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A Social Change-Maker and a Dreamer: Olive Schreiner's Figures for an Ideal Future

Jessica Ampel
Skidmore College, jampel@skidmore.edu

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Skidmore College

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Professor Barbara Black

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Foreword

I first encountered Olive Schreiner and *Dreams* (1890) in my first year at Skidmore in an undergraduate course titled "Women and Literature"; I returned to her one year ago in the course "Imagining the Future." These two courses led me to see Schreiner as a radically progressive Victorian woman able to *write* her desires for a better future. For the last four years, I have been waiting to write this capstone—and in a way, this paper has been waiting for me. I needed to develop as both a literary and sociological scholar so that I could give Schreiner the eloquence, intellectual understanding, and respect that she commands and deserves.

In my sociology work, I have been specifically interested in dominance categories and intergroup relations; I could not help but see—and value—the social implications of both the form and the content of *Dreams*. Schreiner's allegories immediately stood out to me because, while they offered necessary moral messages, I also felt as though *Dreams* was instructing me to *do* something. I appreciated that Schreiner expected action from me and I admired that Schreiner expected the same action from herself. The more I read her work and learned about her life in nineteenth-century South Africa and Victorian London, the more her ability to seamlessly combine social theory, social justice, and literary craft fascinated me, especially because I was pursuing the same interests in my undergraduate career. It baffles me that today Schreiner is not a household name and that I had to read *Dreams* in home-made pamphlet form because it is out of print; her lack of recognition in our contemporary world astounds me especially because she fought for the same kinds of racial, gender, and class equalities that progressive thinkers fight for today. She lived in a rapidly changing environment--similar to ours--and desired a cooperative and intersectional world where people live, love, and work for each other's well-being. Her mission aligns with mine and with countless others'; our contemporary world needs to hear her

voice, read her work, and internalize her insights regarding social change and social change-making.

For my argument in this capstone, I have developed the concept of the "social change-maker" because I argue that social change is more creative and hands-on than we generally understand it to be. "Social activist" simply implies general actions fighting for social change, but in order to realistically reach a better future, someone has to visualize, mold, and build the change they believe is necessary. Schreiner built social change through many mediums, but her primary mode was writing. She imagined and dreamed of social change, but more importantly, she crafted many detailed accounts for necessary steps to eventually reach a better future. "Social change-maker" connotes a more specific kind of action, one that takes skill and precision, pointed decision-making—and the work of social change-making cannot be performed by just anybody. Schreiner's *Dreams* perfectly exemplifies social change-making: it comprehensively instructs, incites, and inspires generations of future and present social change-makers.

Introduction

Social activist, theorist, and author Olive Schreiner dreamed and demanded that others dream as well. Living in the Victorian era, a time of extreme change but also rigid cultural values, she dreamed about an ideal future characterized by gender equality, sexual equality, and racial equality not just in her own "homes" of England and South Africa, but globally. However, for Schreiner, dreaming was not enough; we must *act* on our dreams in order to make the necessary social change to reach an ideal future. Schreiner acted on her own dreams for social change throughout her life by theorizing, joining important social movements, and combining each of those actions into her art of writing; these efforts were not mutually exclusive. In a letter from 1888 addressed to Mrs. Philpot, a friend she met in London, Olive Schreiner almost perfectly summarizes the mindset that she asks of others, and of herself. She states, "my work widens and widens out before me, and it isn't the getting done that's beautiful, it's the working and the learning more" (5-7).[1] In other words, the "beauty" is in what we *do* to attain our goals. The beauty is in *how* we get to a more just future. Important biographical moments and pieces of her political writing paired with her allegories titled *Dreams* unite to illustrate a radical social change-maker demanding progress from others as well as from Schreiner herself.

A Context for Dreams

Schreiner had many reasons to write a book of dream-like allegories to portray social change and social change-making. These reasons range from the Victorian context of dream-writing and allegory at large to the smaller, more local context of her own life. To better understand Schreiner's unusual stylistic forms, we will begin with the larger Victorian context surrounding dreams, dream-writing, and allegory.

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[1] Olive Schreiner to Isaline Philpot, August 1888, NLSA Cape Town, Special Collections.

The science and spirituality of dreams and dreaming boomed during the Victorian era. In fact, nineteenth-century British literature scholar Jonathan C. Glance names at least five different dream "scientists" from this period, even before Freud, each with theories about how dreams occurred and what dreams meant. Glance centers these thinkers around Charles Dickens and his own dream-writing, but as an informed and avid reader, Schreiner likely would have been familiar with these ideas as well. From the many other dream theorists Glance mentions, Robert Macnish stands out as a thinker with whom Schreiner's work aligns. Macnish claims that dreams are "'transient delirium[s]', which resemble insanity in the absence of the mental faculty of judgement" (Glance). Though we usually attach a negative connotation to insanity, Macnish sees it as freeing the mind of "judgement" momentarily. His language suggests less permanence and more of a temporary state that we have the privilege of entering in our sleep. According to Macnish's theory, I see writing in the form of dreams freeing Schreiner from the societal constraints of the time precisely because she could make her writing seem almost involuntary. Writing in a form that suggests the author wrote innately challenges the reader because it is difficult to deem something wrong or incorrect if it was instinctual. In this way, writing in dream-form allowed Schreiner to present her radical ideas and methods about social change within a Victorian context often unwilling to welcome stylistic variation in writing.

Another popular idea that proliferated at this time about dreams concerned their prophetic nature. In his work, Glance explains that although dream scientists agreed that dreams were not prophetic, these scientists competed for public attention with "dream books and spiritual accounts of revelatory dreams" (Glance). "Dream books" informed extensively on the prophetic power of dreams and were quite popular because they reached the uneducated public, unlike the scientific accounts and theories about dreams. If the *popular opinion* of Victorian England was

that dreams could in some way predict the future, then the dream form was an effective method for writing about social change. In a letter, Schreiner once wrote "our dreams are not delusions but the forerunners of the reality."[2] This quote shows that Schreiner did indeed see the prophetic nature of dreams. For Schreiner, dreams lay the groundwork for action, which then becomes the new "reality." Schreiner writes her change-making ideals through dreams, propelling both her and her readers further toward the ideal future.

Victorian fiction writer Robert Louis Stevenson developed a playful take on dreams and their impact on writing. He does not see dreams as insanity or prophesy, but instead as separate beings within the brain who communicate to the "dreamer" in their sleep. "The Little People," as Stevenson calls them, are "unseen collaborators" who help him write his stories because the "dreamer" is "a creature as matter of fact as any cheesemonger or any cheese, and a realist bemired up to the ears in actuality" (140). In other words, the person dreaming thinks too realistically and "matter-of-factly" to be any kind of storyteller on their own. Stevenson further explains that the Little People "are but just my Brownies, God bless them! Who do one-half my work for me as while I am fast asleep, and in all human likelihood, do the rest for me as well, when I am wide awake and fondly suppose I do it for myself" (140). Stevenson's conception of dreaming is that the dreams that occur while a person sleeps directly inform their imagination in their waking hours. Moreover, the "dreamer" is simply a conduit for "The Little People" to channel their stories into the real world. Schreiner and Stevenson's conceptions of dreams and dreaming run parallel as they both understand dreams and dreaming as active; what we dream makes its way into the world to create a story, to enact social change, and even to accomplish both.

