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**Letters and Networks:**

**Analysing Olive Schreiner's Epistolary Networks.**

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## Abstract

This thesis analyses letters and other archival material associated with Olive Schreiner (1855-1920) and her network(s) to conceptualise and theorise aspects of 'letterness' and networks. Its premise is that such qualitative micro-level analysis of letters and other historical documents can contribute effectively to contemporary thinking about both epistolarity and social networks and their analysis. Using the existing literatures on Schreiner, epistolarity and social network analysis as a starting point, the analysis of letters and other relevant archival material is used to inform the setting of analytical boundaries. Then five examples of Schreiner-related networks – the Lytton to Carpenter letters, the Great War letters to Aletta Jacobs, letters of the Men and Women's Club, women's letters to Jan Smuts, and letters in the Schreiner-Hemming family collection - are analysed to demonstrate the validity of the premise and to contribute in an innovative and in-depth way to conceptual and theoretical ideas in the field. In doing so, the thesis offers an in-depth analysis of letters and networks in a variety of historical social contexts, identifying key features within each network and exploring whether these are case-specific or generalizable in theoretical terms.

This thesis argues that many existing concepts such as those of reciprocity, brokering, bridging, gatekeeping and dyads can be teased out in an analytically helpful way by using letters to reveal the variations and nuances of these concepts in micro-levels interactions. It also considers network size, arguing that existing assessments of this based on frequency of contact, emotional intensity and time since last contact are not in fact particularly important in relation to the analysis of these networks and their epistolary communications. Rather, it is what happens in networks and the letters associated with them, with network members using and deploying their letter-writing in strategic and instrumentally ways. The key arguments made by the thesis concerning letters and networks are: that the size of a network is important but not deterministic; that the balance of reciprocity in letter exchanges and correspondence is highly complex, with this emergent through letter-exchanges, letter content and also enclosures of different kinds; that the purpose of a network and the existence of central figures within it creates propulsions and constraints; that brokering is neither necessarily positive nor always proactive action; that the complex nature of interpersonal ties and how these change over time affects both letters and networks; that letters and their writers can be future-orientated rather than retrospectively focused; and, that this orientation towards the future can influence decisions concerning the retention and archiving of letters - a fundamental issue in epistolary research - and subsequently what can be gleaned from them concerning networks.

**Declaration:**

I, the undersigned, confirm that the following thesis is my own work and of my own composition and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or qualification.

.....  
Sarah Poustie

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CLRU	Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa.
CRO	Carlisle Record Office, UK.
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council.
FSAD	Free State Archives Depot, Bloemfontein, South Africa.
H&VdP	Hancock and Van der Poel
IIAV	Aletta: Internationaal Informatiecentrum en Archief Voor de Vrouwenbeweging, Amsterdam.
IWSA	International Women's Suffrage Association (IWSA).
M&WC	Men and Women's Club
NAR	National Archives Repository, Pretoria, South Africa.
NELM	National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown, South Africa.
NLS	National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, UK.
NLSA	National Library of South Africa, Cape Town.
NUWSS	National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.
OSLO	Olive Scheiner Letters Online.
OSLP	Olive Schreiner Letters Project.
SA	Sheffield Archives, UK.
SNA	Social Network Analysis.
UCL	University College London Special Collections.
UCT	University of Cape Town, Manuscripts and Archives.
UESC	University of Edinburgh Special Collections, UK.
WCL	William Cullen Library, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union.
VVVK	Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht.
ZAR	South African Republic

## LETTERWRITERS AND ADDRESSEES (continues overleaf)

AB	Arthur Brown
ABG	Arthur Bevington Gillett
AC	Alice Clark
AE	Annie Eastty
AF	Abraham Fischer
AH	Alice Hemming (nee Schreiner)
AJ	Aletta Jacobs
BB	Barbara Brown
BM	Betty Molteno
CL	Constance Lytton
DB	Di Brown
DVM	Dorothy Von Moltke
EB	Effie (Ethelwyn) Brown (nee Schreiner)
EC	Edward Carpenter
EH	Emily Hobhouse
EM	Eleanor Marx (Aveling)
FE	Friedrich Engels
FS	Fred Schreiner
GH	Guy Hemming
HBD	Horatio Bryan Donkin
HE	Havelock Ellis
HSL	Henrietta Stakesby Lewis (nee Schreiner)
IS	Isie Smuts
JamesRI	James Rose Innes
JB	John Brown

## LETTERWRITERS AND ADDRESSEES (continued)

JeanB	Jean Brown
JCS	Jan Christian Smuts
JessieRI	Jessie Rose Innes
JG	Jill Gribble
JXM	John Xavier Merriman
KM	Kate Mills
KP	Karl Pearson
KS	Katie Schreiner
KStuart	Kate Stuart
LB	Lyndall Brown
LH	Leonard Hobhouse
MCG	Margaret Clark Gillet
MH	May Hobbs
MRI	M. Rose Innes
MS	Maria Sharpe
NL	Nellie Leach
OS	Olive Schreiner
RD	Ray Dick
RH	Robert Hemming
RJP	Robert John Parker
RS	Rebecca Schreiner
RT	Ralph Thicknesse
SGM	Sarah Gertrude Millin
TB	Theo Brown
TS	Theo Schreiner
US	Ursula Scott
WH	Winnie Hemming
WPS	Willian Philip Schreiner

## SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

- ^ When used in citations, this symbol indicates where a letterwriter has edited their own letter and made an insertion.

“Step by step advancing knowledge has shown us the internetting lines of action and reaction which bind together all that we see and are conscious of... everywhere the close internetted lines of interaction stretch; nowhere we are able to draw a sharp dividing line, nowhere find an isolated existence... I can see long unbroken lines of connection... I am able to see nowhere a shape line of severance, but a great, pulsating, always interacting whole” (Schreiner 1927: 180).

This thesis examines the ‘internetting’ social and epistolary networks of Olive Schreiner (1855-1920). My research is linked through a PhD Studentship to the ESRC-funded<sup>1</sup> Olive Schreiner Letters Projects (OSLP).<sup>2</sup> The Project has transcribed and is analysing Schreiner’s circa 4800+<sup>3</sup> extant letters in global archival sources and private collections, and has made these freely available online for future generations of social and epistolary theorists, socio-historical analysts and also ‘popular’ readers and users. The Studentship focused on Olive Schreiner’s epistolary networks with a view to investigating: how these overlapping but not coterminous networks were organised; how they operated in a practical sense; how letters were both constructive of, and used strategically within and across, these networks; and, the changing properties of ‘letterness’ (Stanley 2002b; Poustie 2010), a term which indicates that, as letters often push at or even flout definitional and conceptual boundaries, it is analytically more useful to consider epistolary material as having different aspects and degrees of letterness. The research also aims to underscore the potential sociological importance and relevance of letters - which Plummer (2001: 52) argued in 2001 remained “a relatively rare document of life in the social sciences”- and the emergent and/or renewed sociological interest in epistolarity, auto/biography and documents of life. The sociological importance of letters to emergent research in qualitative longitudinal research is also pointed to.

In this study, ‘letterness’ (Stanley et al 2012) is examined through archival materials<sup>4</sup> (cards, notes from personal interviews, minutes of committee and general

<sup>1</sup> My grateful thanks to the Economic and Social Research Council (RES-062-23-1286) for funding my studentship.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.oliveschreinerletters.ed.ac.uk/> for further information on the project and its publications and <http://www.oliveschreiner.org> for the online letters.

<sup>3</sup> Additional, previously unknown letters continue to be unearthed from a variety of mainly private sources.

<sup>4</sup> Fieldwork for this research has been conducted in collections and material housed in:  
*i. South Africa*



meetings, official documents, news clippings, recorded speeches and especially letters) connected in some way with Olive Schreiner's epistolary networks and her 'epistolarium'. The idea of an epistolarium is a theoretical concept developed by Stanley (2004, 2009, 2010d, see also Stanley et al 2012) concerned with the analysis of epistolarity and epistolary exchanges written by a particular person and "tailored for the particular addressee" (Stanley & Dampier 2010: 61) in their socio-historical context,<sup>5 6</sup> rather than being focused on 'letters' and the writer in any narrow sense (Stanley 2010b, 2010d, 2009, 2004).

Broadly speaking, the two main areas of interest developed in the thesis concern letters and networks, as connected in some way to Schreiner. In addition to looking at what the extant letters and other documents of life reveal about the networks Schreiner was involved in, and how these networks and the people within them variously 'used' letters and for what purposes, in what follows I use examples of letters within networks inductively to tease out and develop conceptual and theoretical ideas about letters and their intersubjective aspects<sup>7</sup> and also about networks. Evans (1997: 92, 95-96) suggests that research questions should be the "product of research not arbitrarily imposed upon it" and "should arise from a total survey of the material and be systematic with reference to it... once worked through" a researcher can then apply the method of controlled selection". However, when dealing with "superabundant material the real work... must for quite a while concentrate upon particular studies of restricted problems". Details concerning the setting of analytical boundaries and the processes of controlled selection around research material are given below. In line with Evans (1997), wherever possible, entire collections should be consulted prior to data-driven

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National Archives Repository, Pretoria (NAR), William Cullen Library, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (WCL), Free State Archives Depot, Bloemfontein (FSAD), Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown (CLRU), National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown (NELM), National Library of South Africa, Cape Town (NLSA) and, University of Cape Town, Manuscripts and Archives (UCT).

*ii. Europe*

Aletta: Internationaal Informatiecentrum en Archief Voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IIAV), Amsterdam.

*iii. UK*

Carlisle Record Office (CRO), National Library of Scotland (NLS), Sheffield Archives (SA), University College London Special Collections (UCL) and, University of Edinburgh Special Collections (UESC).

<sup>5</sup> For relevant social-historical information: Bosch & Kloosterman (1990), Burton (2001, 2003a), Caine (1992), Crawford (1999), Fell & Sharp (2007), Hamilton (2004), Hannam (1995), Headlam (1931, 1933), Holton (1996, 1995), Levine (1990), Nimocks (1968), Pakenham (1979), Purvis (1995a,b), Purvis & Holton (2000), Rowbotham (2008), Rupp (1997), Schreuder & Butler (2002), Summerfield (1995), Swartz (1971), Vellacott (1980), Wiltsher (1985).

<sup>6</sup> See also the Brewer (2007, 2005, 2004) on the relevance of biographical, geographical and spatial contexts.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas and Znaniecki's (1958[1918-1920]) canonical The Polish Peasant is described by Plummer (2001: 104 original emphasis) as heralding a "*symbolic shaping moment* in the development of a sociology of life stories". Blumer (1979[1939]) stated that this study demonstrated the need of studying subjective factors in social interactions.

selections being made. However, ‘superabundant’ collections have necessitated the imposition of restrictions and selection strategies. Using existing conceptual and theoretical ideas concerning letters and networks as a starting point, further ideas from each network example are emergent from and guided by the relevant material consulted. These emergent ideas are carried forward and their utility and applicability in fresh contexts is reflected upon.

My research takes a meta-approach, using Schreiner as a starting point from which to branch out and explore various epistolary networks with which she was connected or featured in different ways, and concerning a variety of people who were close or distant correspondents of hers. Schreiner’s extant letters and those of her associates, many of whom were themselves voluminous letter-writers, are extensively archived in a large number of worldwide collections. The broad aim of my research is to provide an in-depth analysis of a selection of these epistolary networks which, as the opening quotation from Schreiner’s novel From Man to Man indicates, are comprised of a “large, complex and interrelated system of writing and receiving” (Stanley 2011: 137). This is done through the analysis of correspondence and other epistolary material, drawing upon conceptual and theoretical work relating to archives and archival research in doing so.<sup>8</sup>

Whilst adopting a broad historical sociological perspective, and mindful of the need to analyse documents in their own socio-historical and relation-specific contexts, my research contributes to contemporary theoretical and conceptual sociological debates on both epistolarity and social network analysis. Following a brief discussion of Schreiner and how she featured in a multitude of networks, this introductory chapter examines relevant conceptual and theoretical ideas about letters and networks and outlines the main epistemological and other concerns of my research. These have informed the development of questions of potential analytical interest in approaching epistolary material. These are outlined at the end of this chapter and are used as a starting point for the analysis.

The networks I explore have interesting differences in their purpose or objectives, the brokering and bridging strategies they feature, and the communication activities within them. Multiple interconnections exist across them, and Schreiner was related in different ways to all of them, as I sketch in later.

<sup>8</sup> Anderson (2004), Bradley (1999), Bradley & Petro (2002), Brooks (1969), Burton (2003b), Craven (2008), Degenne & Forsé (1999), Etherton (2006), Johnson (2007), Lowenthal (2006), Lynch (1999), McKemmish (1996), McKemmish et al (2005), Milner (1999), Moss (2007), Musson (2007), Nesmith (2007), Osborne (1999), Prescott (2008), Robinson (2006), Spiers (2007), Steedman (2001).

### **Olive Schreiner and Her Networks**

“Olive Schreiner’s archived letters are the single most important source regarding her writing, political views and involvements, and also her life, family, friendships and marriage. Her letters show the extent of her political interests, her keen involvement in family life and depth of feeling for people, and the seriousness of her commitment to the public concerns and analytical ideas she promoted. They also point up how responsive she was to her correspondents, rather than being ‘egotistical’ as a letter-writer. There is a very different ‘feel’ for instance, to Schreiner’s letters to her friends Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter and Karl Pearson; or to her brother Will and sister-in-law Fan; or to the politicians James Rose Innes and John X. Merriman; or to Rose Innes and his wife Jessie. Also the kinds of letters Schreiner wrote to the same correspondent – her sister Ettie, for instance – when she was a young woman are very different from those she wrote in later life” (Stanley 2002a: 55).

As the quotation above indicates, letters reveal things about a letter-writer’s involvement with and within networks and concerning the character and extent of this involvement. Letters, and the differences between those written by the same writer but to different addressees, reveal things about the writer, the addressee, the specificities of particular epistolary relationships, and also the temporally-located socio-political circumstances. Also, of course, analysing actual examples of letters can in addition tell us things about letters themselves and how they are understood and used. Although Olive Schreiner is not central to my thesis in a direct sense, she is, varyingly, central or peripheral to the networks discussed. As such, and to provide the biographical, socio-historical and contextual information that Berg (2006: 8) states must be considered in conjunction with the “rhetorical strategies” of letters, I shall provide a brief biographical overview of Olive Schreiner, the existing literature relating to her, her involvements in various social and intellectual movements and world events, and some of the extensive and extensively interconnected friendships and networks in which she was involved. The following section on ‘Letters and Letterness’ examines the rhetorical strategies of the medium. Schreiner’s fictional (and non-fictional) writings are referenced where appropriate, but I do not assume any referential relationship or direct correlation between her life and her fiction writing, this “flat-footed approach” bedevilling much previous work on Schreiner (Stanley 2002a: 18).

My research is informed by a number of studies of Schreiner's life, ideas and writing.<sup>9</sup> The selectively edited, bowdlerised letters and misrepresentative biography of Schreiner produced by her estranged husband (Cronwright-Schreiner 1924a, 1924b), described by the biographer (of Cecil Rhodes and in this instance Jan Christian Smuts) Sarah Gertrude Millin (1936a: 56) as "his harmful Life of her", are, however, treated differently. Wagner-Martin (1994: 119) discusses how Cronwright-Schreiner stressed

"his wife's artistic temperament, which he described as impractical and impassioned, he deified what Schreiner had accomplished... his biography omitted Schreiner's commitment to ending racial inequity in South Africa, righting the abuse of sexual powers in relationship, and leading her own life. Working from her personal papers and correspondence, he used [selections from] what documents fit his thesis and threw away the rest."

Cronwright-Schreiner's Letters of Olive Schreiner and Life of Olive Schreiner, both published in 1924, Stanley (2002a: 9, 172) argues, precipitated Schreiner's "'vanishing'... from public trace and feminist esteem" until her 'rediscovery' in the 1980s and 1990s by, amongst others, scholars such as Ruth First, Anne Scott, Cherry Clayton, Joyce Avrech Berkman, Carolyn Burdett, Richard Rive, and Liz Stanley herself. Letters from many of Schreiner's contemporaries and subsequent generations of both her family and her friends (discussed later) indicate considerable dissatisfaction with Cronwright-Schreiner's work. A selected and edited collection of her letters was also produced by Rive (1987), which in spite of some severe problems in his editorial practices, nonetheless "increased awareness of the importance of the archival sources to Schreiner scholarship" (Stanley 2002a: 17). However, as Stanley (2004: 213) notes, the "ur-letters produced by editorial work" have

"epistemological consequences". These "creations which depart radically, fundamentally, from the ontological and epistemological qualities of 'actual letters' " (Jolly & Stanley 2005: 92) "are "transformed by editorial activity... and "ontologically they are different" (Stanley 2011: 141, original emphasis).<sup>10</sup>

There are also many biographies of Schreiner and her friends, in addition to the numerous autobiographies by friends (too many to list but referenced where appropriate), which have supplied contextual and historical background information. Whilst agreeing with Brooks (1969: 12, 16) in principle, that "the researcher should know as much as possible about the lives of the persons whose actions he will be studying", his assertion that "the more background info [the researcher] has about his subject from books, personal

<sup>9</sup> These include Barash (1986, 1987), Beeton (1974), Berkman (1979, 1989), Buchanan-Gould (1948), Burdett (1992, 1994a, 1994b, 2001), Clayton (1983, 1985, 1989, 1990, 1997), Draznin (1992), First & Scott (1990), Friedlander (1967), Friedmann (1955), Gregg (1955), Heard (1959), Hobman (1955), Krebs (1997), McClintock (1995), Schoeman (1991, 1992) and Stanley (2002a).

<sup>10</sup> See Stanley et al (2013) for a discussion of the 'cultural assemblage' of Olive Schreiner's letters.

accounts, or whatever, the better use he can make of the documents”, is more problematic in the methodological context of my study. This is because so many claims about Schreiner result from Cronwright-Schreiner’s bowdlerised letters and slanted Life of her, and the highly limited and selective use of Schreiner’s letters by biographers of other people in her network (discussed later) have contributed in an intertextual way to constructions of Schreiner. The strong ‘realist’ perspective that using more sources and information results in greater ‘truth’ is challenged by Stanley & Wise (2006). Similarly, Craven (2008: 14) argues that

“the linguistic turn is understood as the notion or realization (depending on which view you take) that written and spoken language can only relate to itself, not to any higher truth; so there is no correct interpretation of anything, only lots of interpretations”.

Secondary sources have therefore been used primarily to supplement information available within the primary sources, so as to avoid past misrepresentations “shap[ing] the archive” (Bradley 1999: 115) or rather interpretations of its contents. As Hancock (1962: xi) notes in the Preface to his biography of Jan Christian Smuts

“Full and exact references to the primary sources are the means whereby an author enables his critics to test the accuracy of his facts and the integrity of his interpretations.”

A British South African, Schreiner was born in 1855 at the Wittebergen Wesleyan Mission Station to German-born missionary Gottlob Schreiner (1814-1876), and Rebecca Lyndall Schreiner (1818-1903) from England. Olive Schreiner was one of twelve siblings, five of whom died in infancy or as young children, due to the inheritance of a congenital heart condition from their father. The death of her beloved youngest sister Helen or Ellie aged three greatly affected the development of Schreiner’s views on religion, life and death and her subsequent radical free-thinking (Hobman 1955: 24, Stanley 2002a: 19). For economic reasons occasioned by her father’s dismissal from mission service due to his infringement of trading prohibitions, Schreiner was sent from home at twelve years old to live with elder siblings Theo and Ettie. Her experiences of living with Theo and Ettie and their “harsh evangelicalism” (Stanley 2002a: 22) included receiving “great whippings” which Schreiner later claimed did her:

“such immense harm that I think they have permanently influenced my life. They made me hate everything in the heavens above and in the earth beneath. I think the fierce rush of blood to my head when I think of a Kaffir being flogged has something to do with the consciousness of the brutality, the hate-making effect of these whippings” (Hobman 1955: 22).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The original letter cannot now be located but the content is supported by much other material relating to Schreiner’s relationships with her siblings.

For Schreiner, who took delight in the beauty and ‘universal unity’ (Stanley 2002a: 20) of all worldly things in humanity and nature, her life with Theo and Ettie was trying and between 1874 and 1881 she sought financial independence by working as a resident governess with various Boer farming families in up-country South Africa.

During a visit to her sister Alice Hemming in 1873, Schreiner became acquainted with Alice’s friends Dr John Brown and his wife Mary Solomon Brown, who financially and emotionally supported Schreiner’s aspirations to undertake nursing training and also to write. Through the Browns, Schreiner later developed friendships with their relatives, the cousins Adela Villiers and Constance Lytton, when they visited their aunt Lady Loch, whose husband Sir Henry Loch was then Governor of the Cape Colony, in 1892. Schreiner’s nursing training was thwarted within days of arriving in Edinburgh in May 1881 by her poor health and the asthma that was to weaken her throughout her life. Her subsequent removal to stay at the school run by her elder brother Fred in Eastbourne allowed the development of what had previously been solely an epistolary relationship, Fred Schreiner having left South Africa to be educated in Britain before she was born. Despite this separation, Fred had provided financial assistance for various family members for some time, causing him to become known to younger family members as ‘the Dadda’, Gottlob Schreiner having died in 1876 and having also been unable to provide financially for his family during the latter part of his lifetime.

The Browns were initially instrumental in consulting Edinburgh publishers regarding Schreiner’s (1883) The Story of an African Farm. The freethinking radicalism expressed in this novel had grown in Schreiner since the death of Ellie and the book caused a sensation upon its publication in 1883, attracting the notice and approval of radical and liberal intellectuals, but the disapproval of some of her family members due to its perceived immorality, as their correspondence shows. Both the death of Ellie and the publication of The Story of an African Farm are identified as amongst the major ‘turning points’ in Schreiner’s life by various of her biographers.<sup>12</sup> Whilst Schreiner, with her liberal, socialist and feminist convictions, had already formed acquaintances and friendships with like-minded individuals through various network connections before her novel was published, the novel assumes a key place in impacting on Schreiner’s networks. This is because the publishing and reading of it created intellectual and emotional connections with many people previously unknown to Schreiner (or previously unacquainted with her but known to her through their work, reputation or social standing), who frequently wrote to her expressing

<sup>12</sup> See for example Berkman (1979:6) and ‘Changes, Transitions and Turning-Points’ at <http://www.oliveschreiner.org/vre?page=transitions>.

their admiration or otherwise of her novel. On 15 November 1883, Schreiner wrote in a letter to her friend Elrida Cawood that “Almost every week I get letters from people I have never seen, telling me how much my little book has helped and gladdened them.”<sup>13</sup>

Early editions were published pseudonymously under the name Ralph Iron, who Schreiner noted “gets so many letters, and then I have to answer them for him!”<sup>14</sup> However, “it quickly became known in London that Olive was the book’s author” (First & Scott, 1990: 119). Having attained international fame, she then “quickly found her way into the London network of radical intellectuals” (Porter 2004: 141). Regarding The Story of An African Farm, Hobman (1955: 63) wrote, that she owed to it “her reputation and many of her friends, above all one of the most lasting and important events of her life: her friendship with Havelock Ellis”. Ellis (1859-1939) wrote to Schreiner regarding the novel and they developed an intense (epistolary and later face-to-face) relationship which eventually became constraining for Schreiner but which lasted on a lower key for over thirty years and thousands of letters. Schreiner welcomed the expanded opportunities for intellectual stimulus that Britain provided and described one friend, Eleanor Marx as “mental champagne” (Stanley 2002a: 24) compared to “how lonely life in South Africa is mentally”.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to Havelock Ellis and Eleanor Marx, during her “self-searching years in England and Europe” Schreiner developed associations with “Karl Pearson, women’s suffrage, English socialism in the 1880s” (First & Scott 1990: 6), studied theories of prostitution, evolution and much more, and was an active member of various progressive political and social movements and intellectual discussion groups. Through Ellis, Schreiner developed links with the Progressive Association, the Fellowship of the New Life (which Ellis had helped to found and from a branch of which the Fabian Society later emerged), the Social Democratic Federation and associated socialist and intellectual networks, including those of Edward Carpenter (1844-1929). Other pacifist, socialist, feminist, political and intellectual associations with which Schreiner had connections included the Men and Women’s Club (M&WC) initiated by Karl Pearson, the women’s international suffrage and peace movements, the No-Conscription Fellowship and later the 1917 Club formed to discuss and celebrate the Russian Revolution.

Schreiner returned to South Africa in 1889, drained and burdened by the constant emotional, financial and intellectual demands she felt had been imposed on her in Britain and by the weight of the responsibility she felt for the resolution of existing social problems such as prostitution. The amorous pursuits of Bryan Donkin, Karl Marx’s physician, which she

<sup>13</sup> OS to Erilda Cawood nee Buckley, 15 November 1883, NLSA, OSLO transcription.

<sup>14</sup> OS to Erilda Cawood nee Buckley, 20 March 1884, NLSA, OSLO transcription.

<sup>15</sup> OS to Aletta Jacobs (AJ), 21 January 1913, IIAV, OSLO transcription.

had rejected, had also drained her, as had a ‘breakdown’ which occurred in 1886. This breakdown is repeatedly attributed in secondary literature to her unrequited passion for Karl Pearson. However, this literature has either repeatedly failed to consider Schreiner’s perspective as expressed in her letters, or has placed the interpretation of the researcher as *a priori* over that of the subject (Dampier 2011), something I try to avoid.<sup>16</sup> While I think that Hobman’s (1955: 6) claim that Schreiner may have at times “hated her own compulsion” to fight for “the weaker side, for the native population in Africa, for the Boers, and above all - and always - for women” is too strong, her willingness to act on her convictions weakened her already precarious health and impoverished her finances.

On her return, Schreiner took a keen interest in South African political affairs and her letters “show her to have been an astute political commentator with an eye for spotting shifts and developments in contemporary political life” (Stanley 2002a: 35). Her split with and open criticism of the imperialist entrepreneur Cecil Rhodes, Prime Minister of the Cape Colony from 1890 to 1896, for whom her brother W.P. (Will) Schreiner was Attorney General and for whom her mother Rebecca had the greatest admiration and affection, had significant ramifications within the familial network. Her later publication of Trooper Peter Halkett (1897) which openly criticised Cecil Rhodes and the political affairs in South Africa in which he was immersed, as well as British imperialist expansionism more generally, was also a *cause celebre*. Rhodes was forced to resign his leadership in 1896 following an investigation into his involvement in the Jameson Raid on President Kruger’s Transvaal Republic. The Raid, which had the tacit approval of Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain,<sup>17</sup> was intended to incite an uprising amongst the white migrant miners in the gold industry who were known as Uitlanders or outsiders and who were denied equivalent franchise rights to those of the resident male Boer population. It was anticipated that an uprising would result in British control of the Transvaal, an outcome politically and economically advantageous for both Britain and Rhodes. This failed enterprise had widespread ramifications, both upon global politics and international relations and also upon the quotidian of almost all members of the Schreiner network.

Following considerable deliberation and hesitation, Schreiner married Samuel Cronwright in 1894. Despite reservations concerning his conduct and character and those she felt concerning marriage itself, Schreiner was attracted by ‘Cron’s’ butch manliness and physicality. She also admired and respected the position he had taken in supporting the native cause and had been impressed by an article by him attacking Rhodes for supporting the Strop

<sup>16</sup> It may be that Elisabeth Cobb played a significant role in Schreiner’s decision to remove herself from the Club and this avenue of investigation is explored in Dampier 2011.

<sup>17</sup> See Holli (1964) for further discussion of Chamberlain’s involvement in the Jameson Raid.



Bill<sup>18</sup> in the Eastern Cape newspaper the Midland News before they had met. In 1894 she wrote:

“Lonely intellectually one has been from the moment one began really to think, & lonely one will be in the intellect till death folds one round; but there is a curious sweet moral & spiritual comradeship between me & Cron which holds us very much together”<sup>19</sup> (original emphasis).

Schreiner later commented on how she had “supported myself ever since I was a little child almost, & it would be so hard ever to be dependent on any one, even on Cron.”<sup>20</sup> Over time her political hopes and aspirations for Cronwright dissipated and the death of their one day old child in 1895 flanked by a series of miscarriages undoubtedly took an emotional toll on the couple. By the 1900s they were effectively estranged, with Schreiner suspecting her husband of an ex-marital affair with Isaline Philpot, a Londoner known to her from her time in Britain and who had been a guest at the M&WC in June and October of 1886. A political gulf had also emerged between Schreiner and her husband over segregationist policies and the rise of nationalism in South Africa. Schreiner was a strong supporter of racial equality which included personal campaigning for adult suffrage, not enfranchisement divided along racial lines. This caused her split from the Cape Woman’s Enfranchisement League, whose franchise policy would have excluded non-white women. As Hobman (1955: 2) comments, “In a continent bitter with the separateness of English and Dutch and Jews and Indians and native black inhabitants, her voice proclaimed that all the world is one”, and Schreiner continued to proclaim this during World War I.

In 1913, Schreiner travelled without her husband to England and then Europe to live while having medical treatment for her heart condition. On the advent of war, her departure from Holland on one of the last ships heading for English shores was aided by the feminist doctor and suffragist Aletta Jacobs. Schreiner remained in Britain for the duration of the war, experiencing some hostilities due to her German surname. More intensively, tensions emerged in many of her friendships when her fundamental objection to all war and her absolute pacifism came up against the ‘for the greater good’ ethics of many contemporaries who intellectually or actively supported contributions to the ‘war effort’ if not the actual violence and killing. Schreiner published a number of open letters on the contentious issue of conscientious objection during 1915 and 1916.

Schreiner’s friendships with male friends Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter and Karl Pearson have been written about fairly extensively. Much of this work hypothesises on

<sup>18</sup> In 1890 the Afrikaner Bond attempted to amend the Masters and Servants Act to allow landowners the legal right to flog their labourers (Dooling 2007).

<sup>19</sup> OS to WPS, 11 April 1894, UCT, OSLO transcription.

<sup>20</sup> OS to Betty Molteno, October 1898, UCT, OSLO transcription.

issues of ‘sex-love’<sup>21</sup> between Ellis and Schreiner and Schreiner and Pearson, and often relies on secondary sources rather than investigating the archival materials. Schreiner was multiply interconnected with many high profile social reformists and intellectual and political figures of her time. Her brother and close friend Will Schreiner was Prime Minister of the Cape Colony between 1898 and 1900, while other correspondents and acquaintances included Jan Christian Smuts and his wife Isie, John X Merriman, James Rose Innes, his wife Jessie, and their daughter Dorothy von Moltke, and a global network of contemporaries including Cecil Rhodes, Mohandas K. Gandhi, Bertrand Russell, Norman Angell, William Gladstone, Charles Dilke, Horatio Kitchener, Alfred Milner, Edward Carpenter, Isabella Ford, Aletta Jacobs, Emily Hobhouse, Lloyd George, Leonard Hobhouse, John Hobson, Betty Molteno (eldest daughter of Sir John Molteno, the first prime minister of South Africa’s Cape Colony) and her life-partner Alice Greene, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, Constance Lytton, Sylvia Pankhurst and Oscar Wilde, to name but a few. Schreiner and many of her close friends, associates and correspondents were at the epicentre of global political and social activity between 1880 and 1920, and were intellectually immersed in the analysis of key social and political questions of their era, including imperialism and capitalism, the ‘Woman Question’, socialism, race issues, militarism, war, pacifism, relations between men and women, and the effects of what is now termed globalisation (Stanley 2002a, Stanley et al 2010).

The impact of Schreiner’s Woman and Labour, published in 1911, was profound. Various described as ‘polemical’ and the ‘bible’ of the feminist and suffrage movements, it was dedicated to suffragette Lady Constance Lytton, who “embodied for me the highest ideal of human nature, in which intellectual power and strength of will are combined with an infinite tenderness and a wide human sympathy” (Schreiner 1911: 7). Lytton’s protest activities for the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU) led to her imprisonment and force-feeding in 1909 and to her becoming a public figure. How Schreiner subsequently “vanished” from the forefront of feminist theoretical discussion is discussed by Stanley (2002a, 1986); however, even brief biographical accounts of her and the networks she was involved in provide an indication of her prominence in the social and political sphere of her time.

My research is concerned with the analysis of Schreiner’s wider social and epistolary networks (i.e. not her ‘egocentric’ network or ‘personal communities’), which, as with many social networks, have blurred boundaries and are a “cacophony of relations...

