EDUCATION AS PROBLEM AND SOLUTION IN SOME NOVELS BY EDITH SEARLE GROSSMANN AND OLIVE SCHREINER

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I examine selected novels of two contemporary feminist writers, Edith Searle Grossmann of New Zealand and Olive Schreiner of South Africa. As citizens of the British Empire they each inherited a common literary tradition and similar cultural norms. Through their writing the authors explore the inferior status of women in society, and the role played by education in reinforcing female subordination and perpetuating male hegemony. At the same time they both suggest how education can be the means for empowering women to overcome patriarchal domination. My theoretical approach has been eclectic. I have drawn freely from various schools of literary criticism -- Historical, Marxist, Feminist, Structuralist and Post-Structuralist.

Accepting the premise that Grossmann and Schreiner are themselves historical characters, their writing can be regarded as an historical product, because it represents their response to the imperatives of their age. Its subject matter, language and style are moulded by the authors' consciousness of the times. By examining the sub-text in their novels, I have tried to expose some of the contradictions and confusions which represent their subconscious response to the age, that is, evidence of the authors' own "education" and unacknowledged acceptance of patriarchal values.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

> **It is this abiding consciousness of an end to be attained, reaching beyond her personal life and individual interests, which constitutes the religious element of the Women's Movement of our day, and binds with the common bond of an impersonal enthusiasm and loyalty into one solid body the women of whatsoever race, class, and nation who are struggling towards the readjustment of woman to modern life.**
>
> **Olive Schreiner,** *Woman and Labour*.

Two novelists, who were separated by thousands of kilometres, namely Edith Searle Grossmann (1863-1931) in New Zealand and Olive Schreiner (1855-1921) in South Africa, shared a common concern with the oppression of women in their societies. Both authors believed that type of education females were given reinforced their oppression and inferior status. What girls had traditionally been taught locked them into a narrow existence confined to the private world of family and domesticity, perpetually dependent on male financial and emotional support. Their education, moreover, taught them to accept this as normal. It also led to their becoming trapped in a hegemonic view so that they perceived themselves as an educationally inferior breed. However, Grossmann and Schreiner also believed that the education was also the means by which women could be liberated. Through a more meaningful education females could be taught why they needed independence and how it could be realised. In their novels Grossmann and Schreiner explore the problems caused by the way females are educated and suggest how they can be solved through education.

Grossmann and Schreiner were not the only women speaking out against the subordination of women. In many English-speaking countries there existed many individuals and groups of women who were challenging male control over their lives, especially the legal and political restrictions placed on them. The term "women's movement" is something of a "catch-all" phrase and refers to this trend among females concerned with their inferior status in society, and not to an organisation. In each country the movement manifested particular characteristics, but common to all was the demand for the immediate introduction of a more relevant and worthwhile education for females - an education which would enable them to live as autonomous adults in their own right and not merely in the supporting and subordinate roles of wives, sisters and daughters, which they had traditionally occupied.

It should be noted that their concern was selective and not for women of all races and classes. This élitism I will discuss in Chapter Five.

Progress for such a nebulous and disunited movement was slow. It had to contend with powerful religious, economic and political arguments propounded by the well organised, highly articulate forces of the male establishment. Another obstacle, which was perhaps greater because it operated insidiously, came in the form of women who, for different reasons, were quite happy with the *status quo,* and who resented any suggestion that society should be organised differently. All these groups of people considered that educating women would undermine the whole moral structure of society. The main impediment to progress was undoubtedly the apathy of most women, and it was in this respect that women's literature fulfilled a vital role in raising the consciousness of women about their status in society.

Both countries were colonies of the British Empire and were populated by thousands of immigrants and indigenous peoples. During the nineteenth century most of the immigrants originated from Europe. In New Zealand and Australia British settlers predominated. The European population of South Africa comprised the Boers, whose ancestors had first arrived from Holland and France in the 17th century, and the British whose colonising dates from the beginning of the nineteenth century.[1] Together with their personal belongings the colonists imported their culture, their moral values and their prejudices. In their new homes they tried to recreate society according to the beliefs and customs which existed back in the mother country. Consequently patriarchal structures flourished; society was organised and controlled by males who dominated women in all matters -- domestic, educational, sexual, public, legal, political and religious. In his thesis, in which he compares *AF* with Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career*, Garth Green observes

> As these new societies evolved in response to historical conditions, so would a new literature, which was also an agent in, and a product of, this evolution. The tensions of the evolving societies would be reflected in its literature.[2]

These "tensions" are the areas which I examine in my thesis. The examination is two-fold. My main concern is the type of education portrayed in the novels, as it reflects the attitudes to women in relation to men in Australia and South Africa in the late nineteenth century.

The second part of my research involves the sub-text, that is what the authors unknowingly reveal about themselves by their choice of language and imagery and by the "unwritten", that is the gaps and omissions in their text. Grossmann and Schreiner are themselves historical subjects and are 'imprisoned by the consciousness of their times'.[3]

They too are caught up in the processes they are attempting to depict and are moulded by the same patterns and forces they are trying to assess.[4] Hence their writing is also an historical product of these same times. Running through each novels is a sub-text, which is the author's subconscious response to her own education. I will be examining this sub-text for evidence of the way Grossmann and Schreiner accidentally betray themselves in relation to their feminism and didactic intentions, so much so, that they often appear to be condoning at the same time as they condemn. Having inherited a common literary and cultural heritage, they inevitably make similar *faux-pas,* as well as exhibiting their own particular biases.

The novels I will be examining are *In Revolt* (1893) and *Hermione: A Knight of the Holy Ghost* (1907) by Edith Searle Grossmann, hereafter to be referred to as *IR* and *HKHG*; and *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) and *From Man to Man* (1926), hereafter to be referred to as *AF* and *FMTM*. The first three novels are set between the 1860s and 1870s. In Grossmann's novels the action takes place mostly in Australia, with a few chapters set in Europe and the United States. The events of *AF* all occur in South Africa and in *FMTM* the characters live in the Cape Colony and London. No definite dates are given in *FMTM*, but it seems likely that the events take place towards the end of the 19th century.

For the purposes of this thesis the word "education" is used in its broadest sense to encompass the different types of processes involved in the imparting and reception of knowledge and skills. Each chapter investigates a particular aspect of education; firstly in regard to what the authors chose to tell us, and secondly, the sub-text, that is, what their choice, and the style in which they present it, tells us about themselves.

In Chapter One I review the authors' own educational background, their commitment to the women's movement and some aspects of their professional career as writers. Chapter Two is about the early education which is received at home. In Chapter Three I consider secondary and tertiary education, and the relative values attached to intellectual ability versus domestic creativity. Chapter Four is about gender conditioning as an aspect of women's education. In Chapter Five I investigate the transmission of cultural values and ideas, including the indoctrination of some of the "unwritten rules of society". In the final chapter I consider education as the solution to women's subordination in society, how raising the consciousness of women about their oppression can help bring about change.

Changing the *status quo* and informing women about inferior position in society are Grossmann's aims in writing *HKHG*. In this novel she presents her theories about women's rights through the medium of fiction in order to disseminate them and, hopefully, gain converts to the cause. A short note preceding the title page of the first edition of *HKHG*. initially called *A Knight of the Holy Ghost*, leaves us no room to doubt the author's didactic intention:

> The following narrative is based on a study from the past, before the Woman Movement had raised the condition of women; and it is produced now in view of the a strong reactionary tendency towards re-subjection.

Like Grossmann, Schreiner believes in the power of the written word to bring about change. With *FMTM* her conscious purpose is to teach in order to change behaviour, akin to Sidney's idea that a poet's moral obligation is to delight and teach. In a letter to Havelock Ellis in 1884, she declares:

> I have always built upon the fact that *FMTM* will help other people, for it will help to make men more tender to women, because they will understand them better; it will make some women more tender to others; it will comfort some women by showing them that others have felt as they do.[5]

There is of course an underlying assumption here which campaigners of many causes make, the assumption that knowledge will lead to instant conversion, which will be immediately translated into action. The relationship between the novel and society is at all times a dialectic, and one with which novelists have often been engaged, often with the aim of trying to effect change and influence future developments.[6] Ever since the seventeenth century there have been women who have written about the limited lives they were forced to lead and the roles which the patriarchy conditioned them to play. Several poets single out the inferior education females were given as being a prime factor of this conditioning. A brief review of female protest fiction written by women prior to Grossmann and Schreiner will illustrate the literary tradition in which these novels can be placed.

Sarah Egerton (1669 - 1722) discusses the type of education which she, as a female, received in her poem "The Liberty". The effect of this education, she claims, was to circumscribe her existence as an adult and condemn her to a life of 'Foolish, dull Trifling, Formality.' A contemporary of Egerton's, Ann Finch (1661 - 1720), suggests in "The Introduction" that women are 'education's, more than natures's fools'.[7] Mary Wollstonecraft takes up this theme in her 1792 "Vindication of the Rights of Women" in which she argues that women are deliberately kept ignorant 'under the specious name of innocence.' Wollstonecraft sees education as enabling 'the individual to attains such habits of virtue as will render it[8] independent. She is implying that women are

denied the opportunity to become virtuous and independent because they have no access to academic learning and *vice versa*.

The tradition of female protest literature was modified during the nineteenth century when the female *Bildungsroman* became the most popular genre for exploring the position of women in society. A *Bildungsroman* is an "education" novel, i.e. education in its broadest sense, in which the author traces the personal, intellectual and spiritual development of a protagonist, e.g. Dickens' *David Copperfield* and Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*. In her article about the female *Bildungsroman* in Commonwealth literature[9] Margaret Butcher suggests that Maggie Tulliver, who desperately wants to attend school like her brother and learn Latin and Greek all of which is denied her as a female, is a precursor of such women characters in novels of the *Bildungsroman* genre. According to Butcher, women authors throughout the British Empire writing from 'a shared colonial perspective' increasingly used the genre. They did much to highlight women's lives and to raise consciousness about contemporary issues. In fact, during the nineteenth century women writers attained a hitherto unprecedented recognition and popularity. This not only helped to promote the women's movement, but also to popularise it. The novels of Edith Searle Grossmann and Olive Schreiner belong to the *Bildungsroman* tradition and are part of this body of women's literature, written from 'a shared colonial perspective'.

END NOTES

1. The dates when British immigrants settled in South Africa, New Zealand and Australia vary. In Australia British convicts and free settlers first arrived in 1788. Significant immigration from the United Kingdom started after the second British Occupation of the Cape Colony, the first area of South Africa to be colonised, in 1806. Systematic colonisation of New Zealand began under the Wakefield Settlement Plan during the 1840s.

2. Garth Green, *Aspects of the Colonial Novel: The Background and Context of Olive Schreiner's The Story of an African Farm and Miles Franklin's My Brilliant Career as Representatives of South African and Australian Literature*. MA (English) thesis. (Johannesburg: Rand Afrikaans University, 1982).

3. Nadine Gordimer in the Foreword to Ruth First & Ann Scott, *Olive Schreiner: A Biography* (London: The Women's Press, 1989), p.6.

4. Stephen Clingman, *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer: History from the Inside* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), p.2.

5. S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner (Editor), *The Letters of Olive Schreiner: 1876-1920* (London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., 1924). Hyperion reprint edition 1976. p.29.

6. I am indebted to Dr Russell Poole for this point.

7. The idea to include this information arose from a discussion with Dr John Muirhead.

8. It is interesting to note how she avoids the gender specific pronoun.

9. Margaret K. Butcher, "From *Maurice Guest* to *Martha Quest*: The Emergence of the Female *bildungsroman* in Commonwealth Literature". In *World Literature Written in English*, Guelph, vol.21, no.2, 1982.

CHAPTER ONE

She was from the first a militant feminist.

"Edith Searle Grossmann -- Pioneer", Alan Mulgan.

In this chapter the authors are the focus of attention. How they behaved and what they accomplished, is more fascinating than those of their characters, because they illustrate genuine, as opposed to fictional, responses to the imperatives of their age and to the women's movement. The act of writing itself represents a positive attempt to become involved in the *Zeitgeist* and to achieve personal fulfilment, not just vicarious success through the lives of the protagonists.

As contemporary writers and emerging from kindred societies, the lives of Grossmann and Schreiner not unnaturally followed a similar pattern. Born eight years apart, one in Australia and the other in South Africa both women grew up as first generation immigrants in colonial societies which were strongly influenced by imported British values, more so than colonies like India or the West Indies. Each became an avid reader at an early age and possessed a retentive memory. In their adolescence they both experienced major upheavals, Schreiner with the break up of the family home, and Grossmann when her family immigrated to New Zealand. As young women they demanded more for themselves than marriage, and after some years teaching, they eventually achieved careers as professional writers. They both left their own countries and spent some years in Britain and Europe. When they married, both women retained their maiden names, which was highly unusual in the nineteenth century. Neither of them had the traditional Victorian or Edwardian marriage with umpteen pregnancies, and within a year they

both resumed their careers as writers. Grossmann became a professional journalist, whilst Schreiner's writing became more diversified with political tracts and short stories, as well as newspaper articles. commenting on current affairs. Their marriages were not happy, and, during the last few years of their lives they both lived apart from their husbands as single women.

Let us consider how each author was educated and how she became a feminist.

EDITH SEARLE GROSSMANN'S EDUCATION

Edith Howitt Searle was born at Beechworth in Victoria (Australia) on 8 September 1863 into an English immigrant family. Her parents, Mary Anne and journalist, George Searle, were both 40 when their fourth child was born. In 1878 the family moved to Invercargill in New Zealand where Edith attended the local Grammar school. Her education to date had made her 'an untaught girl, with only a good deal of miscellaneous reading to fall back on.'[1] The following year she enrolled at Christchurch Girls' High for a year's 'finishing'.[2] At first she had no inclination for further study, but whilst there, she had the good fortune to be taught by Helen Connan (later Macmillan Brown), the first woman in the British Empire to be awarded an Honours Degree. Helen Connan's example inspired Edith and the extra tuition which Helen gave her pupil enabled Grossmann to secure a Junior University Scholarship. She began her BA course at Canterbury College in 1880. Professor John Macmillan Brown, who later became Helen Connan's husband, recalls the 'splendid work Edith did in (his) classes', her imaginative and philosophical bent' and the enthusiasm and passion with which she entered into 'all societies and discussions with her fellow students.'[3]

Academically she did very well, and in 1882, won several prizes, including the Bowen Prize for an essay on "The probable effect of geographical and other physical conditions on the future development of the Colony of New Zealand", and a University Senior Scholarship. In 1884 she was awarded a BA, and in 1885 an MA with first class honours in Latin and English. in 1885.

W.J. Gardener offers an interesting insight into the early days of Canterbury College. He refers to the 'considerable cost in physical and nervous energy' by which 'women won their university careers ... especially under Macmillan Brown's "gospel of work".'[4] He writes with pride about the larger proportion of women students at Canterbury College which had more 'than any other coeducational institution in the world' during the early 1880s. In her 1923 article for "The Lyttleton Times" Grossmann conveys the tremendous sense of being pioneers which many of the women students felt. It was during her university days that Grossmann's feminist views really developed.

The BA degree course which the students studied then was very much more general than it is now, with 'more emphasis on breadth than on depth of studies'.[5] Its main aim was a strictly colonial one: 'to train the next generation of New Zealand teachers, who would have to turn their hands... to almost any subject demanded of them.' The subjects taught at Canterbury College in 1880 were: classics, English Literature, history, mathematics, chemistry, physics, geology, biology (botany and zoology), French and German. Grossmann is likely to have acquired knowledge of all of these subjects and demonstrates it regularly in her novels, with epigrams, allusions , poetry extracts etc. This polymath approach to scholarship was very demanding, as Grossmann recalls:

> Since medieval days, there have not often been students more tremendously in earnest over their studies; but the best things we learnt were how to learn anything set before us, and how to work hard at everything.[6]

In addition to her academic studies she was a member of the Dialectic Society and took part in their plays and debates. Her last debate, she remembers, was in 1884 on the Married Women's Property Bill. Parliament passed the Bill, but in Canterbury College Dialectic Society, she recalls in her article,

> most of the young men voted against reform, chivalrously declaring that it would degrade such poetic beings as we were to have any possessions of our own.

The ideals and theories of the women's movement were integral to the educational and cultural life of female students in the 1880s. The suffrage campaign and the demands for educational opportunities were very much part of the *Zeitgeist* in New Zealand. It would, indeed, have been strange if Grossmann had not become a feminist and pioneer for women's rights, given the political climate during 1880s and 1890s and her personal involvement in female education.

After graduating she took a teaching post at Wellington Girls' High School where she stayed until 1890 when she married Joseph Penfound Grossmann, a fellow student who had graduated from Canterbury with triple honours in English, Latin and Political Science. Like Schreiner, Grossmann retained her maiden name when she married and was thereafter known as Edith Searle Grossmann. A century later many women will readily accord with the importance of this gesture as a symbol of a woman's individuality and independence as a human

being. Olive Schreiner not only kept her own name but persuaded her husband to incorporate it in his name.

Grossmann's commitment to the women's movement was translated into action in 1892, when she and her husband became founding members of the Canterbury Women's Institute. This organisation was devoted to all aspects of the emancipation of women and not just the franchise. Patricia Grimshaw writes:

> The Canterbury Women's Institute in many way reproduced the work done by the feminist branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Union with the two sexes working together, but with the temperance and Christian basis removed.[7]

Grossmann's only child was born in 1894 and apparently he was mentally retarded.[8] Her husband taught at Christchurch Boys' High School and also lectured at Canterbury College during this period until 1898, when he was prosecuted for forgery and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Shortly afterwards Grossmann started a new career.

Like her father she became a journalist and started writing articles for magazines and journals. This involved her in overseas travel, primarily in Britain and Europe. Patrick Evans discusses the difficulties which colonial female writers, including Grossmann, encountered trying to enter the British literary scene at this time. He suggests they were 'doubly disadvantaged, by gender as well as by colonial status.'[9] Apparently they formed a 'New Zealand Circle' at the London Lyceum Club, the same Club which Schreiner sometimes visited, and in 1903 a women's club called the Austral was started. Evans continues:

> It was here, curiously, in a ghetto at the indifferent heart of empire, that many women writers in particular found the easiest place to write in.

Despite her career change Grossmann's concern with education, especially girls', continued, as subsequent writing reflects. As well the 1905 *Life of Helen Macmillan Brown* and the 1907 Hermione novel, she also wrote articles about it, such as: "The Native School of New Zealand" which was published in *The New Zealand Illustrated Magazine* in 1903, and "Old Saint John's College - Plea for its Preservation", published in *The Auckland Star* in 1919.[10]

OLIVE SCHREINER'S EDUCATION

Olive Emilie Albertina Schreiner was born on 24 March 1855, at the Wittebergen Mission Station in the remote Karoo area of the Eastern Cape Colony bordering on Basutholand. She was the ninth child of Rebecca Lyndall and Gottlob Schreiner and was named in memory of three dead brothers. Until the age of eleven she was taught at home by her mother, herself an accomplished linguist, raconteur, musician and letter writer. Rebecca's duties as a missionary's wife and the mother of a large family living in an isolated rural community left her little time for teaching her children more than the basic skills of reading and writing. In her daughter Olive she recognised a lively, inquiring mind, a retentive memory and a talent for inventing stories, and these traits she encouraged. Stories of the seven year old Schreiner's precocious ability to recite the poetry of Coleridge, Tennyson and Milton are legion.

During these years the Bible exerted a strong influence on the development of her mind. As the daughter of evangelical missionaries she was reared to regard the Scriptures as the ultimate authority on all matters of

spiritual belief. Stern discipline, strict rules regarding behaviour and absolute obedience to elders were the Calvinist type of lessons instilled in the family. The Bible, the archetypal patriarchal document, exerted a tremendous influence on her childhood. The exploits of the Old Testament heroes enthralled her, while the New Testament Sermon on the Mount inspired her. Although she had rejected formal Christianity by the time she reached adolescence, the language of the Bible continued to excite her and she committed long passages to memory. The influence of the Bible on Schreiner's literary style has been researched by several scholars, including A.E. Voss and Riccardo Duranti.[11] As a child she was often described as *koppig*[12], which suggests that her propensity to rebel against oppression was innate.

