Jews, Waiting, and Messianic Masochism in H. Rider Haggard's *She*

H. Rider Haggard's fiction, like nineteenth century England itself, contains a complex tangle of feelings toward Jews ancient and modern. The semitic discourse apparent in *She*, in particular, reflects the wide range of Haggard's attitudes.[1] These include a grudging, hostile acknowledgement of the Hebrews as historical, religious, and social precursors of Christianity and English nationalism, as well as attempts to relegate the Jews that were Haggard's contemporaries—"the Jews whom everybody 'wants' nowadays,"[2] as Holly disdainfully says—and who were the subjects of widespread public controversies in England in the 1870s and 1880s, to the ancient past.

The discussions surrounding "the Jewish question" in 1870s England can be considered the broad context for Haggard's representations of Jews. As Todd Endelman, a historian of English Jewry, writes, "In the late 1870s … Public attention became focused on Jews [of England] more frequently and intensely than before."[3] This focus on the Jews took numerous forms; in the 1870s, these included "Liberal and Radical criticism of Disraeli's policy toward Turkey in the period 1875-78";[4] the publication of major novels about Jews such as George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* and Anthony Trollope's *The Prime Minister*; and, as Michael Ragussis relates, a beleaguered but persistent tradition of attempts by millenarian and evangelical Christians to protect and convert

[1] "Semitic discourse" is a term borrowed from Bryan Cheyette; it is meant to express, like Zygmunt Bauman's "allosemitism," a wider range of representational possibilities than simple "anti-Semitism." See Cheyette, Bryan. "Introduction." Constructions of "the Jew" in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations, 1875-1945. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. 1-12.
[2] Haggard, H. Rider. She. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. 63.
[3] Endelman, Todd M. The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. 153.
[4] Ibid.

Jews in order to hasten the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.[5] In the years preceding the publication of *She* in 1887, the position of the Jews in England became even more complex. On the one hand, Jewish assimilation into British society proceeded apace: "By the 1880s, rich Jews had made their way into the drawing rooms and dining rooms of smart society, their entrance made possible by aristocratic willingness to absorb new wealth whatever its origins, industrial, financial, or mercantile, American or Jewish."[6] No less a cultural authority than Matthew Arnold expressed "unmitigated joy at the ennoblement in 1885 of Sir Nathaniel Rothschild, the first Jewish peer."[7] On the other hand, the rise of some Jews to positions of prominence did not inspire widespread philo-Semitism. "In the mid-1880s," Endelman writes, "massive unemployment, which owed little to the Jewish influx, and fears of worker violence sparked the first calls to restrict immigration"[8]—calls that coalesced into a campaign that would endure for decades, often invoking virulent anti-Semitic rhetoric and stereotypes.

The meshing and confusion of these varied social, economic, and historical factors produced not only an irreducible complexity of attitudes towards Jews in 1880s England, but also a sense for many English writers that the Jew and "the Jewish question" were productive sites for the working through and out of many vexing questions of race, class, nation, Empire, art, and identity. Part of the usefulness of the figure of the Jew inhered precisely in the ambiguity that resulted from contradictory notions of Jews as rich (merchants and capitalists), poor (destitute immigrants), powerful (in the figures of Disraeli and Rothschild), and powerless (in stereotypes of the Jew as physically weak,

[5] Ragussis, Michael. Figures of Conversion: "The Jewish Question" and English National Identity. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995. 299.
[6] Endelman, 156.
[7] Cheyette, 53.
[8] Endelman, 159.

feminine, and ineffectual); as Zygmunt Bauman has influentially expressed it, "the Jew had entered modern times as ambivalence incarnate."[9]

Building on Bauman's analysis, Jonathan Freedman argues that "The Jew functions most fully for [Henry] James"—and a number of late nineteenth century English writers, including Matthew Arnold and George du Maurier—"not as a concrete figure or even as a stereotyped one but as a receptacle: a figure onto which can be loaded all the sources of his inchoate anxieties and unacknowledged terrors."[10] Freedman locates this use of the Jew specifically operating for James in the context of late nineteenth century debates about degeneration. While Max Nordau's theories of degeneration "nominated a figure to replace the Jew as arch-degenerate: the avant-garde artist," James labored in the opposite direction: in *The Tragic Muse* (1890), Freedman writes, "it is as if James is tracing out the terms of the degeneration debate in order to rearrange them in ways that will exculpate him and the artistic vocation he claims for himself and in so doing finds himself almost absent-mindedly inculpating the Jew."[11] For James and for many of his contemporaries, representing the Jewish other was thus an opportunity for self-definition and self-defense, and for exploring without eliminating the threatening uncertainties of their changing world.

