



Letters, Letterness & Epistolary Networks:

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‘I trust that our brief acquaintance may ripen into sincere friendship’: Networks across the race divide in South Africa in conceptualising Olive Schreiner’s letters 1890-1920

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Abstract

This Working Paper does two things. Firstly, it explores Olive Schreiner's (1855-1920) connections with black leaders, specifically Solomon Plaatje, John Tengo Jabavu, Abdullah Abdurahman and Mohandas Gandhi, during the struggle for black citizenship from 1890 to 1920 and the light her letters might throw on this. Secondly, it is concerned with how to comprehend and give shape to the corpus of extant Schreiner letters and so how to conceptualise the Schreiner epistolarium. Although there are only two letters to any of these four men (one to Abdurahman, one to Gandhi), Schreiner knew and frequently worked in common cause with them and there are many mentions of them in her letters to other people. A number of possible explanations for this epistolary absence are considered. Also, a comparison is made with the people she knew and worked in common cause with in the peace movement during the Great War and which of them she wrote letters to and which not. The conclusion is drawn that Schreiner's letter-writing has to be considered in connection with her published writings and the other activities she engaged in. Structural patterns are identified across the Schreiner epistolarium which show that her 'letters of engagement' are much closer to her published writings and involve her directly grappling with political analysis and political differences and disagreements. However, most of her letter-writing was engaged in for different purposes and with different sets of people. 'Schreiner's writing' as well as her 'letters of engagement' are her politics carried by epistolary or other textual means, while most of her letter-writing is of a more quotidian kind.

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Introduction

This working paper and the data it draws on derive from the Olive Schreiner Letters Project, an ESRC funded (RES-062-23-1286) multi-site sociology-led interdisciplinary project concerned with researching and analysing, and also publishing, the more than 5000 extant letters of the South African feminist writer and social theorist Olive Schreiner (1855-1920).ⁱ The Schreiner letters are located in around forty major archive collections on three continents, with the main collections in South Africa. A key ‘New Woman’ writer, Schreiner was a founding figure of English-language South African literature, and also a high profile and widely influential social commentator who was a keen theorist.ⁱⁱ Her letters are fascinating on a number of levels, including because they inscribe the emergent features of her unfolding analysis of the important matters listed below:

- colonialism in transition
- metropolitan feminism and socialism
- prostitution
- marriage
- changing contemporary understandings of ‘race’ⁱⁱⁱ and capital
- imperialism 'on the ground' in southern Africa

- the South African War, its concentration camps & women's relief organisations
- Union versus federation of the settler states (the Cape, Transvaal, Orange Free State, Natal) that became South Africa
- inter/national women's franchise campaigns
- 'race' and labour issues
- international feminist networks
- the totalisation of war
- pacifism and war economies
- political and economic changes in South Africa after the Great War

Schreiner's analytical concerns would now be seen as broadly sociological in focus, in methodological thinking, and in theoretical reach, while her epistolary engagement with such matters stands behind, underpins, helps explain, and sometimes adds massively to, the ideas developed in her published writings. Her letters extend and ground her analyses of events and developments which are still of great importance now, being not so much commentaries on these things as providing the quotidian of her emergent analysis of them. Schreiner's letters are also important because she was a major player on the world political scene, a writer whose works sold in the hundreds of thousands and was translated into just about every major world language, and she inhabited an international cosmopolitan public intellectual position of a kind few women have done before or since (and not that many men either).

Overall, the Project explores and theorises the Schreiner letters around ideas concerned with its central conceptual concept of the epistolarium, relatedly also conceiving epistolary exchanges as a variant

of the system of the gift (Stanley 2004, 2009, 2010b, 2010c). It sees the vast majority of all letter-writing as expressions of the quotidian and the commonplace, with the ordinary and extraordinary intertwined in this in complex ways (Stanley 2010a). While treating letters in any naively referential way is most definitely rejected, at the same time the Project's analytical approach also recognises that letters emanate from and are a part of social life and most certainly have 'real world' referents, albeit complicated ones (Stanley & Dampier 2008). In addition, it sees Schreiner's letters as performative in a variety of ways: they are often part of social action and 'do things', they are not just commentaries on or descriptions of it. The multi-layering of referential and performative aspects of *Schreiner's* letters specifically are interesting in another respect as well, for they were written by a social theorist doing social theory in epistolary form, and so they open up for inquiry the grounding of her theorising (Stanley 2002; Stanley, Dampier & Salter 2010).

Alongside this, Schreiner's letters have a complicated and interesting relationship with her many political involvements and other 'off the page' activities. Where she was involved in a shared practical politics with people - in the examples to be discussed later regarding pacifist networks during the Great War, and in relation to 'race' networks during the period of black struggle for citizenship rights from around 1890 to 1920 - Schreiner did not use epistolary activity as part of these political involvements.^{iv} However, where there were serious political differences between her and other people, particularly when coupled with

Schreiner's exclusion as a woman from formal, official political structures (parliament, the franchise) which these other people had access to, then she *did* engage in epistolary activity with them as a core component of her politicking. In the examples discussed later, for instance, she did so around her opposition to the politics and policies of John X. Merriman, Jan Smuts and F.S. Malan. We shall return to these more general points later, and consider what comes into sight when the overall structure of the very large corpus of extant Schreiner letters is explored regarding this complicated intermeshing of her political activities with her epistolary ones.

Schreiner was an important social theorist and writer contemporaneously, and is one of the key feminist theorists still now. One of the distinctive features of her work is its strongly cross-genre character, such that her theorising as readily appears in her fictional writings and letters as in her political essays and treatises, while conversely strong fictive devices mark her analytical writings of all kinds. Another distinctive feature is that Schreiner was what would now be called a 'public intellectual' with international intellectual stature and influence, with this connecting with a long continuous pattern of her practical political engagement as well. In addition, as the ensuing discussion will show, there are important continuities and also interesting junctures between Schreiner's letter-writing, her social theorising, her writing more generally and her practical political activities, with her letters throwing important light on these. Our route into examining the

letter-writing/theory/politics dynamics going on is Schreiner as a white liberal who became a radical and her epistolary and political relationships with some well-known black leaders during the period of the struggle for black citizenship in South Africa between 1890 and 1913 and the continuing reverberations of this up to 1920.

Contextualising Schreiner on ‘race’ during the 1890 to 1920 struggle for black citizenship

Since 1994 and free elections in South Africa, it has become an intellectual commonplace to refer to the ‘post-apartheid moment’, with academics from a range of disciplines, including sociology and history, invoking this as an opportunity for re-thinking South African society and freeing thinking from the elisions and constraints of the apartheid-imposed order (see, for example, Coombes 2003, Guelke 2005, Greenstein 1996, Nuttall and Coetzee 1998, Posel 2010 and Witz 2003). However, while there has been some re-thinking of the South African *past*, this has been of a limited kind compared with the more wholesale interrogation of its recent *present*, with many supposed truisms of the apartheid mind-set still appearing unremarked in current understandings of the past and the historiography produced about it.^v

One such truism, expressed crudely, is that, until relatively recent times, the blacks were entirely downtrodden and suppressed and the whites were entirely racist oppressors. A sea-change is often implicitly dated from the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 and the Rivonia trials of

1963-4, seen as markers of erupting black consciousness and activism, with white liberalism and radicalism located in the 1960s and 70s and construed in responsive terms. For the earlier apartheid-minded South African academic, early white activism around black citizenship matters was an anomaly and a threat to ideas about white hegemony, and therefore was either ‘unseen’ or else written out of the record. And for many anti-apartheid academics, the existence of white liberals and radicals in an earlier time-period also posed a problem, but for rather different reasons – their existence disrupted the over-dichotomised view of the South African past being perpetuated because it was a demonstration that the moral landscape was not quite as starkly and literally ‘black and white’ as their analyses tended to suggest. Also, by the 1970s when Marxist revisionism took hold in South African academic circles, ‘liberal’ became suspect, so – with some notable exceptions - it has not just been Afrikaner nationalist historiography that has ignored the history of early white liberalism.^{vi} However, the failure by 1970s revisionists to explore and draw on Schreiner’s work is highly ironic given the extent to which her analysis of ‘race’ and capital in South Africa prefigured aspects of their own, although she did so in what would now be called an intersectional way. That is, her work focused on the complex intersections of ‘race’, class, gender and other structured inequalities, rather than the fixing on class which characterised much work by the revisionists.

Consequent elisions of such complicated aspects of the South African past ignore a ‘before’ that includes the extended period of the struggle for black citizenship, from the middle 1890s through to the 1913 Land Act and its aftermaths up to 1920. Over this period, active networks and activities of white liberals and radicals and black leaders developed, cooperating around encouraging the formation of black intellectual elites, mass mobilisation, and campaigning for black citizenship and political rights as these interfaced with the political and economic changes then occurring.^{vii} Originally the Project planned to explore the missing or vanished history of ‘across the divide’ alliances between South African black (African, coloured, Indian, Chinese) elites and white liberals and radicals from 1890 to 1920, by investigating some of the relevant high-profile political events Schreiner engaged with – importantly including Union in 1910 and the Natives Land Act in 1913 - through the lens of her letters. However, this changed as the Project’s work developed and we explain the whys and wherefores of this in what follows.

Between 1890, just after her return to South Africa from Europe, and the late 1890s, Schreiner was engaged in theorising race in the context of the distinctive interdependences of racial and ethnic groups in South Africa, in a number of essays pseudonymously published as by ‘A Returned South African’.^{viii} She also increasingly turned her critical analytical attention to the multifarious activities of Cecil Rhodes as a symbol and a key part of the reality of the structural dimensions of political corruption, and also of the then still emergent capitalist mode of

production around diamonds and gold in South Africa. Here *The Political Situation* (Schreiner 1896) is concerned with the alliance of capitalists, monopolists and retrogressive politicians, and against it encouraging new forms of progressive political formation and engagement. Around this, it also critically analyses capitalist developments which constrained or compelled black labour and reduced it to mere ‘hands’, and also concomitantly created the parasitism of whites upon black labour, in relation to the diamonds and gold industries particularly but also more widely:

“There are two attitudes with regard to the treatment of this Native Labouring Class: the one held by the Retrogressive Party in this country regards the Native as only to be tolerated in consideration of the amount of manual labour which can be extracted from him; and desires to obtain the largest amount of labour at the cheapest rate possible; and rigidly resists all endeavours to put him on an equality with the white man in the eyes of the law.” (Schreiner 1896: 109-10)

Relatedly, the imperialist expansionist activities of the Rhodes-controlled Chartered Company led to massacres in what were then called Matabeleland and Mashonaland, following which Schreiner produced a high profile critique of Rhodes’s complicity and ethical bankruptcy in her semi-fictional allegorical novella, *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* (Schreiner 1897). This was published during the week Rhodes and other South African politicians gave evidence to a House of Commons committee of inquiry concerning the Jameson Raid, amid concerns from her publisher that Rhodes would ‘strike back’ via the libel laws.

For most of the South African War (1899-1902), Schreiner lived in Hanover in the Northern Cape, a small village which was subject to stringent martial law and military censorship, and her writing and other activities were consequently severely curtailed. By 1905-6, however, her analytic gaze was turned towards the import of Chinese labour to work in the Rand goldmines by the Milner imperial administration and its knock-on effects for indigenous black labour:

“The thing that it is hardest for me not to be troubled about now is these Chinese. They are practically slaves flogged & ill treated in the mines, & when by any chance they manage to escape there is no hope for them every man’s hand is against them. They must starve & die or be captures & sent back to the mines & in despair these horrible murders are committed. I would write on the question if I saw the slightest use; but it is not things must ^play out to their own terrible end. Good bye....^” (OS to Betty Molteno, 31 August 1905, UCT; all transcribed extracts from Schreiner letters are provided as in the original manuscript versions, complete with their insertions, deletions and ‘mistakes’^{ix})

She commented similarly but at more length to Merriman about the imported Chinese workers:

Yes, I have felt deeply concerned on the Chinese question. It has absorbed my thoughts more than any other matter but the condition of affairs in Russia for a long time But my chief concern is as to our national responsibility towards those forty or fifty thousand men. In how far have those men ever understood the conditions of life & labour they were to exist under here before they came? In how far is their treatment in South Africa consonant with that universal freedom & justice which should form the only matter for pride to an enlightened people at the beginning of the 20th century?

