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Utopia and Dystopia in Colonial Writings: Henry Rider Haggard's *King
Solomon's Mines* (1885) and Pierre Benoit's *L'atlantide* (1919):

A Postcolonial Study

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In memory of my father,
To my dear mother and to my two families

Abstract

This dissertation aims at studying the issue of utopia and dystopia in two colonial fictions: Henry Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and Pierre Benoit's *L'atlantide* (1919). While the former belongs to the British literature, the latter belongs to the French one. Both were written during the period of the height of imperialism in their countries. While the peak of the British colonial power was the late nineteenth century, the French one was the two first decades of the twentieth century. In this dissertation, I seek to demonstrate that there is a simultaneous incorporation of utopian and dystopian elements in both fictions. These elements are manifest in the English and the French characters' vision towards the colonial world notably "the human world" i.e. the inhabitants, and "the vegetable world" i.e. the natural environment. The existence of utopian aspects in the two fictions is evidenced by "apocalyptic and romantic images", concepts borrowed from Northrop Frye's essay "Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths". As for the dystopian aspects, the evidence is given through "the demonic images" and the ironical situations, two other concepts taken from Frye's theory. Throughout the discussion chapters of my dissertation, I explore the romanticisation of some native characters and the landscape in the colonial world which creates a desirable or utopian atmosphere for the white men in the colonial world-South Africa in Haggard's fiction and Algeria in Benoit's fiction. I also discuss the demonisation of other native characters, because they hinder the fulfillment of the white characters' utopian imperial dreams, and the challenges caused by the colonial natural environment. These aspects cause disillusionment for the white men and render their life in the colonial world undesirable i.e. dystopian. I also consider the variety of myths incorporated in the two authors' discourses and make an ideological reading of them relying upon Roland Barthes's theory of myths. Finally, I have come to the result that: the authors' discourses are ambivalent; they are "paradisiacal" and "anti-paradisiacal" at the same time

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Introduction

[In order to] to satisfy and please myself [I] make an Utopia of my own, a new Atlantis, a poetical Commonwealth of mine own, in which I will freely domineer.¹

This is how Robert Burton expresses his desire, in his work *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), to found a utopian (ideal) colony to rule. In reality, Burton's desire was that of most of the European powers for centuries to come. The colonisation process of any territory started by geographical explorations of new and unknown territories, then it was transformed to appropriation and colonisation. The African continent became a center of exploration by Europeans, including the English and the French, from the beginning of the nineteenth century. By the end of that century and the beginning of the next one, the historical context of the present work, England and France had controlled most of the African territories.²

The exploration and colonisation of the African continent brought about different literary and non-literary works which reflected either a utopian or a dystopian perspective, and sometimes both, of the aspects of this continent. Indeed, my intention in this work is to deal with the issue of utopia and dystopia in two works written by two European travellers; an English and a French one. *King Solomon Mines* (1885), written by Henry Rider Haggard (1856-1925), and *L'atlantide* (1919) by Pierre Benoit (1886-1962).

The term "utopia" was first used by Thomas More, in his *Utopia* (1516), to refer to an "ideal, prosperous, and perfect" place, whereas "dystopia" refers to a "bad, incorrect, or diseased" place.³ The most useful definition to the issue of this dissertation is the one given by John Carey who relates both terms to desire: "[t]o count as a utopia, an imaginary place must be an expression of desire. [And] to count as a dystopia, it must be an expression of fear."⁴ So I will consider the colonial world in the two fictions as utopian when the white characters get what they desire there and dystopian when they experience fear and anxiety.

The narrative structure of a utopian literary work is explained by Gregory Claeys, in *the Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature* (2010), as follows:

[The utopian literary work] normally pictures the journey (by sea, land or air) of a man or woman to an unknown place (an island, a country or a continent); once there, the utopian traveler is usually offered a guided tour of the society, and given an explanation of its social, political, economic and religious organization; this journey typically implies the return of the utopian traveler to his or her own country, in order to be able to take back the message that there are alternative and better ways of organizing society.⁵

A dystopian work has the same plot as that of the utopian one, as explained in the quotation above. Dystopian features became observable and even prevailed over utopian ones in the literature of the late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. This was due mainly to the influence of the negative effects of the industrial revolution and the WWI.⁶

It was during the late nineteenth century that Haggard's fiction, which I am going to deal with, was written. Haggard's fiction is based on events that took place in South Africa. The latter at that time was a British colony where Haggard stayed for a long time working as a colonial administrator. But his disillusionment with the political situation in South Africa, because of the conflicts between the various existing populations during the first and second Boer wars, pushed him to return to his home country. His long settlement in South Africa provided him with a great amount of knowledge which he used to produce his well-known novel: *King Solomon Mines* (1885) despite the short period which he devoted to its writing.⁷

Benoit also was a colonial officer, but in Algeria not South Africa. He started his military service in 1906 in the Southern part of Algeria (Sahara). He received his education in this colony while staying with his father who worked there as a military officer. Living in the Algerian desert, Benoit (Pierre) saw a monumental tomb thought to be that of the Christian Cleopatra Celina and which Benoit associated with Antinea. Furthermore, Benoit is acknowledged for his extensive reading of various books.⁸ This is what allowed him to write his novel: *L'atlantide* which reflects Benoit's deep knowledge about the Algerian Hoggar and the Sahara in general.

Even if Benoit's work was published in the 1920's, the events of the novel take place in the 1880s and the 1890s. Indeed, Benoit's fiction reflects the late nineteenth century events more than the events of the period in which it was published. The setting of the novel

coincides with the various explorations of the Algerian desert by French engineers and military officers. Moreover, the natives in this novel are Touaregs. Because of their strong resistance to the French advance in the desert, many negative myths have been circulated about these people during the late nineteenth century.⁹

As previously mentioned, Haggard and Benoit wrote their works during the period of the apex of the British and the French imperialisms. This was accompanied by the fear of decline which was mainly due to the questioning of the colonial policies.¹⁰ This ambivalent historical context, I shall argue, gave birth to many ambivalent literary works, such as Haggard's and Benoit's works, which combine utopian and dystopian aspects. The aim of this present work is to reveal the myths and ideologies that these literary works perpetuate to serve their imperial countries.

Review of the Literature

Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* has received much critical attention from many western scholars. Most of these scholars based their criticism of this novel on the aspect of the South African landscape, mainly the fact of being eroticised, its portrayal as "a paradise", and its relation with British imperialism. However, these critics have overlooked other aspects of the colonial world.

To begin with, Lindy Steibel, in her "Imagining Empire's Margins: land in Haggard African Romances" (1997), explains the connection between landscape and imperialism in many of Haggard's works and stresses the latter's fascination with the African landscape. *King Solomon's Mines* is one of these works. Steibel observes that Haggard displaces "the male sexual desire" on the landscape because of the absence of women in the novel. To put it in Steibel's words: "For Haggard writing within the masculine imperial romance form, the sexual quest is partially transferred into the landscape, there being "not a petticoat" (that is no white woman) advisable in the genre of his time."¹¹

William J. Scheick also deals with implicit sexuality in Haggard's fiction in an article entitled: "Adolescent Pornography and Imperialism in Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*" (1991). He contends that Haggard makes an association between geographical elements and the female body for gaining money. Scheick adds that Haggard use of jokes is not innocent. His main purpose is not just creating a humoristic atmosphere for his readers. By making fun of the natives, he justifies the use of imperialistic military intervention. In Scheick's view, these jokes are "tricks" Haggard uses to hide his "imperialist and misogynist" views.¹²

While dealing with utopia in *King Solomon's Mines*, Gualter Cunha joins Stiebel and Scheick in speaking about the sexualisation of the South African landscape and the male characters' perception of the African setting as "pleasurable and delightful" which is, for Cunha, part of the "utopian optimism of the empire." Cunha also mentions the English men's contribution to creating a utopian society in Kukuanaaland.¹³ However, he overlooks the issue of dystopia in *King Solomon's Mines*.

John Rieder, in his *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (2008), relates the "Lost race motif" in Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* to the history of colonial exploration. He argues that by making the characters draw a map which leads to the treasure mines, Haggard assures the English men's right to exploit it. Like the critics mentioned above, Rieder argues that this map is sexualised aiming to attract the attention of adolescents to read the fiction.¹⁴ As one can notice, this critic and the others who are mentioned above approached Haggard's novel just from one angle which is the idealisation of the South African landscape through its eroticisation.

Benoit's fiction too has received a similar attention from critics. The following works are those that I had access to. The scholars, who criticised Benoit's fiction, focused their attention on Benoit's portrayal of the character of Antinea and neglected other aspects. The critics' vision alternates between admiration and abhorrence. For instance, Hugo Frey, in an Afterword to *The Queen of Atlantis* (2005), portrays Antinea as a "classic vampire figure"

because she brings European men to her castle just in order to torture them. Frey adds that Benoit through his fiction tries to justify the offensive behavior of the military officers towards the natives. By doing so, he supports the French Empire indirectly.¹⁵

Henri de Régnier holds a completely different view from Frey as far as the character of Antinea is concerned. He considers her as a fantastic and wonderful woman to the extent that her charm affects not just the European men in the fiction, but even the readers. To put it in his words: “Quant on a lu *L’Atlantide*, on désire comme tous les héros du livre, payer de sa vie l’amour de l’héroïne énigmatique et superbe”.¹⁶

Richard Laurent Omgba, in his *Utopies littéraires et création d’un monde nouveau* (2012), takes Benoit’s *L’atlantide* as an example of literary works that represent Africa in a utopian way. He says that the North African desert is depicted as a “lost paradise” especially when it is ruled by an extraordinary woman like Antinea. He adds that Africa is represented by Benoit as a place worthy to be discovered for its riches, particularly the precious library. He writes: “Le paradis perdu est symbolisé, au plan littéraire, par l’Atlantide, le continent que l’on disait englouti par les eaux, mais que Pierre Benoît retrouve en Afrique, précisément dans le désert nord-africain.”¹⁷ [The lost paradise, in literature, is symbolised by l’Atlantide, the continent which is thought to be sunk, but Pierre Benoit finds it in Africa, and more precisely in the north African desert.]

Some critics compared between Haggard’s novel *She: A History of Adventure* (1887) and Benoit’s *L’atlantide* and find many similarities between them including Paul Meehan in his work *The Vampire in Science Fiction Film* (2014). Antonio Ballesteros Gonzalez and Lucia Mora Gonzalez, in their work *Popular Texts in English: New Perspectives* (2001), go further to consider Benoit’s novel as an imitation of Haggard’s *She*. If these critics have studied these two novels together, in the present work, I have chosen to examine a different work by Haggard which is *King Solomon’s Mines*.

Issue and Working Hypotheses

The critics mentioned above have approached, in their criticism of Haggard's and Benoit's fictions, one utopian or dystopian element, but still no critic has broadened the scope of his study to include these two issues i.e. utopia and dystopia at the same time. The present work is an attempt to go beyond those studies by exploring the utopian and dystopian elements simultaneously in Haggard's and Benoit's respective fictions. The utopian or dystopian vision of the colonial world will be considered from a western perspective i.e. the author's perception of the aspects of the colonial world. The author's vision is reflected in the English or the French characters' vision. This will be undertaken in the light of the British and the French colonial history. Individual agents' hopes and dreams which stand for promises of empire, will be associated with utopia, whereas the doubts raised by the problems of colonisation and settlement will be associated with dystopia.

The utopian and the dystopian elements in the two fictions will be shown at the level of the plot, characters i.e. "the human world" and the setting i.e. "the vegetable and mineral worlds" concepts borrowed from Northrop Frye's theory of myths on which I am going to rely. Frye's "Apocalyptic imagery" and "romance" will be used to highlight the utopian aspects, whereas "demonic imagery" and "irony/satire" will be used to point out the dystopian elements. Furthermore, the French and the British imperial ideologies which lie behind the utopian and the dystopian aspects will be highlighted. To reach this end, I will rely on Roland Barthes' theory of myths which will be used to analyse discourse, ideology and myth in the two fictions.

Methods and Materials

Since Frye's theory is called "Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths" developed in his work *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), I find it useful to start by giving Frye's definition of the term "archetype". He defines it as "a typical or recurring image... a symbol which

connects one poem with another and thereby helps to unify and integrate our literary experience".¹⁸

In his theory of mythos i.e. archetypal plots, Frye states that the plot of romance (the mythos of summer) is shaped by the element of adventure or the quest. The main character in his quest, embarks in a series of adventures till he reaches his final destination.¹⁹ In the discussion chapters of this dissertation, I will examine *King Solomon's Mines* and *L'atlantide* to show how they fit in the romance plot, and also identify other romantic images. Frye calls romance "the analogy of innocence." While adapting this plot, the author of the literary work elevates his heroes and romanticises the landscape to the level of utopia.

Frye links "irony/satire" to dystopia and calls it "the analogy of experience" because it has a relation with reality. He writes: "The other world [dystopia] appears in satire, [...] as an ironic counterpart to our own, a reversal of accepted social standards."²⁰ An object or a phenomenon is satirised because of abhorrence, chauvinism and other reasons. In the light of these elements, I will examine the way the native characters as well as other phenomena belonging to the colonised culture and setting are satirised or showed in an ironical way and thus to highlight the dystopian aspect in the imperial romance.

Frye speaks also of two opposed worlds: the pleasing "apocalyptic world" versus the unpleasing "demonic world". The first is an ideal and desirable one, because it is associated with the "Biblical paradise", from which Frye picks up the symbols used in literature, and it is associated by westerners with utopia. The second one is a bad and threatening one and mostly associated with Hell. While apocalyptic imageries are included within romance, demonic imageries are included within irony. To put it in Frye's words: "In the low mimetic area [irony] we enter a world that we may call the *analogy of experience*, and which bears a relation to the demonic world corresponding to the relation of the romantic innocent world to the apocalyptic one."²¹

Frye states that since irony always leads to romance, the dialectic between the apocalyptic and the demonic is generally present in any genre.²² The identification of these elements in Haggard's and Benoit's fictions serves to show the ambivalence of their discourses. This will be accomplished through showing the different apocalyptic and demonic imageries that these discourses contain. Sometimes these authors describe places and people as very pleasant and they compare them to paradise. Sometimes they describe places as very dark and threatening, and people with undesirable qualities, likening the whole landscape to Hell.

The second task of my present work is to examine the different imperial ideologies (myths) which lie behind each utopian or dystopian element in the works under analysis. And since Frye's definition of myth is narrowed to "abstract fictional designs in which gods and other such beings do whatever they like",²³ I will also use Barthes's theory of myth to broaden the scope of my analysis, and to highlight the political ideologies at play in the two works in question.

In his essay "Myth Today", Barthes suggests different definitions for myth. The one which interests me is the one which says that myth is a "depoliticized speech" and myth is embodied in discourse. By saying "depoliticized", Barthes does not mean that this speech has no political connotation, on the contrary, he means the political message that it contains. However, the producer of the speech conceals its political intention to make it appear "innocent". When affirming this, Barthes is inspired by Marx who wrote that: "the most natural object contains a political trace." Barthes adds that the mythical quality in the message seems to be "eternal" and "natural" because the producer of the myth intends to make it appear like that, but in reality, it is not.²⁴ To put it in his words:

Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact.²⁵

Barthes also contends that there are no eternal myths. Some items are mythicised just for some time and they lose this quality afterwards. This is because the mythical quality in the message is historical not natural. This is why Barthes states that in order to decipher the real meaning of a given myth, it should be put in its historical context. He also adds that the production of myth is always accompanied by the production of ideology. It is through the latter that the different leading powers in society, Barthes in his work speaks about the bourgeoisie class, most of the time legitimatise their interests. Ideology or myth is used as a means to make acceptable what is in reality the product of the human personal interest.²⁶

Barthes' theory of myth is relevant to my work since it enables me to read the variety of myths and imperial ideologies that the novels under analysis contain. It also enables me to put the two fictions in the context of the nineteenth and early twentieth century French and British imperialisms that resort to the perpetuation of myths and ideologies to maintain power over the colonised people. In this work, I will use the two concepts (myth and ideology) interchangeably because some myths are used as ideologies to justify imperialism.

As previously mentioned, Barthes is influenced by Marxists while developing his theory of myths. This is why I find necessary to give the Marxist definition of the term "ideology". The latter is the process of the transformation of "the interests of the ruling class...into society's ruling ideas."²⁷ Ideology is held by the ruling class to legitimatise its power or give validity to its status. This is done through the consent of the governed instead of resorting to force. To quote Paul Ricoeur, who explains the Marxist concept of "ideology" and its function of legitimation: "because no social order operates by force alone. Every social order in some sense seeks the assent of those it rules, and this assent to the governing power is what legitimates its rule."²⁸ Marxists, who were the first to coin this term, assume that "superstructure is ideological"²⁹ and since literature is part of the superstructure, so it vehicles ideology.

It is worth to note that Marxists do not differentiate between ideology and utopia: both utopia and ideology are unreal or “unscientific”.³⁰ To be explicit, ideology is not necessarily true or real, what the ruling class seeks to do is just to maintain its position through creating a given ideology which appears to be real or plausible but it is not. A stance which I am going to adopt in the present work. The portrayal of the colonial world will be considered as subjective, depending on the coloniser’s psychological state. This is because the same aspect may be portrayed in a Utopian or dystopian way. In addition, a Utopian aspect either positive or negative is intended to vehicle an ideology.

Since my approach is postcolonial, so I will refer, from time to time, to some postcolonial theories including the following ones: Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) and Homi Bhabha’s concept of ambivalence in “Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817” (1985).

Methodological Outline

The present dissertation consists of three chapters and each chapter will be divided into two sections. In the first section of the first chapter, I will give an overview about the historical context in which Haggard’s fiction *King Solomon’s Mines* was written: South Africa under British imperialism during the period of “the scramble for Africa”. Furthermore, I will mention some examples from the English utopian and dystopian colonial literatures of the time. In the second section of the same chapter, I will present the historical context in which Benoit’s *L’atlantide* was written i.e. Algeria under the French conquest including the French explorations of the Algerian desert, since the novel is set there, and provide some examples of literary works written about it. In the first section of the second and third chapters, I will examine Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* and Benoit’s *L’atlantide* respectively to highlight the utopian elements. In the second section of these two chapters, I will analyse the two novels respectively to extract the dystopian elements implied in the satirical and ironic treatment of characters and situations. And each time, I will explore the

imperial ideology that lies behind these two aspects i.e. utopia and dystopia. Finally, I will offer the results of the analysis of the two fictions in the general conclusion.

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- 24-Quoted in Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans., Lavers Annette, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984). p.142-3
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Chapter One: Background to English and French Imperial Romance

Section one: Background to English Imperial Romance

Introduction

The period, which extends between 1860 and 1920, was known as “the Golden Age” of the adventure novel and saw the production of many successful colonial adventure novels both in the French and the British literatures. The writers of this literature were inspired by the geographical discoveries and scientific inventions of the period.¹ Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885) is one of the works written during this period and is the one I have chosen for analysis. It was written during the late nineteenth century; the apex of British imperialism. In this section, I will give a historical overview about the British presence in South Africa since Haggard’s fiction is set there. And since my intention is to deal with utopia and dystopia in the fiction previously mentioned, I will also define these two concepts in relation to imperialism. Then, I will give some examples of the best utopian works and the most popular dystopian works produced by some British colonial travellers of the second half of the nineteenth century.

1-Utopia and the Emergence of Utopian Romance

The term “utopia” was first coined by Thomas More in his work *Utopia* (1516) and even the foundation of this genre is attributed to him. But in reality, More was not the first to depict an ideal society in his works. For instance, Plato’s depiction of his *Republic*, written around 380 BC, is an ideal one and there are other utopian works by Socrates.² Indeed, the history of utopia is traced back to the Greek period and the Biblical prophets.

Many definitions are suggested for the term “utopia” (polysemous and problematic word); nevertheless, I am going to give those definitions which best fit my subject. The term “utopia” is combined out of two Greek words “ou” and “topos” which means “no-place/no-land”, “nowhere” or a “non-existing place or island.”³ However, the fictitious place or setting is used by the utopian writer just to replace a real one, which is called “the device of

displacement”. Indeed, people try to apply the ideas they read about in utopian works. The setting (place) in a utopian work has different forms: it can be a period in the past or the future, it can be a colony or an island.⁴ As for the two fictions I am going to examine, the setting represents a colony. “Eutopia” is another term used by More to describe the island he is dealing with in his *Utopia*. It means “good” or an “ideal, prosperous, and perfect” place. The Christians associate an ideal place with heaven. They think that it really exists in someplace on earth and hope to reach it someday.⁵ Utopia is also defined as “a matter of attitude” towards an undesirable situation and the desire to change it to a better one.⁶ In this present work, I will use the word “utopia” to refer to an ideal place or situation and “dystopia” to refer to a bad place or situation.

It is worth to note that More got the idea of his island from the discoveries of exotic places by the two great explorers of his time, namely Amerigo Vespucci and Christopher Columbus. Indeed, More’s work implements the conventions of travel literature since even Columbus is mentioned in his work.⁷ Moreover, the plot of his book revolves around a colonial adventure. It deals with a king who invaded an island called: Abraxa. According to the author, this island is utopian because it is the colonial adventurers who impose their own laws on the original population. The latter is described as uncivilised and it is thanks to the colonial settlers that the land becomes productive. So if someone from the original population opposes their policies, he is to be expelled from the land. The land as “idle and waste” is one of the doctrines “which were used by European powers to establish legalistic grounds, via the “law of nature” for expropriating the supposedly uninhabited land.” Another common doctrine was “*vacuum domicilium*” which means “no man’s land”, or an “unoccupied home”. Therefore, the naturalisation of colonialism goes back to the modern utopian tradition that began with More’s *Utopia* who does not give much value to the colonised.⁸

More wrote his *Utopia* when he grew dissatisfied with the terrible circumstances of his country under the reign of Henry VIII. In this work, he attempted to change and improve his

country's situation. He noticed that his society suffered from different troubles because of the English monarchical system which manipulated the laws, as it suited the interests of the monarch as well as the ruling class, and neglected the welfare of the lay people. These people lived in extreme poverty and at the margin of the society. More blamed the people for their blind subservience to this unjust and tyrannical system. In a way, he pushed them to revolt. As a result, he was executed.⁹

There are many Utopian literary works which draw their material from religious and ancient myths. For example, More's work *Utopia* contains different elements taken from classical or religious myths. Similarly, in Sir John Mandeville *Voyages & Travels* (circulated between 1357 and 1371), Jan de Langhe uses the religious myth of Prester John. Plato also have used the ancient myth of the Island of the Atlantis in his Republic.¹⁰

One of the popular sub-genres of utopian literature which emerged during the late nineteenth century was "utopian romance." Patrick Parrinder gives some of its characteristics in a chapter entitled "Utopia and Romance" in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*. Among these characteristics, there is "love" and there is "adventure" that the traveller experiences in the utopian world. The passion that the two lovers feel for each other generally happens involuntarily and it is stronger than logic and rationality. Its effect on the lover is negative since it makes him unstable and unsociable.¹¹ By "adventure", Parrinder means the danger that the visitor faces throughout his discoveries in the utopian world.

Another common characteristic, which is identified by Parrinder, in utopian romances is the search for treasure. It may also be a search for sexual freedom. Other characteristics, which were common in the works of the late nineteenth century, include the following ones: loneliness, the resurrection of the hero, and the existence of grotesque figures.¹² The works I am dealing with fall into this sub-genre and fit in some or most of these characteristics.

