



Men of Men

Wilbur Smith

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Men of Men by Wilbur Smith

It was called The Devil's Own: a steep scar in the African earth, around which men toiled with picks, shovels, and dreams of the milky treasures that would become prized, polished diamonds. In this demonic race, native tribesmen became miners. Sometimes they became thieves. And then they became rebels.

Zouga Ballantyne, an African-born Englishman, sees the Devil's Own mine as his ticket to the North: a realm of waterfalls and fertile plains, teeming wildlife, and seeded fields of gold. But what happens in the diamond mines of the fledgling Boer Free State sets the course for Ballantyne and a cast of comrades, enemies, and lovers--and for the continent itself.

From the visions of imperialists to the fury between a father and a son, from the lengths a man will go for a woman and a woman for her convictions, a tragic clash of generations and civilizations was shaking 19th-century Africa, where some warriors fought for their gods--and others for the men who came before them...

Men of Men Details

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Mark Edlund says

Historical fiction

Smith continues his story of the Ballantyne family in South Africa. The game is now much thinner after the whites have been slaughtering it for decades. The diamond mine at Kimberly continually needs new labour to keep expanding it. Zouga and Ralph Ballantyne are the main focus as they dig for diamonds. Cecil Rhodes plays a part. More than half way through the book the characters from the first book are brought in. Still sad to say a great civilization laid waste due to the white man's greed and underhanded dealings. Smith loves a good battle and an even better slaughter.

Two Canadian references - Mungo St. John travels to Canada for business and one of the troopers is Canadian.

Anbamuthan says

This saga of 18 century Africa is filled with adventure, itrigue, passion and violence. I read this book when i was in college. i had bought it from a second hannd book store and never bothered or had the time to read it. One day i had nothing to do and started browsing my bookshelf and through the pages of MEN OF MEN. That was it. I started reading and did not rest till i completed it. The characters are impressive and strong. Zouga ballantyne and Ralph are some of the most memorable ones i have ever come across. Some of the most amazing pages are when the ballantyne diamond is found inside the piece of blue rock.

Antonio Rosato says

"Dai un po' a ogni uomo bianco e dovrà dare la stessa cosa a ognuno di loro. Così ogni bianco diventa nemico dell'altro. Metti un cane contro l'altro, per non aver contro l'intero branco".

"Stirpe di uomini" è il secondo libro di Wilbur Smith dedicato al ciclo dei Ballantyne... eppure, anche se come il sottoscritto non avete ancora letto il precedente volume ("Quando vola il falco"), con questo non avrete molte difficoltà a capire i suoi tanti riferimenti qui presenti. La storia è incentrata prevalentemente sulle vicende della famiglia Ballantyne (Zouga, i suoi figli Ralph e Jordan e sua sorella Robyn); tuttavia, tra alterne fortune, le loro gesta fanno solo da sfondo alla trama vera e propria... e qui entra in scena tutta la bravura di Wilbur Smith nel saper ottimamente miscelare finzione e storia reale: mi riferisco, in particolare, alla prima guerra matabele ed allo sfruttamento delle miniere di diamanti da parte dell'uomo bianco.

E detto ciò si capisce che questo romanzo è in puro "stile Smith": avventura a tutto spiano ed ampia descrizione dei personaggi, dei paesaggi africani e delle tradizioni del popolo matabele.

Notevole la forte contrapposizione tra uomini bianchi (descritti tutti come degli sfruttatori ed avidi conquistatori) ed i neri locali (oppressi, sfruttati ed ingannati). E notevole anche la contrapposizione tra donne bianche e donne nere. Se le seconde sono viste come fedelissime al marito e pronte a tutto pur di proteggere la loro famiglia e la loro casa, le prime sono rappresentate come delle macchine di sesso e pronte a saltare da un letto all'altro. Metafora di tutto ciò è il comportamento di Robyn Ballantyne: nella prima parte del libro riveste il ruolo di paladina dei diritti civili delle popolazioni africane (nonché medico nella missione cattolica del marito)... ma appena questi muore non esita un solo istante a farsi mettere incinta dall'uomo che proprio lei stessa ha sempre odiato per tutta la vita (un venditore di schiavi che, già in passato, aveva

violentato una giovanissima Robyn).
[<http://rosatoeu.blogspot.it/2017/03/r...>]

