

## Olive Schreiner and African Modernism: Allegory, Empire and Postcolonial Writing

*Are we modern Europeans not the parvenus among the human race? From the ancient civilisations of Asia and Africa, ancient and complete, when we were merely savage, have we not got all the foundation and much of the superstructure of what we possess? [...] It ill becomes us, who are but the tamed children of yesterday, to talk of primitive savages.*

- Olive Schreiner, *From Man to Man* (1926)

*We must go back to go forward; we should employ the process of literary necromancy. The primitive is the embodiment of the fundamental. Originality is not the quality of being ahead of the times, but the capacity to discover a primitive, fundamental law that others in their march forward, have missed.*

- H.I.E Dhlomo, 'Why Study Tribal Dramatic Forms?' (1939)

## South African Modernism

There is something unexpected in the title of this book. Whilst Olive Schreiner's favoured narrative form, anti-imperialism, and literary and political legacy in South Africa are well-known – hence allegory, empire and postcolonial writing - the interruption provided by 'African modernism' introduces a more problematic theme. What is African modernism? It is not a term that is commonly used. In fact, critics are judicious in their use of conjunctions, prepositions and punctuation to separate the two words, so that discussions revolve around Africa *and* modernism, modernism *in* Africa, or African literature *after* modernism.<sup>1</sup> On the rare occasions when the words appear alongside one another, as in a subtitle in a 2015 survey essay by Nicholas Meihuizen, a question mark is used to express doubt about its conceptual viability: 'African Modernism?'.<sup>2</sup> My title is unusual then, because it does not subject 'African modernism' to the usual conditions or exceptions, and so expresses (in highly condensed form) the book's central thesis: Anglophone South African literature is inaugurated and persists *as* modernism. The point of departure for this claim is the work of Schreiner, who, as the first South African novelist, played a formative role in the development of a distinctly South African literary practice. I argue that the key aspects of her writing - her use of experimental allegory and primitivist discourse to express anti-imperialist views - facilitate the modelling of an

identifiable African modernist form that also encompasses the work of later postcolonial Southern African writers, even as their aesthetic and political choices developed in response to changing historical contexts. It follows then, that the literary and political afterlives of Schreiner's modernism can be traced in the work of authors as diverse as Solomon Plaatje, H.I.E. Dhlomo, William Plomer, Richard Rive, Bessie Head, Doris Lessing, Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee and Zoë Wicomb, amongst others.

The widespread critical unease generated by the alignment of 'Africa' with 'modernism' is underpinned by an oft-repeated literary-historical narrative that casts Africa as a passive repository of primitivist imagery exploited by European modernists in the 1890s and early twentieth century; and as the producer of imitative, belated, or otherwise ancillary modernists in association with African decolonisation in the mid-to-late twentieth century. In the first phase of development, this narrative credits painters and sculptors such as Pablo Picasso, Paul Gauguin, Henri Matisse and Constantin Brâncuși, as the forerunners of modernism. They created innovative primitivist artworks inspired by looted artefacts of empire (primarily from West and Central Africa) on display in the museums and galleries of London and Paris.<sup>3</sup> The adoption of African forms by Euro-American literary modernists then followed in the 1910s and 1920s, as writers such as T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf used primitivist imagery to transform their poetry and prose. In its second phase, East and West African writers of the 1960s and 1970s, including Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka and Ayi Kwei Armah, are deemed inheritors and beneficiaries of canonical modernist writers, in particular W.B. Yeats, Joseph Conrad, Franz Kafka and James Joyce. Exemplifying this narrative, Simon Gikandi writes that 'African modernism was produced in relation to mainstream European movements and ideas', though where 'Western counterparts sought to use the ideology of modernism to undo nationalism, African artists adopted the same aesthetic

ideology to imagine and will into being new nations'.<sup>4</sup> Gikandi's argument remains important for recognising the relationship between modernism and postcolonial writing, and the influence of modernist aesthetics on the synergetic literary and political radicalism of African writers. His late twentieth-century focus does, however, stay faithful to the timeline in which African modernism can only occur after, and as a result of, European creative endeavours. Indeed, so ingrained is this idea about Africa's 'secondary, not constitutive' role in the development of modernism that Meihuizen feels confident enough to state that '[w]hat is not in contention is that African writing takes its principal bearings, at least (even reactionary ones), from European modernism, and perhaps, for the time being, one must rest content with this limited fact'.<sup>5</sup> I do not agree with either this claim or sentiment, and argue that in the case of primitivist modernism, it is in fact Africa, not Europe, which leads the way.

This book breaks with received constructions of African and modernist literary histories by exploiting three areas of weakness in the narrative of development outlined above: firstly, the accepted account of the historical relationship between Africa and modernism relies on very specific geographical parameters, in which Africa operates as shorthand for West, Central and East Africa; secondly, it takes a temporally-narrowed view of the colonisation and ongoing decolonisation of Africa and its impact on literary politics and form; and thirdly, it artificially and incorrectly promotes Europe as the sole and primary site of literary innovation. By adopting a new geographical and historical vantage point that shifts the focus from West, Central and East Africa to Southern Africa, and from the twentieth- to the nineteenth century, it becomes possible to perceive a recognisably modernist aesthetic emerging in South Africa in the *fin de siècle* that endures in modified forms even in contemporary literature. This is indeed a novel approach, because although critics have sought to extend our understanding of the temporal and spatial frames of modernism to incorporate African literatures of the late twentieth- and

twenty-first centuries, the case for extending it backwards has not yet been made.<sup>6</sup> In doing so, I propose a new trajectory of modernist development, in which Euromodernist innovations are seen as concomitant with, and related to, a South African modernist tradition.

An entry by Michael Chapman on ‘Africa and the South’ in the *Encyclopedia of Literary Modernism* gives pointers to my claim, albeit with an even broader linguistic and historical scope than I address here. He groups together the hymns of Ntshikana from the early nineteenth century, the work of Schreiner, Plaatje, Coetzee, and Gordimer, as well as Alan Paton, the Afrikaans *Sestigers* such as André Brink and Breyten Breytenbach, and the Soweto poets such as Oswald Mtshali, Mongane Serote and Mafika Gwala, in order to present the idea that they ‘may be characterized broadly as a modernist recognition’.<sup>7</sup> As is to be expected, the brief nature of the encyclopaedia entry prevents Chapman from expanding on how or why this might be the case and so he tempers his proposal by offering the important warning that a grouping such as this, across ‘period’ and ‘intention’ runs the risk of turning modernism into a ‘portmanteau term’, reduced ‘to a style without a content, or a context’.<sup>8</sup> This concern that modernism in a global purview risks being interpreted as an aesthetic practice independent of historical and cultural particularities has also been examined in relation to ethical and political issues by others working in the field of global modernism/s. This is exemplified by Howard J. Booth’s argument that:

Texts have been incorporated – re-colonised one might say – within an expanded definition of modernism with the differences and specificities of context ironed out. The harsh, sundering hierarchies that operated between, for example, colonisers and colonised, races, genders and sexualities have too often simply been set aside. Including texts from outside the West within an expanded definition of modernism may look open and progressive, but the danger is that texts which demonstrate ready affinities with what is already known and valorised will be privileged, while what looks different will be judged negatively and dismissed.<sup>9</sup>

In highlighting the ethical and political consequences of the global turn in modernist studies, Booth brings together the two fundamental problems faced by scholars working in the field: how to ensure that modernism remains a meaningful designation once extricated from early-twentieth-century European contexts, and how to mobilise the term in ways that can recognise inequalities, and accommodate aesthetic and political difference.