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[2] Olive Schreiner to Karl Pearson, 23 June 1886, University College London Library, Special Collections, UCL, London, Olive Schreiner Letters Project transcription, 18-19.

Though the popularity of writing about dreams and dreaming rose in the nineteenth century, Victorian society did not necessarily give the genre of dream-writing as more than simply a plot device much respect; it was not *real* enough for the Victorians.[3] In his essay, Glance speaks about Charles Dickens's dream-writing throughout his career, including the use of dreams in the renowned fictional narrative *A Christmas Carol* (1843). Glance also mentions some of Dickens's lesser known nonfictional works centered around dreams titled "An Italian Dream" in *Pictures From Italy* (1846) and "Night Walks" in *The Uncommercial Traveler* (1860) and goes on to state that "this wealth of material has received surprisingly little critical attention" (Glance). Though Glance feels "surprised" that Dickens's nonfictional dream works have lacked critical attention, I am not. When Schreiner's *Dreams* was released, she received numerous negative reviews or, more often, no attention at all. For example, Schreiner's friend and South African politician John X. Merriman described *Dreams* in his diary as "'short rhapsodies by a very clever woman who would be happier if she believed in what the rest of her sex believe'" (First and Scott 203-04). As soon as the dream stands alone without a narrative binding it, critics and readers find it irrelevant. For someone such as Merriman, writing in dream form is too instinctual and too disorganized, which, in Schreiner's case, results in emotional outbursts of feminist beliefs. However, Schreiner utilizes allegory in her *Dreams*, which organizes her

[3] Victorian culture tended to prefer the novel over all other literary genres. In *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Carol T. Christ explains that the "novel was the dominant form in Victorian literature...They present themselves as realistic, that is, as representing a social world that shares the features of the one we inhabit" (1058-9). In general, the Victorians were not interested in reading symbols of reality, but instead a more straight-forward and "realistic" depiction of the world they lived in. However, in the late 1890s aestheticism emerged, the movement in which author Oscar Wilde thrives. Christ notes that aesthetes, including Wilde, were "very much aware of living at the end of a great century and often cultivated a deliberately fin de siecle ('end-of-century') pose. A studied languor, a weary sophistication, a search for new ways of titillating jaded palates" (1054). Though this movement existed within the Victorian Period, it was considered by many as fringe art; Austrian critic Max Nordau "summed up what seemed to him to be happening, in a book that was as sensational as its title: *Degeneration*" (Christ 1054). "Degeneration" is a negative word suggesting something is broken. The fact that this critic's book was "sensational" also indicates its popularity—that is, that the general public also witnessed a decline and decay of literature.

instinctual ideas into clear messages and morals. Though Merriman disliked Schreiner's literary form of *Dreams,* it seems he disliked even more the radical feminist messaging she embedded within those dreams.

To fully grasp the Victorian context for Schreiner's work, we must understand allegory as well as its place in Victorian English literary culture. The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides a robust explanation of allegory: "A story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). This definition also continues on to call an allegory "a symbol" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). This definition underscores the fact that allegories are not the opposite of symbols, but instead use aspects of commonly understood symbolic language such as naming characters "truth" and "wisdom" to assemble the overall "moral" of the narrative itself. Since allegory utilizes concepts known in the world outside of the narrative, the text can then make statements within its own narrative as well as offer commentary on the world outside of the text. Schreiner does this throughout her *Dreams* to offer discourse on socialism, feminism, and most significantly social change-making. Perhaps most important in this explanation of allegory is the word's origin. The *Oxford English Dictionary* reads, "Via Latin from Greek *allegoria*, from *allos* 'other' + *agoria* 'speaking'" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). If we complete this equation, "allegory" means "other speaking." Moreover, writing allegories is an "other" form of speaking, different or distinct in its nature. I take this definition further and suggest that writing allegory is an alternative way for societal "others" to express themselves outside of their cultural contexts. When written by an "other" such as Olive Schreiner herself, allegory "embeds a hope for change, and this is embedded in the style itself" (Class Notes 3/26/20). Hence, Schreiner writes her tales in *Dreams* as allegories to provide an even deeper sense of hope for social change.

Though quite Victorian in their moralistic nature, by this time in the nineteenth century allegories "came to be seen as mere convention, inauthentic, not grounded in experience, cut off from being and concerned only with manipulating its repertoire of signs" (Cowan 111). More simply, readers felt as though allegorical narratives abstracted themselves to the point where the moral at the end no longer applied to real human "experience." On the other hand, well-respected Victorian literary critics such as John Ruskin still studied allegory. Ruskin himself renamed allegory the "Symbolical Grotesque"[4] because, to him, "allegory and type are necessary to accommodate spiritual truths otherwise beyond the capacities of fallen man" (Landow). Even further, for Ruskin, those "tangible signs" or commonly understood conceptions utilized in allegory help to express almost other-worldly "spiritual truths" (Landow). So, while the larger popular opinion of the Victorian literary world expressed little interest in allegor, a select few people still saw the literary, societal, and even existential potential in allegorical storytelling.

The Story of Schreiner

It is only fitting to weave in select highlights from Olive Schreiner's real life with her literary text to help illustrate her social change-making practices as she herself did not separate the two. Scholar Liz Stanley describes Schreiner's intertwining of personal life and writing as a "holistic" approach to social change-making. Stanley clarifies, "Olive Schreiner simply didn't recognise any hard and fast distinction between life and politics, between life and writing, or

[4] "Grotesque" holds many connotations and meanings in our contemporary world. One salient definition of the word "grotesque" is "a very ugly or comically distorted figure or image" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Another intriguing way to define "grotesque is "a style of decorative painting or sculpture consisting of the interweaving of human and animal forms with flowers and foliage" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). That which is grotesque is confusing and therefore often displeasing to the human eye. However, Ruskin connects allegory and the grotesque because he sees allegory as a "tool" to make sense of the "'confusion of the imagination by the presence of truths which it cannot wholly grasp'" (Ruskin qtd. in Landow). That is to say, allegory names the grotesque or unclear "truths"; allegory does not claim to fully clarify the grotesque, but instead helps the reader orient themselves in widely known concepts so that they can eventually begin to understand the more abstract concepts of the grotesque.

between politics and writing. What she wrote she tried her best to live" (231). For Schreiner, the personal--and everything in between--was truly political, and any action she performed served the ideal she hoped to attain. Since this overlap exists between her life and her work, we cannot ignore Schreiner's early life, her own participation in social change, as well as her evolving ideology regarding race.[5] Her values always remain militantly consistent, but her constant search for *more* knowledge and *more* methods to act on those values intensifies and redirects her social change-making towards her ideal future.

