

Re-Theorising Letters and ‘Letterness’

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Abstract

Epistolary theory has moved away from restrictive definitions of letters, to more fully acknowledge their complexly malleable features. In line with this shift, this working paper explores the concept of ‘letterness’ by analysing examples of letters from a number of South African archives and other cultural institutions. From the examples provided, four key arguments concerning ‘letterness’ are developed: for writers and readers of letters, the ‘truth’ of writing lies in the relationship perceived to exist between them; form and structure can signify a letter in the absence of other definitional features; reciprocity in the usual sense of the word is not necessarily a defining characteristic of a letter or a correspondence; and, letterness does not rely on a literal or figurative distance between writer and reader. The concepts of brokering in an epistolary network, and of ‘arrogating’ as a variant on this, are also discussed.

Introduction

This working paper analyses examples of letters that push at the margins of ‘letterness’, arguably a more useful analytical approach when working with this “infinitely malleable” (Jolly & Stanley 2005 p.75, Barton & Hall 2000) medium than attempting to apply narrower definitions of ‘the letter’. The examples to be discussed were encountered in archival situ, during an intensive period of archival research in South Africa with other members of the Olive Schreiner Letters Project (for further information, see: www.oliveschreinerletters.ed.ac.uk). This project, funded by the UK’s Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), aims to fully transcribe and analyse, and to publish transcriptions of, the letters of feminist novelist and social theorist Olive Schreiner (1855-1920). It will also contribute theoretically and methodologically to epistolary research, and regarding the structure and functioning of epistolary networks and the influence of the epistolary medium on the behaviour and action of individuals embedded within these.

My own research within the wider project explores the extent and structure of the Schreiner epistolary network, rather than Schreiner’s letters themselves, and examine how these networks of letter-writing and exchanges can illuminate a socio-historical examination of ‘the times’ and events, and also of course vice versa. As such, the examples I shall go on to discuss are drawn from the archived letters of a range of interconnected individuals embedded within or connected to Schreiner’s network of correspondents. These people include: prominent South African statesman and Union of South Africa Prime Minister (from 1919 -1924 and again from 1939 - 1948) Jan Christiaan Smuts, whose advocacy of racial segregation eventually led to Schreiner ending their correspondence, and his wife, Isie; the forceful welfare campaigner Emily Hobhouse with whom Schreiner frequently disagreed politically; the opponent of imperialism, John Xavier Merriman, Prime Minister of the Cape Colony 1908 – 1910 who also shared a frequent and intense epistolary relationship with Smuts; Martinus Theunis Steyn, President of the republican Orange Free State (1896 – 1902) and his wife ‘Tibbie’, with her being the person to whom Emily Hobhouse’s memoirs are addressed; various members of the Findlay family with whom the Schreiner family had multiple familial and/or friendship connections; and Betty Molteno, with whom Schreiner had very close friendship and shared ideas about

'race' and pacifism; and Molteno's long-term partner Alice Greene, whose letters convey deep affection for Schreiner particularly during Schreiner's declining health and her last trip to Britain/Europe for medical care.

The content of letters is influenced not only by the personal relationships between letter-writers and letter-readers and the socio-historic contexts these are lived within, but also by their position within their epistolary networks. Additionally, archival organisation and the fragmentation or dispersal of an individual's epistolary output impacts on present-day readings and interpretation of them. Because of such factors, for some social scientists, while letters may be interesting, their 'truth value' is limited (Plummer 2001 p.53-4). Exploring what has been called the 'truth status' (Jolly & Stanley 2005) of letters, Michel de Certeau (1988 p.xxvii) examines the relationship between what he describes as the "two antinomic terms" of history and writing or "the real and discourse". He proposes that analysing historical writing is not simply a matter of reading and interpreting but also a political problem relating to how history is made and (re)constructed. Consequently, as Steedman (2001 p.153-4) points out, when historians

refer to past occurrences whose existence is only known through inference from surviving documents... it is not to those documents themselves, but to what they indicate concerning the past, that the historian's statements actually refer... it is about something that never did happen in the way it comes to be represented... and it is made out of materials that aren't there, in an archive or anywhere else

However, according to Jolly (Jolly & Stanley 2005 p.76), the 'truth' or otherwise of a letter also exists in the unfolding relationship between correspondents rather than solely in its content, including because a "letter-writer promises only that they will communicate with their reader... [and] truth is often less at issue than entertainment". A letter is a performance adapted to suit a particular audience. Whilst Bazerman (2000 p.15) claims that a letter constitutes a direct communication "between two parties within a specific relationship in specific circumstances", in fact perhaps most are singular letters which "can be written, sent and read as a one-off occurrence", and are very different from an epistolary "exchange *persisting* over time" (Stanley 2004 p.209). Also, there is no guarantee that a letter, whether a one-off

or part of a correspondence, satisfactorily represents the relationship between reader and writer for either of them. While often the contents of letters are “uncorrected thoughts” written in the moment (Forster 1845 preface), Stanley & Dampier (2006 p.25) discuss the ‘assumed “present-ness” of life-writing more generally and that this may be “artful (mis)representation”’. Also, Gerber (2005 p.321) suggests that, for any number of reasons, including protecting the addressee from anxiety or harm, not everything that is written in letters is truthful and that the “commitment to maintain correspondence, to preserve a tie, rather than truth telling as such, may be considered the mark of faithfulness between correspondents”.

As these comments indicate, there are many complex factors which stand between a researcher and ‘objective truth’ when working with epistolary material. Arguments about the influence of writer/reader relationships and audience are expanded further below, because they are of particular relevance when considering epistolary examples drawn from my fieldwork. But before moving on to discuss these letters, I want to look at ideas concerning the influence of archival organisation on interpretation and thus on evaluations of truth and facts.

Archival organisation includes what is selected or deselected to be archived, where and how it is housed, when and how material can be accessed, and whether and how such material is fragmented across collections or whole archives. Hill (1993 p.9) notes how an individual’s archival papers may be distributed “seemingly with little rationale” across or within archives. Commenting upon the selective nature of archival material or “consciously chosen documentation from the past”, Steedman (2001 p.68) similarly highlights the recurrence within archives of “mad fragmentations... that just ended up there”. These “selective traces” are, according to Hill (1993 p.19), “filtered by... idiosyncrasies, family sensibilities... archival traditions, social structure, power, wealth, and institutional inertia”. Archives are therefore not to be seen as repositories of the past itself, Steedman suggests, but rather as “just stuff. The smallest fragment of its representation... ends up in various kinds of archive” (Steedman 2001 p.146).

This ‘fragmentation’ is also an inherent quality of letter-writing as a social practice, as discussed by Stanley (2004 p.204-5) in relation to her concept of the ‘epistolarium’, because

understanding the remaining fragments requires some kind of overview; and this constitutes an albeit provisional attempt to comprehend an entirety that never actually existed in the form of ‘a whole’ or a collection

The amassing and (re)reading of the entirety of someone’s epistolary material, intended for a variety of different readers, is a very different idea of ‘their letters’ than that which existed for the contemporaneous addressees and the letter-writer themselves. The collection of *both* sides of a correspondence or surviving parts of it may provide greater insight into the relationship that existed between reader and writer than does just one ‘side’, but does it bring us closer to the ‘truth’ of the writing (Jolly & Stanley 2005)? This is not straightforward.

Much epistolary theory converges around the view that letters are perspectival and relational and that “[d]ocuments... are ‘recipient designed’...”, consequently reflecting “implicit assumptions” concerning the intended reader or audience (Atkinson & Coffey 2004 p.70). The ‘truth’ of letters therefore needs to be gauged through consideration of the epistolary relationship as a whole, which may endure and change over time. Interpretation may be complicated both by such temporal changes and by the survival of only side of the correspondence, or even just parts of it. And, even where both sides of a correspondence are available, the experience of reading a ‘conversation of pens’ (Gerber 2005 p.317) one after the other and in quick temporal succession is likely to create a very different interpretation from that experienced by the original writers and recipients, for whom reading and writing were inextricably linked activities in the exchange of letters (Decker 1998 p.21), but with instalments of the ‘conversation’ separated by weeks or even months as letters passed between them.

Osborne (1999 p.57) argues that “the archive is a useful focal point for bringing together issues of representation, interpretation and reason with questions of identity, evidence and authenticity.” The organisation of archives and the fragmentation that characterises them can influence access and subsequently interpretation. Certeau (1988 p.33) suggests that, as

the divisions that formerly organised both a period and its historiography are being eroded, their presence can be analysed in the very work of their time. The disappearance of the period is the

condition for such lucidity, but this seemingly better comprehension that is now ours is due to the fact that we have changed our position: our situation can allow us to be familiar with their situation in ways other than their own ways

This is certainly so. At the same time, Stanley and Dampier (2005 p.91) caution against “treat[ing] twentieth century practices as a prism through which to interpret... previous centuries”, while the complexities of interpretation require the researcher not to “overrid[e] the understandings of ‘the researched’” (Stanley & Wise 2006 1.4). However, while Certeau (1998 p.xv) cautions that “events are often our own mental projections bearing strong ideological and even political imprints”, he provides no indication, other than will-power, about how to avoid this.

Maintaining an awareness that I am a product of different ideologies and culture from those surrounding the letters I am studying, and that this might lead me to incorrect or invalid assumptions and conclusions, may help me to avoid projecting my own opinions onto what is read and how it is understood. In accordance with Cosslett et al’s (2000 p.9) suggestion that there needs to be “a move away from a one-dimensional interpretation of truth”, my research on letters does not claim to uncover ‘objective truths’, but instead to explore epistolary complexities and to make analytically justifiable and defensible interpretations. Through this and detailed reference to “those documents themselves” (Steedman 2001 p.153-4), evidence for the knowledge-claims made is provided and can be challenged or enhanced by readers. Through this transparency, I hope that the knowledge produced is ‘moral knowledge’ in the sense of being reasonable and defensible. In search of some similar goals, Maynard & Purvis (1994 p.1) advocate providing an autobiographical account of “what it was actually like to do research”. I doubt the achievability of it actually being possible to convey ‘what it was really like’, for reasons I go on to discuss, although I certainly do think that making moral in the sense of transparent and defensible knowledge-claims is possible and desirable.

