

**Representations of Masculinity in Wilbur Smith's Courtney Saga.
Contextual Causes and Strategies of Authorial Control**



M. Isabel Santaulària i Capdevila



Chapter 14: Blacks under apartheid. Performance and representation in the Courtney saga

14.1. Apartheid and race discrimination

Ever since the nineteenth century, skin colour and biology have been functional to discriminatory practices aimed at dividing humanity into inferior and superior, subservient and hegemonic peoples. As Benedict phrases it, "According to racism, we know our enemies, not by their aggressions against us, not by their creed or language, not even by their possessing wealth we want to take, but by noting their hereditary anatomy."¹ If in the past, a belief in 'true religion' was supposed to distinguish the superior from the inferior peoples of the world, by the beginning of the nineteenth century in Africa, "the old theory of a division of the human race into 'believers' and 'unbelievers' no longer corresponded to the facts."² The nature of the interactions between black and white people during colonial times and the necessity of erecting geopolitical frontiers separating the oppressors from the oppressed, so that the former could exercise their authority - and thus manipulate their resources - over the latter, determined the articulation of a discourse of oppression based on race. Colour, therefore, enfronted the opposing parties on the frontier as religion no longer did.

In South Africa, where a tiny group of whites maintained hegemonic power over a major black population, whites also relied on racist parameters for the continuity of race supremacy. Colonial assumptions about the essential, racial superiority of whites were integrated into the racist apartheid discourse and entrenched themselves behind a super-stringent legislation that guaranteed white supremacy by marginalising blacks. Although the roots of these apartheid statutes lay in earlier colonial legislation and racist colonial assumptions, "the absoluteness of

¹ qtd. in John A. Stotesbury, *Apartheid, Liberalism and Romance. A Critical Investigation of the Writing of Joy Packer* (Uppsala, Sweden: Swedish Science Press, 1996) 141.

² Ruth Benedict qtd. in John A. Stotesbury, *Apartheid, Liberalism and Romance*, 141.

apartheid's intentions [...] marked a revolutionary break with the past [...] which was to be repeatedly underlined by the Nationalist regime's attempts to counteract the influence of trends in contemporary western societies towards granting individual rights."³ Although more poignant and stringent than colonial legislation, apartheid laws were based, therefore, on the same racist assumptions: the belief in the inferiority of blacks because of the colour of their skin.

Now, the validity of biological racism has been discredited in our post-Holocaust world: if anything, the atrocities committed during the Nazi's rule in Germany served to awaken people's consciences about the absurdity of separating and abusing people only on the basis of their physiques. As John Stotesbury explains: "The physical expression of the intellectual tradition of biologically-determined racism in the Nazi death camps of Europe destroyed [...] its acceptability."⁴ However, in spite of the apparent condemnation of racism in our present world, even the more advanced countries rely on biological theorising about human difference when faced with internal or external problems. This racism, as John Rex underlines, is given public visibility in popular culture, which is "suffused with racist ideas"⁵ and gives an overtly racist interpretation of contemporary social contexts. Smith's fiction, as I have attempted to prove so far, is an obvious example of the application of biology to support the separate development of blacks (and implicitly, the superiority of whites) under apartheid. True to apartheid and colonial perceptions of colour, he perpetuates and intensifies, via his fiction, the perception of blacks as essentially and naturally debased.

However, he does not rely on race alone to validate the apartheid "system of embargoes and embarrassments calculated to sabotage all human bridges between the races."⁶ His main aim is to endorse the might and right of his British heroes who are both ideals of western masculinity and of western political adequacy within a sanctioned context of white supremacy under apartheid and, to do this, he needs to

³ John A. Stotesbury, *Apartheid, Liberalism and Romance*, 140.

⁴ John A. Stotesbury, *Apartheid, Liberalism and Romance*, 142.

⁵ qtd. in John A. Stotesbury, *Apartheid, Liberalism and Romance*, 143.

⁶ Joy Packer, qtd. in John A. Stotesbury, *Apartheid, Liberalism and Romance*, 140.

debase the threatening blacks. Aware of the fragility of biologically determined discrimination, Smith resorts to more than just biology and race for his representation of whites and blacks in his fiction. In fact, Smith draws on both the blacks and the whites' political and social performance under apartheid to exonerate the British from all responsibility for the mighty apartheid superstructure, which he maintains is solely an Afrikaner creation, and, on the other hand, to justify the necessity of the apartheid supremacist policies and the consenting attitude of the British and their participation in its maintenance. Below, I analyse the representational practices Smith makes use of to achieve these ends, focusing first on how he exonerates the British from the political cesspool of apartheid's most stringent measures, and then by providing an account of how he finds an excuse in black political attitudes and reactions to subscribe to the perpetuation of the selfsame apartheid system he presents as a form of unacceptable intolerance and discrimination.

14.2. Exonerating the British

In Smith's Courtney saga, apartheid is an Afrikaner construct. He follows its creation from its supposed origins in the Boers' belief in their exclusive ownership of the South African territory which was given to them by God "as the promised land flowing with milk and honey." (*Sword* 36)⁷ He focuses on how this belief affected the Boers' perception of the British, who, with their political and economic supremacy, had turned the Boers into "squatters in the land that their fathers had wrested from the savages and the wilderness at the point of their long muzzle-loading guns." (*Sword* 36) He particularly highlights the resulting resentment the Boers harboured against the British and any other powerful social group in the country, especially the Jews. He explains how this resentment provided them with a political agenda that resulted from an awakening of nationalist consciousness and the need to erect an Afrikaner front, which would include the pure-blooded remnants of the scattered Boer communities, against the British.

⁷ In *Birds of Prey* and *Monsoon*, Smith depicts seventeenth-century Boers living in the Cape colony as racists, never allowing blacks to penetrate the walls surrounding the colony, using blacks as slaves and mistreating them on a regular basis.

In Smith's account, therefore, the Afrikaner politicisation process is based on hatred for the British and a desire to regain absolute power over South African political life, which, they assumed, belonged to them as a birth right. The aims of Hertzog's National Party and, in particular, that of the militant secret societies created by extremist Afrikaners, the *Broederbond* and the *Ossewa Brandwag*, therefore, were "to gain control of every facet of [South African life], from the minds of the young to the machinery of justice and government, and to prefer their members above all consideration of merit or worth." (*Sword* 157) Inspired by Hitler and "his gang of political thugs," (*Sword* 144) Afrikaner Nationalist policies are presented as "the counterpart of the rising wave of National Socialism in Germany under Herr Hitler" (*Sword* 158) and are, therefore, violently racist. The *Ossewa Brandwag* is, for instance, described in the following terms:

Extreme right-wing nationalists, anti-Semitic, anti-black, blaming all the ills of their world on perfidious Albion, secret blood-oaths and midnight rallies, a sort of Neanderthal boy scout movement with *Mein Kampf* as its inspiration. (*Sword* 414)

The associations between Hitler's Nazism and Afrikaner policies is constantly highlighted in order to disqualify their validity. *Mein Kampf*, in fact, is assumed to include everything Afrikaners believe in and feel. Their objectives are the same: "to safeguard the existence and reproduction of [the Afrikaner] race and [the Afrikaner] people, the sustenance of [Afrikaner] children and the purity of [Afrikaner] blood, the freedom and independence of the father land." (*Sword* 460) This philosophy, which in itself bespeaks the Afrikaners' obsession with their race's supremacy to the detriment of the well-being of the other peoples in the country, is further discredited by the comments of British heroes who regard *Mein Kampf* as "a rat-bag of nightmares and obscenities, a manual of naked aggression and bigotry" (*Sword* 415) and Hitler's military advances in Europe as "the propagation of cancer" or "Genghis Khan's campaigns." (*Sword* 415)

Given the racist, anti-British and anti-black premises of Afrikaner nationalism, the impending victory of the National Party is predictably presented as "some fateful

cross-roads,” like “heading into a long dark tunnel, no means of escape, no way of stopping it,” (*Sword* 616) or as “a new dictatorship, founded in blood and violence, which has upon it the stench of immense evil.” (*Sword* 305) Already on 25 May 1948, a day before polling in the general election, Manfred addresses a large crowd in the Dutch Reformed Church Hall in Stellenbosch, the intellectual centre of Afrikanerdom. In his speech, the dreadful apartheid concept and vision is formulated for the first time and the objectives of the National Party underlined, namely, “to ensure the survival of the pure untainted bloodlines of [the] *Volk*,” guarantee the separate development of the different races, prevent the nation from becoming “peopled by a coffee-coloured race of half-bred mongrels” and “disenfranchise those black and coloured people who are already registered on the voters’ roll.” (*Sword* 615) After the NP victory, apartheid becomes a reality as the Afrikaner government sets its dreadful network in motion; cuts the ties with Britain by becoming an independent republic; (*Rage* 504) withdraws the country’s application for continued membership of the Commonwealth; and begins to pass stringent legislation designed to exile blacks from every conceivable sphere of human existence. Smith highlights that apartheid is solely conceived by Afrikaners, manufactured by Afrikaner scholars, and designed to dictate the fate of the black population “through [a] monumental framework of interlocking laws and regulations.” (*Fox* 206) Apartheid is presented as a system of discrimination, oppression and violence and it is viewed negatively. Thus, apartheid emerges as a “manifestation of [...] grotesque racial bigotry;” (*Rage* 436) Boers as “the band of the most evil men that Africa had ever spawned” for they are the “supreme architects of misery and suffering and oppression;” (*Rage* 78) South Africa under apartheid as a country in “a state of emergency” with “the police above the law, without appeal to the courts;” (*Rage* 10) and apartheid policies as “merely a device for grabbing the whole pie” (*Rage* 54) so that Afrikaners can be and “shall remain the masters.” (*Rage* 264)

Apartheid, all in all, and as I have emphasised in chapter 11, is presented as an evil monster of Frankenstein-proportions devised as an attempt to guarantee the supremacy of a supposedly super-human and omnipotent white race by marginalising, oppressing and humiliating black people. Now, Smith’s British heroes are subsumed

within the apartheid superstructure, forced by geographical and political circumstances to fare under the yoke of white racism and even participate in it. And yet, it is essential that the hero maintains his moral integrity for the adventure formula to work. Heroes are the upholders of morality and fighters of oppression; our degree of identification with them depends on the empathy we feel with them and the causes they defend.⁸ Given our obsessively Politically Correct state of affairs, racist perceptions of the Other are condemned in western societies. We are living in a postcolonial world, a world that has witnessed the large-scale disintegration of old absolutes, the emergence of anti-imperialist nationalisms and the independence of colonies that had been under imperial control. We nurture the idea that we have exiled prejudice from our minds; that nobody is discriminated against on grounds of race, colour, nationality or ethnic origin; and, of course, we abhor apartheid and its racist policies.

Smith seems to be aware of the detrimental effect an overtly racist hero would have on his readership and, consequently, goes to considerable lengths to disentangle his white British heroes from the apartheid project and its racist assumptions, which he seemingly condemns. Consequently, and without allowing his heroes to lose the upper hand, he presents them as condescendingly paternalistic, benign father figures, deeply concerned about and affected by the distressful situation in which the blacks live in the country. They are the benefactors of the black population who, without them, would be helpless victims of racist policies beyond their control. Essentially non-racist, they are the defenders, protectors and friends of blacks and, conveniently, they try to gain the readers' approval by disapproving of apartheid and establishing friendship connections with (worthy) blacks.

Thus, white heroes develop strong affective links with their coloured servants: Sean I with Mbejane, Mark with Pungushe, Michael I with Sangane, Sean Courtney II with Job, Matatu and Shadrach, Hal and Tom with Aboli. They love them dearly and are even "closer than brothers, or lovers." (*Die* 55) Their affection is so strong that they even save their lives on various occasions, even risking their own lives to do so.

⁸ see chapter 3, section 3.2.10.

Sean I for instance, saves Mbejane's life twice (*Lion* 152-153; *Thunder* 233) and makes sure that, when he is injured, he is well-taken care of, even if this means having to contend with racist doctors who would not consent to treat a 'Kaffir' were it not for a little violent exertion on the hero's part. (*Lion* 314) The love they feel for their personal assistants is not exclusive but it is made extensive to all their home servants and workers for "a true gentleman treats those beneath his station, black or white, old or young, man or woman, with consideration and courtesy," (*Sword* 23) and, after all, servants are "part of the family." (*Fox* 17) With this philosophy in mind, the white heroes condescendingly stop to greet, talk or make jokes with their black servants or workers who "[grin] with huge gratification at being singled out." (*Sword* 44) They organise parties for them or allow them to join in in family celebrations and distribute presents among them. (*Thunder* 462) Field workers benefit from "incentive payment scheme[s]" (*Thunder* 471) and extraordinarily good and faithful servants are given additional perks: a woman whose husband dies trying to protect Sean I's wattle plantation from a fire is given twenty choice head of cattle from Sean I's herds to take with her to her father's *kraal*; and Mbejane and his son Sangane are granted a hundred choice acres of land for they have been "faithful and beloved retainer[s] of the Courtney family." (*Rage* 175-176) All in all, the Courtneys guarantee their servants and field workers' subsistence and ensure they are well-treated. Their standard of living is maintained under their white masters' protection. As Bella puts it with reference to the servants at Weltevreden:

It's not as though they are badly treated. Just think about Nanny and Klonkie and Gamiel and all our people at Weltevreden. [...] They are a damned sight better off than most of the whites living in this country. (*Fox* 103)

The Courtneys are also lenient paymasters and make sure their workers on their mines are properly treated and receive more than just minimum facilities. The Silver River Mine, for instance, is a worker's paradise. Black workers are not allocated to the traditional rows of barracks but are provided with neat cottages for the senior black staff and spacious and pleasant bachelor quarters that resemble "more [...] motels than institutions to house and feed the five thousand [recruited] tribesmen." There are also "soccer fields and cinemas and a shopping complex for the

black employees, and between the buildings [are] green lawns and trees.” (*Rage* 449) Furthermore, blacks are paid “well above the going rate for the job” (*Rage* 87) and they are allowed to participate in “massive training programme[s]” for the Courtneys invest huge amounts of money in “employee education and job training.” (*Rage* 88) Workers sometimes get “a bit or miners’ pthisis” because the “dust gets in their lungs and turns to stone,” so men “die and are crippled;” yet “it takes ten years to build up in the lungs” and the Courtneys “give them or their widows, a good pension.” (*Sword* 105)

Mining has always been central to South Africa’s expansion. Black men are at the core of its labour force at the heart of the economy thousands of feet underground. Endlessly exploited by their white employers and condemned to a subterranean and a compound existence, blacks are not the beneficiaries of the wealth they generate, which is mostly deposited in the leafy suburbs of South Africa’s towns. Many people make fortunes on the mines, only their skin colour is not black. Smith, however, extricates his heroes from any of the blame and the guilt for the participation in this abusive labour system, first, as I have just showed, by highlighting how well they treat their black employees, but most importantly by underlining their philosophy about mining and the wealth it generates. To start with, the mines benefit both blacks and whites, “providing work for tens of thousands” so that capital “flow[s] into [the] country.” (*Sword* 319) And secondly, the mine-generated wealth under British white control is presented as the most effective weapon for fighting apartheid.

The Courtneys, as I have explained in chapter 10, section 10.4.2, oppose the relentless exploitation of blacks under a system that “reserves power and privilege to a hereditary minority, a system which suppresses the free-market principles of labour and goods.” (*Fox* 420) They believe they must give black people “a piece of the pie,” (*Rage* 441) for, if they do not do so, they expose themselves to “bloody revolution” (*Rage* 54) since the “truly dangerous man is one with nothing to lose.” (*Rage* 441) They consider apartheid “a primitive feudal system” (*Fox* 420) and uphold the principle that “the only way out of the dilemma of southern Africa is through the education and upliftment of [...] the blacks, and by the creation of wealth.” (*Fox* 420)

Thus, they are “eager to advance blacks and coloureds to managerial positions” for “bringing all sections of [the South African] community to prosperity and responsibility is the only recipe for long-term peace and harmony in [the] country.” (Fox 474) By defending wealth-creation as an essential anti-apartheid tool, readers are manipulated to forgive the Courtneys’ wealth and turn a blind eye to the means that were used in South Africa to secure this wealth.

The Courtneys also participate in South African politics⁹ as members of Smuts’ South African Party, of the United Party and of the National Party. Their support for Smuts’ policies hardly needs to be defended in the saga for, as I have mentioned in chapter 11, section 11.2.2, Smuts’ ideas of equal development for blacks and whites coincide with those of the Courtneys’. Smuts recognised the primacy of ensuring favourable conditions for the gold-mining industry as the foundation for a modern state, and the necessity to “give all of [the people], black, white and brown, a place and a share.” (Sparrow 326) He was also a man who could guarantee “order and direction and security” (Sparrow 349) and who disapproved of separate development. After Smuts’ death, the Courtneys support the United Party, which was largely English and associated with mining. The United Party, however, William Beinart explains, “did not prove a parliamentary threat” for “Afrikaner nationalism increasingly became a major force in fleshing out the contours of the [country’s] body politic.”¹⁰ As the National Party gained increasing political ascendancy, the United Party lost force and was eventually turned into ‘the opposition’ to mainstream Afrikaner policies; United Party ministers were the liberal back-benchers struggling to maintain the moneyed interests of the white British population under a disguise of righteous moral concern for the destinies of the black peoples in Africa. Given the Unionists’ lack of political ‘stamina’, or rather, power, Shasa Courtney decides to align himself with Afrikaners and accept a parliamentary seat for the National Party. Shasa’s change of political affiliation could be interpreted as treason motivated by personal political ambition, not to say as a demonstration of the underlying racism of the British by giving assent to the apartheid policies. Nonetheless, Smith, once more, makes sure he provides Shasa

⁹ see chapter 10.

¹⁰ William Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa*, 75.

with a righteous motivation; in order to exonerate Shasa and the British for their co-operation with Afrikaners in the construction of the apartheid building, his acceptance of a National Party parliamentary seat is presented as a way to change the world, an opportunity to wield power “like a bright sword against the demons that [plague] [the South African] people and [their] land.” (*Sword* 319) Changing sides is never presented as a betrayal to Shasa’s original objectives. Shasa truly has “the interests of all the people at heart” and is “especially concerned with improving the lot of the black and underprivileged sections.” (*Rage* 436) By joining the Afrikaners, in fact, he can become “an important moderating influence in the high councils of the National Party” and undermine their racist policies from within. (*Rage* 436)

All in all, British heroes are presented as non-racist benefactors, the “white knights of the capitalist system.” (*Fox* 419) They never attempt to grant blacks the opportunity to participate in the political arena since this would mean “the end of us and white civilisation in the land.” (*Rage* 119) But at least they protect the well-being of the black population and encourage the emergence of a black middle class in order to pre-empt the objectives of black revolutionaries. Furthermore, blacks would not even make good politicians. Unlike the British, who understand the workings of democracy based on the idea that “the interests of the minority must be safeguarded,” (*Rage* 92) blacks, according to Smith, know only one principle: “winner takes all - and let the minority go to the wall.” (*Rage* 93) Granting the franchise to blacks would only result in another “Chaka ruling [South Africa], black judges and a black police force working for a black dictator.” (*Rage* 54) And this is hardly an acceptable prerogative in Smith’s diegesis.

14.3. Blacks’ assimilated consent

After consistently exonerating the British for the mighty apartheid superstructure, Smith endeavours to defend its maintenance, suitability and permanence in South Africa. In his account of South African history, the British are certainly *not* the artificers of apartheid. Quite the opposite; they are the upholders of

the rights of black people and firm supporters and protectors of their well-being. Yet, their best endeavours are consistently undermined by the feudal, old-fashioned, restrictive Afrikaner policies, without which blacks would grow and prosper under the benign tutelage of their British guardians. However, and in spite of its drawbacks, white supremacy, even under apartheid, is not absolutely detrimental to blacks. In fact, they willingly forsake tribal alliances and follow the white man in his endeavours. In one of the exchanges between Sean I and one of his Zulu servants, we read the following:

‘You would come with me when you know that I have the Tagathi on me?’ He used the word for witchcraft. ‘You could follow me knowing that behind me I leave a spoor of dead men and sorrow?’

