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“Out of the Living Rock”: The Assemblage of Ruins in H. Rider Haggard’s *She*

Rachel E. Rackham

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

“Out of the Living Rock”: The Assemblage of Ruins in H. Rider Haggard’s *She*

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H. Rider Haggard’s imperial gothic novel, *She, A History of Adventure* (1887), is a narrative of ruins that speak of a vanished past and presage ends: of empire, of history, of culture. Haggard’s novel follows two British adventurers as they travel to Africa in search of a mysterious woman that a potsherd—a ruin in miniature—tasks them with killing. There, they encounter ruin after ruin: pots, roads, caves, canals, sculptures, and more. These ruins serve as sentinels, as walkways, and as homes; they signal, warn, resist, witness, remind, and—not least—exist in a landscape that is anything but empty. Though seemingly inert, the ruins are actants possessing agency and able to influence the people and objects around them. But in Haggard’s novel of colonization and conquest, these ruins do not act alone. Instead, they form an assemblage, a group of vibrant materials that collaborate and collude to resist twin onslaughts from ancient Egypt and Victorian Britain. Two accounts thus emerge from the encounter of human and ruin. In one, the ruins establish a symbiotic relationship with their would-be possessor. In the other, the ruins reject the men who seek to make the artifacts part of the narrative of imperialism. In this way, the ruins in *She* become counteragents of empire, as heroic as Haggard’s human characters and worthy of recognition for the pivotal role they play in the novel.

Keywords: ruins, faux antique, assemblages, geophilia, thing power, vibrant materials, agency, actant, Africa, colonization, H. Rider Haggard

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Introduction

Poised in a display case in the Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery is a ceramic potsherd measuring 250 mm by 195 mm, with Greek, Latin, and English inscriptions painted on the surfaces. Held together by four brass rivets that diagonally dissect it, the artifact has a fresh break on the rim and filed edges (see fig. 1). This sherd, though similar to other pieces of pottery in the museum's collection, boasts one main difference: it is a fake,¹ a prop created by H. Rider Haggard to impart to his novel *She, A History of Adventure* (1887) the aura of authenticity and some of the mysterious potentiality often associated with the ruined fragment. In this attempt, the sherd follows a long cultural tradition, joining Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" and Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ozymandias" as well as countless architectural follies created in the nineteenth century to lend freshly imagined landscapes a bit of crumbling historicity. Like such country estates, Haggard's novel is chock-full of manufactured pieces of the past. It is a narrative of fantastic ruins.

Ruins have a way of leading the mind to wonder about history, about scales of temporality, about the nature of humanity and the human desire for immortality. Many thinkers have found themselves engaged by ruins' symbolic freight. "Cementing history into a place of melancholy and decadent beauty," writes Stefka Hristova, ruins speak "both of the inevitability of decay as well as of the strength behind the act of remaining" (1). They persist, as another scholar puts it, even "when [the evidence of] ruination is temporarily and superficially removed" (Smith 67), and they wait silently, patiently "to be rediscovered, re-remembered" (Hristova 1). In

¹ In his introduction to the Broadview *She*, Stauffer states that "Haggard had a 'fake' sherd fabricated to the specifications of the story, and had photogravure images of it inserted as a frontispiece" (13). Further, in Haggard's autobiography, he states he presented this fabricated sherd as a "genuine antique" to Sir John Evans, an expert on "such things"; much to Haggard's delight, Evans declared it "might *possibly* have been forged." Haggard attributes that declaration as a "testimony to the excellency of the sherd" (Haggard, *Days* 149).

ruins, the “works of man [are] slowly overcome by nature,” leaving “monumental and architectonic remains” that “testify to the ultimate fate of manmade things” and force us “to reflect on the extent of human making and self-making” (Ferri 204). Ruins “provide a favoured image of a vanished past, what is beyond repair and in decay, thrown into aesthetic relief by nature’s tangled growth” (Kolenda 6). In ruins, in short, the past is remembered and immortalized, even as natural processes efface the material form, marking the decay of even the sturdiest of human endeavors.

It comes as no surprise, then, that so many individuals are drawn to the history-filled stones that so often comprise ruins. Jeffrey Cohen describes the allure that stone has for many as “geophilia.” More than just dead objects lying in the dirt, rocks—especially those cut and shaped in the past—live in ways that the landscape both does and does not. These rocks cut and shaped by human hands persist as part of an entangled, enmeshed relationship that exists between humans and the earth, where clearly visible is “the lithic in the creaturely and the lively in the stone” (*Stone* 20). Cohen rightly observes that stone is “full of relation, teeming with narrative, seldom inert”; it “contains energy and radiates agency” (22). The “narrative” Cohen describes emerges from the ecological functions of stone and is shaped by the “energy” and “agency” of that background. Not solely inert, and not solely lively, stone positions itself in human histories and within the deeper story of ecological materialism.

This sort of ecological narrative becomes part of the literary texture of Haggard’s famous imperial gothic novel *She*, in which two British adventurers travel to Africa and find themselves among a fictional indigenous people—the Amahagger—who exist in fragile symbiosis with the ruins that surround them. For thousands of years, the Amahagger have lived in tombs “hewn out of the living rock,” bordered by imposing ruinous structures (Haggard, *She* 98). The Amahagger

live in these cave-like tombs out of necessity; however, further connections between the Amahagger and the ruins develop from their ideologies and daily needs. For fuel and light, the Amahagger burn mummies, the preserved organic ruins, one might say, of a past people. For storage, they use earthenware and clay pots that have an ancient design and resemble the artifacts that populate the shelves of Victorian museums. When they sleep, the Amahagger appropriate stone slabs carved into the bowels of the earth that were originally “designed to receive the corpse[s] of the departed” (98). Through each interaction, the relationship between the Amahagger and the ruins that surround them is strengthened, the Amahagger becoming more and more dependent on the stone for survival and protection and, in turn, protecting the ruins from assault by outsiders. Called “the People of the Rocks” (91), the Amahagger in Haggard’s *She* love ruins with an intensity unmatched in nearly all of Victorian literature.

In *She*, this love of ruins proves contagious; indeed, it sets the plot in motion. It is an enigmatic fragment of stoneware—the potsherd on display in Norwich, or rather its fictional analogue—that captivates the imaginations of the novel’s British heroes and precipitates their journey into the heart of Africa. This potsherd attempts to break through the imaginary and material divide between the characters and readers, offering material evidence (however notional) that the ruins in the novel might exist in the realm of the readers, not just of the fictional characters, and thereby acts as an authenticating artifact, a bridge between the agentic stones of the reader’s world and the agentic stones of *She*. Once in Africa, Horace Holly and Leo Vincey also seem to cross this bridge between fantasy and reality as they enter a terrain that, until that moment, existed only in their minds. They further cross this divide as they encounter ruin after ruin while traversing the landscape in search of a mysterious woman whom the potsherd tasks them with killing. These ruins perform a wide variety of functions. They serve as

sentinels, as walkways, and as homes. They signal, warn, resist, witness, remind, and—*not* least—exist, “full of relation, teeming with narrative” (Cohen, *Stone* 22). Despite this, Holly, Leo, and the other characters seldom give much thought to the ruins that populate the novel, even failing to recognize that it is most often the ruins, and not their own needs or wants, that compel them to action and, crucially, determine their fate.

