The Victorian publics’ image of the African would have been formed by contact from a number of different influences. These included the anthropological debates of the 1850s through to the 1870s, the pseudo-science of ‘social Darwinism’ of the 1860s and 1870s, the printed works and reports of missionaries, and the travel writings of such individuals as Burton and Speke. Influences such as these did produce inconsistencies as to how the Victorian saw the African, or any black man, and much would have depended on what social context the black man was seen in, as to whether he was viewed as the ‘sinned or the sinner’.

The Zulu nation can perhaps be considered as a slight exception to this rule as from the first half of the nineteenth century the exploits of Shaka and Dingane; their cruelties and madness, and the bravery of their fighting men resulted in the Zulu nation standing apart from the other races of Africa. As early as 1857 Livingstone commented on the splendid physique of the Zulu and that they were - shrewd, energetic, and brave, and except for colour and hair, they would take rank among the foremost Europeans. (1)

The cruelties and warlike nature displayed by the Zulus made an impression on Charles Dickens. Writing in his weekly journal, Household Words, in June 1853 he wrote of a visit he made to see a party of Zulus exhibiting near Hyde Park Corner, in which Dickens described the performers as -

These noble savages are represented in a most agreeable manner…. Though extremely ugly, they are much better shaped than some of their predecessors and they are rather picturesque to the eye….

Christine Bolt states that there were aspects of African life, and even of African character, which evoked respect from the Victorians. Bolt argues that as the Victorians prided themselves on their pluck; they admired bravery and a warlike nature in Africans. (2) So where did all this leave the Victorian perception of the Zulu nation just prior to the outbreak of the Anglo-Zulu War?

Sir Bartle Frere, when attempting to paint a picture of a warlike nation ready to spill across the border into Natal, could look back at the reigns of Shaka and Dingane for inspiration and would have found some individuals ready and willing to understand the fears generated by such an association. Indeed, he could turn to more recent history in that Cetshwayo had also displayed a similar ruthlessness first seen in Shaka and Dingane. In 1856, during the dispute between Cetshwayo and his half-brother Mbulazi as to who would succeed the then Zulu king, Mpande, Cetshwayo pursued the forces of his half-brother and defeated them at the battle of `Ndondakusuka. Mbulazi was killed in the battle, along with the six other sons of Mpande, thus securing Cetshwayo’s future crown. However, the battle witnessed a killing peak that Africa, south of the Sahara, had probably never seen before. In the space of an hour over seven thousand men, women and children, supporters of Mbulazi, were butchered and the site of the battle became known as Mathambo, - ‘the Place of Bones’.

The anthropological debates gave Sir Bartle Frere, and others, a simple characterization for the Zulus, which most could perceive and understand; that is to say of the ‘savage’, or even the ‘barbarian’. Furthermore a number of travel books concerning travels in southern Africa, with commentary on the Zulu nation, appeared just before the outbreak of the war. The books were extensively advertised in the newspapers once war had indeed broken out, and were promoted by the publishers as useful tools to gain an understanding of the Zulu nation. Most of these books were inherently racist. Finally, and much to the relief of Sir Bartle Frere, the missionaries in Zululand just prior to the outbreak of the war, were keen for various reasons to portray the Zulu nation in terms of the ‘savage’, and their influence was important in Sir Bartle Frere’s justification for sending the ultimatum to Cetshwayo.

Mpande, father of Cetshwayo, had tolerated missionaries and even allowed the establishment of a small number of stations in Zululand. However, Cetshwayo had a strong distaste for Christian teachings. F.B.Fynney summed up the general situation in a memorandum written for Governor Bulwer in 1877-

…and he (Cetshwayo) – together with his chief izindunai can see no good in either the missionaries or their work. He does not believe in their doctrines, and looks on any Zulu who professes to do so as a Zulu spoiled. He feels that each mission station is a separate power, set up in his land, which to a great extent is calculated to rob him of his influence over the people.
he governs, and forms a place of refuge for all the Abatakati (witches) and those who wish to throw off allegiance to him. This is no new idea on his part. From the first, he wished to get rid of the missionaries. (3)

When Cetshwayo came to the Zulu throne in 1873 he seized the initiative at his coronation by suggesting to Shepstone that all the mission stations in Zululand be closed. After extensive negotiations Shepstone managed to win an extension of the status quo from the new King, which allowed those existing mission stations to remain. In the years following the coronation missionaries in Zululand claimed that Cetshwayo’s accession marked a dramatic turning point for Christianity in Zululand, and that the King made every attempt to impede their work.