<sup>21</sup> See for example: OS to KP, 4 April 1886 & 14 December 1886, UCL and OS to HE, 6 June 1888, NLSA. See also Carpenter, Edward. (1894) *Sex Love: And Its Place in a Free Society*. Manchester: Labour Press.

[involving] economic relations, relations of friendship, and relations of status... political relations... The list has no end” (Burt 1976: 93). Simmel’s (1955[1922]: 155) argument is that social structure is comprised of a multiplicity of cross-cutting ‘social circles’ which create an “infinite range of individualizing combinations” and an intricate web of overlapping affiliations between both individuals and groups. This is apparent on even a cursory examination of Schreiner’s social and epistolary affiliations. As Schreiner (1927: 180) herself wrote, and as in the epigraph to this thesis, “I am able to see nowhere a sharp line of severance.” People can “simultaneously fill... many roles in many contexts” and “belong to many associative groups simultaneously” (Davis & Carley 2008: 201). The “problem for the social scientist then becomes one of conceptualizing the patterns of relations between an actor and the social system in which he exists in a manner optimally suited to explanation” (Burt 1976: 93). Following a brief review of pertinent epistolary and social network theory, I shall discuss the issues surrounding selecting material from this apparently infinite web of affiliations for my particular research purposes.

### **Letters and Letterness: Rethinking the Boundaries of Epistolarity**

My examination of letters and letterness engages with key debates in epistolary theory<sup>22</sup> concerning the conceptual and definitional boundaries of letters and the epistemological consequences of their selection, (re)reading, interpretation and presentation upon research. The subtitle of this section comes from the closing words of Gilroy & Verhoeven’s (2000) ‘Introduction’ to their edited Epistolary Histories, which “challenge us to rethink the boundaries of epistolarity”. To paraphrase Altman (1982) on letters and Stanley (2004) on the epistolarium, ‘a letter’ involves the use of the formal properties of such to create meaning (for a known or unknown audience), regardless of the medium or communication technology, or relative spatial distance, or temporal remove, between writer and reader. However, this does not mean that all writing can or should be considered as ‘a letter’. Whilst the absence of things such as a date, a salutation, a signature or an address each on their own do not affect the ‘letterness’ aspects of epistolarity (particularly as many

<sup>22</sup> Including Altman (1982), Barton & Hall (2000), Bazerman (2000), Benstock (1985), Berg (2006), Cardell & Haggis (2011), Castells (2009), Cook (1996), Colwill (2000), Daley (2003), Dampier (2008), Decker (1998), Derrida (1987), Earle (1999), Fitzmaurice (2002), Gerber (2000), Gilroy & Verhoeven (2000), Goldsmith (1984, 1989), Goodman (2004, 2009), Goodman (1988), Hall (2000), Hallet (2002), Horowitz (1981), How (2003), Huff (2000), Jacobus (1986), Jolly (2001, 2002, 2008), Jolly & Stanley (2005), Kauffman (1992), Kell (2000), MacArthur (1990), Maybin (1999), Milne (2008), Montefiore (2002), Montefiore & Hallet (2002), Plummer (1983, 2001), Redford (1986), Roper (2001), Salter (2011), Stanley (2010a,b,c,d, 2009, 2004), Thomas & Znaniecki (1958[1918-1920]), Yates (2000).

conventions pertaining to these aspects shift over time and between cultures), a letter at basis is a communication from a signatory to an addressee. This can include letters to the letter-writer's own self, can occur over varying degrees of temporal and/or physical separation, and be formulated in a variety of representational forms, whether writing or one of its proxies. To complicate matters further, whilst the intended recipient is usually known to the letter-writer, letters are often read by unintended audiences, such as my own reading and interpretation of the letters cited in this thesis. Also, as in the case of open letters to a newspaper, letters can be written in the knowledge they will be read by unknown eyes. The basic point here is that letters and other representational forms are written with intent to communicate and are intended to be read by a recipient, and this individual or collective addressee may have been distant or near at hand in both the temporal and geographic sense of the terms.

As such, 'letterness' is a useful analytical tool when examining any epistolary material and is central to my thesis. There are two main points on which my work diverges from some but not all epistolary theory. Firstly, despite much assumption and assertion in the literature that epistolarity relies on distance or physical absence between writer and addressee (see Decker, 1998; Gerber, 2000; Jolly, 2008 amongst many others), in fact people who are co-present can sometimes elect to write to each other, for a number of reasons. Secondly, whilst epistolary activities often share some of the characteristics of conversation and have the "effect of immediacy" (Stewart 1982: 188-9), epistolary events do not only occur in lieu of the 'ideal' of conversation. The conventional ideal expressed in many letter-writing manuals or 'secretaries' throughout the eighteenth century is that the more immediacy, the better the effects (Bannett 2005, Fitzmaurice 2002, Redford 1986). True, many letter-writers express regret at separation and long for the presence of and talk with an addressee, but this is not a prerequisite of letter-writing. Whilst epistolary exchanges can sometimes blur the boundaries between the 'face-to-face' and 'the letter', or between the letter and some other form of communication, the malleable features of letter-writing and epistolary exchange make it a form that can be played with, enjoyed, and used strategically, creatively and artfully.

Whilst agreeing with Plummer (2001: 54) that letters are an "interactive product", my response to Henry James's musing that "what are letters, but talk" is, in accordance with Redford (1986: 2), that "they are performances" and that correspondences represent "an exchange between actors" (Fitzmaurice 2002: 1) at varying degrees of temporal remove. Contra Redford (1986: 2), however, letters are not "speech-act[s] in the linguistic" sense but epistolary performances that rely on their epistolary character for their effects. It is worth noting that I have used the word 'performance' here in the sense of 'giving a performance'

for an audience, and not in the philosopher J.L. Austin's (1962) sense of "performative utterances" whereby words are used to perform actions such as "I do" in the marriage ceremony, "I bet..." or "I name this ship". Because of the strong association of the technical term 'performative' with the work of Austin (1962) and his definition thereof, I use instead the terms 'artful' and 'strategic' hereafter to convey this aspect of letterness.

As Jolly & Stanley (2005: 78-9) note, letters and letterness have three largely constant characteristics. Firstly, correspondences involve exchanges over time with reciprocity being an inherent feature. Reciprocity is subject to the perceptions of those involved and so is not just a 'one for one' exchange of letters. Letter-writers can perceive reciprocity in any number of ways – through salutations, acknowledgements or 'replies' in letters not addressed to themselves, through the belief or knowledge that someone would write if they could, and so on, – and it is through qualitative analysis<sup>23</sup> of the content of letters and consideration of the perspectives of the actors involved in the exchange, and not by a quantitative assessment of 'who wrote to whom and how often', that reciprocity becomes apparent. As Allan (1998: 77) notes, reciprocity also

"impacts on a range of different aspects within... relationships, including whether material exchanges occur within them; the favours and services each individual provides for the other; the commitment the parties show in the tie; and the sense of worth they bestow on each other. Such reciprocity is not necessarily short-term; the exchanges do not have to match immediately. Rather, what typically matters is the overall balance of the tie... how much 'credit' or 'debit' is permitted, will vary from one relationship to another, depending in part upon its history and on the current circumstances of those involved. The key issue, though, is that being able to reciprocate and sustain a balance of material and symbolic exchange is normally seen as central to the management of non-kin social ties of a friendship type."

The frequency or infrequency of letters written and received are frequently referred to in quasi-financial terms by letter-writers as 'debts', or ascribed value based on their length and content. For example, Emily Hobhouse wrote to Isie Smuts on 6 June 1911 acknowledging that "I am in debt to you – so here goes for a long one to make up"<sup>24</sup> and Olive Schreiner wrote to her sister to Katie Findlay on 4 February 1878, "I know you owe me two letters, but I shall be very good and write again"<sup>25</sup>. Writing letters is a form of 'love labour' "requiring the expenditure of time, effort, and other resources" (O'Connor 1998: 132; see also Cheal

<sup>23</sup> Texts on qualitative data analysis which have informed this study include: Atkinson et al (2003), Bryman & Burgess (1994), Coffey & Atkinson (2004), Crotty (1998), Dampier (2008), Denzin & Lincoln (2005), Eakin (2004), Elliot (2005), Ely (1991, 1997), Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2011), Marshall & Rossman (2011), Riessman (2008), Silverman (1985, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2011), Stanley & Temple (2008).

<sup>24</sup> EH to IS, 6 June 1911, NAR.

<sup>25</sup> OS to Catherine ('Katie') Findlay nee Schreiner, 4 February 1878, NLSA, OSLO transcription.

1987, Lynch 1989, Haggis & Holmes 2011). However, the content of letters can also reveal other forms of reciprocity at play in a particular relationship. These include explicit reference to the exchange of material or monetary gifts, but also more subjective forms of reciprocity that depend on the perceptions of those in the relationship.

Secondly, letters have “relational characteristics” and “purposeful intent” (Jolly & Stanley 2005: 78-9), with what is written dependant on who the letter-writer and addressee are and what relationship and rules of engagement exist between them. Just as knowing the amount of letters sent from A to B or vice versa “tells us nothing about the quality of the individual tie”, neither does simply “knowing the type of... connection” (Spencer & Pahl 2006: 33) between them. As Laumann et al (1992) note, arbitrary categories such as colleague, sister or friend are often ignored in daily interaction and, in the case of ‘friend’, often interpreted differently. Also, people write purposefully and ‘do things’ with letters. In his discussion of the foundation of the British Post Office and the ‘epistolary space’ (an established and constantly present impersonal space into which letters can be sent, such as today’s ‘cyberspace’) this opened up to public, How (2003: 2) suggests that

“by writing letters and as a result of the existence of epistolary spaces they were able to seek to accomplish a variety of ends, solely through the persuasiveness of their writing. What this meant was that letter writers were able to become involved as active participants in key historical events.”

Letters and other documents, not just their writers (or even independently of them), can become active participants in events (see also Prior 2004, 2008), whether purposefully or by happenstance. Whilst often written from a sense of desire or duty, all letters have effects, whether these effects extend from the writer to an addressee or other readers or not, even if only in occasioning their writing and/or reading. Specific relationships also affect the practice and interpretation of letters and letterness, with Fitzmaurice (2002: 177) suggesting that “self-representation or speaker subjectivity is an outcome of a writer’s epistolary construction of her addressee”. Similarly, Plummer (2001: 54-5) argues that “every letter speaks not just of the writer’s world, but also of the writer’s perception of the recipient. The kind of story told shifts with the person who will read it”.

These comments indicate the mutually co-dependant and constructive influence of the specific relationship between writer and addressee, and also the ‘double vision’ of correspondents afforded by letters and discussed by Daley (2003). In this way, “conduct is monitored by the self and by others” and letter-writer and addressee act as a “metaphorical mirror” for each other “reflecting back their perceptions and judgements” (Atkinson & Housley 2003: 8). To paraphrase Adams & Allan (1998: 2) interaction matters, not just action. Daley (2003) argues that letters (plural) between individuals provide multiple

iterations of the same relationship over a period of time; and whilst writers write about their self, their view of the addressee is intrinsic to the writing performance, just as the recipient's view of them is constituted in their response. In this way, letters are fundamentally perspectival and temporal (Stanley 2004, Jolly & Stanley 2005) and comprised of cumulative "layers of relational exchanges" (Stanley 2011: 143).

The complexity of time in relation to letters deserves a thesis of its own. Pertinent here is that the 'time' in which a letter is written relates not only the socio-historical context and real-world socio-political events in which a writer is immersed, but also the moment-to-moment quotidian time of the individual letter-writer, with added temporal complexities occurring when 'the moment of reading' (Iser 1972, see also Stanley & Dampier 2006) is taken into account. Letters, emails, or texts written in haste, in temper, or in a fit of generosity would likely have been very different epistolary entities if written (or indeed read and reacted to) at a different moment in time (see Jolly 2011: 160). Also the idea of a particular letter-writer catering for a particular addressee at a particular point in time is further complicated by the "epistolary conflict of public and private" (Daley 2003: 11, see also Brewer 2005) in relation to letters as addressed in epistolary theory (Gilroy & Verhoeven 2000).

As How (2003: 4) notes, "Letters were... very much liable to be read by persons other than the recipient [or intended addressee] of the letter", prone as they were to stops, checks, interception, censorship and going astray, in addition to the possibilities of being read by unintended others, purloined, or purposefully read aloud or passed on to others by the addressee. As well as the 'little publics' of domestic networks discussed by Jolly (2011: 155), even 'confidential' and official letters passed through the hands of administrative staff, interpreters and postal officials. Letter-writers write in the knowledge that private letters are also potentially public ones (and this extends to contemporary writers of text and emails and users of evolving computer-mediated communication (see Jolly 2011), as the exposures of WikiLeaks amply demonstrate. How (2003) also draws attention to how a letter's medium and mode of delivery can affect the practice of letter-writing. As such, a telegram sent through a 'public' epistolary space may be perceived differently by letter-writer and addressee from a hand-delivered note even if the message is the same. An obvious example of this is the use of codes and ciphers where it is anticipated a letter may be intercepted, something which fundamentally affects the event of its writing and the interpretative event of reading. Additionally, as Stanley (2004) and How (2003) note, private carriers and telegrams cost more and for some less wealthy letter-writers the decision to use a telegram 'said something' in itself.

The third characteristic noted by Jolly & Stanley (2005) is that letters have “referential aspects” or ‘real-world’ connections which make their impact for the original addressee. Redford (1986: 10) claims that a letter-writer’s “autonomous I inhabits a microcosm it seeks to share with the reader” - a microcosm that likewise “replaces or makes something else of the outside world”. Despite this, letter-writers and their addressees do not write and read in isolation but inhabit the real-world and inevitably rub up against people, places and events. Whilst correspondents may view their epistolary relationship as a ‘private’ space created by and of them, for the reasons discussed above ‘private’ throws up conceptual difficulties in relation to letters because “letters inhabit an interesting ontological as well as epistemological ‘space’, situated as they are on the boundaries of the personal and impersonal” (Jolly & Stanley 2005: 78-9).

Some interesting work on epistolarity emphasises the association of women with letter-writing and the significance that letters have held for women (see Benstock (1985), Berg (2006), Cook (1996), Goldsmith (1989), How (2003), Kauffman (1986), Kenyon (1992) and many more). Often separated “from the spheres in which men were” active, How (2003: 15) argues that “women established links with others through correspondence”, and Berg (2006: 9) comments on the “centrality for women of writing and reading, sending and receiving letters”. Whilst this is undoubtedly the case, Schreiner’s epistolary networks are littered with high profile, radical, social trend setting and progressive, often politically active and independent women who were significant players immersed in the political and social events of their day (albeit impacted on by patriarchal society and the domestic sphere to greater or lesser degrees). As Gilroy & Verhoeven (2000: 15) note, “recent epistolary studies have significantly broadened the feminocentric focus of the letter” and the focus in this thesis is on what women and men in an epistolary network do with letters, what these letters do both inside and outside a network, and what impact external events have on both letters and networks, as distinct from a gendered consideration of the meaning and use of letters for women or for men or regarding comparative differences in their letter-writing.

To paraphrase Berg (2006: 10), regarding my study of letters and epistolary networks, I do not use “letters as evidence” to examine the relevance of theoretical concepts, but always bear in mind “just how completely the concepts and the letters construct one another”. I go on to explore key theoretical concepts from the relevant literatures on networks which inform and are illuminated by analysis and discussion of the substantive examples discussed later in the thesis.



## Epistolary and Social Networks: Using Archival Sources

“My dear Fischer,  
I have just been writing a long letter to Mr Steyn on the subject of Jan 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.”<sup>26</sup>

The above letter was written by John X. Merriman (an opponent of British imperialism in South Africa who later served as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony between 1908 and 1910) to another politician, Abraham Fischer, on 20 February 1906. It aptly demonstrates that epistolary connections are interspersed with face-to-face encounters and that letters can shed light on network connections, referring as it does to three related pieces of writing, six interconnected individuals and two organisations. How it finally came to be housed within the Smuts Papers in the National Archives of South Africa is unknown but it succinctly demonstrates how an analysis of network connections can potentially grow exponentially. As Heath et al (2009: 650) state,

“Documents such as membership lists of organizations and societies, diaries or personal letters... as well as online information such as email lists, web links or data from social networking sites... can also be used as name generators.”

However, as Spencer & Pahl indicate, an analysis that attempts to map links between names often provides little information on the relationships embedded within this:

“[I]n some network studies there tends to be greater emphasis on features such as the size of the network or the frequency of contact between members, rather than on the content of the relationships... we set about exploring people’s micro-social worlds... While some studies have used proxy measures for this, for example, frequency of contact has been used as a way of inferring the strength of a tie, we felt these measures... failed to capture the nature of personal relationships... Consequently... we opted for a qualitative rather than quantitative approach” (Spencer & Pahl 2006: 45-47).

<sup>26</sup> JXM to AF, 20 February 1906, NAR.

In line with this argument, the extant letters I have selected for analysis are not used to simply map or note connections and the “frequency of contact”, but are examined in greater analytical depth for what they can reveal both about “the nature” of the connections and the strategies used in letters to facilitate or mediate these.

Spencer & Pahl (2006: 205, my emphasis) also state that their research “is not about social networks but about personal communities” because their study does not consider “all the contacts in a person’s overall network”, with ‘social networks’ being a term often used neutrally to refer to “all contacts regardless of personal significance” and ‘personal communities’ being comprised of a variety of significant ties and relationships (Spencer & Pahl 2006: 46). Whilst the extant letters of a particular individual do not necessarily reveal all of their social connections, letters do offer valuable insight into the everyday “dynamics of micro-social worlds” (Spencer & Pahl 2006: 3) and the personal networks and/or “personal communities” of letter-writers (Spencer & Pahl 2006: 45-46). In terms of lending insight into the relationship between two correspondents, letters, like those between Olive Schreiner and her brother Will Schreiner, and the Merriman-Fischer letter cited above, often show that “categorical labels like brother, sister, parent, cousin, colleague or neighbour might mask additional friend-like qualities” (Spencer & Pahl 2006: 4) and that ‘multiple’ types of relationship can exist between two people, either synchronically or over time.

Additionally, epistolary relationships are not solely confined to separated individuals and are frequently interspersed with face-to-face encounters between correspondents. However, letters between correspondents who have never met, who later add face-to-face contact to a previously epistolary-only relationship, or between those who never meet, provide insight into how these bonds are perceived by the individuals involved; and I suggest that it is not sufficient to claim that bonds between actors that are confined to the epistolary are “thin” or ephemeral (see Spencer & Pahl 2006: 12). As Stanley (2010d: 143) notes, “correspondences are part (and... sometimes the entirety) of a relationship, not a removed commentary on it”. This said, the strategic devices employed by previously unacquainted letter-writers to establish, strengthen and maintain bonds at the outset of an epistolary relationship are interesting. What letters do and how they are used in networks, including how connections are formed and maintained through letters in specific circumstances, is clearly important.

In addition to examining primary and biographical secondary sources, I also draw on social network analysis (SNA) literature,<sup>27</sup> epistolary and archival theoretical and conceptual

<sup>27</sup> Comprehensive reviews of Social Network Analysis have been conducted by Wasserman & Faust (1994), Scott (2000), Scott & Carrington (2011), Knoke & Yang (2008) and Prell (2011). See also

literature, qualitative data analysis, socio-historical and political literature pertaining to Britain and South Africa, and also the international women's suffrage and peace movements. These literatures, and those relevant to the case studies discussed later, will be deployed in the chapters following, rather than there being a separate 'literature review chapter'. However, as letters and networks are two key aspects of my research, a discussion of relevant material from the SNA literature now follows.

Perhaps particularly when working with the vagaries of historical documentary sources, "achieving 'complete' coverage can only ever be a pipe dream" (Heath et al 2009: 658), with the partiality of my data and the extensiveness of both known and unknown network connections rendering any representation or analysis of a "complete network... based on all of the links that exist between entities" impossible (Heath et al 2009: 648). As a consequence of three structural features in relation to using letters as primary sources (discussed further below) - concerning accessibility, the impact of face-to-face interaction on letters, and the strategic and artful devices employed in them - a researcher can only work with what is accessible, what exists, and what has been recorded; and their analysis should be situated accordingly. Resultantly, a methodological issue, concerning where to set justifiable boundaries, arises as a result of the extent of the "stuff" (Steedman 2001: 67-8, 78-9, 146) that is available in archives and the multiple interconnections that exist between the people to whom the extant material refers. The high profile character of many of Schreiner's correspondents has resulted in the epistolary material of many of her associates being carefully (or sometimes through happenstance) preserved. However, what this equates to is an almost inconceivable amount of material, housed in multiple and often voluminous collections, the 'authors' of which are themselves frequently multiply interconnected to other high profile networks. It therefore becomes necessary to draw an analytical boundary. As

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Bidart & Degenne (2005), Bidart & Lavenue (2005), Blau & Schwartz (1984), Boissevain & Mitchell (1973), Bott (1971), Bott (2010), Bruggeman (2008), Burger & Buskins (2009), Burt (1976, 2005), Collins (1974), Crossley (2010a), Crow (2002), Davis & Carley (2008), Degenne & Forsé (1994), Faust (2010), Feld (1982), Fischer (1977), Freeman, Whyte & Romney (1992), Kadushin (1966, 1968), Kilduff & Brass (2010), Kilstruck & Beamish (2010), Kim & Barnett (2008), Kraut et al (1988), Laumann et al (1992), Law (1999), Lievrouw (1989), Lin (2001), Lubbers et al (2010), Mangino (2009), Riles (2001), Roberts et al (2009), Stueve & Gerson (1977), Surra (1988), Wellman & Berkowitz (1988), Wellman, Carrington & Hall (1988).

On friendship networks see: Adams et al (1998), Allan (1979, 1989), Bellotti (2007, 2008), Bliessner & Adams (1992), Farrell (2001), Feld & Carter (1998), Marks (1998), Milardo (1988), O'Connor (1998), Pahl (2000), Spencer & Pahl (2006).

On mixed-method and qualitative analysis of social networks see: Attridge et al (1987), Bellotti (2010, 2008), Bloor & Wood (2006), Cho & Trent (2006), Coffey & Atkinson (2004), Crossley (2010b,c), Crossley & Edwards (2009), Denzin & Lincoln (2005), Edwards (2010), Fuhse & Mützel (2011), Heath, Fuller & Johnston (2009), Hollstein & Straus (2006), Kirke (2010), Marshall & Rossman (2011), Martinez et al (2003), McCarty (2010), Molina (2010), Shah & Corley (2006).

On networks of intellectuals, elites, and/or invisible colleges see: Masuda & Konno (2006), Noma (1984), Solla Price & Beaver (1966), Tai & Chang (2005), Weedman (1993), Zuccala (2002, 2004).

Heath et al (2009: 650) note, “Defining network boundaries remains a key challenge in all forms of SNA”.

As stated earlier, my research will examine through a number of detailed examples, the wider social and epistolary networks of Olive Schreiner. An estimated 25,000 letters were extant at her death with more having been destroyed by addressees during her lifetime, including at her request. There remain around 4800 letters, comprising mainly of large numbers of letters to a relatively small number of key individuals, rather than small numbers of letters to a large number of correspondents. Given Schreiner’s wide range of international social, political and intellectual interests and affiliations, and the multiple interconnections between members of these and other networks, the boundaries involved are potentially limitless, as the six names generated by one letter in the Merriman-Fischer example suggests. Some limitations are imposed by the temporal location of Schreiner’s life within a specified period of time (1855-1920), but of course the lives of her network members and their associates go well beyond these particular temporal markers, so that analysis is limited by what and whose epistolary material has been archived or has survived, as well as in a major way by my conceptual or theoretical concerns and choices. “[T]he archive itself is a symbolic construct constituted through the process of writing” (Milner 1999: 89), through the processes of archiving and researcher selection, with the researcher also ‘shaping’ the archive in terms of what questions are asked or not asked of it and “what utterances are selected for writing up” (Bradley 1999: 115). As Bradley (1999: 122) notes, the processes of (de)selection are inevitable, “however sincere is the sociologists attempt to attain objectivity... in this way the self of the sociologist is inscribed in the archive, merges itself with the voices” with the partialities and subjectivities not only of the document creators but also of archivists, historians and researchers all playing a “role in constructing objects of study” (Milner 1999: 98). Amongst many other practical and intellectual considerations, temporal matters inevitably influence decisions surrounding selection.

The time and intellectual constraints surrounding what can be reasonably accessed and analysed within three years of doctoral study encourages thinking in terms of a conceptual and theoretical focus. This is an “operational justification” (Laumann et al 1992: 65) for “selecting a particular portion of the “total network” for the empirical focus of an investigation”; and as Laumann et al (1992: 63) suggest, it involves “an apparent appeal to common sense” but, given the extent of the network and the time-scales involved, also a necessary one. It is also in my case a conceptual and theoretical matter: the specification of system boundaries is referred to by Laumann et al (1992: 62) as the central meta-theoretical issue in SNA of all kinds.

Law (1999: 1) suggests that “in social theory simplicity should not displace the complexities of tension”, but it is practically necessary that a researcher-imposed “stopping rule”<sup>28</sup> (Laumann et al 1992: 64) must be applied to a study. This is to establish some kind of network closure. While I do not believe such a thing as network closure in a practical sense can usually be said to exist, I do agree with Wasserman & Faust (1994: 19, 32 my emphasis) that:

“The restriction to a finite set of actors is an analytic requirement. Though one could conceive of ties extending among actors in a nearly infinite group of actors, one would have great difficulty analysing data on such a network.”

and although while:

“Many naturally occurring groups of actors do not have well-defined boundaries... methods must be applied to a specific set of data which assumes not only finite actor set size(s), but also enumerable set(s) of actors. Somehow, in order to study the network, we must enumerate a finite set of actors.”

The boundaries I have elected to work within have a link with the core ‘enumerated actor’, to use SNA parlance, who is Olive Schreiner. I look at how letters are used in different network contexts, and in accordance with Adams & Allan (1998: 4), I use ‘context’ in the sense of “conditions external to the development, maintenance and dissolution of specific friendships” or relationships. Adams & Allan (1998: 4) state that “What counts as context, where boundaries are drawn around the extrinsic yet pertinent, is a question of interpretation and judgement rather than of fact”. Despite the multiple overlapping circles evident in Schreiner’s networks which blur the boundaries of context, the examples discussed later are fairly transparent, in that in this chapter I shall examine: letters from written within the context of one specific relationship in its particular socio-historical and closely boundaried context; letters written within the context of war and used to get around censorship; and, letters written and archived within the context of an organisation, the Men and Women’s Club (M&WC). For these examples, I shall also be mindful of how these letters and letter-writers relate in turn to the broader context of a wider epistolary and social network.

Therefore the ‘finite set of actors’ and ‘specific set of data’ I am analysing are one and the same, namely the letters written by members of a network in a given context, and not the letter-writers themselves as such (i.e. not all of the letters written by an individual or

<sup>28</sup> Despite stating the fundamental necessity for a “stopping rule” in any network analysis, Laumann et al (1992: 64) simply footnote this aspect and do “not consider such problems here”, rather ironically claiming that they do so in order “to make our task manageable”.

individuals across all available archival collections). I recognise that context affects the structure of networks, whether socio-historical, political, cultural, spatial, temporal and/or in relationship formation (Adams & Allan 1998: 5, 7). However, as Cardell & Haggis (2011: 130) note, letters can “produce rather than simply reflect or augment aspects of sociality” and letters can and are used, often strategically, in the examples that follow to affect or mediate the structure of networks. Records or documents are

“active agents in creating what we perceive and not passive carriers of objective facts... those who make, transmit, keep, classify, destroy, archive and use records are co-creators of the records and thus of the knowledge they shape” (Nesmith 2007: 3-4, my emphasis).

This in part relates to issues of provenance, to who created the documents and for what purpose, how and why they have come together in archival situ, in a particular folder or box or under a shared collection reference number, and this must be kept in mind when working interpretatively with these resources.

Whilst to a researcher with limited time, a given collection can seem infinite, in fact archives are ordinarily comprised of static and finite collections of ‘stuff’ held in a given collection, in a given geographical location (Steedman 2001: 68). The ‘archive’ in its broader, postmodern sense is almost infinite, potentially comprised of anything and ‘Everything’ (Steedman 2001) and is a kind of synonym for ‘empire’ or something similar. But in practice, ‘actual archives’ are knowable organisations containing finite collections, albeit occasionally added to over time.

Given the size of some of the collections I am dealing with, I need appropriate criteria to enable me to select which particular letters to focus on. As Bott (1971: 9) states:

“It is hard to decide what to study and how to begin in a very complex situation where there is much variation and any particular piece of behaviour is affected by a multitude of factors... When there are many factors one can choose some particular aspect of the situation and remain blind to the others. One is caught in a dilemma between succumbing in confusion and choosing some simple but false explanation” (Bott 1971: 9).

Bott (1971) also indicates that people, the networks they are involved in, events, socio-historical and political contexts, and culture, are all mutually influential factors. Riles (2001: 2) similarly notes that the “modernist sociological vision is a notion of relations characterized by systemic complexity”. In Laumann et al’s (1992: 61-62) discussion of the “boundary specification problem in network analysis”, they argue that sociological network analysis can provide a “coherent, falsifiable methodology” for the study of “interrelated units of analysis” (my emphasis) and also that observer-defined structural components and imposed boundaries such as “kinship, political, religious, and economic subgroups” are often

simply “ignored in the daily interactions of people”. In other words, the arbitrary labels which third parties apply to observed relationships may have little or no relevance to how that relationship is perceived or maintained by those concerned.

My methodological approach consequently adopts a nominalist strategy, where I reach “network closure by imposing an *a priori* conceptual framework that serves an analytical or theoretical purpose for a particular project” (Knoke and Yang 2008: 16). I therefore draw archivally-located boundaries focusing on the documents contained therein, and not on the actors or persons as such but regarding their epistolary communications in the given context. This means that I am selecting some letters for analysis, and examining how they are used in particular contexts, and not trying to make arbitrary divisions between the multiplicities of contexts in which a particular letter-writer is immersed. Nor am I trying to use the letters to generate names and follow chains of letters *ad infinitum* or until accessibility is exhausted. Selection or deselection of material within these boundaries is determined by key analytical and conceptual concerns around: what the selected letters reveal about Schreiner’s networks and the nature of the relationships within it; letterness; the artful and strategic use of letters and how these are deployed in the construction and maintenance of networks; the effects of context and events on epistolary networks and vice versa; and other related concerns such as how connections between actors and networks are brokered in epistolary mediums, by whom and for what purposes; how and why was it formed; and, what, (if anything) did it ‘do’ and to what effect.

Consequently, I adopt Crow’s (2002: 8) broad definition of social networks as “configurations of people rather than collectivities with definite boundaries”, with these configurations seen to consist of a minimum of three people (although I later question this), the triad being

“theoretically important because social arrangements are possible with three entities that are not possible with individuals or pairs [and] crucial for social configurations such as brokerage... hierarchy... [and] the distinction between direct and generalised exchange” (Faust 2010: 221).

The use of the term ‘social’ network may imply “free association” or free choice in affiliations between members (Simmel 1955[1922]: 130-132), and the examination of letters and letter-writing that used a global postal service may suggest that the configurations and the relationships within them had no geographical restrictions. However, each configuration is subject to its particular context, purpose and to the influences of individual personalities within them (Simmel 1955[1922]: 131) and these factors may place limitations on an affiliated individual’s behaviour and the choices available to them. Additionally, and in accordance with Simmel (1955[1922]: 135), “[g]roup-affiliations which formed according to

objective criteria constitute a superstructure, which develops over and above those group-affiliations which are formed according to natural, immediately given criteria”. Or, in other words, where configurations come together for a given purpose, the purpose will be influential in structuring the configuration and will affect the relationships (or possible relationships) within it and the extent to which these affiliations can be freely chosen.

Brokering involves the actions of a person strategically positioned on a direct or indirect ‘pathway’ between two currently unconnected people, who thereby creates a bridge or brokers a connection between them. The concept is discussed extensively in SNA literature, and particularly helpfully by Burt (2005) and Bruggeman (2008). Four interesting analytical points arise. Firstly, in SNA literature, the concept of brokering is treated as largely synonymous with the broker gaining advantage or accruing value or assets in the form of social capital. In “general agreement” with Putnam (1993) and Coleman (1990), Burt (2005: 5) stresses that social capital is productive in facilitating a co-ordination of action and achievement of goals that would otherwise be unattainable. People who broker connections often have strategic reasons for doing so and may have a personal investment in any positive outcomes that result from the connection being brokered. As Burt (2005: 7) states,

“Informal relations form a small world of dense clusters separated by structural holes. People whose networks bridge the holes are brokers rewarded for their integrative work... Simply, put, the first fact is that brokers do better.”