When Schreiner was ten her father was dismissed from the Wesleyan Missionary Society. His subsequent inability to provide for wife and children led to the break up of the family. The two elder Schreiner boys had been sent to England for a formal education at the Wesleyan College in England. Now Theo returned and offered to help his impoverished parents with his younger siblings. In 1867 Olive and her younger brother, Will, went to live with Theo and an elder sister. Theo ran a small school in Cradock, and for a few brief years Olive had access to a more structured form of tuition.

Her first biographer and husband, Samuel Cronwright-Schreiner reproduces the timetable she proposed for herself, as recorded in her journal for January 1869. It involves an hour each day for French. German, Music, Latin, Drawing, Painting and 'Study with Theo'. Two hours each day were allocated to Mathematics and Reading, and three hours to Writing. How far this ambitious timetable of study (fifteen hours per day) was adhered to is not known. Her husband certainly writes very scathingly about Schreiner's academic ability, maintaining that she learned 'practically nothing of

all these studies'. He suggests that this is 'what one might expect of her unusual mind, which learnt by reading and thought and not mechanically.'[13]

In later years Schreiner always claimed that 'she received no education other than that which her mother was able to give her.'[14] This claim perhaps owes more to the natural pride of a successful autodidact than reality. What we can assume, I think, is that the formal education she did receive between the ages of twelve and fifteen was extremely haphazard. The informal education she received during this period, almost totally through reading, was considerable. During her three years in Cradock Schreiner was a member of the Public Library, which was surprisingly well stocked 'with some of the best and latest publications of the day.'[15]

Reading became an increasingly important feature of her life and from 1870 onwards her most important (and often only) means of acquiring knowledge. Denied the opportunity to receive further schooling, and forced by family circumstances to live on lonely farms where she earned her living as a governess, Schreiner embarked on a programme of self-education. She read whatever she could get hold of: books which circulated from Cradock Library, books she could borrow from friends and a few which she was able to buy. Apart from a few works of fiction by Dickens, the Brontës and George Sand, she read works of theology, science, history, medicine, anthropology and political philosophy. By the time she was twenty she had read, and assimilated, many of the works of Plato, John Stuart Mill, Darwin, Huxley, Emerson, Ruskin, the historians Buckle, Carlyle, Gibbon, Liddle and Lecky, and the plays and poetry of Shakespeare, Goethe, Shelley, Schiller, Goethe and Heine.

The author whose work influenced her most during this period was undoubtedly Herbert Spencer, who wrote *First Principles*. The romantic story of how she was given the book

to read by a chance encounter with Willie Bertram, on whom Waldo's Stranger in *AF* is modelled, is well documented. Ever since the death of her nine year old sister, she had been plagued by religious doubt about which she had been misunderstood and reviled within her family. Spencer's evolutionary philosophy both reassured and inspired her. In a letter to her life-long friend, the pioneering sexologist and man of letters, Havelock Ellis (1859-1939), she wrote, 'I always think what when Christianity burst on the dark Roman world it was what that book was to me.'[16]

Throughout her life Schreiner continued with her informal education and this mainly through reading. Indeed in all her novels she uses books and reading habits, or lack thereof, as powerful literary motifs. During her first sojourn in England (1881-89) she was urged 'to view her desire for self-development as a moral imperative.'[17] To this end she attended lectures and parliamentary debates and regularly visited the British Museum for research purposes. In fact her account of Rebekah's autodidacticism -- reading, research, investigation, study and writing -- parallels the author's own efforts at self-development. Much of Schreiner's writing, especially in *FMTM*, is autobiographical. In a letter to Havelock Ellis in 1888 she writes

> Rebekah is me, I don't know which is which any more. But Bertie is me, and Drummond is me, and all is me, only not Veronica and Mrs Drummond (except a little!)[18]

The scope of Schreiner's education was indirectly broadened by her friendship with the Boers among whom she lived during her years as a governess (1873-81). She became a fluent Afrikaans speaker and gained an insight into a different set of cultural norms. The Boers' way of life was more relaxed and geared to the natural rhythms of the environment than was the rigidly enforced strict English,

middle-class behaviour which governed the life in Rebecca Schreiner's household. Such an atmosphere had a liberating effect on Schreiner, and gave her a measure of financial independence and a sense of self-worth. It was during these years that she wrote *Undine* and *AF* and began *FMTM*. Lucy Nuttall[19] suggests that as a governess she achieved Virginia Woolf's ambition, 'A Room of One's Own'.

A childhood ambition to become a medical doctor now seemed more attainable. Her friendship with John and Mary Brown was a decisive influence in this regard. Since no medical school in South Africa, or in any other British Colony would admit women during the 1870s, Schreiner and the Browns formulated what she termed 'the English plan' to enable her to travel to England and enter medical school. She reached Britain in 1881, and, having failed to gain entrance to Medical School, enrolled for nursing training at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. The cold, damp climate aggravated her asthma and she had to leave. Bad health precluded her ever realising her medical ambitions. Her interest in medical and scientific studies found expression through her fiction in Rebekah's activities. In her will she made provision for the establishment of a medical scholarship for women at the South African College (forerunner of the University of Cape Town) 'to be administered emphatically without reference to race, colour, or religion, with poor women and girls accorded preference.'[20]

The development of Schreiner's feminism seems to have been spontaneous, an instinctive reaction to the *Zeitgeist*. When she wrote *AF*, 'she had no contact with a feminist movement of the kind then active in England and pressing for women's access to higher education and the professions.'[21] To date her reading had included few novelists. The genesis of her feminist theories seems as unexplained as Lyndall's. Her ideas on the position of women as articulated by Lyndall, whom Elaine Showalter describes as 'the first wholly serious

feminist heroine in the English novel'[22] can only have originated from her own experience of life, and from witnessing the way women in the Colony seemed to be second class citizens, lacking economic, social, intellectual and even physical control over their own lives.

Over the years the authors became more radically committed to the cause women's rights. During the intervening years - that is between the writing of *IR* and *HKHG* (fourteen years) and *AF* and *FMTM*[23] - both Grossmann and Schreiner came into close contact with suffrage groups in Britain and in their own countries. Such contacts fuelled their innate feminism and helped in the formulation of their theories about improving the position of women in society. Many of Schreiner's ideas are incorporated in her sociological treatise - *Women and Labour*, which 'became a central text of the women's movement during the first decades of the century.'[24]

Grossmann's involvement with feminist issues continued when she became a journalist and author. An article, entitled "Women of New Zealand", which she wrote for *The Empire Review* in 1906, illustrates this. Analyzing the 'indirect social influence' which the franchise had on the country, she notes how it had 'helped to raise the general position of women, while increasing at the same time their sense of responsibility and their self-respect.' A contemporary review of the novel extols its worth 'as an exposition of the woman question as it appeared in the last century'[25].

From these summaries we can, determine the depth of the authors' commitment to feminism, which was, I believe, the dominant feature of their work. Despite the differences in their backgrounds -- Grossmann came from metropolitan Victoria and New Zealand, where English-speakers predominated, and Schreiner from rural Africa, where English-speakers were well outnumbered by the black indigenous

population and Afrikaners -- the two writers reached similar conclusions about the nature and source of women's oppression. Both recognised the fact that the type of education females received reinforced and perpetuated male hegemony, resulting in their subordination. At the same time, Grossmann and Schreiner believed that education was the means for changing the situation and displacing the male hegemonic world view.

END NOTES

1. Edith Searle Grossmann, *The Life of Helen Macmillan Brown* (Christchurch: published on behalf of Christchurch Girls' High School Old Girls' Association, 1905), p.40.

2. ibid, p.39.

3. This is taken from John Macmillan Brown's 1931 obituary for Grossmann in the Christchurch Press, entitled "Edith Searle Grossmann - A Pioneer on Women's Education".

4. W.J. Gardener *et al*, *A History of the University of Canterbury: 1873-1973* (Christchurch: Caxton Press, 1973), p.157.

5. Gardener, p.96.

6. Edith Searle Grossmann, "Student Life in the Eighties", The Lyttleton Times, Saturday, May 12, 1923.

7. Patricia Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand* (New Zealand: Auckland University Press, 1972), p.51.

8. Aorewa McLeod, "Edith Searle Grossmann: 1863-1931". In *The Book of New Zealand Women*, Edited by Charlotte Macdonald *et al* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books Limited, 1991), p.263.

9. Patrick Evans, *The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature* (Auckland: Penguin Books Ltd, 1990), p.36.

10. I am indebted to Anthony Morgan for this information from his 1976 MA History thesis, *Edith Searle Grossmann and the Subjection of Women* (University of Auckland, 1976).

11. A.E. Voss, "'Not a Word or a Sound in the World about Him that is not Modifying Him': Learning, Lore and Language in *The Story of an African Farm*". In *Olive Schreiner*. Edited by Cherry Clayton (Johannesburg: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1983), pp. 170-181.
Riccardo Duranti, "Voices Crying in the Wilderness: Lies and Prophecies". In *The Flawed Diamond*. Edited by Itala Vivan (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1991), pp. 74-83.

12. I intend to use the word "Afrikaans", rather than "Cape Dutch" to refer to the language spoken by the Boers during the 1870s onwards, and cite as authority the work of Rev. Stephanus du Toit with his (1876) *Die Geskiedenis van Ons Land in die Taal van Ons Volk* and as editor of Die Afrikaanse Patriot from 1876-78. This information is taken from *The Concise Illustrated South African Encyclopaedia*. Edited by Peter Schirmer (Johannesburg: Central News Agency (Pty) Ltd, 1981), p.45.
Koppig is an Afrikaans word which means obstinate and pigheaded.

13. S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner, *The Life of Olive Schreiner* (London: Unwin, 1924), pp.7-3.

14. Vera Buchanan-Gould, *Not Without Honour: The Life and Writings of Olive Schreiner* (London: Hutchinson, 1948), p.21.

15. Vera Buchanan-Gould, p.32.

16. Richard Rive, Editor, *Olive Schreiner Letters: Volume 1: 1871-1899* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.36.

17. Berkman, *The Healing Imagination*, p.27.

18. S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner, Editor, *The Letters of Olive Schreiner: 1876-1920* (London: Unwin Ltd, 1924), p.129.

19. Lucy Nuttall, "A Sketch of the Life and Works of Olive Schreiner". In *The Silver Plume*. Edited by Neville Nuttall. (Pietermaritzburg: APB Publishers, 1956), pp.i-x.

20. Joyce Avrech Berkman, *The Healing Imagination of Olive Schreiner: Beyond South African Colonialism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989), p.40.

21. First and Scott, p.15.

22. Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (London: Virago, 1978), p.199.

23. According to Cronwright-Schreiner she began writing *FMTM* in Kimberley in 1873, under the title *Other Men's Sins* and worked on it intermittently throughout her life.

24. First & Scott, p.15.

25. This is from the *Christian Commonwealth* and is quoted in "Some Press Opinions of the First Edition of the Novel" which are printed in *HKHG*, Second Edition.

CHAPTER TWO

What a soul drinks in with its mother's milk will not leave it in a day.

The Story of an African Farm.

In this chapter I will discuss early childhood and the education at home as they are portrayed in the novels. We will see how various characters are taught: the training and teaching they receive and the type of knowledge and skills they acquire. The emphasis will fall on the way in which teaching methods and subject matter tended to perpetuate patriarchal values. At the same time some attention will be given to the sub-text as evidence of the authors' also being 'imprisoned by the consciousness of their times'.

As young children the protagonists in all four novels live in remote areas. In *AF* and *FMTM* they spend their early years living on isolated farms in the Karoo, a vast semi-desert area about 250 000 square kilometres in the heart of what was then known as the Cape Colony. The parameters of their lives are defined physically by the boundaries of the farm, and socially by their families, occasional visits from relatives or neighbours, and the mostly nameless black marginal figures who exercise an uneasy authority over the young children. Communication with the outside world is by way of infrequent letters from distant relatives in Europe, by 3-week old newspapers (*AF*, p.48) and magazines such as *The Illustrated News* (*FMTM*, p.93). Hence the crucial role played by education and books in expanding the children's horizons -- imaginatively, creatively and academically. The isolation itself acts as a formative influence on their development as adults, limiting their experience and understanding of life. This Rebekah tries to convey to John-Ferdinand:

> She has led a lonely life here. A woman who grows up alone on a solitary farm in South Africa is not quite in the position of most other women. A child of ten who has lived in a village or town and has gone to a school and grown up among other children, has more knowledge of the world in a thousand ways than she can have even at fifteen or twenty. She may know much of books, and be skilled in domestic labour or - she may even be exceptionally advanced intellectually in many ways; she is still a child in the knowledge of men and life. Bertie does not know even the world of books (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.124).

Ostensibly Rebekah is referring to Bertie but part of the description obviously applies to herself, and no doubt to the author as well. Ignorance, naivety and, by implication, innocence, she suggests, are in Bertie's case a direct result of her growing up in a remote area. I do not believe, however, that the geographical location of her childhood home can be held responsible for the inadequacies in Bertie's personality or for the problems she later encounters. Em and Bertie both grow up in isolated farms. Neither of them enjoys schooling or reading, and both lack the intellectual curiosity which characterises their siblings. Yet Em is portrayed as uneducated, unsophisticated and low-brow, while Bertie is shown to be ignorant, naive and lacking in worldly wisdom. Rebekah's words 'she is still a child in the knowledge of men and life' suggest sexual ignorance. Keeping girls sexually ignorant is another aspect of the way the education of females in the 19th century reinforced patriarchal control, and this is discussed more fully in Chapter Four.

The first few years of Hermione's life are spent in a remote log hut on the slopes of 'a yet unnamed mountain chain' (*IR*, p.7) in the Australian colony of Victoria. In

keeping with the conventions of the romance genre which Grossmann uses[1], the isolation of Hermione's birth place and first home conveys an image of an Eden-like paradise in the early days of the colony when 'its world was still young in the beautiful Australian spring-tide' (*IR*, p.8). Hermione's early childhood is passed in an idyllic, close-to-nature type of existence in which the bush represents 'delight' and 'limitless freedom' (*IR*, p.9). The isolation in which the Howards live is not quite as extreme as Lyndall's. Beatrix's newspapers, we note, are only one or two weeks old. (*IR*, p.13) For a few years the bush provides the setting for a blissfully happy childhood for Hermione and her brother. It also inspires Ernest with an 'intense love of adventure and a bush-child's fondness for exploring' (*IR*, p.17), and this, ironically, precipitates his death and the subsequent demise of Hermione's mother.

During early childhood much of a child's education is received indirectly through play, stories and social contact. In the 19th century many educational theorists in Europe were stressing the importance of early education, in keeping with the teachings of Pestalozzi (1746-1827) and Froebel (1782-1852). Schreiner tells us, 'What a soul drinks in with its mother's milk will not leave it in a day' (*AF*, p.139).

Grossmann too acknowledges the importance of early education and of creating a good learning environment when she mentions, in relation to Hermione, 'the child's natural ability and her thirst for knowledge' (*IR*, p.28). The home environment of her early years is characterised by happiness, freedom and a romantic idealism inspired by her parents' background in revolutionary politics and the 'other worldliness' of her father's philosophy. Informally she learns 'hymns to liberty' (*IR*, p.11) and a few prayers which, we infer, are taught by her mother. Beatrix Howard is 'to her children more playmate than mother' (*IR*, p.11), just as years later Hermione is to her children (*IR*, p.359), where we read

of her taking them for outings beyond the station and telling them a Hans Andersen story.

An examination of "The Child's Day" enables us to compile a few details about the informal type of education Rebekah receives in early childhood. " The Child's Day" is the opening chapter of *FMTM* and was originally written as a short story and grafted on to the novel later. Reading plays an important part in the five year old's life and books figure prominently in her play and story (*FMTM*, vol.1, pp.46-8). Her alphabet book is a treasured possession inspiring her dreams and imagination. The spontaneity with which she makes up stories suggests that she herself is frequently on the receiving end of story-telling. The stories she makes up are based on a curious mixture of African, British and Biblical associations. This mixture reflects the colonial and multi-cultural nature of the Karoo farm and Rebekah's own heritage. Schreiner describes the ethnic composition of the farm and its *environs* as a combination of English, Afrikaans, Hottentot and Kaffir[2] people. Rebekah has evidently been given some more formal tuition and has spelling and tables to learn daily (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.66). Someone, probably her mother, (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.58), has also taught her some poetry, British history and Bible stories.

We hear no more details about these children until Rebekah is twenty and Bertie is fifteen. In fact we only learn about what happens during the intervening years later in the novel, when they themselves remember incidents from their childhood. An example of this is when Bertie recalls during her time in Cradock how Rebekah taught her about India and China 'when she was a little girl' (*FMTM*, vol.2, p.103). However, Schreiner never tells us who taught Rebekah, who guided and influenced her, or even who encouraged her with her scientific investigations. When the narrative resumes just before she is married both the father and mother seem to have become ineffectual individuals who regularly defer to

their elder daughter -- 'and everyone followed Rebekah's advice on the farm' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.83) -- making it improbable that either of them ever acted as her mentor. Yet she certainly does act as Bertie's mentor and teacher, and in later years does with her own children.

Waldo, Lyndall and Em never lack an authority figure in their young lives. Otto Farber, the farm's overseer and Waldo's father,[3] is undoubtedly the main source of their early education. His room, which contained a wall map of South Germany, his books and collections of stones, had been 'the one home the girls had known for many a year ... (and) ... every morning and evening found them there' (*AF*, p.47). In this place 'of golden memories' (*AF*, p.47), he teaches them informally through discussions, stories and play. He shares his love among the three children and gently moulds their religious and moral development through the warmth of his personality and by his own example. Likely he is also responsible for teaching them to read and write, and is, no doubt, the one who set Waldo sums (*AF*, pp.33 and 48). Otto is a kindly figure and one whom Schreiner does not make guilty of patriarchal oppression. From Otto the children receive affection, knowledge and culture and his room represents a place where their natural curiosity -- Grossmann uses this expression in relation to Hermione -- is stimulated and their mental horizons are widened. His influence contrasts sharply with that of Tant' Sannie, Em's stepmother, whose rule in the house ensures them 'a place to sleep in not to be happy in' (*AF*, p.47). She is a representative of patriarchal oppression in their young lives.

It is Tant' Sannie's picture of a fashionably dressed lady which determines the girls' concept of beauty (*AF*, p.39). She is the one who disciplines the girls and who is probably responsible for the girls' having learned to sew (*AF*, pp.117 and 230), and to manage the household, which by the time she is seventeen Em can obviously do. No doubt Tant'

Sannie delegated the task of teaching her to the maids. To Lyndall, Tant' Sannie provides a living example of how money represents power and authority over others. This is symbolised by her control of the farm until Em is seventeen. Recognition of this connection reinforces Lyndall's desire to acquire knowledge as a means to financial and personal independence, because unlike Em she will not inherit money. Indirectly Tant' Sannie acts as a role model and inspiration for Lyndall's feminism (*AF*, pp.38-39).

Aunt Bertha is the most powerful representative of patriarchy in Hermione's young life. She dominates her brother as well as her niece. Her influence becomes an increasingly important factor in determining Hermione's future, in particular how she is educated and brought up. Bertha's ideas on child rearing are regulated by a mentality which exalts social conformity above all else. Hermione's independence of mind and spirit offends Bertha's sense of propriety and presents a challenge to her authority. She determines 'to break her in somehow' (*IR*, p.28) and 'to humble her to dust' (*IR*, p.29). Matters are brought to a head when Hermione runs away and appeals to her father to protect her from his sister. A neighbour endorses Bertha's views about the dangers of bringing up a girl in the bush (*IR*, p.35) and eventually Arthur Howard accepts them too, although for different reasons. Grossmann regularly uses the image of "taming" as a means of inhibiting the freedom of females and thus "controlling" them according to patriarchal norms. Teaching Hermione to be 'civilised' (*IR*, p.35) is likened to taming or breaking in an animal.

The connection between females, "breaking them in" and violence finds its parallel in the novels the methods used to teach and discipline children in Australia and South Africa were similar. Corporal punishment is favoured by Aunt Bertha, Tant' Sannie and Bonaparte, but in each case, its educative value is undercut (*IR*, p.29 and *AF*, pp.114-5). Both authors

value is undercut (*IR*, p.29 and *AF*, pp.114-5). Both authors use the occasion of its being administered to expose the bullying and domineering tactics of the adult in relation to the helplessness of the children. This also applies to Bradley, when he forces Hermione to watch the cattle branding, so that she will learn how he 'manages' his possessions, an episode which foreshadows his use of physical violence on Hermione herself (*IR*, p.176). Grossmann's and Schreiner's condemnation of corporal punishment as a way of teaching desirable behaviour is unequivocal. Corporal punishment does not appear as an issue at all in *FMTM*. This, I believe, is because in this novel Schreiner concentrates on exposing psychological rather than physical forms of oppression.

