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Awful knowledge: anthropology and feminist pessimism in Olive Schreiner's *From Man to Man, or Perhaps Only*

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ABSTRACT

This essay reads Olive Schreiner's final, posthumously published novel, *From Man to Man, or Perhaps Only* (1926) as an anthropological epic. Its heroine, Rebekah, is an armchair anthropologist who must come to knowledge not only of herself and her society, as would be conventional in a *bildungsroman*, but account for her place in the sweep of social evolution. *From Man to Man* is animated by a dynamic I describe as recursive feminist pessimism: over and over, Rebekah confronts the idea that women's subordination is both archaic and inexorable. Across the novel, Rebekah's struggles with this idea are surprisingly salutary, spurring her toward a proto-intersectional feminism. Pessimism is also an incisive instrument of feminist self-critique for Schreiner, driving her to interrogate her investments in the primitive versus civilized binary and in evolutionary anthropology as the basis of progressive ideals.

KEYWORDS

Anthropology; social evolution; feminism; new woman; matriarchy hypothesis; pessimism; epic form

In the introduction to her feminist tract *Woman and Labour* (1911), Olive Schreiner positions herself as a kind of in-the-field anthropologist on the basis of her everyday life in South Africa. She claims that her mature feminist philosophy has its origins in a conversation she had with a Black South African woman as a teenager:

> She was a woman whom I cannot think of otherwise than as a woman of genius. In language more eloquent and intense than I have ever heard from the lips of any other woman, she painted the condition of the women of her race; the labour of women, the anguish of woman as she grew older, the limitations of her life closed in about her, her sufferings under the condition of polygamy and subjection; […]; and yet, […] when I went on to question her, combined with a deep and almost fierce bitterness against life and the unseen powers which had shaped woman, […] there was [no] will or intention to revolt; rather, there was a stern and majestic attitude of acceptance of the inevitable; life and the conditions of her race being what they were […] I have since come to regard as almost axiomatic [the fact] that women of no race or class will ever rise in revolt or attempt to bring about a revolutionary readjustment of their relation to society, however intense their suffering and however clear their perception of it, while the welfare and persistence of their society requires this submission.[1]

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Reading this passage in isolation, the sceptical reader is likely to suspect that the anonymous Black woman is a mere polemical device, invented to aggrandize the white feminist intellectual. Even if one is willing to believe that the anecdote had some basis in reality, Schreiner's characterization of the woman seems like a peculiarly depressing rendition of the noble savage trope. Yet Schreiner's tendency to equate pessimism with feminist insight is pervasive in her writing and is not mere condescension in this case. While "primitive" women occupy a role in Schreiner's feminism structurally akin to the *lumpenproletariat* within Marxist theory, it is significant that she asserts that their "submission" indicates a depth rather than a lack of political consciousness: it is a kind of proto-socialist ethics.[2] More generally, Schreiner's drive to understand the psychological sources of women's oppression and to legitimie the perspective of those who feel a "fierce bitterness against life" often shades into a celebration of fatalism. When Schreiner included a version of this anecdote in her unfinished introduction to Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), she went even further in valorizing the woman's supposedly "dead, resigned nature," which correctly apprehends that it is "as hopeless for her to strive against oppression as it would be for one wave in the sea to rise up against the tidal current."[3] In that version, Schreiner asks us to respect the woman's despair as a form of wisdom inaccessible to "any civilised woman."[4]

In *Woman and Labour*, social evolutionism is the *deus ex machina* which saves Schreiner's feminism from its attraction to the figure of the "savage" pessimist.[5] In the conclusion, Schreiner assures her reader that feminism will overcome the demoralizing evidence of anthropology, whether it is extrapolated from prehistory or from contemporary "primitive" societies: there will be a vanguard of "Teutonic" warrior women – really, courageous female intellectuals like Schreiner herself – who will emancipate women in general.[6] The utopian uplift of the tract's conclusion depends upon the racist stadialism of social evolutionary theory: feminism can wake from the nightmare of anthropological knowledge only if it imagines that the world's non-European women occupy an earlier stage of evolution. More generally, *Woman and Labour* bears out Michel-Rolph Trouillot's insight about the intertwinement of utopianism and the category of the "savage" in the West's imaginary and in the constitution of anthropology as a discipline. Trouillot explains that nineteenth-century anthropology inherited a long tradition of using the figure of the savage – what he calls the "savage slot" – to imagine utopias, ideal orderings of society, and humanity in its original condition: a genre of philosophical and fictional writing that began in the Renaissance and did not require empirical knowledge of any non-European other. While nineteenth-century anthropology was ostensibly committed to empiricism and defined itself against utopianism as a genre, it covertly continued to use the savage slot as a means of testing its ideals of order and hopes for utopia – in Schreiner's case, hopes for a utopian future for European feminism..[7]

This essay focusses on Schreiner's final, posthumously published novel *From Man to Man, or Perhaps Only* (1926), in which utopian hope is not so easily wrested from anthropological thinking.[8] Admittedly, this may be because the novel is unfinished: perhaps it would have ended on a note of soaring utopianism like *Woman and Labour* or her allegory "Three Dreams in a Desert" (1890).[9] However, as I will discuss toward the conclusion of this essay, Schreiner's various plot outlines suggest *From Man to Man* was destined for a pessimistic conclusion to rival the famously bleak ending of her first novel, *Story of an African Farm* (1883). This essay explores the relationship between

Schreiner's feminist pessimism and the savage slot – that is, the anthropological category of the primitive. It argues that the recursive feminist pessimism of *From Man to Man* – its "I can't go on, I'll go on" structure – is an important advance on the pessimism-to-utopianism trajectory of *Woman and Labour*. In *From Man to Man*, stadial thinking – the anthropological fiction that European and non-European women occupy different evolutionary time frames – is no longer tenable.[10] Pessimism is an incisive instrument of feminist self-critique in *From Man to Man*, driving Schreiner to interrogate her own investments in the civilized versus primitive binary and in social evolutionism as the basis of progressive ideals. At the level of form, *From Man to Man* expresses the cumulative value of pessimism across its extant chapters: its heroine, Rebekah, makes progress through her struggle to assimilate her disillusionments into more radical forms of empathy, if never clearly into renewed melioristic hope. It is only by tracing Rebekah's intellectual and moral development across chapters that this logic becomes discernible. By tracing that logic here, I also aim to convey the aesthetic richness of *From Man to Man* and to clarify the value of its epic scope and lengthy philosophical digressions.[11] By way of conclusion, I suggest how the novel's secondary *bildung* plot – focussed on Rebekah's sister Bertie – also encodes Schreiner's paradoxical faith in feminist pessimism.

