

# THE NEW GLADSTONE REVIEW

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*an occasional e-journal*

*Informal commentary, opinions, reviews, news, illustrations and poetry  
for bookish people of philanthropic inclination*

## Contents

1. Editorial
2. Bryan Magee (1930 – 1989): an obituary *BM*
3. Culture Shock: a poem from 1968. *BM*
4. The Feminine Touch: crucial roles of women in the history of cheese-making. *BM*
5. A Syncretic Dialogue: *BM*
6. Gladstone: after 210 years by *Richard Gaunt*
7. Absolutely! : a wistful reflection on wanton words. *BM*
8. H Rider Haggard: Formative Years by *Stephen Wade*

## Editorial

This is the third and last issue of the Review for this year, which, as noted issue 6, is now appearing on an occasional basis rather than quarterly. At 18 pages, this is probably a *bumper edition*.

In this issue, I am again pleased to include two articles from guest contributors. Richard Gaunt of Nottingham University provides another of his insightful reflections on the Victorian era, here with reference to the 210<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of William Gladstone; and Stephen Wade has written a fascinating article on the prominent writer of the Victorian era, Henry Rider Haggard. I am most grateful for these contributions, which I am sure readers will also appreciate. I also (tongue-in-cheek) include (item 5) a topical piece on the general election - in the style of a Socratic dialogue.

I feel sure there are several readers who could provide interesting copy for inclusion in future issues of the Review, and if you would like to make a contribution please contact me with suggestions. Unfortunately, I am becoming increasingly convinced that communication by the written (and spoken) word is under threat of being seriously marginalised by the relentless growth of (often illiterate) tweeting, so that any means of countering the latter's influence deserves to be promoted – even in a humble literary e-journal.

Of course, like hemlines, fashions in matters of style go up and down with predictable frequency. But when powerful commercial forces are driving change it may be difficult for minority interests to escape their pervasive influence.

It's some time before we celebrate the customary winter festivities. But, even now, I am sure it's appropriate to wish all readers a less-stressful time than we have experienced in the recent past, and express the hope that 2020 will allow the return of more congenial relationships within society.

*BM*

## 2. Bryan Magee 1930 - 2019: an obituary

There are certain authors whose books have made such an impression on my thinking that, despite having had no personal contact with them, learning of their death has elicited a sense of genuine regret and loss. In recent years, the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman and the philosopher Mary Midgley are prime examples – for whom I was moved to pen the obituaries which were published in earlier issues of this Review.<sup>1</sup>



Bryan Magee, who died in July at the age of 89, is another person from whom I believe I acquired seminal insights that have markedly influenced my philosophical views. Of course, influence is rarely a passive process, in that there has to be an initial receptivity to the writer's views, which may then provide further confirmation of one's own less-clearly articulated ideas. Another factor that may play a part is a sense of shared identity, which is however quite tenuous in this case. For Magee, who was raised in the 1930's in an area of London's East End then described as '*the archetypal low-class criminal area, which the police avoided,*' won a scholarship to Christ's Hospital,

the bluecoat public school in Sussex, which was founded in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with the aim of '*giving children from poorer backgrounds the chance to have a better education.*' This was where my late, first wife lived, as her father was the senior geography master, and must have taught Magee as a boy.

I had always meant to contact him to ask how much he recalled of his schooldays – but I left it too late! Perhaps curiously, apart from mentioning one highly influential master, he makes no reference to the school in his otherwise highly-revealing autobiography *Confessions of a Philosopher*. But it is clear that the school transformed Magee's life, for after doing national service he went to Keble College, Oxford, where he graduated in history and then gained another degree in philosophy, politics and economics. He was president of the Oxford Union in 1953, at a time when Robin Day, Michael Heseltine and Jeremy Thorpe were also there.

Leaving Oxford, he took up a teaching post in Sweden, where after marrying Ingrid Söderlund, they had a daughter, Gunnela. But the marriage was short-lived, and although he subsequently had several close relationships he never remarried. Back at Oxford he soon abandoned work on a doctorate, on the grounds that he found linguistic philosophy, which was then the dominant style at Oxford, was too much like logic-chopping. He also disliked the requirements of teaching to a strict syllabus. (This is where I have a stronger sense of shared identity, for in my own academic career at Nottingham I rebelled against what I saw as the narrow curriculum of science teaching, and established courses on the history, philosophy and social dimensions of biology, and a research centre on bioethics.)

The upshot was that, although the orthodox academic life did not appeal to him, having an academic base was still important. After spending a year in the USA at Yale University, where he met and was influenced by the philosopher Susanne Langer, he developed a deep interest the philosophy of Kant

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<sup>1</sup> For Bauman, see the first article in the Archive (Click D on website); and for Midgley, see Issue 6 of The New Gladstone Review (Click B on website).

and Schopenhauer. Thereafter, for much of his life he maintained academic links by securing a series of visiting appointments at various Oxbridge colleges and other prestigious universities, including Harvard, Yale, London and Sydney.

Alongside his academic interests, he cherished an ambition to become a Labour MP. But after failing in two elections in the late 1950s, it was another 14 years before he was elected MP for Leyton, north-east London, in 1974. But neither Harold Wilson nor James Callaghan considered Magee ministerial material, so that, after briefly joining the SDP, he decided that becoming a TV current affairs presenter might be a more effective way of raising political concerns. In this role he became a highly successful presenter on the current affairs programme *This Week*, providing a progressive standpoint on topics that included independence in Africa, and social issues such as prostitution, abortion and homosexuality. He also presented a TV series called *Arguments* (1973), in which he debated issues with leading figures.

Such was his talent in running these series that in the 1987 BBC series *The Great Philosophers* Magee persuaded some of the world's most distinguished living philosophers — including Noam Chomsky, Karl Popper and Isaiah Berlin (see photograph below) — to talk about their work and discuss leading figures of western philosophy. It is difficult now, when most people's concentration spans seem to



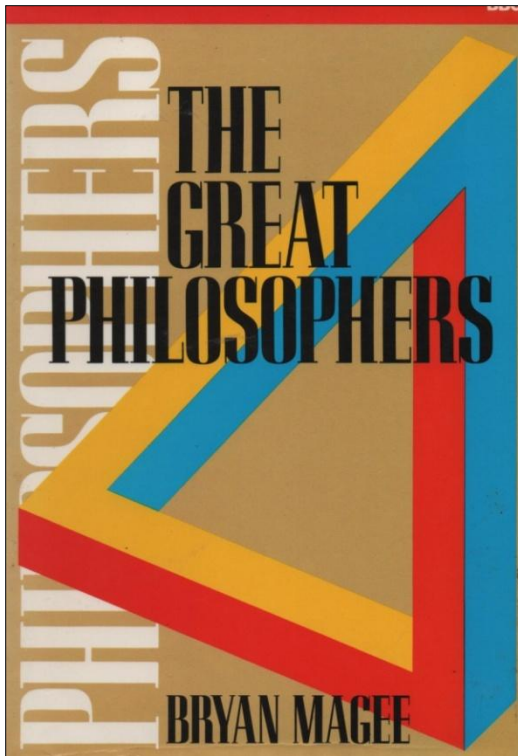
have become so drastically limited, to imagine how such intellectually-challenging programmes could have attracted the substantial numbers of viewers which they did. But they provided a thought-provoking introduction to major figures in western philosophy— and were certainly compulsive viewing for some of us. The interviews were subsequently published by the BBC (see book cover below).