I take it as axiomatic that no free democratic people can introduce into is social organizes a vast body of humans deprived of freedom & the common rights accorded to other men without producing the most serious & ~~the~~ even deadly disease in that organization, dis-co-ordinating all its lines of growth. It seems to me almost impossible to over estimate the many ways in which the introduction of the Chinese under the existing conditions must injure our social & moral growth as a

community, & this entirely without supposing them to be worse than other folk. I do not think the good missionaries we force into China at all worse than the average Chinaman, but he is the source of no end injustice, wrong & social suffering which forced artificially into the midst of a social organization which has no place or need for him!” (OS to John X. Merriman, 10 January 1906, NLSA)

However, Gandhi’s later comment on such matters suggest some of the complexities of the broader context of race in the South African context and Schreiner’s in principle consideration of these issues in relation to indigenous labour:

“...Olive Schreiner, was a gifted lady popular in South Africa and well known wherever the English language is spoken... Although she belonged to such a distinguished family and was a learned lady, she was so simple in habits that she cleaned utensils in her house herself... the Schreiners had always espoused the cause of the Negroes. Whenever the rights of the Negroes were in danger, they stoutly stood up in their defence. They had kindly feelings for the Indians as well, though they made a distinction between Negroes and Indians. Their argument was that as the Negroes had been the inhabitants of South Africa long before the European settlers, the latter could not deprive them of their natural rights. But as for the Indians, it would not be unfair if laws calculated to remove the danger of their undue competition were enacted. All the same they had a warm corner in their hearts for Indians.” (MK Gandhi, 1926, ‘A review of grievances in the Transvaal’, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* 1926, vol. 34, p. 33)

This was followed between 1908 and 1910 with Schreiner’s various responses to the Constitutional Convention set up to consider what form unification of the four settler states in South Africa would take and her increasing concern about the implications for black citizenship rights. These included possible removal of the more liberal Cape franchise (where there was a property and literacy as well as sex qualification basis to the franchise and black men who met this were able

to vote), and the likelihood that racially-directed legislation would be imposed across the four formerly separate states in a Union. Schreiner provided a detailed critique in a lengthy article in December 1908 in a newspaper (Schreiner 1908), which was later published with minimal changes as *Closer Union* (1909). Written to address the white and particularly the Afrikaner population, Schreiner emphasised that Union would impact very negatively on South Africa's black populations, and appealed to white self-interest if ethical principles failed to convince them that full equality was needed for a stable future. The franchise, she proposed, must be based on the principle of absolute equality:

“...no distinction of race or colour should be made between South Africans. All persons born in the country or permanently resident here should be one in the eyes of the state. I am, and always have been, strongly opposed to the importation of Asiatic or other labourers to undersell the labour of the permanent inhabitants of the land... but, once admitted to take up their permanent residence in our country, I think no distinction of race or colour should be made... an attempt to base our national life on distinctions of race and colour, as such will, after the lapse of many years, prove fatal to us” (Schreiner 1909: 7-8)

In her comments, Schreiner went on to link franchise issues with those of labour, emphasising that in South Africa the labour questioned mapped onto that of race, with its “native labour” being “the makers of our wealth, the great basic rock on which our State is founded – our vast labouring class.” (Schreiner 1909: 25), and with there being immense consequences to this:

“...if, blinded by the gain of the moment, we see nothing in our dark man but a vast engine of labour; if to us he is not a man, but only a tool; if dispossessed entirely of the land for which he

shows that large aptitude for peasant proprietorship...; if we force him permanently in his millions into the locations and compounds and slums of our cities, obtaining his labour cheaper, but to lose what the wealth of five Rands could not return to us; if, uninstructed in the highest forms of labour, without the rights of citizenship, his own social organisation broken up, without our having aided to participate in our own; if... we reduce this vast mass to the condition of a great seething, ignorant proletariat – then I would rather draw a veil over the future of this land.” (Schreiner 1909: 29)

‘Drawing a veil’ is actually the antithesis of her discussion, which goes on to spell out what this future might hold.

Between 1907 and 1911 Schreiner’s analytic attention and her practical political activities were concerned women’s suffrage, with her letters tracking her opposition to women’s suffrage groups which were increasingly taking a ‘the vote on the same terms as men’ stance and thus supporting a racial basis to the franchise in South Africa. Her strategic withdrawal from Cape and then national women’s organisations occurred because of this. Thus in the aftermath of her resignation from the Women’s Enfranchisement League (WEL) and probably responding to speculation over her departure, Schreiner sent to her friend and fellow WEL member Ruth Alexander an annotated WEL leaflet which proclaimed that the organisation aimed to “promote an intelligent interest in the question of the political enfranchisement of Women in Cape Colony.” Alongside and over this Schreiner wrote, “It was not a personal matter than made me leave the society the women of the Cape Colony all women of the Cape Colony These were the terms on which I joined”, making clear her rejection of a racial franchise (OS to Ruth Alexander, NLSA).

Relatedly, in 1911-12 some women's suffrage members and groups, particularly but not exclusively in the Transvaal and Free State, were involved in promoting claims about a 'black peril' in the form of claims about black men's sexual threat to white women. In opposition to this, Schreiner participated in General Missionary Commission research which collected detailed information documenting that the greatest threat was to black women from white men, and strongly rebutted 'black peril' claims:

“The subject of the so called Black-Peril is one that interests me deeply. My feeling of course is that peril which has long over shadowed this country, is one which exists for all dark skinned women at the hands of white men. If I can do anything in Cape Town to assist in any way I shall be glad.” (OS to James Henderson, 26 December 1911, Cory)

“One who lives in a great railway camp like de Aar is simply overpowered by the evil & degrading attitude of white men towards dark women... it is not honourable legal marriage between the races that degrades both, but the reckless & degrading ~~illegal~~ immoral relations between white men & dark women. One dare not bring a decent black or coloured girl into this place.” (OS to James Henderson, 15 July 1912, Cory)

The broad context here was of nationalist claims that black men were a threat more generally, strategically promulgated in the lead-up to introduction of the draft legislation that became the infamous 1913 'Natives' Land Act, concerning which Schreiner was a high profile opponent. In a similar vein, Schreiner was asked to speak at the Universal Races Congress in London in 1911 (Pennybacker 2005, Forum 2005), and although her health prevented her attendance, she wrote an address for it:

“I am thinking of writing a little letter of a page or so to be read at the congress, just to say I’m sorry I can’t be there.” (OS to Will Schreiner, 20 February 1911, UCT)

The address was duly written and, as Will Schreiner planned to be at the Congress, Schreiner dispatched it via him and they also agreed he would read it for her:

“I am enclosing a little note to be read at the Races Congress. Please post it to Secretary Spiller.” (OS to Will Schreiner, 3 July 1911, UCT)

Her ‘little note’ and his presence were to counter any idea among international delegates that the pro-nationalist white South African women present and promoting a ‘black peril’ view represented an agreed white position. However, in the event and unaccountably Will Schreiner failed to attend, to Schreiner’s disappointment and probably considerable annoyance as well:

“It was a disappointment to me to see from Adelas letter that you had not spoken at the races congress! I had looked forward so much to your speech & your influence. I can’t understand how it was that time was made for Mrs Macfadyens speech – she representing a tiny society – while you the leading representative of the native interests in South Africa & the Races Congress branch here did not speak. I would have made a great effort to write something on this native peril question this mad hysterical fashion – if I had not thought you would speak much better & with more weight, than anything any thing I should have said.” (OS to Will Schreiner, 16 August 1911, UCT)

Schreiner was a vocal opponent of the 1913 Land Act and various comments on its iniquities appear in her 1912 and 1913 letters. To Merriman in July 1912, she linked the Bill then under discussion back to Hertzog’s appointment as the Minister for Native Affairs, and also saw it as helping promote a wider retrogressive movement:

“It would be impossible for me to tell you the depression I felt when I heard Hertzog had been appointed Minister for Native

Affairs. But I passed through the bitterness of death in South African affairs when the Union was formed. It was then to me as if a wagon were drawn up at the top of a mountain & set slowly going back-wards over the edge – at first to move slowly but surely & steadily back-wards down a gentle slope, but gaining more & more speed as it moves down breaking & crashing everything that comes in its way, & its left at last at the bottom. I may be mistaken but I have always looked for a steady back ward movement for ten or fifteen years. I am simply obliged not to think of public matters which I am so powerless to help or touch. One sits by watching a tragedy.” (OS to J.X .Merriman, 2 July 1912, NLSA)

Schreiner’s letters to Merriman almost invariably play on his well-known egotism by flattering to persuade him, but they also trenchantly point out his failures to live up to his stated liberal principles. This included in relation to his failure in June 1912 to vote against the Land Bill, with a small hint in Schreiner’s June 1912 letter that what he might ‘really think’ could perhaps be different:

“I thought your speech on the Native Bill very fine, but oh if you could have seen your way to vote against the Bill! But the speech was exceedingly fine.
... There really ought to be three parties in this country – the extreme flagwaving folk, on one side with their wretched imperialism & the extreme taal retro-gressives on the other; & a third of liberal enlightened men of both races in the middle; but I suppose there is small hope of that ^just at present.^

I wonder what you really think of the position of affairs now?” (OS to JX Merriman, June 1912, NLSA)

Soon after, the Minister of Native Affairs in charge of steering the Bill into law, Johannes (Jim) Sauer, had a stroke or heart attack and then died. In commenting on Sauer’s sudden incapacity to his friend and colleague Merriman, Schreiner also raised the reneging on principle involved and what the long term consequences in her view were likely to be:

“I am very anxious about Mr Sauer.^x Is it not tragic that the last act of our dear friend’s political life should have been, if he is taken from us, the framing of that native land bill? It runs against all he has so faithfully upheld during his life. How little place & power look when one approaches the end of the journey. Nothing matters but the knowledge that in however small a way one has always fought against human injustice & oppression. If only we could awake South Africa to see to-day that though for the moment we can refuse the vote the right to hold land & nearly all other human rights to the vast native population of South Africa the day is coming, in less than 15 years when the millions will rise up & demand, what we might by generously giving them now win their love & gratitude. Dismiss not the day of small things. A class or a sex or race refused in a so-called democratic state under 20th century conditions the right to take its share in in the government of the state will ultimately be driven the lamentable use of force, & answer repression with resistance which must shake society to its foundations. It is hard to leave South Africa seeing no little glimmering of the great modern truths among its leading people.” (OS to JX Merriman, 20 July 1913, NLSA)

However, the Land Act was by no means the only discriminatory legislation being passed with reference to the denial of black citizenship rights. In mid 1912 legal recognition was withdrawn from immigrant Indian polygamous marriages in an Immigration Bill, following an early Immigration Bill that required registration and in effect passes for Indians in South Africa. Opposition to these and to the registration legislation, extended across South Africa after Union, was the concern of the satyagraha movement led by Gandhi. In November 1913, a Schreiner letter to Merriman comments on his speech about Indian citizenship rights, although once more she notes that he had failed to follow through when it came to voting, and this was the last letter she wrote to him:

“I was glad indeed to see your remarks on the Indians. ~~It~~ It is not waving their little Union Jacks in the faces of other people that makes the true ^& good^ Imperialist; but trying by justice

& love to draw nearer all the races who make it. With out love
& fellow feeling Imperialism is a hideous sham.
I should like much to ~~spea~~ ^write^ on the Indian question, but
am not able to now” (OS to JX Merriman, 16 November 1913,
NLSA)

As is well known, a compromise deal was eventually struck
between Botha and Gandhi in early 1914. What is not well known is that
a minor role was played in this through Schreiner networks around her
introduction to Gandhi of her close friend Betty Molteno. Molteno and
Emily Hobhouse, also introduced to Gandhi by Schreiner, oiled the
wheels by enabling Gandhi to meet Annie Botha (wife of Union Prime
Minister Louis Botha) and Lady Gladstone (wife of Herbert Gladstone,
Governor General of the Union), for these women had somewhat more
sympathetic politics and might indirectly influence their husbands:

“The visit to Miss Hobhouse was entirely successful. It was a
perfect pilgrimage for me. Mrs. Botha was all you described
her. She was most kind to both of us and most loving towards
Mrs. Gandhi. Thank you for all this. Incidentally, we met Lady
Gladstone too &? Are you not pleased?” (MK Gandhi to Betty
Molteno, 23 February 1914, *The Collected Works of Mahatma
Gandhi*, vol. 14, p. 75)

Schreiner’s heart condition was affected by living in the heat and
high altitude of De Aar and her health problems became particularly
debilitating during her years there. At the end of 1913, she left South
Africa for medical treatment in Europe, then remained in Britain from
August 1914 to August 1920.^{xi} Most of her attention over this latter
period was directed to war and the consequences of its totalisation, the
role of international diplomacy, pacifism and the development of war

economies. However, she was also involved in providing support for members of the 1914 and 1919 South African Native National Congress Delegations that protested the 1913 Land Act and also later retrogressive legislation to the British government, as discussed later. Schreiner returned to South Africa just a few months before she died in December 1920, but during those months she supported and helped raise money for the defence of Samuel Masabala, jailed leader of striking Port Elizabeth municipal workers union, and regarding the related killing of nineteen strikers by government forces; and she also similarly supported the Bloemfontein women jailed for refusing to carry passes in the 1920 campaign which built on Free State women's 1913 anti-pass activities:^{xii}

“We are collecting money for Mas-abela's defense. The poor natives! 100 women are in prison in Bloemfontein for refusing to pay their 6d for passes. I wish you were here; & yet it's all too sad.” (OS to Betty Molteno, 12 November 1920, UCT)

As the above outline will have indicated, Schreiner's involvement in and commitment to a range of intellectual issues and practical political activities concerning 'race' in South Africa was extensive. Relatedly, her letters provide ample evidence of her long-term association with some well-known names in the emergent black elite. Pilot research for the Project showed there were Schreiner letters to an array of people throwing indirect light on her commitments on such matters, so as the Project proceeded in tracking and transcribing many previously unpublished and unresearched letters, we expected to uncover substantial numbers to black political figures of the day, and to Plaatje, Jabavu,

Abdurahman and Gandhi in particular. This did not happen, as we go on to explain.