Setting pupils to learning by heart, especially poetry and passages from the Bible, seems to have been a popular teaching method. One of the principles behind it is, presumably, that the ideas in the passage enter the consciousness by a process of osmosis. It is also a traditional way of training the memory and a convenient way of keeping children occupied. Young Rebekah quotes extracts from Cowper's "Boadicea" poem (*FMTM*, vol.1,p.57), and Gregory Rose boasts of his ability to 'repeat whole books from beginning to end' (*AF*, p.164). Arthur Howard is able to quote a quaint old verse from his own childhood (*IR*, p.118). When we first come across six year old George Bruce he is 'patiently learning the Sermon on the Mount'(*IR*, p.145). Bonaparte even uses rote learning as a punishment for Em:

> 'Lyndall made him angry', said the girl tearfully; 'and he has given me the fourteenth of John to learn. He says he will teach me to behave myself, w h e n Lyndall troubles him' (*AF*, p.68).

According to Vera Buchanan-Gould, Olive Schreiner discussed some of her ideas about children's education in her

correspondence with Havelock Ellis. She attached great importance to learning poetry by heart.[4]

Informal teaching at home is eventually replaced by a more formal type of home tuition in which a non-family member is paid to take charge of the child(ren)'s education -- that is a governess or tutor. Schreiner uses the word **tutor** as male and both authors use **governess** as the female equivalent. In the 19th century a separate room or building would traditionally be designated as 'the school' and a set routine of attendance would usually be followed. The level of accommodation allocated was often indicative of the value the family, which represents the society in microcosm, gave to education.

The school on Lyndall's farm was an old gable store-room which 'had been divided by a row of "mealie" bags into two parts - the back being Blenkins' bed-room, the front his schoolroom' (*AF*, p.68). No doubt one of the outbuildings had been hastily converted to accommodate Blenkins and provide him with a make-shift venue in which to practise his job as schoolmaster, which was the initial justification for being allowed to stay on the farm. Fortunately he only holds the position for a few months. To the reader, Blenkins always seemed patently unsuitable to be a teacher, but both Otto and Tant' Sannie are dazzled by his display of superficial learning and verbal fluency. Their gullibility and casual attitude towards hiring an itinerant scoundrel illustrates the low priority attached to providing formal education in their society.

Schreiner does not excuse Otto's irresponsibility in entrusting the girls' education to such an incompetent. Instead she clearly explains his motive, which is to provide the girls with a teacher as a means of showing Christian charity, rather than an end in itself. She also tells us how easily Lyndall detects Blenkins' ignorance, declaring that

'she will never come to his school again' (*AF*, p.68). Otto, meanwhile, is pathetically disappointed that Blenkins no longer visits his cabin. (*AF*, p.69). This suggests that the children, certainly Lyndall, have advanced beyond his intellectual ability and hence his right to shape their moral beliefs.

Despite Otto's efforts, the children's education to date has been haphazard. Tant' Sannie's concern with their schooling has been minimal. This is reinforced by the speed with which she agrees to deprive the girls of their teacher and Blenkins is appointed to Otto's position as farm overseer. A note of irony is apparent in the narrator's words:

> It had been agreed upon between Tant' Sannie and himself ...Bonaparte, was to be no longer schoolmaster, but overseer of the farm. In return for his past scholastic labours he had expressed himself willing to take possession of the dead man's goods and room (*AF*, p.90).

After this there is no attempt to provide the girls with a formal education. On the farm the way is left wide open for superstition represented by Tant' Sannie, for the misuse of knowledge and learning represented by Blenkins and for anti-intellectualism which they both epitomise, to flourish.

Hermione's governess by contrast has a schoolroom, which seems to be inside the house (*IR*, p.28), yet Grossmann's portrayal of Miss Robertson is hardly a positive one. As governess she 'could never get on with Hermione' and fails to encourage the children's 'natural thirst for knowledge' (*IR*, p.28), or stimulate their minds. The methods she uses are designed to keep them occupied and to learn submissive, docile behaviour. Initiative and independence are trained out of them. The time spent in copybook work and

memorizing Bible passages illustrates this. Miss Robertson is moreover shown to be petty and vindictive.

Rebekah's children fare better than Hermione. The schoolroom she provides for them in Cape Town is apart from the main house in a new building which she built to consolidate her relative independence within marriage after her ultimatum to Frank. It serves as a children's playroom by day and a room for homework and sleeping at night (*FMTM*, vol.2, p.181). The warmth of the family evenings in this contrasts with the tension and hostility evident in both Bonaparte's and Miss Robertson's schools. Rebekah's teaching methods too are more enlightened with drawing pads, coloured pencils and lesson books with pictures (*FMTM*, vol.2, p.182) compared to Hermione's ink and copybook (*IR*, p.29) and Em's enforced Bible learning. The encouragement which the young artist Charles receives (*FMTM*, vol.2, p.183) within the family circle contrasts with the beatings and 'put-downs' Hermione and Waldo receive. Impromptu story telling is one of Rebekah's favourite techniques for history lessons, with her allegories being designed to teach a particular point to the children.

As a mature woman Rebekah is far more qualified to educate young children than she was back on the farm teaching her sister. Her present ability is apparent. As a young girl, however, despite her prodigious book learning and natural academic ability, she would have been as naive and unsuitable to have the responsibility for her sister's education as Otto Farber. This is made evident when she endorses the hiring of Percy Lawrie as Bertie's tutor, because 'he had good credentials' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.83).

The consequences of 'settling him (Bertie's tutor) down every day for three hours with nothing but the table to divide them and French verbs to unite them' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.86) are foreseen by Frank. Percy Lawrie abuses his position

as tutor to seduce Bertie. The real tragedy occurs later when Bertie confesses this to John-Ferdinand and he is so offended by her 'sin' that she is filled with shame and remorse and breaks off their engagement (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.141). As isolated and protected from the mainstream of Cape society as she is, Bertie has nevertheless been indoctrinated in the prevalent mores and attitudes to sex. She has internalized those patriarchal standards which insist on female purity and sexual inexperience, and which prompt feelings of guilt and shame when they are transgressed, regardless of her own innocence.

The job of educating children in nineteenth century colonial societies lacked professional status and the qualifications required to be hired as a tutor or governess were minimal. In Bonaparte's case an outward display of superficial knowledge secures him a position as tutor on the farm. Percy Lawrie is hired without an interview on the strength of 'good credentials' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.83). It is implied that he advertised his availability and this attracted Rebekah, who considered that 'men were generally better teachers than women' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.83). Her prejudice, I suggest, derives less from her own experience of being taught, as from internalized attitudes towards female intellectual inferiority, which was widely believed during the 19th century. Male tutors were much less common in both South Africa and Australia and this too enhanced Percy Lawrie's eligibility. His qualifications include a talent for painting fine patterns and flowers and the ability to play 'beautiful dream music' (*FMTM*, vol.1, pp.97-8). During the daily three hours formal teaching he scarcely troubles himself whether Bertie learns and is obviously more concerned with ingratiating himself with the family and seducing his pupil.

At the age of fifteen Hermione herself is eligible to become a governess. Dismayed by her niece's desire to

continue her studies, Aunt Bertha's solution is that the girl should immediately leave school, discontinue her own education and after a few months become a governess. There is no suggestion that Hermione might lack sufficient knowledge for such an occupation, or that she should be trained to teach others. Indeed Grossmann emphasises her 'half-trained, childlike nature, innocent of evil, ignorant of the world and its ways' (*IR*, p.39). In a letter to her aunt Hermione relates how much she dislikes the idea of teaching and her lack of empathy with children (*IR*, p.43).

Governessing is not regarded by Bertha as a career, merely as a solution to the problem of what to do with Hermione until she gets married.[5] Her real opinion of governessing as an occupation emerges when the prospect of an early marriage to Bradley seems feasible. Rationalising Hermione's anticipated objection in her mind she surmises: 'Anyway, marriage cannot be as bad as governessing.' She imagines Hermione as a governess being 'dependent in the family of some vulgar squatter or merchant, snubbed and slighted' and having to 'scrub the kitchen floor or help in the washing'. She concludes 'governessing is such menial work out here' (*IR*, p.53). According to Vera Buchanan-Gould's Schreiner's experiences as a governess in South Africa were similar.[6]

Having initially used the idea of governessing as a solution, Bertha now uses it as an oblique threat. It is clearly implied that unless Hermione falls in love with Bradley and marries him, she will become a governess. By now this is a dreadful prospect and she feels the 'pressure of impending poverty and toil (which) was brought to bear upon her' (*IR*, p.63). Determined nevertheless to decide her own fate, she tells Bradley: 'I would rather live with strangers and be independent' (*IR*, p.77). She applies for a position as governess to Mrs Gascoigne, a Brooklyn society matron. Previously Mrs Gascoigne had asserted that Hermione, as 'a

penniless governess' (*IR*, p.72), would be a bad match for Bradley, thereby confirming the lack of social status accorded to governesses in her society at the time. Ironically, it is consequent to the mortification Hermione feels when Mrs Gascoigne rejects her that she and Bradley become engaged.

Various conclusions about the attitudes to education in the two colonies can now be drawn.

Let us first consider those who were responsible for teaching. Relatively little importance was attached by employers to the academic qualification of those whom they hired to teach their children. A veneer of knowledge, a few desirable accomplishments and an 'acceptable' background are all that was required. Both Blenkins and Percy Lawrie come from the UK, the Empire's 'mother country', which automatically gives them added status out in the colonies. Hermione's acceptability is stated by Mrs Eliot who says: 'Well, she has been well educated, I think, and certainly has good birth' (*IR*, p.73). The irony of this is of course that Hermione does not consider herself well educated.

Previous teaching experience and a natural affinity with children -- neither Blenkins nor Miss Robertson are liked by their charges -- are also not considered necessary. The desire to teach is certainly not the overwhelming motivation of any of the characters. Grossmann shows quite clearly that governessing is regarded by Hermione's contemporaries as a stop-gap occupation between school and marriage, while Schreiner's characters become tutors as a way of securing paid employment and board. In both countries their status within the households is ambiguous. Ostensibly 'above' the servants they were nevertheless expected to extend their duties beyond teaching at the whim of their employers, e.g. Aunt Bertha's reflections on Blanche Wilde's domestic duties (*IR*, p.53) and the little mother expectation,

that Percy Lawrie will fulfil an errand for her (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.102). It seems that Anne Brontë's Agnes Grey has colonial counterparts![7]

The elementary education of their children clearly did not enjoy a high priority among the concerns of the colonists in either South Africa or Australia. Within Britain itself the professional status of educators and the establishment of uniform standards and curricula were very much in the pioneer stage too. As colonies both the Cape and Victoria followed British trends and settlers tended to copy British traditions and systems, to replicate customs and practices with a few concessions made for regional differences. The imperial myth that what originated in Britain, and to a lesser extent in Europe, must automatically be superior was widespread. I discuss the way Grossmann subconsciously betrays her own prejudice in this regard in Chapter Two.

Secondly, let us consider what the children learned. Patrick Evans discusses this in his survey of New Zealand Literature, under the heading, "What they learned at school'.[8] His argument, I believe, is valid for Australia and South Africa. He says:

> The most influential of all the books the colonists brought with them were school texts, which for fifty years taught colonial children British history... and literature.

Despite the gradual inclusion of New Zealand phenomena he states: 'The young New Zealanders continued to be bombarded with British content and values.' This trend was apparently continued at colonial universities in the late nineteenth century, and in New Zealand by Professor John Macmillan Brown. A.E. Voss has analyzed the "Bookshelves of the Colonists" as suggested directly and indirectly through

the text of *AF* and has noted the overwhelming number of British authors and poets.[9]

Inevitably there both authors reflect this strong Eurocentric bias in what their fictional children learn. Young Rebekah recalls a Cowper poem (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.57) about Boadicea, an Celtic queen who rebelled against the Romans, and years later she talks to her children about Hadrian's Wall and reindeer in Lapland (*FMTM*, vol.2, p.228). Queen Boadicea of the Iceni tribe in East Anglia is an excellent role model for the girl and probably one with which the author identified as a child. Raised in the house of a scholar, Hermione no doubt has access to a wider range of books. Their titles and concerns, however, are those of a British trained classicist and teacher whose vision is European rather than antipodean. Significantly, it is a line from Chaucer's "Balade de Bon Conseyl" which he marks as a final message for his daughter (*IR*, p.169), words the relevance of which to Hermione's life in the Victorian outback is obscure.

As we have seen, elementary education in these colonies during the nineteenth century was shaped and supported by imported British ideas and attitudes. Its strong imperialistic and Eurocentric bias manifested itself in what was taught and in the cultural values it perpetuated. Neither author registers any disapproval of this phenomenon, or suggests that the children should learn more about their own country. Among colonials of British origin, nationalist fervour has not yet been felt. Although radical in other ways, Grossmann and Schreiner are both typical of their societies in this regard.

END NOTES

1. Philippa Moylan discusses Grossmann's use of the literary romantic tradition in her MA English thesis, *Paradigm & Promise: A Feminist Critique of the Novels of E.S. Grossmann and L.A. Baker*. (University of Auckland, 1990).

2. The term **Kaffir** is considered highly offensive nowadays. However, I have used it throughout this thesis because its use by Schreiner illustrates her own historicity. Names such as **Native**, **Bantu** or **Non-white** are equally offensive. To refer to this group of people as **blacks** or by their tribal identity (probably **Xhosas**) would be an anachronism.

3. There is a great deal of biographical evidence to suggest that Otto's character was modelled on Schreiner's own father.

4. Vera Buchanan-Gould, p.200.

5. Lynley Cvitanovich presents a brief Marxist-Feminist analysis of the status of governesses on pp. 49 - 50 of her monograph, *Breaking the Silence: An Analysis of the Selected Fiction of Two New Zealand Women Writers* (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1985).

6. Vera Buchanan-Gould, pp.57-65.

7. This idea arose from a discussion with Dr Russell Poole.

8. Patrick Evans, pp.22-4.

9. Clayton, Editor, *Olive Schreiner*, p.170.

CHAPTER THREE

Her intellectual sphere was confined by that narrow routine to which it was then fashionable to force young girls, whatever their abilities and natural bent.

In Revolt.

In this chapter I will consider secondary and tertiary education and the relative values attached to intellectual ability as opposed to domestic creativity. It is during their adolescence, that both Lyndall and Hermione acquire their feminist ideas, so clearly the type of schools they attend influences their future ideas, and, to an extent, their destinies. The girls enter school aged twelve and eleven respectively, avid for knowledge. Both girls experience great frustration over their curricula - what they are taught and what they are not allowed to learn. *AF* and *IR* are both set during the 1860s in obviously recognisable places. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that the schools the characters attend and they way in which they react to them are typical, or at least fairly representative, of such establishments during that era. Some documentary evidence is provided to support these claims.

'There is nothing helps in this world ... but to be very wise, and to know everything... to be clever.' (*AF*, p.38) Lyndall tells Em. As an orphan and financially dependent upon Em's (and Tant' Sannie's) charity, Lyndall soon realises that procuring an education is the only way for her to leave the farm and to create any kind of independent life for herself. To this end, she determines to force Tant' Sannie to send her to school. Before she goes she boasts that she would learn everything that a human being could. On her return four years later she tells Waldo of her experiences, which did not measure up to her expectations.

Girls' boarding schools, she tells him, are aptly named 'finishing school' because 'they finish everything but imbecility and weakness ...(which) they cultivate'(*AF*, p.173). She describes them as 'spiritually, creatively and intellectually suffocating places'. Like Hermione, she resents being expected to learn music, for which she has no talent, and to waste her time learning traditional **female** crafts like cushion-making and embroidery. Acquiring skills such as these, she implies, is not what school education should be about.

From an early age Lyndall had displayed a lively curiosity and a desire to expand her intellectual horizons, stimulated no doubt, by Otto's stories and books. An example of an imaginative response to her need to find answers is when she invents details about Napoleon's feelings to flesh out the story in the 'brown history' (*AF*, p.41). Characteristically Lyndall admires Napoleon as a role model who represents power, cleverness and success, the qualities of a stereotypical male. Experiencing frustration at school about what she is not being taught, she decides to supplement the curriculum and teach herself. She buys books and newspapers and reads and writes some plays. During the holidays, she tells Waldo, she 'made acquaintances, saw a few places and many people, and some different ways of living' (*AF*, p.174). What Lyndall says accords with the experiences of many women throughout the British Empire during the nineteenth century. The details she gives Waldo of her school and its curriculum correspond with Dr Henning's description of an 'élite Establishment for Young Ladies at No. 12 Church Square (in Graaff-Reinet, South Africa), which was regarded as a finishing school.'[1]

Despite all Lyndall does receive an education of sorts. She certainly seems remarkably wise considering her age alone,which, Schreiner insists, is only seventeen when she dies (*AF*, pp.10-11). Her conversations show evidence of wide

reading and a good general knowledge. She is able to discuss comparative religions and customs of other countries, and able to engage in philosophical debate with Waldo. She talks about Goethe with knowledge of his work (*AF*, p.179).

Hawthorne is the 'select boarding school' chosen for Hermione by Aunt Bertha, because the principal, Grace Clare, is 'a perfect lady if nothing else' (*IR*, p.35). The criterion by which an educational institution is chosen is judged according to an imported type of bourgeois class prejudice about gentility. No consideration appears to have been given to the academic standards of the school. For Hermione to acquire such poise, decorum and virtues as Grace Clare has, and to learn to live according to the same codes of behaviour as Bertha herself, are obviously the unacknowledged aims of Hermione's education.

Hermione turns out to be one of Miss Clare's favourites. She values her 'beauty, innocence, proud bearing and good birth' (*IR*, p.36). The curriculum reinforces such attributes and academic learning is of secondary importance compared to gaining a veneer of popular culture and learning. In the type of society Hawthorne young ladies would be mixing in later life these would be considered as vital social skills which girls would require in order to procure a husband and then entertain his guests. Intellectual stimulation and satisfaction or preparation for earning a living are of little account at Hawthorne. As in Lyndall's school, the atmosphere is narrow and stifling, designed to inhibit the imagination and circumscribe the pursuit of knowledge:

> Her intellectual sphere was confined by that narrow routine to which it was then the fashion to force young girls, whatever their abilities and natural bent (*IR*, p.37).

She is allowed the illusion of choice by being allowed **not** to learn music and singing. Instead she opts for additional history, Latin, mathematics and theology. Grossmann creates an image of an intelligent and naturally clever girl, who is anxious for knowledge and intellectual satisfaction. She is interested in subjects beyond the curriculum and is especially keen on political and social issues. Like Rebekah, she is an avid reader. Once again Grossmann is reminding us about Hermione's background, a heritage involving aristocratic, educated ancestors. This is a typical literary convention of the romantic novel.

The academic qualifications of the teachers in the colonies seem to be almost as low as it is for governesses. Lyndall's teachers are described as 'ignorant, uncultured old women' (*IR*, p.173). Hawthorne is actually run by Miss Clare's younger sister Lucy (*IR*, p.36), whose education appears to have been decidedly limited, considering how eagerly she and Hermione study secretly at night. They read French and Latin classics trying, like Lyndall, to supplement the curriculum.

Grossmann repeatedly emphasises the superficiality of Hermione's education and its inability to satisfy her 'widening desires and capacities' (*IR*, p.38). Hermione is described as being ignorant of the world and having a 'half-trained, childlike nature'. The description implies that she is innocent, pure and truthful, similar to Rousseau's *Emile*. This reinforces her earlier depiction of Australia as a young Eden-like country. It also illustrates the author's own feelings on the subject. She is angry and determined to make readers aware of the inadequacies of this type of "education". There is an implicit suggestion here that society has the chance to re-visit Eden, so to speak, to avoid the old mistakes and recreate society more equitably. This superficial type of education was certainly offered in New Zealand during the period according to Chapter Four of Anthony Morgan's thesis, *Edith Searle Grossmann and the*

Subjection of Women, illustrates.[2] He describes the timetable which in many girls' schools was constructed to teach the pupils social skills and prepare them for marriage. The majority of the time was spent on music, drawing and needlework. Some attention was given to language and instilling historical facts. The time spent on arithmetic and callisthenics[3] was minimal. When Grossmann writes of Hermione, 'The subject that touched her most was "the unfair share of education given to girls"' (*IR*, p.37), her words bespeak a strong personal conviction as well.