During this period Magee also wrote an excellent short book on Karl Popper (1973), based in part on his private discussions at Popper's home, which did much to acquaint the general public with Popper's views on politics and the philosophy of science. As recounted in his autobiography, he also visited the elderly Bertrand Russell in north Wales, and engaged in similarly deep discussions with him.

Despite his obvious preoccupation with philosophy, he was also deeply affected by music and the theatre. In fact, among his earliest books was *Aspects of Wagner* (1968), which was followed 30 years later by *Wagner and Philosophy*. He was also a music critic for many publications, including the *Listener*. Above all, his was a life of the mind, and he once said he had never fallen in love and was 'closer to the philosophers he studied than to his friends.'

As someone who was not really part of the academic mainstream in UK philosophy, members of that community probably regarded him with a degree of suspicion - labelling him as more of a populariser than a fully-paid up member of the discipline. It's a role that is not uncommonly experienced by those who aim to cross the rigid disciplinary boundaries that permeate academia - although the more recent

growth of interdisciplinary studies has undoubtedly ameliorated the former strictly-maintained divisions. But for me, and I suspect others who came to philosophy after having graduated in a different academic field, the alternative perspective that Magee brought to his philosophical questioning proved to be decided advantage.



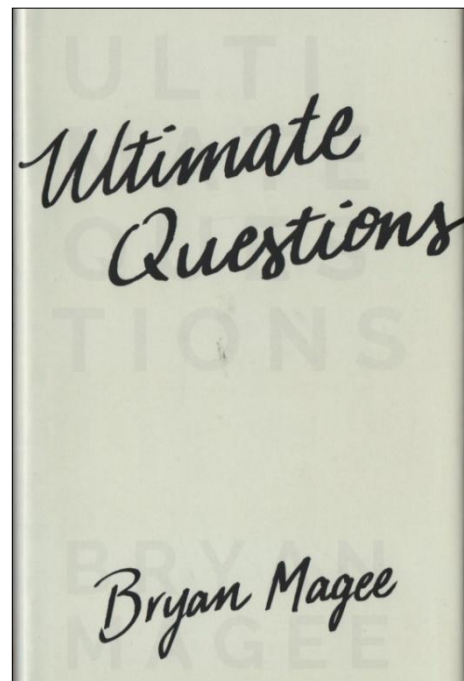
For example, in *Confessions of a Philosopher* (1998) he explored questions that had fascinated him all his life, such as how are we to understand space, time, motion, sleep and death? And can life be said to have a purpose? These are the sorts of questions all those with enquiring minds ask – and without the wise guidance of the non-professional who has trodden the same path might find it difficult to address.

Undoubtedly, for me it has been Magee's lucid description of Schopenhauer's philosophy that has been the most valuable contribution he has made to my understanding. But that Magee was clearly much more than a populariser of philosophy is implicit in the comments of some professional philosophers on his book *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (1997). For example, one reviewer claimed that: *Magee's book is to*

*be welcomed as the most illuminating and admirable study of Schopenhauer's philosophy yet to appear in English; while another stated that He sets about the task of explaining Schopenhauer's ideas with a commitment and enthusiasm all too rare in philosophical writing, and succeeds admirably in communicating his excitement to the reader.*

But leaving aside Magee's insights into Schopenhauer's philosophy, the consistent lucidity of his writing in *Confessions of a Philosopher* will surely be appreciated by many people whose perplexity over the nature of philosophical enquiry is not always eased by the numerous popular introductions to the subject that are now available.

Magee's final statement on philosophy, *Ultimate Questions* (2016) was written, at age 86, when he considered that he was as ready as he ever would be to face the greatest adventure of his life in philosophy - his mortality. He concluded it with the words 'I can only hope that when it is my turn, my curiosity will overcome my fear. Though I may then be in the position of a man whose candle goes out and plunges him into pitch darkness at the very instant when he thought he was about to find what he was looking for.'





### 3. Culture shock

I wrote (and typed on my modest Olivetti) this poem in 1968, on seeing a copy of a news magazine in the staff coffee room of my university department. The *My-Lai massacre* (the mass murder of unarmed South Vietnamese civilians by US troops in the *Viet Nam* war) had occurred a few months earlier. Irrespective of my limited skills in poetry, I was appalled at the cynicism that considered such brutality and frivolous fashion to be appropriately portrayed, side by side, in the same glossy pictorial manner.

#### MAYFAIR MY-LAI

(On the juxtaposition in a glossy magazine  
of photographs of the My-lai massacre and  
of London 'society' life)

She moves towards the window  
and gazes on the trees  
the willows, elms and poplars  
swaying gently in the breeze  
the sun streams down upon her  
lighting her lacquered hair  
warming her arms, serenely flexed  
braceleted, tanned and bare  
The table is laid for coffee  
the walls are lined with books  
while in a gold-framed mirror  
she re-checks on her looks

She moves towards the window  
smearing the dust from her eyes  
the stutter of gunfire filling the air  
deadens her family's cries  
the sun beats down on her matted hair  
searing her wounds to the bone  
while over her breasts, pale and bare  
run tears as big as stones  
Under the field where rice is grown  
on a track where he often played  
lies the flaccid body of her son  
his mouth in a pool of blood

*Many years later(2016) I discovered that John Berger, the eminent art critic, had expressed an almost identical sense of outrage in a TV programme in 1972, on seeing a similar juxtaposition of contrasting images in a Sunday Times magazine. He wrote: **The shock of such contrasts is considerable: not only because of the coexistence of the two worlds shown, but also because of the cynicism of the culture which shows them** (in this way). These highlighted comments appeared on p.146 of *Ways of Seeing* (Penguin, 2008) - the book associated with the BBC series of the same name.*

#### 4. THE FEMININE TOUCH: crucial roles of women in the history of cheese-making

*The WISE campaign* (Women into Science and Engineering), established in 1984, encourages women and girls to value and pursue science, technology, engineering and maths-related courses in school or college and move on into related careers and progress. Its aim is to facilitate understanding of these disciplines among women and girls and the opportunities presented at a professional level. But, arguably, such opportunities were available for some young women over 200 years ago.