These doubly vital ruins, like the ruins in many nineteenth-century fictions, are conceptually linked to Britain’s imperialist project, and it is in this context that most literary critics have explored them.² Many scholars have discussed, for instance, Haggard’s imaginative colonization of the land in which he worked as a member of Sir Henry Bulwer’s staff while he was a young man.³ Nearly all read the ruins in *She* as objects of empire, relics that ornament or embellish Haggard’s imperialism. However, the pots and canals and carvings that Haggard strews throughout his pages are not solely objects of empire; they are actants, and their agency continually opposes the imperialist tendencies that Holly and Leo—and other would-be colonists, old and new—evinced. In making this argument, I adapt terms and concepts from Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory, which “extend[s] the word actor—or actant—to non-human, non individual [sic] entities”—in this case, entities like the stone relics that Haggard’s characters cannot ignore (Latour, “On” 2). Though the ruins are stationary and inanimate, they are also—along with the people, the natural environment, and other external forces that confront the characters—actants; that is, they exert influence and shape potential interactions with entities around them. Latour contends that extending the notion of agency to all objects, and not just

² See Fricke, Michalski, Kil, Malley, O’Connor, Brundan, and Stiebel.

³ Haggard worked in this position from June 1875 until April 1877. He served as special commissioner to Theophilus Shepstone and raised the Union Flag in Pretoria. In 1878, he became master and registrar of the high court of the Transvaal. A few months later, Haggard took up ostrich farming with a friend before returning to England in August 1880, returning to Africa later that year to continue ostrich farming. He returned to England once the Anglo-Transvaal War began in August 1881. See Cohen, “Haggard” for more details.

humans, enables us to connect to the “very essence of societies and natures,” illustrating the role which social networks and the relations that exist between objects play in molding and influencing the world around us (369). In *She*, this agency is seen particularly strongly in the ruins, which exert enormous power in shaping all aspects of the narrative.

Of course, they do not work alone. In *She*, ruins are part of an interconnected network that spans millennia and continents, and they need to be considered in this light. Following Latour, Jane Bennett describes “the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle” (6) but then suggests, recalibrating a key term from Deleuze and Guattari, that animated collections of actants, like the ruins in *She*, sometimes form an “assemblage.”⁴ Bennett defines assemblages as “ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts. Assemblages are living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from within” (23–24). Any cluster of things may be part of an assemblage, acting and functioning both individually and as part of a whole. When this happens, “the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces” obtains a special kind of collective agency (21). When the ruins in *She* come together as “vibrant materials” (23) that exert a collective agency, their influence produces the very “dramatic and subtle” effects that Bennett describes.

If readers view the ruins in *She* as an assemblage rather than a set of inert artifacts, imperial props, or even individual actants, we find that they, and not the mighty Ayesha, the British men, or the Amahagger people, largely determine the manner in which human habitation of the land occurs. In this sense, one could say that the ruins determine who or what rules in Haggard’s novel, how power is allocated, and the extent to which that authority is shared or

⁴ A definition of assemblages appears in Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 310–50.

curtailed. Their force has several effects, one of the most significant being resistance to the narratives that the colonizers of African space attempt to impose. Individually, perhaps, the ruins have little power to resist the authority of the human interlopers, but as nodes in a network that stretches from Cambridge into the African interior, the ruins do something the humans cannot, inverting the novel's hierarchy of power.

To see this network in action, readers must consider *She* as a tale of two attempted imperialist conquests, one nineteenth-century and British, the other ancient and Mediterranean. Long before Holly and Leo arrive hoisting the Union Jack, Ayesha (the titular “She”) led a conquering force from North Africa and attempted to rule over the city of Kôr and the people she found there. However, the ruins resisted her invasion, and instead of conquest, a delicate symbiosis between the people, the ruins, and Ayesha was established, leaving She beholden to the rocks that sustained and maintained both her and her subjects. The second colonization—Holly and Leo's attempt to penetrate the secrets of Kôr and subjugate Ayesha and her people—represents an attempt at intellectual possession. Whereas Ayesha's rule is a suave, subtle despotism that she ends up having to compromise (giving the ruins more leeway than the Amahagger people, in fact), Holly and Leo's imperial incursion wants to be as active and lively as rock itself. Nonetheless, and despite the sheer force of their effort (and the force of the Empire behind them), they fail and are forced out not by Ayesha or the Amahagger but by the rocks.

In *She*, the competing narratives of the human and the non-human actants tell two stories, the one a story of British imperialism, and the other a story of the testing of that narrative. Both stories hinge upon the assemblage of ruins in the novel, in which power is shared and constantly renegotiated. When this collection of ruins is considered in the context of actor-network theory, thing-power, and agential assemblages, these “pile[s] of rock[s]” in the sand appear in a new

light (Haggard, *She* 75). They become as heroic as Haggard's adventurers, demanding that we recognize them as the pivotal agents that they are.

Agential Ruins in *She*

In "A Ruin Amidst Ruins," Anna Jörngården writes that ruins are the "material, palpable residue of a past time, able to be touched and felt" (212). For that reason, they can offer an intimate experience of the continued presence of the past. But this is, of course, a presence framed by absence. Ruins not only embody the past; they also embody their own vanishing and inexorable decay, thus speaking of the past in an idiom of loss. By their very existence, they point toward what is no more and what will inevitably cease to be. (212)

Jörngården suggests here that ruins presage ends: of empire, of people, of stories. At bottom, they signify death. Yet those ruins which "point toward what is no more and what will inevitably cease to be" also present a paradox. They are here yet not, of the past yet also of the present. As such, ruins are unique entities within the arc of time. They represent the lifespan of an object (birth, growth, death, and decay) but also link birth and decay in a chronological loop, the ruined end signaling in the present an un-ruined beginning existing somewhere back in time. In Rider Haggard's *She*, the fictional sherd of Amenartas embodies this paradoxical cycle in miniature. A fragment created in a society that has long since ended, the sherd begins Haggard's narrative. It speaks, as Jörngården states, from the past but also asserts its existence in the present, and it compels Haggard's British heroes, Holly and his ward Leo, into their narrative future.

As noted above, Holly and Leo's initial encounter with this fragment (a diminutive and portable ruin) as well as their other more imperially-inflected encounters with ruins have been given considerable attention in the criticism of Haggard's novel. Stefanie Fricke, for example,

claims that the ruins in all of Haggard's works perpetuate otherness and exoticism but ultimately represent the taming of foreign culture by Westerners (49). This idea is furthered by Robert Michalski, who emphasizes that the indigenous Amahagger culture that Holly and Leo find in the African plain is built upon the ruins of a higher and "historically prior form of culture," that of the ancient inhabitants of the ruined city of Kôr,⁵ and that therefore the novel's ruins end up being coded as non-African (88, 91). These ancient structures make the previous inhabitants of Kôr visible in the novel's literary present, according to Hye Ryoung Kil, who further argues that Kôr—though African in fact—symbolizes the expansive potential of the British Empire and the colonial lure of Africa (331). Similarly, Shawn Malley describes how the ruins of Kôr, which have significant cultural roots for Ayesha (the Amahagger's two-thousand-years-old ruler) and the Amahagger, nonetheless enable the consolidation of an English (rather than an African) heritage in British Africa, for "Haggard's Africa" is filled with ruins viewed as the "remains of white-skinned races having cultural ties to the Western world," where Africa becomes part of the "West's mythological heritage" (284).