The utility of the term modernism in discussing Anglophone South African literature has its foundation in the idea that modernism as cultural production exists in a dialectical relationship with the geopolitical and economic structures of capitalist modernity. In terms of historical locatedness, this is a relatively straightforward claim, as Patrick Williams identifies ‘the start of modernity (and the modernist response)’ as occurring in ‘the late nineteenth century, which is the period of such rapid colonial growth [...] [and] intensified capitalist development and competition’ that a certain synonymy is created between the ‘spread of imperialism’ and the ‘global spread of capitalism’.<sup>10</sup> Williams notes however, that this does not equate to similarly simplistic formulations of modernism as the ‘art of modernity’, ‘art of capitalism’ or ‘art of imperialism’.<sup>11</sup> Rather, as Fredric Jameson writes in ‘Modernism and Imperialism’, ‘the structure of imperialism [...] makes its mark on the inner forms and structures of that new mutation in literary and artistic language to which the term modernism is loosely applied’.<sup>12</sup> As this is just one of ‘a range of other historically novel phenomena’ including ‘modernization and technology; commodity reification; monetary abstraction and its effects on the sign system’ amongst others, ‘the relative weight and importance of the emergence of a whole new global and imperial system in this constellation of “factors”’ remains unclear.<sup>13</sup> These ideas are further explored by Jameson in *The Political Unconscious*, in which analysis of Conrad’s *Lord Jim* leads to the contention that: ‘modernism is itself an ideological expression of capitalism, and, in particular, of the latter’s reification of daily life’ that ‘can at one and the same time be read

as a Utopian compensation for everything reification brings with it'.<sup>14</sup> Jameson's paradoxical positioning of the modernist novel as structured according to a global economic context, whilst at the same time threatening it with a reparative aesthetic alternative, provides a way in to my discussion of South African modernism, which emerges at a time of increased capitalist development and colonial expansion, and which responds using primitivist allegorical forms to express anti-imperialist politics and anticipate postcolonial futures.

The work of the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) provides a further complement to my reading of modernism as indivisible from the global economic order, as they construct a model for how to read literature in the context of the world-system. Deploying the Marxist theory of combined and uneven development, the WReC contend that there is '[a] single but radically uneven world-system; a singular modernity, combined and uneven; and a literature that variously registers this combined unevenness in both its form and content'.<sup>15</sup> They conceptualise this literature as 'world-literature', which they see as 'an analytical category' and explain that "'modernism" might be thought of as a specific configuration, governed by the category of critique, within this wider field'.<sup>16</sup> My interpretation of African modernism digs in to the complexities offered by these terms, assessing the function of modernism as a critical practice that addresses the formative relationships between modernism and empire (as an economic as well as political and cultural enterprise), accounts for the overlapping and intersecting methodologies and periods of modernist and postcolonial writing, and explores the multi-directional circulation of ideas and texts within a one and unequal world literary system.

Whilst I find the notion of the one-world system useful for my interpretation of modernity and modernism, it has previously come under fire from critics such as Susan Stanford Friedman, Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar and Dipesh Chakrabarty, who see it as grounded in the historicist

idea that all societies pass through a fixed evolutionary trajectory modelled on Euro-modernity, which in turn consigns cultural outputs from other parts of the world to a secondary or belated role. It is worth pausing here to briefly reflect on their lines of reasoning, because their criticisms represent some of my own concerns, though the solutions they set out do not, in my view, offer the most constructive models for interpreting South African literature. Friedman levels the accusation that ‘canonical modernism, a Jamesonian “singular modernity,” the modernity of a Wallersteinian “world-system,” or a Deleuzian “minor” or “alternative” modernity [...] [have] insufficiently challenged the prevailing “Western” framework within which studies of modernity and modernism are conducted’.<sup>17</sup> She offers a ‘planetary’ alternative, which takes ‘in the *longue durée* of human history’ in order to argue that modernity and modernism are ‘multiple, contradictory, interconnected, polycentric, and recurrent for millennia and across the globe’.<sup>18</sup> In a similar vein, Gaonkar puts forward that ‘*everywhere, at every national/cultural site, modernity is not one but many*’, whereas Chakrabarty counters the singular modernity model with a ‘provincializing’ approach that seeks to minimise the authority of European ideas which do ‘not claim any universal validity’.<sup>19</sup> Whilst I am sympathetic to the motivations driving these critics, who seek to upend the view of Europe as the wellspring of universal history and experience, their formulations of alternatively situated modernities and modernisms pose limitations of their own, not least raising the concern that if modernism is released from an association with global capitalist modernity and all geographical and temporal parameters are abandoned, how can it remain productively intelligible? The WReC are of similar opinion, and they challenge the main criticism of the singular modernity model - that it promotes a Euro-originary structure of economic development that requires modernity to ‘assume the same form everywhere’ – by stating that it is based in part on a flawed interpretation of Jameson’s arguments, which in fact emphasise that modernity ‘is everywhere irreducibly specific’ and ‘might be understood as the way in

which capitalist social relations are “lived” – different in every given instance for the simple reason that no two social instances are the same’.<sup>20</sup> Thus, despite the claims of Friedman and others, the one-world system still facilitates the ability to think about modernism and modernity in relation to global socio-economic structures, but without occluding localised experiences of discrepancies, inequalities and differences of various kinds, including historical, racial, national, ethnic, and formal.

My conception of South African modernism in the context of a one world-system also provides a literary rejoinder to Chakrabarty’s claim that ‘all variations on the theme of “uneven development” [...] retain elements of historicism’ that not only overstate the global relevance of European ideas, values and culture, but ‘repeat the temporal structure of the statement “first in the West, and then elsewhere”’.<sup>21</sup> As South African literatures were written in the context of empire (broadly conceived), they require interpretive strategies that can account for both the co-constitutive roles of metropolises and colonies in the modern world-system, and the dialectical relationship between modernist form and modern capitalist history, i.e. the period in which capitalism emerged as the dominant global economic system. Yet as Harry Harootunian and the WReC (following Harootunian) note, there is no obligation within the singular modernity model to prioritise the Western dimension of capitalist modernity.<sup>22</sup> This is a provocative idea, and one that has also been parsed by anthropologists, Jean and John Comaroff, with specific reference to Africa. The Comaroffs provide a detailed analysis of African democracy, nation, law, labour, capital, personhood and multiculturalism in order to emphasise that as ‘the making of modernity has been a world-historical process, it can as well be narrated from its undersides’.<sup>23</sup> They continue with the argument ‘that Afromodernity exists *sui generis*’ within the context of the world-system, ‘not as a derivative of the Euro-original’, and as the global south ‘is the first to feel the effects of world-historical forces’, so too is it



situated to 'prefigure the future of the global north'.<sup>24</sup> This is vital, because although the Comaroffs orientate their arguments around the social sciences, their logic can equally be applied to a nineteenth-century literary context. After all, South African modernists experience the same all-encompassing global capitalist processes, albeit at the geographical distance and economic disadvantage that means they are more immediately and intensely felt.

The reason why modernism emerges in South Africa in the nineteenth century as a foundational and enduring mode of literary expression is directly related to the imperialist means by which the area was incorporated into the capitalist world system. In broad terms, this can be described as follows: unlike West Africa, which was brought in through the colonial trade economy that included slaves as well as raw materials, and Central Africa, which was colonised through the machinations of the concession-owning companies, East and Southern Africa established sizeable white settlements, so developed modes of production dependent on native reserves and migratory labour systems. South Africa proved particularly attractive to colonists in this respect, because unlike the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, the area was both mineral-rich and malaria-free. The colonisation of the region began with the 1652 arrival of Jan Van Riebeeck of the Dutch East India Company and subsequent development of the Dutch Cape Colony, followed by the arrival of more Dutch, German, and French Huguenot settlers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The greatest expansion of the European population in South Africa occurred in the nineteenth century however, as the Great Trek of the 1830s, British annexations in the 1840s and 70s, missionary work, and gold- and diamond-speculation in the 1860s and 1870s, contributed to the European population surpassing 200,000 at mid-century, and 750,000 by 1890 (more than all of the countries in North Africa combined).<sup>25</sup> The native population increasingly suffering from land dispossession. This was formalised through the Glen Grey Act of 1894, various commissions and provincial legislations, and the Natives

Land Act of 1913, all which focused on spatial segregation in order to fortify and extend the migrant labour systems that were rigorously controlled by pass laws. In world-system terms, these socio-economic developments meant that unlike the rest of the continent, South Africa had begun the transition from periphery, an area marked by underdevelopment, to semi-periphery, defined by Immanuel Wallerstein as ‘the *middle* stratum [which] is both exploited and exploiter’.<sup>26</sup> Thus nineteenth-century South Africa was simultaneously plundered for its raw materials and labour, whilst also developing features of the economically diversified and wealthy colonising core nations due to its expanding European population and establishment of industries and missionaries.

