Race, Gender, Empire: Transnational and Transracial Feminism in the First Novels of Pauline Hopkins and Olive Schreiner

Heidi Barends

BRNHEI008

A [minor] dissertation submitted in [*partial] fulfillment* of the requirements for the award of the degree of

Masters in English: Literature and Modernity

Faculty of the Humanities

University of Cape Town

2015

COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:_____ Date:_____

RACE, GENDER, EMPIRE: TRANSNATIONAL AND TRANSRACIAL FEMINISM IN THE FIRST NOVELS OF PAULINE HOPKINS AND OLIVE SCHREINER

Heidi Barends (BRNHEI008)

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

White South African author Olive Schreiner (1855-1920) and African American author Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins (1859-1930) are well-known and celebrated literary figures in their own right, but are seldom read side by side. Furthermore, these authors and their works are traditionally placed on different spectrums of feminist literary genealogies despite writing during a similar time-frame and sharing converging feminist agendas. This thesis analyses *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), Schreiner's first completed novel, alongside Hopkins' first full-length novel, the romance *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South* (1900). Individually, these novels and their authors do radical work in liberating their female characters from the patriarchal and racial oppression prevalent in each context. This thesis argues that reading the two in tandem offers unique insight into a specifically transnational and transracial feminist consciousness emerging at the turn of the nineteenth century. Identifying multiple links between the novels' feminist concerns and their intersecting negotiations with race and empire, this comparative literary study establishes temporal, spatial and conceptual links between the two works, arguing that these links transcend both the space and race of their novels' local contexts in order to suggest a definitive transnational and transracial feminist awareness. Such a reading moreover disrupts traditional genealogies of western feminism, urging scholars to look beyond the narrow scope of feminist "waves" and schools in order to detect nuances, convergences and relationships between texts which such genealogies disregard.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my wise and insightful supervisor, Victoria J. Collis-Buthelezi, for inspiring me to write this thesis and for her on-going patience and guidance along the way. I would also like to thank my bursars at the University of Cape Town for their belief in me and in this project.

To my parents, Pete and Bev, thank you for your unconditional love. You have always encouraged me to live out my dreams, and I hope I have made you proud. Last but not least, to Franck: thank you for supporting me in your own way.

Introduction: Converging Contexts

While both South African author Olive Schreiner (1855-1920) and African American author Pauline Hopkins (1859-1930) produced literature between 1880 and 1920 and shared a distinct investment in feminist politics, traditional, separatist feminist genealogies of first, second and third wave feminism do not consider the two in tandem. This thesis argues that moving away from the separation and consequent isolation of feminist "waves" can offer unique insight into literary works, manifesting commonalities and cohesions between seemingly disparate authors and reshaping our conceptualisation of feminism's history and progression.

Using Schreiner's first completed novel, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), and Hopkins' first non-serialised novel, *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South* (1900) as my objects of analysis, this thesis compares the novels in terms of race, gender and empire, in order to reveal a distinctive transnational and transracial feminist consciousness – that is, a politics of female liberation and validation that transcends both race and space – inherent in both authors' works towards the end and turn of the nineteenth century. Transnational feminism is traditionally thought to emerge from the 1980s onwards, and the existence of such a consciousness nearly a century earlier definitively disrupts the ways in which feminist literary history is ordered and perceived.

Schreiner, a white South African colonial writer, is celebrated for both her championing of women's social and political rights in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as well as her promotion of racial equality in South Africa and the world at large. Her political works, such as the feminist "bible" *Woman and Labour* (1911), *Closer Union* (1909), and *Thoughts on South Africa* (1923) espouse her notions of liberation and equality, while her works of fiction – novels such as *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), *From Man*

to Man (1926) and *Undine* (1929), and short stories such as *Dreams* (1890), *Dream Life and Real Life* (1893), and *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* (1897) – creatively deal with issues of race, feminism, and empire.

Similarly, as an African American writer, Pauline Hopkins is celebrated for her early contributions to black feminism, especially in the United States, as well as her work to improve the state of race relations in the US. As an editor of *The Colored American Magazine*[1] from 1900-1904, Hopkins contributed both fictional and socio-historical writings in the form of three serialised novels (*Hagar's Daughter: A Story of Southern Caste Prejudice* (1901-2), *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and South-West* (1902-3), and in 1903, *Of One Blood: Or, The Hidden Self*), biographical essays and sketches, and short stories such as *Talma Gordon* (1900). During this period, she also published *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South* (1900), a poignantly political romance novel that deals with the problem of racial prejudice in the United States Post-reconstruction, particularly in the form of black women's oppression.[2]

1. Hopkins and Schreiner: The Basis for Comparison

Despite the fact that Hopkins and Schreiner are not typically read side by side, there is compelling evidence that they should be. Firstly, in terms of the intervals within which their novels were published, the time-frame of their writing overlaps considerably: *Contending Forces* appears in 1900, a mere seventeen years after the first publication of *The Story of an African Farm.* Secondly, while Hopkins wrote from America and Schreiner from South Africa, the locations of the two writers are intricately linked: both societies were in flux at the turn of the nineteenth century, dealing with dominant discourses of racial and gender

[1] Hereafter referred to as *CAM.*
[2] *Contending Forces* is the only novel by Hopkins that was published as a free-standing novel and not as a serial component of the *Colored American Magazine,* hereafter referred to as *CAM.*

oppression and the despotic influence of empire. Finally, both novels (and novelists) deal with converging feminist concerns of marriage, motherhood and love. When considered in tandem, these threefold elements of temporal, spatial and imperial intersection point to the existence of the aforementioned transnational and transracial feminist consciousness at the turn of the nineteenth century.

1.1. Spatial Convergence: Race, Imperialism and Womanhood in the US and South Africa

Spatially, South Africa and America have unique histories and contexts, yet both deal with peculiar intersections of racial and societal upheavals during the tumultuous nineteenth century. The period I am particularly interested in spans from 1880-1910, although it is important to understand the years preceding this period in each context as institutions such as slavery, the abolition thereof and its consequences for race relations in the future, had profound effects in both locations. In slavery's aftermath, both societies would have to constantly negotiate close contact between races despite (and partially because of) the strict enforcement of white superiority and social hierarchies.

If we look at the South African context firstly, the country in the early 1800s could be described as "pioneering", isolated and unstable. Karel Schoeman writes that the white population there had been "settling for less than a century", that "no town was older than 50 years" and that "the possibility of war with the indigenous population was ever present."[3] The country's primary economic output was tied to agriculture, which in itself was hampered by various obstacles, such as the smallness and wide distribution of its white population, poor roads, mountains, unnavigable rivers, frontier wars and the absence of mineral wealth. However, the discovery of diamonds in 1867 renewed interest in the colony, and a new surge

[3] Karel Schoeman, *Olive Schreiner: A Woman in South Africa 1855-1881.* Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1990. 209.

of prospectors and settlers flocked to South Africa.[4] Schreiner's Lyndall interestingly makes reference to diamonds in *The Story of an African Farm,* a topic I elaborate on in Chapter One. The 1800s also saw the abolition of slavery in South Africa (1 December 1834)[5] and an upsurge in British presence (and imperialist impulses) in the country, culminating in the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) and subsequent Unionisation (31 May 1910) at the turn of the century. Additionally, South Africa's peculiar racial relations began to intensify between the late 1800s and early 1900s as the political forces that governed the economy attempted to segregate society along racial lines.

Similarly, the United States of the nineteenth century saw a society in flux due to various historical events such as the Civil War (1861-1865), the advent of industrialisation and the abolition of slavery. The Civil War is perhaps most important in this context, as it is integral to the derisive rift between the northern and southern states in America who were anti- and pro-slavery respectively. The ideological rift between northern and southern American states also accounts for the intense "honor codes [sic]" that governed the south and that were far less prevalent in the northern states.[6] These "honor codes" relate to the modes of patriarchy instilled in the South as a result of the socio-political dynamics of slavery and account for the intensely strict social and racial hierarchies that were re-enforced after slavery's abolition in order to maintain white superiority.[7] While these hierarchies were largely imported from Britain, historian R.L Watson argues that the US south transformed them to suit its own context, a context which was unique in that it possessed its own self-

[4] *Ibid,* 245
[5] In 1834, the Slavery Abolition Act (1833) was extended to include all of Britain's colonies.
[6] R.L. Watson defines honour as the right of the individual to be treated with respect, a right that exists only *when* they are treated by others with respect and *if* the individual can enforce that respect. Honour itself in this context is itself a contested category, as one society can have several groups with different "honor codes." *Slave Emancipation and Racial Attitudes in Nineteenth Century South Africa.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 204-5.
[7] Nineteenth century America is best understood by its historical divisions of Antebellum and Reconstruction. Antebellum refers to before the Civil War (1820-1860), while Reconstruction denotes the period where the government amended legislation that existed prior to slavery (1865-1877).

reproducing slave population, produced its own set of particular gender dynamics and created patriarchal enforcement measures that managed to intersect both the personal and the private.[8] The United States also had a much larger concentrated population and greater ratio of white inhabitants to non-white when compared to South Africa and other settler colonies.

Similar events, tensions and concerns were thus cutting across nations and infiltrating the United States and South Africa at roughly the same time. In terms of empire, American imperialism and British imperialism also began to distinguish themselves as separate, yet related, projects during the late 1800s. During this period, America embarked on its own large scale campaign for acquiring foreign territories, engaging in international territorial disputes such as the Spanish-American War (1898), the acquisition of the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam (1898-1901), the Venezuelan boundary dispute (1895-1896), the German-US division of Samoa and the US annexation of Hawaii (1900).[9]

Similarly, the British Empire experienced its own "protracted critical period" at the end and turn of the nineteenth century.[10] In *Empire, the National and the Postcolonial*, Elleke Boehmer examines British imperial history during the end of the nineteenth century, using the period of 1890-1920 as her frame of analysis. Boehmer's period differs slightly from the scope of my thesis – namely 1880-1910 – but the overlap between and relevance of the two periods is considerable. Boehmer notes that between 1890 and 1920, the Anglo-Boer War signalled an imperial crisis, imperial rivalry between European powers increased (culminating in the First World War), social and political radicalism rose in the metropolis (the women's struggle, Marxism, the battle for Irish home rule), radical political networking extended on a global scale, and modernity began to be distributed to the Non-West via

[8] Watson, 234.
[9] Hazel V. Carby. *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the African American Woman Novelist.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. 133-4.
[10] Boehmer…..

imperial channels of communication.[11] These socio-political upheavals are keenly felt in the subtext of Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm.* Interestingly, Hopkins' novel also deals extensively with British empire in direct and indirect ways, acknowledging and engaging with slavery's legacy, human rights issues and the socio-political and economic disparities the imperial project left behind. Hopkins's novel is perhaps most thought-provoking in this sense: despite being set in America, *Contending Forces* avoids issues of American imperialism, drawing instead on British colonial histories and legacies through the course of the novel.

This particular moment in history (1880-1910) is especially significant in terms of what it heralded for women's movements in both the US and South Africa. Indeed, in the late 1800s, women's issues and concerns began to take political centre stage. In 1893 at the World Congress of Representatives of Women in Chicago, African American Frances Harper proclaimed that women were, indeed, "standing on the threshold of a women's era," a time Hazel Carby describes as "a period of intense activity and productivity for African American women," both in a literary and political sense.[12] The World Congress of Representatives of Women in Chicago also marked an important moment in the division of the women's movement in America across racial lines: Fannie Barrier Williams and Frances Watkins Harper are well-known for their plenary addresses at this conference, though they were the only African American women permitted by the organisers to speak. Interestingly, famous African American activist Ida B. Wells did not speak at the conference: touring Britain, Wells was working on gaining support for her anti-lynching campaign at the time of the event. Wells parallels Hopkins in turning to the British as a viable alternative/source of support against America, an aspect I discuss in Chapter Two.

---

[11] Elleke Boehmer. *Empire, the National and the Postcolonial 1890-1920: Resistance in Interaction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2005. 4.

[12] Frances Harper quoted in Carby, 3.

Campaigning for the vote, women of all races began to mobilise themselves in women's clubs and movements, though a clear distinction was made between white women's movements (and the white female vote) and the plight of their African American counterparts. African American women in particular turned to pen and paper to promote their aims of liberation through fiction, magazines and journals. Henry Louis Gates Jnr specifies the period by calling 1890-1910 the *"black* women's era" (my italics), because of the considerable amount of work by black female authors that was published in these two decades. He notes: "Indeed, black women published more works of fiction in these two decades than black men had published in the previous half century." This literary flourishing on behalf of African American women had no parallel in South Africa: due to the censorship and racism of segregation in the early 1900s and apartheid in the later twentieth century, the first novel to be published by a black South African woman only appeared in 1975 in the form of Miriam Tlali's *Muriel at Metropolitan*.[13]

In South Africa in general, the turn of the nineteenth century was more a period of political than literary agitation. Schreiner is often considered somewhat of an anomaly: she was the first female writer to be published from South Africa, and the South African canon of white women's writing generally succeeds Schreiner's work with Nadine Gordimer's (1940—). To this day, *The Story of an African Farm* is still largely considered one of the founding texts of South African literature, though its status remains somewhat controversial: Schreiner's position as a white author has often prohibited her from being included in the realm of a contemporary "African" or even "South African" canon, as she is seen to represent only a small portion of the population; secondly, the novel itself is often labelled as exclusionary and racist in nature. My reading of Schreiner radically moves away from the

[13] Henry Louis Gates, Jr. "Foreword: In Her Own Write", *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. xvi.

text and its author's perceived racism and exclusionary tactics, arguing instead that the novel is transnationally and transracially inclusive in complicated and convoluted ways.

The Story of an African Farm appeared on the literary scene in 1883, and the novel speaks to a definite awareness of the cultural and political mood of female activism that was sweeping the world at the time. Between 1890 and 1920, South African women organised themselves politically through white women's organisations such as The Women's Christian Temperance Union (1899) and the Women's Enfranchisement League (1902), and the establishment of the Bantu Women's League of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) in 1918. It is worthwhile noting here that black and white women's political movements in South Africa remained, like America, divided along racial lines, a fact largely attributed to white, middle-class women's exclusionary tactics.

The late 1800s and early 1900s thus clearly marked a "moment" in both South Africa and the US, where competing discourses of imperial plunder and gender oppression took centre stage. The simultaneous emergence of debate of and resistance to these two aspects may be attributed largely to the fact that imperialism as a project is saturated throughout by gendered hierarchies. Anne McClintock explains that imperialism itself is enacted and enforced by white men, who enforced and enacted laws and policies to serve their own interests.[14] In *No Turning Back: the History of Feminism and the Future of Women,* Estelle Freedman further explains that:

> colonialism transported many ideas about gender that reinforced existing inequalities and introduced new ones. European colonial rulers assumed natural superiority of the separate male and female spheres idealised in their own societies.[15]

[14] Anne McClintock. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest.* New York: Routledge, 1995. 7.
[15] Estelle Freedman. *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women.* New York: Ballantine Books, 2002. 91.

The "separate spheres" approach, which took hold during the Industrial Revolution (sometime between 1760 and 1840) in Europe and North America, designated separate spheres or spaces for men and women, where men were biologically created for the public/political, and women were designed for the domestic/private. These gendered hierarchies and divisions were thus carried by colonizers and missionaries to the colonies and imposed on both the settler and native women situated there. McClintock reminds us that it is important to remember that men and women did not experience imperialism in the same way, nor was the experience of imperialism the same for different countries.[16] Both Hopkins and Schreiner thus deal with imperial gender constructions and standards of womanhood, but the conceptualisation of these gender constructions differs in each context.

In British colonial South Africa, for example, British settlers often imposed strict standards on "ladies" to emulate British manners, styles and traditions, despite the hot, radically different and isolated environment. These standards were based on Victorian womanhood: a type of femininity which was centred on the family, motherhood and respectability. In Chapter One, I reveal the ways in which Schreiner deals with the impracticality of Victorian norms in the colony, and indeed rejects British (and, by implication, imperial) standards of womanhood in favour of "new woman" ideals. It must however, be noted that while Schreiner critiques imperialism and its constructions of gender, as a white woman she is intricately and unavoidably complicit in the perpetuation of imperial ideologies. McClintock explains white colonial women's inherent complicity as follows:

> The "rationed" privileges of race all too often put white women in positions of divided – if borrowed – power, not only over colonised women but also over colonised men…white women were not the helpless onlookers of empire but were

[16] McClintock, 6.