‘*Nkosi*,’ Hlubi was grave as he answered. ‘Something always dies when the lion feeds - and yet there is meat for those who follow him.’ (*Lion* 389)

Here, in a nutshell, is epitomised the attitude of blacks as portrayed in the novels. They are subdued beings, eager to acquiesce, consent and ultimately conform to the white order the white hero stands for, willing and well-disposed to accept the spoor of dead men and sorrow white ‘lions’ leave behind, and feeding on the left-overs after the whites have devoured the juiciest and tastiest bits. One after another, black assistants place their lives in the hands of white men. Mbejane relinquishes his own king, Cetewayo, for he killed Mbejane’s father; likens some Zulus to jackals and decidedly joins forces with his master, Sean I, to kill Cetewayo’s impis since, he acknowledges, “they are not my people.” (*Lion* 146-147) Pungushe, a “Zulu of royal blood,” similarly follows Mark for he is “a mighty warrior who has slain great multitudes of the king’s enemies in the war beyond the sea;” (*Sparrow* 480) on the grounds that they are both “brothers of the spear,” (*Sparrow* 481) Pungushe willingly puts his bushcraft and tracking skills at the service of the white man. Job, a mighty Matabele - a direct descendant of “King Lobengula, son of great Mzilikazi” and thus belonging to the “royal Zulu line” (*Die* 78) - and a well-educated one on the side - he holds a first degree in Politics, History and Social Anthropology and a Masters from the Brown College in Chicago - voluntarily adopts a “Plantation Niger Mode” in front of Sean II’s safari clients, calls Sean II ‘*Bwana*’ and ‘*Nkosi*’ and “[acts] out the charade of the bygone colonial era;” (*Die* 78) this is, in fact, “what the clients expect”

(*Die* 78) and Sean II needs him to pay lip service to the racist expectations of the safari customers. And Aboli, to mention another example, is devoted to the Courtneys “like a faithful dog;” (*Birds* 256) although he is of noble descent - the twin brother of the Monomatapa, the King of the Amadoda - he does not want to return to his people for he considers Hal his chief and acknowledges that his “life now is linked to a new destiny.” (*Birds* 482)

Blacks, therefore, accept subservience naturally and find comfortable positions within this subservience. The extent of their consenting slavishness is such so as to regard past colonial times nostalgically as ‘the Great Good Times’ of order and happiness, as can be seen when Tara tries to impinge revolutionary ideas onto Vicky’s, Moses Gama’s wife-to-be, still innocent mind and Vicky exclaims:

Life must have been so simple in those days, my grandfather and my father were hereditary chieftains and yet they were satisfied to spend their lives subservient to a white man, and strangely they loved that man and he, in his way, seemed to love them. I wonder if theirs was not the better way. (*Rage* 71-72)

This view of ‘past times’ as ‘better times’ is further emphasised by presenting the happy situation of blacks who, still at present, put their destinies in the hands of ‘colonial paymasters’, like the workers at Weltevreden who have Shasa, their master, “look[ing] upon them as an extension of his family” and spending time “with them listening to their problems and worries” so effectively that they regard him as “their patriarch.” (*Rage* 507)

Blacks are not only content under the benevolent rule of colonial white supervision. The general framework of white supremacy that so characterises South Africa, even under apartheid, is depicted as beneficial and convenient for blacks. Smith cannot afford to destabilise the political status quo for undermining it would put hegemonic white masculinity at risk. Consequently, and in spite of Smith’s apparent misgivings about apartheid, he has his blacks ultimately conforming to the white order. They even find avenues of advancement and improvement under apartheid. There are blacks, he explains, that characterised by “determination and fortitude [...] even in the face of the most adverse circumstances” and with “courage and ingenuity

far beyond the average,” “flourish and rise high above the obstacles and pitfalls with which their path is strewn;” these men, “through business acumen and natural ability and hard work” have been able to “[wrest] material success from the hands of their white political masters” and are now living in affluence in houses that “[would grace] the elegant suburbs of Sandton and La Lucia or Constantia where their white counterparts [live].” (*Fox* 206-207) Blacks also acknowledge the benefits of civilisation that the white man has brought to this country; in fact, they believe, without whites “[blacks] would still be living in grass huts.” (*Rage* 540) And very importantly, blacks even defend apartheid, which they prefer to an uncertain future controlled by black politicians.

This latter attitude is craftily articulated through Hendrick Tabaka. Smith plays on one of the most deeply-set fears of the western white man: that of having wealth and property, won through hard work and determination, grabbed by the mob, a discontented and resentful mass of people that, incapable of rising above their poverty level, covet the wealth of those who have managed to obtain it. Hendrick is a contented man; his belly is round and full, and he has many sons and herds of cattle; (*Rage* 308) he has stores and *shebeens*, bakeries and reservations that belong to him, money in the post office savings books and in the white man’s banks, and cash that he keeps hidden in many secret places. (*Rage* 307) He is not free, but then he is “not sure what free really mean[s].” (*Rage* 308) Well-satisfied as he is, Hendrick beholds revolution with dread; he does not want his possessions to be distributed among ‘the people’ for, after all, he says, “The people are cattle, lazy and stupid, what have they done to deserve the things for which I have worked so long and hard?” (*Rage* 307) In his opinion, revolution would only mean “his cosy existence taking [a] painful toss.” (*Rage* 308) If “the gods and the lightnings intervened and by chance [revolutionary forces] destroyed the white man,” he assumes, “there would come a darkness and a time without law and protection that would be a hundred times worse than the white man’s oppression.” (*Rage* 465) Moses may consider the rage of the people a “beautiful and sacred thing,” (*Rage* 308) but Hendrick disapproves: “Rage makes a man sick [...]. It spoils his appetite for life and keeps him from sleep.” (*Rage* 465) Rage bears the seeds of destruction and leaves a bloody track of chaos and darkness as it stirs and

moves. Hendrick, all in all, conforms to the white man's idea that rage only means chaos and darkness and that if this rage eventually destroyed the white man, as Shasa Courtney puts it, the only things South Africans would inherit would be "the ashes of a once beautiful land." (*Rage* 627)

In Smith's fiction, therefore, South Africa under apartheid is still a good place to live for blacks who know how to take advantage of the circumstances and do not oppose resistance. The mighty apartheid structure, after all, and as blacks admittedly say, is too strong to be destroyed; the white men have "teeth [...] as swords" (*Sword* 502) and forces "obdurate as granite;" (*Rage* 221) so trying to oppose them would amount to "throwing pebbles at a mountain" or "fight[ing] the lion with bare hands." (*Rage* 541) Whites have caused much oppression but have also been the artificers of progress: they claimed the land and worked it; "they built the cities and laid the railways and sank the mine shafts" and other things that the black man alone "was incapable of doing." (*Rage* 390) In South Africa, all in all, "the material existence of the black people [...] is five or six times better than any other on the African continent." In this country, "[m]ore is spent on black education, black hospitals and black housing, per capita, than in any other African country." (*Rage* 250) Furthermore, black men can even eat meat every day; earn from five hundred to two thousand rand a month; (*Die* 419) buy food, "shoes and suits and ties, transistor radios and dark glasses;" (*Die* 419) and even own motor cars. Of course they do not have the vote for "only pale faces get the vote," (*Die* 419) but who cares about a vote anyway for, as Alphonso puts it, "Vote, what is a vote? [...] you can't eat a vote. You can't dress in a vote, or ride to work on it. For two thousand rand a month and a full belly you can have my vote." (*Die* 419-420)

14.4. Apartheid and black violence

In the Courtney saga, apartheid is not presented as detrimental to blacks for they are happy under white tutelage, contented in containment. Their comfortable existence in subservience in itself justifies the maintenance of the system and

demonstrates the superior strengths of the white man. Smith, however, uses another strategy to support the continuity of the apartheid framework. Although undeniably racist, apartheid is justifiable on the grounds of the terror that would follow if blacks gained control of the situation. Smith manipulates the readers' sympathies by providing an account of the dreadful practices black revolutionaries make use of to fight the system and the chaos that would follow if they eventually defeated whites. He leaves no room for anti-racist condemnation on the part of the readers. After his vivid depictions of the revolutionary activities of blacks and the nature of their alliances, we are ready to excuse apartheid, condemn black activists and even give our assent to the stringent measures apartheid employed to keep the black masses subjugated.

To start with, the black population is not presented as intrinsically politically-minded. The miners, for example, are "simple souls with not the least vestige of political awareness" (*Sword* 371) and the "vast bulk of [...] black peoples are happy and law-abiding [...] disciplined and accustomed to authority [for] their own tribal laws are every bit as strict and circumscribing as the laws [whites impose]." (*Rage* 117) They are "simple ignorant black folk" (*Rage* 447) who, left on their own, would turn a blind eye, "faces closed, eyes unseeing," (*Sword* 342) to oppression for, after all, they can still be happy and affluent under apartheid, like the Cape coloureds who "[have] achieved a standard of affluence surpassing that of many of their white neighbours." (*Sword* 501) Their lack of political sophistication can be appreciated during the different demonstrations they take part in. For instance, the crowd that gathers in Greenmarket Square in the centre of Cape Town to protest against the racially-oriented bills introduced by Malan's National Party in 1939 are peaceful and orderly. The band of leaders at the front of the demonstration, headed by Dr. Goollam Gool, march the people assembled towards the parliament building and the ranks of the procession are swelled as many blacks, the idlers and the curious, join them so that they are followed by a column of five thousand. Now, Smith makes haste to underline, "almost half of them [are] there for the fun and the excitement, rather than for any political motives." (*Sword* 503) Furthermore, they have never intended to cause problems and when a police inspector "[wags] his finger like a schoolmaster,"

scolding them in a friendly manner for their mischievous behaviour, “the crowd [laughs],” for “this [is] the kind of paternal treatment which everybody [understands].” (*Sword* 504) Demonstrators are similarly introduced as naive and obedient during one of the arrest campaigns in New Brighton; when a police inspector scolds them like a schoolmaster addressing an unruly class and wags his finger at them, the demonstrators “[hang] their heads and [grin] shamefacedly” for “here [is] the father figure, stern but benevolent, and they [are] the children, mischievous but at the bottom good-hearted.” (*Rage* 204) Blacks, therefore, are described as intrinsically childish and naive, not really involved in political activity and obediently following the instructions of their paternalistic masters when ‘scolded into harmony and plenty’.

However, the black population is manipulated by a few Messianic leaders who, backed up by organisations such as the South African Communist Party, the African National Congress, the Trotsky National Liberation League and the African Peoples Organisation, (*Sword* 502) incite blacks to revolt. They constitute a “small [but] vicious group” who orchestrate “a groundswell of hatred” in South Africa and who “[brainwash] an entire generation of young peoples around the world to regard [white South Africans] as monsters who must be destroyed at all costs.” (*Fox* 385) This “new generation of trouble-makers who have grown up amongst the native peoples” (*Rage* 117) have a frightening political agenda for they “have no respect for the old orders of society which [white] forefathers so carefully built up,” and they want to tear down the system. (*Rage* 117) These agitators are progressively identified as young members of the ANC and the PAC who have given up peaceful negotiations and want to resort to sabotage, destruction of property and other violent means to achieve their ends. They are qualified as “bringers of darkness,” (*Rage* 117), “evil” or as “a nest of snakes breeding in [South Africa’s] little paradise.” (*Rage* 119) By presenting ANC and PAC leaders as evil destroyers and manipulators, Smith discredits the ANC and the PAC. He furthermore provides a justification for the use of force against them since, after all, their plans are dreadful indeed. What they are offering is “the sloughing off of the white domination;” “a destruction of the old ways, a denial of the customs and orders of society;” “a world turned upside down, a chaos in which old values and proven codes [would be] discarded with nothing to replace them except wild words;” (*Rage*

181) “anarchy and the same savagery of Africa that rent the land before [...] whites arrived;” (*Rage* 412) and, all in all, “[taking] this land by its heels and [setting] it upon its head.” (*Rage* 467)

Their objectives alone render black revolutionaries despicable, but Smith resorts to other strategies to further manipulate our sympathies against them so that the instigators come alive as monsters that need to be destroyed before they turn the beautiful South African landscape into a world of chaos, anarchy and savagery. To start with, Smith underlines that black agitators make use of force to guarantee that reluctant blacks participate in their struggle. A senior Zulu boss ‘with a misplaced sense of duty’ who refuses to become a member of the Buffaloes (a group of rogue agitators created to spread revolutionary ideas around townships) ‘accidentally’ falls into one of the mine chutes in *Goldi* so that his body is “ground to a muddy paste by the tons of jagged rock that [rumble] over it.” (*Sword* 362) One of the company police *indunas* who also resists the blandishments of the brotherhood is “found stabbed to death in his sentry box,” while yet another is “burned to death in the kitchens.” (*Sword* 363) In order to turn Drake’s Farm into the Buffaloes’ citadel, they erect new *shebeens* which they expect to use to recruit new members for their cause; the opposition *shebeens*, on the other hand, are burned to the ground, their proprietors burned with them. (*Sword* 368) The young *Umkhonto we Sizwe* crusaders prepare boycotts, strikes and work stoppages. In order to guarantee that their campaigns have a large following, they also resort to violence. Raleigh, for instance, goes to Evaton with a small task force in order to enforce the decrees of the ANC; they attack the black workers in the bus queues who are trying to get to their places of employment or to go shopping for their families, beating them “with *sjamboks*, the long leather quirts, and with their fighting sticks.” (*Rage* 466) A black-leg bus driver who is attempting to drive his bus for he has children to feed, to mention another example, is dragged into the bushes beside the road and beaten up, then “left [...] lying in the dusty dry grass.” (*Rage* 484).

Secondly, black agitators are presented as upholders of ‘the-end-justifies-the-means’ principle. Moses Gama, for instance, is introduced in the narrative as the founder of the Buffaloes, a member of the ANC and its military wing - *Umkhonto we*

Sizwe - and as an opponent to Mandela, both intent on becoming the leaders of the ANC. Mandela disapproves of using violence against humans; he believes that peaceful demonstrations and campaigns unite black people; and defends the idea that acts of sabotage against government premises are enough to awaken the white man's conscience towards their objectives. Moses, however, treats him with scorn:

[Y]ou are as reluctant as an old woman and timid as a virgin. What kind of violence is this you propose - dynamiting a few telegraph poles, blowing up a telephone exchange? [...] Next you will blow up a public shit house and expect the Boers to come cringing to you for terms. (*Rage* 311)

Unlike Mandela, Moses and his followers believe that "freedom can only be won at the point of the gun," (*Rage* 192) through "killing and maiming and burning [...] [t]earing down and destroying," (*Rage* 75) and that "the revolution must be tampered and made strong in the blood of the masses." (*Rage* 192) Like the much deprecated and abhorred terrorist groups in western and non-western societies, black revolutionaries in South Africa do not hesitate to resort to assassination of both blacks and whites to further their interests for, in their opinion, their fight is a sacred war so they are all in the battlefield and, consequently, "those who die are either enemy casualties or courageous and honourable sacrifices. In war both are unavoidable, even desirable." (*Fox* 131) In fact, black revolutionaries are defined as terrorists who commit acts of violence against targets of a non-military nature even if there is "a high probability of injury or death being inflicted on innocent bystanders." (*Fox* 127) Their 'bloody' objectives result in many deaths indeed, and not all are enemy casualties; on the contrary, many innocents are sacrificed for the cause. Moses, for instance, uses children as front-liners in the different demonstrations he orchestrates since "they make the perfect soldiers for they question nothing and it takes no great physical strength to pull the trigger." Furthermore, "if an enemy strikes them down they become the perfect martyrs" for "the bleeding corpse of a child strikes horror and remorse into even the hardest heart." (*Rage* 189) After this demonstration of cynicism, even the bleeding-hearts, one assumes, should be ready to forgive the outcome of the Sharpeville events that result in the massacre of sixty-nine black demonstrators by the police; after all, their assassination is not caused by the police, but prepared beforehand by black leaders themselves.

Poqo (the armed wing of the PAC) leaders are similarly violence-oriented, if not more so. Poqo is presented as “an organisation of young fanatics already responsible for a number of vicious and brutal murders.” (*Rage* 460) This qualification is well-deserved in the saga, as the description of the events that take place in the little town of Paarl, in the Cape, demonstrate. Poqo march hundreds against the police station and, when driven back, they “[vent] their fury upon the civilian population, massacring two white women, one a girl of seventeen years.” In the Transkei, they “[attack] a road-party encampment and [murder] the white supervisor and his family in the most dreadful manner.” (*Rage* 461) But Poqo does not remain alone in the violence track. After Moses’ death, the ANC’s *Umkhonto we Sizwe* takes an even more violent turn as it begins its campaign of terror bombing. The effects of this campaign are likewise dreadful; they, for instance, explode a limpet mine in a South African supermarket on the last Friday of the month, pay-day for monthly workers, and create carnage since “the store [is] crowded with housewives and their offspring both black and white.” (*Die* 262) Other acts of terror include “[letting] off a few car bombs, [...] [putting] burning motor-car tyres around people’s necks” (*Fox* 555) and planning the massacre of hundreds of thousands of people. Their violent nature is particularly illustrated by the description of their aborted attempt to spray Cyndex gas from an aeroplane over the Rand Easter Show, an important fair attended by more than half a million people.¹¹

The fact that this attempt to gas a vast crowd is aborted, does not make it more acceptable. Smith makes sure he provides a graphic description of the effects the gas has on people to bring to the fore the magnitude of their brutality. The symptoms are the following: they commence with “a sensation of tightness in the chest and difficulty

¹¹ As I have explained in chapter 10, section 10.3.2, Shasa is in fact the one who develops Cyndex gas in order to provide South Africa with an effective weapon to protect the country from foreign interference. Shasa approves of testing Cyndex gas on monkeys in order to find out how Cyndex gas works. Now, Shasa never plans to use the gas on people; the gas is only developed as a deterrent measure in case foreign countries tried to invade and take control over South Africa. In contrast, black revolutionaries plan to use the gas on innocent people in order to achieve power and create chaos in South Africa. The vivid description of the effects the gas has on people renders black rebels even more evil; after all, they are the ones who, moved by selfish purposes and ambition, would not mind massacring more than half a million innocent people in the most dreadful manner.

of breathing, followed by copious running of the nose and a burning, stinging pain in the eyes;" as these symptoms become more intense, there is heavy salivation and frothing of the mouth, sweating and trembling, nausea and belching, and a sensation of heartburn and stomach cramps that lead swiftly to "projectile vomiting and explosive diarrhoea." These niceties are followed by "involuntary urination and bleeding from the mucous membrane of the eyes, nose, mouth and genitalia" and eventually by paralysis and convulsions. After all that suffering, subjects die of a "total collapse of the respiratory system." (*Fox* 464) As if the description of these effects were not convincing enough, Smith illustrates them on test subjects, baboons that have been shaved to resemble human subjects more closely and that are depicted as "pathetically vulnerable-looking." (*Fox* 484) It takes Smith three pages to portray their death in vivid detail and the horror it produces on the beholders. After this chamber-of-horrors depiction of what happens to subjects that have been sprayed with Cyndex, we cannot but condemn the 'depraved black monsters' who attempt to use the gas on no less than half a million innocent people.

Finally, Smith uses yet another strategy to manipulate his readers' sympathies against blacks. In the saga, all black terrorists are communists, assisted in their endeavours by members of the South Africa Communist Party such as Joe Cicero and Marcus Archer. The former, Cicero, is also a colonel in the Russian KGB responsible for African policies and a chief of the staff of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. All black ANC and PAC members are presented as hard-core Bolsheviks who regard Lenin as "not a man, but a god come down to earth" (*Sword* 340) and mother Russia as "a true ally of the oppressed peoples of this world." (*Rage* 193) The black revolutionaries' political affiliation would not deserve condemnation in itself were it not for Smith's presentation of communists in the saga. Even in the description of an early communist revolt against Smuts in the Johannesburg area of Fordsburg, communists, white this time, are presented as cruel, mendacious, resentful, dirty and brutal "bomb-throwing monster[s]" (*Sparrow* 80) who resort to bloody revolution to bring about their objectives (*Sparrow* 299) against the will of the "duly elected representatives of the people." (*Sparrow* 163) In Smith's perception being a communist amounts to being "the great Antichrist," (*Fox* 88) and all communists are "a pack of Marxist savages"

(*Fox* 103) who “[blow] women and children to pieces” and cause “blood and death [...] [j]ust like the Irish.” (*Fox* 103-104) By likening communism to terrorism and then applying the term communist to all black revolutionaries, Smith consolidates the image of blacks as blood-thirsty terrorists and discredits communism on the side.