From a young age, Schreiner followed her radical instincts and allowed herself to evolve separately from the dominant beliefs surrounding her. Her German father Gottlob, sent to Cape Town, South Africa by the London Missionary Society, and her English mother Rebecca raised Schreiner in a devoutly religious missionary setting in South Africa. However even in her early childhood years she found Christianity too "restricted" and could not "conceive of God and man and the material universe as distinct from one another" (First and Scott 53). In her mind, the universe was all united as one:

> When I was a little child of five and sat alone among the tall weeds at the back of our house, this perception of the unity of all things, and that they were alive, and that I was part of them, was as clear and overpowering to me as it is today. It is the one thing I am never able to doubt. (First and Scott 53-4)

Immersed in nature, she felt its part as equal to hers within the universe. God was not just one thing, but instead a uniting force living inside of *everything.* She felt at-one with the nature

[5] I must add that I wish I could write my own biography about this extraordinary and revolutionary figure who just could not seem to *stop working*; maybe someday I will venture to complete that daunting project of reporting on the entirety of her life's work. However, today I am constricted within a page limit that impels me to stay on a specific course when writing about Schreiner's life. All of this is to say that I wish I could add hundreds more pages into this particular section, but I had to be selective.

surrounding her and did not feel "overpowered" by a larger or "higher" power, but instead the connection—suggesting equality—between her and nature "overpowered" her. This moment "among the tall weeds" initiated Schreiner's eventual loss of faith because now, in Schreiner's mind, God was not responsible for her life or the plants' life, but instead she and the plants were responsible for each other.[6] Even though she lost her faith in Christianity, however, she never "doubted" or lost her faith in the unity of the universe.[7]

Schreiner's rejection of Christianity is significant because it occurred both in a missionary setting and within the larger South African and British Victorian context. Schreiner's biographers Ruth First and Ann Scott comment, "What was extraordinary was the fact that this crisis of faith had occurred in a particularly closed culture, in which a system of theology co-terminous with family authority had not yet been challenged" (56). Schreiner was sanctioned off in a "closed culture" yet she *still* managed to formulate ideas about the universe contrary to her schooling (her family's messaging in her formative years). First and Scott further explain that "Olive would have been triply stigmatized: she was adolescent, she was a girl, and she had had almost no formal education" (56). Even though she faced multiple levels of tremendous "stigma," she rejected the only culture she knew. Already in her adolescence, she demonstrated radical thought and conviction in her beliefs, unafraid to oppose dominant values and principles.

For Schreiner, the 1880s became a time for her to hone her social change-making tendencies with support for--and from--social movements gaining their own momentum. A

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[6] Schreiner's identification with "freethought" or "freethinking" also happened at around the time she began diverging from Christianity. As a freethinker, she was "someone willing to think for herself and think freely about God" (Class Notes 2/27/20). She attributes her freethinking to her little sister Ellie's death as it was "impossible" for her to "accept the ordinary doctrine that she was living somewhere without a body" (First and Scott 54). She instead thought for "herself" and saw Ellie as part of the larger body of nature.

[7] Interestingly, she remained quite attached to the Bible after renouncing her Christian faith. To her, it was more than a symbol of her lost faith; it was "her only education" and her "companion all through childhood" (First and Scott 54). Her appreciation for the Bible shines through in her writing of *Dreams* specifically.

migratory figure, Schreiner identified as an English-South African, but struggled throughout her life to feel at home in either England or South Africa. In 1881, Schreiner decided to move to England originally to pursue a nursing degree, but this plan fell through because of lack of funds as well as a chronic asthmatic condition (First and Scott). So, instead of nursing, Schreiner focused her energy on publishing her novels and joined several socialist, progressive, and feminist groups fighting for social change. Though she did not receive a "formal education," these years connected her with some of her closest friends and surrounded her with influential progressive thinkers and writers such as herself, all contributing to a different and more cooperative kind of education paired with social change-making. Understanding the basic functions of the progressive organizations and therefore the people Schreiner surrounded herself with in England helps us to better grasp her various social stances. However, let us also remember that this decade led into the creation of *Dreams*; these years in London not only sharpened her ideas and philosophies regarding social change-making, but they also inspired her writing as the two were always intertwined.

In 1881, the year Schreiner arrived in London, the first socialist party formed in England called The Democratic Federation. The term "socialist" has political connotations; many of the group's members were involved with organized politics as they were "convinced of the necessity of a new social order," but Schreiner and a number of other avid socialists of the 1880s "were trying to put their ideas into practice in their own lives. A notion of politics that went beyond parliament and elections" (First and Scott 110). So these leagues and organizations that Schreiner joined sought to break down the existing oppressive structures through transforming how people lived their private lives; for Schreiner and a number of other progressives in her time, the personal was political.

Many of the beliefs Schreiner had always held emerged within these socialist circles in London, though "the Socialism of the 1880s had no single coherent ideology, let alone organization" (First and Scott 109). This lack of organization is most likely another reason for the numerous groups and leagues Schreiner affiliated with during this time. Following the formation of The Democratic Federation, Schreiner joined William Morris, Eleanor Marx--whom Schreiner became close friends with--, and Edward Aveling in their Socialist League in 1884 (First and Scott 109). Also in 1884, Schreiner's friend and fellow writer Havelock Ellis[8] brought her to The Progressive Association, a "small group of freethinkers, cooperative pioneers, and ethical socialists brought together by the editor of the radical monthly *To-day* for the purpose of lectures and discussion" (130). Schreiner shared her own thoughts and opinions, while also absorbing the ideas of her peers. Before long, Schreiner had established herself as a leader amongst leaders and co-founded The Men's and Women's Club with her friend Karl Pearson in 1885. This club had an equal male-to-female ratio, and they were particularly concerned with the "correct expression" of sex and sexuality (First and Scott 151). Though Victorian society at large did not speak explicitly about sex,[9] Schreiner herself never shied away from discussions involving sex and sexuality, but wanted a group setting with both men and women to dialogue about topics such as "sexual objectification" and prostitution (First and Scott 157). Schreiner, a major feminist, believed in complete equality of the sexes, and eventually theorized the main

[8] At one point, Schreiner and Ellis were so close that she considered him as her "otherself" (Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 4 November 1884, Harry Ransom Research Center, University of Texas at Austin, Olive Schreiner Letters Project transcription, 28). Ellis and Schreiner's relationship was unique: "Both of them needed a relationship to express their notion of a higher morality, and…they projected an ideal of a life of service" (First and Scott 141). For Schreiner, their "ideals" and morals made them one and the same.

[9] The Victorians did not explicitly speak about sex, but they were obsessed with it. In *The History of Sexuality* Michel Foucault argues that "the tightening up of the rules of decorum likely did produce, as a countereffect, a valorization and intensification of indecent speech" (18). Evidence of this incitement of "indecent" speech lies in Schreiner's own Men's and Women's Club. The less society's norms allowed for sexual discourse, the more people desired sexual discourse.

concerns of The Men's and Women's Club into a book titled *Woman and Labour.*[10] Moreover, Schreiner's time in London helped shape her progressive views and in turn further determined herself as a social change-maker through direct participation in movements working for social change.

As an evolving thinker herself, Schreiner continued to actively engage in and pioneer social movements that reflected her ideals after she returned to South Africa in 1889. However, before the 1890s, Schreiner's language, and therefore action, very much reflected the common Victorian conceptions of race relations, racism, and racial stereotypes of black people in South Africa due to her upbringing and more importantly, her whiteness; she had to learn the experiences of Black South Africans because as a white person, she did not experience the same oppression. For example, in *Story of an African Farm* (1883), her most canonical work and also her earliest work, she exhibits ignorance through use of derogatory and offensive words and stereotypes when writing her black characters. Leading up to the 1890s, Schreiner relied upon the notions of race she was brought up with in her white, missionary settings. She could conceive of black people only as "victims." However, Liz Stanley draws attention to Schreiner's changing conceptions about race in the 1890s. Stanley points out that, during this time, Schreiner began "'to know black people in a very different way, as political agents rather than victimized peoples, including as writers and journalists using the power of ideas and the written word in a socially and politically transformative project'" (qtd. in Lewis 155). Schreiner had no respect for hypocrisy or conflicts between beliefs and action. So, as she learned more, she realized she was not fully aligning her own beliefs in racial equality with her actions. Though the 1890s primed

[10] In 1900, the British exiled Schreiner during the second Anglo-Boer War in South Africa to silence her strong defense of the Boers. The British also looted and burned Schreiner's home, destroying her original manuscript of *Woman and Labour*. She rewrote and improved upon this project and eventually published it in 1911 in London (First and Scott 369).

her intellectual development, her significant change on the issue of race came from reading the influential Black-American civil rights activist and sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).