> ambiguously complicit both as colonisers and colonised, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting.[17]

Such a consideration does not, however, discredit the progressiveness of Schreiner's views on and reformation of womanhood in the late nineteenth century; it merely alerts the reader to being aware of the different hierarchies and levels of power at stake.

Hopkins, too, deals with imperial standards of womanhood, though in the American context faced a more aggressive, classist and racist ideology of true womanhood. While many of true womanhood's tenets coalesce with and are based on the tenets of Victorian womanhood – domesticity, submissiveness, piety and purity – America is unique in being the only country to elevate these standards to cult-status. True womanhood is thus also called the cult of domesticity, the cult of the lady or the cult of true womanhood. The cult, enforced by an aggressive, white patriarchal society, valorised white women for being mothers and wives, as well as being fragile and unable to perform hard labour. Black female sexuality was automatically placed outside of the cult of true womanhood, as black women were often forced to work long hours performing hard labour, endure physical defilements, and foster a sense of strength and resilience because of the hardships they had to endure. As a result, white women were glorified as precious mothers and wives while black women were designated to the realms of bestiality and immorality.[18] Hopkins, in a similar way to Schreiner, works tirelessly to challenge the racist and classist assumptions of true womanhood, with the added project of recuperating violated black womanhood in the process.

These two authors therefore share a common goal of critiquing imperial constructions of womanhood, and are writing at a critical time for gender oppression and the rise of imperialism. They also share feminist commonalities of motherhood, marriage, and love to

---

[17] *McClintock,* 7.

[18] Carby, 31; Paula Giddings. *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*. New York: Harper Collins, 1984. 47.

name a few, despite their characters' different racial positions, which I establish in detail in the literary analyses in Chapters One and Two.

1.2 Disrupting Feminist Literary History: Schreiner and Hopkins in Context

As mentioned previously, traditional trajectories of the feminist critical tradition do not typically group Hopkins and Schreiner together in terms of their feminist preoccupations. Ultimately, my reading of Hopkins and Schreiner disrupts notions of separatist "waves" and "movements" within feminism, arguing that a transnational and transracial feminist consciousness already existed at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Estelle Freedman explains that feminist politics originated where "capitalism, industrial growth, democratic theory and socialist critiques converged, as they did in Europe and North America after 1800."[19] Traditionally divided into three "waves" with various branches, feminism encompasses vast schools of thought. "Self-naming" on behalf of black feminists, Christian feminists, lesbian feminists, male feminists, eco-feminists, third world feminists, Asian American feminists and the like attest to the "malleability" of the term, causing Freedman to proclaim that the "plural feminisms" is more apt in describing female politics.[20] The genealogy that follows cannot begin to include the complexity of feminism (or feminisms) in its entirety, but serves as a useful backdrop from which to explain where Hopkins and Schreiner are traditionally situated.

The "origin" of western feminism, the so-called first wave, is largely thought to be heralded by Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1792), a prolific feminist text (though Wollstonecraft did not call it such) that encouraged strength, intellect

[19]Freedman, 23.
[20] *Ibid,* 24.

and the education of women.[21] First wave feminism was largely defined by political activism and organisation toward the white)women's vote in Europe and America as well as the obtaining of legal rights for women in terms of divorce and property ownership, reaching its apex in 1840-1880. As I have said, such activism was not called "feminism" as such, as feminism as a term was only coined in the 1890s. This wave was especially orientated in response to capitalism and colonialism, both of which entrenched earlier gender hierarchies and made the split between male and female even wider in the nineteenth century. At the same time, religious, scientific and social ideas such as Darwinism, Eugenics and true womanhood gained impetus, bolstering ideas of femininity and the role of women in the family and society, and promoting men's moral hold/superiority over women.[22] Little to no recognition was given to minority women's voting or legal rights during this period, and it also signalled a divisive split between the concerns and potential alliances of white and black women in Europe and North America, as white women chose to align themselves to their own self-interests rather than join black women for a plight of common female suffrage.[23] Olive Schreiner is typically situated within this first wave of feminism for her championing of the Eurocentric New Woman, as embodied in *The Story of an African Farm's* Lyndall: a nuanced feminist heroine, exercising her rights to political and social autonomy and challenging patriarchal oppression. Despite the fact that Hopkins was writing during this period, she is typically recuperated in later feminist movements – the black feminist literary tradition in particular, largely because of the first wave's exclusion of women of colour.

[21] Interestingly, Olive Schreiner was commissioned in the late 1890s to write an introduction for a later publication of this text, though only a rough draft remains today. See Liz Stanley, *Imperialism, Labour and the New Woman: Olive Schreiner's Social Theory.* Oxon: Routledge, 2002. 63-65.
[22] Freedman, 88.
[23] Paula Giddings in *When and Where I Enter* writes that while white women were actively involved in abolitionist campaigns in the mid-1800s, their efforts were not based on a vision of racial equality – rather, they used abolitionist campaigning as a platform to exert their own frustrated (and self-serving) political energies in order to overcome their otherwise total exclusion from the political arena. 135-6.

As women gained voting and legal rights in Britain and America in the early twentieth century, women's movements and feminist activism died down until after World War Two. With the advent of the Civil Rights Movement in the US, a second wave of feminism took hold (1960-1980), where women now campaigned for social equality and an end to sexual discrimination, alongside medical rights, such as choice in terms of abortion and the use of contraception. Significantly, this period also marks the birth of a distinctly feminist literary criticism. Championed by critics such as Elaine Showalter with her theory of gynocritics[24] (1977) and the work done by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), second wave feminist literary criticism typically undertook a twofold task: firstly, to critique patriarchal images of women in literature and, secondly, to identify and analyse the specificity of women's writing; that is, to define the views of women's writing and identify a particularly feminine aesthetic.[25] This feminist literary tradition made great inroads in terms of raising female consciousness and the awareness of gender oppression in literature, but is predominantly critiqued for its failure to take racial, class, sexual and locational differences into consideration. Like first wave feminism, the second wave remained both exclusionary and elitist, promoting largely white, Northern European/American, middle-class feminist values.

For this reason, second wave feminism stimulated the formation of various sub-genres of feminism within the period, established in the hope of addressing the voids that existed within the Western, middle-class feminist tradition at the time. Lesbian feminist criticism was one such attempt. Caroline Gonda in "Lesbian Feminist Criticism" writes that while some

[24] Showalter describes her project of gynocritics as follows: "The program of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories. Gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of male tradition, and focus instead on the new visible world of female culture." "Toward a Feminist Poetics." *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory*. Ed. Elaine Showalter. London: Virago, 1986. 131.
[25] Chris Weedon. "Postcolonial Feminist Criticism." *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism.* Eds. Gill Plain & Susan Sellers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 282.

lesbian criticism predates second wave criticism, the tradition was chiefly established to counteract the second wave's inability to take non-hetronormative difference into account. Famous lesbian critics include Adrienne Rich, Audre Lord and Judith Barrington, and the features of the tradition included establishing the importance of the personal as political (with a special focus on women's confessional or autobiographical writing), as well as identifying literary lesbians and lesbianism.[26] Second wave (read here, western American) critics were ambivalent toward lesbian critics: "lesbian" and "lesbianism" as terms were often associated with "man-hating" and radicalism in the late 1960s and 1970s and, ironically, lesbian feminist criticism itself came under attack from other branches of feminism for ignoring issues of race and class in its considerations of women.

Another sub-genre of the second wave worthy of mention is French feminist criticism. Originating in 1970s France, the movement was led by Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigary.[27] Using tools such as Freudian psychology, post-Lacanian philosophy and theories of deconstruction, French feminists sought to analyse *Écriture Fèminine*, the inscription of the female body and female sexuality in the language and structure of literary texts. Freedman further describes the movement as insisting "on the centrality of the act of writing as a woman to both breaking silence and undermining patriarchy."[28] While French feminists have had a considerable impact on academic feminism, the school (like traditional second wave and lesbian feminist criticism) has been criticised for being racist and, at times, unconscious of local and/or ethnic difference. For this reason, both Schreiner, as colonial South African, and Hopkins, as African American, would be (and are) both ignored by French feminists.

---

[26] Caroline Gonda. "Lesbian Literary Criticism." *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism.* Eds. Gill Plain and Susan Sellers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 171.
[27] Freedman, 567.
[28] Freedman, 567. See also Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. "French Feminism in an International Frame." *Yale French Studies* No. 62. (1981): 154-184.

One of the few schools of feminism to take intersections of race, class and gender into account, is black feminist criticism – the school responsible for recuperating female African American writers and activists in order to create their own canon. Like lesbian criticism, Arlene Keizer explains that black feminism was formed in "a backlash" to the essentialism and racism of the second wave and sought to produce "a body of critical and creative work by women of African descent in the US."[29] Black feminist criticism's tenets were: one, to recuperate black female texts (like Hopkins's) from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries[30], two, to establish a trajectory of black women's struggles over the centuries, and three, to focus on the ways that race, class and sex intersected. Famous black feminist critics include Alice Walker (who coined "Womanism"), Barbara Smith, bell hooks and Henry Louis Gates Jnr. This thesis is especially indebted to black feminist critics Hazel V. Carby and Claudia Tate, who wrote in the 1980s. A major debate within black feminist criticism has always been whether a woman (or man, if we consider Henry Louis Gates Jnr) has to "inhabit a black body in order to express a black feminist perspective."[31] Despite the concerns of essentialism, many men and non-black women have contributed to the black feminist critical tradition, examples being Barbara Johnson, Michael Awkward, Kevin Everod Quashie and Madhu Dubey.[32]

In addition to black feminist criticism, African feminism is another important branch of feminism addressing the needs and concerns of specifically black, African women. Evan Mwangi draws on Obioma Nnaemeka and produces one definition of African feminism as:

> a manifestation of the characteristics (balance, connectedness, reciprocity, compromise, etc.) of the African world view as demonstrated in the

[29] Arlene R. Keizer. "Black Feminism." *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism.* Eds. Gill Plain and Susan Sellers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 154.
[30] The Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women's Writers (a series of publications), championed by Henry Louis Gates Jnr, was one such endeavour to recuperate black women's texts which had fallen into obscurity. Pauline Hopkins's work was published in this series, alongside authors such as Phyllis Wheatley, Harriet Jacobs, Elizabeth Keckley, and Anna Julia Copper.
[31] Keizer, 174.
[32] Keizer, 174.

> encoding in many African languages of gender-neutral, third-person singular pronouns who etymologies are mindful of gender neutrality and balance.[33]

African feminists include Oyéròn ké Oyewúmi, Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi and Amede Obiora, and major debates within this field comprise of the issue of defining the movement independently from western feminism (as a movement in itself as opposed to a backlash toward or resistance to western feminism) as well as whether to include white and/or non-heterosexual women. Olive Schreiner, for example, is generally excluded from this school because of her position as a white woman.

However, returning to the traditional second wave of so-called western feminism, the establishment of the black feminist critical tradition marks an important turn in the history and conceptualisations of feminist thought. Indeed, from the 1980s onwards traditional feminism notes the beginning of a third wave, one whose temporal duration extends to the present. Third wave feminism is greatly indebted to the intersectionality that black feminism established, and is generally divided into three subsections: Third world and postcolonial feminism, queer theory, and transnational feminism.

Third world feminism was propelled by the knowledge that "questioning the dominant meaning of womanhood can occur in any culture where racial or class divisions complicate feminism", resulting in a more radically and sexually diverse movement that highlighted "female empowerment rather than male oppression."[34] The movement itself focused especially on the position of women in third world countries and minority groups.[35] Postcolonial feminism developed in a similar vein in the 1980s, deeply influenced by black feminist and third world critiques and forming its own distinctive postcolonial perspective.

---

[33] Evan M. Mwangi. *Africa Writes Back to Self: Metafiction, Gender, Sexuality.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009. 239.

[34] Freedman, 30.

[35] Many feminists that emerged during the Second wave and its sub-genres realigned their feminist tactics with third wave concerns. Adrienne Rich for example, a lesbian feminist critic, redirected her feminist strategies to include the "politics of location" – the fact that one's country (and race) can "deeply [influence] one's view of the world and of womanhood." (Quoted from Freedman, 148).

The characteristics of postcolonial feminism were fourfold: a questioning of Eurocentrism, the reclaiming of "voices" lost in the colonial project and its aftermath, the interrogation of colonial modes of representation, and the investigation of racial difference and marginalisation.[36]

At the same time, queer theory began to take hold. Championed by Eve Kosofsky and later joined by critics such as Judith Butler, David Halperin and Michael Warner, queer theory has often been critiqued for its elite vocabulary – deeply rooted in continental philosophy, this school's approach was to move away from specific and recognizable sexual identities. Departing from categories such as "gay" and "lesbian", Heather Love explains that *queer* "evinced a thoroughgoing scepticism about the stability and usefulness of such categories."[37] Queer theory is generally considered a branch of criticism separate from feminism, but borrows heavily from feminist methodology. Despite their similarities, the relationship between queer studies and feminism is a tense one.[38] Importantly, Hopkins has since been recuperated by queer theorists such as Siobhan Somerville in *Queering the Color Line* (2000); I explore her reading of non-hetronormative relationships within a transnational context in more detail in Chapter Two.

Finally, the third wave brought on the emergence of transnational feminism. While international feminism refers to the relationships and engagements between women of separate, politically and culturally "equal" nation states (such as occurred in the 1800s between women in the US and Britain), transnational feminism was mobilised in the 1980s, in the aftermath of colonial inequalities and national struggles. I draw on Inderpal Grewal and

---

[36] Weedon, 283.

[37] Heather Love. "Feminist Criticism and Queer Theory." *A History of Feminist Criticism.* Eds. Gill Plain and Susan Sellers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 302.

[38] For more on the uncomfortable relationship between feminism and queer theory and an overview of the major debates, see Judith Butler. "Against Proper Objects." *Feminism Meets Queer Theory.* Eds E. Weed & N. Schor. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1997. 1-30; and Gail Ruben. "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality." *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*. Ed. Carole S. Vance. London: Pandora. 1992. 267-293.

Caren Kaplan's distinction between the inter- and transnational, as well as their definition of transnational feminism. For Grewal and Kaplan,

> transnational is a term that signals attention to uneven and dissimilar circuits of culture and capital…On the other hand, Internationalism as a concept is based on existing configurations of national states as discrete and sovereign entities.[39]

Transnational feminism is not equitable to global feminism, which assumes that white, middle-class women's values apply to the entire world and encompasses the myth of "global sisterhood", although it is also not free from "asymmetrical power relations."[40] Kaplan and Grewal go on to argue, however, that:

> there IS NO SUCH THING as a feminism free of asymmetrical power relations (sic). Rather, transnational feminist practices, as we call them, involve forms of alliance, subversion, and complicity within which asymmetries and inequalities can be critiqued.[41]

In terms of the literary, Anne Heilmann, editing a collection on the "transnational 'hybridity'" of New Woman representations in literature, stresses the relevance and significance of using a transnational scope to revisit feminist texts. Such an approach enables us to "revisit our understanding of existing work by seeing it in a comparative light", "identify continuities and discontinuities across time and space", and enable "an understanding of the historical and cultural specificities and therefore the differences between manifestations of the New Woman [and feminism]."[42] Making use of a transnational scope to compare Schreiner and Hopkins is particularly relevant in that it broadens the relevance of their feminist concerns to encapsulate a consciousness that exceeds traditional new woman

---

[39] Inderpal Grewal & Caren Kaplan. "Postcolonial Studies and Transnational Feminist Practices." *Jouvert: 5.1.* 2000. http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v5i1/grewal.htm DOA: 29-11-2014.
[40] Freedman, 227; Kaplan & Grewal, "Postcolonial Studies and Transnational Feminist Practices."
[41] Kaplan & Grewal. "Postcolonial Studies and Transnational Feminist Practices."
[42] Anne Heilman. "Introduction." *New Woman Hybridities: Femininity, Feminism and International Consumer Culture, 1880-1930.* Eds. Anne Heilman and Margaret Beetham. London: Routledge, 2004. 2.