If the ruins in *She* often point back to Britain, as critics assert, the fictional setting of the ruins also points toward Haggard's experience as a British subject in colonial Africa. According to Lindy Stiebel—the critic who has studied the ruins in Haggard's fiction more extensively than any other—the discovery of a collection of Zimbabwean ruins in southeastern Africa in the mid-nineteenth century shaped Haggard's descriptions and locations of the ruins in *She* ("Creating" 125). Their discovery by Karl Mauch was reported in British newspapers on 21 September 1872 and sparked considerable cultural interest in African ruins outside of Egypt. The ruins astounded

⁵ Robert O'Connor compares Ayesha's unnaturally long life to the ruins of the city of Kôr in size and splendor, her role as the "unchallenged ruler of a primitive race" indicative of the imperialist power she exercises as a living ruin (51).

Europeans largely because they challenged European beliefs that indigenous Africans were too primitive to build an advanced civilization. Haggard, who worked in and toured southeastern Africa from 1875 to 1881, did not see the Zimbabwean ruins, and he denied using a local guidebook's description of them "as the setting for the ancient Kôr" ("Creating" 127); nonetheless, he later acknowledged in his autobiography that he must have heard and subsequently internalized "very faint" "rumours of these things" while in Africa (Haggard, *Days* 145). His awareness of their structure, or at least of their existence, illustrates Haggard's own imaginative colonization, evident in his autobiography, of the land in which he worked as an aid, a registrar, and eventually, an ostrich farmer (145).

In the plot of *She*, the imaginative colonization of Haggard's characters begins with the sherd of Amenartas, the very fictional object which Haggard forged and which is now housed in Norwich Castle Museum. As an ornament of imperialism, the sherd, as it appears in the novel, is a relic both of Leo's recent past and of a deep genealogical past, and it bears a noisy narrative on its surface. When Leo comes of age, he and Holly retrieve a case that was left in Holly's care by Leo's father (a close friend of Holly's) shortly before he died. The case—which Leo's father had instructed must not be opened in the interim—contains a letter to Leo from his father detailing his family heritage, several pieces of parchment that offer a "Translation of the Uncial Greek Writing on the Potsherd," and a piece of linen containing a "very large" and "ancient" potsherd of a "dirty yellow colour" that had been a part of an "amphora of medium size" (Haggard, *She* 55). Its surfaces are filled with "numerous inscriptions" of a highly "erratic character," written with "a reed pen" by "different hands and in many different ages" (55). Passed down from generation to generation, and traveling from Northern Africa to Victorian England, this loquacious sherd conveys the last wishes of Amenartas, an Egyptian queen, whose husband

Kallikrates was murdered by a wicked rival queen (Ayesha) who sought to keep him for herself. Speaking from “across the gulf of death” and “from the unutterable silence of the grave” of both Leo’s father and his centuries-dead ancestor (56), the sherd calls for the descendants of Amenartas (Leo is the last) to ““seek out the woman [who murdered Kallikrates], and learn the secret of life, and if thou mayest find a way slay her, because of thy father Kallikrates”” (59–60). The urgency with which the sherd’s message has been passed down over the years highlights its narrative power on the story’s protagonists, who are captivated by its call to act.

The sherd’s ability to compel Holly and Leo to action, combined with its miraculous existence after millennia in transit, demonstrates its important role in Haggard’s *She*. The sherd is, notably, an actant, “something that acts or to which activity is granted by others” (Latour “On” 373). Bruno Latour states that an actant “implies *no* special motivation of *human individual* actors, nor of humans in general. An actant can literally be anything provided it is granted to be the source of an action” (373, emphasis original). The sherd is also part of a larger network of related actants: its creator (Amenartas) is an actant, as are the oven and fire used to make the sherd, the people who wrote upon it, and the reeds used in their inscriptions—again, we have an effective network or assemblage. Many actants are implicated in the sherd which, because it convinces Holly and Leo to leave England, acts as the narrative’s initial “source of an action.” It facilitates the movement of the characters and thus highlights a goal embedded within and subsequently perpetuated by the sherd (Latour, “Agency” 10). It also has what Latour calls a “shape-changing destiny,” being able to influence the agency of others (15). In *She*, the interactions that follow between Holly and Leo are directly influenced by the sherd’s initial persuasive powers that propel the protagonists onward.

This narrative movement highlights only a portion of the sherd's capabilities as an actant, however. In addition to simply existing and becoming a source or motive of action, the sherd archives and catalogs occurrences and by doing this, it transfers a familial duty. Covered in inscriptions detailing the many attempts of Leo's ancestors to seek revenge for their predecessor, the sherd speaks from the past "in an idiom of loss": Amenartas's loss of Kallikrates (Haggard, *She* 59); the loss of Leo's grandfather, who "communicated to [Leo's] father" the tale "on his deathbed" (57); and even Leo's loss of his father (46). The sherd is thus placed within a specific network of relationships that exist between Leo and his forebears, as well as between Leo and Holly. Once again, we see the interdependence of the living and the dead, their continuing relationship in the present, and their shared (and inevitable) disposition toward the future. As agents interact with other agents or "subjects" as Latour describes, they become "*subjected*" to the actions of other agents and thus do not "act autonomously" but "*share agency with other subjects that have also lost [at least some of] their autonomy*" ("Agency" 5, emphasis original). The autonomy of the sherd is implicated and enmeshed, first, in the agency of all of Leo's ancestors (including his father), and second, in the actions Leo will go on to take in the novel. To be sure, the sherd is not a self-aware or intentional entity; nonetheless, in combination with other actants, it makes things happen.

The same is true of other ruins that exhibit agency in the novel. Holly and Leo soon discover the ruined fragment to be part of a whole assemblage of ruins, a fact that becomes apparent as they follow the directions on the sherd and travel to the coast of Africa near the British Protectorate of Aden, where they are shipwrecked. Their particular location along the horn of Africa has been determined by the sherd, which presented the men with a landmark: a second ruin, an uprising of rock which appears to be shaped like a human head. The landmark's

existence corroborates the sherd's tale of a "great rock carven like the head of an Ethiopian" that stands alongside a river by the "coast of Libya" (Haggard, *She* 59). It also affirms the account of Leo's father, who wrote in his final letter to Leo of a "headland" on the "coast of Africa" that is "shaped like the head of a negro," a landmark he had seen with his own eyes (57). The confirmation of this rock's existence affirms the sherd's narrative within the novel (similar to the way in which the sherd in the Norwich Museum affirms the novel's narrative in the reader's world). Thus, the carved head and the sherd exist as part of a chain of ruins bridging fictional time and space and imagination and materiality.