Structural holes are the gaps that exist between cohesive clusters or configurations of people. They are holes in information flow which brokers are seen as rewarded for bridging. Brokers here are essentially gatekeepers in the process of information diffusion (Bruggeman 2008: 68). However, as Burt (2005: 19) notes, “There are shades of gray”. Although Burt defines a structural hole as a lack of indirect connection between third parties and a bridge as a relationship that provides opportunities for indirect communication, he also acknowledges that the concept of a structural hole has no absolute meaning and that forms of indirect communication can vary across networks. Structure holes can therefore be defined in terms of effect rather than structure. In other words, instead of saying that brokering creates value by bridging connections across a structural hole, the hole itself can become a place in the network where value could be created through brokerage. Put simply, although parties on either side of a structural hole may be aware of each other, they are unaware of how coordination across this hole would be valuable.

Despite the emphasis in the literature on the strategic pro-activity of brokers, in many instances the lines on an SNA graph that appear to indicate a bridging relationship in fact actually represent connections formed at the bequest of others (sometimes the



unconnected parties themselves), and those who make the connection gain by simply fulfilling the request and receiving approbation from those concerned. In such instances, the ‘responsibility’ for creating the connection to a certain extent ends with the formation or attempted formation of the connection and the broker need not assume, and sometimes may explicitly refute, responsibility for the outcomes or repercussions of their activities. This indicates some subtle but analytically important differences between acting as a broker, and perceiving oneself and/or being perceived to be a broker within networks. Therefore, while a person may be ‘the bridge’ on paper in terms of graphical representations of network structure, this gives no analytical insight into how this bridge or bridging relationship came to be built. There may therefore be some interesting and important analytical differences between being a bridge, and being a builder of them, that is not revealed through SNA’s quantitative assessment and representation.

Secondly, SNA literature puts emphasis upon the diffusion, transmission or flow of information within and across networks and on how a broker can positively or negatively affect that which flows through their hands, potentially accruing social capital through their ability to do so. Thirdly, however, given that a broker’s behaviour is subject to the expectations and the “norms and sanctions” (Bruggeman 2008: 69-70) of the networks with which they associate, brokering can influence the broker’s reputation positively or negatively. Fourthly and finally, the literature suggests that brokering is ordinarily welcomed, or actively sought by, third parties to allow their progression into a certain social network or to allow access to otherwise inaccessible networks of information (Bruggeman 2008: 68).

The concept of gate-keeping within SNA is discussed, amongst others, by Bruggeman (2008), Castells (2009) and Wasserman & Faust (1994). Gate-keepers are usually people who occupy a position in a network that allows them to control the access of other people to that network. Gate-keepers are therefore people within networks upon whom “disconnected social units” (Castells 2009: 43) and previously unconnected people are “locally dependent” (Wasserman & Faust 1994: 191). Castells (2009: 1519) suggests that:

“power is exercised [by gate-keepers] not by exclusion from the networks, but by the imposition of the rules of inclusion... respect for these rules is what makes the network’s existence as a communicative structure possible.”

A gate-keeper, then, occupies a position of power and influence within a network and can also control and influence the flow of information across a network and access to that network, thereby influencing both its structure and its communication processes. However, as with brokering, there are shades of grey to gate-keeping. For example, the British Library required a letter of introduction from my thesis supervisor before I could access certain

archival materials. In effect my supervisor then became for a short and bounded period of time a gate-keeper to the gate-keeper of the British Library administration. Among other things, I am interested in exploring what light letters can shed on: if, why and how acts of gate-keeping occurred within networks and whether letters were integral or peripheral to this; who constituted a gate-keeper within networks; what strategic goals these acts of gate-keeping involved; and what repercussion these acts had upon the network and the relationships and people within it.

Epistolary networks can be both products and elements of social networks, but are also a particular kind of social network in their own right and connections can be created, maintained and severed with or without the communicants necessarily having met face-to-face. Frequently, however, correspondences are interspersed with face-to-face encounters and this impacts upon what is recorded in epistolary exchanges, i.e. the event of face-to-face meetings can impact on what is written in subsequent letters and often results in silences, allusions, implicit references and ellipses based on mutual understandings between writer and addressee that are beyond the comprehension or knowing of a third party. As such, a researcher must be mindful of “the epistolary presence of the ‘not there’” (Cardell & Haggis 2011: 130). Letters have a complex chronotopic character (Stanley 2010c), in that they are written (or not written) in circumstances of time/space/place that affect the interpretations of future readers. Letter-writers also, whether purposefully or inadvertently, (re)construct and (re)create subjective ‘memories’ of other time/space/place in a form that is always present tense when read and which creates an illusion of order and factual accuracy, thereby working to (re)create the past in the collective memory of readers.

Whilst quantitative analysis of networks structures and interconnections is interesting in providing overviews of who wrote to whom, when and how often, this approach often gives no indication of the relative importance of letters or relationships from either the perspective of the individuals concerned or from a socio-historical perspective. Whilst a ‘master chart’ of social interconnectedness based, for instance, on a quantitative assessment of numbers of surviving letters from, and to, network members, or on a mixed-method approach combining this with a content analysis of letters regarding network connections (Crossley & Edwards 2009), may be interesting from a ‘small worlds’ analysis perspective, it does not tell me the kinds of things I want to know. This is because such work provides little analytical depth or insight regarding the specific relations of people within a network or ‘who’ they are in a historical sense. Lines on a graph representing acts of brokerage between actors give no indication of the strategic concerns of the broker, nor of the perceived value of the connection or “weight of a tie” in terms of “duration, emotional

intensity intimacy, and exchange of services”, for any of the network members concerned (Opsahl et al 2010: 245). Martinez et al (2003: 353) argue that SNA:

“by itself is not enough for achieving a full understanding... [and] needs to be complemented with other methods, like qualitative data analysis... [which] can be used to account for the occurrence of actions or events”

The importance of considering the impact of events on networks and their links is discussed by Bidart & Lavenu (2005), who further comment on the temporal dimension of networks and how events may influence or effect changes;

“Networks of personal relations evolve over time. They reflect and go with processes of socialization. Their history and dynamics contribute to the present structure. The number of people involved in them and their composition change, as does the quality of the links that constitute them. What life events might influence these changes or possibly even explain them?” (Bidart & Lavenu 2005: 359).

In short, the temporal dimension (which is often, as Bidart & Degenne (2005) state, ignored in SNA), the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of networks and consideration of the links between network members both require qualitative analysis for understanding. Many dynamics of a social network may be “lost in a single snapshot [or snapshots] of the state of a social network” provided by cross-sectional analysis (Totterdell, Holman & Hukin 2008: 294-5, see also Lubbers et al 2010). It is of interest therefore to consider what a longitudinal analysis of a personal network would throw up regarding “relationship processes” and of the “disruptive effects of life events on the social network that surrounds an individual” (Lubbers 2010: 92). Given that the period for my analysis (circa 1880 to 1920) was one of considerable social and political upheaval, including the South African War (1899-1902) and World War I (1914-1918) and the immersion of many people in Schreiner’s networks in these, the impact and influence of events on networks (whether major ‘real-world’ events or incidents in the personal lives of subjects) is also important.

Networks are not static, they shift over time and context and “have a history”, and people within particular network configurations may have had prior contact and a shared history that has contributed to the “form and structure they show today” (Bidart and Lavenu 2005: 360). Over someone’s life, their ties change. Ties strengthen, weaken, interconnections form between them, they change in their meaning, utility and perceived value for those concerned, the frequency of contact between ties varies over time, and all of these aspects are influenced by events (Allan & Jones 2003, Bidart & Lavenu 2005, Dindia & Canary 1993, Roberts & Dunbar 2011). As discussed below, once a connection between two people has been formed, even if they cease to communicate or have any form of

contact, their relational position is irreversibly altered and they cannot revert to a state of ‘un-connectedness’. However, as Bidart & Lavenu 2005; 360) note:

“As the individual moves through varied contexts, social circles, activities and commitments, ties with new partners have been incorporated and reconstituted. At the same time, old childhood friends have dropped out of sight, cousins have been somewhat forgotten, friends have moved away. In the current network, each relationship has its own history. It was born in a precise social environment, integrated into a group of friends or separated from other relationships, experienced in particular circumstances with forms of exchange and shared resources particular to the contexts and periods in question. It has subsequently evolved, along with new life situations and new socializing contexts. Today’s relationship is the product of that history, that evolution and it bears its marks and specificities.”

Some ties, such as given familial ones, can carry positive or negative feelings of commitment. For example, after the death of Olive Schreiner’s sister Alice Hemming, Alice’s widower Robert Hemming agreed to their children being cared for by another sister, Ettie Stakesby-Lewis. The correspondence between Robert and Ettie suggest that Robert Hemming’s debt of gratitude to the indomitable Ettie, the hub of a large familial network, sometimes weighed heavily upon him. Chosen ties, such as the relationships between friends, are in most cases elected but often shift in their intensity over time, as the correspondence between Constance Lytton and Edward Carpenter or between Olive Schreiner and Havelock Ellis suggests. Consideration of the changing composition and dynamics of networks, the various propulsions for the formation of ties and networks, how epistolary networks shift over time and in different contexts and circumstances, are all relevant in considering the networks I am researching.

Personal networks are structured around individuals who simultaneously belong to a multiplicity of overlapping social circles (Bidart & Degenne 2005: 284, Davis & Carley 2008). As the Merriman-Fischer example noted earlier implies, network connections and interconnections can theoretically extend *ad infinitum*. The key issue facing all forms of SNA is therefore where a researcher can justifiably draw a boundary or analytical cut-off point, given that potentially at least a network “ramifies in every direction and for all practical purposes stretches out indefinitely” (Srinivas & Bêteille 1964: 166). As Boissevain & Mitchell (1973) argue, in complex social systems boundaries tend to be blurred with interpersonal relations cutting across them. Even in formal and apparently tightly bounded networks, boundaries expand and contract with connections being made and broken across time and in relation to the contexts and issues at hand. Totterdell, Holman & Hukin (2008: 293) note that:

“Research in social networks has mostly focused on the structure and effects of relations between individuals, rather than on how the attributes of

individuals might contribute to the formation and structure of social networks.”

Linked to the idea of individual influence are the concepts of social selection and social influence discussed by Klepper et al (2010), with ‘social selection’ referring to the selection of similar or like-minded friends or acquaintances and ‘social influence’ relating to the emergence of similarity amongst connected individuals through acquaintanceship. The extent of social selection and/or influence is dependant on the “contextual conditions” of the network in question (Klepper et al 2010: 82) and it may be helpful to consider and compare these concepts across the various contexts of letter-writing, particularly in relation to the brokering of new ties and the development of existing ones. Whilst “coordination problems are [often] resolved by conventions”, it will be of interest to consider whether “aligning their behaviours”, or being expected to, facilitates or constrains a network (Corten & Buskens 2010: 4) and this idea will be carried forward in the chapters that follow.

### **Epistemology: Thinking About Archival Sources**

Written and spoken words discussing or recounting events and perceptions of them are all composed post-event, whether this be minutes or decades later. The recounting of events is artful and directed to a given audience and purpose and, as discussed in relation to brokering, can also be purposefully manipulated and used by intervening parties. Memories are also “manufactured” (Stanley 2006b: 3) by the vagaries of memory itself, and by being “tangled up with imagination”.<sup>29</sup> The social world of the past and the person recalling events from it are mutually constitutive entities (Stanley 2005, 2006b). What an actor ‘knows’ about the past, that is, the “biographical knowledges” that memory tells them they ‘know’, can prove problematic in social research and in analysing letters (Gardner 2001: 185), because any given narrator cannot be omnipresent and is limited by their own partial and particular experience. Whilst “grounded in particular times, places, persons and activities”, events are subject to the cumulative and incremental effects of post/memory; so therefore:

“why not recognise that all memory almost immediately becomes post-slash-memory, that is, hang on to the core of historical fact, and explore the gaps between what was and what, post hoc, is thought to have been?... all memory is ‘post-slash-memory’, ‘post/memory’, because almost immediately marked by representational forms and separated by the absolutism of passing time from the originating events” (Stanley 2006b: 14).

<sup>29</sup> EH to Rachel Isabella Steyn, 29 March 1925, FSAD.

Time, purpose, intent and the subjectivities of writers (and intended readers) influence what is recorded and how, and also the passing of time and changes in socio-historical context and conventions influence subsequent re-readings. Memories are therefore not ‘facts’ but are “internally fractured and contested; competing interpretations of past events [that] crowd up against each other” (Stanley 2006b: 87). Given this fractured nature of memory and of interpretation, the ‘accuracy’ or otherwise of any representation of past events, whether in letters from the 1800s or oral recounting of events from hours ago, is a complicated retrospective exercise, as of course is the academic interpretation of such sources.

As Milner (1999: 100) suggests:

“Once historical research is presented as a process in which a partial subject addresses a part of an archive that is constituted by fragments that themselves are far from impartial in their witness to a past age, the possibility of writing ‘hard history’ appears far-fetched.”

However, this is not to say that extant letters and other epistolary materials cannot reveal things that are analytically useful about (Schreiner’s) networks. In addition to the analytical implications of “posterior readership” (Decker 1998: 9) - that is, exploring things which are at considerable temporal and cultural remove from their original socio-historic context – I want to raise three methodological matters here (Grbich 2007) concerning: the ways in which a researcher’s view of events is affected by access to particular sources; how the face-to-face encounters of letter-writers and addressees involved in a particular exchange and also other members of a social and epistolary network impact on what is written, and how; and, how the artful and strategic devices employed in letter-writing, including strategic silences, “the artifice and conventionalities of self-presentation” (Cardell & Haggis 2011: 129) and the motivations behind these, influence the interpretation of letters and the events to which they relate. Truth, history, events, lives and letters are different beasts and often elusive in their nature.

Firstly, epistolary material is often destroyed, lost, or simply unknown to the researcher. Also, “indissolubly tied up with each other” though they are, “the real and the represented resist fusion” (Bakhtin 1981: 253). However objective a creator strives to be, a representation of some ‘thing’ can never be the ‘thing’ itself. In some cases the content of letters, for whatever reasons or motives, may be lies or deliberately selected aspects of the ‘truth’. As such, “secrets and absences” are unknown aspects of letters and there is undoubtedly a great deal that “can not be told because it is not known” (Rappert 2010: 571). What can be known are the words on the extant pages, with their meaning (even when considered in context) sometimes implicit and known only to letter-writer and addressee.

Secondly, epistolary exchanges are often interspersed by face-to-face encounters even though it is only infrequently that allusions to these interactions are found in the records. As Elton (1991: 74, 76) states, “what is presently irrecoverable in the flesh is indestructible in its past reality” and “events can occur but be unknowable” if unrecorded, thereby becoming “a piece of potential history never to materialise but which did occur”. Meetings between people can (although not always) result in breaks in epistolary exchanges over the duration of a relationship, resulting in a lack of recorded information. Similarly, connections formed and maintained through face-to-face encounters may never result or be recorded in epistolary exchanges, so that some network connections may remain unknown. In other words, letters are unlikely to generate all of the names from an individual’s personal community, let alone the details of all their interactions with these people.

Thirdly, letters are selective, artful and strategic: they are recipient designed and how and what is written is selectively shaped depending on who is being written to and why. As Riles (2001: 25) states, it is not “sufficient to simply accept others’ representations of their actions at face value” and despite the “feeling of genuineness” often associated with handwritten material noted by Brooks (1969: 1), Decker (1998: 9) rightly cautions that:

“Although their value as primary documents is indisputable, letters do not really provide transparent access to history... Letters tell stories centered in the experience of historically real individuals, but the stories they tell depend on the context in which they are read.”

In addition to this, as Licoppe (2004: 149) notes:

“the density of the experience shared in an intense and lasting friendship allows the use of codes, allusions, and veiled references, so that this kind of interaction is hardly relevant for an outsider.”

Letters between two specific individuals may therefore be only fully comprehensible to them.

Archival research and the analysis of documents is said to be marked by issues regarding: authenticity (C.L.I.R 2000); “secrets and absences” (Rappert 2010); selection/deselection; ordering (Craven 2008); in/accessibility (Brooks 1969); fragmentation (Milner 1999; Moss 2007; Stanley & Wise 2006; Steedman 2001); the under-representation of significant sections of society (Robinson 2006, Speirs 2007); the resultant over-representation of particular elites, occupational or organisational groups (Johnson 2007); abridgement, editing, and bowdlerisation, and the subsequent undermining and embellishing of the past (Lowenthal 2006, Stanley 2006b, Stanley & Salter 2009); the partiality and agency not only of documents and their creators but also of archives, archivists and researchers (Milner 1999, Lowenthal 2006, Musson 2007, Prior 2004, 2008); the

incompleteness of records (Musson 2007); the vagaries of memory (Prescott 2008); the mutable effects of epistolarity (Stanley 2005, 2006a); inaccuracies (Grieg 2007); the “spurious claims that become folklore” (Speirs 2007); the inferential limitations imposed by self-censorship and archival silences (Speirs 2007, Johnson 2007); and, much theoretical discussion concerns the “limitations and deceptions of text as a medium in which to encapsulate human experience” (Prescott 2008: 33-4). As a result, archival research challenges the philosophical idea of objective truth in innumerable ways, and teasing out such issues enables me to explore the complexities involved, both at the time practically, and also now regarding interpretation.

I conclude that access to material is frequently restricted in ways outwith the control of the researcher; and also that, even where access is available, the documents themselves are interpretations and representations of events from which researchers must make selections for the purposes of study and analysis. Fitzmaurice (2002: 9) rightly proposes that “referential opacity and vagueness, informational gaps and inexplicitness all contribute to the challenge of reading... letters”. The letters I examine in later chapters were not written for the author of this thesis, nor its readers. Their meaning was “dynamic [and] occur[ed] in time” (Fitzmaurice 2002: 63, 72) and context, and later readers are unlikely to understand all the elliptical references that the writer assumes the addressee will comprehend. Also, “The process of interpretation can generate more than one meaning at a time” (Fitzmaurice 2002: 64), both for the intended addressee and for future readers of letters. Layers of interpretation or inference of non-intended meanings have a knock-on effect regarding the epistolary responses that follow and how these are interpreted by the intended addressee and future readers. As a result, my approach does not try to established historical ‘truths’, but to analyse the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of what people write, in the socio-historical context of the epistolary and social relationships these documents were written in. The “different perspectives, contradictions and complexities” (Warin et al 2007) within my data are an opportunity for fruitful analysis, rather than a methodological and epistemological obstacle to be overcome.

Contra much textbook positioning and teaching on the subject of social research, and in line with Evans (1997), Hammersley (2010: 553) notes that,

“research questions... need not be fixed or very closely defined especially at the beginning of the research, so that they may leave open a wide range of potentially relevant matters.”

The approach adopted in my research, of starting with broad themes concerning letters and networks, and using case studies of source material to tease out, develop and interrogate concepts, in is accord with this comment from Hammersley.



From the discussion in this section, I draw a number of conclusions that underpin my general research strategy. The first is that I cannot use the primary sources I am working with to uncover or recover some historical ‘truths’, nor can I recreate the networks I am analysing in their entirety. This is because, as Elton (1991: 73) states, “in historical enquiry... no knowledge can be total or finite”, and as Abrams (1982) points out, resurrecting the past in the present is an impossibility.

Secondly, my research will analyse whatever documentary material is extant, drawing justifiable boundaries around relevant sources for analysis, and will when using primary sources provide transcriptions which include misspellings, crossings out and other ‘bird in flight’ and ‘in the moment’ features (Stanley 2004, 2009, 2010a, 2010c, 2010d, 2011, Stanley et al 2013). In doing so I hope to reduce the possibility of the “mediations of the editor [becoming part of] the epistemological claim” (Cardell & Haggis 2011: 130). Also, some epistolary analysts guess at what letter-writers ‘probably’ meant and provide what they ‘probably’ (Porter 2004: 147) wrote in missing but alluded to letters, which are referred to by Allen (2011) as “shadow letters”. I reject this on both ethical and methodological grounds: the remaining documents should be respected and the words on the page dealt with, rather than ‘guesstimations’ of these. At the same time, all research necessarily interprets the words on the page:

“analysis of qualitative material is a necessarily subjective process capitalising on the researcher’s appreciation of the enormity, contingency and fragility of the signification. Indeed, one of the principal reasons for using this method is, precisely, to bring to light the meaning, richness and magnitude of the subjective experience of social life (Altheide and Johnson, 1994). Meaning can only be understood within a social context (Saussure, 1974), so the very notion of objectivity (i.e. the absence of interpretation) is necessarily omitted from the equation in qualitative research” (Attride-Stirling 2001: 385).

Thirdly and relatedly, my own processes of selection and representation unavoidably impact upon my interpretations and conclusions, and are a necessary “constructive activity” (Hammersley 2010: 557) because I cannot provide all of the relevant data, nor avoid interpretation. Providing detailed transcriptions, as (Hammersley 2010: 566) notes, allows plausible alternative interpretations to be assessed and put forward by readers. By providing what Hammersley (2010: 560) describes as “strict transcriptions”, I hope to attain transparency whilst acknowledging the inevitably constructionist aspects of all social research.

Fourthly, as a consequence I have adopted a research approach which combines epistemological and methodological aspects, known as ‘fractured foundationalism’

(Stanley & Wise 2006). This recognises the real and material nature of the world and events, and also that disjunctures or fractures can exist in interpretations and representations of these. In accordance with this, my methodological approach is consequently developed in a manner appropriate to the complexities of the epistolary materials I am working on and, by drawing boundaries around the material for analysis, I hope to do justice to these complexities “without being so complicated as to be meaningless” (Riles 2001:9) and to accept the many ways in which the extant data or records are incomplete or ambiguous. Elton (1991: 20) points out that historical evidence

“is necessarily confined to [what] survives or can be reconstructed...  
Historical study is not the study of the past but the study of present traces of the past’ ... The crucial fact is the present evidence, not the fact of past existence.”

This is central for me.

In Chapter Two, I go on to explore the ideas about letters and networks developed in this opening chapter in the analysis of the three different and differently sized, networks. As (Nesmith 2007: 3-4) indicates, letters are “active agents in creating what we perceive”. From the discussion in this chapter I am drawing on a number of important insights about the relation between letters and networks, and recognising that the size of the latter is likely to be important regarding letters and letterness.

Firstly, the content of letters influences the analytical and practical boundaries seen to delimit particular ‘configurations of people’. For example, in the next chapter, a wider network and reference to its members is used by two letter-writers, Constance Lytton and Edward Carpenter, to establish and strengthen a bond between them until the relationship could ‘stand alone’. This is both as a dyad (and their correspondence is dyadic) but also a relationship that was fundamentally inextricable from the wider pre-existing network of which it was part.

The next example in Chapter Two concerns the familial and friendship connections between Schreiner and Aletta Jacobs, Schreiner and Dorothy Von-Moltke, and between Jacobs, Von Moltke and various of the Rose-Innes family. The particular circumstances surrounding the formation of connections, as indicated by letter content, suggests that a sensible and practical analytical boundary can be placed around this configuration of people and their letters. The third example discussed concerns the letters and other documents of the Men and Women’s Club. This archival collection was analysed in its entirety, with a focus on particular topics relating to letters and networks suggested by an iterative reading of the letter content.

The character of these configurations as impacted by ‘size’ is discussed in Chapter Two. Firstly, as discussed above, decisions regarding boundaries inevitably influence subsequent analysis and ultimately what can be perceived from the source materials. However, this is not necessarily limiting and in fact, being responsive to the content of letters in setting boundaries is analytically crucial in understanding what ‘the network’ is, how it is formed and by whom, and also how, or if, it ends.

Secondly, the content of letters affects what can be perceived about social actors and how they are both represented and constructed by letters. This includes letters written to them, those written by them and also references to them in the letters of other network members. Totterdell et al (2008: 293) observe that “the attributes of individuals might contribute to the formation and structure of social networks”. Using the content of letters, I consider who the central figures within networks were and how this affected the epistolary conduct of people. In the chapters following Chapter Two, this will be pursued by considering the purpose of a network and what the various network members wanted to gain from connections to particular individuals within it. People often have more than one “type of... connection” (Spencer & Pahl 2006: 33, see also Davis & Carley 2008) and can fill numerous roles in a variety of contexts and the existence of roles within networks and the effects of these upon letters and networks will be considered later.

Thirdly, as discussed above, which letters are archived and accessible and by what people and groups they are written, obviously influences what can be known. This is not only in terms of what is written in letters, but also in terms of what happened to letters once they have been written and once they have reached their intended addressee, if indeed they ever did. This idea is developed in Chapter Four in the context of the Schreiner Hemming family archive, using this extensive collection of letters to explore and analyse what can be gleaned from them concerning the network and the various roles of people within it, and also why and how it came into being as an archival source.

In all of the three following chapters, I use letters to explore the formation of connections, brokering of ties and gatekeeping - regarding inclusion in and exclusion from particular networks and particular relationships within them - and how letters were deployed to these purposes. The content of letters suggest that considerable complex nuances exist, something I expand upon later, indicating that letters can shed analytical light on the strategies (both epistolary and otherwise) used in the formation, connections and dissolutions of networks.

As noted, and with a view to contributing new ideas and insights regarding social interactions, in the following chapter I consider three examples of Schreiner-related social

networks or “configurations of people” (Crow 2002: 8). There are interesting differences between them concerning: how Schreiner was affiliated to or involved in the network and its letters; why and how the network came into being; how individual members became affiliated to them; how connections were made and brokered within them; how and why the connections ended; and, how letters were used in all these regards. These matters are discussed regarding the number of people whose letters lie within the analytical boundaries suggested by the archival material. The size of a network has effects upon the conduct of actors within it and consequently the letters they write and the strategies deployed in these. Letters are also used strategically in the examples that follow to both increase or restrict access to networks.

### Does Size Matter?: Using Letters Qualitatively to Discuss Network Size

Simmel (1955[1922]) argued that the number of actors involved in a group greatly influenced the interaction that occurred between them, with triadic relationships opening up far greater possibilities than dyadic ones. Ritzer (1992: 167) proposes that "the increase in the size of the group or society increases individual freedom", with 'freedom' here referring to associational possibilities and those of movement across boundaries including cultural, ethnic and geographical ones. Similarly, for Farganis (1993: 140) an increase in group size will loosen the rigidity inherent in very small groups with "demarcation against others... softened through mutual relations and connections" creating greater flexibility and freedom.

However, in a dyadic relationship, whether face-to-face, epistolary or conducted by other means, each participant has control over how they construct and represent themselves and the relationship can be ended or decline without repercussions for a wider network. However, as Simmel (1955[1922]) points out, when network size increases to a triad and beyond, strategies can be deployed which affect the interactions of each of the composing dyads leading to competition, alliances, conflicts and so on.

In what follows I shall explore the question of 'does size matter?', using the content of letters to comment upon how and in what ways the size of a network can affect both the epistolary relationships involved and the letters associated with them. Consequently, the networks examined in this chapter are incremental in size. They range from: a dyadic correspondence, where just four letters span the entire relationship from its formation to the death of one of the letter-writers; to the letters of a small epistolary network established to circumvent disruptions in another network caused by censorship during World War I; to the correspondence of a discussion club which drew upon on a large and complex network of friends and family and whose relationships were further complicated by their roles in the context of the club.

Much of the literature relating to the size of networks pertains to methodological issues concerning the measurement and estimation of their size and connectivity (see for example Bernard et al 1990, Killworth et al 1990 and McCarty et al 2001). The purpose of what follows is not to use letters to measure network sizes or to estimate or gauge all connections between network members. Doing so, whilst potentially interesting, would, as Riles (2001) discusses, produce an analysis so densely interconnected as to be effectively meaningless. However, interesting work on network size (discussed below) suggests that

there may be links between network size and the frequency of contact between network members, the shifting emotional intensity of relationships, the means of communication used, and the nature of the relationships involved.

Relationships are dynamic entities and shift over time in terms of the frequency of contact, the types of connection involved and the emotional intensity existing between the people concerned. Roberts & Dunbar (2011: 439) suggest that ‘effort’ is required to maintain relationships and the frequency of contact or the time since the last contact between two people is often linked to levels of emotional intensity between them. Roberts & Dunbar (2011: 439) also note that frequency of contact is “likely to vary with the characteristics of the relationship partners and the wider social network in which the relationship is embedded”. In some cases, this may be more dependent on the respective positions of the actors concerned, such as kinship ties, than on frequency of contact (Mok et al 2007: 453). Whilst many studies focus on ‘significant ties’ from the ‘inner layers’ of networks, my analytical gaze is wider and avoids prejudging or imposing notions of significance. This is because I am interested in exploring whether network-specific particularities can be generalised to alternative contexts, and indeed whether these can be applied to networks more generally.

The methodological strategy of dividing networks into inner and outer layers can be analytically useful. Some research proposes that members of the ‘outer’ layers can be subdivided into inactive and active network members, with the latter defined by Roberts et al (2009: 138, see also Hill & Dunbar 2003, and Killworth et al 1990) as “alters that ego feels they have a personal relationship with, and make a conscious effort to keep in contact with... or alters whom ego has contacted within the last 2 years”. However, these three things do not necessarily go hand in hand. In line with Spencer & Pahl’s (2006: 45-47) argument that measurements of frequency of contact fail to “capture the nature of personal relationships”, in what follows changes in the frequency of epistolary contact (often interspersed with other forms of contact) is commented upon when it indicates something significant about network activity, although frequency in itself is not used as a proxy measurement of connectedness and significance, whether emotional or otherwise.

Roberts et al (2009), Roberts & Dunbar (2011) and Dunbar (2008) suggest that network sizes may be constrained by both cognitive and time related factors, claiming that the maintenance of high levels of emotional intensity requires an outlay of time and that there is an “upper limit on the number of relationships that can be maintained at a given level of emotional intensity” (Roberts & Dunbar 2011: 440, Wellman et al 1997, Zhou et al 2005). Any form of communication takes time. Not only do letters take time literally and

strategically to compose (as the drafts and re-drafts of political letters by Jan Christian Smuts noted in Chapter Three indicate), but they must also be paid for and in many cases discussed here, physically taken, or collected then taken, somewhere to be posted. They then take time to travel to their addressee and be delivered. Many letter-writers refer specifically to pressures of time in their letters - in terms of both having to “stop now as I have a few more letters to write”<sup>30</sup> and “writing in haste to catch the post”.<sup>31</sup> Given the frequency of explicit references to time in letters, the time expended on the act of writing and sending may therefore be seen as contributing to the balance of reciprocity in an epistolary relationship.

Time constraints may therefore place practical limits on how many people it is possible to realistically maintain relationships with, with Roberts et al (2009) and Roberts & Dunbar (2011) arguing that the greater the number of connections an individual has, the longer the time that will elapse between contact, and therefore the less emotional intensity that will exist between the connected people. However, many of the letters read in the course of my research indicate that frequency of contact was not necessarily equated with depth of feeling or emotional intensity and that evaluation of this was relationship-specific. For example, on 5 October 1885, Schreiner wrote to Havelock Ellis “Don’t worry, please, if I don’t write much, you are not far from me even when I don’t write”<sup>32</sup> and to Edward Carpenter on 6 April 1888 “I felt so [unreadable] near you all day yesterday, though we didn’t talk”.<sup>33</sup> In line with Mok et al (2007: 434), such comments seem to indicate that strong emotional ties, rather than decaying without frequent contact, may not require as much contact and are more dependent on the perception of mutual affection, respect or admiration. Stanley (2004: 209) defines an epistolary exchange as a “correspondence [that] persist[s] over time”, and certainly letters analysed in what follows suggest that correspondences can endure over long periods and extended epistolary silences without any evidence of the ‘decay’ in emotional attachment.

As Mok et al (2007: 434) note in relation to telephone calls, the same ‘effort’ is required to write a letter irrespective of geographical distance. However, depending on the socio-historical context, the financial costs and the levels of behind the scenes coordination required to bridge this distance may vary. Also, whilst face-to-face encounters are seen by some at the ‘gold standard’ of relationship maintenance, I reject this, given the fact that ‘non-face’ communications such as letters are always volitional, and so such contacts may, as

<sup>30</sup> LB to WH, 16 December 1951, UCT.

