



Olive Schreiner's Allegorical Dreams and the Late Nineteenth-Century Woman Questions

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Abstract:

In nineteenth-century England, there was a significant rise in the culture of interpreting and representing dreams in public life, literature, and scientific studies before the publication of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). The culture of dream interpretation was tremendously popular among the women, especially towards the end of the century. Dream interpretations and representations were divided between the age-old Biblical, prophetic, or supernatural, and the contemporary scientific or medical. The very act of dreaming was considered a feminine practice within Victorian androgynous ideology. It was a common belief that women subscribed to irrational, revelatory theories of dreams. Rhoda Broughton, a popular late-Victorian woman writer of sensation stories, represented and promoted this concept through her tales of dreams in *Tales for Christmas Eve* (1873). She supported this from a feminist perspective as a tool to counter the male rational ideology. However, her representation of dreams was unscientific and regressive. In this context, Olive Schreiner's approach to dreams becomes crucial. This article examines her allegorical dreams of the late Victorian period and seeks to explore, through textual hermeneutics, whether her dream representations were binary both to popular beliefs about dreams vis-à-vis women and to Broughton, an English woman writer's representations. It also seeks to examine how her representations of dreams served the woman's issues of the time, in relation to the same of Broughton.

Keywords: Dreams, Representations, Late Nineteenth-Century, Woman Question, Dream Psychology, Unconscious.



Received: 31.10.2025

Accepted: 15.12.2025

Published: 31.12.2025

CJHSSC, Volume: 1

Issue: 2, December 2025

Page: 16 - 27

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18252174>

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Published by: Seth Soorajmull Jalan Girls' College,
Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Available at: www.ssjalangirlscollege.org.in/journal.php

Email: confluence.ssjgc@gmail.com

“For, ever from the earliest childhood to the latest age, day by day, and step by step, the busy waking life is followed and reflected by the life of dreams, — waking dreams, sleeping dreams. Weird, misty, and distorted as the inverted image of a mirage, or a figure seen through the mountain mist, they are still the reflections of a reality”.

-- Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm*, 1883.

Dream and its interpretations loomed large in nineteenth-century Britain before the publication of the groundbreaking psychoanalytical study of dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams* by Sigmund Freud in 1900. The convention of interpreting dreams centred chiefly around the traditional – classical and Biblical – ways of regarding dreams as vehicles of prophetic messages, divine or demonic. Most of the nineteenth-century British women writers subscribed to this supernatural method of interpreting dreams despite the initiation of medical and psychological studies about the causes and meanings, or lack of meanings of dreams in England of the nineteenth century, especially towards its end. The British women writers generally took hold of the superstitious interpretations of dreams as a tool to counter the contemporary androgynous precept about dreaming as a meaningless activity of women, the weaker sex, and effeminate males. Such gendered and prophetic representations of dreams have been dealt with in my article “Are you sure that it meant nothing?” Prophetic Dreams and Women: A Study of Rhoda Broughton’s *Tales for Christmas Eve*” was published very recently. In this article, I have shown how Rhoda Broughton, a popular late Victorian British woman writer, emphasised the prophetic and irrational interpretations of dreams as a means of countering the then androgynous rational interpretations of dreams as something meaningless. Barun Naha (2025) has noted:

It is true that she has prioritised the prophetic over the scientific, the irrational over the rational, and the conventional over the contemporary, with regard to dream interpretations. But she seems to have done this deliberately to counter the authority of rationality which the dominant late Victorian androgynous ideology thought to be the sole domain of the males. She accepts this culture and makes it a privileged possession for her sex and turns what patriarchy regards as a condemnable activity into an object of exclusively feminine space of power and belief system (p. 89).