Contra ‘What It Was Actually Like’: The Emergent Nature of Research

It is impossible to reconstruct exactly what an intensive period of research was *actually like*. However, regarding the intensive month of fieldwork in South Africa which underpins the work presented in this working paper, I want to provide an analytically reflexive account of some of the key developments involved in, and influences on, the direction the research took.

I was invited to join this period of OSLP fieldwork to enable me to gain a detailed overview of the various collections of relevant archived material, (i.e. what was housed, how, and where) in South Africa. As I had never carried out archival research before, a pilot piece of work was conducted in the Edward Carpenter collection in the Sheffield City Archives, with Carpenter a friend and important correspondent of Schreiner. With supervisor support, a ‘To Do’ list of research activities was created to “provide some sense of systematic coherence in the process of archival research for sociohistorical investigations” prior to this visit (Hill 1993 p.6). This involved me systematically recording basic quantitative features of the archive, including: the numbers of letters, from and to whom; and the start and end dates of correspondence(s) and, qualitatively, possible reasons for this. It also involved me analysing the (often shifting) volume of letters to particular people tracked over time and in specific circumstances; comparing correspondences to/from women and to men; analysing the content and shifts therein of particular epistolary exchanges over time; political convictions expressed therein; and particular political events which impinged on Carpenter’s correspondences. This pilot working method enabled me to gain a good albeit provisional overview of some features of the Carpenter collection, and the methodology was later adapted and refined, visit by visit, regarding the various South African archives in which I worked.

Hill (1993 p.6) comments that “the proper names of people and organizations are guiding elements in the social construction of most archival collections.” This role can also be played by events and circumstances, such as war, bereavement, migration and so on. Names, events and circumstances all guide the research activities of the OSLP and also the archive collections it is concerned with. The archives and collections visited during fieldwork were preset by the wider OSLP timetable, based on prior research and knowledge of people and events featuring within Olive Schreiner’s epistolary network. These archives were: the National Archives

Depository, Pretoria (NAD); the Free State Archive Depository, Bloemfontein (FSAD); the William Cullen Library, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (WCL); the University of Cape Town Archive, (UCT); and the National Library of South Africa, Cape Town (NLSA). Detailed handlists for most of their individual collections were not available online prior to departure, so preparation was limited to background work and obtaining published edited collections of letters by, for instance, Smuts, Milner, Merriman and Rose Innes. In brief, the working methodology when approaching the first archival collection, that of Jan Smuts (JCS) in the NAD, was:

1. Copy/photograph the collection handlist for current and future reference (nb. such handlists do not always exist).
2. Discern the structure of the collection, for example whether it is divided into public and private correspondence, family and 'other' correspondence and so on, to ensure letters from all relevant sections are sampled.
3. Ascertain how the letters are organised, whether chronologically by year then date, or chronologically by correspondent, or in some other way.
4. Commence detailed overviewing work by operating the sampling procedures outlined above in relation to the Carpenter collection.
5. Update the running list of interconnected individuals already established by the wider OSLP where 'finds' occurred.
6. Record any significant events and focus on letter exchanges surrounding known important events from background reading/knowledge and also as established during ongoing fieldwork.
7. Make decennial or five yearly 'cuts' across large collections to establish an overview and examine all the letters in that period, to enhance depth of knowledge of the collection.

It is not possible to fully detail all of the cumulative developments in working this methodology over the duration of the fieldwork. It is simply impossible to detail 'what is was actually like'. In brief, all of the procedures above were operated in all of the collections where time permitted, while points 5. and 6. were updated almost daily as I came across new and potentially interesting material. Also, my work in 'the archive' in the narrow sense was not the only source of information drawn on, with other cultural artefacts and "physical traces" also influencing the development and process of my research (Hill 1993 p.2).

Steedman (2001 p. 82-3) suggests that “[t]he Archive...is somewhere to put what [we] find, which is the first thing to do with material derived from cultural activity” and that “[t]he Archive then is something that, through the cultural activity of History, can become Memory’s potential space.” My research drew on ‘the Archive’ in this wider sense because its interpretations were influenced by a broad range of “cultural and material residue” or “physical traces” of individuals, social groups and social movements captured within “cultural monuments such as libraries, museums, [national monuments], and formal archives” (Hill 1993 p.2). Although referring specifically to the process of working with archival collections, Hill’s (1993 p.6) argument, that “what you find determines what you can analyze, and what you can analyze structures what you look for”, also applies more widely.

One such ‘physical trace’ was the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria, which I visited on the first day of arrival. This is a Nationalist monument built to commemorate the trekkers who left the Cape Colony between 1835 and 1854 primarily but not exclusively as a result of the British abolition of slavery. It was unveiled on 16 December 1949, the 111th anniversary of the Battle of Blood River, when the trekkers defeated a Zulu army in 1838, a date which became known as Dingaan’s Day after the Zulu leader. A marble relief in the monument’s ‘Hall of Heroes’ depicts these events and those of the Great Trek. MacKenzie (1997 p.77) suggests that “subsequent accounts have taken at face value the estimate made by victors of over 3,000 Zulu dead” compared to three wounded trekkers. Such a “recasting of the past” (MacKenzie 1997 p.77) creates a mythologised representation from particular, and in this case political and nationalist, perspectives. In relation to post/memory and commemoration of such dates and events in the nationalist calendar, Stanley (2006a) and Stanley & Dampier (2005 p.91) have examined how such “dominant, constructions of facts, truth and history” have created a mythologised Nationalist account of the South African past.

Other ‘physical traces’ which influenced my research were found the next day at the Kruger Museum, Pretoria, the former residence of President Kruger of the Transvaal. When he died in exile at Lake Geneva on 14 July 1904, Kruger’s body was embalmed and later taken to Cape Town by ship. Here it lay in state before being transported to Pretoria by rail and buried amidst “tremendous public interest and homage” at a state funeral on 16 December 1904 (De Kock & Kruger 1972 p.454). On display in the Museum was a plaster bust of Kruger sculpted in Paris in 1901

during his exile. According to the accompanying notice, this was purchased by Louis Botha “on behalf of the people of South Africa” and later cast in bronze by the Union Government. This was unveiled on 16 December 1921 by General Smuts. Also located in the Kruger Museum was a large photograph of the crowd at his state funeral, which Olive Schreiner and various members of her social and epistolary networks attended. Kruger’s 1904 funeral, the date 16 December, and an interesting example of the complex character of ‘letterness’ displayed at the Museum, have influenced my research by directing my attention to particular persons, events and dates. In particular, my attention was caught by a letter from Queen Wilhelmina of Holland to Queen Victoria of Britain (her aunt) which was on display, regarding reconciliation between the Boers and Britain. This ‘covering’ letter written from a niece to her aunt had originally accompanied an official and public letter from one Head of State to another, and I shall return to this later.

When researching data or other “intersubjectively verifiable trace evidence” (Hill 1993 p.1) from formal archival repositories, or other physical traces such as monuments and museums, it is important to remember that these texts are *representations* of the past (Atkinson & Coffey 2004 p.66). Consequently, I have throughout remembered the selection and construction processes involved and explored the impact on the collections I have worked on, and also on historical monuments and cultural artefacts such as the Voortrekker Monument and Kruger Museum.

What Is ‘A Letter’?

A large body of work has been written about cultural and historical shifts in letter-writing conventions and practices over time (see for example Barton & Hall 2000, Bazerman 2000, Decker 1998, Dierks 2000, Ditz 1999, Earle 1999, Goldsmith 1989, Jolly & Stanley 2005, MacArthur 1990, Schneider 2005, Thomas & Znaniecki 1918-1920 [1958]). As it is neither possible nor necessary to review this in detail here, instead some key work concerning the theoretical, conceptual, definitional and genre aspects of epistolarity will be explored, as well as a later re-theorising of ‘letterness’. Of particular relevance here is Jolly & Stanley’s (2005) discussion of ‘Letters as/not a genre’, Stanley’s (2004) work on the epistolarium and theorisation of letters and correspondences, Decker’s (1998) discussion of epistolary practices, and Barton &

Hall's (2000) edited collection examining *Letter Writing as a Social Practice*. From this work, I am particularly interested in how the relationship between a correspondent or writer and their audience can affect the 'truth' of the writing; authorial embodiment within letters; issues surrounding the absence or distance between writer and addressee; the dialogical nature of letter-writing and the extent to which reciprocity is necessarily an inherent feature; and whether 'epistolary intent' alone, in the absence of other widely accepted definitional features of 'a letter', can signify 'a letter'. Additionally, Bruggeman's (2008) discussion of social network analysis throws interesting light on the structure and organisation of Schreiner's epistolary networks. In particular, I have found the social network concept of 'brokerage' useful in exploring the actions of epistolary network members and their epistolary output, as well as my own development of this in the concept of 'arrogating'. And in using these ideas and concepts in what follows, I also draw on Prior's (2004, 2008) argument that letters can be viewed as in themselves agentic within networks.

The key definitional characteristics assigned to 'the letter' provide a useful baseline from which to examine how examples of letters from my research correspond to, or vary from, these. In a dialogical exchange, Jolly & Stanley (2005 p.78-9) refer to four characteristics of epistolarity, that: "letters in correspondences involve exchanges with reciprocity built in"; letters have "relational characteristics" and "purposeful intent"; letters have "referential aspects" or a "real-world" connection which make their impact for the reader; and "letters inhabit an interesting ontological as well as epistemological 'space', situated as they are on the boundaries of the personal and impersonal". As well as these loose characteristics, rather than strict definition, characterising current theorising of 'the letter', there is also general agreement that the writer and addressee of a letter need not necessarily be singular, and that letter-writing is a social practice with letters frequently sent to addressees "who often collaborate as readers" (Decker 1998, 22), including by reading letters aloud or passing them on (Barton & Hall 2000, Decker 1998, Prior 2008, Schneider 2005).

Commenting that the convention of dating a letter is relatively recent and anyway is often ignored or omitted, Stanley (2004 p.207), like many other epistolary theorists, rejects a narrow definitional approach:

Fundamentally, a letter is a material document of some kind (paper, words on a screen or taking other forms...) that signals its epistolary purpose through its form or structure by being addressed from one person and signed by another... A letter... signals an 'epistolary intent', and the epistolary or letter form can be easily recognized and distinguished from other forms of writing, because of existing in a social context with shared and largely stable conventions governing its form.