Though their writings suggest that Haggard's set of "inchoate anxieties and unacknowledged terrors" would have differed markedly from James's, the figure of the Jew seems to have functioned similarly as a "receptacle" for Haggard's own intense concerns about degeneration and evolution. His tactic in *She*, which reinforces his

[9] Cited in Freedman, Jonathan. The Temple of Culture: Assimilation and Anti-Semitism in Literary Anglo-America. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. 31.
[10] Freedman. 149.
[11] Freedman, 126, 132.

support for imperial project and elides the problems of modern Jewry, is to subsume modern Jews into his ideas about ancient Hebrews.

The author's biography suggests he may even have had a personal stake in discussions about the assimilation and conversion of Jews, their racial difference, and their social position. According to a tribute to Haggard written by his daughter Lilias, Haggard's paternal grandmother "Elizabeth Meybohm … was probably of Jewish blood." Haggard himself is described by family members as having had "a big nose" or "the bold Haggard nose"—a feature that also seems to be emphasized in the *Vanity Fair* caricature that appeared around the time of the publication of *She*. Haggard is further described as, like his siblings, manifesting physical "characteristics" that were "a hint … at some touch of Slav blood in the past."[12] Considering Haggard's consistent attention in

Vanity Fair caricature of Haggard, May 21st 1887. (Obtained at http://www.vanityfairprints.com/pages/0000000413.html.)

[12] Haggard, Lilias Rider. The Cloak that I Left. Ipswitch: Boydell Press, 1976. 19, 24-6. It's worth noting here that Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather* (full citation below) mistakenly conflates two distinct sources of ancestral blood in Haggard's family. There is the blood of Frances Amyand, Haggard's great-grandmother, who was the presumably non-Jewish daughter of "the Rev. Thomas Amyand," and "granddaughter of Claudius Amyand, Surgeon to George II"; it is this blood that Lilias says the family called "accursed," and that is said to have to have conferred "more than a hint of mental instability" in the

She to personal appearance and its connection to social, physical, or moral vitality—Holly, for example, remembers being "So ugly … that the spruce young men of my College … did not even care to be seen walking with me"; and the name of Leo's supposed ancestor, Kallikrates, means "The Strong and the Beautiful, or, more accurately, the Beautiful in strength"[13]—one can only speculate about the author's unexpressed attitude toward his own physical appearance, and the degree to which his "Slavic blood" and "bold Haggard nose" may have increased his interest in reinforcing his social and political ideologies through his relegation of the Jews to the ancient past.

Whatever his personal stake in representations of Jews, one major factor in the constitution of Haggard's semitic discourse seems to have been the stark contrast he saw between the classical legacy of the Jews—as an ancient and once powerful civilization, like those of Egypt and Greece, an ancestor to Christianity and to the English nation—with modern instantiations of Jews as impoverished immigrants to London's East End, or unpatriotic, scheming capitalists.[14]

Musing on the question of Jewish nationalism, in 1901—four years after the First Zionist Congress was convened in Basel, Switzerland, by Theodor Herzl—Haggard asserts that Jewish financiers could easily purchase the land of Palestine from the Turkish sultan, and wonders why they do not follow this course of action: "Are they held back by indifference and apathy—or, perchance, by the mysterious chain of some Divine

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family. Elizabeth Meybohm, Haggard's grandmother, was an entirely different person, not of the Amyand bloodline (though her entrance into the family does seem to have been facilitated by the Amyand family's banking interests in St. Petersburg).