Schreiner knew Solomon Plaatje (1876-1932) from when both lived in Kimberley, where from 1894 to late 1898 Plaatje worked for the Post Office initially as a telegraph messenger then letter-carrier, subsequently moving to Mafeking as an interpreter in its Magistrate's Court. It seems that Plaatje held Schreiner's 1896 essay *The Political Situation* in high regard. With other members of the South Africans Improvement Society, including John Tengo Jabavu's brother, the Reverend Jonathan Jabavu, who lived in Kimberley, Plaatje was almost certainly present when it was read by Cronwright-Schreiner in Kimberley Town Hall in August 1895; he named his oldest daughter Olive (with Jabavu as her godfather); and thereafter he supported Cronwright-Schreiner's political activities because of this (as also did Jabavu).^{xiii} Later Plaatje and Schreiner both acted as informants to the General Missionary Commission concerning the 'so-called black peril' and collected counter-evidence for it in 1911-12. In addition, they frequently met in London between 1914 and 1917 when Plaatje was in Britain as part of the SANNC Delegation^{xiv} protesting the 1913 Land Act,^{xv} and then again in 1919, when the second SANNC Delegation was campaigning against the extension of retrogressive legislation.

There are references in Schreiner's letters to meetings and her role in facilitating contacts for Plaatje, although in her extant letters at least this is not until after publication in May 1916 of Plaatje's *Native Life in South*

Africa (Plaatje 1916). An interesting sub-set of these concern Schreiner brokering for her younger friend John Hodgson, an engineer would-be journalist and writer, who wanted to meet Plaatje, and her later reservations about Hodgson's activities, as follows:

"I have not read Platjes book but will get it from Mundie's... I have a friend a Mr Hodgson who has been deeply interested in Platje's book... Would it be possible for you to lend it to him? He would carefully return it. If it was too much trouble to post it to him & you would give your consent I would give him your address & he might call for the books – if you cared to lend them. He wants very much to meet Solomon Platje Could you perhaps arrange for him to meet him in your house?" (OS to Georgiana Solomon, 5 October 1916, NLSA)

"Did Mrs Solomon say she would arrange for you to meet Solomon Platje? I would arrange for you to come & meet him here, but the only sittingrooms are so crowded with people that one can't sit & talk. I am writing to Mrs Solomon to arrange for us both to meet Solomon Platje at her home on Sunday afternoon. Could you come then." (OS to John Hodgson, 13 November 1916, HRC)

"I have written to Mrs Solomon & given her your address & asked her to invite you to meet Solomon Platje. You might write to her." (OS to John Hodgson, 19 October 1916, HRC)

"Mrs Solomon writes to me in great delight that you are going to write an article in the Statesman about Platje. She seems to think you are deeply in sympathy with his view. I hope this is so. I know you would never make use of any thing Mrs Platje or Mrs Solomon to whom I intro-duced you said, against them." (OS to John Hodgson, 6 December 1916, HRC)

Schreiner's health continued to deteriorate over the war period, and she was also very shaken by her brother Will's death in 1919, having been closely involved in the weeks before this with him and his family. In the midst of this crisis, a letter to Georgiana Solomon shows she had attended a meeting at which the delegates spoke:

"Your gathering was most interesting. How well Plaatje and all the delegates spoke!" (OS to Georgiana Solomon, 26 July 1919, UCT)

“I am going to ask Dr Sayer to have a meeting for the South Africans in her house. She may not feel able to.” (OS to Betty Molteno, August 1919, UCT)

“Could you give me Solomon Platjes address I know a friend who I think might help him with a little money for his paper, if I could ask him here to tea to meet her. Don’t mention it to Platje as it may not come off!” (OS to Georgiana Solomon, 13 October 1919, UCT)

She was then soon involved in the terminal illness and death of her close friend Alice Greene, partner of Betty Molteno, and also the decline in her own health continued. When her sister-in-law and nieces left for South Africa, Schreiner’s thoughts turned to returning there, with no epistolary signs of any further contact with Plaatje.

Schreiner met John Tengu Jabavu (1859-1921) in 1897 when he (and also other black people who had directly witnessed the events concerned) provided her with information about the massacres in Matabeleland and Mashonaland,^{xvi} with her allegorical novella *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* providing an expose of the Rhodes’ controlled Chartered Company’s culpability for these. The acquaintance had probably started earlier than this, via Jabavu’s brother Jonathan, who was a Congregational Minister in Kimberley. Jabavu had investigated the events in Matabeleland and Mashonaland as a journalist and editor of the newspaper *Imvo Zabantsundu* [Black Opinion], and like others recognised that Schreiner would feel strongly about these events and also, in her words, ‘do the best she could’ by taking Rhodes on:

“But all that happens in the Colony seems to me such a small thing compared with what has gone on in Mashona & Matabele land. Did I tell you of the educated Christian Kaffir [Jabavu] who came to see us the other day? I fancy I did. He had been up in Matabele-land talking to the chiefs and indunas there. I asked him what they gave as their reason for fighting. He said, “They

say they fought for death.” I asked what he meant; & he said that they had never any hope of conquering the white men or driving him out, but their treatment was such that death was the one thing they desired. The Chartered Company are trying to drive them down into the fever swamps to live where they all must die by inches. Ah my dear friend, it is these things that are so terrible to me. I Sometimes feel ashamed to look at a black man. But we can but each live out our little life, doing the best we can with the little fragment of strength that is given us.” (OS to Betty Molteno, 16 December 1897, UCT)

Thereafter Schreiner and Jabavu remained in contact, with frequent comments and brief observations about his political activities and their possible meetings occurring in her letters:

“Hearty greetings to Dr Abduraman and Jabavu” (OS to Will Schreiner, 12 July 1909, UCT)

“Tengo Jabavu is passing tonight but I’m not able to go to the Station to meet him” (OS to Anna Purcell, Thursday nd but 1912, UCT)

The first extract here concerns gathering opposition to the proposals of the Constitutional Commission concerning federation or union of the settler states. In particular it refers to an occasion when Abdullah Abdurahman of the African People’s Organisation^{xvii} and Jabavu as editor of *Imvo Zabantsundu* attended relevant debates in the Cape parliament, with both being members of delegations (including Schreiner’s brother Will Schreiner, then a ‘Native Senator’ representing black interests in the Cape Parliament) which visited Britain in 1909 to lobby against union. James Rose Innes acted as the patron and co-funder of Jabavu’s newspaper and political activities (as did a number of other ‘liberal’ Cape politicians), and Schreiner referred obliquely to this in letters to Will, the only liberal Cape politician of stature who did not

renege on his principles regarding black citizenship rights at this time and subsequently:

“I hope dear old Tengu Jabavu is standing firm.” (OS to Will Schreiner, 27 July 1909, UCT)

“Jabavu seems to have stood out finely, eh?” (OS to Will Schreiner, 8 August 1909, UCT)

The implied political shakiness of Jabavu here relates to the particular character of his white support and it surfaced in particular around the campaigns against the 1913 Natives Land Act and its consequences.

Jabavu supported the Land Act and used his role as editor of *Imvo Zabantsundu* to criticise objections to it by the SANNC. A final break between him and Plaatje came when he denigrated a Kingwilliamstown meeting protesting against the Act although he had not attended it and was challenged to a public debate by Plaatje, which Jabavu ducked out of.^{xviii} Given this, it might perhaps be expected that Schreiner would have worked with Jabavu’s more radical political rival Walter Rubusana. However, as we have indicated, the link between Schreiner and Jabavu was a long-standing and personal one, and she never mentions meeting or admiring Rubusana. This is unlike, for example, John Dube, who lived in Natal and Schreiner clearly admired but seemingly never met, who is mentioned in her letters.

As the 12 July 1909 extract above from the letter to Will Schreiner indicates, there are also similar frequent parenthetical references in Schreiner’s letters to Abdullah Abdurahman (1872-1940), whom Schreiner first met in April 1909 in connection with debates concerning the likely recommendation of the Constitutional Commission for union.

A letter to Will about this meeting with Abdurahman indicates the level of Schreiner's contempt for the supposedly liberal politicians in the Cape parliament, including John X. Merriman, James Rose Inness and Jim (Johannes) Sauer, as well as F.S. Malan, with the latter specifically mentioned in her letter:

“That scene in the house yesterday, was without any exception the most contemptible from the broad human stand-point I have ever seen in my life, which has been pretty long & varied. It seemed as though the curse of the serpent had fallen on them all – “on thy belly shall thou crawl & dust shalt thou eat.” I hardly know what was the most awful thing Jamesons face, so much worse than it ever used to be, ~~with~~ even that with an uncomfortable leer on it, – or dear old Malan looking like a lost soul. – for he has a soul & a noble one! And as they squirmed & lied, & each one giving the other away, & all gave away principle, all the while there was Abdurahman's drawn dark intellectual face looking down at them. Men selling their souls & the future – & fate watching them. One sees strange things from that gallery!” (OS to Will Schreiner, 9 April 1909, UCT)

The ‘squirming and lying’, ‘giving away principle’ and ‘selling souls’ which Schreiner saw these so-called liberal politicians engaging in concerned what she predicted (correctly) would be the eventual removal of the non-racial basis of the Cape franchise by a Union parliament and the rapid introduction of discriminatory measures against black people, because of political domination of the Union by an increasing retrograde Afrikaner nationalism.^{xix} In this letter, Abdurahman represents both the ‘fate’ of the erstwhile liberal politicians and also the future, the intellectual and political presence of black people fighting eventually successfully for citizenship rights. Her response to Malan himself in two 1909 letters is equally clear, if expressed in less contemptuous terms, and

concerned with persuading or exhorting him to take up a more liberal position:^{xx}

“The problems of Dutch & English have for me quite vanished away from the practical horizon in South Africa now. The problem that is rising before us is that of the combination of the capitalist-classes, land-owning & mine-owning, against the rest of the community; & ^an^ ignorant, blind, land-thirsty, gold-thirsty native policy; which will plunge South Africa into war & bitterness, compared ^with^ which the Boer War was nothing. In the picture of Jameson walking with his arm round the neck of his fellow “Conventioner” of Africander blood, I see an omen of evil. It is not love that is uniting you all – it is greed. Cheap land, cheap labour, cheap mines, exploit the nigger^{xxi} – that is the bond that is uniting you!” (OS to F.S. Malan, 6 January 1909, NELM)

“Please return me that little paper I brought you. I only wished you to see that I too have had my dreams of a United South Africa; a South Africa Federated into one great collection of Free State: & in which we who had suffered so terribly & taught by our suffering would withhold freedom & justice from some of our fellow South Africans, irrespective of race or colour or creed. In those long months when I live in one little empty room with a stretcher & a box as its only furniture, & 36 natives set to guard me at my doors & windows night & day, when I was only allowed out to fetch my water from the fountain at certain hours, & when I used to see not only English women but Dutch women walking free, hanging on the arms often, of English officers; in all that awful loneliness & darkness the thought that came to comfort me was that out of all this, would arise in us who suffered a love not only of freedom for ourselves but for all our fellows. If we have not learnt that, then indeed we have learnt nothing.

Has it ever struck you, Malan, that the day will come when we shall need the love & devotion of the black & coloured man; just as the day will come & come soon when England & the “Empire” will need the loyalty & love of ^white^ South Africans. To-day is our hour to win their love & confidence. My dear friend, draw yourself sometimes apart from the noise & greed of the political world about you, & look at these matters by the light of that deeper spiritual instinct that is within you.” (OS to F.S. Malan, nd but early 1909, NELM)

Immediately following their April 1909 meeting, Schreiner wrote a letter to Abdurahman, discussed later, and thereafter there are also parenthetical references to him in Schreiner's letters and also in Gandhi's papers which show they remained in contact up to Schreiner leaving South Africa for Europe in late 1913.

In 1908, Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) was jailed for burning registration certificates which Indians were required to carry following the Transvaal's 1908 Registration Act, and then in 1909 for failing to produce his own certificate. He and Schreiner met in connection with the ensuing campaigns and also the associated satyagarha passive resistance movement. Gandhi's extensive letters and collected works provide scattered evidence of Schreiner's practical involvement in shared black citizenship causes more widely as well as regarding the removal or denial of citizenship rights to Indians in South Africa.^{xxiii} In spite of the many references to meetings, however, there is only one extant letter from Schreiner to Gandhi, written in August 1914, which will be discussed later.