The convention of dream interpretation, explored in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, was given a crucial shape by Olive Emilie Albertina Schreiner (1855-1920), also a South African English woman writer of dreams and allegories. This article seeks to explore how Schreiner differs from Broughton in her interpretations and representations of dreams around the same time with regard to addressing the late nineteenth-century women's issues. Schreiner and her contemporary women writers saw the 1880s and 1890s as a time of immense possibility and hope for a better future. The future that she had hoped for, as is reflected in the dedication of *Dreams* – “To a small girl-child who may grasp somewhat of that which for us is yet sight, not touch” -- seemed to her as very much within reach even in her own time and certainly for the next generation (Schreiner, *Dreams*, 2003, p. 2). Schreiner’s interests in socialism, pacifism, feminism, and liberalism made her known as one of the pioneering and significant Anglophone novelists from South Africa and a forerunner to other New Woman writers of the *fin-de-siècle*, such as Mona Caird, George Egerton, and Sarah Grand. Largely self-educated and undaunted by

the prevailing male intellectuals, she struggled for years to create a narrative to feature the women's issues, especially their emancipation, out of the dominant discourses of social evolution and positivist science. Hence, she took up a writing process in which she remained self-confident, that of the allegorical, non-realist form, which she claimed was integral to her own self.

"By the 1880s, women were describing a whole range of social, political and economic constraints which acted as real bars to their freedom, and which needed urgent redress. In a changed and modern world, it seemed possible that women might demonstrate that they, too, were capable of thought and work equal to that of men," remarks Carolyn Burdett (2001) (p. 47). Schreiner was conscious of this turn-of-the-century social evolution of the emancipation of women and, right from the beginning, she strove to create narratives concerned with women's emancipation, while at the same time she remained equally aware of various modes of telling stories. If she was engaged in writing the argumentative and rational history of women, she also practised writing short allegorical tales and symbolic prose pieces to express the transcendental and psychic reality. The most striking form of her writing was her allegories, be it in the form of dream narratives or non-realist novels.

Schreiner (1911) was aware of the ways in which these allegorical dreams had the potential to express something which was beyond the capacity of the "argumentative prose" (p. 16). These allegories, according to her, articulate the emotions that the objective intellectual prose writings, in contrast, cannot. She emphasised the symbolic aspect of allegories as an art form which had "a deeper value" than her novels in the sense that they could embody a truth higher than plain realism (Cronwright-Schreiner, *The Letters*, 1924, p. 194). Her allegories are, like dreams, a sort of wish-fulfilment of not only hers but of all the women whose dreams were to apply their own rationality and choice as complete human and rational beings who deserve both freedom and love:

Schreiner's allegory is a wish-fulfilment; it answers in dream-life a question which in real life proved far more intractable – of whether women can have freedom and love. To have both, after all, presumed not only a transformation of women's lives, but also a transformation in men. And, if it be possible to have both, how, *short of dreaming*, might it be achieved? (Burdett, 2001, p. 47; my emphasis)

This is possibly the reason why Schreiner took recourse to the dream convention to express the wishes of her community and find possible means to fulfil them in all of her works, especially in allegories. Her affinity for the dream form has possibly been derived from the Biblical lessons that she had received from her missionary parents. But Schreiner was not only inspired by the Christian versions of dreams to employ them in her writings, but she was also aware of the contemporary medical studies of dreams. She had a psychological habit of having an incessant bout of daydreaming and night-dreaming throughout her life.¹ But these dreams never thwarted her works, rather they worked as a stimulus for her creative impulse, resulting in her keeping the term "dream" in the titles of all the volumes of her allegories -- *Dreams* (1890), *Dream Life and Real Life* (1893) and *Stories, Dreams and Allegories* (1923) – which were written during her intermittent stays in London and South Africa in the 1880s, resulting from a distinct and more unconscious form of writing after the rupture in her relationship with Karl Pearson.²

It is *Dreams*, a volume of eleven allegorical tales reflecting her most private concerns both as a colonist and a woman, which earned her the status of an extraordinary author of great

sensitivity. Ruth Parkin-Gounelas (1991) remarks in this regard, “Schreiner’s post-1881 work, which includes her important ‘Dreams’, would alone qualify her for serious consideration in any study of either Victorian or feminist writing” (p. 84). Gerald Monsman (1992) records the impact that Schreiner’s *Dreams* had left on the literary circle: “A quarter century after their appearance, Amy Wellington proclaimed that to those concerned with the social growth of women, “this volume of Olive Schreiner’s ‘Dreams’ – profoundly stirring allegories which have their place among the greatest in world-literature – is the complete expression of her peculiar power” (p. 50). However, not all the stories of this volume, despite the titular suggestion, do contain dreams in them, leading me to select and analyse only those which feature dreams prominently in *Dreams* and *Dream Life and Real Life*.