(Schreiner) or black women's (Hopkins) issues: looking at the two texts in tandem brings to the fore a particularly – and prodigious – *transracial* feminist consciousness, one which attempts to not only transcend spatial borders, but also conceptual or societal forces in the form of racial categorisation.

Several scholars have undertaken comparative projects involving South African and African American literature, such as Mary Pope, Fiona Mills, Victoria Collis-Buthelezi, Spihokazi Koyana, Pumla Gqola, Desiree Lewis and Rosemary Gray.[43] Most of these scholars however, have undertaken South African and African American projects comparing two (or more) novelists of the same race, or two novels with characters or protagonists of the same race. In this sense, my study diverges from most scholarship that has been done in terms of comparative South African and African American literature, for Hopkins and Schreiner inhabit different racial identities, as do their protagonists. I look predominantly at the female characters in each of the novels as opposed to the private lives of the authors. Moreover, the fact that Schreiner's female protagonist is white and Hopkins's female characters are black serves to enrich the comparison, largely because of the fact that I place my comparison within the practice of transnational feminism,

---

[43] See Mary Pope. '"I am NOT just like one of the family...": The Black Domestic Servant and White Family Dynamics in 20th Century American and South African Literature." *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* Vol 2.4. (November 2001);
Fiona Mills. "Diasporic Displacement and the Search for Black Female Identity in Toni Morrison's Tar Baby and Nadine Gordimer's *None to Accompany Me*." *Safundi: Journal of South African and American Studies.* Vol 2.4. (November 2001), accessed online:
http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17533170100302403#.VNm2Z_mUdqU
Victoria J. Collis. *Anxious Records: Race, Imperial Belonging and the Black Literary Imagination, 1900-1940* (PhD Dissertation, 2013).
Siphokazi Koyana & Rosemary Gray. "Growing Up with Maya Angelou and Sindiwe Magona: A Comparison." *English in Africa* Vol. 29. 1 (2002): 85-98.
Pumla Gqola. *What is Slavery to Me? Postcolonial/Slave Memory in Post-Apartheid South Africa.* Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2010

Lewis, Desiree. "Theory and Intertextuality: Reading Zora Neale Hurston and Bessie Head." *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* Vol 9.2. (2008): 113-125.

As alluded to earlier, though Schreiner is often convalesced as first wave as a result of *The Story of an African Farm's* new woman ideologies and the time it was written, and the resurgence of Hopkins's fiction and political writings are vital to the second wave era of black feminist recuperation, I situate both of them within the transnational feminist tradition. Undergoing a detailed exploration of the language, imagery and feminist heroines in each of their novels, I argue that Schreiner and Hopkins be read side by side in terms of their "alliance[s], subversion[s] and complicity": their propagations of female equality in marriage, the rights and experiences of women in motherhood, and the political role and importance of women as individuals in society make them allies in the quests for female self-sufficiency that permeate their fiction. However, there are also "asymmetries and inequalities" between the novels, largely as a result of the intersection of race and class: as a white woman in South Africa, Schreiner's main female protagonist has access to particular positions of power which Hopkins's black American female protagonists do not. Despite the seemingly asymmetrical power relations of these two novels, both authors negotiate and interact with these inequalities in particular ways – Schreiner works to subvert racial exclusion through Lyndall's credos of equality and the commonality of humanity and Hopkins, too, uses her novel to stress the "brotherhood" of all peoples.

If we then return to the genealogy of feminism(s), its trajectory charts the movement's ambivalence to the relevance of race, class and heteronormativity in analysing feminist literature. My choice to compare a white South African author with an African American female writer disrupts separatist feminist schools – both temporally and conceptually – for so do their individual works. Neither essentialist nor separatist, both Schreiner and Hopkins work towards a vision of "greater social justice", one echoed in the words of bell hooks in *Feminism is for Everybody*:

> Imagine living in a world where there is no domination, where females and males are not alike or even always equal, but where a vision of mutuality is the ethos

> shaping our interaction. Imagine living in a world where we can all be who we are, a world of peace and possibility. Feminist revolution alone will not create such a world; we need to end racism, class elitism, imperialism. But it will make it possible for us to be fully self-actualised females and males able to create beloved community, to live together, realising our dreams of freedom and justice, living the truth that we are all "created equal."[44]

Like hooks, both Schreiner and Hopkins were idealists. Exploring their first complete attempts at the novel form and, subsequently, their first thorough and completed articulations of their feminist visions and thoughts in tandem helps highlight their common idealism, their hopes (in the nineteenth century already) for the feminist values many critics and activists such as hooks strive for today. It must be said that such idealism does not eradicate class or racial difference; it encompasses the belief that these differences can eventually be overcome, in anticipation of a "mass-based, anti-racist" and transnational feminist movement.[45]

I start my analysis in Chapter One with an examination of *The Story of an African Farm,* looking particularly, but not only, at the novel's main female protagonist, Lyndall, and her feminist quest. Lyndall's quest engages with dominant discourses of racism, patriarchy and imperialism, and I dissect these engagements by focussing particularly on representations of love and marriage in the novel, motherhood, empire and processes of racialisation. Ultimately, these dissections serve as a buttress for my grander claims – that *The Story of an African Farm* is in fact involved in a transnational, transracial feminist project that transcends its South African context.

In Chapter Two, I extend my analysis to include *Contending Forces*, looking at the ways that discourses of racism, sexual violence, gender and imperialism intersect within the novel, particularly in terms of the novel's female characters. My literary analysis thus centres

---

[44] bell hooks. *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* Cambridge MA: South End Press, 2000. 2000, x.
[45] *Ibid,* 60.

around the figures of Sappho Clarke, Dora Smith and Dora's mother, Ma Smith, and the ways they negotiate topics of marriage, motherhood, spirituality and social oppression. As with Schreiner, I ultimately argue that the feminist consciousness in *Contending Forces* transcends its racial and spatial context, prefiguring a specifically transnational and transracial feminist consciousness.

Considering the two novels in their entirety in tandem then brings me to the concluding chapter, where I place Hopkins and Schreiner side by side in order to evaluate the efficacy of what, I argue, are their transnational and transracial claims, in terms of establishing a particular moment in the history of feminist consciousness.

Chapter One: Lyndall, Proto-feminism and the Colony

Olive Schreiner is one of South Africa's first and arguably most famous literary figures, with her first novel, *The Story of an African Farm,* being published in 1883. Self-taught and exceptionally bright, Schreiner was both an exemplary woman and writer. Due to various alternating bouts of asthma and depression, Schreiner battled to produce longer works of writing; *The Story of an African Farm* is resultantly her only extant novel to be completed and intended for public consumption during her lifetime.[46] The novel is thus significant in conception, but also in the fact that it deals with competing dominant discourses of race, gender and empire, possessing what Carolyn Burdett calls in *Olive Schreiner and the Labour of Feminism* an "acute awareness of the intellectual and cultural mood of 1880s English modernity."[47] Most importantly, *The Story of an African Farm* is Schreiner's first significant engagement with feminist preoccupations and concerns, one perhaps only paralleled by her non-fictional exposition, *Woman and Labour*, in 1911.

In the following section I analyse *The Story of an African Farm* in terms of its main female protagonist, Lyndall, and her own engagements with these discourses. I have divided this chapter into four broad subsections. These are: love and marriage, motherhood, empire and the process of racialisation (of Lyndall herself as well as the non-white characters in the novel). Ultimately, these subsections serve as means of establishing the viability of the transracial and transnational application of Lyndall's credos – that is, establishing whether her propagations of love and marriage, motherhood, empire and attitude toward race can transcend the South African context.

[46] Schreiner did not intend for *Undine*, her first attempt at novel writing, to ever be published, and *From Man to Man* was incomplete upon her death.
[47] Carolyn Burdett. *Olive Schreiner and the Progress of Feminism.* New Hampshire: Palgrave, 2005. 6.

Crucial to any discussion of marriage in *The Story of an African Farm* is heterosexual love. For Lyndall, love is often a driving force: it informs (and limits) her actions throughout the novel, and is intricately linked to her ideas of marriage. Perhaps the earliest exposition Lyndall provides on the topic of love occurs upon her return from an all-girls boarding school. She shares her views on the prospects and status of heterosexual love with her childhood friend and fellow farm inhabitant, Waldo, beginning by highlighting the different standards and/or experiences of love for men and women:

> A man's love is a fire of olive wood. It leaps higher every moment; it roars, it blazes, it shoots out red flames; it threatens to wrap you round and devour you – you who stand by like an icicle in the flow of its fierce warmth…The next day, when you go to warm your hands a little, you find a few ashes! 'Tis a long love and cool against a short love and hot; men, at all events, have nothing to complain of.[48]

A woman's "cool", "long" love cannot be properly reciprocated by the "short" and "hot" love of a man: they are, in fact, as oppositional as fire and ice.

She goes on to explain the fickleness of men's love for and interest in women in a cutting critique of male chivalry, relating a story of when she, as a passenger on a train surrounded by men, was the only one to offer her seat to an elderly lady. She equates men's love and attention to those of bees: they are "very attentive to the flowers" until "their honey is done", upon which they "fly over them."[49] As soon as beauty wanes, so do men's affections for women. She concludes that the only real "chivalrous attention" to be found is from "woman to…woman."[50] Additionally, in a letter to her stranger, the father of her stillborn child born out of wedlock, she writes: "You love me because you cannot bear to be resisted, and you want to master me. You liked me first because I treated you and all men

[48] Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm*. London: Penguin Books, 2005. 184.
[49] *Ibid*, 191.
[50] *Ibid.* This sentence also hints at a level of female solidarity that Lyndall (or Schreiner) is calling for, one echoed in her short stores such as *The Woman's Rose.*

with indifference. That is all your love means."[51] The reference to mastery emphasises the inequality Lyndall detects at the very core of relations between men and women: her stranger only sees her as a challenge, a wild creature for him to "master" and tame, and not an equal.

Domestic duty in the form of marriage was deemed to be one of women's primary responsibilities in the late 1800s, one greatly entrenched in Victorian modes of patriarchy. If we look at Britain specifically (which is, perhaps, the most influential origin of Schreiner's feminist avocations), various campaigns for women's emancipation emerged, with two main camps advocating different positions with regard to the roles women played in marriage: on the one hand, and to a lesser extent, there was the claim that heterosexuality, marriage and maternity were "terrible bars" to women's freedom and, on the other, there was a call for a "reformed love" – one where heterosexual relations between men and women could be repaired in such a way as to benefit both males and females. Lyndall as a character is positioned at the juncture between these two camps: she rejects the notion of marriage as it existed in her time period (resulting in her never marrying in the novel), yet hopes for and hints at the possibility of a different kind of romantic union between the sexes.

Lyndall's critique of male love and chivalry does not mean that she rejects the notion of love altogether: rather, it points to her rejection of the notion of mutual admiration and respect between the sexes existing within the confines of the Victorian gender ideologies that existed at the time. She does, however, "love" Waldo, with interesting implications for her view on heterosexual relationships:

> I like you so much, I love you. …When I am with you I never know that I am a woman and you are a man; I only know that we are both things that think. Other

[51] *The Story of an African Farm,* 238.

> men when I am with them, whether I love them or not, they are mere bodies to me;
>
> but you are a spirit; I like you.[52]

Lyndall's protestation of love for Waldo hints at the potential for a symbiotic union of the two sexes, one that is seemingly contradictory in that it ignores the notion of gender altogether, turning the two parties into merely "things that think." This union draws on aspects of the metaphysical – the "spirit" – which points to (and prioritises) a non-physical connection in favour of a bodily one. Gerald Monsman phrases Lyndall's ideal of love differently, observing that she seeks in love "its total statement": the "ideal lover must be one who is both subject and object", both man and woman simultaneously, and not "merely half of the duality."[53] Lyndall and Waldo are never romantically linked in the novel, and the narrative itself is more preoccupied with the relationship between Lyndall and her stranger. Despite the focus given to the latter, she is never "fulfilled" by either of these relationships. Monsman argues this is because both men represent mere parts of Lyndall's own self – Waldo as spiritual, the stranger as corporeal, neither representing a viable "whole" and thus resulting in the fact that Lyndall marries.

I agree with Monsman, but believe that the resistance of societal forces and gendered ideologies played a more considerable role in Lyndall's refusal to wed. As Louise Green notes, Lyndall's refusal to marry her stranger may be attributed to the fact that if she participated in the common practices of society, she would indefinitely lose the "freedom she had won for herself through her determined resistance" to societal forces.[54] Lyndall views marriage as it stood in the nineteenth century as an institution for putting a woman's "neck" beneath a man's "foot", and, despite her stranger's protestations of being able to preserve her freedom, she sees no possibility of this. Haskill similarly observes that Lyndall is Schreiner's

[52] *The Story of an African Farm*, 210.
[53] Monsman, 71.
[54] Louise Green. "Olive Schreiner and the Labour of Writing." *English Academy Review: South African Journal of English Studies* (2012). 170.

way of demonstrating that women in the nineteenth century "were at a crossroads where they [hungered] for both love and freedom".[55] After the death of Lyndall's child, her stranger tries one last time to persuade her to marry him:

> My darling, let me put my hand around you, and guard you from the world. As my wife they shall never touch you…you shall have perfect freedom. Lyndall, grand little woman, for your own sake be my wife![56]

Marriage affects Lyndall both personally and politically, further indicative of the "crossroads" Haskill observes. Her stranger promises that, through marriage, he can "put [his] hand around [her]", and "guard [her] from the world." Haskill argues that Lyndall's death and her inability to wed is a result of the fact that she cannot merge her desires for love and freedom in Victorian society in a way that does not compromise either. While this stands true, there is also textual evidence to suggest that Lyndall never really "loved" her stranger. Earlier in the novel, Lyndall equates the prospect of marriage for a "ring and a new name" with a prostitution of the soul, and a marriage without "love" as the uncleanliest traffic that defiles the world."[57] Her response to her stranger's last marriage proposal is indicative of this:

> I cannot marry you. I will always love you for the sake of what lay by me those three hours; but there it ends. I must know and see, I cannot be bound to one whom I love as I love you.[58]

Though she "loves" her stranger for the sake of the child they shared, it "ends" there. She does not love him with the pure and total love she aspires to – he is "not [her] prince", as she tells Gregory Rose, and so a marriage to him would be a violation of both her personal and

[55]Christine Haskill. "Valuable Failure as a Unifying Principle in *The Story of an African Farm.*" *ELT* Vol. 57 No. 1 (2014) 89.
[56] *The Story of an African Farm,* 278.
[57] *Ibid,* 190.
[58] *Ibid,* 279.

political ideals, of both her love and her freedom. Through saying "I cannot be bound to one whom I love as you", Lyndall suggests that there indeed exists a person she *can* be bound to, but her stranger is not that person. In Chapter Two we will see that in *Contending Forces,* Hopkins, too, considers the idea of marriage for love: her heroine, Sappho, definitely considers love a prerequisite for marriage – she has two possible suitors: Will Smith, and Monsieur Louis who she meets at the convent after she flees Boston. She refuses Monsieur Louis's hand in marriage despite the fact that he is just as "socially respectable" as Will, because she does not love him – but more on this in the following chapter.[59]

Lyndall's marriage (or lack thereof) is, however, not the only representation of matrimony in *The Story of an African Farm.* Lyndall's cousin, Em, is portrayed largely in terms of her marital pursuits. She strives toward tenets of true womanhood and longs to be a wife and mother. She falls in love with Gregory Rose, an effeminate man who comes to labour at *The Story of an African Farm*, and is betrothed to him only to have him fall in love with Lyndall, who consequently does not return his affections. In an elaborate attempt to be close to Lyndall, Rose leaves the farm (and Em) and disguises himself as a woman, in so doing obtaining a job as Lyndall's nursemaid at the lodging house where Lyndall has given birth and fallen ill. Rose stays with Lyndall until she dies (all the while incognito), where after he returns to the farm to tell Em the news, and proceeds to then marry her.[60]

Em is often described as merely a foil for Lyndall, where her traditional views on love and marriage serve only as a means of contrast for Lyndall's liberal feminist quest for self-sufficiency and female independence. She is, after all, not nearly as beautiful as Lyndall, and is forced to marry a man Lyndall did not want (Rose). Interestingly however, although Em

[59] Pauline Hopkins. *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. 353-357.
[60] This instance in the novel has been greatly analysed in terms of its gender-role-reversal, a conscious tactic on behalf of Schreiner to undermine gender stereotypes and categorical rigidity.

has wanted to be a wife and mother all of her life, when she is eventually betrothed to Rose, she is not "happy". In a significant passage, she tells Waldo:

> "Why is it is always so, Waldo, always so?" she said; "we long for things, and long for them, and pray for them; we would give all we have to come near to them, but we never reach them. Then at last, too late, just when we don't want them anymore, when all the sweetness is taken out of them, then they come. We don't want them then," she said, folding her hands resignedly on her little apron. [61]

It would seem that Em is speaking of her impending marriage explicitly, as she tells Waldo shortly hereafter of her betrothal to Gregory Rose. Traditional marriage – one involving arranged partnerships for the sake of reproduction and/or social propriety – was something that Em had "long[ed] for", but when she finally received her wish, it was "too late"; all the "sweetness" had been "taken out of" it. Schreiner thus seems to be suggesting through Em that even those who covet marriage for social propriety are not fulfilled by such a union. [62]

Intrinsically linked to the notion of love and marriage is that of motherhood. Motherhood and its nurturing qualities play integral parts in Schreiner's corpus of writing (political and fictional), but Lyndall's pregnancy in *The Story of an African Farm* and relationship to motherhood is peculiar. As briefly alluded to earlier, Lyndall falls pregnant out of wedlock. She refuses to marry the father of her child, yet agrees to leave the Karoo farm of her childhood with him in order to give birth in a place removed from everyone she knows, namely the Transvaal.[63] At a lodging house, she births her child who only lives a mere three hours. The child is buried in a shallow grave at the back of the lodging house. Lyndall mourns her child by standing over its grave for several hours in pouring rain, and

[61] *The Story of an African Farm,* 296.
[62] Em is often discarded by scholars analysing *The Story of an African Farm,* but she is actually a very interesting figure. She deserves more attention than I am able to give her in this paper.
[63] Lyndall calls the Transvaal "out of the world" on page 239.

shortly after becomes bedridden. We are never told what sex the child is, or what medically afflicted either Lyndall or her child.