Such meetings between Gandhi and Schreiner lasted beyond the debates and lobbying around Union, with, for example, Schreiner meeting Gandhi and his friend and supporter Herman Kallenbach in De Aar en route to the Union parliament in Cape Town to protest against registration, marriage and other adverse measures being enacted:

“I had a wire from my friend Kallenbach asking me to meet Gandhi at the station... I should have liked a long talk with Gandhi, but I fear they'll only stop a few minutes. I shall

however try to go down.” (OS to Will Schreiner, 24 October 1912, UCT)

In addition, once both Schreiner and Gandhi arrived in Britain (she at the end of 1913 and he in June 1914), their social and other shared meetings and activities increased. This was presumably because of the cohesive nature of the expatriate community, combined with the focus for both being in London rather than being geographically more dispersed as in South Africa. Schreiner’s letters to other people provide an interesting outline of such meetings:

“Ghandi & Callenback came to see me today but I was out; they are coming again tomorrow.” (OS to Will Schreiner, 1 September 1914, UCT)

“Ghandi & Callenback came to see me & yesterday I went to see them & Mrs Ghandi. They came over third class & will be here for two months. It was a great comfort to me to see them.” (OS to Will Schreiner, 4 September 1914, UCT)

“I had tea with the Ghandis the other evening.” (OS to Alice Greene, 26 August 1914, UCT)

“I was sorry you did not come to Miss Hobhouse’s yesterday. I was glad to see Mr Gandhi looking much better... Could you ask Mr Gandhi if he could get me the address of that Mahamedan Judge I was speaking of: he lives near London.” (OS to Herman Kallenbach, Monday, 1914, NLSA)

“I went to see dear old Ghandi the other day: he looks very ill & weak. The damp & fog try him too.” (OS to Alice Greene, 23 November 1914, UCT)

“I am so sorry I did not know Mr Gandhi was ill. I am coming to see you all perhaps at tomorrow.” (OS to Herman Kallenbach, October 1914, NLSA)

Schreiner’s letters also indicate there was more than acquaintanceship and sociability going on. Gandhi and colleagues must have seen her as a significant asset in their cause to have asked her to speak on important public occasions, which included Gandhi’s arrival in Britain, and also the farewell gatherings that took place when he left for India:

“I was so well this afternoon I went to Gandhi’s goodbye gathering at the Westminster Hotel. To my surprise they asked me to speak. I stood up & said ten or twelve words, but the wonderful thing is, it didn’t tell on me at all; I had none of that awful fluttering & faintness I always have when I try to speak in public, & don’t feel ill at all tonight.” (OS to Will Schreiner, 11 December 1914, UCT)

“I went amid pouring rain to see Gandhi & his wife off at the station & went the night before to a little gathering of Indians to ~~see them~~ bid them good bye & I said a few words.” (OS to Betty Molteno, 23 December 1914, UCT)

The letters v. the contextual evidence

There is, then, considerable if fragmentary evidence of Schreiner’s long-term systematic engagement with ‘race’ matters, both intellectually in her writings and also in terms of her practical political activities. But in spite of this, while there are extant Schreiner letters to a wide range of people, and at her death somewhere around 20-25,000 letters had survived before Cronwright-Schreiner’s mass burnings of them, only miniscule numbers exist which were written to members of the black elite with whom we had expected to find her corresponding at significant volume. Our researches in the widely dispersed remaining papers of Abdurahman, Jabavu and Plaatje and the Gandhi collections have yielded nothing more (at least so far) in the way of Schreiner letters, other than just one letter to Abdurahman and one to Gandhi. To add to the puzzle of why there are not more: alongside the absence of letters to Schreiner, there are many letter-exchanges between these four men and friends of Schreiner who had similar but not quite so radical politics, such as Will Schreiner, members of the Colenso family, and Betty Molteno, and indeed with some of her political acquaintances and sparring partners

such as James Rose Innes, John Merriman and Jan Smuts, with their shifting, dubious or retrograde race politics respectively.

Schreiner knew all four black leaders, she worked politically with them, a good few of her friends and acquaintances corresponded with them over lengthy periods, but there is no sign, bar the one-off letters to Abdurahman and Gandhi, that Schreiner and they corresponded. This is perplexing as well as puzzling because it seems so unlikely that she would not have corresponded with men whose political involvements she fully – and actively - supported. Consequently there are a number of possible explanations for the absence of Schreiner letters to Plaatje, Jabavu, Abdurahman and Gandhi which need to be explored.

Firstly, we considered whether perhaps there might have been something politically suspect about Schreiner herself with regard to ‘race’ matters that had not come to light in previous research, such that the supposition of a positive engagement between her and Plaatje, Jabavu, Abdurahman and Gandhi was wrong. However, the evidence from their side is strongly against this and instead indicates their admiration for her. For instance, Plaatje named his daughter Olive after her and gave long-term practical support for Cronwright-Schreiner’s political ambitions; Gandhi made ‘fancy the author of *Dreams* giving us her support’ and other appreciative comments about her; and Cissie Gool^{xxiii} commented that her father, Abdurahman, had told her how much he respected Schreiner. This goes hand in hand with many mentions of these four men in Schreiner’s letters to other people which show she

knew and admired them and frequently met them socially and politically. There is no evidence, then, that this is plausible as a possible explanation while considerable counter-evidence exists of mutual regard and shared political goals.^{xxiv}

Secondly, perhaps Schreiner and Plaatje, Jabavu, Abdurahman and Gandhi *did* in fact correspond, and her letters to them were destroyed or lost because of happenstance and the passing of time. Schreiner certainly destroyed nearly all the letters she received at various points when she moved house or continent; but while she mentions the names of various people whose letters she burned, there are no references to Plaatje, Jabavu, Abdurahman and Gandhi among them. Also, after Schreiner's death her estranged husband Cronwright destroyed thousands of letters sent to her, and he too never mentions any of these men's names, although he admired them and might be expected to have listed them if such letters had existed. In addition, Solomon Plaatje was a voluminous letter-writer and also kept many letters he received, including from Schreiner's friends Betty Molteno, Georgiana Solomon, the Colenso family and Jane Cobden Unwin, and he would have been highly likely to have kept anything received from Schreiner herself.^{xxv} Also, Gandhi's followers saved everything, documented everything, and there are huge archive and published sources documenting the 1891 to 1914 period he spent in South Africa as well as his activities in India thereafter. However, while there are admiring personal references to Schreiner, and also regarding her practical support for the political activities Gandhi and

his colleagues engaged in, there is only one extant Schreiner letter to Gandhi, from 1914, although there are many from her to Gandhi's close friend, secretary and supporter Herman Kallenbach.

Thirdly, perhaps an explanation is to be found in the structures and characteristics of Schreiner's letter-writing itself, such that, although she and Plaatje, Jabavu, Abdurahman and Gandhi frequently cooperated over issues and campaigns during the period of the first struggle for black citizenship from the 1890s to 1913, there is perhaps something about the character and composing features of Schreiner's epistolary activity which might explain the absence of correspondences with them. This we have concluded is the most plausible explanation of why there is an absence of Schreiner's letters to these black leaders.

We start by sketching out some of the relevant dimensions of Schreiner's letter-writing, by adding to the outline of her practical political involvements and activities, and by exploring the links between this and her published writings. An overview of Schreiner's different kinds of letter-writing are then sketched out in relation to her published writings and her practical political involvements. This is followed by exploring the presence and absence of Schreiner letters to like-minded people she knew who were involved in pacifist organisations during the Great War, to see if there are similar or different patterns here which might throw some light on the absence/presence of her letters to like-minded black leaders.

Schreiner's extant letters and the absence/presence of pacifist like-minds

Across the 5-6000 now extant, Schreiner's remaining letters have an overall patterning when their structural features are attended to, instead of focus being directed to their content, and this patterning strongly marks the Schreiner epistolarium. There are a number of broad kinds of letter-writing practices within the whole corpus of Schreiner's letters. This is a patterning which concerns ebbs and flows within Schreiner's letter-writing, and is absolutely *not* to be seen as providing a typology, a listing of 'types of letters'. Many of Schreiner's letters contain more than one kind of letter-writing, and also some correspondences shift over time between the balance of these different kinds of writing within them. That is, the headings below are not of 'groups or types' of letters at all, but are rhetorical and other features or dimensions of how Schreiner writes her letters, and a number of them can often be found within just one letter. Also, as the following discussion will additionally suggest, Schreiner's letter-writing is strongly performative: to paraphrase the title of J.L. Austin's (1962) *How To Do Things With Words*, which analyses words as performatives, her letter-writing 'does things with letters' and through letters.

Schreiner's letters (and indeed other letters too) are always purposive, being concerned with making arrangements, reporting on activities, providing solicitations, encouraging responses and so on, rather than simply 'describing' things that have happened in the everyday life of the

writer. Her letters (and those of other people) are also by definition performative when written and sent as part of ongoing correspondences, because they presume a response, followed by a further reply, further response and so on. Schreiner's (like other) letters are also performative in the deeper sense that they are often action in their own right: they make promises, send payments, enter into legal contracts, provide introductions to third parties, present apologies, set up forthcoming social arrangements, and in and of themselves enact these and similar activities.

In addition, Schreiner's letters often lay an obligation on their addressees to carry out some action or activity besides replying, for instance, by requesting favours of them of various kinds, and so are performative in this further sense too. Examples here include informing friends of meetings she had set up for herself and them with third parties, and enclosing cheques in payment of goods or services she asked friends and family to obtain for her. Her letters are often performative in an additional sense as well, because they can contain information of a kind that irrevocably changes the addressee by providing them with new knowledge about a person, event or set of circumstances. An everyday although important example here concerns the very few occasions when Schreiner's tacit rule of silence about her marriage is breached with a chosen recipient, almost invariably Betty Molteno.

And finally here, one of the main ways Schreiner's letters are performative is that, alongside and often in the same letter or even the same passages within letters which contain the performative aspects

sketched out above, they perform social work. That is, they foster and sustain social networks and they also broker contacts and activities within these networks (this is by no means to suggest that networks are *only* fostered and sustained by epistolarity – as the ensuing discussion shows, we are very aware of the importance of the face-to-face and ‘off the page’ situation). Examples discussed in this paper include Schreiner brokering between Solomon Plaatje, Mrs Solomon and John Hodgson around the former’s need for publicity about the black cause and the latter’s desire to become a professional journalist, and her facilitating contact between Betty Molteno and Mohandas Gandhi around the former’s involvement as the most radical member of the influential Molteno ‘clan’ in many progressive causes, and the latter’s skilful use of the face-to-face aspects of high-level liberal social networks to further the Indian cause in South Africa.

These rhetorical dimensions and purposive and performative characteristics of the Schreiner epistolarium need to be located around its other defining characteristics, such as its perspectival, dialogical, emergent, temporal and serial aspects (Stanley 2004, 2010). However, rather than do this at a more abstract level, we shall now examine how such things shape up at a micro-level, doing so in terms of the kinds of letter-writing practices Schreiner engaged in and how these were deployed around particular correspondences, in relation to particular addressees, and also concerning specific letters. Below, we sketch out the different kinds of epistolary practices Schreiner engaged in, and then

discuss how this related to her epistolary and other activities regarding ‘race’ over the 1890 to 1920 period of struggle for black citizenship rights.

Commonplace and ‘business’ quotidian letter-writing: This involves Schreiner’s ‘fabric of everyday life’ kinds of letter-writing practices, concerned with routine, everyday quotidian social and business matters. Such letter-writing was done almost in passing, is largely impersonal and frequently addressed to people Schreiner did not know personally but instead their capacity as, for example, a journal editor, typist, lodging housekeeper, railway official, store keeper and so on. The correspondence served to make or change arrangements of different kinds. Many of Schreiner’s other kinds of letter-writing sketched out below also have a strong quotidian ‘weather, family and friends, everyday life, arrangements’ dimension to them: these are letters written in part to expedite meetings and shared activities as part of maintaining closer relationships than the ‘business’ kind. Her 1880s letters to Havelock Ellis, for instance, are often largely if not entirely concerned with such routine, everyday matters, being written to and received from Ellis in the gaps between their at times almost daily meetings, while their content changed over the lengthy period this correspondence was maintained, through to 1920 (Ellis HRC, Ellis NELM).

But of course, such letter-writing is also purposive in the other sense of quotidian – it provides the everyday ‘stuff’ that much letter-writing is

concerned with. Selected editions of letters give a rather skewed impression of what ‘the letters of X or Y’ are like by picking out ‘exciting’ and ‘good’ examples and excluding the many more that are of this quotidian kind.^{xxvi} However, it is the everyday quotidian that provides the grounds of connection, relationship and the social, including their epistolary forms. Schreiner was very clear that such things were also quotidian in the sense of ethically fundamental to social life, commenting on this in a 29 July 1916 letter to her brother about her nephew Oliver, that he always reached out to do “the little kindnesses that are really the big things in life”.