An interesting parallel can be drawn between Hermione and Rebekah in one important respect. They both possess strong personalities and are able to dominate those around them. Lucy Clare, who might have acted as a mentor for Hermione, is more inclined to be influenced by her than the other way around. Such is the case with Rebekah's parents are. It is hardly surprising that both girls reach maturity with an inflated sense of their ability to evaluate people and situations, very much in the tradition of Jane Austen's Emma Woodhouse. This can, and does, lead to their making impetuous decisions with the almost inevitable disastrous consequences.

Desperate to learn more and finally to have the 'mysteries (of knowledge) unsealed to her' (*IR*, p.11), Hermione writes to her father and aunt and begs to be allowed to study further under a tutor. Hermione's use of the word "tutor" rather than "governess" is interesting. Like Schreiner, Grossmann has used it, I think, to indicate male rather than female. As I hope to show in this thesis, a middle class colonial male in the 1860s would automatically be better educated than his female counterpart. Hence in 1860s' parlance the word "tutor" has an air of authority about it which "governess" lacks. This makes Hermione's request more serious. In a letter to her father (*IR*, p.42) she expresses her deepest need to 'do something in the world'

other than plain sewing, making artificial flowers or 'thumping a piano.' She realises that her feelings will be condemned as 'unfeminine' and masculine. Her longing is real; her instinctive rejection of the 'perfect lady' role for which Hawthorne school is supposed to prepare her is emphatic. Aunt Bertha dismisses the request as a 'piece of disgraceful absurdity' (*IR*, p.43).

Twelve years later, when she was writing about the obstacles Helen Connan had to face, she recreates Hermione's plight and writes:

> Girls who inherited their fathers' literary or scholastic tastes were then (thirty years ago) mercilessly ridiculed, and their inclinations and ambitions were crushed as being contrary to the law of nature. The most meagre and superficial education was enough for them; French, the rules of English grammar, letter writing, a very small dose of arithmetic, the recitation of poëtry, fancy work, and the accomplishments of indifferent piano-playing and drawing, all taught without the least regard to the various natural talents.[4]

Arthur Howard agrees with Bertha but his reply is kinder but the answer is the same. He tells her that 'learning was meant for men and not for women' (*IR*, p.43) and endorses his sister's governess idea. Refusing to take responsibility for his daughter's future, he unconsciously trivialises her sincere and well considered request for further education with his words: 'Do not fret over this disappointment, my little daughter' (*IR*, p.45). Such an argument of course upholds the traditional limitations set upon the ambitions and lifestyles of females within the nineteenth century patriarchal societies. I discuss this more fully in Chapter Four. We notice the author's irony when she

tells us how after his stroke, when he needs Hermione's help to finish his book, he is quite willing to aaceppt that 'she might be taught, and might help him with her willing heart and fresh young brain (*IR*, p.117).

Once again Hermione's longing for knowledge is frustrated. Years later she tells Prudence of 'her father, who was a scholar too, and who loved her, but who was persuaded by her aunt that it was preposterous and rather immoral for girls to study' (*HKHG*, p.170). Obviously the feelings of bewilderment and hurt she experiences at the time go very deep. Arthur's guilt in refusing to take Hermione's aspirations and needs seriously are as great as Bertha's, and he does not escape the author's censure. The words 'He who before had seemed to spare so little love from his books and writings' (*IR*, p.116) imply that his sin is one of selfishness and neglect rather than deliberate malice.

It is Aunt Bertha though whom Grossmann really condemns. She has consistently shown Bertha to be jealous and disapproving of Beatrix (*IR*, pp. 26-27), unkind to Hermione (*IR*, pp.28-9), self-righteous (*IR*, p.34) and socially pretentious (*IR*, p.35). Her dislike of Bertha is reinforced in *HKHG* when Clara Dale remarks to Hermione on their meeting again in America (*HKHG*, p.124), 'that horrid aunt wouldn't let you study because you weren't a boy.' The author's lack of sympathy for Bertha and her failure to mitigate the character in anyway, illustrate her own subjective reaction to patriarchal convention. She, just as much as her fictional creation Bertha, has internalized society's prejudices and attitudes to gender roles. Both have become part of the patriarchal establishment.

Lyndall explains the principle to Waldo: 'A woman must march with her regiment. In the end she must be trodden down or go with it; and if she is wise she goes' (*AF*, p.177). A woman must conform in order to survive. Schreiner's metaphor

is an interesting adaptation of the title of John Knox's 1558 pamphlet "First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women". Neither Lyndall nor Schreiner underestimate the power and strength of the patriarchy.

Typically, the more successful a woman was at conforming to patriarchal norms, the more powerful she became within society and the greater the opportunity she had to perpetuate its mores at the expense of other women. Bertha illustrates this principle well, and so, I believe, does her creator. Schreiner, I think, falls into a similar trap. This can be seen in the way she adopts a rather superior and patronising attitude towards some of the female characters, Em and Tant' Sannie especially. Moreover, she has Lyndall talking about her fellow pupils as 'those things that were having their brains slowly diluted and squeezed out of them' (*AF*, p.174). Kathleen Blake has analyzed Schreiner's habit of objectifying females by referring to them as "things" and suggests that this peculiarity is a symptom of the author's own uneasiness with the assigned 'female role' society has foisted on her.[5] John-Ferdinand and Leonard use similar terminology.

The arguments Bertha uses to convince Arthur of the inappropriateness of Hermione's requests are typically those which the Women's Movement rejected, based as they are on the myths of women's intellectual inferiority. Condemning the idea of a tutor as "masculine", Bertha supposes that she might even like to become a lawyer or a doctor' (*IR*, p.44). Such notions are evidence of Hermione's lack of common sense. Notwithstanding the girl's faults, her propensity to be 'flighty, and wild, and proud' (*IR*, p.45), and her lack of gratitude to Bertha who has paid for her education and who now considers that it is finished (*IR*, p.50), she is now considered fit to become a governess.

There is a strong feeling in these early chapters that Beatrix Howard, the daughter of French revolutionaries, would

have empathised with Hermione's aspirations, that she would have prevailed against Arthur's and Bertha's -- and, by implication, society's -- refusal to admit that women have the right to intellectual satisfaction. This feeling is reinforced when Bertha unfavourably compares Hermione with her mother during this same discussion on Hermione's future (*IR*, pp.44-5). Unconsciously the author is suggesting that colonial attitudes are less enlightened than those in Europe in the 1860s. This in turn betrays her own historicity, her own 'imprisonment in the consciousness of her times'. She is exhibiting the same colonial sense of inferiority which we noticed in Chapter Two. This prejudice, rampant in New Zealand and Australia in the nineteenth century, Grossmann acquired through her own education and the literary texts she studied at Canterbury College.

Denying females the right to learn Latin and Greek has long been recognised as an aspect of gender differentiation in education. Expanding upon Virginia Woolf's idea from her article "On Not Knowing Greek", contemporary scholars like Walter Ong, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have shown how knowledge of Greek (and often Latin as well) operated as an exclusive barrier within patriarchal societies, denoting male privilege and female deprivation. This practice extended of course to the colonies.

To avoid being the butt of mockery and censure of others young Rebekah studies Latin surreptitiously. It is only in the privacy of her study in Cape Town that she can openly display the Latin grammar which she had secretly bought as a nine year old (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.179).

When Hermione wants to learn Greek she encounters this barrier head on. Having first assured herself that Bradley is in 'an especially good temper ' -- we are reminded of the wheedling tactics Lyndall tells Waldo women must use

(*AF*, p.178) -- she confesses her longing to study and her desire to help her father finish his book (*IR*, p.88). Arthur Howard is a Greek scholar, we remember. She confidently expects Bradley to understand, as she eagerly begs: 'You will let me try, and you will help me and teach me all you know?'. When he replies: 'Teach you Greek?' and then refuses, he is extending the meaning of the word beyond the language itself to include the whole idea of mysterious male education to which females have no access. He accuses her of being 'a queer girl', almost unnatural and then self indulgent. He views study as a means of getting out of housework and neglecting her duties, the implied proper sphere for a female.

Earlier Hermione's desire for further education was trivialised by her father. Now it is deflected by Bradley using quasi moral arguments to convince her, at least ostensibly, that she is wrong and ungrateful to wish for such a thing. In private she subsequently realises that 'she was shut out now far more completely than ever from the hope of doing anything good or great in the world; her narrowing fate shut her in now within the home-life of ordinary women' (*IR*, p.90). This is how Hermione, and probably her creator too, perceives the lot of 'housewives' - restricted, dull, unfulfilled and marked by frustrated ambition. A century later most feminists hold a very different view to women who chose to work in the home rather than the public arena.

At her family's insistence she returns to school where she is now both a pupil and a teacher. During this time Bradley tells her

> not to waste her time on essays and reading and Latin and "all that bosh" but learn music and singing as necessary accomplishments, and needlework as certain to be useful (*IR*, p.97).

In the ill-fated letter to her father (*IR*, p.42) Hermione naively asks: 'Why shouldn't girls go to Universities too?' She tells him of Charlie Clare who is 'sent to University and ever so many pounds spent on *his* education' whereas Lucy is older and 'six times cleverer ..yet she has to be drudging away here' (*IR*, p.42). She laments how unfair it is.

Charlie Clare is not an exception and there are several examples in these novels of the discrepancy between the attitude to the education of males and females. Rebekah explains to Bertie how John-Ferdinand 'took his degree well at the University' (*FMTM*, vol. 1, p.112). Her use of the possessive pronoun helps reinforce the assumption which, I believe, she subconsciously accepted, that higher education was a birthright and prerogative of males. Another man who "misuses" Bertie, that is the Jew, sends his cousin to 'ze University', but despite this: 'He is no good... He has always no money; it is ze pleasure, ze gamble, ze horse race, all ze bad zings he likes' (*FMTM*, vol. 2, p.160). There is a slight suggestion there that maybe education is wasted on some males.

When he is nineteen Bradley is sent to Oxford University where he is to study law. He stays there for a year acquiring some knowledge of Latin, his Latin aphorism (*IR*, p.269)illustrates this, and excels in rowing (*IR*, p.104). Grossmann's use of irony calls into question the validity of automatically giving males of a certain class an expensive education. During the remaining three years Bradley is overseas, he spends some time in a lawyer's office in London and travels in France and Germany. The lack of detail we are given about his education suggests that this period of his life is viewed by him, and by society, as the time to acquire the attributes of his " gentlemanly" class, as befits a member of Australia's "squattocracy"[6], to gain experience (in the *Bildungsroman* sense) and to have a youthful fling, rather than prepare him for a future career. Tertiary education is

not regarded as a serious business at all. Grossmann's own disapproval at such a profligate waste of time and money emerges here, and it seems as though she is preparing the background for Bradley's subsequent degenerate selfish behaviour. Evidence that Bradley's "education" was not unusual among middle class colonials is supplied when Professor Haugwitz confides to Dr Earle that 'a dose of debauchery' would be good for Leonard and 'he will come out stronger and more experienced' (*HKHG*, p.102).

The tradition of sending males overseas to complete their education was well established in other parts of the British Empire. Anna Lyman's two sons are sent from Canada to military school in France (*HKHG*, p.179) and thereafter to England (*HKHG*, p.254). Being male and living in a British colony did not, however, guarantee either an overseas or a tertiary education as an automatic birthright. Class and race were the real determinants. John-Ferdinand, Bradley, Leonard and the Lyman boys all come from financially privileged backgrounds. This also applies to Bertie's cousins, the daughters of a successful general agent (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.248). George Bruce, on the other hand, who is the child of an impoverished missionary and female dependant of Bradley's, is educated at home. The whole concept of boarding school is also tied up with economic privilege and class. Gregory Rose describes Waldo as 'a low vulgar, uneducated thing. that's never been to boarding school in his life' (*AF*, p.164). Gregory is equating a non-experience of boarding school with being low and vulgar, as well as being uneducated. His opinion of male boarding schools and the education they provide contrasts dramatically with the experiences of Lyndall and Hermione at female boarding schools.

The character of Leonard Earle exemplifies the relation between gender, class and education. His way of life, his room and even his looks (*HKHG*, p.36) betoken privilege, culture and education. His passion for art has a self

indulgent dilettante aspect to it, something with which he amuses himself when bored with his studies (*HKHG*, p.40). Compared to her own perceived uselessness and broken heart and spirit, Hermione finds Leonard 'strong in noble purpose and warm with hope and pleasure' (*HKHG*, p.40). Leonard's élitist views on education reveal his intellectual snobbery and bourgeois prejudices. They repel Hermione and sound to her like the 'claim(s) of tyranny'. She feels that what 'Carlisle asserted for his sex, Leonard was asserting for his class' (*HKHG*, p.52). The incident in which Dr Earle remonstrates with his son about his carelessness with books (*HKHG*, p.54) reinforces the contrast between Leonard and Hermione: Leonard, the male who has received these advantages by virtue of his gender and class, and Hermione, the female whose gender has ensured her an inferior education, the limiting of access to several areas of study and culture and deprivation of a tertiary education.

Deprivation of higher education for females was one of the major concerns of the women's movement. In Britain the problem of securing university education only really came into public view in 1866. The efforts of pioneers such as Emily Davies and Anne Jemima Clough are discussed by Ray Strachey in *The Cause*.[7] This issue caused almost as much controversy in society as granting women the franchise. The justification for denying women tertiary education was based on erroneous medical theories, such as the idea that during menstruation women were temporarily insane.[8] Gilbert and Gubar discuss the issue of women's insanity in Victorian literature in *The Mad Woman in the Attic*[9]. Sociologists, including Herbert Spencer whose *First Principles* made such an impact on Schreiner, believed that women were less developed and evolved than men because their energy resources were spent in reproduction and so were not available for intellectual activity.[10] A notorious opponent of tertiary education for women was Dr Henry Maudsley who argued, in an 1874 issue of *The Fortnightly Review*, that 'women, by virtue

of their reproductive functions, could not stand up to the rigors of higher education or sustained cerebral activity.'[11] Furthermore, he declared, women should not be allowed to undertake any form of education that would "unsex" them.

As we have already noted in chapter Two, along with the furniture and textbooks British immigrants imported a whole load of cultural impedimenta including prejudices about women's biological and intellectual capabilities. Tertiary institutions were not open to women in any of the British Colonies until the 1870s at the earliest. Unfortunately for Hermione, living in the late 1860s in Australia, there is no precedent for her to attend university and her request is ridiculed and refused. In South Africa the situation was the same as Lyndall tells Waldo: 'We are not to study law nor science, nor art' (*AF*, p.180).

By denying women the opportunity to exploit their intellectual ability, and by restricting the active participation in public life of half the population, a society inevitably wastes a great deal of potentially beneficial energy and creativity. In her discussion with Waldo, Lyndall hints about the implications of this for society. Because women are denied these opportunities, they often expend their natural talents and energy on men. She suggests that this subversion of their abilities has a corrupting influence on women, on men and on society itself. She says (of the women whose names)

> 'stain the leaf of every history - the names of women, who, having power but being denied the right to exercise it openly, rule in the dark, covertly, and by stealth, through the men whose passions they feed on, and by whom they climb. 'Power!' she said suddenly, smiting her little hand upon the rail, 'Yes, we have power; and since we are not to expend it in tunnelling mountains, nor healing diseases, nor making laws, nor money, nor on

> any extraneous object, we expend it on *you*. You are our goods, our merchandise, our material for operating on; we buy you, we sell you, we make fools of you (*AF*, p.179).

Like Lyndall, Rebekah also mourns the loss of potential female intellect, insight and creativity, because women have been suppressed, subjected and denied access to knowledge, and, by implication, a worthwhile education. Schreiner's lament about female Shakespeares, who were 'stifled out without one line written, simply because, being of the weaker sex, life gave no room for action and grasp on life' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.228) is taken up later by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*.[12]

What happens to Hermione illustrates this at the personal level. Although she is kept very busy in the routine of daily life at Moorabool and raising the children, her 'intellectual and emotional instincts were still unsatisfied' (*IR*, p.308). This, combined with being trapped in a loveless marriage and regularly humiliated and abused, gradually leads to a deterioration in her own pure nature which becomes tarnished and ruined (*IR*, pp.312 and 375). She grows reserved, cynical and deceitful. Underlying this exposure of the injustice and corruption engendered by the marriage laws is the implication that, had Hermione been allowed to continue studying, she would not have married so young and have been so vulnerable to her husband's brutalities. She would also have been better able to maintain her integrity.

As we have seen, intellectual activity and higher education in the nineteenth century were deemed to be a male preserve. The natural consequence of this in patriarchal societies is a privileging of intellectual ability, and of those who exercise it, in relation to domestic and manual skills. The contrast between Bertie and Rebekah illustrates this.

Bertie admires her elder sister who 'had once been on a visit to Cape Town, and knew a great deal, and had read a great deal' (*FMTM*, vol.1, pp.80-1). Much of Rebekah's knowledge is self-taught and she is 'always busy with her books, and her microscope and collections of insects, and stones' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.81). On the night before her wedding she ponders over the attractions of 'a studious life, in which one might grow wise exceedingly over plants and suck whatever joy there was in insects and stones; a thoughtful life, in which one might read and creep into the heart of books' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.88), compared to '--well-- a vague insatiable hunger' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.89). In common with many nineteenth century feminists Schreiner could not envisage the compatibility of female intellectual and sexual drives. Implicit in Rebekah's musing is the idea that study and book learning lead to wisdom. This, when considered with the influence she wields on the farm (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.83), must lead us to question various aspects about Rebekah's upbringing.

Has she been taught to regard book learning as superior to experience of the world, and hence, that absolute values and transcendent truths are to be found in books rather than in people or nature or through religious philosophy? How much guidance has she been shown in regard to forming ethical judgements? There is no doubt that there have been vast gaps in Rebekah's own character formation and education, which results primarily from parental neglect, especially her father's. We are repeatedly told how he retreats to his copy of Swedenborg[13], but we never hear of his teaching Rebekah any of Swedenborg's theories. She also has a very lop-sided attitude towards education and life. This is demonstrated by her decision that Bertie will be "ready" for a visit to Cape Town when she has 'learnt a little more' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.91), that is, acquired more book learning.

As Bertie's teacher, Rebekah unconsciously passes these prejudices on to her pupil. Consequently Bertie grows up with the idea that accumulation of knowledge and the practice of scientific investigation are the skills which bring wisdom, respect of others, and, to an extent, the ability to control the events around you.

During John-Ferdinand's visit, Bertie feels herself to be inadequate, 'so big and heavy.. so stupid..' and wants to be different, clever and like her sister. She tells Rebekah: 'I can understand about work and such things ... but I can't talk about books and all the clever things other people talk of' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.122). Admitting her competence in household activities -- the traditional female sphere -- she discounts their worth and feels herself unable to participate in meal-time conversations. She feels excluded and marginalised from 'clever things'. Her worry of course is that John-Ferdinand's view of her will coincide with her own poor self-image and so he will not love her. Rebekah's answer that Bertie will be loved fails to reassure her that she is <u>not</u> stupid. Consequently Bertie receives no positive affirmation that the talents and abilities she possesses are worthwhile or significant. This is probably because Rebekah herself undervalues them. Having received so much recognition for her intellectual abilities, she is very much aware that Bertie lacks them.

When Rebekah suggests to John-Ferdinand that Bertie is deficient in intellect and 'calm strength of character' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.125), qualities which he might require of a wife, she is using typical patriarchal female-put-down logic. To reassure and compensate the prospective husband, she praises Bertie's beauty, her ability to love 'absorbingly' and to live only the 'life of personal relations' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.125). Small wonder that Bertie has grown up with such low self esteem, coming as she does from a family whose members refuse to recognise her as other than a beloved baby

-- indicated by her nickname Baby Bertie[14] -- who has grown into a beautiful creature. They are unable to acknowledge her potentiality as an adult with her own talents and natural abilities and still regard her as a child to be petted and placated. Bertie's education has kept her babyish and incompetent to live as a fully functioning adult in society. Her childish inability to articulate her feelings and thoughts to the Jew when she goes to the theatre is a symptom of this.