My title reflects the fact that, traditionally, it was women who were responsible for cheese-making, which was closely associated with their established roles as milkmaids. And it seems likely that it was *milking* as a process requiring a gentle, patient approach that cows must have intuitively assimilated to suckling by a calf, as well as the need for much insight and sensitivity in performing the procedures involved in converting milk to cheese, that confirmed the aptness of women's role as cheese-makers. But milkmaids' tasks demanded physical strength as much as they did gentility, because milking usually took place in all weathers, using traditional three-legged stools in the open fields, after which the milk was carried to the dairy using a wooden yoke which spread the weight of the two full milk buckets across a milkmaid's shoulders. Moreover, as reported by Val Cheke, the hours were certainly demanding, for they *'were generally at work by 3 a.m. in the summer, and at 4 a.m. in the winter.'*

However, age-long practices were to change radically as a result of the Industrial Revolution. As its name implies, this was a disruptive process that involved major social changes over a relatively short period of time. But, for a long-standing and highly traditional industry like agriculture, the major impact of which was to affect the way people were fed on a day-to-day basis, it would be surprising if there was not a more protracted period in which the farming community took time to adjust to the dramatic changes being imposed on their life-styles. One consequence was that the establishment of cheese factories, designed to supersede cheese-making on farms, was initiated not primarily by urban



machinists but by dairy farmers who were inevitably drawn into the factory system as suppliers of the raw material, milk. But factory production was less easy to achieve for certain cheeses; so that women continued to play significant roles. Consequently, this was perhaps one of the earliest professional fields in which women received a technical education.

The main stimulus for cheese factories was the realisation that importation of factory-made cheese from the USA was depressing sales of home-produced cheeses, not necessarily because of superior quality but because the economies of scale in mass-production systems meant they could be sold more cheaply. The response from a group of dairy farmers in Derbyshire, supported financially by members of the nobility and gentry of the county, was the setting up of two cheese factories in 1870, one in the town of Derby and the other ten miles away in the village of Longford, which would allow a comparative assessment of the feasibility of making their local Derby cheese by the factory system. To increase the chances of success two experienced managers from the USA, who happened to be brothers, were recruited to establish the factories. The Longford factory (see painting above) was built of wood, which was not the ideal material, but chosen in the interests of saving time.

With the stipulation that the Longford factory would only begin operations if guaranteed the processing of milk from between 400 and 600 cows, the rationale for the factory lay in the following objectives: 1) *to increase overall efficiency*; 2) *to relieve farmers and their families of the 'toil and anxiety' associated with home cheese making*; 3) *to break the power of 'middle men'*, and 4) *from feelings of mutual interdependence, to encourage a freer intercourse, and to introduce habits of system, enquiry, calculation, regularity and order among the farming circles of the country*. One cannot but be impressed by the high moral tone of objective 4, even if sceptical it would be achieved.

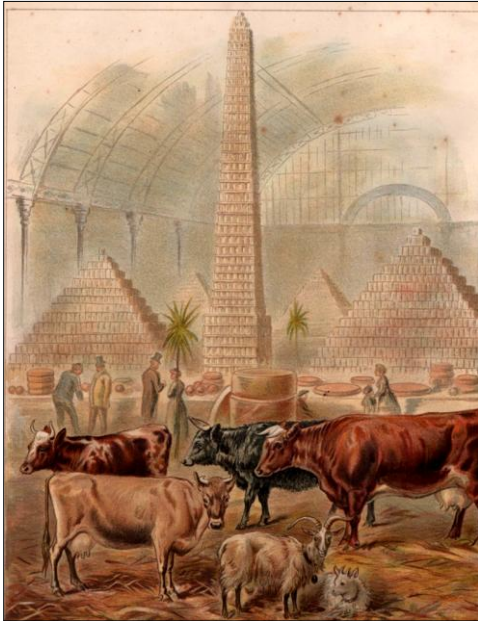
Unfortunately, several unanticipated problems soon became apparent, not least due to the '*regret that an experiment made entirely on public grounds ... should have been viewed with so much uncalled for and unworthy suspicion.*' It seems that several *cheese factors*, middle-men who had prospered by buying up milk in the country and managing its subsequent distribution to town markets, exhibited their '*extraordinary and unexpected jealousy and dislike of the movement.*' But despite these difficulties, by 1872 both factories had become financially viable and met several of the other objectives. Over the next decade or so, factories were established elsewhere – in Cheshire, Somerset and Scotland. However, in the later 1870s there was a marked decline in the price such cheese could command, so that within a few years the Longford factory became just a convenient depot for milk sent by rail to distant towns. In some cases, in response to the rapidly fluctuating demand for milk, many factories were used to regulate the milk trade as a 'governor' regulates the speed of an engine. '*When the market fell off, more cheese was made in urban cheeseries, which lent themselves in that way to the milk trade.*'

In contrast to hard cheeses like Cheddar and Derby, at the other end of the spectrum of cheeses are the soft cream cheeses of which, by common consent, '*Stilton Cheese is considered to be the finest cheese ever developed in England.* Although the tradition of making it in farmhouses survived until the 1930s, over subsequent decades so many disparate cheeses were being marketed as 'Stilton' that a High Court judgement was made to protect its reputation. Nowadays, uniquely among British cheeses, it is registered under the *protected food name scheme* which covers regional and traditional foods whose authenticity and origin can be guaranteed. For Stilton, as well as precise product specifications, it must be derived only from milk produced in Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire or Derbyshire.

The name Stilton is a matter of interest and contention, because although apparently of fairly recent origin there are competing claims as to where and by whom the cheese was first made. In a book of 1726, Richard Bradley, a professor of botany at Cambridge University, referred to a pressed cheese called 'Stilton' that was made in the small town of that name in Huntingdonshire (now Cambridgeshire), the recipe for which was in the possession of the landlord of the *Blue Bell Inn* there. However, it is now acknowledged that Bradley's recipe was for making a very inferior cheese to that which now graces the name. In particular, the procedures involved, e.g. 'boiling the whey' and 'putting it to the press' differ from those described for the 'protected' cheese.

A supposedly more reliable account of the origins of Stilton cheese dates from 1742 with the marriage of William Pawlett, a farmer living near the Great North Road, to Frances, a widow who had earned praise for her skill in cheese-making by producing a blue-veined cheese of exceptional quality. They were so successful that their cheese was on sale at Stilton for 40 years, but in large part this was undoubtedly due to their business arrangement with Cooper Thornhill, Frances' brother-in-law, who owned both the *Bell Inn* (formerly the Blue Bell Inn) and the *Angel Inn* in the town. Stilton being situated on the main arterial road of England, about 70 miles north of London, received stage and posting coaches in a continuous stream, often destined for Edinburgh or York, night and day. The constant changing of horses and collection of mail, goods and passengers, meant that a buoyant trade

was guaranteed: and Thornhill certainly ‘milked it’ by providing stabling for more than 300 horses at both The Bell and The Angel inns. In addition to these, there were two other hostelries in Stilton (*The George* and *The Talbot*) that sold Pawlett’s cheese, as well as several others close by. Frances’ skills combined with William’s sound business acumen led to them establishing the first cheese-marketing cooperative for supplying the needs of the town of Stilton and its many visitors.



