LIGHTS AND SHADOWS: OLIVE SCHREINER'S THEORISING WOMAN

by

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INTRODUCTION: OR, "PERHAPS ONLY..."

Olive Schreiner is perhaps best remembered for, and was in her own lifetime most famous as the author of, The Story of an African Farm (1883; a semi-autobiographical novel set in South Africa), Woman and Labour (1911; a theoretical tract on the condition of women and the feminist movement), and numerous "dreams" or allegories (Dreams, 1890; Dream Life and Real Life, 1893; Stories, Dreams and Allegories, 1923). Prominent amongst her other works are her first novel, Undine (1929) and From Man to Man (1926), an unfinished novel published posthumously which deals with the subject of prostitution - a subject which concerned Schreiner throughout her life and which is a recurring theme in her work.

Assessments of Olive Schreiner's work, however, have been plagued by the portrait of her constructed in Samuel Cronwright Schreiner's biography, The Life Of Olive Schreiner and in his "Preface" to The Letters of Olive Schreiner, 1876-1920.[1] As Ruth First and Ann Scott maintain in their biography of Schreiner, Cronwright-Schreiner's Life written after Schreiner's death presents Schreiner as "the hysterical personality of the 1880s"[2]. They contend that Cronwright, unable to comprehend the complexities of Schreiner's emotional and intellectual constitution, constructed and perpetuated a view of her acceptable to himself by destroying much of the biographical material to which he had access. He was thus able to defuse those aspects of her life and thought which most evaded his understanding and which he could not reconcile with conventional notions of genius - and femininity. In this way, "his presentation of her personality and behaviour created the Olive Schreiner of most subsequent biographies and commentary"[3].

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[1] S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner, The Life of Olive Schreiner (Unwin, London, 1924); S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner, The Letters of Olive Schreiner, 1876-1920 (Unwin, London, 1924).

[2] Ruth First and Ann Scott, Olive Schreiner: A Biography (Andre Deutsch, London, 1980) p.20.

[3] First and Scott, p.20.

These claims are supported by Cronwright's "Preface" to his edition of The Letters of Olive Schreiner. Here Cronwright tendentiously concentrates on what he terms the "obvious peculiarities" of Schreiner's epistolary style which he implies are an index of a mind "strange and wonderful in its manifestations and in some of its physical reactions". Omitting to mention the crucial fact that he, as editor, was responsible for the selection and (in many cases) the drastic editing of the letters written by Schreiner, he focuses on the unusual punctuation and construction of some of her sentences. The reader is also informed that she was "averse" to "any form of close, continuous, systematic work, mental or physical...Usually such writing was done rapidly, impetuously, carelessly, and almost invariably without any revision or re-reading"[4].

Although ostensibly eulogising Schreiner, Cronwright simultaneously constructs an image of her as an unsystematic, barely coherent, inconsistent neurotic whose utterances require his mediation. This representation of Schreiner has proved persistent and continues to inform even that criticism of her work which attempts to liberate it from traditional literary and political interpretations.

In A Literature of Their Own, a ground-breaking feminist study, Elaine Showalter cites Schreiner's work as an example of the literary effects of the new tensions in the feminist role, of the "confused aspirations and dreams and the claustrophobic femaleness of the feminist aesthetic"[5]. This is a valid insight into the ambivalences pervading feminist writing of the period as will be discussed later. However, Showalter offers an interpretation of Schreiner's writing which relies as heavily upon assumptions regarding Schreiner's psychological "flaws" as does Cronwright. Showalter states that Schreiner put a "neurotic compulsiveness" in place of sustained productivity and self-discipline with the result that her

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[4] Cronwright-Schreiner, Letters, pp.v-vi.

[5] Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists From Brontë to Lessing (1977; Virago, London, 1982) p.195.

manuscripts "waxed and waned over the years, pieced together out of fragments, endless revision, loving reconsiderations, accretions, and patches"[6]. Her literary shortcomings ("The labors of construction and plotting were beyond her"[7]) are therefore established as arising from the fact that Schreiner herself was a "paradox" and hopelessly enmeshed in "her ambivalence, her self-deception, her psychosomatic illness"[8]. All of these expressed themselves in "a perverse will to fail"[9].

Schreiner's literary "failures" are undeniable. However, in linking them directly to personality, Showalter (along with critics as various as Sheila Rowbotham, Virginia Woolf, Ruth First and Ann Scott) perpetuates to some extent the concentration on Schreiner's idiosyncratic perplexities and ambivalences which has impeded a just appraisal of the literary and political merits of her work. An important factor of this impediment is the recurring inability on the part of certain critics to separate "Schreiner" from the characters represented in her novels. It is common to encounter the assumption that characters such as Waldo, Lyndall (The Story of an African Farm) and Rebekah (From Man to Man) are unmediated projections of Schreiner's personality and opinions. Ridley Beeton, for example, constantly confuses Schreiner with her characters. Of Waldo and Lyndall, he claims: "Both are hopelessly impractical, as Olive Schreiner herself was..."[10]; and of Undine: "Undine, like Olive herself, was in actuality deeply religious..."[11]. This facile

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[6] Showalter, p.197.

[7] Showalter, p.198.

[8] Showalter, p.195.

[9] Showalter, p.198.

[10] Ridley Beeton, Olive Schreiner: A Short Guide to her Writings (Howard Timmins, Cape Town, 1974) p.22.

[11] Beeton, p.33.

collapsing of author and character pervades even that feminist criticism which claims to avoid "an exclusive focus on personality"[12].

The "perverse will to fail" referred to by Showalter is perhaps best embodied in the lack of systematicity, the theoretical or literary incoherence of which Schreiner is implicitly accused by the aforementioned critics and others. Vineta Colby, for example, emphasises Schreiner's lack of discrimination in her reading, claiming that she read "without direction, hungrily seeking ideas, often assimilating then without thoroughly digesting them"[13]. This alleged lack of direction is implicit in the common criticism, aimed particularly at From Man to Man, that Schreiner's fiction is "...flawed by lapses into rhetoric, long passages of angry denunciation or personal bitterness"[14].

These criticisms do have validity and it is certainly not the aim of this thesis to elevate the flaws in Schreiner's work into unqualified strengths. Her writing is marked by its ambivalence, ambiguous mode of argumentation, and the ellipses and displacements which are a feature of textuality in general. To counter the image of an incoherent Schreiner with a new consistent Schreiner would be to reproduce in inverted form the very value system which is challenged by this thesis. However, in that such criticisms tend to endorse traditional representations of the literary, of femininity, and of the biographical Schreiner herself, they form an important and productive focus of debate.

In this revaluation of Schreiner's work, I shall contend that much of its significance both in historical influence and contemporary effect, resides in its rejection of a unified theoretical position or political commitment and in its strategic

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[12] First and Scott, p.21.

[13] Vineta Colby, The Singular Anomaly: Women Novelists of the Nineteenth Century (New York University Press, New York, 1970) p.54.

[14] Patricia Stubbs, Women and Fiction: Feminism in the Novel 1880-1920 (Harvester, London, 1979) p.117.

resistance to the literary and theorětical effects of systematicity. The complexity and radicalism of Schreiner's approach, like that of current French psychoanalytical feminism, challenges traditional conceptualisations of the operations of power and political propriety, and decentres theory. The specificity of her feminist intervention consists precisely in its rejection of notions of unity and in its deployment of a diversity of theoretical strategies. As such it strongly resists confinement within a model in which success is measured according to the ability to produce a new theory of Woman to replace the old. Through her writing, Olive Schreiner undertakes an examination of the political investments in the dominant discourses and fictions which constructed late nineteenth-and early twentieth-century social reality, demonstrating an acute recognition of the ideological power exerted by the patriarchal representational system. Her major works (whether in the form of novel, allegory, essay or treatise) function explicitly, if not exclusively, to challenge patriarchal constructions of Woman.

I have chosen to concentrate on three texts which I see as Schreiner's major works: Woman and Labour, The Story of an African Farm, and From Man to Man. In them Schreiner engages with the privileged nineteenth and twentieth-century discourses of social evolutionary theory, sociology, sexology, and eugenic theory. Each of these discourses and fields of knowledge takes biology as an object of study. Each is implicated in the production and reinforcement of a phallocentric model of sexual difference which levels the two sexual orders to that of the masculine and promotes a conceptualisation of sexuality which negates the notion of true difference and autonomy.

Schreiner's texts, in particular these three, highlight their status as sites of ideological contest wherein patriarchal discourses are scrutinised. The conceptual models they produce and reinforce are tested and reformulated in the interests of the evocation of other more positive possibilities for configurations of femininity. Her writing is significant not only for the theories and positions it enunciates but also for its strategic effects - its ability to confront patriarchal theory with its own

paradoxes, ambiguities and logical limitations. It is significant for its subversion of key nineteenth-century discursive paradigms and for its embodiment of the conflicts to be negotiated in the feminist invasion of the realm of patriarchal theory. Therefore, my focus is on the paradigm of Victorian literary/scientific culture and not on the syntagmatic reasonings of Schreiner's antecedents and line of descent.

Schreiner's writing, in its strategic manipulation of male theory, in its weaving in and out of various discourses (sociology, sexology, social evolutionary theory, evangelicalism, feminism, socialism among them), reveals an astute (although untheorised) recognition of the limitations of patriarchal formulations. It questions the universality and political neutrality of patriarchal theories and highlights the role of theory itself in the exclusion and oppression of women. Schreiner's attempt to construct a feminist position from within the patriarchal framework, a place from which she, as a woman, can speak, transforms this theory into a mode of critique wherein the strategems of patriarchal discourse recoil upon themselves.

Schreiner's project bears striking similarities to the work of contemporary French feminist Luce Irigaray, whose own project demonstrates the role of Western discourse in the repression of the feminine and questions the relation of women to patriarchal theoretical structures. This is not, of course, to produce a reading of Schreiner's work rigidly determined by its relation to contemporary feminist positions and, in particular, to Irigarayan "difference" theory. However it is fruitful to consider the similarity between the techniques adopted by feminists whose main interests lie in combatting male theories and whose texts highlight their status as sites of ideological conflict.

A major emphasis in the work of both Schreiner and Irigaray falls upon the the social meaning of sexual difference, as evidenced in Schreiner's engagement with

evolutionary theories of sex difference, and in Irigaray's politics of the body[15]. The comparability of the projects of these historically-distanced feminists is also demonstrated in their self-positioning within a male-determined intellectual and philosophical framework. Rather than repressing the influence of this male tradition on their work, both Schreiner and Irigaray explicitly acknowledge the debt to their intellectual "Fathers" and take patriarchal theory in a duplicitous embrace in order to reveal its limitations and to proclaim their own deviation. In so doing, both announce the necessity of the feminist engagement with male theory.

A reassessment of Schreiner's work depends upon the acknowledgment of its ambiguous status as both a product of a shaping (male) tradition and as a specifically located intervention into this tradition. This reassessment stresses yet again the overtly strategic and polemical nature of the texts to be discussed. They confront both specific male theories which are oppressive to women, and theory in general, as a realm in which male supremacy is produced and maintained. This position does not confine Schreiner within a twentieth-century framework thereby effacing her own historical and theoretical specificity. It is an attempt to demonstrate the analogous relationship of her project, in both its investments and its effects, with developments in contemporary feminist theory and praxis. Schreiner shares with prominent late twentieth-century French feminists such as Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Hélène Cixous (to mention a few) a concern with the construction of sexuality and representations of motherhood. These are issues which are of crucial concern to the current feminist debate between the Anglo-American and the French psychoanalytical perspective. A close study of the strategies employed by Schreiner is thus of great relevance to contemporary polemic.

In stressing these connections and in fully and closely revaluing the import of Schreiner's theoretical and fictional practice this thesis seeks to release Schreiner's

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[15] See Elizabeth Gross, "Philosophy and the Body: *Kristeva and Irigaray* ". Feminist Challenges and Political Theory, eds. Carole Pateman and Elizabeth Gross (Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1986).

work from common derogatory misconceptions without elevating it into a model of consistency. It also seeks further to destabilise schematic accounts of Victorian "bourgeois" feminism as theoretically naive and intrinsically conservative. It aims to question the various inscriptions of "feminism" in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century and to highlight the relationship of Victorian "reformist" feminism to forms which, in their utopian orientation, accord more with a contemporary politics of autonomy.

Schreiner's texts offer an ideal subject for an appraisal of the successes and costs, the ideological stakes, in the feminist engagement with theory, and in so doing assume relevance for the contemporary feminist debate around the issue of the relation of women to theory: the nature of a "theoretical" feminism. For this reason an intensive discussion of Schreiner's overtly "theoretical" and political tract, Woman and Labour, functions as the centre-piece of this thesis. Hailed by Vera Brittain as "a trumpet call summoning the faithful to a vital crusade" and regarded by many early twentieth-century feminists as "the Bible of the Woman's Movement"[16], it has been relatively neglected by Schreiner critics. Yet a reappraisal of this text is crucial to an understanding of Schreiner's literary and political project and, more importantly, of its strategic nature - a facet of her work which has been ignored or much underestimated. This accounts for the extended space and discussion I have devoted to Woman and Labour.

My interest in the meaning and deployment of "theoretical" feminism in the English context has focussed the specific concerns of this thesis. It is primarily concerned with an appraisal of Schreiner as a "theoretical" feminist and explores the various implications of this term, as it relates not only to definitions of femininity but also to the issue of women's non-fictional and fictional writing. As a result there is no attempt at fullscale comparison of Schreiner with English feminist

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[16] Vera Brittain, Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900-1925 (1933; Fontana/Virago, London, 1980) p.41.

contemporaries such as Beatrice Webb, Josephine Butler, Frances Power Cobbe and Millicent Garret Fawcett who also actively challenged patriarchal sexual theory. Their engagement with patriarchal fantasies of the feminine was conducted on the level of theory and, like Schreiner, they concentrate on the issue of "women and labour" both as female reproduction of the species and as the enactment of ideologically-invested forms of work. However Schreiner simultaneously opens up the issue of women's "labour" as political and cultural practice and highlights the difficulties inherent in the feminine participation in writing as the dominant "high" culture mode of activism in public and private. She problematises "writing" as the chosen investment/praxis. Therefore, it is the figure of "Schreiner" as a theorising woman writer which interests the present discussion; it is this figure which forms the link between the four quarters of the thesis and which has determined the selection of the three works chosen for discussion. In these texts Schreiner's literary engagement with theory is most overt, her movement between the genres of non-fiction and fiction is most significant and problematic, and the figure of the theorising woman is predominant (whether in the form of "Schreiner" as author, or in the form of Lyndall or Rebekah). Schreiner's first novel Undine was written before her ideas were as fully formed or as directed as in the three works selected and is, therefore, of minor relevance to the specific issues raised here. The same must be said of the books of allegories which, although they do offer fictional alternatives to patriarchal discourse, are not as central to the contention of the thesis as the three major works which are accorded close and concentrated attention.

Chapter One of the thesis examines nineteenth- and twentieth-century theories of gender in relation to political discourse and cultural production, and focuses specifically on Schreiner's appraisal of the theorisation of sexual difference produced within the confederate discourses of social evolutionism, sexology and sociology. Schreiner's intervention into the debate on sexual difference is introduced with attention to the intersection of three debates: social evolutionary debate, the

debate on individualism and collectivism, and the construction of sexology and sociology. These three public debates were identifiable to Schreiner's contemporaries in the published works of three men: the "prophet" of the Victorian "Religion of Science"[17], Herbert Spencer; the barrister and mathematician, Karl Pearson; and Havelock Ellis. The last two were proclaimed "progressives", members of the discussion group known as the Men and Women's Club, and were personal friends of Schreiner[18].

Schreiner's relation to, and difference from, Spencerian sexual and social theory is examined in the broader context of the discourse on sex in the modern period from the Enlightenment and Owenism to contemporary feminism, philosophy and literary theory, with particular emphasis upon the work of French feminists Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. The ideological links with Enlightenment and Owenite feminist ideals and strategies are also discussed in the context of the current tendency to dismiss nineteenth-century feminism as tied to a politics of equality which necessarily binds it to phallocentric conceptual models. Schreiner's tactical intermingling of utopian and reformist elements effectively problematises such reductive categorisation and reflects upon contemporary feminist theory/praxis.

Chapters Two and Three discuss Schreiner's contestation of the sexual difference theories produced within social evolutionary discourse and consider the phallocentric formulations of sexual difference which underlie the powerful Victorian separate spheres ideology. Chapter Three is devoted to an examination of the work of the sexologist Havelock Ellis, and in particular his rendition of the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ideology of motherhood. His version of an invalided, masochistic and male-serving motherhood is contrasted with Schreiner's ideal of "the

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[17] Beatrice Webb, My Apprenticeship (1926; Cambridge U.P.,1979) p.90.

[18] First and Scott, ch. 4.

mighty labouring woman" which strives to release women from the position of reproductive machine.

These three chapters are organised around Schreiner's overtly theoretical tract, Woman and Labour. The key terms of Schreiner's strategy receive their fullest and most coherent expression in this influential but undervalued work. Since this thesis seeks to explore these key terms, its own strategy depends on as full an explication of Schreiner's developed ideas and approaches as possible. This strategy renders inappropriate a strictly chronological consideration of her texts within the determined boundaries of the present discussion.

Chapters Four and Five present readings of The Story of an African Farm and From Man to Man which emphasise Schreiner's resistance to realist narrative form and her related critique of traditional configurations of femininity. The chapter on The Story of an African Farm is concerned with Schreiner's reformulation of Spencerian scientific naturalism and Emersonian Transcendentalism in which the sexual indifference they assume is revealed. Thus transcendental discourse is confronted with the particularity it disavows and with the repressiveness of its representations. The representation of masculinity as rigid, unified, and untainted by difference, the feminine, is challenged by a text which acknowledges the difference and division informing subjectivity and which asserts the claims of feminine desire over the desperate recuperation of the phallus enacted in phallocentric discourses.

The discussion of From Man to Man highlights the activation of otherness produced by the interplay of allegory, realism, vision and polemic common both to Schreiner's fictional and non-fictional works. Through the transgression of conventional generic boundaries, Schreiner elaborates a discourse in the interstices between reason and desire, logic and unreason, masculinity and femininity, in an excess of dichotomous formulation which projects the possibility for a feminist theory which would circumvent the distinction between utopian desire and political pragmatism.

In the subtitle to her posthumous novel, From Man to Man, or, Perhaps Only, Olive Schreiner draws attention to the words spoken by the young Rebekah, the protagonist, in the justifiably famous prelude to the novel, "The Child's Day". Wearily gazing at the shadow of her hand in her candle-lit room before falling asleep, the child begins to wonder why the shadow falls where it does. Unable to solve this perplexing problem, she reassures herself with the thought that "Perhaps only God knew what lights and shadows were"[19].

Adopted by Schreiner herself as a key sentence from her final and unfinished novel, Reb ekah's thought also proves a fitting emblem of those concerns of Schreiner which are of paramount interest to this thesis: knowledge, or more specifically, the production of knowledge about male and female sexuality; and the "lights and shadows", the dichotomous formulations, of phallocentric conceptualisation. Of equal importance however is the emphasis on the conditional implicit in this significant epigram. For, above all, the driving force of Schreiner's project is the speculative impulse, the visionary embrace of what Schreiner herself terms the "'probablies', 'possiblies', and 'likelies'" of a future social reality[20]. This commitment to different possibilities, the symbolic "Perhaps", informs her literary and political endeavours.

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[19] Olive Schreiner, From Man to Man, or, Perhaps Only (1926; Virago, London, 1982) p.67.

[20] To Karl Pearson, 10 September 1886, The Karl Pearson Papers.

CHAPTER ONE

WOMAN AND LABOUR: PRELIMINARY

The present discussion on Woman and Labour[1] stresses the significance of the strategic element in Schreiner's works. This is displayed in a consideration of their adherence to, and difference from, those of her patriarchal compeers. Therefore, it is necessary to give a brief account both of the controversies informing polemic of the period and of the broad theoretical, philosophical and intellectual context in which Woman and Labour was produced.

During the years in which Woman and Labour was written (from the 1880s to 1911) a portentous intersection occurred between several important discourses and debates: social evolutionary theory enjoyed immense influence and was connected with the ongoing individualist-collectivist debate. The "science" of sexology and the discipline of sociology were constructed, both of which were grounded in what Michel Foucault terms "true" or scientific discourse. There was also the ever-increasing "problem" of feminist activism and militancy, which was to climax in the campaigns of the British Women's Social and Political Union (W.S.P.U.) immediately prior to the publication of Woman and Labour.

As J.W. Burrow argues in Evolution and Society[2], the rise of social evolutionary theories (most associated with the name of Herbert Spencer) to a position of dominance in the mid-to-late nineteenth century was from the outset politically motivated, stemming from the social and political unrest of the 1840s. A conceptual apparatus was produced which could respond to demands for an increased empirical validity and a greater historical sophistication than that provided by the Utilitarian philosophy of Bentham and James Mill but which could simultaneously defer a radical questioning of the English positivist framework. Traditional values and

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[1] Olive Schreiner, Woman and Labour (1911; Virago, London, 1978). All subsequent references are to this edition.

[2] J.W. Burrow, Evolution and Society (Cambridge University Press, 1968) chs 1-4.

assumptions regarding the class system, capitalist economic organisation, and relations between the sexes, were sanctified in a discourse formulated around the search for laws of social development whose central premise subsumed sociological operations under fixed and deterministic natural laws discoverable through scientific investigation[3]. Major postulates of the Western metaphysical tradition were maintained and strengthened by a theory emphasising the universality of natural causation, the permanence and continuity of natural laws, the transfer of concepts between biology and sociology, and the scientific verifiability of the unity and universality of human nature and truth.

The "science of society" (sociology) which arose in conjunction with social evolutionary theory was conflated with a philosophy of history and was preoccupied with discovering the laws of social development rather than with functional analysis. The search for ethical and moral certainty in this "reasoned history of man"[4] correlated with the social evolutionary equation of evolution with progress. Both are in keeping with the frenetic search for stability and certainty in an age characterised by the replacement of godhead with the notion of Necessity (of prime concern in The Story of an African Farm) and both function as mechanisms of control through normalisation.

Michel Foucault's elaboration of the nineteenth-century nexus between sociology, sexology and science is pertinent in this connection[5]. Foucault's theorisation of the investments of power in discourse, the role of discourse in the production of knowledge, and the correlative development of procedures of control is of particular relevance to Woman and Labour, Schreiner's "sociological" text.

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[3] See Beatrice Webb, My Apprenticeship, pp.131-2.

[4] Burrow, p.83.

[5] Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Volume One: An Introduction, trans., Robert Hurley (Vintage Books, New York, 1980).

The nexus between knowledge, power and the body is expounded by Foucault in The History of Sexuality, Volume One: An Introduction which forwards a conceptualisation of power that highlights its productive aspects. Power is seen not as merely negative and repressive, but as providing the conditions for the construction of those knowledges which utilise the strategic deployment of truth and which take the human body as their object. Foucault counters what he terms the "repressive hypothesis" (p.49), claiming that the nineteenth century in fact witnessed a proliferation of discourses on sex: it put into operation "an entire machinery for producing true discourses concerning it" (p.69) which set out to "formulate the uniform truth of sex", constructing it as a system of knowledge (p.69). According to Foucault, this establishment of a field of knowledge with sex as its object is correlative both with the nineteenth-century will to knowledge and truth (where truth is defined as external to power and history) and with the related imperative to "police" sex through discursive regulation (p.25). Thus the nineteenth century, rather than repressing sexuality, was actively involved in the "very production of sexuality" (p.105).

Foucault's analysis is useful to a consideration of Woman and Labour. It emphasises that sexuality is a discursive product and is a specific effect of power rather than simplistically opposed to it, as certain sexual liberation theories (Ellis' among them) would maintain. Foucault theorises sexuality as the means by which power gains control over the body and thus populations. Occurring at the juncture of the body and the population, sex functions as an ideal target of procedures of social management, for mechanisms of control inextricably implicated in the classification of sex as an appropriate object of study or observation for a diversity of discourses:

> Sex was a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species...But one sees it becoming the theme of political operations, economic interventions through incitements to or curbs on procreation, and ideological campaigns for raising standards of morality and responsibility. (p.146)

Foremost among the "whole web of discourses, special knowledges, analyses and injunctions" (p.25) which settled upon sexuality are the nineteenth-century

discourses of social evolutionism, sociology and sexology, all of which located themselves at the juncture of the individual and the population and all of which intervene into, and proffer their own formulations of, the biological.

Sexuality forms the crux and the point of intersection between social evolutionary theory, sociology and sexology and proves useful in mediating between the Victorian categories of the individual and the collective in a strategic confusion between the social and the biological (the species life and social life). Although biology and sexuality are not treated as strictly equivalent in Victorian social theorising, sexuality displays a tendency towards duplicity in its ability to function at the level of the social and the biological, with biology displaying a similar equivocation between the natural and the human. Indeed it is the capacity of the biological to signify the sexual which facilitates its application to the debate on sexual difference and which highlights the active intervention of social evolutionary discourse into questions of sexuality, thus explaining why biology is such a useful tool for patriarchal ideologues like Ellis.

If, as Foucault maintains, the will to theory and discourse is inextricable from the production of a new field of knowledge, the construction of an object of study, and the generation of a prescriptive truth about that object, the truth generated in the case of sociology and its master discourse, social evolutionary theory, is that of the meaning of human biology and its relation to the natural world and social existence. Hence, it becomes clear why social evolutionary theory functions as a particularly powerful enforcer of patriarchal norms and why Schreiner should focus upon its guiding principles in Woman and Labour. Social evolutionary theory takes biology as its overt and central object of study; it actively intervenes into the discourse of biology and specifically constructs it. Given that women in phallocentric culture are constituted as "lacking" and as inferior on the basis of interpretations of their biology, social evolutionary theory is ideally positioned to reinforce patriarchal configurations of the feminine, to justify and legitimate the inferiority of female biology on "scientific" grounds, and to naturalise and normalise women's

subalternity. It is no coincidence that social evolutionary discourse, and its brother discourses of sociology and sexology, devote considerable time (as will be seen in the discussion of Ellis' sexology in Chapter Three) to explicit theorising about women (and "Woman"), the meaning of their sexuality, and to the enforcement of the ideology of the separate spheres, the most potent nineteenth-century expression of the phallocentric repression of women through recourse to biologism. Although these confederate discourses focus on the biological and utilise sexuality as a convenient point of leverage with which to gain control over the individual (as a means by which biology and sexuality are appropriated by knowledge and power), it is the female body in particular which is subjected to the most extreme forms of regulation. It is the site where power is most necessary and yet least sure of itself.

Nor is it coincidental, as Foucault fails to mention, that the proliferation of nineteenth-century discourses on sex and the associated theorising on female sexuality correlated with the increasing visibility and persistence of a mounting feminist militancy and discourse of which Schreiner was an active part. In the late nineteenthcentury the social control of women was perceived as both crucial and disturbingly precarious, as is evidenced in Ellis' anxious theorising about the Victorian women's movement and its inroads into male privilege.

Sexuality, and female sexuality in particular, forms the crux and linkage point of the discourses under discussion. However, it functions simultaneously as their Achilles' heel. As Foucault maintains, discourse can be "both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance, and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and reproduces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (p.101). This is precisely why Schreiner focuses upon female sexuality in her investigation of Victorian theoretical premises. Sexuality binds the influential discourses she confronts and is a point at which patriarchal investment is heavily weighted and extremely fragile. Taking female sexuality as her subject in Woman and Labour and in the two other major texts to be discussed, Schreiner turns

the phallocentric gaze to which it is normally subjected back upon the subject of this gaze in a manoeuvre which aims a blow simultaneously at the representations produced within these discourses and at their principles of structuration.

It is this capacity of discourse to act both as an effect of power and as its site of destabilisation which reveals why so much is at stake for Schreiner where the representation of women and their biological function is concerned and, more significantly, why so much of her argument revolves around the issue of female sex-parasitism - the reduction of the female to a purely sexual function. Sex-parasitism functions in her work as the symbol of woman's sexual inferiority, of her lack, her assimilation to the body, the material. She shows that this representation of femininity is ideologically and historically constructed, a condition of patriarchy rather than, as First and Scott interpret her position[6], an empirical phenomenon without systemic basis; it is a configuration which must be challenged at the site of its construction: nineteenth-century "true" or scientific discourse. The fact that sex-parasitism occupies the position of Schreiner's "central concept"[7] attests to her recognition of female sexuality as the crux of patriarchal control and phallocentric dominance.This is the reason why sexuality rather than the issue of work, education, or even legal reform, is at the centre of Schreiner's work. She acknowledges that it is from the construction of female sexuality that related effects of patriarchal power, related oppressions and related prescriptions radiate. In a set of theses and interpretations which comprise a self-differentiating and distorting mirror image of phallocentric theory Woman and Labour takes female sexuality as its subject/object, strategically blurring the clarity and the "definition" of the reflection from the "flat" mirror of the specular phallic economy.

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[6] First and Scott, pp.269-71.

[7] First and Scott, p.269.

The following discussion investigates the nature of Schreiner's intervention into the phallocentrically defined discourses of social evolutionism, sociology and sexology which operated to naturalise patriarchal assumptions about social organisation, human nature, and, above all, sexual difference and the social position of women. In Woman and Labour Schreiner explores the implications for women of the phallocentric theories of sexual difference produced by these complicitous sciences in accordance with the model of the biological they construct: how the discourse of biology is constructed patriarchally and deployed to enforce women in a position of social subordination.

It is my intention therefore to focus upon the repressed connection between the position of women in the late nineteenth century and the prominence of a biologistic evolutionary theory, a nexus which forms the central but untheorised insight of Schreiner's much underestimated texts. Stress will fall on the conjunction between her challenge to particular representations of women, the feminine and sexual difference, and her artful subversion of the discourse which upholds these representations. This subversion is inextricable from her specific confrontation of the related ideologies of woman's exclusive sphere and the cult of the mother. Schreiner's primary weapon is discourse itself; the very system which ensures the reproduction of the patriarchal hegemony functions in her texts as the site of feminist resistance.

The discourses of social evolutionism, sociology and sexology, are not however the sole threads in Schreiner's vast discursive tapestry. Incorporated into its fabric and invoked against social evolutionary discourse, sociology and sexology are the strands of a feminist and socialist polemic which carry sufficient authority to contest productively the presuppositions of aspects of phallocentric or "true discourse". They provide the raw materials from which she fashions her ideological abode. In Woman and Labour socialist and feminist perspectives, the latter with origins in an Enlightenment and utopian tradition, combine without merging or becoming

synonymous to launch a broadly-based assault on patriarchal individualism. In the process a new definition of feminism itself emerges.

In recognition of this dual orientation the following discussion of Woman and Labour has been organised into two overlapping sections. The first is devoted to an explication of the general strategic placement of Schreiner's work and deals primarily with its relation to social evolutionary, socialist and feminist discourse of the period. Part Two, which consists of two chapters, deals exclusively with Schreiner's assault on specific theories of sexual difference and representations of the feminine with special attention to the influential work of Havelock Ellis.

It cannot be stressed too highly that this emphasis on the distinction between the general and specific temperament of Woman and Labour is a crucial aspect of any consideration of Schreiner's work, since either to displace the specifics of her argument from its general context of contestation, or to concentrate upon the specificities without considering the larger ramifications is tantamount to an elision of her most salient insight: the integral connection between the operations of an apparently innocent and neutral socio-political theory and women's social and sexual subalternity.

In treating Schreiner's exposition of the oppression of women and the aims of feminism in the context of a related attack on the tenets of social evolutionary theory, a powerful reinforcer not only of individualism but of patriarchal myths about women, I will demonstrate the degree to which her confrontation of patriarchal sexual ideology acts as a double-edged blade. For in challenging representations and configurations of the feminine she unavoidably cuts through to the deeper structures so that the surface and depth are revealed as reciprocally defined. In Woman and Labour the dual orientations form a plexus of interrelationship and mutual reinforcement, a mirror image of the complicity between social evolutionary theory

and the oppression of women, between the metaphysics of presence and the privileging of the phallus in patrocentric culture.

WOMAN AND LABOUR: SPECULATING WILDLY, OR THE VINDICATION OF "THE FRAGMENT".

The Religion of Science and the "other book"

Woman and Labour was published in 1911 and constitutes Olive Schreiner's contribution to the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century debate on the meaning of sexual difference. The parameters of this controversy were defined by the discourse of social evolutionary theory as specifically constructed in Herbert Spencer's influential theory of natural and social evolution. Spencer's theory is contained in his major sociological works, Social Statics (1851), The Study of Sociology (1873) and The Principles of Sociology (1876), but First Principles (1862) is also of interest in the context of my discussion. Spencer's now infamous "Synthetic Philosophy" applied a formula of evolution to all phenomena and carried out a systematisation of heterogeneous phenomena. He defined "Evolution" as "a change from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity, to a definite coherent heterogeneity, accompanying the dissipation of motion and integration of matter"[1]. All change is a product of physical laws which can be deduced and his theory is bolstered by the doctrine of Necessity and a belief in the "universality of natural causation everywhere happening"[2]. According to Spencer "Everything was referred to the unvarying course of causation, no less uniform in the spheres of life and mind than in the sphere of inanimate existence"[3]. Spencerian theory thus posits the operation of general laws in nature which encompass different sciences and bodies of knowledge.

For Spencer the law of organic development is the law of all development and his work is engaged in the quest for first causes, or as the title of one of his works suggests, "First Principles". His Synthetic Philosophy is founded upon the assumption

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[1]Herbert Spencer, First Principles (1862; 4th ed., 2 vols, Williams and Norgate, 1910) 2: p.307

[2] Herbert Spencer, An Autobiography (1894; 2 vols; Watts and Co.,1904) 2: p.6.

[3] Spencer, An Autobiography, 2: p.7.

that "the recognition of a persistent Force, ever changing its manifestations but unchanged in quantity throughout all past time and all future time, is that which we find alone makes possible each concrete interpretation, and at last unifies all concrete interpretations"[4]. Spencer's search for first causes is motivated by his commitment to laissez-faire radicalism, which he attempts to ground scientifically in natural causation. Politics and science, specifically biological science, are thus fused in his monolithic schema.

As will be discussed Spencerian social evolutionism constructs a field of knowledge and thus of power around certain representations of female sexuality. However the phallocentric investments in social evolutionary discourse are not restricted specifically to its rendition of femininity. They are primarily expressed in its tendency to impose order upon and to assert control over the variability and diversity of the natural world and the social system. While the concept of God is expelled (or at least destabilised), order, hierarchy, causation and determinism are reinstated in His place. The quest for unity, uniformity and stability is the driving force of social evolutionary theories. In Spencerian theory evolution naturally implies "an advance from confusion to order - from undetermined arrangement to determined arrangement"[5]. However, above all, such theories are motivated by the desire for Law. In his autobiography Spencer describes the feeling of exhilaration during the shaping of his theory when "the growing generalisation, thus far inductive, might take a deductive form: being all at once recognised as a necessary consequence of some physical principle - some established law"[6]. He speaks of his firm commitment to "such notions as uniformity of law and an established order" which he wishes to

[4] Spencer, First Principles, 2: p.443.

[5] Spencer, First Principles, 2: p.293.

[6] Spencer, An Autobiography,1: p.401.

promote in his works[7] and he also expresses "an unhesitating belief that the phenomena of both individual and social life, conform to law"[8].

Thus Spencer's social evolutionism harnesses the heterogeneity of natural and social phenomena under a set of supposedly uniform and predictable natural laws. This movement is synonymous with the phallogocentric reduction of the other to the same in the interests of unified subjectivity which is enunciated by Julia Kristeva. Despite Spencer's apparent commitment to heterogeneity and to pluralistic laws, these laws themselves are conceptualised as monolithic and as expressions of the Law - Necessity - which organises all phenomena. He distinguishes tendentiously and sharply between a heterogeneity which signals disorder (including social disorder and revolution), and is therefore not aligned with evolution, and a heterogeneity which implies "definiteness":

> Thus, then, is that increase of heterogeneity which is not a trait of Evolution, distinguished from that increase of heterogeneity which is. Though in disease and after death, individual or social, the earliest modifications are additions to the pre-existing heterogeneity, they are not additions to the pre-existing definiteness. From the outset they begin to destroy this definiteness, and gradually produce a heterogeneity that is indeterminate instead of determinate....And in the one case as in the other, it is the absence of definiteness which distinguishes the multiformity of regression from the multiformity of progression.[9]

Therefore, social evolutionary laws function to enforce order and uniformity upon the plurality and diversity they appear to invoke. For Spencer, the function of Science, and presumably Sociology, is to group "isolated facts under laws, uniting special laws under more general laws" and so to reach "laws of higher and higher generality; until the conception of universal laws has become familiar to it"[10]. Social

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[7] Spencer, An Autobiography, 1: p.6.

[8] Spencer, An Autobiography, 1: p.7.

[9] Spencer, First Principles, 2: pp.294-5.

[10] Spencer, First Principles, 2: p.443.

evolutionism, as rendered in Spencerian theory, functions as a principle of organisation, a means of systematising the various, and of uniting various phenomena "as correlative manifestations of one law"[11]. As he says:

> There can be no understanding of social actions without some knowledge of human nature; there can be no deep knowledge of human nature without some knowledge of the laws of Mind; there can be no adequate knowlege of the laws of Mind without knowledge of the laws of Life. And that knowledge of the Laws of Life, as exhibited in Man, may be properly grasped, attention must be given to the laws of Life in general.[12]

In Woman and Labour, Schreiner's "scientific" and most overtly theoretical text, she examines the implications for women of the theorisation of the operation of biological laws which was instituted by social evolutionism. Woman and Labour undertakes an unrelenting scrutiny of the patriarchal construction of sexuality and of the biologism implicit in a phallocentric discourse of which social evolutionary theory functioned as a specific nineteenth-century expression.

This text addresses itself to the issue of sexual difference. It simultaneously presents a more general refutation of the discourse of individualism, constituting a feminist perspective on the controversies surrounding the issues of collective responsibility, social reform and the meaning of natural selection which informed political debate of the period 1880-1910. As such it contributes to the polemic, centring on the question of what constitutes social progress and "fitness", between Spencerian individualism and liberal revisionists such as T.H. Green, D.G. Ritchie and L.T. Hobhouse, who adopted an anti-Spencerian position on the role of collectivism and social reform and promoted a relaxation of competitive individualism which could accommodate a notion of limited intervention[13]. Unlike these liberal theorists,

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[11] Spencer, First Principles, 2: p.323.

[12] Herbert Spencer, The Study of Sociology (1873; Kegan Paul Trench, Trübner, London,1892) p.390.

[13] For a fuller discussion of this debate see Stefan Collini, Liberalism and Sociology: L.T. Hobhouse and Political Argument in England, 1880-1914 (Cambridge

Schreiner argues from an avowedly socialist position. However her polemic shares with them the project of an attempted reformulation of social evolutionary tenets and, contrary to certain received notions[14], Spencerian theory functions in her work, as it does in other major polemicists of the period (Huxley, Ritchie and Hobhouse most notably perhaps) as a key ideological antagonist. D.G. Ritchie, for example, argues in Darwinism and Politics that the theory of natural selection was claimed by theorists such as Spencer "for the defence of the inequalities in the social organism" and does not necessarily support the laissez-faire political ideology. Evolution, he claims "has become not merely a theory but a creed, not merely a conception by which to understand the universe, but a guide to direct us how to order our lives"[15].

In keeping with the strategy adopted by the collectivist (and Idealist) adversaries of Spencer's rigid competitive individualism, Schreiner adopts a procedure of reformulation which seeks to appropriate and alter, to reduplicate with a difference, the social evolutionary theoretical terrain. She attempts to demonstrate the concordance of her own notion of social reform with evolutionary progress and the dictates of natural law (a link between reform, evolution and Progress which was an inescapable component of the "creed" of social evolutionism[16]). This appropriation involves the alignment of Progress with equal rights for women, a revaluation of the construction of sexual difference and femininity, and an associated assertion of the consonance of female equality with the laws of nature.

Woman and Labour produces a conceptualisation of Progress (that quintessentially Victorian fetish) which equates it with an alteration in women's social and sexual status; a recognition of their pivotal role in social production and

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University Press, 1979) Part Three, ch. 5; and Greta Jones, Social Darwinism and English Thought (Harvester Press, Brighton, 1980).

14 First and Scott, p.276.

15 D.G. Ritchie, Darwinism and Politics (Swan Sonnerschein, London, 1889) pp.2-3.

16 Collini, pp.154-61.

reproduction; and a revaluation of the terms "masculine" and "feminine". This reformulation entails a radical transformation in social and sexual structuration. Unlike Spencer, who aligns Progress with increased sexual differentiation and the sexual division of labour (the "adaptation to the paternal and maternal duties"[17]), Schreiner's formulation stresses the "movement of the sexes towards each other"[18]. It disputes the assertion of the necessity of sex antagonism as a motor and outcome of social evolution[19] common to Spencerian sociology and sex discourses of the period (including sexology and the mother-right theories to be treated in Chapter Two of the thesis). Thus, while retaining the Spencerian tactic of equating social evolution with Progress ("...Progress essentially consists ...[in]...the transformation of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous")[20], both terms of the equation are substantially redefined by Schreiner.

Implicated in this process of reformulation, and productive of potentially more subversive effects, is the separate but related reinscription of crucial social evolutionary terms and concepts such as "natural selection", "adaptation", "modification" and "fitness", all of which are indispensable weapons in the Spencerian armoury[21]. Schreiner's strategic reduplication and mimicry of these concepts differs from the tactics of the majority of her fellow dissenters in openly questioning not only the assumption of the organic analogy which forms the crux of social evolutionism but also the notions of universal causation and determinism. Conventional descriptions of the "natural" are likewise subjected to scrutiny. If,

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[17] Herbert Spencer, The Study of Sociology, p.372.

[18] Olive Schreiner, Woman and Labour (1911; Virago, London, 1978) p.259. All subsequent references are to this edition.

[19] David Wiltshire, The Social and Political Thought of Herbert Spencer (Oxford U.P., Oxford,1978) p.114.

[20] See J.D.Y. Peel, Herbert Spencer:The Evolution of a Sociologist (Heinemann, London, 1971) p.137.

[21] Peel, Ch. 6.

therefore, Schreiner's project is "rooted...in the evolutionism of the 1880s" as First and Scott maintain[22], it also involves considerable ambiguity and paradox and possesses the potential to uproot that biologistic determinism which in a certain fashion nourishes it.

The three major works to be discussed, Woman and Labour, The Story of an African Farm, and From Man to Man, confront the patriarchal representations of sexual difference generated by social evolutionary and sexological theory. However, Woman and Labour is the only text to operate ostensibly in the realm of "true" or scientific discourse. It invades and occupies the conceptual terrain encoded masculine in which knowledge is produced in an attempt to inject women into the patriarchal discourse which marginalises and excludes them.

The "Introduction" to Woman and Labour functions specifically to establish the text within the privileged realm of scientific discourse and to position it within the institutionally authorised and thus influential discourse of sociology. In it Schreiner proves her credentials and in this way gains access to a public voice and a participatory role in the production of knowledge. This is evidenced in the opening pages in which she is occupied with the rigorous task of justifying her entry into the scientific domain and in affirming the authority of her text. This movement necessitates the demonstration of an allegiance to the methodological requirements of sociology and an adherence to a range of prescriptions which govern this discipline, imposing limitations upon access to, and definitions of, the truth produced within it.

In adopting this stance of the sociologist, and in dealing with "sociological questions" (p.17), Schreiner is constrained by the compulsion to conduct her analysis in accordance with the assumptions of social evolutionary theory. This involves the acceptance of the biological analogy, an emphasis on evolutionary (and specifically Comtean) accounts of social and institutional "development", and the application of anthropological documentation. Schreiner's "orthodoxy" is also

[22] First and Scott, p.258.

compelled to evince a commitment to "true" discourse with its demands of objectivity, detachment and rationality.

It is significant that this process of self-construction in accordance with the strictures of science takes the form of a summary of what Schreiner claims to be the "original" book (allegedly destroyed during the Boer War [pp.17-20]) entitled Musings on Woman and Labour. Of this originary work Schreiner says:

> It began by tracing the differences of sex function to their earliest appearances in life on the globe; not only as when in the animal world, two amoeboid globules coalesce, and the process of sexual generation almost unconsciously begins; but to its yet more primitive manifestations in plant life. In the first three chapters I traced, as far as I was able, the evolution of sex in different branches of non-human life. Many large facts surprised me in following this line of thought by their bearing on the whole modern sex problem. (p.11)

Having established the concern of this work to be "most matters in which sex has a part" (p.11), and thus implicitly placing it in the context of the sex discourses of the period[23], Schreiner displays a conformity to the tendency to frame sociology with social evolutionary tenets. The study of woman, labour, and "sex matters" is equated with tracing the "evolution of sex" in a work anxious also to demonstrate its basis in the empirical, in "facts".

The commitment to theories of social evolution is reinforced by the orthodox insistence upon the relevance of data from "different branches of non-human life" to the modern sex problem in an application of the organic analogy. This commitment is repeated in the ensuing discussion of the process of generation in the plant and animal world in which Schreiner's observations of species such as the cock-o-veet lead to the assertion that they represent the "realisation of the highest sexual ideal which haunts humanity" (p.13). The irony implicit in this apparently orthodox confusion of the organic and the social is highlighted by the regret that this ideal is as yet unrealised by the human race. Thus specifically human values such as "aesthetic" and "intellectual" development (p.12) receive their highest expression in the non-

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[23] This will be discussed in Chapter Two of the thesis.

human, revealing an implicit paradox and contradiction in the always regulatory function of the organic analogy.

The impulse to strategic reformulation rather than imitative reduplication is apparent from the outset. While the introductory analysis of the relationship between the "evolution of sex" in non-human life and the modern sex problem (pp.11-2) does apply the evolutionary formula to social phenomena in strict accordance with the methodological mandate, it simultaneously undertakes a reformulation of scientific discourse which acknowledges the various political investments in so-called neutral facts. In the midst of the utilisation of technical vocabulary such as "amoeboid globules" and "primitive manifestations" and an adherence to empiricism ("many large facts surprised me" [p.11]), there is a reference to an overtly political issue: the modern sex problem. This "problem" occupies an equivocal status in this context. It functions self-consciously to problematise a confusion which plays a basic role in Spencer's conservative rendition of sexual difference. Sexuality is deployed both as a scientific category and as a euphemism for the socio-political phenomenon of women's inequality in an intimation of Schreiner's argument for the interdependence of the social and the sexual. Thus politics intrudes overtly into, rather than surreptitiously organising, the neutrality and universality of true discourse.

This is followed directly by the deft introduction of "facts" pertaining to the relative size and strength of the male and female form, to the diversity of the sexual relationship, and to the representation of sexual difference. These facts reveal that:

> in the great majority of species on earth the female form exceeds the male in size and strength and often in predatory instinct; and that sex relationships may assume almost any form on earth as the conditions of life vary; and that, even in their sexual relations towards offspring, those differences which we, conventionally, are apt to suppose are inherent in the paternal or the maternal sex form, are not inherent. (p.12)

In this passage Schreiner displays an orthodox social evolutionary transference of concepts from the natural to the social. The human "sex problem" is to be elucidated by observation of other species. Woman and Labour explicitly attempts at this point to reformulate key concepts of the social evolutionary and sexological

discourse in an endeavour to compel it to support conclusions other than those traditionally upheld. While remaining ostensibly within the empiricist framework, Schreiner emphasises those facts which operate to contradict prevalent patriarchal myths regarding sexual difference. Armed with her own biological data, she challenges the so-called "biological" basis of women's inferiority, the uniformity of the heterosexual relationship, and the sexual division of labour. Patriarchal notions of the gender-based distribution of characteristics and capacities (a distribution which functions to maintain conceptions of Oedipalised masculinity and femininity) are scrutinised.

However, the strategic effects produced by this reconstruction of social evolutionary postulates far exceed those explicitly undertaken. In stressing that "those differences" (sexual differences) are not inherent but are, by implication, socially ("conventionally") produced, Schreiner refuses to participate in the accepted social evolutionary confusion of the social and the natural which maintains these terms in oppositional status. Furthermore, the construction of the term "natural" is itself subjected to reconsideration and scrutiny.

The discontinuity between the social and the natural is emphasised in this analysis. So too is the variety and diversity of forms of sexual difference in the natural world. Schreiner's account stresses the heterogeneity of "natural" behaviour and reveals the impossibility of applying general laws of sexual and parental behaviour; the examples of "toads" and certain "sea animals" serve to substantiate the specificity of behavioural patterns. Thus the biological analogy is attacked at key points: its assertion of the continuity between the social and the natural; its assumption of the principle of uniformity and homogeneity; the subsumption of diversity and disparity under general laws of development. The natural is shown as impervious to uniformity and resistant to the desired homogeneity of Spencer's "deeper law"[24].

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[24] Herbert Spencer, First Principles, 2: p.323.

This acknowledgment of the empirical diversity of the natural has serious repercussions for the normative and prescriptive function of this key term. Schreiner's intervention into social evolutionism generates the resonant suggestion that not even nature is truly "natural" in the sense of conformity to the homogeneous and continuous laws of nature which supposedly govern natural and social phenomena. In this way the possibility is opened for an interpretation of the natural which admits its ideological determination. The social evolutionary conception of natural law is seen as an inappropriate socio-cultural construct imposed upon phenomena which resist the very homogeneity they allegedly embody. Natural law is revealed to be as "other" to nature as is the natural to the social in the terms of dichotomous systems of signification.

Thus Schreiner's reformulative strategy extends beyond a merely cosmetic revision or translation of evolutionary terminology in which the basic premises are maintained. Instead the terms of the argument themselves are subjected to a reformulation which probes the limits of scientific discourse, destabilising it to the degree that it can no longer operate as neutral, pure and transcendental, but is forced to acknowledge its "pollution" by the ideological. It is a matter not only of a manipulation of pre-established formulations, but of a simultaneous reassessment and undermining of the founding tenets of scientific discourse and its aspirations to an immutable truth.

Schreiner enacts a process of parody which highlights the ideological perspective from which scientific (not to mention her own) discourse is produced. Her writing refuses to recognise the distinction between truth and the political upon which phallocentric theory depends, evincing a resistance to the dichotomous impulse which informs such discourse. This resistance can be seen in the equivocality of the allusion to the "modern sex problem", and arises from Schreiner's specific position as a woman in a patriarchal and phallocentric cultural order.

From the outset then, Woman and Labour's relation to the social evolutionism it mimics is problematical. The question which arises is the degree to which this

unsettling of scientific discourse is a self-conscious stratagem or the result of a structural effect irreducible to, and independent of, conscious or unconscious intentionality. The self-positioning within social evolutionary discourse in a calculated attempt to effect tactical reformulations is common to various participants in the individualism debate. However special problems arise for Schreiner in undertaking a conformity to the scientific conceptual framework.

Ambivalence haunts Schreiner's work. Generally interpreted as haphazardness, carelessness and intellectual laxity (as for example by Meintjes[25]), it has proved the most salient source of irritation for critics such as Virginia Woolf and Schreiner's husband, Cronwright. Woolf, while praising Schreiner for her convictions and her sincerity, complains heartily of the contrasts between "masterly sanity" and "childish outbursts of unreason" which produce the "jumble and muddle of odds and ends" characteristic of her writing[26]. On the level of content, the ambivalence which is the keynote of Schreiner's work is expressed in several clearly delineated and well-documented forms: her alleged oscillation between an overtly hostile and a deeply sympathetic attitude towards her own sex[27]; her ambivalence to a stereotypical masculinity and the heterosexual relationship; her paradoxical participation in the religious moralism she defines as intellectually oppressive; and the tendency to endorse scientific rationalism over the "literary" and allegorical mode

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[25] Johannes Meintjes, Olive Schreiner: Portrait of a South African Woman (Keartland, Johannesburg, 1965) p.58.

[26] Virginia Woolf, Women and Writing (1925; The Women's Press Ltd, London,1979) pp.180-3.

[27] Showalter claims categorically, for example, that she "did not enjoy the company of women". A Literature of Their Own, p.195.

she employs most effectively to undermine phallocentric modes of science and rationalism[28].

Ambivalence is evident in the tonal inconsistency characteristic of the "Introduction", the apparent oscillation between self-confidence and a chronic self-effacement. The "Introduction" is launched on a note of self-defence, if not outright apology: "It is necessary to say a few words to explain this book" (p.11). The mood of latent anxiety is accentuated in the reference to the original text as Musings on Woman and Labour. This is a paradoxical title in which the inherent intrepidity of an undertaking with as broad a scope as the multiple relations of woman to an ambiguously defined "labour" (both productive and reproductive) is undercut by the indeterminacy implicit in its designation as "musings", which reflects both a hesitancy and uncertainty on the part of the author and an undermining of its status as science.

The conciliatory defensiveness of this opening contrasts markedly, for example, with the rousing conclusion to the "Introduction" (pp.29-30) in which an inspired, triumphant and deft rhetorician resourcefully transforms a proclamation of "failure" and futility into a cogent invocation to action. The equivocation between the self-assertion embodied in this passage and self-derogation is highlighted in the transition to the autobiographical centrepiece of the "Introduction" in which Schreiner's ambivalence to her own project and ability is made manifest (pp.17-25). This section is concerned with the deficiencies of Woman and Labour and with emphasising its subsidiary status as a mode of stimulating "other minds" (p.20). It functions to provide an objective account of the socio-historical conditions of production of this work but operates simultaneously as an apology for its limitations, although this is stringently denied by the author:

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28 "Science is the Pope of the Middle Ages, the Holy Ecumenical Council; when it speaks loud and clear and firm enough the whole world listens and not a dog may wag its tail". To Karl Pearson, 23 Oct. 1886, p.109 of Olive Schreiner: Letters, Volume One, 1871-1899, ed. Richard Rive (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987). All subsequent references to the Schreiner letters are to this edition.

> I have dared to give this long and very uninteresting explanation, not at all because I have wished by giving the conditions under which this little book was written, to make excuse for any repetitions or lack of literary perfection, for these things matter very little; but, because (and this matters very much) it might lead to misconception on the subject-matter itself if its genesis were not exactly understood. (p.21)

The expiatory predisposition of this diaristic insert, which details Schreiner's movements during the Boer War, is further evidenced by the choice of epithets applied to Woman and Labour by its author. Schreiner claims that, in contrast with the entire book, this, her "little book", "this little remembrance","this fragment", is subject to "limitations and errors" and cannot aspire to encompass the full range of the proposed topic (pp.19-20). It cannot, she bemoans, even attempt to present "a general view of the whole vast body of phenomena connected with woman's position" (p.21) and can at best serve to lead "other minds more happily situated" to obtain a "larger view" (p.20-1).

Schreiner's posture of humility is undercut by her insistence upon the literalness of her categorisation of Woman and Labour as a fragment, or the "burnt remains" of a larger book (p.19). The "Introduction" is devoted to a detailed and fastidious description of the contents of this original book which functions to validate both its existence and its claims to encompass "the whole body of phenomena connected with woman's position". Such detail suggests an inflated assessment of one's capacity to execute such an intellectually rigorous project, rather than a chronic self-deprecation, although the exuberant confidence of this self-representation must be regarded with as great a suspicion as that of extreme humility. However, it is significant that Schreiner takes her own "original" work rather than an external authority as a measure for the successes and failures of the extant version in what could be seen as an example of the egotism and "profound belief in her own genius" attributed to her by Woolf[29].

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29 Woolf, p.181.

Is the stance of self-effacement and humility, then, just one aspect of a masquerade which involves the duplicitous assumption of a traditionally feminine deference before the authority vested in the realm of theory? Does the ambivalence which fractures the coherence and uniformity of Woman and Labour function as a self-conscious discursive stratagem rather than a symptom of personal indecisiveness, haphazardness and irritating inconsistency?

In attempting to answer this question it must be noted that Schreiner's autobiographical account of her experiences at De Aar functions largely to underline the fact that Woman and Labour constitutes a fragmentary "remembrance" recuperated from the burnt remains of the entire work Musings on Woman and Labour. This insert is intended to substantiate her lifelong claims (the credibility of which is irrelevant in the parameters of the present discussion) regarding the existence of the lost work in the face of scepticism generated by her husband Cronwright and reiterated in certain critical works (Meintjes and First and Scott among them). Whether or not Woman and Labour is a fragment of an original, it is the symbolic valency of the account of its genesis which is of significance. "Fragment" is an apt metaphor both for the location of this "little book" and for the discursive tactics it mobilises.

While emphatically lamenting the shortcomings and limitations of her work, Schreiner's very insistence can be seen as a deliberate invitation to contrast this text with those works which do attempt the "general view" and the "literary perfection" which hers does not, but which, significantly, the earlier work allegedly did[30]. Schreiner's humility would function in this case as a mock-humility designed to mask a critique of those (specifically) nineteenth-century philosophical tracts which endeavour to unify "the whole vast body of phenomena" connected not only with woman's relation to labour but with the order of things in general. This is an

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[30] Schreiner significantly criticises Galton because he "generalises from quite insufficient data, it is ludicrous sometimes." To Havelock Ellis, 29 June 1884, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.43.

intellectual and textual disposition of which Herbert Spencer's "Synthetic Philosophy" is the epitome, as Spencer's own description of his project reveals:

> Setting out from an established ultimate principle, it has to be shown that the course of transformation among all kinds of existences cannot but be that which we have seen it to be. It has to be shown that the re-distribution of matter and motion, *must* everywhere take place in those ways, and produce those traits, which celestial bodies, organisms, societies, alike display. And it has to be shown that in this universality of process, is traceable the same *necessity* which we find in each simplest movement around us, down to the accelerated fall of a stone or the recurrent beat of a harp-string.[31]

Schreiner's "long and very uninteresting explanation" of the genesis of her book accentuates Woman and Labour's deviation from those works of "other minds" which correspond to a Spencerian obsession with systematicity and "universality of process". By her own admission this is a category to which her lost work belonged. Her insistence upon the incompleteness and partiality of her book and upon its concentration on one aspect only - parasitism - can be seen, therefore, as a gesture of repudiation and as a pointed rebuttal of those master texts which, in their phallocentric drive to systematise natural and social phenomena, aim to impose a mastery over it.

The "Introduction" thus constitutes a vindication of the "fragment" and is a resolute refusal to submit to the master discourses and to fill the gaps in the interests of a coherent narrative as, for example, psychoanalysis in its hermeneutic aspirations attempts to close or to disavow the gaps in the hysteric's speech. Unlike the original work, Woman and Labour makes no claims to theoretical or literary coherence. It does not mimic Spencer's concern with the "advance" from so-called "confusion" to "order" and "definiteness"[32]. Through her insistence upon the fragmentary nature of this text, Schreiner subtly undermines the strictures of "the

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[31] Spencer, First Principles, 2: p.323.

[32] Spencer, First Principles, 2: pp.293-5.

conceptual universe of the *Logos* "[33] by means of an implicit interrogation of its master concepts. In so doing she opens the possibility for an alternative approach, one equally rigorous and intellectual if decidedly different and prone to misinterpretation.

Schreiner counters the myth of an organic and continuous literary tradition with a new one which stresses the discontinuity of both the discursive event and the literary tradition. This new myth is that of the "genesis" of the feminist text created from the burnt remains of texts which in their quest for the "key to all mythologies", the Spencerian search for "some all-pervading principle"[34], embody patriarchal authority. Woman and Labour rises Phoenix-like from the ashes of a phallocentric and historically male-dominated theoretical tradition.

The construction of a work such as Woman and Labour is predicated upon a dissociation from male predecessors in an anecdote/fable which inventively displaces the male tradition from a position of unchallenged origin. "Paternity" is thus acknowledged but is simultaneously repudiated in an action which does not deny connection with the patriarchal tradition and which does not conform simplistically to a construction/destruction dichotomy. The feminist text is situated both within and exterior to the male tradition in an image which evokes both connection and severance, destruction and construction. The phallocentric text may be "burnt" but it remains a resonant "remembrance" which informs the text it generates without dictating its terms.

The formation of the feminist text is posited on the disfigurement of the patriarchal text and of the phallocentric values it encodes, on the "burning", not of memory, but of unreflective affiliation, and is dependent upon Schreiner's acceptance of her own otherness to that tradition. This acceptance is signalled by her relegation of the "lost" work, the emblem of phallocentric conformity, to a position as the "other

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33 Carolyn Burke, "Irigaray Through the Looking Glass", Feminist Studies 7, no.2, (Summer 1981), p.296.

34 Spencer, First Principles, 2: p. 323.

book" - an other which, unlike patriarchal femininity, is transformed rather than anxiously and unsuccessfully repressed.

Schreiner's insistence that Woman and Labour is different from the work of "other minds" operates as a technique of accentuating its deviance from phallocentric norms. This is a strategy which highlights the position of otherness to which women's texts are assigned, and converts this into a means by which the discourse of phallocentrism is destabilised. Her myth of literary genesis flouts the social evolutionary notions of continuity, "knowledge of the Cause"[35] and progression, and amounts to a renunciation of the Father, the founding fiction which functions to control the prodigality of her text. This evasion is embodied in the problematising of social evolutionary methodological requirements and in the practice of the compounding of genres to which the discussion will return.

However, the richness of the resources made available to Schreiner's argument in this fashion is not yet exhausted. She insists that the subject-matter of her "little book" may be misconceived or may miscarry if its genesis is not exactly understood. By requiring that the assertorial function of her work be supplemented in this way she affirms the rights of the productive or the genetic against the exclusive privilege of the systematic or structural. The claims of this often unacknowledged or disenfranchised interest in the discursive product are embodied in what at first seems a conventional enough narrative of a fall from the originary plenitude of an ur-text, except that the convention is reinscribed in terms of a feminist tract, a feminine or maternal plenitude. Woman and Labour, and the subjectivity which supports and is supported by it, are separated from this utopian state by patriarchal violence (the Boer War), by the imperialism which Schreiner did not cease to denounce.

This does not represent defeat nor mere marginalisation. The violence which founds patriarchal discourse in its separation from a femininity stigmatised as incomplete or fallen, and which is disavowed by the universalising and eternalising

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[35] Spencer, First Principles, 2: p.443.

pretensions of male theory, unleashes the unassimilable power of the genetic, of historicity and empiricity, of the feminine, to disrupt theoretical completeness. Schreiner's text inhabits and exploits this ambivalence exposed by her almost Nietzschean sketch of a genealogy of the theoretical impulse[36]. This ambivalence is that of a violence which she suffers, or appears to suffer, and which haunts her text (like the reminiscences of hysterics) with the sense of its incompleteness, but which she also turns on its perpetrator to unmask it as disfigured no less (and perhaps more) than disfiguring. This trait or constitutive principle of her argument is exemplified in the ambivalence of her relation to Napoleon Buonaparte, who is both excoriated and celebrated in Woman and Labour and The Story of an African Farm, as will be discussed.

Schreiner's refusal to adhere to one position has traditionally been viewed as symptomatic of her inability to resolve certain aspects of her personal history, with many accounts paying homage to the portrait of Schreiner constructed by her husband Cronwright and implicitly endorsing Woolf's description of her as "one half of a great writer; a diamond marred by a flaw"[37]. The question which remains however is whether this "flaw" is to be seen as an expression of personal inadequacy or as one effect of the structural lack which informs femininity in patriarchal culture - a consequence of the optic of phallocentric representation and as much a property of the perspective as of the object.

The phenomenon of ambivalence in women's fiction assumes greater significance when it is removed from the realm of the strictly personal and idiosyncratic and is regarded in the light of recent feminist forays into psychoanalytic theory. It is now possible to view it as the outcome of an attempt to negotiate the

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36 Michel Foucault, Language, Counter-Memory, Practice (Cornell University Press, 1977) pp.139-165.

37 Woolf, p.183.

socio-political restraints placed on women by the patriarchal construction of sexual difference.

Schreiner's alleged hostility to women[38], for example, becomes more meaningful when interpreted not as a rejection of women but of the implications of a patriarchal post-Oedipal femininity equated with passivity, subordination, and self-alienation. It becomes a projection onto other women (when it is not internalised and converted into hysterical asthma) of the femininity she repudiates.

Although Schreiner complained to Edward Carpenter on one occasion that she "hates" women[39] this must be balanced with her deep attachment to them[40], particularly prostitutes, and her life-long commitment to aiding her "sisters"[41], despite Karl Pearson's advice to restrain her sympathy[42]. The implications of Schreiner's occasional identification with masculinity, her desire to "think I am a man"[43], are clarified in a letter to Edward Carpenter in which she expresses the wish to be a male "that I might be friends with all of you, but you know my sex must always divide. I only feel like a man, but to you all I seem like a woman"[44]. It is not women that Schreiner hates, but the social inscription of sexual difference which "divides" her not only from her male companions but from a recognised relation to the intellectual endeavour they share. The heroines in The Story of an African Farm and From Man to Man attempt to evade this inscription of femininity.

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38 First and Scott, pp. 170, 175.

39 To Edward Carpenter, 16 April 1888, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.139.

40 To Karl Pearson, 20 June 1886, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.84.

41 To Edward Carpenter, 5 April 1888, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.138.

42 To Karl Pearson, 11 November 1890, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.179.

43 To Edward Carpenter,16 April 1888, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.139.

44 To Edward Carpenter, 12 April 1887, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.126.

Ambivalence in Schreiner's writing, whether expressed on an empirical level (content) or structurally, is the embodiment of a desperate resolve to compromise a compliance with patriarchal prescriptions of femininity and discursive production with a protest against these expectations. It represents a silent refusal to comply while appearing to do so, functioning analogously to hysteria in which compliance is denoted while protest is signalled. However, unlike the hysteric in whom repressed rebellion is somatised, Schreiner has access to the political: her protest is voiced - in her lasting attachment to particular female friends, in her wide-ranging political involvement and above all in her decision to write. Unlike hysteria, textual ambivalence can accommodate open protest.

Ambivalence, then, possesses a social and political dimension which in Schreiner's case facilitates its transfiguration into a discursive strategy. Rather than simply expressing the conflict between the desire to conform to patriarchal literary and the demands of feminine norms, it is activated as a potent strategic device directed towards the undermining of the phallocentric discourse it mimes. It provides in this way an effective means of turning into a positive advantage what was for the nineteenth-century woman writer a restrictive prescription. It is the sign of the ambiguous interiority/exteriority upon which her position as a woman is predicated[45].

There is of course no ultimate means of ascertaining the precise degree to which Schreiner's equivocation and the effects produced are intentional, nor to what extent her masquerade as a sociologist is self-conscious. The question is not of overriding importance. In Woman and Labour the strategic challenge to patriarchal constructions of science, reality, and the feminine occurs in three forms: the self-

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[45] See Luce Irigaray, "Women on the Market", This Sex Which is Not One (Cornell University Press, 1985) pp. 170-191 for a discussion of the concept of interiority/exteriority.

conscious and passionate feminist assertions; the conscious marshalling of social evolutionary discourse to support feminist claims; and in the form of effects, not all of which can be conscious, of Schreiner's position as a sexed subject.

Strategy in this book takes the form of intentional self-positioning as a specifically feminist intervention as well as those effects which exceed the intentional and arise from the fact that Schreiner is already positioned as a woman in a patriarchal culture. Her consciousness is implicated in a complex network of cultural and historical relations which cannot be totally mastered by her and which are generative of effects which elude her conscious control.

It is irrelevant to distinguish between the intentional or the unintentional inasmuch as it is the strategic effects of Schreiner's avowedly feminist intervention into social evolutionary and sexological discourse which form the focus of the present enquiry. Of greater significance is the fact that ambivalence, whether intentional or not, constitutes a political response to patriarchal and phallocentric strictures, functioning in this text to reveal the capacity of Schreiner's position as a woman to undermine the persona of scientific authority assumed. For a woman to speak as a scientist within the phallocentric parameters of the social evolutionary framework is to assume a mask which is ill-fitting and prone to slippage.

The impulse of Woman and Labour is to unsettle existing discourses rather than to proffer an alternative theoretical stance and it is in this capacity to raise more questions than it can answer, to suggest more positions than it can consistently adopt, to evoke more theoretical possibilities than it can encompass, and to provoke more ambiguities than it can resolve, that its strategic efficacy resides. This perhaps explains the intense attachment Schreiner expressed to the work of J.S. Mill, which she describes in a letter as having been "of most aid to my *moral* and *spiritual* growth"[46] and particularly to Mill's A System of Logic which she describes as having the most effect on her spiritual life. Schreiner distinguishes between "the intellectual

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[46] To Betty Molteno, 22 May 1896, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.277.

knowledge of *facts*" and "the spiritual attitude of soul", tacitly conceding that Mill's theory is anachronistic and less "technically" accurate than "other writers". Her affection for his work derives instead from its "spiritual" influence upon her as a young girl, from its character as "the spirit, the pure soul searching after the *Truth* which is God".

Although Mill's theory of liberty would have obvious appeal to Schreiner, based as it was on the principle of individual freedom from "compulsion and control" whether in the form of physical force or moral coercion[47], the clue to her enthusiasm for his work lies in his disposition to theory itself. As George Sabine claims, it was "the qualifications and not the theory" which carried the meaning of Mill's philosophy, rendering "systematic criticism" both fatally easy and practically useless. "The importance of Mill's philosophy", contends Sabine, "consisted in its departures from the system which it still professed to support and hence in the revisions it made in the utilitarian tradition"[48]. This departure from systematicity is the basis of its similarity to Schreiner's own destabilising position of interiority and exteriority to the social and political theories she so drastically "revises".

Schreiner and the New Life

Woman and Labour situates itself within a broadly socialist framework which owes little to Marxist analysis or to working class politics. This is not to suggest that the same is true of all Schreiner's writing. Her intervention into the "native question" upon her return to South Africa, for example, attests to a familiarity with the Marxist critique of capitalism and employs Marxist rhetoric in expressing abhorrence at the exploitation of the black workers[49].

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47 John Stuart Mill, On Liberty (1859; Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1981) pp.68-9.

48 George Sabine, A History of Political Theory (George G. Harrap, London, 1937) p.707.

49 First and Scott, pp.256-260.

Schreiner is committed to the "moral" socialism of the late nineteenth century which based its precepts on moral evolutionism, and the regeneration of human nature, and which forwarded an ideal of co-operation and collectivism. This ideal had its roots in the revolutionary humanism which informed the socialism of the first half of the nineteenth-century and whose orientation was to an ethical revolt against capitalism as a system laden with injustices. The following discussion does not suggest that pre-Marxist forms of socialism such as Owenism represented Schreiner's only knowledge of socialism; her familiarity with Marxist concepts has already been demonstrated (see above). In fact, Schreiner's familiarity with Owenism is not the issue. It is important however to situate Schreiner firmly in the tradition of radical protest perhaps best represented in an earlier period by Owenism.