Primitive matriarchy and Schreiner's Reading of anthropology

It is far from obvious or inevitable that Schreiner should have regarded late Victorian anthropology as a stumbling block to feminist ideals. From the 1860s onwards, the new field of anthropology was characterized by extraordinary speculative ferment about the origins and development of the family, marriage, the sexual division of labor, private property, and the state. Such speculation did not on the whole support comfortable orthodoxies about women's nature or social status. On the contrary: anthropology provided the lay reader with a provocative array of views about the origins and legitimacy of patriarchy and of women's subordination.[12] Firstly, the rimitive matriarchy thesis – the theory that prehistoric societies were in some sense matriarchal (or maybe only matrilineal, or matrifocal) – was one of the dominant anthropological paradigms up until the turn of the century and retained some respectability well into the 1920s.[13] Secondly, even the major theorists who were convinced of either the originality or the civilizing impetus of patriarchy (Johann J. Bachofen, Henry Maine, and John Ferguson McLennan) still problematized its ethics or its naturalness, providing the feminist reader with plenty of suggestive material.[14] The overall effect of anthropological debate in this period was to cast the familiar tenets of bourgeois gender ideology in an estranging light, whether by suggesting that they were relatively recent constructs or by aligning them with "primitive" customs. Marriage, separate spheres, female chastity, patriarchal rule: all these apparently venerable axioms of society were historicized and relativized by comparative analysis. As Ann Taylor Allen has argued, anthropology thereby exposed modern patriarchy and sexual relations to radical critique and generally provided feminist thinkers with a "source of optimism and intellectual empowerment."[15]

The impact of theories of primitive matriarchy upon Schreiner's thinking has been underestimated.[16] It is true that Schreiner dismissed the most literal interpretation of matriarchal theory: she thought that the brute physical superiority of men made it implausible that women had ever "domineered" over men anywhere.[17] But "matriarchy" – or the

matriarchate, or "mother-right," or "the mother age," as it was variously characterized – was really an umbrella term for a range of theories about the possibility that women enjoyed more power, freedom, or esteem in primitive societies than they did in modern bourgeois societies in the West. And this body of work also encompassed a variety of strong claims about women's role in the early evolution of society. Schreiner assimilated many of these latter claims into "The Boer Woman and the Woman Question (1898)," *Woman and Labour* and *From Man to Man*. In all three texts, Schreiner affirms a major theme of the matriarchy hypothesis insofar as she asserts that the origins of civilization are mainly attributable to "the genius of woman rather than that of man," in the words of her close friend Karl Pearson.[18] Like Pearson, Schreiner credits women with inventing most of what is valuable in human society: in her accounts, visual art, storytelling, religion, and music; horticulture, animal husbandry, and early agriculture; medicine, pottery, cooking, housing, and weaving.[19] Men, meanwhile, are credited mainly with cultivating arts of death: hunting and war.[20] In *From Man to Man*, Schreiner also follows matriarchal theory in the tradition of Bachofen and suggests that maternal love was the origin and prototype of human society (though she is reluctant to essentialize altruism as a female trait and keen to stress the importance of paternal protectiveness as a factor in social evolution).[21] In postulating this largely gynocentric division of the spoils of human nature, Schreiner was endorsing some of the basic premises of the matriarchal argument as rendered by a number of her feminist contemporaries: Mona Caird, Matilda Joslyn Gage, Catherine Gasquoine Hartley, and Frances Swiney.[22]

What distinguishes Schreiner from other feminist matriarchal theorists is her marked negativity about women's historical social status. In her account, women's contributions to the early evolution of society probably surpassed those of men, but women have never received meaningful credit for them; and although women did and continue to do the bulk of the useful labor in primitive societies, they were and are "more or less enslaved."[23] In her emphasis on female subordination as the primordial type of slavery, Schreiner echoes August Bebel's and Friedrich Engels' pungent commentaries on this theme.[24] However, where Bebel and Engels claimed that women had once enjoyed equality under primitive communism, Schreiner does not really imagine a lost golden age. (At the start of *Woman and Labour*, she gestures at the idea that "the savage man and the savage woman wandered free and labored free together," but this vision is dispatched in a sentence and she moves on to imagining primitive women as slave laborers).[25] Also like Bebel and Engels, Schreiner identifies the shift to more advanced agriculture as a watershed moment for women because it drastically reduced the variety and value of their labor.[26] But where for Bebel and Engels this moment represents the "world-historic defeat of the female sex," in Engel's famous phrase, for Schreiner it marks only a transition from one form of subjection to another: women's subjection is archaic and has continued in a more or less unbroken chain down to the present, whether it takes the form of slave labor or "sex parasitism" (Schreiner's term for the dependent condition of modern middle – and upper class women)..[27]

Despite Schreiner's decidedly bleak interpretation of matriarchal theory, her feminism was also clearly empowered by the anthropological turn in late Victorian thought. In her introduction to Wollstonecraft, she writes:

> The purblind inhabitant of the modern social state, […] sees in sex manifestation something unalterably fixed and unchanging as a mathematical axiom. The first glances at the history of

> the [human] race, even as far as our infantile powers have deciphered it, show the untruth of this view. Nothing has been more fluid, nothing more continually changing with the development of the race than the sex manifestation.[28]

This paragraph captures the liberating sense of historical contingency that anthropology conferred upon gender roles for feminist thinkers like Schreiner. But this self-confident assertion appears in the same essay as the anecdote about the Black South African woman and her sage fatalism. As is often true of Schreiner's *oeuvre*, the malleability of women's social status can be affirmed as an abstract proposition, but it is the opposing view – the despairing sense of the inexorability of women's subjection – which is invested with real feeling and aesthetic power. This is a critical commonplace about *Story of an African Farm*: its heroine, Lyndall, can articulate her feminist principles at great length and in remarkably trenchant rhetoric, but cannot put them into practice. Instead, the novel aestheticizes Lyndall's apparently inexorable fulfilment of the tragic conventions of the Victorian fallen woman plot..[29]

Schreiner intended to dedicate *From Man to Man* to her sister Ellie and to her unnamed daughter, both of whom died in infancy. She toyed with alternate epigraphs that together distil the novel's feminist pessimism: "[s]he never lived to know she was a woman" and "[s]he never lived to shed a woman's tears."[30] Both epigraphs gesture at the idea that it is better to die in infancy than to grow into a woman – a provocation only the more startling for being offered in the guise of a consolatory sentiment. This is a gendered variation on one of the starker definitions of philosophical pessimism (i.e. the claim that life is not worth living, or that existence is worse than non-existence), and as we shall see, *From Man to Man* thematizes it insistently through its recurrent female-suicide motif.[31] However, I also use the phrase "feminist pessimism" to gloss the burden of Schreiner's anecdote about the Black South African woman: a clear-sighted understanding of women's oppression provokes despair rather than resistance.