But just what is 'epistolary intent'? Altman (1982 p.4) throws light on this in commenting that 'epistolarity' is "the use of a letter's formal properties to create meaning." I am interested here in the extent to which the form and structure of letters alone can signify 'a letter' in the absence of other commonly accepted definitional features and discuss this further below. I shall also discuss the extent to which letters written from one person to another over time can be considered 'a correspondence' if there is no reciprocity in the usual sense of the word involved. That is, building on the more flexible current approach to theorising letters, rather than following the "minimal definition" of familial letters proposed by Decker (1998 p.22) which insists that letters as "texts that at some point in their histories are meant to pass in accordance with some postal arrangement from an addresser to an addressee", I am interested in letters at the margins of what constitutes 'letterness'. Barton & Hall (2000 p.1) note but then ignore their own insight that letters are a "particularly difficult text object to define: after all anything can be put in the form of a letter". I intend to interrogate this.

One of these margins to the letter concerns the assumption, which Stanley (2004 p.209) criticises, in some epistolary theory that letters exist due to an absence and/or spatial distance between a writer and addressee, whether "literal or figurative" (Altman 1982, Decker 1998, Barton & Hall 2000, Derrida 1976). Schneider (2005 p.28) for instance suggests that the "raison d'être of letter writing [is the p]hysical distance between sender and recipient." Certeau (1988 p.3) too argues that "the body reaches the written page only through absence." But this is more complex, as a consideration of some examples of letter-writing attempting to convey, capture or symbolise bodily action in written form, will demonstrate.

Messages with ‘epistolary intent’ are sometimes written to me by my partner in the steam on the shower screen door while I am physically present and neither figuratively nor literally distant. Such examples challenge Derrida’s (1976 lii-liii) ideas concerning absence and the “spacing” or “nonpresence” of the subject in writing, and his assertion that

absence... is required by the general structure of signification... It is radically requisite: the total absence of the subject and object of a statement – the death of the writer and/or the disappearance of the object he was able to describe – does not prevent a text from “meaning” something

Contra Derrida, Certeau and others, these messages in steam bear many accepted characteristics of letters but do not signify either temporal or spatial distance. As with notes slid across desks in classrooms, they have an epistolary intent but are unsigned and undated and assume co-presence. In such cases, the physical act of writing and ‘delivering’ is often observed and anticipated by the addressee and therefore the identity of the writer is obvious or unquestionable and so does not need to be ‘signed for’. These forms of ‘letters’ do not exist due to absence, and do not ‘signify the relationship itself’, but instead convey a message such as ‘I ♥ you’, which could be easily verbalised, in a written form for impact, emphasis or novelty or because the opportunity to verbalise is restricted.

These examples do not exist due to absence, but they do encompass three features of letters highlighted by Stanley (2004). They are ‘dialogical’ and form part of communication or exchange between one person and another or others; they are ‘perspectival’ in that the structure and content of the message (including material aspects of the ‘letter’ such as ink, steam, text on paper, technology) will vary according to recipient and circumstance and the particular ‘voice’ or ‘persona’ they are adopting at that moment (i.e. whether loving, playful, threatening etc); and they have emergent properties by having their own epistolary ethics concerning what is and is not to be communicated and which will vary between different correspondents and also over time. Many of the documents I read during South African fieldwork sat comfortably within conventional ideas about private letters as a genre, because they were formal business or politically-orientated communications. However, these

conventional categories in fact all contained interesting examples at the margins of ‘letterness’ and several of these are discussed in the following section.

Discussing genre within the context of epistolary exchange, Decker (1998 p.21) argues that the “contractual parties are correspondents who alternate in the readerly and writerly roles, and for whom reading and writing are inextricable activities”. Seeing epistolary relationships as based on exchanges is the basis of Stanley’s (2009) theorisation of the letter as a gift which is concerned with maintaining a relationship rather than repairing absence. The reciprocal nature of such gift exchanges and the alternation between readerly and writerly roles involved generates structural properties within correspondences and within the wider writing practices of epistolary communities or networks. Decker’s (1998 p.21) assertion that “reading and writing are inextricable activities” within epistolary exchanges is interesting if in some cases also problematic, and examples which are discussed later highlight how the act of reading influences the act of writing, and also that these acts can influence emergent structural properties within the writing practices of epistolary networks.

Decker (1998) and Stanley (2004) consider whether, in passing from manuscript to transcription and then print, the letter undergoes a genre change. Whilst this relates primarily to edited and published collections of an individual’s letters, this liminal aspect of genre is also helpful in thinking about transcriptions of single letters or individual letters within a reciprocal epistolary exchange. In a similar vein, Barton & Hall (2000 p.1) summarise the prevalent assumption in life-writing theory that “letters may contain elements of other genres” or appear within a variety of other texts. Decker (1998), Bazerman (2000) and Jolly & Stanley (2005 p.75), among others, acknowledge the “infinitely malleable features” of letters and letter writing as a social practice which morphs into and across genres and across historical periods in spite of (varyingly) prescriptive conventions. For Stanley (Jolly & Stanley 2005 p.84), indeed, “‘the letter’ as a *general* genre category... is so leaky as to be of little sustained use”, although if applied to letters within a “particular epistolarium” (i.e. a specific person’s epistolary output) it has more analytic utility.

Decker (1998 p.26) also notes the “unusual freedom” brought to the practice of letter-writing because people frequently deploy their own conventions to the available forms, and Barton & Hall (2000) too note the ability of the letter as “a carrier for text” to appear in many forms. Similarly, Stanley (Jolly & Stanley 2004 p.78) argues that “‘the letter’ as a genre type immediately dissolves into messy or

hybridic forms once actual examples come under analytic scrutiny” and it is to such ‘analytical scrutiny’ of actual examples that I now turn.

In what follows, I explore the ideas discussed above in relation to specific examples of letters from my fieldwork, examples which play with widely accepted definitional features and conventions of letters and which are at, or otherwise trouble, the margins of ‘letterness’. In doing so, they provide interesting test-cases for considering a re-theorisation of letters and ‘letterness’.

‘Actual Examples Come Under Analytic Scrutiny’: ‘Letterness’ at the Margins

My research aims to make the “full use of historical materials” advocated by C Wright Mills (1959 p.145) for a “well considered social study”; and so in what now follows I discuss in detail examples of letters drawn from across the range of South African archives I worked in, involving some very different members of Schreiner’s epistolary networks. A full list of archival material used and accompanying digital images is provided in the Appendix.

The Complexities of the Addressee

Neither the writer nor the addressee of a letter need be singular. The following example demonstrates the effects of particular relationships on the written performance of a letter (Jolly & Stanley 2005). On 4 October 1903 Emily Hobhouse wrote simultaneously to three addressees, addressing specific sections of her letter to each and referring to them, following a more conventional salutation, as ‘(1)’, ‘(2)’ and ‘(3)’.

Dear Barbara, Dorothy, and Leonard,

Forgive a triple letter... I am too worn out and too pre-occupied to write home as much as I did.

I thank (1) and (2) for their letters; (3) never writes so I can economize gratitude.

I am so sorry (1) has had such a bother editing my badly written hasty letters for the papers. I hope she improved grammar and style...

(2) sounds very below par from her letters and I fear that her wrist is not in better writing condition...

(3) may like to know that I leave Cape Town on November 4...
So (1) and (2) need not write again. It is unnecessary to tell (3) not to do so.
Yours,
E.HOBHOUSE¹

This example plays with a widely accepted definitional feature of the letter, in that it is intended for and communicates with multiple addressees. Moreover, the pointed division of the letter between recipients ‘(1)’, ‘(2)’ and ‘(3)’ explicitly suggests differences in the relationships Hobhouse had with each. The performative ‘effects’, encompassing tone, content and also structure are adapted according to Hobhouse’s relationship with each. Knowing that all three addressees were likely to read all ‘sections’ of the letter, Hobhouse was able to draw on the contextual knowledge each had of the others as part of the performance to humorous or perhaps strategic effect, to nudge or shame the apparently negligent ‘(3)’ into writing more frequently. This example explicitly plays with ‘letterness’, with conventions of form, and with the implicit assumption that letters are shared, for performative purposes pushing at the boundaries of letter-writing conventions. Divided by sections into ‘1, 2 and 3’, this letter could effectively become three separate letters because each has characteristics of ‘letterness’. However, the performative effects that amalgamation has deliberately produced would be diminished or lost.

Brokering: Letters of Introduction

I came across examples of letters of introduction in almost all of the archival collections I worked on, requesting that a relationship be brokered between two other people who had no existing network connections. Examples of these were particularly prevalent in the collections of high status individuals whose influence was sought in opening up pathways to otherwise inaccessible people. Bruggeman (2008 p.68) states that brokers “can facilitate transactions between other actors lacking access to or trust in one another”. However, brokers can also, through their power position on a pathway between two unconnected people, elect *not* to facilitate

¹ FSAD, Steyn Collection A156, 1/1/12, EH to BB, DB & LH, 4 October 1903. Surnames/background information obtained from Hobhouse Balme (1994). See Appendix 2 for a photograph of the letter.

such transactions. “[N]etwork contacts”, Bruggeman (2008 p.68) comments, “are screening devices that filter, concentrate, and legitimize [strategic] information”.

Essentially, brokers receive strategic information from network contacts and act as a gatekeeper in the strategic transmission of that information. Any resulting contact between previously unconnected people may be advantageous both to them and to the broker. However, brokers may strategically ‘gatekeep’ or mediate information between them, or indeed they can refuse to broker between them if she/he perceives that brokering a contact may have negative consequences for themselves, their network or their position within it. Of particular interest to me in terms of brokering within social networks was a set of letters in the collection of John X. Merriman, archived in the NLSA.

On 8, 13 and 15 October 1902, Merriman received three separate letters of introduction from WT Stead, C.A.V Conybeare and Leonard Courtney respectively, concerning a Captain Fletcher Vane. Each of the three letter-writers employed differing selective strategies when conveying information about Vane to Merriman.