The missionaries blamed their lack of success in reaching out to the Zulu people on the King. The truth was virtually no progress had been made before the coronation and virtually no progress was made afterwards. To become a Christian meant, for the Zulu, that he or she would be deprived of their Zulu citizenship. Those who consented to baptism ceased for all practical purposes to be Zulus. They would not be permitted to Khoanza, that is to say, give allegiance to the King. Men could not serve as soldiers and lost their regimental identification. For a society that valued their military traditions so highly this was indeed a major penalty. They would be unable to hold property and farm only on the mission stations. From all festivals, civic duties and Royal largesse, the Zululand Christian was quite shut out. Their old associates, even family, treated them as dead, or at best strangers, and as a final insult, the Zulus applied to mission station residents the same sneering epithet which whites gave to all blacks. They called them Kaffirs.

The missionaries would complain that this was religious persecution. In reality their lack of religious conversions was due to lack of interest. It was comforting for missionaries to believe that all their opposition, and their failures, stemmed from Cetshwayo. However, general hostility to Christianity infected all sections of the population. Scepticism was widespread. One missionary protested that though he preached to the Zulus-every Sunday from the most interesting texts I can find, I can make no progress. Hell does not frighten them and heaven does not attract them. (4)

The Lutheran Hermannsburg Missionary Society arrived in Zululand in 1859, in the reign of Mpande, and established a mission station. In the fourteen years up to the coronation of Cetshwayo the Society made almost no converts and was seriously considering withdrawing. Yet their leader, Schreuder, became one of the most vocal critics of the new king, the ‘despotic, heathen chief’, who was, supposedly, holding back their success. Norman Etherington (5) considers it likely that Schreuder politicked actively to bring Shepstone to Zululand for the coronation and thereby hoped to retrieve Lutheran fortunes. With the increase in tensions along the Transvaal border some of the missionaries, including Schreuder, saw an opportunity to discredit Cetshwayo by exaggerating, or even fabricating claims against the King. According to Etherington, Shepstone needed ready information against Cetshwayo for his attempts to assist in the Confederation of South Africa; a Confederation that both Shepstone and Sir Bartle Frere could only envisage happening if the autonomy, and the perceived military threat of the Zulus, were removed. If such information came supplied by missionaries it would be all the more creditable.

Frustrated in their calling, and living, in a situation that the missionaries perceived was one of perpetual insult, it took little encouragement from Shepstone to persuade them to turn on the Zulu king, who embodied traditional customs and beliefs that they had been unable to challenge by their teachings. Natal newspaper editors needed no urging to publish garbled rumours about the Zulu threat, which came from their ‘special correspondents’, often a missionary source. Shepstones’ major source of information was Robert Robertson, whom Bishop Colenso had ordained and sent to Zululand twenty years before.

Robertson had initially been friendly towards Cetshwayo and had even started to teach the King to read English, but as time went on his frustrations at lack of conversions turned him against the King himself, and Robertson readily supplied Shepstone and the Natal press with the information which could be used to demonstrate the danger the Zulu posed to Christianity and civilization. He became the anonymous Zulu correspondent of the Natal Mercury and wrote voluminously to anyone who would listen to his tales of the King’s tyranny.

Both Robertson and Schreuder opened correspondence with Sir Bartle Frere and there is evidence that Frere chose to use some of it in his campaign against Cetshwayo. Robertson wrote to Bulwer that Cetshwayo was ‘ready for war, and a mere trifle may bring it about’. (6) Robertson assured him that war was inevitable, and tragic as it would be ‘there are worse things than war sometimes.’ (7) Other missionaries wrote to luminaries with similar tales. Samuelson told his missionary society that ‘half the
Zulu nation would welcome Shepstone as their deliverer. (8) Robertson urged Bishop Macrorie to pass his fabricated stories along to all well placed sources. (9) Missionaries began to report that executions of accused witches grew more and more frequent as Cetshwayo’s reign went on. Their letters offered no hard evidence to support this assertion.

When on the 4th March 1877 a Lutheran Hermannsburger convert was accused of witchcraft, seized and killed by one of Cetshwayo’s impis, the missionaries immediately raised the cry of persecution. This was despite Cetshwayo’s assurances that the action had been taken against an evil individual, and was not directed at Christians in general. Robertson, never one to miss an opportunity, managed to fight against old rivalries and organized a united response from the mission stations. He suggested sending a memorandum of grievances to Natal and to consulting Shepstone on what action to take.