<sup>31</sup> See for example OS to Fan Schreiner, 15 January 1902, UCT, OSLO transcription, amongst others.

<sup>32</sup> OS to HE, 5 October 1885, Cronwright-Schreiner (1924: 83), OSLO. After writing his Life and Letters of Olive Schreiner, Cronwright-Schreiner destroyed the letters which he had sourced and selectively edited. See <http://www.oliveschreiner.org/vre?view=collections&colid=137&letterid=125>

<sup>33</sup> OS to EC, 6 April 1888, SA, OSLO transcription.

Roberts & Dunbar (2011: 441) note, “offer a better indication of the true strength of the relationship”. Geographical proximity and distance also need to be considered in the relevant socio-historical context. Advancements in transport and in communication technologies such as Skype means that contemporary society has a different conception and experience of ‘distance’ and ‘separation’ than that held by the people whose letters are discussed here, leading to the idea that such advances have led if not to the “death of distance” (Cairncross 1997) than at least to its “diminished relevance... for maintaining social ties” (Mok et al 2007: 431).

Burt (2000: 2) suggests that new relationships develop more frequently and faster in networks where there is spatial proximity, due to greater access and opportunity and increased potential for interpersonal attraction. Using the term distance as ‘degrees of separation’ rather than in a geographic sense, Burt also suggests that the existence of mutual friends has similar effects. Whilst these attributes may contribute to the potential for relationships to be formed, these factors are not causal. Later in the chapter I explore how issues of proximity and distance affect networks and the epistolary communications between network members, suggesting that absence and presence are interpreted by letter-writers and addressees within particular epistolary relationships, in a relationship-specific interpretational way.

Burt (2000: 19) argues that a high level of embeddedness in an interconnected social network can slow the ‘decay’ of relationships, by which he means the tendency for relationships to weaken and end. The term ‘decay’ and statements such as “some of the relations observed today are gone next year” (Burt 2000: 2, my emphasis) are misleading, particularly when considered in relation to his suggestion that “the simple act of asking someone for information creates a tie between asker and responder that can survive past the information exchange” (Burt 2000: 2). It is analytically more useful when conceptualising the cessation of interaction or contact between two people, to see this as ‘disengagement’<sup>34</sup> rather than the disappearance of a tie. Two people who once had a relationship do not revert to being two people with no connection – their previous interactions have irreversibly altered this.

Although all interactions and communications are subject to the social norms and conventions of the time in which they occur, the volitional nature of friendship and letter-writing means that letters can provide a good indication of who does and does not wish to be involved in a given epistolary network. Whilst time constraints are important, it is not the

<sup>34</sup> Burt (2000: 2) himself uses the term ‘disengage’ when describing a ‘selection process’ where actors will ‘disengage’ from connections with negative ramifications in order to establish more positive connections with other contacts.



case that with infinite time all connections would be maintained with equal ‘effort’ and so letters can offer a guide to the sought and the volitional. At the same time, unlike friendship ties, kinship ties are inherited and non-volitional. According to Burt (2000) kinship ties are less prone to decay. Also, Roberts et al (2009) and Roberts & Dunbar (2011) suggest that being embedded in a large kinship network may constrain friendship ties. Roberts et al (2009) further suggest that kinship ties are powerful bonds which operate over and above any personal relationships and/or friendship that also exist between two people and the

“high level of ‘structural embeddedness’ in kin networks means that even if two individual kin do not maintain their dyadic relationship, they will still be linked and hear important news about each other through the wider kin network” (Roberts et al, 2009: 139).

In what now follows I shall use the ideas discussed above concerning letters, networks and network size in relation to the three epistolary networks noted earlier. The first discussed is the dyadic epistolary relationship between Constance Lytton and Edward Carpenter. Lytton (and by inference, Carpenter) used references to mutual acquaintances in letters to do things, in particular by invoking Olive Schreiner. I now move on to discuss this particular epistolary network in detail and use in-depth analysis of letter content to tease out and develop ideas regarding epistolary and social interactions. These ideas will be carried forward in subsequent chapters to examine whether they are generalizable to other contextual circumstances.

**“Correspondences with a stranger can also help establish a connection...”<sup>35</sup>:  
Constance Lytton’s letters to Edward Carpenter**

The first example of a Schreiner-related network for discussion is composed of just four letters from Constance Lytton to Edward Carpenter and is an example of the smallest possible configuration of people, two. Whilst this correspondence is dyadic, and a network has been said to consist of a minimum of a triad (Crow 2002), closer examination of these letters indicates that this is misleading and that the formation and development of this relationship relies on and also invokes a wider network of mutual connections. The network and reference to key individuals within it, particularly Schreiner, are used strategically to ‘do things’ within the letters around the epistolary exchanges and the changing relationship between Carpenter and Lytton. References to this wider network dwindle as the relationship between them became more established,

<sup>35</sup> Thomas & Znaniecki (1958 [1918-20]): 144.

which again suggests something interesting about relationships and social bonds over time including in relation to letters and their import.

The first letter from Lytton to Carpenter was written in January 1909, in response to an ‘out of the blue’ letter from him. This letter, and the strategic references to other network members in those that follow, constitute something akin to a ‘network intervention’, described by Valente (2012: 49) as “purposeful efforts to use social networks... to... achieve desirable outcomes”, in this instance, connection formation and negotiation. The fourth and last letter is dated February 1917. Between these dates the letter-writers had also met face-to-face. I am interested in how the letters point to “the dynamic aspects of relationships and how they develop and change over time” (Adams & Allan 1998: 2). Only the four letters from Lytton to Carpenter survive and they indicate that, despite their not having met prior to the opening of the correspondence, they had numerous mutual acquaintances, and many shared social and political interests.

These letters provide interesting examples of the artful and strategic devices employed in letter-writing. They also permit consideration of the wider network of interconnections that existed between the letter-writer and addressee which facilitated, mediated and strengthened the relationship between them. I read them as being written very much from within a network, the existence of which helped to form a connection between different nodes within it. And so, summarising the argument to follow, there were in fact three parties to this correspondence, the letter-writer, the addressee, and the mutual network connections that linked them. The Lytton/Carpenter letters also provide examples of how letter-writing in a given context can change over time and of the impact of events on the epistolary relationship and letter content.

### **Lytton and Carpenter: Confined by and Escaping From Convention**

The Edward Carpenter (1844-1929)<sup>36</sup> collection is housed in the Sheffield City Archives and contains Carpenter’s personal library, his works and manuscripts, notebooks and letters from

<sup>36</sup> The biographical and academic literature on Carpenter is immense and an extensive annotated secondary bibliography collated by Brown and covering the period 1883-1987 was published in 1989 (Brown 1989a, 1989b). The most recent and notable publications are those by Brown (1989a, 1989b, 1990), Crosby (2006[1905]), Maiwald (2002), Moncur-Sime (2010), Rowbotham (1987, 2008), Rowbotham & Weeks (1977) and Tsuzuki (1981, 2005). Like many other writers on Carpenter, Brown (1989a, 1989b) claims that Carpenter’s considerable influence was mainly confined to his lifetime and until the 1970s he was effectively forgotten. Brown (1989a) attributes the revival of interest in Carpenter to the publication of Forster’s *Maurice* in 1971, which included a note referring to the influence of Carpenter and of the author’s visit to Millthorpe in 1913 (Stape 1998), an often frequented retreat for many of Carpenter’s friends, acquaintances and “like-minded radicals and intellectuals” (Brown 1989a).

friends and publishers (Sheffield City Council 2011). My strategy in the time available was to focus on Carpenter's extensive network of female correspondents, involving his mother, sisters and a number of close female friends including Olive Schreiner, rather than to attempt to read the entire collection. Lytton's letters<sup>37</sup> stood out for me because of her closeness to Schreiner and because just four letters constitute a neatly bounded and analytically interesting small-scale example for in-depth analysis. In effect, these letters provide the material for a longitudinal study of their entire relationship interspersed with 'silences' including those occasioned by face-to-face encounters. While both Lytton and Carpenter were close friends of Schreiner and knew of each other through her and other mutual connections, they had not met when their correspondence started. However, references to Schreiner and to a lesser extent other network members are used in their letters to develop their own relationship. What is particularly interesting about the letters is that they somewhat paradoxically 'stand alone', offering insight into how this dyadic relationship was formed, developed and ended, but despite this are also inseparable from the network of which they form part.

Born in 1844 to an upper-middle class family, Edward Carpenter came to reject Victorian social conventions and adopt advanced liberal ideals. In 1877 he formed an epistolary friendship with the famed American poet Walt Whitman and corresponded with him regarding living and working conditions in manufacturing towns. After developing an interest in the work of art historian and social commentator John Ruskin, Carpenter took lodgings in a farmer's cottage with Albert Fearnough and his family, and he and Fearnough eventually became lovers. During this time Carpenter wrote perhaps his most famous work Towards Democracy, which was published in 1883 and extensively read and admired by like-minded radical intellectuals.

Carpenter was seen as a pro-Boer during the South African War of 1899-1902. He also supported the Women's Freedom League and later had links to pacifist organisations such as the No-Conscription Fellowship. Carpenter admired working class men and was buried in 1929 in a grave with his long-term partner, George Merrill, who was born in a Sheffield slum and who, amongst other manual jobs, had worked as a labourer (Tsuzuki 1981).

Of all the "well-known figures" (including Constance Lytton) listed by Rowbotham (2008: 2) in Carpenter's "enormous network of friends and acquaintances", Olive Schreiner's name appears first. As Myall (1998: 61) notes, much of the literature on Lytton

<sup>37</sup> See Balfour (1925) for a selected edition of Lytton's letters.

concerns her suffrage activities and related imprisonments<sup>38</sup> focusing in particular on her assuming the disguise of a working class woman ‘Jane Wharton’ when arrested for suffrage activities, in order to expose the class discrimination of the penal system. Lytton visited relations in South Africa in 1892 and while there formed a life-long friendship with Olive Schreiner, with Schreiner (1911) later admiringly dedicating her Woman and Labour to Lytton. For a long period Lytton devoted herself to the care of her mother and she remained unmarried. Through her association with the Esperance Club, which challenged the conditions endured by girls in London’s dress making trade and was influenced by the socialist ideas of, amongst others, Edward Carpenter, Lytton established relationships with Mary Neal and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence who were active members of the WSPU. As her letters indicate, these women greatly influenced Lytton’s views on women’s suffrage, and her emergent dedication to the WSPU left friends, family and others she came in contact with “awe struck” (Mulvey-Roberts 2000: 159-160). Her involvement provided an “escape from the constraints imposed upon aristocratic women” (Purvis & Holton 2000: 180, see also Simmel 1955[1922]: 179-184), with the conventions of the time something Carpenter too found constraining. Mulvey-Roberts (2000) draws analogies between the societal imprisonment faced by Lytton, her four actual incarcerations in Holloway, Newcastle and Walton gaols between 1909 and 1911<sup>39</sup> as a result of militant suffragette activities for the WSPU, and her eventual physical imprisonment in a partially paralysed body after a severe stroke in 1912 when she came under her mother’s care. The metaphor of imprisonment pervades almost all writing on Lytton, with Myall (1998: 70) for example claiming that the suffragette movement allowed Lytton to “throw off the shackles of her old life and prove to herself and to others that she was capable of achieving much more”. However, the imprisonments, hunger-striking and the force feedings that ‘Wharton’ received took their toll on Lytton’s already precarious health. Lytton had a series of heart seizures between 1910 and 1911 and a stroke in 1912 which caused partial paralysis (Thomas 2003).

In what now follows, I discuss three points of particular analytical interest that emerged from in-depth analysis of the four extant letters from Lytton to Carpenter (dated 17 January 1909, 26 June 1909, 9 March 1910 and 11 February 1917 respectively). These concern: in what ways Lytton and Carpenter used strategic reference to mutual connections to position themselves not as an isolated dyad but as part of an existing network; the effects of letters - which are gifts in themselves – on the balance of reciprocity when they are

<sup>38</sup> See for example Crawford (1999), Holton (1996), Mulvey-Roberts (2000), Purvis & Holton (2000).

<sup>39</sup> See Myall (1998), Purvis (1995a) and Thomas (2003).

accompanied by further gifts; and, how events, both within the relationship and in the wider context, affect letters and what is written in them.

### **The Strategic Use of Connections: “most of all... Olive Schreiner”<sup>40</sup>**

Shared connections imply the existence of common interests, facilitate access to another person, and implicitly carry some guarantees concerning suitability. Even if Carpenter and Lytton had disliked each other, it is likely that the existence of so many mutual connections (in addition to social conventions of politeness and acceptable behaviour) would have constrained their expression of this. As well as positively influencing the formation of connections, networks can constrain members through implicit or explicit pressure to maintain the status quo and avoid negative impact on the network’s many interconnected members. Whilst other people in this network may have had such influence, the central figure in terms of being the strongest named connection between the two is Olive Schreiner. It is worth noting, that I am using the term ‘central figure’ here in the sense of a person who is ‘a fixed point of reference’ and seen as key to, or at the middle of, concerns and not in the SNA sense of the actor who “can be reached by the most people” (Wetherell 1998: 125). Although Schreiner is in a literal sense peripheral to this relationship, she is made central, at the outset at least, by both Carpenter and Lytton through repeated references to her, until such time as the relationship was more established and stood on its own without Schreiner being invoked in support. This small group of letters suggests that Schreiner and a wider network were instrumental in forming the connection but ceased to be essential once the relationship became established.

In her first letter to Carpenter, dated 17 January 1909, Lytton thanked him “for your “invading” letter” with her quotation marks around “invading” suggesting that Carpenter has used this word within and regarding his own opening letter. In doing so, Carpenter tipped a nod to conventions and politeness. However, by writing the letter without the customary formal introduction from a mutual acquaintance he ultimately rejected the “smug” conventions of the period (Rowbotham 1987: 41-2). In her reply, Lytton listed a number of mutual acquaintances:

“I have asked every likely fellow-admirer – ‘Do you know Edward Carpenter’? I think these are among my friends who do – Mr Fifield, Mr Broadbent (Manchester) Betty Montgomery, Mary Neal, Mrs Pethick Lawrence ^ Mrs Sydney Webb^ - and most of all, of course, Olive Schreiner.”<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> CL to EC, 17 January 1909, SA.

<sup>41</sup> CL to EC, 17 January 1909, SA.

It is likely that Carpenter had prior knowledge of Lytton from these, and potentially more, third parties and knew of her admiration of his work (which she widely expressed) and of the existence of shared interests, values and beliefs. As such, Carpenter likely had good grounds to believe that there was little real risk of her being offended by his ‘invasion’. In fact, Lytton refers to her own frustration with the indirect brokering conventions of the time, writing that she had wanted “to go & see you or write to you with the help of one of these friends”<sup>42</sup> (my emphasis), but that this was a “cold-blooded affair”.<sup>43</sup> Mutual connections to and knowledge of Lytton through these people eased the way for Carpenter to write an “invading” letter. But still references to Olive Schreiner “most of all” are repeatedly used to do things in the letters in terms of establishing and strengthening the bond. These references support Adams & Allan’s (1998: 2) argument that:

“Relationships have a broader basis than the dyad alone; they develop and endure within a wider complex of interacting influences which help to give each relationship its shape and structure. If we are to understand fully the nature of friendships, or for that matter of other personal ties, these relationships need to be interpreted from a perspective which recognises the impact of this wider complex, rather from one which treats the dyad in isolation.”

Adams & Allan (1998: 3) also helpfully suggest that “these contexts impinge directly on the emergent construction of the relationships”, and certainly the references to Schreiner and questions or statements relating to her are used artfully and strategically to aid continuance of the correspondence and create sympathy.

Lytton’s use of the prefix ‘Yes’ in her comment “Yes, if only she could come here for a little. The prison house of her bad health seems at times very cruel and separating”<sup>44</sup> implies that she was responding directly to a question or sentiment expressed in Carpenter’s ‘invading’ letter concerning Schreiner. This suggests that Carpenter has also used Schreiner in his opening letter to reinforce the existence of common bonds. Given the events about to unfold in her own life, Lytton’s reference to the “prison house of her bad health” seem prophetic.

Lytton also explicitly asks Carpenter “has Olive sent you her paper on ‘Closer Union’ (in the ‘Transvaal Leader’)?” with the familiar – and implicitly mutual – use of Schreiner’s first name strongly reinforcing their familiarity, like-mindedness and closeness to Schreiner, and thereby mediating the relationship and opening up opportunities for further dialogue between them. Schreiner was also influential in the formation of Lytton’s

<sup>42</sup> CL to EC, 17 January 1909, SA.

<sup>43</sup> CL to EC, 17 January 1909, SA.

<sup>44</sup> CL to EC, 17 January 1909, SA.

friendship between Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, with Lytton establishing a shared interest “over an Olive Schreiner talk the first evening we were together”. It is clear from these examples that Carpenter and Lytton stressed their mutual connection with Schreiner at the outset of their interactions. While Spencer & Pahl (2006: 191) note that “people themselves may not always be readily aware of the overall set of social relationships in which they are embedded”, there is little sign of this here, indeed the reverse. Lytton’s list of mutual acquaintances does not so much reveal “hidden solidarities” (Spencer & Pahl 2006: 192) as emphasise the known ties between them.

These shared and known ties meant that Lytton and Carpenter had, albeit vicariously, ‘known’ each other for some time before their correspondence opened. This, combined with Carpenter’s apparently well-received letter, its accompanying gift of a pamphlet (discussed later), and his apparent reference to Schreiner, may have contributed to Lytton feeling disposed to propose a face-to-face meeting in her closing sentences:

“Thank you for your “invading” letter.  
I may be in London for a few days in February & for a longer time in May. Do you ever go there?  
Yours sincerely  
Constance Lytton.”<sup>45</sup>

In her first letter Lytton described her transition from battling with the policy of the WSPU to becoming a “whole hogger”. By her second letter of 26 June 1909, Lytton had endured an imprisonment for her activities in this regard. Lytton had also received the “delightful news” that Carpenter was to give “valuable services to our cause” and speak at a public meeting “for Woman Suffrage”. It is unclear whether Lytton had received this news in a letter from Carpenter or had gained it from another source. However, she commented:

“It is profoundly irritating that I should be out of England when you are speaking for Woman Suffrage. I should have made a point of being there to hear you, & perhaps get in a word face to face after the meeting, had I been anywhere within reach. Please do send me a report of your speech if there is one that is at all worthy.”

This reference to meeting face-to-face, and a later reference to the time “since we met”<sup>46</sup> in her third letter dated 9 March 1910, suggests that Lytton and Carpenter’s relationship was solely an epistolary one for some time, with a face-to-face element added at a point between June 1909 and March 1910.

Again, the second letter uses strategic devices references to Schreiner to mediate the relationship between writer and addressee:

<sup>45</sup> CL to EC, 17 January 1909, SA.

<sup>46</sup> CL to EC, 9 March 1910, SA.

“I felt sure of your sympathy throughout my recent doings which was a great help for it is wonderful how many friends are “offended” by the mere fact of one’s having been in prison, quite regardless of why one was sent there.

Olive Schreiner, too, is a very staunch supporter.

Prison was so amazingly interesting... Since my release, however, I have found it difficult to pull round to the quite normal, and desperate & very ineffective attempts to make speeches in public have taxed my [*unreadable*] to the uttermost.

But – as you rightly say – a good fight is refreshing...

I have re-read your Prisons, P & Punishment<sup>47</sup> since being in Holloway and find it even better than before...”<sup>48</sup>

Given that Lytton and Carpenter had not met by this point, the phrase “as you rightly say – a good fight is refreshing” may indicate that Lytton is citing a letter received from Carpenter. However, this is unclear. It may be cited from another source, including being paraphrased from Carpenter’s published or unpublished work. Even if cited directly from a letter from Carpenter, it may not have been written in the context of Lytton’s imprisonment or intended to be read as such. Lytton’s assurances concerning Carpenter’s sympathy can therefore variously be read as hopeful, persuasive, as a need for reassurance, or, a way of reinforcing her connection with him around her certainty of his support.

If Lytton viewed her emergent friendship with Carpenter as significant, his approval may have been important to her and provided meaning for her political actions and their consequences (see Spencer & Pahl 2006: 45). Given Carpenter’s strong commitment to addressing social inequalities and injustices, it seems likely that he was sympathetic with Lytton and, in relation to the mounting tension “between moderates and militants”, Rowbotham (2008: 323) discusses how Carpenter typically tried to “rise above faction” but also felt “sympathy for the young militants in the [WSPU]”. Also, from a position of hindsight, the knowledge that a friendly correspondence continued until 1917 suggests that Carpenter was not “offended”. Through her political actions, more than just her imprisonment, Lytton was breaking out of the idle, powerless and unfulfilling prison of upper-class convention that Carpenter saw the “Lady” of modern England to be confined within (Geoghegan 2003: 514). Carpenter’s “share[d]... attitudes, values and beliefs” with Lytton were likely important in the forging and maintenance of mutual respect, admiration and a relationship (Spencer & Pahl 2006: 180).

In Lytton’s letter the sentence “Olive Schreiner, too, is a very staunch supporter” is separated into what is effectively a paragraph on its own. This highlights the significance

<sup>47</sup> Carpenter, Edward. (1905) *Prison Police and Punishment: An Inquiry Into the Causes and Treatment of Crime and Criminals*. London: Fifield.

<sup>48</sup> CL to EC, 26 June 1909, SA.



placed upon Schreiner's approval. Also, the use of "too" in the sentence is implicitly to be read as 'in addition to you, Edward Carpenter' and is an interesting way of reaffirming the bond between three friends, two of whom had never met. If, however, Lytton intended the 'too' more tentatively, the implications of the sentence/paragraph become more nuanced and Lytton could be implying that if Carpenter was not 'staunch' in his support then he would be at odds with Schreiner. Whatever way it was intended or was read, the recurrence of Schreiner's name to reaffirm their connection is interesting in terms of maintaining epistolary relationships and connections and it highlights her importance for both of them.

### **Gifts Within Gifts: Reciprocity and Subjective Values**

Drawing on the work of Mauss (1954), Strathern (1988) and Godelier (1996), Stanley (2011) has theorised the system of the epistolary gift and of letter exchange as being characterised by giving, receiving and reciprocating. Letters, whether implicitly or explicitly, embody and possess something of the letter-writer and generate a felt social obligation on the part of the addressee to reciprocate. However, this is impacted by the particular people involved and is not a quantifiable one-for-one exchange. An epistolary relationship involving correspondence is at basis a gift relationship, whereby letters are seen to embody the letter-writers and used to establish bonds and maintain social relations.

In addition to the reciprocal gift exchange aspect of epistolary relationships, the value of letters as gifts and judgements concerning balances or imbalances of reciprocity in correspondences are sometimes based by those involved in the exchange on their length, frequency and 'depth' of content, in terms of such things as intellectual or emotional weight as opposed to just 'small talk' of the 'keeping in touch' kind.

However, judgements concerning the value of letters by those in the exchange are more frequently of a subjective nature. These judgements are based on the correspondents having shared knowledge of each other, the 'rules' of their particular relationship and their circumstances at any given moment in time. Equilibrium in the 'value' of individual letters is therefore also part of reciprocal gift exchange and must be maintained and negotiated to maintain balance in the relationship. To complicate this further, many letters are also accompanied by or enclose gifts, such as newspaper cuttings, locks of hair, pressed flowers, photographs, books, money and so on. Whilst the 'value' of these is not necessarily quantifiable, the Lytton/Carpenter correspondence is interesting in that both material gifts such as pamphlets, and implicit gifts such as the obvious and considerable effort expended in the act of letter-writing, are 'enclosed'. These are used to strengthen and maintain balance in

the gift basis of the epistolary exchange and to support the establishment and maintenance of the relationship between them, with some examples discussed below.

A foreknowledge of shared values (and indeed also rejected ones) may account for Carpenter feeling at liberty to send Lytton, the daughter of an Earl, a pamphlet criticising the aristocracy without fear of causing offence. Carpenter's letter and accompanying pamphlet were used to open the epistolary acquaintance and Lytton's reply and subsequent letters indicate that the exchange of literary gifts, in addition to that of the letter itself, was recurrent. These gifts were used not only to facilitate initiating the relationship, but also to re-commence it following periods of apparently amicable silence.

Lytton's first letter opens with:

“A second day shall not go by before I thank you for your letter & your pamphlet. It was kind of you to send them both. For several years past, ever since your books have vivified literature to me – it was a most hated thing before – I have asked every likely fellow-admirer – ‘Do you know Edward Carpenter?’”

and later continues

“If you will let me, I will write you a longer letter soon and tell you how I first grew towards your books & what they have meant to me. Some exceptional things are on for me just now which fill my days very full, so I must wait for this pleasure...”

Your pamphlet on our aristocracy & H of Lords<sup>49</sup> calls out my agreement more than anything I have read on the subject. Your handling of the possible reform of the H of Lords expands my own views – as ^does^ all that you ~~right~~ ^write^ - with the sense of something real, tangible & to the point, in the highest sense rational. My least sympathy with you – tho' at all points it is great – is over the opening accusations...”

Lytton reciprocated Carpenter's gift of a letter and pamphlet by responding with constructive criticism. Perhaps feeling these comments lacking in sufficient depth, she emphasised that she would take the time and trouble to provide more - once her brain had “hew[n] out new cells in which to harbour the unaccustomed stuff” and produced some “new intelligence” allowing her to “interpret them with more acuteness”. This and her comment that she “had nothing to offer that would make acquaintanceship an intercourse” suggest a certain intellectual deference to Carpenter and imply a perceived inequality on her part in the exchange with each other. Such expressions may be read as heartfelt, modest or simply polite, but the motivation behind them can be known only to the writer

<sup>49</sup> Carpenter, Edward. (1908) ‘British Aristocracy and the House of Lords.’ *Albany Review* (April). London: Fifield.

Although claiming that “Except for one or two of his longer later life poems, my father’s writings have not appealed to me”, lines of poetry that Lytton cites as being reminiscent of Christabel Pankhurst’s personality are from her father’s work. Lytton encloses a miniature “Treasury” of these poems, published by their mutual acquaintance the publisher Arthur Fifield, as a gift for Carpenter. Carpenter was himself a poet but less widely known than the Earl of Lytton and her comments may indicate her greater appreciation of Carpenter’s work. Fifield had published Carpenter’s Prisons, Police and Punishment in 1905 and at the time of her writing was publishing a pamphlet of Lytton’s “on the suffrage”, highlighting another shared area of interest.

There are indications of more nuanced gift giving and the perceived value of these in Lytton’s second letter. Although Carpenter does not appear to have enclosed anything material with the letter to which Lytton’s is responding, she seems to perceive Carpenter’s “valuable service to our cause” in his intention to “speak... for Woman Suffrage” as a future ‘gift’. Also, Lytton refers to the fresh insight afforded her by re-reading his “Prisons, P & Punishment since being in Holloway” in the light of her own prison experience. Her gratitude appears to have created a perceived imbalance in terms of reciprocity which Lytton corrected by referring Carpenter to work she perceives to be of worth, namely Emmeline Pethick Lawrence’s “extremely fine speech... made after her release now published as a pamphlet “The faith that is in us”<sup>50</sup> to be had from The Woman’s Press 4 Clements Inn. W.C. Strand for 1d.”<sup>51</sup>

Lytton’s shorter third letter in its postscript declines with regret an invitation from Carpenter on the grounds of her health. Another literary gift is exchanged by Lytton enclosing “some printed telling about my last imprisonment”,<sup>52</sup> which she thought Carpenter would find interesting and therefore ‘valuable’. This gift had personal value for Lytton because her personal suffering had generated these “tellings”, with her imprisonment part of a chain of events started by her making friends with WSPU members “over an Olive Schreiner talk” and ending with the collapse of her health, as revealed over the course the letters.

The last of the four letters is dated 11 February 1917 and was written seven years after the third. This letter is typed, not handwritten like the other three, although the signature is Lytton’s own. From the characteristic use of the abbreviation “altho” (and “tho” in previous letters) it is likely that Lytton typed this herself. But the fact that it is not written by

<sup>50</sup> Pethick Lawrence, Emmeline. (1908) *The Faith That is in Us: The New Crusade*. London: The Women’s Press.

<sup>51</sup> CL to EC, 26 June 1909, SA.

<sup>52</sup> CL to EC, 9 March 1910, SA.

hand is indicative of the decline of Lytton's health and the effects of a stroke on her physical capacities. The details of this letter suggest that after a considerable break in their epistolary and social relationship of somewhere between five and seven years, Carpenter had broken a lengthy but amicable 'silence' by sending Lytton a letter and another literary gift, his pamphlet "Never Again". It had been some months since Lytton received this, and her letter is a 'thank you', an apology for the delay in writing, and also an explanation of her life and health since they had last communicated:

"I received your pamphlet "Never Again"<sup>53</sup> & have read it many times. It was exceedingly kind of you to send it to me but I know you will forgive me for not thanking you before. I had a stroke five years ago & altho' much better now I have relapses from time to time. The last was in September & from then until quite lately I have written as little as possible. "Never Again" is refreshing to read. How admirably you summarise at the end the vision of after the war... Thank you again & again for sending it to me. Yours sincerely & with great admiration Constance Lytton. [signed by hand, rest typed]"<sup>54</sup>

Although there are no explicit references or allusions in these letters to other letters having been written to Carpenter by Lytton, it is not possible to know with certainty whether there are others which have not survived. However, the inclusion of "I had a stroke five years ago" above strongly suggests that they had not corresponded within that time period at least. As Spencer & Pahl (2006: 56) note, "there can be a sense of continuing presence when there is little current contact", with infrequency of contact not necessarily diminishing the value placed on a particular relationship. It is unclear whether Carpenter in sending his anti-war pamphlet sought to re-activate an 'expired' friendship, or whether this was just a politeness of the 'keeping in touch' kind. However, the warmth of Lytton's response and the obvious effort she had exerted to reply and to sign the letter implies that, either way, she continued to welcome and value the contact, with there being a sense of the "pick up where you left off" (Spencer & Pahl 2006: 74) about her reply.

## Events, Letters and Networks

Adams (1998: 157) claims that until recently it was relatively unusual "for a relationship to develop between people without them being initially physically co-present".

<sup>53</sup> Carpenter, Edward. (1916) *Never Again!: A Protest and a Warning Addressed to the People's of Europe*. London: George Allen.

<sup>54</sup> CL to EC, 11 February 1917, SA.

However, there are many epistolary exchanges which show that the letter-writers concerned developed an intimate correspondence with each other before having met face-to-face or indeed, whilst never meeting (Ellison 1999). Lytton and Carpenter's relationship developed from the epistolary, to the face-to-face and epistolary; and then reverted back to the epistolary again. This affected what was written and how, with the third letter being shorter, less formal and more openly friendly. The phrase "since we met" shows that Carpenter and Lytton had added a face-to-face dimension to their previously exclusively epistolary relationship. They were as a consequence, sufficiently at ease with each other for Carpenter to have invited her to stay with him and for her to reply that she would have liked to.

The ripple effects of Lytton's involvement in the suffragette movement are also evident over the course of the four letters. The first letter describes Lytton's first meeting with Emmeline Pethick Lawrence and Annie and Jessie Kenney and how she became a "whole hogger".<sup>55</sup> Written just a few months after Lytton's imprisonment in Holloway, the second letter is almost exclusively concerned with Lytton's suffrage activities and notes the growing concerns of both the WSPU and Lytton's mother regarding her being "again in a deputation just yet".<sup>56</sup> It is implicit that these concerns are for her health, but perhaps for her mother, also for her reputation, which Lytton indicated now had "prison taint" amongst unnamed friends, writing that:

"Prison was so amazingly interesting... my mind was on the acutest alert the whole time and my flimsy body did not strike at the considerable hardships of the life in the way I had thought wd be inevitable. Even the want of sleep which in ordinary life wrecks me at once seemed to do but little harm to one there. Since my release, however, I have found it difficult to pull round to the quite normal, and desperate & very ineffective attempts to make speeches in public have taxed my [*unreadable*] to the uttermost.

But – as you rightly say – a good fight is refreshing, and my dry bones have taken a new life since I went in for this sort of game. It is the first time in my life that there has ever seemed to be any use for me & the sensation is wondrously invigorating...

But with the women there... In Holloway we had only to look at the faces to see that as the great bulk of the prisoners were undoubtedly strugglers, against evil of a more than average force, they would probably survive even with the additional prison taint [*unreadable*] to handicap their lives.

