

FROM MAN TO MAN: SCIENTIFIC AND RELIGIOUS REFERENCE IN A FEMINIST NOVEL

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live Schreiner's *From Man to Man* is a difficult novel to date. When Schreiner arrived in London from South Africa in 1881 she apparently had with her manuscript versions of both *The Story of an African Farm* and *From Man to Man*. The manuscript of *From Man to Man* was revised during the 1880s when Schreiner was associated with Havelock Ellis, Karl Pearson and other members of the Men and Women's Club in radical intellectual circles in London. But it was also "cut up", changed, and reworked into the 1890s and the new century.¹ When Schreiner died in 1920 it was still unfinished, and her husband finally published it in 1926. In this article I follow Elaine Showalter in assigning *From Man to Man* to the fin-de-siècle, although I do not follow Showalter and other critics in their generally hostile attitude to *From Man to Man*.² I am especially interested in some characteristics of feminist writing about the turn of the century which throw light on Schreiner's unusual novel.

Feminist polemic in Britain in the fin-de-siècle seems especially liable to make use of (and mingle) scientific and religious reference. For instance, Frances Swiney, a suffragist organiser, writer and lecturer, wrote in 1907: "Men have sought in women only a body. They have possessed that body. They have made it the refuse heap of sexual pathology, when they should have revered it as the Temple of God" (qtd McGibben 42). Here Victorian reverence for the female—with the assistance of a major biblical image—enables a statement of resistance to the contemporary take-over of sexuality by the medical profession. On the other hand, Susan Kingsley Kent quotes Elizabeth Blackwell, a pioneering woman doctor, who "exhorted her colleagues in 1897, 'the redemption of our sexual relations from evil to good, rests more imperatively upon [you], than upon any other class in society'" (134). The feminist doctor appeals naturally to the *redemptive* power of her own profession.

When the language of science is used in such contexts it often evokes Darwinian ideas of evolution: the biblical and religious reference includes a good deal of millennial rhetoric. On the face of it, this seems an odd combination since the nineteenth-century battle between theology and Darwinism was hardly over. Peter Bowler remarks that "opposition to Darwinism, far from diminishing as the century progressed, actually grew in strength after the 1870s" (154). Moreover, feminist

¹ See the introduction to *From Man to Man*, and "A Note on the Genesis of the Book"; also Ravilious.

² In *A Literature of Their Own*, Showalter found Schreiner "sadly underambitious," her novels "depressing and claustrophobic," and the treatment of the heroines "disconcertingly unadventurous." She concluded: "Like Schreiner, they give up too easily and too soon" (203). More sympathetic readings of Schreiner's ideas by Berkman and Parkin-Gounelas has probably not altered the generally held opinion that *From Man to Man* is (in the words of First and Scott) "a most unwieldy novel" (178).

criticism of Darwin by Ruth Hubbard and others³ is endorsed by a 1983 essay by Evelleen Richards who remarks that Darwinism had the "general political role" of "scientifically endorsing anti-feminism through late nineteenth-century biology and anthropology" (98). In short, one would expect to find these positions at war with each other, rather than yoked together in a public polemic.

The picture, however, is far from simple. Rosaleen Love has also described the way "the evolutionary metaphor" could be exploited by feminist writers to their own advantage (113 and passim), and gives the examples of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Olive Schreiner. R.M. Young has described a general late-nineteenth-century trend among the intelligentsia towards an accommodation of the new world view and "an attendant natural theology" (23), and it is clear that many women in the later nineteenth century in fact took up radical positions on the "woman question" because of religious beliefs and values.⁴ Bringing biblical reference to bear on a scientifically conceived reformist movement or allying it with an evolutionary approach to history should not, therefore, be regarded as unexpected in feminist writing at the turn of the century.