For the travelers using the sherd as their map, the head's status as a ruin is complicated in a way that the sherd is not. The illustration included in Haggard's novel as it was serialized from 1886 to 1887 in *The Graphic* clearly shows the head to be a manufactured artifact sculpted out of the rock (see fig. 2). But Holly's description of the head makes it unclear whether it was made by humans—a "gigantic monument fashioned . . . by a forgotten people out of a pile of rock that lent itself to their design" (Haggard, *She* 75)—or is simply a "mere freak of nature" (75). The ruin's design thus raises questions of intentionality and origin for Holly, but Haggard's narrator jumps in to erase Holly's doubt. The head, we learn, has been hewn by the hands of ancient people (as well as by Haggard's nineteenth-century racism): "Shaped like a negro's head and face" with a "fiendish and terrifying expression" (74).⁶ Its "thick lips," "fat cheeks," and "squat nose" stand out against the "flaming background" of the setting sun, which illuminates "a scrubby growth of weeds or lichen" that transforms in Holly's mind into an organic representation of "the wool on a colossal negro's head" (74–75). It is, in other words, a cleverly designed artifact, though derelict and yielding to the forces of time and nature, like all ruins. In

⁶ Job, the servant who has accompanied Holly and Leo from England, finds in the ruin a portrait of the "Old Gentleman" or Satan (75).

short, the “Ethiopian” head reminds readers that ruins enact “a separation of nature and culture” that is always eventually “overcome by the dissolution of the manmade into the natural world,” a view that Holly, and perhaps even Haggard, seems to endorse in this passage (Ferri 205).

Like the sherd, this ruined head is notable because of the agency it possesses and the actions it causes the characters to take. First, it exists; as Holly says, “there it stands, and sullenly stares from age to age out across the changing sea” (Haggard, *She* 75). More importantly, perhaps, it testifies: it bears witness to the veracity of the sherd and the historical narrative it contains. In addition, it reveals the thoughts of those who encounter it. Holly and Leo’s reaction to the head illustrates the racist ideologies they have absorbed. When its creators carved the head out of the rock, and when its description was inscribed onto the sherd, no overt racial indicators exist. However, all of Haggard’s characters—African and British—use the term “Ethiopian” for the head, and Holly and Leo regard it as “fiendish,” “terrifying,” and “demoniacal” (74–75). These are not features inherent to the ruin itself. They are projections from the minds of the characters, minds that are now put on display for readers through the agency of the ruin. Further, the head acts (or at one time acted, according to the sherd) as an “emblem of warning and defiance to any enemies who approached the harbour,” the rock surrounding it being “difficult [to] access both from the land and the water-side” (75). With its position atop a promontory “weathered with so much peril,” it is likely that many “started” at its appearance just as Holly does, choosing to steer clear of the coast—and by extension the head—instead of drawing near (74). Perhaps, we conclude, Holly and Leo ought to heed the warning. They should perceive an early hint that the ruins will resist their project. Instead, however, they do the opposite. Thus, the ruin exerts its force in two directions: it admonishes the adventurers, yet it also draws them into the African interior. Whereas others purportedly turned back upon seeing the head, Holly and

Leo recognize it, settle on its veracity, and disembark in its shadow. Similar to the sherd, the “Ethiopian” head is an actant, enabling desire and (foolish) confidence that allow the narrative to progress.

After struggling to the shore beneath the head and beginning their march inward from the coast, Holly and Leo find themselves once again checked by the presence of ruins. This time, a whole complex of structures, the ancient stone remains of a wharf and series of canals, captures their attention. And if the “Ethiopian” head poses a design problem for Holly (who questions where human creation stops and natural creation begins), these built waterways pose a larger ideological problem for him. Holly ultimately recognizes, in the ruins, the existence of an ancient civilization responsible for creating the dilapidated infrastructure: “towing paths” that “still remained” run alongside a canal that “had evidently been dug out by man at some remote period of the world’s history” (Haggard, *She* 86). The evidence of his eyes insists on the reality of long-dead African engineers, laborers who removed earth, cut and placed “large blocks” of “solid stone,” and bound these together with a “brown cement” of their own manufacture (77). Holly even discovers a “huge stone ring” after picking away at the dirt surrounding it (78).

However, Holly first sees this area—full of these remnants of human civilization—as desolate, empty, and untouched by human hands, nothing but “a dreadful wilderness of swamp” (Haggard, *She* 87). When Leo remarks, ““This place has been a wharf,”” Holly replies, ““Nonsense. . . . Who would be fool enough to build a wharf in the middle of these dreadful marshes in a country inhabited by savages, that is if it is inhabited at all?”” (77). Leo insists that far from bearing witness to ““a tribe of savages”” (whose engineering skill proves them to be not “savage” at all), the ruins could once have moored ““good-sized vessels,”” which would suggest a thriving trade community (78). Again, Holly replies, “Nonsense” and persists in his denial of

the possibility of a sophisticated African culture that inhabited the land in the distant past. He admits that ““a country [sic] like Africa . . . is sure to be full of the relics of long dead and forgotten civilisations,””⁷ but he attributes such “relics” not to Africans but to “offshoots” of a Hellenized ““Egyptian civilization,”” to ““Babylonians,”” ““Phoenicians,”” ““Persians,”” or possibly Jews, ““whom everybody “wants” nowadays”” (78). It is a ridiculous idea, of course, that ancient African ruins must have been built by non-African people, and Holly’s own body seems to betray his willful ignorance at this point. “I tried to say ‘Nonsense’ again,” Holly admits, “but the word stuck in my throat” (78).

Holly’s belief that only a “civilized” culture would be capable of creating long-lasting monumental works, and that even lands full of the evidence of human habitation may be uninhabited, aligns with nineteenth-century imperialist ideologies of the primitive “other.” For Holly, as for many Victorians, ruins were records of civilizations “dead and forgotten” (Haggard, *She* 78), while the British empire thrived in its political and technological superiority. Ruins from “primitive” countries also served as trophies of cultural appropriation for the British, prizes that “illustrate[d] the nation’s command over East and West” (Aguirre 286). However, like Holly, Victorian antiquarians and archeologists often regarded the land in which these ruins were situated as, paradoxically, empty because they lacked the infrastructures of Western civilization. This myth of the empty landscape is reflected “in many maps of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century explorers where the blank spaces call out to be peopled” (D’Ercole 229). Because of the existence of these “blank spaces,” when British explorers encountered ruins or other remnants of the past while abroad, the very existence of them in the landscape needed to be justified. They

⁷ Holly’s verbal slip—calling Africa a “country” rather than a continent—reveals his own (and perhaps Haggard’s) geographical imperialism. To him, all of Africa is a coherent unit, a country rather than a large coalition of tribal nation-states with different languages, cultures, geographies, and economies.

were commonly interpreted as either the remnants of an “ancient, supposedly white, [civilization]” (Stiebel, *Imagining* 91), or they were regarded as signals of emptiness and availability for conquest. Holly’s adoption of both of these justifications for the ruins he encounters thus reinforces a narrative of British conquest and indigenous subjugation that he uses as he presses into the African interior, intent on asserting his authority over the people, places, and objects he finds—including and especially the ruins.