Bertie does possess skills though. She can play the piano and sing (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.133), she is a deft needlewoman (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.159) and is artistically creative, a fact demonstrated by the bridal arch she creates (*FMTM*, vol. 1, p.90). Her domestic skills are acknowledged by old Ayah who considers 'she was turning into a wonderful housewife' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.101). Griet, Bertie's Bushman maid, certainly appreciates the importance of Bertie's domestic skills. In order to express her dislike towards and mistrust of Veronica's usurpation of Bertie's place in the family, Griet sabotages Veronica's attempts at housework and gardening, presumably hoping to demonstrate how much Bertie is missed.

In Cape Town Bertie still feels stupid and foolish compared to Rebekah and once again praises her sister's ability 'to read and think' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.160). Bertie's approbation of the value of Rebekah's intellectual abilities and the comparative devaluing of her own traditional female skills mirror the attitudes of their society. Indirectly the conversation with Mrs Drummond reinforces society's attitude towards Bertie's education and the skills she has been taught. Trying to worm the seduction story out of Bertie Mrs Drummond suggests that neither Rebekah nor her mother -- '" my sister taught me out of her old books; and my mother taught me to sew."' (*FMTM*, vol.1. p.173) -- were "real" teachers.

If her family and the society in which she lives fail to value the talents and skills which Bertie possesses, the author does not. During her stay in Cradock Bertie's artistic ability and natural creativity are allowed to flourish. She is given the opportunity to display her talents and to receive praise, popularity and respect because of them. Impressed with her niece's efforts as sewing, interior decorating and cooking, Aunt Mary tells Bertie," You must remain for eight months after the girls come home, so that they may learn from you" (*FMTM*, vol.2, p.86). Such appreciation of what she does as opposed to who she is and what she looks like is new to Bertie and she thrives on the experience. The respect and admiration of others engenders self respect and, Schreiner tells us, 'Bertie was very happy all day' (*FMTM*, vol.2, p.88).

The peak of Bertie's creativity is reached with the robe she makes for Veronica's baby. Making the garment is, I think, a cathartic experience during which she is finally able to come to terms with past events. It also marks the high point of her adult life, when she is accepted and valued for her achievements and abilities as an adult woman, not as a daughter, younger sister, potential lover or mistress. The robe she makes is a work of art although its creation, Schreiner sadly suggests, is seldom recognised as such by society. She writes:

> The poet, when his heart is weighted, writes a sonnet, and the painter paints a picture and the thinker throws himself into the world of thought, and the publican and the man of business may throw themselves into the world of action; but the woman who is only a woman, what has she but her needle? In that torn bit of brown leather brace worked through with yellow silk, in that bit of white rag with invisible stitching, lying among the fallen leaves and rubbish that the wind has blown into the gutter or the street corner, lies all the passion of

> some woman's soul finding voiceless expression. Has the pen or the pencil dipped so deep in the blood of the human race as the needle? (*FMTM*, vol.2, pp.90-1).

The author's impassioned plea represents far more than just a recognition that needlework be recognised as a creative art. It is a cry against society's oppression which confines women's creative opportunities to the private and domestic arenas. It is a lament against those restrictions which prevent women realising their potential and which condemn them instead to a life of 'voiceless expression.' Such writing is highly emotive and this reflects Schreiner's personal conviction. Bertie expresses herself through her needle just as surely as Rebekah does through her pen and Hermione through her words. Significantly Bertie does not articulate her feelings of injustice and oppression unlike Lyndall, Hermione and Rebekah, and must rely on her author to do it for her.

END NOTES

1. C.G. Henning, *Graaff-Reinet: A Cultural History*: 1786-1886 (Cape Town, T.V. Bulpin, 1975), p.128.

2. Morgan, pp.28-39.

3. The word "callisthenics" refers to gymnastic exercises which are designed to achieve grace and bodily health.

4. Grossmann, *Life of Helen Macmillan Brown*, p.9.

5. For more details on Blake's discussion of the way Schreiner's style of writing suggests the male/female divided self of the author, see the chapter entitled "Olive Schreiner: Art and the Artist Self-Postponed" in *Love and the Woman Question on Victorian Literature: The Art of Self-Postponement* (New Jersey, The Harvester Press, 1983).

6. This idea arose from a discussion with Dr Russell Poole.

7. Ray Strachey, *The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain* (London: Virago Ltd, 1979), pp.141-165.

8. Susan Kingsley Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain: 1860-1914* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1987), p.137.

9. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Mad Woman in the Attic* (New Have: Yale University Press, 1984).

10. Susan Kingsley Kent, p.35.

11. Henry Maudsley, "Sex in Mind and Education", Fortnightly Review, 15, (1874): 466. This is quoted Susan Kingsley Kent, p.43.

12. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1945), pp.40-2.

13. Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was a Swedish theologian, scientist and philosopher. He wrote works on mathematics, geology, anatomy, physiology, chemistry and physics, as well as many theological works on religious philosophy.

14. Grossmann also uses this convention in *IR* (pp.326 and 367), in relation to Ellen Pierson's younger child, Baby Louise.

CHAPTER FOUR

The dominion of man, she was discovering, was supported by a good many other means than force.

Hermione: A Knight of the Holy Ghost

As we have seen, the inferior status of women in nineteenth century patriarchal societies was maintained by the systematic way in which society restricted the lives of females to those roles which supported its institutions and traditional beliefs. In this chapter I will attempt to analyse why women accepted this, why they did not rebel against the injustices perpetrated against them, and why they did not unite as a body unilaterally and challenge their husbands, fathers, brothers and uncles. The answers lie in the way females are conditioned to believe that male domination and female inferiority are normal. The sub-text is particularly revealing in this regard. Let us consider the four different types of female characters represented in the novels.

On the one hand we have women like Lyndall and Hermione who refuse to accept the *status quo* and positively challenge the prevailing attitudes in their society. Obviously, our authors belong to this category, although they share characteristics with the next type, that is females like Tant' Sannie, Veronica and Aunt Bertha who successfully use and subvert patriarchal traditions in order to take power and control into their own hands and dominate both the males and females round them. Em and Florence Leroy represent types who accept conventional female roles without resentment or questioning. The fourth type is the victim, that is women like Bertie and Ellen Pierson who succumb to patriarchal

prejudice and subsequently fall prey to exploitation, financial problems and physical degradation.

Rebekah's case is rather different. She learns through time, in the tradition of the female *Bildungsroman,* to transcend her own patriarchal conditioning and to synthesise within herself the male/female dichotomy and become, albeit tentatively, a "new" kind of woman. I will discuss the idea that Rebekah's character represents the author's attempt to create a new evolutionary type of being, a female able to realise her own ontological potentiality, in Chapter Six.

What characters like Aunt Bertha, Em, Bertie and Ellen all have in common is that they believe and accept what they have learned about a woman's role in life, how she can achieve happiness only through duty, domesticity, marriage and motherhood. They accept the dominant Victorian convention of ideal womanhood which involves purity, piety, delicacy, sweetness of temper, self-sacrifice, submissiveness and self-control.[1] This ideology -- developed through time in response to the needs of the men (and shaped by them) in their families and societies -- they have internalised. They have also internalised the prevailing view of what characterises female beauty, that is softness, frailty, fairness of complexion, neatness of dress, modesty, and moderation in behaviour and appearance[2]. Both authors suggest that indoctrinating women to conform to a male construct of womanhood was the most insidious aspect of female education during the nineteenth century. When a female has internalised male norms and values, she becomes part of the patriarchal establishment.

Girls boarding schools aimed to produce this type of pupil, whom Lyndall considers is a distortion and unnatural.[3] She tells Waldo how women are "constructed" to fit their 'sphere as a Chinese woman's foot fits her shoe, exactly, as though God had made both -- and yet He knows nothing of

either' (*AF*, p.177). It can be argued that, in accepting their place in society and achieving a measure of success and contentment, women like Tant' Sannie, Em, Veronica, Bertha and Florence have succumbed to the atrophy process which Lyndall goes on to describe, and that aspects of their personalities 'have weakened and left.' Small wonder that Hermione and Lyndall both reacted so strongly against their school, if this was what was being done to them.

Indoctrination in patriarchal norms starts even younger than this. In the opening chapters of *AF* we see how gender demarcates the activities the children engage in, as well as the way in which the author portrays them. Whereas Em and Lyndall are seen quietly sleeping and are both bathed in moonlight, Waldo is awake and actively agonizing over lost souls. The next day, while the girls are indoors threading beads (*AF*, p.32), Waldo is outside in the veld[4] herding sheep and working out arithmetical problems. That he is two years older does not negate the impact of this contrast, The girls are playing in a protected environment, whilst the male is out working, both physically and intellectually.

Lyndall develops this theme when she tells Waldo about the kindly way in which girls are conditioned to accept their place in society. Whereas boys are encouraged to go out and play, little girls are lovingly restrained and urged not to risk ruining their complexions and clothes. While the boys indulge in 'their happy play', the girls watch them wistfully through the window and make bead necklaces (*AF*, p.176).

Gender acculturation starts for Hermione only after her mother's death. Initially life continues as before and Hermione enjoys the freedom to roam through the bush and swamp, much to the horror of Aunt Bertha, who equates this freedom of movement and spirit with being 'bush-savage' (*IR*, p.27). Bertha has 'her own ideas of what Arthur Howard's daughter should be' and her mission thereafter is to 'reclaim

Ione from barbarism', by restraining her, curtailing her independence, 'forcing her to stay indoors and wear pretty dresses' (*IR*, p.27). We noted in the last chapter how Hermione tried to break free of this restraint, which prompted Bertha to confine her within Hawthorne School. In sharp contrast to this is the liberty given to Bradley who is allowed to run wild in the bush until he is seventeen (*IR*, p.66).

The veld and bush, it seems, are reserved for males, because they represent wildness and freedom from patriarchal restraint. These are contrasted with images of female confinement and restriction of movement as examples of patriarchal control. That Grossmann and Schreiner use similar motifs suggests the notion that patriarchal suppression of female freedom was wide spread during the nineteenth century. Female wildness must be tamed, just as Bradley tames his horse and breaks it in.

Lyndall's diatribe to Waldo on the sex-role conditioning of females has become seminal among feminist literary texts. Trying to explain to him why women are 'born branded and cursed', she declares, 'It is not what is done to us, but what is made of us ... that wrongs us' (*AF*, p.176). The world -- and by this she means family and friends as a microcosm of society -- indoctrinates females by teaching them from an early age that physical appearance is their prime asset and means of achieving 'all that human heart desires'. Men, on the other hand, achieve this by strength, knowledge and the ability to labour. She likens the way women learn to accept and internalise their passive roles in life to the foot binding endured by Chinese girls of the leisured classes, in order to have the unnaturally tiny feet which their notoriously patriarchal society of the nineteenth century considered beautiful. In her 1911 sociological treatise on the position of women in society, *Woman and Labour*, Schreiner

develops the idea of sex-role conditioning into her theories on "sex parasitism"[5].

Lyndall's bitterness and resentment, as a mouthpiece for her creator, are felt in the words: 'We wear the bandages, but our limbs have not grown to them; we know that we are compressed, and chafe against them' (*AF*, p.177). Anticipating Waldo's scepticism Lyndall uses an analogy to illustrate how their Karoo neighbours would discriminate between what is considered acceptable behaviour for a male and female. They would, she suggests, accord friendship to the male and disrespect to the female. As a male, Waldo naturally has more physical freedom and opportunities than Lyndall, whose activities are circumscribed by the sexually encoded mores of the society in which they both live. The one advantage women have, she tells him, is that they can with a 'little weeping, a little wheedling, a little self-degradation' obtain a life of ease, whereas 'men must labour patiently for it' (*AF*, p.178). This fails to compensate her for the way society denies females tertiary education and career opportunities, and are fobbed off with 'men's chivalrous attention' (*AF*, p.178).

Dr Earle is Grossmann's embodiment of male chivalry and Lyndall's words aptly describe the way he tries to make Hermione conform to his version of ideal womanhood. After her recovery Hermione soon learns to hold him 'in reverence' and 'to keep her dark moods to herself, and not to let them fret him' (*HKHG*, p.23). She offers him 'silent devotion' and 'self-surrender' and allows him to 'soothe and pet her' (*HKHG*, p.25). In her desire to show her gratitude she offers to look after the housekeeping for him. Dr Earle refuses because he regards 'anything like personal service an imputation on his old-fashioned chivalry and an actual impropriety on her part' (*HKHG*, p.28). He continues, 'I cannot allow you to wait on me, Ione,... it is my duty and pleasure to wait on you.' Consequently Hermione has nothing

to do, is driven 'in upon her own mind' (*HKHG*, p.30) and becomes tortured with remorse and sad memories. This provides Dr Earle with another opportunity to rescue her, thereby reinforcing her dependency on him.

Hermione's enforced inactivity and morbid self-absorption is reminiscent of Bertie in London, and of the suffering endured by the nameless woman in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), who craves activity and intellectual stimulation but is forced to spend her time resting. Hermione cannot accept the inactive life she leads and tries to discuss with Dr Earle her need to have 'some part in life ... some purpose in the world'(*HKHG*, p.41). He reacts to this by trivialising her feelings and blaming them on 'over-fatigue'. His refusal to take her needs seriously and his insistence on diagnosing her aspirations as a medical aberration are in accordance with the role he has constructed for her. It is symbolised by the way he sends his *'Liebchen'* to bed telling her not to fret. The fact that he is a doctor tends to reinforce the patriarchal/paternal relationship. Service, or 'chivalric attention', towards women takes on a spiritual dimension for Dr Earle, and this he mentions to Hermione, whenever she suggests doing something he has not initiated, or she expresses a personal opinion indicating independence of thought, e.g. *HKHG*, p.28 and p.60.

Dr Earle constructs a role for Hermione as his niece and acting daughter. To him this is a substitute for the sexual love relationship which Grossmann makes clear is what he really wants (*HKHG*, pp. 25-6). Having healed her body, he attempts to restore her mind and personality by constructing a new role for her, thereby creating a new woman. He wants Hermione to be an interesting, beautiful companion who will contribute to his enjoyment in life by supplying adoration, affection, and later, when they embark on her adult education, cultured conversation. Her role is to be that of a parasitic ornament, living only to fulfil a man's needs,

just as Bertie fulfils another kind of need as the Jew's mistress.

There is no doubt that Dr Earle cares deeply for Hermione, and in providing her with a home and new life he is acting altruistically. However, by trying to mould her and later force her using emotional blackmail (*HKHG*, pp.91-2) into becoming what he wants her to be, despite her expressed wishes to the contrary, he is motivated by self-interest. On one of her trips to Melbourne with Bradley Hermione visits Dr Earle who begins teaching Hermione, 'or rather training her passionate desire for knowledge' (*IR*, p.230). This has resurfaced through the unhappiness of her marriage. It gratifies him to see 'the yet unformed child mind turning so towards the light' (*IR*, p.231). Years later in Europe she resumes her study under his tutelage. Now at last Hermione has the opportunity to further her education and she enthusiastically takes it, because 'she longs to prove, if only to herself, what a woman could do' (*HKHG*, p.62). Ironically, her adult education becomes a trap of another kind, one to keep her docile, passive and under Dr Earle's "paternal" domination. Once again, the author tells us about the pleasure he derives 'in developing Hermione's mind' (*HKHG*, p.62), and suggests that he also enjoys the prospect of Hermione becoming a 'woman of culture' (*HKHG*, p.63) whom he can show off. Such an occasion occurs when she reads a speech in French from Corneille's 1640 *Les Horaces*. Dr Earle is apparently 'very proud of her reading; he had taught her to manage her voice' (*HKHG*, p.89). It is not hard to understand the benefits such a man would gain in having as his constant companion a beautiful, talented and cultured woman who is adoring, devoted, grateful and dependent.

As with the father, so with the son. Unintentionally Hermione thrills Leonard Earle with a 'current of chivalric pity'. However, what he admires and worships in her is not so

much what Hermione really is -- 'All was pure poetry in and around her to him' (*HKHG*, p.49) -- but what he wants her to be to him. Grossmann's mistrust of male chivalry as a tool of patriarchal female gender conditioning is encapsulated in her words concerning Leonard: 'Below all his chivalry lay the old view of a woman as an object in a man's existence, not as a subject in her own' (*HKHG*, p.50). He also constructs a personality for Hermione which is at variance with reality. He admires her 'passivity and silence', 'her slow and languid movements', her motherhood and the love his father has for her. Such a construct provides him with the 'dearest and most beautiful of women' whom he can adore 'as an image or a picture' (*HKHG*, p.49). Here we see how Leonard objectifies "ideal womanhood" in relation to himself as a <u>thing</u> to be worshipped, rather than as a living independent being. John-Ferdinand uses similar language in relation to Bertie. That he is dissatisfied with the picture he paints of Hermione as 'ideal Womanhood ... though it was many years before he knows why (*HKHG*, p.57) reinforces the delusion of the constructs which both he and his father have tried to impose upon Hermione.

Eventually Hermione recognises what is happening to her, the effect of Dr Earle's "constructing" her to be a 'woman of culture' as he defines it. She realises how, in the face of his 'superiority', 'kindly satire' and 'amused indulgence', she has regularly suppressed many of her opinions, so that now she is perhaps <u>becoming</u> what he imagines she is, that her existence is totally dependent upon his personality and character.

> Quite unconsciously he was submerging her individuality in his, and her own will and heart were continually deserting her and going over to his side. The dominion of man, she was discovering, was supported by a good manyother means than force (*HKHG*, p.72).

Schreiner also shows men "constructing" women. John-Ferdinand creates his own construct of Bertie which, like Leonard's idea of Hermione, idealizes womanhood. He loves her as an 'absolutely pure and beautiful thing' and as an 'absolutely spotless, Christ-like thing' who makes him become a 'nobler and better man'. He values her as 'the eternal virgin-mother' and for 'what she is' (*FMTM*, vol 1, pp.125-6). He tells Rebekah that he has not yet told Bertie how he feels, because 'she has seemed to me almost too pure and sacred a thing for me to approach.' He likens her to a delicate flower that is 'too beautiful to be plucked' and 'too pure for your finger to touch' (*FMTM*, vol 1, p.126). This construct deprives Bertie of her humanity and removes her to the realm of the divine as a type of moral and inspirational force. This view of a 19 year old *plaasmeisie*[6] is incredible. It certainly does not correspond with Schreiner's portrait of her as the shy, diffident young woman she becomes after the seduction. The discrepancy between their ages, education and experience reinforces the notion that John-Ferdinand is guilty of "constructing" Bertie in the image of his own needs and the requirements of their society. Schreiner has a tendency to belittle the male lovers in her novels. Gregory Rose and Piet Vander Walt from *AF* illustrate this. Her exposure now of John-Ferdinand's construct of Bertie follows this pattern, but its effect goes beyond the humorous.

During the nineteenth century the idea of women's innate moral superiority was widely accepted. It was based on dominant middle class ideology which categorized women as biologically determined sexed-beings, able to reproduce and to provide sexual gratification but requiring none themselves. This belief was sanctioned by Christian theology and ratified by current medical science[7]. Olive Schreiner emphatically rejected the idea of female moral superiority[8] and she uses this opportunity to demonstrate its absurdity. John-Ferdinand is merely echoing Victorian middle class dogma

in which he has himself been thoroughly steeped. His construct of Bertie is nonsensical and based on ignorance. Unlike Schreiner, Grossmann accepts the principle of innate feminine moral superiority. Lynley Cvitanovich discusses Hermione's theory for achieving an equal and pure social order by imposing the prevailing female middle class sexual mores on all people.[9]

In the previous chapter we noted how certain areas of knowledge were deemed male preserves and unsuitable for females. Seldom were girls of the middle classes taught more than rudimentary details about their own biological workings. Most of them entered marriage sexually ignorant, unprepared for either marital relations or childbirth. Susan Kingsley Kent suggests a reason, that 'ignorance of sexual matters was tantamount to sexual innocence'[10], which contemporary society equated with the model of female purity and moral superiority. Early feminists recognised that lack of knowledge was disempowering women. This was why the call for education and training was always an integral part of the women's movement. Karl Pearson, a socialist university lecturer in England and a close friend of Olive Schreiner, discusses this in his 1885 paper, "The Woman's Question". According to Lloyd Fernando:

> Pearson held that the emancipated woman was entitled to knowledge -- would indeed seek it -- and, "because of the social responsibilities her emancipation must bring," that meant sexual knowledge as well, something completely excluded by existing taboos.[11]

For years there was a trend in western society to judge Victorian prudery about sexual matters with condescending amusement, and to ignore the way it frequently gave men licence without responsibility but made women the victims. What happens to Bertie exemplifies this, showing the deficiencies in her education and the consequences. As young

women, both Rebekah and Bertie are, compared to Veronica and Lyndall, unsophisticated and lacking in commonsense. Their parents have not compensated for the isolation in which they have grown up nor for the dearth of social contacts. When the little mother 'nervously' tries to tell Bertie to behave more modestly towards her tutor, she fails completely, because she refuses to explain the sexual innuendos implicit in Bertie's conversation with Percy Lawrie (*FMTM*, vol. 1, pp.99-100). Bertie does not understand her mother's hints about how her affectionate nature could be misconstrued. Schreiner makes it clear that the little mother's typical Victorian prudery is just as much responsible for the subsequent seduction as the father's abnegation of responsibility in regard to the tutor.