Bettie? says

[Bettie's Books (hide spoiler)]

Dave Fellows says

5/5 stars. Well, I wish I could say that the ending of this book is bittersweet, but in truth it is very likely the saddest, most sickening and most infuriating ending that I have ever read. I loved it! It's not Wilbur Smith's fault - it's the subject he's chosen. Like one other Shelfari reviewer of this novel, I too was ashamed to belong to a race of people who did what was done in this book. The story itself is a great read, and if you're going to read a novel set during one of Africa's darkest periods, then you must prepare yourself for tragedy. But man, does it get tragic. [If you have read this book, I discuss this book further in more detail at this link: <http://www.shelfari.com/groups/13180/...>]. At the time of writing this review, the only COURTNEY novels I've read are the early ones ('Birds of Prey' through to 'Blue Horizon') and, as the plot of 'Men of Men' progressed, I couldn't help but compare Smith's two famous families. At the end of 'A Falcon Flies', there was one Ballantyne for me who helped me keep believing that the family was a "good" one - but by the end of this book, that character commits a sin far worse than any they've previously condemned, and now I have nothing for the Ballantynes but contempt and disgust really. Will I be reading 'The Angels Weep'? You betcha - and soon. Just not immediately - you won't blame me for reading something a little lighter first, will you? No? Good. Jack Reacher, here I come.

Barbara ★ says

Wilbur Smith's books tend to be based in Africa during the 1800s when England and Englishmen seize control of huge tracts of land and kill or force out the native people. Usually these books involve gold digging and/or diamond mining. This book is no different. The end of the book is very violent and off-putting at times. If the treatment of native Africans during this time period offends you, I suggest that you skip this book.

That said, I enjoyed this book immensely as it is a family saga with very interesting characters with ungodly ambitions. Zouga Ballantyne, an Englishman born in Africa, is mining diamonds in order to get rich enough to move onto his real goal...gold digging. After spending 10 years in the diamond mines, he has given up on his dream and drifted away. His two sons have left their father and travelled in different directions. Ralph, the fighter, has gone north towards the gold fields and Jordan, the effeminate one, stays on with the reigning diamond merchant.

The first 220 pages are exciting as hell and then there is a three year shift in time and the action drops off. This is where the men separate. After a 100 pages or so, the pace again picks up and the real aims of the main characters become clear. Remove the black men and be king of the African country.

Stuart says

Another good one but so many story lines happening that I actually had to go back and read a bit again. Still elephants and slaves and missionaries but with a Zulu war in Zimbabwe thrown in for good measure. The Whites were certainly terrible to the Zulus with their modern weapons versus spears and shields but the Zulus allegedly wiped out a million other natives when they took over Zimbabwe a generation earlier.

Liz says

This is the first (and will be the last) Wilbur Smith book I've read. As I had suspected from the start, it's a walloping great macho saga, full of testosterone and peopled by unpleasant, greedy characters. Fine for a beach read, but not much more. A shame really because Smith's description of Africa itself is vivid and clear - the only strong character study in the whole piece. His grasp of the period is good and I genuinely enjoyed reading about the harsh life in the diamond fields. I understand that the characters shouldn't actually be likeable - they are 'raping' Africa afterall. However they are never more than flat, lifeless, cliche-ridden ciphers.

John says

The continuing adventures of Zouga Ballyntyne, as he returns to the dark continent set on funding his grand vision with diamond mining. The historical insights into the nascent diamond industry in Africa are great. The downfall of a great native African tribe and its leader were poignant. You could see the inevitability. There was no binary good and evil. Numerous parallels with the native American are evident, manipulative treaties, military action, exploitation of natural resources. Mix in some great love stories and two boys from different cultures growing into men and fast-friends, then torn apart.