Woman and Labour belongs to the movement on the part of some socialists (among whom Edward Carpenter was a prominent figure) in the 1880s and '90s to extend the meaning and scope of politics beyond the fight for parliamentary reforms and increasingly narrow notions of socialism. As such, Schreiner's work recalls and perpetuates in another form the project of the early utopian socialism of the Owenite phase, locating itself in the tradition of an Owenite feminism which, although increasingly submerged, was a persistent element in later forms of socialism (demonstrated for example by the infiltration of versions of the "new life" into the platform of the Independent Labour Party formed in 1883[50]). The argument propounded in Woman and Labour is strongly influenced by the tradition of Owenite feminism which was a pervasive force in radical politics of the period. It is a tradition which Schreiner herself may not have explicitly acknowledged, nor aligned herself with. Retrospectively, however, her work can be seen to form part of a political philosophy whose roots are firmly in a pre-Marxist notion of socialism.

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[50] Jeffrey Weeks and Sheila Rowbotham, Socialism and the New Life: The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis (Pluto Press, London, 1977) p.16.

The Owenite movement, founded by Robert Owen in the early 1820s, was oriented towards general social emancipation, the abolition of all forms of social oppression by means of a broad cultural reconstruction, and universal liberation in which sexual equality was an essential component. To Robert Owen and his followers, particularly his feminist followers, socialism represented a struggle to achieve true social equality and freedom. This struggle included a commitment to the emotional and cultural transformations necessary to construct a sexual democracy[51].

In his essay entitled "A New View of Society" Owen wrote :

> It was evident to me that the evil was universal; that, in practice, none was in the right path - no, not one; and that, in order to remedy the evil, a different one must be pursued. That the whole man must be re-formed on fundamental principles the very reverse of those in which he had been trained; in short, that the minds of all men must be born again, and their knowledge and practice commence on a new foundation.[52]

Here the emphasis falls upon the necessity of structural as opposed to merely reformist change. An assault is also launched on existent relations of social dominance. As Owen says:

> You must think of me as not belonging to the present system of society, but as one looking with the greatest delight to its entire annihilation, so that ultimately not one stone of it shall be left upon another.[53]

Owenism also emphasised the centrality of women's struggles and called for a "multi-faceted offensive against all forms of social hierarchy, including sexual hierarchy"[54]. Within the Owenite perspective, women's freedom and class emancipation are interdependent: feminism is an integral feature of the socialist

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[51] For a full discussion of the connection between Owenism and the construction of a sexual democracy see Barbara Taylor, Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century (Virago, London, 1983).

[52] Robert Owen, A New View of Society and Other Writings (1813; J.M. Dent, London, 1927) p.94.

[53] Robert Owen, The Life of Robert Owen (2 Vols; Effingham Wilson, London, 1857) 1: p.ii.

[54] Taylor, pp.xv-xvi.

objective in a movement which makes manifest the connection between the sexual and the social and which makes the transformation in sexual relations central to the process of cultural regeneration. This can be seen in the work of two prominent Owenites, William Thompson and Anna Wheeler who collaborated on the influential text, Appeal of One Half the Human Race although the book is attributed to Thompson alone. They maintain that:

> The interests therefore of all human beings, their real comprehensive interests, calculating all the consequences of their actions and pursuing that which will promote preponderant good, thus reconciling individual with general welfare, ought to be pursued for all, and for all classes; the interests of women for their own sakes, the interests of men for theirs. What reason can men give, what reason can any individuals of the human race give, that their happiness should be promoted which cannot be equally given by any other individuals, by women?[55]

Thus, women's equality is central to the Owenite project. It is also imporatnt to stress that Owenism should not be seen as representing a quaint relic, an anachronistic social critique surpassed by more sophisticated discourses such as Marxism. It has significant historical relation to the radical impulse in both "bourgeois" feminism and modern radical feminism.

Within the Owenite schema there is a strategic stress on the equal status of the categories of the moral and the political. This is evident in Owen's tendency to equate political transformation with moral rebirth:

> But there was more than this to consider before I could arrive at the great fundamental truth which should ultimately confound the learned, arouse the population of the world from its dream of error, change the entire system of society from its foundation through all its ramifications, and make man a new being, so that he shall appear to be born again with a new heart, a new mind, new spirit, new feelings, and new conduct.[56]

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[55] William Thompson, Appeal of One Half the Human Race, against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, to retain them in Political and thence in Civil and Domestic Slavery (1825; Eagle, Cork, 1975) pp.119-20.

[56] Owen, The Life of Robert Owen, p.xx.

This conflation of the political and the moral can also be seen in Thompson's statement that:

> ...no equal system of morals, no equal system of laws, can be relied upon by women as affording them an equal chance of happiness, in proportion to their powers and faculties, natural or acquired, with men, if not accompanied and supported by equal political rights.[57]

The critique of existing social and sexual relations in no way occupies a subordinate position in the invocation to moral renovation. Instead, the moral and the political cease to operate oppositionally and are proposed as equivalents, with moral regeneration posited as dependent upon political intervention. Apart from effecting a radical politicisation of the "moral", in which morality is reformulated as political activism, this movement displaces the political as the traditionally inferior term into the dominant Victorian category of the moral.

This act of displacement is expressed in Owenite millenarian rhetoric. From Owen's belief that society constructs character and can therefore alter character he draws the inferences:

> Fourthly - That it will introduce the Millenium over the world, by peaceably and quietly superseding the existing ignorant, false, wicked, and insane system of society, by the wise, true, good, and rational system of society, for the government of the human race as one family.
>
> Fifthly - This new system of society will develop the true religion, government, laws, classification, and institutions of society for the population of the world.
>
> Sixthly - That it will cordially unite all of our race as brothers, - create a practical equality of position, education, and occupation, according to age and capacity, - and establish for ever true liberty, just equality, and real fraternity.[58]

Such use of millenarian rhetoric, according to Barbara Taylor, indicates "not a literal faith in millenarian change but an intensity of aspiration for which there was simply no secular vocabulary available - an imaginative straining towards

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[57] Thompson, <u>Appeal of One Half the Human Race</u>, p.182

[58] Owen, <u>The Life of Robert Owen</u>, p.iv.

future freedom which found voice in the only language of social optimism possessed by most men and women"[59]. Owenism thus availed itself of a religious rhetoric expressive, not of a lapse into conservative conceptualisation, but of a provocative act of appropriation and an invasion of a dominant philosophical terrain. Utopian rhetoric is exploited, therefore, as one strand of a political strategy in which the moral authority previously monopolised by organised religion is mobilised to different ends. Language is revealed as a site of ideological struggle which, in this case, reformulates highly charged theological discourse in an attempt to produce new definitions of the moral.

As Owenism reveals, utopianism, rather than denoting a vestigial attachment to an enervating and depoliticised idealism, constitutes instead a refusal to accept as inevitable and trans-historical a social reality which is ideologically determined. It functions therefore as an overtly political strategy in which visionary rhetoric is galvanised to supplant rather than promote dominant social attitudes while remaining overtly within a conventional Christian/moralist framework. The practical utility of this tactic is attested to by the utilisation of wish-fulfilment modes of narrative in women's fiction[60]. Utopian texts such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Herland[61], in which three male explorers discover an all-female society, constitute a liberating flight into vision and idealism which denotes veiled protest against patriarchal social, sexual and literary Necessity.

An understanding of the utopian impulse in the early socialist movement is crucial to an appreciation of those aspects of Schreiner's writing and general political disposition which have proved most problematical - her utopianism and the theoretical ambivalence which is most cogently evinced in the protean vacillation

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59 Taylor, p.159.

60 Gillian Beer, "Beyond Determinism: George Eliot and Virginia Woolf", Women Writing and Writing About Women, ed. Mary Jacobus (Croom Helm, London, 1979) ch. 4.

61 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Herland (1915; The Women's Press, London, 1979).

between traditional moralism and fervid political exhortation. Of special relevance to this issue is the Owenite conflation of the moral or the visionary with the political, the effects of which extend beyond the insight into the ideological power enmeshed in certain definitions of morality.

The Owenite engagement with morality works not only to ground socialist assertions in an authorised discourse and system of beliefs but, through its manipulation of linguistic constructs, to enact a reformulation of morality by means of which possibilities for new concepts emerge. These are marked by their synthesis of moralism and socialism, moral regeneration and social transformation in which the dichotomy between the categories of the ethical and the political is inoperable. The two interfuse in a gesture which ruthlessly deforms the representation of a transcendental morality untainted by a political whose roots are in the empirical and the historical. It is this formulation of morality which was recuperated by the moral socialism of the late nineteenth-century and which forms the basis of Schreiner's definitions of morality.

The strategic generation of new conceptualisations of the moral is evident in the resounding conclusion to the "Introduction". It opens with a reiteration of the theme of the evolution of sex with one striking variation:

> And, it would indeed almost seem, that, on the path toward the higher development of sexual life on earth, as man has so often had to lead in other paths, that here it is perhaps woman, by reason of those very sexual conditions which in the past have crushed and trammelled her, who is bound to lead the way, and man to follow. (p.27)

In this passage Schreiner not only openly announces the feminist orientation of her project but signals a crucial link with the resurfacing tradition of Owenite feminism through her conversion of the evangelical ideal of "woman's mission" into a justification for female militance and political activism. The sanctified values of self-sacrifice and self-abnegation are recoined as self-determination and political "duty".

The moral and the political are conflated in this rhapsodic invocation to women to assume a role of leadership. The moral rhetoric surrounding the concept of

woman's mission is exploited to bolster political aims. The expeditious advancement to a "higher development" is presented as resting upon feminist activism in a process in which the ethical and the political are rendered synonymous. In proposing that the feminist movement stimulates evolutionary progress, the political expression of feminist aspiration is adroitly imbued with an ethical impetus.

This passage is followed by the allegory of the tired angel, sexual love, in which Schreiner enacts an analogous dissolution of the dichotomy between the visionary and the political precisely through the deployment of the genre of allegory as a technique of scrutiny:

> So that it may be at last, that sexual love - that tired angel who through the ages has presided over the march of humanity, with distraught eyes, and feather-shafts broken, and wings drabbled in the mires of lust and greed, and golden locks caked over with the dust of injustice and oppression, - till those looking at him have sometimes cried in terror, "He is the Evil and not the Good of life!" and have sought, if it were not possible, to exterminate him - shall yet, at last, bathed from the mire and dust of ages in the streams of friendship and freedom, leap upwards, with white wings spread, resplendent in the sunshine of a distant future - the essentially Good and Beautiful of human existence. (pp.27-8)

This allegory is explicitly framed by the political, following as it does upon the invocation to female leadership. The conjunction, "so that", which introduces the allegory, links these so-called dissonant representational modes - the political and the allegorical (trans-historical and universal) - in a relation of mutual support which is potentially menacing to the maintenance of the traditional theoretical antithesis which underlies their conceptualisation.

Schreiner adopts the visionary vocabulary of Evangelical discourse. Drawing on a tradition of Biblical rhetoric she selects the figure of an angel, incorporates him into a defining system of Good and Evil and represents human sin as "lust" and "greed". The rhetorical fervour of the set piece reinforces its location within the doctrine of Christian millenarianism. This emblem simultaneously employs secular imagery and themes which disturb the theological purport. The very choice of an angel as a metaphor for sexual love is paradoxical in a theological schema (although finding

support in certain radical interpretations, notably for the purposes of this discussion, in Milton's visionary polemic) supported by the binarisation of the spiritual and the corporeal. Here as elsewhere Schreiner's promotion of a fluidity between these realms problematises the category of the spiritual.

The co-existence of the vocabulary of Christian moralising with terms such as "injustice" and "oppression" also proves problematical; these terms, although they do possess religious connotations, unlike the cardinal sins referred to, belong specifically to the domain of the socio-political.

Thus the theological rhetoric is not simply adopted nor absorbed for the purposes of an allegorical rendition. It is undermined by means of a covert assault on the integrity and the autonomy of the categorisations upon which it depends. Implicit in this is a critique of the distinction between the spiritual and the physical, the transcendental and the social or empirical, the most cogent feature of which is the framing of the ethical content by the political, the affirmation of the socio-political over the metaphysical. Schreiner's allegorical technique compounds rhetorical modes such as the metaphysical and the social, the moral and the political. In this way it attacks the logic which maintains the spiritual and the physical, the moral and the political in opposition.

Therefore, in a tradition of utopian socialist feminism which extends to the present, Woman and Labour challenges certain of those divisions deployed by contemporary patriarchal representation. In common with pre-Marxist feminism there is a deliberate blurring of the divisions (insisted upon by a later socialism) between the moral or spiritual and the political, the sexual and the social.

It is, however, the impact of the changes in nineteenth-century socialism on the inscription of feminism which is of overriding importance to a consideration of Schreiner's project. Owenism was replaced in the second half of the nineteenth century by a socialism dominated by an emphasis on class antagonism and the contest

between labour and capital in which organised labour played a key role[62]. Concomitant with the displacement of the ideal of universal emancipation was a narrowing of the socialist focus which involved the loosening of the ideological connection between sex oppression and class exploitation as twin targets of a single project. This resulted not only in the marginalisation of feminist demands but their stigmatisation as "bourgeois deviationism"[63] with no inherent connection to the socialist movement.

The repudiation of utopianism as a viable strategic option and of women's emancipation as an essential component of the socialist struggle which was a feature of the movement to the "Scientific politics of proletarian communism"[64] is one which has informed socialist endeavour to this day. In fact it dictates the terms of those analyses of Schreiner's work which confine it within the limited political categories of twentieth-century socialist polemic. Sheila Rowbotham, for example, claims that Schreiner's real weakness was that "her capacity for insight can be used to cover up the weaknesses in her ability to analyse and work out alternatives"[65]. This is a weakness Rowbotham associates with the tendency of the socialism of the 1880s to display "less interest in theories of organisation and little grasp of strategy"[66]. Feminism was, thus, displaced from a position of centrality within a revolutionary ideology and its links with the concept of revolution and social transformation severed. It was conceived as a struggle less revolutionary in its aims and implications than those based on class.

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[62] Taylor, pp. 261-287.

[63] Taylor, p.285.

[64] Taylor, p.xv.

[65] Sheila Rowbotham, Women, Resistance and Revolution (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1974) p.96.

[66] Rowbotham, Women, Resistance and Revolution, p.86.

This narrowing of socialist focus did pave the way for an autonomous feminist movement and it lent feminism a new respectability and a position within mainstream liberal thought[67]. However, its acceptance was predicated on a strategic distancing of the reformist movement from the revolutionary humanism of the Owenite period and the detachment of an emphasis upon sexual egalitarianism from a theory of structural change. Along with notable gains, then, went significant losses. Primary among these was the increasing antagonism between the once concordant aims of feminism and socialism.

Woman and Labour strategically locates itself in the interstices between reformist and utopian premises, which does not imply or condone a simplistic opposition between socialist and reformist feminism. Nor does it seek to align each with radicalism and conservatism respectively. There has been a tendency to equate the Victorian feminist movement with a latent conservatism and to perceive it as individualistic and devoid of revolutionary potential. However, in keeping with the views of Bebel, for example, who represented the "bourgeois suffrage movement" as opposed to the more "radical" aims of socialist feminism[68], recent studies have done much to alter this perception of nineteenth-century feminism. Both Sheila Jeffreys and Martha Vicinus, for example, stress the desire of certain strands of Victorian feminism to transform "not only the position of women in society, but that very society itself"[69].

Woman and Labour operates on one level as an expression of the rift between organised socialism and the aims of feminism, between the Labour and the women's

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[67] Taylor, p.297.

[68] August Bebel, Woman and Socialism (Socialist Literature Company, New York, 1911) p.6.

[69] Martha Vicinus, Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920 (Virago, London, 1985) p.39. See also Sheila Jeffreys, "'Free from all uninvited touch of man': women's campaigns around sexuality, 1880-1914", The Sexuality Papers: Male Sexuality and the Social Control of Women , eds. L. Coveney, M. Jackson, S. Jeffreys, L. Kaye, P. Mahoney (Hutchinson, London, 1984) pp.9-24.

movements - a rift deplored by working-class feminists such as Hannah Mitchell. However, where Mitchell rues the split between her two ideological "homes", Schreiner argues for the inevitability and indeed necessity of the split, given the impasse, acknowledged by Mitchell, between the demands of feminism and the "deep sex prejudice" endemic in the male population[70]. This was a prejudice to which socialists were not immune[71].

In her attention to what she terms the "Woman's Labour Problem" (p.50), Schreiner addresses not only the specific changes which occurred in the availability of paid employment to some women in the nineteenth century, but also and more significantly, the wider changes in the conceptualisation of women's work brought about by the technological advances associated with English industrialisation. As she makes clear, the "modern 'Woman's Labour Problem'" can in no easy way be equated with that of the male. It refers instead to a dramatic and fundamental alteration in the social placement of women which far exceeds that of the male wage earner under capitalism. While acknowledging the hardships experienced by the male unemployed (p.44), Schreiner states that his plight is somewhat ameliorated by the fact that "In a million new directions forms of honoured and remunerative social labour are opening up before [him]" (p.45). Woman, on the contrary, has been robbed "almost wholly, of the more valuable of her ancient domain of productive and social labour" (p.50) in the shift from a home-based and collective labour system. Therefore, while Schreiner does not address the issue of the class distribution in these new male fields of labour, she dramatises the different effects upon men and women of the industrialisation process. Women are clearly the losers in the shift to a wage-based economy in which,

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70 Hannah Mitchell, The Hard Way Up (Virago, London, 1977) p.142.

71 "About this time I realised that if women did not bestir themselves the Socialists would be quite content to accept Manhood Suffrage in spite of all their talk about equality...Strangely enough, Mrs Pankhurst and her followers found some of their bitterest opponents among the Socialists". Mitchell, p.126.

although some men may fare better than others, men in general fare better than women.

Woman and Labour categorically refutes an identification of the male and female labour "problem", thereby questioning the subsumption of the feminist struggle within socialism or the Labour movement. Schreiner poses herself against the increasing socialist tendency to efface the crucial difference between the exploitation suffered by men and women under patriarchal capitalism, seeing the "question of sex" as far more "complex" than that of the labour problem[72]. She rejects as "radically and fundamentally false" the assertion that the labour problem confronted by men and women is "absolutely identical" and that "when the male labour problem of our age solves itself, that of the woman will of necessity have met its solution also" (p.74). This is a paraphrase of Bebel's claim that the "solution of the woman question is identical with the solution of the social question"[73]. For, she claims, "Were the entire male labour problem of this age satisfactorily settled tomorrow;...yet the woman's problem might be further from satisfactory solution than it is today; and, if it were affected at all, might be affected for the worse" (p.118).

Schreiner is challenging the subsumption of feminism within socialism. Although this may represent an oversimplification of arguments deployed by Engels and Bebel, it is not unjust to their basic assumptions about the place of feminism in the "larger" struggle[74]. The woman's problem is recognised as issuing from a source different from that of the male - namely, the patriarchal sexual economy. As Schreiner maintains, "The question of woman's having the vote, and independence and

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[72] To Edward Carpenter, 13 January 1887, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.118.

[73] Bebel, p.7.

[74] See Rosalind Delmar, "Looking Again at Engels' 'Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State'", The Rights and Wrongs of Women, eds. Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1979) pp. 271-287.

education, is only part of the question, there lies something deeper"[75]. The inadequacy of a merely economic reorganisation to resolve this "something deeper", a relation of sexual domination, is satirically encapsulated in the metaphor of the mistress and her pampered poodle (p.119), in which the analogy between the woman and the pampered pet is a telling one.

The socialist assault on capitalism is perceived by Woman and Labour as an attack aimed primarily at a redistribution of wealth and power among males and directed to a "re-adjustment of the position of the male worker" which, in functioning to "open up exactly those conditions which make parasitism possible to millions of women today leading healthy and active lives" (p.119), marginalises and debases women. However, the Labour movement is not categorically condemned. On the contrary, its vital role in society is acknowledged. Along with the women's movement it is viewed as "a healthy and virile condition in a race or a society" (p.121). The two are likened to two streams which, although running along a parallel course, and proceeding "co-extensively", "yet remain wholly distinct" (p.122). Their relation is clearly one of similarity and mutual interest, but of difference rather than identity.

The "large impersonal obligation"

Woman and Labour functions in one sense as Schreiner's vicarious participation in the campaigns of the Suffragette movement. Residence in South Africa precluded her from supporting this movement more actively and indeed her dislike of organisations and societies may have precluded her participation in any case[76]. Schreiner applauded the activities of the Women's Social and Political Union as can be seen from the dedication of this book to the respected suffragette leader, Lady

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[75] To Havelock Ellis, 2 May 1884, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.40.

[76] To Havelock Ellis, 2 May 1884, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.39.

Constance Lytton who, during her imprisonment in 1910, was forcibly fed to the detriment of her health[77].

Indeed it could be argued that this "trumpet call summoning the faithful to a vital crusade"[78] is inspired by precisely the same flame of revolt which issued in the now legendary violence of the window smashing campaign launched by the W.S.P.U. in 1911, the year of the book's publication. As well as representing an early twentieth-century feminist emphasis on suffrage and militance, Woman and Labour simultaneously evokes the atmosphere of the feminism of the 1880s and '90s, a time when discussion of the issue of sexual difference was at its height and during which Schreiner participated briefly in the second Men and Women's Club (1884). The discussion of sexuality bears strong traces of Schreiner's involvement in this debate, owing as much to the sexual ferment of the 1880s as to the anti-feminist discourse of the early 1900s, although it is of course to this discourse that her arguments are specifically directed[79]. Thus Woman and Labour constitutes an intervention into both of these related but historically-distanced feminist discourses. This attests not only to the extended period over which the text, whose (perhaps more legitimate) origin can be located in a paper she was preparing for the Men and Women's Club in 1885, was written, but also to the breadth and depth of the project it undertakes.

Woman and Labour is an attempt to reveal and expand upon late nineteenth-century feminist ideology in its multifarious guises, in its theory and its praxis, and in its multiple expressions. It aims to demonstrate the common denominator in a heterogeneous attack on patriarchal authority and is a work which eschews commitment to one organisation, to one approach, and to one strategy, but which, in

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[77] See Vicinus, Independent Women, pp.274-6.

[78] Vera Brittain, Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900-1925, (1933; Fontana/Virago, London, 1980) p.41.

[79] See First and Scott, Ch.4; Vicinus, Independent Women, Ch. 7; Sheila Rowbotham, Hidden From History (Pluto Press, London, 1973) Chs 8-18. This point will be discussed in the following chapter of the thesis.

its confrontation of the phallocentric social and sexual economy, symbolises the principle coalescing the diverse expressions of late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century feminism. This attempt involves revealing the links between the so-called reformist feminism of the mid-to late-Victorian era and the militant feminism embodied in the W.S.P.U.

Schreiner's representation of the women's movement is characterised by an elevation of heterogeneity and diversity and a refusal to hierarchise the various struggles it incorporates. The strength and value of feminism is seen as residing in the fact that it "has not taken its origin from any mere process of theoretic argument; that it breaks out, now here and now there, in forms divergent and at times superficially almost irreconcilable" (p.138). This description could be applied equally to Schreiner's own discursive practice in its tendency to resist "literary perfection" (p.21). As she says:

> The fact that, at one point, it manifests itself in a passionate, and at times almost incoherent, cry for an accredited share in public and social duties; while at another it makes itself felt as a determined endeavour after self-culture; that in one land it embodies itself mainly in a resolute endeavour to enlarge the sphere of remunerative labour for women; while in another it manifests itself chiefly as an effort to reco-ordinate the personal relation of the sexes;...- all this diversity, and the fact that the average woman is entirely concerned in labour in her own little field, shows, not the weakness, but the strength of the movement. (p.139)

This conceptualisation does not merely reconcile the reformist impulse (the endeavour to "enlarge the sphere of remunerative labour for women") with the more radical (the effort to "reco-ordinate the personal relation of the sexes"). Political divisions such as these are sublated. Schreiner resists the tendency to impose a unifying framework upon what she perceives as an inescapably heterogeneous critique of patriarchal sociality, acknowledging instead the differences which inform individual women's struggles while at the same time recognising the common element of these struggles - the "negation of all possibility of parasitism in the human female" (p.139). It is a formulation of feminism which, in common with late twentieth-century radical feminism, admits of the interplay between reformism and

radicalism. It conceives of feminist struggle as entailing a diversity of sites and modes of intervention.

A definite role is afforded the reformist impulse, to those women who "labour year after year at some poor little gargoyle of a Franchise Bill, or the shaping of some rough little foundation-stone of reform in education" and through whose actions "the enwidened and beautified relations of woman to life must rise, if they are ever to come" (p.143). However, reform is a model of change which is counterposed to an alternative model privileging frictive explosiveness. The emphasis on divergence functions to demonstrate the inability of labels such as "reformist", "individualist", or "socialist" to encompass adequately the scope of feminist endeavour. It attests to Schreiner's attempt to conceptualise the political in ways resistant to phallocentric theorisation.

Divergence is also a feature of the discursive strategy in Woman and Labour with Schreiner's own position echoing that of the women's movement in its reckless tendency to "break out" in "forms divergent and at times superficially almost irreconcilable" (p.138). Nowhere is this more apparent than in the plurality of impulses informing Schreiner's representation of the women's movement itself and expressed in the equivocation between explanation, conciliation and contention.

Woman and Labour explicitly justifies what was becoming an increasingly militant feminist movement in the face of a rapidly spiralling anti-feminist drive. Although no apology is made for the militance of female demands for social and sexual equality - the book functions in fact as a celebration of, and an invocation to, a militant womanhood - the aims of the feminist movement are framed in eugenic terms and in the rhetoric of sexual service rather than female self-assertion (which is why Rowbotham describes Schreiner's struggle as involving a "mystical connection to other women with whom she could communicate only through the common experience of pain"[80]). Its proclaimed theoretical premise is that the women's movement

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[80] Sheila Rowbotham, Women, Resistance and Revolution, p.94.

operates to promote and facilitate social progress and, significantly, union between the sexes.

The strategic considerations which motivate and propel Schreiner's advocacy of the feminist movement produce a representation of feminism which luxuriously exploits the liberating potential of paradox. The reader is conducted by this arch-rhetorician through a whirlpool of emotions, rhetorical registers, and discursive models. She goes to extreme lengths to emphasise that the claims of the women's movement, enunciated in no uncertain terms as the cry for "labour and the training which fits for labour" (p.33), are motivated not by "irresponsible impulse" or personal selfishness (p.73) but by a sincere concern for the welfare of future generations: "we make this demand, not for our own sakes alone, but for the succour of the race" (p.72).

Women's emancipation is also posited as necessary to ensure evasion of the debilitating state of sex-parasitism, which will be discussed later in the thesis. Furthermore, it is viewed as contributing to a "healthy" society through its facilitation of the "movement of the sexes towards each other" (p.259) and as functioning, therefore, to remedy the sexual disco-ordination which is the sign of the times according to theorists such as Bebel, Pearson, and Ellis. Thus Schreiner's formulation of the women's movement counters criticism of its self-serving nature and of its dangerous tendency to foster a potentially disastrous division between the sexes - a feature of Ellis' and Pearson' s anti-feminist polemic[81]. Schreiner's definition firmly refutes the stigma of "unnaturalness" commonly attributed to

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[81] "The rapidity with which women in this country are obtaining an independent social and political position...is one of the most marked features of our age. Yet, like so many other social changes, we allow it to take place in a tentative and piecemeal fashion, without first intelligently investigating whither the movement is leading us, or how far it may not really be undermining the existing basis of our whole society. The remoulding of existing social institutions may be desirable in itself, but is it not also advantageous that we should see the real bearing of what is taking place in this revolution of the relations of sex, and endeavour, as far as is humanly possible, to guide the movement into such channels that it may gradually change the foundations of society without at the same time depriving society of its stability?" Karl Pearson, Ethic of Freethought (Adam and Charles Black, London, 1901) p.353.

members of the women's movement (and exploited by anti-feminist writers such as D.H. Lawrence, as will be discussed in Chapter Three of the thesis), revealing instead the concordance of the aims of feminism with the laws of Nature, and deploying Spencerian discourse for precisely this purpose. What could be more natural, Woman and Labour tacitly enquires, than that women should fight to become "fit" mothers, to produce healthy children, to enter into successful and fulfilling relationships with men, and in so doing, ensure the "continued development of the human race on earth" (p.130)?

With a view to confronting the stereotype of the selfish and "masculine" feminist, Walpole's infamous "hyena in petticoats", Schreiner utilises religious, if not Biblical, rhetoric to strategic effect and overtly compares the women's movement to a religious revival. Rather than demonstrating her seduction by the mystical or traditional moralism, this manouevre highlights the political investments in the evangelical position:

> It is this fact, the consciousness on the part of the women taking their share in the Woman's Movement of our age, that their efforts are not, and cannot be, of immediate advantage to themselves, but that they almost of necessity and immediately lead to loss and renunciation, which gives to this movement its very peculiar tone; setting it apart from the large mass of economic movements, placing it rather in a line with those vast religious developments which at the interval of ages have swept across humanity, irresistibly modifying and reorganising it. (pp.124-5)

Schreiner's comparison stresses the relationship of the women's movement to "religious developments" as one of analogy rather than identity. The equivocality of her reference to the religious is emphasised by a consideration of its echoes of Karl Pearson's atheistic appropriation of the religious metaphor. In The Ethic of Freethought Pearson constructs the concept of freethought as a "new religious movement", religious in its mission to discover the truth and in its "enthusiastic desire to convey the newly-acquired truth to others, the intense wish to spread the

new knowledge, to scatter its light into dark corners, to sweep away error and ignorance"[82].

In accordance with this metaphor, the feminists in Woman and Labour are selfless warriors (but warriors nevertheless) engaged in a fight for "humanity at large" and propelled by the "over-shadowing consciousness of a large impersonal obligation" (p.125) which makes each individual a "landmark in the course of our human evolution" (p.126). Schreiner marshals both the vocabulary of social evolutionism and religion, with the added bonus of a fleeting reference to Comte's religion of humanity, for the express purpose of ascribing to an increasingly vilified group of women a saintly status, and to their passionate, disruptive commitment, a quasi-religious legitimacy. Their "efforts... after physical or mental self-culture and expansion" are endowed with "solemn import" (p.126).

The particular sainthood embodied in women such as Lytton (see pp.29-29), their particular expression of the "angel in the house" ideology, is of a distinctly secular and political nature. If any "wages" are to paid, as Schreiner's reference to Tennyson in the dedication implies, the "sin" to be expiated is that of a repressive social formation. If the women's movement accords in scope and degree of commitment with a religious movement rather than "economic movements", the aims it encodes are determinedly secular, consisting of the "attempt to co-ordinate the ideals, manners, and institutions of the society to the new conditions" (p.264). And, if women are forced to endure the "suffering and evils of woman's condition" (p.125), the evil referred to is a social rather than a metaphysical one, emanating from "artificial constrictions and conventions, the remnants of a past condition of society" (p.24).

Schreiner states that it is renunciation which lends to the women's movement its "very peculiar tone". This is a denial which has little to do with female self-repression, self-sacrifice and acquiescence. Within Schreiner's formulation it

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[82] Pearson, The Ethic of Freethought, pp.12-13.

amounts to a renunciation not of the self but of the restrictive norms of patriarchal femininity. It represents a refusal of the sacrificial price demanded by the phallocentric signifying system. Schreiner claims that:

> It is this consciousness [of the large impersonal obligation] which renders almost of solemn import the efforts of the individual female after physical or mental self-culture and expansion; this, which fills with a lofty enthusiasm the heart of the young girl, who, it may be, in some solitary farm-house, in some distant wild of Africa or America, deep into the night bends over her books with the passion and fervour with which an early Christian may have bent over the pages of his Scriptures; feeling that, it may be, she fits herself by each increase of knowledge for she knows not what duties towards the world, in the years to come. (pp.126-7)

In this evocative vignette which has obvious personal significance for the South African Schreiner, and which is suggestive of Lyndall's thirst for knowledge in The Story of an African Farm, the "feminine" virtue of renunciation is inscribed as the rejection of ignorance and exclusion from male knowledge and power. The assertion of the young girl's right to knowledge is invested with a "solemn import", her desire for self-development and self-affirmation, with the sanctification of inpersonal duty. The references to self-culture again signal Schreiner's commitment to the philosophy of Freethought but here, as throughout the text, this notion is imbued with specifically feminist connotations.

In this passage knowledge becomes in effect the new sacred Word and although it is the Word of Man which replaces the Word of God (the Scriptures), the Word of Man is eminently ripe for, and accessible to, scrutiny and reappraisal. The theological tradition is thus secularised and in the process made accessible to criticism which ceases to be a profanation of the sacred text and becomes instead the primary mode of the reader's relation to the text.

Schreiner claims that it is the consciousness of the "great impersonal ends" to be achieved which gives to many a woman

> strength for renunciation, when she puts from her the lower type of sexual relationship, even if bound up with all the external honour a legal bond can confer, if it offers her only enervation and parasitism; and which enables her often to accept poverty, toil, and sexual isolation...and the renunciation

> of motherhood, that crowning beatitude of the woman's existence...in the conviction that, by so doing, she makes more possible a fuller and higher attainment of motherhood and wifehood to the women who will follow her. (p.127)

A subversive and paradoxical reformulation of renunciation is enacted in which sacrifice and duty consist of women's rejection of social and sexual subjection. Schreiner draws on Pearson's concept of "renunciation" as that which frees "man" from "phenomenal slavery" (physical circumstances, human passions, institutional prejudice) through the subordination of "outward sensation" to the "Reasoned will", a renunciation "based on knowledge"[83]. However, although Schreiner does employ Pearson's formulation of renunciation as self-assertion his notion of "phenomenal slavery" is overtly politicised. In her account phenomenality equates with the social exclusion of women.

The litany of renunciations recited in this passage amounts to a contestation of women's social and sexual servitude in which confinement within a potentially destructive model of heterosexuality and reduction to a "motherhood" connoting purely reproductive function are firmly "renounced". In the name of woman's duty to "the women who will follow her", a renunciation of the norms of "feminine" behaviour is advocated and justified. It is significant that the range of actions by which women are encouraged to express their duty/renunciation/self-affirmation extends from the radical choice of "sexual isolation" (sexual autonomy) to resisting fashions in dress. This signals Schreiner's recognition of the penetration of phallocentrism into all aspects of life and the correlative necessity for varying modalities of response.

Woman and Labour constitutes on one level, then, Schreiner's intervention into the conflict between socialism and feminism. Its negotiation of the rift between the two consists in part of a movement between them, the flexible adoption or amalgamation of both sets of strategies. This is expressed in the equivocation between

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[83] Pearson, The Ethic of Freethought, pp.95-102.

feminist and socialist rhetoric, between an emphasis on the social construction of "sex manifestations" (p.187) and on the "material conditions of life" (p.44), the capitalistic "subjugation of large bodies of other human creatures" in the interests of accumulating the results of "the excessive labours of those classes" (p.98).

Schreiner's feminist analysis is underpinned by the humanist-socialist commitment to universal emancipation, to the process of universal enlightenment and cultural reconstruction, to the vision of a truly "socialised human race" (p.131) projected by English socialism of the early nineteenth-century. It is, therefore, firmly grounded in an early socialist recognition of the link between the social and the sexual.

The impetus behind the recall of Owenite feminism is, however, one whose interests lie elsewhere than in the re-establishment of the unity between feminism and the socialist struggle; its overriding aim is not to reunite sex and class. Schreiner recoups from the radical tradition inspired by Owenism a formulation of the inextricable conjunction between structural change and the alteration in the social and sexual status of women. This is a connection between social and sexual revolution absent from or at least repressed in post-1850s socialism.

The influences of earlier forms of socialism function to ground Schreiner's critique of patriarchal socio-sexual hierarchy, if not in the nature of things, then at least in the historical past. They furnish her underlying premise of the necessity of structural change with a legitimate theoretical precedent. More significantly they enable her to retain and strengthen the respectability enjoyed by the feminist movement which was contingent upon its self-distancing from socialistic intentions without being forced to relinquish the radical impetus which comprised an essential component of its historical expression.

Her recuperation (conscious or unconscious) of an earlier feminist tradition is, therefore, highly selective and oriented towards the provision of a basis for a reformulation of nineteenth-century feminism which links her version of feminism, not only with the historical past but also, ironically, with the radical feminist future.

Through her reinscription of feminism, Schreiner bypasses the limitations inherent in conformity either to the reformist feminism or the socialism of the period, avoiding both the narrow focus of reformism and the subsumption of sex in class characteristic of Victorian socialism. It is a means of circumventing the division between utopianism, the dream of a sexual democracy, and political pragmatism, the reform of women's legal, economic and sexual status.

Schreiner's feminism eschews reduction to classification and is determinedly anti-formulaic. It re-acquaints Victorian feminism with its own radical prehistory, its revolutionary past. It is at the same time a feminism which rejects its ostracism from socialist discourse. Schreiner does not endeavour to replace feminism in the central position in socialism from which it was ejected but attempts, rather, to reforge the link between feminism and socialism with the difference that feminism now functions as the guiding principle, the arbiter of policy, the monitor of tactical priorities, operating to marshal the socialist commitment to structural change in the interests of a specifically feminist goal. It is, above all, a feminism which attempts to produce new possibilities for its own inscription.

The voice of unconscious desire

Although stressing the heterogeneity of the women's movement, Woman and Labour is simultaneously insistent upon the coherence of its motivating impulse. It is described as "a movement steady and persistent in one direction" (p.139), and as shaping itself " as the child is shaped in the womb" (p.139):

> Not merely is the Woman's Movement of our age not a sporadic and abnormal growth, like a cancer bearing no organic relation to the development of the rest of the social organism, but it is essentially but one important phase of a general modification which the whole of modern life is undergoing. (p.252)

This statement aligns the women's movement with the processes of social evolution and an organic, gradualist model of social change. However, the concept of organicism evoked in this passage is significantly modified by the allowances made for the "divergent", the "irreconcilable" and the "spontaneous" in Schreiner's

formulation. The women's movement manifests itself in "forms divergent and at times superficially almost irreconcilable" (p.138) and is "vital, spontaneous" (p.139). This definition undercuts the gradualist model of change implicit in the organic analogy as it was employed in social evolutionary theory and the nineteenth-century literary tradition. Schreiner describes the women's movement as simultaneously heterogeneous and homogeneous, spontaneous and gradualist. This is a highly paradoxical union emblematised in the phrase "vital, spontaneous, and wholly organic and unartificial" (p.139) and enacts a reformulation of the notions of the organic, of a unity unhampered by difference and a disruptive heterogeneity.

According to Schreiner the women's movement resembles "the gigantic religious and intellectual movement which for centuries convulsed the life of Europe" (p.136). This comparison serves to emphasise the link between women's struggles and broader social, moral and political transformation. However the particular transformation referred to here is the movement to liberal humanism and freethought of which Schreiner was a committed advocate.

In the broad historical sweep undertaken in her discussion of the "battle for freedom of thought" (pp.134-44) Schreiner echoes Pearson's utilisation of the Protestant Reformation as a metaphor for "the revolt against established forms and rebellion against restrictions of freedom of thought, investigation and learning"[84]. It is also relevant to note that the condensation of history and experience, and of time and space, enacted in this invocation of the past and represented by figures such as Luther, Spinoza and Rousseau is held in place, not by theoretical argument nor empirical generalisation, but by poetic and persuasive considerations, much in the visionary mode of Carlyle and Emerson, although, unlike them, Schreiner eschews all claims to transcendental sanction.

Schreiner's overt aim in drawing the women's movement into analogy with "those great movements which have permanently modified the condition of humanity"

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[84] Pearson, Ethic of Freethought, p.161.

(p.134) is to justify the heterogeneous nature of Victorian and Edwardian feminism in an elevation of difference and diversity which, as will be seen, ultimately outstrips her conscious control. She states that the diversity of the feminist movement, the dispersion of its strategic energies over a wide range of issues and political affiliations is "sometimes taken as an indication of the inefficiency, and probably the ultimate failure, of the movement" (p.134). Schreiner thus establishes a direct comparison between women's struggle and other movements which are also "wholly unable logically to give an account of the great propelling conditions behind it" (p.134). Those great movements, she claims

> have never taken their rise amid the chopped logic of schools; they have never drawn their vitality from a series of purely intellectual and abstract inductions...Mere intellectual comprehension may guide, retard, or accelerate the great human movements; it has never created them. It may even be questioned whether those very leaders, who have superficially appeared to create and organise great and successful social movements, have themselves, in most cases, perhaps in any, fully understood in all their complexity the movements they themselves have appeared to rule. They have been, rather, themselves permeated by the great common need; and being possessed of more will, passion, intensity, or intellect, they have been able to give voice to that which in others was dumb, and conscious direction to that which in others was unconscious desire:... (pp.134-5)

Although this passage has obvious implications for a problematics of writing and for the status of "unconscious desire", these implications will be left aside for the moment.

Schreiner contrasts these movements driven by the "wave of human necessity" (p.135) with "artificial" social movements originating in the "arbitrary will of individuals" which, although guided with reason and determination, have proved ephemeral and "abortive":

> An Alexander might will to weld a Greece and an Asia into one; a Napoleon might resolve to create of a diversified Europe one consolidated state; and by dint of skill and determination they might for a moment appear to be accomplishing that which they desired; but the constraining individual will being withdrawn, the object of their toil has melted away, as the little heap of damp sand gathered under the palm of a child's hand on the sea-shore, melts away, scattered by the wind and washed out by the waves, the moment the hand that shaped it is withdrawn; while

> the small, soft, indefinite, watery fragment of jelly-fish lying beside it, though tossed hither and thither by water and wind, yet retains its shape and grows, because its particles are bound by an internal and organic force. (pp.135-136)

Through her analysis of the two contrasting movements, that founded in the arbitrary will of the individual and that arising from the common need ("true" necessity), Schreiner presents a schematic critique of the phallocentric drive to theory, logic and reason. It is no coincidence that the movement deriving from "purely intellectual and abstract inductions" concords with political tyranny, the attempts of Alexander to amalgamate Greece and Asia, or of Napoleon to suppress diversity in the name of unity, the construction of "one consolidated state".

Under explicit attack is the will to reason, aligned by Woman and Labour with the phallocentric will to power through the suppression of the heterogeneous. On one side is ranged the "artificial", the "arbitrary" exercise of the will, the assertion of a unified reason, logic and theory disposed to the containment of diversity, whose political expression is despotism. On the other side is the movement to the complex and diverse expression of "unconscious desire". Alexander and Napoleon function thus as symbols of of the phallocentric monopoly on meaning and definition; the apparent clarity and singularity of purpose of their project is contrasted with the complexity and "lack" of definition embodied in the alternate modes represented by the women's movement among other "folk" movements[85].

This contrasting of desire and a unitary reason or logic mimics Carlyle's somewhat Coleridgean opposition between the Dynamic and the Mechanic force, in which the domain of the Dynamic is that of the "primary unmodified forces and energies of man", while the Mechanic encompasses the "political, ecclesiastical or other outward establishments" and is associated with the Intellect or Logic[86]. This is a distinction between the two realms evocative of Julia Kristeva's conception of the

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85 Pearson, p.xi.

86 Thomas Carlyle, "Signs of the Times", Thomas Carlyle: Selected Writings, ed.Alan Shelston (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1980) pp. 72-85.

semiotic and the symbolic, unity and process, and of Marx's distinction between base and superstructure - all versions of the metaphysical distinction between appearance and reality. Schreiner's appropriation and mimetic repetition involves a reformulation of the Dynamic, "unconscious desire", which stresses its implication in the rational, the Carlylean Mechanic disposition, and thus problematises strict dichotomisation of the two. She emphasises their interplay in contrast to Carlyle's sense of their contradistinction in a gesture which simultaneously disturbs the privileging of the spiritual over the material.

The women's movement symbolises resistance to the phallocentric social, sexual and discursive system encoded in the figures of Alexander and Napoleon. It simultaneously represents, therefore, an historical movement and a mode of resistance to the phallic discursive economy. Resistance functions in Woman and Labour as the trope which facilitates the passage from the empirical to the theoretical and the discursive, the mediation of the empirical and the theoretical - a vital and underestimated feature of Schreiner's strategy.

Her project is one of overturning a movement simultaneously discursive and social which equates homogeneity, clarity and unity with meaning, and which relegates heterogeneity and diversity to the realm of the anti-rational. The "vast controlling movements" (p.134) constructed in this context represent not only social, historical and political movements but a simultaneous movement to discourse in which the social and discursive expressions of phallocentrism are revealed as mutually consolidating and reinforcing in their logocentric pact to exclude the other, whether in the form of the diverse, "unconscious desire", or women.

Therefore, although an appeal is made to a dichotomous structuration of the "artificial" and the natural, the arbitrary and the necessary, in Schreiner's schema, these concepts are deployed to different effects than the inherently conservative bias of their formulation would suggest. Schreiner's text does not uphold organicism, necessity or unity, as traditionally conceptualised, although her discourse does appeal here and elsewhere (notably in The Story of an African Farm) to these concepts. In

contrast, it constructs an alternative mode of formulation capable of encompassing that which the phallocentric economy must exclude in order to ensure its survival. Despite the fact that the women's movement is posited by Schreiner as conforming to an "internal" and "organic" force or logic, it is a logic or necessity unassimilable to that defined as "the chopped logic of schools" (p.134).

It is not logic or reason *per se* which is under attack in Woman and Labour but, rather, a notion of order or logic which refuses to recognise its debt to the diverse and which cannot tolerate its own gaps, contradictions and silences, relegating them instead, as its other, to the no-man's land of chaos, incomprehensibility, and absence. Schreiner's appeal to organicism is an appeal to an "internal and organic force" which does not suppress heterogeneity but which in fact elevates its status.

The alternative logic of which the women's movement is expressive is, according to Schreiner's analysis, a logic in which diversity and heterogeneity are placed in the heart of coherence and unity, altering the traditional construction of these terms. The unity of the movement is thus informed by divergence and a coherence whose strands of meaning are dispersed over a wide range of sites. For Schreiner its indefiniteness and fragmentary nature (emblematised in the fragment of jellyfish referred to earlier) does not imply a hopeless incomprehensibility, nor a negation of purpose and cause. The drive to reason, logic and unity, as phallocentrically articulated, is cannily perceived as the will to political, social and discursive tyranny, and judged to be lacking. The "erection" of sand is, after all, ephemeral, melting away once "the hand that shaped it is withdrawn" (a masturbation metaphor which assumes even greater significance in Waldo's death scene in The Story of an African Farm). The jellyfish, although indefinite and fragmentary is bound by a force or a logic other than that which expresses itself through domination and hierarchisation, and which can admit of forces other than the rationalistic Napoleonic will. This it also must be added owes little to an oppositional and unpolluted conceptualisation of Circumstance; Schreiner's Necessity consists of a

collapsing of Will and Circumstance and also an elision of the distinction between the conscious and the unconscious.

In Woman and Labour Schreiner presents a model of a consciousness not fully in control of events nor fully known to itself: "It may even be questioned whether those very leaders...have themselves, in most cases, perhaps in any, fully understood in all their complexity the movements they themselves have appeared to rule (pp.134-5). However, it is a consciousness which is not troubled by the disruptions of "unconscious desire" but which gives expression to this desire. Desire becomes synonymous in this equation with the necessity which propels such movements and which, in turn, become synonymous with the force of desire. The women's movement, therefore, expresses "unconscious desire" in the face of a phallocentric Napoleonic will which asserts its precarious and aborted control through the repression of desire as excessive[87], revelling in its supposed access to reason, self-knowledge and self-identity. The women's movement is tactically aligned in this way (as is the character of Lyndall in From Man to Man) with the liberation and marshalling of the transgressive force of desire, over which the hold of antithetical reason is ephemeral and doomed to ineffectuality.

As can be seen, Schreiner's commitment to the rationalist mode signals its difference from that of the intellectual Enlightenment with its investment in a notion of reason as a process of filtration from above, and a belief in the power of a rational argument for liberty and equality. Woman and Labour on the other hand is infused with a peculiarly Victorian or Romantic sense of the sub-strata, of dynamism, or the force from below, which proves resistant to the clear light of universal reason - a force analogous with the unconscious and located by Schreiner in the feminist movement.

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87 See Jacques Lacan, "The Signification of the Phallus", Écrits: A Selection, trans. Alan Sheridan (1966; Tavistock, London, 1977).

Schreiner, although employing a scientific rationalism,demonstrates a deep suspicion of Reason and its confederate, Theory. This suspicion is born of a fairly sophisticated interpretation of the Enlightenment formula: Reason equals Power. The power of self-evidence is replaced by a notion of reason which questions its intrinsic possession of power and truth, perceiving it rather as seized by power as a useful tool of control. It is seen as constructed according to patriarchal interests, as integrally affiliated with the social and discursive system which prescribes the exclusion of women, and as complicitous therefore with "masculinity".

Woman and Labour signals the changes in the meaning of the equation of power with reason which was an essential feature of Enlightenment feminist tracts such as Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Woman. Aware of the despotic power of reason over those it constructs as "irrational", Schreiner is equally aware of the powers of resistance generated by the discourse of reason itself. Her texts operate on the frontier between reason and non-reason.

In connection with this, Schreiner's account of the Napoleonic will is significant in its character as a response to Karl Pearson's Idealist elevation of the intellect, and the subsumption of the material in the rational. It constitutes a direct refutation of Pearson's assertion, although not in these terms, of the ultimate identity of sign and signified, the determinacy of meaning, and the impossibility of alternative conceptualisation. As he claims:

> We have to look upon the universe as one vast intellectual process, every fact corresponds to a conception, and every succession of facts to an inevitable sequence of conceptions; as thought progresses in logical order of intellect only, so only does fact. The law of the one is identical with the law of the other. To assert, therefore, that a law of the universe may be interfered with or altered is to assert that it is possible to conceive a thing otherwise than in the only conceivable way.[88]

Schreiner's project consists precisely of the attempt to "interfere" with and "alter" so-called laws of the universe; to challenge the determinacy of patriarchal

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[88] Pearson, Ethic of Freethought, p.19.

meaning; and to conceive of things "otherwise" than in ways considered the "only conceivable way" by a masculine reason which assumes its own universality. The "law of the one" is determinedly not identical with the "law of the other" in Woman and Labour. It is this phallocentric reduction of the other to the same endorsed by Pearson which Schreiner disclaims.

Pearson states that "It is the mind of man which rules the universe. Freethought in making the freethinker master of his own reason renders him lord of the world"[89]. Schreiner's critique of the Napoleonic and Pearsonian will reflects significantly, and to a degree largely ignored, on Pearson's explicit endorsement of the dominion of reason over all phenomena. Her account functions not only to problematise the lord's assumption of mastery over his own consciousness, but also to topple the "master" from his complacent, if ominously self-evident, position of dominance. This is a challenging of the master which applies to Pearson himself; Schreiner, although she admired Pearson, openly disagreed with him and criticised him on numerous occasions[90].

As has been discussed earlier, her treatment of "those vast controlling movements which have in the course of the ages reorganised human life" (p.134) thematises the movement between the empirical and the theoretical. It also thematises the relation between explicit project and "unconscious desire", the textual play of difference in Schreiner's own writing.

The relation between these two distinct but related levels - that of explicit project and that of textual process - is highly problematical in any assessment of the self-proclaimed feminist text. A text such as Woman and Labour is constantly operating on two levels, that of conscious theoretical intervention and that of the

89 Pearson, Ethic of Freethought, p.20.

90 To Karl Pearson, 6 June 1890, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.174; To Karl Pearson, 20 July 1886, p.99; To Karl Pearson, 7 August 1886, p.102.

mobilisation of the play of difference and any assessment must take account of the continuities and discontinuities between these strategies.

Woman and Labour is particularly interesting in its capacity to thematise the split or discontinuity between explicit project and the indissociable and ultimately incalculable strategic and textual effects. Schreiner criticises the formulation of this discontinuity as opposition through the presentation of the Napoleonic will as undertaking a violent subjugation of differences, whether of race, class or sex, and their enforced homogenisation. The feminist model she advances stresses the complicity between unconscious and conscious desire, and although this may suggest a crudely Romantic continuity between the unconscious and the conscious, it is seen on closer inspection to ground the "natural" unconscious in "material and spiritual conditions" which have a plainly social and historical reference (p.134). As a result, the nature-culture opposition is undermined and the relation between the unconscious and the conscious is seen as non-conformable with dichotomous structuration. The difference between reason and desire is thus blurred in an evocation of the indeterminate complicity of unconscious and conscious desire which is an ironically apt representation of Schreiner's own discursive practice.

Schreiner's "season of revolution"

A striking and significant feature of Schreiner's reformulation of feminism is its equivocation between two models of social change. Woman and Labour accommodates and activates an interplay between the evolutionary and the revolutionary, the reformist and the radical. The prevailing terminology is insistently evolutionary with an emphasis on "modification" and "adjustment". It therefore conforms to a Spencerian social evolutionary framework in its application of the evolutionary formula to social phenomena; Progress is presented as an inevitable feature of evolutionary transformation. This signals an apparent endorsement of the Spencerian debt to an emphasis on evolution as a process of continuous change and successive development, and in connection with this, to a

Lamarckian intentionalism - a belief in the role of the will in facilitating change. However, while Schreiner's argument does rely upon the Spencerian amalgam of Darwin's theory of organic evolution and Lamarckian intentionalism, this evolutionism is consistently undermined in a process of subtle subversion which becomes increasingly explicit as the book approaches its climactic conclusion, its apocalyptic vision.

The self-consciously strategic nature of Schreiner's argument is revealed by an examination of the flexibility and creativity with which she reworks the concept of "adaptation", for which the terms "adjustment" and readjustment" are variously substituted. These terms equivocate within the framework of Schreiner's argument between social and natural denotations, functioning ambiguously as euphemisms for feminist activity and as the scientific explanation for the natural phenomenon of change registered both in the individual and the social organism.

On the subject of women's relation to social change Schreiner claims that:

> ...the women of no race or class will ever rise in revolt or attempt to bring about a revolutionary readjustment of their relation to their society, however intense their suffering and however clear their perception of it, while the welfare and persistence of their society requires their submission:...wherever there is a general attempt on the part of the women of any society to readjust their position in it, a close analysis will always show that the changed or changing conditions of that society have made woman's acquiescence no longer necessary or desirable. (p.14)

Adroitly concealed by the ideology of female submission and service is an unabashed justification of "revolt" or "revolutionary readjustment" - a demonstration that female militancy is licensed and in fact demanded by the social structure in the interests of expediting "progress".

The term "readjustment" recurs frequently in Woman and Labour and functions as a euphemism for female political activity. The women's movement is described, for example, as an attempt by women to effect a "readjustment in their relation to the social organism" (p.16). The term recalls the Spencerian notion of adaptation and in so doing signals a compliance with the organic analogy, but it

simultaneously signifies a formulation of change as a measured process of internal rearrangement and modification rather than radical structural alteration. Feminist activism is thus associated with moderation and, more significantly, with changes determined by the social structure itself. For it is, Schreiner claims, the "changed or changing conditions" of society which provoke the readjustment attempted by women. Feminism is in this way depicted as a response rather than a stimulus to changes in the social organism. Female "revolt" is posited as the outcome of the evolutionary process, the inevitable product of "changing conditions" and, by logical deduction, as necessary to continued evolutionary development. Feminist activity is thus grounded in the physical laws of development and becomes a structural necessity.

Schreiner's discussion of "revolutionary readjustment" is introduced by the anecdote of the Kafir woman "still in her untouched primitive condition" (p.13) and yet who is capable of an inspired eloquence when speaking of the condition of women. In the interests of scientific veracity this episode is based on what Schreiner claims was an actual encounter with a Kafir woman who does, however, function as a thinly veiled projection of her own anger and ambivalence.

In the course of the conversation between the two recounted by Schreiner, the Kafir woman is presented as speaking with "passion and intensity" of the anguish and sufferings of "the women of her race" (p.13). She attributes this suffering to "the condition of polygamy and subjection" imposed upon these women (p.13) and to "life and the unseen powers which had shaped woman and her conditions as they were" (p.14). Thus the Kafir woman's lament offers both a social and a natural explanation of her oppression. For example, concentration on the male sexual practice of polygamy as a source of "the limitations of her life" (p.13) connotes an acknowledgement of the cultural and specifically patriarchal determination of her "subjection". The use of terms applicable to social analysis - "condition", "labour", "subjection" - reinforces this emphasis on social modes of explanation. However there is a simultaneous and equivocal recourse to the metaphysical as evidenced in the woman's reference to "unseen powers" which may or not be ultimately social.

This impression is strengthened by Schreiner's description of the woman as possessing a "stern and almost majestic attitude of acceptance of the inevitable; life and the conditions of her race being what they were" (p.14). In apparently endorsing the woman's attitude of submission, Schreiner's account ostensibly participates in her view of the ineluctability of natural laws and thus her victimisation, as does its quasi-religious elevation of the Kafir woman's suffering and submission into a moral virtue. Much is at stake in the equivocation between social and natural, or metaphysical accounts of suffering, an oscillation characteristic of social evolutionary thought.

The Kafir woman in offering a supernatural interpretation of social phenomena subsumes the social within the natural in a manner which conforms to the requirements of social evolutionary discourse. Yet the apparent scientific orthodoxy constructed in this allegory is simultaneously undermined in an analysis which highlights the anomalies implicit in social evolutionism. The Kafir woman's translation of natural law into "life and the unseen powers" evokes an unmistakeable appeal to metaphysics, emphasised by the employment of the rhetoric of Christian self-abnegation. However, such recourse to metaphysical or, more precisely, supernatural explanations of social and natural phenomena, is rigorously opposed by Spencer and other proponents of social evolutionary theory. Schreiner's rhetorical movement between modes of explanation in which the natural is equated with the metaphysical operates to focus attention on the repressed metaphysical investments in the social evolutionary conceptualisation of physical laws of development.

Although Schreiner uses the Kafir woman to express her own bitterness at "the condition of the women" (p.13) of her own race, Schreiner's endorsement of the Kafir woman's final interpretation of her suffering is highly ambiguous. The woman's analysis does conform to the confusion of the social and the natural dictated by social evolutionary theory. However, this confusion, rather than assimilating the social to the natural effects a reduction of the natural to the social and offers a strategic

affirmation of the social. The metaphysical is framed by the social and by "conditions" whose cultural, historical, and sexual specificity are acknowledged.

The significance of the Kafir woman episode lies in its contribution to the procedure of self-legitimation undertaken in the opening stages of Woman and Labour and in its role as an emollient prelude to the resolute feminism of the ensuing debate. Through it Schreiner explicitly demonstrates conformity with the demands of sociological discourse, establishing her commitment to the principle of comparative social anthropology. In describing the Kafir culture as "primitive" and as providing insight into women's condition in "the savage and in the semi-savage states" (p.13), Schreiner acts in accordance with the social evolutionary designation of such contemporary cultures as more "primitive" on the evolutionary scale.

However, this allegiance is a duplicitious one which functions as a mode of resistance to the very premises it affects. It enables Schreiner to express, under the guise of a scientific study into Kafir conditions, her own bitterness regarding the social subjection of women. As allegory, the emphasis is removed from the specificity of the Kafir woman's experiences to the commonality of the interests shared by all women under patriarchy. Schreiner thus voices her belief in the socio-political determination of women's "subjection" and "suffering" in her own culture by means of a tactical displacement of criticism onto a surrogate society.

The deployment of social evolutionary rhetoric functions to facilitate a socio-political interpretation of women's oppression thereby undermining its own theoretical presuppositions. It also allows Schreiner to distance herself from certain aspects of the Kafir woman's enunciation and notably those which suggest the more crude metaphysical investments. The Kafir woman's observations are endorsed; her interpretation of them is not. Despite her emphasis on the Kafir woman's "genius" and "eloquence" the connotations of primitivism are artfully exploited to define cogently Schreiner's own theoretical position and to distinguish this from the submissive pose of her "object" of sociological research.

The anecdote of the Kafir woman is set within the context of Schreiner's analysis of the female condition as an example of an historic moment in an evolutionary past in which, revolt being impossible due to social conditions, a recourse to metaphysical explanations of structural oppression results. The reduction of the social to the natural as evidenced in the Kafir woman's account is characterised as symptomatic of a "primitive" stage of social evolution (a tactic to be reiterated throughout Woman and Labour). The Kafir woman is representative of those woman bound in a position of submission by the structural relations of their society.

Drawing on the popular "comparative method", the use of contemporary "primitive" races to illuminate the earlier stages of human and social development, Schreiner effects a strategic equation of political quietism (embodied in the Kafir woman) with social and structural archaism. The Kafir woman has no "will or intention to revolt" (p.14) and demonstrates a passivity which is associated by implication with a tendency to metaphysical surmising. This is an equation between political passivity and the metaphysical impulse which is explicitly criticised through the character of Waldo in The Story of an African Farm. Both are unhesitatingly relegated to the "past" by their association with primitivism and rendered anachronistic by the evolutionary changes which have "made woman's acquiescence no longer necessary or desirable" (p.14).

Schreiner's position discredits the rhetoric of social evolutionism to which it ostensibly conforms by affirming structural and social determinants over natural law. Her discussion of female "revolt" functions to stress the dominance of structural analysis over that favouring transcendental determinism. It also operates to highlight the paradoxical union within social evolutionary theory of a (disavowed) transcendental determinism and an individualism with strong voluntarist investments (vestiges of the Lamarckian intentionalism which provides the basis of dominant accounts of social evolutionism).

Schreiner capitalises on the uneasy alliance between an accent on natural causation (with its anti-interventionist leanings) and the intentionalism which

affords a role to varying degrees of intervention. Her interpretation of the women's movement delights in the advantages to be reaped from the incapacity of social evolutionary discourse to reconcile its overpowering desire for a naturalist explanation with its rationalist tendency - its failure to resolve the conflict between a determinist and a voluntarist account of social evolution.

In Woman and Labour Schreiner retains a voluntarist explanation of change which emphasises the necessity of active intervention but simultaneously acknowledges the significance of structural restraints on the individual. It is thus intentionalist without supporting an individualist ideology and it adheres to a notion of deterministic progression which accommodates and indeed impresses the necessity of political intervention or "revolt".

Schreiner's manoeuvring around these issues constitutes a mimicry of the paradoxical co-existence in Spencerian theory of a view of society as a naturally-determined organism impervious to legislation and intervention with advocacy of the role of conscious endeavour[91] - a paradox examined in The Story of an African Farm. It is a mimicry which, following the precedent set by Spencer, works a sleight of hand with its own theoretical machinery to produce a rejection of the Spencerian premise. Schreiner metaphorically catapults herself into the intellectual confusion of social evolutionary discourse to emerge with a vastly different disposition of elements from that of Spencer. Intentionalism, although retained, is equated with political intervention and revolutionary activism rather than individualistic self-assertion; intervention is inscribed as resistance ("revolt") to received modes of domination.

Although Schreiner's argument does contain elements of both transcendental determinism and individualism, it simultaneously locates itself against both accounts of social change and refuses to adhere to binarised notions of natural law and voluntarism. Although determinism is retained, it is situated structurally.

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[91] See Wiltshire, pp.209-216; Peel, pp.101-3.

Determination is denaturalised and the susceptibility of the social structure to intervention by the individual or collective "will" is recognised.

Schreiner's discussion of "revolt" shifts the level of argument to that of structure and renders the term "natural" irrelevant. The argument is reframed in terms of determinism and voluntarism in a reformulation which facilitates an analysis of change within the context of these terms. Her account retains notions of natural causation and deterministic law but locates them in the social structure itself. This is a tactic directed to the legitimation of her concentration on the structural oppression of women. For Schreiner social change is not simply a matter of the intentional or the structural, the individual or the collective, but is conceived instead as an interpenetration of the two - a conceptualisation which promotes her argument for a revolutionary voluntarism at the level of structure.

The disturbance produced within the evolutionary model of change is one aspect of Woman and Labour's equivocation between this theory of social change and an alternative construction in which the interplay between evolution and revolution is highlighted and in which Lamarckianism is confronted by a concept of change more Darwinian in complexion.

Woman and Labour delights in the panoply of paradoxical configurations of change it produces and in its fluidity of movement between them. This movement acords with Schreiner's refusal to dichotomise commitment to a socialist vision of wholesale transformation and a "bourgeois" feminist concentration on pragmatic reform. Counterpoised against the metaphor of the gradual construction of the "great Gothic cathedral" (p.140) as an emblem of reformist zeal is the representation of the spontaneous, frictive and disruptive "season of revolution"[92] which occupies the concluding chapter.

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92 See Carlyle's reference to "seasons of Revolution", in "The French Revolution", Thomas Carlyle: Selected Writings, p.134.

The anxiety and disturbance surrounding the struggles of the women's movement is, Schreiner claims, part of "the general upheaval, of the conflict between old ideals and new; a struggle which is going on in every branch of human life in our modern societies" (pp.259-60). Schreiner emphasises that this general upheaval is not the result of feminist activism. She claims that:

> The continually changing material conditions of life, with their reaction on the intellectual, emotional, and moral aspects of human affairs, render our societies the most complex and probably the most mobile and unsettled which the world has ever seen. As the result of this rapidity of change and complexity, there must continually exist a large amount of disco-ordination, and consequently, of suffering. (p.260)

This concern with social disruption is not exclusive to Woman and Labour. Bebel, for example, states that "We are living in an age of great social transformations that are steadily progressing. In all strata of society we perceive an unsettled state of mind and an increasing restlessness, denoting a marked tendency toward profound and radical changes"[93]. However Schreiner's text differs from those of Pearson and Ellis in the role it affords disco-ordination and in its celebration and activation of the transgressive forces which precede and exceed signification and the social structure[94].

Schreiner's conception of change is characterised by randomness, rapidity and spontaneous variation which, in strategically blurring the distinction between evolution and revolution, plays havoc with the cherished Victorian creed of Reform. Her conceptualisation accentuates flux and process and seeks to acquaint the social evolutionary model of change with the discontinuity and rupture inherent in its very uniformity. Spencer's "Synthetic Philosophy" represents one manifestation of the Victorian obsession with change and is coloured by a paranoid desire to explain and render less threatening the social reality of a phase of social transition unprecedented

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93 Bebel, p.3.

94 See Julia Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, trans. Margaret Waller (Columbia University Press, New York, 1984) pp. 21-106.

in its rapidity (a paranoia expressed by Ellis but located by him directly in the feminist movement). Woman and Labour signifies a counterposed revelling in its liberating potential.

Julia Kristeva's formulation of the relation between "unity" and "process" is useful in clarifying the significance of Schreiner's intervention into theories of social change and in contributing to an establishment of Schreiner's position in the theoretical feminist tradition extending from the 1790s to the present day. In the article "Signifying Practice and Mode of Production", Kristeva outlines her conception of the interplay between the symbolic and the semiotic - the "setting in place, or constituting, of a system" and "the traversing of the system"[95]. The "symbolic", according to Kristeva, is the movement to unity and stability which establishes and regulates existing significations and the social order (social institutions, the discursive system, and subjectivity), the Oedipal regulation of pleasure under the law of the phallus.

This order, in which naming, signification, truth and logic all appear is possible, according to Kristeva, because of the movement of "cutting through", the process, the "semiotic", which both precedes and exceeds it and which can roughly be equated with the pre-Oedipal phase of the child's life and thus with libidinal flows and unregulated pleasure. The semiotic consists of the process of "drives and pleasure overflow"[96], the "heterogeneity of drives at work within and upon the homogeneity" of the symbolic. It accords with the so-called "maternal" space preceding the Oedipal demand for the renunciation of the polymorphous drives and of identification with the mother.

Of particular relevance to the present discussion is the assertion that:

> 'Signifying practice and mode of production'... does not at all imply an initial separation of the two which has then to be reconciled, but the intrinsic belonging of a mode of signification

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[95] Kristeva, "Signifying Practice and Mode of Production", p.64.

[96] Kristeva, "Signifying Practice and Mode of Production", p.65.

> to the mode of production of the socio-economic ensemble. The specific terrain on which this relation of belonging is played out is that of the speaking subject and, more concretely, the relationship set up within this subject between unity (foundation of the signifying and social ensemble) and the process which precedes and exceeds it.[97]

Woman and Labour highlights this interplay of signifying practice and social production, discursive system and social structure which is thematised in Schreiner's exposition on the "vast controlling movements" (p.134). The text explores the interrelationship between the speaking subject, the signifying system and social institutions. It calls attention to the procedures of the semiotic and the symbolic in these three realms and focuses in particular upon the operations of the semiotic in textual signification, the constitution of the subject and the concrete social structures.

According to Schreiner it is the "stationary society", the society whose evolutionary advancement is either at a primitive stage or curtailed, which demonstrates the "harmony, and homogeneity, and tranquility" generally associated with a healthy or desirable social organism in conservative theory (p.260). However,

> In societies in that rapid state of change in which our modern societies find themselves, where not merely each decade, but each year, and almost day brings new forces and conditions to bear on life, not only is the amount of suffering and social rupture, which all rapid, excessive, and sudden change entails on an organism, inevitable; but, the new conditions, acting at different angles of intensity on the different individual members composing the society...are producing a society of such marvellous complexity and dissimilarity in the different individual parts, that the intensest rupture and disco-ordination between individuals is inevitable; and sexual ideals and relationships must share in the universal condition. (pp.260-1)

Evolutionary progress is thus associated with social friction rather than homogeneity. The revolutionary model of change evoked by terms such as "rapid", "excessive" and "rupture" is aligned in Schreiner's schema with evolution and rupture and disharmony function as the "inevitable" outcome of the evolutionary

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[97] Kristeva, "Signifying Practice and Mode of Production", p.64.

process. Revolution becomes merely "the state of rapid evolution and change" (p.260) in a reformulation in which the distinction (continuous or ruptured?) between continuity and rupture is blurred and in which a conceptualisation of evolution is forwarded which admits of the "inevitable" discontinuities and gaps in its supposed uniformity. Evolution is forced to confront the difference, the "dissimilarity" underlying its unity and generative of its processes. Thus Woman and Labour surreptitiously introduces its dream of wholesale social transformation into the heart of a reformist ideology and rhetoric.

Schreiner displaces the women's movement from its position as a patriarchal scapegoat, the cause of social disturbance, a role accorded it by Ellis, Pearson, and Spencer, who anticipates "mischief from the exercise of political power by women"[98]. In so doing Woman and Labour does not participate in a marginalisation of women's struggles but instead locates feminist activity and the sexual reconstruction to which it is directed at the centre of social transformation. While Schreiner is careful to stress that the women's struggle is not the cause of social disco-ordination - "It is not sex disco-ordination that is at the root of our social unrest; it is the universal disco-ordination which affects even the world of sex phenomena" (p.271) - sexual disco-ordination is perceived as an integral facet of the social changes occurring. Sexual and structural change are firmly bound together in a text which tactically removes it from the "firing line" while resting on the premise that the revolution in social "conceptions, ideals, and institutions" (p.269) is simultaneously a revolution in sexual ideals.