The source of the cheese was, however, shrouded in secrecy, and there was certainly no evidence of it actually being produced in Stilton. In fact, Frances probably made the cheese at her family home in the village of Wymondham in Leicestershire, situated about 30 miles north of Stilton and easily accessible via the Great North Road. But such was the amount of cheese produced, that many other cheese dairies in the same area were involved as the ‘Pawletts began instructing other Leicestershire and Rutland farmers on the modern method of producing Stilton cheese in their dairies.’

The golden era of stage-coach travel spanned the 50 years from about 1790 to 1840, and this was surely the period when the legacy of the Pawletts spawned countless Stilton cheese dairies. Many adopted different approaches to the cheese-making process, so while most used milk from cows grazing meadows the grasses of which were influenced by the soils nurturing them, the distinctive characteristics of the cheese were not always evident. In any case, everything changed dramatically in the early 1840s with the opening of the Midland and Great Northern railways, connecting Peterborough with London, and signalling the end of the stage-coach businesses, and the inevitable demise of the Stilton-based cheese trade.

By 1847, Melton Mowbray had instead become the hub of activity, with the cheese being made in and around the town and delivered to London from the railway station; for ‘*there was hardly a farm grazing cows for milk production in East Leicestershire, the Lincolnshire wolds, the Vale of Belvoir and parts of Rutland that did not convert its surplus milk to Stilton cheese.*’ Cheese dairies also sprang up further afield in the east Midlands, where they contributed significantly to the region’s economic activities.<sup>2</sup>

Notable among the cheese-makers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was Thomas Nuttall, who put on some impressive displays to advertise his wares. At the 1878 dairy show held in London, he assembled a model of London’s *Cleopatra’s Needle* monument and the *Pyramids* (see figure) entirely from Stilton cheeses. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he was awarded the gold medal for the best blue-veined cream cheese, a silver medal and special silver cup for an outstanding display. Queen Victoria, who visited the show, was so impressed that she promptly bought all the cheeses used in the display!

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<sup>2</sup> In the 1960s and 70s, with my wife and our young family, I lived in the Leicestershire village of Wymeswold, where Stilton cheese was made in a small dairy. In earlier times, there were six cheese dairies in the village, which received milk from farmers who grazed their tethered cows on the common land verges of old drovers roads bordering the village. *Lymeswold cheese*, introduced in the 1990s, was so-named to attract an overseas market by evoking reminiscence of a quintessentially English place name – Wymeswold: but it was not a commercial success!



Today's Stilton is considered to be largely a cheese made in the Melton region of Leicestershire, although there are also important dairies in the neighbouring counties of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. According to Trevor Hickman, the current methods of producing it are quite reminiscent of the earlier Pawlett tradition, although the final product is subtly different. Thus, fine quality milk is delivered to dairies on a daily basis, pasteurised and poured into vats before addition of starter milk and rennet. Bacterial growth is carefully controlled, and influenced by the presence of *Pencillium roqueforti* and *Penicillium glaucum*.



By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the critical role played by women was becoming increasingly acknowledged. Thus, the *Standard Cyclopaedia of Modern Agriculture and Rural Economy*: suggested that: *system, method, regularity in work, alert and intelligent interest in processes, and ungrudging industry whilst duties are being performed, are all met with in the trained and efficient dairymaids who control up-to-date dairies of the present time. It is not necessary that a dairymaid should be, practically, a chemist, microscopist or bacteriologist – but she*

*has need to study the work that lies to her hand, in order to realise what fermentation and structural changes in milk mean.* Frances Pawlett was thus but one of many women upon whose skills the production of elite cheeses depended.

According to historian Nicola Verdon, despite some claims that cheese-making was commandeered by men during the industrial revolution, it remained dominated by women as both managers and workers in activities that continued to take place overwhelmingly outside the factory after 1850. It is, then, hardly surprising that when dairy schools were established in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, principally to provide courses on cheese-making which (as evident from their published curricula) had a sound scientific basis, the numbers of young women studying at them often greatly exceeded those of young men. For example, between 1920 and 1939 women accounted for an average of 65% of those qualifying with a National Diploma in Dairying, and many of their teachers were women.

In 1911, the list of principal dairy schools throughout the four countries of Britain numbered 15, in addition to smaller and travelling dairy schools under the auspices of county councils. Notable were the British Dairy Institute, which soon became incorporated into University College Reading in 1896 and the Cheese School in Somerset, where Dr F J Lloyd and his esteemed colleague Miss Edith Cannon undertook important research on '*the science of cheese-making*.' According to Sheldon (1912), '*perhaps the most important* (of the dairy schools) was *the Midland Agricultural and Dairy College at Kingston, Derby* (shown in the above painting) – '*an institution excellently provided with all the latest and best equipments*.' Later, after the establishment of the University of Nottingham in 1949, the College became the University's School of Agriculture, situated a few miles from Kingston at Sutton Bonington in Nottinghamshire. This is now the campus of both the University's School of Biosciences and the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science.

Principal sources of reference were: J P Sheldon (1912) *Dairy Farming*; T Hickman (2009) *Historic cheeses*; V Cheke (1959) *The Story of Cheese Making in Britain*; N Verdon (2006) *Women and the Dairy industry in England, c.1800-1939*. XIV International Economic History Congress, Helsinki, Finland

## 5. A Syncretic Dialogue

*A simulated Socratic dialogue, in which Socrates is portrayed as a fictional Syncretus – **syncretism** being the attempt to combine elements from across the conventional left/right political spectrum.*

### *A chance meeting in the market place of an English Midland town*

**Syncretus:** Hail to you, my good fellows! But what agitates you so?

**Brexitus:** Good morrow, *Syncretus*. T'is true - we argue, for we disagree over a public dispute which we seem unable to resolve.

**Remainus:** Indeed, learned *Syncretus*, our discussion follows a course like that of a snake chasing its own tail!

**Syncretus:** Ah! I feel sure it concerns the referendum held three years ago, at which by a small majority those in these islands expressed the wish to become free of long-established economic and political ties with the other 27 countries of the European Union.

**Brexitus and Remainus** (in unison): Indeed – there is talk of little else! Can you assist us, *Syncretus* – because the evidence *for* and *against* seems to be highly contentious.

**Brexitus:** For I think many pessimistic claims made by ‘remainers’ are just scaremongering.

**Remainus:** Whereas I believe that ‘leavers’ adopt a simplistic analysis – and downplay problems like that concerning Northern Ireland, of which little was said before the referendum.

**Syncretus:** Dear friends, my first advice is to seek common ground. Heated verbal exchanges only elicit stubborn resistance from those of opposing opinion, which when observed by some voters who are less-able to engage in reasoned discussion encourages intemperate language and even physical violence.