Stead writes:

The bearer of this letter is Captain Vane, who, after serving with credit in the War... found the strain of administering injustice too much for him. He resigned, and has done good service by exposing the system of martial law in the British Press. He is now in South Africa as the representative of the WESTMINSTER GAZETTE, DAILY NEWS and MANCHESTER GUARDIAN. I hope that you will render him any assistance that may be in your power to enable him to get to know the truth, and to open the eyes of our purblind public²

Like WT Stead, Leonard Courtney highlights Vane’s changed political views:

Going out as a reserve officer volunteering in what he thought a great imperial cause, he got fresh light from what he saw and is now ardently convinced that the only way of saving S Africa to the British

² NLSA, John X. Merriman Collection, MSC15, 1902, WTS to JXM, 8 October 1902.

connection is by a prompt and strong development of self government within it...

However, Courtney places greater emphasis on Captain Vane's reputation, commenting

I know how heartily you will welcome one whose powers are so actively occupied in the right direction and whose development has been so straight and honourable³

He also highlights Vane's class background:

He... is indeed heir to the present Sir Harry to whose estate he will in due course succeed...

Both Stead and Conybeare use Vane's experiences and status as a soldier to promote his cause but in different ways. Stead presents Vane as an honourable man who, despite fighting for Britain, "found the strain of administering injustice too much for him" and now wished to expose this "truth and to open the eyes of the purblind [British] public to the wrongs of martial law". Conybeare, however, positively represents Vane's prestige as a British soldier, by emphasising his conduct and distinction during the war:

I have the pleasure of introducing to you my friend Capt Francis P Fletcher Vane, who served during the War with distinction under General French, winning 2 medals & 5 clasps. He is returning to S.Africa & wishes to [illegible] of the Civilian side of things now the War is over. If you could anyway assist him you will really oblige⁴

Conybeare refers to how Merriman's hoped for act of introduction will 'oblige' both Vane and also Conybeare himself and it is implicit but resonant in Conybeare's letter that a positive brokering action by Merriman will be favourable to their own

³ NLSA, John X. Merriman Collection, MSC15, 1902, LC to JXM, 15 October 1902.

⁴ NLSA, J.X. Merriman Collection, MSC15, CAVC to JXM, 13 October 1902.

relationship. Courtney's letter, however, implies that he perceives his act of brokering as a favour to Merriman, writing that he "knows how heartily [Merriman] will welcome one whose powers are so actively occupied in the right direction". Despite this assertion, a letter from Jan Hofmeyer to Merriman on 8 December 1902 suggests that Merriman replied to Captain Vane more cautiously and that he forwarded a copy of this (archived) letter to Hofmeyer, who "*thoroughly agree[d]*" having written to Vane "*in the same spirit*" by stating that if Vane wished to negotiate then "*he ought to go to our Parliamentary party and that of MP's near Cape Town*".⁵

Vane continued to try to bring about a meeting between both parties to discuss grievances regarding goods requisitioned by the military during the South African War (1899-1902), and hoped that Merriman "*will lend and hand in this*".⁶ However, a 7 December 1902 letter⁷ from Merriman to Vane, the subject of which is detailed in the finding aid but which is missing from the archive, implies that Merriman did not commit himself to positively brokering between Vane and his own political connections.

The concept of brokerage is not coterminous with being 'a broker', in that an individual can act as a broker on occasion without being acknowledged or perceived as a broker more widely by network members. An example here is a letter from W.J.C Brebner to Mrs Steyn dated 11 January 1903:

*I am enclosing to you a card of a Dr Burns. He is a great sympathiser with the boers and would very much like to meet the President. He handed me his address and asked me to write requesting you to let him know of ^when^ the President was strong enough to receive him. He is not a bad old man. You will see that he lives not far from where you are at present*⁸

This letter implies that acts of brokerage can occur due to external pressures without any perception on the part of 'the broker' that their actions are beneficial for the parties being connected or that they promote the requested outcome. However, a letter from Emily Hobhouse to Mrs Steyn, dated 1 February 1925, suggests that people who

⁵ NLSA, J.X. Merriman Collection, MSC15, JH to JXM, 8 December 1902.

⁶ NLSA, J.X. Merriman Collection, MSC15, Capt. Vane to JXM, 5 December 1902.

⁷ NLSA, J.X. Merriman Collection, MSC15, JXM to Capt. Vane, 7 December 1902.

⁸ FSAD, Steyn Collection, A156 1/1/15, WJC Brebner to Mrs Steyn, 11 January 1903.

have brokered connections may prefer to emphasise positive and diminish negative outcomes:

It was so unfortunate that he [a Mr de Bruyn] shot (accidentally) poor [illegible] Fischer in Leipzig, to whom I had introduced him, through the thigh. She was laid up some time with it, but he was very good to her & she liked him⁹

The above examples suggest that acts of brokering can influence relationships and that brokers can strategically direct information that is passed between disparate network members. However, these examples also suggest that brokering is not necessarily coterminous with being ‘a broker’ and that ‘brokers’ forming connections can do so due to external pressure without the desire or perceived opportunity to gain strategically. The Brebner example indicates that brokers in certain circumstances may wish to remain neutral and passive, disassociating themselves from the repercussions of connection requests once these are made. Hobhouse’s letter, however, implies a perceived enduring responsibility for connections formed but with a desire to emphasise only positive effects.

The following example concisely highlights the social and epistolary interconnectedness between some members of the wider Schreiner epistolary network, the impact that letters can have upon network structure, and that letters are prototypically interspersed by face-to-face encounters. A correspondence may persist over time, but correspondents are not necessarily absent and either figuratively or literally distant from each other for the duration of it. The exchange I want to consider consisted of both face-to-face and epistolary contact, but with the letters themselves acting in agentic ways in directing and structuring further action (Prior 2004, 2008). As Atkinson & Coffey (2004 p.59) note, “documents are used and exchanged as part of social interaction.” In this example, John X Merriman writes to Abraham Fischer regarding a letter Merriman had just written to Steyn, with the subject a memorandum written to the Colonial Office by Jan Smuts:

⁹ FSAD, Steyn Collection, A156 1/1/13, EH to Mrs Steyn, 1 February 1925.

My dear Fischer,

I have just been writing a long letter to Mr Steyn on the subject of John Smuts Memo to the Colonial Office. Perhaps you will ask Mr Steyn to show you my letter...

I hope that you will use your influence to combat any idea of abstention... I am convinced that the cause Smuts champions has lost much by the fact that he and Botha conceived it to be their duty to hold aloof from the Leg[islative] Council. I wish I had a chance of discussing all these matters with you.

It was a great pleasure to see you the other day but the time was too short for serious talk...

With kind regards to Madame

Believe me

Yours truly

John X Merriman...¹⁰

This short letter encapsulates three pieces of writing (itself, the letter to Steyn and Smuts' memo), it explicitly refers to six members of a social network (Fischer, Merriman, Steyn, Smuts, Botha and Madame), and two organisations (the Colonial Office and the Legislative Council). It also mentions a previous face-to-face encounter between Fischer and Merriman, plus a desire to meet in the future, and it directs action by suggesting that Fischer should ask Steyn to show Merriman's letter to him, and that Fischer should exert his political influence. As this example suggests, letters can provide "material evidence of social connectedness" on many levels and bear "weighty sociocultural significance" (Schneider 2005 p.27). In this regard, and as discussed earlier, letters can be a rich source of contextual, socio-historic and political information surrounding the organisation of epistolary and social networks. This will inform further research concerning the extent and structure of the Schreiner network, and also the light its workings can throw on 'the times' and events, as well as vice versa.

¹⁰ NAD, Smuts Collection, JXM to Fischer, 20 February 1906.

Bodily Traces and Materiality

Decker (1998 p.38, 40) proposes that a “letter’s materiality affords many opportunities for exporting the bodily trace” and that “[h]andwriting images actual bodily presence.” Steedman (2001 p.74) suggests that “[t]he letter is part of the body which is detachable: torn from the very depths of the subject”. I came across a perhaps surprisingly large numbers of letters playing with this aspect of letterness in the collections I worked on, and doing so in a variety of ways.

My first example is a letter to Alice Greene from Emily Hobhouse, dated 20 May 1914, which comments:

the habit has been growing upon me more and more of late to keep all my friends letters even if I don't read them often, it feels almost like murdering an individual ^you love to tear them into pieces^!!!¹¹

The double message of the comment “tear them into pieces” suggests that for the recipient there is an enduring association of the material document with the body and physicality of the sender, or the perception that the letter itself is a ‘piece’ of the sender that materially and literally survives beyond their death. As Stanley & Dampier (2006 p.27) argue, there is a “complex relationship with contextual time, concerning both the time that the events being written about occurred, and also the “moment” in which these are written about”. Given that “the moment of writing is always a present-time one, but the time being written about can be present-past and/or present-future as well as present-present” (Stanley & Dampier 2006 p.27), the workings of time become increasingly complex as letters, captured in time, are read and re-read over time “in a succession of presents” with their meaning, or perhaps more accurately interpretation and application of their meaning, shifting over time in accordance with the contextual, emotional and/or physical relationship that exists or has ceased to exist between writer and addressee (Stanley & Dampier 2005 p.109). Despite the reciprocal, dialogical and relational foundations of correspondences (Jolly & Stanley 2005), Jolly (2008 p.104) notes that further temporal complexities may arise through delays in the “emotional post” where the emotional purport of a writers

¹¹ UCT, Molteno Collection, BC330, EH to AG, 20 May 1914.

letter or an emotional response to one, is only realised, acknowledged or instigated by the re-reading of letters across time. As discussed further below, emotional referential and relational letters can be ‘sent’ even after the death of the addressee.