First published in *The Fortnightly Review* in August 1887, with the subtitle “Under a Mimosa Tree”, “Three Dreams in a Desert” features the allegorical journey of a woman from a desert land, symbolic of a spiritually dead land for women, to the land of Freedom. The entire sojourn is cast into three sleep dreams, with intermittent awakenings, of the unnamed narrator of the story. The story is set in an unspecified “African plain” where the narrator sleeps under a Mimosa tree and has “a curious dream”, the epithet “curious” intensifying the sense of mystery and curiosity involved in any dream (Schreiner, *Dreams*, 2003, p. 16). The first dream allegorically speaks of a woman’s lack of freedom and inability to make herself break free from “the hard-baked clay of Ancient Customs,” though she “once wandered free over the rocks [the Rocks of Language] with him.” The reason behind her present lowly status, the unnamed reporter informs, is that “ages ago the Age-of-dominion-of-muscular-force found her” and bound her “with the broad band of Inevitable Necessity” with “no hope for her,” leaving her helpless (pp. 16-17). The narrator’s dream ends with a light in the eyes of the woman, signifying the imminent fulfilment of her hope of breaking free from the clutches of “Ancient Customs” of the “Inevitable Necessity.” This dream speaks of the necessity of an evolutionary determinism that Schreiner talked about in her “Wollstonecraft Introduction” and *Woman and Labour*. This evolutionary necessity is represented through the cutting knife, a technological modernity that comes to aid the woman to cut the burden of ancient customs. But the removal of the burden is not just enough in the women’s struggle for emancipation. Neither the woman nor the man had anything to do with the mysterious and inescapable evolutionary process of so many ages. This first evolutionary dream, therefore, brings no relief for the dreamer who is still caught by the fierce heat of the day, metaphorically, the heat of androgynous oppressions.

Immediately after, the narrator has another dream in continuation of the first one. The dream shows that the woman, “seeking for the land of Freedom,” meets an old man holding the stick of Reason which he offers to the woman, to cross the dark river of Labour through the water of Suffering (p. 18). She is also instructed to remove “the mantle of Ancient-received-opinions” that she had worn in the desert and “take the shoe of dependence off” her feet with only the light white garment of Truth on her body that is worn in the land of Freedom” (pp. 18-19). In this dream, the desert landscape is categorically identified as African. In this dream, the woman’s struggles do not merely manifest evolutionary law; rather, she is seen to exercise her individual volition as she has to opt between Passion and Reason, choosing the latter. Burdett (2001) observes, in this connection, “She has had to trade love for wisdom and, in so doing, she makes the sacrifice which Freud ascribes to men in the founding of civilization. As I discuss in my introduction, in Freud’s account, it is this move away from sexual love and family which

makes women hostile to progress” (p. 82). In the final dream, the narrator sees the woman’s self-sacrifice for humanity has not gone in vain and, in consequence, “on the hills walked brave women and brave men, hand in hand. And they looked into each other’s eyes, and they were not afraid” (Schreiner, *Dreams*, 2003, p. 20). The dream breaks with the sinking of the sun, and the narrator leaves the place with the expectation that it will rise again and “these things will occur “IN THE FUTURE” (p. 20).