The attempts of the "charities" to cope with this prison taint after it has been deliberately imposed - the parsons - & all the goody goody atmosphere sandwiched between barbarities are simply revolting.

But there were lots of human beings, thank God, amongst the prison officials, and when anyone is decently kind without hypocrisy one feels ready to die for them."<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> CL to EC, 17 January 1909, SA.

<sup>56</sup> CI to EC, 26 June 1909, SA.

<sup>57</sup> CL to EC, 26 June 1909, SA.

There are frequent references to the body and the life-course in this letter, including her comments that her body is ‘flimsy’ and she has still not ‘pulled round’, but also that Lytton she was invigorated by being of “use” for the first time in her life. These comments are foreboding in health terms and her subsequent third letter, written nine months later, shows that a drastic decline in her health had occurred:

“It was a great delight to get your friendly letter tho’ it comes at a tantalising moment when I have for the moment to deny myself the acceptance of your plans.

Since my last imprisonment I have collapsed to a certain extent physically. I managed to hang on until I had both spoken & written a certain amount of my experiences & interviewed a good number of people. Then I was put to bed ^here^ where I have mostly been till now, newspapers letters & friends all disallowed.

I go back to Hertfordshire tomorrow where I am to be more or less invalided for another month or so. After that I shall hope very much to see you. I should like most enormously to go & stay with you later on. I should like to tell you some of my more recent prison experiences.

I have read no more of your books since we met – first because of unduly much suffrage travelling & speechifying & now because of illness. Hope to do so soon. They are the most life giving to me of any books I know.”<sup>58</sup>

The aftermath of Lytton’s political activities and forced feedings while imprisoned is implicit in this letter. Carpenter is likely to have known in broad terms what had happened to Lytton from mutual connections and potentially also from media sources. This is the first of the letters not to refer to Schreiner or other mutual connections, and it may be that the friendship had by this time developed beyond the need to draw upon third parties for affirmation.

Lytton’s last (typed) letter to Carpenter of 11 February 1917 comments on her stroke “five years ago” and her “relapses from time to time”. There is, however, no explicit ‘end’ to this correspondence, although Lytton lived another six years, dying in London in May 1923. Given that Carpenter appears to have meticulously kept all letters, their relationship most likely lapsed into amicable silence until her death. It is the only letter of the four that does not mention the suffrage movement, indicating both the changed circumstances of war and also Lytton’s removal from feminist organisations and politics, such as the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. Lytton closes the letter with explicit reference to her “great admiration” for Carpenter’s work and implicitly for Carpenter himself. Lytton expressed admiration for Carpenter from the outset and it appears to have been genuinely felt. However, the epistolary conventions and those of politeness of this period should be

<sup>58</sup> CL to EC, 9 March 1909, SA.

borne in mind, and expressions of admiration, gratitude and interest, whilst written, may be felt to a lesser extent.

What discussion of these four letters from Constance Lytton shows is that levels of friendship or connectedness is not quantifiable by the numbers of letters exchanged, and that the face-to-face impacts upon and is inextricably linked with this. These letters also demonstrate the complexities of networks and that the existence of mutual connections not only indicates likely shared beliefs and interests, but also provides a web of interconnections that dyadic exchanges can call upon. Regarding these particular letters, Lytton's reference to such connections and particularly to one central person, was used artfully and strategically to mediate the relationship until after a face-to-face dimension had been added. Not only can one person within a network be identified by others as a central figure, but also the face-to-face acts as an event or series of events occurring within the relationship and so impacts upon what is written in letters. In addition to these letters themselves being part of a reciprocal exchange, both literal and invoked 'gifts' accompany or are contained within them, but with the balance of these managed by the correspondents to ensure an acceptable reciprocity. These gifts have effects and are used to do things within the letters and the relationship. Also, events which are external to the relationship impact upon the content and the exchange of letters, with consequences for both the correspondence and the relationship, with Lytton's suffrage activities having such impact in a strong form.

Multiple potential bridges – the web of shared connections - had previously existed between Lytton and Carpenter, but no direct connection was formed until Carpenter's overture. However, after the formation of a direct connection between Lytton and Carpenter, these mutual connections, despite no longer being required or drawn upon for the flow of information between the parties, were repeatedly invoked to facilitate the formation and strengthening of the personal bond.

I will return to the dyadic basis of the connection between Lytton and Carpenter in the conclusion to this chapter. Because of sociality, 'third parties' - the web of shared connections provided by people known in common - have presence within dyadic relationships and exchanges. In this instance these third party presences, and particularly that of Schreiner, are positive ones and references to them are used in various ways within the letters for strategic purposes and to underscore the existence of strong connections with others. This works to repeatedly underscore the embeddedness of this dyad within a wider network. Despite the analytical 'honing in' on these letters, the letter content demands a wider lens from the outset, constantly redirecting focus upon a wider network.

Wasserman & Faust (1994:18) note that “[m]any kinds of network analysis are concerned with understanding ties amongst pairs”. However, “relationships do not occur in a vacuum but are embedded in a broader social network of family and friends” (Roberts and Dunbar 2011: 439) and Felmler (2001: 1259) comments on the effects that the social networks in which actors are embedded can have upon their dyadic relationships, with perceptions of the approval of wider network members working to increase the stability of a relationship. Lytton and Carpenter were both immersed in an interconnected network which provided not only their knowledge of each other but also helped facilitate the formation and establishment of their connection. It is in fact not analytically useful to consider their connection either as an isolated dyad or to “focus on the properties of pairwise relationships, such as whether ties are reciprocated or not, or whether specific types of multiple relationships tend to occur together” (Wasserman & Faust 1994: 18). As Anderson et al (1994: 1) argue, “consideration of ... individual relationships and what occurs within them is often scant, with the relationships themselves diminished to links within a network that is of focal interest”, and they go on to suggest that if it is accurate that being part of a network provides advantages beyond the sum of the dyadic relationship of which it is comprised, then consideration must be given to dyadic relationships and the “embedded context in which they occur”. To use dyads merely as a “basic unit for statistical analysis of social networks” (Wasserman & Faust 1994: 18) misses both the point and a rich resource for analysis. Whilst Simmel (1950[1908]: 135) has argued that triads and the possibilities they open up in terms of connections represent “an enrichment from a formal-sociological standpoint”, the consideration of just one side of the ‘dyadic’ correspondence between Lytton and Carpenter, comprised of four letters, provides not only a rich data source allowing considerable insight into the particularities of their relationship but also shows how wider social connections immediately come into play.

To respond to the question ‘does size matter?’ in this relationship-specific context, I would argue that size does, and is made to, matter from the outset, with the idea that both letter-writer and addressee are part of ‘something bigger’ being integral to letter content from the outset. Despite flouting convention and ‘by-passing’ the customary introduction via network members, this dyad does not attempt to isolate their relationship from the wider network or create an air of exclusivity around their relationship (something evident in the dyadic relationships of Smuts with various women discussed in Chapter Three). Instead of being used in the conventional way to increase the number of connections via formal introductions, the network and the prior knowledge it afforded the protagonists of each other is used in a positive but strategic way to maintain the connection, once it was formed through



letters. The letters also suggest that despite fluctuations in the means and frequency of communication (from epistolary to face-to-face and back again) there were no signs of ‘decay’ in this relationship in terms of the affection and admiration letter-writer and addressee held for each other. This, like many other letters analysed here, suggests that the equation of decline in frequency of contact with emotional distancing is misplaced and that a reversion from face-to-face to non-face-to-face methods similarly does not correspond to ‘decay’ in relationships.

In terms of the nature of relationships, Lytton and Carpenter’s was a volitional one, perhaps particularly so given Carpenter’s convention-defying ‘out of the blue’ letter. As discussed above, ideas concerning volitional communications and relationships are bound up with those concerning frequency of contact with the thinking being something akin to ‘the number of times X writes to Y indicates the number of times they wished to make contact’ with, in turn, the act of making contact equated with emotional intensity. The letters of Lytton to Carpenter suggest that this is not the case and that the relationship, once firmly established and having using wider network connections strategically to facilitate this, did not require ‘maintenance’ – whether epistolary or otherwise – to be considered ‘active’. This would suggest that, of the three things used by Robert et al (2009) to indicate an active relationship, the importance of feeling that a connection and mutual regard continues to exist greatly outweighs factors such as frequency of contact or time since last contact. Whilst letters and other means of communication can contribute to the continuance of such feelings they are not integral to it, as the continued affection between Lytton and Carpenter despite infrequent contact aptly demonstrates. All communications are subject to the conventions of politeness and, as discussed above, do not necessarily contain the ‘truth’. However, in addition to allowing access to information concerning frequency of contact and time since last contact, using letters as a resource does allow considerable insight into the feelings of the letter-writer as well as affording a ‘double-vision’ of the addressee and the letter-writers perception of them and their relationship.

The next letters for discussion concern an originally dyadic relationship between Olive Schreiner and Aletta Jacobs, plus another separate dyadic relationship between Schreiner and Dorothy Von Moltke, the daughter of Schreiner’s close friend Jessie Rose Innes. Events, in the shape of war and censorship, led Schreiner to establish an ‘ostensible’ epistolary relationship between Jacobs and Von Moltke as a channel by which news from Von Moltke could be relayed to her through Jacobs. These arrangements subsequently in a sense ‘went viral’ and the numbers of people and letter exchanges increased and largely without a face-to-face basis. How did these events impact on the features which I have

suggested characterised Lytton and Carpenter dyadic epistolary exchanges? Who called on which pre-existing connections and to what effect? What was the role, if any, of gifts in addition to that of letter-exchanges? Which, internal and/or external events impacted on the network and the letters associated with it and with what consequences? And, of great importance for the developing argument in this chapter, did the shift from dyad (Schreiner and Von Moltke and also Schreiner and Jacobs) to triad (Schreiner/Von Moltke/Jacobs) and beyond make a difference, and if so, what was this?

### **An “intermediary in the matter of letters”<sup>59</sup>: Aletta Jacobs, a “Suspicious Looking Name”<sup>60</sup> and Others.**

I now focus on a selection of letters from the Aletta Jacobs collection housed in the Aletta, International Archives for the Women’s Movement in Amsterdam (IIAV) to explore the points raised at the end of the previous section of this chapter. These letters are to Aletta Jacobs from: Dorothy Von Moltke (nee Rose Innes); her parents, James and Jessie Rose Innes; and, Von Moltke’s paternal aunt, M. Rose Innes.<sup>61</sup> The majority of the twenty-eight extant letters were written in 1919 when Jacobs facilitated a meeting between Von Moltke and her parents.

Dr Aletta Henrietta Jacobs was the first woman to be officially admitted to a Dutch University, in 1872. On attaining a doctorate in medicine, Jacobs travelled to England in 1879 and developed ties with other notable female physicians including Dr Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, sister of Millicent Garrett Fawcett, the leader of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). Bosch & Kloosterman (1990: 10) note that it “was characteristic of Jacobs that she not only acted in the face of injustice, but also openly defended her principles, translating her social campaigns into political issues.” In line with this description, Jacobs advocated the importance of contraception for women and registered for the vote in 1883 but, despite her subsequent legal appeal, was denied the franchise. Jacobs, who like Schreiner kept her name after her marriage (to Carel Victor Gerritsen) and bore a child who lived for only one day, became President of the Dutch women’s suffrage association Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht (VVVK) in 1903. Jacobs’s activities for and

<sup>59</sup> DVM to AJ, 3 August 1919, IIAV.

<sup>60</sup> DVM to AJ, 15 July 1915, IIAV.

<sup>61</sup> The collection is arranged by letter-writer and then chronologically within this.

involvement with the International Women's Suffrage Association (IWSA) are well documented.<sup>62</sup>

In 1911 and on behalf of the IWSA, Aletta Jacobs together with Carrie Chapman Catt conducted a world tour. During her visit to South Africa Jacobs met Schreiner, whose Woman and Labour (1911) Jacobs had recently translated into Dutch (Jacobs 1913, Jansen 1998). On 23 August 1911, Schreiner wrote to Jacobs from De Aar, South Africa,

“I hope you will have a splendid time in the Transvaal. I shall always remember your day here, a “red letter” day to me. Will you please write to your publisher about that copy of your book ^translation^ that I ought to have got.”

Although there are no extant letters that confirm this, according to Jacobs's memoirs she and Schreiner had been corresponding for some time (Jacobs 1996: 154). It is likely that Jacobs also met the Rose Inneses or perhaps just Jessie Rose Innes whilst in South Africa.<sup>63</sup> In September 1911, Schreiner gave Jacobs letters of introduction to prominent South African women including “one to my dear friend General Smuts's wife, & one to my friend Mrs Sauer the wife of the acting Prime Minister”.<sup>64</sup> It is likely that Jacobs was also introduced to Jessie Rose Innes during this visit. As such, a previous face-to-face encounter may have facilitated the epistolary connections that were instituted later.

Jacobs's autobiography describes Schreiner's arrival in Amsterdam in 1914, following train delays due to the mobilisation of troops, and after Schreiner's visit to “Creisau [Silesia], where she had been staying with Count and Countess von Moltke, [and where] people talked constantly of the impending war” (Jacobs 1996: 80). In a letter dated ‘Tuesday’, the content of which shows was July 1914 (also discussed by Stanley 2010c), Schreiner wrote to Dorothy Von Moltke:

“I do trust there will be no war Russia can't be so mad. I feel anxious not only for yourselves but the beautiful old house at Creisau. Please send me a postcard to c/o Dr. Aletta Jacobs, Amsterdam (that is enough address) just to say if all goes well with you”<sup>65</sup>

This indicates Schreiner's mounting concerns regarding the state of international political affairs and it was this postcard which established the foundations of the epistolary

<sup>62</sup> See Rupp (1997), Bosch & Kloosterman (1990), Addams, Balch & Hamilton (2003) and Jacobs's (1996) own autobiography Memories: My Life as an International Leader in Health, Suffrage and Peace, and Jacobs (1913) Reisbrieven uit Afrika en Azië. Benevens Eenige Brieven Uit Zweden en Noorwegen.

<sup>63</sup> There is some indication in Jacobs (1913) that Jacobs had met the Rose Inneses during her trip to South Africa.

<sup>64</sup> OS to AJ, September 1911, IIAV, OSLO transcription.

<sup>65</sup> OS to DVM, 15 July 1914, NLSA, OSLO transcription.

connection between Jacobs and Von Moltke, and so gave rise to the Jacobs, Von Moltke, Rose Innes set of epistolary exchanges. On 26 July 1914, Schreiner asked Jacobs “If any letters come for me to your care please keep them till I wire or come”.<sup>66</sup> Later, on 8 February 1915 - by which time the Rose Inneses were also writing to Von Moltke via Jacobs - Schreiner wrote to Jacobs enquiring as to whether she had had any “further news of my dear friend Dorothy?” and on 17 August 1915 wrote

“Thank you so much for sending me the good news of the birth of my friends little baby. Please if you can tell her how glad I am it is a little girl; I know she longed for one so after having four boys. Please tell her I wish I could have been with her, I fear her husband was away. But she makes every one about her love her.”<sup>67</sup>

Due to wartime censorship, Schreiner avoided referring to Von Moltke’s ‘suspicious’ surname (discussed below) or else anonymised Von Moltke to ‘my friend’. In the latter letter to Jacobs, Schreiner also included a “tell her” comment intended for Emily Hobhouse. The inclusion of comments intended for two different recipients in one letter suggests that Jacobs’s role in this network had changed from simply that of receiving and forwarding letters between correspondents, to that of corresponding with them independently in some form. In doing so, the epistolary relationships in this network shift from being dyadic, to dyadic with an intermediary, to triadic and beyond.

As discussed by Stanley (2010c), Schreiner had known Von Moltke since her birth.<sup>68</sup> Von Moltke’s husband Count Helmuth Adolf von Moltke was one of the Prussian Von Moltkes, who were famous in German military history and his uncle was a key military advisor to the Kaiser (Mombauer 2001, Stanley 2010c). This association and worries that German spies would intercept her letters, combined with prevalent suspicions surrounding all things German (including the surname Schreiner) by British censors during the war years, led to Von Moltke’s later comment to Jacobs that “Moltke is such a suspicious looking name!”<sup>69</sup> and to difficulties and disruptions in the correspondence between Schreiner and Von Moltke as well as between Von Moltke and her parents the Rose Inneses.

In 1914, Sir James Rose Innes became Chief Justice of South Africa. He had been a member of Cecil Rhodes’s first ministry between 1890 and 1893, but later came to draw his distance from Rhodes due to the “political misuse of his wealth” and the political “wire-pulling” of both Rhodes and the Afrikaner Bond (Mouton 2009: 145-6), a political party of the Cape Colony which gave primacy to advancing Afrikaner, as opposed to English-

<sup>66</sup> OS to AJ, 26 July 1914, IIAV, OSLO transcription.

<sup>67</sup> OS to AJ, 17 August 1915, IIAV, OSLO transcription.

<sup>68</sup> Von Moltke was born in South Africa, 25 February 1884.

<sup>69</sup> DVM to AJ, 15 July 1915, IIAV.

speaking, interests. Despite some increasingly sharp differences of political opinion between Schreiner and James Rose Innes, she maintained a close friendship with Jessie.

On the outbreak of war, correspondence between Germany and other involved countries was censored in both directions, whereas correspondence to some neutral countries was not. Jacobs, situated in neutral Amsterdam, became in an unfolding way the epistolary go-between or “intermediary”<sup>70</sup> for Schreiner and Dorothy Von Moltke and then later between Von Moltke and her parents so as to circumnavigate censorship.

Although Schreiner had a close relationship with all the parties concerned, and her postcard to Von Moltke asking her to write to her “c/o Dr Aletta Jacobs”<sup>71</sup> may have given the idea for the epistolary arrangement that emerged, it must not be assumed that Schreiner was instrumental in establishing the other epistolary connections. Indeed, it remains unclear exactly how the epistolary arrangement was first established. On 26 July 1914 Schreiner wrote to Jacobs stating “If any letters come for me to your care please keep them till I wire or come”<sup>72</sup> a statement which suggests that at the outset Jacobs and her address were merely a form of postbox. Given the social conventions of the time and the high profile of Jacobs, it is unlikely Schreiner would have intentionally placed (or approved of) what became considerable impositions upon Aletta Jacobs’s time. The incrementally opportunistic demands that Von Moltke and the Rose Inneses placed upon Jacobs, discussed below, suggest that this was self-motivated on their part.

In what follows, I develop some relevant ideas from the previous letters between Lytton and Carpenter. This second network was established in response to the censorship and disruption to epistolary communications following the outbreak of the Great War. The network was therefore event-led and was established in direct response to occurrences external to the relationships of people within the correspondences. Events were also the proximate cause for the establishment of all the epistolary connections with Jacobs by the people in this configuration, with the exception of the relationship between Schreiner and Jacobs which pre-existed these events. The fact that this network, the relationships and the letters within it were event-led had interesting ramifications regarding what was written and how.

Here, letters written by different writers to the same addressee are analysed. However, contra my original expectations, these letters reveal little about Jacobs, and this appears to be because the content and concerns of the letters are shaped almost entirely by external events. The workings of the emergent network show that the incremental demands

<sup>70</sup> DVM to AJ, 3 August 1919, IIAV.

<sup>71</sup> OS to DVM, 15 July 1914, NLSA, OSLO transcription.

<sup>72</sup> OS to AJ, 26 July 1914, IIAV, OSLO transcription.

made of Jacobs placed considerable pressure upon her to acquiescence, and later Jacobs's resistance can be inferred. Jacobs's compliance was in considerable measure due to references to a central figure, that of Olive Schreiner, with a number of strategies used by the letter-writers to try and balance reciprocity or at least gesture toward this.

### **“I Know You Will Be Willing”<sup>73</sup>: Jacobs's Compliance in “Forwarding Letters to and From”<sup>74</sup>**

As already noted, there are interesting aspects of how the connections in this network were formed and the advantages or otherwise of these for the people connected. Drawing upon the concepts of bridging and brokering, I am interested in what was happening at the micro-level in this network and whether these concepts work in analysing it. One of the things that eventually happened concerns the ‘end’ of the network. The number of letters exchanged peaked around the needs and demands of some of the letter-writers, then dwindled, then ended once the situation concerning war-time events had changed and especially when censorship ended.

In what is chronologically the first of the letters, dated 16 October 1914 - and one of only two from James Rose Innes to Aletta Jacobs – he advised Jacobs:

“We are still without news of my daughter since the letter which you so kindly forwarded in August. We can hear nothing either by cable or letter... I am again taking the liberty of enclosing a letter addressed to her at Hanover, which I trust may reach her if you would be so very kind as to stamp and post it. You would be adding to the obligation under which you have already placed my wife and myself. I am leaving the envelope open, so that you may be able to place the letter in another envelope & address it yourself if you think it would be likely to go better that way.

We are having our troubles here as you may see from the newspapers...  
What a terrible thing this dreadful war must be for you in Holland...

With kind remembrances from my Wife,  
and many grateful thanks from us both.”

As propriety demanded, it was James Rose Innes who took “the liberty” of making epistolary contact with Jacobs. His “kind remembrances from my wife” (my emphasis) support the idea that Jacobs had met the Rose Inneses, or Jessie at least, previously. All except one of the remaining letters from the Rose Inneses were written by Jessie Rose Innes, who wrote rather offhandedly at points.

<sup>73</sup> JessieRI to AJ, 5 May 1915, IIAV.

<sup>74</sup> DVM to AJ, 21 October 1914, IIAV.

As with the later letters, there are repeated references to Jacobs's kindness, and consequent feelings of "obligation" and gratitude towards her. On a number of occasions, attempts are made to reciprocate Jacobs's efforts. I previously identified a number of features which were characteristic of the Lytton to Carpenter letters. These related to: the use of strategic reference to mutual connections to do things within the letters; the balancing of reciprocity through letters and the things which 'accompany' them in a both literal and emotional sense; what form such things took and what role they played; and, the impact of events on the networks and its associated letters. All of these features are evidenced in the Jacobs letters albeit in nuanced forms and are expanded upon in what follows. For example, James Rose-Innes's expression of sympathy with Holland in the letter cited above goes some little way to counterbalancing his obligation and gratitude to Jacobs.

This letter also points to the impact of events, commenting on disruption to the epistolary connection between the Rose Inneses and Von Moltke. Jacobs's importance in maintaining communications is emphasised in that, they have been "without news... since the letter you so kindly forwarded". In a letter dated 21 October 1914, Von Moltke too stressed that this letter was the "first news they had of me since the outbreak of war"<sup>75</sup> - a comment that exerted subtle pressure and moral obligation upon Jacobs as it implied that, without her continued help, they would have been cut off from each other.

Although Jacobs had "kindly forwarded"<sup>76</sup> a letter in August, is not clear how this epistolary arrangement - that now extended to Von Moltke's parents - came about, or whether Schreiner, Von Moltke, the Rose Inneses or Jacobs herself initiated it. From James Rose Innes's letter, it is also clear that - as opposed to writing ostensibly to Jacobs but actually to Von Moltke - Jacobs is being used as an epistolary go-between, opening and forwarding letters by "plac[ing] the letter in another envelope & address[ing] it"<sup>77</sup> from her residence in neutral territory to avoid arousing the suspicion or interest of a censor. Through the covering letters of these enclosures, epistolary (and later face-to-face) relationships became established albeit, as I discuss later, sometimes rather clumsily or inconsiderately negotiated by Von Moltke and her mother.

The fact that Von Moltke wrote to Jacobs on 21 October 1914 "thanking her for your kindness in forwarding letters to and from my parents" and introducing herself with some biographical information concerning her home, children and husband suggests two things. Firstly, that she had received her father's letter via Jacobs and was writing a covering letter to Jacobs with an enclosure for her parents in response to this; and secondly, the expression

<sup>75</sup> DVM to AJ, 21 October 1914, IIAV.

<sup>76</sup> JamesRI to AJ, 16 October 1914, IIAV.

<sup>77</sup> JamesRI to AJ, 16 October 1914, IIAV.

“to and from” implies that a regular system of exchange was now established with Jacobs’s consent or that Von Moltke presumed this. Von Moltke also referred to Jacobs’s kindness and expressed both gratitude for her individual efforts and collective sympathy for “You in Holland who are suffering much”.

Despite James Rose Innes’s and Von Moltke’s earlier suggestions that Jacobs’s role in the exchange was pivotal, a letter dated 11 December 1914 from Jessie Rose-Innes indicates that a contact in Switzerland was also being used as an epistolary go-between for them and that this arrangement was, in their terms, proving more effective than that with Jacobs:

“at last we were receiving her letters through a friend in Switzerland. They go through him quite regularly now so I shall not trouble you at present until a change seems advisable. You will be surprised to hear that the cable you sent us never reached us.”<sup>78</sup>

However, the need for “a change” came five months later on 5 May 1915, when Jessie Rose Innes wrote that:

“the friend in Switzerland is rather a crank & has lately taken to obliterating her opinions on books she reads, telling us he considers the matter is controversial, until I have lost all patience.”<sup>79</sup>

This editing out of controversial matter points to the (perhaps overly cautious) concern of the go-between, but also to the considerable risks taken by anyone acting as an intermediary for people with connections with high ranking German military personnel.

There is some indication that Jacobs had continued to communicate with Jessie Rose Innes during the intervening five month period, with Rose Innes knowing “from all the printed matter you have sent me from time to time how every busy you are”.<sup>80</sup> However, Rose Innes’s reference to how “sorry” she was “that you took all that trouble about the cable” (referred to in her letter of 11 December 1914), and her question “Have you ever been paid for the cable you sent & the stamps [unreadable]? I fear not so I am sending you my cheque for £4 as I shall ask you to forward letters & perhaps sometimes a cable”,<sup>81</sup> suggests that Rose Innes had not written to Jacobs since her letter of December 1914. Having been advised that her assistance was vital to maintaining communications between the family members, then dismissed in favour of a more effective contact, it was only when Jacobs’s help was again needed that Rose Innes apologised for her troubles and thought to recompense Jacobs for postage costs expended.

<sup>78</sup> JessieRI to AJ, 11 December 1914, IIAV.

<sup>79</sup> JessieRI to AJ, 5 May 1915, IIAV.

<sup>80</sup> JessieRI to AJ, 5 May 1915, IIAV.

<sup>81</sup> JessieRI to AJ, 5 May 1915, IIAV.



Jessie Rose Innes rather artfully exerted subtle pressure upon Jacobs. In writing “I am going to ask you to be good enough to forward letters to my daughter”<sup>82</sup> she implied that by not doing so Jacobs would not be “good”. Rose Innes appears to be attempting to correct the imbalance caused by her dismissive treatment of Jacobs by her enclosure of a cheque for £4. In terms of balancing reciprocity this compensated Jacobs for previous expenditure but also presumed future postage costs, meaning that Jacobs was both effectively and literally in Rose Innes’s debt until she was ‘good enough’ to forward further letters. Rose Innes’s closing line was similarly artful - “I know you will be willing to help in this special way at this special time” – with the phrase “I know you will be willing” having similar strategic effects to that of Constance Lytton’s phrase “I felt sure of your sympathy”<sup>83</sup> discussed previously. Rose Innes’s appeal for help also reads as rather manipulative and likely concerned Von Moltke’s pregnancy.

The following month Von Moltke wrote to Jacobs on 19 June 1915 asking if she would

“please be kind enough to post a letter now & then from me to my parents?  
Needless to say I write only of family matters & there is nothing in them  
which could possibly be considered as not strictly neutral.  
Thanking you in advance for your kindness.”<sup>84</sup>

Given that Von Moltke’s earlier letter dated 21 October 1914 had already expressly thanked Jacobs for “forwarding letters to and from my parents”, this subsequent request is most likely related to the ‘crank’ in Switzerland no longer being used as an epistolary go-between. Von Moltke’s assurances to Jacobs concerning the neutrality of the content of her letters may be to allay any concerns raised by Jessie Rose Innes’s earlier reference to potentially ‘controversial’ material.<sup>85</sup> The emphasis on the maintenance of family ties and “kindness” can be read as a morally persuasive element, or perhaps this letter is a polite smoothing over of any possible offence caused previously.

This ‘re-start’ in the epistolary relationships between Jacobs and the Rose Inneses and Von Moltke also brought with it a shift in how the information flowed through Jacobs. Instead of simply forwarding enclosures between the parties, Jacobs was now asked to translate information from German to English in a communication ostensibly for Jacobs but actually for the Rose Inneses. On 15 July 1915, Von Moltke wrote:

“Very many thanks for your kindness in giving my parents news of me. I understand that my mother has sent you a cheque for any expenses that may

<sup>82</sup> JessieRI to AJ, 5 May 1915, IIAV.

<sup>83</sup> CL to EC, 26 June 1909, SA.

<sup>84</sup> DVM to AJ, 19 June 1915, IIAV.

<sup>85</sup> JessieRI to AJ, 5 May 1915, IIAV.

occur. That being so I shall probably in a few weeks time send you a telegram in German, & I shall be much indebted to you if you will forward its content in English to my parents. “Innes, Kenilworth, Cape.” is the cable address. I think it will be better for you to send it, for should it come from me & bear my signature I fear it will not pass the censor (the last telegram I sent through you in the winter never reached its destination) – Moltke is such a suspicious looking name!

I am expecting a baby quite soon & naturally want my parents to know the news as soon as possible, so I shall telegraph to you more or less in this manner “boy born 2<sup>nd</sup>, all well”, & will be much obliged if you will cable to my parents somewhat like this: Dorothis boy born 2<sup>nd</sup> all well” or words to that effect.

Please, when writing to Olive Schreiner, give her my love & tell her we are well. My husband is at the front but well too I am thankful to say.

I was most interested in reading of the Peace Congress in Jus Suffragii – what a work it must have been for you!

Thanking you once more for your kindness.”<sup>86</sup>

There is a subtle yet increasing sense in the letter of obligations being placed upon Jacobs, although how Jacobs herself felt about this cannot be known. There is also a shift from writing to Jacobs, to writing ostensibly to Jacobs. That is, information pertaining to the birth, whilst to be shared with Jacobs, is essentially for the Rose Inneses.

As discussed previously, one of the features of Constance Lytton’s letters to Carpenter, and by inference his letters to her, was the strategic use of reference to mutual connections to accomplish ends in the letters. The letter above contains the first reference in the series to Olive Schreiner. Made just at the point where additional favours were being asked of Jacobs, it worked to remind Jacobs of their mutual connection to and affection for Schreiner and it has similar strategic effects as Lytton’s comment to Carpenter that “Olive Schreiner, too, is a very staunch supporter”<sup>87</sup> discussed previously.

Fifteen of the twenty-eight letters in this set are written in 1919 when Von Moltke and the Rose Inneses (plus children and servants), who had not seen each other for more than five years, were trying to arrange a family gathering in a neutral country. The external event of war initiated the need for this epistolary network and the internal event of arranging a face-to-face meeting between its members greatly affected the letters within it, both in terms of their frequency and the requests made of Jacobs within them. As Jacobs responded to these requests, her role within the network changed. Although she continued to forward

<sup>86</sup> DVM to AJ, 15 July 1915, IIAV.

<sup>87</sup> CL to EC, 26 June 1909, SA.

correspondence between them, she was also instrumental in assisting in the administration and other arrangements needed. On 9 March 1919, Von Moltke once more emphasised Jacobs's vital role in re-uniting the family, claiming to be "quite overwhelmed by your kindness in helping us. Without your help I am sure my parents & I would never meet."<sup>88</sup> Perhaps aware of the impositions being placed upon Jacobs in this letter, Von Moltke also attempted to redress the now considerable imbalance of reciprocity in the relationship with assurances of her "use" to Jacobs in the future and her sincerity in this, stating "If ever I can be of any use to you or your friends, I hope you will count on me, & this is not an empty phrase, but is what I feel most intensely."<sup>89</sup>

Aletta Jacobs was a prominent and respected figure involved in many social and political campaigns and an extremely active and busy professional woman. However, the following letter, dated 16 March 1919 and written by Jessie Rose Innes from London, represents another, less subtle, shift in the relationship between Jacobs and the Rose Inneses, involving Jacobs being used by the family as a kind of factotum (Stanley, 2010d), something hinted at in earlier letters too:

"All our enquiries seem now to have narrowed down to the possibility of our meeting our daughter in Holland. Generals Botha & Smuts both think that they could get permission through the Netherlands Minister here for my daughter & her family to enter Holland.

If we succeed in meeting in your country where would it be wise for us to go. The Hague, Amsterdam or nearer the German border?