Lyndall never wanted to be a mother. Upon her return from boarding school, she tells Em: "I do not so greatly admire the crying of babies."[64] Later, to Waldo, she confesses her fear of child-rearing:

> I would not like to bring a soul into this world. When it sinned and when it suffered something like a dead hand would fall on me, – "You did it, you, for your own pleasure you created this thing! See your work!" If it lived to be eighty it would always hang like a mill-stone round my neck, have the right to demand good from me, and curse me for its sorrow.[65]

It is interesting to note here that she refers to potential children as "souls" rather than bodies, hinting at a process of societal conditioning that takes place in identity formation.[66] Moreover, Lyndall stresses the immense moral responsibility that accompanies motherhood and childrearing, deducing that it is a "terrible thing" to bring child into world.[67] In stark contradiction to the above expression of the severity and "terrible" nature of motherhood, Lyndall tells Waldo in an earlier passage that motherhood is in fact "the mightiest and noblest of human work", and that "there never was a great man who had not a great mother."[68] Lyndall's ambivalence about motherhood stems, in part, from the fact that while she deems motherhood to be mighty and noble, it is not meant for *her* as in individual. She thus loses her child very quickly after its birth, in part representing the fact that as a woman, she possesses the biological capacity to bring forth children; however, that is not enough – she lacks the

[64] *The Story of an African Farm,* 184.
[65] *Ibid,* 209.
[66] This echoes Gayatri Spivak's allusion to imperialist "soul-making" in *Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism,* but it is an allusion I explore later in greater detail with regards to female aspirations and race later in this essay.
[67] *The Story of an African Farm,* 209.
[68] *Ibid,* 193.

moral and emotional conviction needed to mould that "soul" into a functional human being. Her child "wanted to drink" and "wanted warmth" but Lyndall could not provide for it.[69]

Green writes that while Schreiner's writing values motherhood for its ability to demonstrate concern and nurturing outside of the self, for some characters it becomes a mode of entrapment.[70] Lyndall is "deformed" by her pregnancy: the activation of her reproductive and biological capacity overwhelms her quest for intellectual and social equality, hampering her quest for self-sufficiency and negating the gender equality she has fought for all her life, largely as a result of the socio-political restrictions and expectations placed on women (and particularly mothers) at the time. Indeed, she tells her stranger that her pregnancy has caused her to "[lose] the right to meet on equal terms."[71] He then tries his best to persuade her to marry him during her pregnancy, promising to "guard" and protect her.[72]

Lyndall does not view his persuasion as true care: as mentioned previously, she sees it as his way of trying to "master" her. In this way, pregnancy and child-bearing also become propagandistic tools available to men (and women) who deny responsibility in parenthood and reproduction. Lyndall seethes at the fact that for such people, it is socially acceptable to say "God sends the little babies":

> Of all the dastardly revolting lies men tell to suit themselves, I hate that the most…Men do not say God sends the books, or the newspaper articles, or the machines they make; then sigh, and shrug their shoulders and say they can't help it. Why do they say so about other things? Liars! "God sends the little babies!"[73]

---

[69] *The Story of an African Farm,* 278.
[70] Green, 167.
[71] *The Story of an African Farm,* 278.
[72] *Ibid.*
[73] *The Story of an African Farm,* 209. In 1912, almost 20 years after The Story of an African Farm was written, Schreiner wrote that "to be a real mother intellectually and emotionally as well as physically is the highest function in life except perhaps to be a real father." Child-rearing is thus posited then (in 1912) as a mutual undertaking between the sexes, perhaps indicative of modern child-rearing practices (quoted in Monsman, 12-13).

She thus refutes the idea that humans are not responsible for procreation, emphasising a need for accountability on the behalf of parents. She buttresses her argument by telling Waldo the story of her own parents, who left her to fend for herself because of their lack of responsibility toward her. Despite the fact that her father was dying of consumption and her mother "knew she had nothing to support [Lyndall] on", they still "created [her] to feed like a dog from stranger hands."[74]

What does thwarted motherhood teach Lyndall then? Why does Schreiner have Lyndall bear a child only to lose it? Haskill tries to explain this conundrum by conceptualising Schreiner's preoccupation with motherhood in *The Story of an African Farm* (and other works) as advocating a "mother heart", where Schreiner attempts to transport maternal instincts and duties from the private sphere to the public. Rooted in this position of motherhood and mothering, is a maternal investment in the world – in other words, a feminist ethics rooted in sympathy and compassion that stems from, but *transcends*, the domestic sphere.[75] Haskill contends that through mothering and giving birth, Lyndall is still unable to develop a mother heart; she remains detached and "caught up in self". It is only through her grief and her mourning for her child that she learns to extend (or transcend) her private sphere towards the public. Upon her death bed, Lyndall has the epiphany that "happiness is a great love and much serving", a moment that Haskill reads as pointing to her experience or acceptance of the idea of the mother heart, that is, a redefinition of power (or happiness) as care.[76] Ultimately, we as readers never know the exact nature of Lyndall's epiphany. Instead of providing narrative closure at the point of Lyndall's death, the following questions are posed:

[74] *The Story of an African Farm,* 209.
[75] Haskill, 93.
[76] *The Story of an African Farm,* 280; Haskill, 94.

> Had she found what she sought for – something to worship? Had she ceased from being? Who shall tell us? There is a veil of terrible mist over the face of the Hereafter.[77]

If motherhood and marriage are explicit considerations in *The Story of an African Farm,* dealing directly with transforming and liberating female subjectivity in the nineteenth century, the issue of race is perhaps more implicit.[78] My main interest lies in how racialisations affect identity construction, agency and interaction between female characters in *The Story of an African Farm*: how are non-white women portrayed, and why? How do white women view non-white women in the novel? What is Lyndall's relation to non-white women, and how are her feminist credos linked to or impacted by these relations?

There are four main white female characters in the novel: Em, Lyndall, Tant' Sannie and her niece, Trana. Interestingly, they are all differentiated according to language and/or nationality – Em is English, Tant' Sannie is (Dutch) Afrikaans, as is her niece, Trana, – except for Lyndall. Lyndall is never given a linguistic or national identity – she is not linked to a specific racial, linguistic or national group. Instead, her womanhood and experiences are described in terms of colour imagery.[79] As a child, Lyndall experiences a characteristic "flush" each time she shows excessive optimism, passion or conviction, a flush which covers her "delicate features" and "[deepens] at every word."[80] When she is afraid, however, she is described as "white" with fear, a feature she similarly possesses when in shock, an example being the aftermath of Otto being attacked, where her "face was rather white."[81] Most

[77] *The Story of an African Farm,* 284.
[78] In terms of terminology and racial categorisation, it is perhaps important to note that in a dispersed, largely isolated and fluctuating society such as South Africa in the late 1800s, it is impossible to impose racial categories congruously and evenly to the novel. Several different terms existed for referring to peoples of different complexions, and they were often used unpredictably and interchangeably. For this reason, I make use of the more contemporary (and, admittedly, reductionist) categorisation of white, black and coloured female characters, in order to facilitate clarification.
[79] "Colour imagery" here refers to mentions in the novel that may be linked to race, but are not limited to it.
[80] *The Story of an African Farm,* 48, 126-7.
[81] *Ibid,* 48, 89.

significantly, when she is dying, she is continually described in terms of her "whiteness": her "face" as "white as a mountain lily"; her pale, frail, "white hand[s]".Just before her death, she stares into a mirror, and the colour imagery is intensely significant:

> The white face in the pillow looked into the white face in the glass. They had looked at each other so often before…Now tonight it had come to this. The dying eyes on the pillow looked into the dying eyes in the glass, they knew that their hour had come.[82]

The "flushed" face of her childhood progresses, through the novel's course, to the "white face" of her adulthood – the "white face" of grief and despair – and, ultimately, "the white face" morphs into a dead face. Rather than symbolising purity, light, or power, whiteness for Lyndall appears to symbolise coldness and death. Colour, or flush, is, in her childhood, her marker of life – of passion, conviction and action, while the whiteness she experiences in adulthood constricts and ultimately suffocates her. Her "whiteness" here may be seen as a symbol of colonial, patriarchal power – a highly racialised power that intensifies as she ages, and ends up crushing her feminist aspirations and leaves her dead.

Considering the non-white female characters in the novel proves a difficult task: they feature infrequently and, when they do, are very seldom given their own dialogue.[83] Generally, the non-white female characters are not given positive attributes – Tant' Sannie's Hottentot handmaid is portrayed as vindictive, malicious and nosey, whereas the black women on the farm are known to "stare stupidly" at their surroundings and are more often than not "half-naked."[84]

---

[82] *The Story of an African Farm,* 283.
[83] Non-white women in *African Farm* mostly inhabit servant positions, whether as a maids or nannies for Tant' Sannie or nurses, as in the case of Lyndall's Mozambican nurse.
[84] *The Story of an African Farm,* 51.

The white female character that has the most pronounced and vocal perceptions of non-white female characters in the novel is Tant' Sannie; indeed, in the novel she provides the *only* substantial account of non-white women from the perspective of a white female. Though she allows her coloured maid to attend Sunday services with her husband, she will not allow her black maids and servants to attend because she holds them to be "descended from apes, and [in need of] no salvation."[85] Her intense racism extends beyond the scope of black women to encompass all black people - upon thinking that Uncle Otto has betrayed her, she tells him:

> My Kaffirs will gladly drag you through the sand. They would do it gladly, any one of them, for a bit of tobacco, for all your prayings with them…Go, dog…Praying with the kaffirs behind the kraals. Go, you Kaffir's dog![86]

She views black people as commodities, as things she possesses – "*my* Kaffirs" (italics added). She portrays them as disloyal and cruel, and it seems it is the ultimate insult to call Uncle Otto a "Kaffir's dog".[87] Tant' Sannie thus shows no sign of any solidarity between women of different races, going so far as to view black people as a different species to herself – as "descended from apes", as though she herself were not.

What is Schreiner's intention in portraying non-white women at all if they are not to be "part of the story"? They are not given names or any real sense of interiority, and appear sparsely throughout the narrative. Indeed, as Dan Jacobson notes in his introduction to the 2005 edition of *The Story of an African Farm,* the novel is "about the white people on the farm, not the black":

---

[85] *Ibid.*
[86] *Ibid,* 89, 90.
[87] The irony of the situation is, of course, that in her unjust treatment of Uncle Otto, Tant' Sannie herself showing her own morals and values to be even beneath the low moral standards she holds the black farm servants to.

> it is far from being the novel of 'race relations' which many people have come to expect every South African novel to be. The black people in it are merely extras, supernumeraries, part of the background; the Boers are never seen as usurpers, but rather as people wholly indigenous to the ground they occupy.[88]

Jacobsen goes on to state that the only instance in the novel where one really gains a sense of how a non-white character may feel is when Tant' Sannie chases Otto off the farm because of Bonaparte's lies. In this scene, Otto turns to a "Coloured maid" who was "his friend" for help, but instead of aiding Otto's plight, the maid turns to Tant' Sannie and tells her to "Give it to him, old Missus!" (beat him/chase him away) and thinks to herself, laughing: "It was so nice to see the white man who had been master for so long hunted down."[89] Jacobsen ponders whether this isolated scene was "creative detachment" on Schreiner's part, or at the very least "creative immersion."

Without any other substantial portrayals of non-white experience, agency or interaction in the novel, this extract is very difficult to situate. However, I find it unlikely that this section was an act of "creative detachment." Rather, this brief inclusion of the "Coloured maid's" thoughts on Schreiner's part seems rather calculated, for no other non-white character is given paralleled interiority or an opportunity to speak. This makes the fact that we are informed of and allowed access to her vindictive pleasure in the "white man" being "taken down" all the more significant: Schreiner is highlighting the fact that while white men such as Uncle Otto may have good intentions and think of non-white peoples as his "friends", the social and economic order of segregation and racial oppression that existed at the time eradicated any reality or reciprocation of such "friendship".

---

[88]Dan Jacobsen, "Introduction". *The Story of an African Farm*. London: Penguin, 2005. 24.
[89] Quoted from *Ibid,* 24.

If we are to look further at the other non-white women in the novel, Louise Green explains that their lack agency or interaction could be attributed to the fact that, as an integral part of colonial culture (indeed, as the labour force upon which that culture was built), they "could not be left out."[90] Green argues then, similarly to Jacobs, that Schreiner includes non-white characters only as accompaniments, because the oppression, degradation and/or exploitation of non-white peoples is not what is "under investigation" in *The Story of an African Farm* – the novel's primary concern is Lyndall's journey, her female "Anglo-socio-political quest" (that is, her striving toward white English social and political autonomy).[91] In terms of the novel as a whole, I agree with Green's view, though if we consider the scene of the "Coloured maid" and Uncle Otto it becomes evident that the brutality and inequality of race relations in South Africa is indeed deeply embedded in the novel's subtext.

Green's statement that Lyndall's "Anglo-socio-political quest" is the novel's primary concern becomes especially interesting if considered in terms of Gayatri Spivak's notion of "soul-making" in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason.*[92] In this iconic text, Spivak explores Brontë's Jane *Eyre,* Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* in order to identify "feminist individualism in the age of imperialism." She explains that this "feminist individualism" is "represented on two registers: childrearing and soul-making", where "the first is domestic-society-through-sexual-reproduction (cathected as 'companionate love') [and] the second is the imperialist project cathected as civil-society-through-social mission."[93] In other words, a two-fold task of attaining reproductive legitimacy (through marriage) and the assertion of moral superiority (often through social or missionary activities)

[90] Green, 161.
[91] Ibid, 160.
[92] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. Originally published as: "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." *Critical Inquiry* 12. (Autumn 1985): 243-246.