Inevitably, perhaps, this seemingly empty landscape stretching as far as Holly can see soon proves to be far from empty, and it resists his vain imaginations. As Holly and Leo proceed along the ruined canal, they are suddenly stopped by a group of men who call themselves the Amahagger, or “People of the Rocks” (Haggard, *She* 91). The Amahagger—who speak a “bastard Arabic” but whose “appearance had a good deal in common with the East African Somali” (90)—instantly complicate Holly’s belief in a blank wilderness and, just as importantly, introduce the Englishmen to a civilization predicated entirely upon ruins. Led by a revered elder named Billali, who claims to be acting under the direction of a mysterious ruler called “*She-who-must-be-obeyed*” (91, emphasis original), the Amahagger capture Holly and Leo and bring them to their dwelling place. Their village exists within what might be described as a natural ruin, a “long-extinct volcano” shaped “like a Roman amphitheatre” and bordered by “rocky” cliffs (92). A series of caves dot these cliffs, some huge and “resembling a cathedral aisle” (95). The men soon learn that these caves are “none of Nature’s handiwork” (95). They have been “hollowed by the hand of man” to provide homes, meeting rooms, storage chambers, and tombs for the Amahagger (95).

The entire civilization, Holly and Leo quickly learn, is intimately tied to ruins. Haggard portrays the Amahagger as “primitive humans” (Godfrey 75), hard, “grim people” who live

surrounded by rock, with all aspects of their livelihood intricately connected to the stone works of an even more ancient people who populated the area before their arrival (Haggard, *She* 97). Haggard spends a great deal of time describing the “baked earthenware” artifacts of “rude manufacture” used by the Amahagger in their everyday life (97). They use “hand lamps” made of “baked clay” and “big red earthenware pots” for cooking, storing goods, and lighting their caves (97). The “earthenware jars” and “vases” from which they drink are of a “very ancient manufacture,” none of which had been made in “hundreds, or rather thousands, of years” (106). The Amahagger sleep in ancient ruins as well. Their cliffs contain hollowed out chambers made by the earlier people. In these, a “stone slab” running the length of the wall “like a bunk in a cabin” had once “served for a sepulchre for the dead” but now functions as “a sleeping-place for the living” (98). Some of these slabs still contain mummies, the organic ruins of human beings, which the Amahagger use for fuel. From birth to death, stone ruins circumscribe their lives and provide the silent backdrop against which their culture thrives.

At the same time, we see that the interactions between the ruins and the Amahagger are reciprocal—that is, that they work in both directions. Although silent, the ruins surrounding the Amahagger act, just as the “Ethiopian” head and the sherd do. First, the ruins provide a home and sanctuary for the Amahagger people. They offer what to Holly and Leo seems like a cold and barbaric hospitality, but it is hospitality that the people crave and enjoy. The ancient clay objects that serve as pots and lamps make Amahagger life possible, and the ruins even determine the religious beliefs and cultural rituals of the Amahagger. The “red earthenware” vessels that are elsewhere used for food have a ritual function as well: they are “heated to a white heat” (Haggard, *She* 108) and placed over the heads of sacrificial victims, like Holly’s unfortunate servant Mahomed, during a long ceremony marked by incantations and the sharing of “fermented

fluid” (106). Later, Holly and Leo are allowed to witness a ritual “dance” in which the caves and their organic ruins (the mummies that many of the tombs still contain) become part of a huge ceremonial bonfire. The corpses are tied to the stone walls at prescribed intervals and set alight, forming a “great ring of bodies flaring furiously” that Holly describes as “very terrible yet very fascinating” (203). In both instances, the ruins create and enable the Amahagger’s system of beliefs which, like the people, seem to spring from the rocks themselves. It is impossible to say whether the rituals existed first and came to incorporate the ruins or whether the ruins inspired the rituals, but in either case, the ruins impact the people as much as the people impact the ruins.

The “ring of bodies” and its role in this ritual highlight the fact that the individual ruins with which the Amahagger coexist are part of a whole collection of actant ruins, a network that also encompasses the “Ethiopian” head, the sherd, the canals, the stone wharf, and all the other ruins in the novel. The Amahagger village—a constellation of ruined structures—is connected to the ruined canals, which in turn were discovered by Holly, Leo, and Job when they disembarked at the head of the “Ethiopian.” When Leo first spots the head, he cries, ““There is the head the writing talks of,”” tying it back to the palimpsestic sherd that propelled the men out of Cambridge (Haggard, *She* 76). In effect, the various ruins act as relay stations. The network of ruins widens throughout Haggard’s narrative but repeatedly circles back on itself, as during the hot-potting episode when Holly and Leo recall the sherd’s mention of people who “*put pots upon the heads of strangers*” (108, emphasis original), or when Holly reflects that She-who-must-be-obeyed is “undoubtedly the person referred to in the writing on the potsherd” (96).

We see again that this ever-growing network of artifacts and ruins forms what Jane Bennett describes as an “assemblage,” a group of things that are separate but take on a meaning as a collection “distinct from the sum of the vital force of each materiality considered alone”

(24). As the novel progresses, ruins accumulate, as do their resonant interconnections. As Bennett predicts, an actant “never really acts alone. Its efficacy or agency always depends on the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces” (21). Thinking of groups of related actants as assemblages with both “emergent” and “interactive” (24) properties emphasizes their combined power over and above the individual and separate agency of each thing. When acting together, the ruins in *She* do what Bennett says all vibrant networks of things do: “form alliances” to “modify” or “be modified” by the acts of other people or things (22). They also act as “open-ended gatherings” that question “communal effects without assuming them,” as the influence that assemblages can have on their surroundings varies depending on the type of interaction that occurs (Tsing 23). Thus, when the individual actants are considered as constituent parts of an assemblage, they become powerful forces that are capable of shaping and influencing the world around them in ways that individual objects cannot.

As interconnected actants, the ruins in *She* work to establish relationships among themselves, forming nodes in a network that becomes increasingly interrelated. Because an assemblage “owes its agentic capacity to the vitality of the materialities that constitute it,” it can seemingly continue its existence indefinitely (Bennett 34). In *She*, this extended lifespan is visible in the individual ruins that dot the landscape, which depend on the existence and agency of the other ruins “*in or as a heterogeneous assemblage*” to enhance their power (23, emphasis original). Each ruin in the novel builds on the others to act together, their agency distributed across a network instead of localized in one entity. When this occurs, an assemblage’s “*matters of expression*”—its layered components with the ability to cause change—form independently of its “form-substance relation[s],” leading to the ability of its individual parts to act (Deleuze and Guattari 336, emphasis original). In the end, the most important action that the assemblage takes

in the novel is the resistance of colonizing invaders, which happens twice. In the first instance, the ruins maintain their autonomy by establishing a kind of truce that allows the invader (Ayesha) to co-exist without domination or destruction. In the second, when Holly and Leo appear, the result is much less amicable.