After reading Du Bois's work, Schreiner altered the way she wrote about race and brought discussions of race and racism to the forefront of her social change-making. Scholar Simon Keith Lewis takes the stance that Du Bois's writing is the singular cause of Schreiner's change in thought because of her strong "resonance" with Du Bois's ideas and writing. She even writes in a letter to Edward Carpenter that sometimes she has to stop reading *Souls* out of sheer shock because "'it seems to come from within me'" (qtd. in Lewis 158). More specifically, Lewis states that "Du Bois's political thinking about race and human progress in general, and the rhetorical strategies underpinning his magisterial prose in *Souls*, resonated deeply with Schreiner" (151). Schreiner was so tethered to Du Bois's words that she began implementing "the veil" into her own work to explain society in her migratory and feminist contexts (First and Scott 258). In this way, Schreiner felt united "politically" and "rhetorically" with Du Bois, which inspired her to re-work her approach to social change-making regarding race.

Another result of Du Bois's influence was Schreiner's social action outside of her writing. In 1907, at this point a prominent feminist figure fighting for women's suffrage, Schreiner was requested by the Cape Colony Women's Enfranchisement League to serve as their Vice President. However, she quickly recognized that the group was not interested in getting the vote for women of color, but instead only white women. Schreiner responded to this by writing on a leaflet from a league meeting, "The women of the Cape Colony *all* women of the Cape Colony. These were the terms on which I joined" (First and Scott 262). This writing on the leaflet became her virtual letter of resignation from the league; after Du Bois, any social change

Schreiner fought for, she did so intersectionally and *only* intersectionally. Before Du Bois, Schreiner fought for social equality, but Du Bois expanded her intellectual landscape regarding race specifically, therefore also expanding her notions of race and strengthening her change-making abilities; Schreiner was open and willing to make that change within herself. Schreiner was a selfless, hard-working social change-maker willing to alter her own actions if that meant she could bring society closer to a better future.

Why *Dreams*?

Schreiner wrote countless essays and polemic prose on top of multiple allegories and novels, but why did she write *Dreams* specifically? We understand dream-writing and allegory as genres in the broader Victorian context, but we must also understand Schreiner's project in the more personal context of her life. The ever-changing context of the Victorian era unsettled Schreiner. However, Schreiner's own experience with broken social ties and frustrations with conveying cogent morals through novel-writing led her to write *Dreams*.

Crucial to our interpretation of *Dreams*, Schreiner underwent a break-up of sorts in the midst of attempting to write longer works as well as writing her allegories.[11] She and Karl Pearson had been in an intimate relationship, but whether that relationship was physically intimate is up for interpretation. Nevertheless, when they cut off communication, Schreiner began avoiding London and spent the years 1887 through 1889 travelling around Europe, recovering and writing (First and Scott 178). Of course, Schreiner already experimented with her work, always willing to write outside the boundaries of the widely accepted Victorian novel. However, this recovery period speaks directly to the small spurts of allegory—and the many

[11] Between 1887 and 1889, in addition to her allegories, Schreiner worked on her novel *From Man to Man*, published posthumously in 1926, and attempted to write an introduction to Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which she never finished.

surrounding issues of gender—included in *Dreams.* These short allegories allowed her to move away from strict narrative plots and characters and write "unconsciously" and directly from her "imagination" rather than from her "conscious" mind currently muddled by her heartbreak about Pearson (178). When Schreiner tapped into this imaginative state, she describes becoming "absolutely dead to all sense of sound, sight or touch...the pictures flash on me...I have no power of producing any of my imaginative pictures at will" (Schreiner 14). Writing "imaginative" allegories gave Schreiner a kind of escape from the perceptive and emotional aspects of her mind. In this way, Schreiner's breakup with Pearson inevitably affected her writing in both form and subject.

Regardless of the social estrangement she experienced at the time, Schreiner wrote *Dreams* because she found complete clarity in her allegorical writing.[12] When she struggled to communicate a message larger than the text itself, she describes "condensing" her work: "Sometimes I find that by throwing a thing into the form of an allegory I can condense five or six pages into one, with no loss but a great gain to clearness" (16-18).[13] As we know, writing was a form of active social change-making for Schreiner, meaning she always at least attempts to include morals regarding her ideal future; "condensing" into short allegories and writing characters such as "Truth" and "Wisdom" make the moral unavoidable because the concepts are already familiar to the reader. The reader does not have to sift through character development to get to the core argument. At this point in her career, Schreiner's novel-writing frustrated her and she wanted instead to convey specific, pointed principles.

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[12] We know for a fact that she used allegory long before Pearson. In her most canonical work titled *Story of an African Farm* (1883), Schreiner included a significant chunk of allegory in the middle of the novel, which emerges again in *Dreams* as "The Hunter."

[13] Olive Schreiner to Emilia Frances Dilke, nee Strong, m1. Pattison, m2. Dilke, 17 March 1891, British Library Manuscripts, Olive Schreiner Letters Project transcription.

Schreiner did not simply concentrate her stories into allegories, but she *beautifully* and *powerfully* imparted her ideals in *Dreams*. She fed her own "impulse" to "condense" while also appealing to the potential change-maker of her time through her allegorical stylistic choice. Schreiner claims that, originally, she wrote *Dreams* for "the rich—capitalists, millionaires and middlemen in England and America—and all high and mighty persons" (First and Scott 185). Schreiner wanted to use her allegorical messaging regarding socialism, gender equality, and inclusivity to reach those people deeply engrained in the capitalist system. In a review of *Dreams*, Schreiner's publisher and friend Fisher Unwin states that Schreiner's "new" voice "came from the heart to the heart" (qtd. in Black ms.). Through her "profoundly human" symbols and ideas "yet in no limited sense," Schreiner attempted to mold--or even enlighten--new change-makers (Unwin qtd. in Black ms.). Schreiner's morals are so universally "human" that they have the potential to touch *any* person, even the ones whose beliefs appear vastly different from her own.

Schreiner also wrote the allegories in *Dreams* with a sense of imperative action, inspiring already active social change-makers within various Victorian social movements. The unusual style of her writing demands more action from her readers on a literary level, which translates into physical action. Unwin states that her allegories ask for "assistance from the reader, for printed words in prose cannot become audible" in the way that they more easily do in poetry (qtd. in Black ms.). The reader must add a song-like rhythm to the allegorical prose to gain the full energy of the pieces. Allegory on its own also demands a great deal from the reader; the reader must decode and connect the various symbols the author deploys to reach the final message. Schreiner's allegories build to a goal, and she asks that her readers participate in the building process. Thus, Schreiner demands a kind of action from her readers—an action they are

not necessarily used to performing while reading. In particular, the British Suffragette Movement took up *Dreams* to ignite their own social change-making.[14] Schreiner's *Dreams* are "her most deeply-felt 'message'" (Unwin qtd. in Black ms.), but they reach out to all of the various forms of humanity that exist in this world; they instruct and relate to current radical change-makers to further inform their work towards an ideal future.