But then *Remainus*, I would advise you to acknowledge that, according to the criteria agreed (although you and many others believe them flawed), the decision to leave the Union was valid – as it would have been had only 50.1% so voted. And *Brexitus*, I advise you to appreciate that it would surely be foolhardy not to acknowledge the consensus of expert opinion as to the negative effects on the UK’s economy of leaving, either with the current deal or, worse, without a deal. You surely have also to consider the likely impacts on the continued union of the UK as a whole.

Indeed, if the predominantly utilitarian arguments considered above were the sole basis of your decisions, would you not be wiser to seek the middle ground, rather than assuming that, by however small a majority, the ‘winner takes all’? Moreover, it is surely arguable that the lapse of time since the referendum disenfranchises many younger voters, for whom the final decisions made will have the greatest effect. Even so, I believe there are valid arguments both *for* and *against* a so-called *people’s vote*.

But, dear friends *Brexitus* and *Remainus*, if I were in a position to vote in the coming general election, I would not limit my evidence to the utilitarian criteria we have discussed, for it is of their nature that *predictions* of future outcomes should determine our current decisions - yet they could be, and often are, quite unreliable. And, promises are much easier to make than to fulfil.

No, rather, I should trust my considered assessments of the *character* and *integrity* of the politicians and opinion-formers (like newspaper editors) who advance opposing views. Such insights may be the most reliable and trustworthy we have. May you choose wisely!

## 6. Mr Gladstone: after 210 Years

Richard Gaunt

William Ewart Gladstone, the eponymous hero of *Gladstone Books* and the *Gladstone Review*, was born 210 years ago this December. He served as MP for Newark from 1832-46. Gladstone still holds the record for the longest budget speech delivered in the House of Commons, at 4¾ hours: perhaps appropriately, his arch political-rival, Benjamin Disraeli, holds the record for the shortest, at ¾ hour.

Gladstone was an energetic and impassioned public speaker who, in the course of a long political life, spoke to tens and thousands of people. He entered public life in 1832 and was still operating at the highest ranks of politics 62 years later, when he resigned as Prime Minister at the age of 84. To put that in context, imagine a contemporary politician who had entered Parliament in 1957, when Harold Macmillan was in power, who was still leading the cabinet today. Even the current father of the House of Commons, the Rushcliffe MP Kenneth Clarke, who is in his 50<sup>th</sup> year as an MP, and a great admirer of Gladstone, cannot claim equality in that respect.



Public life changed markedly in the time that Gladstone was a politician. The development of newspapers, the electric telegraph and the railway, transformed the ability of politicians to communicate with the public. Gladstone was adept at seizing the opportunities which this presented. In the 1860s, Levy Lawson, the editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, christened Gladstone, 'The People's William', creating an image which he was only too happy to encourage. By 1880, when Gladstone fought the constituency of Edinburgh Midlothian, he had become our first locomotive politician. The election campaign was masterminded by Lord Rosebery, who had visited the USA and been impressed by the scale and organisation of caucus politics. Gladstone traversed his far-flung constituency by train, making whistle-stop appearances *en route*. It did not necessarily make him more concise. On one occasion, Gladstone was still in full flow, making a speech from the window of the train, when it left the station. It did not matter,

because the full text of his speech had already been furnished to the newspapers, which printed it the next day, as though it had been delivered to its conclusion.

Queen Victoria famously complained that Gladstone spoke to her as if she were a public meeting – unlike Disraeli, who conversed with her as a fellow author and flattered her as a woman. But, as Disraeli once commented, 'Everyone likes flattery; and when you come to Royalty you should lay it on with a trowel'. To Gladstone, this was dishonest and discourteous. He thus suffered by comparison. She was the one woman in his life who was not impressed with him.

Gladstone was vigorous, fit and healthy, a great walker, and a man who loved wielding an axe. At Hawarden Castle, the family home he occupied in Flintshire, he assembled an impressive collection of axes which are still on display in his study. Gladstone was busy chopping down trees at Hawarden

when he received the commission to become Prime Minister for the first time in 1868. 'My mission' he proclaimed gravely 'is to pacify Ireland'. It was a mission in which he was not to succeed. But he also pursued many other missions. The recent disturbances in the Middle East may call to mind Gladstone's fiery denunciation of the Ottoman Empire for its intervention in Bulgaria in 1876. He called for the Turks to remove themselves, 'one and all, bag and baggage...from the province they have desolated and profaned'.

Gladstone was also associated with baggage of a different sort: the famous reinforced leather case or holdall which came to be known as the 'Gladstone bag' and which was as much a part of his political armoury as Margaret Thatcher's handbag, Harold Wilson's pipe and Winston Churchill's cigar. It was the idea of an enterprising leather-goods manufacturer, J.G. Beard, to market the widely retailed case as a 'Gladstone Bag'. It was only one of many forms of commercialisation with which the 'Grand Old Man' came to be associated.

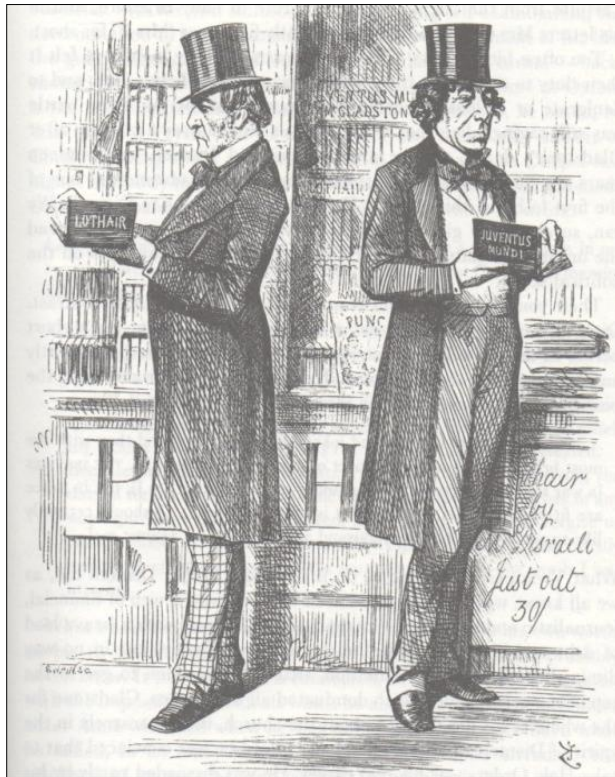
Gladstone's private mission, from the 1840s, was to save prostitutes from the life of misery and exploitation into which they had fallen. This has been subject to generations of misunderstanding but arose from a youthful desire to perform good works and bring the saving power of religion to those who might benefit from it. Today, such activities would mark the end of any political career. It was the newspaper editors of the day who helped to prevent Gladstone's reputation descending into scandal. We know from the diary which Gladstone kept with meticulous care for over seventy years that this work produced conflicting sentiments within him and exposed him to severe temptation. It led, thirty years after his death, to a celebrated legal case, in which Gladstone's surviving sons defended their father's reputation against the charges of Captain Peter Wright. It might be said that Gladstone deliberately exposed himself to such risks, the better to test his own faith.