Colonizing Ruins

The first attempt by an outsider to colonize the ruins in which the Amahagger live is made by Ayesha long before the time in which the novel takes place. After being forced to flee from Egypt two millennia before the appearance of Holly and Leo, Haggard explains to readers, Ayesha sought to establish a kingdom of her own. She traveled through Africa until she arrived at a huge ruined city (Kôr) peopled by the ancestors of the “People of the Rocks.” Her actions were similar to those that British imperialists would take in the nineteenth century, but she wanted something more than the land, people, and resources that comprised Kôr and its surroundings. Ayesha sought omnipotence and eternal life. She found it in yet another ruin: an ancient rock cave close by Kôr in which a magic flame guarded by the hermit-philosopher Noot burned eternally. “Sexually irresistible” to Noot (Doyle A69), Ayesha convinced him to share the “gift of Life” offered by the flame, something the laws governing Kôr and its people forbade her from doing (Haggard, *She* 252). She bathed in its light, gained immortality and magical powers, and became the nearly-omnipotent ruler of the Amahagger. However, her actions in entering the flame were countered by the ruins of Kôr, which imposed a curse that served to check Ayesha’s power. In the prequel to *She*, Haggard writes that Ayesha was “cast out of Kôr” (Haggard, *Wisdom’s* 274) “because of the curse that had been set upon [her],” a curse that would remain “until Kallikrates came again” (284). Indeed, “no captive was more chained and fettered in a dungeon” than Ayesha, but her imprisonment was metaphorical (284). She remained free to

move about, to tyrannize the Amahagger, but she was not allowed either to leave or to inhabit the ruins of Kôr. The ruins refused to become her subjects. “Why did I stay at Kôr?” she asks; “Why did I not wander forth throughout the world? Because I *could not*, because of the curse that had been set upon me” (284, emphasis original). Instead, she was forced to make her home in the lesser complex of tombs surrounding the ancient city (277), which is where Holly and Leo find her.

The ruins’ power over Ayesha illustrates how they—the cave with its flame of fire, the city of Kôr, and the tombs outside the city—acted as an assemblage, collaborating and cooperating to resist Ayesha’s attempt to possess them and impose her will upon them and upon the People of the Rocks. As a united force, the ruins were able to negotiate a *détente* that resulted in a surprising interaction between would-be colonizer and would-be colonized: coexistence. Ayesha lives in the ruins, on the ruins, and through the ruins surrounding Kôr. Her interconnectedness to the ruins causes her to “[lay] out stones” in the tombs near Kôr to “mark the passage of those years” that have lapsed since she began her “fettered” rule (Haggard, *Wisdom’s* 283–84). By so doing, Ayesha tethers herself to the ruins that surround her but refuse to allow her possession (282). Like the Amahagger, Ayesha needs the ruins to exist but hates them for the way in which they curtail her desire to become all-powerful. They are her home, her means of empowerment and discipline, and the shapers of her ideology. But at the same time, it is her rule, and her willingness to comply with the limits to her power imposed by the ruins that protects the ruins from further occupations and the destruction other invaders might occasion. By circumscribing Ayesha’s actions, the ruins thus forge a delicate symbiosis with Ayesha and her people that necessitates the combined power of the ruins to maintain. As usual, an actant’s success is dependent on the “cooperation” of “many bodies and forces” (Bennett 21). Without

this cooperation, the ruins would not be able to modify and control the actions of Ayesha and the Amahagger, which is vital to the ruins' power in the novel. In a way, these actions make the ruins counteragents of empire as they work together to resist domination. These ruins do not simply run Ayesha out of Africa or subvert the hierarchy of power by asserting themselves as ruler over her. Instead, they offer a middle ground: stay and exist, but exist alongside and not over.

When Holly and Leo arrive, threatening to disrupt this careful coexistence, they have already experienced the power that the ruins possess. In the beginning of the novel, when the two men first opened the chest from Leo's father and found the sherd, they believed themselves to be the sole and supreme actants. In their rush to satisfy their curiosity, they failed to realize that the sherd was acting as well. It posed a crucial question: could Holly and Leo coexist with the fragment of amphora and live a quiet life in Cambridge alongside it? Or would they need to possess it, to own the ruin and all the other ruins that formed part of this same assemblage? Because Holly and Leo are steeped in imperialist ideology, it is perhaps inevitable that they are unable to live alongside the ruin as Ayesha and the Amahagger do. They have to dominate, to colonize, and so they leave for Africa, allowing Haggard's tale to unfold. Holly does waver momentarily. He acknowledges that there are "curious things and forces in nature which we rarely meet with, and, when we do meet them, cannot understand" (Haggard, *She* 64). But he cannot rest in his lack of understanding and quickly decides that with a little pluck and the wisdom of a Cambridge education, the "curious things and forces" represented by the sherd can be penetrated. He and Leo will travel to Africa not to colonize the land for Queen and country, but to possess it via knowledge.

With each ruin the men encounter—the sherd, the stone head, the canals, the Amahagger village, and ultimately Kôr and the ruins of Noot’s hermitage—Holly cannot help but to try to appropriate it into his mental museum of “British” artifacts, things over which his superior understanding gives him authority. From the novel’s advent, curiosity, the need to know, continuously motivates Holly. At first, Holly is curious about the box and the “extraordinary relic of the past” it contains (Haggard, *She* 62). His curiosity then extends to the “Ethiopian” head—the “curious peak”—that cannot be real or made by man (72) and then to the canals and wharf, both of which “excit[e]” Holly’s “curiosity” (79). When he meets the Amahagger, Holly’s curiosity extends from the people to their customs to the “curious” and “ancient” vases of all sizes that the Amahagger use (106). When Holly arrives at the tombs outside Kôr, which are filled with ruins, he is curious about everything, including the “sculptures” (139) and “borings” that speak of civilizations past (174). The ruined city of Kôr enables Holly to think on “how many thousands of years the dead orb above [the moon] and the dead city below had gazed thus upon each other” (238). And finally, Holly describes a “curious scene” with the flame of fire still burning inside the “rocky chamber” of the long-dead Noot (250). Despite Holly’s initial misgivings surrounding the trip and what he and Leo might encounter in their travels, his acquisitive curiosity keeps him moving from node to node in the novel’s network of ruins.