[13] She, 8, 10.

[14] See, for example, Katz's claim that "The racial [i.e., anti-Semitic] stereotype becomes a point of convergence for all of Haggard's aversions—the petty merchant mentality, the single-minded profit orientation, and the unpatriotic evasion of military service." 118. Katz, Wendy R. Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire: A Critical Study of British Imperial Fiction. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

decree?" True to his imperialist beliefs,[15] Haggard implicitly accepts the premise that Jews should desire Palestine as a national homeland. If they wanted to effect such a political change, he continues, "they might drill, buy arms, and make an insurrection. I am informed, however, that they prefer to await the advent of their Messiah, a man of blood and power, a Jewish Napoleon, who when he appears will bring about the glory and temporal advancement of the race."[16] The Jews could, Haggard argues, employ the methods of colonialism—economic and military aggression—and achieve their long-awaited nationhood, but they do not. The condescending and sarcastic censure of Haggard's statement ("I am informed, however") reflects this aspect of his ambivalence toward the Jews: why, if they were at one point in history powerful enough to sire Christianity and the English nation, do modern Jews not now have the will to power that would restore them to their former exalted position? Why do they passively await their redemption, Haggard seems to want to ask, and how—given their debased and degenerate current position in the world—can they possibly bear to wait?[17]

In *She*, similar questions of religious and social evolution relating to Christian England and its empire are reflected in the attention to waiting and suspense throughout the text and in the construction of the narrative. The central circumstance of the novel—Ayesha's "two thousand years of waiting" for the return of her lover Kallikrates[18]—provides Haggard with opportunities to explore the relationship of the ancient past to

[15] Towards the end of his career, Haggard wrote: "All my life … so far as opportunity was open to me, by means of fictional and other writings, and as a humble servant of the country, I have done my best to spread knowledge of the Empire and all it means or should mean to us." Quoted in Katz, 153.
[16] Cheyette, 90.
[17] Of course, in implying such questions, Haggard's statement ignores the financial and political efforts Herzl and the Zionists had in fact famously made between 1896 and 1901. In ignoring the realities of modern Jewry through reference to their religious history, the representational strategy of this statement on Palestine seems to resemble the semitic discourse I argue (below) can be found in *She*.
[18] She, 204.

modern religious and social life, and, in some larger messianic and imperial sense, to ask what it means to wait for deliverance rather than to seek power and salvation aggressively in the present.

Unsurprisingly, Ayesha's millennial patience was read by more than one of Haggard's contemporaries as a religious allegory. Two years after the novel's original publication, in 1889, for example, a writer calling himself Leo Michael—with a first name suspiciously identical to Haggard's protagonist's—published the book-length study *She, an Allegory of the Church*, with a New York press. Michael's slim book is a wonderfully strange hodgepodge of religious philosophy, personal essay, literary criticism, and unbridled appreciation of *She*. A straightforwardly allegorical reading, Michael's posits Ayesha as an avatar for the Christian Church, loyally awaiting the return of "Intuition" as represented by Leo, who is accompanied by "Science," represented by Holly. [19] Michael meticulously details the relationships between these figures and the Priesthood (as represented by Bellali), Spiritualism (Ustane), Conscience (Leo's father), Religious Enthusiasm (Leo's mother), and "sheer Infidelity" (Mahomed), and describes how the interactions between all of these concepts, as prophetically outlined in the allegory of *She*, will lead to the Second Coming.[20] His reading was likely not unique in the connection it draws between Ayesha's patience and the anticipation of messianic salvation, [21] but it develops this theme with strikingly directness: "The deeper meaning of 'She,' and Leo," Michael writes, is "the Divine Marriage—the fruit of the tree of life that

[19] Michael, Leo. She, an Allegory of the Church. New York: F.F. Lowell & Co., 1889.
[20] Michael, 43, 44, 30, 30, 37.
[21] Michael acknowledges a predecessor, who similarly emphasized "the correspondence between [Ayesha] and the church" and "published in one of the New York magazines," for giving him the idea. See Michael, 68. It should also be noted that Haggard himself, in his role as the putative editor of the narrative conveyed to him by Holly, plants the seed of such readings when he writes that he "At first … was inclined to believe that this history … was some gigantic allegory of which I could not catch the meaning." She, 5.

shall heal the world's sickness—the second coming of Christ to the world."[22] For Michael, and likely for other readers of Haggard's novel, the potential explored in *She* is for the rejuvenation of the Christian church and for messianic salvation.