In the same way that ‘I ♥ U’ on a shower door is an abbreviated and abstracted ‘present-present’ representation of the “contiguity between the bodies of correspondents and the body (text) of correspondence”, the following example also demonstrates authorial ‘embodiment’ (Decker 1998 p.38) in letters through playing with form. It concerns a letter dated 11 March 1919 from Beryl (surname unknown and not provided in the collection handlist) to George Findlay:

*Some of the mosquitoes are as large as cows (don't laugh) and they
leave huge lumps as large as sixpences. Just a minute —
My left foot has gone to sleep~
~~~~~  
~~~~~That is supposed to be my foot wiggling  
about.¹²*

This suggests that material representations of bodily traces in letters act not just to signify the relationship, but also are an attempt to convey what is happening ‘in real time’ to the writer whilst writing. Despite much recent questioning concerning the often wrongly assumed temporal and spatial immediacy and referentiality of life-writing genres including letters and diaries (Stanley & Dampier 2006) the writer in the above example attempts to provide the contextual and extraneous information normally available to communicants in face-to-face conversation by providing additional social cues for interpretation. These relate to the physicality and physical sensations of the writer at the moment of writing but during a temporarily and/or literarily distanced ‘conversation of pens’ which, from a ‘reduced [social] cues perspective’ (Adams 1998 p.169) is more impersonal and subsequently less intimate than direct contact. Functionally, experimenting with stylistic strategies relating to authorial embodiment is likely to indicate an attempt on the part of the writer to mimic the ‘ideal’ of conversation as advocated by many letter-writing conventions. This clearly relates to the ‘assumed “present-ness”’ of letters discussed above but is

¹² WCL, Findlay Family Papers, A1199, B? to GF, 11 March 1919.

temporally complex and suggests that the enduring association of a letter with its writer, discussed by Hobhouse above, is independent of actual bodily references and is more related to the enduring physical presence of the document and, in line with Decker (1998 p.38, 40), material existence of “[h]andwriting images actual bodily presence.” Again, this association of letters with writers is further complicated when it endures beyond someone’s death and literal physical presence, with the document becoming something else again, no longer an association perhaps, but something on a border between: ‘the person’; a representation of them; and/or what remains of them, or in other words, their embodiment, or fragmentary traces of them and their bodily presence/imprint.

In the third example, a letter written by young Zoe Findlay to her father Hudson Findlay on 11 February 1904, ‘o’ and ‘x’ are used to represent the physical acts of hugging and kissing (the representation of hugs by ‘o’ is made explicit in a previous letter dated 5 February 1904 which ends “XXXXXXO,OOXO hugs”)¹³. Also of interest is her assertion that she will continue to write even if there is no chance of reciprocity, something I return to later:

Dearest Daddie,

I received your nice long letter last night... You must know it is the first one I've had since we came from home. I will keep on writing even if you don't answer them because I know you have lots of work to do...

I will write often & tell you all the news love to all & a lot for yourself

XXXXXOO

I remain

Your loving girlie

*Zoe.Findlay*¹⁴

In the temporary or longer-term absence of physical presence, correspondents fairly frequently experiment with form in an attempt to express or simulate the physical and emotional relationship that exists between them or alternatively physical aspects of a relationship they may wish to introduce or experience should they meet

¹³ WCL, Findlay Family Papers, A1199, ZF to HF, 5 February 1904.

¹⁴ WCL, Findlay Family Papers, A1199, ZF to HF, 9 February 1904.

again. In the case of correspondents who have never met or will never meet, written negotiations regarding potential or fantastical physicality may take place. In this way they attempt to convey physical aspects of their relationship in the writing but are unable to “represent fully what would be ideally transmitted face to face” (Schneider 2005 p.34). Zoe Findlay attempts to materially express physical aspects of her relationship with her father which are denied to her at the point of writing. However, Beryl does not attempt to signify her relationship with George Findlay, but instead uses material representation of the bodily trace to illuminate her physicality and physical experiences during the act of communication. Hobhouse’s association of material documents with the body of the author suggests that letters can enduringly signify and stand for not only relationships but also the writer themselves.

Reciprocity: Unsent and Self-Censored Letters

The intention to send a letter may change during or after its writing. In agreement with Decker (1998), the *removal* of an earlier intention to send a letter does not change its status as a letter. However, I also want to argue that ‘a letter’ written without *any* intention of exchange or any possibility of reciprocity is still a letter. This argument relies on ‘letterness’ being at basis “the expression of epistolary purpose through its form or structure by being addressed from one person and signed by another”, and removing reciprocity and exchange as essential requirements (Stanley 2004 p.207). This is akin to Altman’s (1982 p.4) suggestion that ‘epistolarity’ is “the use of a letter’s formal properties to create meaning”. A relevant example is a letter dated 16 July 1919 from George Findlay to Joan Niemeyer:

I wrote a most brilliant 4 pager to you some time ago, a really fine letter. But I discovered an unchoice expression in the very middle of one page and so failed to post the work of art... I thought you might resent it as an undue interference in your affairs. I have filed that letter in my records which it adorns quite reasonably¹⁵

¹⁵ WCL, Findlay Family Papers, A1199, GF to JN, 16 July 1919.

Despite being unsent, the letter referred to was initially written with the intention of exchange and reciprocity and therefore meets Decker's (1998) 'minimal definition'. Interestingly, unsent letters, unless kept and marked in some way as 'unsent', are frequently made known to a researcher only through reference to them in sent letters. In this regard, Joan Niemeyer responds to the comment above as follows:

I think you might send me the letters you write instead of filing them. I could never have detected one unchoice phrase among your pages of artistic prose & the flaw would have been known only in your own little soul¹⁶

The function of explicit references to unsent letters in the structure of epistolary relationships is an interesting avenue for further investigation. The paradox here is that, by referring to unsent letters in sent letters, they are in effect 'sent' and reciprocity, exchange and communication concerning them follows, as with Joan Niemeyer's response above.

In my next example, Alice Greene had decided not to send a letter to Betty Molteno due to its content; however, Greene then proceeds to summarise its content in a letter which she did send. In the extract below, the act of writing and not sending one letter has influenced what is written in a subsequent sent letter, considerably complicating Decker's (1998 p.21) assertion that the acts of reading and writing letters are inextricably linked:

*My Beloved,
I wrote you along letter of three sheets last night, but I don't think I will send it. It was all based on the idea that I simply cannot be separated from you any longer & as to whether I could come round in the boat next week if the railway is still not clear... you can understand how deeply exciting your letters are to me how terribly I feel our being as far apart, & how difficult for me to settle to anything*

¹⁶ WCL, Findlay Family Papers, A1199, JN to GF, 18 July 1919.

*here. All this you know without any word from me, so letters of that kind are no use to send*¹⁷

However, this is not an invariant rule, and on one level a clear exception is found in a series of letters which were written by Betty Molteno to Alice Greene after Greene's death in January 1920. As such, these letters were unsent in the conventional sense of the word and written without the possibility of the conventional meaning of reciprocity. They do, however, persist for some months and they clearly signal 'epistolary intent', and have an "epistolary or letter form [which] can be easily recognized" (Stanley 2004 p.207). In this example, the address, part of which is illegible, is provided at the top of the page:

High View [illegible]

*Wednesday Feb 24/20*¹⁸

O, Lovely Love. Today it is 4 weeks since you went into the Beyond.

This is the hour at which you went. For days I've not written to you... and now the past few days threaten to become hazy.

*I wrote to you last on Thursday Feb 19. Friday is almost a blank but I think I went in the afternoon to... had a wonderful time with Mrs Saunders... And now Saturday afternoon comes back to me... in bed on Sunday. On Monday came one of those marvellous days... I ate oranges... where you so often sat... Two dreams of you, Beloved*¹⁹
(original emphasis)

In relation to the dialogical nature of letters, Stanley (2004 p.202) notes that letters in an exchange "are not one person writing... about their life, but a communication or exchange between one person and another or others." Whilst Molteno's 'dead' letters to Greene show epistolary intent, they are not part of an exchange in the ordinary or material sense, but nonetheless they are a communication to Greene. Molteno believed in spiritualism and after Greene's death she attended séances in London (see various Olive Schreiner letters to Fan Schreiner in UCT

¹⁷ UCT, Molteno Collection, BC330, AG to BM, 13 January 1914.

¹⁸ Incorrectly dated. Correct date is Wednesday 25 February 1920.

¹⁹ UCT, Molteno Collection, BC330, BM to AG, 24 February 1920.

collection BC16). While the purpose of these letters was known only to their writer, they certainly demonstrate ongoing desire to communicate with the deceased.

Molteno's chronological recounting of daily events since she 'last wrote' in the above extract might suggest that, without the possibility of reciprocity, these 'letters' are actually a form of diary. There is, however, the explicit signalling of 'epistolary intent' in comments such as 'written to you' and Molteno is intentionally writing a *letter* and writing it *to Greene*. I am aware that diaries are often similar in having a real or unreal, named or unnamed, addressee. However, these letters are dialogical by constituting a communication, although not a usual kind of exchange, between one person and another, and they are strongly perspectival in that they are written to a specific addressee. It is only when removing these letters from their particular context that they seem problematic because the pattern of exchange and the link between writing and reading is broken. I would however agree with Jolly & Stanley (2005 p.77) that the 'truth' of this writing is to be explored in *the relationship that existed* between Greene and Molteno (or that Molteno perceived still to exist) and these letters are not simply Molteno writing about her own life.

Arrogation: An Epistolary Example

The concept of 'arrogation' in relation to social networks occurred to me around various archival materials located in the Smuts papers in the NAD. The idea of arrogation and arrogating needs to be differentiated from brokering.

Firstly, brokerage involves the actions of a broker who is strategically positioned and occupies a pathway, whether directly or indirectly, between two currently unconnected people. Secondly, a broker may seek to benefit from the act of brokering. Thirdly, a broker can positively or negatively affect the information that passes through their hands. Fourthly, brokering can influence the broker's reputation. Finally, brokering is ordinarily desirable to, or actively sought by, a third party to allow their progression into a certain social network (Bruggeman 2008 p.68). 'Arrogation' differs conceptually from 'brokering' in a number of ways. Although still involving the brokering of a connection between two other people, arrogating may occur by supplying information from or about one of them, or making some other form of connection or communication between the people concerned, without the prior cognisance or consent of the people concerned. In short, broker 'B' creates a

connection or supplies information between ‘A’ and ‘C’ without ‘A’s consent or knowledge, creating a connection potentially undesirable to and certainly unsought by ‘A’. Resultantly, the chances of an arrogater benefiting from this act are more precarious due to the potential for a negative response from ‘A’. However, if the social status of people is unequal along this pathway, and ‘C’ holds more power, influence or status than ‘A’, then theoretically an arrogater may strategically benefit from gaining a positive advantage with ‘C’ at the expense of their relations with ‘A’. Alternatively, an arrogater may act without prior consent in the belief that the establishment of a connection between ‘A’ and ‘C’ may benefit ‘A’ or ‘C’ or be mutually beneficial. Arrogation is based on the connection of disparate people along a pathway, but may also involve a network with which the arrogater has no or only weak ties. As with brokerage, arrogaters may affect the information they pass between two people and the outcome of arrogating activity may influence the reputation of the arrogater, as the example below will demonstrate.