2-Dystopia and its Relation with Satire

Before the nineteenth century, writers produced many “positive utopias”, but from the nineteenth century onwards the “dark side” of utopia, also called “anti-utopia” or “negative utopia” started to appear in literary works. This is mainly due to the negative consequences of the progress made in science and technology, such as the destructive weapons used during the WWI. The term “dystopia” was first used by John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) in a speech he delivered in the Irish parliament (the British House of Commons) in 1868. He says about some parliamentarians who set projects which were too bad to be realised: “It is, perhaps, too complimentary to call them Utopian, they ought rather to be called dys-topians, or caco-topians.”¹³ Fatima Vieira says that in Utopia there is a big place for hope and dreaming about a good life, whereas in dystopia there are doubts about the existence of this wonderful world.¹⁴

It is worth to point out that dystopian and utopian works share the same techniques of narration. The difference lies in the fact that the former has a pessimistic view towards life. It is also defined by Merriam Webster (cited in Paul Sutton) as “an imaginary place where people lead dehumanized and often fearful lives.”¹⁵ These two authors think that a dystopian work is that which has a negative portrayal of life. That is to say, people are not happy or satisfied with their present situation.

There are other definitions which link dystopia to satire. In dystopian writings, flaws are part of man’s nature. In order to criticise these flaws without being condemned by the society’s political institutions, the utopist resorts to fiction and satire as safe means. By exposing the defects of societies, the utopian writer intends to attract his audience’s attention to them and find other alternatives.¹⁶

Zsolt Cziganyik quotes John Sutherland to define dystopia as a “satire focusing on the whole of humankind.” He adds that satirists consider themselves as protectors of civilisation leading a humanitarian mission which aims at the benefit of all human beings. This type of

satire is especially common in colonial writings. It plays an important part in this research work. Cziganyik also identifies a number of characteristics for dystopia. First, the impossibility of escaping the bad consequences of a problem or undesirable situation. Second, the existence of relation of “superiority and subordination” between the satirist and the satirized. The latter might be a person (generally the anti-hero) or an event. The aim of the satirist in revealing the problems of a society is to find solutions to them as mentioned before.¹⁷

3-Victorian Quest Romances

The Victorian period was marked by a huge production of romance works. It is defined as all what is related to “the fictive or imagination” since it deals with unbelievable and supernatural events. Its origins are traced back to the Greek and Roman periods in the form of folk tales. In the early Middle Ages, there was the emergence of “chivalric romance” (courtly love).¹⁸ The following are some of the characteristics of romance identified by the dramatist William Congreve, cited in Barbara Fuchs’ *Romance* (2004), in the 1690’s:

Romances are generally composed of the constant loves and invincible courages of heroes, heroines, kings and queens, mortals of the first rank, and so forth; where lofty language, miraculous contingencies and impossible performances, elevate and surprise the reader into a giddy delight which left him flat to the ground [...]¹⁹

Romance has many sub-genres including historical romance, gothic romance, imperial adventure romance and so forth. There were works which were a mixture of all these types. Its main features are: idealism, optimism, improbability, and adventure.²⁰ Another element of romance common in Victorian novels is “the quest” which consists of a succession of adventures that a hero (protagonist) undertakes in order to reach an object or a solution to a problem. The hero has to overcome many difficulties that threaten his own life and if ever he is killed, there would be resurrection. This motif can be traced into ancient mythologies before it appears in modern colonial writings. The destination of the hero’s journey might be an unknown land, a forest, another kingdom, a secret island, a mountain, or just the psyche of a human being.²¹ The quest is said to be cyclical as the traveller returns ultimately to his place

of departure. If in the Middle Ages, there was a “chivalric quest”, in the nineteenth and twentieth century fictional works, the quest was psychological.²²

The setting of these imperial romances, which were written during the Victorian period, is most of the time Africa. Even if romances are generally related to the imagination, most of those written during late nineteenth century combined historical and realistic elements with imagination which makes them credible. In these works, the idealisation of the colonial landscape is due to the desire of escaping the troubles of industrial England, and the negative effects of the metropolitan life.²³ These novels and other short stories were published in magazines, the aim of which was to spread the imperial ideologies for the whole population. This is obvious in embodying the ideals of British Imperialism. To put in Todd Lee’s words: “Juvenile literature and adventure novels served along with press coverage to keep far-flung possessions in the public mind; while the glorification of militarism and “just” wars served to unite Britons behind the course of empire.”²⁴

Robert Louis Stevenson and Henry Rider Haggard, according to Anna Vaninskaya, are the best representatives of imperial romance. While the former is best known for his *Treasure Island* (1883), the latter is known for *King Solomon’s Mines* and *She: A History of Adventure* (1887). Haggard’s contemporaries include Arthur Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling. The works of these writers were read by a large public particularly Haggard’s ones who knew very well how to satisfy his Victorian readers’ dreams of liberty and supremacy.²⁵

4-Nineteenth Century Explorers of the African Continent

The nineteenth century was a time of discovering new territories and occupying them. So authors of utopian works had moved from dealing with distant unknown places, as they have the tendency to do, into dealing with discovered ones.²⁶ They offer different visions of the discovered world: positive (utopian) or negative (dystopian) and sometimes both.

Daniel Bivona, in his book *British Imperial Literature, 1870-1940: Writing and the Administration of Empire* (1998), observes that travels into the interior of Africa were very

few before the discovery of the quinine remedy against Malaria around the 1850s. The first daring adventures into the interior of Africa were made by David Livingstone, Richard Burton and Henry Stanley. Later on, other travellers followed their path such as John Hanning Speke, James Grant, Samuel White Bakern and many others. These travellers made their discovery public through their writings. The latter were in the form of memoirs, travel books, diaries and so on, and were sold in large numbers.²⁷ Among the best selling books, Bratlinger mentions the following ones: Livingstone's *Missionary Travels* (1857), Stanley's books *In Darkest Africa* and *How I Found Livingstone*, Burton's *Lake Regions of Central Africa* (1861), Speke's *Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (1864), Joseph Thomson's *To the Central African Lakes and Back* (1881).²⁸

In addition to giving geographical and scientific information about the discovered territory, these travellers also provided commercial and political ones. As a matter of fact, the decision of the government to claim or not to claim a territory depended on what the explorers reported in their works mainly about its climate, its natural resources and the original inhabitants.²⁹ Nevertheless, Mary Louise Pratt argues that the explorer's discovery is not something interesting as the traveller depicts it in his book. In reality, what the traveller does is just appropriating the natives' knowledge to himself and portrays himself as the hero of the discovery. This is because the places, such as mountains, lakes and so forth, that these explorers claim to have discovered, had been already known by Africans. To put it in Pratt's terms: "Crudely, then, discovery in this context consisted of a gesture of converting local knowledges (discourses) into European national and continental knowledges associated with European forms and relations of Power."³⁰ Therefore, instead of calling these adventurers "explorers", Curtis Perry argues, it is better to call them "reporters" because they have just reported what the natives had told them.³¹

The works of these explorers are "nonfictional quest romances" (gothic romance or boy's adventure story) in which the hero is generally the explorer himself or his white friends

but not Africans. The aim of the travellers' quest in these lands is either scientific exploration, such as the discovery of rivers or lakes, or humanitarian i.e. civilisation of the natives by converting them to Christianity. Eventually, the hero returns home into "the regions of light" leaving behind an infernal environment in which only inferior and "demonic savages", who are the natives, live. In this case the work is a dystopia. Other writers imitated these early explorers, produced "fiction romance novels" generally in the form of a "boy's adventure story" like the ones written by Haggard and Conrad.³²

5-"The Scramble for Africa"

Juhani Koponen defines "the scramble for Africa" by European powers as "the competitive phase of expansion in which various Europeans carved out widening spheres of interests for themselves in Africa."³³ Because of the fear that this scramble would become uncontrollable, they resort to the division of African territories as a solution. This partition into "spheres of influence" took place in the Berlin conference of 1884-85. The countries which were present in the conference stressed "effective occupation" i.e. "direct rule" instead of the "informal empire".³⁴ The period between 1880 and 1914 witnessed great rivalry between these European powers over the occupation and the appropriation of other territories in Africa and outside Africa through the division of the African territories, the European countries would assure free access into its resources. However, when partitioning these territories, they did not take into consideration the differences that existed between the African ethnic groups or languages. In fact, no African chief was invited to attend the conference.³⁵ The British Prime Minister at the time Lord Salisbury says it openly:

we have been engaged in drawing lines upon maps where no white man's feet have ever trod; we have been giving away mountains and rivers and lakes to each other, only hindered by the small impediment that we never knew exactly where the mountains and rivers and lakes were.³⁶

This Prime Minister's speech also reveals the Europeans' lack of knowledge about the interior of Africa and they did not care about something else. Indeed, the scramble started on the African coasts, then little by little (around the 1880s) it spread into its inner parts which was

very dangerous because of diseases and lack of knowledge about the native populations. This is why the Europeans, mainly Britain, hesitated at the beginning to control their colonies in a “direct way”.³⁷

“The scramble for Africa” started by adventures, sometimes officialised and sometimes it was just a personal initiative of some ordinary people, army officers or explorers most of whom worked for their governments. As a case in point, one can mention Henry M. Stanley who explored the Congo river and thanks to whom king Leopold II was able to claim the Congo region for Belgium.³⁸ In this perspective, Roy Bridges comments: “Certainly, Stanley and men like him were not only erroneously depicting Africa as a cornucopia waiting to be opened by Europe but also taking the romance out of African travel. Stanley easily made the transition from geographical explorer to land grabber and exploiter.”³⁹

The reasons that led European powers to rush for dominating Africa were many and varied including: economic, political, strategic for “the official mind” (politicians, high officials) and “humanitarian, scientific, personal” for the “unofficial mind” (travellers, explorers and missionaries). But most of the time these motives are not separated and intermingle with each other. Historians agreed that the economic motive was the strongest one. This is because the end of the nineteenth century was a period of industrialisation and competition between the European powers over broadening their trade relations with other countries, mainly those that possessed raw materials, was at its climax.⁴⁰

Another important motive is the scientific one. It is concerned with the exploration of “the dark continent” (Africa) which would allow Europeans to fill the unexplored spaces on their maps. Moreover, they seized the opportunity to transfer their culture to those people who, according to them, have no history or culture of their own. This is why they went there to fill this emptiness. Therefore, to explore these unknown places, Europeans established associations, the aim of which was financing expeditions into Africa. The British, for instance, established *The Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of*

Africa (1788) which was to become the *Royal Geographical Society* in 1830. France, in its turn, established *Société de Géographie* in 1821. Even the personal motive claimed by the “unofficial mind” intermingle with other economic and political ones as Koponen argues. As a matter of fact, the travellers who visited Africa did not restrict themselves to speaking about their curiosity and excitement for discovering the new territories, but they went on to describe the riches of those territories. In doing so, they raised enthusiasm, in their countries’ governments, to establish markets there and to encourage them to intervene in the management of the colonies. This is the reason why historians call these travellers: “colonial enthusiasts”.⁴¹

Furthermore, these travellers, through their stories, encouraged their readers from their mother countries to travel to the new discovered territories. Their aim was to relieve their societies from its different troubles such as the high demands for jobs caused by the increasing population in Europe during this period. In addition, the government needed faithful citizens to manage its affairs in the colonies such as building homes and cultivating lands. This is called by historians “social imperialism”.⁴² All these points are revealed by the following speech by the explorer Verney Lovett Cameron’s (1844-1894): “[S]hould England, with her mills working half-time and with distress in the manufacturing districts, neglect the opportunity of opening a market which would give employment to thousands of the working classes?”⁴³ This “economic need” by Europe for Africa is due to the Industrial Revolution and the ideology of Laisser-faire. To be explicit, Europeans needed markets to export their products and to import raw materials. This is what increased the competition between the different colonial powers at that time.⁴⁴ Henry Stanley, David Livingstone, Joseph Thomson are just few examples of these travellers whose writings contain these motives and thanks to their contribution and help that their governments were able to claim territories in Africa or elsewhere.

6-Utopia in some Colonial Victorian Writings

Many colonial Victorian writers (travellers), during the nineteenth century, incorporate visions of paradise into the colonial lands and show the living there as a desirable experience. Jeffery Auerbach, in his article “Art, Advertising and the Legacy of Empire” (2003), argues that the fact of portraying distant lands as ideal places, where these travellers could fulfill their dreams, may be compared to advertising for a product.⁴⁵ To illustrate better this idea, I am going to mention some writers who adopted this ideology in their writings.

For a start, John Buchan imperial romances presents Africa as “an earthly paradise” instead of considering it as a “dark continent”. Hermann Wittenberg, in his thesis entitled *The Sublime, Imperialism and the African Landscape*, deals with the ideology of aesthetics in many of Buchan’s works including: *Prester John* (1910), *African Colony: Studies in Reconstruction* (1903, a political discussion narrative) and *A Lodge in the Wilderness* (1906, an auto-biographical narrative). In these works, Buchan portrays South Africa as a large open uninhabited land waiting exploration. There is a hidden imperial ideology behind Buchan’s paradisiacal portrayal of the landscapes of South Africa, where he worked as colonial officer, by which Buchan is fascinated (like his contemporary Haggard). In the same perspective, William John Thomas Mitchell points out that this landscape, in addition to being described as beautiful, has a cultural and imperial signification which is revealed in the form of a utopian fantasy from the part of the coloniser.⁴⁶

In *African Colony* (1903), Buchan dreams of being a master over a great estate where he will establish his country house. Wittenberg asserts that Buchan’s work *African Colony* supports an imperial interest. This is apparent in the fact that Buchan gives suggestions to help the British government in maintaining their domination over black population in South Africa (Transvaal colony). Furthermore, he tries to portray a desirable environment for his readers to push them to go to settle there.⁴⁷

Richard Burton is another distinguished traveller of the Victorian period who adopts the ideology of aesthetics or the picturesque in his writings. In *Lake Regions of Central Africa* (1860), Burton gives his readers a “picturesque sight” of Tanganyika Lake as this passage clarifies:

Nothing, in sooth, could be more picturesque than this first view of the Tanganyika Lake, as it lay in the lap of the mountains, basking in the gorgeous tropical sunshine. Below and beyond a short foreground of rugged and precipitous hill-fold, down which the foot-path zigzags painfully, a narrow strip of emerald green, never sere and marvelously fertile, shelves towards a ribbon of glistening yellow sand, here bordered by sedgy rushes, there cleanly and clearly cut by the breaking wavelets.⁴⁸

As one may notice from this quotation, Burton uses more than two adjectives to describe one image of the landscape which makes the reader more focused on the beauty of the thing rather than the thing itself.

Mary Louise Pratt analyses the discourse used by the Victorian explorers or travellers and takes Burton as an example, as far as the landscape in the new discovered land is concerned. She explains that these explorers do not use much of “scientific vocabulary”; instead they use more adjectival modifiers to raise the esthetic pleasure of the reader. The latter is a very important aspect in the discovery because these aesthetic qualities of the landscape makes the explorers’ discovery more interesting. This is why there is a relation between aesthetics and ideology. She calls this phenomenon “a rhetoric of presence”.⁴⁹

Among the long list of the prominent and pioneering Victorian explorers who have a utopian vision of the African landscape, there is David Livingstone who was a Scottish doctor and missionary. He combined religious missions and political and imperial ones. He was attracted by Victoria Falls, which he visited in 1862, and considers them as the “most wonderful sight that [he] had witnessed in Africa”. He goes on to describe the Victorian Falls as “the most lovely *coup d’oeuil* [sic] the soul of the artist could imagine”.⁵⁰ In his journal *Missionary Travels* (1858), he gives a utopian vision while narrating his adventures throughout the southern part of Africa. The latter was at that time unknown for Europeans. Burton gives the reader some information about the plants and the animals of the region, and

explains the motive of his journey, which is that of Christianisation of Africans. He believes that through “commerce and Christianity”,⁵¹ the life conditions in Africa might be improved. A vision that Livingstone shared with many other explorers of his age.

Like Livingstone, Stanley has a utopian vision of Africa which lies in his belief that successful management of Africa will improve its situation. The latter can be civilised through trade and commerce. Concerning the landscape, he describes in “edenic terms”⁵² Lake Victoria in Uganda:

It is the spot from which, undisturbed, the eye may rove over one of the strangest yet fairest portions of Africa-hundreds of square miles of beautiful lake scenes-a great length of grey plateau wall, upright and steep, but intended with exquisite inlets, half surrounded by embowering plantains-hundreds of square miles of pastoral upland dotted thickly with villages and groves of banana.⁵³

Moreover, Stanley describes Africa in general as a place where there are plenty of riches. He tries to convince his readers that Uganda is a wealthy country, but trading contact should be made with the more civilised world which is Europe. In his travel book *Through the Dark Continent* (1878), he narrates his adventures through the Congo River and legitimises the use of its wealth for the benefit of imperial Britain. He portrays Africa as a place which requires improvement and offers suggestions about the way to do so. In his narrative, Stanley has a utopian vision of the natives. He shows that the European traveller can trust the natives which he considers to be faithful.⁵⁴ Thanks to the positive image that these travellers provided, many people considered travelling into the Congo at that time “a pleasure trip” or a touristic journey.⁵⁵ The writings of this author and many others might be considered as an advertisement for the colonies.

Pratt, through her analysis of the rhetoric used in colonial Victorian writings, identifies “the aesthetics of landscape” and its richness in “material and semantic substance” as the main characteristic of colonial writings mainly the Victorian ones. She states that these writers make the “aesthetic pleasure” of landscape the most important element of the journey.⁵⁶

As a conclusion, one may say that without these authors advertising for the landscape of the colonies, the imperialist mission would not have been successful.

7-Dystopia in some Colonial Victorian Writings

One of the most known dystopian Victorian fictions written during the Victorian period was Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Africa in this novel, is portrayed as a "dark continent" and thus the aim of the white agents was to enlighten and civilise its people. As mentioned before, there are many Victorian writers who associate the primitive life with "paradise" but Conrad did completely the opposite since he associates Africa with "hell". Conrad's dystopian vision lies also in the fact of portraying Africa as a place where human beings can regress to their "savage past" as is the case with Kurtz. In Europe, he was a civilised person, but once he reaches Africa, he forgets about the principles of the western civilisation and falls to savagery. Conrad depicts the journey to the Congo as a nightmarish journey. This is because everything bad happens there including: greediness, treachery, murder and slavery. Furthermore, Conrad's vision of the natives is a very pessimistic one. Indeed, they are portrayed as savage, and cannibals. Therefore, there is no hope to civilise them, but they deserve only to be exterminated. The myth of "the Dark Continent" that Conrad adopts in his work *Heart of Darkness* and which characterises "the imperialist discourse", Bratlinger observes, has been circulated from the period of "the abolition of slave trade" to the period of "the scramble for Africa".⁵⁷

It is worth noting that before Conrad's work *Heart of Darkness*, which associated the Congo with "horror", the Congo was not perceived as a hell but considered by many as a paradise or a touristic place as Stanley did in his works. By doing so, he encourages tourism and investment there, that is to say, he raises the imperialistic ambitions towards the region.⁵⁸

Thomas Fowell Buxton is another Victorian writer who shares Conrad's dystopian vision of the native Africans. According to him African salvation and civilisation is not possible because of their "savagery". This vision is clear in his chapter title "Superstitions and

Cruelties of the Africans” in his work *The African Slave Trade and its Remedy* (1840) in which he describes them as ignorant, superstitious and inferior to other ethnic groups mainly to the Europeans and the Asians, so it is difficult to domesticate them.⁵⁹

Burton, even if his vision of the African landscape is utopian, joins Buxton and Conrad in their pessimistic visions towards the Africans. Because the African people have all the features mentioned previously, Burton believes that “they need civilised masters” (Europeans) to guide them. If Burton held this view towards the natives, this is because he was an aristocrat who possessed ships and plantations, so he felt the need to preserve his interests.⁶⁰

In short, any representation of the African territory and its inhabitants during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, being positive or negative; utopian or dystopian, depended on the writings of the British travellers and explorers.

8-Historical Background about Britain and South Africa

In order to understand the relation between Britain and South Africa, one should go back to the seventeenth century. It was Netherlands that first controlled the Cape of Good Hope and used it as station when the Dutch were travelling between their country and the West Indies. Many Dutch people (also referred to as Boers or Afrikaners) came to settle there and the manual work was performed by slaves. Netherlands controlled the colony from 1650 until 1795 when Britain hurried to buy the Cape Town from the Dutch preventing its fall under the French rule. Since then, Britain has got the lion’s share in the region. At that time, the Cape colony was used as a trade route to Asia. However, after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1865, Britain needed to find another pretense to justify its presence there especially after the discovery of two valuable and precious metals namely diamonds and gold. The importance of these resources lay in the fact that they constituted the basis of the “international monetary system” at that time. Britain provided two main reasons for staying

there: first, it opposed the slave trade by closing some routes (humanitarian pretense), second, it encouraged other forms of trade instead of slave trade (economic motive).⁶¹

The period from 1873 to 1896 saw a “Great Depression”. The competition between the colonial powers increased mainly between the United States, Germany, and France. Thus Britain realised that the “informal empire” would not help her to keep its place among these great powers. As a solution, Britain moved to the policy of “direct rule” and formalised its domination of its colonies.⁶² It started with the most important colony which was South Africa. As a first step, it annexed Griqualand, the place where diamonds were first discovered. Then, it applied the same process on Witwatersrand (Johannesburg) where gold was discovered in 1886.⁶³ Britain realised the importance of South Africa and if ever the colony was taken by another colonial power, it would be a catastrophe for the future of the empire. This is because the colony served as a sea route to India, a source of raw materials (mainly diamonds and gold) and a market for exports.⁶⁴

It is worth mentioning that the entrepreneurs also called “Randlords”, who controlled the diamond and gold mines in South Africa, were European and mainly British. They owned companies and banks. Furthermore, they asked for further rights for all the British settlers. It was indeed this issue that led to the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War in 1899. However, the Africans were denied by British government, through the “ordinance” of 1872, any right to possess gold and diamond mines.⁶⁵ To have everything in South Africa for itself, Britain united the colonies: the Transvaal, the Orange Free State, the Cape Colony and the Natal and formed the Union of South Africa as its dominion. But the Africans were marginalised in this union.⁶⁶

Conclusion

In this section, I have introduced some of the works written by British explorers in the form of “nonfictional quest romances” such as those of Stanley and Livingstone. These explorers were imitated by other writers who produced “fictional quest romances”. There

were those who idealised the colonial world and created utopias and those who criticised it and created dystopias. In each case, these writers intend to vehicle or perpetuate a given ideology (myth) that contributed to the preservation of the British imperial power. I have also highlighted the historical context which witnessed the production of these literary works including Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885).

Section Two: Background to the French Imperial Romance

Introduction

Algeria was one of the vital colonies of the French Empire. If India was considered as the jewel of the British Empire, Algeria was considered as “the crown jewel of the French Third Republic Empire.”⁶⁷ The latter followed the policy of “assimilation” to bring the native population and the Algerian resources under its control. The Algerian desert was of great importance to the French empire. Indeed, many imperial projects and dreams were set there. It was the place where French engineers and military officers conducted their researches of exploration.⁶⁸ French literary works produced during that period reflect many of these historical elements including Pierre Benoit’s *L’atlantide*. To illustrate these points, I will provide an overview of this historical era in this section.