Michael's interpretation of why it should take so long for this awaited salvation—his faithful decoding of the significance of Ayesha's "two thousand years of waiting"—is suggestive and relevant enough to merit a lengthy quotation. Michael asserts that Ayesha was too much "in love with the outward form of" Kallikrates, and,

> for two thousand years … lived in the tombs of Kor, worshipping his dead body. Herein is most wonderfully symbolized the weakness of the Church. It has debased a pure spiritual love with physical passion. It has hovered and gloated over the body, suffering and death of the Jesus rather than lifting up its thought and love to the eternal Christ. Physical passion, physical blood—our theology is incarnadined and saturated with gore. Our Catholic churches and all Christian art repeat over and over every horrible detail of the physical sufferings of Jesus and cloud thereby the spiritual and redeeming power of the Truth he taught.[23]

Michael argues here that the delay that Ayesha's patience symbolizes—Christianity's wait for the Messiah's second coming—is associated with an unhealthy emphasis on "physical passion," with an obsession with "the body, suffering and death." Later in the same passage and consonant with Haggard's attention to Jews both in *She* and elsewhere, Michael characterizes these regressive or anti-salvation qualities of violence, physicality, and bloodiness as having been first "embodied in Judaism."[24] This analysis of waiting for the Messiah, and particularly the paired opposites established here—"physical passion"

[22] Michael, 82.
[23] Michael, 20-22.
[24] Ibid.

versus "pure spiritual love," suffering versus redemption—powerfully evoke Gilles Deleuze's and Kaja Silverman's definition of masochism.

According to Deleuze, "Formally speaking, masochism"—like messianism—"is a state of waiting."[25] He argues that, "The anxiety of the masochist divides … into an indefinite awaiting of pleasure and an intense expectation of pain"[26] that appears homologous with Michael's above-quoted ideas about "the weakness of the Church": like the individual who, in indefinitely deferring pleasure, calls forth an "intense expectation of pain," the religious group or institution willing to wait indefinitely for messianic salvation becomes "incarnadined and saturated with gore," obsessed in the meantime with suffering and martyrdom. Silverman, building on Deleuze as well as Theodor Reik's attention to martyrdom imagery in masochistic pathology, provides a clear articulation of how a messianic form of moral masochism operates: "The Christian, of course, lives his or her life in perpetual anticipation of the second coming. The figural meaning which this anticipation implants in present sufferings makes it possible for them to be savored as future pleasures, with time folding over itself in such a way as to permit that retroactivity to be already experienced now."[27] Suffering in the present, because it foreshadows and figures future salvation, becomes desirable.

Conceptual overlaps between masochism and messianism are likewise visible in Deleuze's statement that "Christology [is] an all-pervasive element in the work of Masoch,"[28] and in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's own interest in "a seventeenth-century

[25] Deleuze, Gilles. "Coldness and Cruelty." Masochism. New York: Zone Books, 1991. 71.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Silverman, Kaja. "Masochism and Male Subjectivity." Male Subjectivity at the Margins. New York: Routledge, 1992. 200.
[28] Deleuze, 97.

[false Jewish] Messiah, Sabattai Zwi."[29] It should be emphasized that Judaism and Christianity—not to mention the many diverse schools, traditions, and denominations that are grouped under those umbrella terms—differ widely in their attitudes toward and approaches to messianism. These various theological models should not be collapsed into one another; as a general rule, for example, physical suffering does not in most Jewish theological traditions occupy that same privileged space it does in many Christian theological traditions. As Silverman writes, behind the scenes of the Christian masochism described by Reik "is the master tableau or group fantasy—Christ nailed to the cross";[30] scenes of suffering are less prevalent and less central in traditional Jewish texts, rituals, and art, and to the extent that they are present in the Jewish tradition, they more often, it could be argued, emphasize and glorify victimization rather than suffering per se. Despite the genuine differences and variations in messianic traditions, however—and though a complete analysis of the conceptual relationship between messianism and masochism is beyond the scope of this paper—I would like to propose that there remains in messianic expectation, in almost any context, an essential and inherent aspect of masochism in the sense that the ultimate pleasure of the Messiah's arrival is deferred, often indefinitely, to the future, and the present is therefore accepted as a period of at least relative suffering.