Gladstone lived a long, dynamic, and energetic life. Yet it had all begun when he first traversed the streets of Newark, as the prospective parliamentary candidate for the town, in the first general election to be held after the Great Reform Act of 1832. Young Gladstone was far different from the later Gladstone of legend. He was a Tory, a supporter of the established constitution, an opponent of parliamentary reform, and was more tolerant of slavery, because of his father's slave owning interests in the West Indies, than many people liked. He was also the political nominee of the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Newcastle, whose son, Lord Lincoln, had been a close University friend at Oxford. Fighting the Newark seat was not easy for Gladstone, but contemporaries who could have no idea of his future eminence were already lauding him for his willingness to debate with large, sometimes unsympathetic, crowds of people. He generated further opposition when he proceeded to challenge his election expenses, particularly the publicans' bills. The episode showed Gladstone's political principle and also his naivety. Without such inducements, it is unlikely that many electors would have voted for him. In 1874, after Gladstone's government had restricted the licensing laws, it was defeated in the General Election; Gladstone remarked sorrowfully that 'we have been borne down in a torrent of gin and beer'.

Gladstone survived at Newark until the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. Political differences led him to relinquish his seat to avoid a painful contest. However, he always remembered his political origins. On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his election to parliament, he subscribed a splendid plum pudding for a dinner held by sixteen of the surviving electors who had returned him in 1832. According to legend, Gladstone used to chew each mouthful of food thirty-three times – although whether the lucky diners of Newark did so on this occasion we are not told.



Gladstone died in May 1898. He received a state funeral, attended by the future King Edward VII. The Liberal M.P. John Morley was commissioned by the family to write a three-volume biography. Morley stated ‘that his heart failed him on two occasions. One was his entry into Dublin Castle; and the other was his first sight of the Gladstone papers at Hawarden’. Today, Gladstone is the only statesman to have a separate volume wholly dedicated to his papers in the British Library’s printed catalogue



**CRITICS: (of each other’s books)**

**Cartoon by Tenniel in Punch (1870).**

**Mr G-D S-T E: ‘Hm! Flippant! Mr D-I-R-Li: Ha! Prose!’** A public appeal after Gladstone’s death raised £9,000 for a permanent library building, which was opened in October 1902 as the National Memorial to W.E. Gladstone. A residential wing was opened in June 1906 and a statue to Gladstone erected in the grounds in 1925. Gladstone had been named after his father’s Liverpool friend, William Ewart, who was responsible for the first Public Libraries Act of 1850. It is, therefore, entirely fitting that the man who wished (in his daughter’s words) to ‘bring together books who had no readers with readers who had no books’, should be commemorated in this way. No other British Prime Minister has left such a legacy.

**Dr Richard A. Gaunt is associate professor in modern British history at the University of Nottingham. His new exhibition on George IV (for his bicentenary) is opening at the University’s Weston Gallery on 13 December, and running until 29 March 2020.**



He is also the only prime minister to have a library dedicated to his name. American presidential libraries are obligatory on retirement from office, but St Deiniol’s Library, Hawarden is unique, in a British context, and now glories in the name of its founder as ‘Gladstone’s Library’.

Among the 150,000 printed items on the shelves are the books which Gladstone gave to the library, including some of the 20,000 which he read and annotated during his lifetime. The library began in a temporary building of corrugated iron nicknamed the “Tin Tabernacle”, on land which Gladstone bought in 1889. Aided by his valet and one of his daughters, Gladstone – then well into his 80s – wheeled 32,000 books  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile between Hawarden Castle and the new library. Here, he arranged them on shelves which he had designed to take the maximum number of books and using his own catalogue system.

## 7. ABSOLUTELY!

### *Wistful reflections on wanton words*

As something of a pedant, though probably less irksome than I used to be, I am amused as much as irritated by the way that some words which come into vogue seem to be propagated with pervasive and viral rapidity. I recall many years ago writing a piece for a magazine in which I commented, in passing, on the-then commonly-used ‘*hopefully*.’ This, I suggested, seemed to have been derived from the German *hoffentlich* and reached us via the USA: but whatever its origin it was certainly employed on far more occasions than were justifiable.

Four currently contagious linguistic infections, which induce in me a mental, if not actual, squirm, come to mind. Since people have virtually stopped writing letters (I mean with a pen), the practice of addressing your correspondent ‘Dear X’ seems to almost entirely have fallen out of use. Well, I admit I rarely write letters myself – except occasionally to grandchildren, in which although I type them I do pen *Dear X* in ink, which I hope gives a touch of warmth that the printed word can’t convey. But in using ‘Dear’ in emails I am surely being eccentric – although I’d explain it as just not wanting to mindlessly follow the crowd! But, if the alternative is **Hi!** (from the USA again?) – then I’ll stick to the time-honoured style, even though nowadays it might, unfortunately, suggest an intimacy I wouldn’t always want to admit to.

A current habit that now seems especially to contaminate the speech of many academics is the use of ‘**So**’ to preface answers to questions put by radio interviewers. It’s not only almost always meaningless in the context of the question, but it also seems to reveal a nervous knee-jerk reaction to engaging in the process of intelligent dialogue which might be expected from interviewees supposedly chosen for their ability to express themselves clearly and concisely.

But the prize for overuse must surely go to ‘**absolutely**,’ which rules the radio waves, apparently at all available frequencies – and equally affects those in every level of society – from artists and athletes to politicians, pundits, interviewers and interviewees of all kinds. Perhaps the most plausible explanation for its popularity that I can imagine is that articulating four separate sounds instead of one (i.e. ‘yes’) allows more time to consider what to say next. Or maybe it’s used as a superlative in line with the modern tendency to exaggerate qualities, so that ‘good’ has to be expressed as ‘fantastic, marvellous’ or – by another word in vogue – ‘**unbelievable**’ –each of which also trip from many tongues without reserve.

Etymologically, such words might be classed as *memes*, units of cultural information, such as a habit or idea, which are repeated unthinkingly and then transmitted verbally, from one mind to another. It is a neologism introduced by Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene* to convey the sense that ideas are disseminated like genes (with which it rhymes) via the unconscious memory. I’m not a great fan of Dawkins, but he may have hit on a fair analogy in this case.

## 8. H Rider Haggard: Formative Years

Sir Henry Rider Haggard was an English writer of adventure fiction set in exotic locations, predominantly Africa. His stories, at the lighter end of Victorian literature, continue to be popular and influential. Notable among his books are *King Solomon's Mines* and *She*. (Source Wikipedia) In this article, *Stephen Wade* explores the influences shaped by his early life.

Reading Rider Haggard's early life, one is struck by its toughness and isolation. He comes across as the slow but dependable little brother who needs to be teased. He once said that his brothers threw him into the Rhine to teach him to swim. That could almost be a metaphor for his childhood and indeed for his approach to every challenge he faced: to be thrown in it or at it, and to go from there, alone, to find resources and strength or to go under.