The first two dreams suggest ways of winning women’s emancipation, but they also highlight the gap between the ideal and the real in the story of progress. Berkman (1989) comments, “With “Three Dreams in a Desert” Schreiner introduces another form of boundary transcendence. This allegory telescopes the collective history of women past, present, and future, climaxing in an evocative vision of androgyny and female autonomy as well as male-female and female-female equality, comradeship, and affection” (p. 214). This story, set in Africa, is also seen as embodying a postcolonial resistance by Jade Munslow Ong (2018): “For Schreiner, both dreams and death cause rupture and fragmentation as these states of being (or non-being) are outside of the parameters of colonial control, and a later example of this occurs in the short allegory “Three Dreams in a Desert” (1887), where Schreiner uses dream to envision a location outside of a narrowly conceived view of teleological history and thereby articulate a specifically postcolonial resistance to imperialist culture” (p. 94). The desert landscape of the third dream is set in Africa. It represents the evolutionary journey of humanity and the wilderness in which women have been trapped for ages.

Schreiner got most of her stories from abrupt flashes of insight which, she claimed, came from her unconscious self. The same had happened with this story, which, as she shared with the poet Arthur Symons, had resulted from her unconscious mode of writing. Symons reports Schreiner’s sudden flash of the plot of the story: “She was walking over one of the bridges across the Seine, when suddenly all flashed upon her. She screamed aloud, and began to run up the Boulevard St Michel, and ran until she came to her lodgings, where she sat down and never rose until the allegory was finished” (Cronwright-Schreiner, *The Life*, 1924, p. 189). Schreiner had written “Three Dreams” as a part of her “sex-book” which was composed to counter Pearson’s anti-feminist approach in his opening paper for the “Men and Women’s Club”, in which he projected “women, her need, her mental and physical nature” as a scientific object for man to analysis (First & Scott, 1980, p. 148).³ Elizabeth Jay (2003), therefore, comments, “The form she had therefore chosen for her ‘sex-book’ mingled two genres so as to restore the balance disturbed by Pearson, that “sworn enemy of the emotion” (p. xx).

Unlike in the previous story in which the dreams came to the unnamed sleeping narrator from nowhere, the next allegorical story in *Dreams*, “A Dream of Wild Bees,” presents a pregnant mother’s dream, induced by some external natural factors, reminding one of the contemporary theory of association. The would-be mother, expecting her ninth child, was sitting beside a window with her knitting work. From outside the window, she was hearing the voices of children playing outside and the humming sound of wild bees. Gradually, she fell asleep and “had a weird brain-picture; she thought the bees lengthened and lengthened themselves out and became human creatures and moved round and round her” (Schreiner, *Dreams*, 2003, p. 22). The dream here has been iteratively described as a “weird brain-picture,” possibly as a response to the psychological explanation of dreams in which impressions of day’s events imprinted in one’s brain get reflected in dreams. In her dream, the human-shaped bees come to her one by one in

the allegorical form of Health, Wealth, Fame, Love, and Talent to offer their respective blessings for the unborn child. The mother also rejects their plentiful offerings of material gains for her future child, except for the blessing of Love. At the end, a bee appears, and it promises the child a life of toil and sorrow, renunciation and failure, lack of love and wealth, the fate of those who strive for something other than material pursuits. The mother allows the bee to touch her swelling belly as it promises the foetus of an ideal which will make it “see upon the mountain-tops burning gold” and gives the blessing: “*This shall be thy reward - that the ideal shall be real to thee*” (pp. 23-24; author’s emphasis). But this dream tale has an ironic twist in the end, and that is the foetus is also described to have a dream of its own: “But deep within her the antenatal thing that lay here had a dream” (p. 24). In its dream, the foetus sees nothing but a light, emblematic of life. And Schreiner makes the dream end on a tragic note that the foetus will never see the light of life, finding its ideal to be real in the world of death.

A significant feature of “A Dream of Wild Bees” is the synchronisation of the Ideal and the Real in the form of a dreaming foetus within its dreaming mother. The allegory can be read as a ventilation of the author’s past sorrow as a child, as well as her future anxiety as a mother; the absence of motherly love she felt in her own mother, and her own inability to become a mother. The child in question in the allegory is the ninth child, the position Schreiner herself held within the family. The first thing that the “antenatal thing” is given an independent destiny smacks of Schreiner’s own desire for a choice in her own destiny. Jay (2003) observes on the issue of maternity and maternal sacrifices that this dream highlights: “The repeated motif of renunciation, figured as a mother plucking the suckling child from her breast and giving it up to enable a greater good, in stories predating her own series of miscarriages, points to a deep preoccupation with the allied themes of motherhood renounced and the sacrifice of the infant as a route to a greater good” (p. xxiv).