Family and friendship affectional letter-writing: This involves letter-writing practices so as to maintain and frequently to extend personal bonds between Schreiner and people she was connected with through the ties of family and kinship or the stronger more individualised bonds of friendship. In both instances, these ties were maintained often in spite of major political and other differences between Schreiner and these other people, differences which might be either silenced in her letters, or ‘handled’ by focusing on safe topics and on views that were shared. Examples of the ‘silencing’ kind include Schreiner’s weekly letters written to her mother Rebecca Lyndall Schreiner, which focus around writing about routine family news and loving endearments (Schreiner UCT), and to an older friend Georgiana Solomon, which explicitly rule out of discussion the 1914-1918 war because they would fundamentally disagree about it (Solomon UCT). One example of the ‘handling’ kind of

letter-writing can be seen in Schreiner's letters to a women's suffrage friend and colleague Miemie Murray, where their fundamental disagreement concerning Murray's support for a racial basis to women's enfranchisement was confronted by Schreiner, who made her disagreement clear while also continuing the epistolary relationship (Murray NELM). Another involves her letters to Herman Kallenbach, where again Schreiner's letter-writing confronts their disagreements regarding his partial and Schreiner's absolute pacifism, and she also insists on always paying her way against his repeated 'gentlemanly' attempts to pay for everything (Kallenbach UCT).

Comradely 'republic of like minds' letter-writing: This kind of letter-writing practice was conducted and sent as part of wider epistolary exchanges within a politically and ethically like-minded circle of close friends with a shared politics about the social world, the external world of political and other events. It is marked by an emergent epistolary ethics of critiquing the now, projecting the future, containing the personal. In such letter-writing, Schreiner assumes a taken-for-granted foundation, in the form of a shared politics and ethics about the three great 'questions' of the age concerning inequalities regarding labour, women and black people, and later in her life also regarding war and pacifism. These letters do not delineate, rehearse or proclaim political standpoints because the correspondents are presumed to share a common ground.

An important example here involves Schreiner's letters to close friends Betty Molteno and Alice Greene and her much loved brother Will (Molteno and Greene UCT, Will Schreiner UCT), which take the 'big questions' entirely for granted. Only exceptionally do fissures open up. One such fissure is indicted by a startled 1910 letter to Alice Greene when Schreiner realised that Greene supported teaching craft skills to young Boer farming women while Schreiner, deep in the writing that led to *Woman and Labour*, had assumed her friend would share her own recognition that capitalist methods of production had rendered this obsolete as a means of enabling people to earn a sustainable living (OS to Alice Greene, 15 October 1910, UCT). Another such fissure is that Schreiner initially assumed her brother Will, South Africa's High Commissioner in London 1914-1919, would be opposed to the Great War. However, a discussion between them led to her realising she had been mistaken, with her letter to him of 15 September 1914 apologising for her assumption: "Now I know you really approve of the ~~the~~ Governments action in backing Russia & France I shall never mention it to you again. I have thought all along from the letter you wrote me from Berlin about the evils of England's taking part in it, that you disapproved even more than I did!" (OS to Will Schreiner, 15 September 1914, UCT). However, such fissures regarding her closest friends are rare, with this kind of letter-writing instead strongly marked by the taken-for-granted premise of a shared politics/ethics on the big questions and the inscription of the fabric of 'everyday life' activities around domesticity,

weather, news of family and friends, Schreiner's various dogs and cats, meerkats, her gardening...

Introduction and brokerage letter-writing: Schreiner's letters of introduction are usually if not invariably one-off letters written for the specific and usually sole purpose of introducing a third party to an acquaintance or more usually a friend of hers. Sometimes this kind of letter-writing also involves a strong political brokerage aspect, with Schreiner doing favours for a third party by calling in favours with the addressee or someone they are closely connected with, in relation to her presence within two different and usually quite separate networks. One example here is Schreiner's 20 October 1905 letter 'introducing' Frederick and Emmeline Pethick Lawrence to Isie Smuts, written with the purpose of securing their entree into high level Boer circles in the Transvaal via politician Jan Smuts, with his wife Isie positioned as an intermediary (Smuts Pretoria). Another concerns Schreiner's letters of introduction to Isie Smuts and Mary Sauer on behalf of Aletta Jacobs, leader of the Dutch Association for Women's Suffrage, when she visited South Africa in 1911, commenting to Jacobs, "I am only sending you letters of introduction to Dutch women because I know you will have only too many introductions to the English" (OS to Aletta Jacobs, September-October 1911, IIAV).

Obviously, introductions occurred in a face-to-face way as well as in epistolary form; and also Schreiner's epistolary brokerage activities were not confined to just the letters of introduction she wrote. An

interesting example which contains both aspects of this kind of letter-writing concerns a letter of 22 March 1907 to her brother Will Schreiner, in which she writes about political events around a letter of introduction from her to Will she had given the head of Reuter's Australia in South Africa, commenting that this man would also bring a letter of recommendation to Will from the Australian Premier (OS to Will Schreiner 22 March 1907, UCT). Her letter shows Schreiner brokering between Will and the Reuter's representative by conveying that the man is 'really' as acceptable as her formal letter of introduction suggested, and also indicates she could assume that this would be as or more important to Will than the letter from the Australian Premier.

Paraenetic, analytical and political engagement letter-writing:

Paraenetic letter-writing involves Schreiner corresponding with people for whom she had some liking and respect but where major political and/or ethical disagreements existed and - key to such letter-writing - she also wanted to persuade or dissuade the people concerned regarding their views and activities. Such letters of engagement were written to people who were 'fallen angels', people capable of great good but who had betrayed important moral principles, as appositely conveyed in Schreiner's comment to Jan Smuts that "And from the man of wide powers, from him much is expected" (OS to Jan Smuts, 30 December 1908, Pretoria Smuts). Schreiner's paraenetic or hortatory persuading and dissuading letter-writing greatly inflects her letters to, for instance, Jan Smuts, John X. Merriman, F.S. Malan, Julia Solly, and also perhaps

the latter stages of her epistolary relationship with Emily Hobhouse.^{xxvii} Her analytical letter-writing was designed to impress, or perhaps rather to shine in the eyes of, the addressee in question, something which strongly marks her letters to Karl Pearson, J.T. Lloyd and to an extent Merriman as well. Schreiner's political engagement letter-writing is a prominent feature of her correspondences with W.T. Stead and to a significant extent her brother Will as well. Her letter-writing of this latter kind was, to use W.T. Stead's (1911) own phrase, akin to 'talking for hours to the Categorical Imperative'. It flattered, cajoled persuaded, and argued with the people concerned with political purposes in mind, purposes frequently stated in other letters to close friends, which point up how much this kind of Schreiner's letter-writing was deliberately performative in a political sense.

Indeed, all of Schreiner's letters of engagement are highly performative because absolutely concerned with 'doing things with letters'. These correspondences (with the sole exception of that with Stead, who died when the Titanic sank), quite unlike Schreiner's other letter-writing, all came to sudden end at the point at which she gave up on the people concerned ever changing, often around important political or other events and junctures. Examples here concern Schreiner's correspondence with F.S. Malan, which ended when he supported union rather than federation in South Africa in 1909 (Malan, NELM); and with Merriman, which stopped in 1913 in the wake of his support for racist legislation concerning Indians in South Africa and failure to vote against the Natives Land Bill (Merriman, NLSA).

Over time, Schreiner's epistolary exchanges could move between the first three kinds of letter-writing practices outlined above, with an example here her letters to Mary Drew (nee Gladstone), which begin with Schreiner's polite response to a letter from Drew and thereafter shift between making arrangements and 'family and friendship' kinds of letter-writing (Drew, British Library). However, Schreiner's letters of engagement have a more immutable character, as comparing Schreiner's 'family and friendship' letter-writing to Isie Smuts with her very different letters to Isie's husband Jan indicates, with the latter involving largely primarily paraenetic and political letter-writing across the whole set. In addition, Schreiner's letter-writing to family and friends and also her comradesly letter-writing are characterised by an emergent and shared ethics/politics and set of epistolary concerns, while her letters of engagement represent a very upfront ethical and political framework which was not available for negotiation with the addressees concerned, and was expressed in large part to counter or even challenge the different views and values which these addressees held.

In addition to her voluminous letter-writing,^{xxviii} and as we have already indicated, Schreiner was involved in a range of political activities which are not documented in any detail in her extant letters, although brief letter references and other archive evidence indicates her involvement in campaigning activities regarding these. In addition to the political matters already outlined above, three other sets of practical

political activities should be added to the picture. The first of these concerns Schreiner's 1880s practical campaigning in connection with prostitution and relatedly the injustices of the Contagious Diseases Acts, in collecting signatures for a petition in support of Stead's campaign around the 'Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' and the raising of the age of sexual consent for children, and also in her co-founding the women's section of the Social Democratic Federation (and on the latter, see OS to Will Schreiner, 21 April 1912, UCT). The second involves Schreiner's 1899 behind-the-scenes campaigning and her published writing (Schreiner 1899) opposing the South African War (1899-1902) provoked by Milner as High Commissioner of southern Africa, her high-profile role in the peace congresses organised across South Africa in 1900 and 1901 after the war was underway, and her continuing support, even though confined under martial law in Hanover, for the women's relief organisations which raised money and provided practical relief (blankets, material and so on) for the 'removed' Boer people in the wartime internment or concentration camps (Stanley 2006). The third concerns Schreiner's practical activities as well as her writings in Britain over the period of WWI regarding pacifism and in establishing a role for the absolute pacifism she promoted, and her related opposition to the introduction of conscription in 1916 and active support for the conscientious objectors affected by this.

As comments here and earlier about Schreiner's political involvements will have conveyed, her practical political activities and the strongly political (with both a large and a small 'p') character of her

formal writings for publication march hand-in-hand, and indeed are often two sides of the same political analysis and engagement. One instance here is that the analysis in Schreiner's (1896) *The Political Situation* sketched out earlier was closely connected with her epistolary, textual and socially-expressed critique of the Rhodes empire as a symbol of the wider emergent features of imperialism and capitalism in southern Africa more generally. Related to this, *Trooper Peter of Mashonaland* (Schreiner 1897) combines fiction and documented fact (Stanley 2002, Stanley & Dampier 2008), providing a strong critique of the activities of the Chartered Company controlled by Rhodes and his associates and also naming Rhodes as personally responsible for the massacres in Matabeleland and Mashonaland. Its structure of facts, as noted earlier, was provided by information from black leaders, who perceived her as a source of moral and also public and political support for their cause, while its fictive devices enabled her to convey things that a factual account would not.

A second example where there are similar textual and practical political links concern *Woman and Labour*, (Schreiner 1911) and the two earlier essays on the 'Woman' (Schreiner 1899) from which it derives. In these writings, Schreiner's ideas in *The Political Situation* concerning white parasitism on black labour are extended to situations regarding women's structural economic dependence on men, linked to changes in gendered divisions of labour associated with what would now be seen as the at the time emerging 'Fordist' character of capitalism. Here

Schreiner’s analysis led to her distancing herself from the activities of Emily Hobhouse and other friends and acquaintances in teaching craft-skills around hand-weaving to young Boer farming women as a way of them earning a living. As noted above, she expressed this in stringent terms in 1910 to her close friend Alice Greene as an anachronism and wasted effort, given capitalist high volume production processes.

What we began to realise, through thinking about Schreiner’s activities as a whole in relation to the absence of letters to Plaatje, Jabavu, Abdurahman and Gandhi, is that her writing overall (that is, her letters and her published work taken together) can be helpfully mapped onto a broad distinction between ‘fabric of everyday life’ kinds of quotidian activities and writings, and political engagement kinds of activities and writings, as shown in Figure 1. However, in proposing this we regard it as essential to recognise that these are matters of emphasis and strands of activity within a whole, rather than a binary division. That is, the distinction concerns aspects of Schreiner’s letter-writing, rather than characterising complete bodies of letters, concerns facets of her writing rather than entire works.