Welfare campaigner Emily Hobhouse was a frequent correspondent of Jan Smuts who, during the South African War (1899-1902), was a Boer General. In 1904 he was “filled with the bitterness of defeat” and had returned to his legal practice in Pretoria (De Kock & Kruger 1972 p.741). However,

Before long [Smuts] was again immersed in politics. It was Milner’s education and language policy and his importation of Chinese labour for the mines that roused the Boer leaders in the Transvaal to organised opposition. They refused Milner’s invitation to join the impotent legislative council and in January 1905 launched the political party Het Volk (De Kock & Kruger 1972 p.741).

On 15 March 1904, Emily Hobhouse wrote to the Editor of *The Times* as follows;

Sir, - I have just received the following letter [dated February 21st 1904] from Advocate J.C Smuts, of Pretoria, late general. As it sets forth more fully than has yet been known in England the views and feelings of the Boer, and, as I well know, a large section of the English South African population, I think it would afford an interesting addition to the present controversy on Chinese labour.

*The letter was not written with any view to publication but I am convinced Mr Smuts will not object to my giving others the opportunity of reading it*²⁰

In fact, Smuts did object very strongly to Hobhouse publishing this letter. Sarah Gertrude Millin's (1936 p.xi) biography of Smuts revised by him "as to its facts, but not its opinions", discusses this incident. It may or may not have enhanced his reputation with some segments of the readership of *The Times*, but Smuts' reputation amongst his political rivals, peers and contemporaries was damaged. Millin (1936 p.192) describes how Smuts, "resent[ful] at having to face another colour problem... abandoned himself completely to paper" in a letter that was "very immature... for a statesman" (p.195) being "unconsidered, unbalanced, exaggerated, for all the world to read, resent and smile at." This example among other things demonstrates that letters are "best understood through the social and literary codes of relationship" (Jolly & Stanley 2005 p.75, 77) and that the acceptability of a letter as a performance will differ greatly according to audience.

From her letter to the Editor, it is reasonable to suggest that Hobhouse perceived mutual benefit from this connection, for the British public through acquisition of information, and for Smuts (and potentially the South African nation) through British recognition, sympathy and support. It is also possible that Hobhouse may have sought to gain influence herself through publicising her association with such a high profile South African political figure. A later letter from Hobhouse to Smuts dated 11 April 1904 is, on a surface level at least, an apology for her transgression of epistolary trust - but it also indicates that Hobhouse felt she had strategically gained from forcing Smuts to 'cross the Rubicon' with this advancing of a political cause they both supported:

Your...[letter] of March 19 has come – and I am deeply sorry if I have vexed or injured you by that publication of your letter – and yet I can't feel sorry that it is published, for continually I am thanked for it and everyone seems to think I did right in doing so, and that the letter has done good. I was of course careful to cut out remarks about Milner but

²⁰ NAD, Smuts Collection, A1, EH to Editor, 15 March 1904.

*will never act in this wise again without first cabling to make sure –... I trust no real harm is done & if it has made you cross the Rubicon so much the better I think... Please forgive me... I shall never forgive myself if I have done you or your position any real injury.*²¹

What I draw from these examples is that arrogating, as with brokering, can have positive or negative repercussions both for the arrogater and for the members of disparate networks between whom connections are formed as a result of arrogating action. However, with acts of arrogating the arrogater must assume responsibility for outcomes within social networks, whereas, due to the mutual and reciprocal nature of brokering connections, responsibility in brokering to a certain extent ends with the formation or attempted formation of a connection. These initial research examples also indicate a stronger correlation between arrogating and being perceived as ‘an arrogater’ than that which exists between brokerage and being ‘a broker’, although this requires further investigation.

Reconstructing the ‘Truth’ Of Letters

Hobhouse’s two letters above show how a broker can affect the information they pass on. Her letter to the Editor of *The Times* is in typescript and appears at the start of the first of two pages. Transcribed immediately below it, also in typescript, is the ‘originating’ letter from Smuts to Hobhouse, dated 21 February 1904. There are handwritten corrections in the margin of the Smuts typescript, which are presumably Hobhouse’s corrections to her transcription of the original. Hobhouse’s comment to the Editor that she has “just received the following letter” together with her handwritten corrections might be taken to mean that Smuts letter had been copied faithfully. However, as stated above, Hobhouse wrote to Smuts that she had been “careful to cut out remarks about Milner” that would in her view impact negatively on Smuts. It was therefore *not* a faithful copy. Additionally, a letter from Hobhouse to Smuts, dated 15 March 1904, *the same day* she sent his letter to *The Times*, highlights the strategic nature of Hobhouse’s concerns, and also the potential of letters to have agentic effects in their own right (Prior 2008):

²¹ NAD, Smuts Collection, A1, EH to JCS, 11 April 1904.

I was very glad to get your most interesting letter dated Feb 21 by last mail. I read it to several people who were profoundly touched by it – and great pressure was put upon me to publish it – in view of the present controversy on Chinese labour & people’s excited feelings about it... I have had some qualms lest you should disapprove but after consultation with legal & sympathetic minds we decided that with a few eliminated sentences, it could do you no harm, and the moment is so crucial... that immense good might be done.

Forgive me if I have erred, but if so it was done for the helping on of the cause you have at heart... I sent the original... to Lord Spencer²²

Spencer replied to Hobhouse the same day thanking her for Smuts’ letter, which he returned commenting that “[i]t has my warm sympathy”²³. A letter dated 17 March 1904 from an Emily Morgan thanking Hobhouse for “publishing Mr Smuts’s letter”²⁴ is also present in the Smuts collection. The presence of these letters addressed to Hobhouse, in the Smuts collection implies that Hobhouse later sent them to Smuts to show that, from her perspective, outcomes had been positive. Hobhouse’s later comments that she “can’t feel sorry that it is published” considered against her “qualms” surrounding the breaking of her epistolary trust with Smuts, the “eliminated sentences” and the fact that she chose to publish on the same day as receiving Smuts’ letters without waiting for his consent, indicate that she had considered the potentially negative outcomes but these were, in her view, outweighed.

Whilst these activities may not have diminished Hobhouse’s long-term reputation as a broker and/or arrogater connected to various networks, it certainly diminished her role as a confidant and correspondent with Jan Smuts and his wife Isie. In a letter to Isie Smuts dated one month after her ‘apology’ to Smuts, Hobhouse commented that Isie Smuts had written in her previous letter to her that she:

²² NAD, Smuts Collection, A1, EH to JCS, 15 March 1904.

²³ NAD, Smuts Collection, A1, Lord Spencer to EH, 15 March 1904.

²⁴ NAD, Smuts Collection, A1, Emily Morgan to EH, 17 March 1904.

*can only write about babies and domestic details and not about the “greater subjects” that fill the correspondence that passes between yr husband & myself*²⁵

The same letter also refers to the distress Hobhouse had caused Smuts and asked Isie to assist her to “*make my peace*” with him. On 27 April 1904, Hobhouse then wrote in a conciliatory way to Jan Smuts,

*I have sent you a great many papers and cuttings etc, and I hope you have had them all and my various letters. I have not missed a mail for 2 months at least. Don't go and stop writing ^to me^ as I'm no longer to be trusted*²⁶

Clearly letters can have unintended as well as intended outcomes for people in a network. Hobhouse's plea that Smuts should not stop writing letters to her indicates that her actions *had* affected the structural and dialogical properties of their epistolary correspondence, as well as also having effects outside of the letters. Given that writing and reading letters are linked activities, and that the epistolary network which included Smuts and Hobhouse had multiple interconnections, changes in individual correspondences can in turn affect the wider structure and flow of information within the network. In terms of Prior's (2008) argument that documents can have agentic force within networks, then, Hobhouse sending this letter to *The Times* is a powerful example.

Letters, Genre and the Hobhouse Memoir

The above incident is also referred to in a chapter of Emily Hobhouse's variously referred to 'autobiography', or 'memoirs', or edited collection of assembled 'letters'. Cosslett et al (2000) examine “whether autobiography is a genre [and] if so what it consists of, and whether it is the product of an internal urge or of external forms and pressures.” At the request of her friend Isabella or Tibbie Steyn, wife of ex-President Steyn of the Orange Free State, during the last years of her life

²⁵ NAD, Smuts Collection, A1, EH to Isie Smuts, 15 April 1904.

²⁶ NAD, Smuts Collection, A1, EH to JCS, 27 April 1904.

Hobhouse wrote “a little memoir of [her] connection with South Africa” (Van Reenan 1984 p.1). In this, Hobhouse comments that she

draws rather largely... upon my old letters because rereading them I see that they constitute a running comment upon my comings and goings – almost a journal. A real journal I could never attain to... it has seemed a necessity in my case to have the human factor – I could only write as if to someone...

The letters faithfully depict feelings that then existed, exaggerated and vehement as they now seem. A generation has passed and Time has done... the wonders it always does do...

There are odd holes in memory... I have frequently paused, struck by the peculiarities of memory... for the sake of exactness, I have written little beyond what is verified in these contemporary letters. They too, may err, but at least they record impressions and opinions accepted and acted upon at the moment... (Van Reenan 1984 p.7-9²⁷)

As with Stanley’s (2006b) questioning of what the appropriate genre terms are for describing David Hume’s complexly organised and written *My Own Life*, Hobhouse’s memoir challenges existing concepts of ‘autobiography’ and ‘letters’ in a number of ways. Blanchard (1982 p.98), citing Lejeune (1975), states that autobiography “is in all cases a narrative in retrospect made by a real person about her past”. However, Hobhouse’s extensive, indeed pervasive, use of letters, which were written ‘at the time’ but retrospectively selected, edited and stitched together, considerably complicates this idea. Indeed the retrospective structure and the scope for ‘editorial shaping’ of the memoir would, using Carter’s (2006 p.51-2) approach, align her activity more closely with autobiography than with letters. Using her letters as a source of factual information facilitated Hobhouse’s ability to ‘reconstruct’ events using the dates of letters, with the events related in them serving as anchors for further recall. The relationship between Hobhouse’s memoir, memory and her letters has been examined by Stanley (2005). Whilst my discussion relates primarily to issues of genre and ‘letterness’, this work informs discussion below, including by

²⁷ The original of this document is now missing from the FSAD, Steyn Collection.

providing information which was not uncovered during the very brief time I had to work on Hobhouse's manuscript.