In a private discussion with two Norwegian missionaries, Shepstone advised them that Britain would soon break up the Zulu military machine and advised them that they should leave Zululand immediately. This the Norwegians indeed did, and most other missionaries followed suit, only to discover that once they had left, British annexation was not going to be quite so immediate. Apart from the Hermannsburger missionaries, who Cetshwayo positively forbade to return, the missionaries shamefacedly returned to Zululand throughout 1877. By the outbreak of war, in January 1879, no missionaries remained in Zululand. Despite the king’s best efforts, and huge tolerance, even the Anglican missionaries, Robertson and Samuelson, as well as the Norwegians, Oftebro, Gundersen and Larsen, had decided to believe their own propaganda and had chosen to leave. By then, of course, Sir Bartle Frere had issued his ultimatum and the writing was very clearly on the wall.

Cetshwayo had always distrusted the missionaries and it seems clear that even from the start of his reign the missionaries were making his position intolerable by telling the world that the king’s attempts to settle his country amounted to nothing more than a bloody and capricious tyranny. It is debatable whether the part played by the missionaries in supporting the move to war had much to do with Frere’s ultimatum. Certainly there is evidence that Frere quoted their reports, but whether he believed them is another matter. That the public believed them is more certain, and of course, at the very least, such missionary reports influenced how the Victorian world of 1879 perceived the Zulu nation.

Travellers’ tales had an important influence on how the Victorians perceived the black man. At the time of the Anglo-Zulu War two important books concerning the region had recently been published. The news of the outbreak of the war must have been a publisher’s dream; both books were heavily advertised in the London papers as not only being available, but also stressing how vital they were to gain a proper understanding of Zululand and the Zulus.

The first of the books was My Command in South Africa 1874-1878, by General Sir Arthur Thurlow Cunynghame. The author had, until 1878, been in command of British forces in South Africa, and was replaced in that year by Frederick Augustus Thesiger, who was soon to become Lord Chelmsford. Cunynghame was not happy to be recalled just as the possibility of war seemed to have increased, but at least he could now write his memoirs of his command in South Africa. The book, which is little more than a travelogue of Cunynghame’s various troop inspection tours, does have the odd insight into the author’s view of the Zulu nation and on the likelihood of war. The book begins with Cunynghame outlining his views on the South African black man-

In Kaffirs two great characteristics are noticeable, superstition and theft. (10)

Cunynghame then turns his attention to the Zulu nation. The following piece must have been written just before the outbreak of the war-

Zululand …is inhabited by the most warlike of all the KAFFIR tribes. Cetewayo, the present king, almost rivals his uncle Dingaan in cruelty, and his (great) uncle Chaka in military talent…his (Cetshwayo) demeanor has been growing steadily more and more warlike, and in 1878 his attitude became so threatening, that the safety of the colonies of Natal and the Transvaal was seriously threatened. This induced Sir Bartle Frere to bring matters to a head, and last year an ultimatum was sent to him, requesting that certain warlike customs should be abandoned, and that he should give certain guarantees for keeping the peace. (11)

It is impossible to gauge whether this comment was the accepted Army view of the Zulu nation, one contrived by Sir Bartle Frere, or simply Cunynghame’s personal viewpoint. However, the book was written by an influential member of the establishment and would have been taken seriously, perhaps by newspaper editors and the general reading public, for that reason alone.

A book that could certainly be considered one to fit into the genre of travellers’ tales was Six Months at the Cape, by R.M. Ballantyne. Like the Cunynghame title it was published in London in 1879, and the publishers promoted the book as being useful to gain an understanding of the Zulu. Once again the author clearly outlines his views on the Zulu nation-
The whole Kaffir nation, root and branch, is a huge thief, an inveterate liar, and a wholesale thief. Those who have read of their doings under Chaka, and such like Neros, will confirm this to be true. The history of our colonial wars clearly shows it. The monstrous unnatural, and brutal practices which at present hourly form part of the Kaffir laws incontestably prove it... ‘the uneducated savage Kaffir is an intellectual child - and a very bad child too. He ought to be disarmed to prevent his avowed and inveterate desire, and constantly recurring attempts, to ‘drive the white man into the sea’. (12)

As war seemed more likely, the Victorians were able to build a picture of the Zulu nation. This picture would have been built around a number of generalizations of the black man, along with information specific to the Zulu nation; for example, their violent history, their disdain for missionaries and the military structure to their society. This would have been gained from history books, travellers’ accounts, the Natal press and missionary reports. However, H.C. Swaisland (13) has argued that the major influence on how Victorians perceived the Zulu nation in 1878 and early 1879 was via the reports from Sir Bartle Frere, which appeared in the British press.

The initial British defeat at Isandlwana confirmed to many that Frere had correctly portrayed the warlike nature of the Zulus. However, this success, and the later Zulu victories of Intombi Drift and Hlobane, demonstrated that the military abilities of the Zulus raised them above the level of the simple African savage. The bravery clearly demonstrated by the Zulu warriors at such battles as Kambula and Gingindhlovu, combined with the nobility displayed by Cetshwayo in captivity, began to alter the Victorian perception of the Zulu, which had been held before the war.