I feel that it is important for me not only to contextualize the entire work of *Dreams*, but also to contextualize my specific selection of allegories in the broader work of *Dreams* as a whole. The most important dreams teach the reader about love, truth, and "the beautiful," which for Schreiner is "the work." The four dreams I have chosen encompass each of what I believe to be Schreiner's major qualifications for social change-making and social change-makers. Though Schreiner denies any teleological trajectory in *Dreams* other than chronological order, I see a clear argument. Throughout *Dreams*, Schreiner includes allegories that explain *how* to create social-change to most effectively reach an ideal future such as "A Dream of Wild Bees" and "The Hunter." She also incorporates allegories that exhibit *what* her ideal future looks like such as "The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed" so that anyone can recognize progress when they see it. Some of her allegories, including "Three Dreams in a Desert," even explain the *how* and the *what* simultaneously. Through each of these dreams, we can see that Schreiner does indeed *build* her argument for social change-making and concludes with a culmination of all of the preceding work: "The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed," her notion of Heaven on earth.

Schreiner's Change-Makers: "The beauty is in the work"

Every suffering of our unhappy nature is only a seed of that divine harvest - Emily Brontë

[14] *Dreams* was so popular in socialist, suffragette, and pacifist circles that, by 1930, it had been reprinted twenty-four times (First and Scott 185).

The allegorical and metaphorical moments in Schreiner's *Dreams* contain a sub-textual commentary on social change and, more specifically, the attitudes and characteristics that are necessary to create social change. In the dreams titled "A Dream of Wild Bees," "The Hunter," and "Three Dreams in a Desert," Schreiner uses both her linguistic ability as well as her storytelling to create characters who make social change. These characters are selfless believers who constantly reach for an ideal future whether they reap the benefits of their hard work, or not; at the same time, she illustrates change-makers as independent idealists who are hungry for progress regardless of the voices of the current moment. In this way, Schreiner reveals that these characteristics must work together in order for successful change to occur.

In the dream titled "A Dream of Wild Bees," a mother chooses to allow a bee to touch her child that will make them believe that the ideal is real. Schreiner shows here that people trying to make societal change must be able to idealize and see beyond the status quo. The bee explains to the mother, "'For the man I touch there is a path traced out in the sand by a finger which no man sees. That he must follow. Sometimes it leads almost to the top, and then turns down suddenly into the valley. He must follow it, though none else sees the tracing'" ("A Dream of Wild Bees"). On the surface this quote illuminates Schreiner's independent, freethinking change-maker who sees the past attempts at paths that "no man sees" and creates new paths that still "none else sees." The ideal "no place" becomes visible to Schreiner's change-maker. However, Schreiner takes this quote further when we observe the mother and child relationship involved in this dream. Schreiner emphasizes the mother's choice of the perfect bee to touch her son because the mother is also a social change-maker. For Schreiner, a mother and a child are connected long enough for the mother to influence her child's values and core behaviors, but at a certain point the child goes on to live its own life. Knowing that the child is now "antenatal" or

still part of her, the mother can make the bee decision for it ("A Dream of Wild Bees"); however, she also knows that one day she will lose control of her child, and it will create paths that she cannot see; she will not necessarily see the results of her change-making. Thus, Schreiner uses "A Dream of Wild Bees" to argue not only the importance of looking forward to routes less travelled and seeing a society that others cannot yet fathom, but also that we can *teach* people to both envision and act on their conceptions of an unknown or ideal future. Although Schreiner did not receive a formal education herself, we know that she valued education, especially for potential social change-makers. Scholar Maria Antonietta Saracino explains that "In [Schreiner's] will she provided that sums should be set aside for a scholarship for [all] women at the South African College, Cape Town...as a key way to combat racism and war: [education] was a path which Olive Schreiner opened up for women in her fiction, essays, and personal life" (104). Providing free education for women specifically is a change-making act in itself, but this posthumous act further illustrates Schreiner's emphasis on education as a "tool" for future social change. In other words, Schreiner knew that education was a key to reaching an ideal future and underscored its necessity in every facet of her life, including her literature. For Schreiner, in order to progress forward, people must first learn from past social change-makers.

Schreiner also utilizes this mother/child duo to highlight the pertinence of simply dreaming as a social change-maker. In a way, the mother dreams so that her child can dream. She sleeps, "but she [feels] under her heart where the ninth child lay" ("A Dream of Wild Bees"). With her unborn child "under her heart," she dreams about this being inside of her one day unquestioningly searching for the ideal. The bees do not offer a chance for the mother to decide until she first dreams, which illustrates the necessity of dreaming as a first step toward social change. The mother takes the extra step of deciding on the bee, and therefore *acting* as a social

change-maker. The mother's decision instantly gives her child the ability to dream themself: "But deep within her the antenatal thing that lay here had a dream. In those eyes that had never seen the day...was a sensation of light!...Light--that existed somewhere! And already it had its reward: the Ideal was real to it" ("A Dream of Wild Bees"). The mother's dream gives her child the opportunity to dream and define "light," or the ideal, long before they even leave the womb. Phrasing this perception of the ideal as a "reward" suggests that providing the ability to dream is a positive act worthy of compensation of some kind. Also, we can interpret "reward" as a gift, meaning Schreiner understands dreaming as not just a necessity, but an extraordinary ability given only to those especially deserving. In this fashion, Schreiner clarifies that, though this child will have little support in believing "the Ideal" is real, dreamers still create dreamers. The later path is lonely, but the commencement stems out of love.

Schreiner continues to write trailblazer figures in the dreams titled "The Hunter" and "Three Dreams in a Desert." In these dreams, she contends that a change-maker must not only idealize and see what others do not see, but also block out any temptation to remain within the current society's constrictions. In the dream "The Hunter," the character physically shields his body from the opinions of the people around him. This moment occurs towards the middle of the dream when the main character, the Hunter, releases all of the birds he catches after receiving word from Knowledge that these birds come from the "brood of Lies" ("The Hunter"). When the village people hear of this and begin stoning him, the Hunter leaves for the woods and "burie[s] his face in his hands" ("The Hunter"). The act of using his hands as a barrier between himself and the villagers shows his resistance to their taunts. Later, the Twins of Seduction try to distract him from his journey to find the bird of truth. When he refuses them, Schreiner uses almost the same language to describe the Hunter. He again "cover[s] his face with his hands," physically

dispelling these falsities from his own body ("The Hunter"). Schreiner's sheathing of the Hunter's "face" specifically in both instances further illustrates her emphasis on the mind; invalidity and falsehoods attempt to infiltrate the brain where humans *imagine* and *dream*, so barricading their entry is essential to change-making. Through the repetition of this character's defensive action, Schreiner celebrates change-makers protecting themselves from the deleterious influence of the status quo.