A typical technique is the way Jane Ellice Hopkins incorporated imagery from Genesis and Revelations into a discussion of sex education for girls in *The Power of Womanhood* (1899): "Sure I am that if we will accept this deeper and larger ideal, and endeavour, however imperfectly, to work it out on the earth, in the midst of it, as in the old garden ideal, will be found the tree of life; but then its very leaves will be for the healing of the nations (qtd Jeffreys 448). Here Hopkins endows sex education with power to end one age and initiate another. Such a polemic forces feminism into the Christian world history. That this was a common way to approach public discussion of reforms in sexual behaviour is shown by an earlier article in the *New Review* (1894)—a "symposium" offering opinions on the question of how much girls should know—which is entitled "The Tree of Knowledge."⁵ Another Hopkins article, this time on child prostitution, is called "The Apocalypse of Evil"—once again a particular aspect of the feminist struggle is implied to have power to end the existing social order and to renew the world. In fact, in this article some striking quotations from Tennyson's "The Passing of Arthur" clearly signal that "this last dim weird battle of the West," as Hopkins calls the "conflict with the degradation of woman and its causes" (333), will mark the end of an era. Hopkins exhorts her readers to take heart from the greatness of the task: "We surely need, as a first step to strong hopeful action, to see something of what God is working out by it, to see it as a part of a vast redemptive whole" (339). Using scientific and scriptural reference, she adds arguments derived from the physical law and geological history as well as the resonating biblical image of the building of the temple: "No fall but carries with it the force that can be converted into a rise . . . no effort so weak and insignificant but, by laying hold of these mighty forces, and laid hold

³ Hubbard charges Darwin with "blatant sexism" (16); feminist attacks on Darwin are reviewed by Richards (59-60).

⁴ See Levine chapter 2.

⁵ Vol 10: 675-90; contributors include Walter Besant, Hall Caine, Sarah Grand, Thomas Hardy, and Frances E. Willard. Willard's contribution blends science and religion: she argues that "the great law of continence and chastity" is "unbroken in their natural state by any of the lower orders of warm-blooded animals" (686) and remarks that "every devout teacher of natural law is a teacher of religion" (687).

of by them in return, can build up the great temple of the future, as the great World-Power builds up his eternal marble of broken shells" (339).

As Young explains, absorbing evolution into a new natural theology "provided a guarantee of progress" (28). An example of a feminist taking advantage of this accommodation is Gertrude Colmore in her *Suffragette Sally* (1911), a popularising feminist novel which at a climactic moment in the story describes a male character as "raised" by the forgiveness of a working woman, and "brought a little nearer to the glory that waits, far onward on the upward path of evolution, for every living soul" (279). Such an amalgam—evolutionary "glory"—is fascinating, and so is Colmore's deft substitution into her updated eschatology of the redemptive forgiveness of a modern working woman for that of Christ. Many other women must have noted—as Elizabeth Cady Stanton did in *The Woman's Bible*—that "the Darwinian theory of the gradual growth of the race from a lower to a higher type of animal life, is more hopeful and encouraging" than the allegory found in the book of Genesis (24).

Is the "guarantee of progress" the main reason for this rhetorical approach? Although the optimism of these women is striking—especially in contrast to the poetic mode of "weariness, exhaustion, enervation" which, as Helen Vendler remarks, we are "accustomed to think characteristic" of the period (124)—the same habit of drawing on both religious and evolutionary metaphor is found in at least one pessimistic vision of devolution, by Emily Pfeiffer.⁶ Some feminist women had clearly thought through a reconciliation of Christian and evolutionary views of history: this is so of Francis Swiney, whose book *The Awakening of Women or Woman's Part in Evolution* appeared in a third edition in 1908. The dual grounds for Swiney's argument for female superiority are well illustrated by her appeal to "further research in biology, embryology, psychology and sociology" in the preface to the third edition, and her exhortation to the "average woman" which closes the original preface to "rise and trim her lamp." On the other hand, one suspects Colmore's references to evolution are merely a frank attempt to maximise readership by alienating neither the Christian nor the freethinking reader. Feminist visions of the Second Coming and society redeemed doubtless relate to the turn of the century and the coming into view, beyond this, of the birth of the second millennium. But they also must derive from the sense of destiny given to history by Darwinism. In Elizabeth Martyn's argument for the suffrage, "The Case of the Helots" (1894), there is a striking evocation of the tree of life so familiar to