The shortest of the stories in *Dreams*, “Life’s Gifts”, offers another dream within a dream of allegorical nature concerning a feminist issue. The unnamed narrator dreams of a woman who dreams of Life offering her two gifts – Love and Freedom – to choose one from them. The dreaming woman chooses Freedom, and the figure of Life becomes happy with her choice as the latter says, “If thou hadst said, ‘Love’, I would have given thee that thou didst ask for; and I would have gone from thee, and returned to thee no more. Now, the day will come when I shall return. In that day I shall bear both gifts in one hand” (Schreiner, *Dreams*, 2003, p. 29). This tale captures the contemporary dilemma of a nineteenth-century woman who desires to be independent, to define herself. Elaine Showalter (1991) read this story as an expression of “the bitterness and disillusionment of New Women with men who were not ready to join them in their evolutionary progress” (p. 57).

Schreiner’s *Dream Life and Real Life* (1893) is another dream allegory which “interpreted such problems as the search of truth, the meaning of life, the essence of real art, of human love, and . . . the women’s liberation struggle” (qtd. in Davidson & Filatova, 1993, p. 42). Very popular in her own day and a source of inspiration for the suffragettes, this story incorporates dream sequences with Biblical overtones. Although the Scriptural dreams served as a source for her literary inspiration and writing technique, Schreiner wanted one’s mind to be attached to concrete reality, life being an ideal amalgam of gentleness and toughness. The first story of this volume, “A Little African Story”, features two dreams which, contributing to the course of events of the plot, are significant from both social and psychological perspectives. Little Jannita,

a poor orphan child, is employed as a shepherdess. One day, at the time of herding, she feels depressed, gets tired and falls asleep to see a “beautiful dream” (Schreiner, *Dream Life and Real Life*, 2003, p. 49), which transforms the unpleasant events of her life into pleasant ones, the lacks of her real life getting fulfilled in her dream life: the *kraals* for the goats are transmuted into lilac trees from drab red stones, the goats jump over a blossoming lily branch instead of a barren stick. She also sees in her dream that her cruel mistress and other family members no longer torture her and are kind and polite enough to her to feed her well. She feels herself no longer an orphan, and when a goat kid licks her cheeks, she thinks her father kisses her. Watching some marks on the back of his daughter, he takes her away to Denmark. But immediately after her beautiful dream life, Jannita is taken back to her sordid real life when she finds a goat kid missing from the flock. Extremely frightened, she takes the flock back to the farm, where a Hotentot man, Dirk, who stole the goat and killed it for meat, informs her mistress about the missing goat, and Jannita is deprived of food as a punishment and is whipped badly. Hungry and weary, Jannita looks up at the moon and sees a spring-duck reach the cottage and return to the unknown free. Jannita also sets herself free and runs down the riverbank to build a hideaway there and sleep.

The next day, Jannita had her second dream, lying asleep in a cave amidst the rocks beside the river. She dreams that she is again with her father in a beautiful place with crowns of asparagus on their heads. They walk together hand in hand, when the passersby smile at her and kiss her and bestow their blessings on her with flowers and food. While dreaming, a darker reality hangs upon her. She comes to hear the plotting of burning her master’s cottage by three robbers, one of them being Dirk. She hurries back to the cottage to warn the master of the Boer family with her cry, “Master, master, wake!” (p. 55) She somehow manages to warn the Boer family, but gets attacked by the robbers and killed. The next day, she is buried under her beautiful shelter amidst nature, and the moon shines over it at night.