Images of a society torn apart by its own contradictions, conflicts and disunities, rent by a disco-ordination it can no longer mask, abound in the closing pages of Woman and Labour. The text presents a vision of a society and a culture "so complex and so rapidly altering, that social co-ordination between all its parts is impossible" (p.266). Noticeably absent from this vision is the impulse to order and

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[98] Spencer, The Principles of Sociology, p.758.

unification which impels the Napoleonic/phallocentric will. Absent also is a Spencerian drive to an assertion of the pervasive continuity of laws of social development or the Arnoldian celebration of "culture" at the expense of "anarchy". This is displaced by a celebration of difference, of the movement of traversal and transgression embodied in the frictive and fragmenting social and discursive movement it both describes and activates. Schreiner claims that:

> In the stationary societies, where all individuals were permeated by the same political, religious, moral, and social ideas;...this cause of friction and suffering had of necessity no existence; individual differences and discord might be occasioned by personal greeds, ambitions, and selfishnesses, but not by conflicting conceptions of right and wrong, of the desirable and undesirable, in all branches of human life. (p.268)

Schreiner delights in the release of "individual differences", the right to discord and to reconceptualisation of "right" and "wrong" from a "permeation" by sameness. Difference in this context does not conform to an oppositional framework. Discord and difference, rather than being opposed to mutual agreement or unity, function instead as the condition of the conflict between opposed "conceptions of right and wrong, of the desirable and undesirable" itself. Difference operates in an almost Derridean sense as *différance*, as the condition of difference and sameness as phallocentrically defined.

As in the case of the discussion of the "gigantic religious and intellectual movement" (p.136), Schreiner's intervention into theorising on the nature of social change operates to thematise the play of difference in discourse. Not only does it explicitly celebrate the heterogeneity which informs and is seen to generate change (as in Kristeva's formulation of the semiotic) but in an indeterminate interaction of the conscious and the unconscious gesture, it activates a play of difference, of differentiation in its own textual processes. In Woman and Labour difference functions as a principle of formulation both of social movements and of works of theory.

Schreiner's version of determinism, in keeping with Darwin's anti-humanist tendency[99], constructs individuals as ill-equipped to comprehend the complexities of social and natural phenomena, or to control their meaning(s); her social leaders are compelled by forces amounting to "unconscious desire". Conscious endeavour and will, while they may contribute to the (r)evolutionary outcome, are shown to be insufficient to guide or control events in a process perceived as a web of interrelationship and entanglement rather than of linear progression. By means of a potent image of a deterministic operation characterised by interrelationship, randomness, complexity and spontaneity and whose processes evade mastery by the individual consciousness, Schreiner contrives to turn "Darwin" against a social Darwinism dedicated to the promotion of an individualist and anti-interventionist ideology. Phallocentric hubris is simultaneously under attack is as exemplified by Spencer's "Synthetic Philosophy", which disports narcissistically in its imagined capacity to unify all knowledges under a single natural law and to exert its domination over the multifarious.

Woman and Labour revels in the rupture, discord, and difference which Schreiner posits as the condition of change and which severely disrupt the social evolutionary bulwark of the uniformity and predictability of the laws of social transformation. As such, it operates not only as a "scientific" account of social crisis but simultaneously as a projection into the future, a point of connection with the Carlylean notion of history as a "prophetic Manuscript". As Schreiner wrote to Karl Pearson, "The wider the Historical part the better, and the more full of "probablies" and "possiblies" and "likelies" the better"[100]. This is a projection born of the desire for radical social and sexual transformation which represents as objective reality that which has yet to eventuate.

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99 Gillian Beer, Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction (Ark, London, 1985) pp.3-26.

100 To Karl Pearson, 10 September 1886, The Karl Pearson Papers.

The distinction between scientific description and the discourse of desire is thus blurred in Schreiner's utopian vision of the "inevitable" (and deterministic) rupture of the patriarchal social fabric, the inevitability of its failure to repress the heterogeneity which is its very condition of being. Woman and Labour is a discourse which asserts the reality of desire itself over the desire of or for reality in a discursive displacement of the scientific mode which highlights Schreiner's recuperation of the speculative impulse of Owenite feminism and the libertarian optimism of Enlightenment radicalism. It enacts not merely a description of social and cultural conflict but a fantasy of revolution marked by the ebullient interplay of the social and the discursive.

This leads to a consideration of the comparability of Kristeva's and Schreiner's conception of subjectivity. Both assert its polarisation between the site of structure, law and order and its transgression. The threat to the rational, knowing subject of traditional social, philosophical and literary theory implicit in this formulation is embodied in Schreiner's account of those leaders who have "superficially appeared to create and organise great and successful social movements" (p.134). Schreiner openly questions whether they have "in most cases, perhaps in any, fully understood in all their complexity the movements they, themselves have appeared to rule" (p.134). The discussion of the relationship between leader and movement functions to represent a subjectivity which lacks mastery of itself - a presumed "rational" and unified subjectivity informed, and potentially undermined by, forces beyond conscious control.

The disruptive potential of these forces, and the relationship between the "traversing" of a social system and the subject, is highlighted in Schreiner's analysis of the interrelationship between social turmoil and "the conflict going on within the individual himself"(p.269):

> Within the individuality itself...goes on, in an intensified form, that very struggle, conflict, and disco-ordination which is going on in society at large between its different members and sections; and agonising moments must arise, when the individual, seeing the necessity for adopting new courses of

> action, or for accepting new truths, or conforming to new conditions, will yet be tortured by the hold of traditional convictions; and the man or woman who attempts to adapt their life to the new material conditions and to harmony with the new knowledge, is almost bound at some time to rupture the continuity of their own psychological existence. (pp.269-70)

Schreiner's evocation of the contradictions informing the social structure in this passage is heavily influenced by the Idealist assertion of the mutual dependence of "personality" and social structure (T.H. Green's influential if vague claim that "the self is a social self"[101]). It is simultaneously influenced by the Marxist conception of the dialectical relationship between material conditions and the construction of consciousness. More significantly, it recognises that subjectivity is not a point of unity opposed to social processes and fragmentation, but is continuous with and constituted by the same processes - the struggle, conflict and disco-ordination informing the subject reproduces that "going on in society".

Schreiner's account, like Kristeva's, acknowledges that the subject is produced and informed by the same interplay of unity and process, "harmony" and "rupture" as that which constitutes the social structure and its modes of representation. Woman and Labour depicts a subjectivity, an "individuality" split between the symbolic ("tortured by the hold of traditional conviction") and the semiotic, the disco-ordination which ruptures the (illusory) continuity of its own "psychological existence". It is a subjectivity upon which is played out the tension between unity and process, stasis and change, informing society itself. In this way Schreiner challenges the Victorian antinomy between the public and the private in a recognition of the continuity between social and subjective formation which is parallelled by the text's insight into the interaction between empirical/social movement and theoretical disposition.

Woman and Labour presents a culture, a subjectivity and a discourse in a state of flux and indeterminacy. It explores the interconnection between unity and process and refuses to privilege the movement to stability and order at the expense of

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[101] See Sabine, pp.730-1; also Collini, pp.127-9.

process. It is a text which exults in the "rupture" of psychological continuity, in the "struggle, conflict, and disco-ordination" riddling society, and in the undermining of the Napoleonic will of rational discourse by the eruption of the force of "unconscious desire".

Schreiner's interpretation of social crisis advocates and valorises the process of upheaval, the disruption of stability by the "diverse" which she "objectively" observes. Progress is presented as arising precisely from discontinuity . Within phallocentric discourse, discontinuity functions as a "hole" or a "lack" in discourse and is posited as unrepresentable. Schreiner's representation of change, in its acknowledgment that all change is an "inevitable" fragmentation of social system and discourse (the paradoxical outcome of natural causation) and is dependent upon the interrelationship of the representable and the unrepresentable (the semiotic, the feminine) actively introduces the unrepresentable, the fragmentary into the discourse it supports. This project resembles Kristeva's in its positing of the existence and the power of the unrepresentable. This is a concept of change which contrasts vividly with that presented by George Eliot in a novel such as Daniel Deronda in which change is reserved for another time and another place. For Schreiner social change is the inevitable outcome of processes already and always occurring and is thus possible at any time.

Woman and Labour revels in the difference, the representational blank signified by the heterogeneity and plurality which must be repressed by a phallocentric symbolic but not, it must be stressed, by an alternative mode of symbolic formation. Its task, along with that of The Story of an African Farm and From Man to Man, becomes that of re-acquainting phallocentric discourse and patrocentric sociality with their underside, with the unarticulable other that is anterior to and exceeds representation. Woman and Labour brings to bear the "outside" of phallocentric meaning, which is associated by theorists such as Irigaray and Kristeva with the feminine and located specifically in women. The activist feminist movement endorsed by the book functions therefore to represent the

activation of this other, this difference, in a direct confrontation with the Napoleonic will of phallocentric signification.

The representation of a society in crisis constitutes an emblem of the disruptive disposition of Schreiner's discursive practice, of the constant eruption of the discourse of the other into her text, a transgressive force of desire which is unequivocally equated with the feminine and the women's movement. In Woman and Labour "unconscious desire" in the form of the feminine and pleasure in the form of disruption are brought to bear on a symbolic predicated on the Law of the Father. The "inventing subject", the constructor of sand castles of logic, order and phallocentric reason, is forced to acknowledge the "abundance of the other"[102].

However Woman and Labour is not satisfied with a mere elevation of the semiotic upheaval of social and discursive structures. The text identifies the process of rupture or transgression directly with the feminine and, unlike Kristevan theory (which reinstates the male sexual paradigm in a position of centrality[103]), it is oriented to the reconceptualisation of sexual difference. Woman and Labour works towards the "unrepression" of difference and desire with the view to releasing femininity from its elision by phallocentric discourse and women from their social oppression, in a movement which announces the connection between empirical oppression and "symbolic" repression (a fact neglected by Lacan in his formulation of the construction of sexed subjectivity). Social structures and Schreiner's own discourse are fissured by desire, a desire which is specifically aligned with feminine desire and which is activated in all its power in The Story of an African Farm.

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102 "...there is no invention possible...without the presence in the inventing subject of an abundance of the other". Hélène Cixous, "Sorties", New French Feminisms, eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Harvester Press, London, 1981) p.97.

103 See Elizabeth Gross, "Philosophy and the Body: *Kristeva and Irigaray* ", Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory, eds. Carole Pateman and Elizabeth Gross (Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1986) pp.125-143.

Dreams of the future: the "wild" speculation

Woman and Labour may not challenge the limits of what is sayable to the extent of some modern texts, conforming as it does to the syntactical and grammatical norms. However it cannot be contained within a facile formula which co-opts nineteenth-century feminism into the model of an equality politics and denies the radical project at the heart of this text.

Despite Schreiner's conformity to stringent Victorian syntactical and grammatical norms (a conformity more noticeable perhaps in her earliest novel Undine[104]), Woman and Labour is a text fractured by its other, the eruption of allegory, dream, parable, poetry and vision into its rationalistic sociological framework. This activation of otherness constitutes a refusal to concord with the reduction of the heterogeneous to the same, the feminine to the masculine, demanded by theoretical Fathers such as Spencer. It recalls a universe unnamed and unrepresented by phallic law.

Schreiner's utopian aspirations and discursive practice are an expression of a politics of autonomy in their capacity to open a space for the possibility of new definitions of femininity and new possibilities for women's speech. Woman and Labour is oriented to a dual-faceted project of discursive challenge and positive projection which indicates a radical propensity generally denied in accounts of nineteenth-century feminism. As such it forges a strong link between Schreiner's writing and theoretical developments in contemporary "difference" feminism.

For Kristeva the male avant garde can at best challenge the limits of patriarchal signifying practice. Woman and Labour evokes the possibility of a different structuration of sexual difference and hence discourse, a different modality of female sexuality. It not only tests the limits of phallocentric discourse but attempts

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[104] Olive Schreiner, Undine (1929; Ernest Benn, London, 1930). All subsequent references are to this edition.

to expand its capacity to represent women through configurations which exceed the bounds defined by the drive to opposition and dichotomy.

The conclusion of Woman and Labour builds to a crescendo of utopian fervour, the dream of the Garden serving as an expression and partial satisfaction of the desire which ruptures the text and shakes the foundations of society:

> The ancient Chaldean seer had a vision of a Garden of Eden which lay in a remote past. It was dreamed that man and woman once lived in joy and fellowship, till woman ate of the tree of knowledge and gave to man to eat; and that both were driven forth to wander, to toil in bitterness; because they had eaten of the fruit.
> We also have our dream of a Garden: but it lies in a distant future. We dream that woman shall eat of the tree of knowledge together with man, and that side by side and hand close to hand, through ages of much toil and labour, they shall raise about them an Eden nobler than any the Chaldean dreamed of; an Eden created by their own labour and made beautiful by their own fellowship. (p.282)

Schreiner's new Eden functions as an appropriate metaphor for the project of difference undertaken by Woman and Labour and for the disruptive potential of feminine desire. She produces a myth which dismantles the patriarchal Eden and the law which founds it and constructs a site for the articulation of a feminine desire and a female perspective. Her myth rejects outright the patriarchal construction of femininity, represented here in the Christian fable of the Fall - a fable symptomatic of a patriarchal ideology and Judaeo-Christian tradition which institutes the culpability and "castration" of women. Schreiner challenges this myth and replaces the Chaldean's phallocentric "dream" with one born of women's desire in which women eat of the tree of knowledge with men, claiming knowledge as their shared realm.

This is a speculative projection crucial to the political import of Woman and Labour. In a plan of her "Woman's Book" sent to Karl Pearson, Schreiner says of the concluding section that, "It is here permissible to insert one's ideal of the future and

to speculate wildly. Hurrah! After having held ourselves in so horribly to the facts all along, let us have a burst"[105].

In Schreiner's utopia forged by desire, an army of militant Eves pluck the fruit of knowledge, displace a patriarchal God from his heaven (and the signified from its position of transcendence) and construct their own Eden "side by side" with men, not opposed to them as in the binary logic of a phallocentric economy. Images of bondage to masculine conceptualisation or paradigms are carefully avoided; women's difference from the male is closely guarded. This is not a dream of plenitude, nor of the healing of the perceived split in consciousness, nor of a separatist female utopia such as that presented in Perkins Gilman's Herland. It is a dream of a world in which difference is given its due. The fall from phallic plenitude is not replaced with a similarly logocentric vision of full presence. It is replaced with the rejection of the strict polarisation of the sexes, women's exclusion from knowledge and the power it produces, and the embodiment of this exclusion in a "lacking" femininity.

Woman and Labour enacts an earthquake of women's desire which revels in the possibility of revolution (the overthrow of "traditional ideas and manners of action" (p.269)) just as the text delights in its breach of scientific decorum and methodological conformity. Desire does not merely permeate the text as an inevitable feature of textuality but announces itself "as such". In Woman and Labour desire tears the seams of the social and discursive fabric, making possible the imaginary leap into the future which embodies the impossible feminine desire.

In a letter to Karl Pearson Schreiner wrote that,"I see always more and more the possible regeneration of the race in that new union of friendship between man and woman: it must and will come at last, our dreams *are* not delusions but the forerunners of the reality"[106]. In Woman and Labour vision, the speculative or

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[105] To Karl Pearson, 10 September 1886, The Karl Pearson Papers.

[106] To Karl Pearson, 20 June 1886, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.84.

utopian impulse, Schreiner's "wild" and ebullient speculation[107], does not merely signify the "dream" of social regeneration. In its assertion of the reality of desire it actively works to the political realisation of that dream. Vision functions as the "forerunner" of the "probablies", "possiblies" and "likelies" of a future reality and is simultaneously installed as its condition of possibility.

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[107] See Note 87.

CHAPTER TWO

SCHREINER AND THE "PREHISTORIC PROTOZOA"

In Woman and Labour Schreiner proffers a critique of the patriarchal construction of Woman. She strategically displaces the dominant phallocentric theories of a biologically-based sexual difference which formed a vital component of the social evolutionary framework and functioned to enforce Victorian and Edwardian role prescriptions. These theories of sexual difference (most associated with the names of Herbert Spencer, Geddes and Thompson, Havelock Ellis, and Karl Pearson[1]) underlay the ideology of the separate spheres which gained ascendancy in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. This ideology was formulated in accordance with patriarchal assumptions about femininity and functioned to maintain and reinforce a phallocentric model of sexual difference. Woman and Labour specifically and systematically targets these sexual difference theories and, in common with psychoanalytical feminism of the late twentieth-century, it evinces an awareness of the role of theory and discourse in the construction of femininity. As was stated earlier, the argument presented in this chapter will focus on historical analysis rather than on historical research; the Victorian period is the genre or locale of the discussion not its site or location.

Through unsettling and destabilising the sexual difference theories produced within the social evolutionary conceptual schema[2] the book engages in a re-theorising of femininity. This project or effect of the text involves the counterposing of patriarchal discourses on sexual difference not with a new and opposing system but

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[1] Jane Lewis, Women in England (Wheatsheaf Books, Sussex, 1984) pp. 83-4.

[2] See Greta Jones, Social Darwinism and English Thought (Harvester Press, Brighton,1980).

with a series of challenges to the knowledge and truth they produce and with an extension and revision of the possibilities they can encompass.

Schreiner's concentration on the separate spheres ideology, on the morphology of the female body, and on the overt refutation of patriarchal theories of sexual difference, imparts to Woman and Labour a radical propensity it is not commonly held to possess. Its orientation extends beyond the provision of a treatise on the "female condition", the demand for increased representation of women in the workforce, or the championing of legal, economic and social reform, although all of these do occupy a place in its concerns. It reveals as well an astute (if untheorised) recognition of the foundation of women's oppression not merely in legal or social restrictions but in a "hostile" system of representation. Woman and Labour operates to disturb and displace those phallocentric representations of sexual difference which entrap women in a crippling subalternity.

In taking Woman as the subject/object of its study Schreiner's text overtly casts itself into relation with other discourses on sex produced in the context of the "fierce and violent debate [which] took place over the nature of sexual relations, the question of power between the sexes and the role of the family in relation to other social institutions" during the second half of the nineteenth century[3]. The key texts in this debate include Bachofen's Myth, Religion and Mother-Right (1861), Bebel's Woman Under Socialism (1883), Geddes' and Thompson's The Evolution of Sex (1891), Morgan's Ancient Society (1877) and of course the work of Sigmund Freud, Havelock Ellis, and Karl Pearson.

Woman and Labour is characterised by its difference from and interrogation of these pivotal texts. It constitutes a different perspective on the debate and is an

[3] For discussion of this debate see Rosalind Coward, Patriarchal Precedents: Sexuality and Social Relations (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London,1983) p.9.

ambivalent voice of dissent which is not afraid to announce its refutation of the misogynist readings of the feminine produced within these allied discourses. It enacts a resistance to the knowledge and power they construct and transmit and challenges their dominance over meaning and the mechanisms of control and regulation they embody.

Woman and Labour is divided into two parts, as indeed are The Story of an African Farm and From Man to Man. The first (Chapters I-IV) deals with the issue of women's work, the relation of woman to labour, with special emphasis on the concept of sex-parasitism popularised by Schreiner along with her American theoretical counterpart, Charlotte Perkins Gilman[4]. The second part centres on the refutation of influential nineteenth-century theories of sexual difference (such as those generated by the anthropological sex tracts of Morgan, Bachofen, and Bebel) and on questions relating to feminism and the women's movement. These two sections are interdependent. The history of women's work with which the book commences is heavily reliant upon the analysis of woman's situation to be developed in the concluding chapters. This analysis elaborates on terms established in the opening section, particularly as it relates to the separate spheres ideology. Both aspects of Schreiner's exposition are committed to a rejection of traditional stereotypes of Woman and the feminine.

Woman and Labour opens with an impassioned cry: "Give us labour and the training which fits for labour" (p.33) - a demand around which Schreiner's wide-ranging critique of patriarchal sociality is organised. Although this book is an

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[4] Christopher Lasch, The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963: The Intellectual as a Social Type (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1965) pp. 46-7; Joyce Avrech Berkman, Olive Schreiner: Feminism on the Frontier (Eden Press, Vermont,1979) p.26.

exposition of "some of the points connected with woman's work" it is simultaneously her "sex book" and touches on "most matters in which sex has a part" (p.ii). As the title itself suggests, the text addresses itself both to "Woman" (to the socially and historically inscribed female body and its significance within a patriarchal cultural and discursive system) and to "Labour" (a term which encompasses the labour movement and the status of women's (re)productive work). Woman and Labour is not just about the place of women in the workforce. While it does deal with the empirical conditions of women's work it is equally concerned with investigating the ways in which the social/discursive marking of the female body determines the value, status and conditions of women's work. Thus the crucial interrelationship between the discursive construction of female sexuality and the theory of the sexual division of labour is stressed. This gives Schreiner's analysis of women's role in the workforce a depth and a scope exceeding that of her English feminist contemporaries.

The subject of Woman and Labour is the exploitation of women's bodies. The book emphasises the integral connection between the exploitation of women's sexuality and labour and its challenge is conducted primarily on a discursive level. Schreiner stresses the crucial and often neglected continuity between the metaphorisation of femininity and the empirical reality of living as a woman in patriarchal society. In so doing, she takes the feminist struggle onto the level of discourse and locates women's oppression in the phallocentric representations of the feminine produced within, and reinforced by, the sex discourses of the period. Therefore this discussion will commence with a consideration of Schreiner's concerted attack on the phallocentric construction of sexual difference which underlies and determines the Victorian ideology of the separate spheres and the very definition of women's "work".

Schreiner and "the prehistoric Protozoa"

Woman and Labour is poised at the juncture of changing attitudes to women and their sexual function. As Jane Lewis maintains[5], the mid-to-late nineteenth century was marked by its production of theories emphasising the "limiting" nature of the female reproductive capacity. Notable among these was Herbert Spencer's assertion of women's arrested evolution "necessitated by the reservation of vital power to meet the cost of reproduction"[6] and Karl Pearson's infamous claim that "If childbearing women be intellectually handicapped, then the penalty paid for race predominance is the subjection of women"[7]. This attitude was superseded in the early-twentieth century by a more "positive" view of motherhood which was a result of the impact of the revisionist theories of Geddes and Thompson which, according to Jill Conway, "preserved the immutability of the separate spheres, but stressed the complementarity of sex roles and co-operation between men and women". The emphasis was thus placed on "women's equal but different attributes" rather than on "male domination"[8].

The impact of these changing attitudes to the maternal function and hence the separate spheres ideology forms the topic of the following discussion. Schreiner's strategy in Woman and Labour involves a refutation of negative theories of female

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[5] Lewis, pp.81-5.

[6] Spencer, The Study of Sociology, p.373.

[7] Karl Pearson, "The Woman's Question", The Ethic of Freethought (Adam and Charles Black, 1901) p.373.

[8] Jill Conway, "Stereotypes of Femininity in a Theory of Sexual Evolution", Suffer And Be Still, ed. Martha Vicinus (Indiana University Press, 1973) p.99.

sexuality by means of a self-conscious deployment of the ideology of motherhood, a "defence of maternity" which defies appropriation by the eugenicist and anti-feminist positions with which it was primarily associated.

Jane Lewis speaks of two strands of the feminist challenge to the ideology of the separate spheres. The first of these stressed women's right to enter the public domain on an equal basis with men, while the second, the social maternalist position, highlighted the importance of women's domestic role and argued for its extension beyond the home. The former equates roughly with the argument for equality on the basis of sameness and on an elision of female difference which is viewed by certain feminists as characterising nineteenth-century "bourgeois" feminism. Implicated in the latter strand is a championing of a female "uniqueness" and an elevation of the "domestic virtues"[9], a perspective distilled in the appeal against female suffrage mounted by Mrs Humphry Ward in 1889.

These two positions still inform feminist debate to some extent and both are double-edged. Although they challenge restrictions placed on women, they implicitly conform to the patriarchal definitions of a hierarchised and oppositional sameness and difference which institutes these restrictions. For example, the argument for female uniqueness risks lapsing into the myth of women as the moral guardians of the social order regardless of its strategic utilisation by feminists such as Fawcett and Butler[10]. Given most feminists' belief in the incompatibility of marriage and a career, it could easily function to reinforce women's restriction to the private sphere and was indeed exploited to this effect by Ellis and Geddes[11]. On the other hand, the

[9] Lewis, p.89.

[10] Lewis, p.95.

[11] Conway, p.153.

argument stressing sameness, while it does not implicitly denigrate marriage and motherhood to the extent claimed by opponents such as Ellis, could imply a relinquishing of the female difference of perspective and interest. Thus it could constitute yet another submission of the female to "ideas" about her "elaborated in/by a masculine logic"[12] and the adoption of a traditional prescription of femininity.

In Woman and Labour Schreiner strives to negotiate the difficulties inherent in both attitudes - difficulties which arise from an inability to theorise beyond the limits of a phallocentric "sexual indifference"[13]. These are limits which Woman and Labour cannot transcend, but with which it does contend, with varying degrees of success. Schreiner combines elements of both the social maternalist and the equality strands of Victorian and Edwardian feminist thought. She carries out a strategy comparable to the Irigarayan internal critique and constructs a female difference which refuses to be reduced to inferiority or opposition.

For example, Schreiner was among the few feminists who urged that women combine social employment and marriage in the interests of the race; that they be admitted into the public sphere on an equal basis with men without having to renounce their roles as wives and mothers or the difference of perspective which made their contribution unique. This proposition plays havoc not only with definitions of femininity but also with the conceptualisation of the categories of public and private within which such definitions were produced.

However it does reveal a "blind spot" regarding the difficulties facing the woman burdened with this dual role. This is a shortcoming not uncommon in feminism of the period[14] and is integrally related to a reluctance to confront the issue of the

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[12] Irigaray, "The Power of Discourse", This Sex, p.76.

[13] Irigaray, "The Power of Discourse", This Sex, p.69.

[14] Lewis, p.91.

family itself as a locus of women's oppression. Schreiner never really explored the repercussions of her argument as regards the institution of the family. While she would concur with Engels' claim that the reintroduction of "the whole female sex back into public industry" is a vital, if not the first condition for "the liberation of the wife"[15], his proposition regarding the abolition of the monogamous family is anathema to Schreiner's firmly held ideal of "the perfect mental and physical life-long union of one man with one woman"[16]. Despite this weakness her argument does achieve the removal of the discussion of sexual difference from the controlling ambit of an exclusively phallocentric delineation.

Woman and Labour is passionately interested in the social construction of the difference between the sexes and it demonstrates an acute awareness of the stakes involved not only in the patriarchal rendition of this difference but in both sides of the feminist position on this issue. In this influential text Schreiner responds to a subtext of patriarchal theories on women's "natural" inferiority. She specifically targets those theories of sexual difference which normalise and naturalise women's social and sexual subordination and she makes explicit the connection between social and sexual exploitation.

The concluding chapters of the book, "Sex Differences" and "Certain Objections", are devoted to an explicit response to biologistic evolutionary and eugenic theories of sexual difference. In the latter, Schreiner summarises what she terms "certain objections" to woman's foray into "the new fields of labour" (p.244), namely the male-dominated public sphere. These objections are linked unequivocally

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[15] Friedrich Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State (1884; International Publishers, New York, 1964) p.66.

[16] Olive Schreiner, To Mary Roberts, Jan. - Mar. 1889, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.145.

to anti-feminism and the desire to restrict women (through the power of theoretical intervention) to performance of their "sex functions" alone, even when they are only potentially childbearers (p.199). The objections are paraphrased as follows: that the natural function of women is childbearing and nurturing (p.199); that women are naturally inferior in terms of their productive capacity and "not exactly equal with the male in terms of productive labour" (p.207); and that the entry of women into previously male-dominated professional domains would result in a diminution of "sexual attraction and affection" between the sexes which would prove ultimately detrimental to the welfare of the race (p.225).

These objections relate specifically to notions about sexual difference and the social inscription of masculine and feminine rather than the issue of work alone. Implicit in them are a range of assumptions (reinforced and popularised by Spencerian sociology) which structure the conceptual framework of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century discourses on sex and which permeate the theories of Geddes and Thompson, and Ellis. The tenor of Schreiner's argument is informed by the implicit refutation of Spencerian theories which advance the notions that women are characterised by a "somewhat-earlier arrest of individual evolution"[17]; that they are nearer nature than men and thus occupy a natural place in the domestic sphere as nurturers of the young; that the differentiation of sex roles, the sexual division of labour, is a hallmark of progress; that women are physiologically predisposed to support authority, manifesting an "awe of power and authority"[18]; and that any attempt to alter the status of women interferes with the process of natural selection[19]. These theories combine to provide a biological basis for women's social

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[17] Spencer, The Study of Sociology, p.373.

[18] Spencer, The Study of Sociology, p.380.

[19] Wiltshire, p.114.

inferiority, and to vilify feminists for attempting to intervene into the natural processes of social evolution.

Her strategy, in keeping with the tactics employed by feminists since the late-eighteenth century, marshals physiological, anthropological, historical and literary evidence of women's mental, moral and physical equality with men in an attempt to challenge the assumption of innate feminine deficiency. However Schreiner's argument differs from those of her historical predecessors and of the majority of her contemporaries (with the obvious exception of American feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman) in the intense attention she focuses upon the issue of biology - upon the nexus between power and the body. At its broadest level of expression, it conducts a categorical refutation of the organic basis of sexual difference and rejects the patriarchal theorisation of the sexual division as absolute. This theorisation institutes sexed reproduction not simply as a mechanism of variation, as in Darwin, but as the basis of a theory of different spheres of influence[20].

Schreiner's intervention into these theories consists of an emphasis on the cultural determination of masculinity and femininity and an insistence that the welfare of the race depends upon a greater convergence rather than an accentuated differentiation in sex role. She was not alone in this insight, as the writing of prominent feminists such as Cobbe and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson most strikingly reveals[21]. However she was alone in the scope and intensity of her assault.

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[20] Coward, p. 88.

[21] Frances Power Cobbe, "The final cause of woman" (1869); Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, "Sex in mind and education: a reply" Fortnightly Review (July 1874), Women in Public: The Women's Movement 1850-1900, ed. Patricia Hollis (Allen and Unwin, London, 1981).

In the chapter entitled "Sex Differences" Schreiner examines the "physical phenomenon of sex as it manifests itself in the human creature" (p.181) and expresses cynicism regarding the irreducibility of biological difference in the forthright assertion that "we find, in the first stages of the individual's existence, no difference discernible...between those germs which are ultimately to become male or female" (p.181). In this section she attempts to disentangle anatomical from psychic difference thereby questioning the facile collapsing of the psychic and the anatomical, the social and the biological, upon which patriarchal theory depends.

In "Sex Differences" the concept of biology itself, the appeal to biological naturalism, and the uses to which anatomical discourse is deployed, are subjected to considerable scrutiny. Biology does not function as neutral in Woman and Labour. Instead the book evinces a concern with the morphology of the human, and in particular the female body. This is a concern which acknowledges the ideological construction of the body and flies in the face of social evolutionary assumptions that the body is simply a natural, empirically confirmable object.

The chapter commences with an assertion of the basic anatomical similarity of the sexes which counters the Spencerian emphasis on the sexual division of labour on the grounds of sexual dissimilarity ("contrasts in bodily form"[22]). Schreiner maintains that, apart from the reproductive organs, "the major extent of the human body and of physical function [are] little, or not at all, affected by sex modification" (p.181). The eye, the ear, the sense of touch and all "general" organs are, she claims, "in the main identical" with "little or nothing to divide the sexes" in the general structure and working of the organism (pp.181-182). Even in the domain of the "psychic" (which Schreiner is careful to distinguish clearly from the physical) the issue of division, although acknowledged, remains unaccented:

22 Spencer, The Study of Sociology, p.374.

> The intelligence, emotions, and desires of the human infant at birth differ not at all perceptibly, as its sex may be male or female; and such psychic differences as appear to exist in later childhood are undoubtedly very largely the result of artificial training....Even in the fully adult human, and in spite of differences of training, the psychic activities over a large extent of life appear to be absolutely identical. (p.183)

Schreiner asserts that male and female brains acquire languages, solve mathematical problems and master scientific detail in precisely the same way. This position in some ways parallels Freud's observation and minimisation of the significance of secondary sexual characteristics which he regards as "inconstant and ...variable"[23].

In her best scientific manner she cites examples from comparative anthropology and from studies of the natural world to illustrate her argument. The mierkat, the ostrich, and various insects are noted as examples of species which exhibit a cross-transference of those characteristics assumed within nineteenth-century sex discourse to be sex-specific. These examples are compiled to support Schreiner's anti-biologistic stance and to attest to the frequency with which "all forms of psychic variation are found allying themselves now with the male sex form, and then with the female" (p.185).

Thus far the argument presented in Woman and Labour accords with an "equality" feminist emphasis on the sameness of the sexes and differs in no substantial manner from that tradition of feminist thought (of which Mary Wollstonecraft is perhaps the best representative) in which an innate femininity is denounced in favour of the concept of social determination. Schreiner's contribution is distinguished from Wollstonecraft's insights at this stage only in its concern with empirical data and the accumulation of facts. However the argument does proceed to

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23 Sigmund Freud, "Femininity" (1933), New Introductory Lectures (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1977) p.147.

develop the implications of Schreiner's claim that "it is exactly as we approach the sphere of sexual and reproductive activity, with those emotions and instincts connected directly with sex and the reproduction of the race, that a difference does appear" (p.185). The meaning Schreiner attaches to this "difference" distinguishes her work from a feminism which argues for equality on the basis of sameness and endows her position with a strategic and theoretical complexity and ingenuity uncommon in English feminism of the period. It also firmly places her work in a tradition of the feminist assertion of "difference" which extends to twentieth-century feminists such as Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous.

According to Woman and Labour there are "certain psychic differences in attitude" between the male and the female which are "inherent and not artificial" (p.185). This assertion of a difference between the sexes contradicts Berkman's claim that Schreiner discounted the existence of "significant sex differences"[24]. This misapprehension results from an oversimplification of Schreiner's position and is connected with the equally controversial claim that Schreiner upheld androgyny as an ideal.

As becomes clear, Schreiner's reference to "inherent" differences does not constitute a recourse to the biological naturalism which plagues the sexual theory of Freud, Spencer and Ellis. Her emphasis on the difference between the sexes owes little (apart from a similar terminology) to the biologism activating theories such as these which accentuate the "profound biological differences between the reproductive instinct in each" in order to justify the "fundamental opposition between male and female interests and propensities"[25]. Instead it signals the flexibility of a position which enables her to dispute the innate nature of sexual traits and behavioural

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[24] Berkman, p.31

[25] R. Briffault,"Family Sentiments", quoted in Coward, p.90.

patterns without lapsing into a conceptualisation of difference that cannot see beyond the compass of a phallocentric economy of the Same which seeks to "eradicate the difference between the sexes in systems that are self-representative of a 'masculine subject'"[26]. Schreiner's notion of "inherent" psychic difference between the male and the female is strictly and dogmatically limited to "the moment actual reproduction begins to take place" (p.190). This moment signals the entry of the woman into "a certain world of sensations and experiences, from which her male companion is for ever excluded" (p.190). The fact that reproduction and sexuality are collapsed at this point (with reproduction tending also to imply conception, gestation, childbirth and nurturing) will be discussed shortly. It is more important to consider the terms in which this psychic difference is framed:

> From the moment the universal initial attraction of sex to sex becomes incarnate in the first concrete sexual act till the developed offspring attains maturity, no step in the reproductive journey, or in their relation to their offspring, has been quite identical for the man and the woman. And this divergence of experiences in human relations must react on their attitude towards that particular body of human concerns which directly is connected with the sexual reproduction of the race; and, it is exactly in these fields of human activity, where sex as sex is concerned, that woman as woman has a part to play which she cannot resign into the hands of others. (p.191)

In a tactical echo of the social maternalist position, Schreiner lifts the psychic differences associated with the reproductive function of the male and the female from the realm of natural difference and places them in the domain of the "human", the experiential and the attitudinal, that is, in the domain of the social rather than the purely instinctual. This emphasis on the "human" (an emphasis evidenced in the word's constant repetition in the passage) implies that it is impossible to remove the process of reproduction from its social context as one among many social activities, roles and experiences and, as such, held within the ambit of

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26 Irigaray, "The Power of Discourse", This Sex, p. 74.

cultural inscription and ideological encoding. Stress falls upon the lived experience of being a woman and hence upon the cultural context of reproduction rather than upon reproduction as an inherent and irreducible biological imperative. Any notion of woman's biological or maternal "destiny" is undercut by a text whose investments reside with the cultural construction and thus mutability of this "destiny".

Schreiner's emphasis on the experience of femininity rather than its organic determination is highlighted in her discussion on woman's relation to war (Chapter IV). This chapter is notable for its advocacy of pacifism and also for its overt contradiction of the hypothesis of woman's natural or innate moral superiority upheld by feminist and anti-feminist alike[27]. Schreiner, although capitalising on the Evangelically-inspired concept of "woman's mission", categorically denies that woman possesses an "inherent all-round moral superiority over her male companion, or naturally on all points any higher social instinct" (p.171). This is a point with which Freud in his assertion of women's weaker "social instincts" and propensity to narcissism and envy would ironically concur, although Schreiner would have no difficulty in settling his tendentious indecision as to whether such "psychical peculiarities" are the consequence of "the sexual function" or "social breeding"[28].

In Woman and Labour female antipathy to war is unequivocally imputed to woman's differing experience and in particular to "the relations of the female towards the production of human life" (p.176). Schreiner claims that it is shaped neither by innate virtue nor by a "loftier social instinct" than men (p.171) as Geddes, with his theory of woman's more developed social talents would claim[29], nor by her "cowardice" or "incapacity" (p.173). It is a direct consequence of the experience, or

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[27] Berkman, p.30.

[28] Freud, "Femininity", pp.166-9.

[29] Conway, p.147.

potential experience, of childbirth. Unlike the male "she knows the history of human flesh; she knows its cost" (p.173). It is a matter then of one's relation to life, one's relation to materiality, to the processive, and to "the history of human flesh" - a history which is effaced in the interests of a phallocentric language and metaphysics whose apparently smooth and seamless functioning is dependent upon repression of its material matrix. It is also seen as a matter of simple pragmatics - the unwillingness of women to witness or participate in the destruction of the products of their labour, their "works of art" (p.174). Woman's "instinct", significantly "instructed by practical experience" (p.176), steps in to prevent the destruction of the products of her "blood, anguish, and sometimes death" (p.175).

This account does not reproduce the tendency in patriarchal theory to conflate masculinity and femininity with the prescribed roles of men and women in sexual reproduction. In Woman and Labour women remain distanced from the experiences and attitudes discussed and resist absorption into the maternal function. The capacity to reproduce is seen as one possible function of femininity - one which does not define its meaning and which falls firmly in the ambit of cultural rather than instinctual determination. From this it can be seen that within Schreiner's schema the anatomical model does not function as an ineluctable determinant of masculinity and femininity. Rather, it is one factor among others (notably socialisation) which conditions behaviour. It is, she claims, "almost impossible to determine scientifically in how far they [sexual differences] are the result of national traditions, environment, and education, and in how far the result of real differences in organic conformation" (pp.160-161). Biological differences stand simply as anatomical variations whose wider significance, if any, is underplayed.

Therefore Schreiner's concept of sexual difference recognises that biology always already incorporates the social value and location assigned it. Schreiner

acknowledges that value judgements are already inscribed into interpretations and configurations of (particularly female) anatomy.

It is important to note that even in the sphere in which "sex as sex manifestly plays its part" (p.195) difference between the sexes is not only radically curtailed and limited but is delineated in terms of female capacity and the male's relative incapacity: "he" is "for ever excluded" from the world of experiences and sensations which open to the female. This constitutes an implication of male "deficiency" which will be expanded upon later.

Of equal significance is the fact that, while Schreiner does appear to conflate sexuality with reproduction at this point, her formulation of difference in no way implies a return to the traditional negation of female desire. This denial is effected both through explicit denial and through the more subtle elision of female desire enacted by a phallocentric system of signification which recognises only one libido, one desire, that of the masculine[30]. Overt references to female sexuality are rare in Woman and Labour but this omission owes much to Schreiner's scepticism about the heterosexual relationship as patriarchally determined. As Jane Lewis maintains[31], Schreiner did remain suspicious of "sensuality", or more accurately, of the sexual freedom campaigns of the early-twentieth century (supported by feminists - Dora Russell, Stella Brown - and others). She displayed along with many women the belief that so-called sex reforms did little other than to subject women further to male sexual norms and to marginalise their subversion by women they labelled "spinsters", "militant feminists" and "prudes"[32]. Men and women are alike,

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30 Luce Irigaray, Speculum of the Other Woman, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Cornell University Press, New York) p.32.

31 Lewis, p.121.

32 Sheila Jeffreys, "Free from all uninvited touch of man: women's campaigns around sexuality , 1880-1914", The Sexuality Papers , eds. L. Coveney, M. Jackson, S Jeffreys, L. Kaye, P. Mahoney (Hutchinson, London, 1984) pp.43-4; and Margaret

Schreiner claims, in the "possession of that initial instinct which draws sex to sex" (p.190).

Schreiner's limitation of radical sexual difference to the reproductive function undermines the definition of masculinity and femininity according to an oppositional schema. This construction of sexual difference was also challenged by the American feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman in her exposition of the dangers of an excessive sex-distinction. She claims that this "excess" is produced as a result of "the economic dependence of the human female on her mate"[33] which she defines as "unnatural" (p.26). This refutes the assertion of the fundamental opposition between the sexes which propels theories such as Ellis' and allows for a female sexuality which is not bound by difference but which is both similar to and yet different from that of the male. Both writers provide space for a difference which is not conceptualised as opposition, lack, or deficiency, but which does not imply an elision of sexual difference (the reduction of two sexes, two desires to one). In Woman and Labour the two sexes are perceived as similar and yet different in ways which are socially determined and inscribed upon the anatomical differences they exhibit. As Schreiner's analysis reveals, femininity cannot simply be aligned with anatomical constitution, a biological femininity. It is always perceived as a secondary formation tied inextricably to social prescription.

Despite the strategic employment of examples from the animal world, Woman and Labour self-consciously and rigidly upholds the distance between the social and

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Jackson, "Sexology and the social construction of male sexuality (Havelock Ellis)", The Sexuality Papers, pp. 64-6.

33 Gilman, Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution (1898; Gordon Press, New York, 1975) pp.38-9.

the organic. In fact Schreiner parodies the alignment of femininity with anatomical construction in the discussion of those arguments which posit "natural and spontaneous division of labour based on natural sexual distinctions" (pp.156-157). According to Schreiner, arguments such as these suggest that there might be "a subtle correlation between the condition of the brain and nervous system which accompanies ability in the direction of certain forms of mental, social labour, and the particular form of reproductive function possessed by an individual" (p.157). This passage is an obvious parody of those sexual theories which assume the determination of the different functions of the sexes by their reproductive role in the interests of advancing the concept of sex antagonism[34]. This concept was adopted to greater or lesser degree by sexual discourses in the period from the 1880s to the 1920s and culminated in the "hysterical" texts of Heape[35].

Schreiner focuses in particular upon the "sometimes stated" assertion of "some inherent connection in the human brain between the ovarian sex function and the art of fiction" (p.158). She dismisses outright the assumption of women's organically determined proclivity to fiction and locates the female penchant for this art form in women's lack of training for, or the opportunity to engage in, other art forms or occupations. The association of femininity with particular spheres of influence is seen to be the result of "the crabbed, walled-in, and bound conditions surrounding woman at the present day" (p.159) rather than the laws of a biology which institutes the different interests of the sexes on the basis of "the profound biological differences between the function of the reproductive instinct in each"[36].

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[34] See E. Westermarck, The History of Human Marriage (Macmillan, London, 1891), quoted in Coward, p.89.

[35] Walter Heape, Sex Antagonism (Constable, London,1913).

[36] R. Briffault, "Family Sentiments", quoted in Coward, p. 90.

"Scientifically speaking", Schreiner states that "it is as unproven that there is any organic relation between the brain of the female and the production of art in the form of fiction, as that there is an organic relation between the hand of woman and a typewriting machine" (p.159). Here Schreiner combines the authority of scientific discourse and the art of ironic declamation to highlight her self-distancing from biologistic notions of sexual difference and the sexual division of labour.

It is relevant to note at this point that Schreiner's argument on this issue does not only make use of the concept of the social determination of character but also appeals to an interpretation of Nature which casts it into opposition with the "artificiality" of patriarchal sociality. In the radical tradition of Godwin, Paine and Wollstonecraft, Nature is posited as an alternative to a stunting social organisation. Schreiner maintains that:

> ...no abstract consideration of the human body in relation to its functions of sex can, in the present state of our knowledge, show us what intellectual capacities tend to vary with sexual structure... (p.164)

Following this it is demanded that "natural conditions...may determine the labours of each individual, and not artificial restrictions" (p.166). This demand is consonant with Schreiner's plea that "Mother Nature" be allowed to sit unimpeded as "umpire" over sexual difference (p.167), a plea which refutes Geddes' rejection of the role of social or political factors in the subjection of women[37]. His belief in the determining power of "the prehistoric Protozoa"[38] is clearly disputed by Schreiner's emphasis that the social and the natural are artificial and patriarchally-defined constructs.

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[37] Conway, p.146.

[38] Conway p.247.

Schreiner's argument draws heavily upon the revolutionary inscription of Nature, not as the pre-social nor extra-social as in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century conceptual schema[39] but in its teleological inscription, as representing a human, and in this case particularly female, potential. In Woman and Labour the natural does not imply a return to a pre-social past. This concept holds no place in Schreiner's theory, as can be seen from the allegory of the "sudden arrival of strangers" into a primitive society (pp.261-265). Rather, it refers to the possibility for the conditions in which "not one potentiality shall be lost, nor squandered on a lesser when it might have been expended on a higher and more beneficent task" (p.216). Schreiner appeals to an anti-deterministic teleology and joins Mary Wollstonecraft in repudiating the political conservatism implicit in the epithet "all *is* now right", in favour of the belief that "all will *be* right"[40]. The natural assumes the status of an alternative to the existing state of sexual and social relations and the patriarchal social organisation is branded as unnatural, artificial, and liable to supercession by an order in which the "natural activities" are restored[41]. In this schema nature signifies women's freedom from patriarchal restrictions on their education, labour and sexual expression, a liberation which will assist not only the evolution of society but a truly rational assessment of the relations between the sexes:

> In love there is no first nor last. What we request of life is that the tools should be given to his hand or hers who can best handle them; that the least efficient should not be forced into the place of the more efficient, and that an artificially drawn line should

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39 Henry Collins, introduction to The Rights of Man, by Thomas Paine (1791-2; Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1983) p.32.

40 Mary Wollstonecraft, Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792; Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1982) p.95.

41 Bebel, p.304.

> never repress the activities of the individual creature, which we as women bring into the world. (p.217)

This is a plea which echoes Gilman's lament in Women and Economics that "Sex has been made to dominate the whole human world" and that sexual difference has been allowed to "surge all over its natural boundaries and blazon itself across every act of life"[42]. Schreiner's argument utilises the radical interpretation of Nature as a projection into an alternative and more progressive future and also posits the feminist facilitation of the progress to this truly natural state as the necessary motor of social evolutionary progress and advancement. Although she rejects the eighteenth-century commitment to the pre-social she nevertheless deploys a reformulated notion of Nature and natural rights in a polemic motivated by strategic interests similar to those implicit in Wollstonecraft's complaint that "Nature, or, to speak with strict propriety, God, has made all things right; but man has sought him out many inventions to mar the work"[43].

Returning now to the issue of Schreiner's assertion of the "difference" between the sexes, it is crucial to appreciate the tactical motivation behind the concern with biology and female difference from the male. This motivation consists, as has been suggested, of the attempt to forge a point of intersection between the "equality" and "difference" modes of late-nineteenth to early twentieth-century feminism. This attempt is of obvious significance to current debates on the same topic.

In line with the "equality" position Woman and Labour argues that broad identity with men in "the laboratory, the designing-room, the factory, the mart, the mathematician's study, and in all fields of purely abstract or impersonal labour" (p.191) justifies the accordance to women of a share in "the electoral, and ultimately in the legislative and executive duties of government" (p.192). Sexual difference is

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42 Gilman, Women and Economics, p.53.

43 Wollstonecraft, Vindication, p.113.

minimised at this point, with emphasis falling upon the fact that there is "nothing in the nature of their (women's) sex-function which exonerates them, as human beings, from their obligation to take part in the labours of guidance and government" (p.192). However,

> ...in certain "spheres" of social activity, the sexes as sexes have often each a part to play which the other cannot play for them; have each a knowledge gained from phases of human experience, which the other cannot supply; here woman as woman has something radically distinct to contribute to the sum-total of human knowledge, and her activity is of importance, not merely individually, but collectively, and as a class. (p.192)

Therefore, while Schreiner finds "nothing in the nature of their sex-function" which implies female inferiority, in their "radical" distinction from the male, they do "form a class and are bound to represent the interests of, and to give the state the benefit of, the insight of their class, in certain directions" (p.193). Key elements of the sameness and difference positions converge here. Woman and Labour capitalises both on those arguments which seek to elevate women to the status of men on the basis of their broad identity with the male, and simultaneously, upon those arguments designed to promote the extension of the female sphere on the basis of woman's "special" insight. The patchwork of positions presented in the book enables Schreiner to reap the obvious advantages of stressing women's natural equality with men without submitting to a concept of equality which implies the commensurability of the sexes.

In her thesis of the specific knowledge which men and women "contribute to the sum-total of human knowledge" Schreiner resists what Elizabeth Gross describes as the "prevailing conception of knowledge as a neutrally expressed body of information produced by a sexually indifferent subject from an unspecifiable perspective"[44]. This is a conception predicated upon the "evacuation" of the male body from phallocentric discourses, and signifying processes. As Gross states:

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[44] Elizabeth Gross, "Philosophy and the Body", Feminist Challenges, p.137.

> In so far as phallocentrism represents itself as disembodied, universal or true, the specific attributes and interests of men are capable of being presented as if they were universal. To compensate for this absence of the male body, women are considered the corporeal, bodily, material substratum supporting male intellect, reason, theoretical structures - male immateriality.[45]

Rather than participating in the myth of the universality of subjectivity and truth, Schreiner presents social evolutionary theory and sexual discourse with the sexed body and subjectivity they disavow in their production of knowledge. As her discourse makes clear, there are always at least two categories of the body, two kinds of sex, each of which is associated with a differing perspective on and orientation towards truth. Each has "a knowledge gained from phases of human experience" (Woman and Labour, p.192). Knowledge in Schreiner's schema is always the representation or the contribution of a specific viewpoint, the product of a mind embodied in a sexually, socially and interpersonally inscribed body. It is this recognition of the sexualisation of the body which leads Schreiner to her conclusions regarding the specificity of knowledge and her advocation of greater female input in certain areas.

Apart from acknowledging the sexual specificity of knowledge, and thus the vested interests implicit in its phallocentric production, Woman and Labour simultaneously resists the reduction of women to the corporeal which is the corollary of the masculine drive to a universalising knowledge in which male subjectivity is identified with a mind privileged over the body which is relegated to feminine status. This view of femininity is generated by the sexual discourse of Spencer, Geddes, Freud and Ellis, and is the target of Schreiner's strategically framed "equality" arguments.

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[45] Gross, "Philosophy and the Body", pp.135-6.

In striking similarity to the project undertaken by contemporary French feminist Luce Irigaray Schreiner attempts to inject the feminine body into a discourse which excludes or denigrates it and also to forge a space in which a positive reinscription can take place - "to speak about a positive model or series of representations of femininity by which the female body may be positively marked"[46].

Woman and Labour argues that women are entitled to the same social privileges as men (to a sameness in social stature) but that this should not imply the necessity of renouncing the notion of two equal but different subjectivities. It posits the existence of two sexes and two subjectivities in a formulation of difference which does not elevate one term at the expense of the other and which resists placing male sexuality in a paradigmatic position. Nor does it lapse into a conflation of the anatomical and the psychic thus resorting to a biological identity for women.

The demand for electoral and legislative equality (the demand for the vote) is, according to Schreiner, bolstered rather than undermined by an acknowledgment of women's sexual specificity and difference of perspective. This view was expressed by Millicent Garrett Fawcett who, in her protest against the appeal against female suffrage, insisted that: "We do not want women to be bad imitations of men; we neither deny nor minimise the difference between men and women. The claim of women to representation depends to a large extent on those differences. Women bring something to the service of the state different from that which can be brought by men"[47]. In labelling women as a class Schreiner does not necessarily participate in the idea of the eternal feminine nor in an elision of class and race difference between women themselves. The interests ascribed by her to all women are those determined by the

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[46] Gross, "Philosophy and the Body", p.142.

[47] Millicent Garrett Fawcett, "Female suffrage: a reply", The Nineteenth Century (July 1889), in Hollis, p.331.

common factor of their social oppression rather than their participation in an essential femininity. It follows that Schreiner's theorisation of the sexes as interest groups does not correspond with the concept of sex antagonism promoted in the theories previously mentioned.

In "Sex Differences" then Schreiner challenges the reduction of femininity to an anatomical or biological femininity; the basis of behavioural modes in the anatomical. She implicitly questions the placement of the masculine in the position of sexual origin as the term in relationship or opposition to which the feminine is constructed. More significantly, Woman and Labour challenges the way in which the female body is constituted by patriarchal theory, removing it from the realm of nature and placing it instead in the realm of an always discursive morphology. Implicit in Schreiner's analysis of sexual difference is the recognition of the integral connection between the sexed body and the production of knowledge by and around it.

The concept of sexual difference is summoned by Woman and Labour specifically to support the impassioned announcement that women "claim today, all labour for our province" (p.196). Schreiner's conceptualisation of difference effectively eradicates the distinction between the public and the private maintained by social maternalist theorists such as Ellis, as will be seen. According to Woman and Labour, the "sphere" of women's influence knows no such artificial boundaries; it encompasses both the so-called public and the private in its range of legitimate concerns - "all labour" is confidently claimed as woman's inalienable right and as her indisputable province. This attitude may take its bearings from the ideology of the separate spheres but it is unequivocal in its renunciation of it. Schreiner's refutation of a biological masculinity and femininity strikes at the heart of the phallocentric division not only between the sexes but between their natural spheres of action and influence. In so doing it throws into turmoil the theoretical safeguards of male supremacy.

The "ancient myth" of woman's exclusive sphere

Schreiner's assault on the organic basis of sexual difference and her intervention into the equality-sameness polemic comprises one facet of a concerted attack on the ideology of the separate spheres which formed a crucial component of the late nineteenth-century conceptual schema. My discussion now turns to the subject of the sexual division of labour and the ideology of the separate spheres in order to highlight the interpenetration of the theorisation of the sexual division of labour (women's work) with the theorisation of sexual difference.

One effect of the history of women's relation to labour which occupies the opening phase of Schreiner's project in Woman and Labour is its displacement of patriarchal images of women by different and more positive ones. The history of women through the ages is contained in the first two chapters on parasitism and functions as an account, critique, and rejection of the exclusion of women from the field of productive labour. Schreiner's history of women's relation to labour is simultaneously a history of representations and myths of femininity. It is an exposition of the empirical conditions of women's work and of the configurations of sexual difference which subtend these conditions. The notion that women are naturally adapted to the domestic sphere and the reproductive function (a sphere conceptualised as external to the circuits of production) was prominent among the myths promoted by social evolutionary theory and was reinforced by a developing sexology.

Woman and Labour regards the sexual division of labour as a prime locus of women's oppression and refutes its character as natural and immutable. In the first two chapters, Schreiner addresses the changes in woman's domain contingent upon the technological advancement associated with British industrialism in the late-nineteenth century. In these opening chapters Schreiner focuses attention on predominant myths about women and the nature of their work - myths further

entrenched in the early decades of the nineteenth century by evangelical prescriptions for woman's role. She targets the set of phallocentric assumptions underlying what she terms "our modern 'Woman's Labour Problem'" (p.50). This problem prompts the strident demand for labour which launches Woman and Labour. According to Schreiner it forms the keynote of "that clamour which has arisen in the modern world, where now this, and then that, is demanded for and by large bodies of modern women" (p.33). The emphasis on "modern" establishes what is to become a significant contrast between an idealised past of woman's active involvement in production and a contemporary exclusion.

From the outset Schreiner frames the demand for training and labour embodied in this "clamour" in terms of the welfare of the race -"We demand this, not for ourselves alone, but for the race". However the opening pages are notable for the tactical expedience which reduces the complex web of feminist endeavours and claims to the deceptively simple plea for work. In focusing on the labour issue in relative isolation, Schreiner achieves an effective, accessible and comparatively uncontroversial entrée (given the numbers of women in the work force and the increasing number of professions opening to middle-class women by 1911) into an argument whose scope encompasses a multiplicity of aspects of patrocentric sociality in a far from benign fashion.

In the first chapter Woman and Labour traces, in general and non-culturally specific terms, the "tendency for the sphere of woman's domestic labours to contract itself" (p.52) in the context of a technological revolution which, while providing "extension" in areas of male labour, has severely truncated those of the female:

> The changes which have taken place during the last centuries, and which we sum up under the compendious term "modern civilisation", have tended to rob woman, not merely in part but almost wholly, of the more valuable of her ancient domain of productive and social labour; and, where there has not been a determined and conscious resistance on her part, have nowhere spontaneously tended to open out to her new and compensatory fields. (p.50)

Schreiner associates this radical contraction in female productive labour with the reduction of the female to sex-parasitism, the "passive exercise of her sex functions alone" (p.78). As such, it devolves more upon patriarchal attitudes to the feminine than upon changing "material conditions". This is stressed as the argument proceeds. However Schreiner's opening gambit assumes the form of a methodologically and thematically uncontroversial provision of a brief history of the vicissitudes of woman's labour, much in the style of Bebel's tracing of "Woman in the Past" and "Woman in the Present Day".

According to Schreiner's schema in Woman and Labour "savage" woman (although depicted as wandering and labouring freely with the male) engaged primarily in reproductive and "domestic" labour:

> Within our bodies we bore the race, on our shoulders we carried it; we sought the roots and plants for its food; and, when man's barbed arrow or hook brought the game, our hands dressed it. (pp.33-34)

This apparent endorsement of the organic or natural basis of the sexual division of labour is repeated in the presentation of the next stage of social development. Schreiner claims that with the development of settled communities "again the labours of life were divided between us" (p.34). These labours are classified as: "Man fought - that was his work; we fed and nurtured the race - that was ours" (p.35).

According to this account increasing civilisation introduced the changes which were to accelerate with the industrialisation of England. Males began to encroach upon the fields of labour previously occupied by women:

> Then our fellow-man, having no longer full occupation in his old fields of labour, began to take his share in ours. He too began to cultivate the field, to build the house, to grind the corn (or make his male slaves do it); and the hoe, and the potter's tools, and the thatching-needle, and at last even the grindstones...began to pass from our hands into his. (pp.35-36)

Thus, with the changing material conditions, those labours traditionally undertaken by women (agricultural, medical and otherwise) were gradually appropriated by males who were no longer required to devote their time entirely to hunting - a stage in social evolution which accords roughly with Morgan's and Engels' conception of the establishment of patriarchy, as will be discussed. This resulted in an increased domestication of women and in their virtual confinement to strictly household tasks such as spinning, weaving, brewing and cooking (p.36). It was the final transition to advanced industrialism which produced the removal of even "the minor domestic operations" from female control (p.51).

In her attention to the "Woman's Labour Problem" Schreiner addresses not only the specific changes which occurred in the availability of certain types of employment to particular classes of women (an issue to which the feminist reformist campaigns were directed) but also the wide changes in the conceptualisation of women's work which accompanied the social and economic changes of an industrialised nation. Her history evokes a pre-industrialist and a pre-capitalist society in which the division between public and private (social and domestic work) is inoperable and in which women possess a clear and valued role in a home-centred economy and a family-based collective labour[48]. Schreiner outlines the shattering of this economic system (the removal of manufacturing from the home to the factory, the shift to a wage-based economy in which women were severely disavantaged) in her opening history/fable of a past female equality. Moreover, these civilised and civilising arts are depicted as primordially feminine occupations - the "progress" of civilisation consisting in the dispossession of women of these roles by usurpers formerly confined to the "barbaric" pastimes of hunting and warfare.

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[48] Janet Horowitz Murray, Strong Minded Women (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984) pp.4-5; pp.259-60.

Woman and Labour does not draw overt attention to its relation to the matriarchal rule (mother-right) theories which achieved pre-eminence in the 1860s and '70s. These theories assumed the historical primacy of a matriarchal rule which was overthrown in a transition to patriarchal rule generally associated with the establishment of private property, monogamy, and slavery[49]. However aspects of its argument are clearly informed by the assumptions of Engels, Morgan and Bebel in this context. As Bebel claims, "With the establishment of private property the subjugation of woman by man was accomplished....The matriarchate implied communism and equality of all. The rise of the patriarchate implied the rule of private property and the subjugation and enslavement of women"[50]. Woman and Labour rejects the implicit assumption of sex antagonism and the absolute sexual difference along biological lines which are endemic in matriarchal theory. It also avoids mention of the period of promiscuity and polygamy which supposedly accompanied the alleged matriarchate[51]. Nor does Schreiner concur with prominent socialists of the period in the equating the matriarchate and communism.

However Schreiner's theory does signal its intersection with these theories in its "materialistic conception of history"[52]. It is also interesting to note that the historical stages outlined in Woman and Labour accord quite closely with Morgan's three epochs of history - savagery, barbarism and civilisation [53]; and that Schreiner's work evinces a valorisation of the Germanic races evident in Morgan,

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[49] See Lewis H. Morgan, Ancient Society (Charles H. Kerr, Chicago, 1877); Bebel, Woman and Socialism; Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.

[50] Bebel, p.33.

[51] Engels, chs I and II.

[52] Engels, p.5.

[53] Morgan, Ancient Society, chs. 1-3.

Engels and Bebel. The correlation between the accumulation of wealth, the advent of slavery and the sex-parasitism of women outlined in Schreiner's perversion theory is perhaps the clearest index of the debt of Woman and Labour to its subtext of matriarchal theory. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

The changes outlined by Schreiner in her introductory history are seen as significant primarily in their contribution to the state of sex-parasitism - a state, or ideology which affects not only upper middle-class women but poses dangers to "the mass of civilised women, perhaps ultimately to all" (p.79). Schreiner has been accused of class bias in her analysis of women's oppression. This charge is justified to an extent. Her account certainly does underestimate the impact on working women of the double load of duties it recommends and her conception of women's relation to labour does concentrate on the entry of middle-class women into the professions. However she is aware of the repercussions, both negative and positive, of social change on women of all classes.

Woman and Labour was written during a period of the expansion of occupations for middle-class women and this is undoubtedly a primary area of interest in her book. However, it is not merely the rights of the middle classes which occupy Schreiner's attention. The scope of the project in Woman and Labour enables it to encompass a wide range of women's experiences and oppressions including those of seamstresses, charwomen, and Kafir women. As will be seen in the following chapter, the specific discrimination confronting the charwoman, for example, is acknowledged as different from that of the woman doctor. However the root of this oppression is seen to be the same, linking the struggles of these two very different women, contrary to Rowbotham's claim that Schreiner is "incapable of indicating the common interest" of women such as the worker and the parasite[54]. Woman and Labour is able to direct

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[54] Rowbotham, Women, Resistance and Revolution, p.96.

its attention both to the similarities between the social situation of all women under patriarchy and to the specific differences, the heterogeneity of the expression of this oppression.

Returning now to the history of women's labour it is necessary to stress that the "regret" expressed by Woman and Labour at the invasion of the male and technology into "woman's ancient domain" of social and productive labour (p.50) does not connote an unproblematical acceptance of the natural allocation of women to the domestic sphere. This allocation involves the elevation of the role of motherhood, a role Schreiner has been accused of viewing from an idealistic and apolitical stance[55]. Nor is it, as First and Scott maintain[56], founded on a picture of the "modern woman" as outside social production in comparison with earlier epochs. The ideology of the separate spheres is utilised quite self-consciously and tactically in this instance and Schreiner's attitude to this entrenched system of beliefs reflects a critical perspective extending beyond that of the bulk of nineteenth-century discourses on the "woman question". The concept of the sexual division of labour manipulated by Schreiner to her advantage and its very premises are contested.

Far from accepting the separation of the spheres of activity on the basis of biological difference, Schreiner's apparent acquiescence in the proposition that "Man fought - that was his work; we fed and nurtured the race - that was ours" (p.35) is highly strategic. It is critical for later developments of her argument to establish the fact that the scope of women's legitimate labour has diminished to detrimental effect. Schreiner's demands for increased labour and training opportunities literally hinge upon acceptance of this premise. In order to substantiate feminist claims of women's "right" to labour (p.68) she must first establish that women have actually been

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[55] See, for example, First and Scott, p.277.

[56] First and Scott, p.274.

robbed of what was initially (and in accordance with male needs) theirs. Schreiner must strategically emphasise the existence of a domain of specifically female labour and assert its relative autonomy from that of the male. This aim is admirably served by the revered concept of woman's exclusive sphere, a concept which might defuse the fears of even the most anxious patriarch. The terms are, after all, his own.

However, this invocation of the separate spheres ideology is one which reformulates rather than reproduces the original definition. It does not repeat the conflation of femininity with passivity, masochism and symbolic invalidism which is the effect of phallocentric signification. Instead the interpretation of women's sphere produced by Woman and Labour unsettles this facile equation. It is a central contention of the book that, contrary to the norms of Victorian womanhood, women have always worked and that "an excessive and almost crushing amount of the most important physical labour generally devolved upon the female" (p.49). Schreiner's view of femininity is in keeping with the trend in the late 1880s and '90s to a revaluation of femininity which stressed a greater degree of independence as essential to "honourable womanhood"[57]. Although this view is not particularly emphasised at this point it does inform Schreiner's history and functions to highlight the paradoxes and inconsistencies inherent in patriarchal definitions of women.

By remaining (however ambivalently) within the separate spheres formula Schreiner is able to effect an elevation of the status of women's work and to equalise the value of male and female labour as traditionally conceived. A striking feature of the nostalgic re-creation of "the ages of the past" (p.39) is the fantasy of female equality: "Side by side, the savage man and the savage woman, we wandered free together and laboured free together" (p.34). The sexual harmony and equality embodied in this image is an ideal which permeates Schreiner's works and is the

[57] Murray, p.260.

image (this time projected into the future) with which Woman and Labour concludes. The utopian dream of true equality for women and harmony between the sexes, whether embodied in a particular past or a projected future, is woven tightly into the fabric of Schreiner's feminist vision.

It was the recognition of the value of women's work which Woman and Labour presents as sustaining women "a thousand years ago" (p.36) in the face of the historical contraction of their duties. As Schreiner's feudal dame states when questioned as to why she is content with a domestic as opposed to a more "public" role:

> "Ill would it go indeed, if when the folk came home from war and the chase of wild beasts, weary or wounded, they found all the womenfolk gone out a-hunting and a-fighting, and none there to dress their wounds, or prepare their meat, or guide and rule the household! Better far might my lord and his followers come and help us with our work, than that we should go to help them!....What becomes of the country if the women forsake their toil?" (p.37)

Women's work is thus afforded a pivotal role in social production and iselevated above that of the male in terms of its importance to "the country". This vignette, along with other similar "scenes from history" (pp.37-40) does not function as a literal record of what can only be described as an historically and irretrievable consciousness. Nor is it merely a compensatory gesture to a nineteenth-century womanhood which suffers the consequences of a debasement of its work. It does not merely idealise the role of wife and mother but, rather, strives to construct (from its own historical perspective and political disposition) an image of women's work which accords it a status denied it in contemporary culture. It operates thus as a rebuttal of stereotypical representations of the place of women's work. It is also interesting to contrast Bebel's statistical approach to the same issues with Schreiner's blending of fantasy, story, monologue, dramatic presentation with analysis, empirical detail and an appeal to logic and reason.

If a process of idealisation is implicated, it is an idealisation which does not concur in patriarchal misrepresentations of wives and mothers but which looks to different modes of conceptualisation. If the women depicted in this series of vignettes are "contented with our fields of labour" it is because they are sustained and strengthened by a sense of their service to men and children and also by the knowledge of their own worth and the centrality of their social role. Through the voices of these women Schreiner highlights her recognition of the centrality of women to the social structure, their function as "the foundation of the symbolic order"[58].

The ideology of the separate spheres is invoked to serve ends quite different from those conventionally achieved. It is utilised to highlight the centrality of women's work to social production not to reinforce the equation of femininity with passivity, nor to ameliorate the reality of women's oppression. It asserts the dependence of the social order upon the work traditionally undertaken by women and it challenges the traditional definitions of that work.

This challenge to traditional conceptualisations forms a vital aspect of the subversion of the separate spheres ideology enacted by Woman and Labour. Schreiner's ancient women hoe the earth, shape the dwellings, weave the clothing, practise medicine, and perform as priests and prophets, as well as bearing and raising children, in a deliberate confusion and intermingling of the public and the private. Therefore, even at an early stage of society which recognised the "natural" division of labour, according to Schreiner, the labour assigned women as their natural sphere involved an intersection of the social and the domestic, an elision of the strict demarcation between the two spheres posited as natural and immutable in Victorian sexual theory. Moreover, this interdependence is characteristic of the primarily feminine sphere of civilisation itself in contrast to the comparatively

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58 Luce Irigaray, "Women's Exile", Ideology and Consciousness 1, p.71.

savage and (because it conforms to an oppositional logic) impoverished, masculine domain. While Schreiner may superficially appear to uphold the sexual division of labour, in that male and female tasks are "divided" (p.34), this division clearly confounds nineteenth-century conceptions of sexual difference and the natural attributes and roles of men and women.

Male labour is presented as a robbery from the female - "Then our fellow man, having no longer full occupation in his old fields of labour, began to take his share in ours" (p.35). Male labour, that which defines the male in nineteenth-century discourse, is placed in a relation of derivation from the feminine. As a result, the terms "male" and "female", active and passive, cease to function as neutral and purely descriptive. The labour undertaken by Schreiner's ancestral women can be categorised as both active and passive, as neither one nor the other, and as comprising specific forms of activity later defined as naturally masculine. This confounding of crucial nineteenth-century categories of public/private, active/passive problematises the conception of woman's proper sphere and the theories of sexual difference which underlie it and paves the way for Schreiner's demands for social and sexual transformation.

The history of women's labour functions thus as a displacement of Schreiner's critique of the arbitrary and politically motivated construction of masculinity and femininity in her own society. Her analysis proffers a version of woman's domain which eschews the separation between the public and the private and is for that reason civilised. This challenges the absorption of women into a passive function and unsettles biologistic notions of mascuinity and femininity. Furthermore, in recounting the history of the usurpation of "even the minor domestic operations" such as carpet sweeping, window cleaning by "machinery, or extra domestic, often male labour", Schreiner comes to the conclusion that, although in the past it was

"exclusively the woman's duty to prepare the viands for her household", with increasing modernisation this has become "an antiquated lie" (p.51).