> Everyone liked him at the farm, except perhaps the father; and he only showed dislike, if he felt it, by speaking even less than usual if he was by.
> (*FMTM*, vol. 1, p.97)

Years later, when she hears that Bertie has gone away with the Jew, the mother is distraught and cries, '"Oh, she was my little baby - she was such a child! - she knows nothing!"' (*FMTM*, vol. 2, p.114). The inference, that "nothing" refers to sexual matters, is clear. This is a sad indictment on the way they, as parents, have prepared their daughter to take her place in the world.

The mother's prudery in discussing sexual matters is, to an extent, mirrored by the style of our two authors, especially Grossmann's. Hermione is also sexually ignorant but is described romantically, in keeping with the conventions of the romantic genre, as being 'innocent of evil, ignorant of the world and its ways' (*IR*, p.39). Grossmann is reticent about Bradley's behaviour too. The regular violence and marital rape he inflicts on Hermione are never fully described, although there is little room to doubt that it happens (e.g. *IR*, pp.331-2). Schreiner's style is

more direct, yet she still uses a euphemism like 'great Chaldean curse' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.89) to refer to menstruation. Similarly, we are not told expository details of Bertie's seduction and have to wait until John-Ferdinand's horrified question, 'Bertie, do you mean that you gave yourself to him?' (*FMTM*, vol 1, p.140), to confirm our suspicions about Percy Lawrie's sudden departure and the abrupt change in Bertie's personality. Also, we are never specifically told about Lyndall's pregnancy, although, in hindsight, we realise the implications behind her suggestion that Gregory should marry her and give her his name.

Marriage and motherhood were considered almost universally during the nineteenth century as the true goal and purpose of a woman's life. To prepare her to attract a man, to be a successful companion and hostess, to manage a household, to perform household duties and to rear her children were the aims of all the education and training she was given. The class to which she belonged of course laid emphasis on learning particular skills . Em, Lyndall, Rebekah and Bertie all acquire domestic skills, although the more menial ones are carried out by servants. Even on her return from boarding school as a sophisticated young lady, Lyndall wants to learn how to make 'sarsarties' and 'kapjes'[12] and drive the buggy (*AF*, p.186). Hermione's ineptitude at housekeeping, which Grossmann refers to as 'having her share of girlish troubles' (*IR*, p.160), worries her and annoys Bradley. In response to her request for reassurance of his love Bradley tells her, 'Oh, yes, you are ornamental enough, Beauty; I know that. I only wish you were half as useful' (*IR*, p.161).

Females throughout the British Empire accepted marriage as one of life's absolutes and spent their lives waiting for it as their natural destiny. When twelve year old Em comments upon the long time she and Lyndall have to wait until they get married (*AF*, p.38), she is demonstrating her automatic

acceptance of the inevitability of marriage. Unlike Lyndall, she has no intellectual curiosity or desire to explore beyond Tant' Sannie's world of sheep, farming and husbands. Predictably, she becomes engaged to the first eligible male she meets and looks forward to showing Lyndall all the things she has been preparing for her marriage. Lyndall, however, has not internalized the idea that marriage is automatically a woman's fate and tells Em: 'I am not in so great a hurry to put my neck beneath any man's foot; and I do not so greatly admire the crying of babies' (*AF*, p.172).

The period between schooling and marriage was regarded as one for preparing and waiting. Some women became governesses or companions during this interim, but such occupations were considered temporary only. The state of being unmarried was not one most females wished to prolong. Prevailing societal norms regarded it as a mark of failure. As we noted in Chapter Three, people were cruel in their judgement on a woman who sought, either through necessity or choice, to live independently and not under the protection of a man. Lyndall articulates contemporary feminist thinking about marriage as a profession being a matter of choice. She suggests that 'old maidenhood' means a life 'with a name that in itself signifies defeat' and 'old age without honour, without the reward of useful labour, without love' (*AF*, p.181). Aunt Bertha's changed manner to Hermione after her engagement epitomises society's attitude. 'To Miss Howard, a niece who was mistress-elect of Moorabool was very different from an unmarriageable governess' (*IR*, pp.90-1).

By the time she is twenty two Ellen Wood is anxious to get married, regarding it as 'her true sphere' and imagining 'how hateful it was to think of being an old maid and lonely all one's life' (*IR*, p.294). The alternative is for her to remain at home caring for younger siblings or to become a governess. She has been educated and trained for nothing else. Rather than remain in this unenviable state, she

marries Pierson, her aunt's stock driver, and an eminently unsuitable man. Ellen becomes more and more brutalised by Pierson, both morally and physically, so much so that she dies. Her husband is sentenced to three years' imprisonment for this. The moral is clear. Society's attitude to marriage is wrong. The inadequate education which fails to prepare girls to live independently and to provide them with a means of supporting themselves financially, other than by governessing, is wrong.

Like Ellen, Bertie is unqualified to earn a living and is driven to seeking the protection of a man who exploits and abuses her. Schreiner's refusal to name the Jew turns him into an Old Testament type of character, which evokes strong images of patriarchal oppression and vengeance. His subsequent treatment of Bertie and her kittens reinforces this. Back in Cradock she tells him:

> I want to find work, some place where I can work... I can do nearly anything ... that a woman does with her hand. I can cook and sew, and I can trim hats; I could take care of a baby or a house... I could do anything. I wouldn't mind working hard (*FMTM*, vol.2, p.105).

The tragedy is that Bertie does possess sufficient imaginative creativity and talent to earn a respectable living with her hands. Moreover, there would have been opportunities for her in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth or even 'the Fields'[13] for her to work as a dressmaker or milliner. Unfortunately her "education" and training has kept her childishly naive and lacking in self esteem and confidence. She has few survival skills so is a natural victim. Despite her obvious natural abilities she has been so conditioned and oppressed as a woman that she has become effectively handicapped. Incapable of initiating action, she has to wait passively to be rescued by a man and gratefully take up whatever kind of occupation she is offered. Bertie's heart-

rending plea to the Jew echoes the plight of millions of women of the era.

Conditioning girls for motherhood was also a major part of their education in the nineteenth century; not only was a female taught that being a mother was the climax of her life's work, she was also indoctrinated in the beliefs that maternal instinct was natural, and that not to possess it, or not to want children, was abnormal. Early feminists recognised how such beliefs resulted in motherhood being sentimentalised and a tendency to ignore the realities of repeated childbearing. Effectively, females were regarded as breeders and nurturers, not as autonomous adults. Grossmann's writing illustrates this recognition and motherhood, as an institution, is not idealized, except by Leonard. Hermione's own mother disappears from her life fairly early. Apart from an obsessive love of her first born, which the author hints is psychologically inseparable from her own selfhood, Hermione's relationships with her own children, although maternal and loving, are guided throughout by pragmatism. Also, the mother and son bonds between Kate and Bradley Carlisle and Janet and George Bruce are realistically conceived in terms of character and are certainly not sentimental portraits.

Schreiner by contrast idealizes motherhood and suggests that it is the 'mightiest and noblest of human work' and is itself an ennobling task. Like Grossmann, she believes in the formative significance of early childhood and its influences. During this period, Lyndall tells Waldo, the mother's role 'or at best a woman's' is vital as the 'first six years of our life make us; all that is added later is veneer' (*AF*, p.181). Few modern day feminists would disagree with Lyndall's thesis that motherhood requires a 'many-sided, multiform culture', vision and knowledge of human life. Many would, however, quarrel with her exaltation of motherhood to the degree that it becomes itself the reason and

justification for giving a woman 'knowledge of men and things in many states', that is, an education. In her last novel Schreiner treats motherhood in a more matter of fact way, as an almost inevitable consequence of a woman's adult life. Curiously, neither Bertie nor Mrs Drummond, the two sexually promiscuous women, become mothers.

When Hermione advances the idea that she might want a career, Dr Earle is amazed. Later he manages to accommodate the notion by constructing an image of Hermione which is safely marginalised from the main stream of public life and which would not remove her from his "protection". He imagines her 'going in for literary and historical research, and writing books like other scholarly women making literature charmingly feminine and not too profound' (*HKHG*, p.66). This is the type of work which Hermione later produces, when she leaves the stage and tries to earn money with her writing. Her articles are too scholarly and unsaleable (*HKHG*, p.147) and, despite her determination and courage, she cannot cope unaided in a male dominated environment. Such was the type of "work" women were allowed to do in patriarchal societies. They were allowed to enjoy the illusion of engaging in some occupation, but the hurdles they had to overcome in a male-controlled workplace offered little incentive to rely on it for providing them with financial independence. Hermione's experience encapsulates female "non-existence" in patriarchal societies in any kind of independent, self-supporting or public role.

As a professional journalist herself Grossmann would no doubt appreciate the difference between having the ability and knowledge to produce interesting, erudite articles, as opposed to writing which appeals to the general public and hence has market value. Fortunately for Hermione, a young male journalist teaches her how to write in an acceptable way (*HKHG*, p.148). She is eventually able to sell her work and make a living. In Hermione's society the "acceptable way" is

of course decided by men who control the newspapers and are generally the publishers, printers and retailers. The only way she can gain entry is by enlisting male help, by internalizing male values and writing in a male voice.

As usual Grossmann takes care to ensure that the reader does not equate patriarchal control only with Dr Earle and an older generation. Leonard, his son and Hermione's junior, exhibits similar prejudices towards careers for women. Years later in Melbourne he is appalled when he learns about Hermione's work in the Commune and Mission.

> He would have given her or any woman her loved a career, if that was her fancy; but in the same spirit of indulgence that he would have bestowed a jewel. The idea of any woman standing alone in the world as Hermione stood, free and independent ...(is) beyond the range of Leonard's views of her sex... (and, as far as he is concerned, the)... reputable occupations for middle age ... (are)...gossip and church-charity' *HKHG*, pp.268-9).

Marriage, as the only real career available for a woman in patriarchal societies, was supposed to guarantee her job security and employment for life. Ideally her career path would progress according to her age through motherhood to being a grandmother and finally becoming a much respected matriarch living within the bosom of her family. Her financial support would be provided by her husband and then by her sons. Economic dependency was therefore a major disadvantage for women. Early feminists soon noted the relationship between inferior female education, lack of career opportunities and the restricted subservient lives most women were condemned to lead.

END NOTES

1. Joyce Avrech Berkman, *Olive Schreiner: Feminism on the Frontier* (Vermont: Eden Press Women's Publications, Inc., 1979), p.41.

2. Berkman, *Feminism on the Frontier*, pp.41-2.

3. Laurence Lerner discusses the construction of woman as an aspect of Lyndall's feminism in his essay "Olive Schreiner and the Feminists" in Cherry Clayton's book, pp.181-191.

4. Veld refers to the Karoo countryside.

5. Olive Schreiner, *Woman and Labour* (commemorative edition), International Year of the Woman (Johannesburg, Cosmos, 1975).

6. *Plaasmeisie* is an Afrikaans word which literally means "farm girl", but it carries with it nuances of ignorance and lack of sophistication, which the English translation does not.

7. Susan Kingsley Kent's *Sex and Suffrage in Britain: 1860-1914*, chapter 1, provides interesting information about this.

8. S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner, *Letters*, p.307.

9. Lynley Cvitanovich, pp.104-5.

10. Susan Kingsley Kent, p.41.

11. Lloyd Fernando, *"New Women" in the Late Victorian Novel* (USA, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), p.15.

12. Nowadays these are spelt *sosaties* and *kappies*. They are Afrikaans words meaning kebabs and sunbonnets.

13. "Fields" refers to the shanty town which mushroomed around the diamond diggings in the north of the Cape Province after 1869. The town was originally named New Rush. In 1873 it was renamed Kimberley in honour of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Kimberley. This information is taken from *Origin and Growth*, complied by the Public Relations Department of the Kimberley Municipality. No date or publishing details are given.

CHAPTER FIVE

It was all lies men made up to keep children quiet and make women fools.

In Revolt.

The transmission of culture is the subject of this chapter, that is, how the "unwritten rules of society" are taught, and how its moral and ethical values are perpetuated. These manifest themselves in the prevailing prejudices of a society. Like gender conditioning this represents one of the more sinister aspects about female education in patriarchal societies. I will be investigating how religion is used to reinforce male hegemony. I will also focus upon the sub-text to see what it reveals about the authors' own internalisation of the culture of their societies, particularly evidence of racial and patriarchal prejudices.

The most powerful argument used by the patriarchy to justify and enforce women's subordination in the nineteenth century was undoubtedly religion. Christian ethics, in particular Protestant theology based often on literal readings of Scripture, were fundamental to both colonial societies. In the early days of migration to South Africa, Australia or any British colonies, few settlers would have arrived without their Bibles. Schreiner's personal background was influenced by Calvinism both during her missionary childhood and as a governess on Boer farms. Although she called herself a free-thinker and neither attended church nor taught religion to her charges, life in the Karoo and in most rural settlements in South Africa was lived according to the "Bible and gun" philosophy. In Australia and New Zealand, British colonists tended more towards English Protestantism -- Anglican and Methodist -- and loyalty towards the Empire, the State and the Church was part of their faith. These

values permeated the established structures of society. Although details of Grossmann's religious upbringing are not known, we can assume that she too was trained in Christian beliefs. Use of the Bible to teach correct behaviour and moral virtues was standard practice in Victorian times.

The Story of an African Farm especially abounds in examples of the important status the Bible enjoyed in society. All the main characters exhibit familiarity with passages of the Bible, which suggests that a great part of their education involved reading, learning and discussing aspects of it. Tant' Sannie's respect for the church, the *Predikant*[1] and the Bible illustrates the degree of influence and control exerted by religion among the white population, especially, although not exclusively, Afrikaners, in the Cape during the 1860s. It is the stifling aspect of this control, which leads to anti-intellectualism, the crushing of individual creativity and the censoring of independent thought such as we see in the book burning incident and destruction of Waldo's machine. Schreiner's abhorrence of this type of religious intolerance is evident in her use of italics to foreground her words about discrediting and then suppressing ideas one does not understand (*AF*, p.104), and in her satirical treatment of Tant' Sannie's ignorance and prejudice: 'Didn't the minister tell me when I was confirmed not to read any book except my Bible and hymn-book, that the Devil was in all the rest?' (*AF*, p.105).

Riccardo Duranti maintains that one of Schreiner's main aims was

> to denounce the oppressive effects which the keeping of ideological order she had grown up in ... had on a generation like hers and to demystify the use which the Bible as one of the many props that held up an obsolete view of the world -- a view tragically at odds with the new concepts of evolution and of human progress

> obsolete view of the world -- a view tragically at odds with the new concepts of evolution and of human progress towards perfection, which she calls 'the new spirit' in *From Man to Man*'.[2]

Significantly, it is the rejection by Lyndall and Waldo of Otto's simplistic religious beliefs -- based upon the unquestioning acceptance of scriptural authority -- which marks the first adolescent step towards personal intellectual development and independent thought. Whereas Waldo seems to renounce orthodox Christianity for philosophical reasons, Lyndall's rejection results from experience. Even as a twelve year old she notices the discrepancy between the pious religious truisms of Bonaparte and Tant' Sannie and their behaviour. Four years later at Tant' Sannie's wedding, she talks to Waldo about the hypocritical way men use God as an excuse to justify the results of their lust. She tells him: 'They say, "God sends the little babies." Of all the dastardly revolting lies men tell to suit themselves, I hate that the most' (*AF*, p.196).

Life on Rebekah's farm is not dominated by religious beliefs. The father avidly reads Swedenborg's philosophy, and Veronica pretends an interest in religious matters to ingratiate herself with John-Ferdinand (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.149), but the society in which the novel is set is distinctly secular. We are reminded that this is the work of the mature Schreiner, who has already worked out her own spirituality in her first two novels, and who is now concerned with sexual, rather than religious, ethics.

Despite Lyndall's eloquent articulation of feminist principles, neither she nor her creator is really aware of the degree to which religion was used to reinforce women's inferior status in their society; how scriptural teachings from both the Old and New Testaments promoted the orthodox

Victorian ideal of womanhood as being self-sacrificing, self-effacing, passive and always subordinate to men.

Grossmann, however, evinces no doubt about the way religion was used to enforce women's subordination. The moral in Hermione's story is unequivocal. During her years at Hawthorne she boards with the Howe family. Rev. Howe is a 'gentle Puritan' who moulds Hermione according to

> his notion of religion (which) was to live purely and according to a rigid interpretation of Scripture and the Church Catechism, to take an interest in the poor, to read the Bible and go to church regularly'
> (*IR*, p.39).

When she asks Bradley to teach her Greek, his accusation of self indulgence hits home and she immediately feels guilty. Guilt and duty were typical weapons, used by nineteenth century authority figures, to instil obedience and subordination in females. This Hermione learns when she asks Rev. Howe to help her prepare spiritually for marriage. He expounds traditional the Victorian religious belief that in marriage alone will a woman find her proper sphere and 'fulfil the purpose of her being by yielding up her own will unto the man's' (*IR*, p.113). He quotes the Book of Esther, the words of the apostles Peter and Paul, and even John Milton, to validate his arguments, and convince Hermione that self-abnegation is her religious duty. After months of marriage and bitterly disillusioned with Bradley's tyrannical behaviour, she returns to the Howes, hoping for solace and perhaps a solution to her unhappiness. By using Biblical exegesis Mrs Howe finally convinces Hermione that it is her Christian duty to submit to her husband and 'lead him back (to God) by her purity and subjection' (*IR*, p.252).[3] As her marriage deteriorates, so her acceptance of this dogma evaporates. After Ellen Pierson's death it is apparent that Hermione has totally rejected the notion of Christian wifely

submission. She tells Susie Wood that talk about heaven and God 'was all lies men made up to keep children quiet and make women fools' (*IR*, p.368).

Like Schreiner, Grossmann uses the rejection of orthodox Christianity in a character to mark the beginnings of independent thought. In Waldo's case the process leads to the development of his transcendental spirituality. In Hermione's it leads to her rejection of patriarchal gender conditioning and the development of her feminism. This is confirmed just before her revelation in Florence, when the narrator tells us:

> And, moreover, the subordination of women had been preached to her as part of religion, and in her childish uncertainty and her ardent passion of love she had accepted that too. When she had revolted against sex tyranny, she had cast off religious faith with it (*HKHG*, p.47).

Another set of cultural beliefs which are passed on to children are racial prejudices. In Schreiner's society these were endemic, and the insidious influence they exert is evident in her writing. However, the use of blacks only as background characters in her novels is historically accurate. They were not integrated into Schreiner's white settler society and they did occupy marginal, and menial, positions as servants or labourers. A case can be made that Ayah, Griet, Saartjie and her mother play minor rather than marginal roles in *FMTM*, but usually blacks are portrayed as part of the farm or veld background, and not as individuals. What does betray her racial (and class) prejudice, which her "education" has indirectly given her, is her complete lack of concern for the position of black females in her novels, and the reductive way in which she refers to them. Itala Vivan has analyzed the seventy two occasions on which Africans appear -- Schreiner calls them variously Natives, Kaffirs,

> On the whole, the treatment of blacks in *The Story of an African Farm* reflects the anthropological and cultural approach of the time, it is historically correct...Schreiner keeps close to the reality her fiction refers to, although she reflects the mentality of her society.[4]

Despite her obvious satire of Tant' Sannie's racist attitudes typified by the "Kaffir" servants absence from Sunday service 'because Tant' Sannie held they were descended from apes, and needed no salvation'(*AF*, p.62), and her subsequent criticism of racial discrimination and imperialistic politics, Schreiner nevertheless exhibits definite racial prejudices. These are characterised by condescension, paternalism, and a very real sense of ethnic superiority, typical of traditional South African liberal opinion.