[93] Spivak, 116.

were necessary for nineteenth century feminist heroines to assert their (individualist) female subjectivity. This subjectivity was then created against the backdrop of the "barbarous [and often female] Other". As Stephen Morton explains, "the enlightened morality of the western female individual in the domestic sphere simultaneously [defines] the non-western woman as 'not-yet-human Other'." [94]

In Lyndall's case, I have to disagree with this statement. While Jane Eyre may deliberately demonise and animalise Bertha in order to assert her own place in Rochester's household (and thereby too enjoy the fruits of British marriage and motherhood), Lyndall's entire quest fights against the very notions of British womanhood. Moreover, Brontë depicted Jane as the absolute paragon of virtue, as opposed to the monstrous, bestial, mixed-race Bertha – in Schreiner's novel, Lyndall has no equivalent racial counterpart, and is, herself, fighting against typical notions of virtue. As a character, she is narratively removed from the non-white female characters in that very little (if any) dialogue occurs between them. In this absence of textual interaction, there is little evidence to point to Lyndall's demonization of non-white women in order to assert her own "Anglo-socio-political quest" – in fact, as I argue later, Lyndall's feminist quest cannot be reduced to "Anglo-social-political" at all .[95] Thus, while the absence of non-white interiority and agency is indeed disturbing in *The Story of an African Farm*, I do not read Lyndall's quest (her aspirations and subjectivity) as built upon, or dependent on, that absence.

Furthermore, if we are to take the aspect of child-rearing into account, Lyndall's "deformed" pregnancy may indeed be further proof of a rejection of imperialist values: while Lyndall falls pregnant and is able to fulfil the initial step to attaining the nineteenth century

[94] Stephen Morton. *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.* Oxon: Routledge, 2003. 88.
[95] There are of course intense and complex power relations and inequalities inherent in the relationship between white colonial women and non-white female colonial subjects. However, my argument here merely points to the fact that Lyndall's quest, as both a colonial white woman and colonial *New Woman*, is not pursued at the expense of the demonization of the non-white female characters in the novel.

"feminist individualism" Spivak identifies, she refuses to legitimise that pregnancy through marriage (or "companionate love") and thereby too refuses the act of "soul-making" in the imperialist sense. We must also remember that Lyndall herself often uses the term "soul" in *The Story of an African Farm,* in conjunction with motherhood. There, however, she expresses that she does want to be responsible for another "soul" – perhaps pointing further to the fact that she does not want a part in imperialist politics, and the "soul-making" it implies.[96]

Indeed, imperialist politics permeate both *The Story of an African Farm* and *Contending Forces.* During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the British Empire dominated vast portions of the world. *The Story of an African Farm* is set in a British colony and fights against British colonial norms and, if we consider Hopkins for a moment, there is significance in the fact that *Contending Forces* similarly draws from the long and tumultuous history of slavery embedded in colonialism. I deal in greater detail with the impact of imperialism/colonialism in *Contending Forces* in Chapter 2, but it is important to flag here that both the novels are directly influenced by imperial constructions of race, gender and power.

Louise Green states that *The Story of an African Farm* marks the "beginning" of Schreiner's "lifelong engagement" with what she calls "dominant imperialist discourses" on human interactions and social identity.[97] Indeed, imperial and patriarchal discourses go hand in hand, and the values Lyndall rejects – the arbitrariness of gender roles and the reformation of female concerns such as love, marriage and motherhood – are in direct contrast with those that empire propagates. Reading empire as a patriarchal project, Lyndall's expositions on female oppression may well be seen as Schreiner's means of attacking empire itself.

---

[96] *The Story of an African Farm,* 209.
[97] Green, 160.

The first allusion to empire made in the novel is when Lyndall tells Em that when she is "grown up", she will "wear real diamonds" in her hair, an implicit reference to the diamond rush and forthcoming mineral revolution that South Africa experienced towards the end of the nineteenth century.[98] Anna Snaith notes that diamonds in general are associated with "romance, female luxury and the marriage contract", and a woman wearing a diamond (presumably given to her as a gift from a man) is the "ultimate symbol of love commodified."[99] While childhood Lyndall seems to be excited at the prospect of wearing "real diamonds", adult Lyndall shirks all forms of female ownership and commodification. The allusion to diamonds here may thus be indicative of the changes society was to witness with the coming of the mineral revolution – the intensified commodification of women which according to Snaith, may be linked to the intensified "commodification of… colonial peoples and resources" in the early 20th century.[100]

Lyndall's critique of colonialism gains most of its impetus when she returns from boarding school. She is appalled by the uselessness of girls' "finishing schools". Lyndall says that the schools, modelled on British notions of ladyhood, "cultivate" only "imbecility and weakness", and she wished she had ran away on her fourth day there and "hired [herself] to the first Boer-woman whose farm [she] came to, to make fire under her soap pot."[101] Hinted at here is the notion that British ideals of femininity and female occupations (such as sewing scatter cushions and learning music) are ill-fitted for the colony – being confined indoors, making decorative household paraphernalia and singing songs is, for Lyndall, useless in the South African landscape. Karel Schoeman similarly writes of other Victorian customs that were inserted into the South African landscape with the expansion of the colony, such as Victorian dress. Women, for the sake of social decorum, were expected to wear thick,

[98] *The Story of African Farm,* 45.
[99] Anna Snaith, *Modernist Voyages: Colonial Women Writers in London 1890-1945.* 46.
[100] *Ibid*, 46-7.
[101] *The Story of an African Farm,* 186.

cumbersome gowns and Victorian clothing despite the impracticality of such attire in the hot, African landscape. Interestingly, Schoeman also notes that as the imperial regime expanded, women's clothing designs became more and more restricted, perhaps a physical symptom of the increasing social oppression at the hands of a patriarchal regime.[102]

Apart from the material impracticality of imperial customs in the colony, colonialism placed especial stress on the abstract and emotional aspects of the female situation, making white female subjects in the colony almost doubly marginalised – not only for being women (and thus inferior to men), but also for being *colonial* women, distanced from the centres of imperial power and stereotypically prone to "madness".[103] Green attributes Lyndall's lack of congruency in her words and actions, the fact that she aspires to female independence and reformation yet is unable to achieve them, as a result of the contradictory spaces white colonial women were forced to inhabit: as colonial subjects, their socially and geographically peripheral status disabled them from achieving or forging a way forward.[104]

Relatedly, Jed Esty, in an analysis of *African Farm* as a *Bildungsroman*, notes that narrative progress is turned on its head in the novel, with Lyndall's (and Waldo's) "development" ending in premature death.[105] For Esty, Lyndall can never mature, because her environment cannot mature – in the colony, there can be no real *bildung*, for imperialism itself casts its colonies and its "subject peoples" as "underdeveloped" and "youthful", stuck in a time of "endless not-yet". Esty's findings reinforce Green's reading of Lyndall as colonial woman, marginalised on the physical and social periphery: as a pioneering New Woman,

---

[102] Schoeman, 213-216.
[103] See Green, 168 on the process of inscribing a sense of female self. Black women, too, were doubly marginalised, for being female and for being "inferior" as a result of their race.
[104] Green, 169.
[105] Jed Esty, "The Colonial Bildungsroman: The Story of an African Farm and the Ghost of Goethe." *Victorian Studies* Vol. 49, No. 3 (2007):414. Esty makes sense of this phenomenon by reading the novel as an extension of the socio-economic situation in South Africa when the novel was written, marking the pinnacle of the imperialist era: a moment where global capitalism was becoming entrenched with racialised thinking and justification, and middle class commitments to social mobility were dissipating.

Lyndall cannot mature in colonial South Africa – she cannot withstand the tribulations and sufferings that are needed for her female subjectivity to reach "maturity" in a landscape that is harsh, underdeveloped and fraught with internal and external socio-political tensions, and literally dies as a result.[106]

Having discussed Lyndall specifically, and secondary female characters in *The Story of an African Farm* more generally, in terms of marriage, motherhood, race and colonialism, I now wish address the aspect of transnational feminism in the novel. Many of Lyndall's "feminist" credos possess overtones of transnational (and transracial) applicability; that is, they can be broadly applied and related to the oppression of other peoples of various racial, linguistic, national and gender groups – indeed, as mentioned previously, Lyndall is never assigned a fixed national, racial or linguistic identity as a symbol of the transnational and transracial applicability of her credos.

As a child, she tells Em: "When [the] day comes, and I am strong, I will hate *everything* that has power, and help *everything* that is weak" (my italics).[107] The all-inclusive "everything" comes forth again when Lyndall provides Waldo with her exposition on the position of women, choosing to use non-referential metaphors in order to, in my view, allow for inclusivity and the applicability of her credos to *all* oppressed peoples. An example of this is her metaphor of the "bird" and the "cage":

> If the bird *does* like the cage, and *does* like its sugar, and will not leave it, why keep the door so very carefully shut? Why not open it, a little? Do they know there is many a bird will not break its wings against the bars, but would fly if the doors were open.[108]

[106] Esty, 414. Colonialism is thus antithetical to female progress.
[107] *The Story of an African Farm,* 93.
[108] *The Story of an African Farm,* 192.

Instead of referring to many a "South African" or many a "woman", she uses a non-human signifier in order to extend the relevance of oppression and limitation to various social categories. She goes on to state, "If two men climb one ladder, did you ever see the weakest anywhere but at the foot?...Nature left to herself will as beautifully apportion man's work to his capacities as long ages ago she graduates the colours on the bird's breast."[109] Again, Lyndall interestingly refers to "man's work", not the "black/white man's work" or "women's work", but "man" in general –"man" which, according to Green, may refer to Lyndall's own "abstract imagined community" (of both men *and* women) and be extended to the "human species" as whole.[110] In support of this all-inclusive view of the human race, Lyndall posits that *all* "men" (humans) – irrespective of race, class, gender – have *all* "things" – virtues, vices, capabilities, and limitations, extending this metaphor to encompass transnational scope:

> sometimes what is more amusing still than tracing the likeness between man and man, is to trace the analogy there *always* is between the progress and development of one individual and of a whole nation; or again, between a single nation and the entire human race. It is pleasant when it dawns on you that the one is just the other written out in large letters; and very odd to find all the little follies and virtues, and developments and retrogressions, written out in the big world's book that you find in your little internal self. (My italics)[111]

According to Lyndall, there is "always" a "likeness" between "individuals" and "nations" and, significantly, "single nation[s]" and "the entire human race."[112] Moreover, the novel's ideas of universality and universal unity exceed Lyndall and her death. In trying to come to

[109] *The Story of an African Farm*, 193.
[110] Green, 160.
[111] *Ibid.*
[112] In further support of Schreiner's transnational intentions in *African Farm,* Jed Esty describes her project as weaving "classical and colonial vignettes into an expansive transcultural perspective." 420.

terms with the grief of Lyndall's death, Waldo comforts himself with the following statement:

> For the little soul that cries aloud for the continued personal existence of itself and its beloved, there is no help. For the soul which knows itself no more as a unit, but as a part of the Universal Unity of which the Beloved also is a part; which feels within itself the throb of the Universal Life; for that soul there is no death.[113]

The suggestion here is that individualist plights – like Waldo's and Lyndall's – are only meaningful when considered in terms of their relation to a whole/group, ultimately stressing the value of mutual complicity and interconnectivity between humans (as a race) in a system of "Universal [and transcendental] Unity."

If Lyndall's feminist plight in particular were to be considered in terms of this belief in "universal unity" and/or equality, there is evidence to suggest that her feminist credos could be applied to not only the white female situation in South Africa, but the oppression of (all) women on a transnational and transracial scale.[114] I argue that Lyndall's feminist aspirations, although depicted and enacted through the thoughts and deeds of a white female character, are not constricted to, or by, her race. There is no evidence to suggest that Lyndall's aspirations are pursued at the expense of, or intended at the exclusion of, non-white women. On the contrary, if we are to consider Lyndall's feminist expositions in terms of Schreiner's greater textual corpus which advocated not only equality between men and women, but equality between races, Lyndall's aspirations seem to certainly exceed racial

[113] *The Story of an African Farm,* 290.

[114] This also relates to the oppression of all peoples on a transnational scale, referring to any problems of unequal power relations and social hostilities. My scope in this essay is, however, limited to feminist preoccupations. Monsman sees the formal aspects of the novel mirroring the novel's, and Lyndall's in particular, on widespread oppression: "[The] resistance to the more traditional forms of narrative closure is an important element in Schreiner's attack upon *all* hierarchies of power, *all* categories of limitation (my italics)." (18). The narrative closure (or lack thereof) that he is referring to relates to the fact that the two main protagonists (Waldo and Lyndall) both mysteriously die in young adulthood without a true explanation given for the cause or symbolic meaning of their deaths.

barriers.[115] The fact remains, however, that the novel does not deal with non-white women in the same way that it does with their white counterparts. In trying to understand this seeming *faux pas* on Schreiner's part, Monsman urges critics to understand that:

> Though Schreiner evolved toward a vision of human unity, the young Olive in the diamond fields [had] a more complicated and ambivalent relationship to racial politics. Somewhere between the white "master" seated on his bucket culling the riches and the black worker who digs the alluvial deposits is the young colonial woman who at best partakes marginally in male prerogatives…and who has no language adequate to effect a rapprochement with the natives who are her counterparts in dispossession.[116]

The Story of an African Farm is Schreiner's youngest novel and, as Monsman suggests, it is possible that at the time of its publication she did not possess the "language adequate" to articulate her understanding that non-white women were, indeed, "her counterparts in dispossession."[117] Such articulations are more prevalent in her later works, such as in *Man to Man* where the protagonist, Rebecca, takes pity on her husband's coloured mistress and adopts their illegitimate lovechild as her own.

While Schreiner famously never aligned herself or "declared her debt" to any feminist writer, it is evident that Lyndall portrays a comprehensive and coherent feminist philosophy.[118] Schreiner – through Lyndall – overhauls perceived notions of femininity, womanhood, motherhood and marriage in *The Story of an African Farm,* in so doing ensuring that the novel's prolific feminist credos of equality, mutuality and responsibility in

[115] This means that Lyndall's feminist aspirations do not EXCLUDE non-white women from attaining or aspiring to them. It is not the same as true womanhood, which was only applicable to white women.
[116] Monsman, 9.
[117] She articulates this understanding much more eloquently in later works.
[118] While Schreiner was asked to write an introduction for Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication,* she does not directly align herself to Wollstonecraft's views. See Joyce Avrech Berkman's *The Healing Imagination of Olive Schreiner* for more on this topic. Boston: Massachusetts Press, 1993.

motherhood are constructed in such a way as to transcend their local context, making them essentially transnational *and* transracial in scope.

In the next chapter, I discuss the ways in which Pauline Hopkins's *Contending Forces* similarly espouses a distinctive feminist strategy that works, like Schreiner's, towards redefining and transforming ways of thinking about womanhood in the nineteenth century, shifting the focus to the American context. In the next chapter, I thus explore Hopkins's romance novel and the specificities of the African-American female condition, all the while remaining attentive to the strong ethos of transnational feminism that is, as in *The Story of an African Farm,* embedded in the novel's subtext.

Chapter Two: Sappho, Black Womanhood and the Undermining of Race

Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins was a multifaceted figure, producing works in a host of different genres – musicals, mystery, romance, thrillers and non-fiction, to name a few. As editor of the *Colored American Magazine* (*CAM*) from 1900-1904, Hopkins worked tirelessly to establish an African American literary style for a targeted African American audience. The CAM was one of the first major literary outputs created by African Americans, for African Americans and concerned itself with promoting racial and societal upliftment. The preoccupations of Hopkins's writing thus often closely overlap with those of CAM, championing for the advancement of African Americans and proving their sense of self-worth in a society filled with racial prejudice.

Hopkins is especially well-known for her use of the romance genre to explore and highlight social and racial concerns and injustices. In-depth examinations of her work done by critics such as Hazel V. Carby in *Reconstructing Womanhood* and Claudia Tate in *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire* are invaluable studies proving the political nature of Hopkins's romances. I am primarily interested in Hopkins's first, and only, full-length novel to be published as an individual entity (and not as a serial in the *CAM*), *Contending Forces.*

My interest in the novel stems from the fact that *Contending Forces* operates as a feminist text on several levels: championing for the rights of women (and black women in particular), through a typically "female" genre (romance), Hopkins actively engages with discourses of racism, sexual violence, oppression, prejudice and imperialism. Feminist concerns permeate the majority of Hopkins extant written works, but *Contending Forces* in particular does prolific work in bringing the troubles and issues of African American women to the fore at the turn of the century.

More significantly in terms of my comparative project, the feminist concerns of *Contending Forces* speak to and with Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* in various ways, including but not limited to issues of marriage, motherhood and love. This chapter explores these feminist preoccupations within Hopkins's novel in greater depth, seeking parallels and divergences from Schreiner's project while still analysing the work in its own right.