The strategy here is twofold. It involves, firstly, an appeal to the social evolutionary equation of historical progress with increasing perfection, the synonymising of nineteenth-century European civilisation with moral and social superiority over earlier or non-European forms. The ideology of the separate spheres has become an antiquated lie "in proportion as civilisation has perfected itself" (p.51). The epithet "antiquated" carries with it a strongly derogatory impact; in accordance with the social evolutionary formula, the "ancient" is denigrated as the primitive. This casts a somewhat ironic light on Schreiner's eulogy of the past and its construction of the woman's sphere. The progression to "perfection" implicit in social evolutionism is called upon to enforce the perceived disjunction (born of an imperialist pride) between "civilisation" (as embodied in contemporary English society) and the archaism of the evolutionary past - a past to which the concept of the woman's sphere is firmly relegated.

The second phase of Schreiner's strategy involves the branding of the superseded and "antiquated" notion of the woman's sphere a "lie" and one which is inimical to civilisation itself, rightly understood. In labelling it as such, doubt is immediately cast not only upon its modern relevance but indeed upon the validity of its historical application. The natural difference upon which the ideology of the separate spheres is predicated should, after all, transcend history and politics. Thus through the epithet "antiquated lie", Schreiner constructs a condensed and subversive critique of the theory of woman's sphere of influence in which, not only is its nineteenth-century formulation derogated as outmoded, but its status as a universal expression of natural or social law is called into question. Thus Schreiner allocates the separate spheres ideology to the body of patriarchal mythology, displacing it with a fiction of her own, as will be seen.

Schreiner's position on the sexual division of labour is unequivocally proclaimed in the chapter "Woman and War" in which she openly engages with the social maternalist contention advanced by theorists such as Ellis that increased equality for women is dependent upon the extension of their sexually specific attributes and talents. Schreiner claims that the proposition that "a dividing line of some kind should be drawn between the occupations of men and of women" has "no practical or scientific basis". She refers to it as an aspect of "evolution in the past"; while the sexual division of labour may have been appropriate in the past it is "out of harmony with the conditions of modern life" (p.154).

Schreiner does not launch an outright attack on the ideological basis of the construction of the natural. She strategically locates the natural in representations applicable only to the past. This enables her to remain ostensibly within a phallocentric social evolutionary framework while enacting a radical subversion of the accounts of the natural which activate and are activated by its operations. "for the present," she claims "we see no such natural and spontaneous division of labour based on natural sexual distinction" (pp.156-157).

The argument forwarded by Woman and Labour is dependent upon a linkage of the progress of "civilisation" with the contraction of the women's sphere and with the movement of its masculine appropriation. However, within the terms of this argument, this contraction does not merely accompany advancing civilisation in a relationship of coincidence. It is posited, by implication, and through the artful arrangement of terms, as a virtual index of increasing civilisation itself: "and the contraction is marked exactly in proportion as that complex condition we term 'modern civilisation' is advanced" (p.52). "Civilisation" is thus rendered synonymous with the contraction of women's exclusive sphere in an equation in which this contraction comes to assume the status of prescription. As the contraction of woman's domain is itself aligned with the need to revaluate the role of women in social

production and to provide them with new forms of labour, "civilisation" becomes reformulated as commensurate with new definitions of women's duty. The demands of the women's movement for "new forms of labour and new fields for the exercise of their (women's) powers" (p.67), and the contraction of the women's sphere which motivates these demands are connected in this way with the motor of social progress.

This equation of the contraction of women's sphere with greater opportunities for women is ignored by Berkman in her claims that Schreiner's emphasis on the "decline" of meaningful labour for women was at odds with her insistence on "the fact and possibility of human progress"[59]. As can be seen, Schreiner's thesis is more complicated than this implies - the so-called "decline" is in fact if not a condition then at least a motor of progress.

Schreiner's exposition of the changing nature of woman's duty exhibits a similarly subversive dimension. While explicitly setting out to demonstrate the contingency of contemporary alterations in the definition of women's duty upon changing material conditions that definition is itself subjected to scrutiny and exposed as socially rather than naturally prescribed. The thrust of her exposition is to justify woman's withdrawal from her "traditional" sphere. In association with changes in the woman's sphere those duties deemed essentially feminine are shown to have altered in accordance with the laws of social change. Maternal duty - child-bearing and nurturing - receives special attention in this context.

According to Woman and Labour the traditional depiction of woman's duty as consisting in the reproduction of children and dedication to the home (a depiction revived and reinforced by theorists such as Ellis) belongs firmly in the past. The only position it can occupy in contemporary society is that of myth, lie or "absolute misstatement" (p.55).

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[59] Berkman, p.38.

Of the mother's duty to assume precedence in the educative role it is stated that:

> To-day, so complex have become even the technical and simpler branches of education, so mighty and inexorable are the demands which modern civilisation makes for specialised instruction and training for all individuals who are to survive and retain their usefulness under modern conditions, that, from the earliest years of its life, the child is of necessity largely removed from the hands of the mother, and placed in those of the specialised instructor. (p.54)

Social selection thus dictates the curtailment of this particular maternal role. The "ancient statement that the training and education of her offspring is exclusively the duty of the mother" (p.55), a statement given credence until the closing decades of the century among the middle classes, and with particular relevance to daughters[60], has been rendered "an absolute misstatement" (p.55). Contemporary conditions have, according to Woman and Labour, made a virtual lie of past definitions of female duty.

This applies particularly to woman's reproductive duty. Past social conditions (including high infant mortality rate, high death rate from famine, poverty and war) necessitated that "the first and all-important duty of the female to her society was to bear, to bear much, and to bear unceasingly" (p.56). This "primitive" situation (p.56) is contrasted with the modern condition in which the "advance of science and the amelioration of the physical condition of life tend towards a diminution of human mortality" (p.60) - a diminution which has resulted in the fact that "to the family as well as to the state, unlimited fecundity on the part fo the female has already, in most cases, become irremediable evil" (p.62). The divergence of Schreiner's position on "unlimited fecundity" from that enunciated by eugenicists and Neo-Malthusians will be discussed later.

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60 Patricia Branca, Silent Sisterhood: Middle-Class Women in the Victorian Home (Croom Helm, London, 1975) pp.45-7.

Woman's duty is here reformulated by Schreiner as the limitation of her reproductive capacity. This is the closest Schreiner comes to signalling support for the birth control movement. Like many other feminists she was ambivalent about the benefits of contraception not only because of the taint of Malthusianism but because of indecision as to whether it freed women or further encouraged male indulgence[61]. Schreiner's attitude to woman's duty is perhaps best encapsulated in the footnote allegory of "the good old mother of the race", (pp.52-53), who "having survived, here and there, into the heart of our modern civilisation is sorely puzzled by the change in woman's duties and obligations' (p.52). This woman

> may be found looking into the eyes of some ancient crone, who, like herself, has survived from a previous state of civilisation, seeking there a confirmation of a view of life of which a troublous doubt has crept even into her own soul. "I," she cries, "always cured my own hams, and knitted my own socks, and made up all the linen by hand. We always did it when we were girls - but now my daughters object!" And her old crone answers her: "Yes, *we* did it; it's the right thing; but it's so expensive...." And they shake their heads and go their ways, feeling that the world is strangely out of joint when duty seems no more duty.

In this allegory Schreiner engages in a delicate balancing act between sympathy for the regrets expressed by these women and alienation from the position they represent (which is associated with a state of mental and physical fossilisation). Once again the pejorative "ancient" is employed and its impact is bolstered by its embodiment in the two witch-like old women; images are evoked of that genre of fairytale in which witches ruthlessly put young girls to work (as in "Hansel and Gretel"). These archetypal mothers are presented as remnants of an age already past and obviously not rued by Schreiner; they exist only "here and there". Of equal significance is the fact that the change in woman's duties bemoaned by them is presented as a *fait accompli*, as a non-negotiable facet of modern life.

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61 See Hollis, pp.157-8; Sheila Rowbotham, Hidden From History (Pluto Press, London, 1973) pp. 74-6.

The hopeless archaism of "those who shake their heads...feeling that the world is strangely out of joint" is reinforced by the sister allegory of the old mother duck. Those who resist change are likened to the mother duck who persists in her ways even though the pond to which she has led her young for years "has been drained and nothing is left but baked mud". Her ducklings, on the other hand, with their "fresh young instincts", are applauded as capable of adjustment and eventually leave the "ancient mother" to seek the new dam. The response to this mother duck is a ringing: "...can you not see the world has changed? You cannot bring the water back into the dried up pond....New machinery, new duties!" (p.54).

Through its employment of a social evolutionary schema Woman and Labour establishes a connection between social primitivism and traditional conceptualisations of the female sphere of influence. The contraction of woman's sphere is depicted as being consonant with social progress. This equation functions to absolve women of those duties which traditionally devolved upon them and which were equated with an organic femininity. Technical advances are seen to have rendered women actually "incompetent" in the very duties which defined their womanliness. Thus a critical light is cast upon the assumptions underlying prescriptions placed on women's work and the inscriptions of sexual difference upon which these are based. Social evolutionary theory is exploited to dispel those very myths of femininity it is generally relied upon to perpetuate.

CHAPTER THREE

HAVELOCK ELLIS AND "THE SHARP LINE OF SEXUAL DISTINCTION"

In The Sexuality Papers Margaret Jackson[1] presents a cogent argument for the congruence of the decline of feminism in the years leading up to World War One and the development of the so-called "science" of sexology by Havelock Ellis, pioneer of "sexual frankness" and the attack on Victorian moralism[2]. According to Jackson Ellis' work in fact constituted a counter-attack against feminism and increasing female independence in the wake of the Women's Movement's stringent critique of male sexuality (a critique emblematised by the social purity campaigns of the 1880s).

Ellis' theory is viewed by Jackson as representing a direct response to women such as Josephine Butler and Elizabeth Wollstoneholme Elmy who challenged the exploitation of girls and women on the grounds that male sexuality was "a consequence of male power, not male biology"[3]. She describes Ellis' sexology as an apology for, and indeed a justification of, a male sexuality based on "uncontrollable urges", power, and violence, and of a sexual liberalism which functions to conscript women into patriarchal definitions of male and female sexuality. Jackson contends that one of Ellis' key concepts, "the art of love", teaches women to accept male sexual violence as inevitable, to experience submission as pleasure, to consent to conquest - to "enjoy" masochistically that form of male sexuality which feminists were actively challenging.

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[1] Margaret Jackson, "Sexology and the social construction of male sexuality (Havelock Ellis)", The Sexuality Papers, eds. L. Coveney, M. Jackson, S. Jeffreys, L. Kaye, M. Mahoney, pp.45-68.

[2] Sheila Rowbotham and Jeffrey Weeks, Socialism and the New Life: The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis (Pluto Press, London, 1977) pp.142-182. See also, Phyllis Grosskurth, Havelock Ellis: A Biography (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1980).

[3] Jackson, The Sexuality Papers, p.50.

Ellis was not, of course alone in this project. His theories bear striking similarities to Freud's theory of female sexuality with which they are roughly concurrent. The work of both men, although diverging at key points, such as infantile sexuality and bisexuality, corresponds in its function of reinforcing and normalising phallocentric conceptions of male and female sexuality. Both propose a model of femininity which institutes it as biologically determined (despite Freud's later attempts at modification of this position); as secondary to that of the paradigmatic male; as masochistic in nature; and as signifying deficiency[4]. Both also exhibit the tendency, raised to extravagant if not hysterical heights in Ellis, to collapse female sexuality into the maternal function.

Therefore a brief consideration of the relationship of Woman and Labour to Ellis' sexology is appropriate for a number of reasons. Not the least of these is the close personal involvement of Schreiner and Ellis, dating from her residence in England from 1881-9 and persisisting, although less intensely, throughout the remainder of her life. The familiarity with Ellis' ideas and opinions resulting from this association must be stressed, given that the following analysis of the interaction and difference between their theories relies upon the assumption of Schreiner's intervention into texts by Ellis which, although written during her lifetime, were not widely accessible until after her death. There is no suggestion that Schreiner actively engaged with the particular Ellis texts presented for consideration. She did, however, engage with the sexual ideology they represent and popularised. The ensuing discussion does not propose to enact a point by point contrast of their ideas but to indicate the general features of Schreiner's response to a position on female sexuality and feminism emblematised by Ellis and popularised by him to the extent that his model of male and female sexuality still enjoys acceptance.

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[4] Sigmund Freud, "Femininity", New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1933; Penguin, Harmondsworth,1973) pp.145-169.

First it is necessary to place Ellis' work firmly in its context as a committed advocacy of the "separate spheres" ideology. It is concomitant with and served by a belief in eugenics and is motivated by an opposition to the women's movement and its trail of causes and effects. This was an opposition never openly acknowledged by Ellis who considered himself a proponent of women's rights and who, in his first book, The New Spirit (1889), includes the rise of the women's movement along with science and democracy as chief elements in the "spiritual awakening" of the age[5]. Ellis' particular translation of the tendentious theory of women's domain was framed by the ideology of motherhood which gained vogue in the early twentieth century and which conducted an inspirited elevation of the role of motherhood. This occurred in the face of a falling marriage and birth rate among the middle and upper middle-classes and the disturbing 1890s phenomenon of the "new" woman (fictionalised, for example, by Thomas Hardy in Jude The Obscure, 1896).

His formulation of sexual difference, like Freud's, is plagued by a vacillation between an emphasis on the biological and on the social determination of sexual difference. He dismisses the notion of substantial differences between the sexes and claims that:

> we do not draw the sharp line of sexual distinction which was formerly accepted. We recognise differences that are indeed fundamental, and endless in number, but they are subtle differences...They represent the same human nature with the same varying tendencies...The custom of establishing hard and fast oppositions between "man" and "woman", in this field as in others, will not bear serious consideration, though it is not yet extinct.[6]

However, when discussing the vexed question of female passivity, he asserts that:

[5] Rowbotham and Weeks, p.145.

[6] Havelock Ellis, Psychology of Sex (1933; Heinemann, London,1943) p.288. Subsequent references are to this edition, which is hereafter referred to in shortened form as P.O.S.

> In the biological game of sex the female normally plays the more passive part, and in civilised women this relative passivity is reinforced not only by Nature but by our conventions. It is true that the doctrine alike of the sexual activity of the male and the sexual passivity of the female needs to be qualified. It is fundamental, and constitutes, as is too often forgotten, the deep foundation for far- reaching psychological differences between men and women. (p.283)

Ellis concludes in this instance that the two sexes are "opposite" and "complemental" (p. 291), a conclusion supported by the claim derived from comparative anatomy that "anatomically, if not physiologically, the male is the giver, the female the receiver" (p.286). Ellis' selectivity in his use of biological data is here given a rare acknowledgment; the grounds for privileging anatomy over physiology, which would presumably acknowledge a predominant feminine contribution of productive activity, can only be ideological.

Although Ellis (driven by the desire to be seen to wave the banner of sexual liberalism) eschews "the sharp line of sexual distinction" between man and woman, his patriarchal investments dictate a contradictory retention of a notion of differences which are "fundamental and endless in nature", and which "may in the male lead more often to modifications in one direction and in the female more often in the other" (p.288). Ellis bends to the growing tendency to downplay a theory of rigid opposition between the sexes, replacing it with a notion of "variations" on a common human nature.

However, any concessions to a feminist-inspired revision of sexual difference are heavily qualified by an emphasis on its inscription "in accordance with the natural facts" (p.288). Although this style of argument can be (and is in Schreiner's case) utilised to support a critique of existing social constructs, Ellis' appeal to the natural serves to stress the "fundamental" nature of difference. Nor is his theory substantially critical of the oppositional formula of sexual difference he describes as archaic. His so-called revision of an "ancient" ideal (p.288), rather than challenging that ideal, merely reinstates and strengthens it through its supposed grounding in

science. The principle of biologically-based sexual difference and the confederate ideology of the sexual division of labour are in effect reasserted in the name of sexual reform and the championing of women's rights. As he acknowledges, "...there has been a revolution quietly going on in the status of women and in every field of women's activity....Since we cannot expect, nor even desire, the effects of the feminine revolution to be undone, the present sexual situation is mainly one with which men have to deal" (p.292).

However, despite a half-hearted gesture towards an analysis of sexual difference which takes into account the "combined influence of nature, art, convention, morality and religion" (p.283), Ellis stands firmly on the side of the sexual division of labour on the basis of irreducible biological difference which he defines as oppositional. If he does overtly renounce "the sharp line of sexual distinction" it is only to replace it with a notion of difference which is itself "fundamental" and fully under the sway of nature. Ellis' position on this, therefore, is not far removed from that of theorists of sex antagonism such as Heape.

It is also strikingly similar to the sexual difference theory of D.H. Lawrence whose anxiety regarding women and the women's movement matches that of Ellis. Lawrence too emphasises a sexual difference which translates as polarisation and a balanced "purity" of masculinity and femininity. In the chapter appropriately entitled "Man To Man" in Women in Love, Birkin anticipates the day when:

> we are beings each of us, fulfilled in difference. The man is pure man, the woman pure woman, they are perfectly polarised. Each has a single, separate being, with its own laws....Each acknowledges the perfection of the polarised sex-circuit. Each admits the different nature in the other.[7]

Lawrence's version of sexual apartheid, like its South African equivalent, does not signal a recognition of the non-hierarchical difference between the opposed terms, masculinity and femininity, but functions to assert the need for femininity to

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[7] D. H. Lawrence, Women in Love (1921; Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1974) ch. 16, pp.224-5.

act as the "pure" vehicle of male self-possession: "Always a man must be considered as the broken-off fragment of a woman, and the sex was still the aching scar of the laceration" (Women in Love, p.225). Femininity represents to Lawrence the threat of an inmixing of otherness which has always already taken place in the self. Sex is "that which remains in us of the mixed, the unresolved" (p.225) according to Birkin and as a consequence "woman was always so horrible and clutching, she had such a lust for possession, a greed of self-importance in love" (p.224). Femininity functions unconsciously as the reflection of male paranoia and mirrors the desperation which informs the male struggle to maintain the phallus, a struggle which ironically involves "bathing" in the womb, participating in a feminine "creative heat" which restores male subjectivity (pp.388-389) - "And he, child and man, received of her and was made whole" (p.389). This will be discussed further in the chapter on The Story of an African Farm.

Ellis' interpretation of the relationship between Nature and Society invites comment at this point. He believes in the collusion between nature and social convention, a complicity which works to the decided advantage of the male. As he asserts, the biologically-determined passivity of the female is "reinforced" by social convention; it is "fortified by our social traditions" (P.O.S., p.286). Thus convention becomes the virtual lieutenant of Nature, even though Ellis, as pioneer of sexual liberalism, casts doubt upon the objective value of tradition and aligns it with ignorance and prejudice (p.291). In so doing, he eschews the division between Nature and Society which is deployed as a strategic lever in arguments such as Schreiner's. This device serves him well in discussions in which he considers the "sexual disadvantage" women suffer; Ellis proposes that it is simultaneously founded in "the nature of things" and in "the circumstances which we can control" (p.291).

It is never for Ellis a question of the social versus the biological. Instead his polemic tends to a confusion of these categories which defies logical exegesis, but which, it must be stressed, does not mirror Schreiner's undermining of the ideological basis of such categorisation in oppositional dichotomy. In Ellis' work, this

confusion functions as a ruse by means of which he oscillates between an essentialist and an anti-essentialist stance without declaring overt allegiance to either. It enables him to proffer an account of sexual difference which acknowledges the impact of convention and of progressive thought while remaining solidly in the camp of a Nature which is the dominant force in the relationship of subordination and "fortification" which links it to convention.

According to Ellis, it is essential to understand that "the sex life of woman is largely conditioned by the sex life of man" (P.O.S., p.285). As in Freud, female sexuality is posited as secondary to that of the male: "she" is more passive and naturally inclined to "shape herself" to "male needs"; "she" is "inevitably the instrument in love", while it is "he" whose "hand" and "bow" elicit the music[8]. As Ellis says in another context, "so we are always brought back to the men" (P.O.S., p.287).

In being brought back to the men, as the reader is constantly, he or she is also brought back to the fact that "the traditional masculine virtue is force" (S.I.R.S., p. 425). This "virtue", although qualified by Ellis, occupies a crucial position in his formulation of sexuality and possesses a special relevance to Woman and Labour. Arguing that his theory does not condone male violence, Ellis states that: "Violence is bad in every art" (S.I.R.S., p. 425). This self-defence is framed overtly in response to feminist objections. "We sometimes see the matter so stated", he wrote, "as if the objection to force and domination in love constituted some quite new and revolutionary demand of the 'modern woman'" (S.I.R.S, p.425). However, even if violence is "bad", Ellis assures the reader that:

> The woman admires the male's force; she even wishes herself to be forced to the things that she altogether desires; and yet she revolts from any exertion of force outside that narrow circle, either before the boundary of it is reached or after the boundary is passed. (S.I.R.S, p.425)

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[8] Havelock Ellis, Sex in Relation to Society: Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Vol VI (1910; Heinemann, London, 1937) p.417. All subsequent references are to this edition, which is herefter referred to as S.I.R.S.

Therefore it is purely a matter of degree and of the "skill" of the male involved to "divine the moments when, in love, force is no longer force because his own will is his partner's will" (S.I.R.S., p.425). The determination of female desire is placed in male hands in a legitimation of male power which reinforces the masochistic model of female sexuality and provides an implicit justification of the use of male sexual force.

Ellis' insistence upon the necessity of the male development of powers of "divination" in the heterosexual relationship is integrally bound to his conceptualisation of the natural "duplicity" of women (S.I.R.S., p.425). Like Freud in the article on "Femininity", he asserts the natural difficulty of the woman's path to sexual development, in contrast with the male's which is "in a straight line, fairly simple and direct" (S.I.R.S., p.424). The woman on the other hand:

> must sail through a tortuous channel with Scylla on the one side and Charybdis on the other...She must be impenetrable to all the world, but it must be an impenetrability not too obscure for the divination of the right man. Her speech must be honest, but yet on no account tell everything; her actions must be the outcome of her impulses, and on that very account be capable of two interpretations. It is only in the last resort of complete intimacy that she can become the perfect woman. (S.I.R.S., p.424)

And for those who fail to achieve this "final erotic avatar":

> She is compelled to be to the end of her erotic life, what she must always be at the beginning, a complex and duplex personality, naturally artful. (S.I.R.S., p.424)

This reinscription of the "eternal feminine" is a model of unselfconscious misogyny and is remarkable for its condensation of patriarchal myths and ideas of "Woman". It not only transcribes classic phallocentric representations of a duplicitous and artful femininity but also provides it with a biological foundation - a foundation which places the "salvation" of woman, her only chance of becoming the "perfect woman", in the hands of the male. This representation of femininity is explicitly endorsed by D.H. Lawrence. In Women in Love the cultured, intelligent, "superior" Hermione must admit that "she had no natural sufficiency, there was a terrible void, a lack, a deficiency of being within her" (p.18). Her desire, like that of

Ellis' unfinished woman, is a reassuring and unchallenging one - she simply longs for "someone to close up this deficiency" in order to make her "complete" (p.18). Even more reassuringly, despite of (and indeed because of) her aspirations to the male realm of knowledge, she is presented as possessing "a horrible desire to prostrate herself before a man" and to become his slave (p.331), to place herself literally in the hands of the male as if in recompense for the "betrayal" of femininity involved in her intellectualism (p.331)[9].

In the passage from Sex in Relation to Society quoted above the woman's sexual development is established as pursuing a difficult path leading from duplicity and complexity (natural but disadvantageous) to a comprehensibility and singularity dependent upon her fulfilment in a heterosexual relationship (sexual mastery by the male). In this none-too-subtle male fantasy of power over women Ellis invokes the stereotype of female duplicity and oppositional otherness in order to assert their basis in the organic and to allay anxiety at the obvious ability of the female to evade male conceptualisation and dominance - her speech is "always capable of two interpretations". Duplicity, he maintains, may be an unavoidable female trait; femininity in itself and for itself may be in effect an illness but it can be cured by "complete intimacy" with the male. The otherness of femininity may have to be acknowledged but it is finally accessible to the male and ultimately tameable, as Ellis assures his readers.

Ellis' discourse on women confronts the paradoxes and the illogic which plague phallocentric representations of "her". This is an illogic which, although he does not acknowledge it as such, he is at great pains to justify, explain, and resolve. However any attempt on his part to close the gaps in patriarchal logic on the feminine is hindered by his inability to escape the system of signification of which he is himself an integral and obsessively committed component. As is the case in Freud's musing on

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[9] For the asymmetry of this model, its misogynistic foundation, see page 143.

"the riddle of femininity"[10], it is the otherness of the feminine to patriarchal discourse itself which finally triumphs over any attempt to explain "her". Ultimately, all that can be said of Ellis' discourse on female duplicity, is that it reveals why the female path to patriarchal femininity is as "tortuous" as he proclaims it, and from which corner springs the paradox in which her image is engulfed. Ellis, like Freud, unconsciously chronicles the impossible path through the minefield of phallocentric configurations she must negotiate if she is to assume the mantle of patriarchal femininity. It also reveals why she is ultimately able to elude the restrictions of such a confused, confusing and self-contradictory set of images; Ellis' explanation of femininity cannot but become shipwrecked on the Scylla and Charybdis of patriarchal misrecognition of the feminine.

Ellis' sexology operates therefore to reinforce a discourse on sex in which female biology is constructed as secondary to the male and is characterised by disadvantage. It enacts a subordination of the female through its institution of the male right to power over this inferior female biology and through its support of the biologistic concept of the separate spheres.

Ellis' valorisation of motherhood is a crucial aspect of this project and is aimed both at reinforcing the relegation of women to the private sphere and simultaneously at responding to the feminist challenge to this ideology. As Jane Lewis maintains, the turn of the century witnessed a strengthening ideology of motherhood. Changes occurred in the theories of sexual difference which resulted in a shift away from the negative view of women's biology towards an emphasis on the importance of a healthy and intelligent motherhood[11]. This is a modification embodied in the "eugenic mother" theories of Geddes and Thompson. It was in this intellectual climate that the work of both Ellis and Schreiner was produced and both are heavily influenced by the

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[10] Freud, "Femininity" p.149.

[11] Lewis, pp.99-100.

eugenic concern within which this so-called more "positive" emphasis arose. The issue of maternality has assumed current importance in feminist debate and some discussion of Schreiner's perspective is therefore warranted.

Although both Schreiner and Ellis adopt a position which takes as a reference point the ideology of motherhood, Schreiner's inscription of it challenges restrictive representations of women and argues for liberation from the maternal role. Ellis' theory, on the other hand, forms part of the significant backlash to feminist propositions such as these and employs the new concern with motherhood to promote the division between the sexes which is the mainstay of the ideology of the separate spheres. This is not to suggest that the "negative" view of femininity connected with Spencerian social theory no longer exerted power. It is rather that its principles were revamped, with the emphasis falling on female service to mankind rather than on the disservice paid women by their biology. It was merely that the other side of the patriarchal coin enjoyed predominance.

Nowhere is this better illustrated than in Ellis' discourse on "The Mother and her Child" in Sex in Relation to Society (pp.1-26). This exposition, in which Ellis' concern as a eugenicist is paramount, enacts a systematic reduction of women to the private sphere and in particular the maternal function. This reduction is performed in the name of female responsibility to children, family and the welfare of the entire race, in keeping with the nineteenth-century representation of the constitution of sex as a matter not only of personal but also of state concern[12]. Ellis' valorisation of motherhood is a crucial aspect of a polemic aimed both at reinforcing the limitation of women to the private domain and simultaneously at responding to the feminist challenge.

The tendentious nature of Ellis' idealisation of the maternal role is evidenced in his discussion of the mother as "the child's supreme parent" (S.I.R.S., p.3). Taking up the feminist gauntlet, he maintains that at various stages of evolution it seemed

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[12] See Foucault, The History of Sexuality, pp.24-5; pp.115-27.

possible that the maternal function could be shared equally by the male parent. This notion is soon discarded for:

> it remains true that it was not along these lines that Man was destined to emerge. Among all the mammal predecessors of Man, the male is the most imposing and important figure in the early days of courtship, but after conception has once been secured the mother plays the chief part in the racial life. The male must be content to forage abroad and stand on guard when at home in the ante-chamber of the family...Nature accords the male but a secondary and comparatively humble place in the home, the breeding-place of the race; he may compensate himself, if he will, by seeking adventure and renown in the world outside. The mother is the child's supreme parent,...and the hygiene of the future man can only be affected by influences which work through her. (S.I.R.S., p.3)

Despite its pseudo-scientific tone, this statement amounts to little more than a reiteration of Ruskin's tendentious sentimentalising of the domestic in "Of Queen's Gardens"[13]. Although Ellis denies that to assert that motherhood is a woman's supreme function is by no means to assert that her activities should be confined to the home, he stresses that domestic duties must be considered foremost and, unlike Schreiner, leaves no space for the working mother. Spencer also ties women to the maternal role when he proclaims that "the ethics of the family are upheld by the parental instincts and sentiments, which, in the female, are qualified in a smaller by other feelings than in the male"[14]. The working mother actually becomes the "bad" mother in Ellis' theory. He depicts her as being in collusion with her employer to "crush the interests of the child who represents the race, and to defeat the laws made in the interests of the race which are those of the community as a whole" (S.I.R.S., p.19).

The wayward behaviour of the "employed" woman (S.I.R.S., p.19) is linked by Ellis to the activities of the feminist movement. He claims that:

> Fundamental and elementary as is the fact of the predominant position of the mother in relation to the life of the race, it must be admitted that it has sometimes been forgotten or ignored....At

[13] John Ruskin, Sesame and Lilies (1865; Oxford U.P., London, 1951).

[14] Spencer, The Principles of Sociology, p.758.

> the present time, for instance, we are but emerging from a period during which this fact was often disputed and denied, both in theory and in practice, even by women themselves....Motherhood and the future of the race were systematically belittled. (S.I.R.S., p.3)

The tendentious nature of Ellis' own elevation of "motherhood and maternity", and its integral connection with his anti-feminism, becomes apparent as he develops his argument into a bitter attack on the perceived aims of the women's movement:

> By a curiously perverted form of sexual attraction, women were so fascinated by the glamour that surrounded men that they desired to suppress or forget all the facts of organic constitution which made them unlike men, counting their glory as their shame, and sought the same education as men, the same occupations as men, even the same sports....It was absolutely right in so far as it was a claim for freedom from artificial restriction, and a demand for economic independence. But it became mischievous and absurd when it developed into a passion for doing, in all respects, the same things as men do....Freedom is only good when it is a freedom to follow the laws of one's own nature. (S.I.R.S., pp.3-4)

The ideological bent of Ellis' endorsement of motherhood is particularly evident at this point, coupled as it is with a thinly veiled anxiety about feminist inroads into male privilege (not to mention male "sports"). His real concern lies not with the debasing of women's supreme function but with the possible loss of male supremacy. This passage is notable for the transparency with which it flaunts the link between the social maternalist position and anti-feminism. It is an ill-tempered and paranoid tirade against feminism which barely conceals its own bias and dispenses with any pretence to the scientific objectivity to which Ellis' characteristically heavy-handed citation of statistical data aspires, only to make a half-hearted gesture to it in the concluding reference to "the laws of one's own nature". By this stage, however, it has become apparent whose interests are served by the appeal to organic constitution. Ellis himself is established as holding the right to determine woman's "own nature" assumes the role of paternalistic arbiter of the fine line between women's legitimate claims and "mischievous" demands. These mischievous demands

also concern Spencer who believes there is a "direct reason for anticipating mischief from the exercise of political power by women"[15]

The character of Winifred Inger in D.H. Lawrence's The Rainbow[16] is a literary example of Ellis' stereotypical representation of the feminist whose desires and aspirations are "perverted" and unnatural. In the chapter entitled "Shame", Lawrence transforms Ellis' attribution of feminists' shame in their own femininity into a shame which is the "unnatural" act of lesbianism. Winifred Inger, conforming to Ellis' description, is "interested in the Women's Movement", an interest whose corollary would appear to be her "fine, upright, athletic bearing" - a point reiterated by Lawrence: "She belonged to various athletic clubs" (p.341) - and her "masculine" pride and air of freedom (p.337). Lawrence reproduces Ellis' caricature of the intellectual ("Miss Inger was a Bachelor of Arts" [p.337]), athletic, masculine feminist, carrying Ellis' anxiety about feminists' perverted and mischievous demands into the specifically sexual domain. However, lest Miss Inger appear an attractive character, or in any way a potential role model, it behoves Lawrence not only to comment that she was a "fearless clean type of modern girl whose very independence betrays her sorrow" but to remedy that sorrowful independence through her eventual marriage (p.334).

Ellis' sentiments in the passage quoted differ little from those of an extremist like Heape, who viewed the suffragettes as "the waste products of our female population" engaged upon a sex struggle waged against the family and society[17]. It is a passage which also echoes Ellen Key's argument that nineteenth-century feminism had neglected women's need for love and family life[18].

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[15] Spencer, The Principles of Sociology, p.758.

[16] D.H. Lawrence, The Rainbow (1915; Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1975).

[17] Coward, p.93.

[18] Lewis, p.100. Ellis' views were strongly influenced by Key's philosophy on family life, as Rowbotham and Weeks note, p.172.

It is, therefore, precisely those issues with which Ellis' discourse concerns itself that form the focus of Schreiner's polemic on sexual difference: the meaning of women's biology, the maternal function, and the role of the women's movement in what both she and Ellis describe as a "phase of transition" (P.O.S., p.288).

The Delusive Theorist

In the chapter entitled "Certain Objections" Schreiner responds openly and specifically to those "lofty" theorists committed to the elevation of motherhood and who advocate the withdrawal of women from "fields of labour in the new world of social conditions as she has still her function as childbearer" (p.199). As a leading proponent of the separate spheres ideology and as a theorist who advises the withdrawal of women from social production in the interests of the performance of their "supreme function", Ellis is an obvious candidate for the role of her derisively portrayed "lofty theorist".

Schreiner's response to the lofty theorist occupies seven pages (pp.200-7) and offers a revealing insight into her capacity for biting irony and penetrating travesty. In this vignette she mimics the sentimentalising rhetoric of the advocates of the ideology of motherhood, demonstrating with a sure hand and a ruthless and mordant wit the devious and spurious nature of the arguments marshalled in its cause. This impassioned exposé of the self-interest and fraudulence at the heart of the idealisation of the mother commences with a pithy enumeration of the major impediments to the programmatic restriction of women to the reproductive function. These include: the eugenicist argument against "parasitism"; the fact that it flies in the face of the reality that women already perform "probably much more than half of the world's most laborious and ill-paid labour"; and the empirical fact of the surplus of marriageable women (p.200). In the light of this it is, Schreiner maintains, "somewhat difficult to reply to the assertion, 'Let Woman be content to be "Divine Child-bearer" and ask no more'" (p.200).

Schreiner's response to the "lofty", "idle" and "delusive" theorist is unrelenting in its derogation of his (and by implication all patriarchal theorists') pious hypocrisy and dedication to an idealisation of womanhood which barely masks the contempt for women upon which it is predicated. She introduces the theorist as a man who "stands before the drawing-room fire in spotless shirtfront and perfectly fitting clothes" (p.201), declaiming upon the "mighty value" of women's work as child-bearer which makes it unnecessary for her to share "man's grosser and lower toils" (p.201). This is the same man who, on rising the next morning to find his tea late, condemns his "household drudge" and threatens her with unemployment. "Does he exclaim to her," asks Schreiner, 'Divine child-bearer! Potential mother of the race!...Is it not enough you should have the holy and mysterious power of bringing the race to life? Let that content you.'"? (pp.201-2)

Woman and Labour captures here the exaggerated and tendentiously sentimental tone of the rhetoric on motherhood. It simultaneously manages to reveal, by bringing his words literally "home" to him, the hypocrisy and self-interest which prompts the theorist's utterances on the function of childbearing (p.202). Schreiner's parody of the theorist at home is effective in highlighting concisely the contradiction between his theory of women and his actual treatment of them; the sanctimonious and idealising rhetoric is exposed as concealing the reality of women's subordination and exploitation at the hands of those who so glowingly idolise them.

The theorist's relationship with his landlady is similarly framed. When she sends him a poorly cooked dinner, does he send for her, Schreiner asks, and address her thus:

> Child-bearer of the race! Producer of men! Cannot you be contented with so noble and lofty a function in life without toiling and moiling?...We, we, the men of the race, will perform its mean, its sordid, its grinding toil! For woman is beauty, peace, repose!...The Mother, the Mother! How wonderful it sounds! Toil no more! Rest is for you; labour and drudgery for us. (p.202)

Schreiner assures the reader that he would be more likely to threaten her with non-payment.

The disjunction between the valorisation of the Mother and the reality of her subjection is thus poignantly evoked by Woman and Labour. The facade of a Dickensian sentimentalism is relentlessly stripped from theories such as Ellis' and the consequences to women of the separate spheres ideology are revealed in sordid detail. Not only is the household drudge seen to undertake the most gruelling and menial of household tasks (p.200) but the landlady is similarly presented as engaging in tasks such as carrying heavy coal-scuttles and bending over hot fires (p.202). Their labour goes unacknowledged and unappreciated by a theorist whose representations of femininity are predicated on a blindness to their implicit paradox and self-contradiction. The relegation of women to the private domain constitutes a restriction to precisely the "mean", "sordid" and "grinding" toil from which the theorist recoils as incompatible with the "noble and lofty" function of childbearing.

Woman and Labour attributes this disjunction to the self-interest which motivates the idealisation of motherhood and which assumes the character of little more than a ruse calculated to protect male interests. Herbert Spencer enacts a comparable idealisation of motherhood in The Principles of Sociology:

> At the same time it must be concluded that no considerable alteration in the careers of women in general, can, or should be, so produced; and further, that any extensive change in the education of women, made with the view of fitting them for businesses and professions, would be mischievous. If women comprehended all that is contained in the domestic sphere, they would ask no other. If they could see everything which is implied in the right education of children, to a full conception of which no man has yet risen, much less any woman, they would seek no higher function.[19]

The lofty theorist's flights into abstraction are actually dependent upon the delegation of full responsibility for his material requirements to the women who serve him. The idealisation of women is thus dependent upon their absorption into the

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[19] Spencer, The Principles of Sociology, p.757.

material, a point which Schreiner develops more fully in From Man To Man. It becomes evident that the suppression of femininity and particularity is the unacknowledged condition of possibility of this "delusive" theory .

It is not the scrubbing woman who fills the lofty theorist with "anguish for womanhood" for, as Schreiner maintains, "that somewhat quadrupedal posture is for him truly feminine, and does not interfere with his ideal of the mother and child-bearer" (p.204). The objection is not to the concept of women working, given that their work literally supports the social structure: "Through all the ages of the past, when with heavy womb and hard labour-worn hands, we physically toiled beside man...it was never suggested to us, 'You, the child-bearers of the race, have in that one function a labour that equals all others combined; therefore toil no more in other directions, we pray of you;..." (pp. 200-1). What underlies the concerns of the theorist is, rather, the threatened invasion of the male sphere, the "amount of reward" and the "invasion of such fields as he might himself at any time desire to enter" not to mention the fact that the professional woman may devote her time to "her own study and life of thought" (p.204) and, as such, exercise personal autonomy.

Thus the motivation behind the elevation of the maternal role and the insistence upon the organic basis of sexual difference is placed in an overtly political context by Woman and Labour. Schreiner's analysis highlights the historical and the economic determination of the separate spheres ideology and the representations of the feminine it reinforces, astutely focusing on the patriarchal anxiety underlying the promotion of particular theories of motherhood and woman's exclusive role. This anxiety is heightened, the text reveals, by the fear that the entry of women into areas of social production would lead to a transformation in relations between the sexes.

As this account makes clear, the modification of women's status poses a threat to the patriarchal model of production, wherein production and reproduction are rigidly separated, and women's role in the circuits of production is reduced to that of private acquisition, commodity and instrument of reproduction. This tendentious

distinction between production and reproduction with its investments in an origin somewhat paradoxically situated on the side of masculinity highlights the extent to which the structural violence against women defended by Ellis is a subset of the "violence of metaphysics"[20]. The "holy and mysterious power of bringing life to the race" is set in opposition by "theorists of this class" (p.203) to labour of any kind, thus establishing the production/reproduction dichotomy.

Schreiner's analysis highlights the rigid distinction between work and home insisted upon by patriarchal ideologues like Ellis despite all empirical evidence to the contrary, although "entirely contradicted by experience"[21]. As Woman and Labour recognises, this model is founded upon a suppression and devaluation of the work performed by women both in the public and in the domestic sphere. The domain of "beauty, peace, repose" is in fact the domain of unpaid, undervalued labour and thankless drudgery demanded of women and simultaneously disavowed. It does not, however, remain suppressed in this text.

Schreiner's emphasis on the excessive physical labour undertaken by women, and its menial nature, so evocatively portrayed in the figure of the household drudge, challenges the production/reproduction dichotomy which organises the patriarchal economy. It reveals women's status in this economy to be that of private servant and reproductive machine, a dual role which is rendered congruous in patriarchal social reality. It also highlights the manner in which the ideal of the "eternal feminine" accommodates a concept of labouring womanhood while upholding the ideal of the domestic angel. This contradiction is sustained by differing definitions of labour. That undertaken by women is generally regarded as more passive and less rigorous than that of the male. This is stressed in the allegory of the master and his ass (p.205) in which Schreiner expresses outrage at the lack of social recognition and just

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[20] See Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, trans. A. Bass (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1981) pp. 79-153.

[21] Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, "Sex in mind and education: a reply", Fortnightly Review (July 1874), in Hollis, p.27.

recompense awarded women for the "unending muscular toil" they perform (p.207). As the lofty theorist would say - "Rest is for you; labour and drudgery for us" - a lamentation reminiscent of Ellis' disingenuous complaint that the male monopolisation of the public domain is a form of compensation for his secondary "and comparatively humble place in the home" (S.I.R.S., p.3).

Also in marked similarity to Ellis' theory, the lofty theorist conflates women's confinement to the home with the exercise of the maternal function. Both fail to distinguish between the two roles; even the "elderly" servant is addressed by Schreiner's theorist as "Potential mother of the race!". Schreiner thus underlines the patriarchal tendency to blur the woman-mother distinction with value accruing to a woman in accordance with her performance of the maternal role. The account offered in Woman and Labour, like that of Irigaray and Kristeva, distinguishes between these roles in an effort to release the women buried under them.

The paradox and inconsistency informing patriarchal representations is depicted most notably in Schreiner's description of the lofty theorist's reaction to the scrubbing woman. She assures the reader that the sight of a woman in a "somewhat quadrupedal position" presents no paradox to him; not only is it congruous with his "ideal of the mother and child-bearer" but it is in fact, for him, "truly feminine". It would appear that paradox does not overly disturb the complacency of the theorist as long as it answers his needs and allays his anxieties. In fact the image of a woman in the "quadrupedal" posture is at the heart of the patriarchal ideal of the feminine.

This image functions within Woman and Labour as a salient metaphor for woman's position in the patriarchal signifying economy, one which unflinchingly unveils the contempt implicit in conceptualisations of the feminine and which incorporates a hint of the masochism inherent in the model of sexuality imposed upon them. The menial and the elevated, the grossly physical and the spiritual, mind and matter, converge in this image of the "truly feminine", a duplicity which extends, however, beyond the ideologically permissible. This excess of duplicity and the

uncontrollable paradoxes it creates in the eternal feminine is exploited in this vignette and flung in the face of the theorist.

It is precisely the weapon of duplicity, paradox and multiplicity which is unleashed by Woman and Labour. Whereas the theorist can afford only to see the "Divine Child-bearer" in his harassed landlady and wretchedly overworked drudge and must disavow the other side of the feminine role he determines, Woman and Labour refuses to condone this selective blindness. Instead it presents women in all their diversity of roles and functions: as mothers, labourers, women, all of which do not cancel each other out, as the lofty theorist would have it. There is no exclusivity of roles in the life of the household drudge, the tea-picker or the washerwoman (p.205); all these women perform a number of varied functions which reduce to irrelevance the notion of a strict division between the productive and the reproductive domain proclaimed by theory and which render ludicrous any simplistic and attenuating definitions of Woman. The facile and tendentious pronouncements of the theorist and phallocentric theory are overrun in Woman and Labour by a multitude of productively and reproductively labouring women in a manoeuvre which at least contributes to the slow process of raising those women from the quadrupedal posture symbolic of patriarchal femininity.

Schreiner and the Cult of the Mother

Schreiner's own theory of motherhood is heavily influenced by the eugenicism which functioned in work such as Ellis' and Pearson's to reinforce the status of women as private property and instruments of procreation by placing female responsibility for the welfare of the race at the centre of social concern. However, her valuation of the maternal role does not operate to advance the aims of eugenicism. It functions as one aspect of the project of liberating women from demeaning and restrictive images and attempts to free women from conceptions of motherhood which would restrict them to that function, as in Ellis' sexology.

Schreiner takes the ideology of motherhood which developed around the turn of the century, along with the eugenic argument with which it was integrally connected, and turns both against their original purpose. In so doing she constructs a position which offers women the possibility of choice and self-determination. Within her schema, unlike that of most feminists of the period, the decision to work is not necessarily to renounce motherhood. Conversely, the choice of motherhood is not represented as an all-consuming function into which the woman is absorbed and disappears. She resists the presentation of these choices as mutually exclusive and was one of the few feminists to argue for the compatibility of marriage and a career even though the practical consequences of this are not dealt with.

Schreiner's representation of motherhood is a complex and paradoxical one, directed to the revaluation of this socially devalued role and the liberation of women from a strict equivalence with it. Her representation is aimed at challenging both the assimilation of women's sexuality to the reproductive function and the concomitant devaluation of this function itself. Therefore any valorisation undertaken by Woman and Labour is distanced by its very nature from the superficially comparable idealisation of the mother enacted by Ellis. As will be seen, Schreiner did not simply "follow" Havelock Ellis and Ellen Key in "stressing the social recognition and elevation of motherhood" as First and Scott maintain in a misrecognition of Ellis' actual devaluation of the maternal[22], nor did she see motherhood "almost non-politically, as one of the glories of life"[23].

The influence of eugenicism is heavily felt in Schreiner's polemic on the changing role of women. As has been discussed previously, the notion of woman's reproductive duty is strategically reformulated by Schreiner in line with the fact that "to the family as well as to the state, unlimited fecundity on the part of the female has already, in most cases, become irremediable evil" (p.62). Here the over-zealous

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22 First and Scott, p.276.

23 First and Scott, p.277.

performance of the maternal function is presented as an "evil" in a pointed parody of the moralistic fervour of the cult of the mother. It also constitutes an ambiguously poised mimicry of the eugenic concern regarding indiscriminate (that is, working class) fecundity in which the phantom of Malthus is invoked to dramatic effect; the "reckless" producer of children is thoroughly stigmatised as initiating a process of racial deterioration (p.62).

However, unlike Ellis, whose eugenic interest functions to confirm women in a subordinate and limited role, Schreiner's deployment of eugenicist rhetoric is geared towards challenging such curtailment and the castigation of women as the source of social crisis implicit in Ellis' theory of motherhood. The eugenicist overtones are directed instead to the reformulation of women's sphere and feminine duty and are marshalled in aid of justifying women's release from the narrowly domestic. As Schreiner says:

> No man ever yet entered life farther than the length of one navel-cord from the body of the woman who bore him. It is the woman who is the final standard of the race...as her brain weakens, weakens the man's she bears; as her muscle softens, softens his; as she decays, decays the people. (p.109)

The centrality of the mother to the welfare of future generations is thus established. Furthermore, it is in the power of women to "impress" themselves on future generations, "not only through germinal inheritance, through influence during the period of gestation, but above all by producing the mental atmosphere in which the impressionable infant years of life are passed". This makes the condition of childbearing women one of "paramount interest" to the race (p.108).

Such statements constitute a direct engagement with the ideology of motherhood. However Schreiner employs her own version of the elevation of the mother. Implicit in this valorisation is a deliberate and pointed emphasis on the quality of the womanhood required to produce "healthy" future generations: "Only an able and labouring womanhood can permanently produce an able and labouring manhood; only an effete and inactive male can ultimately be produced by an inactive and effete womanhood" (p.107). Schreiner's derogation of the "pampered darling"

strongly echoes Bebel's dismissal of the "superficial, extravagant dandies" who are the product of women subjected to "a narrow, superficial education"[24]. The question of motherhood is reframed in this way to focus primarily upon the interests of the mothers themselves, for "if woman is to be saved from degeneration and sex-parasitism, and the body of humanity from arrest, she must receive a training which will cultivate all the intellectual and all the physical faculties with which she is endowed, and be allowed freely to employ them" (p.154). The welfare of future generations is thus posited by Woman and Labour as dependent upon an alteration in the conceptualisation of woman's sphere. Utilising the eugenicist argument to her own advantage, Schreiner subtly shifts the emphasis from the products (future generations) to the producers and reproducers, women themselves. Her strategy involves taking quite literally the points raised by Geddes and Thompson, Ellis and Pearson, and arguing for the practical implementation of their advocacy of a healthy, intelligent motherhood.

Although Schreiner's theory mirrors Ellis' in establishing the position of the mother to be of "paramount interest", their respective interpretations of what should constitute the "condition" of the mother could not be more divergent. For Ellis the proper performance of the "supreme function" is predicated upon the woman's acceptance of her natural role as wife and mother; according to Schreiner it is woman's responsibility to be educated, trained and financially independent - to determine, rather than merely "follow" her so-called nature.

Her concept of childbearing as a "lofty privilege" which should be permissible "only to those who have shown their power rightly to train and provide for their offspring" (p.63) is a case in point. Although bearing superficial resemblances to the idealisation of motherhood promoted by Ellis to conservative ends, Schreiner's delineation of motherhood as a privilege rather than an irrefutable duty, a biological imperative, serves to allow women a wider scope for self-expression. In contrast

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[24] Bebel, p.144.

with Ellis' normative and prescriptive vision of the mother as the "supreme parent", the conceptualisation presented in Woman and Labour admits of the possibility of choice by women. For Ellis, the maternal role is an ineluctable and all-absorbing duty enforced upon women by the dual imperative - "biology" and the fulfilment of social responsibilities.

In Woman and Labour this responsibility is in effect redefined as the restriction of reproductive powers - "if we would act socially we must restrict our powers" (p.106). Therefore the notion of responsibility assumes a wider dimension for women than is encompassed in Ellis' eugenic theory and is capable of incorporating a diversity of roles. Present duty, according to Schreiner, dictates both the control of "unlimited fecundity" (a veiled reference to the vexed question of contraception) and "the search by women for new forms of labour and new fields for the exercise of their powers" (p.67). Duty is aligned with the exodus from an exclusive role as childbearer and nurturer and, as such, works directly counter to that staged by Ellis. Some form of public employment is even facetiously proposed by Schreiner as a pre-requisite to the right to bear children in an attempt to refute the incompatibility of public and private duty (p.207). Schreiner would no doubt concur with Frances Power Cobbe in ridiculing a social maternalism which proclaims that "the woman who has given birth to a son has fulfilled her mission. The celibate woman - be she holy as St Theresa, useful as Miss Nightingale, gifted as Miss Cornwallis, - has entirely missed it..."[25]. Schreiner's argument for the loosening of role prescriptions is bolstered by the assertion, implicit in Cobbe's outcry, of the inapplicability of these biologistic prescriptions to an ever-increasing number of women, including widows, prostitutes and the unmarried:

> Thus, it has come to pass that vast numbers of us are, by modern social conditions, prohibited from child-bearing at all; and that even those among us who are child-bearers are required... to produce in most cases a limited number of offspring; so that even for these of us, child - bearing and

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[25] Frances Power Cobbe, "The final cause of woman", in Hollis, p.23.

> suckling, instead of filling the entire circle of female life from the first appearance of puberty to the end of middle age, becomes an episodal occupation. (p.65)

In this way Woman and Labour challenges those inscriptions of femininity which are dependent upon the absorption of women into the maternal function. Not only is maternality seen to be a notion which is simply inapplicable to some women, but even to those to whom it does apply it is, at most, an "episodal occupation" and a role whose limits they of necessity exceed. The description of motherhood as an "occupation" implicitly accords it status as a form of social labour rather than an instinctual act which is defined as external, although ambiguously central to, the social process.

Schreiner challenges the inadequacy of biologistic notions of motherhood or the reproductive capacity by classifying motherhood as "episodal" rather than continuous (to those women to whom it is applicable at all). Thus she sorely tests the extent to which any representation of femininity which aligns it too closely with the reproductive capacity can claim validity on the basis of empirical evidence or logical deduction. Schreiner's account questions the extent to which biology can function as an infallible and irreducible index of the essence of sexual difference, when even the fact of the female reproductive ability is subject to such extreme divergence and individual difference. She challenges the assumption that there is a universal content to female sexuality and poses the possibility of a variety of different types of femininity. Binarising categorisation is truly unsettled.

Thus Schreiner's exposition of maternal duty undertakes a scrutiny of the conceptualisation of woman's role. She presents a subversive redefinition which legitimises the extension of the female domain beyond its traditional sphere without conceding to the social maternalist and eugenicist prescription of a limited and carefully proscribed expansion of the domestic skills. Schreiner's reformulation circumvents the strictures of social maternalism in constructing a vision of woman's proper sphere as encompassing the public and the private, motherhood and paid employment, marriage and a career - with woman's prerogative to choose as its

guiding principle.

The concept of sex-parasitism bolsters Schreiner's claims for the revaluation of woman's social role and responsibilities. This concept has been criticised by First and Scott and by Liz Stanley who refer to it as a minority condition and one with a specific class, race and cultural location[26] . Although this criticism is to an extent valid, the metaphorical impact of sex-parasitism in the critique of patriarchy enacted in Woman and Labour is largely ignored by accounts which centre solely on its empirical application, as Stanley does in fact acknowledge.

Schreiner's inscription of sex-parasitism deals not only with the empirical manifestations of the phenomenon (as in the history of Greek and Roman women, and in the analysis of the state of contemporary European women of the middle and upper middle-classes) but is primarily concerned with its place in a symptomatology of patriarchal culture. Therefore, although sex-parasitism is treated as an identifiable historical phenomenon, Schreiner's interest is engaged by its symbolic resonances and reverberations (which are by no means devoid of significant empirical consequences). She emphasises its status as a symptom and a symbol of the detrimental effects of the patriarchal sexual ideology. It functions in this way as a site of ideological confrontation in Woman and Labour and as a point of focus for a critique which is oriented to an analysis of causes as well as effects.

To limit Schreiner's inscription of sex-parasitism to a white, middle-class context is to overlook its status within Woman and Labour as an index of a patriarchal social foundation which underlies various and specific social, race and class oppressions and which reduces women to the "mere parasites" abhorred by Wollstonecraft[27]. It represents the tip of the patriarchal iceberg.

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[26] Liz Stanley, "Olive Schreiner: New Women, Free Women, All Women", Feminist Theorists, ed. Dale Spender (Women's Press, London, 1983) p.240.

[27] Taylor, p.4.

Jane Lewis claims that even radical feminists such as Schreiner found it difficult to evade the patriarchal scientific framework, citing Schreiner as a case of a radical writer whose appeal for women's right to work is limited by its recourse to the concept of "parasitical mothers"[28] and, therefore, to a Darwinian system of conceptualisation. She too fails fully to appreciate the ambiguous status of Schreiner's mode of argumentation, for, rather than bowing to the eugenic framework, Schreiner's concept of parasitism carries with it a staunch indictment of the social and conceptual schema within which it is produced.

Schreiner's argument on sex-parasitism is deceptively simple. Having established the modern phenomenon of the contraction of the woman's sphere, she maintains that if women acquiesce in the passivity instituted as a result and "sink into a state of more or less absolute dependence on their sex functions alone" (p.115), the welfare of future generations is placed under threat:

> Again and again in the history of the past, when among human creatures a certain stage of material civilisation has been reached, a curious tendency has manifested itself for the human female to become more or less parasitic; social conditions tend to rob her of all forms of active, conscious, social labour, and to reduce her, like the field-tick, to the passive exercise of her sex functions alone. (p.78)

Labelling this potentially disastrous state "sex-parasitism", Schreiner directs her energies to proving the connection between sex-parasitism and social decay (pp. 83-101).

It is relevant to return to a discussion of the correlation between the accumulation of wealth, the advent of slavery and the sex-parasitism of women outlined in the "perversion" theory presented in these pages, a correlation which links Woman and Labour to the broad outlines of matriarchal theory. As Schreiner states:

> Behind the phenomenon of female parasitism has always lain another and yet larger social phenomenon; it has invariably

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[28] Lewis, p.104.

> been preceded, as we have seen, by the subjugation of large bodies of other human creatures, either as slaves, subject races, or classes; and as the result of the excessive labours of those classes there has always been an accumulation of unearned wealth in the hands of the dominant class or race...Without slaves or subject classes to perform the crude physical labours of life and produce superfluous wealth, the parasitism of the female would, in the past, have been an impossibility. (p.98)

Although Schreiner does at this stage favour a traditional "perversion" theory over a socialist emphasis on the transition to private property, her account explicitly links women's oppression to the private ownership of wealth and the acquisition of slaves as in the matriarchal theory expounded by Morgan, Bebel and Engels[29]. Unlike these theorists (Engels and Bebel in particular), Schreiner, while supporting the economic emancipation of women through participation in social production, examines and challenges the theorisation of sexual difference which organises these social relations. It is also important to note that the "decline" theory suits Schreiner's purposes as it provides her with the opportunity to stigmatise on moral grounds those features of patriarchal organisation which are most detrimental to women.

The concept of sex-parasitism is significant for two major reasons. Firstly, it signifies Schreiner's recognition of the equation between women's relegation to the private sphere, and the active reduction of their possible roles, capacities and functions. Within her schema, sex-parasitism is consonant with the separate spheres ideology; it functions as an index of women's subjection, a subjection which is linked directly to the ideology of the separate spheres. Secondly, in Woman and Labour a connection is posited between the limitation of woman's function (sex-parasitism) and social decay in a movement strikingly similar to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's assertion of the retarding impact of reduction to the maternal role - "the restriction of her [woman's] range of duty to the love and service of her own immediate family"[30].

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[29] Engels, pp.48-50.

[30] Gilman, Women and Economics, p.336.

Capitalising on "perversion" Schreiner renders sex-parasitism, or women's subjection, synonymous with the state of decadence preceding social collapse (pp.80-6). The subjection of women and the ideology of the separate spheres which is seen as instituting this subjection are firmly linked to the racial and social decay of which sex-parasitism is symptomatic. Therefore Schreiner's assault on sex-parasitism must be placed in its context as a challenge to the ideology of the separate spheres as propounded by theorists such as Ellis. In Woman and Labour the elevation of motherhood is equated with precisely that limitation of function of which sex-parasitism is indicative. This elevation virtually enshrines female limitation and truncation in a position of religious and fetishistic significance which is represented as concomitant with the "enervation and degeneration" of the race (p.109).

The fact that Schreiner's formulation of the dangers of sex-parasitism is directed specifically against theories of motherhood such as Ellis' is highlighted by her concentration on the specifically maternal aspects of women's reduction to the sexual function:

> the female having one all-important though passive function which cannot be taken from her, and which is peculiarly connected with her person, in the act of child-bearing, and her mere sexual attribiutes being an object of desire and cupidity to the male, she is liable...to become dependent on this one sexual function alone. (p.102)

It is interesting to note that Charlotte Gilman mounts a similar argument when she suggests that women have been cut off from the real environment by their economic dependence on the male, and that as a result of "natural selection acting directly through the male"[31], have developed sexual characteristics alone and are "modified to sex to an excessive degree"[32] - they are, as she points out, revealingly spoken of as "the sex"[33]. At issue here is the patriarchal conflation of femininity with

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[31] Gilman, Women and Economics, p.63.

[32] Gilman, Women and Economics, p.39.

[33] Gilman, Women and Economics, p.49.

a function which, as Schreiner stresses, remains in many women a "mere potentiality" (p.103).

Therefore, although both Schreiner and Ellis invoke eugenicist discourse to support their theories of motherhood and woman's role the differences between their rendition of this role are striking. Ellis advocates a policy of racial moulding by "deliberate selection"[34], presumably by the male. For Gilman, and no less for Schreiner, this prescription is precisely the impediment which must be overcome. Race improvement is posited upon an improvement in women's social and sexual status, upon an increase in their capacity to exercise choice and self-determination.

Ellis subordinates the needs of the individual mother to her social duty to produce and rear children; for Schreiner, women's emancipation and social progress are synonymous, with the interests of the social and the individual jointly served by a reassessment of the traditional female role. For Ellis, the mother is the supreme parent; for Schreiner parental responsibility does not accord with the sexual division of labour. Elllis stresses the necessary divergence between male and female roles; Schreiner the necessity of greater convergence. Ellis attacks the women's movement for disparaging and devaluing motherhood and for exacerbating sex antagonism; Schreiner applauds it for making possible a "higher and fuller attainment of motherhood and wifehood" (p.127). Ellis reinforces the myth of the "bad" mother and equates maternal irresponsibility with the pursuit of paid employment; for Schreiner, the term "bad" mother does not apply, although its nearest approximation would ironically be the woman who conforms to Ellis' prescription and merely accepts her status as a sexual object and acquiesces in the sex-parasitism which produces social decay.

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[34] Ellis, Sex in Relation to Society, p.2.

Above all, Ellis represents the combination of motherhood and employment as a conspiracy against the child and the race, and as an abnegation of maternal duty[35]. Schreiner, in redefining this duty, upholds the image of "the mighty labouring woman who bears and rears offspring and in other directions labours greatly and actively for her race" (p.103). Schreiner's ideal of the labouring mother allows for choice on the part of women. To work is not to renounce motherhood and motherhood itself is represented neither as the ultimate aim of femininity nor as an all-consuming function into which the woman, as the passive reproducer of the patriarchal economy and discourse, disappears[36].

This ideal must be placed in its polemical context as an image which demands no exclusive and self-limiting choices of women and in which productive and reproductive labour are posited as equivalent and complementary. Schreiner's woman quite deliberately flouts the boundaries between the public and the private, the productive and the reproductive, upheld by social evolutionary, eugenicist and social maternalist discourse, while at the same time enacting and emphasising the separation of the feminine from the maternal.

Motherhood is not elevated to the dizzy heights of sublimity despite the claim that Schreiner not unreasonably saw it as as "one of the glories of life"[37]. Nor however does she devalue maternity. Her images of motherhood carefully evade complicity in an excessive idealisation behind which, more often than not, lurks thinly veiled contempt. And, while the ideal of the labouring woman does exaggerate the benefits to most women of a gruelling double role, failing to address the implicit inequalities, Schreiner's blind spot, unlike that of Ellis, contributes to an expansion rather than a diminishing of the possibilities for female self-expression.

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[35] Ellis, Sex in Relation to Society, p.19.

[36] Irigaray, Speculum, p.76.

[37] First and Scott, p.277.

Cultivating the New Man

The demonstration of the mutability of definitions of the masculine and the feminine is a vital aspect of Schreiner's project in Woman and Labour. Within the terms of the social evolutionary schema, and with the economic and sexual freedom of women functioning as the index of progress, she articulates the connection between social change and sexual difference:

> As the primitive, ignorant male, often willingly selling his offspring or exposing his female infants to death, often develops, with the increase of culture and intelligence into the extremely devoted and self-sacrificing male progenitor of civilised societies; so, yet even more markedly, does the female relation with her offspring, become intensified and permanent, as culture and intelligence and virility increase. (pp.234-235)

Although the social evolutionary framework is utilised here to prove the civilising impact of culture and intelligence, particularly as it relates to the condition of women, implicit in this evolution metaphor is a critique of certain expressions of the masculine, the relegation of these modes to the evolutionary past, and an assertion of the mutability of definitions of the masculine and the feminine.

Schreiner's perspective again takes key elements of Ellis' theory of sexual difference as its most overt reference point. Woman and Labour evinces an anti-individualist opposition to the principle of physical force and characterises the exertion of brute strength as a social anachronism. Schreiner views the transition to an industrialised economy as disadvantaging women in some respects. However she simultaneously appreciates it as ushering in the decline of "the day of the primary import to humanity of the strength in man's extensor and flexor muscles" and its replacement by "the day of the all-importance of the culture and activity of man's brain and nerve" (p.41). She sees it as providing, therefore, excellent opportunities for the admission of women into social production on an equal basis.

In calling upon the concept of the decline of the age of physical force, Schreiner capitalises upon an argument advanced by collectivist critics, Drummond

and Kropotkin among them[38], of the reputed Spencerian emphasis on competition rather than on co-operation or altruism as the motor of social advance (although as both Peel and Collini stress, this emphasis was associated with a vulgar Spencerism rather than Spencer's own arguments, "since in fact the supercession of conflict by cooperation was the central theme of that theory"[39]). This insistence upon co-operation was also evident in the works of various proponents of women's rights, most notably (in the context of the present discussion) in that of John Stuart Mill.

In The Subjection of Women Mill emphasises the supercession of "the law of force" which characterised the "primitive condition of humanity" by moral law which is seen as the mark of civilisation[40]. According to Mill, the subjection of women constitutes the solitary exception to this transition, remaining as "one case of a social relation grounded on force"[41]. Evolutionary progress is aligned in his theory with a transition to an "equal justice" which is synonymous with legal equality.

Mill appeals primarily to liberalist notions of natural rights and assumes that equality for women consists in the removal of legal impediments to their competitive ability. For Mill, the "citadel of the enemy"[42] is injustice and authority based on birth rather than merit. For Schreiner it is patriarchy, a citadel whose foundations must be rocked not merely by the admission of women to the marketplace on an equal footing with men but through a social transformation in which the values of that marketplace itself are reassessed.

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[38] Peter Kropotkin, Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution (1902; Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1939); Henry Drummond, The Ascent of Man (1894; Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1898).

[39] Collini, p.28.

[40] John Stuart Mill, The Subjection of Women (1869; Virago, London, 1983) p.12.

[41] Mill, The Subjection, p.12.

[42] Mill, The Subjection, p.52.

Also, whereas Mill gestures towards the questioning of "natural differences" between the sexes[43] but accepts without argument the assumption that the social inferiority of women is grounded in the superior physical strength of the male, Schreiner's orientation is to these "natural differences" themselves. This interest is shared by the underrated Harriet Taylor Mill, whose neglected essay The Enfranchisement of Women[44] emphasises the social construction of femininity and the male power invested in this construction. Although overtly motivated by the same liberalist impulse as Mill, Taylor focuses her attention specifically and almost exclusively upon the relationship between women's social subordination and the construction of the category "Woman".

Unlike The Subjection of Women, Woman and Labour is clearly troubled by the equation of superior strength with the social dominance of the male and energy is expended on the demonstration that "civilisation" has diminished the significance of this particular attribute and elevated the importance of those skills equally applicable to women, delicate manipulative ability among them. At times there is in Woman and Labour what appears to be a tendency to reproduce the equation of physical strength with social superiority and the assumed consonance of this attribute with masculinity. This leads in some instances to an apparently ahistorical reading of the dominance of the male which runs counter to Schreiner's recognition of the social construction of the organic. She states on one occasion that:

> It is possible, that women after countless ages, during which that smaller relative development in weight and muscularity...and that lesser desire for pugilism inherent in almost all females who bear their young alive, rendered her lacking in the two qualities which made for individual dominance in her societies, may yet, in the future, discover that those changes in human conditions, which have done away with the primary necessity for muscular force and pugilistic arts, have also inverted her place in the scale of social values. (p.214)

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43 Mill, The Subjection, p.125.

44 Harriet Taylor Mill, The Enfranchisement of Women (1851; Virago, London, 1983).

In this statement, the traditional alignment of aggression and physical strength with masculinity is maintained. However the possible inversion of women's status is represented as being dependent entirely upon alterations in "human conditions" rather than upon natural determinants."It is possible", Schreiner continues, "that the human female...may in the future find that, so far from those qualities which, in an earlier condition, lessened her social value and power of labour, continuing to do so, they will increase it" (p.214). Social value is seen to be at stake here rather than natural superiority and dominance. The two are definitely non-synonymous.

That social dominance, and therefore patriarchal dominance, cannot strictly be equated with natural superiority is evidenced in Schreiner's assertion that the qualities which afford social dominance to an animal, an individual or a race, are always influenced by changes in the environment: "As the wheel of life slowly revolves, that which was lowest comes continually uppermost, and that which was dominant becomes subservient" (p.213). In this slimly disguised wish-fulfilling hypothesis, social dominance is distinguished from natural superiority. Invoking a Darwinian emphasis on contingency and chance, Schreiner hints at the arbitrary and precarious nature of social dominance, and natural law is revealed in its tendency to a truly random selection. Little place is left for the notion of inherent superiority: "As with individuals and races, so also with sexes, changed social conditions may render exactly those subtile qualities, which were in one social state a disadvantage, of the highest social advantage in another" (p.210). Biological attributes no longer function as absolute, socially transcendent and impervious to change; all conceptualisations of femininity and masculinity are seen as anchored in the social. Social dominance determines, rather than intervenes in, relations of superiority and inferiority.

Therefore, despite the fact that Mill's writing was "formative in her intellectual development"[45], Schreiner's polemic on force offers a vastly more

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[45] Berkman, p.22.

penetrating analysis of the patriarchal investments in the equation of masculinity with force than Mill's cursory attention to "natural differences" can provide. While Schreiner's devaluation of force on the basis of its social antiquation mirrors that of Mill, she devalues not only authority founded on force but also the representational system which constructs an equivalence between physical strength, masculinity and superiority. Whereas Mill challenges the synonymising of the latter two, Schreiner assaults the conventional representation (which Mill leaves intact) of femininity as passive, weak, and biologically deficient.

It is relevant to note at this point, that Berkman fails to perceive that Schreiner's argument for "an equalisation of power" does not necessarily imply "a contradiction with her dismissal of physical prowess as crucial to progress"[46]. While it is true that Schreiner's work does evince an ambivalence to physical prowess, her equation obviates the necessity for crude physical force - the parity of power for which she argues is not necessarily a power founded upon a conventional model of physical strength as Berkman seems to assume.

However Schreiner's attack on force is not limited to the broadly social inscription of this concept but is particularly focused on the issue of force as it pertains to the sexual realm. It is in this application that Schreiner's tacit and tantalisingly ambiguous debt to Ellis is most apparent. She states that:

> In the barbarian state of societies, where physical force dominates, it is the most muscular and pugilistically brutally and animally successful male who captures and possesses the largest number of females; and no doubt he would be justified in regarding any social change which gave to woman a larger freedom of choice, and which would so perhaps give to the less brutal but perhaps more intelligent male...an equal opportunity for the gratification of his sexual wishes and for the producing of offspring, as a serious loss. (pp. 238-9)

This constitutes a direct refutation of the patriarchal model of sexuality normalised by Ellis - a model of physical force and capture at the heart of his "art of

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[46] Berkman, p.23.

love"[47]. Schreiner is unrelenting in her denunciation of it as a "barbarian state of society" thereby devaluing its applicability to contemporary society, disputing its claims to immutability, challenging its elevation of force to the status of a biological imperative of male sexuality, and demonstrating the congruence of such models of masculinity with the domination and repression of women and with resistance to the social change associated with their emancipation.