Critics have long expressed frustration with the aestheticized pessimism of late nineteenth-century New Woman writing in general and of Schreiner's work in particular. Satirising Schreiner's taste for portentous allegory in 1912, Rebecca West complained of the "extremely depressing career of Woman, who left the garden of Pleasure because Duty with his white, clear features came and looked at her, and who decided to seek the land of Freedom down the banks of Labor through the waters of Suffering."[32] More recent critics have read the pessimism of New Woman writing in similar if more rigorously political ways: it is taken to be symptomatic of the incapacity of fin de siècle feminism to think beyond liberal individualism or outside of the essentializing terms of Victorian evolutionary science – intellectual failures which often led feminists into devil's pacts with eugenics, Social Darwinism, colonialism, and imperialism.[33] Whether Schreiner should be counted an exponent or critic of these ideologies has been debated extensively, in part because her views shifted over the course of her life.[34] However, even some of Schreiner's more sympathetic critics interpret her pessimism as a "morbid symptom" of Victorian feminism's relationship with both evolutionary science and the politics of colonialism and empire..[35]

Recently, two critics have offered compelling reappraisals of Schreiner's pessimism. Pearl Brilmyer has argued that Schreiner found Arthur Schopenhauer's pessimism attractive because it affirmed the involuntary dimensions of character and thereby enabled a

rethinking of the terms of literary realism.[36] Meanwhile Kailana Durnan has argued that Schreiner, like other radical thinkers of the fin de siècle, deployed pessimism strategically: it was a means of preserving the integrity of feminist ideals in an inhospitable cultural moment.[37] Indebted to these readings, this essay also emphasizes that pessimism is not a bug but a feature of Schreiner's feminism. In *From Man to Man*, Rebekah finds anthropological thinking by turns a source of intellectual empowerment and a cause for fatalistic despair about women's lot. But this contradiction does not merely represent an impasse in Rebekah's thought, nor in Schreiner's. The novel dramatizes Rebekah's restless dissatisfaction with her own efforts to construct a viable feminist narrative out of her own understanding of social evolution. Rebekah's pessimism is productive, impelling her to construct better narratives and find more receptive audiences for her storytelling.[38] And her stories get better insofar as she strives to repudiate stadial thinking and comes to understand Black women as crucial to feminism's future rather than as allegories of eternal bondage.[39]

The uses of pessimism in From Man to Man

As Kathy Psomiades has shown, the representation of gender and sexuality in the late Victorian novel is informed by concepts and frameworks derived from the discipline of anthropology.[40] However, according to her analysis, the influence of anthropology generally manifests itself in the latent structure of novels, inflecting their construction of the marriage plot and gender dynamics; or else it surfaces in allusions and symbolic patterns which situate a novel's depiction of modernity in relation to "primitive" cultures. *From Man to Man* is remarkable in the degree to which it makes its preoccupation with anthropology explicit and pervasive. It does so primarily through Rebekah, whose need to tell herself a comprehensive story about human nature begins in childhood and becomes both more anguished and more sophisticated over the course of her life. Rebekah must come to knowledge not merely of herself and of her contemporary society, as would be conventional in a *bildungsroman*, but attempt to account for her place within the sweep of social evolution. This is never just an intellectual project; at every point, Rebekah's effort to construct an anthropological story is driven by acute existential need. In particular, it is driven by a need to conceptualize the status of women in terms that are both intellectually credible and personally bearable.

The opening chapter of *From Man to Man* is an allegorical retelling of Genesis, though one which foregrounds motherhood and sisterhood rather than the original man and woman, and in which Africa is implicitly understood as the true birthplace of humanity. When the novel opens, Rebekah is five years old and her mother is giving birth to twins: one sister, Bertie, survives, while the other does not. Tellingly, Rebekah rejects her living sister but feels an affinity with the stillborn twin, whom she discovers in a separate room and attempts to mother.[41] After her Ayah rebukes her for interfering with the corpse and sends her away, Rebekah remains preoccupied with the dead baby and imagines discovering her, Moses-like and miraculously alive, in the rushes of a riverbank.[42] This imaginary resurrected sister becomes the occasion of Rebekah's first foray into feminist anthropology. Casting herself as "Queen Victoria of South Africa" and as the author of a revised Bible, Rebekah tells her imaginary sister a series of parables about the heroic agency of women.[43] In each story, it is clear that Rebekah's heroic ideal of femininity is an attempt to rationalize a form of violence or cruelty she has perceived in the

natural world, in the everyday realities of colonialism, or in men (here symbolized by her two young male cousins, one of whom she will go on to marry.)[44] Reminiscent of Maggie Tulliver's juvenile effort to "civilize" a group of Roma in George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* (1862), Rebekah's precocious didacticism is by turns charming and disturbing: it at once demonstrates the intensity of her need to theorize the world and the inadequacy of the ideologies – Christianity, colonialism, feminine self-sacrifice – available to her.[45] Indeed, Rebekah's stories are an unwitting indictment of all three ideologies, with her child's simplicity exposing a nihilism at the nexus between them. This is best captured in Rebekah's recital of the plot of Sarah Tytler's short story, *What Hester Durham Lived For* (1863). In Rebekah's tendentious retelling, the heroine is driven to suicidal despair by a loveless marriage and the death of a son. Hester staves off her suicide ideation by traveling to India, where she dies a martyr's death at the hands of sepoys during the Indian rebellion of 1857. While Hester provides comfort to other despairing women in their final moments, she is not able to save anyone, and her martyrdom seems primarily a way of lending a veneer of imperial Christianity to a pre-existing death wish. Schreiner makes clear that Rebekah is invested in this story because, even at the age of five, she too has an underlying death wish: her failure to revive her stillborn sister with her storytelling leads her to echo Hester Durham and declare, "I wish I was dead!."[46]

Rebekah's sermons on her dead sister are sometimes cited as proof of Schreiner's own complicity with colonial ideologies.[47] But they are clearly a child's theodicy – Rebekah's naïve effort to make sense of her sister's death and of the evil she perceives in the world around her. This sense of evil is at once theological (encountering a cobra, she has a "sense of all the world being abandonedly wicked") and inseparable from her colonial context (she confesses to an imaginary Queen Victoria that "[t]hings are not always nice" in South Africa).[48] Rebekah's theodicy is equally obviously a failure: far from reassuring just-so stories, her narratives are overwhelmed by the sense of evil they try to redeem. This establishes the novel's pattern: for most of the narrative, Rebekah's feminist storytelling will fail twice over, once because it is undone by its own morbid logic and again because it has no audience capable of receiving it. But there are nonetheless lessons in this for the reader. Schreiner is alerting us to the ways that Rebekah's theodicy-cum-anthropology is driven by psychic needs. She is also alerting us to the insoluble core of the problem that preoccupies Rebekah: the theological problem of evil (in this first chapter, why would God let a baby die?). Rebekah's childish ambition to rewrite the Bible in feminist terms will get secularized into a host of anthropological questions for the adult Rebekah: whether human evolution is driven by competition or by care and cooperation; the origins of human violence and cruelty; the cause of male sexual promiscuity; the roles of slavery and female subordination in the development of civilization; the significance or insignificance of racial differences. However, these apparently anthropological questions will retain their original sense of theological enigma as well as their tendency to induce despair.