Any information you could give about hotels or apartments – we should be such a large party 3 adults 5 children a nursery governess & two maids – which makes 6 or 8 rooms - ~~Yester~~ would be of such great advantage to us & so gratefully received.

Yesterday we saw Olive Schreiner – She was very cheerful but suffers much from her heart. She spoke so warmly of you.

With apologies for troubling you."<sup>90</sup>

The requests made of Jacobs within these successive epistolary communications changed and significantly increased over time. The reuniting of the family depended upon her, its members were meeting in her country, they required somewhere to stay and they wished Jacobs to source information regarding locations and accommodation.

<sup>88</sup> DVM to AJ, 9 March 1919, IIAV.

<sup>89</sup> DVM to AJ, 9 March 1919, IIAV.

<sup>90</sup> JessieRI to AJ, 16 March 1919, IIAV.

Another interesting point in this letter, which supports the view that much valuable information is lost through the editorial tidying up of ‘mistakes’ in published letters, is the ‘false start’ regarding the reference to Olive Schreiner. After making the additional accommodation related requests of Jacobs, Jessie Rose Innes starts to make a perhaps strategic reference to their mutual acquaintance Olive Schreiner. However, “~~Yesterd~~[ay]”, the opening word of this reference, is struck through and instead a polite expression of gratitude for Jacobs’s help was inserted before the appearance of “Yesterday we saw Olive Schreiner!”, an interesting example of the conventions of politeness mingling with persuasive and artful strategies.

### **“[T]aking up your thoughts & time”<sup>91</sup>: Jacobs’s Evolving “Kind Rôle”<sup>92</sup>**

Throughout 1919, the letters show that Jacobs forwarded telegrams, made “efforts with... foreign ministers”<sup>93</sup> and had been asked to make enquiries regarding lodgings. Despite Jessie Rose Innes’s protestation that “It seems inexcusable to bother you”,<sup>94</sup> nonetheless Jacobs’s “past kindness gives us the courage to venture”<sup>95</sup> that she would do considerably more. It was also strongly implied that Jacobs’s help in employing a “lady’s maid”<sup>96</sup> for Jessie Rose Innes would be appreciated. These are mundane and time-consuming requests to make of someone who was almost a stranger, as well as being as socially and politically prominent as Jacobs.

By March 1919, Jacobs had moved to The Hague and the Rose Inneses and Von Moltke and her children were due to meet there the following month. Von Moltke wrote to Jacobs on 26 March 1919:

“We are very busy preparing for our journey & the children naturally are most excited at the prospect. Without your help I do not think I should have seen my parents at all, & certainly they would not have seen their grandchildren. I thank you once more dear Dr. Jacobs.”<sup>97</sup>

As previously discussed, the balancing of reciprocity can be more nuanced than simply like-for-like exchanges. Whilst Jacobs had expended considerable effort to bring about this meeting - which involved the parties travelling through war-torn Europe - is it likely that she gained some satisfaction from the achievement of the goal, from being

<sup>91</sup> DVM to AJ, 11 July 1920, IIAV.

<sup>92</sup> DVM to AJ, 3 August 1919, IIAV.

<sup>93</sup> JsRI to AJ, 20 March 1919, IIAV.

<sup>94</sup> JsRI to AJ, 20 March 1919, IIAV.

<sup>95</sup> JsRI to AJ, 20 March 1919, IIAV.

<sup>96</sup> JsRI to AJ, 20 March 1919, IIAV.

<sup>97</sup> DVM to AJ, 26 March 1919, IIAV.

instrumental in re-uniting the family, from the excitement of the Von Moltke's children and from the obvious gratitude and delight of those involved. As such, expressions of this excitement and joy most likely helped redress imbalances to an extent.

The letters show that Jacobs met the family members face-to-face during their reunion. Whilst stressing that her assistance was still needed in the exchange of letters between the family (i.e. Jacobs and the network still had a purpose to serve), James Rose Innes's letter below dated 29 May 1919 reads as a formal recognition of services rendered and his reference to (or perhaps acknowledgement of) 'trespassing' and 'taking liberties' is analytically interesting:

"We were very sorry to find you were not at home this afternoon. It is possible that we may trespass upon your kindness a little while longer. In asking you to send more letters to Dorothy - and I am taking the liberty of enclosing a small cheque [*unreadable*] [*unreadable*] for postal expenses.

I cannot tell you how grateful we are to you for all you have done for us; it is a thing not easy to speak about but which we will never forget. I only hope that we may meet again some day, either here or in Africa.

Wishing you all good fortune & success, both in your private life & your public work, and with renewed expression of thanks."<sup>98</sup>

The relationship had expanded to include the face-to-face and James Rose Innes politely expressed a desire to meet again. Whilst indicating that "we may trespass further", this letter reads as a formal recognition and acknowledgement of, and in effect an end to, the additional requests made of Jacobs occasioned by this reunion.

However, a further 'trespass', dated 10 June 1919, followed not long after his letter, when Von Moltke wrote remembering meeting Jacobs with affection and requesting that she forward a letter to a Mrs Hartley in Britain. From a letter dated 3 August 1919, it is evident that Jacobs and an acquaintance, Miss Word, visited Von Moltke in Creisau for a period, with Von Moltke's hospitality towards both Jacobs and her friend working to redress the imbalance that had earlier existed in the relationship.

Despite advising Jacobs in this letter that "your kind rôle as intermediary in the matter of letters will no longer be needed" and taking the "opportunity of thanking you once again most gratefully for your kind services during so many sad years", Von Moltke also advised Jacobs that she "should be so glad if you could send me my parcel (registered please) soon" and then introduced "A very dear South African aunt of mine" who "would so like to visit us... but alas she speaks no German!". Her letter goes on to ask Jacobs to advise her aunt "of anyone travelling from England to Germany during the

<sup>98</sup> JamesRI to AJ, 29 May 1919, IIAV.

next 6 months... so that she could make inquiries as to the possibility of travelling together? I should be so grateful! ...” Von Moltke closed this letter with offers to be “any service to you” in the future and opened up the possibility of future face-to-face meetings. By writing “should you be coming to Berlin... it may be possible for me to see you there, or, better still, you come to Creisau.”, her ‘call on my help anytime’ and ‘my home is always open to you’ comments, on top of her recent hospitality, she exerted some pressure for Jacobs to help the “very dear... aunt”.<sup>99</sup>

However, it appears that Jacobs either did not respond or had no assistance to offer this aunt, as Moltke wrote again (in German)<sup>100</sup> on 9 September 1919 that:

“A very lovely aunt of mine, Miss Rose Innes, is visiting in England until spring. I would so terribly much like her to be here for a few weeks, but she speaks not a word of German and so a trip is made difficult. If you were to ever know of anyone who travelled to Berlin, could you let us know? It would be too delightful!...we would be so thankful if it should succeed! Her permanent address is: c/o Standard Bank of S. Africa, 10 Clements Lane, Lombard Street, London, E.’l. That I always come to you with requests is terrible to me. Hopefully you will ask me for something sometime.”<sup>101</sup>

It is unclear whether or not Jacobs responded to this second request. Von Moltke’s acknowledgement that “I always come to you with requests” explicitly acknowledges the factotum nature of their relationship. This second request may indicate that Von Moltke thought Jacobs had not received her previous letter. It may also suggest (particularly when it is considered against the letter from ‘M. Rose Innes’ cited below) that Jacobs’s silence was not accepted as indication that she did not know “of anyone travelling” but that the question was broached in the assumption that she would provide assistance. Perhaps Von Moltke believed her hospitality had tipped the balance of reciprocity in her favour, or else this assumption traded on Jacobs’s previous efforts and “kindness”. Whatever the reason, the following month Jacobs was sent the following highly artful letter dated 18 October 1919 directly from M. Rose Innes:

“Dear Dr Aletta Jacobs

We have never met but you are perhaps better known to me than I to you. Letters to my niece, Countess Von Moltke, have been posted from me to your care more than once. She is most anxious that before I return to S.Africa... I should come & pay her a visit at Creisau... my niece writes begging me to get attached to some Women’s Commission... I feel rather uncertain. She says I would suffer little or

<sup>99</sup> DVM to AJ, 3 August 1919, IIAV.

<sup>100</sup> My thanks to Gregor Schneur of University of Edinburgh for his assistance in translating the two letters in this series written in German.

<sup>101</sup> DVM to AJ, 9 September 1919, IIAV.

nothing as British, but unfortunately I speak no German... while she writes of it being comparatively easy to get over, her letters take more than 21 days to reach me. In the last she said that she had asked you to let me know if there were any suitable person going over with whom I could travel. I so wonder if now is the best time or if it would be wiser to wait a month or two – Can you advise me?...

I [~~unreadable~~] have a friend from S.Africa in this country just now who may be visiting Germany before he returns & it is just possible I might have his [~~unreadable~~] in a month or two. I am though middle aged, what might be called unsophisticated as far as travel is concerned! I have no feeling about meeting Germans & believe that good will one towards another is the only Christian attitude. And I should love to see them all at Creisau – if it is possible. I have taken the liberty of writing to you for advice. I hope you won't mind... My sister a widow... & I, have no influential friends who one can find out facts for us... accounts are rather conflicting. I hope you will pardon my troubling you.<sup>102</sup>

That Jacobs, perhaps tactfully, ignored two previous requests from Von Moltke regarding this aunt may indicate that she had begun to feel these further requests were unacceptable, although this cannot be known with any certainty. The opening line of M. Rose Innes's letter provided her justification for writing to Jacobs 'out of the blue' and drew on her loose connection with Jacobs as a channel for correspondence to her niece. There are also repeated allusions to vulnerability and lack of worldly knowledge, being untravelled and unable to speak German, and evocative language relating to begging, suffering, anxiety and uncertainty. The juxtaposition of references to "good will", "Christian attitude", "tak[ing] the liberty of writing to you for advice" and "hop[ing] you won't mind" reads as manipulative and persuasive. Another aunt of Von Moltke's, the widowed sister of the letter-writer (neither of whom have "influential friends who can find out facts") is introduced in an emotive and morally obligating way, again expanding the network of people for whom Jacobs was being asked to act. Later letters show that Jacobs did offer considerable assistance to M. Rose Innes, in terms of support, guidance and advice, even inviting her to stay with her in The Hague.

However, despite this kindness, three months later on 19 March 1920 M. Rose Innes wrote from London to inform Jacobs that she:

"should have written to you some weeks ago to tell you that acting on my niece's advice I have given up the idea of going to German at present.

You were so kind in offering me the hospitality of your home in passing through the Hague, in giving me information. I was very grateful. I quite meant to have written to you when, after much see-sawing it was finally decided that it was not quite the best time for me to go to Germany.

<sup>102</sup> MRI to AJ, 18 October 1919, IIAV.

You asked about Olive Schreiner in your last letter. I have only met her once or twice but she is a great friend of my sister-in-law Lady Innes. I have seen her once or twice since coming over here – last time she was looking in at a shop window & I passed in a bus!”<sup>103</sup>

What comes across from this letter is a lack of politeness as well as of consideration and a considerable “liberty” having been taken of Jacobs. Both of Von Moltke’s letters regarding this aunt are extant suggesting that they were received by Jacobs<sup>104</sup> but not responded to. In the face of this, the highly artful and emotive writing used by M. Rose Innes to effect Jacobs’s assistance and fact-finding efforts stand in sharp contrast to her rather flippant “I should have written to you weeks ago”<sup>105</sup> comment.

Dorothy Von Moltke’s letters to her variously characterise Jacobs as a “fairy godmother”<sup>106</sup> and an “enchantress in my life”<sup>107</sup> and repeatedly express gratitude for and embarrassment concerning the extent of help that Jacobs had given her. However, in a letter dated 11 July 1920, despite “feel[ing] quite apologetic for taking up your thoughts & time again”,<sup>108</sup> Von Moltke sent Jacobs a list of questions regarding the timetables and destinations of steamships, having been unable to obtain the information herself. Then, on 22 September 1920 she replied to Jacobs a response from Jacobs that she “felt very guilty when I read your kind letter & realized what a lot of trouble I had given you, in asking you to make enquiries about the ships running to the Cape”, but despite this she would “probably take a boat from England after all”.<sup>109</sup> Once again Jacobs had been asked to carry out a time-consuming and menial fact-finding mission on behalf of these network members, only to be told after considerable effort that this was wasted. The last letter of the series, dated 16 November 1920, seems to add insult to injury, for in it Von Moltke wrote to Jacobs that:

“I cannot remember whether or not I ever answered your kind letter telling me about the ships sailing to South Africa. It was most kind of you to take so much trouble about the matter. I have however decided to sail early in January from England.”<sup>110</sup>

Perhaps fittingly, the last line of this last letter in the series concerns Olive Schreiner. Von Moltke was planning a visit to the Cape and, “the thought of my parents, & the warmth &

<sup>103</sup> MRI to AJ, 19 March 1920, IIAV.

<sup>104</sup> However, the fact that letters are extant in collections does not guarantee that the addressee received them timeously. Letters may go astray for months or even years before arriving but will be archived in chronological order of the date written.

<sup>105</sup> MRI to AJ, 19 March 1920, IIAV.

<sup>106</sup> DVM to AJ, 20 March 1919, IIAV.

<sup>107</sup> DVM to AJ, 24 March 1920, IIAV.

<sup>108</sup> DVM to AJ, 11 July 1920, IIAV.

<sup>109</sup> DVM to AJ, 22 September 1920, IIAV.

<sup>110</sup> DVM to AJ, 16 November 1920, IIAV.



beauty of the Cape is very enticing. I shall hope to see Olive Schreiner too.”<sup>111</sup> This too reads as a strategic reminder of mutual affection for Schreiner being used artfully at a point when Jacobs might well have felt thoroughly put upon.

### **Events, Networks and Building Epistolary Bridges**

As these letters show, the referential aspects of letters are important, because ‘real world’ events can create, impact upon and change network configurations. Coming into existence as a response to the censorship of World War I, this Schreiner-related network involved Jacobs filling, or being requested to fill, “structural holes” that opened up in a network due to such events. In this context, information ceased to flow from one cluster of people to another and Jacobs was used to fill in the structural hole and provide a bridging role that was ordinarily fulfilled by the postal service. As such, Jacobs became literally central in the configurations discussed, because all information flowed through her to circumvent censorship. Bruggeman (2008) suggests that the person who acts as the bridge has some control over information and its flow and can subsequently strategically benefit from their position in the network, and the literature on brokering connections across structural holes places considerable emphasis on the potential to gain social capital:

“a structural hole is a potentially valuable context for action, brokerage is the action of coordinating across the hole with bridges between people on opposite sides of the hole, and network entrepreneurs, or brokers, are the people who build the bridges” (Burt 2005: 18).

However, as Jessie Rose Innes’s comment regarding the Swiss-based “crank” implies, Jacobs was fully expected not to exert any control over the information passing between the Rose Inneses and Von Moltke, despite the risks she was taking in facilitating this. Also, the social capital or other advantage which Jacobs might have gained from this is unclear. Whilst gratitude was frequently expressed to Jacobs, the burdens placed upon her were heavy and all the advantages appear to be for those connected by the activities she engaged in and not for Jacobs herself.

Although Jacobs was the bridge (in Burt’s (2005: 24) terms, the “relationship that spans a structural hole”), she was not the “network entrepreneur” or “broker” who built it and it is unclear in this instance just who the broker was, other than that the set of epistolary events seems to have been initiated by the initial request from Olive Schreiner for Von Moltke to write to her care of Jacobs’s address. At a micro-level, there are nuanced but important differences between brokering/building bridges, and being the bridge. The

<sup>111</sup> DVM to AJ, 16 November 1920, IIAV.

literature on bridging is however hazy in this regard. Indeed, Burt's (2005) Index states "Bridge 24; see also brokerage".

Coleman (1990: 312) notes that social capital can be a "by-product of activities engaged in for other purposes", not just of brokering. Whoever was responsible for coordinating these efforts to 'get around' the constraints and structural holes created by censorship (whether this was Jacobs herself, Schreiner or self-motivated by those concerned) may also have gained social capital through appreciation and recognition of their enterprise within network relationships.

Jacobs accrued some social capital through her efforts even if this was seemingly not fully reciprocated. Jessie Rose Innes was very involved in South African women's enfranchisement and Jacobs wished to foster her support for the international women's movement, as her sending of 'printed matter' indicates. There is also some indication from her autobiography that Jacobs developed a genuine fondness for Dorothy Von Moltke and had been thrilled by the elite society she had mixed with during her visit to Creisau. Whilst a desire to please Schreiner may have encouraged Jacobs's endeavours, the social standing of other network members and the personal benefits to be gained through association with them may have also motivated her.

Consequently, whilst helping Schreiner to maintain her particular line of communication with Von Moltke may have been paramount for Jacobs at the outset, Schreiner's friendship with Jessie Rose Innes and Von Moltke, the highly persuasive and artful language used in the letters, and the social standing of those in the network, are all likely to have been influential in Jacobs agreeing to the expansion of their requests. Burt (2005: 25) suggests that "Relations can be... sorted into three categories: bridges, bonds, and something else (more than a bridge and less than a bond)" and that the

"contrast between bridges and bonds distinguishes two research strategies for estimating returns to brokerage. One strategy is to study returns to the people connected by brokers. The other is to study returns to the broker."

Whilst Jacobs may have benefited from some aspects of the connections formed in this network, the majority of the immediate 'returns' of the connection seem to have been for the people who were connected by Jacobs. It is harder to consider "returns to the broker" as it is not clear who this was. However, this particular example certainly demonstrates that brokering/bridge building and being a bridge are not necessarily the same.

In terms of whether and how networks might 'end', the correspondence dwindled when the need for Jacobs diminished and the purpose of the network ended. This occurred after Jacobs's visit to Von Moltke, which suggests that this visit acted as something of a closure by equalising favours and establishing a reciprocal balance to the relationship. The

letters available reveal little about their addressee other than some limited information concerning Jacobs's political activities and her visit to Creisau with a named friend. This appears to be due to the event-led character of this network, with the letters written within its context being primarily concerned with accomplishing ends and polite expressions of gratitude.

This analysis has shown that pre-existing connections were used strategically by letter-writers to accomplish ends, in this instance to remind Jacobs of their mutual association with and affection for Schreiner. Doing so at key points when additional demands were placed upon Jacobs suggests that the purpose of this was to use Schreiner and perceptions of her approval and gratitude to elicit Jacobs's continued and incremental assistance. This example also indicates the balancing of reciprocity through various relationship and network specific strategies, crudely expressed as 'services rendered' in exchange for 'bed and board'. The impact of events is evident here occasioning both the network connections and the letters exchanged between them

Three further ideas have been generated by this analysis which can usefully be carried forward. These concern: the various roles of people within networks, how these come about and how they are assumed and executed; the differences between brokering and bridging when teased out in micro-level analysis and the association that these concepts have with proactivity and positivity; and, matters concerning the 'end' of a network and if and when this can be said to occur.

Jacobs's "kind role" within this network evolved over time from that of simply maintaining ties by forwarding correspondence, into providing practical and administrative assistance to an incremental number of Von Moltke's family members. Jacobs's association with Schreiner appears to go some way to explaining why she assumed this role and accepted the additional demands placed upon her over time, and ideas concerning roles within networks are discussed further in Chapter Four.

As discussed above, the micro-level analysis conducted here also problematises ideas concerning bridging and brokering and the proactive connotations of these terms. Similarly, associative ideas concerning the rewards and gains to be gleaned from these activities are rendered more fuzzy by this example and I develop this idea further in Chapter Three.

There is also some indication of 'disengagement' between the ties in this network with contact between Jacobs and the other letter-writers being marked by a face-to-face encounter and a meeting intended to repay her for her efforts. This network effectively ended when the need for it no longer existed, with the nature of the key relationships within

it being purpose-driven. There is some evidence of volitional contact being made by Jacobs with Jessie Rose-Innes but this remained unreciprocated until a need for the connection was re-established for Jessie Rose-Innes and also, this may have been driven by Jacobs's desire for Rose-Innes's support in her political activities.

In terms of size, this example is 'bigger' than the dyad of Lytton and Carpenter in terms of the number of people whose letters are analysed. However, the content of letters analysed here does not point outwards to a wider network in the same way that occurs in my previous example. This is likely due to the purpose of this international network and the fact that the letter-writers were not primarily concerned with creating a lasting relationship with Jacobs. Strategic references to other network members were used to accomplish practical ends, not to create solid foundations upon which lasting relationships could be built. Over time, the boundary between dyad and triad becomes blurred here, as letter-writers went from using Jacobs as an ostensible post-box through which to maintain dyadic exchanges to forming a purpose-specific relationship with her in their own right. However, the events and other specificities of the context in which these letters were written result in each correspondence being isolated from the other and letters are preoccupied with resolving this, not with developing ties. Resultantly, the increased possibilities opened up by triads are not in evidence here due to the circumstances in which these relationships occur.

From discussing a dyadic correspondence in my first example of a network, to discussing a number of dyadic exchanges, all with (or initially, via) a key person in the second example, in the third example I shall discuss letters written and archived in the context of a discussion club and between various interconnected and/or prospective members.

### **The Men and Women's Club: Expand or Die. The Limiting Effects of Recruiting the "right sort"<sup>112</sup>**

The papers of the Men and Women's Club (M&WC, 1885-1889)<sup>113</sup> are part of the larger

<sup>112</sup> RJP, Review Manuscript 1, UCL.

<sup>113</sup> The M&WC Papers (archival references 10/1 – 10/61/7) are located at University College London (UCL) Library. They comprise of: a Minute Book (which, in addition to minutes of meetings held, includes: Chairman Robert Parker's "Review"; Maria Sharpe's "Secretary's Conclusion"; Pearson's "Conclusion"; and Sharpe's "Autobiographical Notes" all written around the demise of the M&WC in 1889); a Committee Minute Book; and, manuscripts or printed copies of papers read at the M&WC and members comments about these.

These items from collection reference 10/1 are referred to in footnotes as:

collection of the papers and correspondence of Karl Pearson (1857-1936), the acknowledged “author and initiator”<sup>114</sup> of the M&WC, as well as a writer, statistician and later one of the founders of eugenicism in the UK. In addition to the more formal and administrative epistolary materials of the M&WC, also extant is the “Correspondence relating to the Men and Women’s Club of which Maria Sharpe Pearson was the Secretary” (Merrington et al 1983: 15). Whilst Pearson was effectively the ‘leader’ of the M&WC, Secretary Maria Sharpe was responsible for its administration and documents. In terms of archival provenance, the juxtaposition of the M&WC’s papers and correspondence with Pearson’s personal papers was facilitated by Sharpe’s marriage to Pearson soon after the M&WC ended.

As Bland (1990: 36) notes, the “tantalizing but limited glimpse into club interaction” afforded by the minutes of meetings

“is widened by a reading of the preserved correspondence. The club members and associates appear to have been tireless letter writers... at a time when the speedy postal service allowed letters to be sent and received on the same day.”

In fact, the efficiency of postal services in London at this time (in addition to hand-deliveries) and the close proximity of M&WC members’ residences meant that numerous epistolary exchanges between a number of people could take place on the same day. In some cases epistolary exchanges were so rapid that they blurred the boundaries of conversation and epistolarity and these epistolary ‘conversations’ often involved a number of letter-writers and addressees. “[C]omplex chains of interaction” (Kadushin 1966: 789) can be purposefully delimited and inferred from the extant material archived regarding the M&WC, and while further study can follow these interconnecting and complex chains beyond the discussion here, this can be done only by using more fragmented, diverse and indirect materials.

The M&WC was a purpose-driven social and epistolary network that used letters in a variety of ways to create, maintain, develop and ‘end’ the network. In what follows I shall explore analytical points concerning: firstly, the impact of events and the purpose of a network upon its members and the letters they write; secondly, who the central figure of the network is, how this is suggested in the letters and how this central figure may influence or

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M&WC Minute Book  
RJP, Review  
MS, Conclusion  
KP, Conclusion  
MS, Autobiographical Notes  
Committee Minute Book

The full manuscript of Robert J Parker’s ‘Review’ from UCL collection reference 10/21 is footnoted as:

RJP Review Manuscript

<sup>114</sup> RJP to MS, 25 April 1889, UCL.

constrain behaviour within networks; thirdly, how members and their letters were used to form connections across networks and; lastly, what the letters to a person from a variety of letter-writers reveal about the addressee (and about letters and networks).

Karl Pearson, “the initiator”<sup>115</sup> of the M&WC, was immersed in the ‘old boys’ educational and professional networks that were typical of upper-class masculine Victorian social, political, intellectual and professional life (Wilkinson 1962). Pearson is often “characterized... as cold, emotionless and rationalistic” with a “fierce intellectuality and [a] disposition to theorize about everything from religious faith to sexual love” in an impersonal, rationalist and scientific manner (Porter 2004: 2). Whilst Schreiner teased him regarding his “high seriousness” (Walkowitz 1986: 37, Porter 2004: 125, 131) in her letters to him, his reputation and approach created tensions within the M&WC and greatly influenced its development.

As a network, the M&WC’s membership drew upon connections established by many of the male members who had attended King’s College London (now UCL) and Lincoln’s Inn, one of the four Inns of Court in London. Many members, including barristers Robert Parker and Ralph Thicknesse, and solicitor Hume Pincent, were recruited by Pearson from a former Club,<sup>116</sup> together with Annie Eastty, the only female to follow Pearson into the M&WC from its precursor (Livesay 2007: 79)<sup>117</sup> and whose “own subject [was] the education of girls”.<sup>118</sup>

Elisabeth Cobb was the married sister of Maria Sharpe. Bland (1990), Walkowitz (1986) and Porter (2004) have all emphasised Cobb’s role as Pearson’s “most important ally” (Porter 2004: 135) in the recruitment and/or gatekeeping of potential members. Sharpe’s ‘Autobiographical Notes’ comment on how Pearson communicated with Cobb (Bessie) concerning his initial idea to start the M&WC and that, together with her unmarried sister Letitia, Sharpe “agreed through Bessie to become members if the club was formed”, and “to see some possible women members at our house”.<sup>119</sup>

The extant correspondence of the M&WC, retained by Sharpe, shows how the administration and regular meetings were underpinned by an epistolary network that used letters to flesh out the intellectual ideas discussed at meetings, to manage the practicalities of

<sup>115</sup> RT to MS, 9 March 1885, UCL.

<sup>116</sup> MS, Autobiographical Notes: 8, UCL.

<sup>117</sup> Other members and guests of the M&WC came from a range of professional backgrounds: Robert Davies Roberts like Eastty was an educationalist; Dr Horatio Bryan Donkin, Louisa Atkins, Ethel Williams, Reginald Ryle, Elizabeth Blackwell and Dr Perry, were from the medical profession; Emma Brooke and Olive Schreiner were novelists; and, Rhys David was an honorary professor of the language of Pali and of Buddhism at University College, London.

<sup>118</sup> MS, Autobiographical Notes: 63, UCL

<sup>119</sup> MS, Autobiographical Notes: 6-7, UCL.

club organisation and to broker connections with potential members. Schreiner appears on the list of the M&WC's original members and at the outset sat on its committee. Commenting on the first committee meeting held at her home, Sharpe noted that, after dinner, "Miss Schreiner & Mr Pearson kept up a lively conversation at the other [corner] he persuading her to write a paper for next meeting. A promise she made but did not carry out".<sup>120</sup>

A number of constraints placed restrictions upon who joined or remained an active member, and also on the content of discussions at the meetings. The letters suggest that the gate-keeping activities of Elisabeth Cobb, combined with rules regarding regular attendance and the contribution of papers and the constraints upon individual behaviour imposed by Pearson's 'norm' of scientific rationality (discussed later), restricted membership to the M&WC and brought about its metaphorical death in 1889.

### **Revelations, "Evils"<sup>121</sup> and "Victorian Taboo"<sup>122</sup>: Events, Purpose and Constraint**

The first of W.T Stead's 'Revelations' about the prostitution of young girls in the Pall Mall Gazette was published on 6 July 1885, just days before the M&WC's first meeting but following months of negotiation concerning its formation and recruitment to it. Sharpe later observed that, through the breaking of the conventional silence on sexual matters, these 'Revelations', rather than giving birth to 'liberations', assisted at their birth<sup>123</sup> and facilitated (to an extent) the task of recruiting women willing to speak on such issues to the M&WC. As Bland (1990: 36) suggests, the 'Revelations' further opened up the public "discussion of male sexual desire, prostitution and the question of what constituted informed consent" - subjects which had been hotly and publicly debated by women and women's organisations since the implementation of the Contagious Diseases Act (discussed below), but also extensively privately debated as many correspondences, including that between Olive Schreiner and Elisabeth Cobb, reveal. Sharpe's 'Autobiographical Notes' comment that the 'Revelations' raised awareness and broke conventional barriers of silence concerning such issues and sparked considerable debate. Whilst the 'Revelations' may have fuelled discussions, they were not the catalyst for the M&WC's formation, which was established in response to many perceived social ills affecting women including those imposed and

<sup>120</sup> MS, Autobiographical Notes: 14, UCL.

<sup>121</sup> RT to MS, 9 March 1885, UCL.

<sup>122</sup> Fisher 1996: 2.

<sup>123</sup> MS to RJP, 27 April 1889, UCL.

reinforced by the law. As discussed further below, no one particular event caused the ‘end’ of this network, and it was rather a culmination of constraining factors built in to the purpose and structure of the M&WC and the role of the central figure within it that brought about its cessation.

In March 1885, Ralph Thicknesse wrote to Maria Sharpe, concerning how Pearson (known to Sharpe through his relationship with her sister Cobb) was “the initiator of the idea of the meeting for discussion of the relations of men and women”.<sup>124</sup> As Thicknesse indicated, these discussion meetings were intended to respond to the “evils of the present time” and had the objective of enabling “both men and women to get a clearer idea of the difficulties which these relations involve and perhaps to see some remedy”.<sup>125</sup> These ‘evils’ related, amongst other things, to prostitution and the Contagious Diseases Acts which allowed the arrest and forcible physical examination of prostitutes or suspected prostitutes for venereal disease, and the incarceration of those infected in locked hospitals (Brown 1991, Hamilton 1978, Heyningen 1984, Howell 2000, Ogborn 1993, Smith 1990, Walkowitz & Walkowitz 1973).

The “avowed object” of the M&WC was “the free and unreserved discussion of all matters in any way connected with the mutual position and relation of men and women”.<sup>126</sup> However, as Thicknesse noted, this depended on getting “the right sort of men and women together”.<sup>127</sup> This comment highlights the selective nature of the M&WC’s recruitment, in turn suggesting the existence of preferred views, approaches, and characteristics for potential recruits. As Fisher (1996: 32) notes, “Victorian taboo” rendered “sexual matters... unmentionable” for many people. A club that explicitly encouraged socialisation between the sexes and particularly one that encouraged free discussion of sexual issues was a radical undertaking at the time and members, perhaps particularly the unmarried women with reputations at stake, needed “a certain amount of character”<sup>128</sup> to join at all, let alone to speak freely on the subject at meetings. The problems this presented in terms of recruitment were foreseen at the outset. In a letter from Annie Easty to Pearson dated 16 March 1885 she wrote:

“I hope there will not be any difficulty in getting suitable women as members of the club. It may be true that unreserved discussion between men and women seems more difficult to women than to men.”<sup>129</sup>

<sup>124</sup> RJP to MS, 9 March 1885, UCL.

<sup>125</sup> RJP to MS, 9 March 1885, UCL.

<sup>126</sup> RJP, Review Manuscript:1, UCL.

<sup>127</sup> RJP, Review Manuscript:1, UCL.

<sup>128</sup> MS, Conclusion: 285, UCL.

<sup>129</sup> AE to KP, 16 March 1887, UCL.



These issues were addressed in the M&WC constitution with resolutions urging members to “not disguise from themselves the difficulty of the undertaking, especially having regard to the fact that free discussion between men and women has not been hitherto customary” and that “in view of the foregoing resolution, the members of the Club wish to emphasize the care to be taken in the selection of new members and the introduction of guests.”<sup>130</sup> As Porter (2004: 135) comments, if the M&WC “was to succeed, it had to cultivate trust that participants could discuss the most delicate questions in confidence”. Potential recruits such as Kate Mills expressed anxiety about discussing the “quite familiar” subject, without “some small knowledge of the views of the [other] members”<sup>131</sup> and issues surrounding recruiting the ‘right sort’ who were willing and able to discuss the subject matter freely and knowledgeably continued to prove problematic during the life of the M&WC.