1-Historical Background about the French Involvement in Algeria

Algeria was the first colony that France occupied during her Second Empire and it was exactly in June 1830. Before falling under the French rule, Algeria was a province ruled by an ottoman governor called “the Dey”. But in 1830, Algeria was transformed into a French department (province) after being conquered. The French government declared that Algeria and France were one country: “l’Algerie française”, separated by the Mediterranean sea. By doing so, it aimed to integrate Algeria into its political and economic system.⁶⁹

“Assimilation” was one of the French government’s policies in Algeria. Its aim was not only to assimilate land but to make the indigenous people assimilate as well the French culture (religion, language) which the French considered superior to the Algerian one. They justified this policy by the humanitarian “civilising mission” which they put into practice through establishing schools in which they taught their religion (Catholicism) and language (French). These schools also formed faithful natives, who were an imitation of the French citizens, to serve the French government. These citizens were also called “puppets” since they were manipulated by the French government.⁷⁰ Michael Crowder points out that the French

consider the Algerians as barbarians, do not possess history, culture or civilisation, and always conflicting between themselves. So they should consider the French intervention as a fortune. In order to convince the world in the goodness of her mission, France claimed that “the civilising mission” was for the benefit of all humanity.⁷¹ Azzedine Haddour uncovers the ideology and the real intentions that lie under this colonial ideology when he assumes that:

Assimilation was adopted as a stratagem, in order to pacify and mystify this people. The ideology of assimilation endeavoured to establish and maintain French coloniality. It was an *ideology in the sense that it inverted the meaning of its content to mean exactly the opposite.*⁷² (Italics mine)

Algeria was referred to as “a settler-plantation colony”. It was called “settler” because many settlers came to settle in Algeria and “plantation” because France established a “plantation economy” in Algeria. In order to get rid of its “dissidents”, such as those who participated in the French Revolution of 1848, the French government sent them to Algeria. Other settlers such as peasants and unemployed people immigrated voluntarily to Algeria seeking a better life (future). In Algeria, French companies at that time made investments in railroads, ports and other services. These companies created jobs and improved the life conditions of these immigrants.⁷³

The government, in his part, did his best to set up a good environment and good living conditions for the settlers. General Bugeaud advocated the colonisation of Algeria through encouraging the settlement of French citizens and making Algeria a utopian country of privileges mainly for the French soldiers,⁷⁴ as this extract from Bugeaud’s speech demonstrates:

.. Il faut des colons que vous placerez dans les situations les plus favorables. Pour les avoir, il faut faire un appel séduisant ; car, sans cela, vous n’en aurez pas. Il faut qu’une ordonnance royale leur promette des terres dans la meilleure situation, a Tlemcen, a Mascara. Partout ou il y aura de bonnes eaux et des terres fertiles, c’est la qu’il faut placer les colons, sans s’informer a qui appartiennent les terres ; il faut les leur distribuer en toute propriété .⁷⁵

[You should put the settlers in favorable conditions. To have them, you should seduce them, without doing this, you will not have settlers. A royal ordinance should promise to give them lands, which are in a good conditions, at Tlemcen, at Mascara. Every place where there is water and fertile lands. It is here that the settlers should be placed without telling them to whom this land belongs, it should be distributed with all its possessions.]

This was a policy to dominate and oppress the Algerians. It seized fertile lands from the natives and granted them to French settlers pretending that the Algerians did not make the good use of the natural resources including these lands (plantations). They were used to serve the colonial economy by planting the crops that the French market needed. For instance, the shortage in the grapes production of 1870s in France, was compensated by an over production in Algeria. Above all, the Algerians had worked as peasants and sometimes in their own plantations.⁷⁶

In the second half of the nineteenth century, France Third Republic expanded its empire further to include possessions in the African continent including Tunisia and Morocco. While the former became a French protectorate officially in 1884, the latter was in 1912. During the first decade of the twentieth century, French possessions and power increased further. By the early twentieth century, France occupied Indochina, some islands in the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean, and the Caribbean Sea. In addition to other possessions in the North, West, Central, and East Africa.⁷⁷ Indeed, this period i.e. the two first decades of the twentieth century, was celebrated as “la Belle Époque”. This is because the French Empire was the largest after the British one. French possessions expanded further until the mid twentieth century with the emergence of the national movements for independence. However, the French conquest of Algeria, which lasted for over one hundred years, was considered by some historians as one “of France’s largest, longest, and most brutal colonial campaigns”.⁷⁸

2-French Explorations of the Algerian Desert during the Period of Conquest

The Sahara is an exotic and a touristic place. It has always been a place where colonialists placed their ideals and dreams of development. From ancient times, the desert had a religious signification for the Christians. For them the desert was a place where they could worship God in isolation. But once the Europeans including the Spanish, the British and the French, discovered the desert, either in Africa, Asia or other parts of the world, through the

crusades and later through colonisation, the desert becomes a place to conduct their scientific activities and their ideas of modernisation.⁷⁹

The French explorers, who had a great interest in the Orient, first explored the Egyptian desert, which they called “the African desert”, through a scientific expedition led by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798. This expedition was at the same time a military conquest. Even if the Algerian conquest was launched in the 1830s, it was until the mid- and the late-nineteenth century that the Algerian desert attracted the attention of the French scientists. The French explorers’ dreams of modernisation consisted mainly of finding new water sources, fertilizing the ground, planting trees, establishing Trans-Saharan routes and establishing a great number of oases. The French pretended that their aim, through this “archaeological project”, was to restore the ancient Christian civilisations such as the Roman and the Byzantine ones while it refuted the existence of any culture for North Africans.⁸⁰ Hence, the desert was and still a place of renewable energies or as Henry Jean-Robert points out “the future powerhouse of Europe”. Said differently, the French engineers have the utopian dream of transforming this horrible desert or “fallen Eden” to a wonderful garden (utopia). The French considered these projects as “la mise en valeur of resources.”⁸¹

To back these explorations, to which the government gave much importance, a commission of scientific exploration (Commission d’exploration scientifique de l’Algérie) was established in 1839 and published a work which was a source of valuable information about the desert. French military officers, also called “utopists”, namely colonel Eugène Daumas and Captain Carette, who was a secretary of the commission, attempted to draw a map of the Algerian desert. According to Henry, the ideological function of this map exceeds that of “a long speech” since through this map, Carette convinced the parliament of the necessity of establishing military posts in the desert to facilitate domination. Carette, like Stanley in Britain, believed that the desert could be civilised through industry and commerce.⁸²

If Speke and Burton explored the southern part of Africa, Henri Duveyrier explored its northern part and recorded his findings in *Les Touareg du Nord* (1864). Duveyrier stayed with the Touaregs for two years and wrote about their customs and life in general. He included in his account many positive aspects about this race mainly their hospitality, honour, and democracy concerning women. He also gathered information about trade relations between Algeria and Sudan. He says that his explorations were motivated by his passion for science and discovery. Other travellers claim that their journey of exploration to be a childhood dream, but that this is just “a colonial alibi”, as John Culbert argues, to find a way to penetrate the colonial world. He says: “the explorer’s desire is itself colonized, serving empire in its ultimate drives and childhood fantasies.”⁸³

These French explorers circulated two important myths about the Algerian desert: the first is the myth of an interior sea and the second one is the myth of an evaporated sea. Henri Fournel and Elie François Roudaire (1799-1876) were the first engineers who created the first myth. They hypothesised that under the surface of the desert lies a sea, thus by digging wells, there is a possibility of finding water. They made an expedition to Biskra (a region in the desert) in search of mineral resources and suggested the drilling of wells along the way between Biskra and Touggourt. These wells would serve to create an oasis which would be provided with light to serve as a station for caravans.⁸⁴ Fournel wrote a book on this issue entitled *Richesse minérale de l’Algérie* (1849). Other explorers including Daumas, the author of *Le Sahara algérien* (1845), approved this hypothesis. This project i.e. that of finding water, started in 1846. Daumas also argued for the establishment of a Trans-Saharan route, the education of the natives and “mise en valeur” of the desert in general.⁸⁵

Ajasson de Grandsagne (1802-1846), in his turn, advocated the construction of wells in the desert to provide water which would permit the creation of oases. He was the one who motivated the interest of his country to expand its occupation all over Algeria.⁸⁶ He says in his memoir *Colonization d’Alger* (1831) which was exposed in front of the French government:

En effet, que manque-t-il à ce vaste désert pour avoir aussi sa végétation, ses fleurs, ses fruits, en un mot ses oasis ? [demande le polygraphe.] Ce qui lui manque ? Quelques filets d'eau que l'art de l'homme soutirerait aux entrailles de la terre pour les répandre à sa surface : or quelques cylindres d'un pouce d'ouverture suffiraient d'abord pour abreuver des caravanes entières et pour jeter, dans l'intervalle de leur passage, les bases d'une végétation qui bientôt braverait toutes les tempêtes qui ravagent cette mer de sable.⁸⁷

[In fact, what this vast desert lacks to have also its vegetation, its flowers, its fruits, in a word, its oases? [the polygraph asks.] What lacks? Some trickles of water that the art of man get out of the entrails of earth to spill over its surface: or some cylinders of narrow opening are enough, first, to water entire caravans, and also to throw, in the interval of their passages, the basis of vegetation that would later resist tempests that devastate this sea of sand.]

The failure of the project because of the insufficiency of water sources and the impossibility of changing the climate led to the revolt of natives (Laghouat) in the 1850s.⁸⁸ Therefore, one may conclude that reality in the Algerian desert did not match the utopian dream of the French engineers.

3-Utopia/Dystopia in some French Exotic Writings Set in Colonial Algeria

The period which extends between the late nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century saw a great literary production about the Orient and Africa. This was due mainly to the increase of knowledge about this continent; little by little, Europeans have come to explore many places in what was used to be “the Dark Continent” through colonisation. French writers, for instance, wrote many works about the Orient in general and Algeria in particular. Most of these French exotic works were written by military officers in various forms including short stories, journals, novels, and other forms. Nevertheless, these writings were not published by the time.⁸⁹ Some backed the system of their country as a coloniser and others denounced it. Some of these writers created utopian writings in which they reflected their good experience, others reflected their bad experience, and there were other works which were a mixture of the two aspects.

Since I have included the word “exoticism”, so a brief definition will be useful to provide here. It originates from a Greek word “exôtikos” which means “far away” or

“foreign”.⁹⁰ Exotic literature refers also to all what is “described and reported outside the national territory” as Louis Mario defines it. Exoticism for Ernest Babut, a French writer, can be in places where the landscape is different, fascinating, and attractive, and the people are unlike those one used to live with. Above all, the exotic place, for Babut, inspires extraordinary feelings and excites one’s curiosity for discovery.⁹¹ A feeling, that no doubt, the writer shares with many other travellers of his age.

There are many writers who equate “exoticism” with “orientalism”. The definition of exoticism given above matches Edward Said’s following definition of the Orient as “almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic being, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences.”⁹² In his book *Orientalism* (1978), Said examines the works of French romantic writers such as Pierre Loti, Chateaubriand and Théophile Gautier and other orientalist authors who wrote about the Orient. Exoticism is a “propaganda” or an ideology used by the colonial powers “to legitimatise domination” over the colonised people.⁹³

During the period of colonialism, the French writers preferred to travel and to write more about the Orient (in which North Africa is part) than other French territories outside the Orient especially when the latter was freed from the control of the Ottoman Empire. However, the English travellers preferred to write more about the countries of southern Africa.

The representation of women as “erotic sexual objects” was a dominant characteristic in the exotic literature of the 1920’s. However, the European writers, White argues, disregarded these women and the natives’ mental capacities. Another characteristic of exotic writings is “nostalgia”. In fact, in exotic writings there is a reference to the Bible and classical mythologies.⁹⁴ The following quote by David Campbell, cited in Auerbach, summarises the main features of the exotic writings set in Africa:

Often writers would enact and emphasize the exotic, the bizarre, the grotesque or the elemental in outlining (for example) the abundance of nature, the ease of subsistence, the lack of private possessions, the 'romantic' simplicity, the pleasures of day-to-day life or the unfamiliarity of scents, sounds and images (which have for centuries been common topoi in the representation of 'exotic' African societies).⁹⁵

So in exotic writings there is always stress on the natural richness of the landscape and other attractive features.

One of the eminent French explorers and travellers of the nineteenth century was Pierre Loti who was an army officer. He wrote many exotic works about Algeria, the Orient, and Africa. Loti's writings about Africa are a mixture of two characteristics mentioned above; nostalgia and eroticism. For instance, his two works: *Le Roman d'un spahi* (1881) and *Les Trois dames de la Kasbah* (1882) are two colonial exotic novels set in Africa.⁹⁶

In *Le Roman d'un spahi*, set in Senegal, Loti deals with a colonial Frenchman as an exotic figure who rejects the colonised culture, but eventually he adopts it. "The exotic spaces" in the novel are "as unattainable as utopias". However, in his *Les Trois dames de la Kasbah*, Loti shows a dystopian vision towards the Algerian women and it is characterised by its eroticism. The female characters are prostitutes who transmit a disease to the French soldiers and to their sons who have disgraceful marks on their faces.⁹⁷

Guy de Maupassant is another French writer whose works share the nostalgic motif of Loti's works. This vision is noticeable in his novel *Au Soleil* (1884) in which he explains that the idea of unexplored desert pushed him to visit Algeria: "Attiré vers l'Afrique par un impérieux besoin, par la nostalgie du Désert ignoré, comme par le pressentiment d'une passion qui va naître".⁹⁸ [Attracted to Algeria by an extreme need and a nostalgia to unknown desert, and also by a feeling of a passion that arouses.] Maupassant's works do not share only the motif of nostalgia with Loti's works but also that of eroticism. This motif is apparent in his collection of short stories entitled *Les Nouvelles D'Afriques*, most of which were set in the colonised Algeria. The events of these stories are the result of his own experiences throughout his stay in Algeria.⁹⁹

In “Allouma” (1889), Maupassant deals with a love story between a French officer named M. Auballe, who stayed nine years in Algeria, and a beautiful Algerian woman named Allouma. He writes: “ [...] les négresses, on le sait, sont fort prisées dans les harems où elles jouent le rôle d’aphrodisiaques”.¹⁰⁰ [The female negroes, as we know, are highly esteemed in the harems where they act as aphrodisiacs.] In this quotation, it is noticeable that the author reproduces “the myth of the harem” in which women are portrayed as excessively sexual. Her main features are, infidelity, the ability to manipulate and dominate men. So one may notice a kind of ambivalence in Maupassant’s portrayal of the woman. In this regard, Homi Bhabha says that there is ambivalence in the way the Western writers represent women “on the one hand idealizing and eroticizing, on the other rejecting and condemning, as the Other is simultaneously sexualized and declared taboo.”¹⁰¹ Maupassant wrote another love story “Marroca” (1882) which is similar to “Allouma” as far as the aspect of eroticism is concerned.

One of the main reasons which led some men to travel into distant exotic lands, Ronald Hyam argues, was to seek sexual freedom and other desires which their societies condemned. This dream of fulfilling their desires, mainly the sexual one, in the distant land was amplified by romantic writers such as Maupassant.¹⁰² Jan Goes is right when he contends that the aim of the European writers, who went to visit Algeria, was to satisfy the European audience at home who asked for picturesque images of the local African culture as these provided examples demonstrate. To put in his words: “la littérature romanesque française des années 1870-1914 ne nous apprend pas grand-chose sur l’Afrique.”¹⁰³ [The romance of 1870-1914 does not provide much information about Africa.] This is because it just repeats what the audience wants to hear or to read.

The eroticisation of women and the exoticisation of foreign places, according to Auerbach, are means used by Western writers for two main purposes: first, to make these places desirable for settlement, that is to say to give the audience at home an image of a

comfortable environment and to convey a sense of safety for being there, and justify intervention in the colonies. Second, it aims to change the terrifying image provided by early travellers who had bad experience in the colonies and reflected them in their writings. For instance, in 1889 a Universal Exhibition was held in Paris on the native African culture. This exhibition exposed many positive aspects of the colonial life and concealed many other negative aspects.¹⁰⁴

Theophile Gautier's *Voyage pittoresque en Algérie*, written between 1845 and 1865 in separate chapters, is characterised by "the oriental picturesque". He considers Algeria "as an artistic paradise" since he was fascinated by the Algerian traditions during his visit to Casbah. He appreciates the hospitality and manners of the Algerian population. He says: "even in rags, the Arabs seemed noble"¹⁰⁵ which made him think of the statues of Roman emperors.

Edmond Goncourt has a different vision from the above writers. He expresses his dystopian vision towards Algeria and his deception after his first hand experience there. This is because there is a difference between what he has read and heard about Algeria and what he sees during his visit. He narrates, in a journal he wrote in January 1869 "le dégoût et le mépris" [the disgust and the contempt] that he feels towards "la vulgarité de ces pays de couleurs que nous avons tant aimés".¹⁰⁶ [vulgarity of these colorful countries that we loved so much.] Goncourt longed to visit Algeria but once he arrived there, he discovered that not all things are satisfying and enjoyable as he imagined them to be.

Similarly, Daudet, in his *Les aventures prodigieuses de Tartarin de Tarascon* (1872), has the same attitude towards the Algerian environment when he tries to be realist in his presentation of the colonised Algeria. Daudet portrays all the painful realities of the colonial life of the French settlers. He reverses and mocks the utopian romantic (imaginative) view of Algeria given by previous writers when he says: "Qu'est-ce qu'ils me chantent avec leur Orient".¹⁰⁷ [What are they boasting about their Orient?] His main character's dreams of exotic hunting do not come true because his quest for a lion turns to an ass instead. He portrays

deserted cities in a miserable situation; inhabited by wolves instead of humans whom death is always threatening because of hunger. In short, after his experience in Algeria, Daudet's hero becomes disillusioned and ultimately returns to his home country. Daudet observes that the book alternates between "illusion" and "disillusionment".¹⁰⁸

Victor Trenga, in his *Berberopolis* (1922), writes about a future utopian society in which the Kabyle people will establish their own republic and triumph over the Arab race. It is a "racist novel" which perpetuates the ideology of the division of the Algerian nation. It is one of novels which incorporate the political discourse within the literary one. The Kabyle in their utopian republic will assimilate the Western culture and reject their own culture including the Islamic religion. However, as far as the portrayal of the environment is concerned, it is not a romantic one. He writes of Casbah's routes: "Rues vaultées ou jamais le soleil n'a pénétré, pleines de couleurs et, surtout, d'odeurs locales que n'ont jamais pensé à célébrer les littérateurs ou les peintres en mal d'orientalisme pour gens convenables".¹⁰⁹ [vaulted routes that the sun never penetrates, full of colours, and mainly of local odours that writers or painters have not thought to celebrate.] For Trenga, Casbah's routes are not pleasing, therefore, they are not worthy the celebration of the orientalist writers and painters.

4-The Depiction of the Algerian Desert and the Touaregs in some French Literary Works

There was a significant production of works by French writers about the Algerian desert from the late nineteenth century to the 1930's. Among those who tried their hand in writing literary works were military men. These literary works were valuable sources to know about the degree of progress of the colonial projects in the desert. They make a reference to the influence of ancient civilisations on the desert mainly the Greek and the Roman ones. In addition, the desert is portrayed as threatening and full of dangers. The discourse that the literary work contained during this period, Henry maintains, was the reflection of the political, economic, and colonial ones.¹¹⁰ Indeed, those who promote the ideologies of their countries'

government and the colonial culture in general were supported by the different agencies and expositions, however, those who were against it were ignored, as Alain Ruscio observes.¹¹¹

One common myth among the literary works written by the French military men was their crossing of the desert with success. The implied ideology is to prove that they are able to triumph over its difficulties and thus have the right to exploit its resources for their own benefit. In addition to the obstacle of environment which faced the French explorers, there was also the opposition of the indigenous population. The Touaregs, for instance, were known for their strong resistance to the French advance in the desert. They were said to be the cause of the failure of the Flatters mission. Once the French men came into concrete contact with the Touaregs, the latter became the most important character in the Saharan novels while the other races who lived in the desert took a marginal role. By the 1880s, the culture of the Touaregs reached the French at home, and the curiosity to discover more about this race led the French to visit the Algerian desert.¹¹²

Another common element in the French literature about the desert, Emmanuel Grégoire maintains, was the “psychological adventure” undertaken by a French character causing agony for him. The 1920s and the 1930s were known as “the golden age” of the Saharan novel. The French public admired so much this kind of adventures. The main characteristics of the hero include the following ones: he is a military officer with a complex personality, fond of adventure, values the old traditions; however, his exotic fascination in the colonial world does not last for long.¹¹³

One of the best Saharan novels written at the beginning of the twentieth century is Verne’s *L’invasion de la mer* (1905). In this work, Verne mentions the great French explorers, such as Henri Duveyrier, since he documented himself about the geographical explorations of the time. Said differently, Verne’s work adopts the scientific discourse of the period. This is also obvious in founding his novel upon the hypothesis (scientific myth) of the existence of a sea in the interior of the Sahara as many explorers and scientists believed at that

time. A colonial project which the hero of his novel undertakes. This project is opposed by “the nomadic race” the Touaregs whose representation in this novel is stereotypical and that was common in the French imagination of the period. Verne was very fascinated with the Algerian desert and portrays l’Aïr (a mountain in the Touareg region) in his *Cinq semaines en ballon* (1862) as “a paradise on earth”.¹¹⁴

Verne, while writing this work, was influenced by the narrative of the German explorer Heinrich Barth who visited the Algerian Sahara in the 1850s and described the beauty and the richness of its landscape. Verne combines in his work romance with history. After the peace treaty in 1902 between the Touaregs and the French, explorers were able to explore the region without fear from the Touaregs’ opposition.¹¹⁵

Eugène Daumas, like Verne, founds his work *Le grand désert* (1848) upon one of the colonial dreams of his time which is that of crossing the African desert, however, this dream was not realised during the 1850s. Daumas, in this work, deals with a French man who crossed the desert with a native slave trader. It was the first fictional work that provided the reader with valuable information about the Touaregs at that time. He made an appeal to the French government to intervene to control the slave trade in the region, which means that he cared for the interests of his country. Daumas himself affirms this claim: “interests of the highest gravity are bound up, for us, with the knowledge of central Africa, which, in a more or less distant future, may be opened up to the commerce of our colony”.¹¹⁶

Eugène Fromentin was influenced by Daumas’s work and wrote “an ideological narrative” entitled *A Summer in the Sahara* (1857). In this work, he deals with an exploration journey to Ait Mahdy (a region in the Sahara). Fromentin’s view about the desert in this work is ambivalent.¹¹⁷

G. Demage also visited Algeria, so he seized the chance of writing a novel about it entitled *À travers le Sahara: Aventures merveilleuses de Marius Mercurin* (1903). In this work, Demage deals with a French trader who is fond of reading the work of other travellers

into Algeria, therefore, he takes the decision of crossing the Algerian desert. Demage devotes a whole chapter of his novel to speak about the Touaregs. The image of these people given by Demage is positive due to the influence of Henry Duveryier.¹¹⁸ He writes about them:

Leurs principaux caractères moraux sont une bravoure sans bornes, une extrême sobriété, la fidélité à leurs engagements, l'hospitalité, la patience et la résignation, un immense respect pour la vieillesse, la religion et ses ministres, la charité envers les malheureux et la haine de l'oppression.¹¹⁹

[Their moral principles are of unlimited bravery, an extreme soberness, fidelity to their engagements, hospitality, patience and resignation, an immense respect for oldness, religion and its ministers, charity towards the poor and the abhorrence of oppression.]