Schreiner synthesizes the idealistic nature of change-makers with their physical defense mechanisms in the dream "Three Dreams in a Desert." Schreiner integrates these two ideas in the written conversation between the principal character in this dream and the character called Reason. During this dialogue, the main character tells Reason that she is searching for the land of Freedom; however, she explains, "'I see nothing, but sometimes, when I shade my eyes with my hand, I think I see on the further bank trees and hills, and the sun shining on them!'" Reason then replies, "'That is the Land of Freedom'" ("Three Dreams in a Desert"). This is a salient moment in the dream, and it drives Schreiner's overall argument home because the main character imagines the "Land of Freedom" and does not realize that she has been looking at it already. However, the key part of this quotation is that the only time her ideal becomes real is when she "shades" her eyes with her hand, repelling outside forces and using only her own lens to see; the physical defense transforms into change-making offense. It is also important to mention that "Reason" is the one advising the main character, meaning, to Schreiner, these actions are logical and correct. In this way, Schreiner claims that only after someone rejects the norms of the outside world will freedom reveal itself; attaining societal freedom requires searching, but also sheltering.

Along the same vein, Reason instructs the same character to rid herself of her old clothing. The character then "threw from her gladly the mantle of Ancient-received-opinions she wore, for it was worn full of holes" ("Three Dreams in a Desert"). Through the act of stripping this character of "Ancient-received-opinions," Schreiner argues that a hopeful change-maker cannot reach their goals of a different and better future unless they reject the current norms of society. Even further, Reason allows the woman to keep "one white garment that clung close to her" that the garments of "Ancient-Received-opinions" had been covering up; her pure unfiltered beliefs rooted in *truth*. Ridding herself of societal norms reveals the truth that she always knew deep down. To Schreiner, these characters succeed where others fail because when voices tempt them into thinking they are wrong, they do not listen and continue on their journey because they know that they carry truth with them.

Based on Schreiner's argument within these dreams, once the change-maker idealizes their improved society and protects—or frees—themselves from current societal rules, they must individually persevere to help future generations; they do this knowing that they may not make it through to reap the benefits they make possible. First, Schreiner wants the reader to understand that by separating themselves from the influences of current society, the change-maker must do their work individually. We can see this in "A Dream of Wild Bees" when the bee clarifies to the mother that her child will be able to see the ideal far-off "light" of the future only if "'The thing he loves [does] not journey with him; he must travel alone'" ("A Dream of Wild Bees"). Within this instance of the dream, Schreiner embeds a central aspect of her argument, which is that even the people and things change-makers love the most can hinder their progress. By writing that the child will one day have to give up the "thing he loves" in order to reach a brighter future, Schreiner drives her claim that the change-maker must make this voyage without outside forces

muddling their vision. Schreiner's employing of this character clarifies that nobody else will know about the person's individual voyage. In fact, they often will not receive loving support, yet they will continue on for the betterment of society because helping *others* becomes their life mission.

As the lone change-maker continues imagining an improved future, they begin to realize that they may not live to see their alterations implemented; however, this need not discourage them, but instead motivates them because of their craving for social progress. Schreiner exemplifies this mindset in "The Hunter" as the Hunter finishes his quest to find the bird Truth:

> 'I have sought…for long years I have labored; but I have not seen her; now my strength is gone. Where I lie down worn out other men will stand, young and fresh. By the steps that I have cut they will climb; by the stairs that I have built they will mount. They will never know the name of the man who made them…But they will find her, and on my work; they will climb, and by my stair! They will find [Truth], and through me!' ("The Hunter")

This passage supports Schreiner's argument regarding people who make social change; it characterizes the change-maker (in this case, the Hunter) as a selfless person who cares only that future generations will "mount" and "climb" the literal or metaphorical "stairs" they build. The Hunter knows that later generations may not give him credit for his work, but this does not faze him because he recognizes that his strength and dedication will eventually help future generations find the bird and concept of "Truth." The Hunter's drive to leave a path and help others find "Truth" reflects Karl Pearson's (Schreiner's ex-lover of sorts) description of "the freethinker." To Pearson, the freethinker "'must stand on the slope of his century and mark what the past has achieved...still better if he himself is working for the increase of human knowledge

or for its spread among his fellows'" (qtd. in First and Scott 286). In her writing of "The Hunter," Schreiner shows the reader one version of the epitome of the driven and independent change-maker whose only desire at the end of their life is to lead people of the future down a more honest and "knowledgeable" path. The Hunter even climbs a "slope" just as Pearson suggests the freethinker must do. Knowing that Schreiner was a freethinker herself, we can apply Pearson's notion of the freethinker to The Hunter himself. As the hero of this dream, the Hunter's character further underscores Schreiner's own beliefs in this freethinking archetype of social change-making.

Schreiner continues to epitomize her change-maker in the main character of the dream "Three Dreams in a Desert"; however, instead of using the mere existence of this character to make her case regarding social change, she utilizes active and strong language to highlight the woman's courage as she fights to improve society for younger generations. As mentioned earlier, the character in this dream consults with the human embodiment of Reason and searches for the "Land of Freedom." During her search, the woman hears a loud noise. Reason and the narrator explicate, "'They are the feet of those that shall follow you. Lead on… And, of those that come first, some are swept away, and are heard of no more… They make a track to the water's edge'" ("Three Dreams in a Desert"). Even after hearing this, "the woman grasped her staff. And I saw her turn down that dark path to the river" ("Three Dreams in a Desert"). Schreiner writes this woman as determined, brave and fearless. When Reason tells her that the entire human race will "follow her" and that she must "lead" the creation of the path toward this "Land of Freedom," she "grasps" her "staff," or resources, and heads into the "dark" and unknown. Even though the woman knows this could be a difficult and possibly dangerous journey for herself specifically, the character strongly and intentionally hoists the tool. The female character also knows that

since she is the first to go, she will probably only help to create the "track" for others, and she herself will not make it to freedom. The fact that Schreiner uses verbs such as "grasp" and "lead" in the midst of struggle and darkness illustrates her emphasis on strength and courage in sacrificial moments. Liz Stanley reinforces this point: "The important thing for [Schreiner] was the attempt...and not success narrowly defined. The attempt is a beginning, and beginnings make things easier for all [social change-makers] who come after" (238). Schreiner understood the difficulty of "beginning" social change because the initial social change-maker is alone in inspiring and leading others to follow them, which is why Schreiner accepts the attempt as "success." Schreiner clarifies her point as the character in the dream initiates progress knowing she will most likely die before reaching the Land of Freedom; however, she sacrifices herself nobly and willingly for the rest of society as Schreiner herself did.

All of the work, the labor, the suffering is only a small price for the social change-maker; feeding "that divine harvest" or the eventual result of an ideal future is the only act that matters (Brontë 266). Though the change-maker may not see or experience the "divine harvest," they can relish their contributions towards constructing the ideal. The beauty is in the work or the building because the beauty is in the act of creating change itself.