Unless one accepts a comprehensively allegorical reading—which would seem unfaithful to what is at times a highly self-contradictory novel—the text of *She* does not suggest that Haggard shared Michael's negative view of contemporary Christian institutions as weak in their patience for redemption. It is however known that Haggard

[29] Deleuze, 98. An interesting avenue of inquiry, not relevant in the current paper, of course, would be to investigate how notions of messianic masochism are articulated in some of the fiction that takes up Shabbatai Zevi's life and legacy, including Isaac Bashevis Singer's classic debut novel, *Satan in Goray* (first published in Yiddish in 1935).
[30] Silverman, 197.

was interested, like Michael, in spiritualism and in idiosyncratic readings of scripture; as one of Haggard's relatives recalled, he "had his own interpretation of Holy Writ and took it for granted that it was the only interpretation deserving of belief."[31] According to Wendy Katz's critical study of Haggard's life and fiction, "Haggard's undogmatic Christianity and his notion of spiritual evolution are both attempts to accommodate to evolutionary thought"[32]—though not, it seems, in a strict Darwinian sense of biological evolution, but rather "in the idea of a mystical, spiritual evolution, the movement of the individual to God or an eternal oneness."[33] A notion of the evolution of culture, civilization, and religion seems to have been as essential to Haggard's imperialist ideology, as was his faith in the divine in general. Katz argues that

> By positing a transcendental force, or intelligence, moving behind the scenes, Haggard presents all acts, political as well as personal, as manifestations of some greater purpose. The rationalization that emerges is convenient because the belief that human acts and their consequences are directed from on high and have a significance we cannot presume to divine encourages imperial servants to submit happily to a greater force than their own and to cultivate a zest for obedience.[34]

Similarly, the notion of spiritual evolution (i.e., the development toward "some greater purpose") as applied to imperialism—and, specifically, the belief that the British empire is both a continuation and a refinement of great ancient civilizations—conveniently underwrites and licenses the imperial project in that it bestows the status quo with historical precedents and authority, as well as a sense of inexorability.

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[31] Cloak, 16.
[32] Katz, 107.
[33] Katz, 106.
[34] Katz, 91.

Positing England as a continuation of classical empires requires, among other things, that the supposed ancestors of English society remain debased and ruined as is appropriate for their position lower down on the historical and evolutionary scale. Thus it is not surprising to find Holly, Ayesha's informant about the modern world, telling her about the destruction of various ancient civilizations:

> The Persians have been gone from Egypt for nigh two thousand years, and since then the Ptolemies, the Romans, and many other have flourished and held sway upon the Nile, and fallen when their time was ripe … the Greeks of to-day are not what the Greeks of the old time were, and Greece herself is but a mockery of the Greece that was ... [35]

These remarks, presented by Holly as incontrovertible history, reinforce the notion of the evolution of civilization by recurring to a natural metaphor for the collapse of previous empires (which fell, like fruit from a branch, "when their time was ripe"), and by ridiculing the suggestion that a once-great civilization might swim against the stream of evolution and in modern times regain its former status through a national independence movement (an opinion regarding the Greek independence of 1829, that Daniel Karlin calls "a Victorian commonplace").[36] History marches on, Holly's remarks imply, and the ages of the Egyptians and the Greeks are past.

Holly's evolutionary litany of failed ancient civilizations climaxes, unsurprisingly, with reference to that ancient civilization whose failure was crucial for the justification of a specifically Christian English empire, and the presence of whose descendants was troubling on the home front in 1870s and 1880s England: the Jews.