As a married woman and a mother, Rebekah pursues armchair anthropology in private, filling notebooks with essays on biological and social evolution in snatched moments between her domestic duties. In the very long chapter "Raindrops in the Avenue" – it runs to seventy pages in Dorothy Driver's edition – Schreiner arrests the novel's plot to give us two extended samples of Rebekah's thought. Both are attacks on the progressivist teleology of social evolutionism. The first meditates on the tendency

of civilizations toward decadence.[49] Rebekah concludes that great civilizations have generally contained the seeds of their own destruction insofar as they were founded on social inequality – particularly slave labor and the subordination of women – and conferred their benefits only upon a small elite. The second is an attack on the rationality of eugenics and Social Darwinism. According to Rebekah, these ideologies overlook the extent to which social evolution has depended on maternal care, paternal protectiveness, and more generalized concern for the weak.[50] Rebekah's essays entail a systematic critique of the distinction between civilized and primitive societies, especially as it was pressed into the service of justifying colonialism and genocide.[51] Reversing the conventional logics of Social Darwinism and degeneration discourse, Rebekah finds barbarity at the heart of Western civilization and suggests that "dark and primitive races" may be humanity's only hope of renewal.[52] As Brilmyer says, this is an "astounding chapter – one of the most pointed critiques of biological racism and sexism in the period."[53] However, analysing Rebekah's arguments selectively can obscure their proneness to reversal and defeat. It is crucial to the novel's over-arching pattern that Rebekah's critique of Western civilization falls apart: although she remains committed to its ethical principles, she ultimately doubts its realism. In the final part of the chapter, she retracts her earlier argument and characterizes human evolution as a dysgenic war of all against all: only the brutal can triumph and altruistic impulses are at best vestigial, perhaps doomed to extinction.[54] Although this remains a critique of Social Darwinism and eugenics, it is now a merely despairing moral protest: Rebekah has lost faith in the credibility of her earlier position. At this point, Rebekah's will to theorize breaks down and she turns to creative writing. This too provides little consolation: she writes an allegory in which she imagines Humanity as a fettered woman, full of admirable sentiments but powerless to liberate herself.[55] She then retreats to bed and fantasizes about being a man because she cannot imagine an end to the "long chain" of women's subjection..[56]

It is through Rebekah's private scholarly labors that the novel's ambivalent investment in epic form becomes apparent. The encyclopaedic range and voluminousness of Rebekah's writings at once swell the novel extravagantly and serve to aggrandize Rebekah herself, whose effort to reconcile her feminist and anti-racist principles with evolutionary anthropology comes to seem a heroic struggle. As Václav Paris has demonstrated, modernist novelists often harken back to the epic tradition "as a medium for thinking about [Darwinian] evolution"; more particularly, they often experiment with epic as a "space for problematizing and reimagining Social Darwinism."[57] Jade Munslow Ong has argued compellingly for *From Man to Man* to be appreciated as an experiment in modernist form.[58] I would add to her analysis that the novel's pessimism about its own capacity to fulfil the totalizing, masculinist aspirations of epic form – that is, the epic's promise to offer a comprehensive vision of a social order and to give us a conquering hero – is central to its modernism: Rebecca is driven by her desire to theorize and advocate for a properly universal humanism, but despairs again and again of her capacity to convince herself, let alone others.[59] In this way, Schreiner uses epic form not only to contest Social Darwinist thinking, but to dramatize the beleaguered nature of such a project for a white woman in colonial South Africa.

Rebekah's feminist anthropology ultimately founders in the "Raindrops" chapter in part because she is still in dialogue only with herself: she has no plans to publish her

work or share her ideas with others. There is a pathetic irony in the fact that her work strives to encompass all of humanity in a compassionate vision but is itself a fundamentally lonely, even solipsistic enterprise. Schreiner emphasizes that Rebekah is motivated by a "curious hunger for exact knowledge of things as they are, of naked truth about all things small or great."[60] Yet Rebekah's effort to understand the truth objectively is not itself disinterested, as is clarified in the subsequent chapter, "You Cannot Capture the Ideal by Coup D'État." This chapter invites us to reappraise Rebekah's anthropological writing in psychological terms: we realize that it is galvanized by her need to understand her husband Frank's philandering. Remarkably, this does not serve to trivialize those speculations: as Hilary Bedder suggests, their sheer length – some run to fifty pages – has the effect of endowing Rebekah with some of the authority of a third-person omniscient narrator.[61] At the same time, the shifts between Rebekah's anthropological theorizing and Schreiner's close third-person narration lends Rebekah's anthropology the quality of a first-person confession. Schreiner was herself deeply interested in the psychological motives that underlie intellectual projects; for instance, she admitted that was inspired to write her introduction to Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* because of her fascination with Wollstonecraft's personal life.[62] In *From Man to Man*, Schreiner aims to dignify the connection between psychic need and intellectual work by dramatizing how intimate struggles can both inspire and impede the construction of philosophical and political arguments – perhaps especially feminist arguments like the one she herself made in *Woman and Labour.* More precisely, Schreiner wants to show that "feminine" emotional desperation – in this case, the humiliating position of the wronged wife – may inspire a "hunger after a knowledge of reality as an end in itself": in other words, the kind of impersonal intellectual enquiry esteemed as scientific and masculine.[63] Rebekah conceptualizes her effort to understand her husband's infidelity as a kind of unflinching intellectual courage; she affirms that her love for him can "survive the most awful knowledge," where "awful" carries both its ordinary meaning and its etymological sense of something awe-inspiring or sublime.[64] The most awful knowledge is, in this case, the possibility that her husband's betrayal attests to an irreducible inequality between the sexes: where for him, sexual love is a "sport," an expression of a male passion for "winning, conquering, taking," for Rebekah it means selfless devotion.[65] Rebekah imagines that her husband's infidelity has put her in touch with the primal truth of female abjection:

> Is it perhaps the spirit of those old ancestresses of mine who for millions of years have followed the man over steppes and through deserts and across mountains, with [lashes] and burdens, always following, following, following–which today cries out in us–"Follow till he sets you free!" I do not know how it is that I […] feel an iron chain about my heart binding me [to my husband]. Often I have said, "Why do I not get up and go?" and then something cries out in me, "If he should need me!–If he should want me!"[66]