⁶ Her essay in the *Contemporary Review* (February 1881) lacks specifically biblical reference, but inflates its evolutionary model with semi-religious language in such passages as the following written in defence of marriage:

Let the man be free to shake off the yoke that irks, and the woman be emancipated from the guardianship of herself as the shrine, of his dearest hopes, and what becomes of the strength of the individual will, increased by struggle and conquest, which has been lifting us higher and higher above the unregulated instincts of the brute? . . . It can never be forgotten that the companion of man is the priestess of a temple whose desecration is his ruin. When the time shall come that we have cast away the marriage pledge to progress, it is presumable that we shall have commenced our downward course, and be on our way back to the ascidian, and through that to some wholly molluscous creature preparatory to the final extinction. (Qtd Lewis 378).

both biblical and Darwinist scholars, although it now reappears as a figure of the determination of women to continue their struggle for justice and freedom:

It reminds me of nothing so much as the life in seed and tree, the life that is so strong that overlying mould, nay, even overlying stone, is pierced to make way for its coming, so strong that all the strength of gravitation cannot pull it back or hinder it from standing in uprightness. . . . Upwards it will go, and sunwards. Breadth is gained, and all-roundness, and solidity, by this over-mastering life; branch after branch, twig after twig is put out, and, as for the leaves—it may be that the leaves are for the healing of the nations. (Qtd Lewis 464)⁷

This visionary tree is rooted in both natural and Christian history. It endows feminism with the irresistible forces of nature and faith by drawing on two traditions of scholarship and public discourse. Women writers, engaged in a highly public, many-faceted and controversial debate, were evidently constructing a politically advantageous dual rhetoric: but I suggest that this represented also a satisfying personal reconciliation of opposed intellectual positions. The resonance of familiar fields of reference, scientific and religious, eased the acceptance, for writer and reader, of position-taking which was often, in fact, audacious, radical, and new.

I return now to my suggestion that it is within this mental climate of feminist writing in the fin-de-siècle that Schreiner's *From Man to Man* can most usefully be read. Scientific (particularly evolutionary) and scriptural strands of reference are both demonstrated in this feminist novel, and I will describe each in turn. This book can be seen to represent an expansion to novel length of the reconciliations of dominant discourses found in fin-de-siècle feminist writing.

From Man to Man, like *The Story of an African Farm*, delineates a world which has clearly evolved. It is both deterministic and naturalistic. The human races or tribes, animal life from the highest to the lowest, the vegetation, and the mineral substratum, topography and climate that support the myriad forms of life are all seen as a continuum in which particular forms are determined by natural laws, up to and including the mental life of the major characters. This is a world where the fittest survive and the weakest do not, a concept illustrated early in the book by the death of one of Rebekah's baby twin sisters.⁸ *From Man to Man* differs from *The Story of an African Farm* because this continuum is not evoked through the narrator's vivid descriptive and symbolic strategies, nor by carrying on an overt quarrel with Christianity. Rather, it appears in the reflections of one of the two heroines in the novel, Rebekah.

⁷ Jane Lewis, editor of the anthology *Before the Vote was Won*, which contains this piece by Martyn, remarks in her introduction that the style "and even the tone" of the early suffragists "was more often than not very similar to that of their male opponents" (2). "The conviction of these early feminists that they had to 'prove' themselves made their writings often stern and unbending" (5) says Lewis, apologising in advance for the dullness of her collection. Lewis, like Showalter (182-84), seems to be impervious to the charms of such feminist rhetorical flights as Martyn's.

⁸ Gray remarks that Schreiner "echoes John Stuart Mill" but "enacts Darwin" (147).