She reveals that buried within stated fears that women's increased independence would lead to an undesirable "severance between the sexes" is the deeper anxiety that "it might, and undoubtedly would, powerfully react and readjust the relations of certain men with certain women" (p.238). Schreiner maintains that in any revaluation of the norms of masculinity and femininity the forms in which sexual attraction would express itself and above all "the relative power of individuals to command the gratification of their instincts" would be "fundamentally altered, and in many cases inverted" (p.238).

Thus it is not the "diminution" or "an absolute abolition of the sexual attraction and affection" (p.225) which detractors of the women's movement accuse it of installing which is at stake. It is the "relative power of individuals", a model of male sexuality which, in naturalising physical force and encouraging men to "cultivate force"[48], actively sustains the existent "relative power" of the sexes. The model of male sexuality based on force and "possession" of the woman[49] and the oppression of women are thus strongly linked in Schreiner's analysis. It is for this reason that, although the "certain men" alluded to in this context are those who exhibit brute force, men like the lofty theorist who practise (by means of a normalising theory) a complicitous domination of women are also targeted.

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[47] Ellis, Sex in Relation to Society, ch. 11.

[48] Ellis, Sex in Relation to Society, p.425.

[49] Ellis, Sex in Relation to Society, p.408.

The repercussions of Ellis' model are unequivocally demonstrated in Schreiner's conception of prostitution which, in being delineated in its broadest sense "to cover all forced sexual relationships" (p.245), is connected to the "element of physical force and capture which dominated the most primitive sex relations" (p.246). The model of force is thus denounced as "primitive". More significantly, in its emphasis on capture and on the subjugation of women, it is revealed as virtually instituting prostitution as the paradigm of the heterosexual relationship (a facet of patriarchal sociality to be explored more fully in From Man to Man.)

Through the figure of the New Man who develops alongside the New Woman (p.252) Schreiner offers a response to the violence-based model of male sexuality legitimised by Ellis and celebrated in the fictional works of D.H.Lawrence. Her New Man is an emblem of a mode of masculinity arising in the wake of the feminist movement and is characterised by its rejection of traditional stereotypes, the values of the "crudely animal hard-drinking, hard-swearing, licentious, even if materially wealthy gallant of the past" (p.257). The traditional masculine attributes of promiscuity, brutality and parental irresponsibility are rejected in favour of a masculine character markedly more "feminine" in contour.

The New Man's conception of love is presented by Woman and Labour as according with that of the New Woman in its emphasis on the "more psychic and intellectual" over the "crudely and purely physical" and as being "an affection between companions" (p.257). The contrast between this configuration of the companionate marriage and the model of "physical force and capture" is pronounced. Schreiner's ideal of the New Man deliberately and pointedly excludes those forms of masculinity promoted by such theories. It does, however, have wider ramifications.

As has been suggested, both Schreiner and Ellis are concerned with what Ellis describes as the "revolution" in the status of the female psyche[50] and the resulting

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[50] Ellis, Psychology of Sex, p.292.

"clash" in ideals[51]. Both acknowledge that a certain degree of friction is inevitable as a consequence of the ongoing modification in women's status but each offers vastly different interpretations of, and solutions to, this phase of transition.

Ellis conceptualises the Victorian and Edwardian women's movement as an essentially divisive force, widening the gulf between men and women through what he perceives as its denial of sexual difference. Concomitant with this conceptualisation is an undervaluing of the feminine and motherhood. He sees the solution to this disturbing problem as residing in the hands of men - "the present sexual situation is mainly one with which men have to deal"[52]. This formulation does not of course imply that men should radically alter their attitudes to, and treatment of, women, but merely that they should in effect tame their women into submission through the strategic deployment of sexuality as a technique of control; that they improve their "skill" in the art of love and the capture of women. Ellis' fear amounts to an anxiety not about division *per se* but about a schism based, in his perception, on the sameness of the sexes - on the female desire to seek "the same education as men, the same occupations as men"[53]. His desire is for division based on irreducible and hierarchical difference.

Schreiner, on the other hand, depicts the relation between the sexes as one of maladjustment, with the women's movement providing a possible remedy through its aspirations to readjustment. In contrast to Ellis she presents the women's movement as a potentially unifying influence framed by its character as "part of a great movement of the sexes towards each other" (p.259). It is, however, most definitely not a movement towards the elision of sexual difference as Ellis claims; Schreiner's ideal is of harmony predicated on the acceptance of difference and heterogeneity.

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[51] Ellis, Psychology of Sex, p.288.

[52] Ellis, Psychology of Sex, p.292.

[53] Ellis, Sex in Relation to Society, p.4.

Also in contrast to Ellis, Woman and Labour shifts the blame for social disruption from women, claiming that this disruption does not arise "in any way from a disco-ordination between the sexes as such" but is instead "a part of the general upheaval, of the conflict between old ideals and new" (p.259). The women's movement is thus freed from the stigma of a guilt imposed upon it by theorists like Ellis. This is not to imply that the notion of women's responsibility for change is refuted. In Woman and Labour women are placed in the position of centrality occupied by the male in Ellis' discourse and heavy emphasis is placed on their responsibility to confront social change and make the necessary "re-adjustments" for the benefit of future generations. Women's responsibility to the future becomes in this way the task of facilitating social and sexual change and overturning the patriarchal sexual ideology which curtails their economic and social independence.

Rather than males educating women to be women as in Ellis' theory, it is women's responsibility to feminise the male in the interests of the race and to shape the New Man in her image:

> Side by side with the "New Woman", corresponding to her, as the two sides of a coin cast in one mould, though differing from each other in superficial detail, are yet of one metal, one size, and one value; old in the sense in which she is old, being merely the reincarnation under the pressure of new conditions of the ancient forms of his race; new in the sense in which she is new, in that he is an adaptation to material and social conditions which have no exact counterpart in the past. (p.253)

If the New Man and the New Woman do form the sides of one coin then, this coin is emphatically feminine in contour. The movement of the sexes towards each other as envisaged by Schreiner is in effect a movement of patriarchal masculinity towards femininity in a process which, although it does not imply androgyny (the traditional patriarchal dream of the subsumption of femininity and the internalisation and neutralisation of sexual difference), does involve a redefinition of femininity and masculinity. The New Woman is presented as a "labouring and virile womanhood, free, strong, fearless and tender" (p.258) while the ideal of the New Man which she "shapes for herself" runs counter to the "sexual and social ideals which

dominated the fox-hunting, hard-drinking, high-playing, recklessly loose-living country squire, clergyman, lawyer, and politician who headed the social organism of the past" (p.255).

The significant feature of this reformulation is not only the interchange between the sexes of what were formerly held to be gender characteristics but also the paradigmatic status occupied by the New Woman. Femininity functions in Schreiner's schema as the model, the standard by which the male is to be judged in an overt rejection of masculinity as the sexual norm. It is the traditionally inscribed feminine proclivity to the emotional life, the affections and parental, familial and marital responsibility to which the New Man aspires. Therefore, although the women's movement is described as a movement of the sexes towards each other, in fact the greatest demands are placed on the male in an ironic apparent reduplication of Ellis' assertion that the effects of the "feminine revolution" are ones "with which men have to deal"[54]. The traditional model of masculinity is undermined and replaced by one strongly influenced by the feminine as inscribed within patriarchy. It is significant that the ideal of the new relationship is constructed to the specific advantage of women; the male must assume his share of what is conceptualised as woman's duty while the woman in turn is liberated from the constraints of social expectations, freed to achieve a masculine liberty.

Thus the reformulation of masculinity and femininity is constructed by Schreiner with a view to women's needs, desires and rights, the primary right being that of casting off the shackles of a limited and notionally castrated femininity. Schreiner neatly overturns a patriarchal model of femininity predicated on male interests, countering its phallocentric investments with a model which specifically serves women's needs. The female actively shapes an ideal of masculinity in a mimicry of the act by which femininity is constructed by patriarchal theory. Woman ceases to function as the passive medium of reflection of male subjectivity. In Woman

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[54] Ellis, Psychology of Sex, p.292.

and Labour, rather than sending the male's image back to him in a process which confirms her in her absence and inversion to him, she is charged with constructing a masculinity which accords to her desires- and which undercuts phallic mastery. Hers is a desire not for the penis, as Freud would assert, but for a masculinity which in its difference from itself participates in the otherness which is femininity. It is a desire for and of herself which re-emerges in the character of Lyndall in The Story of an African Farm and which, as will be seen, shatters the "flat mirror" which underlies the phallic representations[55] of the patriarchal symbolic order.

The Warrior Maid

Schreiner's history of woman and labour focuses on women's relation to the maternal function in an attempt to acknowledge the debt to women, the debt to the mother, repressed by the phallocentric signifying economy. It challenges woman's representation as negativity, passivity, non-being, a mere conduit for life, with the reproductive function operating as a sign of this negativity. The analysis it presents exploits male anxieties regarding the maternal and capitalises upon this infamous blind spot in patriarchal rationality.

Schreiner's representation of motherhood confronts the materiality of reproduction without absorbing women into the corporeal function. It simultaneously creates a fantasy of the woman's release from submission to the male domination of the procreative process. Schreiner thus joins with Frances Power Cobbe in "seeking elsewhere than in the interests of Man the ultimate *raison d'etre* of Woman"[56]. Woman and Labour's most salient images are those featured in Chapter Two in which the historical illustration of the dangers of sex-parasitism is expanded upon (pp.83-110). This chapter, while expounding Schreiner's sex-parasitism-social decay

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55 Irigaray, Speculum, pp.50-1.

56 Frances Power Cobbe, "The final cause of woman", in Hollis, p.23.

thesis, is notable for its striking and controversial images of women and particularly mothers, images which owe as much to a feminist fantasy of future possibilities as to an historical past.

The women of ancient Greece are described as "richly and even heavily endowed with duties and occupations" which include "feeding and doctoring their households, manufacturing the clothing of their race, and performing even a share of the highest social functions as priestesses and prophetesses" (pp.83-4). These women "underlay their society as the solid and deeply buried foundations underlay the more visible and ornate portions of a great temple, making its structure and persistence possible" (p.84). Roman women are similarly portrayed as "erect, labouring and resolute"(p.88).

It is, however, with the Teutonic women that Schreiner's heaviest investments reside, as is the case with Engels and Bebel, a literary heritage overlooked by Berkman when she accuses Schreiner of latent racism in ignoring non-European sources for examples of female "virility"[57]. Schreiner is at this point signalling an intellectual and political affiliation with these socialist writers in which the prevalent sentiment of racial pride, rather than participating in a complacent racism, deceptively marshals ethnocentric bias to the service of an egalitarian or democratic aim. Once again conservative rhetoric is displaced for revolutionary ends. The "Teutonic folk" are represented as a race

> whose women were virile and could give birth to men; a folk among whom the woman received on the morning of her marriage, from the man who was to be her companion through life, no contemptible trinket to hang about her throat or limbs, but a shield, a spear, a sword, and a yoke of oxen, while she bestowed on him in return a suit of armour, in token that they two were henceforth to be one in toil and in the facing of danger... (p.92)

Such images play havoc with the nineteenth-century stereotype of a femininity characterised by passivity and "natural" adaptation to an exclusively

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[57] Berkman, p.28.

domestic forum. The Greek, Roman and Cimbrian women constructed in these pages, so congruent with the then common pedagogical use of classical exempla, grossly confound neat categorisation. They are simultaneously warriors, wives and mothers and are, in the words of Tacitus, not only "beloved" but "valued" (p.92). More specifically, these configurations of the feminine declare open warfare, as the exaggeration of their delineation implies, on the patriarchal theorisation of women's relation to the maternal function. This challenge is embodied in the figure of the labouring mother central to Woman and Labour - the "mighty labouring woman who bears human creatures to the full extent of her power...and performs at the same time severe social labour in other directions" (p.103). This image confounds the public/private, production/reproduction divisions which operate by means of the exclusion of women to a highly ambiguous and precariously maintained position of social externality and marginality.

Schreiner's discussion of motherhood is driven by the desire to accord to women the recognition merited by what is perceived as a crucial social function but which, although excessively sentimentalised and sanctified by discourses as varied as the scientific and the Christian, is actually disdained. The images constructed in Woman and Labour correspond with a tactical attempt to release maternality from the exclusively private sphere and to accord it an acknowledged place in the circuits of production. Therefore, the reproduction and nurturing of children forms just one component, although a vitally important one, of the social labour carried out by the Greek, the Roman and the Teutonic women applauded in the text. The Roman matron "laboured mightily" as well as producing children (p.87); the Teutonic woman actively engages in war while fulfilling her role as mother. Schreiner's demonstration of this point may be extreme but this is an extremity and an exaggeration called forth, it could be argued, by the violence implicit in patriarchal configurations of the domestic angel. This violence receives empirical expression in the threats of physical assault and constraint which ensure women's conformity to the

stereotypes of acceptable female behaviour, as the imprisonment and force-feeding of militant suffragettes such as Constance Lytton emblematise .

If Schreiner's ideal of the labouring woman appears to embody a glorification of war and aggression (as Berkman believes it does[58]) and in the case of the Cimbrian women, infanticide, it must be stressed that it does not constitute an endorsement of these values. It attests to a sense of the discursive force required to overturn centuries of misleading depictions of women. Through this ideal she offers a violent and recognisably heroic response to a violent and rigid system of role prescriptions and representations. It is important to situate Schreiner's valorisation of a "fearless, labouring and resolute womanhood" in its polemical context and to distance the vision presented in Woman and Labour from a complacent acceptance of the attitude of belligerence she so passionately denounces in "Woman and War". It must also be remembered that the values of the Cimbrian women upheld in this instance - courage, aggressive resolve and decisiveness - are among those regarded as least consonant with a nineteenth-century femininity and the Victorian and Edwardian concept of the mother.

Schreiner's "racial ideal" is found in the figure of "the warrior maid" Brynhild (p.145). The reason for this is not located in a reverence for war nor in a desire to espouse a femininity inscribed along masculine lines. It is to be located in Schreiner's hostility to a model of feminine subordination symbolised by a Helen of Troy "passed passively from male hand to male hand, as men pass gold or lead" (p.145). It springs from the repudiation of a representation of women as passive objects or merchandise, commodities on the masculine market, and from a desire to offer a configuration which stresses female activity, courage and resourcefulness. The militaristic nature of these images of the "old" women also serves to draw them into analogy with the New Women who swell the ranks of the feminist "army" (p.128).

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[58] Berkman, p.28.

Schreiner presents a radically redefined domesticity which encompasses a social dimension (the Roman women are also doctors, priests and clothes manufacturers) thus echoing points raised in the opening pages of the book. In this section visionary politics has the upper hand and domesticity is gleefully subordinated to the fearless and dangerous exploits of these emblems of a past and future femininity.

The Children of Woman: Schreiner and the maternal body

Schreiner's representation of motherhood challenges the patriarchal model of production and reproduction, the ideology of women's status as a commodity, a Helen of Troy, within this schema. In particular it highlights the position of women as the repressed infrastructure of patriarchal society. As Luce Irigaray claims in "Women's Exile": "Women's bodies constitute the infrastructure of our society; *they reproduce the forces of production without being recognised as a force of production*"[59]. In Woman and Labour the Greek women are acknowledged as underlying their society " as the solid and deeply buried foundations underlay the more visible and ornate portions of a great temple, making its structure and persistence possible" (p.84). Schreiner's analysis pays tribute to the centrality of women's labour to the maintenance of the social order, the symbolic, and to their status as forces of production rather than passive conduits of life.

As such, Woman and Labour offers a more penetrating and profound analysis of the operations of the symbolic order than is commonly acknowledged. Schreiner's discussion of marriage and prostitution reveals her acute consciousness of the foundation of the patriarchal social order upon the exploitation and exchange of women's bodies. Her account, in common with that of Bebel and Engels, accords

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[59] Luce Irigaray, "Women's Exile", Ideology and Consciousness 1, p.73.

prostitution its broadest definition to encompass "all forced sexual relationships" whether sanctified by the legal system or not (p.246).

The reassessment of women's capacity for activity is not restricted to their relation to the public sphere. Of equal interest to Woman and Labour (and arguably the more radical project) is the redistribution of activity and passivity in the economy of human production. The representations of the maternal body presented in the second chapter, and indeed throughout the text, disturb the facile attribution of activity to the male (the male as active producer and reproducer) and passivity to the female (the woman as passive receptor of his seed, the reproducer of his subjectivity)[60]. In Schreiner's analysis, unlike that of phallocentric theorisation in which nature and ideology are collapsed, the reproduction carried out by women is conceptualised as both an active and a passive process - a "passive labour" and a "labour" enacted by a mother who is also and foremost a woman, as the ambiguity of the term "labour" reinforces.

Flouting the eugenic deployment of the female reproductive capacity in the service of the male and the race, Woman and Labour presents the maternal as the site wherein the woman asserts her self-sufficiency and potency, ceasing to "facilitate the repetition of the same (male subjectivity), in contempt for her difference"[61]. As will be seen, the maternal becomes the focus for a valorisation of this difference.

Schreiner represents mothers as active producers but, more significantly, she represses the role of the male in the reproductive process; she stresses the potency of the woman-who-also-has-a-womb while rejecting male appropriation of the female reproductive capacity and its product. Fathers are largely absent from Woman and Labour in a gesture which emphasises the traditional irresponsibility of the male parent referred to in the context of the New Man. In Schreiner's analysis

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60 As Freud says, "The male sex-cell is actively mobile and searches out the female one, and the latter, the ovum, is immobile and waits passively", "Femininity" p.149.

61 Irigaray, Speculum, p.54.

woman is indeed the "supreme parent" Ellis would have her but in a way and to an effect from which he would recoil in moral repulsion.

In Woman and Labour the male is reduced to a position of comparative irrelevance and assumes the secondary status tendentiously afforded him by Ellis. The role of Phillip in producing Alexander the Great is dismissed. Alexander is described as "the son of the fierce, virile, and indomitable Olympia" and as having specifically inherited from his mother "his most notable qualities - his courage, his intellectual activity, and an ambition indifferent to any means that made for his own end" (p.87). Similiarly, it is specifically from the bodies of Greek women that "the race of heroes, thinkers and artists who laid the foundations of Grecian greatness" sprang (p.84).

The irrelevance of the male is reinforced by the fact that the pleasure of motherhood experienced by women such as Olympia and the Roman matron derives from an implicit revelling in their own potency and power over the future. The Roman matron gives birth not merely to a child but to "the men who built up Roman greatness" (p.88). The eugenic insistence on women's control over the future is thus ironically twisted into an assertion of female power and autonomy. What was intended to diminish female self-assertion by burying it under the onerous weight of racial responsibility is rendered by Woman and Labour into a sign of the potential supremacy of the female, a notion with which Schreiner toys on occasion (p.208)[62].

Through these historical images Schreiner reformulates the female reproductive capacity in a way which attempts to liberate it from patriarchal strictures that determine it as essentially passive, as a metaphor for feminine weakness and dependence (as in Ellis). Schreiner's representation of motherhood highlights women's role in reproduction and nurturing at the expense of that of the male but simultaneously refuses to assimiliate her to this undervalued function.

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[62] Any inversion hypothesis offered does not, however, merely effect a reversal of male and female status but instead queries the terms of the model of superiority, the oppositional schema itself.

Unlike eugenic theory, Schreiner's configuration confronts the materiality of reproduction without reducing woman to "matter" and, in so doing, creates a fantasy of her release from the position of anonymous worker, a reproductive machine in the service of the "master-proprietor"[63]. Woman and Labour forcefully rejects these determinations of a "suffer and be still" ideology[64].

Although maternal love for the child is stressed, Schreiner's representation of motherhood is markedly anti-sentimental, marginalising and suppressing images of self-sacrificing devotion to the child in favour of a vigorous self-affirmation on the part of the mother. Within her schema the male's presumption of sexual self-sufficiency is severely tested and the potent labouring mother functions as a testament to his lack - lack of a womb and lack of a claim to be the indisputable point of origin. His role is in fact limited to the imprinting of the woman's product with his name with the patronymic process itself undermined by Schreiner's reference to the race as "the Children of Woman" (p.68).

The refusal of Schreiner's women to submit to reduction to the status of instruments of reproduction is evinced in their unwillingness to relinquish their rights to the products of their labour, their children. They reject a severance of the mother-child dyad which is the pre-requisite of patriarchal subjectivity and entry into the symbolic[65]. If the male is endowed with the right under patriarchy to stamp his name upon the offspring, Schreiner's women exhibit the ability to imprint themselves upon them - the mother "impresses" herself "indelibly on her descendents" (p.107). The terms of patriarchal motherhood are thus altered and motherhood becomes the site wherein the woman reproduces herself with the child functioning in many ways as the displacement of her desire. "Men's bodies" are, as

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[63] Irigaray, Speculum, p.23.

[64] Sara Ellis, "The Daughters of England", in Hollis, p.15.

[65] Julia Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, trans. Margaret Waller (Columbia University Press, New York, 1984) chs. 1-6.

Woman and Labour triumphantly declares "our woman's works of art" (p.74). Woman here displaces God as the Divine artist. This particular form of woman's art is seen as consonant with a "power of control" - a power which, although Schreiner is careful to portray as bearing with it tremendous responsibilities, is nevertheless expressed as a fantasy of female power.

The patronymic appropriation of the child is reformulated as a belated attempt to mark a product the woman has already indelibly inscribed both in the form of "germinal inheritance" and the "intellectual and moral atmosphere" for which she is largely responsible (p.107). Schreiner speaks of "the great central fact" that :

> with each generation the entire race passes through the body of its womanhood as through a mould, reappearing with the indelible marks of that mould upon it, that as the *os cervix* of woman, through which the head of the human infant passes at birth, forms a ring, determining for ever the size at birth of the human head,...and that so exactly the intellectual capacity, the physical vigour, the emotional depth of woman, forms also an untranscendable circle, circumscribing with each successive generation the limits of the expansion of the human race. (pp.129-30)

Woman functions as a "mould" rather than the neutral medium of transmission as will be discussed shortly.

The rights of woman to her product and her power over this product are nowhere more strikingly and controversially evoked than in the figures of the Cimbrian women who commit mass suicide and murder their children rather than submit to defeat[66]. As dubious as such a victory may be, it does serve to symbolise a female sovereignty over self and child. It functions, however ambiguously, as an allegory of female self-determination, overturning patriarchal prescriptions of maternal passivity. This occurs despite the fact that Schreiner's women appear invariably to produce "sons" and "men" rather than daughters and women. However, it must be remembered that if a woman such as the Greek matron produces sons, they are sons who bear the "indelible marks" of their mother, sons whose future strength

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[66] See Bebel, p.65.

and achievement is tied to the strength of the mother. The sons' virtues are linked in this way to the mother and women cease to function as conduits of masculine virtue. Instead, in a play of difference in continuity such virtues oscillate between the masculine and the feminine. The passive mirror of femininity, the neutral conduit of male subjectivity no longer enacts a "repetition of the same, in contempt of her difference" but instead stands as a symbol of the instalment of this difference into the masculine identity she no longer merely reduplicates but reinscribes - "Alexander is incomprehensible till we recognise him as rising from the womb of Olympia" (p.87).

Maternality functions in Woman and Labour as a site of female self-assertion and power and a process of self-reproduction is enacted. Schreiner's women do in a sense reproduce themselves in a representation of a female pleasure which consists in an assertion rather than a refusal of the self in the interests of reproduction[67]. Schreiner thus counters the myth of woman as the transparent and passive medium through which wealth, property and male subjectivity are transmitted, with a myth which mobilises the powers of mediation and interrupts this smooth transmission. Mothers function as much more than a mere "link in the chain of generations"[68].

Schreiner's history of woman and labour not only proclaims and acknowledges the repressed role of women in production but challenges the exploitation implicit in this effacement. It projects a vision of women's entry into the circuits of production other than as objects or commodities. As its search for alternative representations of femininity suggests, it is not blind to the fact that this is contingent not only upon legal or economic reforms but upon the reinscription of femininity. Woman and Labour is directed towards the forging of a new value system in which the worth of femininity would not accrue from the performance of the maternal function nor from the adoption of a patriarchally inscribed femininity (the masquerade of femininity).

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67 Irigaray, Speculum, p.79.

68 Frances Power Cobbe, "The final cause of woman", in Hollis, p.23.

Rewriting The Prophetic Manuscript: Deciphering Woman

In Woman and Labour Schreiner attempts to fill the hole or gap in the history of women's lives - to provide that "literary record" of "the past, of her desires and sorrows" which she believes has been denied women (p.81). It is a narrative which forcefully injects women into a mainstream history which has traditionally excluded them (or included them for reasons of social vilification) in a mode which challenges dominant perspectives on their place in the social, cultural and sexual economy. Therefore the concept of history itself functions in Woman and Labour as a metaphor for the rejection of the ideal of Woman postulated by the phallocentric system of meaning. In so doing it reproduces histories such as those of Bachofen, Bebel and Engels but with a difference - a difference constituted by its refusal to concede to patriarchal conceptions of sexual difference and by its proposal of an alternative model of sexual difference from those produced in the sex discourses of the period.

In Woman and Labour Schreiner enacts a search through women's mythical past, for different significations, expressions and images of femininity, for a new set of myths to replace the masochistic model of female sexuality perpetuated by theorists such as Ellis, Freud and Spencer. Her history makes little pretence to be an objective re-creation of a past reality. Its "scientific" dialogue with Spencer, Pearson and Ellis is constantly fractured by its underside, whether in the form of overtly fictional footnotes, allegories, visions or dreams. It is a work produced from the tension between self-censorship in the interests of "scientifically speaking" and the delights of textual transgression.

Its concern does not lie primarily, therefore, with historical accuracy, which is not to suggest that the lived reality of Victorian womanhood does not engage Schreiner's empathetic fervour. Woman and Labour treats history as the fiction it is and eschews a statistical study such as Bebel's for example (even though Schreiner was at one time engaged in compiling statistics for Pearson). Instead it focuses on

femininity as it is historically, socially and discursively constructed, upon the culturally inscribed feminine body. Schreiner's mighty labouring woman, her Cimbrian warrior-mothers, her charwoman, her suffragette, and Kafir woman are imbued with a mythic grandeur, a symbolic resonance which surpasses that of any empirical counterpart.

All are activated in the task of challenging and attempting to alter dominant conceptions of femininity; all engage with that other mythic figure, the eternal feminine, on her own ground. They are emanations from an imagination inflamed with an evangelical fervour to displace detrimental images of female sexuality in favour of a more positive expression and experience of femininity. They are motivated by a desire to ignite and commit to flames antiquated paradigms of Woman; to shatter fraudulent and misleading ideas of a "natural" femininity which fetter women to superstitions about their relation to nature and culture. Schreiner attempts to replace male fantasies of Woman with fantasies of her own, however (irrevocably) tainted they may be by the phallocentric phantasms with which they jostle.

Schreiner's history constitutes in this way the metaphorical re-establishment of a continuity between past and present women. This attempt to trace connections between women does not homogenise their diverse experience and conditions but is quite definite about the social and historical differences which determine the conditions of women as disparate as the nineteenth-century Kafir woman and the fifth-century Greek woman. It allows the similarities and differences of their circumstances to emerge in an attempt to capitalise on the past.

This capacity to learn from the past, to reject that which confines women and to embrace that which liberates them is a vital component of Schreiner's project. Much of Woman and Labour is devoted to a finely judged balancing act between the past, present and the future. As such it could be said that Schreiner acquiesces in Carlyle's exhortation to "search more and more into the past" and, like Carlyle, sets up a dialogue between past and present in which the Palimpsest which is the past

functions to prophesy not only the present but the future[69]. In Woman and Labour history does assume the status of a Prophetic Manuscript; Schreiner's Manuscript is a palimpsest in which the past and present of the feminine is in the process of being erased, however partially and provisionally, to provide space for another and alternative interpretation or "deciphering" of Woman, a future interpretation.

Thus the journey through the past enacted in Woman and Labour has both a personal and a political dimension. The strong genealogical ties established with the ancestral mothers and, by inference, with all women are expressive of Schreiner's personal rejection of the patriarchal law instituting rivalry as the essence of inter-personal relationships. They also pertain to broader questions of the patriarchal construction of femininity. It is a journey in which Schreiner enacts a symbolic retracing of her relationship to her origin, a "thinking back through the mother"[70] - a thinking back implicated in the process of writing and entailing at once recuperation and revision. As such it represents a refusal to accept the male monopoly on origin and the finality of women's exile from her origin (the mother) and her originality upon which patriarchy is predicated[71].

It is necessary in the context of this journey through the past to the maternal origin to consider Julia Kristeva's focus on the maternal body in the essay, "Motherhood According to Bellini"[72]. Kristeva here describes the maternal body,

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69 :..for though the whole meaning lies beyond our ken; yet in that complex Manuscript, ...nay which is a Palimpsest, and had once prophetic writing, still dimly legible there, - some letters, some words may be deciphered; and if it is no complete Philosophy, here and there an intelligible precept, available in practice, be gathered; will and an understanding, in the meanwhile, that it is only a little portion that we have deciphered; that much still remains to be interpreted; that History is a real Prophetic Manuscript, and can be fully interpreted by no man", Thomas Carlyle, "On History" (1830), Thomas Carlyle: Selected Writings, ed. Alan Shelston (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1971) p.56.

70 Mary Jacobus, "The Difference of View", Reading Woman, p.39.

71 Irigaray, "Women's Exile", pp.75-6; Irigaray, Speculum, p.43.

72 Julia Kristeva, Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (Columbia University Press, N.Y.,1980) pp.237-270.

often fantasised as the guarantee of representability and "symbolic coherence" (the "phallic" mother) as "the place of a splitting" (p.238):

> the maternal body is a place of a splitting, which, even though hypostatised by Christianity, nonetheless remains a constant factor of social reality. Through a body, destined to insure reproduction of the species, the woman-subject, although under the sway of the paternal function (as symbolising, speaking subject and like all others), more of a *filter* than anyone else - a thoroughfare, a threshold where "nature" confronts "culture". To imagine that there is *someone* in that filter - such is the source of religious mystifications, the font that nourishes them: the fantasy of the so-called "Phallic" Mother. (p.238)

Within the mother there is "an other" produced from a process of splitting and differentiation of which the mother is neither subject nor object - "'It happens, but I'm not there"... Motherhood's impossible syllogism" (p.237). This is a pre-Oedipal process which precedes the child's entry as subject into the social and representational systems of the symbolic order (associated with the paternal) which function through a repression of the founding "semiotic", the maternal[73]. For Kristeva motherhood, rather than ensuring identity, unity, and the stability of phallic representation, is a force of destabilisation, a site of instinctual drives, rhythms, alternative meanings which inhabit the symbolic. It is an "unsettling of the symbolic stratum, this nature/culture threshold, this instilling the subjectless biological program into the very body of a symbolising subject" (p.242).

Impelled by a "nonsymbolic, nonpaternal causality" the maternal body can be fantasised as "the reunion of a woman-mother with the body of *her* mother", a reunion characterised by Kristeva as "the same continuity differentiating itself" (p.239). This *"homosexual-maternal facet"* is countered by the"symbolic-paternal facet" of motherhood in which discourses such as Freud's proclaim the desire for motherhood as "a desire to bear a child of the father" (p.238). Thus the maternal body oscillates between two images of the Mother - one a masculine fantasy of "a

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[73] Julia Kristeva, "Signifying Practice and Mode of Production", Edinburgh Review, No.1, 1976.

hidden god", the other a female fantasy of a lost "paradise" of maternal origin and union.

Schreiner's history strongly manifests the "homosexual-maternal facet" referred to by Kristeva in its emphasis on the continuity between past and present women (expressed in the description of the New Woman as the modern incarnation of the "old" labouring woman). It signals a symbolic rejection of the necessity of the rupture between mother and daughter, woman and woman, instituted by the Law of the Father - a rupture which, unlike that of the male can never (theoretically) be healed. Schreiner's insistence upon her relationship with the mighty labouring woman of the past constitutes an attempt to recuperate a relationship forbidden by Law and can be seen as participating in a fantasy of "a paradise lost but seemingly close at hand"[74]. It symbolises a return to the mother which counteracts the male appropriation of the relation to origin, and constitutes an overturning of the patriarchal decree which determines that the woman's relation to origin is necessarily characterised by abandonment, separation and exile[75]. Through her glorification of "past" women, symbolic access is provided to the mother in a movement which challenges the inevitability of women's amputated status and which asserts their reappropriation of the right to origin.

This does not involve an embracing of the logocentric anchor which Schreiner's work calls into question, nor a construction of a fetishised "phallic" mother. Even if Schreiner's fantasy were of a full and present mother, this concept has vastly different implications for a feminist than for a male history and subjectivity. The link to origin (however illusory the plenitude and certainty embodied in this source) forms the basis of male subjectivity and auto-representation. Female subjectivity is instead predicated upon an eternal prohibition from the mother; a loss is thus instituted which can never adequately be recompensed.

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[74] Kristeva, "Motherhood According to Bellini", p.240.

[75] See Luce Irigaray, "Women's Exile".

Implicated in this politically-determined denial of access to the primary love-object is the woman's acceptance of an amputated and "castrated" status, an inferiority and incompleteness, within the specular economy.

For a woman, the so-called phallic mother can stand not for unquestioned presence and identity but for a self-sufficiency, an autonomy, a lacking-nothing, from which she is excluded by the patrocentric discursive network. Therefore, a symbolic return to the maternal origin such as that enacted in Woman and Labour signifies more than an impossible dream of plenitude. It encompasses a valuation of her own sex and constitutes a recuperation of that which was lost in the name of patriarchal femininity.

Schreiner's women are not, however, phallic, nor is the desired relation to origin characterised by an undifferentiated continuity. In a manner which recalls the Roman matron and the Greek woman who give birth to sons in a play of difference in continuity, Schreiner and her women are "the same continuity differentiating itself"[76]. Different from, and yet intimately connected to the maternal body of which these women are representative, Schreiner enacts a discovery of the relation to the mother which includes her own relationship to her mother and which is characterised neither by separation from, nor absorption into or by, the phallic mother. It enacts instead an identification with the mother which signals a recognition of the difference in similarity between the two; the daughter is no longer constrained by a Freudian "economy of repetition"[77] in which she is reduced to "playing the part of her mother"[78] rather than acting out a relationship with the mother. Instead a possibility is provided for a representation of this relationship based on the play of difference between mother and daughter, woman and origin, rather than on a phallocentric repetition of a feminine sameness.

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76 Kristeva, "Motherhood According to Bellini", p.239.

77 Irigaray, Speculum, p.77.

78 Freud, "Femininity", p.162.

Schreiner's history enacts a revision of the Oedipal scene by disturbing the phallocentric assumption of the institution of difference by the third and singular term, on the model of binarisation. Within her schema, the mediation of the mother-child dyad is fulfilled, not by a singular and phallic term, but by multiple and feminine terms. It is precisely this multiplicity of mothers which Schreiner discovers as she enacts her return to the mother. She discovers not one but many mothers. She also discovers the possibility of identity formulated along lines other than the strict demarcation between the imaginary submersion in the (m)other and its rupture by entry into the symbolic, subjectivity and language, organised around a binarising model of difference. Her account challenges not only the assumption of the necessity of a dual relationship between mother and child, but also establishes a model of identity predicated upon an intermingling and plurality.

There is a sense in which Schreiner's history is a foray into a pre-history, the realm of the pre-Oedipal, Freud's Minoan-Mycenean of the girl's attachment to her mother. In this manoeuvre a relationship is re-established with the mother, the maternal origin, in flagrant defiance of the prescriptions of phallic law. The women who populate this realm preceding a femininity prescribed by the auto-representational system of the male are not imprisoned in a code of passivity, nor are they limited to a carefully circumscribed function, nor to a maternality which robs them of their autonomous sexuality, their reproductive product and their role in social production. They are valued for reasons totally other than those normalised by nineteenth-century theories of the separate sphere.

Schreiner's history is thus informed by a desire to free the feminine and women from the compass of an economy of the Same[79]. In Woman and Labour, the desire which voices itself in the dreams, the allegories, the interstices of the text, is for and of a femininity which no longer functions as a hole in the signifying economy,

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[79] Luce Irigaray, "The Power of Discourse", This Sex, p.74.

which "has nothing, and is nothing, of herself"[80]. It is a dream of a plethora of possible images and configurations, a heterogeneity of choices which do not reduce women to the "outside" of signification, a metaphorical death.

It enacts in this way a refusal to pay the price of the patriarchal symbolic - namely, the sacrifice of the mother, the repression or silencing of the feminine. This is a refusal to stifle the heterogeneity and plurality of textuality itself. If, as Karl Pearson maintains[81], there is a price to be paid for social stability and progress, in Woman and Labour that price is most emphatically not the mother.

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[80] Sara Ellis, "The Daughters of England", in Hollis, p.15.

[81] Karl Pearson, The Ethic of Freethought, p.373.

CHAPTER FOUR

LYNDALL AND "THE INHABITANTS OF JUPITER": THE STRUGGLE FOR THE PHALLUS IN THE STORY OF AN AFRICAN FARM.

The Story of an African Farm was the first of Schreiner's works to be published (1883) and it enjoyed both popular and critical acclaim, and some marketable controversy[1]. Yet, contemporary critics approximate the novel to a standard Victorian product. It is a "deeply pessimistic novel"[2] according to Ruth First and Ann Scott, reflecting a vision in which "men are redeemed by female suffering, while women perish in teaching the lesson"[3]. It certainly is a depressing novel and does appear to enforce the ideology of female suffering common to a number of novels by Victorian female writers, George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell among them.

In this chapter I will take a different perspective on Schreiner's most popular novel and focus on its intervention into the patriarchal discourses which also concern Woman and Labour. This stresses the fact that The Story of an African Farm is a novel whose intellectual and polemical significance is too often neglected in favour of a concentration on its thematic inadequacies. A feminist reading of this novel need not confine itself to the depressing topic of female masochism nor is Schreiner's vision entirely constrained by the phallocentrism of Victorian culture. Like Woman and Labour the text consciously challenges the master discourses of nineteenth-century social and political philosophy and has an interest in theory which has generally been overlooked or at least underestimated. It is also significant for its implicit challenge to the generic codes which divide fiction from non-fiction; it forms part of Schreiner's innovative attempt to redefine women's writing and to free it from those dichotomising divisions which hampered all forms of female "labour" in the

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1 First and Scott, pp.118-124.

2 First and Scott, p.104.

3 Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own, p.20.

nineteenth century. My discussion attempts to redress this imbalance of attention on theme and plot over the theoretical components and concerns of this original and complex text.

This is not to gloss over the fact that The Story of an African Farm is a "story". It is a fictional exploration of the conflicts addressed in Schreiner's non-fictional works, including Woman and Labour, Thoughts on South Africa, and papers delivered at the Men and Women's Club. The very inclusion of the word "story" in its title draws attention to its fictionality. Yet at the same time the text tends to overlap the genres of fiction and non-fiction, not only in Lyndall's famous polemical interlude in Part Two, Chapter 4 but also in the undeniably autobiographical elements present. In The Story of an African Farm Schreiner attempts to work out the connection between fiction and non-fiction and demonstrates a suspicion of the ways in which "stories", whether fictional or non-fictional, construct feminine gender. The question which arises is: To what extent does she finally endorse conventional nineteenth-century fictions of the feminine? Does she cast off the patriarchal fictional and non-fictional renditions of femininity discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis only to replace them with a feminist fiction which reproduces the masochistic, submissive, and narcissistic model of femininity?

As Rachel Blau DuPlessis asserts in her article "The Rupture of Story and The Story of an African Farm" this novel challenges certain powerful nineteenth-century narrative paradigms, marking "the "end" of the consoling stories of the Christian, quest, and romance varieties."[4] Various fictions and ideological constructs are indeed exposed, the most significant being: the Christian allegory of good triumphing over evil; the liberal-bourgeois fiction of the self-determining individual; and the heterosexual romance of love and marriage. The plot of the heroic soul overcoming adversity which is connected in The Story of an African Farm with the narrative of

[4] Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1985) p.21

maturing (*Bildungsroman*) is also exposed to a new scrutiny. An important expression of this challenge is the form taken by The Story of an African Farm. Like all of Schreiner's writing, it explores social and political possibilities but it does not adopt the conventions of classic realism, which is one explanation for its controversial reception. It was received by critics such as Philip Kent as in no way "a reflection of any other book, but a *new book*".[5]

Schreiner's most famous story negotiates between the values of a Brontë and a George Eliot novel, a negotiation which is evinced not only in thematic terms but in Schreiner's striking combination of the Romantic surrealism and expressionism which characterises Emily Brontë's novel, Wuthering Heights, and the classic realism of the Eliot text as in The Mill on the Floss and Middlemarch. The Story of an African Farm has already been compared with Wuthering Heights in its intensity and sense of isolated strangeness[6]. The contrastive force which Schreiner manages through the device of a pair of protagonists, Lyndall and Waldo, has earlier models in the brother-sister pairs of Brontë and Eliot. Heightened scenes such as that in which Gregory Rose adopts the guise of a woman, Bonaparte Blenkins is assaulted by the "ghost" and the grotesque Tant' Sannie infantilises her weakly husband and baby, offset the realist conventions which structure Lyndall's search for personal autonomy.

The novel is determinedly set in a geographical and social reality exotic to the majority of its British readers; it is located in the South Africa of Boer farmers and Kafir tribespeople and more specifically in a "karroo" which possesses mystical resonances evoked in the dream-like opening passage. There are various explicitly allegorical elements, Waldo's "Allegory of the Hunter", and the two "Stranger" episodes being the most often cited. However, rather than isolating the "allegories" it is important to recognise that the novel's narrative form ruptures divisions between the allegory, or fable, and the conventional requirements of the romance or realist

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[5] Anon, "The Story of an African Farm", *Life* magazine, 8 February 1883, pp. 107-8. Cited in First and Scott.

[6] See Meintjes, p.51.

novel in an attempt to circumvent these requirements and the ideological inscriptions they embody. While this produces a formally innovative and powerful text, it does lead to certain problems, the most obvious being Lyndall's perceived "capitulation" to an oppressive social reality in her death. This will be discussed.

As in Woman and Labour, Schreiner's perspective on nineteenth-century fictions of gender is highly critical but this time she uses the prevailing forms of nineteenth-century fiction to critique fiction. Further, it is Waldo's failure to embody the critical perspective which determines his failure in his own "quest" plot. Lyndall's failure in the quest motif is more complex, given the ambiguity of definitions of female "heroism", and her failure raises intriguing questions as to Schreiner's own position on the issue of feminine self-determination.

However it is important to stress that The Story of an African Farm utilises its unconventional narrative strategies to engage through fiction with the phallocentric constructs attacked in Woman and Labour, thus rupturing the generic bonds which separate fiction and non-fiction. Just as Schreiner's deployment of the term "labour" encompasses all kinds of female labour, so too does her most famous "story" break down the divisions between, and hierarchising of, the non-fictional and the fictional. Here the "true" stories of a Spencer or an Ellis are incorporated into the imaginative "plotting" of the problematical figure of a theorising woman novelist.

In The Story of an African Farm Schreiner presents a reading of Spencerian scientific naturalism and Emersonian Transcendentalism which highlights the sexual indifference they assume. The novel, and the woman writer, confront the phallocentric model of order, unity and symmetry encoded in Spencerian and Emersonian philosophy with particularity, specificity, sexual difference, and the disruptive effects of a desire which is disavowed by the universalism and the generalising impulse of both. The feminine (in the form of Lyndall) is brought to bear on the tenets of Spencerian and Emersonian theory which the character Waldo emblematises. The perspective on life adopted by Waldo exhibits precisely that

obsession with the general over the specific, a transcendental universality and necessity over the strategic, which informs Spencerian social theory and its literary equivalent, Emersonian Transcendentalism. Through the character of Lyndall as a principle of a rupturing division and desire the novel confronts phallocentric discourse with its own repressiveness and the limits of its representations.

There is a tendency in criticism of this novel to conflate Waldo and Lyndall and to treat them both rather indiscriminately as projections of Schreiner herself. They are obviously linked by extreme emotional sensitivity, intelligence and a capacity for suffering. However I shall broaden the scope of interpretations of the novel by stressing the less obvious contrasts between these central characters. These contrasts are crucial to its meaning and must be outlined even at the risk of appearing schematic. In fact Schreiner's delineation of these characters is deliberately planned and stylised in the interests of a theoretical principle. Those who accuse her of haphazardness would be unikely to concede this.

The readings of Spencer and Emerson offered in The Story of an African Farm do not seek the unifying meaning or truth of the Spencerian or Emersonian text. They highlight the self-division and repression implicit in its production of meaning. Above all, they reveal the problems posed by the "uncanny difference" which is femininity[7] - a difference which is both the precondition and ruination of a rigidified masculinity and meaning. The Story of an African Farm thematises and puts to work the split which subtends subjectivity and sexuality in relation to philosophies such as those of Spencer and Emerson. It reveals the centrality to subjectivity, sexuality and meaning, of the loss and division which Spencerian and Emersonian discourse recuperates within the economy of the Same.

The Story of an African Farm is divided into two parts. The "story" Schreiner tells is split not only between two main characters, between childhood and adulthood,

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[7] Mary Jacobus, Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism (Methuen, London, 1986) p.286.

but it is also split by the logical "gaps" in its narrative structure, by the absence of the greater part of Lyndall's own story. As in the case of From Man to Man, Part One is devoted to the childhood experiences of its central characters, Waldo and Lyndall. Or rather, it is devoted more exclusively to a delineation of Waldo's painful examination of traditional religious belief and his progression to a scientific naturalism framed by Spencer's First Principles and by a commitment to an interdependent Emersonian pantheism. This section highlights the material and spiritual deprivation suffered by Waldo and is dominated by the theme of relations between Blenkins and Waldo.

However, despite Waldo's comparative monopoly of the first section of the novel and Lyndall's apparent marginalisation, Schreiner is not offering a traditional *Bildungsroman*, with its emphasis on the development to a stable manhood of its male hero. In enacting a critique of phallogocentric discourse, The Story of an African Farm simultaneously conducts a campaign against the version of masculinity proposed by the conventional *Bildungsroman* - a masculinity sure of its essential identity and impervious to the otherness figured in the female characters who, from the sidelines, impede or assist the male's achievement.

More narrative space is devoted to the three central males, Waldo, Blenkins and Gregory Rose, than to Lyndall. However this does not suggest a simple participation in the traditional marginalisation or exclusion of women. Lyndall intervenes in the novel as the disruptive feminine difference is lodged in the heart of phallic masculinity. Masculinity may appear to hold centre stage in the early part of the novel but this is only to emphasise Lyndall's triumphal infiltration of this space as the novel proceeds. The Story of an African Farm deals a crushing blow to the representation of an essential masculinity complacent in its assumption of identity, unity, and stability and in its hierarchical and mutually exclusive opposition to femininity.

Therefore, if masculinity is at the centre of the novel it is a severely threatened masculinity desperately seeking to recuperate the phallus in a text which acknowledges the difference and division informing and deforming the phallus and

implicitly recognises that, in Jacqueline Rose's terms "the status of the phallus is a fraud"[8]. This is a fraudulence arising from the fact that the phallus, according to Jacques Lacan, while functioning as the signifier of presence, simultaneously stands as the moment of rupture and division, the breaking of the Imaginary mother-child dyad. It institutes the splitting of subjectivity, the moment of irreducible division which is constructed and repeated in language. Lacan thus exposes the phallus as symbolising "the relation of privation or lack-in-being", as, indeed, the signifier of lack[9].

Lyndall's comparative absence from centre stage is not an endorsement of a sexual ideology which relegates women to the wings, so to speak. Masculinity may strut and stride through the novel, enacting its dramas of precariously poised identity, but it is for Lyndall alone, and for the power of difference and desire she embodies, that the accolades are reserved. This is reinforced by the fact that the three males, Waldo, Blenkins, and Rose, function to some extent as displacements of possibilities which present themselves to Lyndall. Although the masculine figures appear to dominate centre stage it is Lyndall who occupies the centre of the novel itself - a paradox which highlights Schreiner's writing as meta-fiction. The novel's centring on Lyndall effects a decentring which exceeds the staging of conventional narrative. Whereas this is typically seen to function to secure the presumed identity of consciousness of author and reader/spectator by means of the illusion of a unified and totalising perspective, The Story of an African Farm thematises a movement which exceeds the bounds of this novelistic staging. It fractures the mirror of this self-confirming representation, a fracturing thematised in Lyndall's discovery of difference and not identity in her mirror.

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[8] Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, eds., Feminine Sexuality, p. 40.

[9] Jacques Lacan, "Guiding Remarks for a Congress", Feminine Sexuality, eds. Mitchell and Rose, p. 91.

Waldo: The Dream of Unity and the Sleep of Reason

It is necessary at this point to consider more fully Waldo's role in the novel. This is far more complex than that of direct mediator of "Olive's religious development" assigned him by First and Scott. "Times and Seasons" they maintain "describes Olive's religious development but mediated directly through Waldo"[10]. There is no doubt that Waldo does experience the difficulties of the transition to Freethought suffered by the young Schreiner. However the concept of direct mediation implies a smooth identification with Waldo which is in fact highly problematised by an ambiguous and self-conscious text whose own critical intelligence is deployed against many of its apparent investments.

Waldo has generally been regarded as Schreiner's "double" and as the displacement of her theorising tendency and commitment to scientific rationalism onto a male (therefore legitimate) theoriser. This is true to an extent; his anguish is movingly portrayed and Schreiner did admit to being "fond of him"[11]. She was, after all, ambivalently tied to the writings of Spencer and Emerson. Both theorists greatly influenced her intellectual and spiritual life in much the same way as they influence Waldo (although his commitment to particular philosophies is unconscious). However it must not be overlooked that, even though Schreiner's representation of Waldo deliberately invites reader's sympathy for his spiritual turmoil, the character of Waldo simultaneously and most crucially operates as an intense and partially covert critique of Spencerian and Emersonian discourse.

The Story of an African Farm has been read by critics including Showalter, Colby and Beeton, as a displaced form of autobiography[12]. Meintjes, for example, regards Lyndall as "mainly Olive's mouthpiece" and, as a result, not a true character

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[10] First and Scott, p.98.

[11] To Henry Norman, 22 May 1884, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.41.

[12] See Introduction.

at all[13]. First and Scott also display a tendency to conflate "Olive's words" with those not of Lyndall but of Waldo[14]. Yet, to do so, and to locate Schreiner's investments in a male double, is to ignore the fact that the longing for truth and meaning, in being projected onto a male character and inscribed as masculine, subjects such investments to implicit and explicit critique in a novel sensitive to the "dangers" of phallocentrism. While the novel does at times exhibit a desire to believe in a reassuring determinist fiction and to rest in the bosom of an imaginary unity with Nature along with Waldo, it is at the same time ruptured by a desire of a different order. This alternative impulse would signify resistance to the authority over truth, meaning, and women, displaced from God onto Spencerian Law and Emersonian Nature. It is a desire embodied in Lyndall and connoted feminine.

"Times and Seasons" traces Waldo's movement from religious belief to the search for a secular morality which dispenses with scriptural authority, a movement which coincides with his development from child to adult. In this, Waldo embodies the Spencerian search for a scientific morality mimed by the novel itself. This is not to suggest that this is a conscious decision on Waldo's part. His character is constructed as the emblem of an impulse to a generalising knowledge represented in Schreiner's view by Spencerian discourse. It is this impulse rather than Waldo himself which is criticised by a novel deeply sympathetic to the search for reassuring fictions. The different attitudes of Waldo and the novel to the secularisation of morals projected by Spencer and Emerson is an issue which will be addressed shortly.

In delineating Waldo's transition from religious faith to a belief in natural causation "Times and Seasons" centres on his crucial "turn to Nature"[15] and his discovery that:

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[13] Meintjes, p.57.

[14] First and Scott, p.99.

[15] Olive Schreiner, The Story of an African Farm (1883; Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1971) p.115. All subsequent references are to this edition.

> This thing we call existence; is it not a something which has its roots far down below in the dark, and its branches stretching out into the immensity above, which we among the branches cannot see? Not a chance jumble; a living thing, a *One*. (p.153)

Waldo's discovery of the union between all things is connoted (not denoted) Spencerian in the succeeding chapter in which "Waldo's stranger" presents him with a copy of First Principles[16] and an assurance that, "'In the end experience will inevitably teach us that the laws for a wise and noble life have a foundation infinitely deeper than the fiat of any being, God or man, even in the groundwork of human nature'" (p.171).

Waldo's conversion to a Spencerian ideology is a conversion to the "completely unified knowledge" proposed by Spencer in First Principles[17] which provides him with an assurance of the principles of necessity and generality expressed in the Spencerian commitment to the universality of natural causation. In keeping with the Spencerian orientation to "the general character" of phenomena Waldo in effect joins with Spencer in finding that "in their ensemble the general truths reached exhibit...a oneness not hitherto observed"[18]. This perception of the underlying unity of processes is part of a larger Spencerian schema which posits the "Laws of the Knowable", defined by Spencer as "principles discernible throughout all manifestations of the Absolute" which are "the keys to all classes of phenomena"[19].

It is this impulse to generality and unifying knowledge (a unification which Spencer sees as the "end" of Philosophy[20]) which conditions the use of the third person pronoun in this chapter. When "we" discover the One, as recounted above, the

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[16] As Schreiner wrote, "The book the stranger gives to Waldo was intended to be Spencer's First Principles." To Havelock Ellis, 28 March 1884, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.36.

[17] Herbert Spencer, First Principles, 2: p.432.

[18] Spencer, First Principles , 2: p.432.

[19] Spencer, First Principles, 1: p.xi.

[20] Spencer, First Principles, 2: p.433.

novel is referring less to an identification with Waldo's position than to Waldo's assumption of the universal character of the experience. Schreiner's voice cannot be simply aligned or conflated with Waldo's in "Times and Seasons". An ironic distance is preserved between the (at least) two voices, a space from which the implications of Waldo's desired immersion in the universal "we" can be considered. Waldo's greatest fear is the fear of seeing "no relation between cause and effect, no order, but a blind chance sporting " (p.150). He experiences anxiety about an imagined victimisation by a Darwinian randomness reminiscent of Hardy's description of the President of the Immortals' "sport" with the ill-fated Tess[21]. The desire for order and meaning is thus presented as a driving force behind his "turn to Nature". The earth ceases to be a "weltering chaos" following his "perception" of the intrinsic unity of existence, the "oneness" sought by Spencer - "all is meaningful; nothing is small - all is part of a whole, whose beginning and end we know not" (p.154). God, as an anchoring presence, is replaced by Nature; the One displaces "the old God" (p.149).

In his construction of Nature as "the flowing vestment of an unchanging reality" (p.150), Waldo wholeheartedly if unconsciously embraces the Emersonian philosophy of the universal mind[22] and participates in what Emerson describes as "the resolution of all into the ever-blessed ONE"[23]. In effect, he places himself at the centre of meaning. All becomes meaningful to him; nothing is a "chance jumble" (p.153). Becoming congruous with the universe, suffused with "the presence of law to his mind"[24], Waldo positions himself as the centre of reference. Forced to acknowledge the limits of his knowledge, perceiving a whole "whose beginning and end we know not" (p.154), he nevertheless shifts to a position of oneness with the

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21 Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1891; Penguin, Harmondsworth,1981) ch. LIX, p.489.

22 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Over-Soul", Essays and English Traits (P.F. Collier and Son, New York, 1937) p.148.

23 Emerson, "Self Reliance", Essays and English Traits, p.73.

24 Emerson, "The Over-Soul", Essays and English Traits, p.146.

universe. His acceptance of his own limits (a process traced in his vacillation between faith and doubt (pp.137-149)) is in fact an assertion of his (man's) centrality. It signifies his birth into "the great, the universal mind"[25]. The divinity of God is replaced by the virtual divinity of man - a movement in which man becomes a metaphor of the universe as the universal mind.

It is interesting to note at this point the strong connections between Waldo's progress in the repudiation of religious belief and Spencer's own account of his commitment to rationalism. "My rationalist convictions" he says were caused by "perception of the radical incongruity between the Bible and the order of nature", convictions influenced by the writings of Emerson and Carlyle[26]. Further links are thus forged between Schreiner's conceptualisation of Waldo's theory and its Spencerian origins. To what degree does the novel endorse Waldo's adoption of the generalising impulse in his search for an explanatory, all-encompassing theory? Implicit in this is the question of the text's perspective on this impulse as represented in its conflation of Spencerian social theory with the Romantic pantheism of Emerson; of its perspective on the principles of universal natural causation, Necessity, and the unity of meaning and identity "dreamt of" in these philosophies; and its place in the nineteenth-century reformulation of Spencerian individualism.

It is in the context of these questions that the character of Lyndall assumes vital significance. If Part One of The Story of an African Farm deals with Waldo's struggle with religious doubt and Bonaparte Blenkins, symbol of a tyrannical male authority, Part Two details his attempt to maintain his new faith in the face of Lyndall's implicit and explicit criticism.

In Part Two, Chapter Four, Lyndall delivers her renowned tirade against the patriarchal construction of femininity as "cursed" and confining, a tirade in the tradition of Wollstonecraft's environmentalist polemic. Implicitly acknowledging the

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[25] Emerson, "The Over-Soul, Essays and English Traits, p.148.

[26] Spencer, Autobiography, 1: p.312.

discursive construction of sexual difference, Lyndall rails against a "world" which "tells us what we are to be, and shapes us by the ends it sets before us" (p.188). According to Lyndall, although humans enter the world "little plastic beings",

> "To you it says - *Work* ! and to us it says - *Seem* ! To you it says - As you approximate to man's highest ideal of God, as your arm is strong and your knowledge great, and the power to labour is with you, so you shall gain all that human heart desires. To us it says - Strength shall not help you, nor knowledge, nor labour. You shall gain what men gain, but by other means. And so the world makes men and women." (p.188)

Furthermore, the "curse" of being born a woman is specifically located in the discursive construction of femininity - "They begin to shape us to our cursed end" Lyndall maintains, until "the curse begins to act on us" (p.189). The deficiency and atrophy attributed to femininity ("The parts we are not to use have been quite atrophied" [p.189]) and reinforced by the works of influential writers such as Havelock Ellis and D. H. Lawrence are thus assigned to the realm of discourse rather than biology.

Waldo listens intently to Lyndall's lengthy polemic (p.185-195) but when he is asked by Lyndall if he takes an interest in the position of women he can only respond in the negative. Lyndall assesses his position thus:

> "And as for you, from of old you can see nothing that is not separated from you by a few millions of miles, and strewed over with mystery. If women were the inhabitants of Jupiter...you would pore over us and our condition night and day; but because we are before your eyes you never look at us." (p.187)

In this way, Lyndall confronts Waldo as theorist and generaliser with the particularity and with the alien positions and ideologies with which he, in his blindness to what is "before (his) eyes", is unable to deal. Enmeshed in a dream of unity with the One, complacent in a vision of a benevolent natural law, Waldo is presented as having made a leap into transcendental realities, a Spencerian Absolute "that transcends not only human knowledge but human conception"[27] at the expense of the specific, the particular, and notably, the political and the strategic. Lyndall views

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[27] Spencer, First Principles,1: p.xi.

this leap into generality as a lack of concern for the particular, in this case women, in favour of an investment in the mystical and imaginary - the "inhabitants of Jupiter". This point is reiterated during the same discussion when Lyndall accuses Waldo of an excessive concern for the "final cause of things in general", the equivalent of a Spencerian First Cause or Force which persists "ever changing its manifestations but unchanged in quantity throughout all past time and future time" which in its status as a transcendental signifier, not only unifies "all interpretations"[28] but transcends "all law"[29]. This is a concern whose cost Schreiner perceives to be an interest in "what is real and what is not" (197).

In confronting Waldo with his ignorance and apathy on the issue of women's oppression, Lyndall reveals the limits of his supposed universalising and explanatory theory. "Woman" as a general category may interest Waldo theoretically, but to the particularity and the lived reality of her condition, he is blind: "because we are before your eyes you never look at us" (p.187). To Lyndall's passionate denunciation of political oppression he has no response (just as he has no response to Blenkins' tyranny). He can only look in wonder at Lyndall's quivering face - a glimpse into a "world of passion and feeling wholly new to him" (p.190).

A similar intellectual and emotional blankness enwraps Waldo in the scene in which Lyndall delivers a rousing pronouncement on the "secret of success" in Part Two, Chapter Six (pp. 215-220). Although ostensibly offering advice to Waldo on his future plans, Lyndall seizes the opportunity in this conversation to recount a revealing and confiding allegory of "a woman, young, friendless as I am, the weakest thing on God's earth" (p.216). Waldo listens impassively to the plaintive tale of a young woman's struggle against the past and an impeding social reality and fails to observe the interplay of the personal pronouns "she" and "I" in Lyndall's confessional. His enshrouding self-absorption is highlighted by the text:

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[28] Spencer, First Principles, 2: p.443.

[29] Spencer, First Principles, 1: p.28.

> To him the words were no confession, no glimpse into the strong, proud, restless heart of the woman. They were general words with a general application. He looked up into the sparkling sky with *dull* eyes. (my italics) (p.217)

Once again Waldo is offered a "glimpse" into a world of passion and desire alien to his complacent vision. On this occasion however, as the novel makes resoundingly clear, his tendency to generality proves even more obscuring. Lyndall's confidential revelation of her desires in life, her confession of a certain "burden she must bear to the end" (p.216), and her implicit appeal for a sympathetic response, simply pass unnoticed by a Waldo significantly dulled to the particular. Her words are "general" words with a "general" application; Lyndall is only ever "a" woman and not "the" woman to the man blind to her specificity and deaf to her voice. She is, to all appearances, safely distanced and excluded from the reassuring fiction of a unified natural law which such turbulent desires and difference of experience threaten to unsettle.

Waldo's theory, therefore, despite its tacit claims to a totalising all-inclusiveness and far-sightedness (he can see nothing that is not separated from him by a "few millions of miles" [p.187]) is revealed as claustrophobically near-sighted. His disposition to generality constricts rather than enlarges his perspective. Thus the text charges Waldo with a dullness symbolising a dimming of the desire which Lyndall in her resistance to various manifestations of tyranny emblematises. It is a dullness whose political ramifications are of intense concern to The Story of an African Farm.

Through the theme of Waldo's obtuseness The Story of an African Farm scrutinises the political conservatism of theories like Spencer's. This conservatism is explicitly manifested in the "pact" Waldo forms with Blenkins at the conclusion to Part One which is sealed by Waldo's submission to Blenkins' castrating whip (pp.124-125). Fired by a sense of Blenkins' injustice in confiscating his books Waldo, after "brooding" for hours, determines to assert his rights. "Mine, mine! I have a right" he mutters to himself as he ventures forth on a daring mission to reclaim what is rightfully his, inspired by the recognition that "No one would help

him - he would help himself" (p.119). However this desire for justice and an end to the tyranny imposed by the authoritarian Blenkins dims upon his contemplation of the cold stars which appear to mock him. These are stars which "had seen a thousand such little existences fight just so fiercely, flare up just so brightly, and go out", stars which were themselves "as old as the Unknown" (p.120).

In a scenario markedly similar to a scene in Schreiner's earlier work, Undine, in which the (significantly) dying Undine gains a benumbing comfort from the "old stars"[30], this contemplation of the universal processes which overarch his "little existence" serves to dull Waldo's desire for action and self-assertion just as it symbolically seals Undine's acceptance of death. His contemplation of the Unknown signified by the stars dulls his "lust and desire" for the books (p.120) and for the strategic intervention required to secure them:

> What did it matter about the books? The lust and the desire for them had died out. If they pleased to keep them from him they might. What matter? It was a very little thing. Why hate, and struggle, and fight? Let it be as it would. (p.120)

Waldo thus succumbs to a Necessity and to an implicit nihilism. Waldo's political quiescence (expressed in his determination to "Let it be as it would") amounts to a pact with tyranny. This is thrown into relief by Lyndall's refusal to bow to Blenkins. While avoiding open conflict she undermines Blenkins' authority on numerous occasions, most notably that in which she takes the key to the fuel room in which Waldo has been incarcerated by him (pp.126-127). Her quiet determination unsettles Blenkins as does the look of "wild, fitful terror" Waldo turns upon him after he has been beaten (p.125).

However, unlike Waldo, Lyndall acts upon her convictions and consciously places Blenkins' oppression of the children firmly in the realm of the political rather than the narrowly personal. To Lyndall Blenkins is an emblem of political injustice to be countered by the commitment to active intervention signalled in her reassurance

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30 Schreiner, Undine, "Alone with the Stars", pp.250-4.

that "we will not be children always; we shall have the power too, some day" (p.127). It is significant that in Undine it is also the female character (Undine herself) who opposes masculine rule, this time in the form of her grandfather's decree that she attend chapel[31]. She too decries the fact that it is "a wicked, cruel world in which one human being has power over another" and, in refusing her grandfather's command, emerges "the conqueror". Like Blenkins he has no response to her passionate and courageous self-assertion.

Through the character of Waldo The Story of an African Farm explicitly addresses the political implications of the Spencerian determinist ideology which in rejecting interventionism and in positing the necessity of Progress vacillates between an optimistic determinism and an indolent fatalism[32]. The ambiguity implicit in the necessitarian doctrine is seized upon by a text which, while ambivalently endorsing the Spencerian model to some extent, simultaneously subjects it to a spirited critique. For what is Waldo in his scene under the stars if not an emblem of the "enervating fatalism" which so perturbed George Eliot, a charge of fatalism to which Spencer himself was highly sensitive[33]? And what is Lyndall if not a rejection of the conservative interpretation of Spencerian necessitarianism embodied in Harriet Martineau's noted confidence in the benevolence of "eternal and irreversible laws, working in every department of the universe, without any interference from any random will, human or divine"[34]?

Therefore through the character of Waldo the novel highlights the interconnection between Spencerian naturalism and a political conservatism born of the illusion of a death of desire generated by certain interpretations of necessitarianism (an issue to be discussed more fully later). Submersion in the

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31 Schreiner, Undine, "Going to Chapel", p.55.

32 Peel, pp.101-3.

33 Wiltshire, p.236.

34 Peel, p.109.

"Universal Whole" of existence, a submission to the laws of life which is Spencerian in contour, is seen to rob Waldo of his potential for action. The "lust and desire" which motivate his abortive stand against Blenkins "die" in the face of the "Unknown" (p.120) and he is left with a quasi-mystical sense of his own insignificance. This is an insignificance which ironically confirms his significance within the One and a vision of his own centrality.

Lyndall charges Waldo with his passivity just as she charges him with his submergence of the particular in the universal. When she accuses him of being "aimless, without a definite object, dreaming" (p.215) Waldo responds thus: "'Yes,...but when we lie and think, and think, we see that there is nothing worth doing. The universe is so large, and man is so small -...'" (p.217). Lyndall interrupts with the disclaimer that to think so is "madness" and a "disease", an "anodyne" and a "poison" (p.217). Waldo's adoption of an unconscious Spencerian tendency to universalism is thus rejected by her as defeatist and impractical. However the text is prepared to go further in its critique and in its search for possibilities beyond the parameters of Spencerian transcendentalism.

In her rejection of Waldo's passivity and complacent dreaming as a disease Lyndall embodies the possibility of an alternative to the Spencerian-framed determinist fiction. It is important to consider the form of transcendentalism in which Lyndall and, it could be argued, the novel itself, participates. It must be remembered that Lyndall herself does have recourse to a concept of "the one soul" at one stage, subscribing to the view that "what is a rudimentary in one man is an active organ in another; but all things are in all men, and one soul is the model of all" (p.198). The crucial difference between this and the transcendentalism embraced by Waldo is its political disposition. While acknowledging the desire for meaning and reassurance she refuses to purchase them at the cost of the particular, the strategic, and the feminine. Lyndall is never simplistically aligned with the unity of life in this novel.

For, unlike Waldo, Lyndall restricts her speculations to "real men". She is concerned with tracing "the resemblance between one man and another" (p.217) in contrast to Waldo's contemplation of the ideal which is expressed, according to Lyndall, in his striving mightily "to make an imaginary leaf on an old stick beautiful" (p.187). It is also notable that Lyndall's quest for "resemblance" leads her, unlike Waldo, to a consideration of difference - that "what is rudimentary in one man is an active organ in another", and the observation that while Tant' Sannie and herself, Bonaparte and Waldo are "the same compound", crucial differences separate them (p.198).

Engaged in a comparable struggle for self-realisation in a hostile social and natural environment, Waldo turns to an idealising view of nature as a refuge while Lyndall turns to social critique and an attention to the specificity Waldo's quest for "the final cause of things in general" (p.197) cannot admit. Waldo's pantheism results in a complacent acceptance of his place in Nature. Lyndall, on the other hand, refuses to renounce social responsibility, proposing instead a programme of active and determined intervention. This disposition to intervention is expressed in the allegory of the young woman alluded to earlier.

Feeling herself "the weakest thing on God's earth" (pp 215-216), the young woman (Lyndall) resolves nevertheless to make her way through life:

> "What she would be she cannot be because she is a woman; so she looks carefully at herself and the world about her, to see where her path must be made. There is no one to help her; she must help herself." (p.216)

In this strategic reformulation of the self-help ideology, the definition of femininity as submissive and complacent is countered with an image of a woman who is conscious of the limits which bind her but is determined to extend these limits. As Lyndall states:

> "Men and things are plastic; they part to the right and left when one comes among them moving in a straight line to one end. I know it by my own little experience,...Long years ago I resolved to be sent to school. It seemed a thing utterly out of my power; but I waited, I watched, I collected clothes, I wrote, took my place at the school; when all was ready I bore with my full force

> on the Boer-woman, and she sent me at last. It was a small thing; but life is made up of small things, as a body is built up of cells. What has been done in small things can be done in large. Shall be," she said softly. (pp. 216-217)

Lyndall refuses to bow to a patriarchally-circumscribed universal law or Necessity which prescribes submission or precludes interference (human or divine). Determinism, interpreted as political conservatism in the case of Waldo, is countered with an emphasis on strategic intervention ("I waited, I watched") and with political struggle ("when all was ready I bore down with my full force on the Boer-woman"). Lyndall's allegory of the young woman functions in this way as an elevation of political intervention over a determinism which breeds political apathy. This is an elevation which coincides with Lyndall's own function in the novel as the force of desire which ruptures Spencerian Necessity and Emersonian "eternal causation"[35] . As the symbol of division and fragmentation in what is itself a ruptured and rupturing novel, she challenges the values of continuity and determinacy at the heart of both Spencerian and Emersonian naturalism.

She also represents a challenge to an ideology of submission to the inevitability of the deterministic process implicit in the work of Thomas Hardy and George Eliot, novelists against whom Schreiner judged herself (favourably in Hardy's case, more ambivalently in Eliot's[36]). Unlike a Tess or a Dorothea Brooke, Lyndall refuses to bend to the notion of the inevitability of natural laws, deterministic Circumstance or to the "conditions of an imperfect social state"[37]. While Tess and Dorothea Brooke, or Maggie Tulliver, ultimately submit to determining system, whether in the form of Circumstance or an imperfect social organism, Schreiner posits a belief in the possibility and indeed the necessity of active intervention. Lyndall may, in a striking echo of (and homage to) Eliot's fiction, embody precisely

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[35] Emerson, "Self-Reliance", Essays and English Traits, p.72

[36] To Havelock Ellis, 5 April 1889, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.154; To Havelock Ellis, 28 March 1884, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.35.