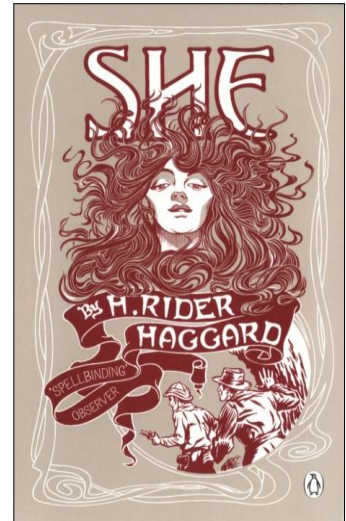
Although the family history of the Haggards of Bradenham is only documented soundly as far back as 1560 when a John Haggard was a gentleman of Ware in Hertfordshire, there is, quite fittingly for a genealogy with Rider Haggard in it, a mythic narrative as well. This tells of a Dane called Sir Andrew Ogard who fought well in the wars in France with Henry V and then gained the manor of Bradenham through marriage. Then, in a more dependable piece of history, we have William Haggard marrying a daughter of the Sheriff of Norwich, and thus was Henry, the famous writer of *She*, considered a thoroughly Norfolk man. Henry Rider, was born on 22 June, 1856 in the thatched house of Wood Farm near Bradenham Hall in Norfolk. He was to be one of ten Haggard children – with just two siblings

Mary and Arthur, being younger than he. His mother, Ella, was the daughter of Bazett Doveton and had been born in India. The transition from India to Norfolk must have been a sharp and demanding one, but she bore her duties with fortitude and inner strength.

Henry had his middle name, 'Rider,' from his great-grandmother, Frances Rider, who was related to a doctor who treated George II. That name always gave the writer a dash of the unusual, and so did his Russian blood, coming from Elizabeth Meybohm of St Petersburg, his maternal grandmother. For many who knew and wrote about this great novelist of Africa, the Russian inheritance was in his nose and profile. Photographs of him show a tall, sturdy man with an uncompromising stare; he appears as a man who is aware of his appearance and his stance. That confidence was certainly not there in Haggard's early life. In fact, he was considered to be something of a dunce. His father, William, was the autocratic squire of Bradenham and enjoyed the status of a Victorian manorial lord. He shouted and asserted his presence at all times, mixing eccentricity with whimsicality. But beneath the bluff exterior there was a caring father. When Rider Haggard was born, his father was thirty-five, broad-shouldered and tall; he tended to need occasional bouts of travel and on some of these trips the family would accompany him, and so the future writer would have experienced versions of military expeditions and the discomforts of travel long before he first went to Africa.

William Haggard, as with all men of his wealth and standing, expected to send his many sons into the Victorian professions: the army, the church or the bar being the preferred destinations of these bright young men. His elder sons were despatched in this way, but young Rider was not academically smart and was considered to be a plodder. The eldest son, William, went into the Diplomatic Service and

Alfred went into the Indian Civil Service, for instance. But instead of being sent to any school of even minor status and reputation, Rider was first enrolled in Ipswich at the grammar school, and then went to Garsington near Oxford, where the Rev. Mr Graham looked after him, but where also he came under the spell of a local farmer with the name of Quatermaine. As his daughter, Lilius, wrote in her memoir of him, Rider was deeply influenced by this tall, smock-wearing countryman: *'Long years after he left Garsington he remembered Quatermaine with affection and bestowed his name upon the small, quiet, unassuming man who became the moving spirit of many books...'*<sup>i</sup>



Rider's childhood is not detailed extensively, but we know about some formative experiences, not least of which was his other-worldly vision of what he thought was the ghost of Emma Hamilton (who had once stayed at Bradenham). He recalled that when he had this experience he was sleeping in the dreaded Sandwich Room – a place stacked high with books and clutter – and had hidden in fear beneath the bed-clothes, thinking that Lady Hamilton's spirit was abroad. In his subsequent nightmare he dreamt of being pursued by a giant ferret, and that he himself was a rat. More familiar is his anecdote about the doll that frightened the young boy to such an extent that his nurse used to threaten him with unspeakable chastisement from this doll if he misbehaved. Somehow, this rag doll became known as 'She-Who-Must-Be-Obedied.' Of course, that is one origin of the famous 'She' of the novel which many rate as Rider Haggard's most successful.

Rider was at the Queen Elizabeth School, Ipswich for around three years. Although this seems to have been a 'rough school,' his grounding in Latin was quite adequate and the Head, Dr Holden, won over young Rider to such an extent that they were often in touch with each other throughout life afterwards. Arguably, the school days at Garsington and Ipswich, though typical 'boarder' experiences, provided the right kind of foundations for a young man in the 1870s who would be destined to play some sort of role in public life and have a career that would please his parents as well as fulfil the demands of the male ideologies of the time. After those educational experiences and their concomitant opportunities for the young man to learn something of places - as Shakespeare said *'Other than at home, where small experience grows'* - it was London that was to prove the required shock and related emotional upheavals. William Haggard did what every wealthy parent at the time did when desperate to make something of the disappointing son: he sent him to a 'crammer.' That meant a journey to London for Rider, and a plan to equip him for a career in the Foreign Office, for which he would have to sit an entrance examination.

***A leaning towards the mystical*** In London, Rider, now alone and asked to be mature and sensible, allowed those elements in him which normally lay well out of sight to emerge. He was reflective and thoughtful; but more than that, he developed as he came to adulthood a gathering sense of the unseen, the atavistic. His nephew saw this in him, writing, *'He believed that our personality is immeasurably ancient, that it may be born again and again sometimes he would fall into long silences...Rider had grown slowly into the soil like the native oak tree which takes the wind and the sunshine and the snow...'*<sup>ii</sup> Godfrey Haggard is here trying to explain that strength of vision that comes from the cultivation of solitude. What had happened in Rider's case is that he had accrued a range of interests and preoccupations in his self-reliance which had flowered in response to what the great city gave him. One of these was with some of the paranormal groups at the time, to which he was introduced by Lady Paulet. These experiences he took in but clearly treated with scepticism and later commented



that dabbling in spiritualism was harmful. His temperament was one that looked for the more complex and fundamentally meaningful confrontations with the unknown factors in human understanding and perception.