South Africa’s transition into semi-periphery meant that its inhabitants lived the inequalities of, and defamiliarisation processes generated by, the imposition of European economic, political and cultural structures detached from African ways of life. This environment was conducive to the creation of modernist literature, because in Jameson’s view modernism is dependent on ‘a situation of incomplete modernization’<sup>27</sup> that is also

a national situation which reproduces the appearance of First World social reality and social relationships – perhaps through the coincidence of its language with the imperial language – but whose underlying structure is in fact much closer to that of the Third World or of colonized daily life.<sup>28</sup>

Whilst Jameson maintains that the only true example of this is Ireland, and played out in the work of Joyce, it seems to me that the description is equally applicable to late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century South Africa. It is interesting therefore, that Laura Winkiel also makes this link (albeit not through Jameson) in her comparative analysis of Joyce and Plaatje’s contexts of writing, contending that:

Ireland and South Africa [...] unevenly combine[d], on the one hand, a managerial group of people who are highly individualistic, consume luxury items, belong to elite institutions (such as universities and country clubs), and ostentatiously showcase their high-style of living (the Anglo-Irish in Ireland [...] and, differently, the Boers and English in South Africa) and, on the other hand, a larger laboring class (Irish Catholic

peasantry black and colored South Africans). For authors in these uneven situations, the formal structure of character and plot in the novel becomes one of fragmentation, discontinuity, allegorical displacement, and projection.<sup>29</sup>

Whilst Winkiel makes the important connection between South Africa's uneven development and modernist form – a point I will return to shortly as I briefly map some of the key aesthetic strategies used by South African writers – her description of authors as 'in these uneven situations' does not make explicit that proponents of South African modernism are not merely *in*, but products *of* the semi-periphery. What I mean by this is that the earliest works of South African modernism were created by three groups of people unique to the colonial South African context: second- and third generation local-born whites, such as Schreiner and Plomer, as well as Roy Campbell and Laurens van der Post; black intellectual elites educated through the missions, such as Plaatje and Dhlomo; and a mixed-race coloured population that included Head and Rive.<sup>30</sup> And, whilst their literature in production and reception was subject to varying degrees of repression and distortion by virtue of their respective races, genders and historical moments, all of these writers still shared what might be described as a kind of bicultural insight, the result of their colonial European educations combined with their lived experience of Africa, which enabled them to produce literature at the interface of African realities and European ideas. I propose that through their modernist practice, these writers would in fact set the literary precedents that European writers would be slower to develop and respond to.

The cross-cultural character of modernism has long been acknowledged, though has historically been configured on terms that favour white, Euro-American, middle-class men, as in Terry Eagleton's claim that 'the heights of modern English literature have been dominated by foreigners and émigrés: Conrad, James, Eliot, Pound, Yeats, Joyce', and their 'great literary achievements [...] [were] made possible by the existence within English society of alien components'.<sup>31</sup> Even the global turn in modernist studies that has taken place over the past two

decades, and which has led to new understandings of the racial and geopolitical dimensions of modernism, has, with few exceptions, retained a Euro-American emphasis that reflects the ongoing sway of Euro-American academic and cultural institutions.<sup>32</sup> As such, critical discussions have tended to focus on permeations of race and empire in European and American modernist culture; or otherwise remain concerned with the writings of colonial visitors to British and American shores, whose modernism is justified through their similarities to, and connections with, writers already recognised as modernist.<sup>33</sup> Whilst this remains an important strategy for considering the cross-cultural influences of modernism, the possibility that modernist writing from the colonies might not only precede, but actually influence, metropolitan modernism, still remains a largely untested claim. Yet it is not hard to see the logic of how and why this might be the case. Thus, if we follow firstly Gikandi's line that '[t]he moment of English modernism [...] was generated by a crisis of belief in the efficacy of colonialism, its culture, and its dominant terms – a progressive temporality, a linear cartography, and a unified European subject', then it becomes all the more plausible that second-generation European settlers and educated black and coloured populations in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century South Africa were in a position to experience, and respond to, the failings and burdens of imperialism at an earlier stage than their British counterparts.<sup>34</sup> Indeed South African-born black, coloured and female writers of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries were able to enter the philosophical territory of modernism earlier than, and alongside, their British counterparts because they did not require the same levels of conscious abstraction in order to understand, and respond to, the uneven dynamics of capitalist modernity. Not only this, but as ideas and texts were increasingly mobile in the period, and patterns of influence extended in multiple directions, South African writers came to be both harbingers of modernist form, and also constructive players in the development of British literary modernism.

As I go on to show in Chapters 3 and 4, Schreiner provides the primary example of a South African modernist pioneer, as her friendship circles in the 1880s included figures such as Amy Levy, Arthur Symonds, Philip Bourke-Marston and George Moore, all of whom were experimenting with Symbolist and Naturalist forms and are therefore credited as forerunners of British and Irish modernism; whilst Schreiner's novels, letters and political writings directly influenced canonical figures of modernism such as Lawrence and Woolf. In Chapter 4, I also briefly discuss South African connections to the Bloomsbury group, through figures such as Plomer, van der Post and Campbell, as well as analysing the aesthetics and ideologies of literature by coeval black African writers, Plaatje and Dhlomo, whose work provides examples of modernism independent of contemporaneous European practice. Through these case studies I argue that South African responses to the uneven development of global capitalism manifest in writing as modernist technique, prior to, alongside, and in association with, the work of European modernists.

One consequence of recognising the simultaneity, collaborative efforts, and influence of South African modernists on British writers, is that a corrective can now be offered to the view that European engagements with Africa always constitute an adoption of the primitive (as belonging to an earlier period, or a culture characterised as crude or simple).<sup>35</sup> Instead, British modernist engagement with the primitive in Africa can now be read in the sense of an engagement with the *first* and *original*, or, in other words: already-modernist. This dissolving of the distinction between primitive and modern is a critical strategy that emerges from African modernist form itself, and which can be elucidated by comparing Marianna Torgovnick's account of Western primitivism to what she calls 'alternative lines of primitivism' that might emerge from female, non-canonical or otherwise marginalised writers.<sup>36</sup> In the former, which

is ‘fundamental to the Western sense of self and Other’, the primitive functions within the context of a binarised hierarchy that is used either to bulwark Western supremacy, justifying imperial control and racial superiority, or to express a desire to return to a past golden age and pre-industrial, pre-capitalist way of life.<sup>37</sup> In either case, the primitive operates at the lowest level, as the less sophisticated alternative to a complex, modern, Western standard. The ‘alternative lines of primitivism’, however, introduce the primitive as a more fluid and analytical category. This interpretation can be bolstered with reference to the work of Carole Sweeney, who investigates the possibility that ‘within versions of modernist primitivism, there opened up radically new spaces of articulation in which counterprimitivism and anticolonialism could emerge’.<sup>38</sup> As I show throughout this book, South African modernist deployments of the primitive do not operate in the dichotomised ways with which they are conventionally associated in Western contexts, but rather are invested with complex political, as well as aesthetic, value, that enables the writers to address modern concerns through methods that run counter to imperialist culture. As a result, I argue that the experimental primitivism of South African literature - configured through representations of the land, history, animals, women and black Africans - has the potential to query injustice and inequality in ways that articulate a postcolonial modernist aesthetics and politics.