Lyndall's discussion on female conditioning and education applies only to whites. What black girls were taught, how, and if, they were also conditioned to fit a male construct role in society, and how they acquire the skills and knowledge they have, we are never told. Schreiner is typically casual about the skills and knowledge which the black servants have. The Hottentot maid, for example, speaks at least three languages, her own, English and Afrikaans. Her ability to translate is indicative of application and intelligence, which gives her a measure of power and control over her life. This she can use to gain employment and status. The contrast between her and Bertie, whose class and race would, in her society, prohibit her being hired as a menial servant, I believe, somewhat undermines the potency of Schreiner's case against what is really the inferior education for <u>white</u> females.

Another way in which Schreiner and Grossmann betray their own internalisation of the prevailing prejudices of

Schreiner's case against what is really the inferior education for white females.

Another way in which Schreiner and Grossmann betray their own internalisation of the prevailing prejudices of society, is their use of gender stereotypes. This relates to an author's practice of attributing "typical" male of female characteristics and behavioural tendencies to a person. In the nineteenth century such traits were widely considered to be biologically determined. Nowadays we believe that gender differentiation is culturally imposed, a case of nurture over nature.

By applying Cixous's theories of patriarchal binary thought[5] to the way Schreiner portrays Rebekah's parents, we can see how the male emerges as the dominant one, in contrast to the little mother. The father is strong, silent and intellectual. The mother is verbose, prone to nervous headaches and in her concerns limited to domestic matters and her immediate surroundings. Rebekah inherits her father's "male" self-sufficiency, intellect and interest in philosophy. Bertie, on the other hand, takes after the mother. Although she excels in domestic skills, she also inherits "female" weaknesses and is deficient in intellect and 'calm strength of character' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.125). Rebekah's "masculine" characteristics enable her to cope, whereas Bertie's "feminine" characteristics make her susceptible to exploitation and disaster. Schreiner's sub-text clearly reinforces male superiority.

We see another version of the masculine/feminine dichotomy in Grossmann's mother and son couple, Janet and George Southwell, where nuances of language produce a traditional male/female, positive/negative opposition, fundamental to patriarchal ideology. Mother and son share a genetic inheritance and exhibit similar characteristics. For example: Janet is grave, stoical, reserved and self-

contained. She reminds Hermione of 'one of those hopelessly good people who never did wrong in their lives (*IR*, p.145). George displays 'open-hearted kindliness'(*HKHG*, p.235), while still being reserved. Janet's natural "goodness", Grossmann implies, makes her sanctimonious and taciturn, whereas George impresses strangers with his 'quiet strength of character and wholesome Scotch kindliness'
(*HKHG*, p.322).

Janet, we remember, is a solo mother, earning a living and rearing a son in difficult circumstances. She is a 'logical-minded Scotch woman' (*IR*, p.376), and does not publicly parade her grief, so much so that Hermione privately considers Janet does not feel it 'the way other women would' (*IR*, p.346). Grossmann offers nothing to balance this accusation of "unnaturalness". Janet is consistently portrayed as 'grave', unattractive and cold.

Although describing similar characteristics in Janet and George, the imagery the author evokes in relation to the female carries negative connotations, compared to the positive portrait she creates for the male. Grossmann's lack of objectivity and sympathy marginalises the female character. Even as she promotes the ideal of a united sisterhood and female solidarity, she herself is guilty of undermining this. A Freudian analysis of this phenomenon would suggest that Grossmann has internalized patriarchal attitudes of a society within which she herself has achieved success, so subconsciously identifies with its standards. The same could be said of Schreiner too in this regard.

A possible reason for this paradox in both Grossmann's and Schreiner's writing is suggested by Cora Kaplan. Discussing Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1969) in terms of its contribution to feminism, she states that feminists must know what they want,

> and since what many women wanted was full of contradictions and confusions, (they were) still entangled in what patriarchy wanted them to be or wanted for them.[6]

One more piece of evidence of the authors' own subconscious acceptance of patriarchal norms deserves mention, and that is the fate of the protagonists.

Lyndall criticises patriarchal conventions and tries to ignore them. Hermione revolts against her personal subordination and then tries to overthrow 'the dominion of man' (*HKHG*, p.197). Both of them fail and die. Em cares nothing for women's issues. Her unquestioning acceptance of the traditional female destiny -- marriage, home, husband and children -- which she exhibits as a twelve year old (*AF*, pp.37-42), does not change. At the end of the novel she is rewarded with marriage. Rebekah rejects restrictions on her personal independence but ultimately opts for an outward show of conformity to the notion of the male-dominated Victorian marriage. She is successful in claiming the right to autonomy, but this is only at the personal level. Her success remains a private secret within the family, firmly contained within the domestic sphere. Bertie and Ellen Pierson are really the only women whose fate serves the authors' cause. Women who successfully use patriarchal conventions to their advantage, and hence subvert them, that is Tant' Sannie, Veronica and Aunt Bertha, are not likeable characters, so hardly likely to inspire admiration among women. Neither Schreiner nor Grossmann provides a positive role model in the way that Miles Franklin does with Sybylla Melvyn in *My Brilliant Career* (1901) or Jane Mander with Asia Roland in *The Story of a New Zealand River* (1920). Their own indoctrination in the "unwritten rules" of society" goes very deep, and they are unable to escape from their imprisonment in 'the consciousness of their times'.

END NOTES

1. A *Predikant* is a minister of the Afrikaans Dutch Reformed Church.

2. Riccardo Duranti's essay "Vices Crying in the Wilderness: Lies and Prophecies". In Clayton's *Olive Schreiner*, pp. 77-8.

3. A.J. Morgan, p.10.

4. Itala Vivan's essay, "The Treatment of Blacks in *The Story of an African Farm*", p.105. This essay is from *The Flawed Diamond*. Edited by Itala Vivan.

5. Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Methuen, 1985), pp.104-5.

6. This is quoted in Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics*, p.29.

CHAPTER SIX

Give us truth! Not jewels, not ease -- nor even caresses, precious as they are to us -- are the first thing we see: give us truth. We are weary with seeking for truth and being baffled everywhere by subterfuge and seeming.

Rebekah, *From Man to Man*.

In this chapter I will consider the authors' solutions to women's inferior status in society. In the two later novels, *FMTM* and *HKHG*, they both suggest that education can also be the means of raising the consciousness of women about their oppression, which will enable them to end their subordination. Their goals are the same, but their methods are different. I will also discuss how both authors have been suffered at the hands of a patriarchal literary establishment.

In *HKHG* Grossmann examines the role education should play in publicising the position of females. She proposes ways in which women can be empowered through education to achieve financial and legal independence and, hence, control over their lives. Schreiner's approach in her last novel is less overtly didactic, but her belief in the power of education to emancipate women at the intellectual and personal level is unequivocally demonstrated through the character of Rebekah.

Grossmann presents her theories about women's rights through the medium of fiction in order to disseminate them and, hopefully, gain converts to the cause. A short note preceding the title page of the first edition, initially

called *A Knight of the Holy Ghost*, leaves us no room to doubt the author's didactic intention:

> The following narrative is based on a study from the past, before the Woman Movement had raised the condition of women; and it is produced now in view of a strong reactionary tendency towards re-subjection.

Grossmann's worry about 're-subjection' was justified. As much as male domination was characteristic of many late nineteenth century societies, so also was female resentment. Although an increasing number of women began challenging their position and questioning the validity of existing patriarchal assumptions about gender, they certainly did not form a homogenous group. Their views and methods differed greatly, even within one country. Nevertheless, the existence of the women's movement as a phenomenon of the female middle and upper classes was widely established by the 1880s, particularly 'in the English-speaking world, in the United States and its colonial dependencies.'[1] In the Preface to the second edition of *HKHG* Grossmann writes that 'those who are taking part in that battle for emancipation ought to fight as one army'.

Her personal commitment to the woman's movement is sincerely and eloquently expressed, for which she was severely attacked by male critics. Both Grossmann and Schreiner have suffered at the hands of the patriarchal literary establishment, as indeed have many female writers. Whether the literary fraternity felt threatened by the feminist authors and so condemned their writing on aesthetic grounds, will never be known.

One of New Zealand's literary critics, Alan Mulgan, suggests 'it would have been better for her literary

reputation had she given herself less whole-heartedly to the cause'. He continues:

> Unfortunately she allowed her hatred of injustice to over-cloud her judgement, and her outlook became morbid. Humorous in herself, she lacked a sense of humour in her stories, and this must be the reason why *Hermione* and *Angela* and *Heart of the Bush* have not been more widely read.[2]

Mulgan's opinion is interesting, mainly because it is so uncomplimentary. It betrays his own patriarchal bias. Patrick Evans discusses Mulgan's lack of objectivity as a literary critic and 'spokesman for the establishment' which effectively silenced writers like Jane Mander (1877-1949) and Jean Devanney (1894-1962). This happened because their novels about 'what New Zealand society did to its women' made the reviewers feel uncomfortable. He exposes Mulgan as a complacent 'male middle-class élite'[3].

Twenty eight years another literary critic, E. H. McCormick, writes about her

> zeal and sense of apostleship, often combined with considerable -- and often ill-digested -- erudition, (which)had an appreciable influence in the decade. Her three earliest books were uncompromisingly didactic in purpose, avowed weapons in the militant feminist campaign.[4]

No doubt both these gentlemen failed to recognise themselves as the New Zealand version of the American arbiters of the written word, who would only accept Hermione's work after she had learned to write in the male way. The thrust of this thesis is to demonstrate the historicity of Grossmann's writing in terms of her conscious response to the times in

which she lived, as well as what she unconsciously reveals about her own conditioning. The same argument, I suggest, can also be applied to Mulgan and McCormick. McCormick, however, is certainly correct about the author's sense of apostleship. Just as the Gospel writers tried to establish the link between Old Testament prophecy of the Messiah and Jesus's forebears, so Grossmann seeks to assert the credibility and sense of continuity within the women's movement and Hermione.

When Hermione is first introduced to the cause of women's rights by Clara Clarke, there already exist many books and pamphlets about it. The author mixes fact with fiction, as we hear about women such as Dr Elizabeth Blackwell, Mary Livermore and Susan Anthony who 'thrill(ed) the hearts of women like Hermione'(*HKHG*, p.125) and of 'modern heroines. .. (who) were making a road for themselves even through the time-worn walls of English universities, and were winning highest honours'(*HKHG*, p.173).

During a brief visit with Dr Earle in London Hermione tries (unsuccessfully) to share her new-found enthusiasm with him. She tells him about the commune she and Clara hope to start composed of like-minded women who

> would work for complete emancipation, political and social; they would raise women to educate themselves, and be no longer the ornaments and toys of an artificial society, but great and strong and free (*HKHG*, p.138).

Clearly Grossmann sees the role education has to play in the struggle for political and legal equality as paramount. Education -- lectures, tracts and discussions -- will all be tools in the promotion of their cause.

After Dr Earle's death Hermione starts lecturing for the cause in a regular basis. At last it seems as though her life has meaning and focus. She is able to utilise her education, that is her accumulated knowledge, and her dramatic and journalistic training, as well as her natural talent. Dr Earle's legacy gives her complete financial independence enabling her to work full-time in writing and lecturing for the cause. Inheriting Mount Moira provides the means to realise her commune idea and return to the land of her birth for which she has been yearning. It also gives her the opportunity to take the cause of women's rights to Australia where, she believes, as a young country there 'is greater scope, a more impressionable nature, less clogging traditions and customs, and more immense possibilities'(*HKHG*, p.184).

Hermione's hopefulness is unfortunately misplaced. According to Grossmann, 'the woman's movement was far more advanced in America than in the British colonies' (*HKHG*, p.184). Because Hermione herself has changed so radically since her flight from Moorabool, she naively imagines that her homeland has too. Protected initially by Dr Earle and then by the physical distance between the two continents, she has temporarily forgotten the harsh realities of colonial society which gave Bradley '*the right* to torture her at his brutal will, the right confirmed by law, sanctified by Scripture, and applauded by society' (*IR*, P.387). As events prove, she is just as deluded in thinking that the patriarchy in Australia will be any more receptive to her feminism because it is a young country as she is in believing that she has changed (physically) 'past all recognition in the last six years'(*HKHG*, p.234).

Mount Moira, she plans, will become a 'home of study and thought' for the sisterhood (*HKHG*, p.184). It will incorporate a school of preparation where the younger members will be educated 'on our own lines' (*HKHG*, p.196). She

considers that daily study and 'serious discussion of matters connected with the progress and ideals of women' (*HKHG*, p.197) for the older members will be important because, she passionately declares, 'We still have so much to learn! We have been, we are still so ignorant and untaught!' (*HKHG*, p.198). Women need to learn about the laws of the country, especially those concerned with marriage, divorce and property. They need a knowledge of physiology, of history and contemporary events. She continues to outline plans for selective study leading to vocational training or 'specialising with the object of some practical career' (*HKHG*, p.199). An important task for them, Hermione says, will be to encourage women to enter the medical profession.

Admission to the medical profession is obviously an issue about which Grossmann feels strongly. We recall how inspired Hermione is, when she first learns about feminism, to read about female medical students who are in the'hottest of the fight' (*HKHG*, p.173), especially some in Edinburgh -- the same medical school which Schreiner hoped to attend -- who are particularly abused both verbally and physically. Once again the author combines fact and fiction to add emphasis. She is referring to an actual event on the 18 November 1877 "Riot at Surgeons' Hall".[5] The author briefly revisits this theme in her last novel, *Heart of the Bush*. Adelaide, the protagonist, is experiencing a difficult labour. A doctor is called in. He tries to comfort Adelaide's husband by saying, 'You're imagining that women feel pain as much as men do. They are not capable of suffering anything like the same degree.'[6] Grossmann's awareness of this aspect of patriarchal control probably dates back to her school days and her mentor, Helen Connan, who also championed medicine as career for women.

During the nineteenth century many feminists considered the admission of women to the medical profession a vital

component of their campaign because, as we observed in Chapter Three, scientific and medical knowledge, was widely used to legitimise Victorian theories of female sexuality. It was generally hoped by those in the movement that a corps of women doctors would 'develop a "true" body of scientific knowledge and expertise and create a medical practice that would aid women, not exploit them.'[7] We have already noted Schreiner's interest in the medical profession, as well as Lyndall's concern that women are not allowed to become doctors or to heal diseases or study science (*AF*, pp.178-80). Women's entry into the medical profession was a burning issue, in fact as well as in fiction, throughout the British Empire.

Women who wished to become doctors in New Zealand during this period also had to combat a 'policy of determined discouragement'[8]. This Emily Siederberg discovered then she entered Otago Medical School in 1891. Despite the opposition of nine senior staff members and being pelted with human flesh by fellow students during an anatomy lesson, Siederberg persevered and graduated as New Zealand's first woman doctor.

By way of comment on the relative problems in this regard faced by the women's movement in different countries, it is interesting to compare the years when women first gained entrance to some of the Empire's other medical schools. In Britain this occurred in 1877, although Dr Elizabeth Blackwell who had trained and graduated in America was registered and allowed to practise medicine in 1859. Australian medical schools opened their doors to women in 1885 and they graduated in 1891. The first woman practitioner was Dr Emma Stone, who had originally been refused entrance to the University of Melbourne Medical School and actually trained in the United States and Canada whence she returned in 1890. The first woman to be admitted to Medical School in

South Africa was Nora McCulloch at the University of Cape Town in 1918. She graduated in 1924.[9]

Grossmann develops her education theme further. In discussions with other members of the commune Hermione explains how education and study will expose the 'great social wrongs ...old barbarisms and fallacies' which have existed during the 'whole dominion of man' (*HKHG*, p.197). Education and study will also empower women to set up new standards and 'create a purer social system' which, Grossmann tells us, was the 'aim of the noblest Women's Rightists' (*HKHG*, p.175). It is their lack of education and knowledge which has kept women subordinate to men, and deprived many of them of the intellectual fulfilment they craved, and reduced them to perpetual economic dependency.

We are left in no doubt about the central role Grossmann feels that education should play in establishing a just society. Hermione's future career will involve lecturing, teaching and writing and the chief right she will be advocating will be

> Equal education, first and foremost. Not necessarily the same, but equally thorough. If a woman is to be trained for the household and for the management of a family, that wants just as sound education as if it were for the State. So far all the higher domestic subjects -- the knowledge of body and mind - have been neglected for haphazard training in the arts connected with eating and personal adornment. We must form new mothers, who can not only nurse infants, but control and guide growing sons and daughters and keep their reverence. Wherever there is special talent in a woman other than domestic she should have the chance of developing it for a career. And

> we must have the right to be represented in parliaments and senates, like any other free, intelligent human beings -- the right to make laws, to have equal wages for our work, to enter any trade or profession (*HKHG*, p.202).

Hermione's words to Anna bring together the author's formula for redressing the injustices women have endured through the centuries and for achieving Utopia. Providing women with knowledge about their oppression is the key factor. This is the knowledge which will discredit at least two patriarchal myths: that females are an educationally inferior breed; and that the concept of separate male and female spheres of existence is a social construct having no scientific justification. Moylan comments:

> Rather than seeing these 'spheres' as social constructs, the Victorians associated them with the differing characteristics that men and women displayed.[10]

There is of course the underlying assumption here that knowledge will lead to instant conversion and a burning desire to change the *status quo*, and that this will be immediately translated into action. Grossmann herself observes:

> There was by no means a united universal army of women opposed to a united army of men. fact, the bitterest and most dangerous enemies were often to be found among women, while, on the other hand, some of the most strenuous champions were men (*HKHG*, p.176).

Sadly, Hermione's story illustrates the falseness of such an assumption.

Summarising Grossmann's solution to women's oppression, we can discern six distinct aspects. The first three concern women as individuals, both in the private and public arenas, and the rest relate to women as a group which comprises at least one half of the world's population.

At the private level education is the means by which a female can achieve a satisfying life, develop her mind and innate abilities as an independent being and realise her own existential needs. An education which includes teaching domestic skills will enable her to manage a household and organise family affairs more effectively. Educating the mind and body for motherhood, that is teaching future mothers how best to train their children for responsible adulthood, is part of this. Breaking away from Victorian middle class tradition, she envisages education as a passport to financial independence providing women with the means of earning a living and obtaining the personal satisfaction of a career.

Women as a group are the audience which Grossmann hopes to reach with her book. Her main ideas are expressed by way of Hermione's discussions and lectures. The main idea is how education can be used to inform women and provide them with the knowledge about the legal, financial, social and sexual disadvantages that Victorian patriarchal societies inflict upon them. If "knowledge is power", which Hermione certainly suggests, then education is the solution to women's oppression, the means of changing the situation. Finally, education is a means of uniting women in the cause, by imbuing them with common ideals and a common perception of a just society.

Once established in Australia, Hermione wastes no time in implementing her educational ideas. She gathers together a group of orphans and starts a school aimed specifically towards training girls for a definite career, the type of

career being determined according to individual preference or inherent ability (*HKHG*, p.232). She also decides to write a book 'embodying her theories' (*HKHG*, p.259). Her aim is didactic, to teach others about the 'dominion of man'. The book, entitled *The New Morality*, is to be a literary arm of the crusade, a weapon in what she now conceives to be a "holy war". It is to be published during the divorce trial. Predictably its content and literary worth are never considered objectively, because of the notoriety Hermione and the cause attract during the legal proceeding -- 'Hermione's cause fell with her reputation; each in fact, dragging the other down'(*HKHG*,p.345). The book is reviewed, condemned as immoral and then suppressed. Unfortunately, as a means of disseminating ideas about the education of women and the movement, it fails completely. No doubt the attitude of Bradley Carlisle's lawyer Forbes is typical of many in the colony -- 'Like most immoral men, he hated the Mission and the book that reflected on his own well-concealed vices' (*HKHG*, p.347).

Inevitably, neither the commune nor the school survive after Hermione's trial, defeat and public degradation. Along with their personal lives, their hopes for realising a Utopian society are ruined. It is left to Anna to provide some hope that Hermione's mission has not been in vain. At the final meeting Anna tells Hermione that because of the moral she has learned from Hermione's story, namely that 'it is quite unsafe to entrust the interests of one sex to the hands of another' (*HKHG*, pp. 385-6), she intends to devote her life to the political and legal enfranchisement of women.

Like Grossmann, Schreiner believed that she had a mission to tell others about her ideas. But whereas Grossmann announces her intention in the Preface to *HKHG*, and through the lectures and discussions of Hermione and her friends, so that the author's feminism is clearly and unequivocally

expressed, Schreiner's method is more subtle. For Grossmann the promotion of education for women is political and public, in contrast to Schreiner's approach, which is slanted more to the private, individual level. The difference in their approach has its parallel with the way the authors themselves acquired their education.