Marcelle Vioux in his work, *Le désert victorieux* (1930), portrays the military officer Forlaville as a heroic character and thus perpetuating the ideology of the white man's heroism. Moreover, Vioux has a utopian (romantic) view towards the Algerian desert. This is apparent in the hero of his novel who is attached so much to the desert that he cannot detach himself from it¹²⁰: « On maudit ce désert, et on ne peut pas vivre ailleurs... » [Cursed this desert, yet we cannot live elsewhere...], then he adds: “Et puis, s'étant dégagé de ses liens africains, où irait-il? Où se réfugierait-il avec Jacqueline? Quitter aussi l'Afrique? Il ne serait pas heureux ailleurs...”.¹²¹ [Then, if chased from this African places, where is he going? Where is he going with Jacqueline? Leaving Africa? He would not be happy elsewhere.]

One cannot deal with the Algerian desert without mentioning a female figure: Isabelle Eberhardt who admired so much the Algerian Sahara which she considers as “the kingdom of innocence.” She wrote in French about her travel through the desert. However, her works do not support the imperial ideologies but question them. One common aspect with other European writers is that she portrays the orient as a place of freedom from the constraints of western society. She appreciates particularly the sexual freedom. Among the works she wrote and set in Algeria, there are the short stories “L'Anarchiste” and “Silhouettes d'Afrique”, and a novel entitled *Trimardeur*.¹²²

In short, these works, even if their portrayal of the natives is to some extent positive, like other colonial works, tend to support the ideologies of their countries' governments.

Conclusion

Throughout this section, I have noticed that the French, during the colonial period, produced many works about Algeria and its desert. This huge production, literary or non-literary, reflects the great importance of Algeria as a colony for the French Empire. Most of the time these works embodied the projects of the French empire and incorporated its ideologies. Some writers (mostly romantics), in their works, deal with the realisation of these dreams, whereas other writers (mostly realists) deal with their failure and expressed their disillusionment through their characters. One of the colonial dreams, which were sought to be realised in the Algerian desert, was that of establishing a Trans-Saharan route and finding an interior sea. Pierre Benoit's *L'atlantide* (1919), which I propose to analyse in the present work, deals with this dream of finding a sea, and the Touaregs as the major native characters of his novel. Indeed, in most of the works set in the desert, the Touaregs generally play a central role. This is because they were strong people who dared to fight the French advance in the desert and caused fear for the French explorers from the beginning of the conquest until the end of the nineteenth century.

From the whole chapter, one can conclude that the exploration of new territories was of central importance to Britain and France aiming to enlarge their empires. The colonisation of South Africa by Britain and Algeria by France resulted in writings which represent a source of understanding and knowledge of both the coloniser and the colonised and their relationship. I have also noticed that utopian and dystopian visions and different imperial ideologies are present in both literatures i.e. the French and the British.

Endnotes:

- 1-Isabelle Casta: *Si l'aventure: La littérature aventureuse a-t-elle-vécu ?*, (Paris :Le Manuscrit, 2009). p.237.
- 2-Stephen Duncombe ed., *Thomas More: Open/Utopia*, (New York: Autonomedia, 2012). p:xxi.
- 3-Chris J. Young, *From Nowhere: Utopian and Dystopian Visions of our Past, Present, and Future*, (Toronto, 2013).p. 10.
- 4-Gregory Claeys, *The Five Languages of Utopia: their Respective Advantages and Deficiencies with a Plea for Prioritising Social Realism*, (London: Royal Holloway, 2013). p.4-13.
- 5-Chris J. Young, *From Nowhere: Utopian and Dystopian Visions of our Past, Present, and Future*, (Toronto, 2013).p. 10.
- 6-Gregory Claeys, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). p.154.
- 7-Gregory Claeys, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).p.7.
- 8-Karl Hardy, "Unsettling Hope and Re-articulating Utopia".p.42. Available on: <http://www.puertodelsol.org/assets/47.2%20PDFS/introduction.pdf>. Accessed on 18 October 2014.
- 9-Simone Goyard-Fabre, *More L'utopie*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1987). pp.47-49.
- 10- Stephen Duncombe ed., *Thomas More: Open/Utopia*, Pp.xxi.
- 11-Gregory Claeys, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).p.154-8.
- 12-Ibid: 157-60.
- 13-Quoted in Graham Cooling, *Dystopian Predictions of Mankind's Reaction to Mechanical, Scientific and Moral Progress*, 2011.
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Chapter Two: Utopian and Dystopian Elements in Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885)

Introduction

In this chapter, I will try to show the ambivalence of Rider Haggard's portrayal of the colonial world, that is to say, utopian and dystopian at the same time. This will be done by extracting utopian and dystopian elements from his fiction *King Solomon's Mines* through the analysis of the plot, characters; native and English; and the setting (landscape). Moreover, I will look at the ideologies behind each utopian or dystopian element and the way they are used to justify imperialism.

Haggard had a wide knowledge about South African landscape and people, because he worked as a lieutenant-governor of the Natal Region, where he obtained experience on both political and social levels. His knowledge about native ceremonies, as the analysis will show, is derived from his personal experience.¹

Section one: Utopian Elements

1-The Quest for a Colonial Imperial Paradise and the Myth of "the Biblical Ophir"

It is worth mentioning that Westerners associate the ideal world (utopia), with Paradise and the reverse is true; they associate the negative side of utopia (dystopia) with Hell.² This is why I have chosen Frye's theory of apocalyptic and demonic imagery. In his *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye presents the different symbols (metaphors) which can be found in a literary work and that correspond to the Biblical Paradise and Hell. He takes these symbols from the Book of Revelation. This theory will enable me to provide evidence that the work under analysis contains many of these symbols most of which are found at the level of the "human, animal, vegetable, and mineral worlds".

Haggard's fiction is structured around a quest which displaces the plot of romance as stated by Frye in his theory of mythos, in which the hero is engaged in a series of small adventures until he reaches a climacteric one.³ This quest is undertaken by three English

characters: Allan Quatermain, Sir Henry Curtis and Captain Good into King Solomon's mines, where a treasure lies, as their final destination. There are also other minor adventures.

Quatermain starts his journey from Cape to Durban, where he used to travel to gain his living from hunting. It is in the boat that he meets the two other companions: Captain Good and Sir Henry. The latter asks his company to look for his brother Neville who has gone in search of King Solomon's mines, situated in Kukuanaland, South Africa, but has not returned yet. A suggestion that Quatermain accepts hoping to gain money. Nevertheless, throughout their way to King Solomon's mines, the English characters do not mention Sir Henry's brother. He is completely forgotten about until they find him by chance in an oasis at the very end of the novel. It is obvious that the English characters' focus of the quest is looking for the treasure and not finding the lost man. The object of quest in romance, Frye states, is to look to fulfill something that the self desires.⁴ So in reality looking for Henry's brother is used just as a deviation from the real object (the desired fulfillment) of the quest i.e. looking for treasure. Said differently, the narrator offers a humanitarian reason i.e. searching a lost man instead of announcing directly the materialist imperialist dream of looking for wealth.

When the English adventurers reach Kukuanaland, where the Kukuana people live, they associate it with "the promised land." The way Haggard describes the arrival of his characters to Kukuanaland resembles the way Moses reached the promised land as described in the Bible, thus this myth is displaced from the Bible. The latter is associated by Judeo-Christians with paradise. Therefore, one may deduce that Kukuanaland stands for paradise for the English adventurers. In Frye's theory of archetypal meaning: apocalyptic imagery, this moment of discovery is called "apocalyptic epiphany."⁵ Judeo-Christians believe that the promised land belongs to them and since they associate it with Kukuanaland, it implies that they want to appropriate the latter to themselves.

The final adventure that the adventurers undertake leads them to the treasure chamber to fulfill their principal dream that of getting some precious stones. The city of God in the

Apocalypse, as Frye explains in his mythos of romance, is characterised by the existence of a temple and precious metals such as gold.⁶ Similarly, the narrator, in this fiction, associates the place or “the ruined city” where these stones lie to the temple of the Biblical Solomon called “the Ophir of the Bible.” In doing so, the narrator wants to show that their quest is a divine and a sacred one and the white adventurers are brought there by god’s providence. When speaking about the relation between discovery of wealth and coloniser’s need for justification of exploitation, she points out that this Biblical myth, is a means used by the coloniser, to justify the “material conquest” by linking it to the religious journey.⁷ The same technique is used by Haggard, in this fiction, through the narrator.

Once the adventurers reach the treasure chamber, Qautermain declares:

There we stood and shrieked with laughter over *the gems which were ours*, which had been *found for us* thousands of years ago by the patient delvers in the great hole yonder, and *stored for us by Solomon’s* long-dead overseer, whose name, perchance, was written in the characters stamped on the faded wax that yet adhered to the lids of the chests.⁸ (Italics mine)

Here it is noticeable that the discourse is explicitly imperialist for the narrator claims that the wealth in the mines is stored for him and his English companions and the whole work done by Solomon’s workers is for their sake. Sir Henry tries to prove this claim, i.e. the cave is that of the Biblical king Solomon, by saying that the gold in the carvings in the cave are in Hebrew characters. Sir Henry is said to be a scholar who knows many things about the classics. This implies that the reader should trust him and believe what he says as if this is an undisputable truth. In other words, their presence there is something natural and justified and their exploitation of the wealth is an unquestionable right. The following quotation by Barthes explains the imperialists’ strategies of naturalising and eternalising their status and interests in a given situation:

Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact.⁹

Through his description of the Biblical city of gold, Haggard conveys the ideology of paradise as “the labour-free acquisition of capital.” Deckard traces this myth back to the period of Columbus’ expedition to the New World, since the latter aim was to find gold, and it has been perpetuated through time. Deckard states that this kind of “paradise discourse [...] is related to profit, labor, and exploitation of resources, both human and environmental.”¹⁰

Even if Haggard displaces the myth of “the Biblical Ophir” from the Bible, however, the existence of diamonds in South Africa is not completely a mythical or new idea that comes from Haggard’s imagination. Diamonds were actually discovered in South Africa in 1876, before the publication of Haggard’s fiction. In 1886, another mine would be discovered in South Africa and more exactly in Witwatersrand. Gold was also discovered in Ghana which was colonised by the British who called it “the Gold Coast”.¹¹ The British Empire rushed to annex any territory where gold or diamond was discovered in South Africa. The nineteenth-century European preoccupation with searching for “gold-lands” or “lost cities” and mapping where the wealth lies in Africa, according to Deckard, is due to their need to control Africa for the benefit of European commerce at the time of the Industrial Revolution.¹²

Moreover, the English adventurers possessed the map to the wealth. This map was drawn by the blood of a European adventurer not a native. This is indeed very significant, because even maps, were used to perpetuate an ideology. The ideology which lies behind mapping a territory, according to Mark Stephen Monmonnier, is the appropriation of that territory to one’s country and claiming the right of its exploitation. To put it in Monmonnier words, maps aim to “legitimizing territorial conquest, economic exploitation and cultural imperialism”.¹³

The Kukuana people have not given a specific name to diamonds, they just term them “bright stones.”¹⁴ It is the same thing for gold which they call “yellow iron.”¹⁵ The author wants to convey the idea that failing to give a name to these metals, as the naming implies just a description, is a sign that the natives ignore their real value. In fact, in this fiction, the

natives, except for the diamond put on king Twala's head, mention nothing about the use of these metals. Besides, it is not refined or transformed, but kept in its natural state. This implies that since the natives do not exploit these metals, the English men are ready to do so.

Despite the defeat of the British forces in the first Boer war, Haggard always believed in the superiority of the English people and the white race in general.¹⁶ This is reflected in his fiction through the narrator. Despite the different troubles that he and his companions face in the colonial world and just after overcoming them, the narrator still has hope and tries to transmit it for his audience. He says: "Perhaps, in some remote unborn century, *a more fortunate explorer* may hit upon the "Open Sesame," and flood the world with gems."¹⁷ Thus, the author thinks that one might succeed in the same way Quatermain and his companions have realised their dream of becoming wealthy and attaining glory. Furthermore, Sir Henry, in his letter to Quatermain, tells him that he and Captain Good have become the wealthiest men in Europe. If an ambitious man had read this novel at that time, he would surely try his chances and make an adventure and look for richness. Linda Dryden generalises the remark I made to Haggard's fiction to all imperial romance by saying that it:

takes the actual experience of empire and dresses it up as romantic fiction so that it becomes the location of easily procured riches. *It assumes the Empire to be the location of limitless wealth easily acquired by 'plucky' young adventurers.* In actuality many adventurers in the Empire did become fabulously rich, making the dream of imperial gold so compelling for writers of adventure fiction and their readers alike.¹⁸

In this fiction's introduction, the narrator declares that by telling the story of his quest, he contributes to writing "a little piece of the history of this dark land",¹⁹ referring to "Kukuanaland". This is because the author is convinced of his ability to write the natives history, whereas the natives are considered as incompetent to write their own history. The narrator adds that he will take the trouble of informing the reader about the plants that exist in that regions and the animals that he has discovered to be living there. Haggard's discourse here is absolutely scientific since he speaks about discovery. This kind of discovery is referred to by Macleod as "imperial science." This is because it combines scientific

knowledge with the political and economic interests of the empire. In fact, during the Victorian period, science was used as a means to maintain colonial power.²⁰ Macleod explains the relationship between science and empire in the following way:

The world, defined and mapped by Europe, becomes a conceptual laboratory for the exact and the natural sciences, and for the sciences of race, language, and culture. Cultural possession comes with military conquest, with “tools of empire”, but more deeply with the naming of geological strata, plants and animals.²¹

In short, to justify the object of the English characters’ quest, Haggard offers different myths and ideologies including religious -biblical- and scientific ones.

2- Characters

2-1-Idealising the English Characters

Romance idealises the heroes by showing their courage and bravery. The hero is generally associated with strength, productiveness, and youth, as Frye states in his mythos of romance.²² Those characters who are represented as the heroes in Haggard’s fiction are no doubt the English adventurers; namely Quatermain, Sir Henry, and captain Good. Their courage is shown through their triumph over the obstacles that they face in the colonial world (South Africa). By doing so, the adventurers have realised one of their utopian dreams which is that of gaining fame and success.

Brantlinger Farrell argues that through “colonial romance”, the English men portray themselves “as the most adventurous and courageous of the entire human race.”²³ Haggard’s portrayal of his English characters fit in this feature. To begin with, the English men’s heroism is shown through their success to live throughout the extreme heat of the desert and the extreme cold of the snowy mountains. It is also through their stories of hunting strong and dangerous elephants in the African wilderness. Thus, Haggard creates “the myth of the “white hunter”. The latter is defined by Brantlinger as a romantic hero who bears the characteristics of the English aristocracy including his ability to triumph over danger as well as his physical fitness.²⁴

The best heroic action that the English characters perform is that of overthrowing Twala whose rule over the Kukuana society signifies evil and installing a new king named Ignosi who rules with justice. This stage is called in romance the conflict. It is indeed one of the English men (Sir Henry) who wins. He insists on the struggle with Twala and he defeats him. The narrator obviously praises Sir Henry saying: “No man, the soldiers said, could have fought as he fought, or could, at the end of a day of such toil and bloodshed, have slain Twala, who, in addition to being the king, was supposed to be the strongest warrior in Kukuana land.”²⁵ So the English men save the Kukuana society from its state of trouble instead of regressing themselves to the savage state of the natives as it is the case with Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* (1899). They also succeed to come back to their country maintaining the imperial ideals (the western culture) i.e. they do not go native. It is here that the utopian aspect in the characters lies. The following quotation demonstrates the contribution of the white men to the success of the rebellion of the Kukuana society:

The white lords from the stars, looking down on the land, had perceived its trouble, and determined, at great personal inconvenience, to alleviate its lot; how they had accordingly taken the real king of the country, Ignosi, who was languishing in exile, by the hand and led him over the mountains.²⁶

Gualter Cunha considers the rebellion in the Kukuana society as “a non-colonialist imperialist utopia.”²⁷ I do not share this view, I consider it “a colonialist utopia”, since the white men participate in the rebellion. Moreover, this rebellion is done through war, therefore the use of arms against the natives is justified.

The writers of romance in the nineteenth century portray their English characters “as chivalric knights” or gentlemen, Dryden argues. The latter’s main characteristics include: courtesy, courage, nobility, fidelity, humility, and most importantly is humanity and respect towards women.²⁸ These qualities most of the time are associated with the three English men in Haggard’s fiction. Their humanity, kindness and sympathy are shown towards the oppressed people in the Kukuana society when they relieve them from Twala’s tyranny. Their

great esteem for women is shown mainly towards the native woman Foulata when they save her from Twala's conceived plan to sacrifice her.

The prominence given to these chivalric characteristics was linked with the myth of the "English racial and moral superiority." Said differently, the English authors, through stressing the heroism of their characters, intend to prove how fit was the control of the English Empire over the other races and the prestige of the English traits, especially by considering the fact that at that time there was doubt concerning healthiness of the English military power.²⁹ Therefore, one may conclude that the characters in Haggard's fiction have attained their utopian dream of becoming successful; they gain wealth and become famous at the same time since the story of their success reaches the audience at home. Moreover, through the myth of the goodness of their qualities, they try to justify their superiority over the natives in the colonised world.

2-2-Romanticising the Native Characters

In addition to idealising the English characters, Haggard also romanticises some native characters including: Umbopa, Foulata and some soldiers. They are associated with innocence and purity which makes their relationship with the white men harmonious and ideal.

To begin with Umbopa, from the first contact with him, the narrator notices something admirable in his face. Umbopa's (Ignosi) face is "proud, handsome",³⁰ despite his dark skin. The human being in the apocalyptic world is "stupid, affectionate, gregarious"³¹, so is Ignosi towards his countrymen and with the white men alike. He is portrayed as faithful and worthy to be trusted, a quality that the white men discover in him while he accompanies them throughout their long journey. He is also proved to be a very useful guide: he shows them the way and serves as a translator for them when they encounter other natives since he masters both English and the native language. Quatermain acknowledges the fact that Umbopa is a "wonderful knack of keeping one's spirits up" which makes the English men "very fond of him."³² Indeed, when Twala wants to kill him, they intervene to save him despite the risk on

their safety. Moreover, when Umbopa decides to rebel against Twala, the English adventurers take Ignosi's side. They even help him to convince the native chiefs that Ignosi is the rightful king of the Kukuana society.

Because of the harmonious relationship that exists between Ignosi and the white men, they consider him as their friend. What makes Ignosi the beloved of the white men is the fact that he promises them help to get some precious metals. These are his words to them: "the diamonds are surely there, and you shall have them, since you white men are so fond of toys and money."³³ In romance, Frye states that those who are for the quest are considered as ideal, pure and brave. They are in communion with nature and serve the hero in time of trouble,³⁴ as is Ignosi here.

Ignosi's promise to help the English men may be considered as a kind of a treaty or contract between the natives and the coloniser. The fact that the English men remind Ignosi of his promise is an obligation to maintain it. The coloniser considers this contract as legitimisation to exploit the riches of the colonised world as if it is his natural right. At that time, to secure a territory or other acquisitions in a peaceful way, not through armed forces, the British offered "a credible evidence" in the form of "formal" or "informal treaties" with the natives. In the Berlin conference of 1884, an act was passed stipulating that it is obligatory to the colonial powers in Africa to offer protection to the property of Europeans, including missionaries, scientists and explorers.³⁵ The coloniser seeks to attain power over the colonised and exploit his riches better through his consent than using military force. This is because the last alternative is more expensive and troublesome for the coloniser.

If Ignosi is the closest native man to the white adventurers, Foulata is the closest native woman whose relationship with the white men is an ideal one. Her soft words are so affecting that the white adventurers intervene to save her from being sacrificed, during the ceremony held by Twala, despite the trouble which results from their intervention. Since then, she has stayed with the English adventurers and devoted herself to serve them. In the course

of time, an intimate relationship develops between her and the white adventurers and particularly between her and Good. She nurses him during his sickness after the war and it is thanks to her fine instinct that he recovers. The two fall in love with each other and act like an ideal couple until the last moment when Foulata dies by accident. Indeed, Good feels an extreme sadness after her death mainly because she dies for his sake.

Even if there is a utopian relationship between the white men and Foulata, however, Quatermain wants to keep it in the frame of friendship and not to extend it into a sexual relationship as the one which starts to develop between Good and Foulata. Quatermain does not approve it. When she dies, Quatermain comments:

I consider her removal a fortunate occurrence, since, otherwise, complications would have been sure to ensue." But no amount of beauty or refinement could have made an entanglement between Good and herself a desirable occurrence; for, as she herself put it, "The sun cannot mate with the darkness, nor the white with the black."³⁶

As this quotation shows, the narrator expresses his disagreement openly towards Good's relationship with Foulata not because she is not attractive or nice, but because of his society's rules. By expressing his disagreement, he distances himself from what was considered in his society at that time as a crime. To be explicit, a love relationship between whites and natives, also termed "miscegenation", was undesirable, forbidden, and a form of "deviant sexuality". Whites avoided making relations with blacks to keep the distance that existed between them; each one in his own position. The white men were in a superior position while the black men were in an inferior one; it was considered as a dishonor for "the civilised white" to marry "the uncivilised black". Indeed, anti-miscegenation laws would be passed in South Africa and Rhodesia in 1903. These laws forbade any relationship between blacks and whites otherwise that person would be punished severely. Mushonga calls the inner conflict towards the colonial subject: "the dialectic of attraction and repulsion as British colonial officials were caught in the push and pull of an irreconcilable conflict between desire and aversion for inter-racial sexual union, coupled with the insatiable quest for control, domination, and exploitation."³⁷

Ignosi is not the only native who is taken as a guide with the English adventurers. Khiva, who speaks English well, is among the natives who guides the white adventurers during their journey. His life does not last for long, like Ignosi, because he dies sacrificing his life in order to save Good from the attack of elephants. There is another native man named Ventvogel who is chosen by the white men because he is a good hunter. He dies from cold in a cave in the mountain. Ventvogel and Khiva are good guides for the white men. They serve them with loyalty and give their lives to save that of their masters. They satisfy them as far as their service is concerned, however, they are not allowed to express their opinion or to take part in intellectual matters in which they are considered inferior and incompetent. Even in reality, the explorers succeeded in their expeditions thanks to the help of the natives, but once it comes to displaying the findings of their journeys, they denied the natives' contribution to them.