The two dreams that Jannita sees in the story carry various implications. If, on the one hand, her dreams are creative in the sense that they help Jannita to cope with her wretched existence, they are also destructive as they become responsible for her death. Had she not dreamed, she might have been able to spot the robbers much earlier, warn the Boers in time, and save her own life. In this light, dreaming is fatal, at least for Jannita. Yet this dreaming helps Jannita to endure the bleak and inhospitable circumstances that she was in by getting her suppressed wishes expressed through dreams. The Freudian perspective of dreams as wish fulfilment is appropriately expressed in this story.⁴ The contemporary Victorian theory of association in relation to dreams is also carried out when the goat-kid’s licking the cheek of Jannita makes her dream that it is the kiss of her father. Though Jannita’s dreams indirectly lead her to be killed, her dreams provide her, as to many other oppressed people, with means of survival.

The story implies the idea of self-sacrifice in order to save other lives. Jannita appears to be a Christ-figure whose self-immolation suggests that women, irrespective of ethnic and racial backgrounds, can bring about the regeneration of the entire human race. Ann Heilmann (1999) has opined that “with her central Christian metaphor of self-sacrifice, Schreiner tapped into the feminist unconscious of the time” (“Dreams in Black and White”, pp. 181-2). Heilmann (2003) also observes in the “Preface” to *Dreams, visions and Realities* that Schreiner’s *Dream Life and Real Life* suggests that “feminists sometimes combined their attack on patriarchy with a reclamation

of the concept of self-sacrifice in order to sanctify women (in Schreiner's story, black or mixed-race women) as a spiritually redemptive and morally regenerative force in society" (p. viii). Jannita's dreams also heighten the perception of the readers about the cruelty and sordidness of her actual condition by juxtaposing her sufferings with the creation of alternative, fantastic worlds of dreams. The fact that it is only Jannita's father who appears in her dreams, and not her mother, who is not even mentioned anywhere in the story, reflects the contemporary Victorian social structure and the gender acculturation of Jannita, and also possibly of the young Schreiner. Jay (2003) makes a pertinent remark about the role of the self-determining female protagonists in Schreiner's allegories:

The woman's self-sacrificial role is strongly reminiscent of the mid-Victorian understanding of woman's place in the theology of atonement, that Schreiner would have been taught as a child, and the accompanying trope of self-mutilation owes much to the Christian imagery of the self-wounding pelican mother, so beloved of Renaissance painters of the crucifixion (p. xxii).

Thus, Schreiner has also used dreams in her *fin-de-siècle* allegorical works in the 90's as Broughton had done in her sensation stories in the 70's of the nineteenth century. Such a preference for the non-realist genres was quite common with the women writers of the *fin de siècle*, and their investment in dreams and visions and allegories was a process to intervene into the particular historical and political moments. The prophetic messages and the desire for an imagined future, manifested through dreams and visions, make a way for the women to search for hopes and solutions that the immediate political or social circumstances could not offer to them. Jay (2003) comments, "Non-realist genres can be variously interpreted as, at worst, escapist substitutes for political engagement and, at best, models for future empowerment, offering a critical vantage-point external to the narratives of patriarchy" (p. xx). Schreiner's allegorical dreams address both the extremes of this interpretative approach as they, on the one hand, strive to escape the binary divide between ideal and real, and reinstall the same dualism on the other. Taking into consideration the popularity of dreams in the nineteenth century, especially among the women writers, Schreiner used them as vehicles in her allegories to germinate in the readers the passion, idealism, and optimism required for the desired change in society, especially to move beyond the social restraints cast on women. Schreiner has even included the word "dream" in the titles of her allegories, speaking for women, as she was aware, like Broughton, of the popularity of dream-tales among the women readers of her time.

Like Rhoda Broughton, Schreiner also employs the dream motif as a tool to represent the plight of women, to empower and liberate them from masculine bondage. But unlike Broughton, Schreiner has employed dreams from myriad perspectives. Whereas Broughton has favoured the prophetic and popular interpretations of dreams in her horror stories, Schreiner has taken into serious consideration the Biblical or visionary or Romantic views as well as the existing philosophical and even psychological explanations of dreams, with an inclination towards the latter. Her treatment differs from Broughton's as she has come out of the conventional superstitious representations of dreams by discarding dreams' divine or premonitory angles. Instead, she has adopted the rising scientific studies of dreams as something coming out of one's unconscious or subconscious self. Schreiner equated the process of her own dreaming with that of her writing, both coming out of her unconscious self through dream-

flashes, thereby transgressing the boundaries between conscious and unconscious or rational and non-rational phenomena.