Here the stock role of the long-suffering wife is anthropologized into something grander: an archaic experience that enriches Rebekah's sense of the profundity of feelings even as it confirms the absoluteness of her subjection. Rebekah spends the rest of the chapter confounded by this anthropological sublime. Interpreting the conflict between herself and her husband in evolutionary terms, she wonders if men are fundamentally hunters and killers, programed to see the world – including women – in terms of

prey.[67] She finds consolation in the idea that women are essentially compassionate beings, driven by a need for intersubjective understanding.[68] Yet such a starkly essentialist view of gender renders heterosexuality a hopelessly sadomasochistic enterprise and thereby empties life of all value for Rebekah.[69] This "nightmare" is at once a marital and an intellectual crisis: her husband's fulfilment of the worst stereotype of masculinity ruins not just her marriage but her efforts to construct a feminist anthropological narrative for herself..[70]

The "Coup d'État" chapter once again dramatizes Rebekah's failure to find an audience or even an interlocutor for her theories: it primarily consists of a long letter to Frank which he refuses to read. As with previous chapters, Rebekah also experiences a moment of profound despair, though this one is considerably darker than any so far: she contemplates killing both herself and her children.[71] The resolution to this crisis is Schreiner's homage to the famous moment in Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872) in which Dorothea Brooke spots several laborers outside her window and is thereby lifted out of her personal suffering and into a sense of fellowship with all of humanity.[72] In Rebekah's case, it is the sight of a Black laborer which shames her out of her solipsism: she asks herself, "'[w]hen all hope is dead in your own life, is there yet nothing left to live for? Are there not others?'"[73] Like Dorothea, Rebekah is inspired to reach out to her female rival in the love triangle which has caused her misery. Yet in Schreiner's provocative rewriting of Eliot's moral plot, the rival here is not a social equal but a Black servant girl whom Frank has gotten pregnant. In other words, Rebekah's *bildung* will require a more radical extension of human sympathies than Eliot demanded of her heroines. While Rebekah has managed to forgive her husband's other infidelities, his relationship with the Black servant is a breaking point for her and she decides that their marriage can only continue as a formal arrangement. The sense of an unbearable transgression in this case is not because it is an interracial relationship *per se*: indeed, Rebekah specifies that it "might seem a grosser and more brutal thing [than adultery with a white woman] in the eyes of the world but not in mine."[74] As Carolyn Burdett has pointed out, Schreiner is here at pains to clarify that Rebekah's reaction is grounded not in racism but in moral revulsion at the exploitation inherent in a relationship between a teenaged Black servant and her middle-aged white employer – exploitation which Rebekah recognizes as a vestige of slavery in South Africa.[75] As we have seen, the fact that Western civilization has been underpinned by slave labor and the subordination of women is already a source of intellectual pessimism for Rebekah, and now she is forced to confront that idea as a reality in her own home and marriage. In this context, it is significant that Rebekah's attempt to speak to the Black servant about their common predicament – they are both pregnant by Frank – is the first time in the novel that she tries to translate her philosophical principles into direct communication with another person. The effort at solidarity fails: the girl is rude to her, and Rebekah loses her will to speak.[76] Still, we are meant to notice that there is some progress here: for the first time, Rebekah tries to put her feminist and anti-racist ideals into practice, however abortively.

In the chapter "Fireflies in the Dark," Rebekah's private anthropological project finally becomes social and productive. She has an audience at last: she can instruct her own children, a group which includes her adopted daughter Sartje – the product of Frank's relationship with the Black servant. The adoption of Sartje symbolizes the fact that Black South Africans are no longer abstractions within Rebekah's anthropological

theorizing but must be recognized as members of her intimate family. Late Victorian anthropology had settled on monogenism – all races have a common ancestor – as a consensus, but this universalist understanding of humanity remained riven by a range of overlapping hierarchizing schemas: savage, barbarian, and civilized peoples; inferior and superior racial groups; primitive and advanced cultures; fit and unfit types.[77] When Rebekah instructs her white biological children that they must treat Sartje as their sister, Schreiner is offering an allegory of how the full implications of a single human family must be affirmed without recourse to invidious distinctions.[78] Some critics have rightly found adoption a troubling metaphor for racial inclusivity here: it is too evocative of colonial practices of child removal and forced assimilation, and we do not learn anything further about the fate of Sartje's biological mother.[79] The potential violence of Rebekah's humanist universalism is apparent at this moment: her will to encompass everything in a redemptive totality – characteristic not only of her intellectual project but of epic form – clearly privileges her own moral and symbolic satisfactions over the particularities of Sartje or her unnamed mother. Schreiner does not encourage us to be sceptical of Rebekah's adoption of Sartje: we are simply invited to admire her moral heroism, and this is never clearly problematized by Rebekah's recurrent bouts of pessimism (though the unfinished nature of the novel, of course, leaves this possibility open).

The radicalism of Rebekah's sermon to her children should nevertheless not be downplayed: white supremacy is derided as a "parvenu" delusion; colonialism is indicted not only as violent expropriation but for the psychic trauma it inflicts on the colonized; and civilization is characterized as a cross-racial work-in-progress upon which Europeans can claim no monopoly.[80] As throughout the novel, Rebekah's arguments are defined by their universalizing sweep and by their aspiration to think prehistory and modernity simultaneously, without the scaffolding of racialized hierarchies or the triumphalist Eurocentrism of so much social evolutionary thought.[81] Rebekah's sense of identification with her prehistoric "ancestresses" is the basis of her critique of racism in the present:

> You will hear people talking often of Inferior Races and of how superior we are–the people who may be speaking; but for me I know this, that if you took from me bit by bit all I have gained and learned from other races and other peoples in whom my blood never flowed, I should go back and back, and you would find me at last only a little cave mother with her baby tied by a skin on to her back, peeping out at the door of the cave to see if the man with his bone hook or flint arrows was coming home.[82]

Arguably, Rebekah's self-primitivization only reinscribes the temporal distancing ofracialized others typical of evolutionary anthropology: even if Rebekah is willing to join her imaginary others in a cave, the identification of "inferior races" with a prehistoric past remains intact.[83] However unsatisfactory we may find the rhetorical gesture, Rebekah's effort to interiorize the concept of the primitive is clearly intended to blunt its force as a colonial weapon in the present. This effort is clearly distinct from the exoticizing and often hyper-sexualized primitivism associated with some male modernist writers and artists.[84] Importantly for my purposes, it is borne of Rebekah's feminist pessimism: her capacity to locate the primitive within herself is a direct consequence of her "hours of great darkness" over her husband's infidelity, which made her feel that she was as doomed to subjection as her prehistoric "ancestresses."[85] In other words,

Rebekah's reckoning with that anthropological sublime – her "nightmare" of heterosexuality as the primordial master/slave relationship – yields a proto-intersectional feminism: it leads her toward a recognition of the entanglement of sexual and racial inequality in contemporary South Africa and a tentative sense of solidarity with Black African women.[86]