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[35] She, 147.
[36] She, 327.

Though Ayesha's remarks on the Jews are hardly favorable, she does acknowledge them as having occupied a somewhat exalted position in the ancient world: she refers to "the Temple that the wise king built," for example. Holly informs Ayesha that no matter their previous position, the Jews—like the Egyptians and Greeks—are ruined: "The Jews are broken and gone," he says, "and the fragments of their people strew the world, and Jerusalem is no more."[37] Though Holly is supposed to be informed and knowledgeable, this statement seems less like reportage and more like wishful thinking: one wonders what the recently ennobled Sir Nathaniel Rothschild, for example, would have thought of the assertion that the Jews are "broken and gone." Holly's statement may appear to contradict his earlier reference to "the Jews whom everybody 'wants' nowadays," which, as suggested above, seems to allude to the prominent place of "the Jewish question" in late nineteenth century British political discourse. Actually, that comment aligns perfectly with this reduction of the Jews to an ancient and long ruined culture, as it appears as the final entry in a list of "long dead and forgotten civilizations."[38] Wanting the Jews, in other words, means wanting to revisit the ancient past. In these moments, Holly subsumes modern Jews into the history of the ancient Hebrews, and thereby ignores the social issues surrounding the former in late nineteenth century England.

It is on one level ironic, of course, that Holly, as the character who works hardest to bury the Jews into the past, is the same one whom Ayesha and Leo call an "unbelieving Jew" often enough that in a 1995 essay, Anne McClintock, an otherwise astute late twentieth-century reader of Haggard's fiction, mistakenly reads him as

[37] She, 147.
[38] She, 63.

Jewish.[39] At the same time, Ayesha's and Leo's references to "unbelieving Jews," as Karlin points out, echo Acts 14:2—both from the perspective of a nineteenth-century Englishman, and from Ayesha's ancient viewpoint. That these two characters, despite the millennia separating their experiences, can share the Jew as their primary example of skepticism, produces an erasure of the intervening centuries of Jewish existence. The Jews are unbelievers, irrespective of time. Once again, the present realities of Jewish life are subsumed in ideas about the ancient Hebrews.

Consistently relegating the Jews to the ancient past, Haggard denies them a place in the present and its justifying narratives of religious and political evolution: he ignores the obvious fact—obvious in late nineteenth century English literature, at least, because of *Daniel Deronda*—that many modern Jews were waiting with increasing expectations either for their own Messiah (if they were religious) or for a nationalist movement that would restore them to political power and self-rule (if they were secular). Holly, Leo, and Ayesha relegate the Jews to ancient history; as such they deny that modern Jews have anything, in the future, to wait for. Stripped of any reasonable anticipation of pleasure or salvation, even an indefinitely delayed one, the Jews' position is degraded from one of messianic waiting to that of pure ruin and degeneration. As Holly reflects, "Without Hope we should suffer moral death,"[40] and this seems to be exactly what Haggard's text projects onto modern Jews.

The Jews thus seem to provide a contrast for Ayesha's own waiting, which is based on a specific expectation of romantic love, as represented by the return of

[39] She, 60, 257. McClintock, Anne. "The White Family of Man: Colonial Discourse and the Reinvention of Patriarchy." Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest. New York: Routledge, 1995. McClintock refers to "The Jewish Holly, in *She*." 247.
[40] She, 118.

Kallikrates to be her lover. This expectation is figured throughout the text in terms resonant with the formula elaborated above, based on Deleuze and Silverman, for masochistic messianism. Ayesha's awaited pleasure is both indefinite and inevitable: she admits that the timing of her lover's return is unclear, thereby suggesting the potentially indefinite deferral of her pleasure: "it may be when five thousand more years have passed … or it may be tomorrow," she remarks.[41] Yet Ayesha has no doubt of her expectation's eventual fulfillment: "here I tarry till he finds me," she says, "knowing of a surety that hither he will come."[42] Unlike the Jews and other lingering remnants of past civilizations, who are described in the novel as having nothing to wait for, Ayesha waits for pleasure that, though indefinitely deferred, is eventually inevitable.