Schreiner had a deep interest in the unconscious, especially in the erotic content of it, which she regarded as the source of artistic imagination and intellectual fervour. She was well aware of the contemporary studies of the unconscious by a group of scientists and philosophers who paved the way for modern psychology and psychoanalysis.⁵ Schreiner's friendship with J. A. Symonds and Arthur Symons, who were members of the Society for Psychical Research, founded in 1882, made her further interested in the study of the unconscious. Dreams, in this process, freed her writings from following the traditional, linear realism, and allowed her to break free from the conventional sense of time and space, merging past, present, and future together. Dreams served as a means for Schreiner to bridge the gaps between ideal and actual realities, between material and spiritual perceptions. The dream images that Schreiner used served as a platform for expressing her worlds of social, moral, and political ideals with which to transcend the boundaries and divisions of race, class, and gender, offering to transform not only her but others' perceptions about their mundane lives.

But Schreiner was not content with the physiological or psychological explanations of her dreams or unconscious flashes only. Despite her reverence for such theories, she considered the unconscious in semi-spiritual or supernatural terms: "a force works in us such as works in nature, and if we follow that we must be right," as Symons reports (qtd. in Cronwright-Schreiner, *The Life*, 1924, p. 31). She viewed the creative unconscious as a microcosmic representation of the cosmic creative impulse on the individual level. Following the Romantic trend, she considers the creative flashes as both individual and universal. Despite her dilemma between the naturalist and the transcendentalist perceptions of the unconscious, she discarded dreams as either divine or premonitory though she imbibed the Romantic view that dreams are revealing of some higher truth: "[H]er belief in a form of collective unconscious, as well as her mystic illuminations of the fusion of individual soul and cosmic truths, inclined her toward a more romantic outlook on unconscious creativity. When, in her allegories, she imagined a synthesis of natural and transcendental reality, she heard, as did Keats and Shelley, the music of the spheres" (Berkman, 1989, p. 202). Jay (2003) comments in this regard, "Schreiner's fondness for the dream form and the allegory -- it is not clear to what extent she distinguished between the two -- has been variously attributed to a Romantic strain acquired from Gottlob, to the influence of Dante, and of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the last, at least, forming staple reading in most nineteenth-century Protestant households" (p. xviii). Schreiner believed that the artist's ability to dream something unknown and transcendental to his lived experiences comes out of "the accumulated life of his race, of the millions of human creatures who have been his ancestors" to which the artist adds his personal and unique thoughts, intrinsically connected with the macrocosmic human experiences, to present a better future (Cronwright-Schreiner, *The Life*, 1924, p. 26).

But her representations of dreams do not strictly follow the scientific discourses of dreams. She suggests the dreams come from the unconscious self, which she considers to be something semi-spiritual or supernatural. She presents dreams neither from a core religious point of view, like Broughton, nor from a purely psychological angle. Her presentation is somewhere between these two perspectives. She does deal with religious or moral issues through her dream narratives, but she treats them more in a modern sense than in the conventional form. Schreiner's dream visions not only criticise the empire, capitalism, and patriarchy, but they are

also the reflections of her own desires and wishes. The dreams of various characters of her allegories have shown how they are mere literary representations of Schreiner's own personal concerns and hopes. The creation of dream sequences, therefore, was therapeutic, a cure, making Schreiner able to cope with her anxieties and sublimate her desires in envisaging utopian worlds.