Experimenting with various genres within the novel format, what she calls her 'ribbed style'[11], Schreiner expounds her personal philosophy about love, the position of women in and out of marriage, evolution, eugenics, religion and human relationships. Her conscious purpose is to teach in order to change behaviour, akin to Sidney's idea that a poet's moral obligation is to delight and teach. In a letter to Havelock Ellis in 1884, she declares:

> I have always built upon the fact that *FMTM* will help other people, for it will help to make men more tender to women, because they will understand them better; it will make some women more tender to others; it will comfort some women by showing them that others have felt as they do.[12]

In his introduction to Virago's reprint of the novel, Paul Foot suggests that the main theme of the novel is the subjection and humiliation of women, and that it is about prostitution of married women, of seduced women and of the men who care little or nothing for either.[13] Certainly this is the obvious tenor of Schreiner's didacticism. On these grounds, it slots neatly into Elaine Showalter's feminist phase.

The feminist angle goes beyond this though. Through the protagonist the author presents an image of a woman who manages to subvert those patriarchal forces which overcome her sister and emerge as an autonomous adult, who is able to

live within the restrictions of a male-dominated colonial society. In this respect, Rebekah is reminiscent of Lucy Snowe. Lucy, however, remains outside Britain, living and working in a foreign country. Rebekah realises her existentiality within the fold of the British Empire, within the patriarchally-endorsed institution of an (outwardly) respectable marriage. As such, she represents Schreiner's vision of what a twentieth century woman should be, a truly radical feminist who manages not to outrage the norms of the society in which she lives.

Education is the key to Rebekah's success; education which stimulates and satisfies intellectual curiosity, which enlightens and broadens the sympathies and which teaches and delights. It is education which empowers Rebekah to rise above her unhappy marriage, to create for herself a new life, and which gives her the strength of character and determination to avoid falling into another relationship in which she would still not be an equal partner. In 1889 she wrote to a married friend about the importance of education, or self-development, as the key to eradicating the 'inequalities between man and woman' and to helping women be independent, which is the 'real Secret of Freedom' (author's capitals).[14]

Rebekah, like her creator, never ceases from developing, or educating, herself. When we first meet the adult Rebekah, we are told that she is 'always busy with her books and her microscope and collections of insects, and stones' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.81). Such an activity is autodidacticism in practice, and because of it, she is able to sublimate her periods of hyperactivity for which, as a child, she resorted to prayer. When she returns to the farm four years after her marriage, she spends every available moment reading. Her absorption in books and their subject matter is made clear in the narrator's description of Rebekah. She reads both in

public and private, morning, noon and night. She reads when everyone is sleeping, when she is breast-feeding the baby, and when she is tending the children. She 'always has a book in her hand' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.121). She seems to responding instinctively to the practical demands of living and 'only the world of her thoughts was real to her.'

In the Cape Town house she improvises a study for herself. It is a small room with a window and two doors connecting with the children's bedroom and the garden. The furniture comprises a desk, an old arm chair, a waste-paper basket, some book shelves and a tall wooden cabinet. This room allows her to fulfil her obligations as a mother and simultaneously to pursue her own interests. It provides a place into which she can escape from the unhappiness of her marriage, and 'through the intellect draw in a kind of life' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.125). Inside she keeps her collections of fossils and insects, her microscope and books which are all old, worn and much loved, excepting Darwin's *Variation of Plants and Animals under Domestication*. The nostalgic tone used in the anecdotal description of Rebekah's books and possessions is one of the many autobiographical aspects about the novel, this time reminding us of the author's own autodidacticism.

Self-education is very much a private occupation and has distinct disadvantages. Rebekah's fantasy (*FMTM*, vol.2, pp.232-3) showing Mr Drummond her fossils and books and being able to discuss her ideas with him, exposes the loneliness of the autodidact. It also illustrates the marginalisation in society which intellectual women so often experienced in the early 1900s.

Indicative of the freedom to be herself in the study is the openly-displayed Smith's *Latin Principia*, which she had brought surreptitiously as a child 'when she knew they would

laugh at her if they knew she meant to learn Latin' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.179). Her study is the place in which she is able to indulge her thirst for knowledge openly, as though trying to realise her childhood belief that, when she was grown up, she would know everything (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.70).

Rebekah's study acts as a sanctuary, a quiet place, where she writes her dissertations, allegories, story outlines and personal thoughts. Writing for Rebekah is a means of assimilating the knowledge she has gained, of synthesising the information and understanding what she has learned. Through the writing process, she is able to extend the boundaries of her education and develop her own theories. This is illustrated by the 'long discussion with herself' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.183), in writing, where she analyses the desire for knowledge and concludes that its pursuit is an end in itself. The discussion covers fifty pages. Its main interest in terms of this thesis is her plea for women to be allowed the 'freedom of life and action' and no longer be condemned as the physically weaker sex, to a 'line of life. ... rigidly apportioned to them at the will of their societies' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.228).

Rebekah's writing, including her long letter to Frank, involves abstract analyses of a broad range of subjects, from evolutionary theory to feminist issues. This diversity, together with the level at which she probes the issues, indicates her wide background reading and intellectual ability. Laurence Lerner questions the plausibility of this character trait, observing that 'she is surely more learned than her amateur interests in science and philosophy are likely to have made possible.'[15] I find this somewhat ironical, bearing in mind the way in which Rebekah's creator herself acquired her knowledge. Lerner underestimates the dedication and perseverance of the autodidact, illustrating another instance of patriarchal criticism.[16]

As a place in which she can continue her education, write, explore her thoughts and be her own person, the study is a powerful symbol and one which Elaine Showalter finds disturbing. She describes the room as 'all too clearly and pathetically the embodiment of her femaleness'. Feminists nowadays would accord this characteristic more regard than was customary during the 1970s when Showalter wrote this. She imagines how Rebekah, as she feverishly scribbles what no one will read she 'is like a prisoner in a cell.'[17] The way Rebekah walks round her desk reminds her of the Brontës and the woman in *The Yellow Wallpaper,* and all of them are likened to caged animals. This idea is reductive, and not, I think, the only possible reading of the text.

Apparently Schreiner also had the habit of walking up and down and muttering to herself, just as Rebekah 'used to under the trees in the kloof' (*FMTM*. vol.1, p.181). Stephen Gray interprets this image as an example of the protagonist's restless energy and often frenetic burst of creativity. In the second scene of *Schreiner: A One-Woman Play* [18] the actress is shown 'striding intermittently between steel walls' in simulation of the author's personal idiosyncrasy.

Showalter stresses the cell-like property of the study calling it a 'womb with a view'[19] which minimizes the importance of what the room provides for Rebekah, that is the power to 'think for herself'[20] and the strength of purpose to demand the right to act as an autonomous adult, and not just react as a helpless victim of her husband's infidelity.

There is no doubt that Rebekah is not free to write and pursue her own thoughts and interests whenever she chooses. Moreover, the very way in which she manufactures the closet-sized space by 'cutting off the end of the children's bedroom with a partition' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.178) is itself an apt symbol for the contrivances a woman had to adopt in Victorian

society in order to exercise her intellect and explore the exclusive realms of 'male knowledge'. However, the study does not represent a place of confinement and restriction to Rebekah. Instead it offers her freedom to write, the 'space for fantasy',[21] and to exist, albeit temporarily, not as a mother or a wife or a daughter or a sister, but as individual, responsible for and answerable to only herself. Its existence is important to Rebekah. Even though she might not use the study for days or weeks, 'she knew it was there; and there was always a quiet spot in her mind answering to it' (*FMTM*, vol.1, p.181).

It is to her study that she retreats when she discovers Frank's adultery with the coloured maid. Significantly it is also in her study that Frank comes to find her and she finally forces him to listen to her ultimatum. Somehow, in the room of her own, she finds the courage and strength to withstand his bluster, his wheedling cajolements and patriarchal reproaches. Her study and how she feels about herself when she is in it, empowers her to speak out and act as an individual. This, together with the financial independence she gains from the wine garden venture, which generates sufficient income to pay all Rebekah's and Sartje's expenses (*FMTM*, vol.2, p.215), greatly enhances her self confidence. Now, with her study and financial independence she has achieved the conditions which Virginia Woolf sets for her female writer - 'a room of her own and five hundred a year'[22]. The importance of this in terms of the solution Schreiner offers for raising women's consciousness and suggesting how they can rise above their oppression, can best be understood in relation to the ending of *FMTM*.

The ending of *FMTM* is problematic. Events are neither conventionally resolved, nor brought to an absolutely final conclusion. It seems as though the words have stopped, rather than that the text has been finished. Originally the novel

was published posthumously by her husband, who, in order to 'satisfy a legitimate interest' (*FMTM*, p.xvi.), suggests an ending. In this ending Bertie dies, Rebekah renounces Drummond, leaves her husband and goes to 'Matjesfontein'[23] where she lives 'educating the children and rearing Sartje' (*FMTM*, vol.2, p.255).

Why Schreiner did not have it published during her lifetime has caused much speculation. This speculation was started by Cronwright-Schreiner's subjective biography of his wife. Schreiner's work has also been misunderstood and misrepresented by generations of literary critics, both before and after her death, e.g. Rebecca West (1912 essay), Phyllis Bottome (1924 essay), Arnold Bennett (1928 essay) and Uys Krige (1968 essay).[24] Like Grossmann, Schreiner was a casualty of the patriarchal literary establishment, which also included women. Within South Africa her work, including *AF*, has often been misunderstood and, in some sectors of society, unpopular. The reasons are various and concern her scathing indictment of British imperial policies, her radical feminism, her satirisation of Afrikaner society and her views on race, sex, religion and pacifism. What she wrote and what she did not write has caused great controversy among her critics.

Some critics agree with Cronwright-Schreiner that she was unable to finish it satisfactorily, although he claims, 'she had finished the novel in her own mind' (*FMTM*, p.xiv), and had written no more of it than he had in his possession. Elaine Showalter calls her a 'dedicated writer who could never finish a book'[25] and chooses rather to believe the husband's words regarding the lost manuscript than the author's.[26] With the exception of *AF*, she belittles Schreiner's work ignoring the fact that much of it was widely influential and popular when it was published[27].

Kathleen Blake discusses the difficulties Schreiner experienced in finishing the book. She cites a sentence from a 1907 letter to her husband: 'If only the powers that shape existence give me the strength to finish this book.' She further maintains that Schreiner delayed finishing *FMTM* indefinitely and uses her a case in support of her argument about the art of self-postponement in female writers.[28] However, many critics disagree, e.g. Vera Buchanan-Gould who finds 'the ending quite satisfactory as Olive left it.'[29] Paul Foot, writing the Introduction to the Virago edition of *FMTM*, feels 'quite content that she did finish her book, even if she could never quite admit it.'[30]

Some observations of Umberto Eco's might help us out of this apparent impasse.

> Eco argues that some texts are 'open' and invite the reader's collaboration in the production of meaning while others are 'closed' and predetermine the reader's response, He also speculates on how the codes available to the reader determine what the text means as it is read.[31]

It is the way in which the open ending of *FMTM* is 'read' wherein lies the key to much of Schreiner's radicalism as a feminist. What *FMTM* offers us is a writer who has created a text scattered with clues as to how the protagonist is likely to react; who presents us with the critical moment when Rebekah must decide how to act; who tells us what her decision is but then, as Author-God, withdraws leaving us to 'write' the final paragraph.[32]

In Mr Drummond Rebekah finds an intellectual soul-mate. Her fantasy becomes real and she is able to show him her

fossils. They have intense conversations about writing and the creative process, and, probably for the first time ever, Rebekah is given the opportunity to discuss her evolutionary and religious theories with an empathetic adult. The warmth and understanding they both experience in each other's company is symbolised by Drummond's reference to the Indian custom of sharing a pipe with another 'in token of amity and union'(*FMTM*, vol.2, p.253). Rebekah responds by telling him where she leaves the keys to her room and, more importantly, the key to her cabinet where she keeps her beloved fossils. Drummond invites Rebekah to come and see his fossils which he is in the process of packing prior to his departure. Before replying she momentarily hesitates revealing that she is tempted. Then, for whatever reason, she declines with a firm, 'No, thank you' (*FMTM*, vol.2, p.254). Without responding directly to her refusal Drummond immediately tries persuading her, on the grounds that 'they are in an outer room on the other side of the house; I have two rooms there; you would interfere with no one' (*FMTM*, vol.2, p.254).

The message is clear - 'outer', 'other', unnoticed, marginal to the household and covert. Drummond makes the mistake of reassuring Rebekah that, if she adopts a certain type of behaviour, she will be rewarded by nobody knowing the truth about her visit. One of her main grievances with Frank is that he will not tell her the truth. In her long letter to him she writes,

> Oh, can't we speak the truth to one another just like two men? ....I do not ask you to love me, only to speak the truth to me, as you would if I were a man'(*FMTM*, vol.2. pp.37-8).

It is distortion of the truth which ruins Bertie's relationship with John-Ferdinand and which Veronica and Mrs Drummond use to malign her. It is Bertie's inability to

convey the truth of the situation to the Jew, which precipitates her total descent into prostitution. Truth is a recurring motif throughout the book, and its use now acts as a vital clue as to how the reader should 'finish' the book. When Rebekah hears the ominous note conveyed by his words 'outer' and 'other', she is, I think, reminded how once before she had been tempted to give up her independence, the time when she left the farm to become Frank's wife. Having successfully extricated herself from the domination of one man and removed herself and the children to some outer rooms 'not connected with the house' (*FMTM*, vol.2, p.181), she is not about to enter a relationship which replicates her situation and former subordination. As an independent woman she would find such an invitation unacceptable. Her second 'No, thank you' represents a proud refusal to becoming 'outside' and 'other', and to being made to conform to Drummond's construct of her. Her refusal is not an act of self-postponement, but a full scale assertion of her autonomy as a woman with the right to equality in relationships.

Because of the rapport between them and her longing for such a friend, which her daydream (*FMTM*, vol.2, pp.232-3) suggests, she is tempted. We cannot ignore Schreiner's belief in the female sex drive, which she projects into the character of Rebekah, if we are to believe Frank's word (*FMTM*, vol.2, pp.73-4). No more can we discount her probable reluctance to flout the strict conventions of her society as reasons for her choosing not to visit Drummond. Yet, what prompts her refusal is, I believe, an absolute conviction in her human right to think and act autonomously, a right which patriarchal institutions and mores deny her. This is what the "Kaffir" woman does when she jumps off the mountain with her two children under her arms. (*FMTM*, vol.2, p.207). The "Kaffir" woman and Hermione deliberately reject their societies and choose to commit suicide. For whatever reason, Rebekah decides not to enter into a relationship with

Drummond. She elects to remain within her society, to accept its restrictions but to conduct her life as an independent woman, dominated by no one. Rebekah's refusal and Drummond's subsequent departure bring the novel to an end on an optimistic note.

Why Schreiner did not keep to her original ending or use the one outlined later to her husband is open to debate. The explanation, I believe, lies in the greater understanding about the 'woman question' which she gained in the years after she wrote *AF*. To write of Rebekah's renunciation in terms of self-sacrifice, or to have her die as Lyndall does, or to find happiness by way of a man who would undoubtedly try to mould her according to his idea of what she should be, would not have been consistent with Schreiner's feminist philosophy as outlined in *Woman and Labour* (1911). The truly evolved and educated woman of the twentieth century must demand and construct her own life and be responsible for her own happiness.

The story of Rebekah and how she establishes her independence as an autonomous adult represents Schreiner's solution to the problem of women's subordination. Her example demonstrates how women can rise above their oppression and achieve a meaningful life. From her childhood habits of self-education and investigation, she acquires self-discipline and application. These enable her to rise above the domination she experiences in her unhappy marriage. We witness how she studies and empowers herself with knowledge, how she works hard to gain self respect and financial independence, and finally how she refuses to enter a relationship in which she will likely have to give up her autonomy. This is Schreiner's prescription for the "new woman".

END NOTES

1. Patricia Grimshaw, p.xiv. Grimshaw's study also presents useful background information about the suffrage campaigns in Britain, the United States and Australia.

2. Alan Mulgan. "Edith Searle Grossmann - Pioneer". In *Art in New Zealand*, vol.3, no.12 (Wellington, June 1931).This is an obituary.

3. Patrick Evans, pp. 68-9.

4. E.H. McCormick, *New Zealand Literature: A Survey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p.73.

5. Ray Strachey, p.179.

6. Edith Searle Grossmann, *The Heart of the Bush* (London: Sands & Company, 1910), p.296.

7. Susan Kingsley Kent, p.131.

8. John McIndoe, *New Zealand Herstory 1977: A New Zealand Women's Calendar* (Dunedin: The Dunedin Collective for Women, 1976).

9. I am indebted to Professor J P de V van Niekerk, the present Dean of the University of Cape Town's Faculty of Medicine for this information.

10. Phillipa Moylan, p.19.

11. S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner, *Letters*, p.38.

12. *Letters*, p.29.

13. Olive Schreiner, *From Man to Man* - with an Introduction by Paul Foot. (London: Virago,1982).

14. S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner, *Letters*, p.151.

15. Laurence Lerner, "Olive Schreiner and the Feminists" p.190. From *Olive Schreiner*. Edited by Cherry Clayton.

16. This idea arose from a discussion with Dr Russell Poole.

17. Elaine Showalter, p.202.

18. Stephen Gray, *Schreiner: A One-Woman Play* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987), p.14.

19. Elaine Showalter, p.202.

20. Virginia Woolf, p.88.

21. First & Scott, p.176.

22. Virginia Woolf, p.78.

23. This is now spelt Matjiesfontein.

24. Extracts from these essays are published in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, volume 9, pp.394-400.

25. Showalter, p.195.

26. A. and A.S. van der Spuy, p.4.

27. First and Scott provide a useful bibliography on pp.371-6 of their biography.

28. Kathleen Blake, pp.202-27.

29. Vera Buchanan-Gould, p.204.

30. There are two known possible endings of *FMTM*, Cronwright-Schreiner's one and the one the author describes in a long letter to Karl Pearson in 1886. This letter is <u>not</u> included in her husband's *Letters*, but is in Richard Rive's *Olive Schreiner: Letters*, pp. 91-4. The endings are similar varying only in the details about her relationship to Drummond and the show-down with Frank. In neither ending does she leave her husband to live with Drummond, not does she have an affair with him.

31. Raman Selden, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (Sussex: The Harvester Press Ltd., 1985), p.109.

32. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", published in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*. Edited by David Lodge (Essex: Longman Group UK Limited, 1988), pp.166-172.

CONCLUSION

In these novels we have seen how Grossmann and Schreiner try to explain the patriarchal subordination of females in their societies. From an early age girls are taught to believe that the modes of behaviour and expectations of life designated for them as females are different from those for males. They are taught to accept this as both natural and normal. The education they receive at home and later at school reinforces the demarcation between the sexes. Unlike their male counterparts they are not encouraged them to aspire to a career or tertiary education. This effectively denies them the opportunity to earn a living or establish an independent, autonomous life for themselves. Their subordination extends beyond the financial and academic, and women in their societies are seriously disadvantaged legally and politically, in the public and private spheres.

Both authors see education as a way of informing women about their oppression and of giving them the skills, knowledge and self confidence to rise above it and change the situation. Their novels also represent a means of raising women's awareness of the situation and, hopefully, mobilising them to take action.

However, even as dissenters against patriarchal oppression, they too operate within the structure of their societies. Their writing often betrays their own conditioning, and they often seem to be reinforcing the *status quo* whilst trying to change it. There are many anomalies in their writing, which are carried in the sub-text. These anomalies reveal the extent of their own

historical conditioning and the pervasive power of patriarchal ideology. Notwithstanding this, their writing still presents a vision of how education, in particular the promotion of their theories on women's issues, can solve the problems of female oppression.

There is a hope that Rebekah's children will accept her teachings and pass them on to the succeeding generations, just as Anna Lyman and Prudence will continue with Hermione's crusade. Writers of today of both sexes have benefitted from the work of Grossmann and Schreiner, and many continue to promote similar issues.

The extent to which Victorian mores influenced nineteenth century colonial societies has not yet been fully investigated. A great deal of research still needs to be carried out to determine how far patriarchal, racist and imperial beliefs are embedded in the consciousness of our own times. Unless we know about our own prejudices, we cannot eradicate them.

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