Finally, to further highlight the evil nature of communism and its effects in South Africa, Smith subsumes ANC and PAC terror campaigns within a broader communist plot, the Red Terror Plot, orchestrated by the Russian KGB and aided by Cuban guerrillas in an effort to plunge Africa in general and South Africa in particular into a world of violence and destruction and destroy the social fabric of the continent just as had happened in Russia. The KGB agents, particularly Joe Cicero and Ramon de Santiago y Machado (who succeeds Cicero as colonel-general in the African department of the KGB responsible for the African continent below the equator), are depicted as racists who regard ANC blacks as ‘monkeys’ rather than ‘civilised human beings,’ (*Fox* 343) but who use them because they are easily manipulated and ready to resort to violence in order to destroy South Africa. Their objectives are far-removed from the communist utopia of “opportunity and a share of life for every man” (*Sparrow* 299) or “the perfect dawn of universal socialism and brotherly love.” (*Fox* 563) Their ideals are corrupted by ambition. Castro, for instance, decides to help Ramon by sending his specially trained guerrillas not to further the cause of communism but to gain control over a continent that would make him “a statesman of world influence and power.” (*Fox* 256) Ramon, on the other hand, is a crazed megalomaniac who believes only in power and political mastery and sees himself as a prophet or as a creator, like Mozart or Michaelangelo; only his creation surpasses that of these artists; he uses land and millions of human beings as his raw materials and then mixes them on his palette and “in blood and flames and gunfire [fashions and works] them into [his] masterpiece.” (*Fox* 334) Furthermore, and to conclude, KGB agents are prepared to sacrifice human lives to achieve their objectives, which do not even consider the possibility of granting blacks political independence. They only want to establish a puppet government controlled by Russia once the revolutionary elements of the continent have been eliminated. This is what they do, for instance, in Ethiopia, where they silence the voice of dissent, eliminate all possible opposition and

establish a puppet government controlled by a general in the security police of the German Democratic Republic, skilled in “the enforcement of pragmatic democracy on a recalcitrant population.” (*Fox* 333)

14.5. Other pro-apartheid strategies

Set against the violent anti-apartheid plots orchestrated by KGB agents and conducted by ANC freedom-fighters, and against the uncertain and chaotic future that would follow if white rule was finally overthrown, apartheid emerges as benevolent government that guarantees the placid, although segregated, comfort of whites and blacks alike. Throughout the saga Smith highlights that South Africa under apartheid is a place of safety where the rule of law still applies and “men [do] not have to walk each moment in the shadow of death.” (*Die* 448) He does not deny that apartheid politicians are racists and the legislation they implement stringent and segregationist, but, at least, it prevents “lawlessness and terror” (*Sword* 363) and allows “full opportunity for each and every group within its own racial community.” (*Rage* 289) And yet, this paradise of order and peace is in jeopardy, threatened by “terrorists and revolutionaries,” who, motivated by hatred not only against white assassins “but against them all, every white face and every bloody white hand,” (*Fox* 35) want to “destroy [white people] and [their] world.” (*Rage* 574) Smith’s negative presentation of black revolutionaries serves him the purpose of invalidating their objectives and undermining their claims for freedom. Also, their belief in violence, destruction and murder to attain these objectives justifies the government’s use of violence against them, the police charging against demonstrators, the passing of increasingly stringent laws and banning orders and the need to use forceful measures “to protect [the country] from hatred.” (*Fox* 387)

In Smith’s saga, therefore, apartheid is acceptable as a protection against internal hatred. Yet, Smith relies on more than this justification to defend the adequacy of apartheid in the country and uses three other strategies to subscribe to its maintenance and perpetuation. To start with, the situation in South Africa, he defends,

is not so distressful for blacks as people abroad believe. In his opinion, the media purposefully distorts events. Reporters, motivated more by personal ambition and a desire to gain the acclaim of a public craving for sensationalist accounts of barbaric practices in Africa than by any attempt at verisimilitude, systematically manipulate events and provide biased versions of African and South African life. As Shasa puts it, “the vultures of the international press are [...] eager to show us in the worst possible light, and [...] to distort and misrepresent our policy of apartheid.” (*Rage* 406) The introduction of Kitty Godolphin, a glamorous American reporter, provides a clear example of how the media manipulates reality. Kitty’s job, Smith explains, is “to capture reality” only that “when reality doesn’t conform to [her] view of it, [she] bribe[s] somebody with a Rolex watch to alter it.” (*Rage* 374) She is not motivated by “concern over the fate of the black masses” and she shoots images of killing and screaming because they make good footage and sell advertising time. When violence does not ensue, she easily fixes it, giving it “a little shove.” (*Rage* 252) By clipping unwanted bits and pieces of her footage and by cutting in previously recorded material, Kitty manages to provide the effect expected by her audience. Her account of Moses’ funeral, for instance, is craftily manipulated to present him as a martyr, and proves to be very effective and successful indeed. It gains her promotion to head of NABS news and she becomes the highest-paid female editor in American television. Her promotion does not come from a realistic account of the events, though, but from her special treatment of what happened that turned her report into “the most gripping and horrifying ever shown on American television.” (*Rage* 623) After all, reality and truth is not what audiences want - they only want to be shocked and peace and order do not make news. The BBC’s Richard Dimbleby is another example of the reporter who manipulates events to create specific impressions. His report about Ethiopia, for example, is handled in such a way as to discredit Emperor Selassie and present him as unconcerned about the situation of poor people in that country:

With calculated malevolence he intercut scenes of famine and lingering death with those of feasting nobles dressed in gold lace and flowing white robes and the emperor seated at a board that groaned with rich food. [...] Dimbleby had an enormous following. The world took notice. (*Fox* 316)

Secondly, Smith explains that economic problems in South Africa, which lead to poverty and famine among the black population while whites become increasingly rich, are not caused by the apartheid government but are the direct outcome of foreign, especially American, interference. Americans are presented as political interlopers who try to direct the government of South Africa from abroad, even when they have so many problems in their own country as to disqualify themselves as valid advisors:

America, who should know better, racked by her own racial problems, the unnatural aspirations of the negroes they brought as slaves from Africa [...] wishes to dictate to us and divert us from the course we know is right. (*Rage* 36)

Americans, characterised by what Smith calls the “hysteria of America for [...] civil rights,” (*Rage* 506) disapprove of South Africa because of its racist government and, with the support of the United Nations, help black revolutionaries and magnify their attempts to disrupt white rule. By so doing, they propagandise an image of South Africa that is distorted. They present the country and the government as “tottering and on the brink of capitulating to the forces of communism and darkness [...] engulfed in despondency and anarchy, with black mobs burning and looting and white civilisation about to go up in flames.” (*Rage* 506-507) This in turn frightens off “businessmen and investors of the world” and, as a consequence, “the value of property [collapses] [...] and the stock market is at its lowest.” (*Rage* 506) Furthermore, the economic sanctions Americans set up against the South African government are highly detrimental to black people. By undermining the country’s economy in an attempt to overthrow white rule and “enforce their particular political vision,” (*Fox* 419) they are in fact “inflict[ing] starvation and misery upon millions of ordinary people.” (*Fox* 419) On the other hand, the sanction policies force American citizens to sell South African assets back to South Africans “at five cents in the dollar” and overnight, they create “two hundred multi millionaires [...], and every one of them [has] a white face.” (*Die* 48) Finally, economic sanctions and other anti-apartheid strategies directed by the “sanctimonious little bleeding hearts in the General Assembly of the United Nations” and Americans (*Fox* 419) ironically encourage the advance of the Red Terror Plot in Africa in general and South Africa in particular. While Americans, for instance, establish economic sanctions that threaten to “destroy the South African economy and

bring its government crashing down in ruins” and set up the arms boycott in an attempt to render “South Africa defenceless and vulnerable,” (*Fox* 20) communist armies prepare themselves to “step in and place [their] own surrogate government in power.” (*Fox* 242) The artificers of the Red Terror Plot, in fact, rely on sanctioners and prohibitionists for its success in the continent. They, for instance, plan to use foreign interference against South Africa to gain control over Angola. This country, after independence from Portugal, is left in the hands of the Red Admiral, Rosa Coutinho, charged with organising the popular elections to select a new African government. If elections take place, they will be won by Jonas Savimbi, who is not a Marxist and, consequently, not an acceptable leader for the Red Terror Plot orchestrators, who need manageable politicians they can manipulate. To prevent Savimbi from winning the elections, they instruct Coutinho to declare that it would be impractical to hold elections and to demand a transference of power to Agostinho Neto who, cruel, weak, devious and malleable, can be controlled by communist forces. Their only fear is South African intervention and they know the only way to prevent it is by furthering the anti-apartheid movement among American and European liberals so that the moment they cross the border it will be interpreted as just another of South Africa’s interventionist policies. They assume that when South African troops cross and prepare for an attack, there will be such an outcry against South African despotism that, in the face of hysterical world-wide condemnation, South African troops will be forced to retire, leaving the way free for the undisturbed advance of the Red Terror Plot.

Finally, Smith resorts to another strategy to justify apartheid. Smith glories in depicting failures in neighbouring black-ruled African states to show that South Africa is better off under white rule and to argue that, if whites do not retain control, South Africa will resemble the appalling situation now seen in independent black African countries. There is indeed, as Richard Peck phrases it, “a large element of truth in the observation that independent African states have not done well since independence.”¹² We are accustomed to daily news accounts of the wide range of problems in the continent, from tribalism to racism, to socialist fumbblings as communists dupe leaders

¹² Richard Peck, *A Morbid Fascination*, 27.

into thinking that socialism is the answer. We are, thus, predisposed to disapprove of African policies after independence and to follow the bloody advance of decolonisation with horror and smug, self-righteous contempt. Smith plays on our sympathies once again and delights in depicting independent African countries as dystopian¹³ to set off, by contrast, the advantages that the apartheid government in South Africa holds in store for blacks and whites alike.

The independent African countries beyond the South African frontier hardly present a bountiful outlook. Brief depictions or mentions of postcolonial Kenya, Congo, Algeria, Rhodesia, Ethiopia, Zambia, Angola, Nigeria, Uganda and Zaire in the saga provide a general image of “chaos and confusion and communism, murder and mayhem and Marxism.” (*Fox* 283) As these countries fall prey to mendacious and brutal Marxist leaders, good democratic principles vanish from view. The typical African government fills in the void left by the exodus of the colonial power and entrenches itself behind a barricade of AK47 assault rifles. It then declares a one-party system of government, which precludes any form of opposition and it nominates a presidential dictator for life. Democratic elections are out of the question and, since all Africans are “blatant tribalists” (*Die* 47) and various tribes live in the same political territories, leaders of different tribal affiliations naturally oppose the presidential dictator by starting tribal faction and guerrilla fighting, plunging the nation into “decade[s] of brutal civil war.” (*Fox* 314) Retribution and slaughter ensue, and are even desirable because, in Africa, “it is easier to kill people than to feed them.” (*Die* 345) Meanwhile, the only acceptable currency for moving about the country and

¹³ And not only independent African countries. Smith depicts South Africa as superior to even other, supposedly better countries in the world in an attempt to highlight that South Africa is in fact a paradise as compared with other countries, which are subsumed in disaster and mortal danger:

In America the system of credit has collapsed and trade with Europe and the rest of the world has come to a standstill. Armies of the poor and dispossessed roam aimlessly across the continent. [...] In Germany the Weimar Republic is collapsing after ruining the economy. One hundred and fifty billion Weimar marks to one of the old gold marks, wiping out the nation's savings. Now from the ashes has risen a new dictatorship, founded in blood and violence, which has upon it the stench of immense evil. [...] In Russia a ravening monster is murdering millions of his own countrymen. Japan is in the throes of anarchy. The military have run riot cutting down the nation's elected rulers, seizing Manchuria and slaughtering the unfortunate inhabitants by the hundreds of thousands, threatening to walk out of the League of Nations when the rest of the world protests. [...] There has been a run on the Bank of England, Great Britain forced off the Gold Standard, and from the vault of history the ancient curse of anti-Semitism has escaped once more and stalks the civilised world. (*Sword* 305)

obtaining basic necessities is bribery which we, western people, may regard as corruption, but in Africa is simply the only “universal and acceptable means of getting things done.” (*Die* 73) The continent does not have the economic means and the facilities to train and educate people, to modernise agriculture or to develop industry and commerce; consequently, Africans ravage the environment, which is devastated as “the wild game [is] decimated, the forests hacked down for fuel, the very earth abused by primitive agriculture and animal husbandry.” (*Die* 95) All in all, these “shining gem[s] of African socialism” (*Die* 116) are “confused, illogical,” interesting as only “a nightmare is interesting.” (*Die* 346) The predicament of the whole continent is one of desolation since Africa has been “overtaken by its own inherent savagery.” Once freed from the checks of colonialism “the peoples of Africa [are] rushing headlong, with almost suicidal abandon, towards their own destruction.” (*Die* 493) Trodden under the greedy rush for power by the “thoughtless hordes of the emerging nations, by the unbridled tribal rivalries and the lawlessness of this new age,” Africa becomes again “the dark continent.” (*Die* 95) Only this time, there is no ‘benign white aid’ to save it and keep things in check.

Smith does not only provide general comments on or brief analyses of the situation in different independent African countries in his saga. In fact, he devotes a whole instalment, *A Time to Die*, to illustrate the predominant situation in the continent through a detailed depiction of Moçambique after independence. His hero, Sean Courtney II, a great-grandson of Sean Courtney I, crosses the Zimbabwean border where he has a hunting concession, following the track of Tukurutela, a mythical bull elephant. Once in Moçambique, Sean II plunges into the restless tides of the deadly civil war that is tearing the country apart and becomes witness and narrator of the events there. His is the critical South African perspective. Coming as he does from a country where “the rule of law still [holds] sway,” he regards South Africa as “safety” and “home” (*Die* 448) and beholds the situation in Moçambique with dread and contempt. The same dread and contempt readers are expected to feel after reading about the horrors in this country.

Moçambique is presented as a colonial paradise before its independence in 1975. It had been a Portuguese colony for five hundred years and during that time it was “a reasonably happy and prosperous community,” (*Die* 116) “it all worked very well, as indeed did most colonial administrations, especially those of the British.” (*Die* 117) When the Portuguese were pushed out, they handed over to a Marxist dictator, Samora Machel, and his Frelimo party. His government was ruthless and ineffective and his rule was directly responsible for the emergence of an opposition front, the Renamo resistance. Now, in the novel, the country is swept by civil war as Frelimos and Renamos, both made up of a pretty merciless bunch of characters, fight for control over the area. Renamos are supposed to be the freedom-fighters against the inept and savage Frelimo government, but they are not a safe option. They are commanded by cruel men like General China, who is “a soldier of fortune, a turncoat, [...] a warlord taking advantage of the Moçambiquean chaos for his own private ends.” (*Die* 220) He does not even consider the possibility of holding democratic elections if he gains power for as he says, “I certainly have not fought so hard and so long [...] simply to hand [power] over to a bunch of illiterate peasants. [...] once we have the power it will remain safely in the right hands,” (*Die* 345) his own.

Moçambique is, therefore, in “chaos and confusion” (*Die* 96) and “in a state of flux.” (*Die* 453) The two armies are responsible for equal amounts of destruction, savagery, slaughter and carnage as they increasingly turn their fury on the civilian population. No one can even say which territory is held by the opposing forces and “which is a destruction area devastated equally by both sides.” (*Die* 448) Neither can they say whether the troops are Renamos or Frelimos - “both shoot the same bullets” (*Die* 118) and kill for any reason, “harbouring rebels, withholding information, hiding food, refusing the services of their women, any of those crimes, or none of them.” (*Die* 165) The only thing certain is that they are both providing the international media with “a Roman holiday of slaughter and torture which they [the media] blame upon Renamo and South Africa,” which they believe is helping Renamo troops. (*Die* 344-345)

The appalling situation of the country as a result of this civil war is vividly portrayed; once you cross the frontier there is “[n]othing but darkness;” you go into “the wasteland.” (*Die* 317) The villages are destroyed, the huts “burnt to the ground,” (*Die* 164) “skeletal and blackened by flames,” (*Die* 447) their populations massacred, otherwise they are deserted. The village of Dombe, for instance is depicted in these wastelandish terms:

[T]he village was merely a collection of twenty or so small buildings that had been long abandoned. The glass was broken from the window frames and the white-washed plaster had fallen from the adobe walls in leprous patches. Termites had devoured the roof timbers so that the corroded corrugated sheeting sagged from the roof. [...] The road [...] was dirt-surfaced and littered with rubbish and debris, weeds growing rankly in the unused ruts [...] thick with dead leaves, scraps of paper, discarded plastic bags and other rubbish. (*Die* 456-457)

What was cultivated land is now “gone back to the weed and bush” (*Die* 101) for the fields have not been tilled or planted for many seasons and are, thus, “thick with the rank secondary growth that invades abandoned cultivation in Africa.” (*Die* 447) Public facilities like railway lines, roads and electric schemes have been sabotaged. The economy is managed under the “well-known socialist principles of chaos and ruination,” (*Die* 117) which has resulted in a negative growth rate, a foreign debt amounting to double the gross national product, a total breakdown in the educational system, inadequate health services, lack of access to purified drinking water, and infant mortality at 340 per 1,000 births. (*Die* 117) Famine is a widespread phenomenon that “will starve a million people;” there is also epidemic disease, including AIDS, “that will kill another million in the next five years.” (*Die* 33) The people who manage to stay alive are forced by circumstances to make their living as poachers, bee-hunters, government soldiers or rebels or simply armed bandits. (*Die* 121, 151) Otherwise they cross the Moçambiquean borders and become refugees, “tens of thousands of them [...] stream[ing] across the border into South Africa,” “[t]errified, starving, riddled with disease.” (*Die* 452)

Finally, wildlife has similarly been laid waste. What had once been a “paradise of big game” (*Die* 147) is now empty of wild animals. Frelimo troops machine-gunned them from helicopters. First they killed almost fifty thousand buffalo, and when they

were finished, they started on the other game, the wildebeest and the zebra. (*Die* 148) The great elephant herds, the rhinos and the crocodile populations were all wiped out. (*Die* 460) When no more animals were left, they started on the magnificent forests of the Save: Rhodesian mahogany and the tamboti or African sandalwood. This was a treasure house, the “last natural resource of this ravaged land,” (*Die* 460) and the “source and fountain of myriad forms of life, insect and bird and mammal and reptile, of man himself.” (*Die* 493) Now these forests have been despoiled by labour battalions, peoples gathered from among the “refugee camps [...] [and] the vagrants and the unemployed from the slums and the streets of Maputo.” (*Die* 461) The government calls it the ‘Democratic People’s Full Employment Programme’, but it is only a new form of slavery for the forest workers are chained and forced to work “from dawn to sundown for ten Frelimo escudos;” furthermore, they have to pay for the single meal they are fed, which costs them fifteen Frelimo escudos. (*Die* 461)

All in all Moçambique is depicted in dystopian terms; as a land of savagery, cruelty, misery and suffering. After this account, we feel we have been plunged into Africa’s real heart of darkness and, like Marlowe in Conrad’s novel, we are ready to shout ‘the horror, the horror’ as we behold the bloody effects of decolonisation and brutal African savagery at work. Smith may claim he is no message-writer as fervently as he wants, but as he shares with us his particular account of the appalling conditions in independent African countries after the ‘benign’ colonial forces have left them to fare for themselves, we are willing and ready to agree with him that South African apartheid is, indeed, a paradise, that white men, especially the paternalistic British, are angels come to earth to save blacks from their inherent barbarity, and that international interference is nothing but detrimental, opportunistic and intent on misleading us into believing that South Africa is nothing but hell.

Smith, like many other colonial writers before him, is a firm believer in the superiority of the white man, and as I have attempted to prove in this part of my dissertation, he spares no effort to support this idea. Apartheid is good for it guarantees benign white supremacy in the country. It allows space for *real* white men to prosper and advance and, in this way, it allows for the creation of truly masculine

heroes at a time of feminisation and emasculation in other western societies. And yet, Smith dreads emasculation; he fears white men are eventually going to be overpowered by a progressively increasing and violent black population and, consequently, he does not hesitate to use any strategy at hand (from 'backgroundising' black men, to resuscitating colonial stereotypes or to providing accounts of their political and social barbaric behaviour both in South Africa and outside it) to present detrimental representations of blacks in his fiction, representations that deprive them of their power and set off, by contrast, the might of white men. The fact that he is motivated by fear and by a necessity to create safe masculine spaces for whites, cleansed of the black threat, becomes particularly obvious, as I have explained in chapter 10, section 10.5, in his use of pre-colonial Africa in his most recent instalments of the Courtney saga, *Birds of Prey* and *Monsoon*. Written after the first democratic elections in South Africa, and aware of the superior condition blacks enjoy in this country today, he removes his heroes to past times, when Africa was a vast 'empty' space 'open' for white penetration and where worthy white heroes could prove their superior masculine skills, unhindered by emasculating forces. There is a hint of nostalgia in this presentation, a longing for times that are no more. There is also opportunistic merchandising, a great amount of fantasy-creating for a readership craving for exoticism. But above all, there is a great deal of anxiety involved; an anxiety caused by the fear that, after the last redoubt of white control in Africa has been finally brought to its demise, there are no more safe spaces for white adventurous masculinity to grow and prosper, threatened as it is with being swallowed up by a tidal wave of resurgent black masculinity. This further supports my original argument in this part of my dissertation, the fact that Smith's representation of blacks is conditioned by his anxiety caused by the fear created in the white man's psyche by the increasing visibility of the black man in our western world in general and South Africa in particular.