Rebekah's identification with her prehistoric "ancestresses" is not only grounded in a sense of abjection: it is in this same section of the novel that she makes claims about women's preeminent role in early social evolution – the kinds of claims generally associated with matriarchal theory.[87] Rebekah interweaves these with her anti-racist pedagogy, exhorting her white male children to feel due humility about their place in human history.[88] This scene of maternal instruction seems like a partial fulfilment of Rebekah's search for a social use for her anthropological theories. Her cast of mind nonetheless remains fundamentally pessimistic. The novel's female suicide motif resurfaces, and in its most disturbing suicide/infanticide form: Rebekah tells her children about the formative impact of an incident from her childhood when she heard a story about a Black woman who had flung herself and her children from a mountain top. Rebekah recalls that she sought out the site of their deaths and composed an elegiac poem for them, though the tragedy took place before she was born.[89] Schreiner thus highlights that Rebekah's hopeful vision of an egalitarian future is paradoxically grounded in a sense of hopeless belatedness – of arriving in the aftermath of a tragedy that cannot be understood, only mourned. Rebekah's vision is also enabled by her sense of identification with another woman's despair, and it is of course not incidental that this is a Black woman's despair. We know from earlier in the novel that Rebekah herself has contemplated not just suicide but infanticide, and that dire self-knowledge is the basis of her radical sense of empathy with other women and the anti-racist politics she is attempting to instil in her children. However, it is worth noting that Schreiner does not suggest that Rebekah's empathy has any heroic efficacy. The story about the suicidal/infanticidal mother prompted a small gesture of kindness in the child Rebekah; it led her to give her bread and jam to another Black woman she saw traveling with her baby on her back. In the present of the story, Schreiner underscores the limits of Rebekah's power to influence her children: her lesson is symbolically interrupted by her husband's arrival home, and he refuses to acknowledge Sartje as his child (Sartje is only permitted to join the rest of the family at the dinner table when he is away from home, and Frank banishes her from the room when she tries to touch him).[90] Whether Frank or Rebekah will shape the moral imaginations of their sons – symbolically, the political future of South Africa – is left an open question, but Rebekah's predominance seems doubtful.

Analysis of the final extant chapter is necessarily more speculative given the novel's unfinished state. Rebekah seems poised to embark on an adulterous affair with a new character, Mr. Drummond (though in Schreiner's plans for the novel, their love was to remain unconsummated).[91] Critics often identify Mr. Drummond as an idealized New Man figure – a modern man capable of egalitarian love – and it is true that he is the first adult character with whom Rebekah has intellectual dialogue on terms of equality.[92] Their deepening intimacy also seems designed to dispel the Manichean essentialism about sexual differences that paralysed Rebekah in the wake of her husband's infidelities. Yet there are some hints that Mr. Drummond is a less than ideal intellectual partner, and given the broader patterning of the novel, it seems likely that Schreiner is setting up

another opportunity for Rebekah to act as pedagogue. Like Rebekah, Mr. Drummond is a collector of fossils and "savage" artefacts and a teller of anthropological stories; however, unlike hers, Mr. Drummond's are conspicuously masculine – focussed on hunting and war.[93] Also unlike Rebekah, Drummond collects African artefacts to sell to museums in Europe and describes his profits as "blood money."[94] Schreiner appears to be developing a contrast between Drummond's mercenary and masculinist anthropology and Rebekah's disinterestedly feminist kind. Drummond's anthropology is based upon the objectification and cataloguing of "specimens" and primarily treats Black Africans as living fossils: he is interested in their skulls, though contemplating these seems to "depress" him.[95] Drummond also confesses his desire to be a novelist to Rebekah and describes his tortured creative labors at great length.[96] My guess is that Schreiner was preparing the ground for another of Rebekah's lessons: she will convert Drummond to her own ideal of anthropology as a self-critical imaginative process which demands continual reckoning with "awful knowledge."

Nothing depressing: Schreiner's endless pessimism

My analysis of *From Man to Man* has concentrated on the dialectic between Rebekah's anthropological theorizing and her *bildung*. But *From Man to Man* is a double *bildungsroman*, alternating between the narratives of Rebekah and her sister Bertie. Superficially, their paths are divergent: where Rebekah is a serious, inward-turning autodidact, Bertie is a party girl who can only live for "personal relations"; and where Rebekah becomes a wife and mother and remains in South Africa, Bertie is seduced by her tutor as a teenager, travels to London as a kept woman, and is rumoured to have wound up in a Soho brothel.[97] As is often remarked, these differences in the sisters' characters and fates only goes to show homology: both find themselves degraded by male sexuality and patriarchal structures, and both are often rendered passive by despair. As Anna Snaith points out, the fact that Rebekah's experience of marriage often seems just as abject as Bertie's life as a sex worker is designed to dramatize the radical thesis that patriarchal marriage is merely the respectable face of sex work.[98] More precisely, the novel's parallel adultery and sex work plots seem structured to drive home the argument famously made by Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884): sex work and adultery are not external threats to the institution of bourgeois marriage but intrinsic features of it..[99]

Bertie's narrative also has consequences for the interpretation of Rebekah's anthropological theorizing. As noted, Rebekah chooses her dead sister over her living one as the audience for her sermons in the first chapter of the novel. Rebekah is, for most of the narrative, effectively still in conversation with the stillborn twin, or with herself, rather than with her sister or any other living woman. The emotional and physical distances between the sisters – for a large part of the narrative Rebekah does not know where Bertie is – seem an implicit reproach to Rebekah's intellectual project: her anthropology, for all its emphasis upon female emotional intelligence and the primacy of care, can make no difference to her sister. In an 1886 letter to Pearson, Schreiner revealed that Bertie was to return to South Africa and die of syphilis; Rebekah would deliver her final anthropology lesson at Bertie's deathbed. Schreiner insisted that there was to be "nothing depressing" in the scene, but its pessimism seems overwhelming: Rebekah's inspiring vision of sexual equality was to be communicated too late, and Bertie would only

listen "half uneasily" to it.[100] At the end of the novel as at the beginning, Rebekah's feminist anthropology is only shareable with a dead sister.