To explain the relevance of the analysis of these characters, it is worth to recall the issue of utopia for the coloniser as it is depicted in Thomas More's work *Utopia*. What makes this island utopian is the fact that the inhabitants are obedient to the utopian visitors, which represent the coloniser, and because they impose their own laws on the inhabitants. Similarly, the Kukuana people are so naïve that the white men trick them. For instance, the narrator meets some natives who drink too much wine, in order to prevent them from doing it again, he tells them that it is "the white man's strongest medicine"³⁸ and it may kill them. A trick that the natives believe. The natives' naivety extends to believing other tricks played by the white men. For example, the adventurers pretend to be "the sons of the stars"³⁹ and having supernatural capacities such as making the sun disappear during the day. "These white men from the stars, their magic is great, and Ignosi is under the cover of their wing"⁴⁰ as one of the natives admits. From this quote, one may understand that the natives are superstitious since they believe in the magical powers of the English men. In this context, Joanna de Groot says "

women and 'natives' are "portrayed and treated as children in need of the protection and care of male/imperial authority by virtue of their weakness, innocence, and inadequacy."⁴¹

Therefore, the natives in Haggard's fiction are "noble savages" in the positive sense since they are innocent; easy to manipulate and there is thus the utopian hope to civilise them through the western standards of civilisation. To better understand the concept of "the noble savage", it is useful to provide a definition for it. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Voltaire, cited in Christer Lindberg, describe it in the following way: "openhearted, simple, gallant and honest. His physique is athletically perfect. His nobility is expressed in a childish innocence."⁴² Bartolome de Las Casas, a Spanish who wrote about the Indians and lived during the sixteenth century, in his turn, described "the noble savage" in the following way: "God created these simple people without evil and without guile. They are the most obedient and faithful to their natural lords and the Christians whom they serve. They are the most submissive, patient, peaceful, and virtuous."⁴³ As one may notice from these two quotations, the noble characteristics of the natives are set in relation to the white men and the degree of subservience to them. This, indeed, will not cause much trouble for the coloniser in order to achieve his ends in the colonial world; such as exploiting its riches. This is the case with the native king Ignosi, and the other natives alike, in Haggard's fiction whose kindness is attributed by the white adventurers to his assistance for them to get precious metals. So the utopian colony for the coloniser is where the inhabitants are obedient and naïve whereas the dystopian colony is where the natives are against him.

3-The Landscape in the Colonial World as a Paradise

Most of the setting i.e. the different places that the English adventurers visit in the colonised world is utopian. This is apparent in the apocalyptic imageries associated with "the vegetable" and "the animal worlds". Haggard associates most of the South African landscape with paradise. Indeed, Haggard was known for his fascination with the South African landscape to the extent "that he always believed that natal was the most beautiful country in

the world.”⁴⁴ This is because he lived there for many years and worked as a farmer. A fact that he acknowledges by himself when he wrote his autobiography: *The Days of My Life* (1926). This is obvious in the following quotation said by the narrator Quatermain when he arrives to South Africa and more precisely to Durban: “Altogether it was a perfect night, such a night as you get only in southern Africa, and it threw a garment of peace over everybody as the moon threw a garment of silver over everything.”⁴⁵ The narrator’s description includes an apocalyptic imagery which is that of the moon. The beauty of the landscape provides emotional tranquility and satisfaction.

The narrator follows his description of Durban by saying that there is a great and long river formed by different small streams. Many streams that flow into one river and the image of “the green world”, are two images which characterise the Garden of Eden i.e. the apocalyptic world as Frye explains in his theory of apocalyptic imagery.⁴⁶ Indeed, there are many green places in Durban including trees, fruits and blossoming flowers; a sight which the characters find very pleasant. Despite the splendid beauty of this city, the beauty of Kukuanaaland (another region in South Africa), for the narrator, exceeds that of Durban:

As we went on the country grew more and more lovely. The vegetation was luxuriant without being tropical; the sun was bright and warm, but not burning, and a gracious breeze blew softly along the odorous slopes of the mountains. And, indeed, this new land was little less than *an earthly paradise*; in beauty, in natural wealth, and in climate I have never seen its like. *The Transvaal is a fine country, but it is nothing to Kukuanaaland*⁴⁷

Haggard mentioned the word “paradise” openly several times in his fiction mainly when he describes the natural landscape. Kukuanaaland in the quote above is likened to paradise thanks to three factors: beauty, richness, and good climate. There is nothing to complain about in this place; everything is perfect. From the author’s description, the reader may understand that the earthly paradise, for which many adventurers are looking, exists in South Africa. Haggard also mentions paradise when he says: “*It was like Paradise*. The magic of the place, combined with the overwhelming sense of dangers left behind and of *the promised land* reached at last, seemed to charm us into silence.”⁴⁸ Here, there is a metaphor of Kukuanaaland as the promised

land as stated before. If in the Bible the promised land is Jerusalem, in this fiction, Quatermain considers it to be Kukuanaaland.

Haggard also used the word “paradise” when he mentions the abundance of game (animals): “It seems that we are in a paradise of game”,⁴⁹ Quatermain says. Throughout their adventure into Kukuanaaland, the three English men encounter different species of animals to feed on, so they do not suffer from hunger. Among these animals, they find a sable antelope, which is a very beautiful one, especially if the deliciousness of its meat is considered. The adventurers’ happiness and excitement increase when they observe a herd of elephants and most of which are big ones. This excitement is due mainly to the ivory that these elephants will provide the adventurers with. In fact, they hunt those that have big tusks, since these ones will make them rich. At that time, elephants’ tusks were very expensive, and ivory was a very precious item for producing many useful things including: piano keys, billiard balls, combs, fans, knife handles, and many other objects.⁵⁰

In short, the narrator does not miss the opportunity to refer to the richness of South Africa whenever he finds the occasion. He says: “Suffice it to say that as we went the country seemed to grow richer and richer.”⁵¹ Therefore, the wealth in South African does not consist only of mineral sources i.e. gold and diamonds, but also of animals and landscape. Hence, if one is disgusted with the metropolitan life in England mainly after the emergence of the Industrial Revolution with its negative consequences, and if one longs for the age of innocence, simplicity and tranquility, South Africa might be the suitable destination.

Through portraying South Africa as a paradise, Haggard’s cooperates in a way with the English government in its advertising project for settlement in South Africa. Britain wanted South Africa to become British, this is done by encouraging settlement through the utopian projects which were set for the British people. Indeed, there was a state project which stipulated that every adult male who desire to settle in South Africa would be granted “100 acres of land” which was a kind of aid to find a better life away. To fulfill this project, the

government chose ninety thousand British men to settle in South Africa. The percentage of British settlers in South Africa reached seven per cent of the total South African population in 1904, and only one per cent as South African Dutch.⁵²

The map drawn by Haggard of the South African land is read by Anne McClintock in her *Imperial Leather Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995) as the sexual organs of a female body. She says that the imperial adventurers had power over the land because they succeeded to penetrate it and extract its wealth.⁵³ This is what Cunha considers as a paradisiacal element of the African landscape.⁵⁴ As such the sexualisation of the landscape is a utopian element for the English adventurers and the empire they embody.

As a conclusion, one may say that the English adventurers realise their utopian dream which is finding the treasure that lies in Kukuluanaland (South Africa). The latter is described in “paradise discourse”. It is described as rich in mineral materials (gold and diamonds) and also in beauty. To appropriate this wealth to themselves, the English adventurers claim that the place of the treasure is “the promised land” and hence creating the myth of the “Ophir of the Bible”. I have also noticed that the white adventurers’ idealisation of the white characters serve to back the ideology of the white men’s supremacy over the colonised people and the romanticisation of the natives is due to the fact that they serve their imperial interests.

Section Two: Dystopian Elements in Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*

1-Moments of Disillusionment

It is true that Haggard's English characters, at the end of their quest, realise their imperial dream of becoming rich which can be considered as a great achievement. Yet, the characters, before fulfilling their dream, experience moments of disillusionment and there has been a possibility for failure. In this perspective, it is worth quoting Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel who argue that "in the background of every utopia there is an anti-utopia."⁵⁵ There are moments and places in Haggard's fiction where the English characters feel themselves satisfied and happy but there are also moments when they feel themselves disappointed and hopeless. These two last features fit in what Frye calls "the demonic world". He defines it as "the world that desire totally rejects", and also "the world of the nightmare and the scapegoat, of bondage and pain and confusion".⁵⁶

The first moment that the English adventurers feel real disappointment throughout their quest is when they cross the desert and face death because of the lack of water. They face similar experiences when they enter the Kukuana society and find its customs so shocking and undesirable. The Kukuana society holds two ceremonies and in both of them innocent men or women are sacrificed. One of these ceremonies is called "the witch hunt". Quatermain comments on this ceremony: "I have heard of the gladiatorial shows of the Caesars, and of the Spanish bullfights, but I take the liberty of doubting if they were either of them half as horrible as this Kukuana witch hunt."⁵⁷ During this ceremony, hundreds of native men are sacrificed. And since the adventurers are present there so they are confronted with the same risk and thus the same fear and anxiety of the victims. As Ignosi says: in this ceremony "no man's life is safe".⁵⁸

In the demonic world, the individual should obey the law and has no right to question it.⁵⁹ Similarly, the Kukuana soldiers are not convinced of the use of dying during this

ceremony. Indeed, they die for nothing just because the witch Gagool chooses randomly the person who is to be killed.

Furthermore, the adventurers attend another ceremony in which they experience extreme anxiety and fear. In this ceremony, the most beautiful and young girls of the Kukuana people dance, then unfortunately the best one of them is to be sacrificed. However, this time the chosen girl Foulata is saved by the three English men. They intervene despite the risk of the situation upon their safety, especially when they hear the girl bidding them to save her from the cruelty of Twala and Gagool. Her words affect them and every one present there, except Twala and his two attendants whose cruelty is indescribable.

The highest point of disillusionment in the novel is when the English travellers find themselves in the caves of King Solomon's mines. This moment is called, by Frye in his theory of demonic imagery, the point of "demonic epiphany". It is the moment when the goal of the quest is not achieved easily or the object of the quest is not as it is expected to be in a world where there is no pity or hope.⁶⁰ The treasure chamber is termed by the narrator "the place of death" and "a grave",⁶¹ there the adventurers feel their life as "a nightmare". In this place, there is nothing to eat or drink or a possibility to know about time. They remain in complete darkness and "oppressive silence". Worst of all, there is no way to escape from the alarming situation that Quatermain describes in this way:

We were separated by a long tunnel and five feet of rock even from the awful chamber of the dead; and the dead make no noise. The crashing of all the artillery of earth and heaven could not have come to our ears *in our living tomb*. We were cut off from all echoes of the world- we *were as already dead*.⁶²

In these difficult circumstances, the adventurers are greatly disappointed to the extent that Quatermain cries. Indeed, Haggard entitles the seventh chapter in which he narrates this incident by "We Abandon Hope". The place which is supposed to offer them richness and thus happiness turns to a chamber of death. At this moment the treasure becomes useless. The dream turns to something absurd and without value when their lives are at risk. This situation is termed in the mythos of irony by "the parody of romance". Next, they find a narrow dark

tunnel through which they walk a long time which is portrayed as an “awful dungeon”⁶³ that nearly caused their death, to survive miraculously at the end. In this perspective, V.Y Mudimbe says that the Portuguese in Africa, because of their confrontation with similar circumstances:

gave rise to the myth of East Africa as plagued by barbarians and dark forces preventing the advance of civilization and the discovery of gold-lands. The fantasy of “the tropical treasure house” was twinned by dread of the “white man’s grave”.⁶⁴

What is said by Mudimbe of the Portuguese is also true of the English adventurers. Because beside the treasure that lies in the colonial world, there is also the danger of diseases, suffering and death. This disillusionment in the novel may be the reflection of the Haggard’s psychological state, who experienced the same disillusionment in South Africa after the defeat of Britain by the Transvaal in the first Boer war at the battle of Majuba Hill in 1881.⁶⁵

2-Demonising the Native Characters

In the preceding section, we have seen that a place is utopian for the English adventurers when everything goes well for them. It is when the natives obey them, help them and do not hinder the fulfillment of their imperial utopian projects. The opposite is true, a place is dystopian when the natives stand against them and hinder the fulfillment of their dreams and cause them anxiety and trouble. It is the technique of satire which is used to criticise the defects in a society or the undesirable qualities in a person or a phenomenon, as I have already explained in the historical background section while dealing with the relation between satire and dystopia. The reason behind satire, Frye assumes in his mythos of satire/irony, may be hatred or prejudice and other reasons which can be personal or social. In order to be satisfied while expressing his hatred or prejudice or other feelings, the satirist often uses animal imagery.⁶⁶ The European characters when they describe some native characters, with whom the English adventurers do not get on well and are in constant struggle, they use animal imagery. Twala and his son Scragga and Gagool are the most hated characters

by the English men and they are part of this demonic world. This is mainly due to their opposition to the English men's quest.

To begin with, Twala is described as "a tyrant leader". The image of a "tyrant leader" who rules with cruelty and greediness is one of the demonic imageries identified by Frye in the mythos of irony.⁶⁷ It is indeed the most prominent one in this fiction. The existence of a tyrant power implies the existence of victims. The natives, the Kukuana people, are not the only victims but even the visitors are exposed to Twala's treachery. When the adventurers reach the place, they find Twala already on the throne. They heard about his cruelty and treachery, which is behind getting his present status, before even meeting him. Now he is ruling over the Kukuana people in a very barbarous way. The first time that the adventurers meet him, he kills a man without committing any crime, which deserves such punishment, to frighten them. Besides, he is described as a man of "one gleaming black eye (for the other was represented by a hollow in the face), and its whole expression was cruel and sensual to a degree".⁶⁸ In the Bible, it is the devil who is portrayed with one eye. So the narrator hints to the fact that Twala's deeds are like that of the devil without saying it directly. Besides, his voice is once likened to that of a "thunder". This exaggeration is used to show that Twala's voice is disagreeable reflecting his bad deeds.

Furthermore, Twala receives a great deal of satire mainly during and at the end of the battle. When the battle ends, Twala comes to fight with Ignosi, and Quatermain describes him in this way: "out of the press sprang forward none other than gigantic one-eyed king himself".⁶⁹ Superficially, one may understand that Quatermain is praising Twala, but it is completely the contrary, he is underestimating his status because he has been defeated in the war. This is understood when he mentions that Twala has just one eye. Here the narrator does not provide any new information about Twala because we already know this and if the narrator repeats it, it is just for the sake of ridiculing him. Twala is also likened to a "black Madame Defarge".⁷⁰ The latter is a woman character in Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two*

Cities (1859). When the victims were being executed during the French Revolution, she was the one who mentions their names.⁷¹ So it is obvious that the common features between the two i.e. Twala and Madame Defarge are harshness and pitilessness.

Twala, the barbarous king in Haggard's novel, may be considered as a metaphor for Paul Kruger. The latter was appointed as the president of the Boers republic (South African Republic) after defeating the British forces during the battle of Majuba Hill. During this period, it was the Boers who controlled the gold and diamond mines in the Transvaal.⁷² This is why they were disliked too much by the British who were just looking for a pretext to annex the territory. The Boers were perceived as inferior to the British like native Africans, also called by another derogatory term which is "Kaffirs". So Twala in Haggard's fiction, like Kruger, rules over Kukuanaaland where diamonds lie. His rule hinders the English adventurers having access to the wealth. Therefore, it is necessary to find a pretext, such as his cruelty and injustice towards the natives and the foreigners, to overthrow him.

The second person who assists Twala in his bad deeds and executes his wicked orders is his son Scragga, therefore, he receives his part of satire and criticism. He is described through different animal imageries because he is hated by the English men who feel great disgust when they perceive his bad deeds. For instance, when the narrator sees Scragga for the first time, he describes him as "a withered-up monkey"⁷³ who creeps instead of walking. He is not just an ordinary monkey but a wrinkled one because of his ugliness. At another moment, he is described by Good as a "young hound"⁷⁴, which is a dog used for hunting. This comparison to a dog is because Scragga hunts people in order to kill them just after a word or a sign from his father Twala. In fact, he is the killer of most people who are sacrificed during any ceremony or meeting. Like his father, he makes the English men unhappy in the Kukuana society.

The other villainous figure in the novel is Gagool. She makes the white men's journey a terrible nightmare. Indeed, she is said to be "the evil genius of the land".⁷⁵ Which means

that she occupies the first position in doing evil things before even Twala or Scragga. The way the narrator gives us her physical portrayal is a detailed and funny one:

It was (apparently) that of a woman of great age, so shrunken that in size it was no larger than that of a year-old child, and was made up of a collection of deep, yellow wrinkles. Set in the wrinkles was a sunken slit that represented the mouth, beneath which the chin curved outward to a point. *There was no nose to speak of*; indeed, the whole countenance might have been taken for that of a sundried corpse had *it not been for a pair of large black eyes* [...] As for the skull itself, it was perfectly bare, and yellow in hue, while its wrinkled scalp moved and contracted like *the hood of a cobra*.⁷⁶(Italics mine)

The narrator ends his description in this quotation by using the image of a reptile which is a cobra; indeed, it is known to be a very dangerous one as it is Gagool for the English men in the novel. Even Gagool's physical shape, as the quotation demonstrates, is not like every ordinary human being but it is a deformed and very strange one. She stands against the English men fulfilling their quest easily. She is the one who imprisons them in the cave. Unfortunately for the adventurers, she does not die till nearly the end of their quest, which made their suffering longer. Even her name "Gagool" has a bad connotation, it "possibly alludes to gag, suggesting a dual response to her as someone who is funny and who makes one nauseous."⁷⁷ It is the same thing for "Scragga": it alludes to "scraggy" which means "ragged or untidy in form or appearance". It also means "unattractively thin in appearance and bony".⁷⁸ This, in fact, goes with the narrator's description of him. When the latter introduced himself, Good says: "He nearly scragged me"⁷⁹, that is to say, he nearly kills him. So his name stands for his unpleasant job of executing the murder of innocents. Frye calls this kind of satire "low norm satire." It is referred to situations that are characterised by injustice incongruity, craziness, and misdoings.⁸⁰ All these troubles from which the English characters suffer in the colonial world are caused by the three villainous characters namely Twala, Gagool and Scragga, as told by the narrator.

Twala, Gagool and Scragga are not the only natives who are criticised and disliked by the white men, but also their oppressive followers. Haggard, after Twala's defeat, writes about them: "*They broke- they scattered- they were gone as the mists of the morning. They are food*

for the crows and the foxes, and the place of battle is fat with their blood.”⁸¹ From this quotation, one may understand that Twala’s followers deserve their terrible fate and they do not deserve a respectable death or burial. This is because they have not fought for the right cause i.e. the English men’s side.

After my analysis of the way some of the native characters are portrayed namely Twala, Scragga and Gagool, I conclude that they fit in the characteristics which are attributed to “the ignoble savage” i.e. “the noble savage” in the negative sense. These characteristics, according to Christer Lindberg, consist of killing, mutilating, and torturing innocent people including children and most often women.⁸² It is alluded, in this fiction, that there is no hope to civilise this kind of people (Twala and his followers) or to save them from their state of “barbarity and savageness”, unlike the other category of “the noble savage” notably Ignosi and Foulata. Instead they deserve only death or extermination as it is said explicitly for the natives in *Heart of Darkness*. Indeed, this has been their ultimate fate. The three of them died including their followers. And this is definitely justified through their portrayal as “devilish creatures” (monsters), notably Twala and Scragga, and as “a witch” as it is the case with Gagool. The ideology of “the ignoble savage”, Lindberg observes, is a common one when the colonial European expansion is at its apex.⁸³ So it is not surprising to find it in Haggard’s fiction which was written during the period of “the scramble for Africa”. The native had always to cooperate with the white men and to support their policies; otherwise, the coloniser would classify him in “the ignoble savage” lot. In short, the ideology of “the ignoble savage” is a justification for the extermination of the natives and the image it provides for the colonised is far from the real image and the entire truth about him. It is crucial here to evoke the Marxist definition of ideology as “what is not real” or a “distortion” of reality and its primary function is legitimation.⁸⁴ Therefore, not all the negative myths (ideologies) perpetuated about Africans were true, it was just a question of needing to justify their colonisation.

If the British writers and philosophers portray the natives in the colonised countries as primitive, with no culture and unable to self-govern themselves during the period of colonisation is due to their need to justify it, as Frank Schipani observes.⁸⁵ Indeed, the idea of the failure of the native government (political system) is manifest, in this fiction, through criticising the leader of the Kukuana society. It is the trouble in the native political system, according to the narrator, which led to outbreak of the civil war between Twala and Ignosi. In my opinion, this is just a pretext invented by the white adventurers in order to intervene in the political system of Kukuana land. Indeed, they intervene in the Kukuana civil war to overthrow the recent king and suggest an alternative. The ideology which was used to justify intervention by the time was termed “Utilitarianism”, a theory developed by the English philosopher John Stuart Mill. It assumes that if there are many conflicts between the native tribes, the coloniser can settle them only by establishing his own administration.⁸⁶ It is worth to note that the government which is criticised by the narrator is alien to the English men, who represent the British Empire, and the one proposed as the alternative is an ally to them.

3-The Paradoxes of the Colonial Landscape

Even the landscape in South Africa causes challenges for the English characters. The harshest moments that they endure in South Africa, are those which they pass in the desert and the snowy mountains. One of the demonic imageries that characterises “the vegetable world”, according to Frye, is the desert instead of fertile land or green forests that characterise the apocalyptic world.⁸⁷ The English adventurers, before reaching the mines of king Solomon, which is supposed to be a paradise, they pass through the desert and suffer greatly from extreme heat and lack of water. Indeed, the Portuguese man, who draws the map which shows the way to the mines, warns the traveller that surviving through the desert is almost impossible. Quatermain narrates the pain that they endure during their journey in this way: “feeling dreadfully exhausted, and suffering tortures from thirst and prickly heat [...] We had scarcely energy left in us to speak. Up to now Good had chatted and joked, for he was a merry

fellow; but now he had not a joke left in him.”⁸⁸ From this quotation, one may understand that the degree of suffering has reached a high point for the English adventurers.

They regain little hope when they see the snowy mountains of Sheba’s Breasts where they find water to drink. However, these mountains will be also a source of great pain. If the desert is hot to death, these mountains are cold to the freezing point in addition to hunger and fear. While speaking about the paradoxes of the imperialist discourse and the ambivalence of the European writers’ vision towards the colonial world, Deckard states: “Landscapes of seeming abundance and fertility are also paradoxically landscapes of poverty and disease, threatening “primitive violence and destruction”.”⁸⁹

Haggard may have the intention of portraying South Africa as a paradise, however, he cannot forget about the hard experiences that he endured while staying in South Africa. There are some negative realities in the colonial world which he reveals in this fiction. The coloniser or the settler also find difficulties in a foreign country. Sometimes the government does not hold all its promises i.e. it does not carry out the utopian projects it set for its citizens before coming to the colonial world. So the white settlers most often were misled. Moreover, they find difficulties to settle in a new environment where the climate is different and integration with the original people is not easy. In addition, journeying in the wilderness was hard since the progress made in technology was not so high at that period as it is today. In short, his dreams are thwarted. Yet there is an implied idea from this exposition of hardships, it is to strengthen the myth of the white men’s heroism.

Conclusion

A close examination of Haggard’s fiction, through Frye’s “demonic imagery” and satire, reveals that the colonial world was not all that good. The characters face many hardships and thus moments of disillusionment. There are some natives who are portrayed as “ignoble savages” because they disturb the white men’s peace making their stay in South Africa undesirable (dystopian). Moreover, the natural environment, mainly the hellish desert

and the snowy mountains, causes hardships for white men, and worst of all is the imprisonment in the dark cave or the treasure chamber. But still dystopian moments in the fiction do not last for long. After a miserable moment, the English men regain hope and most importantly realise their dream at the end by becoming rich. From the whole chapter, one may conclude that dystopia in Haggard's fiction is ephemeral and it is utopia which dominates the fiction.

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Chapter Three: Utopian and Dystopian Elements in Pierre Benoit's *L'atlantide* (1919)

Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore the same theme which is explored in the preceding chapter i.e. utopia and dystopia, but this time the fiction belongs to the French imperial tradition not to the English one. My contention is that Benoit's fiction *L'atlantide* vehicles different ideologies and myths which serve the colonial interests. Benoit belonged to the class of the Bourgeoisie since he worked as a secretary for an MP and a senator from the French parliament. During his work, he met many parliamentary and political personalities including counts.¹ Therefore, one may argue that the ideology reflected in Benoit's work is that of his class i.e. the bourgeoisie. In my analysis, I will have a look at the different ideologies integrated in his novel after revealing the utopian and dystopian elements throughout the author's and characters' view towards the colonial world, which is Algeria in this fiction. In other words, I will try to show that there is a kind of shift from ideal or apocalyptic world to an undesirable or "demonic" one, to borrow Frye's concepts.