So far I have analysed black men in general, as a race, and shown how the fear they produce in the white men determines their presentation in the saga and justifies a defence of white supremacist measures under apartheid. The same motivations determine Smith's representation of individual blacks in the saga, which fall into three

different stereotypes (faithful assistants, freedom-fighters and revolutionaries), which I analyse in the following chapter.

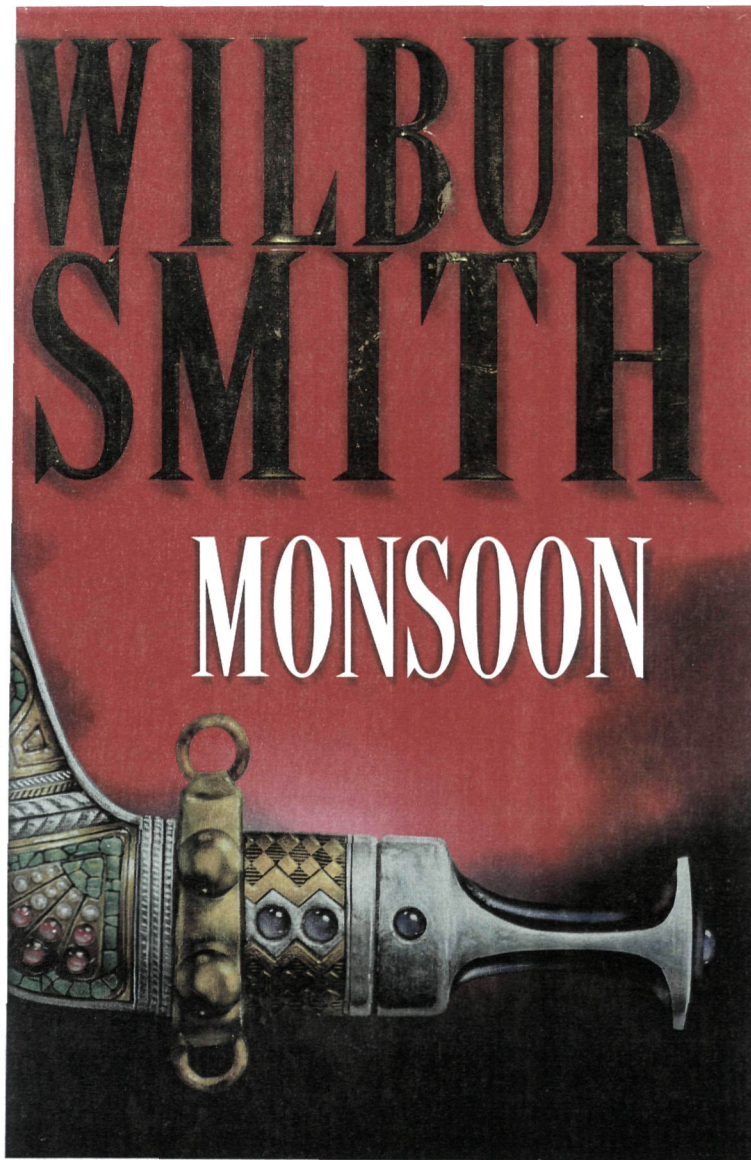


Figure 16. Dust jacket for Wilbur Smith's *Monsoon* (London: Macmillan, 1999). Illustration by Syd Brak.

Chapter 15: Individual blacks. Faithful assistants, freedom-fighters and revolutionaries

15.1. Faithful assistants

The central icon in Smith's adventure stories is the white male hero. Handsome, intelligent, adventurous and enterprising, he is also the essential man, an idealised and reassuring image of white masculinity that Smith creates as a backlash against feminism, the feminised New Man, the homosexual and the coloured man. And yet, writing as Smith does within the parameters of imperialist adventure, tradition requires that the hero's space be shared by a black faithful companion or "faithful African retainer" who, as Michael Chapman explains, is a "predictable type" in imperialist adventure iconography.¹ From the Lone Ranger and Tonto, Old Shatterhand and Winnetou, adventure pages have been populated by many variations on the white hero and his black sidekick, the white adventurer and the Third World 'third wheel'. This tradition has been continued in action films and television serials, where the coupling white hero / black pal, both supposedly equal, brothers-in-arms, has become so familiar as to become prototypical. Cinema and television screens are rife with such pairings, from the earliest examples such as Clint Eastwood and Mario Van Peebles in *Heartbreak Ridge*, to more recent couplings such as Mel Gibson and Danny Glover in the *Lethal Weapon* series, Bruce Willis and Reginald VelJohnson in the *Die Hard* series, Sylvester Stallone and Carl Weathers in the third and fourth instalments of the *Rocky* series and Don Johnson and Philip Michael Thomas in the television series *Miami Vice*. These couplings are part of a literary tradition spanning two centuries, but they are also a direct consequence of the demands of Political Correctness in our western societies which have worked towards the creation of an 'interracial moment' in the representational arts, mirroring a supposed interracial moment in society.

¹ Michael Chapman, *Southern African Literatures* (London and New York: Longman, 1996) 130.

Now, such couplings have never been egalitarian in nature for, while the white hero systematically enjoys central status, his black partner occupies “either a secondary or largely a supportive role.”² The truth remains that the presence of the black body generates anxiety in the white man’s psyche. With his supposedly mighty and awesome genitalia and superb physique, the black man is viewed as a threat, and the closer he is, the greater the anxiety he generates. Thus, representational strategies such as the ones I have analysed so far are put into practice to override fear and anxiety by consistently fixing the blacks into patterns of subservience, inferiority and / or demonisation.

Smith systematically makes use of these strategies with blacks in general. Yet, in his attempt to present his British heroes as intrinsically colour blind, and following convention, he couples his heroes with black companions, that is, generators of anxiety, especially in the early instalments of the saga, *A Time to Die*, and in the two latest instalments, *Birds of Prey* and *Monsoon*. There are no such couplings in *The Burning Shore*, *Power of the Sword*, *Rage* and *Golden Fox*. In *The Burning Shore* this is basically so because this novel has a woman as a protagonist - Centaine - and, although she is aided by two San - H’ani and O’wa - during the time she is stranded in Namibia’s desert, the latter do not fall into the category of faithful retainers. They are assistants, but not life-long companions. They do certainly love each other and establish a relationship of deep affection, but they maintain their separate spheres: the San are primitive ‘throwbacks’, Centaine is ‘contemporary’; the San belong to the desert, Centaine to ‘civilisation’. They stay together while their paths collide, but neither attempts to give up their sphere to follow the other; in fact, the San are not capable of withstanding the thrust of ‘civilisation’ and, when they attempt, if only briefly, to approach Centaine once she has gone back to ‘civilisation’, they are made to vanish from view; as befits ‘lesser specimens’, they perish. Having black, supposedly equal companions in *Rage*, *Power of the Sword* and *Golden Fox* would defeat their author’s purpose, the systematic endorsement of apartheid’s idea of separate development. These novels take place during the apartheid period in South

² Yvonne Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies*, 43.

Africa, which in itself precludes interracial friendships and more so if all blacks are turned into violent 'desperadoes', opponents of white rule. So, interracial companionships are limited to *When the Lion Feeds*, *The Sound of Thunder* and *A Sparrow Falls*, that have an adequately colonial setting under British rule which allows for the development of friendships between black and white men, to *A Time to Die*, that has an equally colonial point of departure in Sean II's Hemingway camp in his hunting concession in Zimbabwe, and to *Birds of Prey* and *Monsoon*, which are set in pre-colonial times in Africa and which, written and published after apartheid and in our viciously Politically Correct times, are forced by both tradition and broader social and political circumstances to pay lip service and give assent to the exigencies of anti-racist oppositional groups.

In these last novels, then, Smith has his heroes paired with faithful companions: Sean I with Mbejane; Mark with Pungushe; Michael I with Sangane; Sean II with Shadrach, Matatu and Job; and Hal and Tom with Aboli. All but Matatu, who is a Ndorobo and gnome-like, and Shadrach, who is a Matabele with no royal connections, are royal-blood Zulus or of Zulu-related tribes - Job is a Matabele and Aboli is an Amadoda - and have powerful physiques. The white hero and the black sidekick generally have a casual encounter which develops into hearty friendship and the black man becomes the faithful shadow of the white man. But the closeness of the black man exacerbates paranoia and sets deep-rooted fears of black manhood in motion. To start with, the white man's black companions have overwhelmingly awesome bodies, which brings to the fore their strength, durability and resilience; with their impressive penises and reproductive 'skills' they become sexual competitors; and finally, with their intrinsic primitiveness, they put the white man's veneer of civilisation in jeopardy, becoming living reminders of the fragility of their civilised robes with which they disguise their intrinsically barbaric core, the essential humanity that makes both whites and blacks members of the same species.

Very importantly, the closeness with the black man generates another set of anxieties. In Smith's attempt to render his heroes non-racist in essence, he constantly emphasises the hearty, loving nature of the relationship, which at times is so intense as

to have obvious homoerotic undertones. The white man is often found admiring the beauty of the black body; like Sean I, for instance, who, when he first meets Mbejane, looks at the man's face and "like[s] it immediately." His appreciative gaze moves about Mbejane's body and he "[notices] the breadth of the man's chest and the way his belly muscles [stand] out like the static ripples on a windswept beach." Mbejane wears "only a small kilt of civet-cat tails," which is small enough, we assume, to reveal the size of his penis for, when Sean I asks the black man his name and he answers 'Mbejane', rhinoceros, he at once enquires, "For your horn?" (*Lion* 143) As the friendship between the black and the white man develops, they reach a high degree of intimacy as they occupy the same physical space, which they share as a couple would. Mbejane and Sean I, for example, "cuddle together for warmth" (*Lion* 159) or "[sleep] huddled together under one blanket." (*Lion* 432) Michael I and Sangane's relationship dangerously resembles a courtship as "[n]aked they [swim] together in the cool green pools of the Tugela river," "[cook] their game on the same smoky fire, and [lie] beside it in the night, studying the stars and seriously [...] deciding on the lives they [will] live and the world they [will] make when they [are] grown men." (*Burning* 104-105) Sean II takes Matatu under his monkey-skin cloak at night (*Rage* 516) or they "[sleep] under the same blanket, [eat] from the same plate." (*Die* 64) Job and Sean II "[sleep] side by side" (*Die* 259) on various occasions and often work together "each stimulating the other, their excitement kept under tight rein, but sparkling in their eyes." (*Die* 265)

The line that separates friendship and love is always tenuous for it is difficult to establish where friendship ends and love begins. Often, love and friendship coalesce and live together in any hearty relationship. And yet, men regard intimacy with other men with dread for fear of appearing homosexual. In Smith's fiction, however, friendship between black and white men is openly identified with love and the intimacy they share precludes even interference from women. Sean I and Mbejane, for instance, find comfort in each other's presence; (*Lion* 147) when they meet each other after a period of separation they do not embrace and touch, but the emotion is so strong that Sean I has to restrain his desire to "prod the swelling dignity of Mbejane's stomach." (*Thunder* 537) Matatu, Shadrach, Job and Sean II share love so intense that

they are “closer than brothers, or lovers,” (*Die* 55) especially Job and Sean II. Their feelings are “perfectly in tune;” they understand each other and recognise and accept the bond between them that “[has] grown stronger over the twenty years of their friendship.” In fact, they are “beyond the love of brothers.” (*Die* 378) The depth of their affection becomes obvious on two different occasions. First when Claudia, Sean II’s lover, enters the scene and Job realises that Sean II is going to make her his wife. With a sting of jealousy that makes him look like a rejected lover more than just a friend, he says, “I shall miss him more than I can tell. [...] It will never be the same. [...] Our time together has ended.” (*Die* 386) And secondly, when Job is injured, Sean II carries him over his shoulders, “locked together like a pair in a harness.” (*Die* 435) As Job becomes worse, he realises that he is a burden for Sean II and takes his own life. This act of self-sacrifice reveals the magnitude of their affection. Claudia’s grief is terrible, but her own feelings are “overshadowed entirely by the magnitude of Sean’s sorrow.” Although she had developed a deep affection for Job herself, it is “nothing compared to the love that she now [sees] laid naked before her.” (*Die* 443) Sean II holds Job like a lover and begins to cry “painfully, burning all the way, scalding his eyelids.” (*Die* 444) Indeed, as Claudia exclaims, “Greater love hath no man” (*Die* 445) and, in spite of Job’s misgivings about Claudia’s interference, she becomes aware of Sean II’s “love for another man” and of their “special masculine relationship in which she [knows] she [can] never share.” (*Die* 438) Although probably less intense, the nature of other relationships between the white hero and his black pal comes to the fore on other occasions. Sean II tells of Shadrach, “He is more than a friend. I have two brothers, same mother and father, but Shadrach means more to me than either of them.” (*Die* 64) Matatu loves Sean II “more than a father.” (*Die* 207) And Aboli loves both Hal and his father, Sir Francis, like a brother. (*Birds* 258)

The relationship between the white hero and his black sidekick, all in all, has a clear erotic inflection. This puts the white man’s virility, traditionally constructed through potent heterosexuality, into jeopardy and threatens the homosocial moment patriarchy relies on for its maintenance. Furthermore, intense friendship between blacks and whites points towards the creation of an egalitarian interracial society which destabilises the hegemony of the white man over the other races. Consequently,

Smith manipulates the narrative again in order to maintain the white man's superiority and endorse his virility by making the white hero's black friend fit into what I call a pattern of separation and exclusion, or the creation of a gap that keeps the two men apart notwithstanding the friendship, love and affection they share. By doing so, Smith activates a discourse that Bell Hooks terms 'new racism' "which suggests that racial difference should be overcome even as it reaffirms white power and domination."³ In Smith's case this 'new racism' consists in constructing an apparently colour-blind friendship between the white hero and his black partner while strategically and simultaneously confirming the gap that has traditionally separated black and white men and reduced them to separate geopolitical spheres.

This separation is created in different ways in Smith's saga. To start with, blacks are never allowed to out-step their role as servants. They are friends and companions; they love each other dearly (too dearly not to be regarded with suspicion, as has been suggested above) and yet, the black man willingly becomes the white man's servant, positioning himself at the service of the white man who, in turn, often addresses the black companion in the imperative, with commands for him to undertake some task or other which he promptly obeys. Thus, Mbejane, for instance, is ordered to handle the cattle or the horses, (*Lion* 344) wash the clothes, (*Lion* 214) bring the coffee, (*Thunder* 342) carry the luggage (*Thunder* 223) or prepare a camp; (*Lion* 189-190) whatever Sean I wants is his own business and Mbejane's "duty [is] to help him." (*Lion* 504) In spite of the comfort they find in each other's company and the friendship they share, Sean I even attempts to confirm Mbejane's servant status by forcing him to wear a livery: "Maroon and gold [...] [t]hat [will] go well with his black skin, perhaps a turban with an ostrich feather in it." (*Lion* 288) When Mbejane disagrees, Sean I bursts out, "You'll wear that uniform [...]. You'll wear what I tell you to wear and you'll do it with a smile, do you hear me?" (*Lion* 300) Ironically, even after Mbejane saves Sean I's life and Sean I allows him to go back to his traditional Zulu loin cloth, his servant status is never questioned. He lives in the servants' quarters and never in the 'master' house; (*Lion* 184) he hunts on foot while Sean I

³ Bell Hooks, "Doing it for Daddy," *Constructing Masculinity*, ed. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis and Simon Watson, 103.

rides; (*Lion* 432) travels with the horses on the train; (*Thunder* 233) and ends his days as Sean I's butler, his name not even mentioned and introduced in the narrative as "the Zulu butler [...] a man with warrior blood in his veins and the usual bearing of a chief." (*Sparrow* 352)

The black men's servant status is further confirmed by their own consent to the names that, in their presence, are used to refer to them. They are never offended when they are called the white man's 'servants', 'savages' or 'heathens' for they have assimilated their inferior status and give their assent to it. Aboli, for instance, when asked whether he is a member of the order Sir Francis belongs to - the Nautonnier Knights of the Temple of the Order of St George and the Holy Grail - says, "My skin is too dark and my gods are alien. I could never be chosen." (*Birds* 22) And Matatu, to mention another example, rejoices every time his master calls him 'stupid little bugger' or 'greedy little bugger'; after all, he is nothing but a useful servant and cannot expect to be addressed in other, more polite terms. On the other hand, the black men are constantly praising their masters. They are not only willing servants, but admirers: Matatu, for instance, says to Sean II, "You'll be young and beautiful for ever, my *Bwana*" (*Die* 349) and Aboli to Hal, "You are not as other lads. [...] You are chosen." (*Birds* 22)

Secondly, the black companion's life is presented as expendable in the narrative. The accent falls on the body of the white hero all along and, consequently, the role of the black friend is to protect the white man from injury - with his own body if needs be - or nurture him or carry him if he is injured. Mbejane carries Sean I in his arms every time he is injured or drunk. (*Lion* 312; *Thunder* 55) Aboli does the same with Hal (*Birds* 227, 341) and Pungushe with Mark. (*Sparrow* 225) They similarly risk their own lives to save the white hero's. (*Thunder* 430, 435; *Birds* 181, 542) Job, as I have mentioned above, even kills himself rather than be a burden for Sean II, (*Die* 443) and Aboli turns his own body into a human shield to guard Hal's life, trying to hinder with his thrust the advance of the 'green jackets' - Boer soldiers - in Hal's pursuit. (*Birds* 345) Their role as the white heroes' protectors is given symbolic expression in Sir Francis' horrible death. Unfairly accused of piracy, he is captured by

Boer soldiers, put on trial and sentenced to death - he is hanged and quartered. It is the role of his faithful companion, Aboli, to put the body together before giving him a decent burial. (*Birds* 293-294) The body of the white hero is all-important in the narratives. It has to remain invulnerable and whole throughout and the function of the black man is to guarantee this wholeness; to make sure that alien forces do not tear him apart. The black man is simply functional to the white man's centrality, helping him to remain whole even if this involves risking his own life to achieve this purpose.

Thirdly, the black man is not allowed to have a life of his own outside the sphere of his white master, so he willingly drops everything in his life to take care of the well-being of the superior white man. The implication is that 'good' white males are inherently worthy, deserving of care; that black men have to be self-effacing to be worthy of the white man's benevolence and love; and that every action black men perform has to be directed at gaining acceptance by the white master, what Bell Hooks calls the "worship at the throne of whiteness."⁴ The white man stands for everything that is right and good and, consequently, his black companion never hesitates to leave everything he possesses, wives, farm, lands, and even dignity, to follow him in his endeavours so as to be worthy of his master's praise and acceptance. Mbejane, for instance, abandons his placid life in his *kraal* to be with Sean I every time he starts out on one of his adventurous expeditions. When Mark is appointed keeper of Chaka's Gate - a natural preserve - Pungushe follows him because he is a "mighty warrior" (*Sparrow* 479) and Pungushe knows Mark will be "just and fair" (*Sparrow* 481) in his treatment of him. When Sean II is forced to capture Frelimo stingers for Renamo guerrillas, he does not want to take Job with him; after all, if Sean II co-operates with Renamo guerrillas it is only because they hold Claudia, his lover, captive, so it is a personal issue. Consequently, Sean II tells Job:

This is the end of the road for us, Job. You aren't coming to Grand Reef, you aren't high-jacking any stingers, and you sure as hell aren't coming back to Moçambique with me. [...] That's it pal. I've got no more use for you. [...] Get out. Go back to your village, buy yourself another couple of pretty young wives [...]. Sit in the sun and drink a few pots of beer. (*Die* 297-298)

⁴ Bell Hooks, "Doing it for Daddy," *Constructing Masculinity*, ed. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis and Simon Watson, 105.

Job is entitled to half the amount (half a million dollars) that a wealthy American tycoon paid to them to help him hunt a mythical elephant in Moçambique. There is nothing for him to gain by helping Sean II free Claudia from the Renamo rebels. However, he does not hesitate to stick to Sean II, in spite of the money proffered, which he ignores. For him, staying with Sean II is far more important than getting his reward and leading a placid life away from Sean II. Matatu also goes where Sean II goes, “without question, without a moment’s hesitation.” (*Die* 99) He is like a puppy you cannot send home; (*Die* 374) when Sean II is in danger his place is near him; (*Die* 383) he loves Sean II with absolute devotion (*Die* 390-391) and places complete trust in him; (*Die* 56) he does not even need a reward to be with Sean II, his praise is all the reward he needs. (*Die* 379) The same applies to Aboli who, like a faithful dog, is devoted to the Courtneys (*Birds* 256) to the extent that his whole life revolves around their needs and desires: he trains Hal in fighting and fencing techniques, (*Birds* 8-14) places his protective wing over Hal during fights, (*Birds* 176) or arranges the enrolment of men from his own tribe to become part of Hal’s crew. (*Birds* 487) There is, indeed, nothing he would not do to be with the Courtneys. He even abandons his country, customs and family to follow them to England when they leave Africa.