My view that the use of primitivist discourse in and as politicised allegory provides the hallmark of South African modernism can be explained by looking more closely at the form and function of allegory itself. The word is derived from the Greek *allos* (other) and *agoreuein* (to speak publicly), and so creates the sense of ‘other speak’ to refer to the multiple and alternative layers of meaning that exist beyond the surface of the text. The etymology of allegory signals that it is both a representational and social act, inviting an interpretation that considers both the role of *the Other speaking* and *speaking about the Other* because the form

expresses both the necessity and difficulty of representing Other experiences, typically configured in South African literature through primitivist tropes. It is no overstatement to suggest that allegory is in fact the predominant form in which Anglophone South African literature arises, because like in other anti-colonial and postcolonial writing, it provides the means by which authors can write back at the level of form to challenge the colonial discursive field.<sup>39</sup> As allegory was the formal baseline for colonial representation – exemplified best by religious texts and narratives – it was also the most effective means by which writers could express an equally powerful counter-discourse to oppose hegemonic colonial culture. Not only this, but the fragmenting and multiplying function of allegory means that it has no final signified, and so opens possibilities and interpretations beyond surface meaning. This polysemia appealed to radical South African authors in particular because it enabled them to acknowledge alternative paradigms of experience – those of women, animals, black and coloured Africans, the working classes – without obstructing the real and often unheard voices of those disenfranchised by imperialist domination.

At this point, the key features of the relationships between primitivism and modernism, primitivism and allegory, and anti- / postcolonial writing and allegory should be readily evident, though my interpretation of allegory as modernist practice may not yet be so clear. This is largely due to the fact that modernism is more commonly associated with the symbol rather than allegory, to the point that Michael Bell suggests it might be seen as a kind of second-generation Symbolism.<sup>40</sup> Thus Schreiner's aforementioned friends, Symons, Levy, Bourke-Marston and Moore, are typically clustered together as modernist antecedents, whereas the early South African writers, Schreiner and Plaatje, utilise predominantly allegorical forms, and so do not share the same genetic literary history. Only recently has Rajeev Patke made the case for considering allegory in the context of an investigation into correlations and continuities

between modernist and postcolonial literatures, stating that ‘creative tension between narrative realism, fantasy and allegory’ is a feature of writing by modernists such as Kafka, as well as ‘the kinds of postcolonial writing that resist the realism associated with European fiction of the nineteenth century’.<sup>41</sup> An interpretation of allegory as modernist practice can be further strengthened through Marxist theoretical approaches, because cultural critics associated with the Frankfurt School played a seminal role in debating and advocating for allegory and/in modernism. One such figure, Walter Benjamin, is notable for connecting allegory to the inception of Western modernity in *The Origins of German Tragic Drama*, whilst Georg Lukács uses this text to argue that Benjamin ‘constructs a bold theory to show that allegory is the style most genuinely suited to the sentiments, ideas and experience of the modern world’, and his work helps ‘to establish the allegorical character of modernist literature’.<sup>42</sup> Although Lukács does not make the point explicit, allegory operates here as both writing and reading strategy particularly associated with Marxist methodology, because, as Jameson argues, Marxist analysis *is* allegorical interpretation.<sup>43</sup> I follow these leads in Chapter 2 by utilising both Benjamin and Jameson’s expositions on allegory to analyse Schreiner’s use of racialised primitivist allegory in *The Story of An African Farm* (1883) as a defining feature of African modernism.

One final point about theory, before turning to Schreiner: whilst by now it is obvious that the methodology that predominates in this book derives from Marxist approaches to literature, I am mindful of the warning offered by Nicholas Brown, that there are significant problems in ‘applying the methodological norms developed for one literature [Euromodernism] to the texts of another [African literature]’, as taking forward terms associated with modernism and/or theory are inevitably loaded with bias.<sup>44</sup> Whilst Marxist theory remains useful for interpreting modernism as the expression of counterhegemonic ideas through experimental aesthetics, I



seek to mitigate Brown's concerns through two methods. Firstly I address the uniqueness of African modernism through the integration of a range of other appropriate theories drawn from the fields of postcolonial, ecocritical, poststructuralist and feminist studies in order to nuance my analysis towards questions and representations of race, gender, non-conformist religion and animals as well as issues of global economic structures. Secondly, and most importantly, I do consider African writers as anomalous practitioners of modernist form. I argue that they theorise and practice modernism, and their arguments about writing reveal the construction and dissemination of a politicised African modernist form with its own literary-historical genealogy. This begins, of course, with Schreiner.

### **Olive Schreiner: African Modernist**

Schreiner's writings provide the initial testing ground for my arguments about South African modernism because she was the region's first novelist and the first to achieve international acclaim. Although her work plays a significant role in studies on South African literature, New Woman writing and *fin de siècle* literary culture, only recently has analysis of her literature been interleaved with studies seeking to draw links between modernist and postcolonial literatures.<sup>45</sup> Studying her writing in these contexts marks a significant departure from older forms of Schreiner scholarship, where the methodological approaches tend to fall into three categories. Either critics prioritise biographical analysis, using evidence from the plot of Schreiner's novels to discuss events in her life; and/or they sidestep the racial politics of Schreiner's writing by subsuming the varied aspects of her radicalism under the aegis of her feminist politics; and/or they offer content-based analysis of her literature as a way of drawing out the radical themes, with limited reference to formal concerns.<sup>46</sup> Of these, the last approach is the one that has prevailed in literary criticism, and is largely driven by the perception of Schreiner as a Victorian writer who fails to adhere to the dominant conventions of Victorian

writing, so that her novels are seen as poor or failed examples of realist texts. Schreiner's novels have long been encumbered by this methodological approach, which Cherry Clayton notes in an early address to this issue: 'it has been the weakness of traditional criticism of Schreiner's work that, while confronting and debating the ethical and social issues, it has dismissed or disregarded or misjudged her characteristic novelistic techniques'.<sup>47</sup> Even twenty years after Clayton's remark, Liz Stanley is obliged to acknowledge that new methodologies still have not been deployed to analyse Schreiner's experimental novel forms, commenting: 'surely now, when postmodernist and deconstructionist ideas about "the text" supposedly rule the intellectual roosts, the time has come for a serious re-look at Schreiner's novel [*From Man to Man*] and an attempt to see its "flaws" in a different light?'.<sup>48</sup> Whilst this concern is now less pressing, as critical interest in Schreiner's literary and political writings continues to proliferate, a new complication arises in the form of analyses that may have gone too far the other way, as in Jed Esty's reading of *African Farm* as a colonial bildungsroman, in which he 'brackets the question of political intention and concentrates instead on the problem of narrative form'.<sup>49</sup>

Throughout this book I assess the dialectical relationship between Schreiner's politics and aesthetics, and maintain that this strategy remains key to interpreting the work of her literary successors too. I argue that the form and function of South African literature can be grasped by understanding how the writers use modernist techniques to refuse normative, hegemonic communicative networks, and thereby articulate postcolonial resistance. Schreiner takes the lead here in eschewing conventions of nineteenth-century literary realism by exploiting the openness of the novel form to integrate radical modernist allegory. This experimentation is a crucial dimension of Schreiner's cultural resistance, because, as Benjamin notes, truly revolutionary art must break with traditional forms.<sup>50</sup> Yet, even though contemporary Schreiner

critics have begun to account for her innovative writing techniques, their assessments still betray loyalty to the idea that modernism remains the preserve of twentieth-century European writers. Thus Schreiner figures prominently in studies on Victorian New Women writers who, in Lyn Pykett's words, 'broke with or modified the representational conventions of realism', thus anticipating an emerging modernism.<sup>51</sup> Multiple other accounts similarly pitch Schreiner as an outlying figure in relation to literary modernism, so that Stanley describes her as 'a high modernist before modernism was named or had become a movement'; Carolyn Burdett sees her as a '*colonial* proto-modernist'; Ruth Parkin-Gounelas describes the 'post-Victorian qualities' of her writing; Simon Lewis suggests that *African Farm* is 'a precursor of modernism'; Esty states that *African Farm* 'seems to anticipate a number of modernist fictional techniques' (Esty 74); and Deborah Shapple Spillman pitches *African Farm* as 'an ostensibly realist novel' that adopts 'various rhetoric strategies in a proto-modernist fashion'.<sup>52</sup> These accounts do perform important work in acknowledging that Schreiner's novels cannot be read under conditions that favour realism, though her position is always situated within the context of exclusively European literary-historical developments, and consequently her writing does not figure as a potential source and origin of a coherent South African modernist tradition.