Section one: Utopian Elements in *L'atlantide*

1-Adventure and Quest

1-1-The Ideology of the "Quest for Knowledge"

Frye states that the plot of romance is structured around an adventure plot or a quest theme whose aim is revealed at the beginning of the author's fiction.² A similar structure is found in Benoit's novel. The main character André de Saint-Avit makes two expeditions to the Algerian desert. In the first expedition, he was accompanied by Colonel Morhange and in the second one, he is accompanied by Lieutenant Olivier Ferrières. In both expeditions, Saint-Avit is appointed as commander-in-chief of the military station called "Hassi-Inifel" situated in Ouargla.

Saint-Avit receives instructions from the military service in France to discover a route which will lead them to occupy the oasis where the Senoussis (a native tribe) live and to

establish military posts there. Moreover, Saint-Avit is asked to find out if the Senoussis and the Touaregs are still collaborating against the French expansion in the desert. The Touaregs, during the late nineteenth century, were considered to be the cause of the failure of the French military missions including the one led by a military French officer named Paul Francois Xavier Flatters. So as one can notice, all the missions that Saint-Avit is instructed to perform are purely political or imperialist. However, these missions, which are the real aim of Saint-Avit's expedition, are kept secret especially vis-à-vis the parliament. Instead Saint-Avit claims that his aim, throughout his expedition, is just a geographical exploration of the Algerian desert. Catherine Delmas, in this regard, states that the "work for the secret services was often conducted under the cover of scientific research." However, in reality these scientific activities have a direct or an indirect relation with military and political interests, she adds.³

The reason why Saint-Avit keeps the real aim of his mission a secret is because there is a conflict between the military ministry and the governors of Algeria, from one side, and the parliament, on the other one, over reinforcing their military posts in the desert. This event which is included in Benoit's fiction is also a historical reality. There was a division between the different political parties (socialists, conservatives, nationalists, monarchists) over the occupation of Algeria and some other territories in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Moreover, many French figures denounced and criticised the negative aspects of colonialism in their writings such as its violence, capitalist system, and economic exploitation.⁴

Morhange, Saint-Avit's companion, in his turn claims that his mission is a civil one, since he is sent by *The Ministries of Public Instruction and Commerce* as well as the Geographical Society. But still it contains a commercial motive which serves the interest of the empire. It is that of restoring an ancient commercial road which dates back to the fourteenth century. Therefore, Benoit's fiction vehicles the ideology of "the quest for knowledge" through the "exploration of foreign lands". However, the truth is that the

coloniser quest is not undertaken primarily for knowledge but for looking for imperial interests, and the primary aim of exploring foreign lands is to occupy them.⁵

Morhange and Saint-Avit on their way to the Hoggar discover an inscription. The interpretation of this inscription demonstrates that maps can be used to manipulate the truth. First, Morhange likens the form of the map to a cross. This comparison reveals his religious background which is Christianity. Second, even though the inscription is written by the natives' alphabet (Tifinar), Morhange traces its meaning to Greek origins: « Antinéa, parfaitement. Nous nous trouvons en présence d'un vocable grec reproduit en Tifinar. Et je pense que maintenant vous êtes d'accord avec moi pour reconnaître que ma trouvaille a un certain intérêt ». ⁶ [Antinea, exactly. These Greek writings are translated to Tifinar. And I think that now you agree that this result is of some interest.] In fact, he provides arguments to prove this claim. Saint-Avit's ideas come from the influence of a great French scholar named Etienne-Félix Berlioux who taught him, while he was in France, about the influence of the Greek and the Roman civilisations on Africa. Benoit as a western writer emphasises this aspect in his fiction. By claiming the influence of a western civilisation on the colonised country and the right of its restoration, the coloniser justifies his presence in a given territory, as Benoit is doing here.

The French characters' dream of discovery will be fully achieved when they reach the Hoggar and more exactly Antinea's castle where they find a French scholar named le Mesge and a great library which contains extraordinary knowledge mainly about ancient sciences. Le Mesge, a scholar who set the dream of confirming the hypothesis which says that the desert used to be a sea. This is the reason why he decides to come to the Hoggar. He informs his European colleagues that he is happy there because he finds the liberty to carry on his studies. A wish that he was not allowed to realise in France, thus the French men's quest for discovery starts to be realised.

This is as far as the first quest is concerned. As far as the second expedition is concerned, Saint-Avit is accompanied by Olivier Ferrières. The former receives instructions from the ministry to make some geographical explorations, as was the case in the first mission. However, he neglects his official duties because his principle or personal aim from this expedition is to fulfill his unrestrained desire of being with the seductive queen Antinea. As Frye puts it in his theory of mythos: “Translated into dream terms, the quest-romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfilment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality.”⁷ This aim Saint-Avit keeps it a secret for himself. Ferrières, indeed, notices his strange behavior of disappearing suddenly from the station and his bad mood. Therefore, the aim of the quest for the main character in the second expedition is psychological instead of geographical or imperial.

The main characteristic of the romance quest, Frye observes, is a constant nostalgia for an “imaginative golden age.”⁸ To be explicit, the fact that Benoit has chosen the myth of the island of the Atlantis, one can notice a “nostalgia” for this ancient vanished civilisation when he says about some of its remains as: “témoignages sacrés de l’âge d’or disparu”.⁹ [a sacred witness of a lost golden age.] Benoit shares this nostalgia with many western writers. This is why he undertakes the task of perpetuating it and modernising it for his generation. Indeed, Benoit at the end of his fiction takes the reader completely to the world of imagination.

1-2-The “Lost Race Motif” and the Ideology of “an Ancient Civilisation”

Quand l’imagination ne trouve pas à se satisfaire dans la réalité existante, elle cherche refuge dans des lieux ou des époques que construit le désir. Les mythes, les contes de fées, promesse d’un au-delà des religions, fantaisies humanitaires, romans d’aventures ont été des expressions toujours changeantes de ce qui faisait défaut dans la vie réelle.¹⁰

[When imagination cannot be satisfied with the existent reality, it resorts to places or times that construct the desire. Myths, folk tales, promises beyond religions, human fantasies, adventure novels were always changing manifestations that were missing in the real life.]

The above quotation by Karl Mannheim, cited by Richard Laurent Omgba, is an illustration of what has been said above about Benoit’s adoption of an ancient myth in his

fiction. Indeed, everyone who is going to read Benoit's fiction will notice his use of the myth of the island of the Atlantis (*L'Atlantide*), as the title of the novel itself suggests. Benoit in his novel explains this myth, through the French scholar Le Mesge, in detail by using ancient documentation. The scholar hypothesises that the desert used to be, in the distant past, a fertile land full of life. However, with the gradual change of its climate, it is transformed to what is now. Le Mesge considers the Touaregs, the native characters in Benoit's novel, to be the possible descendants of the Atlantis people and his main objective in coming to the Hoggar, and more exactly to Antinea's library, is to investigate this issue.

Benoit gives an uncompleted extract from Plato's book which he claims, through the scholar Le Mesge, to be taken from Denys de Milet's *Voyage à l'Atlantide*, a historian from the sixteenth century. He adds that there is only one remaining copy which is the one he has found and completed. In an article entitled « Comment j'ai écrit *L'atlantide* », Benoit writes: « J'avais donc la chance de le compléter à mon gré, et dans le sens le plus favorable à mes imaginations. Dès cet instant, la généologie d'Antinée, descendante de Neptune et reine de Hoggar fut arrêté dans mon esprit. »¹¹ [So I had the chance to complete it as I liked. Since then, Antinea's genealogy, descendant of Neptune and queen of the Hoggar, has become fixed in my imagination.] But unlike Plato who said the island of the Atlantis was sunk, Benoit says that the island has not sunk completely and that the Hoggar is the remaining part of it.

The European scholars who discovered ancient inscriptions or paintings hypothesise that "the lost civilisation" of the Atlantis is located in the African continent and most of the time in the Mediterranean and it was a white woman who ruled over the Atlantis people. The French archeologist Byron Kuhn de Procok who made investigations in the Algerian desert, for instance, thought that he discovered the tomb of the Touaregs' ancestor (Queen Ti-n-Hinan), who lived during the fourth century. He associated Queen Ti-n-Hinan with Antinea. Many archeologists still maintain this claim. As a matter of fact, the myth of the Island of the Atlantis was commonplace in late-nineteenth and twentieth-century Western writings: both

literary and scientific. This was mainly due to the writers' nostalgia to their ancient origins. Le Quellec states that this fiction falls into the category of the literature of "the lost race motif" which is best known in the English literature and mainly with Haggard. He defines it as "an archetype" in travel literature in which the hero discovers "a lost world" over which a beautiful queen or a goddess reigns.¹²

It is worth noting that Benoit tries to convince the reader that the civilisation of the Hoggar goes back to Greek origins by claiming that the Berber Queen Antinea is a descendant of the Atlantis people. This is obvious in the epigraph, taken from Plato's Republic, by which he starts his novel: "I must warn you at the outset not to be surprised if I call the barbarians by Greek names."¹³ This myth was widely spread among French engineers around the 1840s. They assumed that the desert used to be a sea around which the Romans and the Greeks built their civilisations, however, in the course of time the sea evaporated leaving just sand. Therefore, they claim that the aim of the French presence in the Algerian desert is to reestablish this lost "golden age" or "Eldorado". This would be done by looking for water and bringing back Europeans to the region.¹⁴ When having an idea about this historical context, one may argue that Benoit, through introducing this myth in his fiction, perpetuates the ideology of the desert as being the origin of an ancient civilisation which is the Greek one. Therefore, he provided a justification for the French occupation of the Algerian desert through a pacific way (a myth).

The reader of Benoit's novel will be impressed by the vast historical knowledge it contains. Indeed, he mentions many western scholars who made their studies about the Algerian South. Moreover, it was Berlioux who hypothesises that the Algerians that have fair hair and green eyes and live in mountains are the descendants of the Atlantis people like Antinea. Benoit includes some notes taken from the work of André Gide who explored the Algerian desert and more precisely Tougourt and wrote: *Notes sur des oasis et sur Alger*. Benoit relied also on two theses when writing his fiction: Henry Duveyrier *les Touaregs du*

Nord (1864) and Henri Schirmer *Le Sahara* (1893).¹⁵ The latter deals with colonialism in the Algerian South. Benoit's reliance on historical books, such as these ones, is intended to give authenticity to his work.

Benoit uses different sources to write his fiction: ancient mythologies, medieval works, and modern historical books. This makes it a good source to learn from especially if one can distinguish fiction from reality.

2-Characters

2-1-The Myth of the Orient as “a Paradise of Houris”

There are two important facts to know about Benoit's life: first, he was an adventurer who travelled mainly into the Orient including Lebanon and Palestine; second, he read the works of the French great romantics including: François-René Chateaubriand, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, Honoré de Balzac, and Alphonse de Lamartine.¹⁶ These writers no doubt influenced Benoit's writings including his work *L'atlantide*. These romantic writers and others were known for their fictional stereotypical representations of the Orient and circulating different myths about it. The two myths found in Benoit's novel are the myth of sex and the myth of the oriental harem. The latter was perceived by the French and Westerners in general as the place where “sensuous white beauties captured by the ottomans” live.¹⁷ They also thought it to be “a paradise of houris” before that this image had been corrected by some travellers who noticed that the reality was different. What was at the origin of amplifying this myth was Antoine Galland's translation of the *Thousand and One Night* (1714), “the oriental fantasy par excellence”, as qualified by Rodrick Cavaliero, and also to less extent Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*.¹⁸

It is worth to note that even paintings contributed to the perpetuation of this myth: Eugène Delacroix's *Women of Algiers* (1834) and Jean Auguste-Dominique's “highly eroticized” *La Grande Odalisque* (1814) and *The Turkish Bath* (1862), are just a few examples among many others. In these paintings, women generally are portrayed laying in

bed surrounded by luxurious furniture and served by their maids. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu states that women in the eastern harem, especially from high rank, were known for wearing very beautiful attractive clothes and precious jewelry including diamonds which cost a fortune.¹⁹ Actually, many of these artists, particularly males, either writers or painters had not seen the harem because they had never been there, since access to it was not allowed. Thus, everything comes from these writers' imagination or previous writings.²⁰

Benoit's Oriental women, in this fiction, embody many of these characteristics which have been circulated for long about the oriental harem. For instance, when Saint-Avit arrives into Antinea's castle and enters her room, he starts by describing every detail of the harem. He first mentions the beauty of three women who are Antinea's maids : « Je reconnus dans les trois premières des femmes touareg, à *la beauté splendide et régulière*, vêtues de magnifiques blouses de soie blanche, bordées d'or ». ²¹ [I recognised from the first three touareg women with a splendid and regular beauty, dressed in magnificent white silk robes, embroidered with gold.] Nevertheless, when he sees Antinea, he discovers that her beauty is unparalleled. She fascinates him to the extent that he loses his words and even his common sense:

Antinée ! chaque fois que je l'ai revue, je me suis demandé si je l'avais bien regardée alors troublé comme je l'étais, tellement, chaque fois je la trouvais plus belle. Plus belle ! pauvre mot, pauvre langue. Mais vraiment est-ce la faute de la langue, ou de ceux qui galvaudent un tel mot ? On ne pouvait se trouver en présence de cette femme sans évoquer celle pour qui Ephractoeus soumit l'Atlas, pour qui Sapor usurpa le sceptre d'Osymandias, pour qui Mamytos subjuguua Suze et Tentyris, pour qui Antoine prit la fuite...²²

[Antinea ! Each time I saw her I wondered, in my instability, if I had looked at her well. Each time, I find her more beautiful. More beautiful! Is it the defect of language or those who lavished the meaning of this word? In the presence of this woman, we cannot help but evoke the one for whom Ephractoeus submitted l'Atlas, the one for whom Sapor usurped the sceptre d'Osymandias, the one for whom Mamytos subjuguated Suze and Tentyris, and the one for whom Antoine fled...]

In this regard, Emmanuel Grégoire and Marko Scholze state that the French men were fascinated by the beauty of the Touareg women and there were many love relationships between military officers and the Touareg women. This is reflected in the writings of the time, the 1920's and 1930's, which was known as "the golden age of the Saharan novel".²³

The harem in Antinea's castle lives in a great luxury which is apparent in clothes, jewelry and furniture. The following description by Saint-Avit demonstrates this point: "sur un amoncellement de coussins bariolés et de tapis de Perse blancs, *les plus précieux*, quatre femmes étaient allongées."²⁴ [On a heap of striped pillows and Persian white carpets, the most precious, four women were lying.] Furthermore, Antinea puts on her head a uraeus and almost everything else she wears has gold in it. Even Saint-Avit, a guest in this harem, is offered a costume made of silk and slippers decorated by gold in which he feels himself very comfortable.

Like high rank oriental women, Antinea is portrayed as cultivated and very intelligent. She reads books, speaks many foreign languages including English, Italian, Spanish, and German, and she knows many things about foreign countries even if she has never left the Hoggar. This feature increases her fascination and makes her more attractive to the European men. Moreover, she is described as a seductress woman because of her semi-nakedness: « Malgré sa tunique audacieusement fendue sur le côté, sa fine gorge découverte, ses *bras nus*.»²⁵ (Italics mine) [Despite her tunic daringly slit down the side, her naked throat and hands.] In short, Benoit's description of all the touareg women in this novel is an erotic one but Antinea's description exceeds them all.

Indeed, living in Antinea's castle allows the European characters to satisfy the utopian sexual desire and to be freed from the official and religious duties. The characters want to fulfill their sexual desires outside the frame of civilisation. The following four lines, Benoit takes them from a poem written by Charles Baudelaire, which are said by Antinea to Mohange who was still thinking about honesty or morality, demonstrate the influence of the romantic travellers and writers on Benoit's present work:

Maudit soit à jamais le rêveur inutile,
Qui voulut, le premier, dans sa stupidité,
S'éprenant d'un problème insoluble et stérile,
Aux choses de l'amour mêler l'honnêteté.²⁶

As a matter of fact, in a short period of time, Antinea, the oriental seductress woman, makes Morhange forgets both the religious and official duties he has brought from Europe. Therefore, Benoit in this fiction perpetuates the myth of sex and the myth of the oriental harem.

Edward Said, in his work *Orientalism* (1978), deals with the use of the myth of sex by western writers. He mentions Gustave Flaubert as an example of the French romantic writers, and says that whenever he mentions the orient in his works, he associates it with sex. The orient for Flaubert has a “dangerous charm” and thus it is a source of temptation. Indeed, most travellers, who chose the orient as their destination at that time, could not deny this kind of quest i.e. the quest of fulfilling a sexual desire. For many westerners, especially the bourgeois class, going to the orient is an opportunity to escape from the everyday “attachments”, and their societies’ bourgeois morality, which forbade sexual relationships except with one’s single wife. To quote Said: “the Orient seems still to suggest not only fecundity but sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire, deep generative energies.”²⁷

Morhange’s story is not the first nor the last one to occur. All the European men who met or will meet Antinea had or will have the same story. Despite the ultimate result of death, the European men, who meet Antinea, prefer a short period of happiness and a secret love with Antinea than a constant presence and advertised marriage with a European woman. The following two quotations said at different moments in the novel demonstrate this idea:

Un amour mystérieux. – Honte à celui qui étale le secret de ses amours. Le Sahara jalonne autour d’Antinée son infranchissable barrière, c’est pourquoi les exigences les plus compliquées de cette femme sont en réalité plus pudiques et chastes que ne le sera ton mariage, avec son obscène luxe de publicité, les bans, les annonces, les faire-part informant un peuple gouailleur et vil qu’à telle date, à telle heure, tu auras l’avantage de violer ta petite vierge de quatre sous.²⁸

[It is a mysterious love.- What a shame for the one who reveals the secrets of his love. The desert acts as a barrier for Antinea. This is why the desires of this women are more modest and chaste than your marriage using advertisements, banns, announcements, informing everyone that at a given date and moment, you will have the advantage of marrying a worthless virgin.]

Quand il partit pour le Darfour, Douglas *Kaine* laissait sûrement à Édimbourg une *miss Flora*, aussi blonde que celle de Saint-Yves. *Mais que sont ces minces jeunes filles à côté d'Antinea!*²⁹ (Italics mine)

[When Douglas *Kaine* went to Darfour, he certainly left a miss Flora, as blond as the one of Saint-Yves. However, these women are nothing if compared with Antinea.]

The above comment is given by Saint-Avit when he is thinking about one of those European men who commits suicide when Antinea no longer loves him even if his first love was certainly a European woman. In a word, Antinea's love, as an oriental woman, does not just replace the European one, but it makes men forget completely about it.

Saint-Avit, like the other Europeans, idealises and glorifies extremely his love for Antinea. He feels extreme happiness just by imagining the possibility of meeting Antinea again. At the end, Saint-Avit changes his vision towards his fate. What he saw at first as a terrible fate turns to a dream, when he meets Antinea, that he longs for with impatience. Indeed, the few moments that Saint-Avit has spent with Antinea are seen just as a dream. He prefers to be a mummy, in the room of the red marble in the Hoggar, than be buried under the ground in France. Indeed, he does not consider his love with Antinea as immoral, on the contrary, it is very chaste: « en dépit de sa monstrueuse légende, trouvait le moyen de demeurer quelque chose de très pur .»³⁰ [Despite her infamous reputation, but she still has something very pure.] It is worthy to note that chastity is an apocalyptic imagery which means that Saint-Avit considers his love for Antinea as paradisiacal.

2-2- Romanticising the Native Characters

Apart from the sexual relationship which links the French characters with Antinea and makes their life a paradise, there are other natives who create a desirable environment to the French men thanks to their faithfulness and innocence. The first native who accompanies Saint-Avit and Morhange in their expedition is Bou-Djema. He is described by Saint-Avit as “un fidèle Chaamba, que j'avais eu avec moi dans ma randonnée vers l'Aïr, *moins guide*, dans des pays que je connais, *que machine* à bâter et à débâter les chameaux ».³¹ [a faithful Chaamba accompanied me on my way to l'Aïr. He is less a guide than a machine to load and

unload the camels.] As usual, the white men never acknowledge the natives intellectual capacities even if they possess them. Indeed, Bou-Djema's role in this fiction is restricted to physical work such as cooking for the white men and taking care of the camels. He does not survive till the end of the quest, he dies because of eating a poisoned plant. However, the narrator does not express any emotion of sadness towards his faithful native servant.

The only native woman who acts in the novel is Tanit-Zarga. Her relationship with Saint-Avit is an ideal one. The latter spends more time with her than he does with Antinea. She is the one who guides him throughout the castle and stays with him most of the time. Her physical beauty is admirable to him, of course not in the same way that he admires Antinea. She entertains him with her amusing stories when he is in a state of loneliness and despair. Her valuable service lies in arranging for Saint-Avit's escape from the castle by convincing Cegheir-ben-Cheikh to help them which was very difficult. He is hardly able to bury her when she dies. Through this positive portrayal of a native character, the author wants to show that the Europeans are able to love and can be acquainted with the natives provided that they serve them well.

Saint-Avit considers Tanit-Zarga as a child: «J'eus tout juste le temps de recevoir dans mes bras l'enfant.»³² [I had the time to receive the child in my arms.] This signifies, on the one hand, innocence but also weakness, on the other one. Thus a weak person needs always someone to protect him. The colonised, in most colonial literature, is considered as a child protected by his father the coloniser, who is more powerful, intelligent and competent. Accordingly, the natives have just to follow and obey their superior guide. In short, some natives in Benoit's fiction are portrayed as innocent and naïve; do not create any problem and do not hinder the French men's quests which creates a utopian environment, for the French characters, to live in.

3-Setting: Antinea's Castle as "an Earthy Paradise"

Many paradisiacal elements in the fiction are related to the oasis where Antinea's castle is situated. The French men slept and when they woke up, they found themselves in a utopian age that of the island of the Atlantis and more exactly in Antinea's castle, the descendant of these people. Indeed, Le Mesge, the European scholar who works in Antinea's library, hypothesises that the island of the Atlantis, mentioned in Plato's book, was situated in the Hoggar. One does not need to speak about the beauty of this ancient beautiful island.

To begin with, the most extraordinary place is the wonderful garden, which fascinates Saint-Avit to the extent of qualifying it as an earthly paradise. As mentioned before, Judo-Christians associate an ideal world i.e. utopia with paradise or "the Biblical apocalypse." The pleasant garden is also one of the apocalyptic symbols identified by Frye. High and various trees, a river and a very pleasant lake characterise this earthly paradise. Similarly, the Garden of Eden mentioned in the Bible (Genesis) is known for his productiveness and contains plenty of fruitful and pleasant trees. About this garden, Benoit writes:

Un jardin s'étendait là. Les palmiers berçaient mollement leurs grandes palmes. À leurs pieds, tout le fouillis des petits arbres qu'ils protègent dans les oasis, amandiers, citronniers, orangers, d'autres, beaucoup d'autres, dont je ne discernais pas encore, d'une telle hauteur, les essences... Un large ruisseau bleu, alimenté par une cascade, aboutissait à un lac charmant, aux eaux duquel l'altitude prêtait sa merveilleuse transparence.³³

[A garden was situated there. Palm trees gently swayed their great fronds. At their feet lay the tangle of little shrubs which they shelter in the oases: almonds, lemons, oranges, and others; many others. I could not distinguish their perfume because of their height. ... A broad, blue stream, fed by a cascade, ended in a charming lake whose height made marvelously transparent.]