[37] George Eliot, Middlemarch, "Finale", p.764.

the "yearning" for knowledge as the guiding lamp to action "at once rational and ardent"[38] which motivates the "theoretic" Dorothea[39]. However The Story of an African Farm challenges the female self-sacrifice and entombment in the "personal" deemed necessary for "the growing good of the world"[40] implicit in the conclusion of Middlemarch. Dorothea's virtual absorption into the life of her husband Will is rejected by Lyndall in favour of an orientation to intervention in which "the imperfect social state" ceases to function as a determining backdrop, and becomes instead the mutable focus of her disruptive attention. Not for her the "unhistoric" and diffuse acts which characterise Dorothea, emblem of an sepulchred and "hidden" femininity. Rather than valorising the "diffusive" effects of female self-renunciation, Lyndall attempts to break free from this unrecognised living entombment, even if the novel itself can finally only offer a rather paradoxical statement on the contemporary possibilitities for female-self-determination.

Lyndall's resolve that "what has been done in small things can be done in large" also reflects significantly on Waldo's "aimless" acceptance of life. She is convinced that this aimlessness will lead to his being "definitely defeated, bamboozled, knocked this way and that" (p.215), as she does not hesitate to inform him. This is an ironic comment on the paradox implicit in the Spencerian model of the mechanism of evolution which stresses the dependence of social evolution upon "adaptation" to social conditions and subjection to the biological laws which govern them[41]. Waldo's acquiescence to the laws of life is seen to lead to stasis rather than progression, to defeat rather than advancement, a fact which points to a central problem of Spencerian theory - namely its ambiguity in dealing with the motor of social change. Waldo's "adaptation" (a key concept in social evolutionary theory) consists in

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[38] George Eliot, Middlemarch, ch. 10, p.75.

[39] George Eliot, Middlemarch, ch. 1, p.2.

[40] George Eliot, Middlemarch, p.764.

[41] Peel, p.148.

submission to an isolating and alienating social and natural environment. This, in line with the environmentalist stance of Enlightenment radicals such as Godwin and Paine, produces a sense of self-alienation in Waldo himself. Given that it is this submission and self-alienation alone that Waldo can "transmit" to future generations, the circularity of the Spencerian proposition becomes evident. The perpetuation of the status quo is ensured; however the change, and progress, presented as the outcome of the social evolutionary process as formulated by Spencer is surely precluded.

Through the character of Lyndall, The Story of an African Farm, in contrast to Spencerian ideology, stresses the mutability of the conditioning social circumstances and emphasises not the "moulding of humanity into correspondence with the essential conditions of social life"[42] implicit in the concept of adaptation but, rather, the modification of these conditions themselves. This emphasis on social modification over individual adaptation (an emphasis apparent in Woman and Labour as has been seen) is implicit in Lyndall's critique of the social construction of masculinity and femininity and in her determination to go beyond patriarchal law - a "journey" to be symbolically attempted in the closing days of her life (p.216). Her optimistic belief in the possibility of change (an attitude upheld by the novel, even though Lyndall's own end is far from happy) reinforces her acknowledgment of the discursive or social determination of Necessity.

As Lyndall proclaims to Waldo in an earlier discussion, it is the "world" and not universal law which "shapes" human beings, constructing males in accordance with the word "*Work* " and females in accordance with the word "*Seem* " (p.188). In this anti-essentialist polemic Lyndall asserts her independence from traditional and transcendental authority. Her position is forged from a repudiation of naturalism and an acknowledgment of the role played by discourse in the construction, not only of male and female sexuality, but of that "immeasurable blue arch over our heads" (p.154) which is Spencerian Necessity.

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[42] Spencer, Study of Sociology, pp.347-8.

As the characterisation of Lyndall reveals, the characters in The Story of an African Farm are weighed down not by the pressure of determinism *per se* but, rather, by formulations of determinism, by theories of life, society and sexuality - by dominant ideologies. It is language, the word, which is regarded by the novel as shaping males and females, as gendering them through a particular construction of sexual difference. It is by decentring the word and by opening meaning to the division on which it is founded that the novel enacts its challenge. This challenge is conducted on an overtly theoretical level and takes the form of an engagement with the historically specific formulation of Necessity and Universal Law embodied in Spencerian theory and with the atemporal and universalising philosophy of Emerson. It constitutes a resistance to Spencerian and Emersonian metaphysics and is alert to discursive and historical particularity and to the self-division disavowed by this metaphysics. Lyndall's image of the plasticity of men and things is itself an image of division; plasticity and historical change are tied to the possibility of heterogeneity, the divisiveness which is always already situated within the merely apparent totalities of men and "masculine" things.

This divisiveness is rigidly repressed by Waldo. His transcendentalism, unlike Lyndall's polemic, is expressive of a desired absorption into a Unity which subsumes difference and the historically specific, and which is ultimately revealed as illusory. His is a desire which would in effect negate desire.

In its disposition to a totalising vision, Waldo's naturalism functions within The Story of an African Farm as a displacement of his father Otto's traditional religious belief. Mystical in character, his pantheism participates in precisely the metaphysical investment in unity and presence, the Logos, as does his father's Methodism. Despite the emphasis in "Times and Seasons" upon the rational versus the irrational, intellect and knowledge versus faith (p.151), Waldo's conversion to Nature represents a seduction by a conflation of faith and passivity, a seduction to be realised in the subtext of his interaction with the Stranger in Part Two, Chapter Two. Although he "turns" to Nature from a faith which is depicted as having blinded him to

her meaning (p.151), the condition of Waldo's renovated vision of the world is in fact a dulling of thinking and feeling: "We have been so blinded by thinking and feeling that we have never seen the world" (p.152). Nature reveals herself to him in a movement tantamount to religious revelation; he discovers that "Every day the karroo shows us a new wonder sleeping in its teeming bosom" (p.152). This is a revelation which, although it does stimulate Waldo's desire to "know", carries the taint of the very otherworldliness and anti-intellectualism associated with the "superstition" of the religious commitment of his past. He has in many ways merely replaced one form of "prayer and ecstasy" with another (p.151).

In so doing, Waldo enacts a typically Spencerian confusion of faith and reason. Although subjecting religious belief to empirical testing (as emblematised in the experiments of his youth [p.40]) and to rationalist questioning, he settles ultimately for a faith in the benevolence of natural processes and the "final cause" which exceeds the limits of knowledge. Thus a religious dream which "despises facts, and makes its own" (p.145) is replaced by a naturalism which is intuitive and by a faith unverifiable by rational analysis and empirical validation, which takes as its foundation the recourse to an "Unknown". This faith is directly analogous to the religious commitment which preceded and continues to influence it.

The interrelationship of religion, in this case a specifically Methodist ideology, and Spencerian and Emersonian naturalism is highlighted by the strong resemblance between Waldo and Otto. Both are anti-intellectual visionaries who uphold the intuitive and the mystical over the rational. In both cases their formulation of "vision" is decidedly apolitical, in contrast to Lyndall's passionate "dream" of an alteration in power relations not only between men and women but between "everything that has power" in general and "everything that is weak" (p.93). For both Waldo and Otto, dreams of universal benevolence, whether situated in God or Nature, result in complacence and passivity. Both accept defeat at the hands of Blenkins in tellingly similar fashion. Like Waldo Otto "never thought of entering a protest against the loss of his goods: like a child he submitted, and wept" (p.94). Both

men hold firmly to the capitalist work ethic, a self-help ideology critiqued by the novel through the character of Blenkins, the self-interested, egocentric "self-made" man. Above all, both cling to the Logos, the establishment of an authority from which all meaning emanates and through which the value of identity and presence is preserved. It is this commitment to the logocentric myth which is a determining factor in the submission of both to the authoritarianism of Blenkins. Their passivity and belief in transcendental authority maintain them in a metaphorical infantilism which ensures their powerlessness. Both submit "like a child", in an abrogation of adult responsibility whose consequences are nowhere more poignantly evoked than in the torture inflicted upon Waldo following his father's death/abandonment of him - a death through submission to Blenkins' manipulation (p.94).

In establishing these connections between Waldo and Otto, The Story of an African Farm employs Methodist ideology to reflect upon Spencerian scientific rationalism and Emersonian Transcendentalism. Waldo can be seen in this context as a compounding of Spencerian, Emersonian and Transcendental ideology in an attempt to highlight the tacit links between these apparently disparate value systems. From Spencer's First Principles derives his tendency to generality and anti-interventionism; from Emerson, his visionary commitment to an atemporal Unity; and from a counterrevolutionary Methodism, his otherworldliness, quiescence and belief in the capitalist work ethic. Although the character of Otto may be endorsed in the novel and the values of sincerity and innocence embodied by the "loving, simple, childlike old man" (p.96) upheld, the reactionary aspects of the Methodism he exemplifies are highlighted to throw into relief the relation between religious belief and its supposedly anti-supernatural replacement. Both are delineated as conservative ideologies, as religions of the heart, and the "happy" deaths of Waldo and Otto are regarded as a failure of the critical intellect and the failure of desire.

Before expanding upon the issue of this failure, it is necessary to consider more fully the novel's attitude to the doctrine of self-help or, in Emerson's terms, self-reliance. The Story of an African Farm must be seen as taking its place in the

nineteenth-century debate surrounding a strict individualism which posited an antithesis between the individual and the state. This debate, and the reformulations it undertook, developed in accordance with the growing commitment, from Mill to Hobhouse, to collectivist principles which emphasised the interdependence of individual and state.

Waldo, in his isolation and his dislike of society -"I was not meant to live among people" (p.261) - functions in many ways as an emblem of the Spencerian individualist seeking to maximise his liberty through the fulfilment of his "natural rights"[43]. Blenkins assumes his place in this scenario as the Spencerian hero, the self-made man, the bourgeois entrepreneur. He is in fact a monster of self-interest. Once again, Lyndall is the locus of the text's critique of (in this case) an individualism which posits the myth of natural rights and upholds the neutrality of the social organisation. Where Waldo is motivated by self-interest and a sense of his separation from society, Lyndall stresses the interdependence of the individual and society as her diatribe on the inequality of women indicates. Lyndall acknowledges that the so-called "natural" inferiority of women is a social inscription, an inscription of inequality which undermines the Spencerian assertion of the neutrality of the social organism and of the individual's freedom to exercise his or her notional rights.

Waldo and Lyndall embody the distinction between a strict Spencerian individualism, with its emphasis on freedom from restraint, and the new liberalism of the 1880s, the liberalism of Green and Huxley, for example, which was more concerned with the conditions of possibility for the exercise of this freedom. Waldo, entombed in the isolationism of the karroo, is preoccupied with the external limitations on his liberty, while Lyndall, in line with a more collectivist formulation of liberty, acknowledges the positive requirements for freedom - namely, that true freedom consists in the freedom to choose. This requires both an availability of options and conditions conducive to free selection. Her orientation is to the

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[43] See Spencer, Social Statics, Part 2, Ch.5.

reconstruction of a "plastic" society which would provide the conditions for the free exercise of women's faculties. As such, it stands as a critique of Spencerian individualism which, in its hostility to intervention and "over legislation", disavows the sectional interests informing the notionally neutral state.

Above all, Lyndall actively confronts Waldo and thus Spencerian liberalism with the specific interests of women. Lyndall herself, although possessing certain social and economic advantages over Waldo, is nevertheless revealed as markedly less capable of social autonomy. This fact is emphasised in the "story" she relates to Waldo of the different treatment accorded a man and a woman "both poor, both young, both friendless" (p.189), superficially equal therefore, upon coming to a farmer's house one evening. The farmer, she alleges, would greet the man with no suspicion while "I, if I come to the same place tonight, will have strange questions asked me, strange glances cast on me" (p.190).

Thus The Story of an African Farm reveals the inadequacy of political analyses such as Spencer's which define freedom as the free exercise of the faculties while ignoring the necessary pre-conditions of their exercise. It simultaneously shifts the emphasis from the general nineteenth-century debate on freedom to a more specific concern with the disenfranchisement of women from social power. As Lyndall's polemic stresses, the concept of competitive freedom, when coupled with the gross inequality of social power and opportunity, is, for women, no freedom; women clearly do not exercise equal bargaining rights with males in the patriarchal marketplace.

We return now to the issue of the failure of critical intellect and desire embodied in Waldo and Otto, and the effects of Waldo's seduction into a quasi-religious passivity. It is significant that these are nowhere more strongly scrutinised than in the final chapter of the novel, "Waldo Goes Out To Sit In The Sunshine". The Emersonian idyll mimicked in this chapter is preceded and presaged by the chapter entitled "Dreams" in which Waldo, in the aftermath of Lyndall's death, wholeheartedly pledges himself to the Emersonian notion of Universal Unity.

From his sorrow, Waldo constructs a "dream" of Universal Life and a Universal Unity mysterious in its operations:

> "No death, no death," he muttered; "there is that which never dies - which abides. It is but the individual that perishes, the whole remains...It is but the man that dies, the Universal Whole of which he is part re-works him into its inmost self..."
> For the little soul that cries aloud for continued personal existence for itself and its beloved, there is no help. For the soul which knows itself no more as a unit, but as part of the Universal Unity of which the Beloved also is a part; which feels within itself the throb of the Universal Life; for that soul there is no death. (p.290)

As The Story of an African Farm makes clear, this dream is a replacement of a religious fantasy of immortality and is essentially analogous to religious belief in its appeal to an extra-discursive realm which provides assurance of continued spiritual identity. This is highlighted by the text's comparison of Waldo's dream with that of his father. Even though "the son's knowledge was not as the father's", the novel is at pains to insist that Waldo's dream is merely a "new-tinted" version of his father's, embodying the same consolatory "sweetness" and "infinite peace" (p.291). It is a dream to be sharply distinguished from the visionary politics advanced by Woman and Labour and crystallised in Lyndall.

The novel, which is both sympathetic to Waldo's despair and yet detached from the position he adopts, acknowledges that Waldo's Emersonian appeal to a soul raised above time and history[44] constitutes little else than a compensatory fiction and a self-deluding fantasy. "For, mark you," the narrator declares, "men *will* dream; the most that can be asked of them is but that the dream be not in too glaring discord with the thing they know" (p.290). The desire for, and of, the Logos is thus acknowledged as inevitable. The analogous Emersonian longing for birth into "the great, universal mind"[45] is seen as a necessary (if a scrutinisable and ultimately impossible) panacea. From where, asks the text, springs "that whisper to the tiny soul of man.

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[44] See Emerson, "Self-Reliance", Essays and English Traits, p.71.

[45] Emerson, "The Over-Soul", Essays and English Traits, p.148.

'You shall not die'? Ah, is there no truth of which this dream is shadow?" (p.290). In fact it springs, as the novel suggests, precisely from the doomed attempt to produce a "truth" concordant with dreams such as Waldo's of continued presence in and with an imaginary Universal Whole.

It is not, therefore, the dream of an impossible unity itself which is under attack in The Story of an African Farm. As the novel admits, "Without dreams and phantoms man cannot exist" (p.291). It is Waldo's particular dream of unity which is questioned. This constitutes a displacement of a particular discourse (Emersonian and Spencerian) with regard to its presuppositions and consequences which, in their repression of difference, are represented as misogynistic and politically conservative. His dream of Universal Unity is a dream which represses difference, particularity, and the loss and division at the heart of identity.

For the particular "little soul" with its particular demands, there is within the context of Waldo's dream ,"no help". Help, the reassurance that "there is no death" is instead reserved for the soul which merges with the Universal Unity becoming a part of the Universal Life. "Let us die, beloved, you and I," Waldo exclaims, "that we may pass on for ever through the Universal Life!". Enmeshed in this dream, "that deep world of contemplation", he discovers that "all fierce desires die out, and peace comes down" (p.290). Implicit in this resulting "peace" of unity and continuity is a disavowal of the division upon which entry into the symbolic as a subject, and his identity as masculine, are predicated. According to Lacanian theory, it is this division itself (*Spaltung*), this death which necessarily inhabits the illusion of a unified self which is both promoted and disrupted by discourse. Situated within a particularly masculine desire, a fantasised *Liebestod,* in which identity is both cancelled and preserved, this cancellation and preservation is to be resolved in terms of unity and continuity alone.

Waldo imagines the spectacle of his own death as the dissolution of difference, the consequent overcoming of desire in a universal self which is the mirage of the desired personal integrity and autonomy inflated to an infinite degree. All "fierce

desires" die out as a result of his logocentric fantasy; the desire which both subtends and ruptures the illusion of a unified identity is disavowed in an illusion whose "peace" denies the division and self-differing which founds identity.

However, if Waldo's "soul" rests peacefully in its denial of loss, separation and desire, this is a peace which is as self-deluding as the dream in which it is projected. Self-delusion is, in fact, the keynote of the concluding chapter of the novel which reiterates and deploys the images of sleep and "sitting in the sunshine" established in "Times and Seasons" as metaphors for the submergence of the critical faculties.

In the face of the religious doubt and self-questioning depicted in this pivotal chapter (Part Two, Chapter One), sleep functions as a placebo for Waldo. "All things take rest" in sleep the reader is ironically informed, "then why not the human reason also?" (pp.144-145). Waldo's sleep is an abrogation of reason, a sleep laden with the palliative dream of a central and centring "Mighty Heart" which assures its creations of their immortality (p.145). Rationalism is eschewed in his endeavour to allay nagging religious scepticism. "When a man sits in the warm sunshine," the text asks, "do you ask him for proof of it? He feels - that is all" (p.146). Sleep and the image of sitting in the sunshine are established as metaphors for a failure of the critical intellect and an immersion in a self-protective and self-deluding irrationalism. Furthermore, they are images which are deployed to striking effect in the final chapter of the novel - the chapter in which "Waldo Goes Out to Sit in the Sunshine".

On the "rich" afternoon of a "princely" day (p.292), Waldo, keeping faith with the Emersonian exhortation to isolationism - "let us not rove; let us sit at home with the cause"[46] - wanders out only to bask in the "balmy, restful, peacefulness" which reigns in the yard (p. 297). Sitting down against the red-brick wall, in the vicinity of an old hen and her chickens, he enters into a state of vision in which, according to Emerson: "There is nothing that can be called gratitude, nor properly joy.

[46] Emerson, "Self-Reliance", Essays and English Traits, p.73.

The soul is raised over passion. It seeth identity and natural causation. It is a perceiving that Truth and Right are. Hence it becomes a Tranquility out of the knowing that all things go well"[47]. This passage from "Self-Reliance", the Emerson essay most highly valued by Schreiner herself[48] aptly describes the quasi-mystical experience detailed in this episode.

Chuckling with "intense inward satisfaction" (p.298) Waldo peruses the scene before him:

> He rubbed his hands in the sunshine. Ah, to live on so, year after year after year, how well! Always in the present; letting each day glide, bringing its own labour, and its own beauty;...To live on so, calmly, far from the paths of men; and to look at the lives of clouds and insects; to look deep into the heart of flowers, and see how lovingly the pistil and the stamens nestle there together; and to see in the thorn-pods how the little seeds suck their life through the delicate curled-up string, and how the little embryo sleeps inside! Well, how well, to sit so on one side, taking no part in the world's life;...Ah! life is delicious; well to live long, and see the darkness breaking, and the day coming! (p.299)

Just as Waldo's narcissistic image of a universal self would incorporate and neutralise the feminine object of desire (the vision is in fact preceded by Lyndall's death), he sees in nature an intimation of such a completeness in an appropriately vegetative form of existence. The flower comprises both masculine and feminine in an impossibly fulfilled self-love which the passage also suggests would enable a no less impossible autonomous self-reproduction. The displacement of this image in the direction of the hands which act only on each other and absolve each other from action draws out the moral and political implications already sufficiently underlined in the previous development of the novel. The conclusion of the vegetative theme in the sleeping embryo identifies Waldo's reverie with the regression to a masturbatory infantilism.

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47 Emerson, "Self-Reliance", Essays and English Traits, p.72.

48 To Havelock Ellis, 2 May 1884, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.40.

Immersed in the "dreamy lyric" (p.299) of a tranquilising Emersonian idyll, Waldo leaps from the particular into the supposedly atemporal realm of universalising experience. Ensconced in an eternal "present" above time and history, the Emersonian "infinite present"[49], and suffused with a feeling that things do indeed "go well", Waldo is vouchsafed an insight into the universal processes of nature. Granted a visionary moment, one of those "rare times in which a man's soul can see Nature" (p.298), he is the willing recipient of that "divine wisdom" elevated by Emerson over knowledge or the critical intelligence[50]. His vision consists precisely in the capacity to see "identity and natural causation" and is, as such, specifically Emersonian in contour.

In the novel's satirical mimicry of the Emersonian idyll, Waldo's epiphany is seen to consist in an overpowering sense of well-being: "it seemed to him as he sat there that life was a rare and very rich thing" (p.299). The Emersonian concept of Tranquility is thus translated into the "intense", and notably inert, "inward satisfaction" which characterises Waldo's visionary moment (p.298). Rubbing and "washing" his hands in the sunlight in a gesture designed to recall Pontius Pilate's archetypal act of disavowal of the responsibility for ethical and political engagement, the fact that the world is "an evil world, a deceitful, treacherous, mirage-like world", means little to him. For, "to sit there gloating in the sunlight was perfect" (p.297).

The self-satisfied complacency inherent in Waldo's position, signalled by the text in its highlighting of the word "gloating", is reinforced by the suggestion of drunkenness which pervades Waldo's lyric. His communion with nature is expressed in terms of a polemical travesty of a certain Emersonian and Romantic construction of the visionary mode in the sentiment that: "Beauty is God's wine, with which he recompenses the souls that love him; he makes them drunk"(p.298). Thus Schreiner

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[49] Emerson, "The Over-Soul", Essays and English Traits, p. 142.

[50] Emerson, "Self-Reliance", Essays and English Traits, p.70.

draws attention to the dulling of the senses, the intoxicated renunciation of the critical faculties implicit in the Emersonian visionary state. Drunk on an "intense inward satisfaction", Waldo sits gloating in a benumbing "sunshiny dream" of universal unity and "beneficent tenderness" (p.298).

However this dream of a perfect communion with Nature is dependent not only upon a renunciation of the critical intelligence, but, as has already been suggested, upon a renunciation of passion - of the passion specifically for and of the social and the political which vitalises Lyndall. Only when "there comes a pause, a blank in your life, when the old idol is broken, the old hope is dead, when the old desire is crushed" is Nature made manifest: "So long as any passion holds its revel there, the eyes are holden that they should not see her." (p.298).

It is precisely the intellectual inertia and the death of desire implicit in Waldo's apolitical pantheism which seals his death sentence. For, as he says:

> Well to die then; for, if you live, so surely as the years come, so surely as the spring succeeds the winter, so surely will passions arise. They will creep back, one by one, into the bosom that has cast them forth, and fasten there again, and peace will go. Desire, ambition, and the fierce agonising flood of love for the living - they will spring again. Then Nature will draw down her veil: with all your longing you shall not be able to raise one corner; you cannot bring back those peaceful days. Well to die then! (p.299)

In this pointed critique of the consequences of an Emersonian receptivity to the "great soul" of transcendental reality[51] death, the preclusion of change is posited as the complement of Waldo's political and intellectual inertia, his gloating complacence. The "peaceful days" of the idyll are purchased at the cost of a desire, an ambition, and a "fierce agonising flood of love for the living", whose insistent claims, the novel acknowledges, can be stayed only temporarily.

The "deathly" consequences of Transcendentalism are further parodied through the characters of Tant' Sannie, Blenkins, and, most mischievously, the poultry in the farmyard. Tant' Sannie is a physically grotesque woman almost immobile under the

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51 Emerson, "The Over-Soul", Essays and English Traits, p.148.

weight of her own complacency and resistance to change - "If the beloved Redeemer didn't mean men to have wives what did He make women for?" (p.293) . She functions in this final chapter as a direct, if cunningly disguised, incarnation of Waldo's complacent intellectual immobility. This is a physicalisation of Waldo's conservatism also enacted through the character of his most obvious double, Em, with whom he shares a symbolic joint participation in the Name of their literary Father, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and whose complacence like that of Tant' Sannie takes the form of physical bulk.

Waldo shares Tant' Sannie's immobilising conservatism but reconciles himself to the Universe in a specifically masculine mode via the phallocentric Transcendentalist discourse. Tant' Sannie represents the implications for women of this "domestic" ideology, the sanctification of the domestic embodied in Transcendental philosophising. As a woman, Tant' Sannie is reduced to the body, engulfed and rendered inert by the weight of her own flesh. Bound to the physical by phallocentric discourse such as Waldo's, she functions also as the disavowed complement of Waldo's Transcendentalism. The consequences of Waldo's leap into the transcendental sphere for those living in fleshly realities (and more specifically for the feminine) are thus revealed.

However Tant' Sannie and Em are not Waldo's only doubles in this pointed critique of masculine misogynist discourse. This is also the chapter in which Bonaparte Blenkins effects a defiant return. Tant' Sannie, recalling her experiences at church the previous Sunday claims to have seen Blenkins, that "something with its hands under its coat-tails, flap, flap, flap; and its chin in the air, and a stick-up collar, and the black hat on the very back of the head. I knew him!" (p.295). Blenkins functions to recall Waldo's submission to paternal authority. Therefore it is fitting that this phantom of his collaboration with patriarchal power and the tyranny of the strong over the weak should appear to haunt his ambiguously framed apotheosis scene.

Despite the text's detachment from Waldo's visionary euphoria, within the confines of the farmyard, the "domestic and divine"[52], Waldo does have his potential followers - the "well-satisfied" hen and her inquisitive chickens (p.297). Waldo has dreamt earlier of healing the irreconcilable opposition between the little particular soul for whom death, desire and longing are realities, and the Universal Unity which knows neither death nor desire (p.290). In this chapter he attempts to preach his message of reconciliation between the domestic and the divine to his flock of "brother spirits", the chickens. However these little particular souls prove recalcitrant and resistant to the message of universal unity Waldo bears. Although he "stretched his hand towards them" he found that "not one of the little creatures came nearer him" (p.300). Thus the domestic nature with which Waldo supposes he converses defies subsumption in his totalising naturalistic discourse.

One lone chicken does exhibit some interest and peeps at "the great figure sitting there" (p.300). Joining his brothers to follow "a little white moth", he is disappointed when it merely flutters off. Even for a potential follower the little white moth of Waldo's Transcendental assurances can vouchsafe only disappointment. "Great" though the figure of Waldo as philosopher may be, it is so only from a chicken's eye view and even then Waldo's presumed congruence with Nature and natural processes is undermined by his obvious irrelevance to the Nature he deifies. The chickens, those "tiny sparks of brother life" (p.300), incarnations of an "enfolding" Nature, remain alien to him and out of his control, although domesticated and culturally marked. Thus Waldo is displaced by the text from the position of centrality and unity with Nature assumed by his embrace of naturalism.

From the reader's perspective, Waldo, the "great figure" is similarly reduced to a figure of ridicule, an irrelevant sage of the fowlyard sitting "muttering, muttering, muttering, to himself" (p.300) in an ironic parody of a non-conformity

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[52] Emerson, "Self-Reliance", Essays and English Traits, p.70.

which shuns society and trusts only in the sacred "integrity of our own mind"[53]. The Emersonian values of inwardness and self-reliance are, in this way, pointedly criticised through their expression in the futile mutterings of this figure, purveyor of a transcendental ideology to which the domesticity it would claim to encompass proves recalcitrant and irreducible. The hesitant chickens who eye Waldo "askance" (p.300) encode the novel's recognition of the irreconcilability of the particular life and Universal Unity, consciousness and Nature.

The dream of reconciliation, a dream of the death of desire, in which Waldo disavows his own particularity is a dream from which he never awakes. He succumbs to an implicit Spencerian and Emersonian nihilism regarded by The Story of an African Farm as tantamount to death through an intoxicating self-satisfaction. Drugged on an enervating self-congratulation, Waldo's communion with Nature is charged with an investment in the sensuous which verges on the erotic:

> Well, how well, to sit so on one side, taking no part in the world's life; but when great men blossom into books looking into those flowers also, to see how the world of men too opens beautifully, leaf after leaf. Ah! life is delicious; well to live long, and see the darkness breaking, and the day coming!...Well to live long; life is sweet, sweet, sweet! (p.299)

Waldo's use of "delicious" and "sweet" in this passage somewhat diminishes the elevated sentiments expressed and reduces a philosophy of life to a matter of epicurean delight, a matter of mere pleasure and idle consumption. The taint of onanism pervades this final scene. Complacent in its affirmation of "his own all-knowing self" (p.172) Waldo's philosophy is revealed as a philosophical wet dream, a masturbatory fantasy which culminates in the orgasmic sleep-death which constitutes the peak and dissolution of pleasure.

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53 Emerson, "Self-Reliance", Essays and English Traits, p.62.

Lyndall: The Desire of Difference

In locating the Emersonian impulse and the complementary Spencerian socio-political theory in a male, The Story of an African Farm highlights the phallogocentric investments inscribed in both. It successfully draws attention to the character of Waldo's dream-death as a sublimation of phallic desire. The character of Lyndall counters this phallic desire, this desire for a universalising and unifying mastery which disavows the difference and the rupturing desire which conditions its very possibility. It is Lyndall, therefore, who must be seen as bearing a considerable proportion of the weight of Schreiner's own attempt to position herself in relation to the philosophical models and laws, the masculinist/individualist problematic posed by Spencer and Emerson.

Like the chickens, those "brother spirits" who ultimately reject Waldo, Lyndall represents the recalcitrant particular, the refractory other which defies subsumption under the eternal law and all-inclusive systematicity proposed by Waldo's transcendental discourse. In contrast to Waldo's mystical unity she constitutes a force of division and disunity in the novel. Refusing to underwrite Waldo's speculations (his own "general words with a general application" [p.217]), she actively intervenes in his discursive production and challenges its attempted closures, its circularity, its privileging of generality and its logocentricity.

As has been seen, Waldo's discourse excludes the specific, the local, in its drive to explain and codify natural and social phenomena. This is a drive which privileges circularity, closure and continuity. As Waldo states, "I have only a few old thoughts...and I think them over and over again; always beginning where I left off. I never get any further" (p.188). Lyndall's response that in this he resembles "an old hen that sits on its eggs month after month and they never come out" is notable for its contribution to the fowlyard imagery which seriously undermines the status of Waldo's theory in the novel. Lyndall's confrontation of the closure valued by Waldo's naturalist discourse does not take the form of the production of new and oppositional "thoughts" to match his; her contrast with Waldo is not a simplistic one. Mirroring

Schreiner's strategic literary practice, she functions in the novel as an intervention into this discourse which brings the force of the relative, the specific, the strategic, the feminine, to bear on Waldo's "old thoughts".

Lyndall's overtly feminist outburst (pp.185-198) constitutes one such intervention by difference into a discourse sustained by its repression of division and sexual difference. As has been suggested earlier, the discursive construction of masculine and feminine is implicitly acknowledged in this impassioned diatribe. Phallocentric discourse is confronted with its own sexual indifference, its repression of difference under the guise of acknowledging sexual specificity. She disrupts the Spencerian and Emersonian text and unsettles not only the logic of presence and being, but also the logic of masculinity produced and sustained by this discourse. Lyndall's injection of the feminine, in the form of her concern with the "position of women" (p.187), confronts Waldo's complacent theorising with its lack and the gaps in its logic, thus undercutting its supposed plenitude and challenging its claims to inclusiveness.

Although Schreiner's strategy in The Story of an African Farm involves a disruption of the Spencerian and Emersonian text rather than its contestation with a "new" theory of existence, the novel does, in a sense, propose a feminist epistemology. This is an epistemology which is tied to an investigation of phallocentric theory and which highlights the costs of Waldo's leap into the transcendental over the actual content of his epistemology.

Both Waldo and Lyndall share an impossible desire for an anchor in the "one soul" (p.198). For Lyndall, however, it is a soul whose difference from itself is acknowledged. Just as the model of social change proposed by her in "A Boer-wedding" (Part Two, Chapter Six) is characterised by division, a "parting" to the right and left (p.216), Lyndall's discussion of the "one soul" is significant for its unsettling movement from the general to the particular and for its recognition of a heterogeneity irreducible to Law. It is "real men" who interest Lyndall (p.198) - emblems of a particularity which Waldo subsumes in his attention to "things in general" (p.197).

And although "one soul" may be the model of all men according to Lyndall, it is in fact, the differences between them which is of prime interest to her.

Her attention is drawn to the fact that "What is microscopic in one is largely developed in another; what is a rudimentary in one man is an active organ in another" (p.198). It is the particular, the specific, and specific difference which concerns Lyndall - the diversity of reactions, rather than the similarities between, for example, herself and Tant' Sannie, which arrest her attention (p.198). Lyndall desires a resemblance and a unity which can admit the difference informing this unity. While Waldo emphasises the unsullied unity underlying apparent difference and division, Lyndall, as will be explained more fully, symbolises the radical alterity at the heart of an illusory identity.

Thus the novel's proposal of a feminist epistemology acknowledges the need or desire for a transcendental anchor or grounding. However it simultaneously recognises the desire of the particular which exceeds this desire of the general, of unified meaning. An interplay of desires is thus evoked.

Waldo's transcendentalist perspective can be established only by shortcircuiting the infinite processes of history and discourse. Through symbolic thought or intuition Waldo attempts to circumvent the infinite series of mediations which separate the particular from an intelligible totality. He thus maintains a non-discursive rationality which posits a congruity between meaning and reality, representation and being, through a subjugation of the particular, the material. Imposing a general law on the particular, he sacrifices social, discursive and particular relations, indeed, the domestic relations he would claim to uphold.

Lyndall asserts the claims of the discursive, the social, and the processive, in a fashion which implicitly acknowledges the infinity of the mediations between the particular and the general, the impossibility of ever arriving at a desired universal truth. As she says of Waldo's perpetual search for "reasons": "If I howl to all eternity I shall never get hold of it; and if I did I might be no better off" (p.197). When Waldo responds that "man" might after all discover the "final cause of things in general",

Lyndall replies: "*Might* ! - but he never has and never will. Life is too short to run after mights; we must have certainties." (p.197). Lyndall's critique of Waldo's position reveals the impossibility of his leap into the realm of transcendental realities. In her preference for "certainties" over "mights", she expresses a commitment to the local, recognising in the description of Waldo's project as a quest for "mights" rather than realities, that he has merely replaced one representation with another and is no closer to the "truth" than she herself.

This is not to deny that Lyndall herself is a willing participant in a quest for knowledge, something analogous to an exercise of the will to meaning. However her desire for and of meaning is balanced with other concerns - the social, the political, the particular. Its investments are openly investigated and its costs are assessed. In The Story of an African Farm (as in Woman and Labour) the Napoleonic will, the will to mastery, is explored in its various manifestations and raises the issue of the nature of female "heroism". Napoleon Bonaparte is Lyndall's childhood hero and is described by her as "the man I like best" and as a man "common as we are; yet he was master of the world at last" (p.47). Her idealisation of, and identification with, Napoleon opens up the problematic of the female quest motif. It is significant that Lyndall's hero is in fact a hero and not a heroine; he is no St Theresa. Thus the model of female heroism as self-renunciation is circumvented, only perhaps to be partially recuperated towards the end of the novel. However, the characteristics Lyndall admires in Napoleon represent a degree of transference of those characteristics gendered feminine by *society- he, like her, and in accordance with the role assigned women by the separate* spheres ideology, "waited, and waited, and waited, and it came at last" [p.47]).

The critique of the will to mastery enacted through the callous tyrant, Bonaparte Blenkins, Napoleon's namesake, is obvious and requires no further elaboration at this point. Waldo's comparable participation in the Napoleonic will to power, characterised as a will to a Spencerian knowledge which oppresses the particular, is also criticised, as has been discussed previously. What, then, of Lyndall's own valorisation of the Napoleonic will?

As The Story of an African Farm makes clear, the Napoleonic will endorsed by Lyndall is different from that embodied in Waldo and Blenkins. It is interpreted by her as a disposition to activity, an engagement with history and the social which is regarded by the novel as a legitimate aspiration for a woman and does not imply the novel's endorsement of the principle of tyranny and oppression associated with Napoleon in Woman and Labour. Rather than placing Lyndall, the feminine, in strict opposition to the phallocentric exercise of the will embodied in the Emersonian mastery over the social, the temporal, and the historical, Schreiner instead proposes a different problematic. The Napoleonic will as expressed in Waldo is oriented to the subjugation of particularity. This imperialism is countered by Lyndall's exercise of the will in the form of her assertion of the claims of the particular, the processive, the historical. Her desire for a difference between a feminine (and feminist) celebration of the Napoleonic will as a mode of self-expression and active engagement brings her into confrontation with a logo centric desire for mastery. Lyndall's assertion of the individual will actively engaging with the world also stands as a pointed comment on an Emersonian pantheism which subordinates the individual will to the universal will and implicitly entraps the individual in an enervating and apolitical passivity. Where Waldo's dream is to sit in the sunshine, to leap from the particular to generality through inertia, Lyndall is disposed to activity, intervention and an affirmation of the principle of difference and the responsibility of the individual to effect change. As a result of this strategic reformulation of the Kantian ethical will, Lyndall exceeds the binary opposition which would oppose the will to knowledge to anarchy. The Victorian culture/anarchy obsession is thus neatly eluded. Lyndall may be on the side of knowledge but she is simultaneously on the side of the particular, without succumbing to a naive empiricism.

Lyndall acknowledges the impossibility of ever arriving at universal truth. Waldo, on the other hand, becomes obsessed with interpreting the meaning of existence; natural and social phenomena (and their conflation into Nature) function for him as a text from which meaning is to be wrested. In a process mirroring that of

the Spencerian "Synthetic Philosophy", empirical details are traced to greater generality until the limits of knowledge are reached, at which point, a Nature, or Universal Whole directly equivalent to Spencer's Unknowable is posited[54]. The world presents itself to Waldo as a text accessible to penetration and a decipherment of a bewildering complexity which leads ultimately to "knowledge" about the operations of deterministic natural laws. Waldo's decipherment is actually an imposition of meaning.

The text of the world is both more opaque to Lyndall and to her feminine-gendered narrator. Her (their) attempts at interpretation, rather than operating to impose reassuring meaning, reveal instead an intricacy resistant to unifying cognitive principles and reveal the impossibility of arriving at the transcendental certainty assumed by Waldo. Schreiner as the woman writer/theorist is capable of characterising both the masculine and the feminine gaze. Through Lyndall and the heightened imagery of the mirrors, the text raises specularity to an enabling condition of representation. The only certainty Lyndall arrives at is that of the difference and division informing Waldo's unified Nature. Where Waldo, in "Times and Seasons", reduces a profusion of meanings to a "One" which conquers the "weltering chaos" of this profusion (p.154), Lyndall is prepared to acknowledge and accept it and takes strength from the possibilities for conceptual and social change it suggests. She (they), unlike Waldo, has "a rare power of entering into other lives unlike her own" (p.216) and of participating, therefore, in the plenitude which so disturbs him and which eventually drives him from a brief foray into the social back to the simplicity of "rocks and bushes" (p.261).

Waldo discovers that "the inexorable 'Thou shalt and shalt not,'" is conveniently "carved" or inscribed into "the nature of things" (p.171); Lyndall acknowledges her own role as a producer of meaning. She knows that "she must make her way through life" (p.216). For Waldo it is a matter of interpreting the fixed

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[54] See Spencer, First Principles, 1: pp.3-92.

meaning inscribed in Nature. For Lyndall, it is a matter of intervening into the "plasticity" which is social meaning and metaphorically "parting" it, forging a space for the feminine difference which informs, but is tactically concealed by, that meaning. While Lyndall's mode of intervention is never fully delineated in the novel, she symbolises the figure of the woman writer, the Schreiner who ruptures the fictions and fantasies which construct reality and who refuses to write in accordance with strict generic codes. Waldo is engaged in a quest for a truth which is self-reflective, insular and extra-discursive. Lyndall's quest for truth involves a projection outwards, to community with others, and is a projection tied, therefore, to the discursive, the historical and the cultural. Waldo, as a result of his commitment to a non-discursive, ahistorical, and atemporal meaning and experience, effectively imprisons himself in the stasis symbolised by his "seated" position in the sunshine of complacent self-delusion. Lyndall, conversely, by means of her outward projection, and her commitment to the discursive over the extra-discursive, embodies a force for change, for possibilities beyond the limits of a patriarchal symbolic. Waldo, despite (and because of), his congruence with the Spencerian model of change, does not. The Spencerian and Emersonian investment in a symbolic "sitting in your own backyard", a passive and anti-interventionist contribution to social evolution expressed in the Emersonian dictum that "the wise man stays at home with the soul"[55] is displayed in all its self-defeating paradox.

In marked contrast to traditional representations of the feminine, it is Lyndall who is associated in the novel with active desire and self-affirmation and with the possibility of social and discursive change. It is Lyndall, ambiguously situated both within and without the phallocentric representational system, who attempts the journey beyond the patriarchal law which holds Waldo firmly within its grasp. This journey is thematised in the novel as her dying wish to reach "the blue mountain" (p.283)and it must be stressed that it in no way suggests a "way out" of discourse, as

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[55] Emerson, "Self-Reliance", Essays and English Traits, p.78.

does Waldo's belief in the extra-discursive sanction of Nature. Lyndall's journey does not counter Waldo's logocentric construction of Nature with an alternative dream of presence but consists in the challenging of the recourse to logocentric meaning inherent in Waldo's amalgam of Spencer and Emerson.

Divided from life on the farm, and the religious and pantheistic conservatism it signifies, Lyndall inhabits the world of unsatisfied desire, frustrated yearning, and self-division which is the structural necessity of the patriarchal symbolic. Unlike Waldo, enwrapped in a dream of a Nature dressed in a "flowing vestment of an unchanging reality" (p.150), which reinforces a phallocentric fantasy of plenitude and completion, Lyndall, because of her status as feminine, admits of the loss upon which patriarchal subjectivity and sexuality is predicated. However, through her Schreiner refuses to accept this basis in lack and loss as immutable. This is the crucial difference between the dreams of both Waldo and Lyndall. Waldo's dream, in its denial of the fundamental difference informing the unity of language, meaning and identity, functions as a pretext for, and a symbol of, his political inertia. Lyndall's vision is forward-looking, forceful, and takes account of political realities. It is truly a locus of rebellion and encodes a commitment to the visionary as a political response.

Waldo's dream is at odds with the reality of loss and separation and is one from which the sleeper should be awakened: "We must have been awakened sooner or later", the narrator says of Waldo's earlier "religious" dream, for "The imagination cannot always triumph over reality, the desire over truth. We must have been awakened" (p.149). The novel distinguishes sharply between a palliative desire or "imagination" at odds with reality (Waldo's), and a rupturing desire like Lyndall's which takes account of the reality, if not the inevitability, of the loss or "atrophy", which is the condition of patriarchal femininity and subjectivity in general. Waldo's tragedy is that he never awakens to the reality of loss. Unlike Lyndall, who dies with her eyes open to difference and loss, Waldo dies with his eyes closed in a rigid disavowal of the very difference and desire which found his dream.

The reality of loss is, in fact, the very message conveyed to Waldo by the mysterious stranger who appears to him in Part Two, Chapter Two. Rather than bearing the transcendental sanction, the ethical anchor desired by Waldo, and supposedly contained in the copy of First Principles, the stranger instead provides Waldo with a "gospel" whose validity is seriously undermined. As the stranger advises:

> "You must not expect too much; but it may give you a centre round which to hang your ideas, instead of letting them lie about in a confusion that makes the head ache. We of this generation are not destined to eat and be satisfied as our fathers were; we must be content to go hungry." (pp.172-173)

The stranger provides Waldo with a Logos which is an acknowledged symbol of lack. The moment of the male subject's entry into the symbolic is thus reproduced and re-enacted by Waldo and his beneficent stranger - a moment in which the stranger/father initiates Waldo into phallic law in a movement which, rather than assuring him of his unproblematic identity, actually propels him into the realm of unsatisfied desire and yearning, the realm of discourse and subjectivity.

This significant interaction with the phallic stranger highlights the status of the phallus as the ambiguous signifier both of presence and of lack. Rather than holding the promise of satisfaction and fulfilment, all the stranger can offer Waldo is a compensation for the "hunger" which is the Necessity of the condition of those of "this generation", and of generation as such. The Spencerian "gospel" thus functions as does the Lacanian phallus, "the privileged signifier of that mark in which the role of the Logos is joined with the advent of desire"[56], the gospel/phallus standing for the moment of rupture and splitting which constructs the subject - a subjectivity irrevocably fractured and caught up in the circuits of a perpetual and insatiable desire.

The phallic character of Waldo's stranger is reinforced by the appearance of his symbolic double as Lyndall's stranger in Part Two, Chapter Nine. The link between

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[56] Lacan, Écrits, p.287.

the two strangers is established by their structural function in the novel -both are seducers. Lyndall's stranger tries to lure her back into the confines of a phallic law and desire whose "ties" she is desperate to escape (p.239). In a comparable act, Waldo's stranger seduces him more fully into the dream of unity promised by the Spencerian gospel, however fraudulent this promise may be. The sexual connotations of this seduction are made manifest in Waldo's passionate kissing of the hoof mark left by the stranger's horse (p.172). Both are seductions by phallic law. Unlike Waldo, Lyndall resists this seduction in her refusal to subject herself to her lover's demands, and in her recognition of her own self-division.

Although both Lyndall and Waldo share a desire for an anchor in the "one soul" provided by the Spencerian and Emersonian position, for Lyndall it is a soul whose difference from itself is acknowledged and whose capacity to fulfil its promise of unity is questionable. For Waldo, this promise of unity goes unchallenged and is indeed the object of what becomes a desperate quest. Waldo's chief objection to living "among people" (p.261), that is, leaving the farm and entering a wider social network, is the loss of self, the self-division he experiences as a result. As he writes to Lyndall following his return:

> "I was not meant to live among people. Perhaps some day, when I am grown older, I will be able to go and live among them and look at them as I look at the rocks and bushes, without letting them disturb me, and take myself from me; but not now. So I grew miserable; a kind of fever seemed to eat me; I could not rest, or read, or think; so I came back here. I knew you were not here, but it seemed as though I should be nearer you; and it is you I want - you that the other people suggest to me, but cannot give." (pp.261-262)

Waldo's journey away from the isolationism of the farm into the social is experienced by him as a journey into a world of loss and self-division which "takes" him from himself. This is a self-division he cannot accept and one which he prefers to perceive as temporary and capable of remedy by Lyndall, whose significance in this restoration of the male self will be discussed shortly.

Lyndall's conception of identity is, on the contrary, not as firmly contained in a system of opposition between unity and division, presence and absence. For Lyndall

self-division is not only inescapable, but in fact, desired. When Waldo asks why Lyndall, "you who speak so easily", does not try to effect the change she foresees, to "bring that time" of female emancipation (p.195), she responds that:

> "I will do nothing good for myself, nothing for the world, till someone wakes me. I am asleep, swathed, shut up in self; till I have been delivered I will deliver no one." (p.196)

Lyndall expresses the sense of her own enfeebling entrapment in a repressive discursive system. This repression, as her statement makes clear, is effected both through the particular constructions of the self produced in this discourse, and by the specific alienation of women implicated in this construction. It is as if Lyndall recognises that her only chance of the "delivery" she craves resides in the admission of the mythical status of Waldo's unified and centring self.

Furthermore, paralysed and entrapped in an image of the particularly feminine self imposed by phallocentric discourse, Lyndall, although able to "speak", doubts whether her speech (the articulation of her feminine difference) can be heard within this discourse. She feels she has no alternative but to wait for external delivery, for a liberation from a patriarchally defined feminine self which inscribes her as "asleep" and passive. Her desire for freedom from the self is a cry for liberation from a patriarchal feminine self "destined" to inferiority, atrophy and inequality.

Ironically, however, it is Lyndall's very sense of the feminine self as a metaphor of containment and passivity which activates her resistance against repressive representations of women. This resistance, although it differs from the political involvement hinted at by Waldo when he suggests she try to "bring that time", is no less politically motivated or strategically framed. Under question in The Story of an African Farm is the very definition of the political. This question is pursued in Woman and Labour and From Man to Man, both of which highlight the significance of the discursive challenge to repressive representations and emphasise the importance of a heterogeneous and diversified onslaught on the patriarchal system. This novel's response to Waldo's rather narrow definition of political action and

Lyndall's expression of apparent defeatism is to counter both responses with a Lyndall whose political intervention occurs both on the level of discourse and of social convention. Bringing the disruptive effects of feminine desire to bear on the universalism and logocentrism of Waldo's philosophy and thus, on phallocentric theorising, Lyndall's rebellion and political resistance assumes the form of the yearning, the unsatisfied desire, the claims of the particular, and the self-division she embodies. In her is located both resistance to the operations of phallogocentric discourse, and the visionary possibility of travelling beyond patriarchal law.

The image of swathing or entrapment in the self evoked in the passage quoted above, is strikingly similar to the image of "abduction" from the self employed by Luce Irigaray in her article "And the One Doesn't Stir Without the Other". "I, too, am abducted from myself. Immobilised in the reflection he expects of me" claims Irigaray, held "captive" in "his gaze"[57], or what Mary Jacobus terms "the glass of a specular economy"[58]. As Irigaray maintains elsewhere[59]:

> relations among subjects have always had recourse, explicitly or more often implicitly, to the flat mirror, that is, to what privileges the relation of man to his fellow man. A flat mirror has always already subtended and traversed speculation. What effects of linear projection, of circular turning back onto the self-(as the) same, what eruptions in signifying-points of identity has it entailed? What "subject" has ever found in it, finally, its due? What "other" has been reduced by it to the hard-to-represent function of the negative?

The specular entrapment of the "other", the feminine, referred to in this passage is figured in Lyndall's own feelings of a paralysing "swathing" in the self, and in Undine's belief that "a woman is a poor thing carrying in herself the bands that bind her"[60]. Both are, as Jacobus describes it, "immobilised in masculine

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[57] Luce Irigaray, "And the One Doesn't Stir Without the Other", Signs Vol 7, No.1 (Autumn 1981), p.66.

[58] Jacobus, Reading Woman, p.279.

[59] Irigaray,"Qestions", This Sex, p.154.

[60] Schreiner, Undine, "In an Ox Wagon", p.170.

reflections"[61], dispossessed from the self by a specular economy which determines their difference as "the hard-to-represent function of the negative" and which imposes upon them the "curse" of an atrophied subjectivity. "I am so weary of myself!", Lyndall cries to Otto's grave, "It is eating my soul to its core - self, self, self! I cannot bear this life! I cannot breathe, I cannot live! Will nothing free me from myself?" (p.241). The stifling entrapment evoked in this plaintive plea which recalls Irigaray's complaint that "The prison is within myself, and it is I who am its captive"[62]. This feeling of entrapment is the result of a disavowal of the radical difference, a femininity "implicated in" the patriarchal symbolic and "at the same time exceeding its limits"[63], which could liberate women from the model of symmetry with the male "subject".

However, despite Lyndall's demoralisation, The Story of an African Farm does propose a possible alternative to the model of specularity, the "flat mirror" which confirms the masculine subject in his identity and sameness and reduces the feminine to "the other side of the sex that alone holds a monopoly on value: the male sex"[64]. This alternative is most explicitly proposed in the two significant "mirror" scenes which put into question the "flat mirror" of male speculation that subtends phallocentric culture according to Luce Irigaray. The first of these crucial scenes occurs at the conclusion of Part Two, Chapter Nine, "Lyndall's Stranger" (pp.242-3), the second at the conclusion of "Gregory's Womanhood" (pp. 283-4) in which Lyndall's death is recalled. In both scenes, Lyndall finds herself liberated by the mirror, provisionally freed from the specular economy and from the "self" which saps her breath and her life. This liberation is predicated upon a metaphorical

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[61] Jacobus, Reading Woman, p.279.

[62] Irigaray, "And the One Doesn't Stir Without the Other", p.60.

[63] Irigaray, "Questions", This Sex, p.163.

[64] Irigaray, "The Power of Discourse", This Sex, p.69.

shattering of the unity reflected by the flat mirror and upon an enactment of self-affirmation through the self-division that this shattering reveals.

In the first scene, following her rendezvous with her lover, Lyndall gazes into her mirror, looking deep into the "large dark eyes from the glass" which "looked back at her":

> "We are all alone, you and I," she whispered; "no one helps us, no one understands us; but we will help ourselves." The eyes looked back at her. There was a world of assurance in their still depths..."We shall never be quite alone, you and I," she said; "we shall always be together, as we were when we were little."
> The beautiful eyes looked into the depths of her soul.
> "We are not afraid; we will help ourselves!" she said. She stretched out her hand and pressed it over them on the glass. "Dear eyes! we will never be quite alone till they part us; - till then!" (pp.242-243)

This passage projects a model of subjectivity based not on identity, as in the specular model, but on togetherness and complicity. Instead of Emerson's transparent eyeball, which would be suffused by the intelligibility conferred through its own visionary power, Schreiner presupposes and here thematises an inmixture of otherness and an irreducible alterity.

Jacques Lacan's adumbration of this cultural thematic also presupposes a non - identity which is habitually elided by philosophical idealism:

> For, *I warm myself by warming myself* is a reference to the body as body - I feel that sensation of warmth which, from some point inside me, is diffused and locates me as body. Whereas in the *I see myself seeing myself*, there is no such sensation of being absorbed by vision.[65]

Lacan is referring to Freud's *Spaltung* which inaugurates the Unconscious, occurring at the point at which the process of signification exceeds the specular model of representation. This is evident most notably in the unassimilability of the place from which the self is seen to the place from which it sees. The act of vision is not capable of being subsumed in its own seeing. Visibility presumes the "pre-existence of a gaze" to Lacan, which is distinct from and underlies seeing, the look, and

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[65] Jacques Lacan, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, trans. Alan Sheridan, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (W.W. Norton, New York) p.80.

expresses a prior givenness to be seen, of the self, the pre-existence of the symbolic order of a culture and a history in which the self is given to be read as a precondition of its own capacity to read and make sense of that culture and history. Thus the gaze underlies the look and exceeds the voyeuristic economy of scopophilic knowledge to which Waldo is committed. The relation of the other, alterity, is mediated at the level of desire rather than knowledge: "At the scopic level, we are no longer at the level of demand, but of desire, of the desire of the Other"[66].

When Lyndall gazes into her mirror it is precisely this desire and alterity which she discovers: two sets of eyes, two faces, two selves, observe each other in a relation of togetherness rather than of subsuming identity; her eyes are "together" rather than "one". Her mirror confirms her, not in the negativity and deficiency imposed by the specular model, but in her own plurality, her otherness, the difference from herself which exceeds this economy and from which springs her "assurance" in her power to resist: "We are not afraid; we will help ourselves!". Thus the flat mirror of male speculation becomes the mirror of a female self-affirmation conferred through the recognition of the self as difference and desire.

The far-reaching implications of this mirroring of an empowering difference are suggested in the second and complementary mirror scene, Lyndall's death scene. Having undertaken the journey to the blue mountain, Lyndall, in her dying act, once again confronts the white face in the mirror:

> They had looked at each other often so before. It had been a child's face once, looking out above its blue pinafore; it had been a woman's face, with a dim shadow in the eyes, and a something which had said,"We are not afraid, you and I; we are together; we will fight, you and I."...The dying eyes on the pillow looked into the dying eyes in the glass; they knew that their hour had come. She raised one hand and pressed the stiff fingers against the glass...She tried to speak to it, but she would never speak again. Only, the wonderful yearning light was in the eyes still. The body was dead now, but the soul, clear and unclouded, looked forth. (pp.283-284)

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[66] Lacan, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, p.104.

Here again, Lyndall discovers "the desire of the Other" reflected back in her mirror, the "yearning light", the difference, which undermines the value of presence upheld by the specular economy and which evokes the possibility of another sexual and discursive economy. The affirmation of difference reflected in Lyndall's mirror symbolically shatters the organisation of the flat mirror of male speculation and releases Lyndall from her unreflected suspension, her "immobilisation", in a movement which recalls the mobilisation of Tennyson's Lady of Shalott through the cracking of her imprisoning mirror. This is a metaphorical shattering which embraces Luce Irigaray's visionary claim that "in the advent of a "feminine" desire, this flat mirror cannot be privileged and symmetry cannot function as it does in the logic and discourse of a masculine subject"[67].

Thus Lyndall's death itself becomes synonymous with a shattering of the mirror of male speculation, an affirmation of the self as radically other, and with a release from negative representations of femininity. It becomes a projection of a journey (however impossible) beyond the law.

Nowhere is this assertion of autonomy and attempted transgression of, and freedom from, phallocentric conceptual categories more tellingly evoked than in Lyndall's dying moments. Her eyes, and those of the reader, are averted from the "face of the Hereafter" (p.284). Lyndall dies with her own image before her, with the face of the Hereafter, a face covered by a "veil of terrible mist", significantly displaced by Lyndall's own clear and unmisted image. Thus God and his Word, the Logos, are displaced by a woman's face. It is to this face, self-divided and implicated in an insatiable yearning and desire, plurality and resistance, that Lyndall makes her final appeal:

> The dying eyes on the pillow looked into the dying eyes in the glass; they knew their hour had come. She raised one hand and pressed the stiff fingers against the glass. They were growing very stiff. She tried to speak to it, but she would never speak again. Only, the wonderful yearning light was in the eyes still.

[67] Irigaray, "Questions", This Sex, p.129.

> The body was dead now, but the soul, clear and unclouded, looked forth.
>
> Then slowly, without a sound, the beautiful eyes closed...

This signals a victory of desire as resistance over a patriarchal reality which denies the female subject her "due"[68]. The heightened reality of this scene supports a reading of the novel in terms of feminine difference since it cannot be contained within the formal constraints of Victorian realism. There is a temporal dislocation in the narrative (a "now" preceding a "then"); the actual death releases the yearning light in the eyes from actual time. Lyndall withdraws herself from the masculine gaze and in so doing invokes feminine desire for voice, a voice which is not lost though negated by bodily death. The tropes of the woman's fingers and her eyes allegorise the feminine narratorial voice and presence which sustain this feminist desire.

In the two mirror scenes Schreiner postulates a radical feminine narcissism which reflects ironically upon Freud's attribution of "a larger amount of narcissism to femininity" as a form of "a late compensation for their (women's) original sexual inferiority"[69]. In replacing the image of God, the phallocentric male subject *par excellence*, with her own, as occurs in the second mirror scene, Lyndall replaces a male narcissism which projects itself onto a masculine God with a female narcissism which undermines this very appeal to transcendent authority. For, as has been seen, the narcissism reflected in Lyndall's mirror, rather than functioning as compensation for a supposed "sexual inferiority" and supporting the definition of femininity as negativity, is instead grounded in a radical affirmation of alterity and autonomy from the specular paradigm. In taking the mirror of male speculation to reflect her own subjectivity as difference and division, in shattering its smooth and unmediated reflection, Lyndall resists absorption into the notion of femininity as the reflective mirror to male subjectivity, the mirror of his narcissism.

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68 Irigaray, "Questions", <u>This Sex</u>, p.154.

69 Sigmund Freud, "Femininity", <u>New Introductory Lectures</u> (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1977) p.166.

It is precisely this assertion of feminine self-sufficiency and independence from masculine parameters which is emphasised in Sarah Kofman's reading of Freud in "The Narcissistic Woman: Freud and Girard"[70]. However before addressing Kofman's argument, it is necessary to recall Freud's views on female narcissism.

According to Freud, narcissistic women "have the greatest fascination for men" due to the fact that another person's narcissism has a great attraction for those who have renounced part of their own narcissism and are in search of object-love", as, Freud claims, are male subjects[71]. Female narcissism functions, therefore, for Freud, as a fantasy of the primary narcissism which is necessarily renounced by the male in the process of his transference from a narcissistic object-choice to the anaclitic, or attachment-type object choice "characteristic of the male"[72], as opposed to the female who remains locked into a regressive narcissistic model of love.

The narcissistic woman functions, according to Kofman, as the locus of resistance to a representational system which contains sexual difference within a structure of hierarchical oppositions. She claims that, while anaclitic love is preferred by Freud for "ethical" reasons, "On Narcissism" actually affirms narcissism as the basis of all love and all desire, proving the "impossibility of getting beyond narcissism"[73]. Woman, as the embodiment of the narcissism which infiltrates masculine anaclitic desire, is, described by Freud, for once, asserts Kofman, not in terms of natural deficiency or lack, but in terms of her "narcissistic self-sufficiency and indifference", her autonomy and possession of an "inaccessible libidinal position" envied by the male[74]. Representing the primary narcissism lost by the male, woman

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[70] Sarah Kofman, "The Narcissistic Woman: Freud and Girard", French Feminist Thought: A Reader, ed. T. Moi (Blackwell, Oxford, 1987) pp.210-26.

[71] Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism", On Metapsychology (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984) p.83.

[72] Freud, "On Narcissism", p.83.

[73] Kofman, p.217.

[74] Kofman, p.212.

"can be thought about for once beyond the categories of appearance, of the veil, of fetishism and of castration"[75]. Her desire is no longer reduced to penis-envy directed at a male; her enigma, no longer the consequence of natural inferiority, consists instead of her "indifference to man's desire, her self-sufficiency" which makes her "inaccessible, impenetrable"[76]. Feminine narcissism becomes, then, for Kofman, a symbol of female autonomy and self-sufficiency rather than one of a group of "psychical peculiarities" which mark femininity and are based on an "original sexual inferiority"[77]. Or as Mary Jacobus claims: "For once Freud describes woman not in terms of lack but in terms of something she has; primary narcissism replaces the missing phallus"[78].

In her two mirror scenes Lyndall symbolically takes herself as a love-object, a self-attachment which emphasises not her emotional immaturity, her incapacity to love another, but rather, the strategic narcissism alluded to by Kofman, which asserts the value and self-sufficiency of femininity. Rather than reflecting and reproducing the phallic value of presence and unity, Lyndall's mirror reflects the value of desire, mirroring her difference, desire, and determination to challenge the lack and social inequality imposed upon her. As such, her investment in a narcissistic self-image constitutes a strategic resistance to male desire. In selecting herself over the three males who vie for her affection (Waldo, Rose, and her lover), she threatens the operations of a phallic economy which cannot recognise feminine specificity.

Lyndall, in common with Kofman's narcissistic woman, asserts an "affirmative narcissistic self-sufficiency"[79]. She embodies a reserve, an

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[75] Kofman, p.219.

[76] Kofman, pp.219-20.

[77] Freud, "Femininity", p.166.

[78] Jacobus, <u>Reading Woman</u>, p.105.

[79] Kofman, p.212.

inaccessibility and an independence which frustrates Waldo, Rose and her lover. In the face of her impassioned assertion that "I cannot be tied"[80] (The Story of an African Farm, p.239) all three are left unsatisfied, finding themselves bound to the terms of relationship set by Lyndall, terms set in a determined effort to safeguard her independence (narcissism). Her indifference is acknowledged by her nameless lover, who like Freud's hypothetical male, is fascinated by it, recognising it as a symbol of a radical autonomy lacked by himself. As Lyndall says: "You liked me at first because I treated you and all men with indifference. You resolved to have me because I seemed unattainable" (p.238). This indifference becomes her most powerful weapon against the containment he threatens and is the most eloquent expression of her resistance to any attempt to "master" her (p.238), whether this mastery assumes the form of a domineering lover or a phallocentric economy which misrecognises her desire as an inverted reflection of phallic desire.

Through her self-attachment Lyndall symbolically rejects inclusion in a male-centred sexual economy and the commodification of women it implies. Thus, in accordance with the reformulation of female narcissism suggested by Kofman, Lyndall's radical narcissism removes her from the category of appearance, of the veil, of fetishism, of castration, and in so doing removes her from the role of passive mirror of male subjectivity and narcissism[81]. It frees her from the commodified "self" she longs to escape, a desire expressed in her anguished appeal to Otto's grave: "Will nothing free me from myself?" (p.241). Through her strategic narcissism, Lyndall attempts an escape from the atrophied feminine self of phallocentric representation.

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[80] This cry is parallelled by Undine's claim that she doesn't what to be loved, but only to love something herself, in a repudiation of a conventional representation of female love as essentially narcissistic, consisting of a desire to be loved. See Schreiner, Undine, "Lovers", p.97.

[81] Irigaray, ""Questions", This Sex, p.151.

However, this flight far exceeds Lyndall's expectations. Pleading for a form of escape over Otto's grave, she cries out for "something great and pure to lift me to itself" (p.242), a plea for external delivery which has already been discussed and which is reiterated in her confession to Gregory Rose that she has always wanted "something nobler, stronger than I, before which I can kneel down" (p.279). Ironically, it is in her own image, in the narcissistic and self-differing image which displaces God and the human male, that she finally discovers that "something great and pure", this means of salvation. What she finds to worship in this final scene is herself, her own "old strong soul", the fractured and fracturing self which is the source of her "delivery" from the law which binds her.

However, as has been suggested earlier, Lyndall's death, although it constitutes a symbolic transgression of phallocentric norms, must also be read as an indictment of the failure of current social and sexual paradigms to encompass and accommodate a disruptive femininity. It may represent a victory for Lyndall but this victory is at best Pyrrhic. Her "death" by and from phallic law is simultaneously an escape from its strictures and a loss of life, a conclusion to her capacity to effect change. Above all, her war against phallic mastery is a war whose battles continue to rage, as The Story of an African Farm does not hesitate to reveal. For counterposed to Lyndall's embrace of a transgressive otherness and self-division which disturbs the phallocentric logic, is Schreiner's account of the desperate fight for the phallus, the struggle to recuperate and maintain an imaginary phallic unity safeguarded from the infiltration of the femininity which, according to Shoshana Felman "inhabits masculinity" as otherness or disruption[82].

This is a struggle in which Waldo is perhaps the most obvious participant, as the upholder of a blatantly phallocentric ideology of unity, identity, wholeness and the universality and sexual indifference of the paradigmatic human subject. It is,

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[82] Quoted in Jacobus, Reading Woman, p.16.

however, upon Gregory Rose as standard bearer of the battle to recuperate a besieged phallus that this discussion will now concentrate.

Rose and Waldo: The Phallus Under Threat

It is necessary to preface the subsequent exposition of the struggle for phallic mastery with the somewhat paradoxical observation that both Waldo and Gregory Rose are sexually ambiguous figures.

Waldo, while promoting a strident masculinist theory, is simultaneously aligned with the feminine function of passivity and inertia in marked contrast to Lyndall's active desire and self-affirmation. Thus he is placed in the position of patriarchal femininity to a degree. This feminisation is reinforced by the fact that his most explicit "double" is a woman, the domesticated Em. Lyndall herself draws attention to the ambiguity of Waldo's sexual inscription when she tells him that "When I am with you I never know that I am a woman and you are a man...Other men when I am with them, whether I love them or not, they are mere bodies to me; but you are a spirit; I like you" (p.210). Committed to a theory in which he functions as the passive medium through which works the Unknown Cause, Waldo in his adoption of this "feminine" position, lives the supposed subsumption of the feminine (the particular) which is the presupposition of Spencerian and Emersonian universalism.

Gregory Rose is similarly ambiguous, a commixture of the masculine and the feminine, as the name Rose suggests. As the past participle of the verb "rise", it is suggestive of male erection, and, more particularly of the ephemerality and evanescence of the erection. It simultaneously functions as a conventional metaphor for female sexuality and evokes the decorativeness, receptivity and potential fecundity of the flower.

In his relations with Em, Rose displays a tendency to a dominating misogyny born of an implicit belief in "man's right to rule" (p.245). Persevering to the point of obsessiveness in his pursuit of her, he informs her that: "You must love me, love me better than all ! You must give yourself to me" (p.178) - a peremptory order

which the "romantic" lover accompanies with a depreciation of "woman's" capacity to love ("but no woman can love as a man can" [p.178]). However, while demonstrating a "traditionally" masculine desire for mastery of women - "If a man lets a woman do what he doesn't like, he's a muff " (p.207) - Rose is at the same time a markedly feminine character.

In the chapter entitled "Gregory Rose Finds His Affinity" (Part Two, Chapter Three) a portrait is painstakingly constructed of Rose's marked identification with the feminine. A scrupulous housekeeper who performs domestic chores "just as he had seen his mother do", his room is covered with "a preponderance of female faces and figures" (p.174). As becomes clear, however, the identification with femininity signalled by this construction involves a participation in a traditional conceptualisation of femininity repudiated by The Story of an African Farm through Lyndall's rejection of conventional modes of the feminine. Rose, for example, selects pink writing paper (p.175) and displays a tendency to emotional indulgence and narcissistic self-involvement.

Staring at his face in the mirror he discovers that "in the blue eyes there was a look of languid longing" (p.175). His identification with women is depicted as an identification with a particular representation of the feminine, one which endorses a misogynistic inscription of the feminine as emotional, as tied to the domestic, and as languishing in a pool of self-dramatisation. This is, as has been mentioned, a representation against which the novel sets its considerable powers of contestation.

Rather than constituting an undermining of the rigid oppositional definition of masculine and feminine, Rose's femininity must be viewed as a comment on the masculine appropriation of certain constructions of the feminine. This appropriation is, indeed, the target of the novel's depiction of Rose's feminisation (in "Gregory's Womanhood"), which, although it does possess positive aspects, is regarded with suspicion by a novel concerned with the complexity of sexual difference and the insidious operations of a phallic sexual economy. Can Rose's masquerade of femininity, expressed in his assumption of the guise of the nurse, be simply taken as "the novel's

attempt at some kind of androgynous resolution to the problem of sexual difference" as First and Scott suggest ? Does the device of the disguise allow, as they maintain, a dissolution of sex roles and eternal oppositions? Or is it, in fact, an essentially conservative gesture which ultimately confirms Rose, and by implication Waldo, in the Lawrentian dream of a masculinity liberated from the taint of a femininity which can, after all, be reassuringly assumed and then discarded as simply as the woman's clothes donned by Rose? The question thus arises as to the extent Rose does indeed go in his assumption of the feminine. Does it involve a true embracing of the difference which Lyndall constitutes, or does it remain merely a parody of femininity which leaves intact the structured polarity of the sexes?

A crucial clue is provided in Rose's mirror scene, a parody of Lyndall's, in which Rose, although metaphorically assuming her place before the glass, can discover only his own conceit and languid self-indulgence: "It was a youthful face reflected there, with curling brown beard and hair; but in the dark blue eyes there was a look of languid longing which touched him" (p.175). His "languid longing" is a pallid substitute for the "yearning light" of desire Lyndall is to discover; his self-pitying conceit is a travesty of Lyndall's outward looking self-affirmation and self-differentiation.