Whilst the experimentation and innovations of South African writers requires attentiveness to formal issues, it would be a mistake to think of African modernism as solely a formal classification. Writing of this kind is marked by a deep investment in political struggles, including most notably, the liberation and decolonisation of South Africa. In Schreiner's case, this is worth examining in some detail, because her political interests were many and varied, coincided in multiple ways, and continued to inform the writing and activism of later South African writers. Whilst various biographers and critics have already provided rich accounts of Schreiner's social theories and political radicalism in book-length works, some of the key

issues are briefly contextualised here in relation to Schreiner's life, in order to appreciate the breadth and nature of Schreiner's unorthodox views.<sup>53</sup> By the end of her life, these incorporated feminist, anti-imperialist, freethinking, anti-racist, pacifist and socialist positions, as well as a range of other interests including animal rights and environmental concerns.

Olive Emilie Albertina Schreiner was born on March 24<sup>th</sup> 1855 at the Wittenbergen mission station in South Africa, the ninth of what would ultimately be twelve children born to a German missionary father, Gottlob Schreiner, and his English wife, Rebecca Lyndall.<sup>54</sup> In 1865, when Schreiner was only nine years old, her baby sister, Ellie, died, and this initiated the early rejection of her parents' faith. In the following year Gottlob became bankrupt, the family dispersed, and Schreiner, along with siblings Ettie and William, was sent to live with her older brother, Theo. A meeting in 1871 with freethinker, Willie Bertram, marked another significant development in Schreiner's thinking, because, as she later wrote to her friend, sexologist Henry Havelock Ellis: 'He lent me Spencer's "First Principles." I always think that when Christianity burst on the dark Roman world it was [...] what that book was to me. I was in such complete, blank atheism'.<sup>55</sup> Reading the work of Herbert Spencer, as well as Ralph Waldo Emerson, and combining this new knowledge with her own observations of nature, meant that Schreiner was able to develop a non-canonical spirituality grounded in the idea of the connectedness of all things. Following Bertram, Schreiner too began to identify as a 'Free-thinker', and in 1880 she provided this description on a nursing application form in response to the question: 'Of what religious denomination?'.<sup>56</sup> Schreiner's position regarding religion was not as simple as the 'blank atheism' she describes in the letter, however. Indeed eugenicist and statistician, Karl Pearson, who would later become another of Schreiner's close friends, offers a definition that can be usefully applied to describe Schreiner's system of belief. He states that the difference between a freethinker and agnostic is that 'while the latter asserts that some questions lie

beyond man's power of solution, the former contents himself with the statement that on these points he does not know at present, but that, looking to the past he can set no limit to the knowledge of the future'.<sup>57</sup> In line with this description, Schreiner remained open to alternative forms of knowledge and spirituality in order to retreat from Christianity whilst retaining a commitment to a cosmological vision of a unified natural-spiritual world.

Although Schreiner received no formal education prior to joining Theo in Cradock in 1866, she was a voracious reader, and at the age of just 15 was able to take up a post as a governess for the Orpen family at Barkly East. She went on to work for other farming families in Colesburg, Ganna Hoek, Ratel Hoek and Lelie Kloof between 1874 and 1881, and it was during this period that she began writing all three of her novels. Whilst *Undine: A Queer Little Child* was abandoned sometime in 1876, and *From Man to Man (Or Perhaps Only...)* would remain incomplete at the time of her death, *The Story of An African Farm* was finished in 1879, and Schreiner took the manuscript to Britain when she left South Africa in 1881. She intended to commence training as a nurse at the Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh, though her chronic asthma, which she would struggle with all her life, prevented her from pursuing this career. In 1883 she succeeded in publishing *African Farm* with Chapman and Hall, which quickly caught the attention of many of London's radical figures and projected her into social circles that included the aforementioned Pearson and Ellis, as well as sexual theorist and socialist Edward Carpenter, socialist freethinkers Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling, and the Marx family doctor, Bryan Donkin. It is possible that romantic feelings may have played an early role in Schreiner's friendships with Pearson and Ellis, though where her relationship with the former ended rather acrimoniously following accusations – levied by a jealous Donkin – of unrequited love on Schreiner's part, Schreiner would maintain a lifelong, ultimately platonic, friendship with Ellis. This period spent in Europe between 1881 and 1889 gave Schreiner new levels of freedom to

express and explore the different aspects of her radicalism, including short-lived attachments to various debate clubs and organisations, such as the Progressive Association, the Men and Women's Club, the Fellowship of the New Life and the women's branch of the Social Democratic Federation. Her anti-imperialism, feminism and freethought thus expanded to incorporate more clearly articulated socialist, pacifist, and anti-racist politics, and, as I argue in Chapter 3, the impact of these developments and Schreiner's new friendships can be keenly felt in the last of her novels, *From Man to Man* (1926).

Well-established as a leading literary and radical figure by the mid-1880s, Schreiner continued to work on *From Man to Man*, as well as producing a number of other shorter allegorical pieces and political writings. In 1889 Schreiner returned to South Africa, and published two collections of allegories, *Dreams* and *Dream Life and Real Life* in 1890 and 1893. In 1892, she met ostrich farmer and fan of *African Farm*, Samuel Cron Cronwright. They married in 1894, and Cronwright took the rather unconventional step of adopting his wife's surname. The following year, she gave birth to their daughter, who survived for only sixteen hours. Schreiner's return to South Africa was both physical and intellectual as her writing of the 1890s and 1900s tended to focus on South African politics and culture, and her literary and critical pieces proposed strongly anti-imperialist and pacifist critiques of British expansionism. Although Schreiner initially admired Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, Cecil Rhodes, even hosting him for dinner in her tiny cottage in Matjesfontein in 1890, this changed when he voted in favour of the Masters and Servants (or Strop) Bill, which allowed white employers to beat their black servants. Known to liberals as the 'Every Man Wallop His Own Nigger Bill', the Strop Bill inspired Schreiner to write a satire entitled 'The Salvation of a Ministry' which she circulated amongst friends.<sup>58</sup> In this short text, various politicians attempt to enter heaven, and all are accepted apart from Rhodes, whose support of the bill means that he is damned and

taken to hell.<sup>59</sup> On the 20<sup>th</sup> of August 1895, Schreiner went public with her opposition to Rhodes, as her husband read a paper they had co-written at the Kimberley town hall, which condemned Cape politics as retrogressive and controlled by Rhodes and other ‘monopolists’.<sup>60</sup> The Matabele War and, later, the Boer Wars, increased Schreiner’s anger towards Rhodes and the cruelty of British expansionism, and in 1897 she published a cutting attack on his imperialist policies in the form of a satirical novella, *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*. The text was shocking, not least because it was published with a frontispiece photograph showing white soldiers surrounding the bodies of three black men hanging from a tree.<sup>61</sup> In the story, a young English soldier, Peter Halket, encounters a stranger (revealed to the reader as Christ) who impresses upon him the importance of opposing cruelty and oppression. Heeding the stranger’s lesson, Peter tries to release a black hostage but is killed in the attempt. Schreiner’s anti-imperialist pacifism was also strongly articulated in her responses to the Boer War, which included the critical essay, ‘An English South African’s View of the Situation’ (1899), and short stories ‘Eighteen-Ninety-Nine’ and ‘Nineteen Hundred and One’.<sup>62</sup> Her interest in the causes and consequences of imperialist conflict continued until the end of her life, and in 1917 she commenced what would be her final major piece of writing, a book on war entitled *The Dawn of Civilisation*, which remained unfinished at the time of her death in 1920, though parts were published as ‘The Dawn’ in the following year.<sup>63</sup>