One of the utopian dreams of the French men, during the period of conquest of Algeria, was establishing a great number of oases in the Algerian desert. This dream is realised in Benoit's fiction or imagination. Antinea's castle in the Hoggar is a kind of an extraordinary oasis as it is described in the quotation above. Saint-Avit's imagination is so overwhelmed by this marvelous sight of the oasis' landscape, that he cannot restrain himself from crying:

Le ruisseau bleu, les palmes vertes, les fruits d'or, et par-dessus cette neige miraculeuse, tout cela, dans l'air immatériel à force de fluidité, composait quelque chose de si pur, de si beau, que ma pauvre force d'homme n'en put supporter plus longtemps l'image. J'appuyai mon front sur la balustrade, toute ouatée elle-même de cette divine neige, et je me mis à pleurer comme un enfant.³⁴

[A blue river, green palm trees, golden fruits, above all, there is this miraculous snow, all this, in the unsubstantial fluidity of the air, created something very pure and beautiful that my poor human force could no longer bear the sight. I put my chin on the balustrade, which is wadded itself with this divine snow, and I started to cry like a baby.]

As a matter of fact, the characteristics of the garden described in this quotation, correspond to the second phase in the mythos of romance. The latter deals with an idyllic world where the landscape is wonderful and full of images such as the moon, trees, valleys, brooks, and other similar images.³⁵ The narrator also enjoys his stay in the Hoggar, the bath and the massage done for him by a Targui, to the extent that he considers himself as being in a luxurious hotel.

Another aspect which attracts Saint-Avit and Morhange's admiration, in Antinea's castle, is the good quality of food served for them in the dining room including the wine made in the Hoggar, and the variety of fruits such as grapes, apricot, figs, and so on. It is mentioned that the wine was produced by the French living there not by the natives. This was, indeed, one of the French projects. During this period, "Algeria was the largest exporter of wine in the world" since the French agricultural and economic policies encouraged its production and because the climate was suitable for growing vines. The French consumption of this product was very high.³⁶

Through the "aestheticization" of certain elements of the colonised culture, which can be landscape or people, the writer intends to attract the "tourist gaze" to that region and push him to go to visit it, as Grégoire and Scholze state.³⁷ In my opinion, this is Benoit's aim, in this fiction, through his aesthetic description of the Hoggar. The latter was to become of great importance for the western world in the subsequent years. This highly "romanticized" image of the Hoggar region and its people is not perpetuated just through this fiction, but through

different types of western media (written or oral) which stimulate the reader's or viewer's curiosity to discover and know more about it.

In Benoit's fiction, there is a description of an intellectual paradise which is the library in Antinea's castle which is full of ancient, very valuable, and interesting books which the west think that are lost. In this library, Le Mesge feels extreme happiness and satisfaction because he is able to realise the project of his thesis. He feels pity for his colleagues in Europe because in reality valuable knowledge and interesting books lie in the Hoggar and not in Europe:

«La Science fuit l'homme. Alors qu'il instaurait ces monstrueuses Babels pseudoscientifiques, Berlin, Londres, Paris, la Science s'est reléguée dans ce coin désertique du Hoggar. Ils peuvent bien, là-bas, forger leurs hypothèses, basées sur la perte des ouvrages mystérieux de l'antiquité : ces ouvrages ne sont pas perdus. Ils sont ici. Ici les livres hébreux, chaldéens, assyriens. Ici, les grandes traditions égyptiennes, qui inspirèrent Solon, Hérodote et Platon. Ici, les mythographes grecs, les magiciens de l'Afrique romaine, les rêveurs indiens, tous les trésors, en un mot, dont l'absence fait des dissertations contemporaines de pauvres choses risibles.³⁸

[Science escapes the human being. While Berlin, London, and Paris are constructing their monstrous pseudo-scientific Babels, science is confined in this isolated angle of the Hoggar. They might set up their hypotheses which are based on the premise that the ancient books were lost. But these books are here: the Hebrew, the Chaldean, the and Assyrian. There is also ancient Egyptian traditions that had inspired Solon, Hérodote et Platon. Here, Greek mythographers, the magicians of Roman Africa, the Indian dreamers. In a word, all the treasure the absence of which made contemporary dissertations about poor laughable things.]

In this regard, Omgba states that the fact of possessing "l'une des bibliothèques les plus riches du monde" gives Africa an "adamique" vision and makes it an interesting place for discovery.³⁹ However, despite situating this library in the Oriental colonised world (Hoggar), the author traces its history to a western ancient civilisation which is the Greek one. Besides, this library is safeguarded by the French scholar Le Mesge and not by a native. This is because westerners have the tendency to attribute knowledge to themselves and to use any scientific development for their own benefit. In this perspective, Delmas says: science is "increasingly used in the service of empire but the reverse statement was rarely true."⁴⁰ Another example which illustrates this point is the fact that Le Mesge is surprised to know that even the Touaregs have discovered a product used to preserve the mummies which is

“orchilacrum” while he used to think that only the west knows about it. He says: « Quand je suis arrivé ici, quel n’a pas été mon étonnement en constatant qu’on y pratiquait une méthode que je croyais connue uniquement du monde civilisé »,⁴¹ [When I arrived here, I was astonished to realise that they practice a method that I thought only the west knows about it], while the Hoggar is not according to the French scholar.

In this section, I have examined Benoit’s fiction in the light of Frye’s theory and more exactly I have used the concept of apocalyptic imagery, which allowed me to give evidence of Benoit’s utopian vision of the colonised world. I have found out that Antinea’s castle is the place where Benoit situates his paradise thanks to its fantastic garden, romantic landscape, sexual freedom, and valuable library. This picturesque description of the Hoggar attracts “the tourist gaze” and sharpens the imperial greed. The next section of this chapter will explore Benoit’s opposite vision of the colonised world at the level of plot, characters, and setting.

Section Two: Dystopian Elements in Pierre Benoit's *L'atlantide*

1-The Nightmarish Quest

There are many dystopian elements in the French characters' quest. While the characters, throughout their expeditions, are trying to fulfill the different objects of their quests, they face nightmarish moments. Ferrières' description of the melancholic atmosphere of Hassi-Inifel where there is nothing new to break the everyday routine is one evidence. He is in a state of fear and sadness waiting to leave with Saint-Avit in an expedition through the harshest routes of the Algerian desert. He wishes to cancel this expedition, but it is not possible. "Emotional stress" including "loneliness and lack of communication"⁴² are among the imageries that, according to Frye, characterise "the demonic world". So Ferrières comforts himself through childhood reminiscences to his natal country where he used to spend his holiday. This nostalgia to his home country is just another evidence of the loneliness and the anxiety he feels in his present place.

Another evidence which shows the dystopian atmosphere, in Benoit's fiction, is Ferrières' description of the disagreement among the French officers, in Hassi-Inifel, when colonel Saint-Avit is appointed as the chief of the military station. This disagreement is due to the fact that Saint-Avit is suspected to be the assassinator of his companion in his last expedition. In addition, these military officers face the risk of being attacked by the original inhabitants who are the Touaregs. As already explained, the Touareg resistance to the French occupation is very strong. Besides, ammunition in the military station is not always sufficient. Therefore, they resort to hunting sable tortoises or other hardly edible insects. In this miserable situation, Ferrières feels extreme sadness.

Similarly, Saint-Avit feels himself in an undesirable situation when he arrives to the military station in the desert. His greatest wish for the moment is to come back from where he comes: « Quand je suis fatigué, que j'ai une minute d'angoisse et l'envie de m'asseoir sur la route que je me suis choisie. »⁴³ [When I am tired, I have a moment of anxiety and a wish to

sit on the way I have chosen.] In fact, all these aspects which are undesirable were part of the real colonial life. So Benoit reveals some of the aspects, that he no doubt, experienced by himself while working as an army officer in the southern part of Algeria. About the aspect of realism in irony, Frye states:

As a phase of irony in its own right, the fourth phase looks at tragedy from below, from the moral and realistic perspective of the state of experience. It stresses the humanity of its heroes, minimizes the sense of ritual inevitability in tragedy, supplies social and psychological explanations for catastrophe, and makes as much as possible of human misery seem, in Thoreau's phrase, "superfluous and evitable."⁴⁴

Throughout their expedition, Morhange and Saint-Avit face a tempest in which they lose their guide, but fortunately they survive. This place, in which the tempest occurs, is called the land of fear. As its name suggests, it is a place which engenders the feeling of fear because of the danger that lies there. Saint-Avit considers this moment a tragic one because he feels himself and his companions isolated, deprived, disoriented, and lost. This tragic situation is exacerbated by Eg-Anteouen's melancholic and depressing song. In fact, after few moments, Saint-Avit and Morhange are going to reach the highest moment of disillusionment. This happens in the dark cave where they discover that they have fallen to the trick of their Targui guide who is in reality the assassinator of their friends, who were explorers. The fatalistic or fifth-phase of tragedy, according to Frye, corresponds to irony when there is no possibility of escape from one's destiny, as it is the case here, and idiocy is a feature of the hero.⁴⁵ Indeed, Saint-Avit feels that he is somehow idiot and when he realises the reality of the situation i.e. the fact of being tricked, he mocks himself: « Mais je m'en moque, je suis allongé ; maintenant, je vais pouvoir dormir. Quelle journée stupide ! ». ⁴⁶[But I mock myself, now I am laying, I can sleep. What a stupid journey!]

The French characters' ironical tragedy continues when they enter the room of the red marble, also called "the tragic room" in Antinea's castle where they find the most outstanding and young French and European explorers and scholars have become mummies and died for a very futile object which is love for the same woman (Antinea).

Moreover, when Saint-Avit escapes from the castle accompanied by Tanit-Zarga, he suffers a great deal by passing through the harshest routes of the desert. This is how Saint-Avit narrates the troubles of the journey:

Tu as marché dans le désert. Tu sais que les premières heures de la nuit sont terribles. Quand la lune paraît, énorme et jaune, il semble qu'une âcre poussière s'élève et monte en buées suffocantes. [...] La nuit se termine, et c'est pourtant alors l'heure la plus atroce. On meurt de soif et on tremble de froid, toute la fatigue revient en masse. L'horrible petit vent précurseur de l'aube, ne vous est d'aucun soulagement, au contraire. À chaque faux pas, on se répète : le prochain sera le dernier.⁴⁷

[You walked in the desert. You know the first hours are terrible. When the enormous yellow moon raises, it seems as if a stifling dust is rising in suffocating clouds. When the night comes to its end, it is the very difficult moment. We suffer from thirst and we tremble from cold. It is so tiresome. The horrible slight wind does not provide us relief, on the contrary, we consider each step to be the last one.]

Saint-Avit, after the journey back from the Hoggar, becomes very sad mainly after the death of his beloved friend and companion Tanit-Zarga, but he survives miraculously. Yet his expedition as a whole ends in a failure at different levels. At the personal level: he quits Antinea the woman he loves, and at the official level: he brings no valuable results from his exploratory expedition to serve imperial France. In short, the French men throughout their quest in the colonial world experience nightmarish moments.

2-Characters

2-1-Antinea as a “Femme Fatale”

Antinea causes considerable suffering for the French characters and other European men alike and also for her servants. Indeed, she is described as a queen of excessive beauty but with an inflexible heart. She sends Cegheir-ben-Cheïkh to look for European men, but she keeps as lovers just the most handsome, educated and high rank French or other European officers. Nevertheless, she keeps the Europeans, who do not satisfy her, to serve her such as Le Mesge and Spardek. Once they enter the castle, these European men lose their freedom. The period of happiness for these European men is very short with Antinea because she rejects them quickly. Suffering from frustration and sadness, they all die at the end. This goes with the way Frye describes sexuality in the demonic world, he says: “The demonic erotic

relation becomes a fierce destructive passion that works against loyalty or frustrates the one who possesses it.”⁴⁸

Saint-Avit is one of these European men who fall under the spell of Antinea. He claims to be a strong man at first, yet he suffers from fever after the first encounter with her. He is the only European man who escapes from the castle, but has done everything to return to her because he cannot bear the difficulty of living without her, despite his knowledge that his ultimate fate will be becoming a mummy in the room of the Red Marble. Saint-Avit and the other officers are punished for something they have not done, that is to say, they are victims of an ancient story of revenge from the Romans who exploited oriental women in the past. Antinea keeps doing this over years without having mercy over “the poor” men who suffer from her appeal.

Antinea symbolises the forbidden tree in paradise, whose temptation leads Adam and Eve to fall from the Garden of Eden, and the European men including the main characters in the novel (Saint-Avit and Morhange), cannot resist the temptation of approaching and loving Antinea and finally they die. In my opinion, Benoit wants to convey the message that the queen Antinea is dangerous as the Touareg people are in general. Indeed, this stereotype about the Touaregs was common among the French people during this period. So Benoit wants to say that one should beware before deciding to visit or explore the region where the Touaregs live. There is a great possibility of having the same fate.

It is true that the French men in Antinea’s castle get the opportunity of fulfilling their personal dream i.e. sexual desire with an extraordinary woman like Antinea; however, this undermines their heroism as representatives and agents of the French empire. They are supposed to fulfill the ideals of the empire that they embody, instead they turn to puppets in Antinea’s hands. They cannot help but submit to her will since she is the one who has authority over them. They neglect the different missions that their government charged them with, therefore, they deceive the latter. Saint-Avit, for instance, regresses to a wicked man. He

starts by becoming jealous from his supposed to be loved companion Morhange, then he kills him in the end. After doing so, he does not have any feeling of guilt as this quotation demonstrates: «C'était tout. Ni crainte, ni remords, ni cette horreur shakespearienne consécutive au meurtre».⁴⁹ [That was all; no fear, no guilt, no this kind of Shakespearian horror after murder.] Because of this story, Saint-Avit, after his return from the first expedition, is underestimated by the officers with whom he works in the military station. Therefore, here there is a parody of the romantic hero. To be explicit, heroism is lacking the character Saint-Avit. The absence of the heroic is an archetype of the mythos of irony, and in Frye's theory, this is due to the dominance of a woman over a man.⁵⁰ Saint-Avit himself realises that this expedition does not make of him a hero because of his love affair with Antinea. He says:

Je me trompai en espérant voir immédiatement cette aventure prendre une tournure héroïque. Dans la vie, les genres ne sont jamais délimités. J'aurais dû me rappeler, par une infinité de détails précédents, que le burlesque était, dans mon équipée, régulièrement enchevêtré avec le tragique.⁵¹

[I was wrong when I wished that I would become a hero in this adventure. In life, genres are not limited. I should have remembered that the burlesque, in my journey, was always accompanied by the tragic.]

Similarly, the native characters suffer from the domination of their queen. One of the aspects of the demonic world, according to Frye, is the obligation of obeying the law and the punishment which results in case of disobedience.⁵² She obliges her servants (the Touaregs) to obey her unpleasant orders without complaining. One can take Cegheïr-ben-Cheïkh as an example. He serves his mistress (Antinea) with loyalty by bringing to her handsome European men risking his life through wandering in the desert, even if he does not like what he is doing. He sometimes feels pity for those young European men who die for Antinea's love.

In the previous section, I have explained that Antinea is so beautiful, intelligent, and attractive to the extent that the European men fall in love with her from the first sight and enjoy her company. However, the charm of this woman is dangerous for the reasons that I have just explained. Therefore, Antinea may be considered as a metaphor of the colony as a

whole which has two facets for the coloniser; attractive, for its richness and beauty, and dangerous, for its threats.

2-2-The Natives as Evil Characters

The native characters, who are the Touaregs, cause considerable annoyance and displeasure for the French characters while staying in the colonial world. Eg-Anteouen (Cegheir-ben-Cheikh) is one of them. These native characters are considered as enemies. So the relation with them is rather dystopian.

The native who causes much harm for Saint-Avit and Morhange is Cegheir-ben-Cheikh. By pretending to be a guide, he brings them to the cave in the black mountain situated in the Hoggar and leads to Antinea's castle. Saint-Avit and Morhange are in a state of shock and fear while Eg-Anteouen is making fun of them because they have not discovered before that the fact of bringing them to the mountain is just a trick. Eg-Anteouen reveals his plan to the French adventurers and his contribution to killing their companions including Colonel Masson, Flatters and others. Yet, they can do nothing about it. This situation is referred to, in Frye's theory, as "tragic irony" and not satire because the aim of the author is not to make fun of his hero, but to dramatise his situation by providing "social and psychological explanations for catastrophe."⁵³ Indeed, what happens to the two heroes: Saint-Avit and Morhange is really "a catastrophe". They endure a lot of hardships by going through the most dangerous routes of the Algerian desert, and when they reach the mountain where they expect to find the object of their quest, they discover that their trusted guide has betrayed them and has a hand in killing their friends. Worst of all, they cannot escape this place i.e. go back from where they come, despite the fact that this is not exactly what they are looking for or expecting to find throughout their quest. Indeed, this moment may be considered as "the point of demonic epiphany" in the novel. Frye, in the sixth phase of his mythos of irony, explains that this point is characterised by darkness, pain and the non-achievement of the goal of the quest.⁵⁴

The other enemies of Saint-Avit are Antinea's bodyguards who are Touaregs. They keep him under surveillance all the time which restricts his freedom to move in the castle, when he wants to. They even break his arm when they get him out of Antinea's room. There is even an animal named Hiram-Roi which plays an important role in the fiction. It may be considered as the worst enemy of Saint-Avit since it makes his life in Antinea's castle unbearable. Saint-Avit quarrels with it most of the time and causes disgust for him while staying in the castle. Moreover, Saint-Avit makes fun of the Touaregs in general because they fear the *Ilhinen*, a tribe that lives in the "Mont des Génies", and because they believe in absurd and superstitious things. Attributing the quality of superstition in someone is hinting to the lack of reasoning in him, in this fiction, it is the Touaregs who are meant.

One may ask why this satire of the native characters and underestimating them. This may appear shallow or insignificant, however, if it is "tied to the totality of the world: to the general history of France, to its colonial adventures, to its present difficulties"⁵⁵, as Barthes says in his theory of myths, one will get the answer that Benoit aims to perpetuate the ideology of the natives as "the ignoble savage". In doing so, he advertises for the French "civilising mission" that the colonial discourse keeps perpetuated through centuries.

Barthes states that the production of myth corresponds to the production of ideology and whenever there is a production of myth, there is a production of ideology which supports the interests of the dominant social class (bourgeoisie).⁵⁶ So the ideology of "the noble savage", "the ignoble savage" in the negative sense, is used by the coloniser to serve an interest. The latter consists of legitimatising intervention in the affairs of the colonised country either by civilising him, if he is claimed to be "a noble savage", or by exterminating him if he is claimed to be "an ignoble savage".

Lahouari Addi traces the myth of "the noble savage" and the action of civilising him into the age of enlightenment. The philosophers at that time advocated that "the noble savage" should be absorbed into western culture. But this is not necessarily by bringing him to

Christianity, as the French did by trying to impose it on Algerians and other people during colonisation. So Westerners pretend to be the developed and privileged race that brings light to “the barbaric” societies of the world and the French writers perpetuate these imperial ideologies. To show the necessity of “the civilising mission”, Benoit, in this fiction, amplifies the negative image of the Touaregs, who are the colonised people. It is worth to know exactly what the French intend to mean by their supposed to be a “civilising mission”. They intend to teach the Algerians to value work, beside converting them to Christianity, but what kind of work? The answer is to know how to work land and produce crops or other industrial goods, build railroads and similar tasks, all of which were destined to support the European economy.⁵⁷ In order to raise his status and assure a comfortable life for himself, the coloniser resorted to the exploitation of the natives, and made his best to keep them in an inferior position.

Such very negative myths were still held about the Touaregs when Benoit wrote his fiction: « Les Gamphasantes, dit-il, sont nus ; les Blemyens n’ont pas de tête, leur visage étant placé sur leur poitrine ; les Satyres n’ont rien de l’homme que la figure. Les Egipans sont faits comme on le dit communément. »⁵⁸ [The Gamphasants, he says, are naked, the Blemyens have no head, their faces are set on their chests, the Satyrs have nothing human except the face. The Egipans are as we say commonly.] Morhange, throughout his presence in the Hoggar, intends to confirm the truthfulness of this information, which is held by one of the French explorers called Pomponius Mela, about the different Touareg tribes. From this quotation, one may understand that the natives are considered as monsters or dehumanised, they resemble a human being, but they are not completely human. This is, indeed, a very negative representation which is invented by the coloniser to serve his interest and to justify his claims. In this perspective, Said says that Westerners tend to define the Oriental as “not quite as human” as they are. He adds that the aim of this hegemonic discourse is not just “to manage the nonwhite world but also to own it”.⁵⁹

Another negative myth amplified by the French, as far as the Touaregs are concerned, is that they were oppressive and fierce fighters who enslaved their neighbours and subdued them. As a matter of fact, Benoit mentions, through the narrator Saint-Avit, the Flatters mission and attributes its failure to the Touat (a touareg tribe): “C’était, ce Touat, le grand centre des complots, des *razzias*, des défections, en même temps que le lieu de ravitaillement des insaisissables nomades ».⁶⁰ [The Touat was the source of plots, of *razzias*, of defections, and a source of supplying the rebellious nomads.] In doing so, Benoit contributes to the amplification of this myth. The incident, which is mentioned in this quotation, was considered as a dark moment in the history of colonial expansion in the Algerian desert.

Furthermore, Benoit makes Tanit-Zarga, a native woman, not a French character, narrates her story about “the savageness” of the Touaregs so as to give it more credibility. She narrates how the Touaregs destroyed her happy and peaceful life and brought her to slavery, how they slaughtered her family and many people of her tribe. Benoit, however, through Tanit-Zarga, describes the French men as completely different from the Touaregs. Tanit-Zarga’s tribe maintained good relationships with the French officers because they treated them, she claims, with respect unlike the Touaregs who are described as devoid of any human sentiments or qualities. The following quotation clarifies better this idea:

« J’avais la force de trotter encore, et même aussi en avant que possible, pour essayer de ne pas entendre *le cri de mes petites amies* ; quand une d’elles était tombée sur la route, et qu’il était visible qu’elle ne se relèverait pas, un des gardiens descendait de chameau et la traînait un peu sur le côté de la caravane *pour l’égorger*».⁶¹

[I run around further to avoid hearing the shouting of my young friends. One of them lay down on the road, and when it was obvious that she will not get up, one of the men get down the camel and took her to the side to kill her.]

These are the words used by Tanit-Zarga to describe the way the Touaregs have treated her and other women, when they have taken them as prisoners. She represents the Touaregs as very cruel, violent and savages. When she tells her dream, she says: « Je vis *mon ami, l’officier français, sommeillant en paix*, tandis qu’un grand corbeau planait au-dessus de sa tête. »⁶² [I saw my friend, the French officer, sleeping peacefully, while a big crow flying

above him.] Here Benoit uses the word “crow” to refer to the Touaregs, which is the symbol of darkness and evil, whereas the French officer is depicted as the victim. It is crucial to evoke here Barthes’ definition of myth as a “depoliticized speech.” Barthes explains that the political dimension which that speech contains is hidden by the person, or “the social class” the term used by Barthes, who perpetuates the myth to stress its “innocence” and “purity”. He adds that the person who perpetuates the myth will try to cover his identity and real intention.⁶³ In my opinion, this is what Benoit intends to do when he narrates the story of the savageness of the Touaregs through an innocent native woman (Tanit-Zarga) instead of doing this through a European character or himself.