The Ideal Becomes Real

Schreiner's dreams "A Dream of Wild Bees," "The Hunter," and "Three Dreams in a Desert" teach us how to act as effective social change-makers; "The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed" illustrates, in detail, Schreiner's Hell and Heaven. Her Hell is the threat of doing nothing and remaining satisfied with our current situation, and her Heaven is the result of social change-making. In her description of Heaven, Schreiner employs many of the same concepts from the earlier allegories. For example, she names the bridges that lead to Heaven "Good," "True," and

"Beautiful," except the "Beautiful" bridge remains invisible to the narrator until they "climb it," for "the beauty is in the work." These bridges are the baseline qualities of change-makers and a better future that Schreiner explains in the other dreams, but she builds on them in the culminating dream, just as social change-makers must build on the work of past change-makers. For this reason, I will focus on Schreiner's conception of Heaven versus her conception of Hell. In this dream, we taste the ideal through Schreiner's melodic description of her requirements for a Heaven on Earth.

The exceptional poetic tone of this particular dream within the larger work of *Dreams* distinguishes it from the rest of the allegories, both highlighting its significance in the grander mission of change-making and suggesting the difficulty of attaining a Heaven such as the one Schreiner shows us. An example of Schreiner's powerful poetic language occurs when she transitions from describing Hell to describing Heaven. The narrator shades their eyes just as the narrator does in "Three Dreams in a Desert" in order to see the "far off" land of Heaven:

> Far off across the sand, I saw two figures standing...they looked out across the desert sand, watching, watching, watching...And, further and yet further, in the evening light, I looked with my shaded eyes. Far off, where the sands were thick and heavy, I saw a solitary pillar standing...Further, yet further, as I looked across the desert, I saw the sand gathered into heaps. ("The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed")

Schreiner first uses rhythmic repetition of words such as "watching," "far off," and "further," which both creates a musical quality in her writing but underscores the "far" distance of Heaven currently. A person has to shade their eyes from outside forces, "watch" triple the usual amount, and look "further" quadruple the usual amount in order to briefly see Heaven.

In his review of *Dreams*, Unwin agrees that Schreiner's writing of "The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed" stands out amongst the other allegories. He states, "None of the other allegories is written in quite so lyrical a prose as this" (qtd. in Black ms.). He also calls Schreiner's writing "a daring experiment in the direction of a more vocal prose" (qtd. in Black ms.). Unwin sees the musical quality of this dream as even more experimental than the rest of the allegorical works in *Dreams*. Therefore, this kind of "lyrical" and "vocal prose" is more courageous, more divergent from Victorian writing norms, and most importantly, more radical than Schreiner's own preceding allegories in *Dreams*. Schreiner's stylistic choice accentuates the strength of "The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed" as the goal of social change-makers.

Schreiner poetically lists a series of characteristics required in her ideal future within this concluding allegory. Initially, she stresses Heaven's inclusiveness and selflessness through God's explanation of Heaven as a space. God tells the narrator, "'All Heaven is one'" ("The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed"). Schreiner's undoubted faith in a unity of the universe shows through here. For Schreiner, equality and unity among not just "all" *people* but every single *thing* exists in Heaven. Even further, God clarifies that "Heaven has more doors than one, and they are all open," so that more people have the opportunity to enter at any time ("The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed"). That is to say, Heaven does not close its doors on people, no matter their race, class, or gender. In fact, Heaven acknowledges and celebrates difference. For instance, the physically disabled "shine brighter than anything" ("The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed"). Instead of facing discrimination, everyone sees people with disabilities as *special*, holding positive connotations. The able-bodied people of Heaven "kiss" and selflessly "carry" the people with physical disabilities who cannot walk while the people with disabilities selflessly share their

bright light or gifts with "things that need much heat" ("The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed"). Schreiner illustrates a cycle of inclusivity and selflessness; the people of Heaven recognize and embrace "societal others," which then leads the "societal others" to reciprocate by sharing their gifts with the whole of Heaven. Each person has something unique to offer, and everyone accepts their contribution with open arms, only to one day repay that person with their own contribution. By writing this cycle, Schreiner suggests that Heaven's intersectionality is actually the reason for its unity.

Another characteristic of Schreiner's Heaven is that everyone shines "bright." More specifically, Heaven as a whole is enlightened. Light emerges multiple times throughout the allegory, but one such case occurs in an exchange between the narrator and God:

> There was a pale clear light; and I saw it came from the rocks and the stones...And after a while it began to grow brighter… I asked God if the sun were not going to rise. God said, "No; we are coming to where the people are"...And as we went on it grew brighter and brighter till it was burning day. ("The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed")

Schreiner builds her Heaven using repetition again, but this time with the word "brighter." Light shines from the "stones," but it shines "brighter" the closer the characters get to the *people.* The people in Heaven are so enlightened that they "burn" as bright as the sun; everything is unified in Heaven, but the people act as the life force. Schreiner builds with words just as her social change-makers build for a better future.

Relatedly, the word "enlightened" often relates to religion, but in Schreiner's case it refers to "having or showing a rational, modern, and well-informed outlook" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). In other words, Heaven's people are intelligent and wise, therefore making smart

decisions and acting accordingly. Schreiner emphasizes the "enlightened" bright light that the people of Heaven exude to defend their behavior; she wants her readers to accept her Heaven as the ideal because it is her answer for reaching the ideal in future generations.

The final essential quality in Schreiner's Heaven is a labor-intensive and labor-appreciative environment. In the dream, the narrator comes upon a group of laborers digging for stones to fill an outline of a crown. The narrator asks God, "'But what does each man gain by his working?'" God replies, "'He sees his outline filled.'" ("The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed"). The only payment that the laborers need is evidence that they have done their part. Also, the stones "'which are last set cover those which were first...They are covered, but not hid. The light is the light of all. Without the first, no last'" ("The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed"). This quote is reminiscent of "The Hunter" who leaves behind his stairs to simplify the quest for Truth in the next generations. Change-makers must recognize and appreciate past change-makers' work because they "all" share the mission for social-change. Though they cannot solely rely on the "first" stone, every piece of work is valuable. Seeing the evidence of others' work as well as their own also motivates the men to labor *more.* Even the narrator who merely observes the laborers feel a "great longing" to participate and "'see the crown grow'" ("The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed"). The narrator does not want to see the complete picture of the crown lit up, but instead they simply want to watch the process of growth. Schreiner again calls attention to the social change-maker struggling and building towards social-change, knowing that they will likely not see the final image of change. In Schreiner's Heaven, people understand and long to find beauty in their work.

"The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed" weaves the preceding change-making concepts together from the other dreams, providing a feeling of resolution, but also leaves us to spring to action. In the last few passages of the dream, the narrator wakes up from their dream and returns back to Earth from Heaven. They hear all different types of "men and women...beat[ing] their feet on the pavement" ("The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed"). At first, the narrator "could not bear the long day before" them, but then

> suddenly, [the narrator] heard [the men and women] cry loud as they beat, "We are seeking!--we are seeking!--we are seeking!" and the broken barrel-organ at the street corner sobbed, "The Beautiful!--the Beautiful!--the Beautiful!" And my heart, which had been dead, cried out with every throb, "Love!--Truth!--The Beautiful!--the Beautiful!" I laughed. I rose. I was glad the long day was before me. ("The Sunlight Lay Across My Bed")

Essentially, this passage argues that if we *listen* to what Earth offers us, Heaven exists right in front of us, just as "The Land of Freedom" stood right in front of the narrator in "Three Dreams in a Desert." Significantly, the narrator finds "Love," "Truth," and "The Beautiful," Schreiner's most prized qualities in social change-making, within earthly items and earthly people. Similar to the moment Schreiner found herself surrounded by nature and realized the unity of the universe, the narrator feels a unity within all earthly entities. The narrator laughs with glee at Love, Truth, The Beautiful, and Heaven existing within the world that they know. The journey is "long," but the notion that Heaven on Earth is possible excites them. Schreiner knows that attaining the ideal future with our earthly tools is not easy, but through this dream, she contends that if we remain vigilant, we can create our own Heaven.