Schreiner’s commitment to anti-imperialism and pacifism was matched in adulthood by her ongoing investment in feminist and socialist political agendas. In the 1900s and 1910s, Schreiner lent her support to progressive groups such as the Social Democratic Federation in South Africa and the Women’s Enfranchisement League, and her social circles included family members, as well as leading pacifist and feminist figures such as Alice Greene, Emily Hobhouse, and Betty Molteno. Her ‘big book on “Women and Sex”’ occupied much of her

intellectual energy, though unfortunately the first chapter and the bulk of her notes were destroyed in a raid on her Johannesburg home during the Boer War. Once rewritten, the feminist polemic, entitled *Woman and Labour*, was published in 1911. It demanded “labour and the training which fits for labour!” for all women, and expressed a unique evolutionary theory based on the idea that only through union and love could equality between the sexes be attained. In 1913, Schreiner returned to England seeking treatment for her asthma, and was forced to remain in London following the outbreak of the First World War. During this time Schreiner became a supporter of Mahatma Gandhi’s *satyagraha* movement and was in contact with Sylvia Pankhurst. Although Schreiner’s marriage had become increasingly unhappy, and she spent long periods of time away from Cronwright-Schreiner, he eventually came to England in July 1920, having not seen his wife for five years. Despite her poor health, Schreiner managed to return with him to South Africa, and died in Wynberg, Cape Town, on December 10<sup>th</sup> 1920. Following her death, Cronwright-Schreiner published a collection of Schreiner’s essays on South African politics, race and culture as *Thoughts on South Africa* (1923), a number of previously unpublished allegories as *Stories, Dreams and Allegories* (1923), and her two unfinished novels, *From Man to Man (Or Perhaps Only...)* (1926) and *Undine* (1929).

Although Schreiner is known today primarily as the author of *African Farm*, and as a pioneering New Woman of the *fin de siècle*, her work reveals a particularly wide-ranging and interlinked set of concerns relating to issues of empire, race, gender, religion, class, labour and war - in short, all of the same concerns addressed by European modernists. Once again, this reveals modernity as singular and uneven, as the effects of industrialisation, secularisation, imperialist expansion, and war that provided the backdrop to modernist aesthetic and cultural innovations were not only experienced by core nations. Indeed, if the conception of modernism rests on the idea that formal experimentation is tied to conditions of modernity, then in



Schreiner we have a writer fully integrated in debates around the most consistently valued issues in modernist criticism: capitalism; empire; the rise of the New Woman and women's rights; the development of the new sciences and evolutionary theory; new technologies and transport that enabled new forms of communication and movement; mass culture and popular forms; and all conceptualised in relation to an ongoing tension between tradition and innovation, the primitive and the modern.

The book is divided into four chapters, with the first three offering detailed formal analysis of Schreiner's three novels in order to assess how primitivist allegory is used to express radical politics, and how, in turn, this contributes to the shaping of an identifiable African modernist politicised aesthetics. Chapter 1 provides a sustained literary analysis of *Undine* in light of Schreiner's politics by attending to her characteristically allegorical modes of representation. Focusing on the metaphorically-significant zoomorphic and anthropomorphic animal characters in the novel, which have roots in mythical, fairytale, and Ancient Greek philosophical texts, I suggest that Schreiner undermines the conventional Victorian casting of animals and animal-like humans as evolutionarily and racially inferior, by allowing her primitive characters, Socrates, Prince, Diogenes and Undine, to appear as uniquely modern figures able to envision alternatives to their colonial existence. Combining feminist, postcolonial ecocritical and poststructuralist approaches, I interpret how Schreiner uses animals and allegory to express an ideological struggle against the patriarchal, religious and imperialist cornerstones of nineteenth-century colonial South African culture.

In Chapter 2, I use the work of Marxist and postcolonial literary theorists including Benjamin, Jameson and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, to argue that Schreiner's use of racialised primitivist tropes and allegory can be interpreted as a modernist strategy to assert anti-racist and anti-

imperialist arguments. The chapter challenges the notion of Euromodernity as the primary model and measure of progress in political and social terms by establishing links between Schreiner's presentation of the primitive, her experiments with time, and the use of allegory in the context of *African Farm*. I read the chronography of the farm - in which time is allegorised as space – as a critique of the ideologies of labour, religion and imperialism that are affirmed by Western methods for keeping time. Chapter 2 also provides a direct address to Schreiner's presentation of racial difference and racist language in *African Farm*. This approach forges new ground, as critics have tended to sidestep the issue of race, instead focusing on the gender politics of the novel. When race and racist language are discussed, they are seen variably as barriers to her feminism, excused as a product of the time, or used as evidence to suggest that Schreiner had not yet escaped the deep-rooted conservatism of her religious upbringing.<sup>64</sup> By contrast, I suggest that Schreiner's depiction of black characters, use of primitivist tropes, and her figuring of the German farm labourer, Waldo, as a spiritual descendant of the San people, illustrate the nascent anti-racist and anti-imperialist aspects of her radicalism.

Chapter 3 focuses on the radical import of the evolutionary theory outlined in Schreiner's final novel, *From Man to Man*. Schreiner's claim that she created the novel by 'writing ribbed', a term inspired by the process of knitting to describe the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of her literary works, is interpreted as modernist technique, and used to assess the relationship between the novel's form and Schreiner's interlinked arguments about gender, race and empire. I examine how Schreiner binds marginalised characters together through these formal techniques to express an evolutionary theory that positions those viewed as primitive as the most advanced, whilst conceiving of relationships that allow for equal exchange across unequal social and cultural divides. Those most widely viewed as evolutionarily inferior or degenerate in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe, such as black Africans, women, Jews

and mixed-race children, are constructed as the people best equipped to succeed in the future. This new theory of evolution is placed in dialogue with Schreiner's political works on feminism, miscegenation, race and society in order to show how her arguments respond to those proposed by other evolutionists such as Charles Darwin and Spencer, as well as those in her social circle, such as Ellis, Pearson and Carpenter. Schreiner's commitment to equality for all thus is exposed through the interwoven modernist form of her final novel, as she explores the radical potential of the primitive as a positive evolutionary force.

The final chapter of the book is conceived in terms of 'Olive Schreiner's afterlives' and so presents a speculative and selective outline of literary and political legacies of Schreiner's modernist practice. The chapter situates Schreiner's literary innovations in the context of South African literature more broadly, beginning with readings of black African writers of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries as other theorist-practitioners of African modernism. It proceeds to discuss the impact of South Africa's literary innovations on British writers known as proto/modernist, because by drawing out these hidden and under-examined lines of influence, a wholesale reassessment of the accepted literary-historical account of Africa's relationship to modernism can take place. Finally, an exploratory account of transmissions and transmutations of Schreiner's counterhegemonic politics and allegorical aesthetics into writing by later postcolonial authors, reveals the enduring significance of African modernism as a politically and aesthetically radical mode able to respond to the prolonged colonial condition of South Africa whilst accommodating its changing manifestations. After all, when reading strategies associated with modernist scholarship are used to interpret South African literature; when a coherent South African tradition dependent on allegorical forms in response to empire and decolonisation emerges across the work of black, white and mixed-race writers; when these writers are engaging with and influencing the work of canonical modernists; and when this

literature is a response to the same uneven global capitalist modernity experienced by Euro-American modernist writers, albeit from the distant semi-periphery rather than the core, then in my view, this should be given its name: African modernism.