Another aspect which is criticised by Benoit, as far as the Touaregs culture is concerned, is religion which is “Islam”. Benoit’s attack on Islam is in reality an attack on the Ottoman Empire as a whole. The latter was the enemy of Christianity from the Middle Ages, that is to say, from the period of the crusades onwards. “The superiority of Christianity over Islam”, Addi states, is one of the myths perpetuated by the French to justify their conquest.⁶⁴ This is why Barthes says that when a message, like the “superiority of Christianity over Islam”, is perpetuated through time, it is transformed to a myth.⁶⁵ So the transformation from mere idea into myth is “historical” and not “natural” as the French pretend it to be. Said differently, the mythical quality is not in the thing itself i.e Islam or Muslims, but it is history which attributes it to it.

Morhange tries to prove to his companion Saint-Avit that the Touaregs used to be Christians. He illustrates through some aspects of their culture: the cross, for example, is a symbol carved on their objects, such as swords and saddles, or a tattoo on their bodies. Morhange goes on to argue that the Touaregs turned to Muslims only when the Arab Muslims conquered the Touaregs and obliged them to practice Islam. The scholar Le Mesge argues:

Maintes fois, avec Dom Granger, j’ai étudié cette formidable épopée où l’on voit les aborigènes tenir tête aux *conquérants arabes*. Avec lui, j’ai vu l’armée de Sidi-Okba, un des compagnons du Prophète, s’enfoncer dans le désert, pour réduire les grandes tribus touareg et leur imposer le rudiment musulman. Ces tribus étaient alors riches et

prospères. C'étaient les Ihoggaren, les Imededren, les Ouadelen, les Kel-Guéress, les Kel-Aïr. Mais les querelles intestines énervèrent leur résistance. Elle se montra cependant redoutable, et ce ne fut qu'après une longue et atroce guerre que les Arabes réussirent à s'emparer de la capitale des Berbères. *Ils la détruisirent après en avoir massacré les habitants.*⁶⁶ Italics mine

[I studied several times this period, with Dom Granger, when the natives resisted the Arab conquest. I have seen with him Sidi-Okba army, one of prophet's companions, penetrated in the desert to impose Islam upon the touareg tribes. These tribes: the Ihoggaren, the Imededren, the Ouadelen, the Kel-Guéress, the Kel-Aïr, were rich and prosperous. But the conflict between them weakened their resistance. After an atrocious war, the Arabs succeeded to overthrow the capital of the Berber. They destroyed it after they massacred the inhabitants.]

The above quote demonstrates how Benoit, in this fiction, perpetuates the myth of the Muslims propagating their religion "by the sword". In fact, in most western writings and even western media nowadays, Islam is portrayed as a religion which encourages violence mainly towards women. It is worthy to mention that Morhange's aim through his presence in the Hoggar and interest in this subject is to contribute to a research about the areas which Christianity has reached. The ultimate message which is conveyed through Morhange's story, which is told in the quotation above about the propagation of Islam, is that the Touareg tribes should be grateful for the French intervention which has saved them from the abuses of the Ottoman empire and its religion. So in order to convince others of the necessity of converting to Christianity, the French try to attack the heart of the Islamic religion and create prejudices about its prophet, its believers, and its principles in general.

There is also in the novel a satire concerning the Muslims' naming. L'hetman de Jitomir, a French man who Saint-Avit encounters in the Hoggar, exaggerates the name of a Muslim who once visited Paris with his delegation. He says:

Chaque fois, les Touareg inscrivaient leur nom sur le livre d'or de l'endroit. Cela n'en finissait plus. Pour en donner une idée, voici quel était le nom complet du seul Cheikh Othman : Othman-ben-el-Hadj-el-Bekri-ben-el- Hadj-el-Faqqi-ben-Mohammed-Boûya-ben-si-Ahmed-es-Soûki-ben-Mahmound.⁶⁷

[Each time, the Touaregs wrote their names on the golden book of the place. It seems that these names have not an end. To give you an idea, I will provide an example of the complete name of Cheikh Othman: Othman-ben-el-Hadj-el-Bekri-ben-el-Hadj-el-Faqqi-ben-Mohammed-Boûya-ben-si-Ahmed-es-Soûki-ben-Mahmound.]

One may understand from this quotation that L'hetman wants to say that all the Touaregs have similar long names and if he gives the full name of Cheikh Othman, it is not to praise it, but just to stress its ridiculousness and strangeness. Then L'hetman adds :« Et il y en avait cinq comme cela! ». ⁶⁸ [and there were five similar names.] The fact of neglecting their names, in my opinion, underestimates their position knowing that they are important personalities; the prince and his delegation.

3-Setting: The Desert as Hell

I have said in the preceding section that Antinea's castle represents a paradise, but once the French men get out of it, they face the hellish desert. As mentioned before, Judo-Christians associate positive utopia with "paradise" while they associate negative side of utopia i.e. dystopia with "hell". A dystopian or demonic atmosphere dominates the portrayal of the setting in Benoit's fiction. Nearly all its events are set in the Algerian desert. Saint-Avit narrates his arrival into the Algeria desert with great sadness and melancholy and he also speaks about his comrades that he encounters on his way. He perceives them in a depressed situation and he expresses his unhappiness for their terrible fate which brings them into Algeria:

Je les vis tout contre moi, quand la diligence les dépassa. Ils étaient terribles. Sous la hideuse viscope, les yeux brillaient d'un feu sombre dans les visages blêmes et rasés. La poussière brûlante étranglait les voix rauques dans les gorges. *Une affreuse tristesse s'emparait de moi.* ⁶⁹

[I saw them when the coach surpassed them. They were terrible. Their eyes were chining in their pale shaven faces. The burning dust strangle the hoarse voices in their throats. A great sadness filled my heart.]

Moreover, Lieutenant Ferrières, who accompanies Saint-Avit in his second expedition, describes the boring atmosphere of the military station Hassi-Inifel (Ouargla) and goes further to regretting his coming to Algeria and longs for the comfortable life which he would live if he has stayed in his home country (France). He says:

Bizarre destinée, celle qui, à seize ans, sans que j'aie su au juste pourquoi, a décidé un jour que je me préparerais à Saint-Cyr, a fait de moi le camarade d'André de Saint-Avit. J'aurais pu étudier le droit, la médecine. Je serais aujourd'hui quelqu'un de bien tranquille, dans une ville, avec une église et des eaux courantes ; et non pas ce fantôme

vêtu de coton, accoudé, avec une anxiété inexprimable, sur le désert qui va l'engloutir.⁷⁰

[Strange fate that have brought me, without knowing the reason, to Saint-Cyr and made me the companion of Saint-Avit. I ought to have studied law, medicine. I would live today peacefully in a city where there are churches and fountains and not this ghost dressed in cotton, suffering from extreme anxiety, in the desert, which is going to engulf him.]

From the previous quotation, one may notice that Ferrières, like his companion Saint-Avit, is not happy nor satisfied about his decision of travelling into the Algerian desert. The desert for Ferrières is a source of anxiety and confusion, and there is great possibility of dying there. So most of the natural landscape described in Benoit's fiction is "waste land, rocks, and desert" which, according to Frye's theory, characterise "the demonic world" instead of green forests which are found in the apocalyptic world.⁷¹ Indeed, the characters Saint-Avit and Morhange travel through the desert from Hassi-Inifel into the Hoggar passing through the central Sahara (Tanezerouft), also called by the original inhabitants *Blad-el-Khouf* or the *Land of Fear*. Throughout their journey, they suffer from the very hot climate and they experience a tempest from which they hardly survive in addition to thirst and hunger. Saint-Avit qualifies this tempest by a nightmare. Even their guide Bou-Djema dies because of eating a poisonous plant (lettuce), which can be associated with the "the tree of death" in "the demonic world", found in their way to the Hoggar. Moreover, through another journey from the Hoggar back to Hassi-Inifel passing through Tanezrouft, Saint-Avit loses his friend Tanit-Zerga because of thirst. The place (Tanezrouft) is described by the French in the following terms:

Tu sais ce que c'est que le Tanezrouft, le « plateau par excellence », le pays abandonné, inhabitable, la contrée de la soif et de la faim. Nous étions en cet instant engagés dans la partie de ce désert que Duveyrier appelle Tasili du Sud, et qui figure sur la carte du ministère des Travaux publics avec cette attrayante mention : « Plateau rocheux, sans eau, sans végétation, inhospitalier pour l'homme et les animaux.⁷²

[You know the Tanezrouft, the « plateau par excellence », the abandoned and uninhabited place where there is thirst and hunger. We were at that moment in a place that Duveyrier called Tasili du Sud and which is displayed on the map of the ministry of public affairs described as follows: hill full with rocks, no water, no vegetation, uninhabitable for both humans and animals.]

From this description, one can notice that there is a stress on the threat of the journey in the desert where there is no sign of life but only absence (of animals, plants, water) and death.

And the threat is not from the natural environment, but also from the original people who may attack them. Many people would have died, even the natives themselves as it is the case with Tanit-Zarga and Bou-Djema, if they have gone the routes Saint-Avit has gone through (the Hoggar, Tanezrouft), but he survives. This is in fact why he is chosen for the second military mission and why Morhange insists on accompanying him.

Moreover, the paradoxical nature of the Sahara astonishes Saint-Avit and Morhange. A flood occurs suddenly, at a time when the temperature is very high as usual. What is striking is the fact that it is Saint-Avit who saves a Targui's life, who is supposed to know the desert, since he lives there and he is able to keep his nerves calm, unlike the native Bou-Djema who is nervous in this precarious situation. From this description, one may conclude that Benoit intends to make from his French character Saint-Avit a heroic figure by overcoming the dangers of nature. Therefore, Benoit perpetuates the myth of the white man as a hero, as far the natural landscape is concerned. In this regard, George Trumbull observes that "The French vision of the Sahara as a sea of sand, as a place of danger, of intractable thirst and frequently death" was a common one in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century works.⁷³

There is a place in Antinea's castle which is disagreeable for the European characters, it is the room in which the mummies are reserved. Once Saint-Avit and Morhange enter the room, they become extremely shocked and cannot restrain themselves from crying especially when Saint-Avit identifies an old friend of his. Moreover, Saint-Avit is not able to find his way in the castle without guidance because of darkness: « Il obéit. En traversant de nouveau un labyrinthe d'escaliers et de couloirs, je compris que je ne saurais jamais me retrouver sans aide. »⁷⁴ [He obeys. Crossing again stairs and corridors, I realised that I cannot find my way without help.] So Saint-Avit cannot find his way in the castle and feels himself lost. This indeed reflects his inner confusion and uncertainty in the situation in which he finds himself.

Confusion as said before is an imagery of the demonic world. So it is obvious that the atmosphere here is dystopian.

Conclusion

As the analysis of Benoit's fiction in this section has shown, the French characters are confronted with dangers and threats which make their expedition a nightmare. Antinea, the queen of the Touaregs or "the femme fatale" and her people, are among these threats. Indeed the negative image of the Touaregs and their culture (Islamic religion) is amplified. This amplification of the negative image of the natives gives way to the myth of "the ignoble savage" and the ideology of "the civilising mission". In addition to the threat that the natives cause for the French characters, they face another threat from the part of the natural environment and which makes their life in the colonial world undesirable. The images associated with "the vegetable world" i.e. the landscape, which consists of the vast desert, are so bad to the extent that one may qualify it as "Hell". This is evident in the hardships that the main character Saint-Avit faces with his companions throughout their expeditions throughout the desert. Yet, it is this nightmarish journey which makes him appear as a heroic figure.

From the two sections, one may conclude that Benoit's portrayal of the colonised world is paradoxical. That is to say, there are both utopian and dystopian elements and there are often two images in one as it is the case with the character of Antinea. Being with this woman, permits to the French men to fulfill their sexual desire, however, unfortunately for them this is just for short duration. Said differently, there is a move from the utopian elements (Paradise) to the dystopian ones (Hell) and vice versa. While the life in the military station is considered as a nightmare, the Saharan routes are considered as hell but once the French characters enter Antinea's castle, they fancy themselves in paradise so the castle is a paradise in the middle of hell (desert).

Throughout my analysis, I have also noticed that the mythical story of the island of the Atlantis is combined with some historical real events which makes it plausible and to

some extent credible. So Benoit's work is a combination of some elements of romance (imagination) and irony (the world of reality). The first one gives the colonised world a utopian dimension while the second gives it a dystopian one.

Endnotes

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- 3-Catherine Delmas and Christine Vandamme et.al, *Science and Empire in the Nineteenth Century: A Journey of Imperial Conquest and Scientific Progress*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).p.viii.
- 4-Pascal Blanchard, Sandrine Lemaire and Nicolas Bancel, « La formation d'une *culture coloniale* en France, du temps des colonies à celui des « guerres de mémoires » ».p.17. Available on: http://www.achac.com/file_dynamic/intro-culture-coloniale-enfrance.pdf. accessed on: 22 December 2014.
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- 9-Pierre Benoit, *L'atlantide*. p.130.
- 10-Richard Laurent Omgba, *Utopies littéraires et création d'un monde nouveau : Une publication de l'atelier de critique et de créativité littéraire de l'université de Yaoundé*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012).p.6.
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- 21-Quoted in Pierre Benoit, *L'atlantide*. p.157.
- 22-Quoted in ibid.
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- 25-Quoted in ibid: 158.
- 26-Quoted in ibid: 168.
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- 30-Quoted in ibid: 159.
- 31-Quoted in ibid: 211.
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- 33-Quoted in ibid: 111.
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- 41-Quoted in Pierre Benoit, *L'atlantide*. p.142.
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- 49- Quoted in Pierre Benoit , *L'atlantide*. p.240.
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- 55-Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. trans., Annette Lavers. New York: Hill and Wang. 1984. P.119.
- 56-Ibid: 128.

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- 58-Quoted in Pierre Benoit , *L'atlantide*. p.101.
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- 61-Quoted in *ibid*: 217.
- 62-Quoted in *ibid*: 215.
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- 64-Lahouari Addi, "Colonial Mythologies: Algeria in the French Imagination". pp.93-105.
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General Conclusion

The analysis of Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and Pierre Benoit's *L'atlantide* (1919) has allowed me to prove that the colonised world in these two fictions is portrayed as utopian and dystopian at the same time. The two authors' vision towards the colonised world including "the vegetable" and "the mineral worlds" (the setting) and "the human world" (the inhabitants) is ambivalent.

Before analysing the fictions mentioned above, I have given an overview of the historical background in which the two fictions were written. It includes the reasons (scientific, economic, political and so forth) which led the two colonial powers namely France and Britain "to scramble for Africa". I have also explained the importance of South Africa to Britain and its dream of exploiting its natural resources mainly its gold and diamond mines which are the object of the quest of the English adventurers in Haggard's fiction. Similarly, Algeria was an important colony for France and the desert was the place where they set their dreams of modernisation mainly that of establishing a Trans-Saharan route-as is the project of "shale gas" today. This project is also undertaken by the French characters in Benoit's fiction.

Furthermore, I have given samples of the different works (fiction or non-fiction) written by English and French colonial travellers and explorers during the late nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century by pointing out the utopian and dystopian elements in these works. I have also tried to unveil at the same time the ideologies behind portraying the colonial world in a utopian or dystopian way. The recurrent ideology in the utopian works is "the ideology of aesthetics" through which the author idealises the landscape in the colonised world. This idealisation of the landscape stimulates imperial greed for exploitation. My aim in tackling this issue is to show how literary works at that time participated in shaping public opinion as far as the empire was concerned.

The recurrent ideology in dystopian works is that of Africa as "the dark continent". Through this ideology, Western writers mainly the British, claim that the native African

people are benighted and uncivilised. Thus, they need someone else to civilise them. Through this claim, the coloniser legitimises settlement and colonisation of the continent. This was shown through some French and British works for both visions i.e. the utopian and dystopian. The authors vary between those who portray the colonial world as a “paradise” and those who associate it with “hell” and there are those whose vision is paradoxical.

To demonstrate the simultaneous incorporation of utopian and dystopian elements in the two fictions under analysis, which is done in chapter two and three, I have opted for the concepts of Northrop Frye’s theory: “apocalyptic imageries” and “romance” which correspond to utopia, “demonic imageries” and “irony/satire” which correspond to dystopia. In doing so, I have found out that in both fictions the quest itself has utopian and dystopian elements. To be explicit, the characters in Haggard’s fiction realise their utopian imperial dream of getting wealth from South Africa which represents the colonised world. However, throughout their way to realise this dream, they face moments of disillusionment.

As far as the analysis of the characters is concerned, it is found that there is the idealisation of the white characters, the English in Haggard’s fiction and the French in Benoit’s fiction. In both works, the white men’s courage during their quest to fulfill their dreams is emphasised. This is shown through their success to overcome the different obstacles that the colonial world poses for them. In this way, they have created the myth of “the white men’s heroism”. Moreover, the native characters, in the two fictions, fall into two categories: “the noble savage” and “the ignoble savage”. Those who are included in the first category are those who support the white men’s quest and there is a tendency to romanticise them. Foulata and Ombopa in *King Solomon’s Mines*, Tanit-Zarga and Bou-Djema in *L’atlantide*, are romanticised. Those who fall into the second category i.e. “the ignoble savage” are those who hinder the white men’s fulfillment of their utopian imperial dreams. Haggard and Benoit tend to diabolise them which is evident in the fact of being satirised through the use of “animal imageries”. King Twala and his followers notably Scragga and Gagool, in *King Solomon’s*

Mines, exhibit undesirable qualities such as cruelty, pitilessness and injustice. Similarly, the Touaregs in *L'atlantide* are described as a very cruel race that causes harm for the French officers and explorers as well as other people. They make the white adventurers suffer too much and cause much harm to them. They have caused the disillusionment of the white characters. While the native characters are attributed “the myth “the noble savage” or “ignoble savage”, the white men are attributed the myth of “the white men’s burden”, to borrow Rudyard Kipling’s expression. Through this ideology, the coloniser legitimises intervention in the affairs of the colonised people.

The setting, which includes “the vegetable” and “the mineral worlds”, in the colonised world is paradoxically portrayed. In the same context, Deckard states “Landscapes of seeming abundance and fertility are also paradoxically landscapes of poverty and disease, threatening “primitive violence and destruction.”¹ The common utopian aspect which is identified in the two fictions is the image of a beautiful landscape which is likened to “the Garden of Eden”. In *King Solomon’s Mines*, Haggard declares openly that the landscape in Kukuanialand is a paradise and stresses its richness in natural resources notably gold and diamonds. In Benoit’s *L'atlantide*, there is a garden which is situated in Antinea’s castle in the middle of the Algerian desert (the Hoggar). This portrayal of the colonised world as a paradise is linked with the ideology of “labor free production”, that is to say, gaining money without troubling oneself to work. These two fictions also incorporate the myth of an ancient western civilisation as a paradise. The characters’ claim that, throughout their presence in the colonised world, they will restore this “lost golden age.” This is indeed another justification for imperialism. The common dystopian aspect is the harsh climate: the desert in *King Solomon’s Mines* and *L'atlantide*. The hot climate of the desert in all these fictions causes hardships for the characters throughout their journey in the colonised world. I associate this element with the ideology or the myth of the white man’s heroism. This is because the white

man is always portrayed as triumphing over all obstacles thanks to his intellectual capacities and scientific knowledge.

Haggard and Benoit have a paradoxical vision of the colonial world including the original inhabitants and the natural environment. This means that the authors' discourses are ambivalent combining "paradise" and "anti-paradise discourses". It is relevant here to evoke Homi Bhabha's notion of ambivalence as far the colonial discourse is concerned:

The existence of two contradictory knowledges (multiple beliefs) splits the ego (or the discourse) into two psychical attitudes, and forms of knowledge, toward the external world. The first of these takes reality into consideration while the second replaces it with a product of desire.²

Indeed, The portrayal of the colonised environment, in the fictions under analysis, is to a great extent linked to the psychological state of the author which is reflected in the English and the French characters. Before their departure, they conceive a utopian dream to realise in the colonised world. This dream stands for all his country or the whole empire. However, once they reach the colonial world, they confront the realities (difficulties) which hinder the realisation of their conceived dreams. This leads them to express their disappointment.

To sum up the similarities between the two fictions under analysis, one may cite that both of them are romances which has an ambivalent vision towards the different aspects of the colonised world and perpetuate many and similar imperial ideologies. The differences include the fact that Haggard's fiction focuses more on the heroic adventures of the English characters whereas Benoit stresses the love relationship between Saint-Avit and Antinea. This love relationship undermines the heroism of the French characters, but Haggard keeps his white characters ideal imperial heroes along the whole fiction.

Finally, the analysis has revealed that there are different myths and ideologies which are incorporated in Haggard's and Benoit's fictions which serve to support the British and the French colonial policies. This is because a myth is valid just for some situation or just for some period of time then the coloniser has to provide another one to maintain his dominance. At the time when the two authors wrote their works, the English and French

Empires started to decline. Therefore, Benoit and Haggard are among those writers who tried to safeguard the English and the French colonies through the perpetuation of these imperial ideologies.

Endnotes

1- Quoted in Sharae Grace Deckard, *Exploited Edens: Paradise Discourse in Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, (University of Warwick, 2007). p.126.

2-Quoted in Homi K. Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817” in Critical Inquiry, “Race,” Writing, and Difference. (Aut. 1985), v.12, n°1. pp. 144-165.

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Résumé :

Cette thèse a pour but d'étudier l'utopie et la dystopie dans les écrits coloniaux suivants : *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) par Henry Rider Haggard (1885) et *L'Atlantide* (1919) par Pierre Benoit. Ces deux romans ont été écrits lors de l'apogée de l'impérialisme dans leurs pays. Pendant que l'apogée de la puissance coloniale britannique était la fin du XIXe siècle, le français était l'une des deux premières décennies du XXe siècle. Je cherche à démontrer que les éléments utopiques et dystopiques dans ces deux fictions sont apparents dans la vision des actants français vers le monde colonial notamment «le monde humain», à savoir les habitants, et «le monde végétal», à savoir l'environnement naturel. L'existence d'aspects utopiques dans les deux fictions est démontrée en soulignant «les images apocalyptiques et romantiques», concepts empruntés de la théorie de mythes développée par Northrop Frye. Quant aux aspects dystopiques, la preuve est donnée par «les images démoniaques» et les situations ironiques. Tout au long des chapitres de discussion de ma thèse, j'explore la romanticisation des personnages natifs et de paysage dans le monde colonial qui produit une atmosphère souhaitable ou utopique pour les hommes blancs dans le monde colonial (l'Afrique du Sud dans la fiction de Haggard et l'Algérie dans la fiction de Benoit). J'explore aussi la diabolisation de la plupart des actants indigènes, parce qu'ils entravent la réalisation des rêves utopiques impériaux des personnages blancs, et les défis posés par l'environnement naturel colonial. Cela provoque la désillusion pour les hommes blancs et rend leur vie dans le monde colonial indésirable (dystopique). Je considère également la variété des mythes incorporées dans les discours des deux auteurs et faire une lecture idéologique d'entre eux en se fondant sur la théorie de mythes par Roland Barthes. Enfin, je conclus que les discours des auteurs sont ambivalents ; ils sont «paradisiaux» et «anti-paradisiaux» en même temps.