Bland (1995: 19) suggests that the conventions and etiquette of the time meant that unmarried members rarely had any experience of sexual intercourse to draw upon or if they had, they could not readily speak of it. This said, Schreiner’s letters reveal that issues such as sexual desire and masturbation were discussed by her in correspondence with Elisabeth Cobb and Mrs Minnie Walters outwith the formal context of the M&WC meetings. In an exchange between married member Cobb and Pearson, Cobb commented on how one unmarried female member had told her that her contribution to discussions had been limited to “what I thought I ought to say, & had been told & not what I knew”<sup>132</sup> (original emphasis). The absence of sexual experience (or disclosure) of members appears to have limited the scope of discussion and influenced the opinion of members. In her ‘Autobiographical Notes’, Sharpe commented upon the “difficulty we had in getting married women to be members”, claiming that “possibly it was only the unmarried who could treat such matters [as marriage] objectively”,<sup>133</sup> whilst Cobb believed that there was a “great danger of unmarried people not daring to put this sexual relation into the utterly subordinate position it seems to me... it ought to hold... only how can they when they don’t know” (original emphasis). These comments point to some further difficulties and differences of opinion occasioned by divergent sexual experience within the group. As Feld & Carter (1998: 137) note, the expectations of a given focus of activity can have important ramifications for (and constraints upon) the relationships that exist or are formed in that context. In the case of the M&WC, the very purpose of the network in itself constrained its expansion.

<sup>130</sup> M&WC Minute Book: 7, UCL.

<sup>131</sup> KM to MS, 17 March 1885, UCL.

<sup>132</sup> EC to KP, 26 December 1885, UCL.

<sup>133</sup> MS, Autobiographical Notes: 19, UCL.

Despite overt attempts to liberate discussions and steer their course towards scientific rationality, frustrations surrounding the “silence of the women”<sup>134</sup> in the debates that followed, and also what were perceived by some of the men as more emotional than objective scientific responses, continued to plague the M&WC. Whilst these ‘scientific’ discussions within the M&WC were effectively secret, the fact that recruits had to be known to at least three existing members meant that potential recruits often knew of existing members and their outlooks - whether directly or through others – prior to joining. A letter from Eleanor Marx Aveling suggests that her foreknowledge of some members prevented her (and potentially others) from joining. At Pearson’s request, Donkin approached Marx Aveling (and later Frederick Engels) regarding membership. Her reply dated 8 February 1886, stated that she had “heard of the Club - & I am much obliged to Mr Pearson for asking me to join it”. However, she declined on the grounds that “many members of the Club wd decidedly object to my belonging to it” as she had “put one’s theories into practice” by living with a sexual partner outwith marriage and felt that “many of the good ladies in the club wd be much shocked at the idea of my becoming a member of it”.

Like many others, Marx Aveling refers to the commitments tied up with membership and how it would “not be right to join the club well knowing that” she could “not undertake to “write papers” for it or attend its meetings regularly”. Marx Aveling went on to propose that she attend as a “mere “visitor” if “no-one objects to me”, claiming that she “shd be very glad to go to any meeting & take part in any discussion on a question of which I know something”. Her comment “thank Mr Pearson very much for asking me. I have often wished to meet him – but have always, somehow, missed doing it” shows that she and Pearson had never met. Pearson had deployed Donkin’s network connections to create indirect epistolary interactions between himself and people from outside of his own networks, with his name carrying sufficient weight for Marx Aveling to profess to being “obliged” by the approach.

Marx Aveling’s stated reasons for not considering herself the ‘right sort’ for the M&WC are intriguing and hint at the “not exactly radicalism of Pearson’s milieu” (Porter 2004 :125). In theory at least, “by the early 1880s Pearson favoured free marital unions over constrained ones” (Porter 2004: 128). His apparent approval of free union is implicit in his initial proposal of the name “The Wollstonecraft Club” for the Club and his attempts to recruit Eleanor Marx Aveling and Friedrich Engels who both lived with sexual partners outwith legal marriage.

<sup>134</sup> MS to RJP, 20 January 1886, UCL.

However, these proposals by no means met with unanimous approval, something anticipated by Marx Aveling, whose negative epistolary response was subsequently passed around multiple members of the M&WC, including Sharpe and Annie Eastty, who commented on it in their capacity as committee members and forwarded these comments to Pearson. Sharpe did “not consider that Mrs. Aveling would be the right person for a member of our club” and claimed that “by putting her theory into practice” Marx Aveling had “committed herself to a course of action in a way that leaves her no more open to reason”. Sharpe further commented that, “Legally married people... have done what society demanded of them” and have “the self-satisfaction of their well assured position” and therefore have “none of the suspicious sensitiveness to the remarks of others which I feel sure Mrs. Aveling would have and which might make it difficult out of consideration to her for members to speak their minds freely”. Sharpe went on to argue that

“morality for men and women is not the same. Whatever may be our theories this is the fact... there is always I take it the feeling on the part of the man that he can at any moment “repent” and be absolved while for the woman there may be repentance but no absolution. She is committed for once and all and he is not. In all this I do not in any way wish to condemn Mrs. Aveling only to give what seem to me the reasons against her becoming a member, had that been possible.”<sup>135</sup>

Sharpe also expressed resentment at Marx Aveling’s implication she and other members were guilty of “unreasoning and senseless propriety” and would be “shocked” by her joining. Sharpe’s suggestion that “all women” should be acquitted of this on the grounds that they had “joined the club at all”, infers that she believed membership should be taken as evidence of open-mindedness and/or radicalism. However, the frequent recourse to religious terminology, such as “repent”, “absolved” and “condemn”, and her reference to “standards of morality”, indicate unease with Eleanor Marx Aveling’s “course of action”. It is unclear what or whose “reason” Sharpe was suggesting Marx Aveling would not be “open to”, and her use of the term implies that Marx had done something ‘beyond reason’ in cohabiting outside of marriage. Sharpe’s letter justified declining Marx Aveling’s membership on the grounds that her sensitivity to the topics being discussed would inhibit group discussion out of consideration for her feelings and potential discomfort. It then went on to suggest Marx Aveling attend the M&WC as an occasional visitor, where as a ‘stranger’ she would be asked to “withdraw for the purpose of discussing the question”.<sup>136</sup> However, given the tone

<sup>135</sup> MS, 11 February 1886, UCL. Typed statement regarding EMA’s membership, filed with the correspondence of Annie Eastty (10/37).

<sup>136</sup> RT to MS, 15 November 1887, UCL.

of Sharpe's previous comments, objecting to her full membership out of consideration for her feelings reads as rather hollow.

The "radical-liberal[ism]" (Walkowitz 1986: 37) of the M&WC's members therefore had its limitations and varied across its members. In her 'Secretary's Conclusion', Maria Sharpe later reflected on her own 'not exactly radicalism' and how this contributed to problems of recruitment and succession, feeling

"then as often afterwards as though perhaps the somewhat narrow puritanical standard of our family of which there were 3 members [Mrs Cobb, Maria Sharpe & Letitia Sharpe] would destroy the club & prevent it developing into new lines especially when Mr Pearson said at different times that, Mrs Barnes, friend of Miss Schreiner & Mr H Havelock Ellis<sup>137</sup> would be good members & I could not agree."<sup>138</sup>

This correspondence points up the complex direct and indirect interactions involved in the recruitment of members at work behind the scenes of the (direct) interactions of the regular monthly meetings of the M&WC and the indirect practices of its administration. They also show how Pearson used the direct connections of members to communicate indirectly with potential recruits. However, this potentially rapid 'snowball' effect in the brokering of ties was curtailed in numerous ways, by the commitments inherent in membership, by the various gate-keeping activities at play and by differences of opinion in what constituted the 'right sort'.

### **"Suitable member[s]/unsympathetic outsiders"<sup>139</sup>: Letters Connecting the 'right sort'**

As Porter (2004: 135) notes, "clubs, often linked to political and social causes, proliferated in London at this time" and many M&WC members had multiple affiliations to intellectual and social reformist groups that in turn intersected with familial, friendship and social networks. As the above discussion suggests, new recruits had to be known to be the 'right sort' and existing (inter)connections and letters were used strategically in recruitment. The resolution that all guests must be known to at least three existing members, despite the ongoing difficulty which the M&WC had in terms of recruitment, succession and obtaining

<sup>137</sup> A note inserted by Sharpe on the reverse of page 26 of her Autobiographical Notes, and apparently after these having been read by Pearson states, "K.P. doubts whether he ever proposed Havelock Ellis on his own initiative, if he even thought him possible it must have been at a very early date, before meeting him. Oct. 1897".

<sup>138</sup> MS, Autobiographical Notes: 27, UCL.

<sup>139</sup> MS to RJP, 30 September 1885, UCL.

papers for discussion, highlights the sensitivity of members concerning to whom their affiliation to the M&WC and their opinions on the subjects discussed, was made known.

The following letter from Sharpe to Parker dated 30 September 1885 suggests something of the complexity of social and epistolary interactions of the M&WC and how the epistolary exchanges that underpinned the face-to-face encounters of members were integral to both recruitment and gate-keeping strategies.

“I sent on your paper about a week ago to Miss Schreiner. In writing to her [*unreadable*], I asked her to forward it to Miss Easty, I have also asked Miss Easty to send it on when read to Mr Rhys Davids directing him to sending it to Miss Jones... I shall be very pleased to dine at your house on Oct 12, coming I hope from my friends the Shaens...

Miss Schreiner is very anxious that Dr Donkin should come to the next meeting as a guest. She says that Dr Donkin told her you had invited him, will you therefore arrange the formality of the 3<sup>rd</sup> member? I told her I would ask if you would. I do not think Mrs Cobb can possibly feel strongly enough against him not to come as a guest, I have not heard her opinion of him but I have had no opportunity of talking over the club matters with her since my return.

Miss Hadden I believe wished to come to hear Miss Schreiner’s paper but perhaps might not care for Miss Müllers. Mrs Cobb will see about her I think. I don’t think we need be too sensitive about the mention of our club to unsympathetic outsiders, for it is certain that all our members will not be discreet, but I feel very strongly against having too many <sup>^</sup>irresponsible<sup>^</sup> strangers present at the meetings. Of Mrs Caird I have asked Miss Schreiner if she would wish to be one with Miss Jones to propose her as a guest, but even if she does I suppose there is no need to ask her. She wrote to Mrs Cobb of her I know as not at all sympathetic to her, & a little artificial. She spoke to me of Mrs Caird as a narrow one sided woman violently prejudiced against men, but as one clever & likely to add life & interest to our discussion. I will tell you Miss Schreiner’s answer to my question of today, & then you will do what you think best. If I were to confess my personal feeling about all these people and others it would be that I was inclined to hate half of them. But I don’t confess it as it is not to the point, & I really recognize the necessity of different elements, in our club if we are to really learn. I agree with you about the men & married women.

Perhaps you know of Sir Roland Wilson of Cambridge. My sister & Miss Clemes thought of him as a suitable member, but there is a little difficulty about his wife who is not quite so sympathetic.”<sup>140</sup>

This letter, which in addition to the letter-writer and addressee refers to twelve other members or potential members of the M&WC, indicates that intellectual materials such as papers and their drafts circulated within the M&WC and that letters were used, whether directly or indirectly, in recruitment and ‘behind the scenes’ in assessing suitability for membership. The letter refers to multiple social interconnections between members and potentially ‘suitable’ or ‘sympathetic’ outsiders. For example, Bryan Donkin, “known to

<sup>140</sup> MS to RJP, 30 September 1885, UCL.

history as Karl Marx's physician" (Porter 2004 :136), was approached concerning membership by Parker but was also known to and considered 'suitable' by Schreiner, who knew him through her friendship with Karl Marx's daughter, Eleanor Marx Aveling.

The M&WC was a highly localised club with many of the members living "within a stone's throw or two of each other",<sup>141</sup> something which allowed letters to be exchanged with considerable rapidity. Sharpe's friend Miss Shaen, who lived "pleasantly near"<sup>142</sup> to Parker, at whose home many of the M&WC's meetings were held, was later a guest of the M&WC. Given the rules surrounding regular attendance, the M&WC's reliance on recruiting suitable members within a limited geographical radius and from the pre-existing connections of members significantly constrained its capacity for membership succession.

The considerable influence of Elisabeth Cobb in recruitment, gatekeeping and in influencing opinion 'behind the scenes' is also apparent in the above letter, with the implication being that, despite rules concerning the referral and admission of guests, Cobb needed only to "feel strongly enough against him" for access to be denied. The role of gatekeeper was not confined solely to Cobb, however, and the correspondence of members repeatedly shows that, behind the formal rules and administration of the M&WC, the desirability of potential members was assessed and discussed frequently in the epistolary networks underpinning it.

This letter also implies the desire for discretion amongst members regarding not only the views they expressed during discussion, but also concerning their affiliation to the M&WC in the first instance. The desire for more married men and women members referred to here appears in many other letters too, and undermines claims made in much of the literature on the M&WC that it was perceived as a site for courtship.

Finally, discussion concerning the recruitment of the apparently disliked Mona Caird suggests that "different elements" and not just shared beliefs were valued by many members over potential friendships and to promote debate, as Sharpe's comments to Parker concerning her "personal feeling about all these people" indicates.

**"I... write to you personally"<sup>143</sup> and "enclose a letter to"<sup>144</sup> you: Multiple Roles within Networks**

<sup>141</sup> MS to RJP, 10 November 1885, UCL.

<sup>142</sup> MS to RJP, 30 September 1885, UCL.

<sup>143</sup> RT to MS, 15 November 1887, UCL.

<sup>144</sup> RT to MS, 16 November 1887, UCL.

M&WC members were advised of the topic for discussion and the address for forthcoming meetings by postcards issued by its Secretary, Sharpe. Letters were integral to the structure, formal administration and communication processes of the M&WC and Sharpe provided the administrative and epistolary ‘hub’ and the direct point of contact for all members. Members also used Sharpe to communicate indirectly with other members or potential recruits, as demonstrated by the following letter from Thickenesse to Sharpe, asking her to write to members in her capacity as Secretary:

“I wish to write to you personally as Secretary of the Club to say that I think the Committee should call the attention of all members to the rules about visitors.

I should suggest that on the next notice card should be written.

‘Your attention is particularly called to Rule \_’ a copy of which will be found at the back! Members do not seem to exercise as much discretion in their choice of visitors as might be wished. I beg to say that I was not responsible for any visitors last [*unreadable*] & I regarded one of them as most unsuitable and I believe that as to another whose name never even transpired that no member except one knew her even by name.

If the Committee think well I should be happy to move at the next meeting that strangers do now withdraw for the purpose of discussing the question.”<sup>145</sup>

To accomplish his objective of restricting access to the M&WC to unknown outsiders, Thickenesse’s conventional formal letter to Sharpe as “Secretary” was accompanied by an informal letter below, the content of which is more amicable and jocular:

“I enclose a letter to the secretary as to visitors a point on which I feel strongly. What possessed Miss Müller to bring her dear old mother there I cannot imagine. The old lady was nearly killed by it. I liked the look of the Hospital Nurse but no one knew her...”<sup>146</sup>

Whilst relationship boundaries are often suffused or blurred (Spencer & Pahl 2006: 112), these two letters from Thickenesse made a distinction between the types of relationship he held simultaneously with Sharpe – i.e. both friendship and the formal relationship of Secretary/member. As noted by Simmel (1955[1922]: 151), “the same person can occupy positions of different rank in the various groups to which he belongs” and these two letters demonstrate the effect of “different characteristics of context” (Adams & Allan 1998: 9) on a particular relationship. They also allude to the perceived suitability or otherwise of new members and guests and the cautiousness that existed within the M&WC concerning

<sup>145</sup>RT to MS, 15 November 1887, UCL.

<sup>146</sup>RT to MS, 16 November 1887, UCL.

discussing such ‘delicate’ issues as sexual relations in front of “strangers”.<sup>147</sup> The two letters consequently offer considerable insight into epistolary conventions and epistolary artfulness in this particular context. These examples also show, contra the view that people may ignore observer-defined boundaries in their daily interactions (Laumann et al 1992), that Thickenesse observed self-imposed behavioural boundaries around different types of relationship with the same person. Letter-writers cater their writing according to their relationship with the addressee. However, as the two letters demonstrate, multiple types of relationship can exist between the same people and how a letter to an addressee is written can vary across the relationships two people have in different contexts.

Following a committee meeting held on 22 November 1887, a few days after Thickenesse’s two letters to Sharpe, the following minute was written:

“Club Visitors: The advisability of impressing on members the duty of adhering more strictly to rule 12 relating to invitation of guests to club meeting was discussed. It was decided that a card should be issued to members for the purposes of inviting guests, form as opposite.”<sup>148</sup>

Henrietta Müller’s decision to bring her mother to a meeting at which there was also an unknown hospital nurse present, resulted in a number of different epistolary exchanges and had repercussions within the administration of the M&WC, affecting how future connections were brokered or gatekept. Thickenesse’s two letters to Sharpe resulted in a formally recorded minute in a committee meeting and the ‘card’ referred to in this minute effectively became another, and epistolary, ‘gatekeeper’ for the network (Prior 2004, 2008).

### **“just received this letter... It decides the question”<sup>149</sup>: Epistolary Conversations**

I now discuss a number of letters all written, sent and received on 25 March 1886 which concern an attempt by Pearson to recruit Friedrich Engels through Bryan Donkin, who in turn, did so via Eleanor Marx.<sup>150</sup> The chain of replies to this occurred with considerable rapidity, blurring the boundaries between epistolarity and conversation or epistolarity and the face-to-face (How 2003: 7), yet by their chain-like character rely on the temporal and/or spatial distance or separation between each ‘link’. These letters also demonstrate the multiple and highly complex interconnections amongst members and ‘outsiders’ and allow for the

<sup>147</sup> KM to MS, 17 March 1885, UCL., MS to RJP, 30 September 1885, UCL, and RT to MS, 15 November 1887, UCL.

<sup>148</sup> Committee Minute Book, 22 November 1887, UCL.

<sup>149</sup> HBD to KP, (envelope) 25<sup>th</sup> March 1886, UCL.

<sup>150</sup> Eleanor Marx adopted the name Marx-Aveling in 1884 after living openly outwith legal marriage with Edward Aveling.



consideration of the perspectives of people not on the M&WC membership list and their reasons for this.

On 25 March 1886 Friedrich Engels wrote to Eleanor Marx Aveling:

“You know I would do anything in my power to please our friend Donkin, but I am afraid I cannot do so in this case.

The work I have had in hand for the last few years is so urgent and of such dimensions that I have had to give up, once for all, attending meetings of societies and taking part in discussion or preparing papers for such...highly flattered as I feel by the invitation, I very much regret that encumbrances will not allow me to avail myself of it.”<sup>151</sup>

Although a mutual friend of both people, Donkin had approached Engels indirectly about membership via Marx Aveling, but it is not clear why. Engels’s letter exemplifies the recurrent problem experienced by the M&WC, in trying to recruit busy professionals and intellectuals who could contribute to and advance their discussions, but whose prior commitments prevented them from doing so (or provided them with a legitimate reason not to do so). Whilst referring specifically to friendship, Allan’s (1998: 71) suggestion that social relationships are “shaped and constrained” by the “web of other commitments and obligations which an individual has” is pertinent here.

Engels’s letter of 25 March 1886 was then forwarded to Donkin by Eleanor Marx Aveling. It was received by Donkin at some point on the same day and in the time-space between his writing a letter to Pearson on the subject and posting it. Donkin then inserted Engels’s letter addressed to Marx Aveling into the envelope with his own letter to Pearson, having written inside the envelope, “I have just received this letter from Eleanor Aveling. It decides the question.”<sup>152</sup>

As these letters between those from ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ (Riles 2001) the M&WC suggest, the rapidity of these exchanges between four people blur the boundaries between conversation and letter-writing. Exchanged not only on the same day but also being received and read whilst in the act of writing, Donkin’s letter to Pearson is effectively ‘interrupted’ by Marx Aveling’s letter and her enclosure from Engels.

### **The “Extinction” of the M&WC: The Demise of a Network**

References to the ‘nucleus’ of the M&WC were made both in its formative months (1885) and during its demise (1889). Writing to Pearson on 22 February 1885 regarding self-imposed questions regarding her suitability for membership, Annie Eastty refers to leaving

<sup>151</sup> FE to EM, 25 March 1886, UCL. Filed with the correspondence of H.B. Donkin (10/36).

<sup>152</sup> HBD to KP, (envelope) 25<sup>th</sup> March 1886, UCL.

“the responsibility to you [Pearson] and the others who form the nucleus of the society”<sup>153</sup> <sup>154</sup>

Referring to the problem of succession in the M&WC in her ‘Secretary’s Conclusion’ to the minutes, Sharpe lamented that,

“we have worked together for 4 years & at the end formed no nucleus of men & women ready to make personal sacrifices to carry on the work... ready to be done.”<sup>155</sup>

Considered together, these comments imply that this nucleus had not expanded and no further members had been fully absorbed into it, leaving no-one to “carry on the work”. The M&WC was only superficially a collective. The members drawn from Pearson’s pre-existing connections at the formation of the M&WC, such as Pearson, Parker, Thicknesse, Maria Sharpe and Annie Eastty remained static, and problems of succession in terms of commitment or adherence to Pearson’s rational scientific approach proved insurmountable. Despite expressing some desire for “different elements”,<sup>156</sup> succession was also complicated by the desire for M&WC members only to introduce the ‘right sort’ and thus replicate people ‘sympathetic’ to them, rather than a more diverse set of viewpoints. However, where differences of experiences or perspectives existed, Parker (below) suggested that the “individual nature” of members were resulting in differing conclusions being drawn from discussions. Despite the coming and going of various more peripheral members and guests, this network changed little over time and adhered strongly to rules established at the outset that contributed to its failure to expand and leading to its literal and metaphorical ‘death’.

In a letter to Sharpe dated 25 April 1889, Parker wrote that one of the primary reasons for the end of the M&WC was that:

“We cannot generalize with facts and our knowledge of facts does not increase with sufficient rapidity for our craving to generalize. We have ventured on various attempts at conclusions, each [*unreadable*] on particular facts and thence deducing results which harmonize with his or her individual nature. We are too ignorant of facts to correct our premises and if continued without being able to do so should become partisans committed to our own individual theories and further discussion would become useless. If the club is to continue, it can only be by each ^member^ undertaking to collect by reading or personal experiment facts which we do not now know and bringing them before his fellow members so as to give an opportunity for further and [*unreadable*] generalization. For this, as you say, most, if not all of us are far too busy.”<sup>157</sup>

<sup>153</sup> AE to KP, 22 February 1885, UCL.

<sup>154</sup> Eastty replaced Schreiner in the M&WC’s administrative committee soon after its formation and remained a member until its ‘death’ in 1889.

<sup>155</sup> MS, Conclusion: 278, UCL.

<sup>156</sup> MS to RJP, 30 September 1885, UCL.

<sup>157</sup> RJP to MS, 25 April 1889, UCL.

Through lack of concrete evidence (or personal experience) to the contrary, members remained committed to “individual theories”<sup>158</sup> and “personal bias may contribute to the conclusions we draw”.<sup>159</sup>

Despite the fact that “no one was ready to propose its extinction”,<sup>160</sup> during the “disheartening”<sup>161</sup> discussion that followed Parker’s ‘Review’ which was presented to the M&WC on 19 June 1889, Parker and Sharpe had in private referred to this forthcoming meeting as a “funeral”<sup>162</sup> with Parker being the “pulpit orator”.<sup>163</sup> Pearson, however, claimed that the committee “have no right to determine whether the club shall die or continue to exist” without consulting the “whole body”.<sup>164</sup> These repeated funereal images and Pearson’s reference to the M&WC members as a “whole body” imply that the M&WC was one whole and functioning organism and a mortal one at that.

Despite the apparent pessimism, Parker’s ‘Review’, instead of “tak[ing] the character of a ‘swan’s song’” was, following Pearson’s rebuke, and at Sharpe’s later suggestion on 14 May 1889, construed as “rather a looking round and breathing before further advance”.<sup>165</sup> The image of the M&WC as “breathing” also implied its unified and organic nature. However, Sharpe’s insertion of “^whether as club members or as individuals^”<sup>166</sup> after this sentence strongly suggests that she thought this unification would end. Parker noted in his ‘Review’ that,

“comparatively few of our members had undertaken any work of the sort and those who had done so can hardly be ^fairly^ called upon to write more than one paper in the course of a year. It appears therefore that unless more members will in future consent to work for our common interests, we cannot continue our monthly meetings.”<sup>167</sup>

Although a “plan of work was suggested none seemed possible [as] those ready to give time to work were but three or four”<sup>168</sup> As the above letters indicate, the M&WC was only superficially one functioning body, and the nucleus remained relatively static. The result was a variety of shifting and peripheral members and guests who were never fully absorbed into the M&WC which was effectively strangled by its creator, by the constraints he/it placed on members’ behaviour, and by the rules established and negotiated by its core members

<sup>158</sup> RJP to MS, 25 April 1889, UCL.

<sup>159</sup> RJP, Review Manuscript: 5, UCL.

<sup>160</sup> RJP, Review: 277, UCL.

<sup>161</sup> MS. Conclusion: 278, UCL.

<sup>162</sup> MS to RJP, 29 April 1889, UCL.

<sup>163</sup> MS to RJP, 27 April 1889, UCL.

<sup>164</sup> MS to RJP, 29 April 1889, UCL.

<sup>165</sup> MS to RJP, 14 May 1889, UCL.

<sup>166</sup> MS to RJP, 14 May 1889, UCL.

<sup>167</sup> RJP Review Manuscript: 21, UCL.

<sup>168</sup> RJP, Review: 276, UCL.

regarding recruitment, access and attendance. These restrictions, combined with attempts by Pearson (often indirectly through others) to recruit exactly the busy high profile intellectuals and radicals who had little time to commit to attendance or writing papers, inhibited the expansion of the group. As a result, the M&WC “had not after 4 years together gathered a sufficient number of men & women ready to take up further united action”.<sup>169</sup> As Parker’s ‘Review’ and Sharpe ‘Secretary’s Conclusion’ indicate, this lack of successorship led directly to the ‘death’ of the M&WC.

What this suggests is that a specific event or culmination of events may end a network in theory, or to use Crow’s (2002) terms, break up a specific configuration of people. Parker’s ‘Review’ explicitly states that “many of us only see each other at our regular meetings, and if we dissolve may rarely meet again”.<sup>170</sup> Whilst for many members there are very few indications that they were “bounded in any way other than by this particular research interest” (Collins 1974: 171), many connections within the M&WC pre-dated its existence and some connections evolved into other types of relationship (such as from friend to friend and Secretary) and friendships were continued beyond the network’s ‘life’.

Due to repeated references by the letter-writers themselves to the metaphorical ‘death’ of the M&WC, it is tempting to say that this network did effectively ‘die’. Certainly the correspondence associated with the M&WC in the context of the M&WC has a literal end and there was no more material in terms of a next generation, or a successive collection of papers from a subsequent administrator. This said, it becomes more problematic to say if this network finally ‘ended’ because it was a specific and temporally bounded configuration at the intersection of a number of different and evolving networks and these did continue.

Whilst the ‘central figures’ of the M&WC were, on paper at least, comprised of its Committee - and in terms of administration the central figure was Sharpe - Pearson had the greatest perceived influence and his leadership impacted upon and in many ways constrained the M&WC and the behaviour of members. Pearson is attributed with having “set the tone” (Bland 1990: 33, Walkowitz 1986:45) whether purposefully or by “inadvertent consequence” (Porter 2004: 135) with his paper The Woman’s Question. Pearson’s ‘leadership’ or the perception of it impacted directly on the M&WC in terms of: how it operated; the impersonal, rational and scientific stance expected of members; and, as a direct result of this, who was, and wished to remain, affiliated. The few women, such as Schreiner and Henrietta Müller, who “could rival Karl Pearson as an intellectual” (Walkowitz 1886: 43) simply removed themselves, being unable or disinclined to adopt Pearson’s ideal of the separation

<sup>169</sup> MS, Conclusion: 279, UCL.

<sup>170</sup> RJP Review Manuscript: 4, UCL.

of emotions from scientific and rational intellect, something he strenuously advocated but ultimately could not himself practice. Porter (2004: 168) suggests that Sharpe “more than any other woman of the club except Olive Schreiner, stuck by her own views when challenged by him.”

Despite Pearson, Parker and Thicknesse’s intellectual status, internal debates and “struggles of clashing opinions & feeling”<sup>171</sup> often followed the papers that were presented, perhaps particularly Pearson’s initial paper The Woman’s Question, which was printed for ‘private circulation’ in 1885 and dedicated “To the Members of the Wollstonecraft (?) Club”. Whilst the M&WC was at face value a discussion club, it was for both those “inside” and “outside” (Riles 2001) specifically seen as Pearson’s club, and this was definitional.

<sup>171</sup> MS, Conclusion: 286, UCL.

## **Carrying Ideas About Letters, Network and Network Size Forward**

At the end of Chapter One, three key points concerning letters and their relationship with networks were discussed. Firstly, the analysis of letters can influence the drawing of analytical boundaries around networks and shed light on how and why connections were formed, maintained or 'disengaged' from. Secondly, their content affects what can be perceived regarding events, people and their activities, including what be known or gleaned about the existence of centrally influential figures, the purpose of the network, the connections within it, the brokering and/or gatekeeping activities of its members and, the various and often overlapping or coterminous roles adopted by people within it. Thirdly, which letters are extant or accessible greatly influences what can be known about both letters and the networks of which they form part. This chapter (Chapter Two) opened with discussion concerning the size of a network and the main factors identified by recent literature which contribute to or inhibit this. These concerned the frequency of contact, varying emotional intensity, means of communication and nature of the relationship between connections.

Analysis of the three examples in this chapter has raised interesting points for discussion. The Lytton/Carpenter example demonstrates the potential of letters to indicate boundaries around letters and networks. Their content marks these particular letters out as exchanges between a connection purposefully formed outside of the network in which both actors were embedded, but with the wider network integral to and inextricable from the act of forming this connection and maintaining it (and this is despite the fact that only one side of the correspondence is extant). The various strategies deployed in Lytton's (and by inference Carpenter's) letters also point to the perceived central role of Schreiner, with strategic allusions to her approval both of the connection and also of the activities of those connected used artfully to achieve positive outcomes.

In terms of network size the Lytton/Carpenter example shows that, having referred to Schreiner instrumentally to form and maintain this connection, Lytton and Carpenter perceived it to be a sufficiently well-established friendship for variations in the frequency and intensity of contact not to adversely affect it. Despite infrequent contact, there is no sign of 'disengagement' between the friends nor any indication that letters (including by inference those of Carpenter) are written with a sense of duty. Contact appears to continue volitionally and to the pleasure of both parties, and it may have been that the wider network afforded sufficient vicarious knowledge of each other for 'gaps' in communication not to be seen as such.

Lytton's letters reveal how enclosures and more subjective 'quantities' are used in the reciprocal balance between correspondents, over and above the gift exchange of letters, and this balance was maintained over the course of the epistolary relationship. This is a relationship-specific dynamic. Regarding the Jacobs letters, issues concerning reciprocities were both important and took a different form. The impact of events upon letters also comes across strongly in the Lytton/Carpenter example with Lytton's WSPU activities affecting her health and literally affecting her writing, and indeed her capacity to write at all. Whilst Lytton's declining physical capacities placed constraints upon both face-to-face and epistolary aspects of the relationship, the existence of many mutual connections and a foreknowledge of shared interests and values provided the initial propulsion for the connection to be formed and also its continuation.<sup>172</sup> As Wetherall (1998: 126) states, "the structure of... relations or ties among actors both constrain and facilitate action" and mutual connections may also have constrained behaviour here, in that any emergent disagreement or dislike between Lytton and Carpenter would have impacted negatively within their mutual networks, and thus, to avoid negative ramifications within these, been handled with polite phrases or silence.

Balancing reciprocity using both letters and the things enclosed –both figuratively and literally- with them, and also the impact of events on letters and networks, characterize the Jacobs letter exchanges. References to Schreiner were used to smooth over potential cracks in the evolving relationships between Jacobs and Von Moltke and Jacobs and her familial connections because of their incremental demands upon Jacobs. These demands created a considerable imbalance in reciprocity, which expressions of gratitude and sympathy for Jacobs's home country went little way to counter-balancing. Perhaps this was eventually off-set by the hospitality of Von Molke for Jacobs and a friend in Germany post-war. The impact of events is clearly evident with World War I disrupting an epistolary network and creating the need for a new one to get around the structural holes that had emerged due to disrupted postal services and censorship.