First encountered as a child, Rebekah is clearly a born scientist, constantly educating herself in biology, natural history and human history. *From Man to Man*, therefore, situates the human being in the world as one whose task in life is to understand it—the human as scientist. The child Rebekah collects objects which include childish books and toys but also a dried monkey's skin, stones, beetles and grasshoppers, a crystal, a "round bushman stone with a hole in the middle, which she had picked up behind the kraal, and a flat slate-coloured stone with the impression of a fossilised leaf, which she had found on the path going up to the mountain" (39). These objects are selected to represent contemporary ideas of natural and human history. When, as a child, Rebekah imagines for herself a perfect house to live in, it has a room with books from floor to ceiling and a microscope of her own (she is not allowed to touch her father's microscope). In later life, working in conditions evidently intended to represent the obstacles to women's participation in scientific knowledge, she ends up with a tiny study partitioned off from her children's bedroom, so that she can hear them if they need her in the night; the books she owns are old and cheap, although Darwin's *Variation of Plants and Animals Under Domestication* has pride of place among them and she has learnt her science out of school "primers," much regretting that the examples they use are not African. Nevertheless, Rebekah's intellectual life is a vital element of the novel and it is by way of Rebekah's solitary monologues and self-questionings in this little room late at night—punctuated by feeding the baby, and so forth—that Schreiner introduces into the novel a feminist critique of progressive Darwinism.

The best way to illustrate how *From Man to Man* is located in that deeply interconnected world which Darwin celebrated is to quote from Rebekah's mental life—a kind of Victorian intellectual's stream of consciousness:

Between the furthest star and the planet earth we live on, between the most distant planet and the ground we tread on, between man, plant, bird, beast and clod of earth, everywhere the close internetted lines of interaction stretch; nowhere are we able to draw a sharp dividing line, nowhere find an isolated existence. The prism I hold in my hand, rightly understood, may throw light on the structure and meaning of the furthest sun; the fossil I dug out on the mountain side this morning, rightly studied, may throw light on the structure and meaning of the hand that unearths it; between the life that moved in the creature that ploughed in the mud of the lake-shores three million years ago and the life which beats in my brain and moves in my eyes here in the sunshine today, I can see long unbroken lines of connection. (180-81)

It is within the long unbroken stream of Rebekah's thought that a central doctrine of progressive Darwinism is questioned—a doctrine Rebekah sums up as such: "All evolution in life has been caused simply by this destruction of the weaker by the stronger" (209). Rebekah argues that in any human generation developments of value may have been lost because the strong triumphed over the weak: what intellectual advances might women not have made, for instance, if permitted to contribute?

Rebekah claims that the highest form of life yet evolved is not that best suited to survive brutal struggle but that which is able to sacrifice itself for the good of another or for the social group. Her metaphor for this evolutionary triumph is a signal instance of that hybridising of discourses discussed earlier: "Love becomes incarnate in the female mammal feeding her young from her breast—this is my blood which I give for the life of the world" (209-10). Rebekah thus disowns the survival of the fittest as a guide to human behaviour yet elevates the female mammal to the apex of the evolutionary process: love is no longer of divine but specifically of female origin, and becomes the triumph, not of God-made-man, but rather of the animal-made-(female) human.⁹

In terms of the biblical element in *From Man to Man*, Schreiner herself was certainly capable of millennial visions; her treatise *Woman and Labour* (1911) concludes with yet another feminist dream of the world redeemed:

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 together raise about them a garden nobler than any the Chaldean dreamed of; an Eden created by their own labour and made beautiful by their own fellowship. (282)¹⁰

Schreiner, however, had rejected organised Christianity as a child, and substituted for it a sort of pantheism.¹¹ Yet the Bible remained intensely important to Schreiner—she told her friend Karl Pearson in 1886 that the dream of her life had been to write a life of Jesus (First and Scott 52n). Her heroine Rebekah, at five years old, records in the Prelude of *From Man to Man* a somewhat similar ambition to one day write a "book something like the Bible" (53). Schreiner's project in *From Man to Man*, then, should be associated with a parallel project in the United States, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible*. *From Man to Man* is the fulfilment (so far as Schreiner found it possible) of this ambition to rewrite the Bible, and Schreiner concentrates on the book of Genesis, proffering a new "origins" of woman's current position.¹²

⁹ Judith Johnston pointed out to me the centrality in Christian iconography of the Madonna's breasts and the suckling of the infant Christ.