The months and years preceding the War saw more of a shift in public opinion towards the belief that the conflict had not been just. This was displayed in the emergence of the idea that the Zulu King and his people had been simply defending their nation, and they had done so in a brave, courageous and noble manner. This shift in opinion can be clearly seen in Gladstone’s speeches during his Midlothian campaign of late 1879, and early 1880. His most famous reference to the Zulus came in a speech at St.Andrews Hall, Glasgow, on 5 December 1879- Disraeli’s policy was ‘pestilent’ in every corner of the globe. What was the crime of the Zulus? Ten thousand had been slaughtered for no other offence than their attempt to defend against your artillery with their naked bodies, their hearths and homes, their wives and families.....To call this policy Conservative is, in my opinion, pure mockery, an abuse of terms. Whatever it may be in its motive, it is in its result disloyal, it is in essence thoroughly subverse.

Gladstone stated that such a policy would lead Britain along a road of ‘suffering, discredit and dishonour.’

Further criticism of the war was found in print. W.F. Butler, in 1881, produced a title Far Out Rovings Retold, which was a collection of essays concerning countries he had visited. In it Butler made a strong defence of the Zulu King and his nation and criticized the lack of justice in the war-

While the black king’s dealings towards us are weighed and measured by the strictest code of civilized law and usage existing between modern states, our relations toward him are exempted from similar test rules, and the answer is ever ready for those who would preach the doctrine of a universal justice between man and man, of the impossibility of applying to savage communities the rules and maxims of ordinary life.’ (14)

Butler also offered an enlightened view of the Zulu-

Notwithstanding the wide gulf which we fancy lies between us and this black man, he is singularly like us. He will cry if you stick a pin into him, he will be thankful for a gift, he will resent an injury, he will weep for the loss of a wife or child, he will fight for his homeland- he can even die for what he believes to be the right.’ (15)

Similarly, H.Rider Haggard, who had been private secretary to Governor Bulwer of Natal and aide to Sir Theophilus Shepstone during the annexation of the Transvaal, published in 1882 a book entitled Cetywayo and His White Neighbours. Although not a defence of Cetshwayo, Haggard set out to clarify some of the misapprehension in the mind of the public, which had been created by Frere and the press. His comments on the war itself are quite revealing-

With the exception of the affair at Rorke’s Drift, there is nothing to be proud of in connection with it, and a great deal to be ashamed of, more especially its final settlement. There is, however, one point that I wish to submit to the consideration of my readers, and that is, that Cetywayo was never thoroughly in earnest about the war. If he had been in earnest, if he had
determined to put out his full strength, he would certainly have swept Natal from end to end after his victory at Isandlwana…. The reason he has given for his conduct is that he did not wish to irritate the white man; and was only anxious to defend his country.’ (16)

The book heaps much criticism on the settlement of Zululand, into thirteen kingdoms, by Wolseley after the war. Although he did not actually call for the reinstatement of Cetshwayo on his throne, Haggard does state-

‘Cetshwayo’s rule, bad as it was, was perhaps preferable to the reign of terror that we have established, under the name of settlement.’ (17)

Haggard’s literary influence extended much further than this simple defence. His two most famous works, *King Solomon’s Mines*, published in 1885, and *Allan Quatermain*, which appeared two years later, both had the same central-European characters, and both had the Zulu nation central stage. Alan Sandison (18) has argued that Haggard made the lives and destiny of the Zulus themselves the main current of life in these novels. The Zulus are not merely a colourful native backdrop to the exploits of Victorian hearties, but as a native race they are central with the white man who has strayed into their world. Norman Etherington (19) thinks that these novels are remarkable for the features that do not accord with the stereotype image of Victorian imperialism. The novels’ adventurers find a Zulu-speaking people who live in neat hygienic villages in pastoral countryside. The rightful King, a superbly muscled, highly intelligent, haughty African, is no smiling clown, but a proud, regal, aristocrat, who refuses to conform to the subservient role which Quatermain, the main European character, insists that he plays. Daily life in Kukuanaland (Zululand) is healthy, tidy and chaste - no missionaries or civilization is needed. *King Solomon’s Mines* ends on an anti-imperialist note as the King vows to keep Europeans out.