For Blanchard (1982, p.101), "[t]he past is not searched out, It is rather, carefully selected." Occupying a borderline between fact and fiction, the personal and the social, the everyday and the literary, autobiographies, letters and diaries are influenced by the "biographies of others", and knowledge is not objectively 'there' but produced by subjects situated in particular social relations and historical discourses (Cosslett et al 2000 p.2; see also Hill 1993, Bruggeman 2008). Hobhouse's memories, her reconstruction of history and her representation of the 'truth', are shaped not only by what she wrote 'at the time', but also by which letters were and were not available, what she selected and deselected from them, how she edited them, how she understood them when rereading them some twenty years later, and what she was using them for. The result is that Hobhouse's manuscript is neither a letter, nor letters within a far bigger overall letter to Mrs Steyn, nor an auto/biography, nor is it a diary despite her assertion that her letters constitute 'almost a journal'. It is *all* of these, a hybridic fusion of the always 'messy' life-writing genres inscribing the complexities of memory, time and genre.

Hobhouse's memoirs are explicitly addressed to Mrs Steyn, giving a perhaps rather illusory "clear sense of audience" (Bunkers 1987 p.8). Hobhouse's need for the 'human factor' when writing was addressed by writing as though to Mrs Steyn. Indeed, the memoir is peppered with the phrase 'dear Mrs Steyn',²⁸ which if removed would change the nature of the text from an address to Mrs Steyn to a more conventional autobiographical narrative. In some instances, however, Hobhouse writes in a way that addresses Steyn in a more detailed fashion by drawing upon contextual knowledge that would be unavailable to a wider readership:

*Your own Father, dear Mrs Steyn, wrote me the following from Philippolis. You know how careful and accurate he was.*²⁹

Emily Hobhouse's 'letters' to Mrs Steyn in the memoir both comply with and deviate from Stanley's four characteristics of epistolarity. Firstly, had Hobhouse actually sent these letters to Mrs Steyn on an ongoing basis during the writing of the

²⁸ FSAD, Steyn Collection, A156/3/12 Folder XIV p.6, 7, 8, 9 amongst many others.

²⁹ FSAD, Steyn Collection, A156/3/12, Folder XIV p.9.

memoir, then the epistolary features of reciprocity and exchange would clearly be applicable, and Mrs Steyn could have responded and subsequently influenced Hobhouse's future writing. However, writing them as a narrative in the form of a letter to Steyn which was not and was never meant to be sent, means that these are in a sense letters minus aspects of the genre such as reciprocity and exchange. Stanley cites a note attached to a draft of the memoir, not discovered during fieldwork, that states:

These chapters... are only a first writing... they must not be published. They are 'Letters to Mrs Steyn' and as such should be sent to her but asking her to regard them as private & at her death leave them to the Archives in Bloemfontein³⁰ (original emphasis)

Overall, these 'letters' were a means to an end in using Mrs Steyn as an implicit audience to facilitate Hobhouse's writing and support her 'writing self', not as a means of eliciting a direct response from Steyn. Ontologically and epistemologically, Hobhouse's memoir occupies a shifting position on the boundaries of the personal and impersonal as well as in genre terms and, beyond the addresses to Mrs Steyn, it is unclear who the imagined or intended readers are. Hobhouse's 'writing I' is in a direct sense addressed to a singular 'reading I' in the person of Mrs Steyn and conforms to many of the contemporaneous (public) social and structural conventions of private letter-writing. What cannot be known is how Hobhouse would have 'translated' the private writing 'voice' of the draft memoir into a public one for publication and who or what this particular public was.

Hobhouse acknowledged that time, from the perspective of her 1899-1902 letters and subsequent experiences, had changed her perceptions and judgements on people, events and situations. In other words, rereading her letters and her 'at the time' thoughts in a non-linear way, *out of time*, placed pressure upon a "unified and stable subjectivity" (Cosslett et al 2000 p.8). As Blanchard (1982 p.109) suggests, here "[t]he time of the subject writing and rereading himself has become an integral part of the memory's production." Despite her attempt to "faithfully depict feelings that then existed", Hobhouse recognises that letters are not 'fact' providing

³⁰ FSAD, Steyn Collection, A156/ 3/12 cited in Stanley 2005 p.80

“transparent access to history”, but are interpretative accounts of events, perceived differently by different people and over time (Bruggeman 2008, Decker 1998 p.9).

All the above examples use a recognisable letter structure and form, and also play with letter-writing conventions. Despite the highly malleable features of the letter genre, the examples I have provided are referential of, and influenced by, the relationship (encompassing the negotiated epistolary relationship and physical relationship) that existed between writer and addressee and draw upon contextual knowledge. In terms of authorial embodiment within letters, various of my examples show that letters can be used not only to convey the physical experiences and sensations of the writer *at the time*, but also to represent physical aspects of a relationship which the correspondents wish to convey to each other. In this way, physical ‘truths’ of a relationship are also expressed in the writing and in the association of the writer and their body with the material document, something which may endure over time and even after death.

In acts of brokering and arrogating, the negotiation of relationships is more complex. Those brokering must negotiate between the relationships they hold with two disparate individuals from differing contexts, to successfully establish a connection. As such, ‘brokers’ may use or edit information strategically to achieve their objective which affects the ‘truth’ of both letters and of relationships. However, as the examples discussed have demonstrated, not all people brokering relationships are enduringly perceived as brokers within networks, and I provided a different example to show that brokering can occur due to external pressure without any intention on the part of the ‘broker’ to gain strategically from either acting as such or from the connection that is established. Also, due to the level of interconnections between members of social and epistolary networks, the outcomes of connections made between individuals and/or networks, whether positive or negative, can impact upon the structure and organisation of networks and the flow of information within those networks. In addition, even where letters are unsent, their very existence, and explicit reference to their existence as well as content in sent letters, can influence both future reciprocal exchanges and the epistolary output of the writer.

Conclusion: Re-Theorising ‘Letterness’

In concluding, I want to start by briefly drawing together the main points raised about ‘letterness’ through the examples I have discussed and explore how they push at the boundaries of ‘the letter’ as represented in definitional accounts. As I have summarised my main analytical and argumentative points throughout the paper, there is no need to rehearse these at length here. Rather, these points will be used to re-examine the very first example of ‘letterness’ encountered during my fieldwork, namely the letter from Queen Wilhelmina of Holland to Queen Victoria referred to in my Introduction and found, not in a formal archive, but in ‘the Archive’ in its wider sense, in the Kruger Museum displays.

Detailed discussion of the examples presented has shown that form and structure alone can signify a letter in the absence of other definitional features of ‘the letter’. In this way, ‘letterness’, similar to Altman’s (1982 p.4) definition of ‘epistolarity’, is simply “the use of a letter’s formal properties to create meaning.” However unconventional the meaning or purpose of a ‘letter’, and whether or not it is sent or read, intentionally or otherwise, by anyone other than the writer, the use of recognisable formal letter structure means it has ‘letterness’ qualities and is in a fundamental sense to be seen as a letter. In this way, reciprocity is not necessarily a defining characteristic of ‘letters’ or of a correspondence. Even in the absence of reciprocity in the conventional sense of epistolary *exchange*, Stanley’s (2004 p.209) definition that a “correspondence is an exchange persisting over time” is still applicable if the method of exchange is considered and applied in a more perspectival, relational and contextual sense against who is writing “over time” and why. Unreciprocated correspondences fall within the margins of ‘letterness’, not least because a strong ‘epistolary intent’ still persists applying recognisable form and structure. Moreover, letters do not rely on literal or figurative distance between writer and reader. Even letters which push conventions of form and structure to their margins remain letters through their evident epistolary intent, irrespective of the relative distance between writer and reader.

The concept of ‘arrogation’ I have devised can be usefully applied in analysing epistolary networks. Arrogating differs conceptually from brokering in terms of the absence of mutuality. Epistolary examples provided above have indicated that arrogation can affect not just the relationships between the ‘arrogater’ and the

network members they are connecting, but also have repercussions upon the structural properties of the wider epistolary network. This has strong links to Prior's (2004, 2008) comments about the agentic properties of documents.

Also, in support of the approach developed in recent epistolary theory more generally, the consideration of 'letterness', rather than utilising narrow definitions of 'the letter', is clearly of great analytical utility when working with epistolary material. Placing actual example 'under analytical scrutiny' has indeed highlighted the extent to which 'ordinary letters', not just the extraordinary, push at conventional definitional boundaries of 'the letter'.

In the Introduction I referred to an interesting example of 'letterness', in the form of a letter written by Queen Wilhelmina of Holland to her aunt Queen Victoria, which I encountered in the Kruger Museum, Pretoria:

September 8 1899

My dear Aunt,

The serious news from South Africa that reached me these last days causes me great unhappiness as they seem to indicate that a war is very near to break out.

I hope, dear Aunt you will understand the feelings which prompted me to write this letter and therefore consider its contents in a friendly way.

I remain, dearest Aunt and Sister with respectful love

Your Majesty's

very affectionate niece and sister

Wilhelmina³¹

This covering letter was originally attached to an official communication sent as from one Head of State to another. This official letter was not displayed at the Museum, although a copy of this was. The influence of the complexities of the relationship between writer and addressee upon what is written and how is, however, apparent in this covering letter. Wilhelmina was Victoria's niece and her letter is explicitly 'respectful' of this. However, they are also equals or 'Sister[s]' in queenly

³¹ Kruger House Museum, Pretoria, Queen Wilhelmina to Queen Victoria, 8 September 1899. See also Appendix 2 for a photograph of the letter.

status. Despite her ‘respect’ and apparent deference, Wilhelmina’s letter constitutes a deliberate and considered interjection into British and Boer political relations which Holland maintained over a period of years. As discussed above in relation to brokering, Wilhelmina has written a letter that is perspectival and relational, not only regarding her and her country’s relationship with South Africa, particularly Kruger, and concerning her own political and racial views, but also regarding her relationship with her aunt, and her relationship with another country’s Head of State. The very writing of a covering letter to accompany the official communication implies that certain referential aspects of Wilhelmina and Victoria’s relationship are not satisfactorily conveyed in the context of the formal communication, perhaps suggesting that there are perceptively ‘real letters’ which differ from highly formal public ones.