Figure 1 Quotidian and political emphases in Schreiner’s everyday, epistolary and political activities

<p>The quotidian</p> <p>everyday activities, the fabric of everyday life</p> <p>arrangements & ‘business’ quotidian letter-writing</p> <p>family and friendship affectional letter-writing</p> <p>comradely ‘republic of like minds’ letter-writing</p>	<p>= the everyday quotidian</p> <p>}</p> <p>} = the epistolary quotidian</p> <p>}</p>
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<p>The political</p> <p>practical political activities</p> <p>letters of introduction and brokerage</p> <p>letters of engagement</p> <p>formal un/published writings</p>	<p>= the political through practical involvements</p> <p>= the political by epistolary means</p> <p>= the political by epistolary means</p> <p>= the political by other textual means</p>
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On the one hand, the quotidian encompasses Schreiner’s ‘fabric of everyday life’ activities, including the three quotidian kinds of letter-writing practices she engaged in. However, Schreiner’s everyday activities are not just ‘related’ to her letter-writing. Her letters concerned with making practical arrangements, continuing family and friendship relationships, and maintaining and extending her closest comradely friendships is a form of social engagement *in its own right*, as well as supporting other aspects of sociability. Schreiner’s comradely letter-writing to her closest friends is also perhaps surprisingly located within the quotidian: as commented earlier, it rarely engages in any detail with her analytical ideas or her or her correspondents’ practical political involvements, with these largely taken-for-granted as a shared bedrock to their epistolary exchanges.^{xxix}

On the other hand, there are Schreiner’s practical involvements and writings of a quintessentially political kind, involving her practical political activities and also the doing politics through her formal published writing. This includes not only her political writings of fact and fiction but also her letters of engagement, which we see as practical

political activity carried out by epistolary means. That is, these are ‘real’ letters to the people concerned, but they are also political activities in their own right, and Schreiner’s involvement in writing them, as noted earlier regarding Merriman and Malan, could be swiftly withdrawn in a way that her involvement in other kinds of letter-writing, embedded in family and kin ties and the obligations and responsibilities of close and loving friendships, could not be without major inter-personal and wider social network reverberations.

In relation to the political dimension of Schreiner’s activities and writings, what we came to realise is that, for the people she knew and shared a practical politics but not a personal friendship with, what counted and existed between them was the shared practical political activity itself and there are few letters or part-letters which are concerned with such practical matters. However, her letter-writing which definitely comes under a political activity heading – that is, her letters of engagement - inscribes an ethics and politics which positions her vis à vis people she had some respect for but disagreed profoundly with and wanted to change. In this respect we became aware that Schreiner used her letter-writing in parallel ways to her published writing, that is, to seduce, cajole, persuade and argue with her readers.

Thinking about this, we were led to conjecture that the absence of Schreiner letters to Plaatje, Jabavu, Abdurahman and Gandhi might perhaps be explained by virtue of the fact that these men were not located within the overlapping family and friendship networks of Schreiner’s

quotidian letter-writing to her familiars, and nor were they ‘fallen angels’ whom she perceived as having betrayed great ethical/political principles and wanted to engage with regarding this in her letter-writing. They were instead men she knew and respected within the context of her practical political involvements, with her practical political concerns being the least well documented aspect of Schreiner’s life in biographies,^{xxx} and also the least well represented of her activities within her extant letters. Indeed, we are struck that such activities are notable for being largely absent apart from in casual parenthetical references.

If this conjecture is correct, then it has to have explanatory power more generally regarding the corpus of Schreiner letters, so that the pattern should hold true regarding Schreiner’s other areas of practical political involvement. Therefore we decided to explore its utility concerning Schreiner’s letter-writing between 1914 and 1920, focusing on the conduct of Schreiner’s epistolary and other friendships and political involvements over the period of WWI up to when she returned to South Africa in August 1920 regarding pacifism and no-conscription, in particular in relation to people she knew who were closely associated with the Union of Democratic Control (UDC) and the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF).

There are no known Schreiner letters to UDC members Norman Angell, John Hobson, Helena Swanwick, Vernon Lee and Israel Zangwill, all of whom, apart from Angell, Schreiner had known over a lengthy period and liked and shared political views with; and nor are

there more than one-off brief ‘arrangements’ letters to Catherine Marshall, Bertrand Russell and others from the NCF whom she knew on a similar basis.^{xxxii} Schreiner met these people many times, attended meetings with them and was otherwise connected with the organisations they were leading figures within. She also published pacifist articles and open letters in publications they were associated with, and on war matters she and they agreed in a fundamental sense regarding a critique of the conduct of foreign policy, the role of diplomacy in warfare, and regarding the need for pacifism generally or for the end of this war in particular. A similar puzzle exists here, then, to that concerning the South African leaders in the black citizenship struggles: why the absence of a more extensive cluster of Schreiner letters to such people?

Norman Angell is interesting in this connection, for Schreiner’s letters to other people show how much, like many others, she approved his *The Great Illusion* (Angell 1910; see also Weinroth 1974) and recommended it to many people. Also during the period of the war she and Angell met for lunches and teas, she supported his Garton Foundation activities (funded by the Foundation to promote the political platform detailed in *The Great Illusion*), and she also published in the Foundation’s *Peace and War* journal. However, there is no evidence Schreiner and Angell corresponded, certainly there are no traces of letters from her in the extremely extensive, well-kept and fully documented Norman Angell archive collections at Swarthmore College in the US. A similar situation exists with regard to Bertrand Russell – the Russell

Archive at McMaster University in Canada is an extensive extremely well-documented resource, yet there is only one Schreiner letter to Russell (OS to Bertrand Russell, 1914-1915, McMaster). Schreiner's acquaintanceships with Angell and Russell were, however, embedded within and part of her wider political activities, of her writing and theorising about war and pacifism, and also of her attending political meetings and supporting men who were conscientious objectors and had to appear before military tribunals. But at the same time, there is no sign that her relationships with them went deeper than a broadly shared political analysis and shared involvement (albeit to a lesser extent on her part for health reasons), no sign that she and they had any closer contact.

This is helpfully compared with Schreiner's letters to a high-level UDC member, Frederick Pethick Lawrence, the by then ex-Women's Social and Political Union leader. Pethick Lawrence had been a pacifist from the period of the South African War and also a conscientious objector during the Great War.^{xxxii} Schreiner and he became friends around his 1900 visit to South Africa and they also conducted a long-term correspondence (Pethick Lawrence, UCT^{xxxiii}). Their correspondence continued over the period of the Great War, yet Schreiner's wartime letters to Pethick Lawrence do not mention the UDC and its activities but remain within the quotidian aspects of friendship, emphasising in general terms their loving friendship in the broad context of a largely taken-for-granted shared politics about the war and pacifism and also about suffrage matters and imperialism.

Exploring Schreiner's 1914 to 1920 letters with regard to her involvement in anti-war and pacifist activities provided us with no evidence of letters to Norman Angell and other people involved with the UDC and the NCF who she knew and shared political views with, apart from letters to Frederick Pethick Lawrence. However, her letter-writing here is very much based on a broad platform of shared and taken for granted ethical/political thinking with Pethick Lawrence and is largely of the friendship and affectional and comradely like-minds kinds, nor is there any sign that its concerns and rhythms changed over the wartime period.^{xxxiv} Our conjecture, then, was borne out in relation to Schreiner's letter-writing regarding her political involvement in pacifist activities. This encouraged us to explore in greater depth what kind of practical political contacts might have linked Schreiner to Plaatje, Jabavu, Abdurahman and Gandhi, as evidenced in Schreiner's letters to other people and related sources, including the collected works of Mohandas Gandhi.^{xxxv} We now move on to a discussion of the results of this investigation.

Brief acquaintance and sincere friendship

Schreiner knew Plaatje, Jabavu, Abdurahman and Gandhi, liked and admired them and worked with them in various political activities, and also had continuing social contacts with them. However, she was not close enough to them in a personal friendship sense to engage in letter-writing and exchanging of a quotidian kind. Her one traceable letter to Abdurahman, for instance, is an overture only:

“It was a great pleasure to me to meet you and your wife yesterday and I trust that our brief acquaintance may ripen into sincere friendship... As soon as the Union Parliament meets I mean to gather to gather a body of white women, and make an appeal to be heard at the bar of the house, – ~~on~~ ^to petition for extended rights to the native and the doing away of the colour bar^ on the ground that having no vote our voice has not been heard in the drafting of the constitution. If they refuse us I will print the speech I intended to make.” (OS to Abdullah Abdurahman, 9 April 1909, UCT)

But at the same time, she did not in any fundamental way disagree with any of these men regarding black citizenship rights, nor were they political opponents with whom she would want to correspond in paraenetic letters so as to argue with and persuade or dissuade them regarding their views in letters of political engagement.

While matters of ‘race’ remained high on Schreiner’s political agenda after 1913, so too did war and pacifism, with her one traceable letter to Gandhi being interesting in this respect:

“Dear Mr Gandhi... I have at last got your address from the Steamship’s Company. I want so much to see you. Could you and Mr Calenbach perhaps come and see me here, or could I meet you anywhere. I was struck to the heart this morning with sorrow to see that you... and other Indian friends had offered to serve ~~this~~ the English Government in this evil war in any way they might demand of you. Surely you, who would not take up

arms even in the cause of your own oppressed people cannot be willing to shed blood in this wicked cause. I had longed to meet you and Mr Calenbach as friends who would understand my hatred of y it. I don't believe the statement in the paper can be true." (OS to MK Gandhi, 16 August 1914, NLSA)

By August 1914, Schreiner and Gandhi had known each other for over five years and a documented mutual respect existed around a shared platform concerning citizenship and political rights for black people, and also both promoted a universal suffrage (that is, including the enfranchisement of women of all 'colours').^{xxxvi} If our reasoning and conjecture above about 'why no letters' is correct, then it can be expected that there would be an absence of letters from Schreiner to Gandhi because they worked together in a practical way when occasion required but were not personally close enough for quotidian letters to be exchanged between them as part of maintaining a closer friendship. However, if a political/ethical fissure opened up between them, so that some major disagreement surfaced, then it can be expected that Schreiner might well attempt to 'engage' with Gandhi in an epistolary way about this.

Schreiner's letter of 16 August 1914 to Gandhi above provides an example of just such a fissure. To a large extent Gandhi and Schreiner shared ideas about the suffrage and about 'race'. Schreiner, however, was an absolute pacifist, someone who, like members of the NCF, refused to support any war in any way, direct or indirect. The unconditional oath of support for Britain by agreeing to carry out any non-combatant role over the war's duration which Gandhi and other Indians had signed on 13 August 1914, and Gandhi's related founding of the Indian Ambulance

Brigade to Schreiner could only appear as reneging on his satyagraha passive resistance principles. This she makes clear in the letter.

Schreiner might reasonably have assumed that Gandhi's statements made in South Africa before he left about satyagraha precluding any level of involvement in war activities would supersede his earlier involvement in the War Ambulance Brigade during the South African War. However, by August 1914 he had actually returned to this position, albeit for different reasons, as an 18 September 1918 letter to his cousin Maganlal Gandhi expressing as the practical impossibility of the absolute pacifist position explains.^{xxxvii} It is impossible not to wonder whether Gandhi might have replied to Schreiner in similar terms, and what her reaction would have been if he did so, for the views articulated in this letter address various of the same issues Schreiner had started exploring in her unpublished 'The Dawn of Civilisation', begun in July or August 1914. Perhaps Schreiner might have more extensively corresponded with Gandhi in other letters of engagement if he had stayed in Britain, but both Gandhi and his wife were ill for much of their time in the UK and left for India at the end of 1914, and anyway their more general political agreement might have prevented her from writing more than this one-off letter of sorrowful remonstrance to him.

Herman Kallenbach, mentioned in Schreiner's letter to Gandhi, was an architect, Tolstoyian and supporter of Gandhi, who referred to him as his 'brother soul'. By mid 1914, Kallenbach, a stateless German Jew, had applied for British naturalisation before he left South Africa because he

intended to go to India with Gandhi, and he too had signed the above oath and also joined the Indian Ambulance Brigade. Schreiner and he had been friends and correspondents from 1909 on, and in an October 1914 letter to him Schreiner makes clear her opposition to any support for the war:

“Thank Mr Gandhi for the invitation to the meeting, but you know I hate war. It is against my religion – whether it is Englishmen travelling thousands of miles to go and kill Indians ^in India^ or Indians travelling thousands of miles to kill white men whom they have never seen in Europe. It’s all hateful... and hoping to see you when I return to London if you are still there.” (OS to Herman Kallenbach, 2 October 1914, NLSA)

While such sentiments are repeated in other letters, at the same time Schreiner continued her epistolary and also face-to-face friendship with Kallenbach from then, through his Isle of Man internment as an ‘enemy alien’, up to him leaving the UK in late 1916. However, her letters to Kallenbach are not, as one might expect, paraenetic letters or letters of political engagement, but rather take the form of mundane too-ings and fro-ings about him buying her nuts, her eating a vegetarian diet, their riding on buses or going out together, and keeping in touch letter-writing when he is interned. They feature, then, letter-writing of the quotidian kinds commented on earlier, being mixtures of friendship and affectional and business and arrangements kinds of letter-writing. So perhaps the large areas of agreement between Schreiner and Kallenbach were too great, or perhaps he was not enough of a ‘fallen angel’ for what she saw as his pacifist lapse to produce letters of engagement from her.

Gandhi was not the only one of the four black leaders with whom Schreiner disagreed about pacifism during the Great War. In June 1914, Solomon Plaatje arrived in London with the rest of a SANNC Delegation to protest against the passing and the effects of the Natives Land Act of 1913, staying in Britain until 1917. In June 1919, as head of a second SANNC Delegation, he returned to Britain.