Finally, Smith makes sure he systematically erases the black men’s bodies from the narratives or, at least, diminishes their stature by continuously subjecting them to injury or what could be called the ‘effects of an unadventurous placid existence’. The white body is seldom undermined.⁵ White heroes remain fit, whole and imposing even in old age. They may grow big, but never fat; they may have a few age lines here and there and their hair may become grey or even white as they grow old, but they retain a sparkle in their eyes and the strength of earlier days. But this does not apply to blacks. Black bodies are ravaged by age or fatally injured. Mbejane, for instance, becomes fat as he ages so he has “abundant flesh and fat [...] carefully cultivated as a sign to the rest of the world of his prosperity.” (*Thunder* 537) Shadrach has to have his leg amputated after a vicious attack by a lion, (*Die* 60-61) so his life as

⁵ White heroes have to endure pain and injury on a regular basis in the saga. But as I have explained in chapter 7, section 7.5, they systematically recover their strength and power. Furthermore, they remain muscular and shapely throughout their fictional lives.

a tracker comes to an end; he will have to become a skinner or a camp servant and, being a Matabele warrior, “menial work is going to break his heart.” (*Die* 64) Job, as I have mentioned above, kills himself after being injured by Moçambiquean rebels and the consequent period of unbearable suffering and pain as Sean II tries to carry him through the jungle. But this is not enough punishment. Renamo rebels find his burial place and they mutilate his corpse dreadfully; he is chopped into small pieces and turned into mincemeat. (*Die* 466-467) For Smith, these bodily lacerations serve an important purpose. By damaging the black body, he eliminates the anxiety the closeness of the black man generates. He undermines the notions of the black man’s masculine power while destabilising the homoerotic undertones of the relationship he has with the white man and punishing him for ‘daring’ to threaten the white man’s carefully constructed virility.

Aboli’s body, however, is not similarly wrecked. He grows to be an old man without ever being mutilated or even injured. He does not age either, never puts on weight, has his hair razored so that it does not grey, and becomes a prolific ‘breeder’. Being the protagonists’ black companion in the two most recent instalments of the saga, written in our more Politically Correct state of affairs and the post-apartheid period, Smith gives the body of the black man an unprecedented centrality. However, this does not mean Smith is comfortable with this centrality. On the contrary, after apartheid has been brought to its end and the consequent establishment of an all-black government in South Africa, he has more reasons to fear white masculinity is finally going to be overpowered in the country which, in passing, was the last citadel of patent white hegemony in the progressively feminised and interracial western world. Consequently, Smith makes use of different strategies to dispel the deeply-felt anxiety this super-potent, big-penis colossus generates. To start with, he is often a disembodied presence, a “silent gliding shadow,” (*Birds* 289) whose main function in the narrative seems to be to supply advice to the hero; his body eliminated from view, only his throaty voice can be heard, “the deep cadence [...] punctuated by the staccato clicks of his tribal speech.” (*Birds* 79) Secondly, and like all other heroes’ faithful assistants, he is turned into a *castrati* when in the presence of the hero’s women. He has a big penis, which he often displays and even ‘flings’ at the white hero’s face.

Aboli treats the white hero's wounds with his own urine, like a scratch Hal has in his ear: he seizes "his pigtail remorselessly and twist[s] [Hal's] face upwards," then urinates in his face, (*Birds* 15) in a repulsive parody of the 'healing' process the whites have had to undergo through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, their guilt-wounds open for a black audience to heal with forgiveness. However, and notwithstanding the awesome presence of Aboli's penis in the narratives, Smith castrates him when the hero's women are around; Aboli never covets the white man's 'joy-toy'. Instead, he is turned into a propitiator, helping the white hero when he undertakes one of his amorous escapades; as when Hal arranges a meeting with Katinka and Aboli makes sure he succeeds. First he feeds him so that he has strength, and then he keeps guard outside their secret meeting place to ensure they are not found out by Katinka's husband.

Aboli is finally punished for his reproductive potential. While in *Monsoon*, Tom and Sarah are incapable of having children, in a clear illustration of the sterility of the white man overwhelmed by the increasing number of reproductive coloureds surrounding him, Aboli has his wives give him various children. The anxiety this generates is made patent when Aboli's wives and children are massacred by a group of Muslim slave-runners; Aboli has the opportunity to breed profusely, but his offspring are not allowed to stay alive in the narratives. Smith, all in all, makes sure he keeps his heroes' black assistants under restraint, never allowing them to overpower the white heroes or bridge the gap that ultimately keeps blacks and whites apart.

15.2. Freedom-fighters and revolutionaries

Images representing black masculinity as based on a longing for white male love are stock-in-trade in Smith's fiction. These come alive, as I have just explained, in the form of the white hero's faithful black companion who, happy with his lot, gives his assent to the white hero's centrality by willingly occupying a marginalised position in the adventurous milieu. However, Smith allows other individual types of black masculinity to share narrative space with the white hero: the anti-apartheid

freedom-fighters and the revolutionaries in independent African states. These are blood-thirsty savages who pose a direct threat to white hegemony. Smith's decision to give these characters centrality in his fiction is not casual in the least. They are, in fact, functional to Smith's ideological agenda: his systematic defence of white hegemonic masculinity. By manipulating their images and presenting an utterly negative depiction of their personas, he dramatises the white man's anxiety and gives it a *raison d'être*. The message he propagandises is clear: the white man's fear of eventually vanishing from view in Africa in general and South Africa in particular is not just unfounded paranoia, but based on the very real presence of violent black masculinities which are willing and ready to overthrow white rule and plunge Africa and its peoples into an era of darkness and chaos. By presenting individualised versions of these black 'do-baders' who resort to violence to further their political cause, rather than vague generalisations, Smith gives their threat urgency, immediacy and factuality. At the same time he allows us a more direct insight into their inherent immorality, depravity and brutality. Their savage behaviour justifies their exclusion and disqualification and, by extension, the exclusion and disqualification of the policies they epitomise. To illustrate how Smith portrays these 'black monsters' in his fiction, I provide an analysis of Moses Gama as an example of a freedom-fighter in South Africa and of General China as an example of the revolutionary in independent African countries, for these are the two black 'do-baders' that receive more narrative attention in the Courtney saga.

15.2.1. Moses Gama

Moses Gama starts his days in the narratives as an Ovambo boss-boy who Smith immediately classifies as a black man "who [does] not know his place in society." (*Sword* 107) Moved by hatred of the oppressive apartheid policies implemented by the white government, he is an active member of different black anti-apartheid associations. He is the founder of the Buffaloes, a violent group of African rogues which operates from the township of Drake's Farm and whose function is to recruit other blacks and politicise them against apartheid. He is also a "prime mover in the formation of the African Mineworkers' Union," (*Rage* 42) an appointed member

of the government's Natives' Representative Council but who resigned "with the [...] celebrated remark, 'I have been speaking into a toy telephone, with nobody listening at the other end,'" (*Rage* 42) the elected Secretary of the ANC and an instigator of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, the ANC's military wing. He is not only intelligent, characterised by initiative, "mental determination and ruthless energy," (*Sword* 355) but very literate, speaking at least twenty languages (*Rage* 70) and "self-educated to a high standard." (*Rage* 127)

His physique is impressive. He is tall, broad-shouldered, slim-hipped and regal, (*Rage* 155) with "hard rubbery muscle beneath the velvety skin," (*Sword* 355) "forged and tempered by hard physical labour." (*Sword* 243) He has also pale, "almost honey-coloured skin" and "fine intelligent features with a Nilotic cast like those of a young pharaoh." (*Sword* 243) He is beautiful "as a black panther" (*Rage* 199) with the "face of an Egyptian god." (*Sword* 354) Together with his looks, Moses is endowed with such great charisma that he always stands out among other black men for he is like "a lion among men" (*Sword* 617) or "like a black panther in a pack of mangy alley cats." (*Rage* 41) His presence is described as so powerful and overwhelming that he "manipulat[es] the men around him [and] subject[s] them to the force of his will and personality," (*Sword* 339) putting them in a "mesmeric spell" (*Sword* 356) with a "messianic glow in his eyes." (*Rage* 408) People come from all over South Africa to listen to him for he is a man of stature and importance, (*Rage* 179) force and power, (*Rage* 180) who also has the capacity to touch the hearts of the people with his words. (*Rage* 148) He talks about freedom for black men and women, about how the inherent rights of the black people have been denied to them for three hundred years, and about how the apartheid government has built a monumental edifice of laws, ordinances and proclamations which deprive black men of their basic rights and privileges. His words are mesmeric indeed:

My friends, there is one single ideal to which I cling with all my heart, and which I will defend with my very life, and that is that every African has a primary, inherent and inalienable right to the Africa which is his continent and his only motherland [...]. We have all heard it said that the whole concept of apartheid is so grotesque, so obviously lunatic, that it can never work. But I warn you, my friends, that the men who have conceived this crazy scheme are so fanatical, so obdurate, so convinced of their divine guidance, that they will force it to work.

Already they have created a vast army of petty civil servants to administer this madness, and they have behind them the full resources of a land rich in gold and minerals. I warn you that they will not hesitate to squander that wealth in building this ideological Frankenstein of theirs. There is no price in material wealth and human suffering that is too high for them to contemplate. (*Rage* 42-43)

Moses Gama is, in fact, allowed substantial criticism of the South African government, as when, for example, he identifies Verwoerd as the man “who had elevated racial discrimination to quasi-religious philosophy.” (*Rage* 342) Equally, he phrases the suffering of his people with poignant and moving words, as in the television interview he is allowed to give immediately after being freed from Robben Island, where he was imprisoned. He says: “There are no prison walls thick enough to hold the longing of my people for freedom. [...] There is no grave deep enough to hide the truth from you.” (*Rage* 617) His sincerity and depth, we are told, is devastating, so that by the end of the interview even Kitty Godolphin, who conducts the interview and “who [is] old in experience and hardened in the ways a naughty world,” is weeping unashamedly. (*Rage* 617)

There is, indeed, truth in his words and sense in his objectives: the unity of the different black races to overthrow a government that turns every single black man and woman in South Africa into political pariahs. However, because of his dangerous potential, Smith cannot afford to have his words privileged above those of the white man or to have him destabilise his own ultimate ideological assent to apartheid policies. Consequently, Smith manipulates his presentation so that at the end of the narratives we feel nothing but a very strong antipathy for him. In order to undermine his charisma and make him emerge as a monster, Smith uses different representational strategies, which I proceed to analyse.

Firstly, Smith constructs Moses as intrinsically brutal, ready to make use of violence to further his struggle. In Moses’ opinion, the end justifies the means, even if this means killing innocent people or sacrificing his own people because, as he says: “The struggle for liberation is all, in the name of liberty any deed is sanctified;” (*Rage* 416) or “[T]here’s nothing [...] I would not do to further the struggle. I am prepared both to die and to kill for it” (*Rage* 43) since “[d]ignity and a chance for happiness for

all in this land [...] [are] worth any price.” (*Rage* 350) His words are not hot air, and Smith makes haste to illustrate the violent implications behind his grand objectives by surrounding him with faithful but questioning acolytes who listen to his words and visualise the havoc he will wreak, the chaos he will unleash and the blood he will spill if he manages to put his words into practice. The group of white liberals who gather at the Broadhurst’s home to hear Moses speak, for instance, are defined as “practitioners of elegant, socialist dialectic, [...] effete intellectuals.” To them, Moses’ menacing and disquieting declaration of intent, his proposal for using violence as the only way to achieve his people’s freedom, has “the sound of breaking bones in it and the stench of fresh-spilled blood.” (*Rage* 43) Similarly, Tara pictures in her mind’s eye the magnitude of the savagery he defends and sees how it will affect her own family if she helps him in his endeavours:

She was appalled, facing the reality at last, not merely the dizzy rhetoric. In her imagination she saw the flames rearing up through the great roof of Weltevreden and blood splashed on the walls shining wetly in the sunlight, while in the courtyard lay the broken bodies of children, of her own children. (*Rage* 75)

And Centaine, to mention another example, perceives one of Moses’ brutal plans, his abortive attempt to blow up the houses of parliament in Cape Town, as “murder and treason and attempting to assassinate a head of state” and “fostering bloody revolution and attempting by force to overthrow a government.” (*Rage* 401) Even Moses’ own wife, Victoria, shivers involuntarily and, with an effort, tries to close “her mind against the dark images his words [conjure] up.” (*Rage* 309) The extent of his cruelty, though, is better phrased by Moses himself, when, after witnessing the brutal murder and cannibalisation of a nun, Sister Nunziata,⁶ by a crazed mob, he says: “It was beauty - stark beauty, shorn of all but the truth. [...] It was a consecration of our victory. They ate the flesh and drank the blood as you Christians do to seal a pact with history. When you have seen that sacred rage you have to believe in our eventual triumph.” (*Rage* 232)

⁶ see chapter 13, section 13.4.

Secondly, he is presented as power-crazed, far more interested in consolidating his own leadership over men of such calibre as Nelson Mandela, than in guaranteeing a peaceful and democratic society for his people. Ironically, even though Moses defends a unification of the tribes in the interests of sloughing off white domination, he does not regard Mandela as a 'brother-in-arms', both united by the same objectives. While Moses went underground in foreign lands to escape imprisonment, Mandela "stood in the dock and made it a showcase of his own personality;" (*Rage* 309) he was then handed the leadership of the ANC and now Moses realises "how much ground he [has] lost, how far he [has] fallen behind Mandela in the councils of the African National Congress and the imagination of the people." (*Rage* 309) Instead of rejoicing at having a worthy substitute in the struggle, Moses considers Mandela as his "rival to the death" for, as he says, "There can only be one ruler in South Africa, either him or me." (*Rage* 300) He follows this up with, "I must confront him, and wrest the leadership back from him very soon, or it will be too late and I will be forgotten and left behind." (*Rage* 309) All in all, Moses' main objective is to advance his own interests and put into practice his megalomaniac delusions of absolute control over the land and its peoples; as Hendrick, his half-brother, phrases it, "You want not a part of it, [...] not even the greater part. [...] You want it all. The whole land and everything in it." (*Sword* 378)

In the third place, Smith pictures Moses as amoral. He is ready to accept any sort of political action, no matter how corrupt, violent or totalitarian - even if it is detrimental to South Africa in general and the black people in particular - always provided it favours his own political ambitions. In his eyes, even apartheid is desirable. Before the National Party wins the elections in South Africa in 1948, Moses senses this party will emerge triumphant and is aware of the hard times that will follow for black men. He says, "When they come to power they will teach our people the true meaning of slavery." (*Sword* 594) Instead of dreading the moment this will happen, he welcomes it, prophesising that the white man's oppression "will transform the tribes from a herd of complacent cattle into a great stampede of enraged wild buffalo." (*Sword* 594) This will grant him the opportunity to fight oppression with violence and guarantee his status as the leader of the people. Moses similarly applauds

Macmillan's, the British Prime Minister's, decision to drop his political support for South Africa. According to Moses, Macmillan has taken up sides against Verwoerd and his oppressive policies and has shown himself to be in favour of ANC revolutionary activity against apartheid. This decision, he assumes, will so help antagonise international opinion against South Africa that foreign countries will sanction Moses' plan to blow up the houses of parliament while in session, forgive the assassination of the many innocent people who will perish as a result of this terrorist action and even give their assent to the revolution that will follow and its bloody aftermath. (*Rage* 384-385)

His questionable morality and lack of scruples is specially revealing in his treatment of people. Moses does not value friendship, love or fidelity. He uses people for his own purposes and manipulates them at will with the force of his charisma and sexual appeal. Once they have fulfilled the missions Moses has devised for them they are deemed useless and expendable, mere sacrificial lambs. Moses intends, for instance, to use his own brother, Hendrick, as leader of the Buffaloes. Before his appointment, though, Hendrick becomes the target of one of the white overseers on the train that takes blacks to *Goldi*. Hendrick plans to kill the overseer and asks for Moses' permission. Moses knows that if his brother fails, "the white man [will] hang him on a rope" but he does not really care because, if he succeeds, "he will have proved himself an axe, a steely man." (*Sword* 344) So Moses is ready to sacrifice Hendrick's life and "toss him aside with as little compassion as he would an axe whose blade had shattered at the first stroke against the trunk of a tree" (*Sword* 344) in the event he proves unworthy of the task Moses has in mind for him. Likewise, Moses marries Victoria, a beautiful Zulu maiden, not out of love but only because she is functional to his political objectives. Moses is an Ovambo and hates the Zulu; yet, "[b]ecause of their multitudes and their warrior tradition," Moses assumes the first black president of South Africa will be a Zulu "or someone with very close ties to the Zulu nation." (*Rage* 62) Ties of marriage, he muses, would be close enough and, consequently, takes Victoria as his wife to provide himself with the necessary connections to the Zulu nation that would make him acceptable to future Zulu voters. He pretends he marries her to work towards the unity of all the different tribes in

South Africa. He is even aroused by her sexuality, and yet only his megalomaniac ambitions of total and absolute power ultimately affect his decision to have her as a wife.

Finally, Moses uses his vast sexual appeal to manipulate both women and men at will. As befits the white man's psycho-sexual myth of the black man as the "incarnation of genital potency beyond all moralities and prohibitions,"⁷ Moses is superbly endowed with a huge, thick penis like a "shaft of black ironstone that had lain in the full glare of the sun at midday." (*Rage* 347) Women cannot help but succumb when in the presence of such a mighty specimen of masculine genitalia, and as he fills them with "his blackness" (*Rage* 48) or reaches deeply into their bodies with "the sheer magnificence of him," (*Rage* 187) they lose all volition, will or identity. Victoria, his wife, for instance, exclaims after love-making, "Now I am more than just your wife, I am your slave to the end of my days." (*Rage* 187) Tara, likewise, becomes so addicted to his sex that when he threatens to give her up, she pleads, "I will do anything. Just don't leave me. I will do anything, everything you tell me to do - only just don't send me away like this." (*Rage* 74) Both Tara and Victoria are punished for hurling themselves at a gigantic black phallus - Tara loses her beauty and becomes so undignified that she does not even wash her underwear; Victoria becomes an alcoholic sexual pervert and loses her political innocence. And yet, their sacrifice is in vain for Moses does not even love them; they are only functional to his objectives, they are "crucial to his ambitions." (*Rage* 146) All that really matters is "their utility" and he would not hesitate to drop or kill them if they no longer served his purposes. (*Rage* 146) His sexual allure is equally effective with men, whom he also draws to him by the sheer force of his sexuality, men like Marcus Archer, a member of the South African Communist Party. As I have explained in chapter 14, section 14.4, Smith goes to considerable lengths to show that communists are barely human. He presents them as cruel, violent and ambitious. He also reinforces the readers' negative appreciation of communists by claiming that all of them are sexual perverts or homosexuals. Marcus Archer is no exception and he is presented as a communist and a homosexual, introduced to homosexuality by the same man who stimulated his

⁷ Frank Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*, 125.

intellect with “the doctrines of Karl Marx and Lenin.” (*Sword* 353) His sexual preference “[is] strongly for black skin” (*Sword* 353) and he is instantly bewitched by Moses to the extent that it is impossible for him to disguise his passion when beholding him. When they first meet, Marcus works for the South African Chamber of Mines and he offers Moses a position as his personal assistant. Moses becomes aware of the advantages he will have if he accepts the job and is ready to pay Marcus’ price for this privilege; after all, “if the white man wish[es] to be treated as a woman, then Moses [will] readily render him this service,” (*Sword* 355) even if in the African mind homosexuality is regarded as humiliating and degrading. (*Sword* 374) Moses’ acceptance of homosexuality to attain his objectives both highlights his sexual depravity and his immoral nature. He resorts to any means available, no matter how degrading and humiliating, to make his way towards leadership and consolidate his position of control over other black South Africans in the struggle against apartheid.

Finally, Smith disqualifies Moses and his policies by rendering him a coward at heart, which is one of the biggest blemishes in Smith’s ultra-macho world of valiant adventurers. In spite of his claims that he would be ready to die for the cause, he seldom puts his life in jeopardy. After South Africa suffers the first convulsions of the Defiance Campaign, over eight thousand protesters are arrested and all the leaders banned or picked up by the police. Moses considers the possibility of giving himself up and standing trial like the other leaders, (*Rage* 217) but he goes underground instead. Aware of the implications of a prison sentence and the physical ordeals he would have to endure in gaol, he escapes to Russia under the pretence of needing the professional training Russians will make available for him there. He does not even resent the other leaders’ imprisonment but considers it as beneficial for him: being the only powerful black man left, the field cleared of all his rivals, he assumes he is going to become the absolute leader of black people. (*Rage* 225) Ambition and cowardice are indeed an altogether detrimental combination. Going underground does not help his image much in the end. While he is away, the other leaders consolidate their power. When Moses returns to South Africa, the people have forgotten him. In order to regain the people’s admiration, he becomes reckless and plans the one daring action he is allowed in the narrative - his attempt to blow up the houses of parliament in

Cape Town. His plan is, however, aborted and he is imprisoned and sentenced to death. While in prison, Vicky, his wife, brings him news of the outside world. She tells him that Mandela, Moses' most dreaded rival, is now the elected leader of the people. Intrinsicly cowardly and power-crazed as he is, and full of resentment for having fallen so far out of his people's favour, he is ready to make a deal with apartheid leaders. They spare him his life but in turn he has to give them the names of the other black leaders and their hiding places. (*Rage* 432-433) His ambitious nature comes again to the fore; he prefers to be a traitor than allow other men to replace him.