But, again, unlike Broughton, Schreiner has not restricted this cure specifically for women from social and cultural boundaries. Rather, her allegorical dream sequences had a more benevolent and social purpose to serve as they enable Schreiner to transmute her repressed desires into envisioning a utopian world and the betterment of society. She sees dreaming not as a means for escaping the societal realities but as a medium to reconstruct the here and the now, "to carry the dreams and ideals we have formed out into the world, and incarnate them quietly and simply day by day in action" (Rive, 1988, p. 110). The popularity of her allegorical writings, embodying the most varied functions of her dreams, over her other polemical writings or social and political essays, attests to her choice of the genre and a deft use of literary dreams responding to the wider acceptance of this form of writing around that time. The use of multiple forms of dreams, encompassing traditional and contemporary, religious and scientific, literary and social aspects, reflects Schreiner's awareness of the development of dream studies and the popularity of the form, complementing each other in the process.

Notes

¹This frequency of her dreams was impacted by the process of regular self-medication that she applied for herself with patent medicines to remedy her loneliness, depression, chronic illness of asthma and repression of sexual urges at her London lodgings. "These remedies," Jay (2003) observes, "which often contained laudanum, together with the strychnine recommended by doctors and the potassium bromide that she believed to be useful in curbing sexual urges, must have formed a powerful and unpredictable medical cocktail, contributing to the bouts of sleeplessness and the lurid dreams and nightmares . . ." (p. xi).

²Burdett (2001) observes, "In 1885 she began to attend a discussion group called the Men and Women's Club, and formed an intense intellectual relationship with its founder, Karl Pearson. During this period she began seriously to research and plan a non-fictional 'scientific' study of the position of women. By the end of 1886, however, her personal life was in crisis. Her physician, Bryan Donkin had proposed to her; he believed her refusal of him was a consequence of the fact she was in love with Pearson. Pearson himself believed this too, although Schreiner vociferously denied that the attraction was sexual" (p. 10).

³Schreiner's sex-book came out of her discussions with Pearson and as a reaction to his article "Socialism and Sex" in his book *The Ethic of Freethought: A Selection of Essays and Lectures* (1888). Burdett (2001) writes regarding this: "For, as she told Havelock Ellis in 1887, it was Pearson for whom she was writing her 'sex work'. In doing so, she conforms to Pearsonian injunctions (most obviously about the importance of society over the individual), but offers a radically different outcome for women" (p. 62).

⁴Freud (2010) characterised and defined dreams as a reflection of past memory and as a medium of fulfilment of repressed wishes:

And the value of dreams for giving us knowledge of the future? There is of course no question of that. . . . It would be truer to say instead that they give us knowledge of the past. For dreams are derived from the past in every sense. Nevertheless the ancient belief that dreams foretell the future is not wholly devoid of truth. By picturing our wishes as fulfilled, dreams are after all

leading us into the future. But this future, which the dreamer pictures as the present, has been moulded by his indestructible wish into a perfect likeness of the past (p. 615).

⁵Berkman (1989) deliberates on the source of Schreiner's awareness about the unconscious:

To be sure, Schreiner's interest in the physiology of unconscious processes and their relation to artistic imagination was hardly unique in her time. A cluster of Victorian scientists and philosophers, intrigued by the unconscious, foreshadowed the development of modern psychology and psychoanalysis. In 1872 Frances Power Cobbe had written about dreams in terms akin to Schreiner's. Cobbe's essay "Dreams and Illustration of Unconscious Cerebration," published in *Darwinism in Morals and Other Essays* (1883), was perhaps the source of Schreiner's term "unconscious cerebration." Cobbe cited the research of other investigators of the unconscious, most notably Dr. W. B. Carpenter, whom she credited with first coining "unconscious cerebration" in a lecture to the meeting of the Royal Institution on March 1, 1868, and with whose writing Schreiner was also familiar (p. 200).

Schreiner almost celebrates this new aspect of her knowledge in her letter to Havelock Ellis, a researcher of human psychology and the unconscious, on June 12, 1890. She bursts out, "It ["conscious consciousness"] is new and strange evidence of that consciousness which I am sure exists in the brain, at least in mine. I am sure that these marvelous (sic) flashes, as when in *one instant* the whole of my *Prelude* flashed on me as I was sitting and writing things about Bushmen's heads, are not really a flash of revelation, but the result of absolutely unconscious cerebration that had been going on in my brain" (qtd. in Cronwright-Schreiner, *The Letters*, 1924, p. 189).

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