At a formal level, the two SANNC Delegations were political failures. The members of the 1914 Delegation were excluded from mainstream political arenas while their white counterparts were not, because the political legitimacy of the Delegation's presence was rejected due to South Africa's self-governing status. Also Plaatje's detailed observations about the highly negative impact of the Land Act in the Delegation's manifesto, *The Native Land Act of South Africa: An Appeal to the Imperial Parliament and Public of Great Britain* was ignored or seen as exaggeration at high government levels. Informally, however, the more liberal and radical elements of the expatriate South African community in London organised events and venues for members of the Delegation to speak at, and also provided a combined social network and political brokerage, as indicated in Schreiner's letter to her younger friend John Hodgson concerning the networking meeting with Plaatje commented on earlier:

“Would it be possible for him [Hodgson] & myself to meet Solomon Platje at your house on Sunday afternoon?” (OS to Georgiana Solomon, 19 October 1916, NLSA)

Georgiana Solomon was a grande dame within the expatriate community. A letter Schreiner wrote to her in early October 1916 expressed her opposition to war in connection with Plaatje's support for recruitment to the South African Native Labour Contingent, members of which served in France, commenting "You know I am a pacifist, & from what I hear he advocates the natives coming over here to help kill. I think it the greatest mistake." (OS to Georgiana Solomon, 5 October 1916, NLSA).^{xxxviii} There are similarities here with the circumstances which had led to Schreiner's August 1914 letter of disbelieving remonstrance to Gandhi. However, as noted earlier, given that many letters from Plaatje to other members of the Schreiner friendship circles during the two periods he spent in London survive, it seems likely she did not write to Plaatje himself about this.

Rather than letters of engagement, or even letters of a more quotidian kind between Schreiner and Plaatje, something else comes across from the remaining traces in letters she wrote to other people. This is her beneficent sociability regarding, and political protectiveness of, the black cause, and her practical involvements such as attending meetings and facilitating financial support for the Delegation. For instance, John Hodgson had aspirations to become a professional writer and journalist, and while Schreiner facilitated his meeting with Plaatje during the 1914-17 visit, she also conveyed to Hodgson her concern that he might not be disinterested and might be tempted to make use of things said in a private context.^{xxxix}

“Mrs Solomon writes to me in great delight that you are going to write an article in the Statesman about Plaatje. She seems to think you are deeply in sympathy with his view. I hope this is so. I know you would never make use of any thing Mrs [sic] Plaatje or Mrs Solomon to whom I intro-duced you said, against them.” (OS to John Hodgson, 6 December 1916, HRC)

Regarding both SANNC Delegations, Schreiner facilitated meetings with people who might be influential in furthering their political aims and fund expenses for Delegation members. Plaatje remained in Britain after other members of the first Delegation left, and at this point another letter from Schreiner to Georgiana Solomon suggests a more personal effort on Schreiner’s part to provide financial support for Plaatje and a newspaper he was attempting to get off the ground:

“Could you give me Solomon Plaatjes address I know a friend who I think might help him with a little money for his paper, if I could ask him here to tea to meet her. Don’t mention it to Plaatje as it may not come off!!” (OS to Georgiana Solomon, 13 October 1919, UCT)

What this suggests is that there was probably no closer association between Schreiner and Plaatje, with her repeated requests for his address whenever such possibilities arose suggesting support and kindness but not a closer involvement. Certainly they knew each other, they were part of the same liberal expatriate circles, and Schreiner provided various kinds of support for Plaatje personally as well as the two SANNC Delegations more generally. However, among the South African expatriates it was Georgiana Solomon, the Colensos, Jane Cobden Unwin and Schreiner’s closest friend Betty Molteno who were Plaatje’s main links. Also, in spite of Plaatje's support for British involvement in the war, there was probably too much agreement with him on race matters

for Schreiner to write him paraenetic letters of engagement and, perhaps more importantly, there would not have been the sense that someone she expected to support the absolute pacifist position had betrayed a moral principle, as there was with Gandhi.^{xl}

On ‘wanting to shake hands’: A conclusion on letterness and the epistolarium

Social science and humanities scholars working with letters *en masse*, such as David Fitzpatrick, David Gerber and others researching migrant and diaspora letters (Fitzpatrick 1994, Elliott, Gerber and Sinke 2006, Gerber 2006), analyse the hundreds or sometimes thousands of letters they work on thematically, treating content in a broadly referential way. With some exception, modulation or extension, and although various of the representational issues involved are recognised, for these scholars letters are seen to provide facts and historical evidence about particular social circumstances connected with migration and resettlement.^{xli} But as we have shown, this is too simple in relation to Olive Schreiner’s letters (and we think regarding other sets of letters too), for their structural and their performative aspects always have to be taken into serious account, these aspects have to be one of the focuses of analysis, and content has to be viewed and interpreted through this lens.

Schreiner’s letters are never just about an ‘out there’ beyond the epistolary and social relationships involved. Her letter-writing is always tailored for the particular addressee, even when a number of letters are

written on the ‘same’ topic on the same day. And also her inscription of content is always the product of interpretation and analysis of events and activities in the material world and is not referential in any simple way. Schreiner’s letters, then, demonstrate the dangers and limitations of a referential/evidential approach, for letters really are, as the concept of the epistolarium underpinning the Project’s research emphasises, perspectival, dialogical, emergent, temporal and serial. That is, grappling with the representational and rhetorical aspects of letters is not an optional extra, but fundamental. However, although the more indirect references to Plaatje, Jabavu, Andurahman and Gandhi in Schreiner’s letters discussed in this paper may not be ‘evidence’ in a directly referential way, they still add up to something fascinating, important and quite elusive about black/white interconnections and activism over that extended period of struggle for black citizenship between 1890 and 1920. Because of this, they provide a platform for further research, albeit a platform of a different kind from the one the Project initially expected.

As commented earlier, our initial expectation was that, while fully recognising the representational and rhetorical features of the Schreiner epistolarium, the Project would be able to analyse Schreiner’s letters as providing a perspective on the ‘across the divide’ political links between black elites and white liberals and radicals during the first period of struggle for black citizenship. But at the same time, this was always conceived in the context of recognising the ontological and epistemological complexities of the epistolary form, particularly the

fractured and complicated referentiality of letters, and their emergent inscription of a point of view as negotiated and formed in exchanges between correspondents. However, exploring ‘across the divide’ epistolary links between Schreiner and black leaders while also attending to the structural and performative aspects of *the Schreiner* epistolarium has pointed up that Schreiner’s (and other people’s) letters index a complicated set of off-paper, as well as on-paper, interconnections. And in Schreiner’s case, it has been the absence of letters to the black leaders we are interested in which has proved significant, and we conclude that there are in Schreiner’s political terms good reasons for this.

As the preceding discussion shows, while the Schreiner letters to Plaatje, Jabavu, Abdurahman and Gandhi which we started out hoping to find almost certainly do not exist and have never existed, some epistolary traces of networks across the racial divide most certainly do. There are many references to these men across Schreiner’s letters to other people which provide a palimpsest outline of some of the events and political activities they were mutually involved in, and consequently supply a material ‘off-paper’ context for the many letters and published writings concerned with Schreiner’s unfolding analysis of race and racism referred to earlier.

In addition, the absence of Schreiner letters to the men who were (however problematically at times in Jabavu’s case) recognised political leaders in the first period of struggle for black citizenship rights has also been helpful in constraining us to think outside the box regarding how

her letters link with her published writings and with the other activities she engaged in. For instance, identifying the structural patterns we have across the Schreiner epistolium has highlighted that her letters of engagement are much closer to her published writings and involve her directly grappling with political analysis and political differences and disagreements. Also relating Schreiner's letters to her writing generally and the conduct of her life more generally still has demonstrated that, where political consensus but not personal friendship existed between her and other people, her political engagement with them took a practical rather than epistolary form. Indeed, by and large it excluded letter-writing, which Schreiner engaged in for different purposes and with different sets of people. And what this in turn has demonstrated is that 'Schreiner's writing' is frequently 'Schreiner's politics' carried by epistolary or other textual means: the boundaries of the Schreiner epistolium are fluid, because of the porous nature of 'the letter' such that 'letterness' encompasses renegade and variant forms and counter-examples and crosses into 'writing' more generally (Stanley 2004, Poustie 2010). And of course, as this indicates, the morphing involved here runs the other way too, with Schreiner's published writings being equally fluid and porous to other genres.

The extended period of the first struggle for black citizenship, from the middle 1890s through to the 1913 Land Act and its aftermaths up to Schreiner's death at the end of 1920, remains of great interest to us, in particular regarding the light that can be thrown on this era by epistolary

means. Because of the focus of the Project, there are limits to how far our research can depart from taking Schreiner's letters as core. However, once its data collection and preparation phase is completed, we hope to investigate more of the remaining traces of Schreiner and friends around the Gandhi epistolary networks because of the extensiveness of the archival sources here; and also Plaatje's remaining letters will form another node of exploration, for similar reasons. In addition, a related strand of possible research involves exploring the wider epistolary activities of Schreiner's friends and acquaintances, in particular by examining the epistolary links between the 'Cape liberal' politicians she knew (Will Schreiner, Jim Sauer, John X. Merriman, F.S. Malan and James Rose Innes) with black leaders of more traditional kinds, not only the educated elite including Plaatje, Jabavu, Abdurahman and Gandhi.

We conclude this discussion with a final snapshot of the political interconnectedness our discussion here has demonstrated existed. This concerns the political activities opposing Union of the white settler states as seen by Gandhi in mid 1909. In a July 1909 letter to Henry Cotton (and also elsewhere in his comments about meetings with Schreiner), Gandhi emphasises that Schreiner always came to shake hands with him and made a point of doing so in public space. This public shaking of hands is both a metaphor for connection and also a political act in its own right, for it involved a prominent white South African woman publicly touching a man who might be a Brahmin but was one of South Africa's 'untouchables' on race grounds, particularly so by a white *woman*. That

is, the handshake which Gandhi comments on in the extract following can be linked to the table in which we delineated Schreiner's 'on the page' and 'off the page' involvements and in particular to her 'practical politicking'. This was a form of public networking, and was both highly performative and also a challenge to other people who were not like minded:

“Olive Schreiner and her sister, Mrs. Lewis, both came up to me when I left Cape Town, to shake hands. Dr. Abdurrahman tells me that Mr. Sauer tackled her and she, in her own charming and yet refined manner, told Mr. Sauer that she merely wanted to shake hands with me. She performed this ceremony most heartily in the presence of a huge crowd and both the sisters were quite for a few minutes with us. Fancy the author of “Dreams” paying a tribute to passive resistance...” (MK Gandhi to Henry Cotton, 14 July 1909, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 9, p.408)

Such a quiet, companionable, yet explosive way of literally crossing the racial divide is for us a distinctive feature of Schreiner's practical political activities and indeed her ethics of living more generally.

Endnotes

ⁱ See www.oliveschreinerletters.ed.ac.uk for frequently updated information about the Olive Schreiner Letters Project. Publications so far associated with the Project include Stanley 2004, 2002a, 2002b; Stanley and Salter 2009; Stanley and Dampier 2008; Stanley, Dampier & Salter 2010; Poustie 2010. For accounts focusing on 'the life' rather than 'the works', see First and Scott 1980; Schoeman 1991, 1992; and Burdett 2001.

ⁱⁱ In this present discussion, we assume Schreiner's influence. In other publications, we explore and ground this by looking at responses to her and her ideas. See, for example, Stanley & Dampier 2010 on the impact of her ideas regarding federation versus union in South Africa,

ⁱⁱⁱ ‘Race’ should throughout be seen as a problematised term; from 1891 Schreiner saw what was generally perceived as fixed and innate as entirely plastic and socially constructed, a stance which scholarly work has only recently caught up with.

^{iv} Apart from in her many open letters published in newspapers, which will be discussed in future Project publications.

^v One instance of this concerns much of the historical literature which emerged around the South African War centenary, in which, despite claims to ‘rethinking the past’, there was a decided tendency to rehearse many of the truisms of apartheid-era historiography, with the history and experiences of black South Africans simply tacked on to this. See for example Cuthbertson, Grundlingh and Suttie 2002, Lowry 2000, Omissi and Thompson 2002. The challenges to this include Stanley 2006, 2003; Stanley and Dampier 2009, 2007, 2005; and Dampier 2005.

^{vi} See Trapido 1980 for an interesting exception with still useful ideas.

^{vii} See Trapido 1980 for early work. We use radical as well as liberal here because some whites in addition to Olive Schreiner increasingly perceived black citizenship issues and the problem of whites as ‘the root problem for South Africa’ (Schreiner 1909), as did for example Gandhi’s supporter Herman Kallenbach and also Will Schreiner from the period of Union on. These three were by no means alone among whites in holding such views.