All in all, Smith deconstructs and undermines Moses as an individual and, by extension, he condemns the political activities and the nature of all black freedom-fighters in South Africa. Smith does not even allow for readers to be tempted to approve of his actions on purely physical terms. Obsessed as we are with physical beauty, which leads us to admire handsome bodies no matter how empty or evil inside, Smith fears we could feel tempted, especially female readers, to follow Tara and Vicky's example and be ready to be allured by his awesome physique of Denzel-Washington-proportions. Furthermore, in Smith's narratives, the body is really political - a miniaturised version of larger political forms, a microcosm that epitomises and dramatises the essential nature of the larger political body it belongs to. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Moses' body has to be ravaged at the end of his days. He loses weight; his cheeks are hollow, (*Rage* 408) his hair white, his features gaunt, his eyes sunken in dark bruised-looking hollows, (*Rage* 429) his face skull-like, his lips thin and retracting, and his teeth too big for his face. (*Rage* 539) His once awesome body, together with the political ideas he defended with his body, are given a fatal blow. His body is no longer threatening, but simply pathetic, weak, fragile, bent, easy to eliminate. By the end of the narrative everything about him is nothing but repulsive. When he is finally killed by the members of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, to punish him for having betrayed them, we are ready to applaud the action.⁸ Moses, like other revolutionaries, deserves nothing but death in Smith's milieu.

⁸ Bear in mind, though, that *Umkhonto we Sizwe* is not presented positively because of this action. They arrange Moses' death in such a way as to hold the police responsible for the assassination so that Moses can be turned into another martyr for the cause. This again shows the manipulative nature of anti-apartheid leaders and the falsity of their claims that the police killed and massacred black people indiscriminately. Most of their pain, Smith defends, was self-inflicted and manipulated so as to present

15.2.2. General China

General China is introduced in Smith's narratives as an example of the kind of 'monsters' in whose hands the destinies of the black people are left once 'benign' colonial rule is overthrown. He is a blood-thirsty brute whose profile Smith delineates in *A Time to Die* and he epitomises the kind of threat whites have to contend with in order to protect white rule and white masculinity. When Smith first introduces China in the novel, he is a Marxist guerrilla leader fighting against the Ian Smith's government in Rhodesia. When we encounter him again it is in independent Moçambique as a general for Renamo, "a rabidly anti-communist organisation committed to the overthrow of the Marxist Frelimo government" (*Die* 220) in power. Like Moses Gama, he is intelligent, a compelling orator who has a perfect command of English, and outstandingly handsome, with "refined Nilotic features, [...] a narrow high-bridged nose and chiselled lips rather than the broadly negroid;" he also has a muscled body and is fit and strong. (*Die* 108) He is a fine specimen of black masculinity, "relaxed and charming and debonair," (*Die* 217) with "a sense of confidence" about him, experienced and altogether formidable. (*Die* 204)

Yet, as is the case with all African leaders portrayed in the narratives, Smith cannot allow the black man's body and intelligence to dominate that of the white man and he engages in a systematic deconstruction of General China's persona and political objectives in the novel. First, he is presented as intrinsically savage, cruel, tough, ruthless, (*Die* 107-108) with a chilling presence and the reptilian smile of a cobra that renders him frightening. (*Die* 407) His cruelty surfaces in the treatment of his own men and his prisoners. He deals out punishment to any of his men who offend him (*Die* 511) and tortures his prisoners in the most dreadful fashion, like the Russian soldiers he captures who refuse to help him teach his men how to handle the Hinds stolen from Frelimo troops. He picks the weakest of the Russians, rips his overall open and pulls his underwear down. While two of his men hold his buttocks apart, China

the white police as the real monsters. Their use of violence to achieve their objectives is also brought to the fore and emphasised by the terrible death they inflict on a woman pointed out as a police informer during Moses' funeral. (see chapter 13, section 13.4)

introduces a burning metal rod into the Russians' anus. (*Die* 408-411) When he captures Sean II and Claudia, we are provided with another example of China's hospitality with his prisoners. In order to force Sean II to lead an attack against Frelimos, he threatens to infect Claudia with the blood of an AIDS-diseased-woman, so he offers her "the most certain, the most lingering, the most loathsome death of all the ages." (*Die* 371) All in all, China is qualified as nothing but a "bloody swine," (*Die* 471) "a depraved [...] filthy ghoul," (*Die* 472) who does not hesitate to resort to violence and forceful manipulation to maintain leadership over his men.

Secondly, China is also presented as opportunistic, not at all interested in the destiny of the African people, whom he regards as "a bunch of illiterate peasants." (*Die* 345) He is a turncoat who changes political alliances depending on circumstances. A Rhodesian Shangane by birth, he embraced Marxist doctrines and joined the ZANLA guerrillas against white rule in that country. When the ZANLA ousted Smith and took over the government in Harare, he discovered that as a former guerrilla he was "feared and mistrusted by the soft fat cats who had avoided the actual fighting but now had taken control of the show." (*Die* 234) He saw that instead of being rewarded for his participation in the fight, he was likely to end up in Chikarubi prison and, with a group of supporters, he decided to participate in the "good old African game of coup and counter-coup," (*Die* 234) and planned to replace Mugabe in the government of the nation. When his plan was aborted, he was forced to leave the country in some haste and went to Moçambique. He had no scruples in abandoning his communist alliances, after all, he had never been truly interested in "the dialectics of Marxism," (*Die* 233) and he joined the anti-communist Renamo guerrillas in Moçambique who welcomed him because, like him, they are also Shanganes. His decision to join Renamo, however, was not motivated by a belief in the fairness of Renamo objectives, that is, their fight against the ineffective Marxist Frelimo government that had plunged the nation into poverty. He is, in fact, revealed as a capitalist at heart who joins the forces he thinks are going to help him "get on in life." (*Die* 234) By assisting Renamo forces, he expects to become part of the new government in Moçambique once they have ousted Frelimo, and, with South Africa as its ally, he hopes that both countries "will be able to apply irresistible pressure on

Zimbabwe” and force a change of government in Harare with him as the president.
(Die 235)



Figure 17. Endpaper for Wilbur Smith's *Birds of Prey* (London: Macmillan, 1997).

Smith does not present mendacious opportunism as an isolated characteristic that only China displays. He makes it extensive to other generals, emphasising, in this way, that revolutionary activity is never justly motivated in independent African countries. Instead, it is only a struggle over territory and absolute power with different leaders fighting each other instead of working together towards the accomplishment of common objectives. Moçambique is presented as divided into three war zones controlled by different generals. General Takawira Dos Alves is the commander of the north; in the south, the commander is Tippoo Tip; and China commands the armies of the central provinces. The real nature of the relationship between these generals and the motivations that really condition them is brought to the surface through the presentation in the novel of an encounter between China and Tippoo Tip. Although they embrace as if they were friends, they are in fact “two fierce rivals.” (*Die* 457) They compliment each other; Tippoo Tip says, for instance, “Your presence has perfumed my day with the scent of mimosa in blossom.” (*Die* 458) But in fact, they would not hesitate to betray each other if they had the opportunity, for “treachery [is] as natural to both of them as breathing [is] to other men.” (*Die* 458) Instead of allying their forces against a common enemy they both try to smell out weaknesses in the other, which they “would exploit [...] ruthlessly.” (*Die* 460) If, under special circumstances, they agree to co-operate, their pact is honoured “only as long as it favour[s] both of them, and it [can] be broken without warning by any of them as circumstances [alter].” (*Die* 463-464) Both men are birds of a feather; both equally opportunistic; both examples of the typical black politician who represents no one but himself, who only desires to make himself rich and who consistently ignores the needs of the black masses. And, as if sheer opportunism were not enough to undermine the validity of the policies these leaders stand for, Smith adds a couple of other characteristics to their personalities to make them even more despicable. First, both China and Tippoo Tip are sexually depraved. Tippoo Tip likes women and surrounds himself with them, but not out of love but to give free vent to his sexual appetite. China can “take a boy or a girl with equal enjoyment” but only “as a brief diversion.” (*Die* 459) And secondly, they both ruthlessly exploit natural resources, even if this means destroying natural surroundings and threatening ecological balance. They feel

no remorse, for instance, when they destroy the Save forests that constitute the last natural resource of Moçambique for, with the sale of timber, they could “finance the chest of both armies for a further five years, [...] buy the alliance of nations or [...] elevate a warlord to the estate of president over the entire nation for life.” (*Die* 461)

Finally, Smith resorts to another strategy to further diminish China’s status, while, at the same time, highlighting the white man’s superiority over him and others like him. In order to do so, he positions China in conflict with a white hero, the protagonist of the novel, Sean Courtney II. When their paths collide both men engage in fierce competition for they are both equally fit, resolute and ruthless individuals. However, Smith manipulates the narrative so that Sean II always keeps the upper hand. The first time both men come into conflict is during Sean II’s attack on ZAMLA guerrillas in Rhodesia. China is the area commander of the entire north-eastern section and a successful and charismatic leader. And yet, he is defeated by Sean II, who takes him prisoner. Although China manages to escape, it is only after Sean II has mutilated him by cutting his ear off. Sean II, consequently, has both “put the only blemish on [China’s] professional career, and [...] inflicted permanent physical damage on [his persona].” (*Die* 233) By holding him prisoner and mutilating his imposing body, Smith engineers Sean II’s (and by extension the white man’s) fantasy of absolute authority over the threatening black body and affirms the white man’s identity as the sovereign body, empowered with mastery over the abject black man. China’s body is, thus, diminished and symbolically castrated, so it becomes an icon of subjection in the representational space of the white male imaginary, historically at the centre of colonial fantasy.

When Sean II’s and China’s paths cross again, it is in Moçambique and there is a role reversal. China is now a Renamo general, Sean II trespasses into China’s territory and falls into China’s hands as a prisoner. China is obsessed with the white man and intent on revenge for the damage Sean II inflicted on him in the past. Consequently he tries to exercise control over Sean II. However, Smith manipulates the narrative again in order not to allow the black man to ultimately bend Sean II. His imprisonment does not diminish Sean II. Aware of the fact that “with a man like

[China], it [is] best not to show weaknesses,” (*Die* 217) Sean II refuses to accept a subject position and maintains both his dignity and his strength during his stay with China, responding with authority and resilience to China’s attempts at keeping him under control. In fact, his period of captivity serves Smith the objective of reinforcing, once again, the superiority of the white man by making him outwit and overpower China. To start with Sean II’s body is privileged over that of the black man. Although China is impressively built, Sean II is even better built and the object of admiration of China’s men, who exclaim, “he [is] a lion, an eater of men” and “[h]e has the body of a warrior.” (*Die* 221) His presence diminishes China’s build-up and his stature, for Sean II’s body acts as a reminder of the past grievances Sean II inflicted on China’s persona; China’s men are always recalling the fact that it was Sean II who amputated one ear of General China. (*Die* 221) Sean II’s sway over China’s men is so strong that he even convinces some of them to give China up and help him escape to South Africa. Furthermore, although China forces Sean II to lead an attack against Frelimo against his volition, this act of apparent control is craftily manipulated by Smith to enhance the white man’s superiority. China has to resort to Sean II’s fighting abilities to lead an attack because he knows his own limitations (*Die* 237) and subscribes to the colonial theory “that the best bush troops in the world are black soldiers with white officers.” (*Die* 236-237) Also, China cannot exert direct control over Sean II’s body; he can only make him agree to co-operate by threatening Sean II to kill his lover if he does not. Besides, Smith takes the opportunity to highlight once again China’s ignoble nature. Although he promises Sean II and Claudia their freedom if Sean II’s mission is successful, he goes back on his word, rendering him yet another representative of African untrustworthiness for, like other African leaders, “he [makes] bargains and break[s] them as the need arises.” (*Die* 366) Also, China’s reaction to Sean II’s successful mission is altogether ridiculous. Instead of acting ‘like a man’ by beginning to plan an attack against Frelimo with the Hinds Sean II has captured for him, he is full of “childlike excitement” (*Die* 336) and begins to play with the Hinds, making “helicopter and machine-gun noises like a small boy at play; (*Die* 337) he cries, “Pow! Pow! [...] Vroom! Swish! Boom!” (*Die* 337) Moreover, he acknowledges he cannot really fulfil his part of the bargain and allow Sean II and Claudia to go because he still needs Sean II to train his men to use the Hinds and lead an attack against Frelimo.

Moreover, this final attempt to exert control over Sean II is altogether unsuccessful for Sean II does not yield to China's command this time. He gives further proof of his superior strength and intelligence by successfully escaping captivity and outliving China's consequent relentless pursuit.

All in all, China, like all other African leaders, emerges as ruthless, cruel, essentially mendacious and ambitious. Although he is not so strong, skilful, or intelligent as the white man, he is still a threatening figure. Smith, aware of the fact that independent African countries were falling into the hands of men like China, dreaded the same was going to happen in South Africa if white rule was overthrown. Written in 1989 at a time characterised by the fragmentation of the National Party and a more lenient approach towards racial policies in South Africa, *A Time to Die* dramatises Smith's anxieties over the fate of his country. It seems that the stark lesson of Mozambiquean politics in the hands of ruthless black politicians hit home so Smith worried over the fate of South Africa if white rule was to disappear and African leaders gained control of the situation. In this novel, therefore, he sees African revolutionaries as poised and ready to jump at the white men's throats, hunters closing in on their prey. China himself tells Sean II as he chases him after his escape, "You are the game and I am the hunter." (*Die* 441) Black leaders trying to exercise control over whites and trying to eradicate them exacerbates Smith's paranoia. Therefore, he cannot allow black revolutionaries to succeed, not to mention outlive the white heroes, in the narrative. So, at the end of the novel China is killed by Sean II. He brings China's Hind down and as China tries to leave the aircraft, his uniform is soaked in the Hind's fuel. When the Hind explodes, its flames ignite China's sodden clothes, turning him into a human torch. (*Die* 522) As in all the other instalments of the saga, black masculinity is not allowed to overshadow the white hero in this novel. Smith defends rightful and omnipotent white masculinity all along and his treatment of individual blacks, like his treatment of blacks in general, is conditioned by his anxious necessity to maintain the two races separated so as to ensure the pre-eminence, hegemony and supremacy of white masculinity. His blacks, whether individually considered or taken together as a group, emerge, therefore, as expressions of the white man's tortured psyche; threatening figures that he has to subject and / or demonise so

that he can guarantee the maintenance of a purely white space cleansed of alien interference, where white masculinity can grow and prosper unhindered by the dark forces created by his paranoid subconscious.

Conclusion

Where will the romance writers of future generations find a safe and secret place [...] in which to lay their plots? (H. Rider Haggard, “‘Elephant Smashing’ and ‘Lion Shooting’”)

In reading these narratives, we must always ask why *this* man is telling *this* story. What is his stake in the narrative? What is his relationship to the fantasies it represents? (Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*)

King Romance was wounded deep,
All his knights were dead and gone
All his court was fallen on sleep
In the vale of Avalon
Then you came from south and north
From Tugela, from the Tweed;
Blazoned his achievements forth,
King Romance is come indeed!
(Andrew Lang)

Although the *fin de siècle* has been a more positive period than doomsday-preachers and other ‘catastrophists’ predicted and political, economic and personal liberty has become more common than it had been in the past, not all problems have been solved and not all things have changed for the better (or, for that matter, changed at all). Even the much publicised, praised and sold as widespread Sensitive New Age Guy or New Man is revealed as a post-feminist utopia, a mass-produced test-tube experiment, existing more as a representational strategy than as a reality in our western society. The truth remains that the patriarchal ethos has not yet been completely eradicated and that the ‘outmoded’ imperialist, racist, misogynist, white supremacist idea of masculinity, which had served as precept for the formation of past generations of men, is not so outmoded after all.

Ours is still a patriarchal society. While in academe feminist discourse reaches for ever higher heights of obscurity, down in the real world many young women are still offered a slap-up-ma-bitch model of inter-sexual relations. True, women have won legal and political equality in most western countries and they have the same

formal rights as men; yet, they continue to be patronised, pigeon-holed and less well-paid. Women now make up 40-50% of the work-force in rich countries, but most are in jobs markedly different from and often worse-paid than those done by men: teachers, nurses, sales-women, secretaries, waitresses. This segregation can also still be seen in education, with many more boys studying science or vocational courses, more girls studying the arts. The archetypal 'good mother' has not disappeared as a burdensome fantasy, confirming the perception of mothers who prioritise their jobs as wicked, blamed for all manner of social ills. The nuclear family continues to have a powerful hold on late twentieth-century imagination and still determines public policies on child-care provision, parental leave and proper valuation of housework. Poor single mothers are regarded as feckless citizens, while working mothers in power positions are not supposed to care if they have not seen their children for a day, after all, men have forfeited seeing their offspring in daylight at home for years.

Ours is, as well, a racist society. Racial 'minorities' continue to be mistreated and abused, and, together with homosexuals, are still the favourite victims of what is popularly referred to in the media as 'hate-crimes'. 1999, we read in *The Economist*, saw an attack "on a high-school in Colorado (in which a black was apparently killed for being 'that little nigger'), the burning of three synagogues in California, a Fourth of July rampage against blacks, Jews and Asians in Chicago, a shooting-spree at a Jewish day-care centre in Los Angeles, and the killing of teenage church-goers in Texas."¹ In Spain, on July 14th 1999, in the industrial town of Terrassa, two Moroccan men were stabbed by Spanish youths; next day a crowd led by skinheads attacked shops and cars belonging to Moroccan immigrants. In Girona, a mosque was set on fire; in Banyoles there was an arson attack on a house inhabited by immigrants from the Gambia. In the United States, the Ku Klux Klan still gathers on Saturday afternoons in various parts of the south to preach its message of white pride. There is a recorded world-total of 70,000 skinheads in gangs. Search the word 'nigger' via the AltaVista Internet service and it returns more than 150,000 related pages, and suggests that you narrow your search to 'nigger jokes', 'nigger hater' or 'nigger women'. Not even post-apartheid South Africa is the utopia some black men have envisioned it

¹ "Downloading Hate," *The Economist* 13 Nov. 1999: 54-55.

would be. Race discrimination is still common, unemployment still higher among blacks. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission did not even manage to force a confession from those who ordered most of the executions of black men and women during apartheid.

Men (I do mean humankind but very especially white men) have not yet become better; neither have they relinquished past privileges and prejudices. However, they have become more anxious. This anxiety is maybe not global - there are a lot of self-assured machos in view - but mass communication has given it a pre-eminence unlike anything seen in the past, so that the chorus of masculine complaints and reactionary or guilty self-analyses (what I have throughout my dissertation termed 'masculinity crisis' and whose causes and responses I have analysed in chapter 6) has rarely been as loud as it is today. Men's loose assemblage of complaints and resentful laments cannot all be put down to self-pity or unfounded paranoia. Social changes have taken place and the walls that separated white men from women and other 'minority' groups have indeed yielded under the pressure of oppositional forces intent on eradicating barriers and inequalities, leaving men 'alone' and 'unprotected' to face the thrust of an increasingly aggressive army of malcontents.

Women have a higher public profile. Not that equality is near, but women have escaped the spiral of deprivation that had sucked them down to submissive positions in the past. If I remember correctly, I think it was Horace Walpole who called Mary Wollstonecraft 'a hyena in petticoats'. Now most women seem to have become 'hyenas', and proud of it, intent on invading areas that had been barred to them in the past. They have left petticoats behind and jumped into men's trousers (figuratively speaking, of course). The number of senior women in government and business is increasing; employers hire more and more educated women and try harder to make family and working life more compatible; sexual discrimination is punished by law; the irrefutable facts of inequality have led to laws on divorce and married women's property, which, together with professional success, now allow (some) women to rid their homes of menfolk whose presence they had tolerated before out of material necessity. Even the traditional 1950s myth of the happy family - with daddy the

breadwinner, mummy cooking supper, good children doing their homework and all playing Monopoly in the evening - is breaking down as a result of changing social conditions, leading to all sorts of familial combinations, ranging from homosexual couples to one-parent families or cohabitation before marriage. Men, consequently, do not only feel threatened in the public domains of work and education, but also in the innermost recesses of the domestic, from which they feel excluded.