According to *Dreams,* the most effective leaders of social change are people who, simply put, dream. They dream of the ideal, the truth, and finding freedom for all people. However, Unwin calls the message of *Dreams* an "ascetic, unrestful hope" (qtd. in Black ms.). It is no coincidence that the figures in each of the allegories I selected merely scratch the surface of their goals for the future; by leaving the characters slightly unsatisfied, Schreiner leaves us as readers unsatisfied. This unresolved feeling imitates the unfinished endings of every change-maker. Schreiner leaves her readers hungry for progress in the same way her characters hunger to achieve their respective goals. As an independent change-maker dreaming of an ideal world without the sway of hegemonic forces, Schreiner writes this book for a "girl-child, who may live to grasp somewhat of that which for us is yet sight, not touch" (Epigraph). Much like the lone Hunter, she hopes the "young" and "fresh" people of later generations can use her building blocks to continue the fight for a heaven on earth. The notion that the change-maker must remain dedicated knowing that society may not repay them for their work is especially salient because Schreiner is now a largely forgotten figure. She was extremely well-known during her time, but the world has forgotten the suffering she endured laboring towards an ideal future. Yet we still climb the "stairs" she built for us, the future generation, as we work for *our* ideal future.

Afterword: My Dreams

As the ugly caterpillar is the origin of the splendid butterfly, so this globe is the embryo of a new heaven and a new earth whose poorest beauty will infinitely exceed your mortal imagination. - Emily Brontë

When I set out to write this capstone, I knew that I had to do justice to Schreiner in conveying her change-making messages and in capturing her desire for an ideal future. I also knew that scholarly work alone was not going to satisfy my expectations, or Schreiner's, for social change-making. If I hoped to honor Schreiner, then I had to, in some capacity, *dream.*

Many of Schreiner's dreams detail searches for freedom, truth, beauty, and most importantly, change. In my dreams, I employ similar allegorical tools, but I know that just as Schreiner's Victorian context affected her writing, our current Covid World has shaped my own writing. Each one of my dreams deals with change and the anxieties surrounding those moments of change. The beautiful Butterfly symbolic of change appears menacing at first, the freedom outside of a comfortable structure feels risky, and the thought of breaking away from the familiar seems impossible until we do it. Brontë writes change as nature ready to spring into action, waiting to turn our "globe" into a beautiful "new heaven." In other words, we have the essential materials to reach this form of an ideal and beautiful future, but we must recognize that the *change*—from caterpillar to butterfly—is necessary. If we want to reach the ideal future that Schreiner sketches out for us in her own dreams, we have to overcome the initial fear and discomfort that change brings, break out of the rigid social structures, because change is *necessary* and *beautiful.* We must admit and realize that change is always going to be scary, whether it is on a small or large scale, before we can actually make any lasting alterations. I think

Schreiner would have wanted me to use this time as a period of reflection to ponder and probe the complexities of change so that I can sketch out my own vision of social change; one day, I will become a social change-maker just like Schreiner. These dreams are merely the beginning.

1. The Butterfly

I sit with the son of The-Accumulated-Knowledge-of-Ages named Recognition in an unfamiliar bedroom. He sits across from me, knee-to-knee; the white sheets bridge our bodies. A bug captures my gaze. I jump back. The bug hides from me; the wings become two-dimensional, thin as paper. All I can see are long, jagged legs like bent fingers holding up its cylindrical body, dull and unappealing.

I swat it away and Recognition yells, “Stop!” In all of our commotion, the thin paper wings expand. I brace myself for the worst, but instead I feel a rush of guilt because I tried to kill a kaleidoscopic butterfly. Yellows, reds, greens, swirl together with ornate, black curls to separate them, fluttering around the now robust body of the Butterfly. It poses, letting me appreciate its greatness, its beauty. Recognition glances at it and nods.

I understand now. Opportunity. My work is not done.

The Butterfly flies away, leaving me with the briefest feeling of heartbreak, a quick rupture, replaced by gratitude.

2. A Crack

Nobody prepared me for this collapse.

The glossary changes.

Before, my glossary only included what existed within the frame of Comfort.

Now, I only leave the barrier of the home a couple times per day, sometimes just one, and whenever I go outside I've begun to notice the stark difference between sound indoors and sound outdoors. The first steps I take outside, after I close the door, sound crisper than inside. The first word I speak cuts through the air, unobstructed. I find myself wanting to say more, wanting to create more noise, anything to hear that undisturbed sound. A woman named Risk visits me and offers to guide me to the far-off Land of Freedom filled with endless woods and greenery. I yell, stomp, scrape, sing just to listen, letting the decibels warm me like hot cider on a cold autumn day, hoping that Risk will stay with me, steer me in the right direction.

Risk tells me, "The further you move away from Comfort, the more you use your body, and the closer you get to reaching its full capacity, the easier it will become for me to take you to the Land of Freedom."

Heart pounding, I look back at the door from the end of the driveway, Comfort commanding me to return to the frame. The kitchen that feeds me, the pink velvet couch that engulfs me, both tug at my weakness within the vastness; the Comfort demands while the trees of Freedom invite, simply giving me the option to explore, rustle their leaves, listen to the brief sound of my hand knocking against their trunks if I want to, only if I want to.

I look back one more time, just to be sure; then I run, yelling, stomping, scraping, singing.

A branch of Possibility from a tree of Freedom falls upon me.

The glossary changes.

3. The Recurring Dream

Something wakes me. Was it a crackling? Or was it that smell of burning firewood house after house on a summer evening? Or just a feeling, an instinct that I should venture out?

Whichever it was, I arrive on the porch between the slamming screen door and the thing that woke me.

Comfort and Familiarity get in the white Jeep with nothing but each other.

Why did the babysitter named Bravery let me out of bed? How did I get past her?

I watch Comfort and Familiarity buckle their seatbelts. I scoff at their attempt for safety because I know. My father, Familiarity, starts the car while my mother, Comfort, starts the music; I hear it blaring through the open roof, the bass thumping in my chest. Their limbs dangle free as they drive off, overconfident in their porous vehicle.

I swivel towards the door, eyes heavy. Behind the door awaits Bravery, twirling her long and elegant finger, signaling me to turn back outside. “Just look,” she says, “you must learn.”

It’s so pretty, I think, sparkling even; glistening with flecks of orange, yellow, red.

The white Jeep is now The Star of the Labor for Progress, a ball of bright, hot gas.

The orange and red ooze
out of the gaping craters
        where the car doors never existed
                like molten lava rolling
                        down the side of a volcano.

I watch. I can’t look away. I’m mesmerized, fascinated. Fear burns the backs of my eyes.

What comes next? Who puts me to bed, makes me feel warm, kisses my tears away?

Excitement flutters in my stomach. Something seems so right about this very wrong moment, and I don’t like that.

Nostalgia tugs on my arm: Why does it smell like house after house on my usual summer walk?

But something shatters within me, uncertain yet eager for what this soft explosion brings to my tomorrow.

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