Before I begin, the different histories of black and white women in the United States need to be elaborated on. As I mentioned briefly in the introduction, slavery in America operated on two separate yet interdependent racialised codes of female characterisation: white women were considered embodiments of true womanhood – pure, pious, virtuous and glorified mothers and wives – whereas black women were seen as sexually rampant, morally vitiated and breeders.[119]In *"Raising the Stigma": Black Womanhood and the Marked Body in Pauline Hopkins's* Contending Forces, Jennifer Putzi explains that the female slave's body was deemed public property and perpetually exposed, whereas the white woman's body was sacred – never to be violated and always constrained to the private sphere. In accordance with this, female slaves were denied the protection of home and family as well as the culturally condoned femininity of their white counterparts.[120] Acts of rape furthermore served as a means of maintaining these strictly racialised gender categories: through being raped by white men and slave masters, black women were perpetually violated and inasmuch restrained from ever reaching the realm of true womanhood.

When slavery ended, stereotypes regarding black women did not disappear. Instead, societal prejudice gained impetus as the socio-economic justification of race barriers crumbled with slavery's abolition. Hazel Carby writes that rape and pejorative perceptions of

[119] Carby, 20.
[120] Jennifer Putzi. "Raising the Stigma": Black Womanhood and the Marked Body in Pauline Hopkins's *Contending Forces". College Literature* 31.2 (Spring 2004). 3.

black women and their moral worth continued to be "weapon[s] of oppression" after emancipation, and new political confinements were sought in order to maintain black oppression. [121]These took the form of Jim Crow and anti-miscegenation laws which were, in the late 1890s and early 1900s, becoming increasingly imposed and naturalised.[122] It is within this context that *Contending Forces* situates itself, tackling the legacy of slavery that continued to plague its female characters. [123]

In light of the racially oppressive background of slavery and its aftermath, Hopkins begins *Contending Forces* with the story of the Montforts, Caribbean slave-owners who move to North Carolina in an attempt to save their fortune in the face of Britain's impending denunciation of slavery. Upon their arrival, Charles Montfort, patriarch of the family, befriends Anson Pollock, a local plantation owner. Pollock, however, harbours illicit lust for Charles's wife, Grace Montfort, and it is ultimately Pollock's dishonest desire that leads to Grace Montfort's (and her family's) demise.

I am particularly interested in the female characters in the novel: Dora, Sappho and Grace, and I begin my analysis with the latter-mentioned. Grace Montfort is an integral character in the novel, despite the fact that she dies early on in the plot. She is, in all respects, the "perfect heroine": she is beautiful, gracious, and compassionate, a loving mother and a dutiful wife.[124] She thereby also responds to the definition of true womanhood, proving to be committed to her family and domesticity, and of impeachable virtue: when Anson Pollock approaches Grace with an offer of love, she rejects it vehemently:

---

[121] Putzi, 34.
[122] Siobhan Somerville. "Passing through the Closet in Pauline E. Hopkins's *Contending Forces.*" *American Literature.* Vol 69 No 1 (March 1997). 140.
[123] The genre of domestic fiction is often seen to be apolitical, but Claudia Tate proves that the genre served as an "entry point" from which female African American writers could engage with pressing socio-political issues in *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. 5.
[124] *Contending Forces*, 40.

> "Am I so careless of my husband's honor that his friends feel at liberty to insult me?"…Grace Montfort said, while her eyes were blazed with wrath: "Mr Pollock, we are strangers here, my husband and I. He trusts you, and I have no wish to disturb that trust; but if you ever address such words to me again, I shall let Mr. Montfort know the kind of man you are. I promise you that he will know how to deal with you."[125]

Grace's rejection of Pollock is most significant, however, in that this moment serves as a catalyst in the heroine's fate. It is at this moment in the novel that Anson Pollock decides to act on rumours circulated by a local slave-hand, Bill, stating that Grace Montfort had "a black streak in her", in order to exact revenge for her dismissal of him. Pollock's actions reveal the manner in which racial stereotypes were manipulated in order to exact certain ends: Pollock decides to use Bill to fuel the rumours of Grace possessing "black blood" in order to spur on her social demise and gain ultimate possession over her.[126]

The issue of Grace's race is immensely significant. The novel shows that though the actual evidence of Grace's "black blood" is severely lacking – Bill's reasoning that she presented "too much cream color in the face and too little blud seen under the skin for a genooine white 'ooman [sic]" is hardly scientific, and even his companion, Hank, "guffaws" at Bill's claims – the simple suspicion of "black blood" is enough to incriminate her. Carby notes that this is a conscious tactic on Hopkins's behalf to demonstrate the arbitrariness of racial categories: despite Grace's evident embodiment of true womanhood, the mere rumour of her possessing black blood is enough to warrant her cruel treatment.[127]

---

[125] *Contending Forces,* 51.
[126] *Ibid,* 41.
[127] Hazel Carby quoted from Putzi (12). Jennifer Putzi notes that it is important not to forget Grace Montfort's complicity in the institution of slavery – as wife of a plantation owner, she enjoyed the wealth generated from the inhumanity of the system, and is therefore – without condoning her abuse – perhaps being branded as a slave as a means of subverting her position in the institution. Randle also notes that the Montforts, despite Hopkins's portrayal of them as beneficent slave-owners, housed a whipping post on their plantation (13).

Gloria Randle furthermore notes that it is Grace's adherence to true womanhood that results in her ultimate inability to cope with the violence that is enacted toward her: the conventions of "fragility" and sensitivity of spirit that the ideology prescribed leave Grace "unequipped to deal with her change in status and fortune"; Grace cannot deal with becoming "unprotected flesh", and thus "destroy[s] herself".[128] Through Grace's "destruction", Hopkins is not only undermining the process of racial categorisation between black and white, but also critiquing true womanhood in terms of its capacity to sustain a woman's survival in the face of trauma. Carby writes that a "true heroine" in sentimental domestic fiction "would rather die" than live through abuse.[129] For Hopkins and the generation of black women she is addressing – a generation accustomed to continual abuse, psychically and psychologically – death is not a viable option. Grace's story thus foreshadows the novel's most central female concern: the possibilities of generating a true, *black* womanhood.[130]

The primary means of achieving such womanhood is through acts of what I deem "spiritual regeneration", the notion that social violations, injustices or atrocities can be overcome by acts of spiritual, transcendental or religious cleansing/retribution. In the novel, the church, signifying Christianity and its associated principles, is to a large extent represented as Ma Smith's lodging house. The church as a building is a place for the community to frequent in order to morally improve and better themselves. Similarly, Ma Smith's lodging house hosts "reception nights" where "those who were inclined to stray would be influenced either in favour of upright conduct or else shamed into an acceptance of

[128]Gloria Randle. "Mates, Marriage & Motherhood: Feminist Visions in Pauline Hopkins's *Contending Forces*". *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature.* Vol. 18 No. 2 (1999) 195-6; Putzi, 4; *Contending Forces,* 71.
[129] Carby, 34.
[130] Thomas Cassidy claims that true womanhood is displaced entirely in the novel, so that Hopkins can position her female characters as leaders of the black community for the future. I disagree, viewing Hopkins's project as redefining true womanhood to accommodate the involuntary sufferings inflicted on black women in the aftermath of slavery. "Contending Contexts: Pauline Hopkins's Contending Forces." *American Literature Review* Vol. 32 No. 4 (1998). 670.

the right."[131] These reception nights may be seen as domestic "church services", places where the community meet in order to achieve moral and/or spiritual improvement. Furthermore, Ma Smith herself may be seen as a female pastor-figure: she is, in fact, chief stewardess at her church's congregation but, more importantly, she is called "Ma-Smith" by "all the young people" and the rest of the community, similar to "Father" in a church.

Significantly, it is in Ma Smith's lodging house where Dora, Ma Smith's daughter, tells Sappho Clark, the "tragic mulatta" who secretly harbours the burden of being raped by her uncle and bearing his illegitimate child, that God does not judge violated women. Sappho tells Dora that she is not Christian "as [they] of [their] race understand the expression", pointing to the fact that many Christians at the time believed "a woman should be condemned to eternal banishment for the sake of one misstep."[132] Dora refutes this commonly held belief, telling Sappho:

> I have always felt a great curiosity to know the reason why each individual woman loses character and standing in the eyes of the world. I believe that we should hang our heads in shame at having the temerity to judge a fallen sister, could we but know the circumstances attending many such cases.[133]

Here, Dora is essentially stressing the guiltlessness of rape victims in spiritual overtones, suggesting that God does not judge women without knowing "the circumstances attending" cases. Sappho responds by telling Dora: "If our race ever amounts to anything in this world, it will be because such women as you are raised up to save us."[134] While it may seem that Sappho is attributing the future liberation of the race to Dora, she is actually addressing the message that Dora carries: that spiritual regeneration is possible, and capable of re-establishing the virtue of African American women. Mrs Willis, a prominent lady in the

[131] *Contending Forces,* 102-3.
[132] *Ibid,* 100.
[133] *Ibid,* 101.
[134] *Ibid*.

black community who is dedicated to the "advancement of the colored woman", similarly stresses – again, within Ma Smith's lodging house – that the atrocities done to the bodies of African American women through violent actions such as rape, may be "transformed" by cultivating and spiritually regenerating the "nobility of the soul."[135]

In terms of spiritual regeneration working specifically as a means of recuperating black female subjectivity in the novel, it is best to analyse the figure of Sappho Clark. As a teenager, Sappho (then Mabelle Beaubean) was kidnapped by her white uncle and placed in a brothel, where her family found her three weeks later. In that time, Sappho was sexually abused and became pregnant with (presumably) her uncle's child. Unable to face the degradation of the situation, Sappho/Mabelle was taken to a convent by Luke Sawyer, a family friend, where she gave birth to her child and, in the eyes of her family and friends, died. The death of Mabelle Beaubean was, however, only metaphoric; a death of her former identity: Mabelle, placing her child in the care of her great aunt to raise, left the south and reinvented herself as Sappho Clark.

She thus finds herself at Ma Smith's lodging house in Boston, working as a stenographer and bearing hardly any traces of her former life. Upon first meeting Sappho, Dora notes that Sappho has "a story written on her face", but none of the characters in Boston know of Sappho's secret.[136] Both men and women in the Boston African American community come to view Sappho in the highest regard, as a "character of sterling worth—bold, strong and ennobling."[137] Will Smith is especially besotted with Sappho, and a great deal of the novel's plot is centred on consummating their love affair. Her love for Will even tempts her to make peace with her past and shake off her "maddening fears":

---

[135] *Contending Forces,* 155.
[136] *Ibid,* 89.
[137] *Ibid,* 114.

> "Why," [Sappho] asked herself, "why should I always walk in the shadow of a crime for which I am in no way to blame? Why deny myself all the pleasures of a home and love of a man as he who will offer me the noblest heritage of a woman?"…She would rise above the maddening fears, penance for involuntary wrongs, the sack-cloth and ashes of her life, and be as other women, who loved and were beloved.[138]

Sappho's idyllic life and her future with Will begin to unravel when news of her story is leaked at a meeting of the American Colored League (ACL). In response to a discussion on the violation of black women by white men in the country, Luke Sawyer takes the stand and tells the audience of Mabelle Beaubean's story. Luke believes Mabelle to be dead but Sappho, who is part of the audience at this meeting, faints upon hearing him tell her story and has to be carried out of the church hall. Cassidy writes that Sappho's fainting symbolises how far beyond the realms of comprehension the burden of her rape and abuse are to her; the condemnation and ostracisation that Sappho fears society will heap upon her if they were to know the truth cause her to, quite simply, lose consciousness.[139] The Smiths do not suspect Mabelle's story has anything to do with Sappho, but after the ACL meeting Sappho becomes increasingly "silent and depressed."[140] Burying her past moreover proves impossible when John P. Langley learns her secret and threatens to use it against her.

It is at this point in the novel that Grace Montfort's story reappears strongly in the form of allegory: John Langley, a descendent of Pollock, illicitly desires Sappho as his concubine. Sappho, like Grace before her, denies the Pollock advances toward her, and is punished: Langley threatens to reveal her secret, making certain she is aware of the consequences such an action will have:

---

[138] *Contending Forces,* 205.
[139] Cassidy, 668.
[140] *Contending Forces,* 305.

> "…think of your story, and its effect upon Will if he should learn it after marriage!... Girls of fourteen are frequently wives in our Southern climes, where women mature early. A man as supercilious as Will in his pride of Northern birth would take no excuse, and would never forgive." [141]

Sappho mistakes Langley's confrontation as a proposition of marriage, but Langley makes it very clear that Sappho's story makes her unworthy of the "noble heritage" of wifehood: "Marriage!" exclaimed John, "who spoke of marriage? Ambitious men do not marry women with stories like yours!"[142] For Sappho, this is the ultimate dishonour – she internalises Langley's claims that she is not worthy of being a wife; directly threatened with the shame her secret causes her, she is forced to re-acknowledge "the abyss of social ostracism and disgrace" that would follow with the possibility of her rape becoming public knowledge.[143]

Sappho flees the lodging house after Langley's confrontation, leaving a note behind explaining to Will and the Smiths that she is, in fact, Mabelle Beaubean. Her departure does not signal her exit from the novel, but rather the beginning of Sappho's spiritual regeneration. Will, who does not blame Sappho for her past and anxiously wishes to reunite with her, dreams of Sappho and Alphonse, her child, as the Virgin Mary and her son; Dora, similarly, calls the past Sappho is repenting for, the "crucifixion" of her "proud spirit", and the narrator too describes Sappho as representative of "the Negro" who "plods along bearing [a] cross – *carrying the sins of others"* (original italics).[144] Sappho's spiritual regeneration ultimately begins when she decides to publicly "bear" her "cross": to accept the past and reclaim her child. Significantly, she makes this decision at a convent, a religious institution of women bound by service to God. Randle writes that it is first and foremost Sappho's "reclamation of motherhood" that allows her to come to terms with her past and begin to live a happy

[141] *Contending Forces,* 319.
[142] *Ibid*.
[143] *Ibid,* 320.
[144] *Ibid,* 386, 330, 332.

present.[145] Indeed, Sappho's "ship-wrecked life" finds "peace" in motherhood and accepting her child, with her "mother-love" for Alphonse chasing "out all the anguish she had felt over his birth."[146]

In *Contending Forces,* the issue of "mother-love" and the acceptance or nurturing thereof is ever-present and it is something that Sappho (unlike Lyndall) is able to develop.[147] Sappho is able to not only overcome the shame she felt at the way her son was conceived, but transform that shame into a maternal investment in her son and the world around her, evidenced in the fact that, shortly after reclaiming Alphonse and reuniting with Will, she is spurred on to dedicate her life with Will to "race work".

A second integral mother-figure in *Contending Forces* that cannot go unstudied is Ma Smith. She is portrayed as the ultimate matriarch and is glorified continually throughout the narrative for her strength in times of difficulty, her hard work as a single parent, her faith and religiosity and the immensely positive influence she exerts on both her own children and the community. Through Ma Smith, Hopkins suggests (like Lyndall) that motherhood – when undertaken by women with a combination of inner-strength, intellectuality and an ethos of (private and public) care – is indeed, the "mightiest and noblest" of human work.[148]

Symbolically, Sappho is also positioned as a Christ-figure, with Easter playing a significant role in her life and her regeneration. It is after the Easter service in Boston that Will first proposes to Sappho, whereby she decides to bury her past and be happy in marriage. After Langley's attack makes the marriage seemingly impossible, Sappho spends three years apart from Will – but it is, again, at an Easter service that Will, visiting his sister Dora in the South, is reunited with Sappho. Easter as a religious holiday symbolises the death

[145] Randle, 205.
[146] *Contending Forces,* 345, 347.
[147] *Ibid,* 345.
[148] *The Story of an African Farm,* 193.

of Jesus on the cross, and his subsequent rebirth/resurrection. Like Jesus, Sappho is "crucified" by the atrocities of her past, but, like Jesus, she is able to be reborn: through confronting her past and reclaiming her role as mother – ultimately, her spiritual regeneration – she is able to be reintroduced to African American society, as virtuous and noble as she was before her rape as a fourteen-year-old.