Women also seem poised to shake the foundations of so-far safe masculine arenas. The world of politics, for instance, provides a variety of interesting examples. Women have not only proved that they can be able and competent politicians (some would disagree in some cases such as, for example, one particularly strong first lady in an Anglo-Saxon country), but that the expansive waves of their explosive sexuality can also reach the highest political spheres. The troubled waters of scandal, for instance, have even splashed the White House; President Clinton's presidency, to mention one notorious example, hanged from very fragile threads for a while, threatened as it was by Paula Jones' claims of sexual harassment and Linda Tripp's recordings of Monica Lewinski's accounts of her affair with the president. Clinton must have been aware of the risks he put himself into by giving free vent to his flirtatious instincts; but little could he have imagined that his own sperm would turn against himself and Monica Lewinski's dark dress splattered with his DNA would have placed him on the verge of impeachment and forced a public confession of his private sexual affairs.

Not even science (which men had always manipulated to penetrate the secrets of nature, exert control over it and prove their superiority over women on the side) is working to men's advantage anymore and has betrayed men to reveal the weak spots in their biology. Apparently, the battle of the sexes is also being fought at microscopic level and the cells that are directly responsible for the segregation of sperm are being attacked by feminine hormones (oestrogens), which has resulted in progressively declining sperm counts among young generations of men. Other scientific experiments are also beginning to undermine cultural myths such as the traditional view that females should not, biologically speaking, be interested in one-night stands. While

males, the myth goes, ought to go about inseminating as many females as they can find, females of all species should, since eggs are scarce and pregnancy takes a considerable toll on the body, hold out for Mr Right. Yet, things are not so simple. Recent experiments conducted at the University of Nevada prove that polyandrous females do not only win more paternal care or nuptial gifts and gain access to more 'male' territory, but they also maximise their brood: by mating with more than one male a female increases her odds of getting more sperm that can produce viable offspring. Although the test subjects used for the experiment were (unpleasant) pseudoscorpions (that have very little to do, in most cases, with humans), scientists are playing with the possibility of expanding their field of research so as to account for the advantages of cuckoldry in mammals. New scientific developments in the field of reproduction, furthermore, seem to render men's roles as procreators increasingly expendable. In his book *Sex in the Future. Ancient Urges Meet Future Technology*, for instance, Robin Baker envisions a future world in which reproduction restaurants, IVF, surrogate motherhood or cloning will spell the end of infertility, but also the need for men and women to form relationships at all. In his concluding remarks, Baker, as a biologist, abstains from taking philosophical or theological arguments about reproductive technology. Yet, he is not so restrained in his comments about the effects technology will have on sexual behaviour. As he celebrates a new era of promiscuity, he implicitly condemns patriarchal conceptions of family life - for so long a means of female subordination - to inevitable death. He writes,

There will be *no* diminution in sexual activity, adventure, emotion or fun [...] people will be liberated sexually far more than was ever the case in the past. [...] Future populations will almost certainly be more promiscuous than past ones. [...] It will be the 1960s all over again but without the dangers or the attitude. There is no need for the future to be cold and clinical. Our descendants should be able to give their emotions free rein in a way that we never could. The beast within could be released on longer lead than for centuries.²

As if women's invasion of the public space and 'discomforting' scientific discoveries were not 'unsettling' enough, men have to contend with other cultural developments that further increase their causes of anxiety. Male genitalia, for instance,

² Robin Baker, *Sex in the Future. Ancient Urges Meet Future Technology* (London: Pan, 1999) 379-380.

which was practically invisible into the 1960s and yet assumed to be a mighty organ of supreme power, has gone decidedly public in the last decades, revealing its weaknesses and undermining the widespread myth of men's phallic power. Unflattering portrayals of the penis abound: it was famously cut off in the John Bobbit saga; the distinguishing marks of one of its most notorious representatives were endlessly talked about in the Paula Jones lawsuit; Viagra has made penis performance (or lack of it) the subject of various magazines; in *Ally McBeal* two episodes are given over to the heroine's infatuation with a fabulously endowed model, who is, nevertheless, 'fabulously' humiliated when Ally and her girlfriends 'abandon' him, in the middle of a winter night, his trousers and underwear pulled down, his penis sticking out, waddling like a penguin; in *There's Something About Mary* a penis gets painfully caught in a zipper and is exposed for public examination not only by a growing number of curious bystanders, including the family of the penis' owner's date, but also by the audience; in *The Full Monty* a group of social outcasts have to exhibit theirs if they want to earn a few quid. Indeed, the male organ has descended from respectable taboo to merciless public mockery.

Men have also been 'forced into acceptance' of other anxiety-provoking situations. They have 'happily' joined women as sex objects; but, in so doing, they have assumed some of women's sexual insecurities, which are difficult to keep secret since they are revealed in men's new consumer habits: male cosmetics are a boom market, men flock to gyms and surgical phalloplasty is big business. Political Correctness, to mention one last example, has influenced men's approach to family life. Men are now supposed to become super-dads, but they have discovered that the world of toddlers is not only as alien as Saturn, but duller and detrimental if they want to prosper professionally.

All in all, the socio-cultural developments since the 1970s have worked to undermine traditional sources of male identity. Men (I mean white, heterosexual, middle-class men), who were the rulers of their own lives and those of women, children and other (coloured) men, and who used to be the centre of their social worlds, are now confused. Traditional views of masculinity are being attacked on

various fronts and new re-formulations of what a man should be like are constantly being introduced. Consequently, men do not know whether to be New Men and cuddly fathers or the he-men, aggressive beasts and corporate warriors still celebrated in Hollywood portrayals of masculinity. Whether this anxiety affects all men is difficult to prove, but the fact remains that male angst is a hot issue, as is demonstrated by the large number of books being written on the subject of masculinity³ or by the number of films that address, to varying degrees, the question of what it means to be a man. Most of this last year's crop of Hollywood films, for instance, deal with masculinity in all its permutations as their subject: *American Beauty* is about Spacey rediscovering his masculinity and giving free rein to macho rituals of behaviour; *Fight Club* deals with Brad Pitt and Edward Norton getting in touch with their 'inner barbarians' while wreaking havoc on yuppie coffee-bars and credit card companies; *Ghost Dog. The Way of the Samurai* has a black man trading off job, morality and life in return for freedom from inner turmoil, which he finds in the rules of a world that never wavers, that of the Samurai; *The Insider*, *Bringing Out the Dead* and *The Green Mile* defend the contention that morality makes the man and that masculinity is intrinsically linked to facing down the devil within; *End of Days* and *The Omega Code*, on the other hand, portray a 'classic' model of maleness in which masculinity - in the person of the more or less square-jawed hero - means facing down and defeating the devil without.

The representational arts and the mass media do indeed reflect the crisis assailing white, heterosexual men in western societies. They may not determine or explain the way all white, heterosexual men feel, but they, nevertheless, reveal the anxiety around the disappearing solidity of traditional conceptions of masculinity that generations of men had looked upon as models of physical or behavioural performance. The self-same crisis of masculinity - so goes my main contention in this dissertation - explains the popularity of Wilbur Smith's adventure novels, which reach immediate and unfailing best-selling status after their hard-cover release in countries as diverse as the United Kingdom, Italy or Portugal.⁴ What draws readers to Smith's

³ A search by subject, for instance, using the Amazon.com service gave me 284 book titles published between 1995 and 2000 dealing with masculinity.

⁴ *Monsoon*, for instance, was number one best-seller in England immediately after it came out in April 1999 if we are to trust the Internet Bookwatch site. By July it had only fallen to number two, its sales only outmatched by Thomas Harris' *Hannibal*, the much-awaited sequel to his *The Silence of the Lambs*.

fiction is, indeed, the pleasure of adventure, exotic locales, action and huge doses of explicit sex and violence. As I have emphasised throughout the project, Smith drinks in the tradition of imperialist adventure writing. He finds in colonial and postcolonial Africa in general and pre-apartheid and apartheid South Africa in particular the ideal locales where to lay his full-blown adventure plots. He rescues the thematic patterns, characters and the racial-cultural prejudices, presumptions and fantasies of eurocentric imperialist doctrines that comprised the spirit of the adventure genre in its classical Victorian form. In his novels, therefore, there are hunting yarns, tales of fortune in the diamond and gold diggings, romances set against the various wars that have been fought in the 'dark' continent. There are powerful and virile heroes who overcome the odds of mining conglomerates and create vast farming, gold and industrial empires. There are bar-room diggers, riffraff outlanders, unrepentant opportunists and all other sorts of villains against whom heroes try their strengths and assert their masculinity. There are Africans who are presented as either faithful assistants or as cruel barbarians and vicious interlopers that hinder the advance of the mighty colonial project and, therefore, need to be defeated. There are women who are depicted as angels or monsters and who may occasionally be allowed to become wild sports only to conform to the division between male (public) and female (domestic) in the end, or perish in the attempt. All in all, Smith envisions a world of egalitarian opportunity outside the metropolitan class-system in which the enterprising and valiant person can succeed; only that the enterprising and valiant person that succeeds happens to be invariably male, white, British and unquestioningly heterosexual.

The 'big' issue in Smith's novels, therefore, is not only adventure, action, mystery, romance; the issue is, above all, masculinity in its most recalcitrant, 'machist', aggressive, imperialist form. In a world in which new and more feminine versions of masculinity are being popularised in the media, literature and even society, and in which macho, armour-plated models of masculinity from Bogart to Bronson (and more recently Stallone or Schwarzenegger) are being replaced by a panoply of astonished, uncertain, soft men purging their past sins in rehabilitation clinics or in television chat-shows, Smith's fiction comes as a relief for men. Smith writes 'in the masculine' from a patriarchal and masculinist point of view; he writes about men

doing manly things (hunting, fighting, trekking, amassing huge fortunes, sweeping women off their feet); he reclaims war, business, hunting fields for men, disentangling them from domestic scenarios, which he keeps for women; and, above all, he provides male readers with the essential and intrinsic Man with whom they can identify: the archetypal, civilisation-free, mythical hero who is both centre of the action and of morality, the mediator of truth and of pleasure. Smith's heroes may accommodate a few soft spots in their constitutions; they may display apparently liberal, anti-apartheid, anti-racist discourses; or they may even make some concessions to romantic love or to women's aspirations outside the domestic. Yet, as I have striven to demonstrate throughout my dissertation, the author makes use of all sorts of narrative strategies to prioritise the solidity of the tough, rational and inexhaustible male body, of patriarchy, of masculinist behaviour and of white male supremacy over 'lesser' human specimens.

The choice of the imperialist adventure framework for his narratives, with its racist, misogynist and patriarchal undertones, therefore, is not accidental. Smith's particular option of generic convention is essential for the propagandising and maintenance of white-supremacist and patriarchal world-views. Given his works' popular appeal, Smith ensures that his sexual and racial policies reach a vast readership that, by buying and reading his novels, assimilate Smith's particular standpoint. His choice of heroes and their code of behaviour are not accidental either. Male readers, I assume, recognise in Smith's heroes what they could be like given the possibility to give free rein to their manly instincts in conveniently 'uncivilised' adventurous arenas. They see a 'script' which they could adopt, a kind of *vade mecum* to take hold of in order to withstand the charges of oppositional groups, women's higher public profile, or the effects of our mechanised world. Smith takes male readers to a mythological male world where men are 'real men', displaying essential manly traits (such as wildness, robust health, compassionate decisiveness, good will, generous leadership) and acting in a really manly fashion. His narratives, therefore, create a patent male space that comes as an alternative and as a respite from the models of masculinity favoured in our 'civilised' world.

Funnily enough, John Stotesbury informed me, it is Danielle, Smith's wife, who edits his books and eliminates and corrects Smith's blunders and malapropos. If we are to trust one of the various Wilbur Smith sites on the Internet,⁵ Smith's books have a wide female readership. It seems that both Danielle and Smith's female readers have nineteenth-century predecessors in the realm of imperialist adventure. Ballantyne's novels, for instance, were addressed and marketed to boys. Yet, his adventurous yarns were first actually recounted in letters to his mother in Scotland; it was a kindly aunt who encouraged Ballantyne to write his first book and paid for it to be privately published; and it was his sister who marketed the book, ensuring its sale by subscription. Furthermore, many of his stories and characters, including Ralph Rover (the hero of *Coral Island* and *The Gorilla Hunters*), were invented to entertain the writer's two nieces, and girls and women read Ballantyne's, as well as other adventure authors', stories although they were not acknowledged as readers.⁶ Whatever the influence female editors and marketing 'agents' had and have had on these particular examples of adventure, it is not for me to tell, at least not in these concluding remarks, for it would have required a completely different approach to Smith's works that was not my intention to pursue for the elaboration of my dissertation. Yet, neither Danielle Smith nor Ballantyne's relatives seem to have operated any significant transformation on the masculinist ethos in these adventure tales, which remain consistently masculine. The existence of a female readership, on the other hand, can be accounted for by taking into consideration that adventure offers both males and females an opportunity to escape dull, unadventurous domestic environments that not all women, myself included, find fulfilling and exhilarating. But in Smith's case, the existence of this female readership not only reveals the universal appeal of adventure, violence and explicit sex; or the appeal romance (which as I have explained in chapters 8 and 9 features prominently in Smith's Courtney saga) has for women; it also points towards the dissatisfaction of present-day women with milk-and-water, Politically Correct models of masculinity popularised in the representational arts. The women who read Wilbur Smith's stories, may, indeed, one assumes, look for a feminised, sensitive and caring Mr Right in real life, but they

⁵ <http://members.tripod.com/~rollindice/Smith.html>

⁶ see Richard Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire*, 63.

enjoy an occasional, if fictional, 'diet' of utterly and unquestioningly virile machos to take with them as they undertake their escapist flights of fancy into the realms of adventure.

I have not attempted to conduct ethnographic or empirical research in my dissertation. Nevertheless, it remains an enticing area I expect to explore in the future. However, my analysis of Smith's Courtney saga and the conditionings that may account for the emphasis Smith places on the masculine does not merely reveal how Smith never completely departs from a model of masculinity constructed with nostalgic reference to a past imperialist adventure tradition and past masculine ideals. Nor does it simply show how he constructs patriarchal models of familial and social organisation and contributes to their popularisation and endorsement via his fiction. What my analysis does disclose is that, if studied against the social context in which the works have been written, Wilbur Smith is uncomfortable with new social trends that threaten to destabilise traditional notions of what it means to be a 'man' and to wash away the power and centrality of white men within patriarchal and colonial constructs. The popularity of Smith's works, on the other hand, shows that this anxiety affects not only the author, but can be made extensive to his (male and female) readership who, discontented with the models of masculinity sanctioned within a context of Political Correctness, look upon Smith's works not in anger, but in nostalgia, knowing that Smith is not going to disappoint them, that they are consistently going to be offered models of tough masculinity who are never overshadowed by 'lesser beings', overpowered by uncongenial fates, or defeated by illness or pain. In short, Wilbur Smith's Courtney saga nurtures his readership's need for super-virile super-heroes in times when real men are not only blamed for all western society's ills (at least by feminists and other anti-patriarchal groups), but see that their 'free-range days' are coming to an end, threatened, as men are (or feel they are), to end up in 'battery farms' of smug domestication.

Interestingly enough, and to conclude, Wilbur Smith is not the only provider of 'solid', 'imperial' fantasy models of masculinity on the literary market. Adventure is still successfully being cultivated as a genre. Ruthless adventure heroes feature

prominently in the works of authors such as Bernard Cornwell, Patrick O'Brian and John Masters. The current Amazon best-seller (checked on 20th April 2000) is the latest Sharpe novel, *Sharpe's Trafalgar*, by Bernard Cornwell. Nineteenth-century imperialist novels are not only still widely consumed by readers, they are even used as alternatives to present-day children's books populated by prissy paragons of indeterminate sex who spend their time questioning gender stereotypes. In the United States, we read in *The Economist* 11th December 1999,⁷ parents turn in frustration to Henty's books for the education of their children, especially parents, 1.2 million of them, who educate their children at home. Henty's books are published by two companies in the United States: Lost Classics Book Company of Lake Wales, Florida, and PrestonSpeed of Mill Hall, Pennsylvania. The latter has so far published sixteen volumes of Henty's novels and is at the moment issuing two titles a month with audiobooks and study guides. A complete edition of Henty's novels, furthermore, is currently available on CD-ROM. Yet, demand vastly exceeds supply. An overview of the broad adventure publishing and consuming panorama seems to confirm Richard Phillips's claim that "adventure [...] is very much alive, and the geography of adventure is still in cultural circulation."⁸ An in-depth analysis of Smith's contemporary adventure writers and their sales and reception, as well as of the sales and reception of Smith's literary predecessors, would certainly require another thesis, which leaves me with a lot of work to do once I finish the current project. For the time being, the continuous demand for adventure, together with the prominent success of Smith's works, allows me to conclude that King Romance is much alive, indeed, offering his readers heroes that possess the rugged independence of Errol Flynn and John Wayne, and relentlessly preaching the virtues of family loyalty, female modesty, patriotism and white power as soothing alternatives in times of crisis, emasculation and apparent feminisation.

⁷ "Henty's Heroes," *The Economist* 11 Dec. 1999: 44.

⁸ Richard Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire*, 164.

Appendixes and References



Figure 18. Endpaper for Wilbur Smith's *Monsoon* (London: Macmillan, 1999).

Appendix 1

Types of adventure

Adventure, like other genres, may not exist in a pure, unpolluted form. However, there is an adventure genre with its own idiosyncrasies and particularities that determine the classification of individual texts or films under the label of adventure. Yet, adventure comes to life best by splitting it up into different types that, together, comprise, exemplify and define the excitement the genre generates, the attitude with which we approach the genre, and the thematic patterns and ideological, moral or cultural motifs it relies on for its existence.

Not all critics that have attempted to establish the different types of adventure that exist have come to the same conclusions, though. José María Bardavio,¹ for instance, offers a division which is altogether confusing. He uses locale, time and purpose indiscriminately to determine each type and includes types which might be better classified under other generic headings. The types of adventures he identifies are: sea adventure, imaginary places adventure, exotic locales adventure, Robinson adventure, western, scientific adventure, jungle adventure and historical adventure. Martin Green, although enlightening in his almost encyclopaedic knowledge of adventure writers and certainly welcome for his systematic defence of the genre, is also confusing in his categorisation. He writes that adventure can be classified according to type of hero, geographical setting, nationality, historical period and elements (sea, land, air), but does not contemplate an interaction between them. Instead, he offers a classification based on the type of hero featured in the narratives, resulting in an all-too-inclusive approach. In his seven-type division, everything goes in adventure as long as the heroes undertake an adventurous pursuit and a journey into the unknown, no matter how unsuccessful, and even when the other elements of the

¹ José María Bardavio, *La novela de aventuras* (Madrid: SGEL, 1977).

narratives do not fit into the genre at all or when they use adventure points of departure just to parody, reverse and delegitimize the genre and the moral, political or cultural interests it serves. In Martin Green's cosmology of adventure, therefore, the genre appears divided into the following categories:

- the Robinson story, dealing with the exploits of a single individual or a group trying to survive on desert islands or in similarly vacated locales, deprived of the comforts of civilisation.
- the Three Musketeers story, featuring a group of young men fighting to protect the status quo against the background of a colourful historical setting and a picturesque pageant of figures from some national past.
- the Frontiersman story, focusing on a stoic and melancholy hero, a crossbreed of the wilderness with civilisation, torn between the values of savagery and civilised life, in a white settlement during the first stages of colonisation (the fight against the indigenous inhabitants).
- the Avenger story, depicting a hero that has been unfairly accused of a crime and condemned by a corrupt government, who eventually emerges as a fierce and pure authority to punish an evil that would elude the delays and corruptions of constitutional law.
- the Wanderer story, presenting a hero that plays the role of a spy, mole, double agent, smuggler or investigative journalist crossing spatial and moral frontiers to discover the often disgusting 'truth' about political authority and social morality.
- the Sagaman story, featuring the strivings of a saga of wild and atavistic men led by powerful leaders defending their lands from foreign interference, and eventually creating a fairer and better society that is supposed to become the foundation myth of origin of present-day nationhoods.
- the Hunted Man story, portraying a single individual, ordinary or marginal, who takes on large organisations and conspiracies that are subverting the state or the nation and can triumph over them, aided only by weapons of the latest kind and state-of-the-art equipment.

Clear-cut as this division may seem, it is nonetheless disconcerting. Martin Green disregards important factors of adventure such as iconography (he considers narratives whose iconography clearly determines their inclusion into other genres, like Cooper's stories, which are better defined as westerns); mood (which adventure determines has to be optimistic, but which Green ignores, considering pessimistic subversions of the myth of adventure, such as Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and Spark's *Robinson*, examples of the Robinson adventure); and thematic patterns (he regards thrillers by John Buchan or spy stories by Ian Fleming as examples of the Hunted Man story).