^{viii} Five of these appeared between mid 1891 and 1898, with Schreiner’s letters through to 1900 charting her progress in reworking them into a book to be entitled ‘Stray Thoughts on South Africa’, but the outbreak of the South African War and its very different political climate halted publication plans. Versions of these essays, further reworked by Cronwright-Schreiner after Schreiner’s death, appear in Schreiner (1923).

^{ix} The archival short forms used in the text and footnotes are as follows: Aletta IIAV (International Archives for the Women’s Movement, Aletta, Amsterdam, Holland); British Library (Department of Manuscripts, British Library, London, UK); Cory (Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa); Cullen (Cullen Library Manuscripts & Archives, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa); HRC (Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin, USA); McMaster (William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University, Ontario, Canada); NLSA (National Library of South Africa, Cape Town, South Africa); NELM (National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown, South Africa); UCT (University of Cape Town Manuscripts & Archives, Cape Town, South Africa).

^x Schreiner’s ‘anxiety’ here was an ethical and political one, because steering the Natives Land Bill into legislation would be Sauer’s political legacy.

^{xi} This was in part because of factors connected with WWI and the attendant dangers of sea travel, in part because Schreiner’s marriage had reached near-breakpoint before she left South Africa in 1913, in part because she wanted to be in reach of nursing homes (almost

non-existent in South Africa at that time), as she expected to become completely incapacitated as her sister Ettie and brothers Theo and Will, all suffers from the same congenital heart condition, had done.

^{xii} Schreiner had also supported the 1913 campaign, led by Charlotte Maxeke, founder of the women's section of the South African Natives National Congress (precursor to the ANC).

^{xiii} The links between Plaatje, Jabavu, Abdurahman and Gandhi were many and involved friendship as well as political alliances. For instance, in addition to Jabavu being the godfather of Olive Plaatje, Abdurahman later employed Plaatje's son St Leger, while Plaatje came to consider Will Schreiner as a personal friend as well as a strong political ally, and Gandhi worked closely with Abdurahman and his African People's Organisation, as did Plaatje. However, around Jabavu's support for the Land Act, Plaatje came to see Jabavu as a puppet of supposed white liberals who actually supported retrogressive policies, with Rose Innes, Merriman, F.S. Malan and especially Sauer being Plaatje's targets.

^{xiv} The 1914 South African Native National Congress Delegation was led by John Dube, as President of the SANNC, with its other members being Walter Rubusana, Thomas Mapikela and Saul Msane as well as Plaatje. Plaatje produced a manifesto, *The Native Land Act of South Africa: An Appeal to the Imperial Parliament and Public of Great Britain*, which was widely distributed but ignored by government. The other delegates returned to South Africa, while Plaatje remained in Britain to try to settle Barolong land claims as well as continue to protest the Land Act. Leo Weinthal, editor of *African World*, commissioned articles from Plaatje in later 1914 and he also had many speaking engagements. His *Native Life in South Africa* (London: PS King) was published in May 1916. His main friends in London were Georgiana and Daisy Solomon, Betty Molteno and Alice Greene, the Colensos, Jane Cobden Unwin, Will Schreiner and also Olive Schreiner; in Scotland, there was Silas Molema's son Modiri in Glasgow and James Moroka in Edinburgh studying medicine. Following publication of *Native Life...*, in May 1916 Georgiana Solomon wrote to Louis Botha, Prime Minister of the Union, about the Land Act; a detailed considered reply was received, although basically Botha did not concede the need for any change. Plaatje left Britain in January 1917. In 1919, his London friends and supporters and a number of organisations he had been in contact with, and also the SANNC in South Africa, all suggested another Delegation was called for around further retrogressive legislation, because post-war its representations might be more successful. Plaatje was ambivalent but agreed to head it. As leader of the second Delegation, he left South Africa with JT Gumede, arriving in Britain in June 1919; its other members, Richard Selope Thema Henry Ngcayiya and Levi Mvabaza, had arrived at the start of May. Will Schreiner as High Commissioner in London was able to get them access to Leo Amery, and the three first arrivals also saw British Prime Minister Lloyd George in France; Plaatje and Gumede arrived after Will Schreiner's death and attended his funeral. See especially Willan 1984, and also Rall 2003, for useful overviews.

^{xv} The legislation for the Union of South Africa included provision for a one year period after legislation was passed for representations to be made to the British imperial government

that this should be overturned. It was in this context that the first Delegation went to Britain.

^{xvi} As did white people appalled by what was taking place, with the most notable example being the smuggling to Schreiner of the photograph of the 'hanging tree' outside Bulawayo. This appears as the frontispiece to *Trooper Peter Halket...*, with purported 'rebels' with nooses round their necks being forced to jump from its branches, thus bringing about their death by hanging. The photograph was provided secretly by either a Chartered Company employee or the journalist who took the photograph, because of their concerns about reprisals from Rhodes or his henchmen. John Tengo Jabavu visited Kimberley in June and November 1897, with his visits reported in the local press on both occasions. Our thanks to Brian Willan for this information.

^{xvii} Representing the coloured populations of the Cape and wider, the APO as led by Abdurahman at a number of points made serious efforts to work with black political leaders and organisations to create a united political front. Most pertinently here, it did so around the 1908-9 work of the National Convention concerning union or federation and passing of the South Africa Act in 1910 and then in campaigns against the 1913 Land Act. However, it did so again in the late 1920s and early 1930s as well.

^{xviii} See Plaatje 1916, Chapter 12, 'Tengo Jabavu'.

^{xix} A proto-nationalist form of this had resulted in the damaging, discriminatory treatment of black people in the Boer Republics prior to the South African War (1899-1902), while its revitalised form post-1902 spread rapidly across South Africa once the possibility of an Afrikaner-dominated Union became a reality. It is this distinctive combination of racism and nationalism which Schreiner refers to as early as 1896 in a letter to Merriman as the Boers' 'cardinal vice' (OS to J.X. Merriman, 25 May 1896, NLSA).

^{xx} It is worth noting that the erstwhile 'liberal' Malan became Minister for Native Affairs following the death of Sauer in late 1913, and as such he hawkishly defended the Natives Land Act from any criticism of its harshness and injustice.

^{xxi} Schreiner is here assigning use of this term to her political opponents as a generalised word for all black labour, so she is placing 'invisible quotation marks' around this four component phrase, rather than using it herself.

^{xxii} See *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Electronic Book), New Delhi, Publications Division Government of India, 1999, 98 volumes, at <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/cwmg.html>, and selected correspondence (but still some 35,000 items) to and from Gandhi at <http://www.gandhiserve.org/correspondence/correspondence.html>

^{xxiii} (Zainunnisa) Cissie Gool (nee Abdurahman) was a political leader, advocate and member of the Cape Town City Council and also founder of the National Liberation League. She married a younger political associate of her father's, Dr Abdul Hamid Gool.

^{xxiv} These shared political goals certainly existed, in spite of Gandhi's comment that Schreiner prioritised African political rights and economic needs over those of Indian South Africans.

^{xxv} However, the overwhelming majority of letters to Plaatje have survived, not because he preserved them, but because they have been conserved in various other archives, including the Colenso, Molteno, Solomon and Cobden Unwin collections.

^{xxvi} For instance, the editor of Matthew Arnold's letters, George Russell (1895: vii-viii), countering stereotypic views of hagiographic Victorian biographical and editing practices, comments that Arnold's letters "are essentially familiar and domestic and were evidently written without a thought that they would ever be read beyond the circle of his family" and includes the whole range of his letter-writing and indeed points out that this characteristic more than anything else conjures up "*himself*; and there can be no higher praise".

^{xxvii} 'Perhaps' because few letters from Schreiner to Hobhouse from the period in question are as yet available in accessible archive locations.

^{xxviii} There were around 20-25,000 written, with Schreiner asking the recipients to destroy them in 1913, and with most of the remainder obtained and burned by Cronwright-Schreiner as he wrote *The Life...* and concocted *The Letters of Olive Schreiner* (Cronwright-Schreiner 1924a, 1924b; see also Stanley & Salter 2009).

^{xxix} The few surviving letters to Schreiner from her closest 'comradely' friends confirm this from their side of the correspondence, with examples being the remaining scattered letters from Isabella Ford, Alice Greene and Constance Lytton.

^{xxx} See for example the most substantial Schreiner biographies, First & Scott (1980) and Schoeman (1991, 1992).

^{xxxi} There are a few letters from Isabella Ford rather than to her, but these are from the earlier period of their friendship.

^{xxxii} Unlike Schreiner, Pethick Lawrence was not an absolute pacifist. He appeared before a Military Tribunal and agreed to do 'war work' on a farm.

^{xxxiii} These are typescripts of selected letters made in 1955 for a Schreiner centenary event in Cape Town. Although return of the originals was acknowledged, they cannot be located in the Pethick Lawrence archive collections and probably with much more correspondence were destroyed by his second wife Helen immediately after his death in 1961 (see 'Pethick-Lawrence Papers: Catalogue', Wren Library, Cambridge).

^{xxxiv} There are a few letters of engagement aspects as well, although these are actually concerned with the activities of Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, not her husband, and they focus on what Schreiner saw as Emmeline Pethick Lawrence's misconceived attempt to promote women's suffrage in South Africa on the same terms as men (i.e. accepting a racial basis to the franchise) and her misuse of private correspondence from Schreiner in doing so.

^{xxxv} See *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Electronic Book), New Delhi, Publications Division Government of India, 1999, 98 volumes at <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/cwmg.html>, and selected correspondence (but still some 35,000 items) to and from Gandhi at <http://www.gandhiserve.org/correspondence/correspondence.html>

^{xxxvi} See MK Gandhi “Deeds Better than Words” 26 October 1906, in Gandhi’s weekly, *Indian Opinion*, republished (in English, translated from Gujarati) in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 6, pp. 29-30.

^{xxxvii} Gandhi provided a detailed and persuasive explanation to his cousin Maganlal Gandhi of why he gave this support to Britain and encouraged others to do so too: “All of you may want to know why I have undertaken even the nursing of the wounded. Recently, I used to say, in South Africa, that, as satyagrahis we cannot help in this way either, for such help also amounted to supporting a war... But I found that, living in England, I was in a way participating in the War. London owes the food it gets in war time to the protection of the Navy. Thus to take this food was also a wrong thing. There was only one right course left, which was to go away to live in some mountain or cave in England itself and subsist there on whatever food or shelter Nature might provide, without seeking assistance from any human being. I do not yet possess the spiritual strength necessary for this. It seemed to me a base thing, therefore, to accept food tainted by war without working for it. When thousands have come forward to lay down their lives only because they thought it their duty to do so, how could I sit still? A rifle this hand will never fire. And so there only remained nursing the wounded and I took it up... I cannot say for certain that the step I have taken is the right one. I have thought much about the matter though, but so far I have discovered no alternative.” (MK Gandhi to Maganlal Gandhi, 18 September 1914, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 14, p.289).

^{xxxviii} This comment should not be read as indicating Schreiner’s lack of support for the Delegation and its overall purposes, but rather her disapproval of Plaatje’s promotion of the Native Labour Contingent’s role in the war in his *Native Life in South Africa*.

^{xxxix} Schreiner’s reservations were expressed in stronger terms to her brother Will: “...I want to explain about Hodgson. He asked me to read his paper & let him call on Sunday to hear what I thought of it. I told him it would be no use his calling as I would be spending the day with you & would not be leaving till about 10 o’clock. He then said he would call for me at that time so that I might tell him ~~w~~ on the top of the ~~w~~ his what I thought of it. I strongly advised him not to write ~~a#~~ at all or publish anything about South Africa. You know I think he is mad. Why will he write about things of which he knows nothing. He is perhaps clever at engineering, but a fool every other way. He & Mrs Solomon are a distressing pair” (OS to Will Schreiner, 8 January 1917, UCT).

^{xl} Schreiner’s increasingly problematic relationship with Emily Hobhouse throws up interesting aspects of the within-group different positions of many of those involved the NCF and UDC. In a September 1918 letter to May Murray Parker, a younger

friend of both her and Schreiner, Hobhouse wrote that at a dinner they had both attended Schreiner had been “as cold, distant & repellent as she could possibly be...”, adding that someone had told her it was because Hobhouse, a pacifist although unlike Schreiner not an absolute pacifist, remained friendly with Smuts, deeply involved in the war. After similar comments, Hobhouse adds, “It is a pity that Olive should shut herself in & allow herself to become so bigoted & fanatical. I should never have thought it of her.” (Emily Hobhouse to May Murray Parker, 18 September 1918, UCT). Notwithstanding Hobhouse’s tirade, Schreiner seems more simply to have ‘turned away’ in a literal sense rather than engage with Hobhouse in discussing the war, just as she did with her brother Will, Georgiana Solomon and others.

^{xii} Fitzpatrick’s (1994) fascinating transcription and discussion of many emigrant letters in family groups, for instance, marks up each paragraph of the included letters as (a), (b), (c) and so on and relates these to the thematic analysis in the latter part of the book.

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