¹⁰ Heywood has drawn attention to the resemblance between the final paragraphs of Schreiner's *Woman and Labour* (1911) and Ursula's vision of the rainbow in D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915). Lawrence's visionary writing and biblical reference in this novel may be much more closely derived from feminists looking to a new age at the end of the previous century than has been acknowledged.

¹¹ According to her biographers, she could "never conceive of God and man and the material universe as distinct from one another" (First and Scott 53). In 1892, she wrote to a Presbyterian minister that when she was "a little child of five" this "perception of the unity of all things, and that they were alive, and that I was part of them, was as clear and overpowering to me as it is today"(qtd First and Scott 54).

¹² A number of readers seem to be aware of this. Schreiner's husband prefaced the novel with an "Account of the Genesis of the Book." Schreiner herself signposted her text with references to Genesis: as in Frank's remark "it's not the Garden of Eden yet!"(84), or the narrator's mention of "the great Chaldean curse" (86). There's also a copy of Milton stowed away in a male pocket in the book. Schreiner defended the slow-progressing writing of *From Man to Man* to Havelock Ellis in such terms as "organic, true, inevitable, like a work of God's" (qtd Parkin-Gounelas 100) and at the end of the book has a character compare the satisfaction of the artist to "the infinite satisfaction and certitude of the dream-god of the Semitics, when he looked at his work and saw that it was good and rested" (473). A recent

References to Genesis are both extensive and complicated. The Prelude to the novel must be read not as simply the beginning of a book but rather as an account of beginning itself. The child Rebekah's "day" reproduces the history of humanity (phylogeny replicates ontogeny). In play Rebekah builds a house, tames the animals, cultivates the soil, and bears, feeds and educates a child. This evolutionary genesis, however, lies alongside a biblical one, referred to in Rebekah's two major discoveries on this significant day. On this day Rebekah's twin sisters are born, and the first discovery relates to her various childish efforts to understand childbirth. Grasping "something of what birth and death mean," Rebekah, like Eve, attains to a new knowledge, which is, in fact, sex education: "She would never again look for a new little baby, or expect to find it anywhere; vaguely but quite certainly something of its genesis had flashed on her" (64).

The other major reference is to the serpent, the intruder into the garden or snake in the grass seen by Rebekah. This snake, a cobra that should (by the code of adults) be killed, Rebekah allows to slide away unharmed. Genesis is certainly being retold here since a naturalist's view of creation replaces the biblical one. Rebekah has many fantasies of a life continuous with the life of benevolent companion animals (for instance, she is building a house for mice to live in). Thus as a child she has already grasped the continuity of human and animal life, though this does not mean, in a world of tigers, lions, puff-adders and cobras, that nature is benign. On the contrary, Rebekah's observation of a battle between a large ant and a small ant (just before she sees the cobra) is an allegory in miniature of the evolutionary lesson, the survival of the stronger.

The importance of the ongoing biblical references continue to be evident in subsequent plot developments. In the second chapter the narrative jumps to the conventional beginning: the young womanhood of the two sisters Rebekah and Bertie. Of course the tale of Eve's transgression is one women have long needed to retell, and Eve's transgression is presented very precisely in Rebekah: she marries her cousin Frank and leaves the farm for the city because "she was dying of hunger" (86)—the narrator makes it clear that this hunger is both intellectual and sexual. But there are two Eves in Schreiner's African garden and the narrative abandons Rebekah on her departure from the farm, providing instead an account of the "fall" of woman in the seduction of the innocent sixteen-year-old "Baby-Bertie" by her tutor from England. The site of the seduction is a garden of native flowers which tutor and pupil have planted in the bush, and thus the seduction involves expulsion from an Edenic garden: the myth is rewritten by symbols too strong to miss. Moreover, the fall of Bertie is followed by a description of a "flood" on a day "two months after [the tutor] went away," which is also the day of Bertie's recovery from the stricken state into which she has been thrown by her seduction and desertion:

In all the hollows in the hard ground were pools of water, and you could hear the stream still rushing in the bed of the mountain torrent.

reader has remarked of the later stages of Schreiner's novel that it "reads like a late-Victorian feminist Genesis" (Parkin-Gounelas 115)—a comment which, in my view, recognises the book for precisely what it is.

Baby-Bertie leaned her head back against the door; a rich fragrant odour rose from the fresh earth; she drew the white shawl she had thrown over her head closer round her face, and sat watching the wet world. The sun was setting at the end of the great valley below the farmhouse; all the west was a bloody pall of crimson, all the east a faint reflection of its redness. (102)

This passage seems to suggest that Bertie has missed a period, and fears finding herself pregnant, but then with the return of menstruation feels released back into innocence. "Was there not something that might make the past as if it never had been?" (102) the narrator asks on Bertie's behalf. Bertie evidently feels there is, for she wraps her head in a white scarf, representing the veil of a virgin bride. She feels as if stilled by "a strong great hand," and "after she had got into bed it seemed as though a great hand made an arch over her and she crept in under it and was safe" (103). After the flood, a bow appears in the clouds.

Schreiner's method, then, is to relocate the Genesis story, on the one hand in a natural historian's South Africa, on the other hand in the humble and even unmentionable details of a woman's life. When seduction and a spoilt garden are associated with each other, the symbolic pattern is an ancient one and difficult to miss; but the reader may miss the significance of the fact that it is Bertie who destroys the garden *herself*. The intention is clearly to offer a critique of false sexual standards: women do not "fall" once and forever into a state of sexual uncleanness and for every woman a new future is possible: "Was there not something that might make the past as if it never had been?"

For Bertie, the meaning of the rainbow is that nature, the goddess of woman, if only permitted by humanity to keep her covenant, would proceed to provide a fitting destiny for her through love, marriage, children, and the home-making arts she excels in. What actually happens, however, is that Bertie's natural destiny is stolen from her by her history, which returns to haunt and destroy her. False sexual standards and their jealous maintenance by malicious gossip handed on "from man to man" are claimed to be the real serpent in the human garden. Yet Rebekah's wretched marriage to a husband repeatedly unfaithful to her in Cape Town, and Bertie's equally wretched role as the mistress of a rich Jew who keeps her a silenced prisoner in luxury in London, seem melodramatic developments to follow an extraordinary beginning. What can this "womanly" novel—to use Schreiner's own adjective—have to do with Genesis? Perhaps the explanation can be found in Schreiner's reading of W.E. Lecky's *History of European Morals* in 1879, for in this book Lecky became notorious for arguing that the social institution of prostitution was the necessary condition of the existence of marriage.¹³ The foundation of his argument was the assertion that: "concupiscence, or the sensual passion, was 'the original sin' of human nature; and . . . the progress of knowledge . . . concurs with the theological view, in showing the natural force of this appetite to be far greater than the well-being of man requires" (281-82).

Lecky also cites Malthus's arguments that even "normal and temperate exercise" (282) of this appetite within marriage would result in calamitous overpopulation, adding

¹³ See First and Scott's discussion of Lecky (175-76).

that "however much moralists may enforce the obligation of extra-marital purity, this obligation has never been even approximately regarded." (Frank, Rebekah's philandering husband, is Schreiner's illustration of this fact.) On the other hand, says Lecky: "The family is the centre and the archetype of the State, and the happiness and goodness of society are always in a very great degree dependent upon the purity of domestic life" (282). From these premises Lecky draws his conclusion that the prostitute, while "in some respects the most awful [figure] upon which the eye of the moralist can dwell . . . is ultimately the most efficient guardian of virtue. But for her, the unchallenged purity of countless happy homes would be polluted" (282-83). Such a viewpoint might well have appealed to Schreiner if, as has been suggested, she herself "fell" to the seductive powers of Julius Gau at the age of sixteen.¹⁴ For according to this view of humanity, not only does it go without saying that men will regularly succumb to sexual desire, but if tempted by male seducers women will succumb also.