Religious symbolism in *Contending Forces* becomes even more significant when considering the religious aims of *The Story of an African Farm.* Schreiner consciously named her other two protagonists (who feature alongside Lyndall) "Waldo" and "Em", a direct allusion to transcendentalist philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson. Hopkins, too, was influenced by Emerson, though more for his anti-racist sentiments than his religious thought. In *Contending Forces,* Hopkins quotes Emerson's epigraph from "Emancipation in the British West Indies" at the very start of her novel and, according to Sydney Bufkin, his presence can implicitly be felt throughout the rest of the novel.[149] Alternately, Schreiner had a lifelong engagement with Emerson: his works were some of the only books available to her in the colony, and she was deeply influenced by his views on spiritual unity.

The Story of an African Farm has a deeply religious subtext enacted through Waldo's journey, one I have had to neglect in this paper in favour of Lyndall and her feminist quest. Waldo's religious quest is, however, complementary to Lyndall's feminist vision, in that he – as Emersonian-figure – is concerned with moving away from traditional, clear-cut visions of good and evil, towards a more inclusive, forgiving and holistic spiritual (or natural) unity. It is also important to note that Waldo, despite being male, is no figurehead for patriarchy – he supports Lyndall's quest for independence, and is (as mentioned in Chapter One) indeed the only person Lyndall feels she can engage with and be deemed an "equal." The religious quest

[149] Sydney Bufkin. "Contending Forces' Intellectual History: Emerson, Du Bois, and Washington at the Turn of the Century." *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*. Vol 69.3. (Autumn 2013). 77.

of Waldo, as supporter of feminism and "spiritual" equal to Lyndall, then speaks strongly to Hopkins's female project of allowing her heroine to rework understandings of religion and undergo spiritual transformation. Sappho, Dora and Mrs Willis all demonstrate that reinterpreting the Bible and taking "contending" societal forces (such as racism) into account allow violated black women to regain access to religion and spirituality. Like Waldo, who interrogates clear-cut Calvinist notions of good and bad; right and wrong, Hopkins's characters interrogate the limits of white, middle-class Christianity, reinterpreting and redefining religion to facilitate the inclusion of African American womanhood.

In so doing, Sappho in particular becomes stronger and more resilient. Unlike the "true heroines" of nineteenth century domestic novels who would rather "die" than face the stigma of sexual or physical abuse (and of which Grace Montfort is an example), Hopkins's Sappho does not consider death as an option. Instead, she finds that through confrontation and acceptance of the past, through carrying her burdens with grace and with dignity, she is able to renounce blame for the crimes "committed under compulsion" and refashion an identity as a "true, *black* woman".[150]

Sappho's transformation and acceptance of her past occurs on a primarily individual level, but her rehabilitation in the novel is in fact enacted by Hopkins in service of a stretch beyond the individual: Sappho comes to represent a larger, more significant collective that Hopkins is constructing: "race women" – female pioneers for African American advancement. At the sewing meeting, addressing the young women on "the place which the virtuous woman occupies in the up-building of the race", Mrs Willis describes the importance of a redefinition of female virtue for black women:

> Our idea of virtue is too narrow… [Virtue goes deeper than conduct ruled by animal passions] – general excellence in every duty is what we may call

[150] *Contending Forces,* 149.

> virtue… I believe we shall not be held responsible for wrongs which we have *unconsciously* committed, or which we have committed *under compulsion*. We are virtuous or non-virtuous only when we have a *choice* under temptation (original italics).[151]

Ultimately, Mrs Willis is emphasising that black women, and young black women in particular, need to redefine virtue because of the important roles they are to fill in the future of the "Negro race":

> "I am particularly anxious that you should think upon this matter [of virtue] seriously, because of its intrinsic value to all of us as race women. I am not less anxious, because you represent the coming factors of our race. Shortly, you must fill the positions occupied by your mothers, and it will rest with you and your children to refute the charges brought against us as to our moral irresponsibility, and the low moral standard maintained by us in comparison to other races.[152]

The future mothers and wives in the African American community hold, for Willis, the responsibility of rehabilitating the black woman's image in America. Sappho's story, the "unconscious" wrongs of her rape, the degradation she endured at the hands of John Langley and her ultimate regeneration as wife of Will and a woman of "the race", may thus be seen as representative of the black woman's responsibility on a personal level. During her three year departure from Will and the Smiths, Sappho comes to even value her hardships:

> In the years which followed, she learned to value the strong, chastening influence of her present sorrow and the force of character it developed, fitting her perfectly for the place she was to occupy in carrying comfort and hope to the women of her race.[153]

---

[151] *Contending Forces,* 149.
[152] *Ibid,* 347.
[153] *Contending Forces,* 347.

Her adversities and the regeneration she underwent in order to accept them made her stronger in "character", and prepared her for her ultimate role as "race woman."

Sappho's role as a woman facilitating the uplift of the Negro Race is, however, only totally fulfilled when she marries Will Smith. Jennifer Putzi sees Sappho and Will's marriage as "Sappho's reward": sanctioned in her marriage to Will and her re-acceptance into the African American community, Sappho is no longer "unprotected flesh."[154] Siobhan Somerville additionally notes that while white women were beginning to question women's subordinate role within marriage at the turn of the century, African American women viewed marriage as a civil right and privilege associated with freedom from slavery. Somerville goes on to state that the use of marriage in the plot thereby serves as a strategy of empowerment: harnessing the civil rights-aspect of marriage, as well as the moral purity and/or sanction that the union implies in religious terms, marriage assists in endorsing the idea of intrinsic virtue and the moral worth of a "maligned people".[155]

Dora Smith however, Sappho's close friend and Will's sister, initially does not view marriage as a positive institution. Engaged to John P. Langley at the time, Dora tells Sappho: "I don't think there's enough sentiment in me to make love a great passion… Don't you ever speculate about the pros and cons and maybes and perhapses of [marriage]?"[156] Dora is sceptical about the realities of married life, and "[dreads] the thought of being tied to John" for the rest of her life. Sappho tries her best to persuade her friend, harbouring very different ideas about marriage: "A woman loves one man, and is true to him through all eternity", Sappho tells her, Dora is just missing "the mysterious link which would join love, marriage and the necessary man in a harmonious whole."[157] For Dora, that man is Arthur Lewis, whom

[154] Putzi, 15-6.
[155] Somerville, 194.
[156] *Contending Forces,* 119.
[157] *Ibid,* 122-3.

she marries after her engagement to Langley is broken. Hopkins seems, ultimately, to be projecting marriage as the best institution for the fulfilment of female selfhood, as Dora finds contentment in her marriage to Lewis and the son that she bears him, allowing her to "assist [Arthur] in the upbuliding of the race", as does Sappho, whose union to Will allows them to "work together to bring joy to hearts crushed by despair."[158]

Dora's seeming contentment within her marriage must however, be looked at critically. While Sappho (like Lyndall) believes in "true love", Dora ultimately marries for the sake of social propriety. Her mother, Ma Smith, is similarly concerned that her daughter be married off, stating that "the awful chance of [her daughter] remaining single" was a "cause for her to grieve".[159] Dora reiterates her mother's fears: "She could not remain single; she would marry one whose manliness she could respect, if she did not love him. Love was another thing with which, she told herself, she was done."[160] Claudia Tate explains that for African Americans in the late 19th and early 20th century, marriage was the ultimate marker of a civilised life and civilised society – it signalled the efficient "management of human relationships and resources" by the parties involved, serving to multiply and preserve the race through the procreation that would ensue, and exuded "social values of respectability" and "meritorious citizenship" – irrespective of whether romantic "love" was involved.[161] In keeping true to her novel's genre of romance, Hopkins makes that Dora comes to love Arthur Lewis after a period of time, even though love is not her motivation for marrying him. For Hopkins, then, it seems that both love *and* "respected manliness" respectively are sanctioned prerequisites for proper marriage.

---

[158] *Contending Forces,* 381, 401.
[159] *Ibid,* 175-6. This is in contrast to her views on Will – Ma Smith is more than willing to accept her son, married or unmarried, bringing to the fore the double standards that were perpetuated at the time even in a fairly egalitarian household.
[160] *Ibid,* 358, 361.
[161] Tate, 71.

The topic of "homosexual" love also comes to the fore in *Contending Forces. The Story of an African Farm* has merely one instance of homosexual relevance, namely when Lyndall is boarding the train and she is the only passenger to offer her seat to an old lady (see chapter 1).[162] There she remarks that: "There were nine of us in that coach, and only one showed chivalrous attention – and that was a woman to a woman."[163] Lyndall hints at the issue female solidarity, but in strange terms. Chivalry in nineteenth century South Africa was most notably a heterosexual social event or occurrence, and to describe it only in terms of "woman to…woman" is, in part, to subvert heterosexual normative culture. Considered in terms of both Lyndall's refusal to marry and her insistence on a union that somehow eradicated gender difference and/or inequality, such a stance of sexual subversion does not seem unfitting. However, Lyndall engages in sexual intercourse with a man (evidenced by her pregnancy), seems to harbour romantic feelings for him (and Waldo) and fails to display any other signs of actively seeking to subvert the event of "normative" heterosexual partnerships.

Contending Forces is different: there is significant evidence of the exploration and consideration of homosexual love, specifically between Dora and Sappho. Siobhan Somerville in *Passing through the Closet* notes that at the turn of the nineteenth century:

> the "color line (sic) was not the only barrier to desire at work within American culture…[the] period also saw the increased bifurcation of the population into 'deviant' or 'normal' based on newly emergent models of homosexuality and heterosexuality.[164]

As a result of this "bifurcation", Somerville argues that semi-sexual acts and affection between women – which were previously socially acceptable – became strictly policed and

[162] Homosexual here referring to love/affection demonstrated within one gender group, and not homoerotic (denoting sexual acts performed by members of the same gender).
[163] *The Story of an African Farm,* 191.
[164] *Somerville,* 141.

restricted. Using Dora and Sappho as her models for analysis, Somerville observes that the two share a close, almost homoerotic bond that is mostly confined to Sappho's bedroom and, most significantly, near "the closet". The name Sappho in itself is loaded with connotations of lesbianism and "irreconcilable notions of womanhood", a fact Somerville contests Hopkins must have been aware of.[165] However, despite Dora and Sappho's closeness, they never actually transgress "normative" heterosexual gender behaviour in their dealings with each other, which Somerville also attributes to a deliberate effort on Hopkins's part to adhere to the "normative" standards emerging at the time (though still being conscious of the alternatives).[166]

Ultimately, I am more inclined to read Sappho and Dora's relationship as a union of female solidarity or collaboration, rather than an experiment in homoerotic intimacy. Dora is a chief influence in helping Sappho overcome the violence and atrocities of her past, as well as encouraging her in her union with Will. The "love" that Dora and Sappho show each other is, in this way, more akin to filial affection, which may be ascribed to an intention on Hopkins's part to demonstrate the potential for women to support each other as allies in adversary and draw on mutual strength and solidarity in conquering societal pressures. If we consider Lyndall's comment of chivalry from "woman to woman", the notion of a proposed solidarity and camaraderie between women (as opposed to eroticism) also makes more sense. Proffering this notion of camaraderie to the transnational and transracial, there is no reason why the events in the two novels of women showing support and understanding within their gender group could not be conceptually extended to include other races and other nations.

The novel closes with a "happy ending" and irrefutably heterosexual union, in which Sappho, as virtuous heroine, is rewarded with sanctity in marriage and the villain, John P.

[165] *Ibid,* 147.
[166] *Contending Forces,* 143-`47.

Langley, is killed off by his own greed. This simple ending, however, betrays the novel's complex feminist project in a twofold manner: firstly, it diverts attention from the important task of recuperating Sappho's violated womanhood and repositioning her as a respectable female leader of her race. Secondly, it purports a false sense of resolution and relaxation – marriage by no means ensures an "easy life" for Will and Sappho; rather, it is a means of providing moral support and companionship for the turbulent task ahead, namely that of uplifting the race.

Progressively, as Hopkins works to recuperate violated black womanhood in *Contending Forces,* a complicated and contradictory attitude toward British imperialism unfolds. In the preface to *Contending Forces,* Hopkins writes:

> In these days of mob violence… the retrospective mind will dwell upon the history of the past, seeking there a solution of these monstrous outbreaks under a government founded upon the brightest principles for the elevation of mankind.[167]

Here, she is addressing the United States government, and the fact that the tenets of liberation and equality it purports to propagate are distorted by the on-going toleration of racial prejudice, lynching and mob violence. In contrast to the cruelty and injustice of the American socio-political system, Hopkins positions the British as being merciful and just, particularly in relation to their involvement in the abolition of slavery. Hopkins calls the abolitionists "those men of wisdom", and explains the process of emancipation as follows:

> Earnestly devoted to their task, [the British] sought to wipe from the fair escutcheon of the Empire the awful blot which was upon it. By the adoption of the [emancipation] bill Great Britain not only liberated a people from the cruelties of their masters, but at the same time took an important step forward in the onward march of progress, which the most enlightened nations are unconsciously forced to

[167] *Contending Forces,* 14.

> make by the great law of advancement; "for the civility of no race can be perfect whilst another race is degraded".[168]

The implication is thus that white Americans in particular have no "civility" so long as they are degrading people of colour.

Hopkins furthermore paints a particularly romantic and positive view of British rule in the colony of Bermuda, where the Montforts originally hail form. Bermuda is described as a docile and peaceful place, where "a desire for England's honour and greatness had become a passion with inhabitants and restrained planters from committing brutalities", a place where "the iron hand of the master has never shown beneath the velvet glove."[169] This romantic view of slavery, an institution which the novel as a whole undoubtedly condemns, seems somewhat irreconcilable with its greater claims of racial equality and freedom. It must however, be noted that these comments should be considered within their context – the narrator isolates Bermuda as an exception to the rule of the brutalities of slavery and, as Carby notes, perhaps works to romanticise this British colony in order create a greater contrast between the morality of "British" societies as opposed to Americans.[170] Indeed, the narrator writes that "for all [America's] boasted freedom, the liberty of England is not found, and human life is held cheaply in the eyes of men who are mere outlaws."[171]

Hopkins' views of British society as morally "superior" to its American counterpart is highly problematic in terms of her project in recuperating black womanhood. Anne McClintock explains in *Imperial Leather* that imperialism (British, American, or otherwise) was gendered throughout by the fact that it was white men who made and enforced laws and

---

[168] *Contending Forces,* 19, 20.
[169] *Ibid,* 21-2.
[170] Carby, 134.
[171] *Contending Forces,* 25-6.

policies for their own, self-serving interests.[172] The novel's ultimate embodiment of true, Victorian womanhood, Grace Montfort, is described as having been "educated in England", from whence she brought with her to the United States "all the refinements of the Old World"; Sappho's role in the novel is similarly to reform the qualities of true womanhood into true, *black* womanhood.[173] True womanhood however, is in itself an imperial construct, imbedded (as mentioned at the start of the chapter) in male (and female) socio-political hierarchies. In accordance with this, it must be noted that while true black womanhood was, for Hopkins, a means of overcoming racial and class oppression in America, her reformations were not without their own inherent hierarchies – women were still to a large extent subordinates, relying on their husbands to complete their social standing and provide them with protection, though this subordination was shifted to include only men of their own colour. Hopkins, in both her support of the British imperial project and abolitionist movement and in her (albeit selective) use of British notions of womanhood, therefore seems to either condone or ignore the imperial hierarchies and complexities of gender imbued within these relationships.

We must however, remember to read and situate *Contending Forces* within its historical and contextual framework. I contended earlier that Britain could arguably be seen as a foil for the US – a white superpower who achieved global economic and cultural prestige through colonial enterprises and slavery, thereafter ending slavery in the name of "humanity". Hopkins could very well have feigned a genuine belief in the English as enlightened and benevolent as a means of exposing and enhancing the savagery and cruelty of American social customs. Furthermore, as Claudia Tate writes in *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire,* many black people in the post-reconstruction era believed that by adopting values of a dominant society, for example tenets of true womanhood, they could advance themselves

[172] Anne McClintock, 7
[173] *Contending Forces,* 44.

and gain rights and access to social, political and cultural spheres they had hitherto been denied.[174] I therefore read Hopkins's employment of thoughts on and seeming praise of British imperialism and its constructions of gender not as an acceptance or embracing of imperial gender inequalities and oppression, but as a means of choosing the lesser of two evils: in order to gain access to basic social values, rights and privileges, Hopkins chose a "dominant society", significantly Britain as opposed to America, upon which she could model and transform her female subjects.