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<sup>1</sup> See Tim Woods, 'Modernism and African Literature', in *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, ed. by Peter Brooker, Andrzej Gasiorek, Deborah Longworth and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.926-41; Neil Lazarus, 'Modernism and African Literature', in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, ed. by Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.228-45; Simon Gikandi, 'Africa and the Epiphany of Modernism', in *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity*, ed. by Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), pp.31-50; David I Ker, *The African Novel and the Modernist Tradition* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998); Ato Quayson, 'Modernism and Postmodernism in African Literature' in *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, vol. 1, ed. by F Abiola Irele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.824-52; Michael Janis, *Africa After Modernism: Transitions in Literature Media and Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Nicholas Brown, 'African Literature, Modernism, and the Problem of Political Subjectivity', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 41.2/3 (Spring/Summer 2008), 264-78; Peter Kalliney, 'Modernism, African Literature and the Cold War', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 76.3 (Sep 2015), 333-68.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Meihuizen, 'Modernism in Sub-Saharan African literature', in *The Modernist World*, ed. by Allana C. Lindgren and Stephen Ross (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015), pp.189-196 (p.194).

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush, 'Introduction', in *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism*, ed. by Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp.1-19; Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (1989; Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), pp.156-8; Sieglinde Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of the Transatlantic Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.3-9; Jon Hegglund, 'Modernism, Africa and the Myth of Continents', in *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp.43-53 (pp.43-5).

<sup>4</sup> Gikandi, 'The Short Century: On Modernism and Nationalism', *New Formations*, 51 (Winter 2003), 10-25 (pp.24-5). See also Nicholas Brown, *Utopian Generations: The Political Horizon of Twentieth-Century Literature* (Princeton and London: Princeton University Press, 2005) for a lengthy and sophisticated exposition on the relationships between European modernist practice and African literature of decolonisation.

<sup>5</sup> Meihuizen, pp.194-5.

<sup>6</sup> See n.1

<sup>7</sup> Michael Chapman, 'Africa and the South', *Encyclopedia of Literary Modernism*, ed by Paul Poplawski (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 2003), pp.2-4 (p.3).

<sup>8</sup> Chapman, pp.3-4.

<sup>9</sup> Howard J. Booth, 'Claude McKay in Britain: Race, Sexuality and Poetry', in *Modernism and Race*, ed. by Len Platt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp.137-55 (p.137).

<sup>10</sup> Patrick Williams, "'Simultaneous Uncontemporaneities': Theorising Modernism and Empire", in *Modernism and Empire*, ed. by Howard J. Booth and Nigel Rigby (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp.13-38 (p.29).

<sup>11</sup> Williams, p.29.

<sup>12</sup> Fredric Jameson, 'Modernism and Imperialism', in *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* by Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson and Edward Said (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp.42-66 (p.44).

<sup>13</sup> Jameson, 'Modernism and Imperialism', p.44.

<sup>14</sup> Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p.225.

<sup>15</sup> Warwick Research Collective (WReC), *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), p.49. Note: contributing members of WReC include Sharae Deckard, Nicholas Lawrence, Neil Lazarus, Graeme Macdonald, Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, Benita Parry and Stephen Shapiro.

<sup>16</sup> WReC, *Combined and Uneven Development*, p.49; WReC, 'Working Papers', <[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/research/currentprojects/collective/wrec\\_papers/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/research/currentprojects/collective/wrec_papers/)> [Accessed 19/05/17]

<sup>17</sup> Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p.3.

<sup>18</sup> Friedman, p.4.

<sup>19</sup> Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, 'On Alternative Modernities', in *Alternative Modernities*, ed. by Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), pp.1-23 (p.23) emphasis in original; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), p.xiii.

<sup>20</sup> WReC, *Combined and Uneven Development*, p.12.

<sup>21</sup> Chakrabarty, p.12, p.6.

<sup>22</sup> See Harry Harootunian, *History's Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice and the Question of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p.163; WReC, *Combined and Uneven Development* pp.14-15.

<sup>23</sup> Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Theory From The South Or, How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p.6.

<sup>24</sup> Comaroff and Comaroff, p.19, p.12.

<sup>25</sup> See Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, *A Modern Economic History of Africa: The nineteenth century*, vol 1 (Nairobi: East Africa Educational, 1997), p.74.

<sup>26</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, 'The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 16.4 (Sept 1974), 387-415 (p.405).

<sup>27</sup> Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London and New York: Verso, 2002), p.141.

<sup>28</sup> Fredric Jameson, 'Modernism and Imperialism', in *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, by Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson and Edward Said (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp.42-66, p.60.

<sup>29</sup> Laura Winkiel, 'The Modernist Novel in the World System', in *A History of the Modernist Novel*, ed. by Gregory Castle (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.408-28 (pp.415-6).

<sup>30</sup> Coloured has a specific meaning in a South African context as it refers to people of mixed-race descent who predominantly live in the Cape. Although the designation 'coloured' is considered offensive as a descriptor of black or mixed-race people elsewhere in the English-speaking world, it is retained in common usage in South Africa even today. The ethnic mix of 'coloureds' encompasses diverse African, European and Asian backgrounds, including (but not confined to) people of mixed Khoikhoi, Xhosa, English, Dutch, Malay and Indonesian heritage.

<sup>31</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Exiles and Émigrés: Studies in Modern Literature* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970), p.1, p.17.

<sup>32</sup> Notable exceptions include essays collected in Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel, *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005); and Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012)

<sup>33</sup> See for example, Ann Blake, Leela Gandhi and Sue Thomas, eds., *England Through Colonial Eyes in Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000); Richard Begum and Michael Valdez Moses, eds., *Modernism and Colonialism: British and Irish Literature 1899-1939* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Peter Childs, *Modernism and the Post-Colonial: Literature and Empire 1885-1930* (London and New York: Continuum, 2007); Len Platt, ed., *Modernism and Race* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and Urmila Seshagiri, *Race and the Modernist Imagination* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p.161.

<sup>35</sup> I offer a brief point of clarification here, which is that I follow Marianna Torgovnick's lead in eschewing inverted commas around the primitive, because, as she rightly notes, it would require 'all other constructed terms – especially terms like *the West* and *Western* – [...] to require quotation marks as well'. As such, isolating the primitive as an abstract term when other markers of race and religion are not similarly represented constitutes a form of Othering incongruous with South African deployments of primitivist tropes. See Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Lives, Modern Intellectuals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p.20.

<sup>36</sup> Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive*, p.248.

<sup>37</sup> Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive*, p.8.

<sup>38</sup> Carole Sweeney, *From Fetish to Subject: Race, Modernism and Primitivism, 1919-1935* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), p.7. See also Michael Bell, 'Primitivism: Modernism as Anthropology', in *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, pp.353-67 (p.359) for the argument that 'the literary imagination could hold primitivist materials or motifs in a variety of interpretive frameworks, sometimes even simultaneously and indeed this is how it was able to throw those very frameworks into question'; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1994), pp.292-3 where he envisions primitivism as a way for intellectuals and writers from colonial or peripheral regions to use 'the techniques, discourses, and weapons of scholarship and criticism once reserved exclusively for the European' to express anti-imperialist arguments; and Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, p.xv, where he argues that colonial writers could appropriate discourses such as those of modernism in order to 'gain the authority not only to subvert the dominant but also to transform its central notions'.

<sup>39</sup> See Stephen Slemon, 'Post-colonial Allegory and the Transformation of History', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 23.1 (Mar 1988), 157-68; and Fredric Jameson, 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', *Social Text*, 15 (Autumn 1986), 65-88.

<sup>40</sup> See Michael Bell, *The Context of English Literature 1900-1930* (London: Methuen, 1980), p.16.

<sup>41</sup> Rajeev Patke, *Modernist Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 108.

<sup>42</sup> Georg Lukács, 'On Walter Benjamin', *New Left Review* 110 (1978), 83-88, (p.83); Georg Lukács, 'The Ideology of Modernism' in *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (London: Redwood, 1969), pp.17-46 (p.40).