For Holly, understanding the ruins serves as a way of mentally owning them, but this requires real effort. Each time Holly comes upon a ruin, the same thing happens: he initially rejects or is skeptical of the ruin, but then he finds a way to fit it within his established worldview. When Holly and Leo first take the sherd from the chest, for example, Holly believes the sherd to be fake (the loss of Amenartas’s husband must have “turned her head,” he concludes, and “she was not right in her mind when she did write it”), but then he decides that it

is, in fact, “perfectly genuine” (Haggard, *She* 64). Holly initially believes the “Ethiopian” head to be made by nature; he later admits that it must have been fashioned by humans (75). Similarly, the strip of land along the canals “had every appearance of having been made by the hand of man,” but Holly first struggles to accept the land as anything but empty, only to conclude that the ruins must have been constructed by non-African inhabitants (77). In each of these examples, Holly’s move from skepticism to acceptance represents a fitting of the ruins into his storehouse of knowledge, even as the ruins resist this fitting by pushing Holly to continually question their history. He encounters the ruins, then draws firm conclusions about the authenticity, creation, or background of them, dragging them into a British notion of the world, history, and culture.

Holly’s struggle to reconcile the ruins’ presence with British culture and belief crescendos as he and Leo approach Ayesha’s lair, where the hierarchy of power in which the ruins are implicated (and which the ruins largely determine) becomes very visible. Holly first imagines himself at the top of this hierarchy, with Ayesha beneath him. An “Englishman,” he does not feel the need to “creep into the presence of some savage woman” as the Amahagger do (Haggard, *She* 141). He refuses to bow to Ayesha when they meet. Ayesha, however, has great power over the Amahagger, who are “under the direct protection of *She*” (236). When Billali meets Ayesha, he falls “down on to his hands and knees, and in this undignified position, with his long white beard trailing on the ground, he began to creep into the apartment” (141) until at last he “collapsed flat on his stomach” in deference and fear (142). But Ayesha’s “power to slay” those who refuse to show her humility (by failing to crawl or disobeying her) is checked by the powerfully agential ruins of Kôr (195). She cannot live there, nor can she get her people to settle there or rebuild, which strikes Holly and Leo as very “curious.” Holly questions why “a people which has no objection to living amongst the dead, with whom their familiarity has

perhaps bred contempt, and even using them for purposes of fuel, should be terrified at approaching the habitations that these very departed had occupied when alive” (236). This strange configuration of power puts Holly not in direct imperialist competition or conflict with Ayesha but with the ruins that keep Ayesha in check. Not surprisingly, Holly’s path through the novel takes him quickly out of Ayesha’s home and toward Kôr and the ruined cave just beyond, where the real contest of power takes place.

Holly longs to study Kôr, which is the largest and most powerful part of the assemblage of ruins in the novel, but Kôr continuously resists his efforts. The city is “bathed in the red glow of the sinking sun” and filled with “miles upon miles of ruins—columns, temples, shrines, and the palaces of kings, varied with patches of green bush” (Haggard, *She* 235). Its roofs have “long since fallen into decay and vanished,” but “many of the party walls and great columns still remained standing” (235). “Vast blocks of ruins” are interspersed with “dense jungle,” through which “no living foot had pressed for thousands of years” (236). Holly immediately tries to position these temples and columns within his established frame of knowledge. He declares the main street to be “wider than the Thames Embankment” (236) and the temple within the city to be “as large as that of El-Karnac, at Luxor” (237)—both artifacts (falling as they do within the purview of British rule) that Holly feels a scholarly ownership over. But despite his efforts, Holly is unable to “give a string of measurements and details” of what he sees in Kôr (238). Remaining “almost beyond the power of realization,” the ruins continuously resist his attempts to make sense of them by presenting Holly with things he cannot elucidate (238). He finds that he cannot read the “Chinese-looking hieroglyphics” inscribed at the foot of a statue in the city (240), and he struggles to determine whether the great ruined statue in the middle of the city represents an Egyptian deity (Isis) or is something else, the “grandest allegorical work of Art”

given to the world (239). After exploring and examining everything within his limited reach, Holly is equally unable to account for the Amahagger's fear of the city. This failure could be considered Holly's, but it could also be viewed as an act of agency on the part of the ruins of Kôr, which refuse to allow themselves to be known.

Confronted on every side by un-interpretability and “breath[ing] a sigh of regret that we had not had more time to explore it” (Haggard, *She* 241), Holly is pushed out of Kôr by the curse that forbids Ayesha from lingering there, and he moves on to the last ruin that he will encounter in the novel: the ruined hermitage with the flame of fire. It is here that the ruins' resistance to Holly's subjugation becomes final and irreversible. The hermitage (the ancient home of Noot) like other habitations among the ruins, has been hollowed out and “hewn from the live rock” (250), and Holly cannot help but stand in amazement at the sight of it and the flame it protects. Holly's arrival at the flame is marked by his desire to conquer. Just being in the presence of the flame makes him and Leo feel as “strong as giants and swift as eagles” (258). He becomes convinced that he possesses all the “varied genius of which the human intellect is capable” and all sorts of “great ideas” flash through his mind, urging him to “live more keenly, to reach to a higher joy” (258). When he stands face to face with this power, Holly feels like “another and most glorified self” where “all the avenues of the Possible were for a space laid open to the footsteps of the Real” (258). In this moment, triumph over the ruins finally feels tangible to the adventurers.

Crucially, however, this exultant sense of potentiality does not last. The hermitage is deserted but something—readers are left to assume it is the ruins themselves—quickly strikes, leveling Holly's unearned sense of superiority with a “dreadful muttering noise” that is soon followed by a “crash” and a “roar” that terrifies him (Haggard, *She* 258). Still, he and Leo, led by

Ayesha, approach the flame in the center of the cave, wanting to possess it and, like Ayesha, be granted immortality. Ayesha steps into the pillar of fire first, not realizing as the “fire [runs] up her form” that she is breaking the terms of her alliance with the ruins by seeking more power than they originally allowed her. The flame, instead of granting her continued immortality, strips her of it, killing her horribly in the process (260). But the British men are also stricken, as punishment for their hubris and their desire to possess the knowledge of the rocks. Job, Holly’s faithful British servant, “had utterly broken down beneath this last dire sight, and he had died of terror, or in a fit brought on by terror” at the sight of Ayesha’s destruction (265). His death functions as a warning to the British men that the ruins will not yield to these would-be conquerors, that Holly and Leo too will degenerate like Ayesha into a “hideous little monkey frame, covered with crinkled yellow parchment” before the ruins will allow themselves to be possessed (264). Terrified and humbled by this demonstration of ultimate power, Holly and Leo crawl out of the hermitage “broken-down men—so broken down, that [they] even renounced the chance of practically immortal life, because all that made life valuable” was taken from them (267).

As they retreat, the men discover that the penalty imposed on them by the ruins is just as great outside of the caves as in. When the People of the Rocks learn of Ayesha’s death, they turn on Holly and Leo, intent on finishing the destruction begun in the cave of fire. Holly and Leo try to escape the attack of the Amahagger by diverting into the ruined passageways of Kôr, but like Ayesha, they find that the city through which they had earlier passed is now closed to them. “By Kôr ye cannot pass,” declares their only ally (Haggard, *She* 276). The men are instead forced to wend their way to safety through a more dangerous route, “a zig-zag roadway cut, no doubt, in the first instance by the old inhabitants of Kôr” (277). This ruin is the last they encounter, and

they leave it running for their lives. Their final view of Kôr is from a distance, the “pillared ruins of the Temple of Truth” clearly visible, untouched, triumphant (278). Holly and Leo descend into the swamps beaten, and they must fall still further before they can make their sad way back to England. In an ironic act of reverse colonization, the men are first “imprisoned by a savage tribe” and then must rely on a “half-caste Portuguese elephant-hunter” who saves them from starvation and helps them reach the coast (279). Eighteen months after they flee from Kôr and its environs, the pair of would-be conquerors finally manage to return to England aboard a mail boat, utterly defeated by the African ruins.