Described contemptuously as a "man-woman" by Lyndall (p.197) and echoing Undine's contempt for Henry Blair with his "eyes more soft and melting than a woman's", Gregory Rose's identity as masculine is from the outset posited as ambiguous and precarious by the novel. The identification with the feminine hinted at in the description of his domesticity is compounded in the events leading up to his explicit adoption of the feminine role to nurse the dying Lyndall. His playful scribbling of the initials before his own name (p.205) is emblematic, for example, of a "play" with sexual identity in which the initials evolve from G. to an insistent "L.L.L.L". Although his scribbling suggests a repressed desire to marry Lyndall rather than his betrothed, Em, it can also be read as signifying an identification with Lyndall.

The ambiguity of sexual identity is further evoked in the chapter, "Gregory Rose Has an Idea" (Part two, Chapter Ten), in which Rose enters the attic and discovers the women's clothing which provides the apparent stimulus for his plan to ingratiate himself with Lyndall. However, the implications of the transvestism which first manifests itself in the attic exceed his strategic artfulness. Rose's foray into the attic is a foray into the repressed. The attic, as the place where forgotten things are stored, not to mention the place where madwomen hide, functions as a symbol of the unconscious. Delving here, Gregory turns from the trunk which "once held Waldo's books" (books confiscated by Blenkins), the repository of the masculine, to the packing-case which contains "various articles of female attire - "old-fashioned caps, aprons, dresses with long pointed bodies such as he remembered to have seen his mother wear when he was a little child" (p.245). Fondling these articles, he starts guiltily when Em calls to him, a guilt also evidenced in the furtive manner in which he does finally try on the "kappje" and a dress. From under the "kappje" he discovers that "The blue eyes looked out with the mild gentleness that became eyes looking out from under a 'kappje'" (p.246).

While Waldo selects the books, symbols of a masculine access to knowledge and power, Rose not only chooses but indeed dons the cultural sign of the feminine gender. In this way he openly questions his own gendering as masculine in a way which would be alien to Waldo, obsessed as is Birkin in D.H. Lawrence's Women in Love, with the protection of his masculine self from those who would "take" it from him (p.261). Rose's sense of sexual identity is less stable and more capable of acknowledging the informing force of the feminine.

Rose's decision to adopt the masquerade of femininity, to dress as a nurse, is preceded by an explicit and potentially radical questioning of his own identity. Coming to a gully, in a scene strongly reminiscent of Maggie Tulliver's "Red Deeps" episode , he "sprang down into its red bed" in a symbolic identification with the femininity, the otherness which unsettles the stability of his gender identity - "Am I, am I Gregory Nazianzen Rose?" he asks. (p.270)

Whether he can accept this informing otherness is a different question, one whose answer is perhaps presaged by his fascination with decidedly phallic dresses with "long pointed bodies" and by his correlation of femininity with a "mild gentleness". For, although Rose does participate, to an extent undreamt of by Waldo, in a feminine otherness which disrupts his sexualisation as rigidly masculine, his answer to the question of whether he is indeed Gregory Nazianzen Rose, a masculine subject in full mastery of that masculinity, is eventually revealed to be a "yes" as resounding as any Waldo could offer to the shrine of his phallicism. This is hinted at in Rose's sense of guilt in assuming the garbs of femininity, a guilt experienced both in the attic and in the red gully; he assumes the role of femininity in the manner of "a sinner hiding his deed of sin" (p.270). Such an identification of femininity with sin, guilt and shame provides a revealing insight into the precise nature of the feminine inscription assumed by Rose.

It is relevant in this context to consider Luce Irigaray's notion of femininity itself as a masquerade:

> What do I mean by masquerade? In particular, what Freud calls "femininity." The belief, for example, that it is necessary to become a woman, a "normal" one at that, whereas a man is a man from the outset. He has only to effect his being-a - man, whereas a woman has to become a normal woman, that is, has to enter into the masquerade of femininity. In the last analysis, the female Oedipus complex is woman's entry into a system of values that is not hers, and in which she can "appear" and circulate only when enveloped in the needs/desires/fantasies of others, namely, men.[83]

Lyndall attempts to escape the masquerade of femininity required of so-called "normal" women by means of her eschewal of conventional feminine modes of behaviour. Clinging to a radical narcissism, she attempts to ensure her indifference through the rejection of a stereotypical sexual relationship with her lover - a relationship she fears would ultimately rob her of power, liberty and self-respect: "you would hold me fast" (p.237). In avoiding conventional femininity to an extent,

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[83] Irigaray, "Questions", <u>This Sex</u>, p.134.

she endeavours to avoid the envelopment in "the needs/desires/fantasies" of men posited by Irigaray as the outcome of the "masquerade of femininity".

Given Lyndall's rejection of the role traditionally assigned her, it could be said that Lyndall's entry into the masquerade which is femininity is projected by Schreiner onto the sexually ambiguous Gregory Rose. Rose enacts the process of feminisation, the "becoming a woman" resisted by Lyndall - a feminisation which is significantly portrayed by the novel as an actual masquerade, a matter of disguising one's "true" identity. Onto Rose then is displaced the burden of traditional femininity, the "masquerade".

However, rather than epitomising a proximity with an otherness which undermines distinction of sexual identity, and involves a renunciation of a masculine economy of desire, Rose's is only ever a masquerade of the masquerade of femininity. He does not participate in a radical otherness which subverts phallic dominance. In fact what he mimes is a particular representation of femininity as passive, submissive, self-sacrificing. His "nurse" is the epitome of self-renunciation, one whose hands are "glorified for what they had done" in tending to the terminally-ill Lyndall (p.273). Devoting himself entirely to the invalid, Rose becomes the embodiment of the self-sacrificing nurturer, the "most experienced nurse" the doctor has ever seen (p.273). As such, Gregory's nurse is an incarnation of male expectations of women - her self-sacrifice and devotion to others is a complement to the male dominance represented by the authoritative doctor.

As a result, while apparently serving Lyndall, Rose is in fact serving a system of structural opposition between female submission and masculine dominance. This is reinforced by the fact that the scenario depicted in "Gregory's Womanhood", a scenario stage-managed by Rose himself, is one which unequivocally confirms him in his dominance over a now-invalided Lyndall, a position of mastery about which he has previously fantasised but has failed to achieve ("I pity the man who marries her ; I wouldn't be him for anything . If I had a wife with pride I'd make her give it up, sharp." [p.206]). His service to Lyndall is an enactment of a fantasy of power. The

Lyndall who has asserted a contemptuous superiority over him and remained aloof from his advances (see p.232) is reduced from her queenly status, from the being he begs to "serve" (p.231) to the status of a "small doll" (p.281) in his eyes, forced by illness into a position of humility before him - "'Thank you!' Then after a little while she repeated humbly, 'Thank you; they hurt me so'" (p.273).

Rose thus attains the power over Lyndall he has desired, his "service" to her acting as a metaphor for a possession of her exhilarating in its totality and level of intimacy:

> At first Gregory's heart was sore when day by day the body grew lighter, and the mouth he fed took less; but afterwards he grew accustomed to it, and was happy. For passion has one cry, one only - 'Oh, to touch thee, Beloved!' (p.273)

As this passage reveals, Rose's apparent thraldom to Lyndall is in fact born of a passion to "touch", to possess her in the only way he can. As she weakens he becomes happier in the daily confirmation of his growing power over the once disdainful taunter.

This is not to suggest that the values of caring and service are in any way disparaged by The Story of an African Farm. Lyndall herself maintains that "happiness is a great love and much serving" (p.280). However the novel, while valuing service born of love and learning, rejects the masochistic construction of that virtue. Lyndall, although valuing "service", insists upon recognition of her autonomy, refusing to function merely as an adjunct or as a servant. Rose, on the other hand, participates in a masochistic construction of service, one which, in accordance with Freud's formulation of sadism and masochism as vicissitudes of a single type of object-relation[84] , is essentially self-serving. Above all, rather than undermining the masculine-feminine opposition and providing an evocation of a sexual difference beyond simple inversion, Rose's femininity-as-castration-and-service model, reinforces that essentialist opposition.

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[84] Freud, "The Sexual Aberrations", On Sexuality (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1981) pp.70-3.

If Rose's transvestism in fact reinforces the social construction of femininity, it is possible to view it in terms of a fetishistic cross-dressing. Fetishism is described by Freud as a means of disavowing castration, or more precisely, of disavowing the unwelcome "fact" of women's "castration", their lack of the penis, reflecting as it does upon the threat to the male's own penis[85] . Freud labels the actual fetish, "a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy believed in and - for reasons familiar to us - does not want to give up"[86]. Born of castration anxiety, the fetish functions for the fetishist as "a token of triumph over the threat of castration and protection against it"[87] .

It is precisely against this threat of castration that Rose's transvestism, and indeed Waldo's theoretical transvestism, the "dressing up" as a woman implicit in his subsumption of the feminine position, is directed. Both function as manoeuvres to recuperate a phallus under threat and to assert mastery and domination over women and the feminine (the principle of difference).

It is significant that Rose's assumption of the feminine guise is directly preceded by a symbolic castration at Lyndall's hands. Prior to his ascent into the attic, Em finds that he no longer speaks of "the strength and master-right of man" but is instead "as one smitten on the cheek-bone" (p.245), emasculated by his love for the independent and unbending "phallic" woman, Lyndall.

Waldo feels himself to be in a similar situation with Lyndall. He attributes his return from his unsuccessful venture into "the world" to Lyndall. "I have been walking across the plain for hours in the dark" he says. "I have liked the wind, because I have seemed forcing my way to you" (p.262). However (as with Gregory) the image of Lyndall which draws him on is one which stresses his helplessness and

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85 Freud, "Fetishism", On Sexuality, p.355.

86 Freud, "Fetishism", p.352.

87 Freud, "Fetishism", p.353.

weakness before it, a helplessness which, like Gregory's, issues in a desire for possession and domestication of the powerful and elusive woman:

> I am very helpless, I shall never do anything; but you will work, and I will take your work for mine. Sometimes such a sudden gladness seizes me when I remember that somewhere in the world you are living and working. You are my very own; nothing else is my own so. (p.263)

In confronting Lyndall both Rose and Waldo confront woman as the Other, or as Jacqueline Rose terms it in her reading of Lacan, as the place "onto which lack is projected, and through which it is simultaneously disavowed"[88]. Woman, as a "symptom" for man, as the other, thus serves as the guarantee of male self-knowledge and identity through her very negativity - "For the soul to come into being, she, the woman, is differentiated from it...called woman and defamed"[89]. Her negativity, her difference as loss, serves in this way to guarantee the phallus. Simultaneously, however, "she", in her otherness, her capacity to exceed the phallic function, stands against the truth and authority projected onto the phallus - the Other is "the place where truth falters[90] ". Woman, therefore, stands for both the fantasy of male self-completion, supporting his possession of the phallus through her lack; and, at the same time, for its insufficiency, its "pretence to meaning and false consistency"[91] .

Waldo's and Rose's construction of Lyndall as the "phallic" woman functions as a narcissistic projection of the phallus onto this powerful woman - a projection which, in its denial of feminine difference, protects and maintains the phallus. Lyndall, the very woman who threatens the males' phallic certainty, confronting both with their helplessness and lack, is constructed by them as the phallus itself. She functions in this way as a fetish which confirms them in their possession of the

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88 Mitchell and Rose, eds., Feminine Sexuality, p.48.

89 Lacan, Écrits, p.156.

90Lacan, "A Love Letter", Feminine Sexuality, eds. Mitchell and Rose, p.151.

94 Lacan, "A Love Letter", Feminine Sexuality, eds. Mitchell and Rose, p.151.

valued, and threatened, organ - a phallic woman, who, as Jacobus claims, protects the male "against doubts about his masculinity"[92] .

Both men are intensely threatened by the difference which undermines their masculinity. To love Lyndall is to confront their own lack. This lack is, in Rose's case, his failure to assert his masculinity, his "master-right" over the woman who sees him as a "man-woman". In Waldo's case, the lack lies in the failure of his theory to encompass the specificity, the particularity, with which Lyndall confronts it. It is significant that both experience this lack as a challenge to their masculinity, their sexual identity as males. Rose experiences it as emasculation, as expressed in his masochistic subjection to her rule - "If you could only take everything I have and use it; I want nothing but to be of use to you" (pp231-232). Waldo experiences it as the disturbing loss of self which plagues him on his travels (p.261).

Lyndall represents an object of desire to Rose and Waldo precisely because of her function as the place onto which the phallus is projected. To both she is a symbol of an inviolate "phallic" self-sufficiency and potency. Waldo projects his own phallic desire onto her - "you will work, and I will take your work for mine" he writes, in a fantasy of Lyndall as the guarantor of the phallus. However, she represents at the same time the disruption of masculinity, confronting both men with their own inadequacy, with their lack instead of their presence, with their otherness instead of their identity. Therefore, although both Waldo and Rose project their desire for a phallic unity onto Lyndall (constructing her strength and independence as a reassurance) both can ultimately discover in Lyndall's eyes evidence, not of their imagined unity, but only of their lack. Lyndall interferes in their assertion of masculinity, disrupting their complacent acceptance of the oppositional structuration of masculine and feminine.

The experience of both men highlights the phallus under threat; the phallus in all its illusory presence, in all its vulnerability. Through her speech, her actions,

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[92] Jacobus, Reading Woman, p.127.

and her desire, Lyndall confronts both men with the radical difference which informs their identity as male subjects, with the femininity lurking inside their masculinity. This is, of course, a threat to which both men, in their sexual ambiguity, are highly sensitive.

Rose's masquerade of femininity and Waldo's tendency to universalising theory must be assessed, therefore, in the context of this assault on phallic mastery undertaken by Schreiner through the character of Lyndall. When viewed in this framing context, both actions become gestures directed to a conservation of a phallus under attack, gestures aimed at disavowing the femininity which threatens to shatter the unequivocality of their identity as masculine. Teetering on the edge of an alarming bisexuality, both attempt to repress that differing from themselves through a possession of the "phallic" Lyndall which seeks to silence the radical alterity which undermines the very logic of sameness in which the phallus is produced.

This gesture of recuperation involves a strategic transvestism of sorts, a temporary adoption of a femininity defined as the negative which serves to bolster a masculinity founded on an illusory fullness and presence. There is, for example, as has been suggested, an implicit transvestism in Waldo's transcendentalism. His attempted subsumption of femininity must metaphorically "put on women's clothing", a manoeuvre similarly expressed in his assumption of the garb of the domesticated in order to assert the claims of an overriding universal law. However, as The Story of an African Farm reveals, Waldo's Spencerian and Emersonian discourse, involves a repression, not an embrace, of difference. While appearing to take heterogeneity and difference into account, Waldo's theory is a "dressing up" in difference designed to expose the principle of sameness, the universal law which conditions this apparent difference. The sameness/difference, masculine/feminine dichotomy is thus rigidly upheld. The condition of possibility for Waldo's vision of unity is precisely an elision of the difference, the femininity, in which he strategically enwraps himself.

Gregory Rose's more literal enactment of transvestism is similarly revealed as an elision of difference in an attempt to reinforce the stability of masculine

identity. Rose's masquerade of femininity reproduces the phallocentric representation of femininity as castrated, passive, and submissive, the inversion of the masculine. His adoption of the feminine functions as little more than a metaphor for the castration, the "fall" from masculinity he suffers - femininity is, after all, "his deed of sin" (p.270).

Furthermore, in conforming to the ideal of love as service, Rose acts in accordance with the model of courtly love, a model which posits a masochistic male lover and a sublimation of desire into service. According to Jacques Lacan, courtly love is for "the man whose lady was entirely, in the most servile sense of the term, his female subject" the only way "of coming off elegantly from the absence of sexual relation"[93]. This model posits a male who obtains masochistic pleasure from the absence and impossibility of the sexual relation - an impossibility due to the division within the subject [94]. In Rose's case, the ideal of service translates as a desire for the woman who is indeed absent, disempowered, and whose disempowerment is the condition of his possession of the object of his desire. This is a possession which is, however, in the mode of courtly love, fictive. Rose may possess Lyndall, but this is predicated upon the very illness which forms the obstacle to a realisation of the relationship. It is significant that Waldo, similarly, is precluded from entering into a relationship with Lyndall as to him she never exists as more than an idea, an image in which is invested a narcissistic pleasure. This is an image which appears to him on his travels:

> "In my lodgings, many nights I have blown the light out and sat in the dark, that I might see your face start out more distinctly. Sometimes it was the little girl's face who used to come to me behind the "kopje" when I minded sheep, and sit by me in her blue pinafore; sometimes it was older." (pp.262-263)

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93 Lacan, "God and the Jouissance of ~~The~~ Woman", Feminine Sexuality, eds. Mitchell and Rose, p.141.

94 Mitchell and Rose, eds., Feminine Sexuality, p.46.

Arguably, Lyndall is never more to Waldo than this idealised, and significantly, infantilised and thus disempowered, vision - a vison which is dependent upon the absence of Lyndall herself.

Rose's masquerade is also conditioned by the disempowering of the once powerful Lyndall and by her relegation to the position of the lady of the courtly lover, that is, to a position of absence. Through this act of disempowerment and relegation, his mastery over Lyndall, the feminine, is confirmed, and compensation provided for the threat to his masculinity. The appeal of transvestism resides, after all, in the male's consciousness of the presence of the penis beneath the outward feminine guise, and therefore, of his essential masculinity and difference from the woman he mimics.

Gregory Rose, then, in his retention of a model of a castrated femininity and in his deployment of the service ethic as a mode of possessing the recalcitrant Lyndall, never moves beyond the point of "dressing up". It never moves beyond a fetishism which confirms him in his possession of the phallus. While the novel may approve of his temporary relinquishing of mastery, and his initiation into a capacity to care, it is simultaneously aware that his transvestism still conforms to a masculine model and does not signify rejection of the masculine mode. Having reduced Lyndall to the status of a "doll", Rose immediately discards his femininity and returns to Em in the old guise of the superior lover.

Therefore, while Rose's entry into the realm of self-sacrifice may be regarded with approval, The Story of an African Farm registers disapproval of the narcissism implicit in the recuperation of the phallus through his fetishisation of Lyndall. When Rose kisses Lyndall's foot (p.280) it is an act tantamount to kissing the fetish which serves to maintain the phallus intact. His identification with Lyndall, alluded to earlier, must be seen, therefore, as an identification not with the feminine per se, but with the phallus Lyndall represents to him - a phallus placed under threat by her "contempt, loathing, pity" for him (p.232), which is paradoxically retrieved through his identification with, and possession of, her. Lyndall functions in this scenario as

what Irigaray terms "the matrix/womb for the subject's signifiers"[95] - a signifier to the male's status as signified, a signifier he must appropriate in order to ensure this role as signified, his possession of the phallus. It is this function as signifier, as the reflective mirror of male subjectivity, which is rejected by Lyndall, who, in her mirror scenes asserts her status as a signified, even if a signified characterised by self-division and difference (as are all signifieds).

Rose's transvestism is seen by the novel as a mere parody of a parody of femininity, a mimicry of a tendentious patriarchal construction of the Other. It is a mime which leaves "woman" precisely where he found her - defined as weak, dependent and invalid. As such it has far less radical implications than does the masquerade of femininity enacted by women themselves, a masquerade which, in miming itself and not an oppositional "other", disrupts the pretence to identity upheld by Rose's assumption and discarding of the signifier of femininity.

Lyndall, as a woman, participates in a femininity so radically other as to preclude recuperation by masculine discourse. For what Lyndall recognises in her mirror is her own impossibility of being the phallus, her own radical alterity. Her desire is a desire for and of otherness, whereas Rose's desire, far from participating in otherness, lapses into the phallic model. Rather than acknowledging the femininity in himself, the difference informing his identity as a masculine subject, he can finally only recognise this femininity as the Other, as the complement and therefore the negative. Misrecognising the feminine in Lyndall, he envelops himself in her clothes, the clothes of the feminine, only to attempt to further envelop her in his myth-making. It is for this reason that Lyndall, who is a woman, however provisional such a statement of "being" must be, does not "recognise" Rose in the nurse - he, like Waldo is unable to subsume femininity.

Sexual difference is regarded by the novel, as more than, in Shoshana Felman's terms, "clothes alone, that is, a cultural sign, an institution, which determine

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[95] Irigaray, "Cosi Fan Tutti", <u>This Sex</u>, p.101.

masculine and feminine and insure sexual opposition as a orderly, hierarchical polarity"[96]. Schreiner, in positing the impossibility of the male assumption of the feminine within the masculine/feminine dichotomy which structures gender, points to a radical sexual difference which both informs and exceeds the sexual (in)difference of this phallocentric schema. Lyndall, in her embracing of her own difference, affirms a femininity beyond the structure of opposition. She "journeys" beyond the social code to a degree undreamt of by Gregory Rose in his apparent relinquishing of patriarchal masculinity (his trading of one patriarchal role for another) which never truly releases its grip on phallicism. Hence the novel's contempt for the "man-woman", a contempt directed at his enmeshment in social codes and his "effete" failure to challenge the limits of his sexual inscription.

Both Waldo and Rose represent, therefore, masquerades of femininity which do not go far enough and which, while appearing to undermine the masculine/feminine opposition, in fact, cling to a phallic identity - Rose, through dressing up as a woman to reinforce his signification as male, Waldo through the generation of a theory which, while claiming to subsume the feminine, in fact represses the ambiguity, division and specificity which informs the identity of both theory and its producer. Waldo's theorising is little else than a means of recuperating the phallus, the paradigm of all phallocentric theorising in its repression of division and lack.

It is fitting, therefore, that Waldo's apotheosis scene, at the conclusion of the novel should be haunted by the spectre of the despotic will to mastery, Bonaparte Blenkins. For the reintroduction of Blenkins into the narrative at this stage functions to highlight the fact that Waldo's passivity, rather than constituting a challenge to tyranny, social or theoretical, is actually a collaboration with a sublimated form of tyranny. Blenkins returns as the repressed of Waldo's Transcendentalism, an emblem of the social and discursive oppression which "murders" Lyndall and in which Waldo, in his acquiescence in Blenkins' authority participates. This authority is encoded in

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[96] Quoted in Jacobus, Reading Woman, p.15.

Waldo's theory as its repression of the particular, a repression which amounts to the oppression of women, and the silencing of the femininity which informs his masculinity.

The self-division and social injustice repressed by Waldo in his drive to unity and identity return to haunt him in the form of Blenkins, symbol of the phallic oppression of otherness. Waldo's passivity is revealed as in fact a submission to the castrating father. In being symbolically castrated by Blenkins in the whipping scene, he assumes the fantasmatic position of a "castrated" femininity. Rather than challenging this inscription of femininity as castrated, Waldo, forced into a renunciation of phallic mastery, devotes himself to a reconstitution of that mastery through theorising. In so doing he, like Rose, misrecognises the feminine as the inversion of the masculine and instals himself firmly in the phallic economy of Blenkins.

Thus The Story of an African Farm gives a pointed account of the sado-masochistic, the ineluctably violent, origins of the masculine relation to theory. The whipping scene functions as a typical genesis of the theoretical relationship as such. Waldo's theory, in order to maintain itself, perpetually re-enacts this original scene, attempting to whip into submission the particularity, the specificity, which threatens to exceed the Law instituted by Blenkins, Waldo's symbolic Father, the paternal metaphor. Waldo is, thus, in his apotheosis scene stalked by the phantom of his own commitment to phallic mastery, just as Blenkins is stalked by the "ghost" of his own repressiveness in the ostrich episode (pp. 100-101).

The Other Side of the Mirror

Unlike Waldo, whose death is a slumber and a dulling of the intellect, Lyndall's death is depicted as an awakening. Although through the months of her illness "a mist had rested on her mind", in the moments before her death "the old clear intellect awoke from its long torpor. It looked back into the past; it saw the present; there was no future now. The old strong soul gathered itself together for the last time; it knew

where it stood" (p.283). Capable of appraising her situation, Lyndall, in contrast to Waldo, refuses to give up - her eyes still reflect the yearning which symbolises her resistance; "the old clear intellect" looks realistically at itself.

The specular imagery associated with Lyndall's death is of crucial significance in signalling the distinction between this death and that of Waldo. Lyndall's death does not "close its eyes", as does Waldo's, to the plurality and the reality of limitation which Waldo in his dream of plenitude refuses to see. Whereas Lyndall's death affirms this plurality and difference, and the power of desire which activates and is activated by it, Waldo closes his eyes to difference, making the world a reflection of his idealised ego. Where his death reinforces the voyeuristic economy through his fantasy of the self as unseen seer, an all-seeing God, Lyndall, in her death, acknowledges the limitation of perspective, that there is no seeing without being seen, that there is always another perspective from which the seer can be seen. Thus she acknowledges a plurality of contexts which cannot be governed by a single point of view. The limits of the specular model of knowledge and vision are revealed; two ideals of knowledge are presented, one predicated upon the denial, the other upon a recognition of difference; the first pessimistic and closed to change, the second, optimistic and forward-looking.

Therefore, although Waldo and Lyndall both die, their deaths are constructed to reflect significantly upon each other. They constitute, in effect, two endings whose similarities and differences are exploited by the novel. Both deaths, for example, function as escapes. Waldo's death through a fictive unity and self-completion represents an escape from history and narrative, an escape implicit in Spencerian and Emersonian naturalism, while Lyndall's death constitutes an escape from patriarchal strictures, a disappearance from the impossibility of positive encodement in current social paradigms. This similarity is highlighted by the fact that both escapes are at this point impossible; both are deaths. Lyndall's expression of alterity in a symbolic which provides no privileged place for the positive articulation of that alterity is revealed as no less impossible than Waldo's fiction of oneness; her resistance to patriarchal meaning ends no less disastrously than does Waldo's obsessive will to

meaning and order. There is, within the novel, no simple stepping outside the phallocentric discursive network.

This insight has led to much critical debate. Carol Barasch, in her article,"Virile Womanhood: Olive Schreiner's Narratives of a Master Race" makes some salient criticisms of Schreiner's own desire for unity and her apparent lapses into biologism at crucial points in her "deconstruction" of gender possibilities. Barasch also points to the fact that "Lyndall's feminist rhetoric is at odds with the novel's plot". This is quite right. However, rather than interpreting it as a failure of plotting or of theoretical stringency, it is possible to read the novel as a critique of those "plots" or "stories" which heal the ruptures and inconsistencies within ideology which in fact drive narrative mechanisms. Dickens' brilliantly multi-faceted yet politically reductive and compensatory fictions are emblematic of this movement to closure. There certainly are problems with Schreiner's "conclusions" about female self-determination, but their thematic expression cannot be disentangled from the the rupturing narrative effects which tell the real "story" in Schreiner's writing. This "story" asserts that the power of the discursive network cannot be overcome simply through the use of "feminist rhetoric" and that the "problem" posed by Lyndall cannot be resolved by sending her off to a position as a governess.

Although Schreiner has been labelled by Elaine Showalter as a "sadly unambitious" writer of "depressing" novels which grant their heroines "only the narrowest of possibilities"[97], it is clear that the character of Lyndall cannot be contained within Showalter's schema in which Jane Eyre is cited as "the heroine of fulfilment" and Maggie Tulliver the "heroine of renunciation"[98]. Through the historically determined ability of her heroine Lyndall to openly articulate her feminist rebellion, Schreiner resists the destructive model of female self-renunciation represented by Maggie Tulliver without succumbing to the fantasy of the

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[97] Showalter, A Literature of Their Own, p.203.

[98] Showalter, A Literature of Their Own, p.112.

rather ambiguous "happy ending" of Jane Eyre. This is a fantasy in fact renounced by Charlotte Brontë herself in Villette; her refusal to "conclude" her story functions as an ironic concession to "sunny imaginations" who wish to fantasise an impossibly happy resolution to Lucy Snowe's tale[99] .

Neither self-renunciation nor an impossibly happy ending (impossible due to the restrictive circumstances established by the novel) characterise Lyndall's "ending". Instead The Story of an African Farm negotiates these oppositions. Unlike Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, feminine self-affirmation does not involve the symbolic castration of the male. In fact as has been discussed the novel chronicles the strenuous affirmation of the phallus (by the "threatened" males who are neither as overtly dominating as a Rochester nor as firmly or violently suppressed) and the problems confronting women who seek to circumvent its power. In that the novel can more freely voice its protest, and to a certain extent its desires, than either The Mill on the Floss or Jane Eyre, stress falls neither upon the necessity of feminine submission (however unwilling) nor upon the symbolic curtailment of male dominance, but rather, upon the conditions for the empowerment of women and the loosening of the hold of the phallic economy. It is therefore neither pessimistic nor optimistic in any oppositional sense of these terms. In its attempt to represent a repressive social reality and confront it with another possibility it is both depressing and hopeful.

This does not necessarily imply that Schreiner is entirely successful in her attempts to negotiate the contradictions of the conventional nineteenth-century romance or quest fiction. Lyndall's "ending" is as ridden with paradox as is the novel as a whole and much of this paradox revolves around Schreiner's ambivalence on the question of female self-determination. As has been stated previously The Story of an African Farm deliberately evokes the narrative strategies of the romance and the individual quest plot. And, as in the case of the George Eliot and Brontë novels mentioned, the problems of how a nineteeth-century woman is to resolve the

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[99] See Charlotte Brontë, Villette (1853; Pan Books, London, 1973), pp.478-81.

contradictory demands of these cultural fictions are fully evoked. However, unlike a Lucy Snowe or Dorothea, Schreiner's heroine fails in both the romance and the quest narrative. In Lyndall's rejection of marriage to her lover the novel scrutinises the romance plot as an ideological and literary construct designed to deny women social independence. However, while the novel does not compromise on this, its refusal of a compensatory social fiction does not result in the freedom of the heroine, as one might expect or hope. The female quest motif is not abandoned; in fact it is strengthened as Lyndall approaches her solitary death. In her death however the novel risks a reading which would assert that the Napoleonic definition of heroism which has driven Lyndall is transformed into a far more conventional form of female heroism - martyrdom. In this reading, the discourse of female heroism which is an integral part of the philosophy behind Woman and Labour is subsumed by the discourse of female martyrdom. This poses serious problems for a novel which is concerned to examine the cultural construction of feminine submission and masochism.

A determining factor in the paradoxical position the novel finds itself in regarding its heroine is its failure to provide Lyndall with even those choices which are fundamental both to the conventional nineteenth-century romance novel and to novels dealing with the "woman question". The Story of an African Farm is not formulated around the vocation versus marriage dilemma which drives novels as disparate as Gissing's The Odd Women and Charlotte Brontë's Villette. Lyndall's choices are severely limited by the text itself. Just as the story of her relationship with her lover remains untold, so too does the story of the social expression of her feminist and intellectual aspirations. These aspirations remain vague, and for Lyndall, like Waldo, the issue of independence is not located in an identifiable social reality but is collapsed into an ontological questioning which has little to do with Lyndall's earlier pragmatism in the face of Waldo's more mystical musings. Schreiner's negotiation between the allegorical and the realist mode is of relevance here. Although Lyndall's problems are defined in terms of social realism, the "solution" is determinedly non-

realist and assumes a symbolic dimension which proves disappointing and unconvincing to those readers and critics who overestimate (or who prefer to assert) the novel's basis in the realist mode. To do so is to reduce Schreiner's complex "story" to an example of failed feminist propaganda. In The Story of an African Farm, the conventional expectations of the romance plot are flouted, the dubious applicability of the *Bildungsroman* to the female protagonist is signalled, and the terms of nineteenth-century realism are subjected to subtle scrutiny.

This is not to deny that certain problems remain. Schreiner's rupturing of conventional fictional forms and of gender constructions easily lends itself to the claims, mentioned earlier, that it enforces an ideology of submission and self-defeating passivity. Her writing undoubtedly displays an ambivalence to dominance and submission which would at times seem to subvert her own assertion of feminine independence. Lyndall's desire to "bow" can lend itself to such a reading, but as has been discussed, it also lends itself to alternative and more radical readings. The internalised feelings of inferiority which motivate Lyndall's reactionary submissiveness equally inspire her passionate and disruptive feminist outbursts.

The Story of an African Farm is torn between its belief in the ultimate success of feminist goals and its apparent pessimism about how to achieve them. This has been read as a failure of the text itself, and of Schreiner's vision in general, but the strength of this novel, and of the memorable heroine it creates, lies in the refusal to construct substitute fictions, whether they be fictions of unified (feminine) identity, of romance, or of immediate social renovation. A more conventionally "positive" conclusion would amount to a substitute fiction within the terms of this rupturing and unsettling novel. The novel does not neatly resolve the difficulty of redefining sexual difference. Lyndall remains torn, split between optimism and pessimism, between success and failure, in ways that allow for the possibility of change but which are aware of the resulting suffering, isolation, and sense of rupture which Schreiner characterises as heralding all forms of social transformation in Woman and Labour. In the character of Lyndall, Schreiner creates a producer of

theories, a theorising woman whose struggle consists in how to realise these disruptive theories, how to put them into practice - a problem obviously close to the writer and activist Schreiner herself. Like Woman and Labour, The Story of an African Farm is a speculative enterprise which cannot finally produce a reassuring fiction of its own. Instead, the literary "failures" and ruptures connote an inability to support and maintain the gender and generic fantasies which pass for social and transcendental truth.

However, although eschewing definite conclusion and closure, and while admitting the necessity of both of the impossible positions represented by Lyndall and Waldo (the dependence of historical meaning upon both the movement to system and the principle of rupture), the novel simultaneously proclaims the necessity of choosing between these alternatives. For the "irresolution" of the conclusion of The Story of an African Farm is in this way precisely an opening onto the history and politics denied by Waldo, an opening onto a narrative yet to be written, part of which comprised Woman and Labour. Through the character of Lyndall, The Story of an African Farm suggests the possibility of the repudiation of phallogocentric fantasies of identity, a travelling beyond the limits of male fantasy which involves the evocation of a specifically feminine desire. Lyndall's abortive journey along this road does not suggest Schreiner's own abandonment of the project of cultural transformation. For it is this very road, the road of political engagement and historical reflection, which she herself took in her pivotal work, Woman and Labour.

Henceforth for Schreiner, history, politics and narrative are constituted by the displacement of the masculine claims to inclusiveness which is the project of this visionary history - a work which posits the relation between history and feminine desire. In the schism between the alternatives offered by Waldo and Lyndall, then, there emerges the possibility of an articulation of a feminine desire which is heard between speech and silence. In the interruptions and slippages, in the attempts to

theorise the fictions which produce gender, no less than in the visionary polemic, Schreiner's voice is heard and her project is elaborated.

CHAPTER FIVE

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS: THE SLEEPING DEMON IN FROM MAN TO MAN

In his "portrait" of Olive Schreiner, Johannes Meintjes writes that while From Man to Man should have been Schreiner's *magnum opus* it is in fact "the most distressing cry of failure in all literature", exhibiting an almost unequalled "juxtaposition of excellence and mediocrity"[1]. This view of Schreiner's fiction is endorsed by Elaine Showalter who, while praising Schreiner's insight and asserting her position in the tradition of "feminist" writers, rues her tendency, and that of her heroines (in a by now familiar collapsing of Schreiner and her characters), to "give up too easily and too soon". This alleged attitude of defeat is expressed in what Showalter describes as Rebekah's cultivation of a "fragmented and undisciplined art" in From Man to Man[2].

Both Meintjes and Showalter, despite the obvious differences between their perspectives on and investments in the figure of Schreiner, stress the ultimate failure of her "art". This failure is represented in its clumsiness, its disjointed or fragmented nature - its deviance from the literary "finish" of the classic realist text. George Moore would undoubtedly have applied to this novel the same criticism he levelled at The Story of an African Farm; namely, that it contained "of art nothing; that is to say, art as I understand it - rhythmical sequence of events described with rhythmical sequence of phrase"[3]. My discussion, however, deals primarily with the divergent "rhythm" which characterises From Man to Man.

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1 Meintjes, p.160.

2 Showalter, p.203.

3 See Meintjes, p.59.

The most distressing cry of failure

Olive Schreiner wrote of From Man to Man that "Of course the subject of my book is prostitution and marriage"[4]. This description does scant justice to the complexity of Schreiner's themes in her posthumous novel, first published in 1926, in which the theme of prostitution (embodied in Bertie's fall) is deferred and remains a nascent issue because the novel was never completed. However, in that the issues of prostitution and marriage provide the driving force of Schreiner's favourite work[5], her description is appropriate.

From Man to Man explores the issues of women's relation to theory, to the maternal function, and to femininity, all of which are constellated around the concept of prostitution. These three concerns are expressed in the struggles which confront the female protagonist, Rebekah: the endeavour to enter discourse as a subject rather than a muted object; to form a satisfactory relationship with her husband, Frank; and to rescue her sister-mother figure, Bertie. They are interrelated, bounded by the exploitation of women, and the feminine - an exploitation reflected both in the sexual relationship with males and in the self-reflection and self-representation of phallocentric language. It is precisely man's self-affection in discourse and the disappropriation of women it entails[6] which Rebekah resists in her attempts to "locate" both her sister and herself in relation to discourse (through her theories and dreams), to men, and to themselves. This attempt is thematised in her desperate fight to "find" her lost sister in a struggle which metaphorically circumvents the dispossession of both women's desires and subjectivity.

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[4] To Havelock Ellis , 29 August 1884, in Letters, ed. S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner, p.43.

[5] Of this novel Schreiner wrote: "I love it more than I love anything in the world. ...I've never loved any work so..." To Havelock Ellis, 11 April 1889, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.155.

[6] Irigaray, "Questions", This Sex, p.161.

Through the experiences of the two sisters, Rebekah and Baby Bertie, From Man to Man explores the possibilities for a disenfranchised Victorian womanhood which Schreiner rigorously resists representing as disempowered. These options are, as in Woman and Labour, framed by the separate spheres ideology, the patriarchal division between public and private which is specifically translated by this novel as a division between what it terms the "personal" and the "impersonal".

The simplest distinction established by From Man to Man is perhaps that which identifies Bertie with the domestic, "the life of the personal relations", while Rebekah assumes the mantle of the thinker, the theorist, the "complex" and "many-sided" intervener into "the world of the impersonal"[7]:

> Some women with complex, many-sided natures, if love fails them and one half of their nature dies, can still draw a kind of broken life through the other. The world of the impersonal is left them: they can still turn fiercely to it, and through the intellect draw in a kind of life - a poor, broken, half-asphyxiated life, not what it might have been;...but still life. But Bertie and such as Bertie have only one life possible, the life of the personal relations; if that fails them, all fails. (p.121)

As would be expected, however, this division is effectively transgressed in a novel which attempts to negotiate between these two realms, between those oppositions which accrue to the phallocentric dichotomy between masculine and feminine, or between mind and body. Unlike a novel such as Jane Eyre, for example, its structure is not dependent upon a division between a Helen Burns (the spiritual) and a Bertha Mason (the passions, sexuality) as projections of Jane herself. Bertie can in no way be simply aligned with the "feminine" and thus a disturbing sensuality. Nor is Rebekah a symbol of disembodied (masculine) intellectualism.

Yet the world of the impersonal to which Rebekah aspires is seen in no uncertain terms as a male domain. Her father "buries" himself in the pages of Swedenborg (p.93) and, presumably, in the "old brown books" which Rebekah

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[7] Olive Schreiner, From Man To Man: or, Perhaps Only (1926; Virago, London, 1982) p.121. All subsequent references are to this edition.

inherits (p.173). Her "little mother", on the other hand, immerses herself in the domestic - she most misses Rebekah on baking days (p.121). It is this conflation of the impersonal, the public, with the masculine which determines Rebekah's description by Veronica Grey as the more "mannish" of the two sisters (p.158) while the burden of bearing the weight of femininity falls on Bertie. She is the placid, infantile guardian of the personal, the family's perennial "Baby", and John-Ferdinand's "eternal virgin mother" (p.122). Neither sister can win as a result of the effacement of her subjectivity presupposed by this dichotomous logic; prostitution is emblematic of this failure to win.

It is, however, important to stress that any such culturally imposed opposition of the impersonal and the personal, Rebekah and Bertie, masculine and feminine, is firmly resisted by From Man to Man. While the character of Bertie may appear as the traditional conception of femininity - childlike, dependent, with purely familial attachments (pp.107-8) - it is, as will be seen, precisely her conformity to the law that governs her femininity which simultaneously conditions her transgression of it. Rebekah, although apparently the more "mannish" of the two, remains legally "inside" the cultural and sexual economy which Bertie contravenes in her liaisons with her tutor and the nameless Jew. Rebekah, in an act of rebellion inconceivable to the meek Bertie, attempts to forge a relation to theory and language denied her. Yet at the same time she paradoxically occupies the position of wife and mother, a role she at no time eschews despite her commitment to intellectual endeavour. Even though her desires may exceed the limits of the domestic sphere, she remains committed to her role as domestic manager and mother, a conventional apotheosis of femininity even Bertie, the "eternal feminine" to John-Ferdinand and the Jew, fails to attain.

In a complex novel alive to the paradox which haunts phallocentric logic, it is the more "mannish" of the sisters who is closer to the explicit ideal of Victorian womanhood in her performance of the reproductive role. The more "feminine" and "domestic" of the two in her own person exemplifies the constitutive role of the

public sphere of exchange in relation to that femininity and problematises the exchange laws which govern the value of that femininity. As a "fallen" woman and, as such, explicitly "condemned by the social order" according to Luce Irigaray in her discussion of prostitution in "Women on the Market"[8], she is nevertheless emblematic of the patriarchal requirements of femininity in that her prostitution "amounts to *usage that is exchanged...*(Her) nature has been 'used up', and has become once again no more than a vehicle for relations among men."

This is not to suggest that Bertie actually challenges patriarchy more effectively than Rebekah; Rebekah's challenge obviously has greater impact in its conscious refusal to submit to a subordinate social and sexual status. It is merely to stress that the representations of both women challenge patriarchal logic in different ways. It is, above all, to emphasise the inoperability of any simplifying and simplistic opposition between Rebekah and Bertie, the personal and the impersonal, the masculine and the feminine, and also to highlight the inapplicability of First and Scott's assertion that the novel depicts a female world divided into "a passionate motherhood or social ostracism"[9]. Neither Rebekah nor Bertie can be contained within these rigid categories and such a simplifying opposition is resisted by a novel resistant to facile polarisation.

Rebekah and the Nourishing "Matter"

Rebekah, although secluded in the home, the place of private property, has access, unlike Bertie, to another realm, "the world of the impersonal" to which she turns "fiercely" (p.121). This world offers significant advantages despite the fact that it is strategically depicted as a compensation for a failure of the personal. In From Man to Man the categories of the personal and the impersonal coincide more specifically with the domestic and the world of learning, the intellectual, than they do

[8] Irigaray, "Women on the Market", This Sex, p.186.

[9] First and Scott, p.173.

with the possibly more crude division between the private and the public. The novel's interest lies in the relationship between the material and the intellectual, matter and mind, as oppositions which order the division between the public and the private. Therefore, although this novel is as committed to a critique of the separate spheres ideology as is Woman and Labour, its target is a more specific rendition of the public/private opposition. Impersonality is equated with patriarchal law, the Law, the generality under which particulars (including the personal) are subsumed.

In accordance with this schema, Rebekah, with her "mannish" ways and her devotion to auto-didacticism, inhabits the world of the impersonal, striving after truth and a place for herself in the discourse which constructs it. It is, however, precisely because of Rebekah's sexualisation as feminine that the distinction between the domestic and the impersonal is problematised. The status of Rebekah's "work" challenges facile socio-cultural divisions. According to patriarchy, Rebekah does not "work", and, therefore, does not participate in the impersonal. However, in a text devoted to elevating the status of women's domestic labour, in common with Woman and Labour, it is clear that Rebekah does indeed perform socially necessary work - she labours on her farm, manages her home, and raises her children. From Man to Man is conscious at all times, given its sympathetic and nostalgic evocations of Bertie's pleasure in baking, sewing and gardening, that it is the lack of social recognition and value afforded housework, and not the nature of the tasks themselves, which determines its meniality. The novel in no way demeans the potential pleasures of household management or motherhood as the price of justifying Rebekah's desire for another possibility and a wider choice.

Rebekah participates in both the material and the intellectual without belonging exclusively to either as they are culturally defined. In the novel, not only are the terms of the domestic effectively expanded to encompass the intellectual, but "woman" as a category is represented as participating in both rather than playing "body" to the masculine "mind", the matter to his spirituality. Rebekah is appropriated by neither the material nor the intellectual. She refuses to be reduced to

her reproductive function, but she simultaneously refuses to elect the intellectual at the cost of the corporeal. Her children's and husband's needs are acknowledged and met before she enters her study at night.

She is not of one domain but of both, nor is one realm of activity and self-realisation privileged over the other. While the "impersonal" may function as a form of refuge from a "failed" personal life (p.121) and may provide the possibility of her self-preservation, the concerns of the personal not only intrude, as do the cries of her babies in the night ("she thought suddenly she heard the baby stir" [p.192]), but, like her children, are fully embraced by her. Rebekah is in this sense emblematic of Schreiner's feminist philosophy in her capacity to transcend arbitrary divisions between the personal and the impersonal and a mind/body dualism which constructs women as the depositories of the body, the corporeal support of masculine rationality.

Schreiner's perspective on the reduction of women to the corporeal thus constitutes a response to a critic such as Elaine Showalter who has complained, in a collapsing of cultural effects with authorial intention, that in Schreiner's novels the "quintessential" female role is associated with a grotesque obesity (Tant' Sannie) and that "reduced to their sexual functions, women in...[these]...novels seem monstrous, swollen and destructive"[10]. If women are reduced to this function, or are threatened with such a reduction in the works under discussion, this assimiliation is critiqued rather than perpetuated by Schreiner's writing. Furthermore, it could be questioned in the light of the argument presented in the previous chapter, to what extent a figure such as Tant' Sannie represents the "quintessential" female role in the symbolic network of The Story of an African Farm. If "Schreiner's fictional world is obsessed with a femaleness grown monstrous in confinement - a world full of Bertha Masons"[11], this is a monstrous femininity which is patriarchally imposed, which is

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[10] Showalter, p.196.

[11] Showalter, p.197.

resisted by heroines like Lyndall and Rebekah, and which is adamantly not the mark of the femininity Schreiner upholds.

Rebekah produces both babies and knowledge, literally opening the interconnecting door between each realm; the study she enters at night is a "small one, made by cutting off the end of the children's bedroom with a partition", and located where "she could always hear the children call if they needed her at night" (p.171). In passing through this symbolic "door", she upsets the subordination and the veiling of the material conditions of the production of knowledge. Running from room to room throughout the night, from books to babies, she nurtures each but, rather than being reduced to the function of the repressed matter which nourishes speculation and subjectivity[12], she is highlighted as the active producer of both. The door through which Rebekah walks is simultaneously the door linking nature and culture - her reproduction is both natural and cultural in kind, both productive and reproductive. Hers is, therefore, a materiality which proclaims both its significance and its location at the heart of an "intelligible" which would disavow its debt[13].

Rebekah's room or study is the place in which she produces her theories, her "discussions on abstract questions" (p.171), transcribes her dreams and composes her verses, allegories and letters. It is also the place in which she stores a record of her life as traced in her writing. In books dating from her childhood are to be found "verses, and short stories and little allegories told in rhyme" (p.176) along with a novel and prose passages copied from other books.

Books dating from when she was aged twelve to twenty contain stories rather than verse, diary entries, "passionate personal entries, almost incoherent little calls for love and friendship", and the aforementioned "discussions on abstract questions". Only "a couple of books" mark her post-marital period and contain:

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12 Irigaray,"The Power of Discourse", This Sex p.75.

13 Irigaray, "Questions", This Sex, p.161; see also Jacques Derrida, Positions, trans. Alan Bass (The University of Chicago Press, 1981).

> outlines of stories never to be filled in, and short diary notes of a very practical nature: on such a date the baby was weaned, or a new servant was hired, or she had planted a seed in her garden and set down the date to mark how long it took to come up. And sometimes (generally after a long interval in which nothing had been written) there were short notices, so written that no one into whose hand the books should fall could have understood them. (p.176)

Abstract discussion coexists with gardening notes in a writing which dissolves the boundaries between the material and the intellectual thus mirroring not only Schreiner's fictional and non-fictional style but also her own letter-writing technique in which she moves with disarming fluidity from politics to literature, to discussions of her pregnancy[14]. As it also suggests, writing serves a number of functions for Rebekah. Highlighted here is its purpose as what Schreiner terms in reference to Gregory Rose's letters, "an outlet for all one's superfluous feelings"[15], a purpose similarly served by the letters she addresses to her incommunicative and thus ironically named husband, Frank.

Above all, however, Rebekah's study is the place in which she produces the "discussions on abstract questions" which occupy a substantial portion of the chapter entitled "Raindrops in the Avenue". This room is ambiguously located "inside" her husband's house and is at the same time "outside" the existent social and discursive economy, the patriarchal symbolic of which the unsympathetic Frank is an emblem. From this position inside and outside Rebekah reformulates the conceptual machinery of Spencer, Pearson and Shelley in a movement similar to Schreiner's own manipulation of social evolutionary and eugenic theory in Woman and Labour and of Spencerian and Emersonian transcendentalism in The Story of an African Farm.

Rebekah's study is the room in which her visions of other possibilities, both social and sexual, take shape; it is the room in which the distinction between her

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[14] See, for example, To Mary Sauer, October 1896, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.294.

[15] To Havelock Ellis, 25th February 1885, in Letters ed. Rive, p.35.

femininity and her motherhood is most evident and in which the pleasure which constitutes her particular construction of "theory" is allowed free play. From within this room she exploits that reserve or resource, that "*disruptive excess*" which is "possible on the feminine side"[16] - a reserve which exceeds the role of wife and mother she assumes so determinedly, an excess expressed both in her movement between the rooms and in the discursive practice which this makes possible. Therefore, even though her room may at first sight appear to confirm to the structure of the patriarchal home with its "opposing" Hercules statue and Raphael's Madonna della Sedia, what occurs within this space leads in fact to its eventual demolition.

Critics have been quick to point out the "flaws" in From Man to Man, the chief of which is taken, by Paul Foot in his introduction to the Virago edition, to be the faltering of the text in "the huge chunks of Rebekah's thinking and secret letter-writing" (p.xiv). From Man to Man certainly is the most overtly fractured of Schreiner's texts, with large sections devoted to Rebekah's own discursive production (her theorising, dreaming/allegorising, and letter-writing) all of which function analogously in the novel as modes of signifying Rebekah's desire and are, for this reason, treated as synonymous in the following discussion.

The obvious structural fragmentation of From Man to Man could be viewed as implying a dichotomy between the personal and the impersonal, intellect and matter. However it becomes apparent on closer inspection that the political and literary investments of the novel are distilled in the process of fracturing enacted in Rebekah's "set pieces" (the letters, her theorising). For, while the concept of fracture is a useful and significant one, it is not a question of the conventional and debasing sense which attaches to this concept that is at stake in this novel. Rather, it is the interaction of a number of discursive modes or conventions - the philosophical/theoretical; the allegorical; the realist; and the autobiographical.

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16 Irigaray, "The Power of Discourse", This Sex, p.78.

From Man to Man eschews a hierarchisation of modes. It is never a matter of the non-true (the literary) being subordinated to the true (scientific), despite Foot's complaint that the plot gets "lost" (p.xiv), nor of the realist narrative subordinating the signification of desire encoded in Rebekah's speculations, dreaming and epistolatory ventures. Both of these broadly categorised discursive modes constitute the "story" of the text; both combine to recount Rebekah's tale albeit from different perspectives. The "truth" of the novel is, therefore, produced both in the realist plot - the story of Rebekah's and Bertie's unhappy sexual alliances - and in Rebekah's intervention into the discourse which constructs and determines this "realism". The text moves from the impersonal to the personal just as Rebekah herself moves from room to room. Moving from "plot" to Rebekah's nightly philosophising, from "objective" account to impassioned plea, from logic to dream, the novel undermines those cultural and discursive oppositions between matter and mind, intelligibility and sensibility, which assert a tenacious, if tenuous, hold over Rebekah and the feminine.

This movement between discursive modes is demonstrated in the contrast between the account of Bertie's seduction and abandonment in "A Wild-Flower Garden In The Bush", Chapter II, and Rebekah's theoretical *tour de force* in "Raindrops In The Avenue", Chapter VII. The novel's treatment of Bertie's momentous disappointment is notable for its restraint and for the "objectivity" and the emotional sparsity of its style - evidence perhaps of Schreiner's determination to let the characters "simply act"[17]:

> In the middle of the night the mother got up and came and stood at the door of Bertie's room, then opened it and went in softly. She thought she had heard someone crying bitterly; but when she got to the bedside Bertie was lying motionless and seemed to be asleep, with her face turned towards the dark, and the little mother went away, thinking it must have been the owl hooting, who came every night to see if any stray chickens were left out. (p.100)

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[17] To Havelock Ellis, 5 April 1889, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.154.

almost impersonal tendency. This is not to underestimate the figurative power of the owl image, for example, nor of Bertie's symbolic turning "towards the dark". It is rather to emphasise the manner in which events and occurrences are almost analytically pieced together in passages such as this; it is as though empirical data were being compiled with the careful excision of overt value judgement or appeals to the reader's emotions. The narrator appears to take her metaphorical microscope, in an act reminiscent of Rebekah as a child, arranging the samples for observation and examining them with a deep interest but with a suppressed emotional involvement.

It is important not to over-emphasise the text's commitment to an empirically-based insight into the meaning of life nor to impose upon it a tendency to an unequivocal faith in the scientific mastery it in fact functions to undermine. Nor should a claim to a so-called authorial objectivity which effaces ideological investment be attributed to Schreiner. It is significant that the sparsity of style evidenced in this passage and in much of the novel's impersonal narrative accords with the allegorical mode which is Schreiner's trademark. In Schreiner's case this mode utilises impersonality and restraint (both emotional and rhetorical) to in fact heighten the emotional impact. Compare, for example, the passage quoted above with a short allegory entitled "Life's Gifts":

> Life came to me, and she gave me a flower; and I wore it in my breast.
>
> Life came to me, and she gave me a jewel; and I set it in a diadem and wore it in my hair.
>
> Life came to me, and she gave me a draught of water when I was thirsty unto death; and I drank it up.
>
> Life came to me, and shot a ray of light on me; and I did not try to catch it. I cried, "Shine on! Thou art not to be held within the hand. Thy mission is to go forward. Shine on!"[18]

Here, as in the passage under discussion, emotion is constructed through rhetorical simplicity and an accompanying emotional restraint serves to intensify the

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[18] Schreiner, Stories, Dreams and Allegories (Unwin, London, 1923) p.131.

Here, as in the passage under discussion, emotion is constructed through rhetorical simplicity and an accompanying emotional restraint serves to intensify the Biblical cadence of the culminating sentiment of the allegory thus augmenting its impact.

Schreiner's work is characterised by its compounding of genres or discursive regimes, a confusion most evident perhaps in the transgression of methodological requirements enacted in Woman and Labour . As has been seen, Woman and Labour, despite its apparent status as a scientific or sociological text, exhibits an intermingling or confluence of the objective and the subjective, reason and feeling, the scientific and the emotional, which is evinced in the movement between discursive modes. This is a movement not of linear progression, it must be stressed, but of fluidity between what are perceived as interconnected discursive levels - a spilling over of one rhetorical form into another, a novelistic "rhythm" distinct from realist narrative strategy and, as such, unappreciated by George Moore[19]. The "personal" , the literary, the visionary, encroaches on "true" discourse in this text as, in an analogous movement, the text equivocates between the moral and the political thus collapsing these two categories. In so doing, Schreiner's discursive practice threatens the hierarchical ordering of discourses. In defiantly compounding what are generally perceived as incompatible or oppositional discursive regimes and, in pushing to extremes the confusion of rhetorical categories which is in fact a characteristic of Victorian polemic, she rebutts and radically undermines the validity of the true/false distinction which maintains phallocentric discourse.

This generic interconnection is highlighted in Schreiner's use of allegory or the visionary - a genre whose interest resides in its traditional opposition both to scientific (rational) and political discourse. In this way it comes to stand for the literary in its ambiguous exclusion from these domains. Allegory is frequently

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[19] See n.3 above.

employed by Schreiner, with two books devoted entirely to the genre[20] and with a profusion of allegories scattered through her scientific, political and literary works. These function in Woman and Labour, as in the allegory of the old mother duck, to highlight a particular point by recasting it in a more heightened literary mode.

However, allegory also and more significantly functions in her work as a principle of the compounding and dissolution of genres, a technique of scrutinising categories such as the scientific, the literary, the moral, and the political. Schreiner claims in Woman and Labour that she associates "prose argument" with the expression of "abstract thoughts" while allegory constitutes the only possibility for the adequate expression of "whatever emotion those thoughts awaken" (p.16). Emotion functions here as a metaphor for the "indignation" Schreiner feels regarding "woman's position" (p.25) and attains a political efficacy which relies upon the strategic equation of "emotion" with the otherness, the feminine desire which exceeds and undermines rational discourse. Allegory is proposed in this context as an alternative discursive form which, in its alignment with the emotional, the non-rational, compensates not only for the limitations of "prose argument" but operates to reveal its conditions of possibility.

Allegory functions then as "the other form" (p.16). In its status as neither superior nor inferior to prose or to a "true" discourse devoted to concealing its figurative character but instead interrelated with it, it refuses to submit to the hierarchisation insisted upon by scientific discourse. It is also important to stress Schreiner's acknowledgment of the forms of prose argument and allegory as discursive modes rather than neutral transmitters of truth; they are seen as forms which employ different but interdependent means of constructing experience.

In Woman and Labour , for example, Schreiner discusses the issue of divorce in a passage which employs the mechanistic analogy; the social organism is likened to a "complex and delicate mechanism moved by a central spring" upon whose

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[20] Dreams (1890); Dreams and Allegories (1924).

"readjustment", made possible by the liberalisation of divorce laws, depends the progress of social development (p.26). The functioning of the mechanism is located in the play of adjustment and readjustment by means of which the social order (presented in social evolutionary terms) regulates itself. However, as if loth to trust the claims of scientific or prose argument to self-sufficiency and exhaustive application, Schreiner concludes and summarises her argument with the allegory of the wild rose in a tactic which is a characteristic feature of her rhetorical style. The history on earth of the "union of man and woman" is still in its infancy:

> As the first wild rose when it hung from its stem with its centre of stamens and pistils and its single whorl of pale petals, had only begun its course, and was destined, as the ages passed, to develop stamen upon stamen and petal upon petal, till it assumed a hundred forms of joy and beauty. (p.27)

In this allegory the wild rose operates as a metaphor for the social and sexual evolution in which the sexual relation progressively attains to ends other than those of mere reproduction. Both science and allegory are thus mobilised to authorise the provocative advocacy of divorce in an effort to capitalise on all possible sources of legitimation.

Yet more is at stake in this passage. Because the self-regulating mechanism is not just any analogy but is perhaps the metaphor which, more than any other, organises scientific discourse as such, and because the organic and especially the vegetative metaphor is likewise privileged in relation to literature and thought about literature since Romanticism[21], Schreiner here provides an allegory of the relation between prose and allegory. She argues that scientific functionalism or structuralism is deficient in that it excludes "latent, other, and even higher forms, of creative energy and life-dispensing power" (p.27) which can be realised only in the dimension of (visionary or fictional) history. The functionalist model of sociality and sexuality is subordinated to the explicitly prescriptive utopian prophecy which

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[21] See M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition (1953; Oxford U.P., London, 1981).

invokes an "aesthetic, intellectual, and spiritual" (p.27) domain of ends or dimension of values which exceeds the encompassing capacity of scientific functionalism.

Allegory derives from and puts into effect this excess, this reserve of the apparently nonfunctional, in order to liberate joy and beauty, history and desire. Feminine efficacy is revealed as truly productive as well as reproductive and is so in that it manifests, and at the same time transforms, what was formerly concealed, that is, the desire which subtends, which sustains and deforms, the scientific project in all its alternative and "wild" valency.

Allegory or figurality already inhabits scientific functionalism, making possible the play of adjustment and readjustment which constitutes its functioning. Schreiner's allegory mobilises this metaphoricity in the dimension in which it already exceeds functional determination and in this sense comprises the common medium, or better, the condition of possibility of any discursive practice. Nevertheless, it does not attain to an unqualified transcendental authority - Schreiner does not attempt all-encompassing allegories in the medieval mode. Instead allegory makes possible a productivity which delights in the conflict and dissolution of genres in which it simultaneously finds its place as one contestant among others.

Division of the debate on divorce into "science" and "allegory" is, therefore, misleading and simplifies the sophistication of Schreiner's discursive procedures. For while some conformity is exhibited with the distinction between science and allegory, this conformity is specifically oriented to the reinscription of allegory as a viable form of knowledge and to the contestation of its devaluation by the phallocentric privileging of positivist and rationalist formulations (formulations inscribed in the literary form of realism). This reinscription by its very nature undermines the traditional opposition between true and non-true discourse and demonstrates the interdependence and interconnection of scientific and allegorical forms of knowledge. Allegory functions in this usage as a tactic which effects a critique of the founding presuppositions of phallocentric discourse. By this means Schreiner signals her difference from the theoretical positions she invokes.

A consideration of Rebekah's panegyric upon the contribution of Asian culture to formulations of truth is significant at this point. Rebekah stresses the debt of Western culture to "the great stream of human labours and creation so largely non-European" (p.203) and particularly singles out the teachings of Buddha. Buddhism is accredited with presaging the knowledge attained by contemporary science:

> And our great men to-day are only slowly finding out bit by bit, as they climb along that path which we call science, what men of Asia saw years ago when they cried, "All life is one!" (p.432)

Under the doctrine of the transmigration of souls Buddha, it is claimed, covered the same radical truth expressed by "evolution" (p.203) - a truth also expressed significantly by the poet according to Rebekah. Western science, poetry and the visionary (Buddhism) thus converge as non-hierarchised modes of the production of truth in an elevation of the Eastern which functions to undermine the monopoly on truth of scientific discourse.

This elevation of the Eastern over the Western, the visionary over the scientific is developed further in Rebekah's allegory of the whiter-than-white aliens and the "Inferior Races" in "Fireflies in the Dark" (pp. 418-23). In this companion piece to her theorising, allegory also functions as a mode of dissolving the distinction between the visionary and the political. This has been seen in Chapter One in the discussion of the tired angel allegory in which the compounding of the metaphysical and the social, the moral and the political problematises not only dichotomous logic, but the generic distinction between allegory and the political.

Thus, in Woman and Labour and From Man To Man allegory is activated as a technique of discursive scrutiny (in a manner comparable to Luce Irigaray's activation of feminine difference) in an attempt to reformulate truth from a perspective other than that of scientific or rational discourse. This attempt validates the figurative and the poetic in a strategy which removes truth from the exclusive domain of phallocentric reason. Sentiment and the emotions assume a political dimension in Schreiner's work and function as a mode of scrutinising the values of

reason and coherence. Allegory is revealed, thus, not as the antithesis of science, reason and the political but as their repressed foundation.

This principle of a compounding is also evinced in the larger structural movement between realism and autobiography, impersonal and personal in From Man to Man. The relation between traditionally dichotomised discourses such as science and allegory, and allegory and political analysis is perceived as one of symbiosis rather than of hierarchical ordering or evolutionary progression. Not only is the scientific account of the structural relations of society grounded in the central metaphor of the spring-based mechanism but the scientific discourse is itself shown to be functioning allegorically with a binding dependence upon tropes. It is relevant to note that, within Schreiner's schema, the term allegorical is synonymous with the metaphorical, the poetic, the figurative (those elements with which rational discourse is bound in a relation of dependence and repression) as is implicit in her definition of allegory as a mode of argumentation involving effects of desire rather than truth. It exposes what must be fiercely disavowed by rational discourse, "prose argument" in order to ensure and defend its status as the neutral conveyor of truth - namely, its own basis in the figural.

Although Schreiner's deployment of allegory positions the emotional in the rational, in From Man to Man overt expression of emotion and passion is largely reserved for Rebekah's voice, whether it speaks in the "logic" of her theories or in the emotional excesses of her desperate letters to her faithless husband, Frank. Theorising on the similarities between Greek classical and contempory art in European thought she asks:

> Was it not this common hunger after a knowledge of reality as an end in itself which...makes us feel, when we read the page of a translation of some book two thousand years old, as if it might have been composed this morning by someone walking up and down in the pine woods behind the house, as well as by a peripatetic pacing the paths of a garden at Athens two thousand years ago?...Is it not this which, though we know thousands of things they never knew, yet, when we read them, makes us feel! - "My own! My own!" (p.177-8)

This passage, part of Rebekah's "discussions on abstract questions" is notable not only for its allegorical thread but also for the passion which informs its logical exegesis. Rebekah's theories are, as will be discussed more fully shortly, logical and tightly argued, a point supported by a consideration of her diatribe against the irrationality of racialism (pp.195-207) which anticipates and dispatches a wide diversity of possible points of debate. However, her theory is simultaneously the unexpected locus of her passion, emotions and desires as is seen in the passage above; passion, vision and reason form threads in her speculations which cannot be disentangled. Thus Schreiner presents a formulation of theory which, as in the case of her visionary new Eden in Woman and Labour, is truly born of woman's desire. Through Rebekah's dreams and discussions on abstract questions Schreiner projects possibilities for a feminist "theory" which would recoup the utopian speculative impulse with its disposition to new models and paradigms and its vocabulary of desire.

If there are at least two modes of recounting Rebekah's story, there are at least two corresponding voices inhabiting the narratorial space. It is necessary to assert this in the face of a body of criticism which aligns Rebekah's voice with "the thoughts of Olive Schreiner", as does Foot (p.xiv), and less explicitly so, First and Scott who regard the novel as a "didactic, propagandist text" in contrast to the more objective style of The Story of an African Farm[22]. This is an easy alignment of Schreiner with a fictional character which Schreiner herself specifically rejected. As she wrote to Karl Pearson, "I make no comment throughout the book, I *never* speak in my own person, the characters simply act and you draw your own conclusions"[23]. Schreiner's emphasis here highlights the importance to the novel of the interaction of characters rather than the pronouncements of one character only.

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[22] First and Scott, p.172.

[23] To Karl Pearson, 9 July 1886, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.91.

This alignment fails to account for the differences of Schreiner's position from that of Rebekah, differences which relate to Rebekah's attitude to the marital contract and which become clearer in the closing section of the novel[24]. This is not to underestimate the striking convergence between Rebekah's theory and Schreiner's own literary practice, a similarity alluded to earlier. It is rather to stress that, while Rebekah's theory is similar to Schreiner's practice in its refusal to privilege one meaning, one knowledge, one sex, and one race, this similarity, while significant, cannot be reduced to a simple identification between the two.

At least two voices intermingle in From Man to Man, that of the narrator and that of Rebekah herself. Third person narrative and first person exposition, fiction and autobiography, interplay in a resistance to authoritarian novelistic convention. The narratorial space in this novel is shared with a persistent and articulate "other", Rebekah, a voice which proclaims its right to speak, whose claims are democratically upheld and which functions as a personification of the transgressive force of desire, the discourse of the other which ruptures the fabric of Woman and Labour.

As in the case of Lyndall, strong links are established between Rebekah and a George Eliot heroine such as Dorothea Brooke. Rebekah, like Dorothea, possesses a nature "altogether ardent, theoretic, and intellectually consequent"[25] and a passion "transfused through a mind struggling towards an ideal life"[26]. And she too, like Lyndall, yearns for the guiding "lamp of knowledge" which becomes her new faith[27]. Eliot's formulation of a soul in which "knowledge passes instantaneously into feeling,

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[24] "Then if such an awful thing should happen as that a man or woman should find they had made a mistake, there would be no difficulty in their separating forever, as they ought, the moment they feel they do not love each other, or love anyone else better", To Rev. J.T. Lloyd, 1895, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.259. This is a position on divorce which differs significantly from that of Rebekah.

[25] George Eliot, Middlemarch, ch. 3, p.21.

[26] George Eliot, Middlemarch, ch. 5, p.36.

[27] George Eliot, Middlemarch, ch 10, p.75.

and feeling flashes back as a new organ of knowledge"[28] can be detected in both of Schreiner's beloved heroines. Nowhere is Eliot's implicit dissolution of the rigid phallocentric boundaries between the rational and the non-rational more explicitly presented by Schreiner than in Rebekah's passionate theory. Unlike the social evolutionary theory of Spencer, or the Idealist philosophising of Pearson, Rebekah's theory is ori ented to the imagining of other discursive possibilities rather than to the phallocentric reduction of meanings and the privileging of one subjectivity. If her theory is part logical argumentation it also upholds the value of the visionary and it stresses the close proximity of the two modes of thought; it is truly an "intellectual passion"[29].

Rebekah's theory consists of an interweaving of logical argumentation, allegory, poetry and oration. Therefore, any distinction made between her theory and her dream/allegory in my discussion does not imply that From Man to Man itself conforms to any perceived opposition between these modes. Both Rebekah's theory and her dream function to signify her desire and to transgress conventional generic boundaries. They are the excess to that very logic which would dichotomise dream and theory, fiction and non-fiction, reason and desire.

This interweaving of logical argumentation ("prose argument") and allegory, the figurative, is evident in much of Rebekah's intervention into "abstract" theorising; as in Woman and Labour "rational" argument is supported by an imaginative projection often in the form of an impassioned and politically cogent political exemplum. A discussion of the relative degree of "civilisation" of the European and Asiatic races (pp.202-3) is supported by images of the "tender" respect for women and for age exhibited by the Chinese. Rebekah compares the Chinese custom of compressing women's feet with the Victorian English compression

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[28] George Eliot, Middlemarch, ch. 22, p.204.

[29] George Eliot, Middlemarch, ch.15, p.129.

of women's bodies through constricting fashions and launches a passionate protest against

> the slavish imitation of fashions which, by their unending change, feed on the vitals of the race through their ignoble demand on the brain of its womanhood, absorbing energy, reason, imagination, and setting, so long as their diseased reign lasts, a limit to the progress and expansion of woman and, with her, of the race. (p.204)

Her argument against those theories of evolution which stress competition and struggle is similarly informed by an appeal to the imagination. This argument must be seen as an explicit refutation of Pearson's imperialistic support of the beneficial effects of "the struggle of tribe against tribe, race against race"[30] in favour of the emphasis on ethical "fitness" championed by Huxley and more particularly on the quality of "altruism" advanced by Henry Drummond[31]. As she says, "to regard this destructive element in existence as the key-note to life on earth is a strange inversion" (p.212) given that "life and growth and evolution are possible only because of mother-love", the principle of the protection of the weak by the strong (p.210). The principle of mother-love is significantly linked to the creative power "men" call their "supreme God, 'the great Creator'" (p.214). God becomes a symbol of the male appropriation of the female reproductive capacity, a capacity which must however be detached from woman-body-matter as the condition of its embodiment in a male God, "the highest intelligence" (p.214).

Rebekah stresses the value of ethical, cultural and aesthetic "fitness" over the "awful struggle" of the physically more powerful (p.217) in an argument which participates in that strain of anti- individualist and anti-laissez faire ideology that stressed the social and cultural inheritance of the race rather than biological heredity.