Delving deeper into the complexities of race and womanhood in the novel, it is useful to consider the relationship portrayed between black and white female characters. Interestingly, Hopkins does not include any white female characters in her narrative. There is one brief, direct reference to white women when Mrs Davis, a church member, is competing against Sister Robinson for money at a church fundraiser. Sister Robinson, in an attempt to raise more capital, invites white women to help her cause. In response to Sister Robinson's ploy, Mrs Davis asserts: "White folks don't scare Ophelia Davis."[175] Ultimately, Mrs Davis – without any "white" help – obtains the greatest profits. This incident suggests two things: firstly, that white and black women's causes were distinctive; the white women are only called on in a desperate move on behalf of Sister Robinson to increase her fundraising and are not a part of the upliftment event as a whole. Secondly, it points to a move away from transracial solidarity: Mrs Davis, remaining "true" to her race and rejecting white female money, is rewarded and ends up victorious in her efforts.

The above instance is however, the only example in the text of white women politically engaging with African American social pursuits and, as such, is not a definitive framework from which to base the entire novel's representation of and interaction with

[174] Tate, 56-7.
[175] *Contending Forces,* 214.

transracial feminism. Alternatively, the omniscient narrator makes it very clear from the preface that transnationality is a primary concern, stating that the novel in its entirety is meant to be "of purpose to the Negro race *as well as* "the world at large", pointing beyond the local and extending itself self-consciously to peoples of other countries (my italics).[176] An implication of this extension would seem to include a transracial consciousness as well, further enforced by means of the novel's genre: justifying the use of domestic fiction, the narrator states "it is the simple, homely tale, unassumingly told, which cements the bonds of brotherhood among all classes and *all complexions*" (my italics).[177]

If we look further at the idealistic Bermuda that Hopkins has created and the relationships between the Montforts and their slaves, amalgamation becomes a predominant theme. In Bermuda, bloodlines are seen as irrelevant – all the inhabitants are thought to have a little "black blood" in them, and socially this does not pose any problem. Additionally, Mrs Willis notes during the sewing club meeting that there is no black American that does not have "white blood" running through their veins. Later, in *Of One Blood: Or, the Hidden Self,* Hopkins interrogates the theme of amalgamation thoroughly, pointing ultimately to the farcical nature of racial purity and the fact that all humans share a common origin and common biological connection. She does not make such a direct claim in *Contending Forces,* but there is evidence to suggest that her scope of feminist liberation was already slanting toward the transnational.

Contending Forces is thus a complex portrayal of African American life, delving deeply into black women's experiences in particular. In this chapter, I examined the ways in which Hopkins uses her romance novel to critique true womanhood, destabilise racial categories and explore possibilities of spiritual regeneration through her female characters'

[176] *Contending Forces,* 13.
[177] *Ibid.* Hopkins is well-known for her propagation of racial amalgamation, a concept which is touched on in Contending Forces and reaches fruition in her later works such as *Of One Blood*.

more traditional feminist quests of marriage, love and motherhood. Moreover, I highlighted the ways in which Hopkins's critiques and explorations of feminist concerns transcend both national and racial barriers, reinforced by claims toward bonds of "brotherhood" among "all complexions", the futility of racial categorisation (through Grace Montfort), and the encouragement of female friendships and solidarity across emotional divides (Sappho and Dora). Considered in tandem with Schreiner, the prevalence of overlapping and interacting feminist preoccupations that are *not exclusive* to local contexts or racial categories, both *The Story of an African Farm* and *Contending Forces* point to an early awareness of transnational and transracial feminist consciousness in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Conclusion

In exploring *The Story of an African Farm* and *Contending Forces,* my aim has been to establish the remarkable commonalities and convergences that exist between the two texts

in terms of time, space and their individual feminist concerns. Both Schreiner and Hopkins have had an immense individual impact on the history of feminism. This thesis has argued that, read together, the first completed works of Hopkins and Schreiner point to a specifically transnational and transracial feminist consciousness: the novels not only share a common awareness and negotiation of significant feminist preoccupations such as marriage, motherhood and love, but also demonstrate an intention of making these preoccupations transnationally and transracially inclusive.

In terms of time, both Hopkins and Schreiner write within a "moment" (1880-1910), where contending discourses of imperial domination and gender oppression became prominent. These discourses are prevalent in both *The Story of an African Farm,* where Lyndall fights against white patriarchy, British colonial impositions and Victorian modes of womanhood, as well as in *Contending Forces,* where Sappho redefines true womanhood and Hopkins uses a model of the British to critique American brutality and exploitation. The prevalence of these discourses in both authors' works may in part be attributed to the locational similarities they share: though positioned in seemingly separate parts of the world, both the US and South Africa were attached to colonial/imperial imperatives and experienced radical societal upheaval in the nineteenth century in terms of gender and race.[178]

Within this context, this thesis has shown that the feminist concerns of love, marriage and motherhood in *Contending Forces* and *The Story of an African Farm* interact in significant ways. Love is a driving force in both novels: for Lyndall, heterosexual love is underpinned by an awareness of the mastery involved in nineteenth-century romantic relationships, transferring political modes of patriarchy to the personal. Lyndall rejects love as gender mastery – a view linked intrinsically to her refusal to marry the father of her baby – instead, advocating for love based on gender equality and mutual respect. In *Contending*

[178] Here I refer to the fact that America was an imperial power and South Africa was a colony.

Forces, love is also explored, heterosexually (between Sappho and Will, and Dora and Arthur Lewis) and homosexually, between Sappho and Dora. Like Lyndall, Hopkins's Sappho considers a love of mutuality and respect a prerequisite for marriage, but (unlike Lyndall) Sappho marries her lover at the novel's end. For Sappho, marriage is a reward, facilitating her entrance into the realm of "race woman" and the upliftment of society in her partnership with Will.

Motherhood, too, overlaps in the two novels. Both heroines grapple with developing a "mother heart" – a feat Sappho is able to overcome, resulting in the maternal investment of her child being transferred to a maternal investment in the greater body politic. Lyndall cannot develop a "mother heart" – she is "shut up in self", unable to cultivate her individual role as mother and thus losing her child shortly after its birth. Lyndall's "deformed" motherhood is further complicated by her complicity, as white colonial woman, in the process of "soul-making" in the imperial project – in this sense, Lyndall losing her baby may be read as an active rejection on Schreiner's part of her feminist heroine's participation in the making of imperialist subjects. Despite Lyndall's own aborted experience with motherhood, Lyndall advocates the nobility of child-rearing – a sentiment shared in *Contending Forces,* where exemplary mothers such as Ma Smith and Sappho (after her reclamation of her child) are gloried and exemplified.

The convergences of their feminist concerns become even more apparent when considering the definitive transnational and transracial overtones inherent in both of their texts. In *The Story of an African Farm,* we saw that Lyndall is refused a fixed national, linguistic or racial identity, extending her significance as female character to nations and races beyond herself. She furthermore fights against her own position of whiteness through means of her colour imagery, and vows to hate "everything that has power" – all systems of

oppression and domination, irrespective of race, class or nationality. [179] Moreover, she stresses the view of all humans being inherently equal, stressing the "likeness" between all "individuals" and "nations" – a word choice which is important here, as she does not refer to "sameness", which would imply an eradication of difference.

This stressing of a shared equality and/or commonality between humans is predominant in *Contending Forces* too, where Hopkins works to undermine racial categories and hierarchies through characters such as Grace Montfort and depictions of idealised amalgamation in Bermuda. Hopkins's belief in the inherent amalgamation of race within all of society – the fact that all African Americans have "black blood" and vice versa – and the intrinsic irrelevance thereof points to a belief in a shared biological heritage or commonality between humans as a race. The narrator of *Contending Forces* furthermore stresses the brotherhood that exists among "all classes and all complexions", echoing the concept of unity in the universe that is purported in *The Story of an African Farm.* Additionally, while Hopkins's project of recuperating violated black womanhood is directed to the particular condition of African American women in the US, I do not read her feminist project as being racially (or locally) exclusive: there is no evidence to suggest that Hopkins's strategies of liberation and empowerment in *Contending Forces* could not be extended to women beyond the American context – on the contrary, the evidence of transnational consciousness and the undermining of race in her novel point to a very strong indication that her feminist strategies of empowerment could very well be applied transnationally and transracially.

Further buttressing the idea that Schreiner's and Hopkins's feminist credos transcend their own contexts is the espousal of the power of the "spiritual": an alternate code of religiosity or faith in which local and individual injustices or inequalities can be transcended in favour of a belief in the greater sense of commonality or "universal unity." In Hopkins, this

[179] *The Story of an African Farm,* 93.

registers as "spiritual regeneration" in terms of recuperating violated black womanhood, while in Schreiner it appears in Waldo's spiritual quest, as well as Lyndall's belief in the equality and unity of mankind.

In terms of women in particular, this view is incorporated in female relationships or friendships: Dora and Sappho's close bond demonstrates the potential for women to join hands as mutual sufferers of injustice and oppression and offer support to one another, while Schreiner's Lyndall, too, propagates the importance of "chivalry" between women during her episode on the train. During the authors' lifetimes, white and black women joining hands in the fight against gender oppression would never be realised. Nevertheless, this does not mean that either author was opposed to the idea: indeed, the encouragement of support between women evident in their novels – alongside the knowledge we have of Schreiner supporting black women's rights and Hopkins's visions of racial equality – would suggest otherwise.

In their later works of fiction, *Of One Blood* (Hopkins, 1903) and *From Man to Man* (Schreiner, 1926), Hopkins and Schreiner expand their protofeminist ideologies projected in *Contending Forces* and *The Story of an African Farm* into more sophisticated, elaborate and specified conversations on race, feminism and transnationality. Their early works nevertheless remain significant and invaluable objects of study: *The Story of an African Farm* and *Contending Forces* speak to each other in prolific ways, highlighting the convergences within the two texts while also pointing out their particularities. The transnational comparison this thesis has undertaken becomes especially significant when considering traditional genealogies of feminism, which locate Schreiner as a first wave feminist and Hopkins as a recuperated product of second wave Black feminist criticism. In proving that transnational and transracial feminism is present in both of Hopkins' and Schreiner's first novels, this thesis ultimately suggests that there is immense value and insight to be gained from departing from reading feminist authors according to traditional feminist trajectories of schools and

"waves". Moving away from such an approach can reveal important relationships and connections between feminist authors and their feminist agendas – like those that exist between Hopkins and Schreiner – that have the potential to transform our understanding of the progress and history of feminism.

CITED WORKS

Boehmer, Elleke. *Empire, the National and the Postcolonial 1890-1920: Resistance in Interaction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2005.

Bufkin, Sydney. "Contending Forces' Intellectual History: Emerson, Du Bois, and Washington at the Turn of the Century." *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*. Vol 69 No 3 (Autumn 2013): 77-98.

Burdett, Carolyn. *Olive Schreiner and the Progress of Feminism.* New Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001.

Butler, Judith. "Against Proper Objects." *Feminism Meets Queer Theory.* Eds E. Weed & N. Schor. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1997. 1-30.

Carby, Hazel. *Reconstructing Womanhood: the Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Cassidy, Thomas. "Contending Contexts: Pauline Hopkins's *Contending Forces. American Literature Review.* Vol. 32 No. 4 (1998): 661-672.

Collis, Victoria J. *Anxious Records: Race, Imperial Belonging and the Black Literary Imagination, 1900-1940* (PhD Dissertation, 2013).

Esty, Jed. "The Colonial Bildungsroman: *The Story of an African Farm* and the Ghost of Goethe." *Victorian Studies* Vol. 49, No. 3 (2007): 407-430.

Freedman, Estelle. *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women.* New York: Ballantine Books, 2002.

Giddings, Paula. *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*. New York: Harper Collins, 1984. 47.

Gonda, Caroline. "Lesbian Literary Criticism." *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism.* Eds. Gill Plain and Susan Sellers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 301-333.

Gqola, Pumla. *What is Slavery to Me? Postcolonial/Slave Memory in Post-Apartheid South Africa.* Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2010.

Green, Louise. "Olive Schreiner and the Labour of Writing". *English Academy Review: South African Journal of English Studies* (2012): 159-173.

Grewal, Inderpal & Kaplan, Caren. "Postcolonial Studies and Transnational Feminist Practices." *Jouvert: 5.1.* 2000. http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v5i1/grewal.htm DOA: 29-11-2014.

Hellmann, Ann. "Introduction." *New Woman Hybridities: Femininity, Feminism and International Consumer Culture, 1880-1930.* Eds Anne Hellmann and Margaret Beetham. London: Routledge, 2004.

Haskill, Christine. "Valuable Failure as a Unifying Principle in *The Story of an African Farm.*" *ELT* Vol. 57 No. 1 (2014) 81-98.

hooks, bell. *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics.* Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000.

Hopkins, Pauline E. *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Jacobsen, Dan. "Introduction". *The Story of an African Farm*. London: Penguin, 2005: 7-26.

Keizer, Arlene R. "Black Feminism." *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism.* Eds. Gill Plain and Susan Sellers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.154-168.

Koyana, Siphokazi & Gray, Rosemary. "Growing Up with Maya Angelou and Sindiwe Magona: A Comparison." *English in Africa* Vol. 29. 1 (2002): 85-98.

Lewis, Desiree. "Theory and Intertextuality: Reading Zora Neale Hurston and Bessie Head." *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* Vol 9.2. (2008): 113-125.

Love, Heather. "Feminist Criticism and Queer Theory." *A History of Feminist Criticism.* Eds. Gill Plain and Susan Sellers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 301-321.

Louis Gates, Jnr, Henry. "Foreword: In Her Own Write", *Contending Forces: A Romance*

Illustrative of Negro Life North and South. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988: vii – xxii.

McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest.* New York: Routledge, 1995.

Mills, Fiona. "Diasporic Displacement and the Search for Black Female Identity in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby* and Nadine Gordimer's *None to Accompany Me*." *Safundi: Journal of South African And American Studies.* Vol 2.4. (November 2001). Accessed online: http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17533170100302403#.VNm2Z_mUdU

Monsman, Gerald Cornelius. *Olive Schreiner's Fiction: Landscape and Power*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1991.

Morton, Stephen. *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.* Oxon: Routledge, 2003.

Mwangi, Evan M. *Africa Writes Back to Self: Metafiction, Gender, Sexuality.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009.

Pope, Mary. '"I am NOT just like one of the family...": The Black Domestic Servant and White Family Dynamics in 20th Century American and South African Literature." *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* Vol 2.4. (November 2001). Accessed online: http://www.theasa.net/journals/name/safundi/444/.

Putzi, Jennifer. "Raising the Stigma": Black Womanhood and the Marked Body in Pauline Hopkins's *Contending Forces". College Literature 31.2* (Spring 2004): 1-21.

Plain, Gill & Sellers, Susan. "Introduction". *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism.* Eds. Gill Plain & Susan Sellers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Randle, Gloria. "Mates, Marriage & Motherhood: Feminist Visions in Pauline Hopkins's

Contending Forces". *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature.* Vol. 18 No. 2 (1999): 193-214.

Rubin, Gayle. "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality." *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*. Ed. Carole S. Vance. London: Pandora. 1992. 267-293.

Schoeman, Karel. *Olive Schreiner: A Woman in South Africa 1855-1881.* Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1990.

Schreiner, Olive. *The Story of an African Farm.* London: Penguin, 2005.

Showalter, Elaine. "Toward a Feminist Poetics". *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory*. Ed. Elaine Showalter. London: Virago, 1986. 125-143.

Snaith, Anna. *Modernist Voyages: Colonial Women Writers in London 1890-1945.* 46.

Somerville, Siobhan. "Passing through the Closet in Pauline E. Hopkins's *Contending Forces". American Literature.* Vol 69 No 1(March 1997): 139-166.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

— "French Feminism in an International Frame." *Yale French Studies* No. 62. (1981): 154-184.

Stanley, Liz. *Imperialism, Labour and the New Woman: Olive Schreiner's Social Theory.* Oxon: Routledge, 2002.

Watson, R.L. *Slave Emancipation and Racial Attitudes in Nineteenth Century South Africa.*

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Weedon, Chris. “Postcolonial Feminist Criticism.” *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism*. Eds. Gill Plain & Susan Sellers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007: 282-300.