This covering letter blurs the boundaries of the personal and the political, the private and the public, and was it was attached to and corresponds to, a highly public letter. It is, however, still a letter in its own right, is displayed as such at the Museum, and signifies through its form, structure and epistolary intent that it is such. Whilst no direct reciprocity is implied, Wilhelmina’s covering letter takes its place in a structural system of exchange, and it is important to note that both the covering and the formal letters will have had agentic force in their own right. This example very effectively demonstrates the complexities of truth, context and relationship in working with epistolary material and the complexities of epistolary networks. The very first letter I came across in South Africa, it demonstrates that any letter, however ordinary or extraordinary the writer, addressee, subject or content, can problematise definitional approaches to ‘the letter’. Better, then, to work with ‘letterness’, which promotes an analytic focus on some more fundamental aspects of epistolarity.

Finally, I wish to demonstrate how the main points from this research can be theoretically applied to problematise any letter, however ordinary. The following letter, dated simply ‘Wednesday’, is from Alice Greene to Miss Goodlatte, a friend and colleague at the Girls Collegiate School in Port Elizabeth run by Betty Molteno. The address and other contextual and background information suggest it was written to Miss Goodlatte whilst she and Alice Greene were both in residence at the School and therefore not literally, although perhaps figuratively, distant:

Collegiate School

Wednesday

My Dear Miss Goodlatte,

I asked you the other day to look upon me as your friend. I do not unsay it. But it is just that very offer of friendship which obliges me to be frank with you now... Surely you must know that any blow levelled at Miss Molteno wounds me also? And you have wounded me most deeply by the note you have written to her. Perhaps you did not mean it as an insult, & if so I beg your pardon for writing this, but I could not help reading it as one. You assume that she wants your work, even at the risk of making you ill. It seemed the more unjust and unkind, as she has been most concerned about your illness, & was only last night making arrangements with all of us to take out-of-door duty off you for the rest of the quarter...I have felt obliged to write this, or I should have felt as if I were acting a double part. Unless you realise in some measure what my friendship for Miss Molteno means I am afraid you cannot understand me at all. You need not reply to this unless you like. I only wanted you to know what I was feeling.³²

This letter, involving two women living together in an institutional context and experiencing issues about this, certainly has explicit epistolary intent and an immediately recognisable letter form and structure. It is referential of ‘real world’ events and contexts; and the date, context and content all imply that writer and addressee reside in the same building. In view of their actual co-presence, the use of an address and date demonstrate the influence of convention upon form, possibly due to a felt need for formality. The letter does not therefore rely on absence, but on some other need or obligation on the part of the writer and relates and refers to the relationship Greene had with both parties. There is also explicit reference to the fact that reciprocity is neither required nor expected. The concept of arrogation is also relevant here, as Greene writes to Goodlatte, with or without Molteno’s knowledge or permission, regarding a situation that has arisen between them and supplies information about Molteno’s actions and thoughts to Goodlatte. The agentic force of letters with epistolary and social networks is also evident, as this letter was prompted by a note written from Goodlatte to Molteno which was then shared with Greene.

³² UCT, Molteno Collection BC330, AG to Miss Goodlatte, ‘Wednesday’.

This working paper has, through the use of such ordinary yet powerful examples, raised some key points in the re-theorisation of ‘letterness’ and demonstrated how these may be applied and used to problematise *any* letter.

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Appendix 1

Below is a list of all letter examples used, in the order they appear in the paper according to their footnote reference, and a guide to any initials or abbreviations used in footnotes. Digital photography was not permitted in the National Library of South Africa (NLSA), therefore faithful but selectively edited transcriptions are provided in the main text.

| Footnote | Archive | Collection | Sender/Recipient | Date |
|----------|----------|-----------------------------|--|------------------|
| 3 | FSAD | Steyn A156 | Emily Hobhouse (EH) to Barbara Bradby, Dorothy Bradby & Leonard Hobhouse | 4 October 1903 |
| 4 | NLSA | John X Merriman (JXM) MSC15 | W.T. Stead to JXM | 8 October 1902 |
| 5 | | | Leonard Courtney to JXM | 15 October 1902 |
| 6 | | | C.A.V. Conybeare to JXM | 13 October 1902 |
| 7 | | | Jan Hofmeyer to JXM | 8 December 1902 |
| 8 | | | Captain Vane to JXM | 5 December 1902 |
| 9 | | | JXM to Captain Vane | 7 December 1902 |
| 10 | FSAD | Steyn A156 | W.J.C Brebner to Mrs Steyn | 11 January 1903 |
| 11 | | | EH to Mrs Steyn | 1 February 1925 |
| 12 | NAD | Smuts A1 | JXM to Fischer | 20 February 1906 |
| 13 | UCT | Molteno BC330 | EH to Alice Green(AG) | 20 May 1914 |
| 14 | WCL | Findlay Family A1199 | Beryl to George Findlay (GF) | 11 March 1919 |
| 15 | | | Zoe Findlay to Hudson Findlay | 5 February 1904 |
| 16 | | | As above | 9 February 1904 |
| 17 | | | GF to Joan Niemeyer (JN) | 16 July 1919 |
| 18 | | | JN to GF | 18 July 1919 |
| 19 | | | UCT | Molteno BC330 |
| 21 | BM to AG | 24 February 1920 | | |
| 22 | NAD | Smuts A1 | EH to Editor, <u>The Times</u> | 15 March 1904 |
| 23 | | | EH to J.C. Smuts (JCS) | 11 April 1904 |

| | | | | |
|----|------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| 24 | | | EH to JCS | 15 March 1904 |
| 25 | | | Lord Spencer to EH | 15 March 1904 |
| 26 | | | Emily Morgan to EH | 17 March 1904 |
| 27 | | | EH to Isie Smuts | 15 April 1904 |
| 28 | | | EH to JCS | 27 April 1904 |
| 30 | FSAD | Steyn A156 | EH Memoir (Folder XIV) | Various pages |
| 31 | | | | Page.9 |
| 33 | | Kruger Museum,
Pretoria | Queen Wilhelmina to Queen
Victoria | 8 September 1899 |
| 34 | UCT | Molteno Collection
BC330 | AG to Miss Goodlatte | 'Wednesday' |

Appendix 2

Rosefontein,
October 4, 1903.

Dear Barbara, Dorothy, and Leonard,
"Forgive a triple letter, also a stupid one this week, written to Aunt Mary from Kroonstad and Ventersburg, but the truth is I am too worn out and too pre-occupied to write home as much as I did.

"I thank (1) and (2) for their letters; (3) never writes, so I can economise gratitude.

"I am so sorry (1) has had such a bother editing my badly written hasty letters for the papers. I hoped she improved grammar and style. I confess to being a little curious to know what has been printed. Keep the papers for me, please. I do hope (1) and her half will get their week's holiday at Brugs; it sounds delightful. How horribly wet your summer has sounded. To-day all the Orange River Colony is on its knees praying for rain and keeping a day of humiliation.

"(2) sounds very below par from her letters and I fear her wrist is not in better writing condition. She will like to know that the bale of clothes that came to Ventersburg's share was greatly admired and appreciated, and really went to the right people. I mean to those who are the best people, but have not money now to buy a yard of material. For instance, clad in one of your scarlet blouses, and nice clothes had gone to Mrs Louis Wessels (sister of Ellis Cronje) and so forth. These English clothes were considered superior to any other cases sent, which is a feather in the cap of (1) and (2)'s sister. Many thanks also for information about donations, etc. England is stupid and stingy. My one little letter to the South African News brought me £5000 without further effort, and heaps of help in clothes, animals, foodstuffs, etc. etc. In fact I have now choked them off a little because if the drought continues everything will be much worse next year and we want economic charitable feelings, and make Government do its part. Government has now done it on paper and I am leaving instructions with the entire Dutch Reformed Ministry how to act in getting these regulations solidified into actions. Thus I can leave, confident that if they fight in the way I tell them things will be better and no one suffer so much. I have arranged the ploughing in the worst districts and provided oxen, ploughs, yokes and seeds. So we sit and watch the skies. If rain falls all will go well, if not next year will be terrible indeed and all hands must to the rescue.

"For all these reasons I regret Mr Richardson's hasty journey; it would have been better had he held back to learn the issue of the harvest and learn Dutch (without which he is useless) in the interim. Moreover he is not a good man to send. He and Mr A. created gentle amusement from Pretoria to Cape Town in their last trip. They kept to the railway, believed officials implicitly, and the Boer folk they saw in towns thought they were 'intelligence' spies and talked to them accordingly!! But it was too late to stop him, he lands on Tuesday and will be here in a few days. Moreover it will cost him hundreds and hundreds of pounds to go where I have been, for no one but myself could or would at this trying period have been taken about as I have been. But when he comes Arthur Fichardt and I mean to talk to him together for his good and put him into stays.

"I feel as if I had lived through ten years, the work and experience have been tremendous. I like best meeting the Bar-roads - the very pith and backbone of the country - fine men who get up and sing the Old Hundred ever me, and make wonderful and elegant Dutch speeches, and nod their heads in grave acquiescence when I discourse to them about ploughs and teams.

"(3) may like to know that I hope to leave Cape Town on November 4 by East coast reaching England about Christmas and cutting the Bay by landing at Naples. This will give me time

for my last trek in the south-west Orange River Colony and some promised visits in the Colony, Paarl and Stellenbosch, and then I have to be 'received' and 'addressed' in Cape Town which will be the finale.

So (1) and (2) need not write again. It is unnecessary to tell (3) not to do so."

Yours,
E. HOBHOUSE.

Appendix 3

St. Ivo.

September 3 1899

My dear Aunt,

The serious news from South Africa that reached me these last days causes me great unhappiness as they seem to indicate that a war is very near to break out.

I hope, dear Aunt you will understand the feelings which prompted me to write this letter and therefore consider its contents in a friendly way. I remain, dearest Aunt and Sister with respectful love
Your Majesty's
very affectionate niece and sister

Wilhelmina