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30 Collini, p.177.

31 Henry Drummond, Ascent of Man (Hodder and Stoughton, London,1894) pp.1-74.

The vivid depictions of self-sacrificing baboons and altruistic mierkats invoked in support of this advocacy of the "creative" over the "destructive" owe as much to poetic delineation as empirical observation (p.210-12). However, they are in keeping with a late nineteenth-century social and natural science whose foundations lie firmly, despite protestation, in metaphor. It is fitting that Rebekah's discussion of abstract questions concludes with a tribute to the marriage of vision and reason:

> In that strange and lovely power which enables us to see and picture that which we have not in all parts ever fully seen, in the ideals which are clear before the human spirit, have we not the goal to be moved towards? And in our powers of reason the means to find, step by step,the paths that lead to them...? (p.222)

Here the speculative impulse conjoins with the rationalist to circumvent the distinction between utopian desire and political pragmatism.

Rebekah's theory, as presented in three chapters, "Raindrops In The Avenue", "Fireflies In The Dark", and "The Veranda", can be seen as a reiteration and a foreshadowing of the ideological positions enunciated in Schreiner's own overtly "theoretical" Woman and Labour. These three chapters do in effect constitute a précis of the major concerns of Woman and Labour with the addition of an extended exposition on the role of art and the artist. The issue of racism is also dealt with in greater detail in From Man to Man than in any of the works discussed as is the interconnection of white supremacy with the oppression of women - the repression of the sexual and racial "other" by a white male hegemony.

Rebekah's struggle for emancipation quite explicitly links the feminist cause with a loosening of an imperialist denigration of the non-white and an ethnocentric depreciation of cultural difference. This is most apparent in "Fireflies In The Dark" in which Rebekah recounts her dream of the reversal of white and black race relations to her sons. Her attempts to free herself from Frank and from the social conditions constricting women's choices (restrictive fashions are particularly

targeted in this instance [p.440]) are overtly linked with the struggle against a racism of which Frank is emblematic in his treatment of the black servant who is the mother of Sartje, his child. My discussion is however primarily concerned with the issue of female sexuality and Rebekah's entry into discourse.

Verbal and thematic echoes abound between Woman and Labour and From Man to Man and express their concurrent production. A Romantic commitment to the conception of the wholeness and intrinsic interconnection of the Universe - a conception subjected to considerable scrutiny in The Story of an African Farm - is a feature common to both: Rebekah sees "nowhere a sharp line of severance, but a great, pulsating, always interacting whole" (p.181). The notion of the arbitrary Will is, as in Woman and Labour, symbolised by an impermanent "heap", this time of toys, rather than sand (p.179). For a "man" holding to the superseded "Christian conception" of the Universe:

> the Universe could resemble only the heap of toys which a child gathers about it on the floor: doll, bugle, brick, book, having no subtle, living, connection with each other, being there together only because the will of the child has brought them there. (p.179)

In a rather mischievous translation of the image presented in Woman and Labour a child replaces Napoleon as the emblem of the arbitrary will in a vignette which recalls Coleridge's complaint that:

> Frequently all things appear little, all the knowledge that can be acquired child's play; the universe itself! what but an immense heap of little things?...My mind feels as if it ached to behold and know something great, something one and indivisible[32].

Also as in Woman and Labour, the assertion of the affiliated Romantic proposition of the revelatory potential of the particular (p.182-3) feeds directly into a positing of Freethought as an ethical imperative - the "true act of religious worship" becomes "the search after a knowledge of all reality" (p.182).

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32 Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth: A Biography, The Early Years 1770-1803 (Oxford U.P., 1957) p. 344. Letter dated 16 Oct, 1797.

However, whereas in Woman and Labour the Reformation functions as the historical locus of Schreiner's investments, in From Man to Man the "impassable mental chasm" which has widened between a past which "found virtue in faith" and a present which locates it in a "keen unending questioning of the facts of life" (p.178) is attributed to the political and ideological crisis of the late-eighteenth century. It is this crisis and the epistemological upheaval it produced to which Rebekah ascribes the widening gap between the beliefs of the Christian Fathers and "the mass of men" of her own generation (p.178) - a gap to which her own work actively contributes.

However, of more crucial concern to the present discussion, is the relation of Rebekah's theory to the empiricism and "truth" it appears to uphold in the opening stages of its exposition. Although Rebekah's theory is anti-utilitarian and anti-empirical in its generality, empiricism is justified to an extent given that, due to the replacement of religious faith by scientific rationalism:

> we, who are dominated by this new conception of existence, are compelled to look upon the exact knowledge of even the smallest and most insignificant fact as sacred, never knowing when it may turn into the key which may unlock for us the meaning of part of that great universal life of which it is an integral fragment. (p.181)

Although this formulation of the empirical as a "key" to universal unity may sound disturbingly similar to Waldo's Spencerian and universalising naturalism, Rebekah's justification is integrally tied to the connection between truth, knowledge and morality. This connection between reason and virtue is evocative of Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Woman and is deployed in the specific interests of women's access to knowledge. The opening stages of Rebekah's theorising, therefore, while appearing perilously close to Waldo's implicit laudation of empiricism, function in fact as a contemporary translation of Wollstonecraft's strategic equation of knowledge, rationality and virtue.

It is, after all, "the hunger of the fierce young soul for knowledge" (p.174) - a fierce young female soul - which is the driving force of Rebekah's intervention into

discourse. "Truth" in Rebekah's text acquires its value not in its character as "the knowledge of certain facts for a definite purpose" but rather as one which seeks "knowledge of all facts and all relations" (p.180) in a repudiation of the utilitarian ethic. Rebekah does not seek a knowledge or truth designed to suit a particular purpose; she seeks the ethical and political enlightenment associated with rationality according to Wollstonecraft's potent formula. Or, in George Eliot's terms, it is the "lamp of knowledge" itself which Rebekah seeks - a lamp which illuminates the path to "action at once rational and ardent"[33]. To "men of the past" is attributed an attitude which held knowledge desirable only if "direct personal advantage to individuals could be seen to flow from it", an attitude which could hold as "virtuous" acts of outright deceit if "personal good seemed to flow from it" (p.178). In contrast, the "new" orientation to a "knowledge of all reality", an open and objective appraisal of facts, is denoted truly "virtuous".

However Rebekah's argument is less concerned with a minute knowledge of "the shading of the down on a butterfly's wing, the exact nature of a handful of earth, the antennae of a beetle" (p.178), than with women's right to pursue such questions alongside men in the name of virtue. Following Wollstonecraft, Rebekah's philosophy designates the "great sin" as an absence of truth or personal sincerity - a sin of which the most notable perpetrator in the novel is the meek Veronica Grey, subtly alluded to in the description of that spirit "encased in a fair and gentle body" whose hypocrisy and insincerity render it "a rotten apple with dead seeds and a worm at its core, and a shining surface" (p.185).

This concerted discussion of Truth is deployed to support Rebekah's acknowledgment of the political determination of truth. The "new attitude to truth" expressed in scientific rationalism is depicted as influencing "all our personal relations in practical life", a point strategically illustrated by contrasting the "new" mother with her "old" counterpart (p.183). The old mother, the religious mother, is

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[33] George Eliot, Middlemarch, ch. 10, p.75.

depicted as praying that her child may "cling to the dogmas which she would teach it" allowing nothing to "turn its faith from them". The new mother desires that her child may "seek after truth", rejecting even those things she teaches it if it perceives them to be "false" (p.183). The personal, in this case the relation between mother and child, is thus presented as determined by the impersonal, the public, the political. The impact of the "new attitude" on "the emotional relations between man and woman" (p.184) is also considered in a discussion which once again highlights the effects of a shift in ideological emphasis upon individual relations. Both the issue of motherhood and the issue of male/female relations are perceived as integrally bound to the social relations of power.

How then does Rebekah deploy her formulation of truth to ends other than the conservative ones commonly generated by this concept? Her call for truth is, as has been stated, a call for an acknowledgment of the "facts"; the greatest wrong is the wilful misleading of a person as to any reality, the juggling with facts to "outwit the Universe and make that which he knows is not as if it were" (p.182). And, it might be added, to make that which he knows to be, as if it were not. Hence, her anti-idealist stance on art (p.183) and her demand for an uncompromising realism - an abandonment of idealisation in representation which pertains most particularly to the idealisation of women.

Having elevated the value of facts, truth and reality in the face of tendentious representation, Rebekah's theoretical tactic involves the presentation of certain facts designed to enlighten the reader through the faculty of reason. Needless to say, her "facts" support a reality quite different from that constructed by a patriarchal logic which represses otherness; Rebekah's theory highlights the politics of a knowledge which reveals certain facts and certain truths at the expense of others.

These facts are marshalled to support the cause of feminism and anti-racism - the causes of those specifically manipulated by a patriarchal social reality. It functions chiefly as a diatribe against tyranny in its multifarious forms, tyranny effected through knowledge and discourse. The concept of organicism, a notion of

humanity as "a solidarity and a whole with all its parts reacting on one another" (p.188) is deployed, for example, in an assault on individualism and male dominance.

In a development of the social decline theory propounded in Woman and Labour, Rebekah states that the "high point of advance, intellectual and moral" associated with Greece in the fourth century B.C. is an illusion and that the level of culture achieved was only "the possession of a few males who constituted the dominant class in a few cities of Greece" (p.189). This "culture", rather than representing reality, is depicted as an "iridescent film" concealing the reality of a seething servile class comprising slaves and women "nominally of the dominant class, but hardly less servile" (p.189). Sectional growth such as this represents only transient growth - "the few are ultimately drawn back" (p.191).

Social and sexual equality is thus posited as essential to social progress. The realisation of social perfection, a perfection touted by conservative social evolutionists and utopian socialists alike, wants more than "the solitary unit"; it wants "the interaction of the whole society" (p.193). Crucial to the realisation of this ideal is the freedom, the civic rights and the equal share in "the material welfare" of the state of every member of society (p.190). The necessity of collective over individual advancement, of social over merely personal transformation is the "reality", the "fact" proposed by Rebekah's theory:

> The man who dreams today that the seeking of material good for himself alone is an evil, who persistently shares all he has with his fellows, is not necessarily a fool dreaming of that which never has been or will be; he is simply dreaming of that which will be perfectly attainable when the dream dominates his fellows and all give and share. Working it alone, it fails, because the individual is part of an organism which cannot reach its full unfolding quite alone. (p.193)

Although Rebekah's theory contains linguistic echoes of George Eliot in its appeal to organicist imagery the conclusions reached differ markedly. While Eliot situates change in the personal, in the individual and "unhistoric" acts of a Dorothea Brooke or a Maggie Tulliver, Rebekah is committed to the social transformation necessary for the development of a "new attitude" (p.183). Her desires do, however,

coincide quite closely with those of the visionary Daniel Deronda whose reformist dream is proven to be inseparable from the construction of a new nation. The problem of endemic social inequality is seen in his case to demand more than a change of heart.

Racism and the oppression of women are the two tyrannies most extensively and passionately treated in Rebekah's theory and in the dream section which forms its complement and companion piece ("Fireflies In The Dark"). Both deploy a version of social evolutionism against those who would insist on the natural superiority of "Northern fair-skins" (p.203) and of all men over all women. The two struggles are closely allied in From Man to Man even though the novel throws its considerable weight behind Rebekah's rather than Sartje's struggle.

The evolution allegory presented in "Fireflies in the Dark", while reinforcing its presager in taking as its subject British imperialist pride, differs from the earlier piece in its concentration on the evolution of knowledge. As in Woman and Labour human social evolutionary development is traced through several distinguishable stages, each marked by the particular knowledge acquired (pp.426-30). The history culminates in civilised "man" who is characterised by his capacity to write (p.427).

The emphasis in the evolution parable which Rebekah relates to her children falls strongly upon the modern debt both to past knowledge and to forms of knowledge other than the rationalist and the scientific - to knowledges "different from ours" (p.421). A crucial aspect of this history of knowledge is the inherent democracy of various knowledges; hierarchical distinction between the practical and the theoretical, poetic and scientific, knowledge is eschewed. Scientific knowledge for example rediscovers and recasts what "men of Asia saw years ago" (p.432). Western and Eastern, past and present, rational and visionary modes of knowing are cast into significant relationship and accorded equal weighting (although science does at times appear to play poor cousin to Eastern philosophy and the poetic-visionary impulse) in a history which is itself visionary.

Rebekah is driven in this history to clear the vision of a Western ethnocentrism blinded to the ac hievements of non-white cultures, in particular the Asian and African. The parable evokes an image of knowledge as a cultural product with the white Westerner described as the "parvenu" (p.430), the nouveau-riche recipient of a cultural property whose foundation lies in the so-called non-civilised past and present:

> From the ancient civilisations of Asia and Africa, ancient and complete, when we were merely savage, have we not got all the foundation and much of the superstructure of what we possess? Art, science, letters, all are their original creation, merely taken over by us. (p.202)

Of importance also is the fact that, as in Woman and Labour, woman as well as race is inserted into a history which normally excludes both. Rebekah's evolution parable is one which, rather than reproducing the "reasoned history of man"[34], highlights the contribution of women both to social production and to the production of knowledge:

> Somewhere women found that, if you shaped vessels of clay and baked them in fire, they would stand great heat, and they learnt to work in them. Somewhere men found that, if you put some kinds of earth into a great heat, you could smelt it. (p.426)

The emphasis on the division of male and female roles does not support the sexual division of labourbut casts into relief the separate and yet interconnnected history of women and accords it recognition as different, specific, and of equal significance to that of the male.

Women's role in the production of "books" is of special interest in this history. For, as Rebekah claims:

> when I hold these paper leaves between my fingers, far off across the countless ages I hear the sound of women beating out the fibres of hemp and flax to shape the first garment, and, above the roar of the wheels and spinnies in the factory, I hear the whirr of the world's first spinning wheel and the voice of the woman singing to herself as she sits beside it, and know that without the labour of those first women kneeling over the fibres and beating them swiftly out, and without the hum of those early

[34] Burrow, p.83.

> spinning wheels, neither factory nor paper pulp would ever have come into existence. (p.430)

Women's role in the production of the knowledge so often deployed against them in its drive to efface its material foundations is acknowledged in this passage. If it can be said of those past thinkers that "they laid the foundations down; we raise the walls!" (p.430), the same applies to the feminine itself which provides the material foundations of knowledge and is so often absorbed into its operations.

The nature of Rebekah's relation to knowledge is an issue which arises in this context. Unlike the male "parvenu" she does not merely appropriate knowledge to herself nor does she participate in discourse against her own body, her femininity. Her speculative or dream-reason projections position themselves in the interstices between logic and unreason, masculinity and femininity. They partake of both terms as Rebekah swings the interconnecting door between the social and the natural on her way to the room which represents the excess of such dichotomous formulations.

Her act of speculation in itself challenges that discursive system which assigns women to the negative side of reason, defining their value as the silent and passive supporters of male speculation[35]. As the supplement to the phallocentric speculation in which woman's only value is her lack, absence and complementarity, Rebekah's location within her own discourse is constantly shifting. Never speaking as master or mistress, her voice adopts numerous positions, perspectives amd modes of discourse thereby eschewing both mastery by and of the Word. When Rebekah injects women into a history from which they are largely absent (as does Schreiner in Woman and Labour) it is not only "of" women she speaks but "as" woman. When her history of social evolutionism is enunciated it is simultaneously a critique of social evolutionism. When her scientific acumen is flaunted it is a display which undermines the privileging of science and empiricism over vision, poetry and the non-rational.

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35 Irigaray, Speculum, p.177.

The issue of social, sexual and racial injustice consumes From Man to Man. Rebekah's approach to the irrational fear of the other, whether a racial other, or the Other *par excellence*, the feminine, is to apply a scrupulously rationalistic and logical argumentation against universal generalisation, against a scientific or philosophical truth which cannot account for the particular. Deploying a familiar nineteenth-century literary and philosophical tactic, she contrasts legal justice with morality and conducts a sophisticated and inspirited exposure of the collaboration between the law, truth and social power:

> You say that of course no definite concrete action can be set down as marking out the criminal, that it is one in one society and another in another, but that he is yet easily marked off: he is the man who in any society refuses to submit to the laws which its dominating power has instituted and who persists in facing the punishments and penalties it ordains. (p.199)

Travellers along that "broad road of opposition to law and authority" include both the ignorant and the enlightened, both the "selfish" and the "white robed sons of the gods with the light on their foreheads, who have left the narrow paths walled in by laws and conventions" (p.199).

However, the investments of Rebekah's theory lie not in merely challenging social laws and conventions, the trappings of phallocentric sociality, but in undermining in its generality the symbolic law which underwrites them. Her specific "path of resistance to law" (p.199) consists in the production of new and different truths about natural and social law, racial equality and relations between men and women. In this she can be seen as undertaking the project abandoned by Lyndall and as attempting the self-delivery of which she dreamt.

Prostitution is Included in Rebekah's inventory of politically-determined social crimes. She asks:

> Who is the prostitute - the wretched woman whom the policeman drags along the street, or the man, often of wealth and learning and power, whose selfish lust and gold alone keep alive the institution whose bitter fruit she is? When you have crushed and destroyed the woman prostitute, what have you done more than cut out the the tiny rotten place on the surface of an apple, while you leave gnawing away in the dark at the core the worm that produced it. (p.198)

The prostitute's ambiguous relation to the law is effectively evoked in this brief but intense vignette. She is both the "fruit" and the refuse of a law supported by male "wealth, learning and power". Product of a law, a patriarchal institution which at the same time vilifies and excludes her, projecting onto her body its desire and loathing of the corporeal, the prostitute is a "criminal" whose crime cannot be successfully eradicated while the existing power relations between men and woman remain intact. As this passage acknowledges, to remove her is to remove "one tiny rotten place" - the "worm" of patriarchal law continues to gnaw away in the dark.

Rebekah's theory is the place of self-exploration, of attempted self-reflection in which she plays out her ideas, constructs other possibilities and where desire holds sway. Here she leaves aside her prescribed function as the castrated mother who nourishes speculation while being appropriated and discarded by it. In the "elsewhere"[36] of her room, her theory, she turns speculation to her ends without becoming simply absorbed into it; it is emphatically not the word of the Master which is repeated but rather the word of a woman attempting to foresee a future beyond the law which conditions both her subordination and her affirmation. Reason and desire converge in her ruminations as philosophical expatiation interweaves with imaginative play, as what is interplays with what ought to be.

Nowhere is the intermarriage of poetry, vision and science more clearly evinced than in the closing exposition of the prophetic nature of art. Rebekah's theory of art which is detailed in "The Veranda" via a dialogue with Drummond, a potential lover, casts an illuminating light on Schreiner's literary technique, a theory and practice which has much in common, particularly in this novel, with that of Shelley, one of her professed favourites.

The similarities of Schreiner's and Shelley's disposition to political, religious and philosophical tyranny are obvious - opposition to tyranny in its multifarious

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[36] See Irigaray, "Power of Discourse", This Sex, p.77.

forms is a motivating impulse in the work of both. Less overtly signalled, however, is the tendency of both to displace poetry, or, in Schreiner's case, vision, into the heart of a rationalistic knowledge to which it is conventionally opposed. For Shelley, poetry is "at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and to which all science must be referred"[37]. To Rebekah:

> One day the man of science will realise the poet's dream, that dream -'So it is!' - which he would not and could not be shaken out of. The creative artist does not so much recall the life of the race; he paints its future, just as he often does his own. It can't be explained! (p.470-1)

Poetry and art for Rebekah, as for Shelley, are prophetic. Her theory and dream/allegory represent not only an appraisal of present social and sexual inequalities but function simultaneously, in an ironic reformulation of Carlyle's concept of the "Prophetic Manuscript", as speculative projections into a future of universal democracy. Art functions thus in From Man to Man as an affirmation of desire, a self-affirming prophecy in which not only is the possibility of future social perfectibility recognised but also the social and sexual injustices which must be overcome as its precondition.

Schreiner's writing (and here it overlaps with Rebekah's theory), while idealistic in its broadest connotation never loses touch with the reality of social injustice nor with the possible uses of idealism and idealisation themselves as modes of political oppression. The idealism expressed in works such as Woman and Labour and From Man to Man constitutes a desire, particular in its delineation, for social and sexual equality. If the writing of Schreiner and Rebekah is prophetic or visionary in its orientation, this is a prophetic mode which, rather than disavowing existent oppressive regimes (a claim which could be levelled with qualifications at the prophetic pronouncements of a writer such as Carlyle), seeks to anticipate and effect the social renovation which is the object of its desire. In this project, neither

[37] Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry", Shelley's Poetry and Prose, eds. D.H. Reiman, and S. Powers, (W.W. Norton and Co., New York, 1977) p.503.

optimism nor pessimism, the real nor the ideal, the present nor the future, is permitted to monopolise the political or literary agenda.

Bertie and the shadow of male desire

This orientation to both vision and objective reality, the present and a possible future, is emblematised not only in the novel's movement between realist narrative and philosophy/dream/allegory but also in the characters of the two sisters, Bertie and Rebekah, themselves. Thus far this discussion has centred on Rebekah exclusively. Of equal significance, however, and indeed as constitutive of Rebekah's significance in From Man to Man are Bertie and the other women in this text most notably perhaps Veronica Grey.

Of the two sisters, it is Bertie who must bear the weight of femininity in From Man to Man and it is through her that the novel explores the paradoxes and limitations of the phallocentric discursive system. To her family the aptly named Baby-Bertie is the compliant, infantile inhabitant of "the life of the personal relations" (p.121), while to her prospective lover, John-Ferdinand, she is the eternal virgin mother:

> the one absolutely pure and beautiful thing life has ever yet shown me. From all the world of men and women I turn to her to find in her the one absolutely spotless, Christ-like thing I have known. I am a nobler and better man when I am in her presence...For the first time I understand now how men have made a god of woman - the eternal virgin mother! - If I am all the world to her, Rebekah, she is more than all the world to me. (p.122)

For John-Ferdinand, Bertie is a beautiful image to gaze upon, a "mirror" which assures him of his value[38] - "I am a nobler and better man when I am in her presence" - and simultaneously an object onto which is projected his desire for a reassurance of spirituality and perfection. If Bertie is "pure" and "spotless" and

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38 "Now, if this ego [the male] is to be valuable, some "mirror" is needed to reassure it and re-insure it of its value. Woman will be the foundation for this specular duplication, giving man back "his" image and repeating it as the "same". Luce Irigaray, Speculum, p.54.

"Christ-like", the taint of potential sexuality which accrues to her as status as "virgin" is effaced in her simultaneous function for him as "mother" - symbol of a purely reproductive femininity whose desire is expressed in a nurturing passivity and self-abnegation.

As the eternal virgin mother, Bertie's passage from virginity to motherhood necessitates no defloration. As a disembodied femininity, a sublimation of active female sexuality, she is herself John-Ferdinand's own immaculate conception - a conception or representation by means of which he metaphorically gives birth to himself in a process of self-generation which confirms his own value.

A comparable paradox and ambiguity is evident in John-Ferdinand's auto-reflective "dream" of domestic bliss with Bertie:

> Bertie, with her beautiful face and queenly figure lighting up the world about her, till lambs and servants and everyday work reflected that beauty that had made the old farm so lovely to him. He saw her as she had looked that morning at breakfast, when someone had told her that her old Kafir man she was nursing was worse, and she had left her breakfast and gone out....A creature so full of loveliness and love for every living thing, was she not satisfying to the whole soul and body of a man?...he saw children with their mother's fawn-like eyes looking up at him and calling him father, and the thing he loved lying always in his bosom to comfort and complete his life. (pp.132-3)

This dream is redolent with a Dickensian sentimentality and idealisation of woman as the domestic angel. Invested in this ideal, as in the fetishisation of Bertie as the virgin mother, is John-Ferdinand's own comfort and assurance of his "completion". Bertie is placed on a podium in her luminous regality. Yet she is simultaneously a "thing" manifestly required to service the male - to cater to the demands of his children and "everyday work". Her existence is in fact vindicated by the extent to which she "proves satisfying to the whole soul and body of a man". Living proof of the "existence of a relation between body and soul"[39], the possibility of transcendence, she must simultaneously insure the value of the male body. Her

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[39] Irigaray, "Cosi Fan Tutti", This Sex, p.96.

absorption into the material connoted by the domestic idyll in this passage provides John-Ferdinand's comfort and sense of completion through relieving him of the pressure of his own corporeality.

Thus the idealiser imposes his mastery over Bertie and entraps her in an image in which her very regality and superiority presuppose her fundamental incompleteness and submission to the male; she lies always "in his bosom", ready to answer the needs of his subjectivity and sexuality. Through her idealisation as "pure" spirituality she is, ironically, actively submerged in the matter, the "everyday" she apparently transcends. It is, after all, the "everyday" domestic world which reflects and is the condition of her beauty to John-Ferdinand. The effect of his idealisation is, therefore, to deny Bertie's materiality, to enwrap her in the metaphorical garbs of a transcendent spirituality while confirming her in the role of the "body", maternal, virginal, or both, to which he is the "mind". Her "disembodiment" in image or icon thus constitutes her exclusion to the realm of the corporeal.

Bertie functions in John-Ferdinand's scenario as the mirror of the ideal, as confirmation of the spirituality and purity, the "soul" sought by him in a relationship of misapprehension and misunderstanding strikingly similar to that of Tess and Angel Clare in Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles. Like Clare's love for Tess, John-Ferdinand's attraction to Bertie is "more spiritual than animal" and inclined to "the imaginative and the ethereal"[40] in a text which exposes the political investments in the patriarchal deployment of the categories of the spiritual and the ethereal. Bertie, in mirroring, or embodying the ideal, is herself shrouded by John-Ferdinand's "idea" of the "queenly figure" or the eternal virgin mother projected onto her; this idea in effect take her places in the eyes of this "delicate" and sensitive lover (p.106) who is obviously of a mythologising temperament (he is at the time, significantly, annotating a copy of Tennyson's Idylls of the King). To compound Bertie's tragedy, it is precisely for another ideal or projection of his desire that she is ultimately forsaken.

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[40] Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, ch. XXXI, p.257.

Disappointed in Bertie's failure to embody adequately his ideal, John-Ferdinand abandons her for the narcissistic ideal of himself reflected by Veronical Grey. Male narcissism is thus revealed as the primary stake in the sexual transaction.

It is pertinent at this point to comment upon the politics of oppression which frames the conduct of affairs in "the life of the personal relations" - the female domain - as constructed in From Man to Man. As the novel makes clear, the private realm is determined by politics no less than that of the public; the world of personal relations functions as a treacherous underworld in which the Veronicas, the Marthas (the Jew's jealous housekeeper), and the Mrs Drummonds (Frank's mistress) - emblems of a deceitful womanhood - reign supreme. All three are symbols of a moral "rottenness" deplored by Rebekah in her midnight musings and represent an insidious criminality in their capacity to awaken the "terrible distrust of human nature" and to strike at "our faith in our fellows" (p.201).

However, if the domestic is a world of female rivalry and betrayal, it is simultaneously revealed as one in which the socially and politically disenfranchised are literally forced into a desperate struggle for a truncated share in the social spoils of the male. Furthermore, this struggle is not only instigated and condoned but is actively encouraged by the men involved. Veronica Grey gains a foothold in her battle to win John-Ferdinand's affections in the space created by his rejection of Bertie, his inability to accept her "sin" in being seduced by her tutor (p.136). Her decision to write the fateful letter to Mrs Drummond recounting Bertie's sexual indiscretion is likewise conditioned by John-Ferdinand's betrayal of Bertie's faith in telling Veronica the reasons for his rejection of Bertie even though "I took it that she was speaking to me in confidence" (p.164).

Similarly, Martha's machinations, her plot to discredit Bertie's fidelity in the eyes of her possessive lover (pp.393-4) only succeed because of the Jew's selfish jealousy and willingness to believe in the treachery of the obviously innocent Bertie. Mrs Drummond's hypocrisy is framed by Frank's pleasure in pitting women against

each other as can be seen in his nonchalant response to Rebekah's discovery of his chronic adultery (pp.306-10).

The actions taken by these three women should not of course be condoned and stress is placed on the fact that these actions, particularly those of Veronica and Martha, are actually licensed by the male desire for the "angel" and the "queen" he has created to fall from grace. For the fetishised woman such as Bertie, a "body-matter marked by...[male]...signifiers, a prop for their souls-fantasies"[41] is, by definition, destined to a fall which is perceived as justifying the male contempt which paradoxically underlies her idealisation[42]. This fall which symbolises her fundamental inferiority is therefore as crucial to the male fantasy as is her initial support of it; both function ironically to assure the male of his own superiority and completion. As an icon constructed from an impossible and self-contradictory male desire, Bertie is as truly "feminine" in her fall, in her failure to preserve male fantasies (a mark of her constitutional lack) as she is in representing the virgin mother and the queen of courtly love to John-Ferdinand. No longer his ethereal queen , nor the Jew's "doll", she descends into a veniality in the eyes of both men which confirms her absorption into the body in which male speculation has securely maintained her throughout.

However, if Bertie does represent phallocentric conceptualisations which assimilate the feminine with the material, the body, her body remains strangely undesiring and virginal and is without desire and without pleasure in the latter stages of the novel. Her relationship with the Jew is devoid of happiness for Bertie and at no time functions as an expression of her desire. Instead she oscillates hysterically between lethargy and activity, between starvation and over-eating, between the seductions of the masochistic self-denial of a Helen Burns and the excesses of a Bertha Mason. Hidden from the world as Rochester conceals his "mad" wife, entombed as is

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[41] Irigaray, "Cosi Fan Tutti", This Sex, p.96.

[42] See the discussion of the lofty theorist in Chapter Three of the thesis.

Bertha Mason in the fortress of male desires, she becomes a "shadow", a phantasm born of the Jew's nostalgia for his own sister. Thinking of her after their first meeting "he saw Bertie sitting at the agent's table, with her large eyes and her drooping lashes and the curly hair that had brought back the past" (p.333). Kept in the upper chambers of the Jew's house, the character of Bertie constitutes Schreiner's recognition of the male role in producing the "madwoman in the attic", the symbol of depraved feminine sexuality.

In their discussion of From Man to Man First and Scott emphasise the ambivalences it expresses "about women and womanhood" and in particular "the tensions over female sexual energy". The novel, they claim, leaves many of the most significant parts of its story unwritten, including Bertie's life as a prostitute and Rebekah's feelings for Drummond. Although this is interpreted as a documentation of "the absences in women's language", there is a suggestion that Schreiner's construction of female sexuality in the novel hovers dangerously between description and prescription[43].

However, Schreiner's representation of Bertie achieves far more than a documentation of "absences", nor is it satisfied merely to "describe" the contemporary state of women's condition. Its impulse is (as Rebekah's attempt to exceed the bounds of patriarchal law implies) to the provision of alternatives, different models of sexual interaction and female expression. The novel may not pronounce this projection into a future of sexual equality as overtly as does Woman and Labour but an equivocation between social analysis and speculative projection is implicit in the novel's movement between Bertie and Rebekah.

First and Scott's analysis also fails to address the resistance to the social prescription of female sexuality embodied in the character of Bertie herself. Bertie's absence of pleasure with the Jew is concordant with Schreiner's views of the dangers of promoting sexual pleasure for women. Therefore it does not participate in the

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[43] First and Scott, pp.175-7.

repression of this pleasure but provides a pointed revelation of the consequences to women of a sexual economy which, in constructing them as the repositories of the body (of which the "kept" woman is the arch-symbol), in fact deprives them of access to their own pleasure, leaving only the possibility of masochistic satisfaction. Rebekah's "victory" in this sense is her evasion of the mind/body dualism which imposes its schism specifically upon the female.

After Bertie learns that her trust in John-Ferdinand's discretion has been betrayed and that her "secret" has been revealed (pp.166-8) she abandons herself to the world of sensation, symbolised by her oblivious whirling in the dance - "But, Rebekah, you know, I don't care very much whom I dance with now. It's the light and the noise and the going round and round I like" (p.169).

The world of sensation she enters is a male-determined one which she, unlike Rebekah, is unable to circumvent. Instead she becomes engulfed in male fantasies and desires, a process which John-Ferdinand initiates but which culminates in the destructive relationship with the wealthy Jew and which finally alienates her not only from her mother and her sister but also from herself. She assumes the status in From Man to Man of a commodity passed from one male to another, from the faithless tutor to whom she loses her virginity, to the prudish John-Ferdinand, to the possessive Jew. As the muted object of a continual transaction she is robbed of her own self-determination and subjectivity.

Bertie whirls through a metaphorical dance into a system of values not her own and in which the individual man becomes unimportant. The Jew dresses her in queenly robes, adorning her as he would a mannequin in a literal expression of John-Ferdinand's envelopment of her in an idealising veil. It is only in these robes, this chimerical apparel which is the fabric of their desires, that Bertie can appear to these men; this is an appearance predicated, therefore, upon the absence of Bertie herself. It is only by submerging her identity as the flesh and blood woman that she can assume the role of the expensive doll, the virgin mother, or the queen (a role imposed upon her, siginificantly, by the Jew's amorous cousin as well as by John-

Ferdinand) for her capricious idolators/captors. It is paradoxically her absence which constitutes her presence to them - an ambiguous "negativity" upon which is propped their fantasies but which poses the gravest problems for the discursive economy and representational system they embody.

Dressed in the "clothes" of the Jew's desires Bertie walks the streets of London daily as if in a dream (p.372), dispossessed of her sense of self and purpose. During her walk along the Esplanade at St-Leonard's-on-Sea where the Jew has deposited her for a holiday in the care of Isaac, his servant, she is drawn to contrast the reality represented by the homes she observes with the unreality and emptiness of her own existence:

> They were homes....They were real houses, with real people; it was not a nightmare; they were all real; it was she and Issac walking up and down, up and down on the pavement, that were so strange. (p.378)

In this passage"home" is symbolic of Bertie's sense of identity and self-possession and is the equivalent of Rebekah's room, a relation to herself and to others she is denied by the Jew who maintains her in a state of closely guarded isolation. Deprived of this relation to herself, dispossessed of the possibility of pleasure, she does indeed become the shadow, the space, the hollow masquerade that patriarchal representation would have her.

It is significant that Rebekah's engagement in a reformulated mode of speculation, her attempt to construct a place for herself in discourse, is eventually dependent upon her withdrawal from the role of mirror of Frank's value. As a condition of her attempted entry into discursive production, and potential subjectivity, she effectively "buys" back her body, refusing to allow it to function any longer as the locus of his desire, inscribed with a value which pertains only to her natural and social <u>use</u>. In her ultimatum to him upon discovery of his affair with Mrs Drummond she proposes to attend to his material wants and to provide for her own personal needs with the understanding that "from tonight, you and I will never be anything more to one another than any man or woman who pass each other in the

street for the first time" (p.304). Her refusal of further sexual relation with Frank constitutes a refusal to be counted among his conquests, to become yet another reassurance of his masculinity, interchangeable with all others. Through her provisional entry into discourse she lifts herself from that absorption into the body into which Bertie, the "prostitute", eventually falls.

Rebekah's adjustment does not symbolise a refutation of the body or the selection of language and masculinity over the feminine. As has been stressed, she is simultaneously speculator, mother and dreamer; her speculations are distinctive in their transgression of the opposition of speculative to material considerations. Bertie, the "feminine" woman according to Veronica Grey, on the other hand, is reduced to the status of a doll, a plaything for the Jew and later his cousin from which they derive amusement and a sense of their own power. This power is expressed in the Jew's absolute control over Bertie's activities and finally in his coldhearted expulsion of her. The model of femininity imposed upon Bertie is, therefore, one which serves male interests alone and which in alienating her from her interests (housework and gardening among them) effectively transforms her into the bored and neurotic sex-parasite which attracts Schreiner's concerted attention in Woman and Labour.

Bertie drifts through the latter part of the novel in a dream-like lethargy, an endless process of repetition symbolised by the fountain and ball display in the shop window she is compulsively drawn to on her daily walk:

> The water came up like a tiny geyser and threw the balls in the air and always as they fell the water caught them again and threw them up. Every day she looked at them. The first day she had looked with interest; afterwards it became a terrible compulsion - she must look... She felt a kind of sick shrinking; yet she always had to watch them always do the same thing, - they were always the same, like the curtains in the drawing room and the chair before the fire and the sofa in the bedroom, always the same. (p.373)

Bound like the balls in a repetitive stasis, a living death, Bertie is emblematic of the status of the feminine in phallocentrism[44]. It is no co-incidence

[44] Irigaray, Speculum, p.78.

that she feels a "sick shrinking" at the oppressive and stifling power of the sameness, the economy of the Same, which conditions the cycle of repetition and reproduction to which she as a woman is committed.

Therefore, it is Bertie, the illicit "fallen" woman who lives outside social convention and legality, who paradoxically conforms most closely with the norms of the masochistic, passive, parasitical femininity prescribed by patriarchy. It is, on the other hand, Rebekah who, as wife and mother is ostensibly held within its sway, who challenges the edicts and tests the resilience of patriarchal boundaries. She claims the "elsewhere" of the room of sexual difference and refuses to trade herself for less than she considers herself worth. She metaphorically resists being deprived, without a struggle, of a relation to desire, discourse and subjectivity. Bertie, on the other hand, undergoes a process of "passification", of disempowerment and of subjection to her "guilt", the stain of her first sexual "sin". This condition of symbolic paralysis is one also experienced by that other tragic heroine Undine following her "bartering" of herself to a husband she does not love. She, like Bertie, "grew quieter, colder, but more passive and submissive every week"; she drifts indifferently through the social and marital demands placed upon her, experiencing the effects of her "prostitution", however legal, as self-alienation[45].

In accepting her passivity and shame, following her final valiant effort to conquer her past in Cradock (pp.314-40), Bertie is further subjected to it; her passivity and conformity to the feminine norm of submission, rather than expiating her sin in the eyes of others, are revealed as confirming her in her so-called guilt and as pulling her firmly under its mastery. Thus From Man to Man evokes the dilemma of the "feminine" woman; to accept the passivity imposed upon her, rather than increasing her "value", serves merely to confirm the devalued status of female sexuality, functioning as an acknowledgment of the lack attributed to it.

45 Schreiner, Undine, "A Very Wicked Woman", pp.131-2.

Thus the question arises as to whether Bertie's real "sin", according to society, is her loss of virginity or simply being born a woman. Certainly the two losses - her loss of the hymen, and her constitutional "lack" - converge as the novel progresses and she further submits to the male needs and desires which constitute her in particular ways. It is, for example, only after her acquiescence to the Jew's possessive rule that she steps, apparently irrevocably, into the deathly lethargy and the death of her will and autonomy which confirms her in his power.

This leads to a consideration of the deterministic nature of Bertie's downfall. Although resistant to the potentially disastrous implications of her "fall" initially, following Veronica's momentous deployment of the written word against her (her letter to Mrs Drummond), the process of Bertie's dissolution and dispersal progresses with a tragic inevitability. The novel obviously relies upon the emotional impact of this decline to emphasise the hypocrisy of the double standard informing Victorian sexual mores and to underline what Schreiner perceives as the debased sexual relation characterising a society in which "the brothel reigns and the ideals which the brothel presupposes" (p.194).

This decline does connote a certain hopelessness regarding women's ability to reconstruct themselves reminiscent of Maggie Tulliver's resignation to self-sacrificing death. However, unlike The Mill on the Floss, Schreiner's novel balances this pessimism with an evocation of a Rebekah struggling against passive acceptance of woman's "destiny". Where Maggie "chooses" the river of oblivion, an oblivion associated both with sexual desire and self-denial, an equation expressive of the phallocentric non-recognition of female desire, Rebekah resists both dimensions of this connection of femininity with death. As will be discussed, when as a child she "selects" death in taking the dead baby as her own, it is a death which evades the feminine-negative-death equation perpetuated by The Mill on the Floss, although of

course, as Gillian Beer has shown[46], Maggie's death is very much a fantastic escape from the very determinism which eventually crushes Bertie.

From Man to Man signals its difference from George Eliot's novel both in its determination not to provide Bertie with an easy solution to the suffering experienced by a considerable proportion of women in her society and also in its provision of an alternative, a possibility for change. While From Man to Man is strikingly similar to The Mill on the Floss in its tendency to what Jacobus terms "an imaginative reaching beyond analytic and realistic modes to the metaphors of unbounded female desire"[47] (a projection similar to that of Luce Irigaray) it embodies the expression of transgressive and liberating desire in the tenacious and vividly alive Rebekah. The "sacrifice" she makes is extremely different from that demanded of Maggie and Bertie. Relinquishing her sexual relationship with Frank, Rebekah lives an autonomous life on her own property with her children. It is, in this way, a highly ambiguous sacrifice, a tactical renunciation similar to that alluded to in Woman and Labour, which functions to endow her with sexual and economic independence. Rebekah's separation from Frank constitutes a fantasy of a different kind from that constructed in Eliot's novel. Like Maggie, Rebekah escapes from Victorian social strictures in an escape which, rather than advocating chastity and self-denial, functions within Schreiner's sexual ideology as an evasion of the patriarchal control of women through their sexuality. Unlike Maggie's, this escape is not dependent upon death. A plausible and pragmatic alternative is thus provided.

It is necessary to stress, in the light of accounts such as First and Scott's which emphasise Schreiner's evasion of the subject of "the differentiation between men's and women's [sexual] needs" (p.175), that when Rebekah leaves Frank she is quite explicitly abandoning his exploitation of her as a procreative machine, as one of

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46 Gillian Beer, "Beyond Determinism: George Eliot and Virginia Woolf", Women Writing and Writing About Women, ed. Mary Jacobus (Croom Helm, London, 1979) pp.80-99.

47 Mary Jacobus, "Men of Maxims and The Mill on the Floss", Reading Woman, p.79.

the numerous women who service him. Satisfaction of her own desire is impossible, as the novel recognises, in such a sexual situation; the relation with Frank in fact demands her submission to his desire and a silencing of her own needs. Her decision to spend more time on her farm signals her participation in the economic exchange system as an owner of property rather than an object of transaction. It constitutes, in this way, an investment in her own property, her own self.

The expression of woman's desire is not ignored. Rather, it is projected into a future of social and sexual equality, in a Garden of Eden image which recalls that in Woman and Labour, in which "men should teach women and women should teach men" (p.84). If passivity and self-denial is acknowledged as a powerful Victorian prescription on femininity it is simultaneously, through Bertie, exposed as patriarchy's greatest weapon against women; to accept the norm is to acquiesce in a metaphorical death of the self in From Man to Man. However, if Bertie is held firmly by patriarchal law, her ambiguous social position functions to highlight the paradoxes, limitations, and misconceptions blurring the transparent clarity of its representations of women.

Rebekah's and Bertie's lives are paradoxically similar, despite the apparent difference between the possibilities they embody. As the novel makes clear the realms of the "personal" and the "impersonal" of which the two sisters are to some degree representative, are socially constructed. It is not, for Rebekah, a matter of selecting the social over the domestic, nor for Bertie of choosing the personal over the public. The social is seen as no less operative in the life of either.

In the home, the province of the individual, both must submit to the law as embodied in the father-lover-husband. The domestic certainly affords no escape from the social. Indeed it is, as Bertie discovers through her experiences with Mrs Drummond, Veronica, and Martha, the locus of patriarchal dominance; it is through his acquisition of her as private property that the Jew imposes his rule over her. There is no physical escape from the law for either sister as female subject/objects -

their fates are similar in this respect, a fact symbolised in From Man to Man by the subliminal figure of the prostitute which haunts the novel.

As the "public" woman, the prostitute inserts herself into the place of masculine interaction. Outside the law in the sense of exceeding its prescriptions on legitimate female behaviour, she is at the same time the most "feminine" of women - object of male desire and consumption. An explicit, self-pronounced commodity, she is situated firmly within the law which defines woman as body-matter-sexuality. She is, therefore, neither private nor public but both; neither inside nor outside the law but both. She exceeds these oppositions.

The prostitute in patriarchal culture is, as Schreiner recognises, the model for patriarchal female heterosexuality - a femininity defined through its sexuality and commodity status. Rebekah and Bertie are both prostitutes in this sense. Bound by the same law, they function as two expressions of a patriarchal femininity constructed as sold into the service of the male, a fact also acknowledged in Undine in the scene in which Undine recognises the "fallen woman" as "one who is of our own flesh and blood"[48].

Thus the issue of prostitution is the veiled centre-piece of From Man to Man. In its capacity to exceed dichotomous logic, to partake of the legitimate and the illegitimate, the exterior and the interior, it functions within the novel's structure as a Derridean "hinge" term. The prostitute is both banished to the outskirts of the law and yet firmly tied to its interior workings - she is both the "tiny rotten place on the surface of an apple" and "the dark at the core" (p.198). Bertie, in this way, rather than merely representing a disempowered victim of patriarchal sexual ideology, functions as both the model of patriarchal femininity and the point at which its logic is most unsteady.

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48 Schreiner, Undine, "A Very Wicked Woman", p.134.

Olive Schreiner and the Masked Woman

The character of Veronica Grey constitutes a comparable exploration of the impotence of phallocentric discourse where "woman" is concerned. Veronica is the patriarchal "idea of woman"[49] - a transparent surface, the embodiment of self-effacement and service to others. She is the Little Dorrit or the Esther Summerson of From Man to Man. Marked by her "perfect placidity" (p.124), she is "so curiously still in all her movements that the house seemed quiet and empty" (p.143). "Wherein lies this woman's charm?" asks Rebekah of herself when she observes Veronica's subtle hold over her family.

Her charm lies in the emptiness she flaunts. The epitome of stillness, passivity and self-negation, Veronica functions in the novel as the blank space, the silent reflecting mirror, an unthreatening symbol of the castrated femininity posited by phallocentric sexual theory. Her one desire is to serve others (pp.125-6). Obviously lacking in herself, she is a body waiting to be inscribed by John-Ferdinand's desires, to submit her ego to his, and to confirm him in his presence and worth. She is the blank space of phallocentric femininity, the silent reflecting mirror which upholds and guards male narcissistic self-regard and valuation through her very lack of value[50]. To John-Ferdinand she is "myself. When I speak to you I speak within my own soul" (p.164).

However, while Veronica plays the role of patriarchal femininity to placid perfection and while she deliberately devalues herself and sells herself for less than her worth, she is at the same time a reflective mirror with another side, with ideas and desires of its own. The lack, the emptiness, the nothing worn by Veronica is revealed to be a lie, a mask which is assumed in public. Veronica, the "guardian of the negative"[51], brings the negativity attributed to the feminine fully into play in From

[49] Irigaray, Speculum, p.82.

[50] Irigaray, Speculum, p.73.

[51] Irigaray, Speculum, p.111.

Man to Man in a movement which occurs on both a conscious and unconscious textual level. On a conscious level, Veronica is the mistress of artifice and duplicity - a duplicity which invites contrast with the more positive "doubleness" of the recalcitrant Rebekah. Her stillness and assimilation into the negative may reassure those around her (if not the astute Rebekah and Griet, the Kafir servant who despises Veronica) but she is a negativity conscious of its own quiet and lurking power. If she is a reflective mirror, it is a mirror which actively intervenes in the reflective process. Veronica does after all write the most effective letter in the novel; addressed to Mrs Drummond, it seals Bertie's social ostracism (p.165). As a collaborator with the privileged users of language against women, it is appropriate that it is through the letter, the word, that she contributes to Bertie's social death. It must be mentioned that, if it is the word which destroys Bertie, it is by means of the word, by the strategic use of the letter, that Rebekah questions the patriarchal construction of the relation of the sexes embraced by the manipulative and self-seeking Veronica.

Veronica is, therefore, both the "ideal" Victorian woman, pure and accommodating, and a deceitful intriguer. Through this ambiguity, From Man to Man undermines a particular ideal of Victorian womanhood perpetuated and reinforced by Dickensian heroines among others. It is interesting in this context to consider the character of Esther Summerson in Bleak House. Esther is the keeper of the keys, the maintainer of phallic mastery while Rebekah is the user of the keys, the male codes and systems which would lock her into the role of perpetual reproduction of that systematicity. Ironically her usage of the keys unlocks their hold on meaning, their regulation of discourse.

In the character of Veronica, Schreiner evokes the underside of this ideal and highlights the frustration and repression which can lurk behind the "fair, gentle woman" (p.201), the placidity of the domestic angel. This element of repression is strikingly suggested in the erotically charged episode in which Veronica makes her first foray into "a man's bedroom" (p.129).

Schreiner herself considered this a "singular" scene which takes the place "of a whole condensed chapter"[52]. Condensation is indeed apparent in the economic fashion in which insight is provided into Veronica's sexual and emotional needs. Living with her mother and four unmarried sisters, her contact with men has been minimal until she meets John-Ferdinand. Years of emotional deprivation are evoked in the simple gesture in which she passes her hand softly over his clothes and "rubbed her cheek gently against the shoulder of the coat" (p.129). However, the sympathy elicited for Veronica in this tactful depiction of her sexual interest ("So a man's shoulder felt when you put your face against it") is quickly dispelled when she shatters the portrait of Bertie on the dressing table.

The ideal of a womanhood perfect in its tranquility is thus revealed as double-edged - as endowing women with an "elevated" status which, in its repression of their needs and desires, condemns them to petty rivalry and waspish self-expression. It highlights the impossibility of that idea and reveals the reality of self-suppression and frustration behind the mask of female docility and self-abnegation. Veronica functions in this way, as does Helen Burns in Jane Eyre, as an emblem of a masochistically inscribed femininity which is rejected by Rebekah (and indeed by Veronica herself) just as Lyndall in The Story of an African Farm rejects the renunciation model of femininity.

On a less conscious level, From Man to Man exploits the concept of duplicity attributed to women in theories such as Freud's and Ellis', revealing the potential of woman (the passive mirror) for self-activation and intervention into the process of reflection and repetition. Veronica, the ideal woman, the perfect reflective surface, becomes an active force; her supposed stillness is in fact poised activity; her placidity, repressed rage and bitterness; her emptiness, a sense of her own claims and potential power; her transparency, a disguised opacity. She reveals herself thus as an image, an excess to the logic which constructs her, an ultimately deceptive

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[52] To Havelock Ellis, 4 December 1884, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.57.

surface, deceptive not in the ways imagined by Ellis, but due to the miscomprehension and underestimation of the assertive powers of the feminine. It is the image of Veronica as a transparent surface, a blank space which proves most deceptive. Her "duplicity" thus functions as a metaphor for the duplicity of a representation of femininity which would describe her in terms of absence and negativity. Through her, From Man to Man highlights the other side of the apparent blankness of woman.

It is appropriate in connection with this to consider the difference between Veronica's letter, her utilisation of the word, with that other letter, Rebekah's letter to Frank (pp.252-98). This letter is an autobiographical insert by means of which she is provided with an opportunity to speak for herself, functioning within the novel as a signifier of desire - Rebekah's desire for Frank is mediated by the love letter, the traditional mode of directing love to the other. Her letter, unlike that written by Lucy Snowe in Charlotte Brontë's Villette, is not "buried" in an act symbolic of the repression (and self-censorship) of female desire[53]. Nor is it a secret letter, concealed from the very man to whom it is directed. Rebekah's desire refuses to be buried or secreted in the face of Frank's infidelity but instead forcefully announces itself in a voice he cannot finally ignore.

Ironically, however, Rebekah's letter, apparently sent to salvage the love between herself and her husband, operates as a dialogue with herself. This dialogue in effect makes the self appear rather than being engulfed in Frank's indifference and refusal to acknowledge her rights. Her letter, and the discourse it comprises, act as an incitement to the self to appear in a movement analogous with the construction of the self predicated upon the child's entry into language[54]. In a sense it actively constructs her love and positions her in relation to her husband. By means of her letter, Rebekah attempts to insert herself, her otherness, into Frank's, the male's

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[53] See Jacobus, "The Buried Letter: Villette", Reading Woman, pp. 41-61.

[54] See Lacan "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I", in Écrits, pp.1-7.

life, in an act symbolic of the resistance to submergence and absorption into his narcissistic love. In the letter, the feminine, the other, announces itself in response to the narcissism of the male, confronting him with his narcissism and refusing to continue as the silent auto-reflector and sustainer of his desire. It stresses Rebekah's existence and autonomy, her significance, her needs and her refusal to acquiesce in her status as "this 'her' who does not exist and who signifies nothing"[55]. It constitutes an attempt to understand, encompass and master events in and through language; it is language which inscribes her as lack, and through language that she confronts the male with her existence and autonomy.

In tearing up the letter, the signifier of Rebekah's desire, Frank embodies the male denial of female autonomy, the demands of this other upon whom his own desire, his own subjectivity is propped. However, these demands refuse to be silenced. Thus the letter functions analogously to Rebekah's theory, dreams and allegory as a mode of signifying desire - a desire which not only disrupts the smooth flow of Frank's self-centred existence, but indeed, the smooth working, the closed and centred functioning of the text itself, as Paul Foot's complaint that the plot gets "lost" in "huge chunks of Rebekah's thinking and secret letter-writing" implies[56].

Rebekah is herself revealingly fascinated by the workings of desire, describing it as "the old, old lure-light, the decoy light" that leads women on a trek which ends in the discovery of "a few white ashes" (p.295). The movement of desire is here revealed as a search to find an object which in fact can never be recovered. It is a metaphorical movement, which, because what is found is never identical or symmetrical with what was lost, degenerates into a metonymic sequence - the endless trek which leads nowhere. This is a point elucidated in Jean Laplanche's discussion of Freud's statement that "a child sucking at his mother's breast has become the prototype of every relation of love. The finding of an object is in fact a refinding of

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[55] Lacan, "God and the *Jouissance* of ~~The~~ Woman", Feminine Sexuality, p.145.

[56] "Introduction", p.xiv.

it"[57]. As Laplanche clarifies, "the object to be rediscovered is not the lost object, but its substitute by displacement"; the lost object and the object of desire are not identical but are, rather, in a relation of "essential contiguity"[58]. Rebekah's poignant complaint about male sexual dishonesty evokes this metonymic chain of unsatisfied and unsatiable desire:

> Is the passion cry with which the man follows one woman for weeks or months or years, chanting that his love ends only with death, with no refrain to say that its death hour is possession and that its life is long because it passes on endlessly to others, - is this always a conscious or unconscious lie? (p.297)

If woman's desire ends specifically in the discovery of "a few white ashes" it is because, while male desire is itself destined to unfulfilment, as the condition of subjectivity and access to language, woman's desire as such is not even afforded recognition within the models formulated by phallocentric theory. Woman's task is, rather, to sustain the impossible desire, the "passion cry" of those who can at least speak their desire - men.

The sleeping sisters: the release from the image

The issue of unfulfilled desire permeates the novel's treatment of another pivotal concern - motherhood. The glowing vision of motherhood represented in Rebekah's much beloved "rough print" of Raphael's Madonna della Sedia stands in marked contrast to the distance between sisters and mother, and, indeed, between the sisters themselves in From Man to Man. "The Woman's Day" which comprises the second section of the novel is a day characterised by the separation of the three women so integrally united in the prelude, "The Child's Day", - a separation which occupies a somewhat ambiguous status in From Man to Man.

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[57] Freud,"Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality", On Sexuality, p.145.

[58] Jean Laplanche, Life and Death in Psychoanalysis, trans. J. Mehlman (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1985) p.20.

It cannot be denied that the mother's absence from Rebekah's and Bertie's stories is a striking feature of the novel. This absence rather surprisingly attracts no overt comment; the "little mother" has not explicitly alienated her daughters nor do they dislike her or level any blame for their unhappiness at her. It is, rather, that she is irrelevant to their lives. Whilst compassionate and caring (pp.98-102) she is seen as ultimately powerless and ineffective; she cannot, for example, protect Bertie from Lawrie, the tutor, because she fails to perceive the danger or the exact nature of the malaise which affects Bertie following her abandonment.

However, convenient as it would be to attribute the little mother's absence to Schreiner's alleged mistrust of women, this simplifies the novel's treatment of motherhood and to carries out a formulaic reduction of its insights. It ignores the fact that the novel opens with a potent image of the debt Rebekah and Bertie owe to their mother's agony in childbirth and overlooks its concentration on the frustrations experienced by the mother in her relationship with her husband; he meets her concern for Rebekah with inattention and disinterest which is a striking prophecy of Frank's attempted silencing of Rebekah (p.110). The link between Rebekah and her mother implicit in this is reinforced by the application of the epithet "little" to both women - the mother is customarily the "little" mother (p.33) while Rebekah is referred to as her father's "wise little daughter" (p.93).

Commencing with the child's debt to the mother contained in the opening sequence of the novel - "the little mother lay in the agony of childbirth" (p.33) - From Man to Man traces the separation from her mother and sister enforced upon Rebekah and associated specifically with her marriage to Frank. That this separation disturbs Rebekah is poignantly expressed in her attachment to the Madonna della Sedia, a picture which hung in her bedroom since she was six years old and now occupies pride of place in her study.

Raphael's painting of the Madonna haunts Rebekah, the picture of mother and child filling her with "a thrill of quiet joy":

> No one told her it was a great picture, but when she looked at the little John, and the baby with its hand inside its mother's breast glancing round, and the mother with her striped shawl looking down at it, a thrill of quiet joy ran through her, that no other picture made her feel. She called it "*My* picture". (pp.90-1)

Isolated from her mother, there remains a repressed longing for her which is unarticulated and which is projected onto Bertie in a conflation of the sororal and maternal:

> Almost every night when, as a very small child, she had been moved into that room, Rebekah had lain by her to sing her to sleep; and when she grew older Rebekah had still crept in to talk and caress her before she slept. To-night Rebekah put the light down on the floor and knelt beside the bed. She put her head down upon Bertie's breast, under Bertie's arm, and pressed it there. It was as though, to-night, it was she who wanted to be caressed. But Bertie slept on - a deep, calm sleep. (p.91)

In this passage the two sisters enact, with significant differences, the Madonna della Sedia, performing for each other the maternal role in a symbolic return to the mother which From Man to Man recognises as impossible. It most be stressed that this enactment does not participate in the reductive idealisation undertaken by John-Ferdinand in his imposition of the ideal of the virgin mother upon Bertie. Instead, it represents the fantasy of reunion with the mother referred to by Kristeva in "Motherhood According to Bellini", a female fantasy of a lost paradise of maternal union[59].

Unlike John-Ferdinand, Rebekah symbolically moves from this representation of maternal love, of a "phallic" motherhood smug in its imagined plenitude to physical contact with her sister. She thus rejects the masculine fantasy of the maternal body as a "hidden god"[60]. Whereas John-Ferdinand's ideal presupposed the disapppearance of the real Bertie, her absorption into the powerful and engulfing image he projects onto her, Rebekah's movement from representation to Bertie is a movement away from disembodying representation to a relationship

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[59] Kristeva, Desire in Language, p.240.

[60] Kristeva, Desire in Language, p.240.

with her sister, and through her, the mother. Thus, From Man to Man acknowledges the difficulty of establishing a relationship with the exiled mother of the patriarchal socio-cultural regime.

This passage also raises the question of the convergence of self-sister-mother in the novel. Not only does Bertie, the "lost" sister function as a displacement of the lost mother, but Rebekah's own identity is itself strategically merged with that of her mother and sister at this point. She and Bertie are two possibilities for the patriarchally restricted woman - the possibility of change, and the possibility, but not inevitability, of submission. And, as Rebekah herself states, the Madonna della Sedia is "*My* picture!", an ambiguous claim which serves to highlight the interconnection of mother and daughter and by implication the common interest, recognised or not, of all women under patriarchy. Rebekah's search for her lost sister becomes a metaphorical search for her mother- a maternal relation, which lacking expression, must be displaced onto her sister - and a refusal to accept as "necessary" the imposed exile from her origin. Rebekah's search for Bertie also symbolises her search for her "devalued" self as a woman, for to accept the loss of her mother and sister is to accept her own castration, the necessity of her separation from other women. It is in the context of Rebekah's rebellion against the "loss" imposed upon her that the prelude to From Man to Man, the renowned allegory of the lives of the women in the book, assumes its significance.

Knowledge, Death, and The Child's Day

"The Child's Day" is an extended allegory relating Rebekah's entry into knowledge about her origins - an idyll recounting her initiation into womanhood which centres significantly upon her relation to the maternal role and to her younger sister, Bertie. In it she moves from a pre-lapsarian to a post-lapsarian scene, from a garden in which innocence "finds" a baby (a fantasy of self-fertilisation which has wider political ramifications) to one in which a "snake" initiates the child into knowledge about her own genesis and into prescience of wickedness ("...she had a sense

of an abandoned wickedness somewhere: ...[p.62]). This snake has metaphoric connections not only with the phallus (a phallus earlier "tamed" by the child through song [p.52]) and a symbolic law which conditions Rebekah's subjectivity, but also, paradoxically with Veronica Grey, who, as guardian of phallic value, is described as "the snake in the Garden of Eden; yet who can swear she has poison as she glides noiselessly by?" (p.201).

In this allegory of a nostalgic past, in which the Garden of Eden is projected into the past rather than the future, Rebekah rehearses the role of mother with her doll and the dead baby, Bertie's twin, in which she both identifies with her mother, but compensates for her sense of being misunderstood by displacing her own feelings onto her doll: "My baby, I shall *never* call *you* a strange child'" (p.48). In rehearsing the maternal role she steps figuratively into her mother's place and claims one of her mother's babies as her own - "It is mine" she cries to Ayah, "*This one* is mine" (p.42).

However, her difference from her mother is signalled in her selection of the other baby, the dead baby, as her own, while her mother retains Bertie. Through this rehearsal of maternity, Rebekah metaphorically discovers her relationship with the mother, one apart from rivalry or separation, although both of these elements do play a part in "The Child's Day". She plays at being her mother without being assimilated by the role, without becoming , as Freud maintains, locked in identification with her mother. Rebekah is always separable from her mother, the "same continuity differentiating itself"[61] discovering through the game what Luce Irigary terms "the economy of her relationships with her mother and maternity"[62].

The question of why Bertie's twin, the baby Rebekah takes as her own, is a dead baby is an intriguing one. On a superficial level, the death of the twin adumbrates Bertie's symbolic death. From Man to Man is, in some ways, a novel of dead women -

[61] Kristeva, Desire in Language, p.239.

[62] Irigaray, Speculum, p.77.

the dead twin; the little mother dead to the sisters' lives; Veronica, the blank mirror; and the Madonna, the ideal woman drained of matter and yet chained to it in a death of subjectivity and pleasure emblematic of that experienced by all these women.

The dead baby, who is significantly a girl, represents the negativity, otherness, death, in which woman is bound according to phallocentric logic - a death upon which the process of life and the maintenance of masculinity are paradoxically dependent[63]. For a strict life/death, positive/negative opposition cannot function in From Man to Man. When Rebekah chooses the dead baby she fails to recognise it for what it is - "How fast it was sleeping", she thinks (p.38) - attending to it instead "with a curious contentment about her mouth" (p.40).

In her adoption of death, the negative, the feminine, and in her quasi-identification with it ("There was a curious resemblance between her own small, sharply marked features and those of the baby" [p.38]), she effectively abandons the phallocentric perspective from which it is defined as absence. Her embrace of the child, her active selection of it, renders the negative no longer negative. In her celebration of it, death ceases to work as the other and ceases to be bound in a negativity prescribed by an economy of the Same. In "The Woman's Day", she, like the mothers in Woman and Labour, will bear only sons, the valued sex; her daughter will be the "adopted" daughter of her black servant, the sexual and cultural "other" seduced and abandoned by Frank. However, in "the Child's Day" Rebekah embraces the supposed negativity of the feminine in a foreshadowing of her strategic deployment of the "elsewhere", the otherness of her femininity to the phallocentric discursive and cultural economy.

In her play at being the mother, the roles of mother, sister and daughter are significantly confused, with Rebekah participating in all three. She is simultaneously her mother's daughter, her sister's mother, her mother, and her sister's sister in a

63 Irigaray, Speculum, p.53.

confusing compounding of identity which foreshadows her search for Bertie as the sister-mother-self figure in the closing stages of the novel.

It is fitting that this novel, which deals so explicitly with the production of knowledge and one woman's attempt to insert herself into discourse, should commence with a prelude dedicated to the debt to the maternal and the materiality which founds subjectivity and knowledge. This allegory makes manifest the debt to blood, materiality, the uterus, which is exploited and repressed in the interests of phallic mastery and speculation, and which is highlighted in From Man to Man. If death and pain intrude into the ambiguous idyll of the child's day, as they will into the woman's day to follow, this is largely due to Schreiner's endeavour to pay homage to the expenditure of maternal blood and pain which brings forth life and language, to the so-called "repetitive" and merely re-productive maternal function which in its marriage to death is the source and nourishment of life and speculation[64]. "The Child's Day" is a day of hurt and rejection, but also of dreams, storytelling and poetry - a projection into the imaginative, the realm of desire embodied in Rebekah's stories and recitation of rhymes to the "baby" she discovers in her dream (pp. 46-59). It is a day of a hunger for knowledge partially sated, and of a discovery of the mother and unity with her sister. It is a day therefore in which the themes of "The Woman's Day", the "realist" text, are rehearsed in that interweaving of allegory, realism, and dream which characterises Schreiner's writing and through which the meanings of her texts are constructed.

When old Ayah returns to the mother's room late at night, she finds the hands of the sisters "so interlocked, and the arm of the elder sister so closely round the younger, that she could not remove it without awakening both". On reaching the door, she turns to see the night light "casting deep shadows into far corners, especially that in which the two children lay" (p.73). They, however, "were all sleeping well". Dickensian shadows may fall, as indeed they do for Rebekah and Bertie, strongly

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64 Irigaray, Speculum, p.53.

reminiscent here of the tragic Tom and Maggie Tulliver, locked in their deathly embrace and "never to be parted"[65]. For the moment the sisters sleep well, conjoined in a unity they may never recover, but for which From Man to Man never relinquishes hope.

The Sleeping Demon of Female Desire

This hope mitigates what may appear to be the rather pessimistic "conclusion" of the novel. Rebekah's refusal of Drummond's invitation to see his fossils, to share emotional and intellectual communion, could be read as a denial of the possibility for future happiness and pleasure or as a symptom of a strain of moralism, implicit in the Biblical origins of Rebekah's name. Does Rebekah, like Dorothea in Middlemarch succumb to "the conditions of an imperfect social state" choosing to bury herself in "unhistoric acts"[66]? Or is it that, in refusing sexual commerce with Drummond, Rebekah is anticipating an alternative model of male and female sexual relations? To enter into a sexual relation with Drummond is to re-enter the exchange market she has symbolically escaped in living separately from Frank at such personal cost - and gain. To refuse Drummond, to reply with a firm "No, thank you" (p.481) is to hold herself in reserve for another mode of relation and to circumvent her possible reinsertion into the patriarchal system as the object of a perverse form of exchange between Frank and Drummond - one wife in exchange for another.

From Man to Man provides no concluding flight into fantasy; the "perfecting of humanity" is a slow process and "the kingdom of heaven on earth" must wait (p.223). As if to emphasise this point, the novel, concludes with what can be interpreted as a rather disturbing reference to Rebekah's internalisation of the ideology of submission and masochism she so valiantly resists. As Drummond says, if confronted with

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65 George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss, Bk 7, ch. 5, p.534.

66 George Eliot, Middlemarch, "Finale", p.764.

conflicting moral choices, Rebekah would elect "Whichever gave you most pain or least pleasure. You would always think that was the right one" (p.479).

Rebekah, although a courageous questioner of patriarchal truths, as the novel acknowledges, is still held within a powerful model of a masochistic femininity. While challenging the ideology of submission, From Man to Man, like The Story of an African Farm, rejects any notion of an easy escape from the law which determines both the subordination and her mode of affirmation. As Rebekah realises, the "agony of life is not the choice between good and evil, but between two evils or two goods" (p.479), an attitude concordant with Schreiner's own commitment to reconciliation, to seeking solutions to the impasse between men and women (an impasse her characters may resolve no more successfully than do George Eliot's heroines). Waldo may be "killed" in The Story of an African Farm, but as Rebekah's tolerance of Frank reveals, Schreiner's novels conform less to the structural device of maiming or killing male characters in the name of female independence than do either George Eliot's or Charlotte Brontë's. While the maiming of Rochester and the demise of Casaubon and Monsieur Paul ensure the continued autonomy of Jane Eyre, Dorothea Casaubon and Lucy Snowe respectively, the independence of Schreiner heroines such as Lyndall and Rebekah is not predicated to the same extent upon the "castration" or murder of the male protagonist.

The reasons for this are of course largely historical and relate to the greater freedom for feminist expression enjoyed by late nineteenth-century women authors, but it does nevertheless signal Schreiner's faith in the possibilities of reconciliation between the sexes and a desire to avoid what could be interpreted as a simplistic vilification of men themselves. As she wrote in a letter to Karl Pearson, dated 19 July 1885, "we cannot hate anyone....It is not a case for crying out against individuals or against sexes, but simply for changing a whole system"[67].

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[67] To Karl Pearson, 19 July 1885, in Letters, ed. Rive, p.66.

As Schreiner's reference to "system", or structural oppression implies, it is not simply a matter of Rebekah following her "demon", as Drummond advises. This possibility is more accessible to the male whose "demon" is after all in solidarity with the law. The situation is "terribly complex" for Rebekah as a woman and involves confronting this law itself with that other demon, the demon of her desire which keeps in reserve the feminine excess to the law - an excess which forms both its condition and its possibility of self-subversion.

Rebekah's submission then, if it is submission, does not denote disempowerment. Instead, it emblematises the full complexity of her position as a woman, and above all, it reveals the power of difference she can deploy. Her demon is a sleeping rather than a dead or absent demon. It is the demon of another logic poised to realise its capacity to catch off-guard the unwary master, precariously secure in his consciousness of her submission and the tight circularity of his law.

CONCLUSION

In her attention to this "sleeping demon" which is repressed female desire, Olive Schreiner signals her commitment to a theorising or re-theorising of femininity which is the mark of the particular texts which have been discussed. This theorising attempts to release the feminine from phallocentric parameters, and, paradoxically, from "theory" itself. Schreiner's theoretical endeavour is in this way characterised by its acknowledgment of the power of, and resistance to, "theory" as it is patriarchally defined.

In her confrontation with patriarchal theory as it is embodied in the works of Herbert Spencer, Havelock Ellis, Karl Pearson, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, Schreiner exposes the limitations of patriarchal formulations and highlights the role of discourse in the exclusion of women. She elaborates a discourse of her own which is situated in the interstices between reason and desire, masculinity and femininity, speech and silence. In so doing, she constructs a voice and a feminist theorising which circumvents the division between (utopian) desire and political pragmatism. This voice engenders a play of lights and shadows, of order and evocation, that constitutes a largely unrecognised strand of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century feminism.

It is, therefore, in the very interruptions and slippages of her visionary polemic, in her orientation to the symbolic "Perhaps" which has been mistaken for her "perverse will to fail", that the efficacy of her radical and underestimated strategy appears.

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