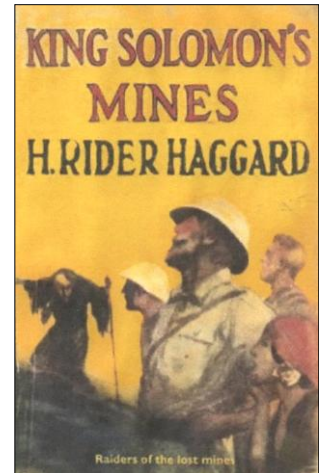
The experience of a séance or a medium at work only proved to confirm his growing belief in the 'shadow world' that perhaps exists outside the 'civilised' European world of manners, traditions and restraint. But of course, London in the 1870s was anything but bland, so he had plenty of other life experience to draw on. When the young Norfolk man arrived in the city it was 1874: Gladstone had just resigned after losing the general election; in Africa, soon to be his destination, Wolseley had won the war against the Ashanti, and much closer to home, and something Rider would later be interested in, Joseph Arch had just formed the first agricultural union. The talk in the salons and coffee houses would be of Empire and Ireland, the trouble in the rural areas, but also of men and women - and in Richmond, Rider Haggard fell in love. It is a sad episode to recall, as the woman he met there, Lilith, was to die, and he never forgot her. As his daughter wrote of this, and other deeply affecting events in Rider's life, '*For it was to be his fate that the deep emotional experiences, his loves and tragedies, were not as with most men and women, if not forgotten, overlaid so deeply by the years (but) remained active, insistent, his daily companions...*'<sup>iii</sup>

There have been many speculations about the impact of this first love and the 'love at first sight' meeting with Lilith at the dance in Richmond; these ideas have mixed together with the more academic and theoretical writings, often concerned with where the figure of *She* came from and how Rider generally treated the whole notion of femininity in his work, linking the fiction to the actual life experience. Lilith (Lily Jackson) '*haunted him all his life.*'<sup>iv</sup> What is certain is that his father, always eager to control and to make sure that his sons made an imprint in the imperial domain, ensured that the couple did not become engaged. Lily was to go on and marry someone else, but not happily by any means. The fact that Lilith's image did stay with Rider always is something that has to be integrated somehow into his vision in the romances.

Haggard's mysticism, as perceived by friends, relatives and biographers, is a quality developed in his particularly introverted childhood. Separate from the preoccupied and eccentric father, Rider found in the stories, myths, oral history and reading of his growing-up that kind of creative sustenance we find in writers who generally turn inside, looking deeply into inner metaphors for explanations and narratives. In some, as in C S Lewis's autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, the longing for stories transmutes into religious insights, as when Lewis talks about seeing the skeleton of an animal and suddenly experiencing an epiphany that would feed his thought for years to come.

For our understanding of Rider Haggard, there is more interest in his statements about his early limitations than may have previously been voiced. He wrote in his autobiography, '*I fear that I was more or less of a dunderhead at lessons. Even my letters presented difficulties for me*'<sup>v</sup> In that kind of reflection, he is simply applying a gentle touch to the surface of what, deep underneath, may well be an explanation of his later facility with narrative: his introversion was his power and there lay his real intelligence. In fact, this narrative ability was more than likely there in oral form: in the way an imaginative child narrates verbally as he or she plays, creating alternative worlds to the one they exist in. Patently, the real world of Rider's childhood was harsh and functional, in spite of the love his parents expressed to counterbalance the demand for success and for conformity. As a storyteller to himself, he was making the foundations of that instinctive teller of tales he writes about in the experience of seeing the 'singularly beautiful young lady' at Norwood when he and his wife set themselves the task of writing about the girl.<sup>vi</sup>

**Friendships and Memory** The basis of so much that influenced the young Rider is in friendship. Later in life, when he was a newly-established literary man, his friend Edmund Gosse was savagely attacked (as he so often was) by a literary critic and it caused a stir in the clubs and pubs. Rider wrote to Gosse: ‘*I do not know much about eighteenth century literature, but I do know what conduct one gentleman has the right to expect from another.*’<sup>vii</sup> It is a fascinating process to observe, this habit Rider had of taking in so much of a conversation with others, or from an observation while among others. This was mostly something that was always used, transformed and adapted in the books. A typical example is in his friendship with a man called Conway, who recalled that when dining with Rider one day, the writer talked about the idea for the Place of Death in *King Solomon’s Mines*. Rider spoke of an old retired sea captain who had lived in Norfolk and told compelling seafaring yarns. The captain had witnessed a mound being excavated at Callao, where a hollow chamber was revealed as he watched: ‘*As the invaders watched in astonishment and some horror, the whole company [of mummies] fell to dust on the floor. Only one object survived... it was the golden ring which was on the finger of the chief....*’<sup>viii</sup>



Haggard retained such things from early friendships and preserved them for later use; he hoarded stories and he allowed images to change, transform, be embellished, just as a professional storyteller does when telling yet again the familiar stories of his trade. But for him, the fruits of this were a succession of variations of a central store of tales, mixing fact and fiction, established narrative and myth. A friendship for Rider Haggard was a collection of moments, of shared stores of experience and of personal anecdotes which all fell like leaves from the tree of each personal stance on the data of life. There was potential for stories in everything and everyone. His childhood had taught him the value of absorbing everything, good and bad, and storing it, to use and to entertain. The storyteller was always there, unseen perhaps by the worldly father.

The days in London were not to last, and the entrance examination was soon to be superfluous. William Haggard heard about his friend, Sir Henry Bulmer, going out to Natal, and it struck the squire that his unimpressive son might do well to go along as a personal assistant. Africa was beckoning to young Rider Haggard. His daughter Liliass makes a special point of mentioning the condescending lecture given to Rider by his mother: he was to be always very careful to get a proper understanding of Sir Henry’s directions, and so on. Little did any of the family and their fraternity around their Norfolk home know just how profoundly his new life in Africa was to shape the writer amongst them.

**Stephen Wade is an historian with an interest in both literature and crime. His latest books are *The Count of Scotland Yard* and *The Justice Women*.**

<sup>i</sup> Rider Haggard, Liliass, *The Cloak That I Left* (Boydell, Ipswich 1976) p. 30

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid. Godfrey Haggard, preface p. 19

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid. pp. 31-2

<sup>iv</sup> Karlin, Daniel, Introduction to *She* Penguin, London, 1991) p. viii

<sup>v</sup> Haggard, H Rider, *The Days of My Life* (Longman, London, 1926) p. 5

<sup>vi</sup> See *ibid.* I p220

<sup>vii</sup> Quoted in Thwaite, Ann, , *Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape* (OUP, Oxford, 1985) p.288

<sup>viii</sup> See Cohen, Morton, *Rudyard Kipling to Rider Haggard* (Hutchinson, London, 1962) Rider Haggard, Liliass, *The Cloak That I Left* (Boydell, Ipswich 1976) p. 30

<sup>viii</sup> Ibid. Godfrey Haggard, preface p. 19

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<sup>viii</sup> Haggard, H Rider, *The Days of My Life* (Longman, London, 1926) p. 5

<sup>viii</sup> See *ibid.* I p220

<sup>viii</sup> Quoted in Thwaite, Ann, , *Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape* (OUP, Oxford, 1985) p.288

<sup>viii</sup> See Cohen, Morton, *Rudyard Kipling to Rider Haggard* (Hutchinson, London, 1962) pp. 20-21