Ayesha furthermore characterizes her state of waiting, if not exactly as physiological pain, definitely as a form of protracted suffering: she describes her existence as "[herding] here with barbarians lower than the beasts,"[43] and as being surrounded by "these hateful caves and this gloomy-visaged folk."[44] Ayesha never explains exactly what the precise connection is between her waiting and Kallikrates' return (she only remarks obliquely that she is afraid she would "lose the way in seeking" him if she were to reverse her practice of passive waiting),[45] but she makes it clear that she lives in these unpleasant conditions specifically, as she says, "Because I wait for him I love."[46] The awaited event, Kallikrates/Leo's rebirth and arrival, is unequivocally understood as being earned by the length and unpleasantness of Ayesha's wait, as when

[41] She, 150.
[42] She, 149.
[43] She, 150.
[44] She, 254.
[45] She, 150.
[46] Ibid.

she sings to him: "*Long have I waited for thee, and behold my reward is at hand—is here! ...I have waited and my reward is with me.*"[47] Literally linking waiting and "reward," these lines suggest that it is through her patient endurance of suffering that Ayesha earns her lover's return. As in messianism, Ayesha waits for pleasure that is indefinitely deferred, and like a religious adherent masochistically awaiting the Messiah, Ayesha predicates her eventual salvation on her suffering in the interim.

It is not, however, solely romance for which Ayesha has been waiting. Her expectations—as well as Holly's expectation of her—have, like traditional messianism, explicit spiritual and political dimensions. In some sense, the messiah for which Ayesha waits is herself. Holly certainly sees Ayesha as having the potential to wield messianic political power. If a person possessed "indefinite continuation of life," as he later is convinced Ayesha does, Holly speculates that this person "could no doubt rule the world. He could accumulate all the wealth in the world, and all the power, and all the wisdom that is power."[48] He goes on to imagine Ayesha assuming "absolute rule over the British dominions, and probably over the whole earth" and understands her in strikingly messianic language as possibly being "used by Providence as a means to change the order of the world, and possibly, by the building up of a power that could no more be rebelled against or questioned than the decrees of Fate, to change it materially for the better."[49] Ayesha herself asserts that once she and Leo/Kallikrates are reunited, they will "live as it becometh us to live"; Leo will "rule this England" even if it means the current queen must "be overthrown."[50]

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[47] She, 232-3.
[48] She, 120.
[49] She, 256.
[50] She, 254-5.

Yet obviously Ayesha does not, by the conclusion of this novel, become a messiah and change the world.[51] Viewed from the perspective of what might otherwise have been—based on Holly's and her own projections—Ayesha's waiting and concern for Kallikrates have at best an ambivalent, and at worst a destructive, relationship to her imperial and spiritual potential. As Holly says in retrospect, although she might have "revolutionised society, and even perchance have changed the destiny of Mankind," instead, "Ayesha locked up in her living tomb waiting from age to age for the coming of her lover worked but a small change in the order of the World."[52] Ayesha was not "locked up," really—only her love for Kallikrates and her expectation that he would return prevented her from striking out into the world and assuming a messianic role. That she did not do so suggests the danger, or weakness, implicit in her loving patience. (Recall that according to Michael's allegorical reading of *She*, it is precisely Ayesha's willingness to wait that symbolizes the "weakness of the Church.") As much as Ayesha might try to distinguish her waiting from that of the Jews, it finally allows her no more power on the world stage—as a political or spiritual figure—than the Jews' does. Thus waiting, while seemingly prized for the romance and loyalty implicit in it, contains in Haggard's novel only an illusory potential for redemption or transformation.