Yet Schreiner's apparently perverse insistence that there would be "nothing depressing" in this scene is nonetheless faithful to the novel's logic. As I have been arguing, Rebekah's anthropological stories progress through pessimism; they find their way to a more expansive empathy if not to optimism by taking a "full look at the worst," in Thomas Hardy's phrase.[101] Over the course of the novel, Rebekah's confrontations with despair render her stories more radically empathic and more genuinely universalist in their scope: she comes to see humanity as a "long climb out of the dark, through the cave doors" and toward a recognition of itself as a single family.[102] One of Schreiner's plans for the conclusion of the novel was clearly plotted with both this universal-family metaphor and Sophocles's *Antigone* (c. 441 BC) in mind: it would involve a confrontation between Rebekah and Frank over whether Bertie should be buried quietly or given a funeral in the family home, given her status as a sexual pariah. Rebekah was to assume the symbolic role of Antigone in this *agon*, standing up to her husband at last and asserting the primacy of kinship bonds over Frank's Creon-like investment in the display of patriarchal power.[103] The structure of this contest seems designed to recall their contrasting attitudes to Sartje (and indeed, in another letter, Schreiner stipulated that the end of the novel would also involve an argument between Frank and Rebekah over Sartje's status in the family).[104] Where Frank's conception of the family is premised upon hypocritical exclusions, Rebekah's is more inclusive precisely insofar as it is more honest about the entanglements of sexuality and race: Bertie and Sartje *are* of course their kin, whether Frank admits it or not. In other words, Rebekah's argument in favour of a model of the family which can embrace fallen sisters and mixed-race daughters has both moral righteousness and obvious biological reality on its side.

Rebekah's attachment to pessimism as both an intellectual self-discipline and as an ethics in *From Man to Man* is clearly also Schreiner's. It is a position affirmed in many of Schreiner's essays and letters. For example, in her essay "The Dawn of Civilisation" (1917), Schreiner claims that she fortifies her sense of hope in humanity by looking "nakedly in the face those facts which make most against all hope."[105] In an 1885 letter to Havelock Ellis, she is galvanized to reaffirm her commitment to feminism by contemplating its possible futility:

> I've been so troubled <u>& despairing</u> about the woman question […] Your hamstrings are cut when you lose your hope. You know it is possible that women are absolutely & all together the inferiors of men, but still their suffering is real, & something must be done for it.
>
> When I look into my own heart then I feel as strong & fierce as a lion.[106]

The brevity of this letter makes the movement from despair to leonine courage seem rapid and linear, even facile. In From Man to Man, pessimism is a more Sisyphean labor: a battle that must be waged in Rebekah's consciousness over and over. And while Schreiner asks us to appreciate that pessimism enables Rebekah to make authentic intellectual progress, the practical fruits of that progress are modest: they are small, perhaps ineffectual gestures of proto-intersectional feminism. Finuala Dowling suggests that From Man to Man was subject to obsessive revision and became the labor of four decades because Schreiner envisioned it as a moral epic to answer Eliot's Middlemarch.[107] As noted, the

intertextuality with Middlemarch is evident at a pivotal moment, and Schreiner clearly meant for us to interpret Rebekah as a Dorothea-like figure, unlikely to achieve fame or recognition for her anthropological project but nevertheless a source of diffusive moral good in her personal life. However, the novel's investment in recursive pessimism is also surely a reason for its unfinished state. This is not because pessimism itself is necessarily the telos of Schreiner's thought, but because for her, any progressive hope that can be wrung from it can only be provisional, contingent upon a willingness to take yet another full look at the worst. It is understandable that she struggled to write a conclusion that would not give false closure to her feminist pessimism.

Notes

1. Schreiner, *Woman and Labour*, 13–14.
2. On Schreiner's idiosyncratic socialist thought, see Livesey, *Socialism, Sex, and Aestheticism*, 73–101.
3. On Schreiner's idiosyncratic socialist thought, see Livesey, *Socialism, Sex, and Aestheticism*, 73–101.
4. Ibid., 27.
5. Evolutionism was the dominant paradigm of nineteenth-century social anthropology. Rooted in the Enlightenment tradition of conjectural history and shaped more by Herbert Spencer's theory of evolution than by Charles Darwin's, it held that human societies progress through a unilinear series of stages (generally from primitivism, savagery, or barbarism to civilisation). See Candea, "Severed Roots," 18-59. For the influence of Spencer on Schreiner, see Burdett, *Progress of Feminism*, 25–27.
6. Schreiner, *Woman and Labour*, 144-147.
7. Trouillot, *Global Transformations*, 14–17.
8. Schreiner worked on *From Man to Man* on and off between 1870 and 1911. *Women and Labour* also had a long and complicated gestation; Schreiner claimed she had worked on a much longer version of it since her youth and lost the manuscript in a fire. In arguing that *From Man to Man* is an advance on *Women and Labour*, I imply no simple intellectual teleology: both texts must be considered almost career-long labours and to have been written to some extent concurrently. See Driver, introduction to Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, iv. See also Schreiner, *Woman and Labour*, 15–26.
9. Schreiner's "Three Dreams in a Desert" similarly identifies Africa with women's primeval subjection and concludes by imagining an egalitarian heaven on earth. See Schreiner, *Dreams*, 51–70.
10. Schreiner's effort to repudiate social evolutionist thinking in *From Man to Man* reflects a broader shift in the discipline of anthropology that began in the final decade of the nineteenth century and is closely associated with Franz Boas's work. There is no evidence Schreiner read Boas, but her turn away from social evolutionism was part of a wider intellectual zeitgeist that would transform the discipline of anthropology in the early twentieth century. See Sanderson, 36–50.
11. As Driver notes, these aspects of the novel were once often cited as reasons for judging it an artistic failure. See Driver's introduction to Schreiner's *From Man to Man*, xiii. *From Man to Man* has received more positive evaluations in recent decades and is now often judged a masterpiece, but there remains a critical tendency to focus on plot and characterisation and to side-step its self-positioning as an anthropological epic. Notable exceptions to this tendency include Bedder, "Alternative Models of Reality," Brilmyer, *Science of Character*, McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, and Munslow Ong, *Schreiner.*
12. See Coward, *Patriarchal Precedents*, Psomiades, *Primitive Marriage*, and Taylor Allen, "Meanings of Modernity."
13. See Coward, ibid., 47–48.