Naomi says

Wilbur Smith does a masterful job of bringing to readers the destruction of native Africa's way of life at the turn of the century. Zouga Ballantyne and his two sons, Ralph and Jordan become involved with Cecil Rhodes who is building his own empire within the British sphere of influence. Zouga once again meets his sister, Robyn who is still using her medical skills along with her husband to give aid to the population. The effects of the mining for gold and diamonds are powerful in telling of the story.

Séverine says

Je suis d'habitude happée par les récits de Wilbur Smith qui est un incroyable conteur. Cependant, pour celui-ci, j'ai été un peu déçue ...

Le début est intéressant, avec Zouga Ballantyne venu s'installer dans les mines de diamant. Mais par la suite, j'ai perdu de l'intérêt pour les histoires de guerres entre tribus africaines et colons blancs.

On ne s'attache pas assez aux personnages, à leur vie.

Je vais quand même lire la suite, en espérant revenir sur un récit aussi passionnant que les autres.

Nahuel says

La continuacion de la saga Ballantyne, principalmente centrado en el personaje de Zouga. El libro resulta mucho mas interesante que el anterior, mas entretenido y mucho mas dinamico. El desarrollo del protagonista en conjunto con su hijo Ralph, esta bien desarrollado; y, sin lugar a dudas, el personaje de Zouga es mucho mas humano de a lo que W.S. tiene acostumbrado. Se entienden algunas cuestiones del primer libro, y su desarrollo, en especial con respecto al personaje de Zouga y sus desventuras. Relata de forma fantastica el enfrentamiento entre los blancos y los matabele, de tal forma que genera mucho repudio leer ciertos pasajes del libro.

El personaje de Robyn creo cae en decadencia de diversas maneras, y es pisoteado por el hombre. La aparicion en escena constante de Saint John, en algunos casos parece ya demasiado.

El libro da cierre a muchas de las historias, dando el pie al proximo libro de una manera amena y conclusiva para con el lector.

Rishi Prakash says

Absolutely brilliant...Smith has got a thrilling plot here which carried on from his last book "A falcon flies"...there are so many sub plots that it keeps you on the edge after every chapter and everything starts connecting slowly as the book progresses. He has definitely taken the "Ballantyne" family story several notches higher with his second book :) As always,Africa looks so fascinating and mythical through his eyes, no one can match it for sure!!

Matt says

As the Ballantyne saga continues, Smith chose a new central focus on which the imperial white man seeks to hoard for himself; highly pressurised carbon. no matter the plight of the Africans currently living on the land. Just as the ivory hunt proved to be highly beneficial for European settlers, the mining of diamonds became a lucrative means to make substantial capital. Smith brings Zouga Ballantyne into the thick of the mining operation, alongside his family. As the novel opens, Ralph and Jordan Ballantyne are in camp with their parents and exploring as any teenage boy is wont to do. When Zouga's wife dies suddenly, it is up to the Ballantyne boys to forge their own way in a world still rife with chaos. As Zouga mines for diamonds, he leads a camp full of locals until Cecil Rhodes arrives on the scene, ready not only to purchase all the diamonds, but to annex the lands and settle them for his own. Using Zouga as an emissary to the African tribes, Rhodes begins the creation of what will eventually be Rhodesia (and then Zimbabwe). Ralph becomes a hardcore worker, mirroring the sentiments of his father and grows up to develop a personality as hard as the diamonds he mines. Jordan, on the other hand, is a more delicate young man, much like his mother, but does find himself involved as Rhodes' personal secretary. When Ralph travels to discover his aunt, Robyn

Codrington (nee Ballantyne)'s missionary camp, he falls in love with his cousin, Catherine and they begin a whirlwind romance. Smith uses this encounter to bridge the two original siblings (Robyn and Zouga), as well as the fallout that befalls them when Captain St. John (the slave owning ship captain) returns to engage with Rhodes and his new territorial plans. Both Zouga and Robyn's clans mesh together during the subsequent portions of the novel, which focusses largely on Rhodes use of soldiers and the British South Africa Company to rid the lands of the African tribes by force, read: slaughter them. Smith masterfully weaves this tale alongside the birth of Rhodesia, the white state that will, in decades to come, prove key in the black suppression on the African continent. A powerful second novel in the Ballantyne series not to be missed.