The ultimate absence of value in Ayesha's waiting is exhibited most starkly in the scene of her death. Not only does Ayesha's waiting for Leo prevent her from fulfilling her messianic potential, but her concern for him also finally kills her. It is only to assuage Leo's fear of the pillar of fire that Ayesha once again exposes herself to it—"if thou seest

[51] Haggard's sequels to She apparently do dispatch Ayesha into the world; these would be, of course, fascinating to consider in this context, but constraints of space and time make such an investigation impractical here.
[52] She, 295.

me stand in the flame and come forth unharmed," she asks Leo, "wilt thou enter also?"[53] This second exposure, for reasons not given in the text, finally destroys her. If Leo had not required Ayesha's demonstration to steel his courage, she presumably would have continued on in immortality and power. Ayesha's love and patience for Kallikrates do not endow her with any of her unusual powers and abilities; these she gains mostly from the hermit Noot. And ultimately her powers are not enough—Haggard suggests that perhaps no messiah's powers could be—to overcome the deterministic forces of history that have produced nineteenth century political realities and a powerful English empire.

To the extent that we can seek an explanation for Ayesha's demise within the bounds of Haggard's literary universe—rather than assuming that Haggard, as a savvy author, realized Ayesha would have to die before he could end his book for reasons of narrative economy, and obliged himself with the most convenient method he could think of to bring this about—Ayesha's downfall is justified in the text by her opposition to what Holly calls "eternal Law." In her potential revolutionary power, Ayesha "opposed herself against the eternal Law, and, strong though she was, by it was swept back to nothingness."[54] What exactly this "eternal Law" is, Holly does not specify. But in its operation in *She*, "eternal Law" seems to fulfill Haggard's concept of spiritual evolution: in destroying Ayesha, it forecloses on the possibility that the ancient past could bear on the political present—a move similar to the one at work in Holly's, and Haggard's, relegation of Egyptians, Greeks, and particularly Jews to an ancient past.

The description of Ayesha's death pointedly reinforces an evolutionary paradigm. After being affected by the fire, she shrinks "till she was no larger than a baboon" and

[53] She, 289.
[54] She, 295.

then transforms into a "hideous little monkey frame."[55] These images almost model Ernst Haeckel's "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" conception of biological development, only operating in reverse: as Ayesha dies, she degenerates into a large ape, and then into a smaller monkey. She returns to a lower point on a biological—as well as spiritual and historical—evolutionary chain. Holly, reflecting on this process, remarks, "the frame lying before me was just what the frame of a woman would be if by any extraordinary means life could be preserved in her till she at length died at the age of two-and-twenty-centuries."[56] At the end of the novel, Ayesha, the 2200-year-old woman, is repositioned, back into her rightful place in history. The series of events that comprise history, the conclusion of *She* suggests, are ordered by a force—called "eternal Law"—more powerful than any individual. That force inherently condones the political status quo because all of history has led to the present moment in an orderly and purposeful way; the way things are is the way things should be. In service to this conservatism, "eternal Law" similarly dictates that the past—embodied in the great ancient civilizations of the Egyptians, Greeks, and Jews, and even in a potential messiah like Ayesha—stays buried.

It cannot be denied that Haggard's novel derives much of its energy and impetus from unearthing the past, as can be observed in the archaeological objects and ancient texts with which the book opens, and in the knowledge about antiquity that Haggard flaunts throughout the text. Yet finally Haggard exhumes past societies, and Ayesha herself as an embodiment of the past, only to rebury them according to the dictates of "eternal Law." As Katz suggests about Haggard's belief in a "transcendental force, or intelligence, moving behind the scenes," the existence of this "eternal Law"—opposed to

[55] She, 294, 295.
[56] She, 295.

revolutions whether messianic or political, strictly regulating history, keeping the past safely past—conveniently sanctions the status quo that Haggard supported. It also, not as a primary goal but then again not quite as "absent-mindedly" as some late nineteenth-century writers, enacts both a methodology and a justification for ignoring the political possibilities opening up to Jews in the last decades of the nineteenth century, both in England and elsewhere. Perhaps a desire to obscure his own Jewish heritage, to bury his racial and blood ties to Jews in an ancient and long forgotten past, played a part—conscious or unconscious—in the vigor with which Haggard, in *She*, insists on relegating the Jews, and the past, to history. Or perhaps it was solely in service to Haggard's conservative, imperialist agenda, that the Jews in *She* are rendered "broken and gone," and that the potential for messianism, even when specifically not Jewish in character, is explored only to be finally denied.