14. See Coward, ibid., 17–46; and Psomiades, ibid., 22–38 and 61–65.
15. Taylor Allen, ibid., 1047.
16. For example, Avrech-Berkman and Driver characterise Schreiner as a matriarchy sceptic, though they both acknowledge nuances in her position. See Berkman, *Healing Imagination*, 95–96; and Driver, "'The Copy Within,'" 134.
17. Schreiner to Karl Pearson, Saturday 7th August 1886. *Olive Schreiner Letters Online*. https://www.oliveschreiner.org/vre?view=collections&colid=74&letterid=87. Accessed 6th of March 2024.
18. Pearson, *The Chances of Death*, 2. Pearson is drawing upon Bachofen; see Bachofen, 67. Otis T. Mason also gave an influential account of women as the architects of early society in *Woman's Share in Primitive Culture* (1894). On Schreiner's close relationship with Pearson, see Burdett, *Progress*, 49–54.
19. Schreiner, *Woman and Labour*, 34–35; and *From Man to Man*, 366–368.
20. Schreiner, "The Boer Woman," 202–210; *Woman and Labour*, 34–35; and *From Man to Man*, 171–176.
21. Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, 171–173; and Bachofen, 79–80.
22. See Mona Caird, *Morality of Marriage*; Matilda Joyce Gage, *Woman, Church, and State*; Catherine Gasquoine Hartley, *Women in Primitive Society*; and Frances Swiney, *The Awakening*.
23. "The Boer Woman," 201–209.
24. Bebel, 9-10; and Engels, 67. As Livesey points out, Schreiner would have been familiar with Bebel's and Engels' works on this subject if not directly then via her close engagement with the thinking of Havelock Ellis, Eleanor Marx, and Pearson. We know Schreiner at least intended to read Bebel's *Woman and Socialism*. See Livesey, *Socialism, Sex, and Aestheticism*, 82–83.
25. Schreiner, *Woman and Labour*, 34.
26. Ibid., 79–82.
27. Engels, ibid., 67, and Schreiner, ibid., 79–82.
28. Schreiner, "Introduction", 23.
29. On critical frustration with the gap between Lyndall's "discursive insight" and her conventional fate, see Burdett, *Progress*, 31.
30. Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, lxii.
31. This is the basic definition given in James Sully's 1877 study *Pessimism*: "The hypothes[i]s that […] the world is on the whole bad, or productive of misery, and so worse than non-existence." See Sully, 156. Sully's broad definition allows him to consider pessimism as a literary tradition and psychological outlook as well as a systematic philosophy. Nicholas Shrimpton provides a useful taxonomy of the varieties of pessimism that circulated in the literary culture of the fin de siècle, though his account focusses exclusively on male writers and thinkers. See Shrimpton, "Pessimism," 41–57
32. West, "Simple", 391.
33. See Barash, "Schreiner," Beaumont, "The New Woman," Chrisman, "Empire," and Richardson, *Love and Eugenics*.
34. On Schreiner's shifting views on race and colonialism, see Stanley, *Schreiner*, 65–81.
35. "Morbid symptom" is McClintock's gloss on this; she is quoting Antonio Gramsci. See McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 295; also see Burdett, *Progress*.
36. Brilmyer, *Science of Character*, 180–219.
37. See Durnan, "Political Pessimism," 160–234.
38. I borrow the phrase "productive pessimism" from Durnan, ibid., 3.
39. I say Schreiner only "strives" to repudiate stadial thinking because the categories of the primitive, the savage and the civilised permeate *From Man to Man*, despite being subject to extensive critique.
40. Psomiades, 1–38.
41. Schreiner, *Man to Man*, 4–9.
42. Ibid., 14.

43. Ibid., 13–28.
44. Ibid., 23.
45. Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 171–179.
46. Tytler, 483–492. Rebekah's recital is true to the story's focus on Hester's despair but tendentious insofar as she omits its final emphasis on Christian redemption and thereby makes the suicide theme starker. Rebekah's staccato summary also makes Hester's decision to travel to India register as irrational in a way that it does not in the original.
47. See Chrisman, 59–60.
48. Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, 31 and 13.
49. Ibid., 151–158.
50. Ibid., 171–176.
51. Ibid., 157–171.
52. Ibid., 164–166.
53. Brilmyer, *Science of Character*, 182.
54. Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, 176–184.
55. Ibid., 185–186.
56. Ibid., 181 and 187.
57. Paris, *Evolutions*, 172 and 9.
58. Munslow Ong, *Schreiner*, 101–142.
59. On the hyper-masculinity and totalising ambitions of epic form, see Paris, *Evolutions*, 23–24 and 64–65.
60. Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, 140.
61. Bedder, "Alternative Models of Reality," 114.
62. See Burdett, "A Difficult Vindication," 178.
63. Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, 141.
64. Ibid., 147.
65. Ibid., 247.
66. Ibid., 241.
67. Ibid., 245–248.
68. Ibid., 246–247.
69. Ibid., 251.
70. Ibid., 251.
71. Ibid., 253.
72. Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 741.
73. Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, 254.
74. Ibid., 242.
75. Burdett, *Progress*, 100.
76. Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, 255.
77. See Stocking, *Anthropology*, 258 and 313-314; and Lorimer, "Theoretical Racism."
78. Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, 380.
79. See Burdett, *Progress*, 99–100; and McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 272–273.
80. Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, 359–371.
81. On the triumphalist Eurocentrism of much Victorian social evolutionist thought, see Trautmann, "Ethnological Time."
82. Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, 357.
83. On nineteenth-century anthropology's characteristic use of evolutionary time, see Fabian, *Time and the Other*, especially 15–18.
84. See Torgovnick.
85. Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, 250.
86. For illuminating analysis of *From Man to Man* as a "precursor to intersectionality studies," see Driver, "'The Copy Within,'" 124. I have used "proto-intersectionalism" here to highlight its uncertain and provisional quality.
87. Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, 359–379
88. Ibid., 359–379.

89. Ibid., 377–378.
90. Ibid., 384 and 359.
91. See Schreiner's plot outlines for the novel in Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, 423 and 428.
92. See Burdett, *Progress*, 99; and Snaith, 50.
93. Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, 395–396 and 355.
94. Ibid., 402.
95. Ibid., 406. As Driver notes, Schreiner is here displacing onto Drummond the moment of creative inspiration that led her to write the first chapter of *From Man to Man*: she was studying the skulls of San people when it "flashed" upon her. In this context, it is interesting that Schreiner appears to contrast Drummond's objectifying anthropology unfavourably with Rebekah's imaginative kind. See Schreiner, *Man to Man*, 406 n.15.
96. Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, 406–416.
97. Ibid., 86 and 389.
98. Snaith, 51.
99. Engels, 90–91.
100. Schreiner to Karl Pearson, July 1886, *Olive Schreiner Letters Online* https://www.oliveschreiner.org/vre?view=collections&colid=74&letterid=80. Accessed 2nd of March 2024.
101. Hardy, "In Tenebris II," 168.
102. Schreiner, *From Man to Man*, 379.
103. Schreiner to Karl Pearson, July 1886, *Olive Schreiner Letters Online* https://www.oliveschreiner.org/vre?view=collections&colid=74&letterid=80. Accessed 2nd of March 2024.
104. Schreiner to William Schreiner, 4 June 1908, *Olive Schreiner Letters Online*. https://www.oliveschreiner.org/vre?view=collections&colid=100&letterid=37. Accessed 22nd March 2024.
105. Schreiner, "Dawn of Civilisation," 213.
106. Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 17 November 1885, *The Olive Schreiner Letters Online* https://www.oliveschreiner.org/vre?view=collections&colid=18&letterid=219. Accessed 2nd of March, 2024.
107. Dowling, "'Writer's Block,'" 80.

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