<sup>43</sup> See Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp.398-400.

<sup>44</sup> Brown, *Utopian Generations*, p.3;

<sup>45</sup> See for example, Anna Snaith, *Modernist Voyages: Colonial Women Writers in London, 1890-1945* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014); and Jed Esty, *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism and the Fiction of Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.71-83.

<sup>46</sup> All of the major biographies conflate or compare events in Schreiner's novel with events in her life. See Vera Buchanan-Gould, *Not Without Honour: The Life and Writings of Olive Schreiner* (Cape Town: Hutchinson, 1949); Samuel Cron Cronwright-Schreiner, *The Life of Olive Schreiner* (1924; New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1973); Ruth First and Ann Scott, *Olive Schreiner: A Biography* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); D.L. Hobman, *Olive Schreiner, Her Friends and Times* (London: Watts and Co, 1955); Johannes Meintjes, *Olive Schreiner: Portrait of A South African Woman* (Johannesburg: Hugh Keartland, 1965); Karel Schoeman, *Olive Schreiner: A Woman in South Africa 1855-1881* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1991) and *Only An Anguish to Live Here: Olive Schreiner and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau 1992); Heather Parker Lewis, *Olive Schreiner: The Other Side of the Moon* (Cape Town, SA: Ihilihili, 2010). Examples of feminist analyses of Schreiner's literature include Carolyn Burdett, *Olive Schreiner and the Progress of Feminism: Evolution, Gender, Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp.31-6; Laura Chrisman, 'Allegory, Feminist Thought and the Dreams of Olive Schreiner', *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism*, 13.1 (May 1990), 126-150; Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 2: *Sexchanges* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp.51-70.

<sup>47</sup> Cherry Clayton, 'Introduction', in *Olive Schreiner*, ed. by Cherry Clayton (Johannesburg: McGraw-Hill, 1983), pp.15-2 (p.20).

<sup>48</sup> Liz Stanley, *Imperialism, Labour and the New Woman: Olive Schreiner's Social Theory* (Durham: Sociologypress, 2002), p.98.

<sup>49</sup> Esty, p.75. Esty's defence for this approach is given on p.226 n65, where he argues that the transference of political agency from author to form goes beyond the intentions of the author. Unusually given that Esty offers a detailed formal analysis of his chosen texts, his defence demonstrates loyalty to the view that authorial intention is a more important interpretive force than the political implications of particular narrative forms.

<sup>50</sup> See Walter Benjamin, 'The Author as Producer', in *Understanding Brecht*, trans. by Anna Bostock (London: Verso, 2003), pp.85-104.

<sup>51</sup> Lyn Pykett, *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), p.57. For more on the relationship between New Woman fiction and modernism, see Ann Ardis, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Jane Eldridge Miller, *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Gerd Bjorhovde, *Rebellious Structures: Women Writers and the Crisis of the Novel, 1880-1900* (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1987); Lyn Pykett, *The "Improper" Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>52</sup> Stanley, p.12; Burdett, p.9; Ruth Parkin-Gounelas, *Fictions of the Female Self: Charlotte Brontë, Olive Schreiner, Katherine Mansfield* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), p.99; Simon Lewis, *White Women Writers and Their African Invention* (Gainesville: Florida University Press, 2003), p.17; Esty, p.74; Deborah Shapple Spillman, *British Colonial Realism in Africa: Inalienable Objects, Contested Domains* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p.191.

<sup>53</sup> See in particular Stanley, First and Scott, and Joyce Avrech Berkman, *The Healing Imagination of Olive Schreiner: Beyond South African Colonialism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1989).

<sup>54</sup> I have previously published some of the biographical information that follows online. See Jade Munslow Ong, 'Olive Schreiner (1855-1920)', *The Yellow Nineties Online*, ed. by Dennis Denisoff and Lorraine Janzen Kooistra (Ryerson University, 2012) Web. [www.1890s.ca/HTML.aspx?s=schreiner\\_bio.html](http://www.1890s.ca/HTML.aspx?s=schreiner_bio.html).

<sup>55</sup> Letter from Olive Schreiner to Henry Havelock Ellis (28 March 1884). All references to Schreiner's letters can be sourced at Olive Schreiner Letters Online (OSLO) [www.oliveschreiner.org](http://www.oliveschreiner.org)

<sup>56</sup> Copy of Edinburgh Royal Infirmary application to be admitted as a candidate nurse, completed by Olive Schreiner (25 November 1880), NELM 2014.91.2.4 (Olive Schreiner Collection), National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown, South Africa, np.

<sup>57</sup> Karl Pearson, *The Ethic of Freethought* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1901), p.x.

<sup>58</sup> See Letter from Schreiner to Mary Sauer (31 December 1891)

<sup>59</sup> See Olive Schreiner, 'The Salvation of a Ministry', in *The Life of Olive Schreiner*, pp.202-5.

<sup>60</sup> See Olive Schreiner and Cronwright-Schreiner, 'The Political Situation', in *Words in Season: The Public Writings with Her Own Remembrances Collected for the First Time* (Johannesburg: Penguin Books, 2005), pp.38-56 (extracts first publ. in *The Cape Times*, 21 August 1895). For analyses of the relationship between Schreiner and Rhodes, see Robert I. Rotberg, *The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.397-404; Carolyn Burdett, 'Olive Schreiner, South Africa, and the Costs of Modernity' in *Women's Experience of Modernity 1875-1945*, ed. by Ann L. Ardis and Leslie W. Lewis (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp.130-45.

<sup>61</sup> See Olive Schreiner, *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* (London: T Fisher Unwin, 1897).

<sup>62</sup> Schreiner, 'Eighteen-ninety-nine' (1923) in *Dreams Three Works: Dreams, Dream Life and Real Life, and Stories, Dreams and Allegories by Olive Schreiner*, ed. by Elisabeth Jay (Birmingham: Birmingham University Press, 2003), pp.69-88; Schreiner, 'Nineteen hundred and one' (1923) in *Dreams: Three Works*, pp.89-90.

<sup>63</sup> Schreiner, 'The Dawn', *Nation and Athenaeum*, 28.26 (26 March 1921), 212-4. Other of Schreiner's anti-war speeches and public letters include 'Letter to a Peace Meeting' (March 1916), in *Words in Season*, pp.201-3; 'Letter to *The Sun*', *The Sun*, (1899), in *Words in Season* pp.104-5; 'On Conscientious Objectors', *The Labour Leader* (16 March 1916), in *Words in Season*, pp.198-200; 'Speech on the Boer War (Cape Town)' (9 July 1900), in *Words in Season* pp.118-21; 'Speech on the

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Boer War (Somerset East)' (12 October 1900), in *Words in Season*, pp.123-32 (first publ. in *The Natal Witness*, (6 November 1900).

<sup>64</sup> See for example, Carol L. Barash, 'Introduction', in *An Olive Schreiner Reader*, ed. by Carol L. Barash (London: Routledge, 1987), pp.1-20 (p.19); Joyce Avrech Berkman, *Olive Schreiner: Feminism on the Frontier* (Montreal, VT: Eden Press Women's Publications, 1979), p.101; Peter Blair, 'That "Ugly Word": Miscegenation and the Novel in Preapartheid South Africa', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 49.3 (Fall 2003) 581-613 (p.608 n15); Dorothy Driver, 'Reclaiming Olive Schreiner: A Re-Reading of *From Man to Man*', in *South African Literary History: Totality and/or Fragment*, ed. by Erhard Reckwitz, Karin Reitner, and Lucia Vennarini (Essen: Die Blaue Eule, 1997), pp.111-20; Nadine Gordimer, "'The Prison-house of Colonialism': Review of Ruth First and Ann Scott's *Olive Schreiner*", in *Olive Schreiner*, ed. by Cherry Clayton (Johannesburg: McGraw-Hill, 1983), pp.95-8 (first publ. in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 15 August 1980).