Brian Taves, in his book *The Romance of Adventure. The Genre of Historical Adventure Movies*, provides an altogether better classification, which I subscribe to. In order to establish the types of adventure that exist, he takes into account the main activities of the main characters, along with their basic locales - whether in the castles of medieval Europe, the piratical Spanish Main, a ship on the high seas, or colonial India or Africa. Together with those, he takes into consideration thematic patterns, iconography, the nature of the hero's efforts and the attitudes of the characters towards political issues. He also stresses the underlying unity of the genre for "the overriding themes remain the same regardless of time and space,"² and the fact that every single example considered takes a descriptive and realistic approach towards historical events and settings and illustrates a different aspect of the historical conflict between injustice, oppression and revolt. The following is an outline of the classification he suggests. The major unity of the genre has been analysed in chapter 3.

1. The Swashbuckler Adventure

This form opens with oppression imposed on a peaceful land, resulting in rebellion that calls forth a leader dedicated to the rights of the people. Through a series of confrontations, power alternates between the forces of change and the status quo until the conflict eventually gives birth to a new era of freedom. With the hero's aid, a just regime is restored or a new, improved establishment is created, replacing one liable to transgression by tyrants. The prototype of the swashbuckler is the myth of

² Brian Taves, *The Romance of Adventure*, 15.

Robin Hood and the figure has been elaborated historically through more recent manifestations in popular literature, from the Scarlet Pimpernel to Zorro. The hero is characterised by mental and physical agility, impeccable manners, and often witty speech, without necessarily having aristocratic origins. He often works alone, although he usually has a band to assist him and with whom he has a relationship of healthy and all-important camaraderie. The historical and physical setting is varied, any country or historical situation is adequate for this type of adventure as long as there are oppressive forces for the hero to fight and a new and better system to be established, although the historical past is favoured. The swashbuckler evokes the expectations of swordplay, often pitting the hero against several adversaries simultaneously, battles or hand-to-hand fights. A typical example of the swashbuckler would be the film *The Prisoner of Zenda*.

2. The Pirate Adventure

The protagonist is a pirate operating within a crew of piratical sailors and followers on board of a pirate boat. The iconography of this type contains the following elements: the Spanish Main, galleons, bleached skulls, buried treasures, the plank, dirks and cutlasses, scuttled ships and marooning. The story follows a well-established pattern consisting of pirates subduing their prey, looting the ship, binding their captives and blowing them up. The setting is often the South Pacific, the Mediterranean, and especially the Caribbean (Tortuga and Maracaibo are particular favourites) during the period of the Spanish Main, with pirates of British nationality fighting French or Spanish pirates. The pirate protagonist is often a man of noble origins who has become the unfair victim of oppressive forces and decides to operate outside the limits of outlawry in favour of freedom (however, there are also uneducated commoner pirates belonging to the lower classes). Eventually, he discovers that he shares a love of liberty with other rebels and they stick together choosing the piratical way of life as the only option possible in a context of political oppression in their homelands. At the end, however, the tyrannical power is defeated, a better regime implemented and pirates are forgiven their previous behaviour and allowed to return to their homeland. There might be pirates who decide to willingly

become outcasts, a status that carries with it the freedom and unsettled existence they thrive upon. For them, patriotism and romance are incidental to self-interest and become simultaneously virtual anarchists and materialists; they range from disgruntled nonconformists to antisocial dropouts and undesirables who find themselves unable to live by ordinary laws or means. A few of these are treated as distinct villains, especially the vicious wreckers, who lure ships onto deserted coasts in storms, killing all on board and ransacking the hulk for profit (like in *Jamaica Inn*). Typical pirate adventures are *The Fortunes of Captain Blood* and *The Buccaneer*.

3. The Sea Adventure

It is linked to pirate adventures by the use of naval iconography, such as the battle scenes, sailing vessels coming round to aim their guns at one another, sweeping the deck with broadsides to the sound of splintering wood and the collapse of masts and rigging. Many sea adventures also deal with the causes that may make people be driven to piracy, such as mutiny. However, they are different from pirate adventures. They generally feature sea expeditions undertaken for expansionism, profit and private benefit or scientific reasons. They are more authentic in portraying the grim realities of life aboard ships in the historical past, the cruel law of the sea that governs the routine of ocean-going life and the rugged life of the sailor. Reefs, collisions and wrecks provide distress; individuals fall overboard and are drowned, or drop to their deaths from the rigging high atop the masts down to the deck below; there are hand-to-hand fights in the sailors' quarters, a few of them good-natured. They often feature stories of maturation from boyhood to manhood, with boys growing into men and learning the complexities of command and responsibility and the ocean comes to represent a basic challenge where humankind learns to fulfil its potential and reaches a greater understanding of itself and nature. The ship acts as a microcosm of society as a whole, and individuals in isolated conditions, living amidst the elements and outside the normal social interaction of other adventure settings, must learn to respect authority and to live within the limitations of a hierarchically constructed society. On the other hand, authority, represented by the captain, has to be benevolent and just; if the captain is heartless and uncaring towards his crew, authority breaks down and a

rightful mutiny ensues, one that will systematically end with a better and fairer command, together with an ideal and democratic brotherhood being established. Characteristic sea adventures are *Mutiny on the Bounty* and *Captain Horatio Hornblower*.

4. The Empire or Imperialist Adventure

This category has been analysed in depth in chapter 4, since it is the type of adventure that best helps to understand the narratives of Wilbur Smith and, consequently, deserves a lengthier treatment. These are only basic tenets. Imperialist adventures are set during the period of European domination over the emerging nations of Asia and Africa, and often feature English colonisers in portions of the former British empire. They portray a colony ruled from an altruistic desire to bring peace and justice to a land where both are endangered by despotic or bloodthirsty native governments or other, less benevolent colonial world powers. Imperialism, therefore, emerges as a liberating experience, with the ruling administration holding in check the inherent propensity toward civil conflict in the colony. Consequently, imperialist adventures endorse the colonial system by portraying it as a way to protect imperilled natives from domestic and foreign enemies, and as a way to spread the advantages of western civilisation against evils such as disease, torture, slavery or barbaric customs such as suttee. The protagonist, the empire builder (whether a soldier, a colonist or an explorer), promotes long-term peace and earns the native people's affection and respect, without expecting personal reward beyond the satisfaction of serving a foreign land and a people that are now loved as his own. The politics of empire-building are often obscured because the adventurer is seldom a conscious proponent of imperial policies; imperialist adventures, therefore, concentrate on the romance of exploration and the broadening of horizons, the imperial endeavour itself remaining in the abstract, almost a side-effect of the adventurers' life-style and altruistic approach to other peoples. The military is often promoted in these stories set in jungles or deserts and, together with other iconographic elements, such as native dances at nightfall, wild animals, explorer suits, maps, hunting expeditions or colourful and often sparse native dresses, weapons such

as the rifle, machine gun and cannon often feature prominently. Typical examples of imperialist adventure are *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, *The Charge of the Light Brigade* and *The Four Feathers*.

5. The Fortune Hunter Adventure

It is the less formulaic of the adventure types, offering the greatest potential for variation. It is not tied to historical setting or locale, which ranges from Europe to the exotic Far East, with the areas around Africa and Asia favoured. The fortune hunter is a greedy, grubby, nerve-ridden white man who tries to lose himself among native peoples and is willing to live in rugged terrain, readily sacrificing the comforts of civilisation in an often gruelling and unsuccessful life. He begins the adventurous story as a self-centred individual without guiding political beliefs or a gentleman's code of honour; commencing as an apathetic nonhero and a disillusioned romantic who is only interested in carefree sport and the acquisition of wealth, he comes to realise his obligations towards society at the end of the story. Otherwise, he might be moved by other less material reasons such as the search for personal revenge or vengeance according to the ethic of 'an eye for an eye'. Eventually, however, he discovers forms of conduct and morality (such as altruism or romance) that allow life to acquire deeper meaning and subscribes to the adventurous code of honour to make up for the misery his greed might have brought about through a heroic sacrificial gesture or by accepting traditionally lauded values resulting into re-absorption into society. Examples of this type of adventure are *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Scaramouche*, *The African Queen*, *Lord Jim* and *Around the World in 80 Days*.

6. Minor Variations

Together with these broader types, Taves contemplates other minor variations which, although they follow some adventure conventions, hardly qualify as adventures. Among them he includes:

- Jungle stories, like the Tarzan films, which mix the fanciful and the fantastic without adhering to historical probability; which offer a mythology of inherent danger which ranges from ferocious wild animals to equally threatening natives; and which lack adventure's freedom-fighting motif.
- Documentary adventure, which is concerned with exploration, living in untamed lands or survival against a hostile nature, but focuses too much on background information of the setting to allow its classification within adventure (*Bring 'Em Back Alive*).
- Wildlife conservation adventure, which focuses on the necessity to protect wild animals and environment from the ravages of poachers, hunters or multinational corporations, to the detriment of adventurous pursuits (*The Roots of Heaven*, *The Emerald Forest* and *Gorillas in the Mist*).
- The oriental swashbuckler, which developed during the 1940s and 1950s and which transferred traditional swashbuckler motifs to Oriental locales (often Arabia), relinquishing any pretence to realism by creating a transparently imaginary and artificial Far East and an atmosphere of surface exoticism and temporal indeterminacy (*The Prince Who Was a Thief* and *Son of Ali Baba*).

Appendix 2

The development of the British empire and the colonisation of Africa and South Africa (a very brief outline)

1. The foundations of the British empire

The foundations of the British empire can be traced back to 16th-century Elizabethan England: merchant explorers went in search of new lands for trade, and they were followed by those who wanted freedom from religious troubles. They settled in lands as far apart as North America, Canada, India and the West Indies (which were settled directly or taken from the French and the Spanish).

People moved from England in pursue either of wealth or political / religious freedom, and settled in areas all over the world. Little by little, settlements grew into towns and towns into cities. The areas inhabited by the British (usurped from earlier settlers or from natives) were controlled directly or indirectly by Britain.

According to the way they were governed we can talk of:

self-governed colonies: colonies which had their own local governments, but they left defence and foreign affairs to the mother country.

dominions: completely free nations that owed loyalty to the crown alone.

India is a case apart because it was never allowed to develop as either a self-governed country or a dominion. It was a trading colony settled and controlled by the East India Company and it was always under direct British rule, under a governor-general who was responsible to the Prime Minister. In 1857 there was an uprising: soldiers in the upper Ganges district rose against their officers. Although the British government

managed to put down the rising, they feared there could be more upheavals in the following years and, consequently, the British government took over the company as the ruler of India.

The different areas controlled by the British were known as the British empire; these areas became an outlet for people in England, which was becoming overcrowded; overseas possessions supplied an appropriate outlet for the energetic, the dissident, the oppressed, the debtors, the criminals and the failures of old England, who would have been troublesome at home. Also, the countries the British settled or occupied were valued as markets where raw materials could be found, and manufactured products sold.

2. The first British empire (15/16th century - 18th century)

It was the time when England settled and undertook the control and government of, among others, the following areas of the world:

- North America
- Australia and New Zealand
- First settlements in some areas in India

2. The second British empire (19th century)

At the end of the 18th century England lost the United States. Because of this, the European nations, that had respected and admired her development and, obviously, fought against it, particularly France, began to question England's potential as a world power. Soon after the War of American Independence, however, Britain became involved in the Napoleonic War (1793-1815) and the involvement in this war paid off in the end. Between 1793 and 1815 Britain gained twenty colonies, including: Tobago, Mauritius, Malta, St.Lucia, the Cape, and the United Provinces of Agran and Oudh in India.

Throughout the 19th century, the British empire grew enormously due to the following factors:

- a) Overpopulation and unemployment in Britain which drove hundreds of thousands of emigrants to the colonies. These emigrants were glad to get hold of land and work it for themselves.
- b) The development of commerce, communication and transport due to steam and iron, electricity and petrol, and the application of medical science in the tropics.
- c) The abolition of slavery in 1833, which drove Quakers and Evangelicals to the colonies to fight against this dreadful practice in the tropics, which would have become a vast slave farm for white exploitation.

The second British empire is characterised by the development of vast portions of Asia and Africa by commercial intercourse and by political rule; the areas which were particularly developed were South Africa and India.

4. The colonisation of Africa

- a) Africa was different from the rest of the colonised continents. For three centuries the traders of Western Europe (Portuguese, Dutch, Danes, French and British) had maintained some small stations on the coast, but they had never managed to explore inland. Anyone who tried to do so was killed by tribesmen or disease.
- b) In the 19th century, however, British explorers uncovered the secrets of Africa's rivers: the Nile, the Niger, the Congo and the Zambezi, although wherever they went they found slavery and disease.
- c) These discoveries were of little interest to the government, but they were of great interest to traders and the churches:
 - Traders wanted to make agreements with inland chiefs in order to set up trading outposts.
 - The churches wanted to spread the Christian faith and stop slavery.

d) Public opinion demanded that the government should interfere because it was believed that only law and order could stop slave-trade in the heart of Africa. But the government preferred to leave the colonisation and settlement of the continent to two companies:

-Royal Niger Company

-East Africa Company

e) Foreign threats to British trade at last persuaded the government to take over the companies' responsibility at the turn of the 20th century. The countries of Nigeria, Gold Coast (Ghana), Kenya and Uganda were born and slavery was stopped by law (before they had been British protectorates controlled by the different companies operating in the area).

f) Meanwhile, the Suez Canal had become a serious problem: for centuries this corner of Africa had been part of the Turkish empire. In 1875 the British bought a controlling share in the canal which the French had built to provide a short sea passage to the East. Since Britain owned four-fifths of the world's steamships, she had a natural interest in the canal's safety. When Turkish rule broke down a few years later, Britain brought in her forces to protect the canal. The breakdown of Turkish and native government in Egypt led to the occupation of Egypt by the British (1882). British control began greatly to the material benefit of Egyptian peasants. Egypt gained its independence after World War I. Finally, in 1956, the canal was taken over by Egypt.

5. The colonisation process in South Africa

a) South Africa was a particularly problematic area for the British. When the British took Cape Town during the Napoleonic War, there was already a large population of Dutch farmers in the area, the Boers (before that, the British had had to fight with the Zulu for the territory in Natal).

- b) When the British government laid down a policy of equal rights for all men, the Boers disagreed. The Boers moved north and began an independent colony beyond the border. But British miners, traders and church workers followed them, and their troubles began again.

- c) The sharply divided interests between Boer farmers and British miners led to war in 1899. After two years of struggle, the Boers were defeated. The defeated Boers were generously treated; the Treaty of Vereeniging (May 1902) was signed, through which it was established that the British would control the economy and the Boers the politics in South Africa; the country became the Union of South Africa in 1910, which comprised four different provinces: the Cape, Natal, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal.

- d) English and Afrikaans were joint languages, and during the two World Wars South Africa fought on Britain's side.

- e) The Boers, however, outnumbered the population of British origin, and they still disagreed with the idea of race equality. When Britain began giving independence to her African colonies, the Union cut its last ties with the crown. The Republic of South Africa was born. The government, in the hands of the Afrikaner National Party, laid out its segregationist apartheid policies that were to determine the fate of the black and white population in South Africa until the demise of apartheid in 1994 with the first democratic elections held in that country, which gave the victory to Nelson Mandela's ANC party.

Appendix 3

What is meant by 'feminism'? A brief outline

Various critics have laid out different genealogies and different classifications for feminism. In "Feminist Criticism and Television," for instance, Ann Kaplan¹ provides the following classifications depending on whether feminism is regarded as a political or as a philosophical movement:

1. Feminism as a political movement:

- a) Bourgeois feminism: women's concern to obtain equal rights and freedoms within a capitalist system.
- b) Marxist feminism: the linking of specific female oppressions to the larger structure of capitalism and to oppressions of other groups (gays, minorities, the working classes, and so on).
- c) Radical feminism: the designation of women as different from men and the desire to establish separate female communities to forward women's specific needs and desires.
- d) Post-structuralist feminism: the idea that we need to analyse the language order through which we learn to be what our culture calls 'women' as distinct from a group called 'men', as we attempt to bring about change beneficial to women.

¹ See: Ann Kaplan, "Feminist Criticism and Television," *Channels of Discourse. Television and Contemporary Criticism*, ed. Robert C. Allen (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988) 211-253.

2. Feminism as a philosophical movement:

- a) Essentialist feminism: it establishes that women are biologically different from men, and thus, display other characteristics that, although have brought women to subjection, are more human and can have beneficial effects on society. They criticise the harsh, competitive and individualistic male values that govern society. They believe that female values, because of their essential humanness, should be resurrected, celebrated, revitalised.

- b) Antiessentialist feminism: women who regard themselves as antiessentialists do not believe that femininity is genetic. They think that men and women are socially constructed as different and that they are taught to be different and behave differently. Consequently, antiessentialist feminists try to understand the processes through which sexuality and subjectivity are constructed. They think that we should move beyond the battle of the sexes and socially constructed arbitrary distinctions, and try to focus on everything that makes, both men and women, human.

Julia Kristeva offers another classification that attempts to link the political and the philosophical currents within feminism.² Her analysis relies on Jacques Lacan's theories of the way the subject is constructed in a patriarchal language order, in which women are normally relegated to the position of absence or lack. Lacan's distinction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic is central to the different kinds of feminism Kristeva identifies.

In Lacan's psychoanalytic method there are three different stages (that Kristeva uses for her own interpretative purposes):

- a) The Imaginary: when individuals, both male and female, are born, they identify with the mother; they do not have a sense of their own individuality, but they merge with the mother.

² See: Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1986) 187-214.

- b) The Mirror Phase: it is when individuals first become aware of their own individuality as distinct from the mother. This happens when they see the image of the mother holding the child in the mirror, and become aware of their own image in the mirror. They not only realise the difference between themselves as distinct from the mother, but of the difference between their own being and the image in the mirror, which Lacan calls *Ideal Imago*. In this phase, individuals also regard the *Ideal Imago* of the mother as *Other*, another image, and begin to set in motion their desire for the mother or a desire for what she desires.
- c) The Symbolic: in a third stage, the child moves beyond the level of the Imaginary, the mother, into the Symbolic (= patriarchy): the language and other signifying and representational systems, such as literature, cinema and television (images / gestures / sound). It is in this third stage that individuals become aware of their sexuality, pinpointed by the language (he / she). According to Lacan, language, and the other signifying systems, are organised around the phallus as the prime signifier, the determining constituent which will help define everything that exists. Because of the importance of the phallus, women occupy the place of lack or absence since they are defined by their lack of phallus. Women, consequently, enter the world of the symbolic in a disadvantageous position, since they are intrinsically thought of as inferior because of their lacks, whereas men immediately find themselves part and parcel of the dominant order. In this situation, women feel forced to identify with the mother and to desire what the mother desires, the phallus.

Taking as a point of departure women's position in relation with the Symbolic (the patriarchal world), Kristeva identifies different types of feminism:

1. First stage of feminism

Women demand equal access to the patriarchal / symbolic order, desiring equality rather than subjection. Within this broad heading, she includes three types of feminism:

- a) Domestic feminism (characteristic of the 19th century): Women acknowledge the existence of a masculine world and see themselves as different from men. However, they do not feel inferior because of their femininity, but, instead, celebrate women's qualities as normally higher or better than male values of competition and aggression.
- b) Liberal feminism: Feminism in which women strive for equality with men in the public work sphere. That is, women demand equal access to jobs, to institutional power, equal pay for equal work, equal benefits across the board, and also changes in family routines to accommodate their rights to demanding careers.
- c) Pre-Althusserian Marxist feminism: They are interested in how women as a group are manipulated by larger economic and political concerns outside their control. Thus, they are worried about how narratives construct images of the working woman if society needs women in the work-force; alternatively, they represent women as content to be housewives when that is economically beneficial.

2. Second stage of feminism

It is the feminism that rejects the patriarchal order in the name of difference, resulting in radical feminism. Femininity is not only celebrated by radical feminism but also seen as better and essentially different. The focus is on women-identified women, on striving for autonomy and wholeness through communities of women or, at least, through intense relating to other women. They condemn the presentation of traditional family life as the solution for all ills, the forced heterosexual coupling, the

presentation of marriage as an earthly paradise, or the portrayal of men as naturally dominant.

3. Last type of feminism (also called post-structuralist feminism)

In this type of feminism, women reject the dichotomy masculine / feminine as an unquestionable abstraction. They see it as a cultural construction and try to analyse the symbolic system (language, films, etc.) through which we communicate and organise our lives so as to understand how it is that we learn to be 'women' as different from 'men'. Post-structuralist feminists, as different from the other types, are antiessentialists.