Conclusion

The ruins in Haggard’s *She*, though fictional constructs, dot the landscape of the novel and employ many of the same characteristics of ruins that exist in the natural, material world. Ruins are persistent and obstinate. They are stationary and architectural, and they exist on a vastly different chronological scale than humans. Because ruins are capable of outlasting humans, they are also capable of holding and containing centuries’ worth of memory. It is this memory that proves vital to the assemblage of ruins in the novel. All “locales and landscapes”—of which ruins are a part—are “embedded in the social and individual times of memory. Their pasts as much as their spaces are crucially constitutive of their presents” (Tilley 27). Perhaps, the assemblage of ruins in *She* succeeds in resisting colonization for this very reason: it is cognizant of the “previous moves” of people and forces in the landscape with which it has come into contact over the centuries (27). These moves left an impression on the ruins, just as Holly and Leo’s attempt to colonize the ruins leave, in the end, an impression that will certainly influence future interactions within Haggard’s fictional Africa.

Though their experience in the cave with the flame of fire has the most physical impact on Holly and Leo, their other interactions with the ruins (as they attempt to possess the land via knowledge) result in the sense of dispossession, misunderstanding, and rejection. By acting as an assemblage, the ruins form themselves into one main narrative opponent to the British men, drawing upon the “capacity of narrative to generate significant objects”—objects like ruins that are capable of acting and influencing what is around them—“and hence to both generate and engender a significant other” (Stewart xi). The ruins influence the novel’s narrative, each separate piece acting within a larger program of action and building upon the previous ruin’s actions in a collective effort to resist Holly and Leo.

In the end, the ruins’ collective influence on the narrative ousts Holly and Leo, who leave the land of the Amahagger without the knowledge they came seeking or any physical relic of the ruins that nearly cost them their lives. Holly and Leo’s inability to colonize the ruins by study demonstrates that the landscape, of which the ruins are a part, can act as a crucial player in the narrative and, in the case of the novel, resist colonization. Thus, the landscape becomes capable of influencing outcomes. The ruins in *She* collectively draw together, acting and influencing the characters around them, and thereby demonstrate to readers the importance of not overlooking objects that seem to be inert.

Figures

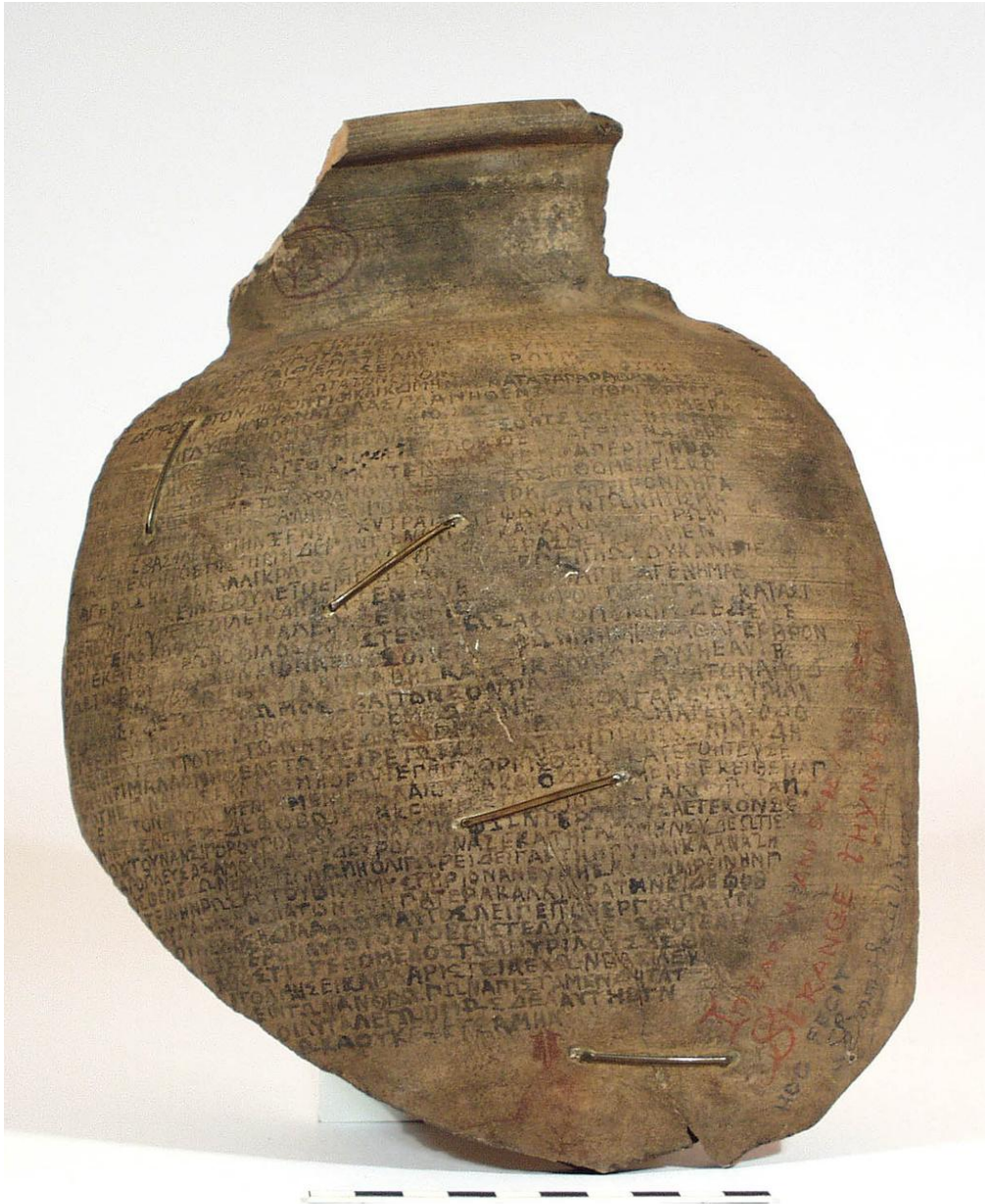


Fig. 1. Haggard's manufactured sherd of Amenartas; © Norfolk Museums Service; Norfolk Museums Collections, norfolkmuseumscollections.org/collections/objects/object-4062191913.html/#/?q=rider%2Bhaggard.



“The top of the peak, which was about eighty feet high by one hundred and fifty thick at its base, was shaped like a negro’s head and face.”

Fig. 2. E. K. Johnson, the “Ethiopian head.” From Stauffer, *She, A History of Adventure*, 2006, p. 66.

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