The novel, *Allan Quatermain*, is a story of a search for a lost white civilization reported to exist in central Africa. The main adventurers from the first novel are reunited and the expedition is lead by Umslopogaas, the bravest Zulu of them all. Haggard draws parallels between the black race of Kukuanaland and the white race, the Zu-Vendi. Etherington (20) has argued that Haggard shows these two races to be nearly identical in life-style and outlook. Both novels end with disquisitions on the need to protect the African way of life from European onslaught. Both these books were hugely popular in the 1880s, and as the works of such travellers as Burton and Speke influenced Victorian prejudices towards the African in the 1860s, so the works of Haggard allowed the reader to view the Zulu nation as a proud, noble and brave civilization.

Christine Bolt (21) believes that the Zulus fit nicely into the Victorian desire to respect the character of warlike tribes or races. The Victorians loved a ‘formidable antagonist’ as the eventually defeat of such foes enhanced the superiority of the British. Sir Bartle Frere reappears in this debate. In a lecture given to The Royal Colonial Institute in 1881 he argued that the Negroes’ inability to resist oppression, including slavery, was one of the main reasons why he should be despised. In contrast, the tribes of southern Africa, including the Zulus, were admirable because they had resisted, and could not be enslaved. An extraordinary turnaround by the former High Commissioner! (22) According to Bolt, the tribes, such as the Zulus, who enslaved or raided their neighbours, were infinitely preferable to those who allowed themselves to be victims. Since the Victorians believed that ‘there are races which must lead, and races for which it is good to follow,’ it was no doubt soothing to the Victorian conscience to find evidence of such an ‘imperial’ quality among those they enslaved.

Zulu characters also appear in the novels of Bertram Mitford, and are physical superior to the other Africans. This fitted neatly into the European idea of a hierarchy of races. The Zulu assumed it to be natural that they would conquer other tribes. The ultimate Victorian compliment was paid to the Zulus by an article, in *The Spectator* in 1898, in which it was suggested that Zulus might be a useful addition to the ranks of the British Army. (23)

The 1963 motion picture, *ZULU*, was primarily an adventure film; it celebrated the courage of the defenders of Rorke’s Drift, fighting against overwhelming odds, and showed that the British had beaten off a formidable foe. Conversely, it could be argued that, by celebrating the bravery of the Zulus, the British were seen as superior. The film did illustrate that the battle had been a close run thing, but one of the closing scenes, in which the Zulus salute the bravery of the defenders, again reaffirmed the superiority of the British. So although the film was made in 1963, it displayed many of the beliefs held in 1883. The Victorian admired and respected warlike races, such as the Zulus, and this set them apart from other tribes, races and foes. I would affirm that the beliefs held in 1883, have stayed with us, more or less intact, and this is why today the Anglo-Zulu War maintains its interest with us, because we still respect a formidable foe, who is so much like us in outlook.
References.

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9. SPG Wigram Papers. Robertson to Macrorie, 7 June 1878
11. Ibid, preface VIII
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The Battle of Ulundi took place at the Zulu capital of Ulundi on 4 July 1879 and was the last major battle of the Anglo-Zulu War. The British army broke the military power of the Zulu nation by defeating the main Zulu army and immediately afterwards capturing and razing the capital of Zululand, the royal kraal of Ulundi. After the decisive Zulu victory at the battle of Isandlwana in January over Chelmsford's main column and the consequent defeat of the first invasion of Zululand, the British launched Zulu war was one of the most bloody wars in South Africa between Zulu kingdom and the British Empire in 1879 and was initiated by Sir Henry Bartle Frere. Cetshwayo however gave no response to the issue and consequently, the British invaded the Zulu nation in January 1879 without the permission of the British Government. This invasion was led by Lieutenant-general Frederick Augustus Thesiger. The British invaded Zululand through the Rorke’s Drift, lower Tugela and Utrecht and were to go towards Ulundi which was the royal capital at the time.

3. Battles that Took Place During the War. The war between the British Empire and the Zulu Kingdom took place in five different areas and thus the five different battles. How the Zulus inflicted the British army’s worst defeat by a native force at Isandlwana. At eleven o'clock in the morning of January the 22nd 1879, a troop of British scouts chased a group of Zulus into the valley of Ngwebeni in Zululand. The scouts stopped dead in their tracks when they saw what the valley contained. Sitting on the ground in total silence were 20,000 Zulu warriors. Newspaper coverage on the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 By. Luke Diver B.A. IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MA IN MILITARY HISTORY AND STRATEGIC STUDIES. Department of history national university of ireland. Both sides incurred heavy losses in men and material, causing universal embarrassment for the British, and the collapse of the young Zulu nation before the might of Empire. The main focus of this thesis is to research what the Irish and British public knew and understood about the Anglo-Zulu War through three famous and popular newspapers- The London Times, the Irish Times and the Illustrated London News.