Therefore, *From Man to Man* continues to be an "origins" or new Genesis, as it re-presents the historically necessary "fall" of woman. Bertie represents that fallen sister whose misery is the condition of the lasting marriage or "pure domestic life" of the virtuous sister. Into this new story of a fall, moreover, Schreiner has taken care to incorporate a view, derived from Lecky's position and from the social purity campaign, that the chaste woman who thinks of the prostitute with "an indignant shudder" should rather think of her with pity, gratitude, and love. For Schreiner, like other feminists of her day, believed that marriage without love was only another form of prostitution, a point made clear by many analogies between Rebekah's life as wife and Bertie's as a kept woman.¹⁵ While Schreiner never quite completed her story of these two sisters, the novel continues to suggest rich biblical readings: Bertie wanders in the desert, meets a Jewish companion, and leads a life of exile, while Rebekah labours in her vineyard. Rebekah meets a neighbour, Drummond, who would evidently make a congenial new partner for her, but the book stops at this point. However, two possible endings have been suggested, and I will review these briefly.

In the ending which Schreiner confided to her husband, and which he summarised at the end of *From Man to Man*, Baby-Bertie is rediscovered, ill and dying, by Drummond. Her death was to precede, and therefore be less climactic than, Rebekah's final parting from Drummond. But in a letter of 1886, Schreiner had given Karl Pearson a summary of her intentions for the whole novel at that time. The ending of the book Schreiner then intended to write is different in that Schreiner described Bertie's death as occurring *after* Drummond and Rebekah have acknowledged their love and agreed to part:

Afterwards there is a scene where she finds her prostitute sister. When she is dying Rebekah sits beside her and paints before her the woman's dream of the future, the freedom, the joy, the strength that are to be. Bertie listens, but half uneasily; there is to be all this for

¹⁴ See First and Scott 61-63. One of Schreiner's earlier biographers speculated that Schreiner herself "allowed [Gau] to seduce her. She missed a period, and she became terrified that she was pregnant." (Johannes Meintjes, qtd First and Scott 63).

¹⁵ Schreiner described marriage as "a lifelong fornication and prostitution" in a letter to Mr Lloyd (qtd First and Scott 225).

woman but what of man! True to her old love for them she says uneasily, 'But, Rebekah, we don't want anything to happen to men!' And Rebekah kneels down by her, and paints as she sees in that moment of passion and hope the future of love; the time when men and women so shall use their sexual natures and the power they have over each other that they shall be the source of life and strength; when love shall be no more bound down to material conditions; but shall be what it is striving to be now, the union of mind, the foundation of the entire nature; there is no hereafter for the individual, but for the race a glorious future. (*Letters* 1: 91-95)

Schreiner's earlier intention, then, was to move her narrative along from Genesis to Revelations: her final vision to be of a world saved and renewed by a proper relationship between men and women, "a new heaven and a new earth" (244) such as Rebekah foresees in the early, happy, days of her marriage to Frank. Why did Schreiner carry her "most womanly book that ever was written" (25) around with her unfinished until she died? Was it the vision of a world redeemed that she was unable to commit herself to? This unusual novel should at least be recognised as a monument to feminist ambition at the fin-de-siècle: it was a rewriting of the origins of human culture from woman's point of view and for the woman reader, a simultaneous critique and usurpation of dominant male histories of how society comes to be as it is, a confounding of discourses such as those practised by Schreiner's feminist contemporaries, but embedded into the narrative language of women's romantic fiction. However, possibly because Schreiner's vision of evolution was more comprehensive, and less optimistic, than that of other feminists, her new Bible never achieved its Revelations.

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