Smith continues with his storytelling abilities to depict the colonial nightmare that saw the sub-continent of Africa become the plaything of the British Commonwealth. Plundering its people, wildlife, and now natural resources, Smith shows how the entire area was devastated by those who thought they knew best. In this tale, Smith pulls no punches as he explores the colonial mindset, to rape and pillage those who will not kneel voluntarily, while killing those who seek to protect their tribal lands. Pitting the spear against the bullet and formal military techniques against those of tribal huntsmen, Smith shows how the European (read: British) mindset utilised this superiority to slaughter those in their way, with no comprehension for the traditional ways of life. Rhodesia's creation was made on the backs of the African people, their blood and sweat imbedded in the land while the whites profited immensely. A novel not for the reader who is not prepared to digest horrible depictions, but full of examples of the deplorable way whites treated those with whom they saw as a hindrance. Smith is to be applauded for this book and the series to date, which has handled many of these topics in a historically accurate way.

Kudos, Mr. Smith for this powerfully disturbing novel. You have left an ache in me to learn more and to be ashamed of the British Commonwealth at the same time. No wonder things became as volatile in that region, pitting race against race and tradition against colonial profits.

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<http://pecheyponderings.wordpress.com/>

Tim Bolitho-jones says

Not one of Smith's best but entertaining enough. The first few hundred pages in the diamond mine could have been skipped over in about half the time and he seems to have trouble figuring out who the lead character is. At first it's Zouga Ballantyne, then his son Ralph, then Zouga's sister Robyn, then the leader of the Matabele, then Ralph again...The language is beautifully evocative though and you can picture the African landscape in your mind's eye easily. His "tell it like it is" approach is nice too and while it largely revolves around rich, heavily armed white men massacring tribal black men and stealing their land, you still feel sympathy and repulsion for both sides.

Swathi Krishnan says

Best book ever

John Hales says

What happened to honor? This book tells the sad tale of one malevolent dirty deed after another. There is certainly a shortage of justice in this book.

Viktor Lövgren says

Denna kom uppdelad i två böcker på svenska. "Diamantens förbannelse" och "När falkarna flyger". Den första delen klart bäst, men handlingen centrerad kring den skoningslösa jakten på diamanter ledd av koloniala intressen under 1880-talet i Sydafrika. Karaktärernas klichéartade ondska och testosteronstina macho-attityd gör del två en aning trötsam i längden.

d harvey says

Another good read

Another good book of the ballentine family..
Not as good as the Courtney stories but still a worth while read.

Graham says

The second book in Smith's Ballantyne series, and a follow up to A FALCON FLIES. This book carries on in the first one's wake, taking up the story of Zouga Ballantyne as he tries his luck in the new-fashioned Kimberley Mines under the beady eye of empire-builder Cecil Rhodes.

MEN OF MEN is a novel of two halves and the first half is particularly gripping. It's all about the diamond mines, and Smith once again mixes technical detail with human incident to great effect. You never get bogged down in the minutiae of the diamond extracting process, yet by the end of it you feel like you've learnt all that there is to know about it, and it's never less than engaging.

The second half of the book is more mixed, and the quality gradually wears off as the story progresses to become a series of strung-together episodes. The characters are rather thinly sketched and feel like pieces being moved around a chessboard. Smith also fails to include any sympathetic characters and the new ones, Ralph in particular, feel repulsive.

This is a novel where bad things happen to good people, and there's a lot of violence packed within the pages. Nevertheless it's a quality read, with - as per usual - wonderful descriptions of Africa and the people who made it tick. I look forward to seeing in which direction the third novel, THE ANGELS WEEP, goes.