In the Jacobs example as well as the Lytton/Carpenter example, an analytical boundary can be drawn, encompassing not just the letter-writers and addressees but also Olive Schreiner. The Jacobs letters indicate Schreiner's importance as a figure who is peripheral to the epistolary exchange but made central to the maintenance of ties. The

<sup>172</sup> It should be noted here that I use the term 'constraints' here as referring to constraints upon the behaviour of members of a network occasioned by the personality or behaviour of another network member and not in relation to constraints upon network size occasioned by the "cognitive and time constraints that place an upper limit on the number of relationships that can be maintained at a given level of emotional intensity" (Roberts & Dunbar 2011: 440. See also Hill & Dunbar 2003 and Roberts et al 2009).

frequency of contact, the means of communication and the nature of relationships to a great extent were determined by need. It is because of events and Jacobs's involvement in them that these letters existed, were responded to and have been archived. The relationships between Jacobs and the letter-writers dwindled once the need, brought about by events, ended and normal international epistolary service resumed. In this example, the need of the network determined its size. It grew incrementally as more and more family members attempted to use Jacobs to communicate with Von Moltke.

Referring to the end of this network, there does appear to be an epistolary 'disengagement' between the various dyadic connections once the purpose of the network ended. This begs the question of 'once a network, always a network?' because once ties have been formed, the people concerned cannot revert to being 'strangers'. However, this network does 'end'. From the outset its existence was purpose or need driven and the letters continually point to this through for example, the lack of 'double vision' of Jacobs. Jacobs ceased to be someone through whom people needed to communicate, and the nature of the remaining ties were different from when this network was active. It was the use of Jacobs's role of intermediary and administrator that was sought, not a connection with Jacobs herself - however, conventions demanded a certain amount of politenesses in this regard. Therefore it can be concluded that this network did end when its purpose ended.

The propulsion for Jacobs to become an epistolary intermediary originated in a desire to please her friend, Olive Schreiner. The extant letters are those to Jacobs, and shed no light on Jacobs's opinion on matters, if indeed she ever expressed this in writing. As Burger & Buskins (2009) argue, reasons are often more nuanced than the attainment of personal objectives or the derivation of utility from a network. Jacobs's involvement carried with it constraints (for instance, that she should do as asked and that editing the letters was not acceptable despite the risks to her) and also demands on her time, as the role of epistolary intermediary developed into something akin to travel agent and administrator.

My analysis of the Men and Women's Club used the literal boundaries of the archival material - all of the documents filed in association with the club - as the analytical boundary. As Secretary and administrative hub of the M&WC, the majority of club related letters went 'through' Maria Sharpe. The formalised nature of the Club and Sharpe's later marriage to Karl Pearson, have contributed to this collection being extant and accessible. However, many mutual interconnections existed between members, and correspondence concerning the M&WC and its interests extended well beyond the confines of its membership list and the correspondence housed in the collection.



The size and duration of the network that was the M&WC, were delimited by its purpose. The M&WC, which its founding members had hoped would grow, drawing upon the many connections of its members, was from the outset restricted and constrained in various ways by its purpose and members. The taboo nature of the topic for discussion, its desire to recruit only the ‘right sort’, its gatekeeping activities, its rules, the requirement of regular attendance and the role of Pearson, are all involved in this. Therefore, unlike the Jacobs example, whilst the perceived need for the M&WC continued, this network was ended due to its purpose and other factors that were inherent in the network. Although various friendship and familial interconnections between members pre-existed this network and extended beyond the temporal boundaries of the M&WC, the roles specific to it ended when the club was dissolved. Again it is the content of letters that have pointed to the restrictions on the size of this network with frequency of contact, intensity, the means of communication (which blurred the boundaries between conversation and writing) and the various and multiple types of relationship between members having little effect on this.

To return to the question of ‘does size matter’, size is relevant to all of the examples discussed in this chapter but in different and case-specific ways. Despite the purposeful ‘separateness’ of Carpenter’s ‘out of the blue’ letter from the wider network, the fact that Carpenter and Lytton saw themselves as part of something bigger is evident from the outset and the existence of this wider network and key people within it are used strategically. The letter content underscores that at no point are Lytton and Carpenter an isolated dyad and nor did they see themselves as such. This is not true of all dyads, however, and in Chapter Three I shall discuss various epistolary strategies within dyadic correspondences that work to underscore the uniqueness and intensity of the dyadic connection to the exclusion of other network members.

Size is also relevant to analysis of the Jacobs letters. Here the formation of connections between people from previously separated networks and the resultant shift, from dyadic connections, to dyads with an intermediary at the centre, to purpose-driven interconnections between members, created more complex relationships. As Roberts et al (2009: 144) note, “large networks are not simply scaled up versions of smaller networks”. The various epistolary strategies deployed to ‘sweeten’ the increasingly beleaguered Jacobs indicate such complexities. As the complexity of this network increased and as the size of the network grew Jacobs’s role within it changed and became more ambivalent as well as more complex. Why Jacobs took on the role of intermediary and later something akin to administrator is nowhere spelled out but was perhaps influenced by the perceived approval of Schreiner –

and in this it has similarities with the Lytton/Carpenter example. The reasons for adopting roles in networks and succession in this, what these roles are, and why and how they emerged is examined in Chapter Four in the context of a large family archive.

The matter of size is perhaps particularly relevant to the M&WC network, with the - epistolary and otherwise - preoccupation with expanding and forming new connections and members being thwarted by the simultaneous preoccupation of its members with restricting access to the network, with the latter also achieved through various forms of gatekeeping, in epistolary and other means. Essentially size was everything to the M&WC, with its failure to expand explicitly cited as one of the main reasons for its 'death'. However, despite the frequency and intensity of the contact between its members, the self-imposed constraints on its size - combined with and contributed to by the other factors discussed above – resulted in its disbanding.

The three examples shift from an epistolary connection formed due to an existing network, to a connection formed because of a disconnected network, to a network formed from existing non-epistolary connections and with different forms of roles and relationships within it. As commented earlier, once ties are formed they do not disappear. The nature of the relationships between the M&WC members and those in the Lytton/Carpenter and Jacobs examples are slightly different, in that regarding the M&WC, this does not centre on the creation of new ties or bridging holes between existing ones. Rather, the M&WC drew predominantly on pre-existing face-to-face connections to form relationships of a different nature, for example, leading to a friendship and a Secretary/member relationship to co-exist for a period of time. Some of these relationships pre-existed the M&WC, some were changed by it, some were formed during it, some endured and/or changed after it ended, and some disengaged when it ended.

Whilst the protagonists in the first two networks had quite specific roles and the nature of the relationship between letter-writer and address is clear, the increased size and complexity of the M&WC allowed for the impact of multiple roles upon letters, as Thicknesse's two letters to Maria Sharpe the 'friend' and Maria Sharpe 'the Secretary' aptly demonstrates. The complex and multifarious roles that can be held simultaneously within networks and the cross-overs between the face-to-face and the epistolary which have been flagged up by this example is something I am mindful of in later chapters.

The size of the M&WC as compared with the other networks has also afforded insight into the impact that network size can have on letters and letter-writing. Unlike

the geographically distant dyadic exchanges of Lytton and Carpenter, the epistolary communications of the M&WC were rapid, to the point where letter-writing was ‘interrupted’ by the arrival of other letters, with their content impacting upon what was written. The epistolary communications of this larger network also formed chains of exchanges between letter-writers and addressees and back again, unlike the back and forth nature of the letters analysed in the first two examples.

Whilst still extensive, the restricted boundaries of this network impacted on the amount of extant archival data associated with it, and so it was possible to consult all of the relevant material and to follow chains of epistolary communications across the entire collection. This methodological strategy, of reading everything and drawing out ideas from it, is however not possible when dealing with ‘superabundant’ (Evans 1997) collections of letters and other documents, such the Smuts Papers analysed in Chapter Three and the Schreiner-Hemming collection analysed in Chapter Four. The ideas discussed in Chapter One and generated by the examples analysed and discussed in this chapter will be carried forward in the analysis of letters from these much larger collections. It is worth noting here that the insights into social interactions afforded by the letters analysed above are not restricted to epistolary networks. As the M&WC example demonstrates, epistolary networks are inextricably intertwined with other forms of social interaction and many of the strategies deployed in epistolary form by letter-writers, such as strategic references to influential others, can also be found in other forms of interaction and means of communication. In Chapter Three, in further exploring the various ideas relating to letters and networks discussed above, I shall use the letters to Jan Christian Smuts from a number of women to explore issues around the purpose of their friendships with him, strategic references to others in these letters, and also the relationship of Olive Schreiner with Smuts as part of this. In Chapter Four I shall explore the letters and other documents in the Schreiner-Hemming collection to analyse specific roles within this family network, the succession to these over time, and how these epistolary and other materials survived and progressed down generations of three interconnected families, to become accessible in an archive as the ‘The Schreiner-Hemming Papers’.

“[H]opes, fears, expectations, and such a network of ties”<sup>173</sup>:  
Letters and the Closeness and Nature of Relationships<sup>174</sup>

“[Lives] are always accessed via a hallway of mirrors and signification best understood as complex semiotic systems composed of narratives, stories and the like” (Plummer 2001: xi).

### Introduction

In the previous chapter I have discussed letters from three different social networks, each connected in some way to Olive Schreiner, using a set of analytical ideas or tools for analysing and theorising letters and networks. The argument so far is that the in-depth analysis of letters and other archival documents can usefully contribute to analytical and conceptual thinking about letters, letter-writing and social networks by opening up aspects hidden from or elided by quantitative methodologies, and in Chapter Two I spelled out what some of these contributions are. The argument is developed in this chapter by deploying these analytical tools in a different context. Drawing on, amongst others, Roberts & Dunbar’s (2011) ideas concerning the mutual effects of the nature of relationships, emotional closeness, network size and communication within networks, I shall focus in particular in what follows on what the content of the letters of various women to Jan Christian Smuts reveal about the nature and purposes behind their connections with him (and his with them), how this was varyingly perceived by those concerned, and how this affected the network and the letters associated with it. The analysis conducted in Chapter One has suggested ideas that can usefully be deployed in the analysis of social interactions. These concern: central figures in social networks and the factors that contribute to some people being seen to have this status; how brokering and bridging connections are achieved and the differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches to analysing this; and, in relation to letterness, what analysing the ‘letters to’ an addressee reveals, both about the addressee and also the social network they are part of. The letters discussed are to Jan Christian Smuts (1870-1960, referred to hereafter as Smuts and in footnotes as JCS) from Emily Hobhouse, Margaret Clark Gillett, Alice Clark, May Hobbs and Olive Schreiner. These are archived in the

<sup>173</sup> JCS to MH, 24 March 1922, NAR.

<sup>174</sup> See Roberts & Dunbar’s (2011) paper entitled Communications in Social Networks: Effects of Kinship, Network Size, and Emotional Closeness.

National Archives Repository (NAR), Pretoria, South Africa, and they constitute a small part of the enormous collection of Smuts Papers. Some brief contextualising information concerning Smuts, the Smuts Papers and my methodological approach is followed by discussing how these women featured in Smuts's inner circle of friends. The contextual and socio-historical information that follows is drawn from the large biographical and academic literature on Smuts. This is too extensive to list here but is referenced as appropriate.

Smuts was born in South Africa in 1870 into a Boer (farming) family of Dutch descent. He studied in England, graduating from Cambridge with a double first in law in 1894. Upon returning to South Africa he was admitted to the Cape Bar (Lentin 2010). Then followed what has been called the "unhappy incident known as the Jameson Raid" (Smuts 1952: 184) of late December 1894/early January 1895, cited by many sources as the catalyst for the South African War of 1899 to 1902. Described, with Smuts's tacit assent, by one biographer, Sarah Gertrude Millin (1936a: 52), as "keen, green, adoring and deluded" in this respect, Smuts acted as a Cape Prime Minister Cecil Rhodes's legal advisor and "defended the policy of Rhodes on every front" (Hancock 1962: 56, 60). Following the Jameson Raid, Smuts like many contemporaries expressed regret over Rhodes's involvement and imperialist agenda and condemned his actions in furthering his political ends through the instigation of conflict. Smuts also opposed the increasingly forceful policy of British expansionism which Rhodes had promoted, renouncing his British citizenship in 1896 (Lentin 2010).

Smuts married Sybella Margaretha Krige, "better known as Isie" (Smuts 1952: 18), in 1897. Various descriptions of her are given: as unselfish and hard working,<sup>175</sup> "brave and true, and good",<sup>176</sup> and by Emily Hobhouse as the "centrepiece of a family who comes and goes",<sup>177</sup> Isie Smuts spent much of her married life separated from her husband because of his political work and campaigning. The result was that Smuts became "almost a stranger" to his children (Smuts 1952: 279). Many of his correspondents state that Isie instructed them to write to Smuts during the periods he was away.<sup>178</sup> As Hancock & Van der Poel (hereafter H&VdP<sup>179</sup> 1966a: ix,) note, despite writing to "her husband regularly when he was away from home, she subsequently destroyed these letters". No explanation for this "self-effacement" is given by H&VdP (1966a: ix). However, some biographers rather melodramatically attribute this to her

<sup>175</sup> Aletta Phillips to JCS, 23 November 1917, NAR.

<sup>176</sup> Daisy to JCS, 15 February 1917, NAR.

<sup>177</sup> EH to IS, 8 September 1911, NAR.

<sup>178</sup> See H&VdP 1966c: 448 fn:2.

<sup>179</sup> The first four (of seven) volumes of Selections from the Smuts Papers that are relevant to the time period discussed here were all edited by H&VdP and published in 1966 and are referred to as 1966a, b, c or d respectively.

jealously over Smuts's friendships with women and his careful retention of their correspondence (for an extreme version of such conjecture, see Beukes 1992: 13).

In 1898, President Kruger of the South African Republic (ZAR) appointed Smuts as State Attorney. Smuts later accompanied Kruger to the peace talks with Britain's High Commissioner in South Africa, Alfred Milner, which were held in Bloemfontein in May-June 1899. Despite the background efforts of many South African politicians, including Will Schreiner, these failed to avert the Boer/British war of 1899-1902. In the ensuing conflict Smuts became a General and led a commando unit against the British. Despite this and the subsequent Boer defeat, Smuts gained the respect and notice of his British opponents, not only for his soldiering and tactical prowess during the conflict, but also for his political and legal acumen. Smuts became known widely as 'slim Jannie', a not entirely complimentary nickname relating to his intelligence and his 'slickness' (Grundy 1986) during the subsequent peace negotiations at Vereeniging, which resulted in the signing of a peace treaty in May 1902.

In 1904, Smuts and his friend and political partner Louis Botha - described respectively as the brain and the heart of a growing nationalist movement (H&VdP 1966b: 3) - established the political party known as Het Volk. Smuts was among those who travelled to England in early 1906 to campaign for self-governing powers to be returned to the Transvaal and Orange Free State. Following their landslide victory in 1906, this was granted by the Liberal Party in Britain, which had earlier denounced British provocation of the war in South Africa. Described by Garson (1966: 101) as the "Botha-Smuts Party", Het Volk's rise to power in 1907 "restored supremacy in the Transvaal to the Boers, less than five years after a war was fought with the avowed object of wresting that supremacy from them".

Following the success of Het Volk in the 1907 election, Botha, with Smuts as his deputy, became Prime Minister of the Transvaal Colony. In 1908 Smuts purchased a farm called Doornkloof, with another farm at Irene purchased later. Smuts's farms are referred to in letters by many people in his personal and political network, who were invited to share their (somewhat basic) Boer homeliness and a private life "lived in the simplest conditions" (Lawrence 1970: 50), often to the surprise and slight discomfort of guests. In the general election of 1910 Botha was elected as the Prime Minister of a new political grouping, the South African National Party. Formed from Het Volk and other like-minded parties, after some political manoeuvrings it later became the South African Party

In 1913-1914 there was a miners' strike, a railway strike and a Boer rebellion against the government's pro-British stance. Smuts as Minister of Defence authorised the execution of one of the rebel leaders, Jopie Fourie, because he had not resigned his army position prior

to his rebellion and so had acted traitorously. Smuts also considered executing some other senior protagonists but spared them “for pragmatic reasons” (Hyslop 2009: 256). Fourie became a right-wing Boer martyr, with Smuts’s complicity in his execution in turn viewed as traitorous by many Boers and with horror by many of his pacifist friends. Many of Smuts’s friends were later also dismayed by his failure to advocate neutrality and his role in entering South Africa into the Great War 1914 -1918, by his part in subduing German South-West Africa in 1915 and by his sending troops to fight in German East Africa in 1916.

However, Smuts received a hero’s welcome on arriving in England in March 1917 for the Imperial War Conference, and he became a member of the British War Cabinet from June 1917 to December 1918. Smuts and Botha attended the Paris Peace Conference, the terms of which were denounced by Smuts and caused him considerable personal and professional anguish, as letters to him at the time suggest.<sup>180</sup> After working to establish the League of Nations, Smuts returned to South Africa after more than two years separation from his wife and children. A month later Louis Botha died and Smuts became Prime Minister of South Africa in August 1919. In the parliamentary elections of 1920, Hertzog’s National Party made considerable gains and Smuts remained in power only through amalgamating his South African Party with the Unionist Party, thereby winning the 1921 election, although later suffering defeat in 1924.

Over this time, Smuts’s spiritual ideas concerning Holism were developing and were discussed with interest by many of his circle (see in particular the letters of Alice Clark to Smuts). Loosely, Smuts’s version of the concept of Holism referred to the tendency in evolution for increasingly complex and greater ‘wholes’ to form from smaller parts. In 1926 Smuts published Holism and Evolution, which was greatly admired by many contemporaries including Albert Einstein.

On the outbreak of World War II, the then Prime Minister Hertzog advocated South African neutrality, and was opposed by Smuts. When a resolution that South Africa would enter the conflict in support of the Allies was passed, Hertzog resigned and Smuts became Prime Minister for the second time from 1939-1948, losing the 1948 election to D.F. Malan and the National Party. Smuts died at the age of eighty in 1950.

In a reassessment of Smuts, Lentin (2010: x) notes that:

“Smuts’s reputation is at a low ebb among historians who consider it their task to judge the past against current nostrums of ‘equality’ and ‘diversity’... weighed in these anachronistic and unhistorical scales, Smuts inevitably emerges as a ‘racist’ and ‘imperialist’. Contemporaries saw him differently.”

<sup>180</sup> See for example the correspondence of Alice Clark (hereafter AC), Margaret Clark Gillett (hereafter MCG) and Arthur Bevington Gillett (hereafter ABG) to Smuts of May & June 1919.

The point in time when something is written obviously influences how its content is represented and understood. Smuts's attitude towards and political dealings with the non-white peoples of South Africa have been the subject of much present-day criticism and debate, with Hyslop (2009: 236) arguing that Smuts's life has become characterised by "two great failures", namely his exclusion of black South Africans from the polity and his "taste for the use of military violence as a political solution". However, contrary to Lentin's comment above, a good many of Smuts's contemporaries openly questioned his political stance towards non-white people and his use of military force.

Smuts's political differences with, and later his personal respect for, Mohandas Gandhi is "famous in imperial history" (Powers 1969: 443). Gandhi's campaign of "passive resistance"<sup>181</sup> for improved rights for Indian immigrants in South Africa raised yet another aspect of the "most troublesome issue" (Hancock 1962: 347, Hyslop 2009) that race was for Smuts, who was primarily concerned with unifying the white peoples of South Africa and handling the often tense relationship between Boers and English-speakers. Gandhi and South Africa's Indian population found sympathy with many anti-imperialists and equal rights supporters in Smuts's networks. These included, amongst others, Emily Hobhouse, Betty Molteno and Olive Schreiner, with the latter making the heavily ironic comment in the postscript to a letter to Isie Smuts in 1907:

"Tell Neef Jan, ~~he's~~ I say, he's not to go on dancing on the head of my Indians like he does; & that when I die, he must take care of all my black people for me!!! I shall leave them to him in my will."<sup>182</sup>

Prior to meeting Smuts and in only her second letter to him, dated 8 August 1896, Schreiner described Smuts as an "open enemy (politically)".<sup>183</sup> Many letters from Schreiner to Smuts were "written humorously but with serious intent"<sup>184</sup> and challenged him to a "political fight!"<sup>185</sup> Hancock (1962: 60) comments that "The moral and emotional heat which she turned on him was an incitement, almost always, towards extremist action." However, not all of Smuts's contemporaries viewed the racial equality advocated by Schreiner as 'extremist'. Also, as Stanley (2011: 148) states in a discussion of 'last letters', Schreiner's "usual disagreements with Smuts [were] expressed in a frank but loving way... prodding him in less racist directions that he did not want to go". In one such letter dated 1 December 1908, Schreiner advised Smuts that she looked forward to him

<sup>181</sup> AF to JCS, 19 September 1913, 195:8

<sup>182</sup> OS to IS, January 1909, NAR, OSLO, transcription.

<sup>183</sup> OS to JCS, 8 August 1896, NAR, OSLO transcription.

<sup>184</sup> Notation to OS to JCS, 21 December 1908, OSLO.

<sup>185</sup> OS to JCS, 8 August 1896, NAR, OSLO transcription.



“doing great work for South Africa... But can you do great work unless your thoughts & ideals are larger than those of the mere racial & party politician?  
Your loving small  
Aunt Olive.”<sup>186</sup>

Ultimately disappointed in her belief that Smuts would do ‘great’ things, when Schreiner felt that she had done all she could do to make him “throw it right this time,”<sup>187</sup> she withdrew from a correspondence that had (intermittently) spanned approximately twenty-four years.

Emily Hobhouse earned Smuts’s and many South Africans’ undying gratitude because of her efforts to relieve distress and improve welfare conditions for Boer people housed in British concentration camps in South Africa during the 1899-1902 war. Schreiner too expressed her admiration for this work, commenting to Hobhouse that her efforts had “saved not hundreds but undoubtedly thousands of lives”.<sup>188</sup> Margaret Clark, a Quaker from Somerset and granddaughter of Smuts’s hero, the radical MP and peace campaigner John Bright, accompanied Hobhouse as a helper on Hobhouse’s return journey to South Africa in 1905. Hobhouse introduced Clark to Smuts, with both women subsequently maintaining long term friendships and correspondences with him. When Smuts sailed for England in early January 1906 to lobby for Transvaal self-government, Margaret Clark was also on board ship. As Hancock (1962: 211) notes:

“On their voyage to England in January 1906 they could not possibly have envisaged the strong and intricate web of friendship which was destined to unite them and their families in the years to come.”

I shall comment on the metaphor of the woven web in relation to the friendship between Smuts and Clark later. Smuts established friendships (epistolary and social) first with Schreiner, then with Hobhouse and later (through Hobhouse) Margaret Clark, while his other most intimate friendships over the period from 1886 to 1920 were established predominantly from the familial and friendship network connections of Margaret Clark. These included, amongst others, Arthur Bevington Gillett, whom Margaret Clark (later Margaret Clark Gillett and referred to hereafter as MCG) married in 1909, MCG’s sisters Hilda and Alice Clark, her cousin Roger Clark, her friend May Hobbs and to a lesser extent Hobbs’s husband Bert.

<sup>186</sup> OS to JCS, 1 December 1908, NAR, OSLO transcription.

<sup>187</sup> OS to JCS, 19 & 28 October 1920 (one letter written over two days), NAR, OSLO transcription.

<sup>188</sup> OS to EH, 3 April 1903, Cronwright-Schreiner (1924: 235-6), OSLO. See <http://www.oliveschreiner.org/vre?view=collections&colid=137&letterid=456>

Despite the extent of the Smuts Papers and my detailed work on them, Smuts remains a rather inscrutable man, and not just because his own letters are largely absent from the collection, which is predominantly composed of letters to him. Keith Hancock's (1962) biography of Smuts, for instance has left readers feeling that "after reading this book, we still do not feel that we know Smuts well" but that "it is not for lack of articulateness on his part or lack of candour on Sir Keith's" (Hanna 1963: 905). Smuts himself acknowledged to biographer Sarah Gertrude Millin in 1934 that "I am ... a puzzle to people".<sup>189</sup> Smuts was an internationally esteemed, calculating and shrewd politician of some considerable fame who chose his words very carefully (as evidenced by his drafting and re-drafting of certain letters). However, when not 'hob-knobbing' at political functions, with British royalty, or at exclusive clubs and expensive hotels, Smuts lived in the basic simplicity of an old-fashioned Boer farming household, and he actively sought friendships and weekend retreats in the woods with the Clarks, an entrepreneurial family of Quakers from Somerset, and their friends, when he was in Britain. Despite being a family man who promoted Holism, Smuts spent the best years of his life away from home, separated from his wife and children for long periods and in later life described himself to a female friend, May Hobbs, as being "happy enough in my family circle".<sup>190</sup> Smuts was a very powerful man, in the conventional and political sense and apparently also in terms of personality and magnetism. He was immersed in a vast network of male professionals and prominent politicians, but also actively sought and enjoyed the company of women and accepted or at least tolerated criticism from his many female friends. Smuts seems to have valued privacy and deeply resented intrusions but also opened his home to selected intimate friends.

The collection number of the Smuts Papers in the National Archives Repository gives some indication of his political and historical significance. Referenced as 'A1', this collection was prioritised as the very first set of papers to be held in the South African Archives (now the NAR) (see H&VdP 1966a: vii and Hazlehurst et al 1996).<sup>191</sup> As noted previously, the private correspondence is "much richer in in-letters than in out-letters" (H&VdP 1966a: vi). Many 'out letters' from Smuts are written to his family members or were donated or sold by their owners after the collection was established, or else by their trustees or relatives on their deaths. Many 'out letters' have in fact been copied from

<sup>189</sup> JCS to SGM, 29 April 1934, NAR.

<sup>190</sup> JCS to MH, 5 January 1920, NAR.

<sup>191</sup> The Smuts Papers are divided into 184 volumes of public papers (including both British and South African Government Papers) and 205 volumes of private papers. Within the private papers are the 108 major volumes of private correspondence that this research is concerned with. Volumes in the archived collection have been arranged chronologically by year, starting in 1886 and ending in 1950, and alphabetically by correspondent with the with the file of each correspondent arranged chronologically from January to December.

originals in other collections (including those of Sarah Gertrude Millin<sup>192</sup> and John Xavier Merriman). Many seemingly original copies of ‘out letters’ are in fact drafts and/or re-drafts that were retained by Smuts. Despite the generally careful retention of in-letters to Smuts, some might (but there is no evidence either way) have been removed or destroyed on receipt or prior to the collection being created.

In addition to the extent of the collection (there over 21,000<sup>193</sup> letters in Smuts’s private papers alone), the main reasons for my working on the Smuts Papers are the connection with Schreiner and also that the papers, to which official biographers Hancock and Van de Poel obtained full access in the 1960s, make explicit Smuts’s appreciation for the company and correspondence of women, something I was interested in exploring. This is because, while the Smuts Papers include thousands of letters which are the products of long-term friendships with women, many biographies of Smuts write these out of existence (O’Brien 2010). Sarah Gertrude Millin’s (1936a,b) biography of Smuts for example – with the exception of Schreiner – makes no mention of Smuts’s women friends despite her research notes containing the lines:

“he has kept the letters of Olive Schreiner & Emily Hobhouse & ~~one~~ ^two^ or ~~two~~ ^three^ other women ^not necessarily famous women^ for whom he has an intellectual respect ^a human affection or friendship.”<sup>194</sup>

Despite his acknowledgement that he had “vast accumulation of stuff”<sup>195</sup> in terms of letters, he discouraged SGM from pursuing this avenue, advising “I don’t think you will find much source material in that direction”,<sup>196</sup> and many subsequent biographers have also failed to tap this resource, working to create a skewed impression of Smuts’s life and network.

The existence of over 21,000 letters necessitated a selection strategy, and so I decided to examine the letters to Smuts from women in more depth. Even so, this still involved over nine thousand letters. Consequently, the content of each letter could not be considered whilst physically in the archive and all letters from women for the period 1886-1920 were digitally photographed, with the exception of Schreiner’s, for which exact transcriptions are available online.<sup>197</sup> Private correspondence in the collection starts in 1886, with this date coinciding with the formation of the Smuts’s friendship with Schreiner and loosely with the formation of the Men and Women’s Club in 1885. This time period also includes the Great War and Aletta Jacobs’s activities as an epistolary intermediary. The cut-

<sup>192</sup> H&VdP, 1966a: vii.

<sup>193</sup> In addition to the ‘public papers’, somewhere between 21000 and 23000 ‘private papers’ are extant. See Hancock and Van der Poel: 1966a: vi-vii.

<sup>194</sup> SGM, A536/G2 ‘Research Notes in connection to Smuts biography’, WCL.

<sup>195</sup> JCS to SGM, 28 April 1935, NAR.

<sup>196</sup> JCS to SGM, 11 May 1934, NAR.

<sup>197</sup> See Olive Schreiner Letters Online (OSLO) <http://www.oliveschreiner.org/>

off point is 1920, which is the year of Schreiner's death and loosely coincides with Smuts becoming Prime Minister in 1919, the year that marked the end of what Hancock (1962) describes as Smuts's 'sanguine years'. All these letters to Smuts from women were later read and logged onto a database with brief comment noted on each and also extracts or full transcriptions of many. This method, whilst methodical and rigorous, is not without its problems. As Plummer (2001: 88) and Stanley (1992: 158) respectively note, "It all depends on how you look" and "each time you look you see something rather different". For my project, making full transcriptions of every letter was not possible and my commentaries and transcriptions reflect what was considered analytically relevant at a particular point in time. This highlights the analytical value of a searchable database of exact transcriptions such as that created by the Olive Schreiner Letters Online, as this can be used and re-used to respond to emergent and new analytical ideas and concerns.

The impact of events upon Smuts's friendship networks and associated letters is clearly evident. Smuts's long visits to Britain from South Africa were necessitated by world events and resulted in regular shifts from the exclusively epistolary to the face-to-face and vice versa in many of his relationships. These extended visits had significant ramifications regarding his networks, both personal and professional, as he established ties or strengthened existing ones with British connections and in turn gained access to their friendship and familial networks. Smuts was immersed, and in many cases played a pivotal role (whether behind the scenes or centre-stage), in the national and international political affairs and events of the time. Hyslop (2009: 235) describes him as "the man who would shape the South African state more than anyone else" and who also "play[ed] a major role in the political framework of the British Empire." As much of the biographical writing on Smuts suggests, it is often "difficult – if not impossible – to distinguish historical events from the historical figures behind the event" (Ross 2008: 182). However, some of Smuts's contemporaries, and particularly Olive Schreiner, also saw him as integral to public political events and regarding their long term effects as these unfolded (discussed below). As well as the more direct or practical impact of socio-political events, Smuts's response or sometimes failure to respond to these led to many letters imploring him to take a particular course of action or expressing dismay and/or frustration about his (in)actions.

The character of the networks around Smuts are inextricably tied up with his immersion in and capacity to influence events. I shall comment on what the letters of his women friends suggest about the shape and workings of Smuts's network later. On a surface level, the purpose of these women's connections with Smuts was friendship. As discussed previously, the purpose of letters in networks is, among other things, inextricably linked with

the strategic and artful devices that letter-writers use to accomplish their desired goals or effects. Close reading of the letters of the particular women friends of Smuts in this chapter suggests that they variously wanted something additional to friendship from him. For many of his contemporaries, and for a variety of reasons, Smuts's status, power and capacities were 'attractive', drawing people to him and facilitating connections he wanted to establish or develop. Whilst many letters express the immense value that their writers placed upon their friendship with him, others indicate that something more was desired and I expand on this later. There is also some indication (again discussed later) that people's perception of Smuts had a constraining effect, inhibiting them from expressing opinions which diverged from his. In exploring this, the existence of central figures within networks is important, as is how bridging and brokering operates at micro-levels within specific network circumstances, with both points also discussed later.

The 'letters to' someone can provide a 'double vision', of both the letter-writer and the addressee, and this chapter uses the letters of a number of women to Smuts to bring into sight two things: what their letters indicate concerning how these women saw their connection with Smuts and his with them; and what they suggest about the shape of Smuts's epistolary and face-to-face network and how people interacted within it. As I will show, this gives a very different impression of Smuts's network than is suggested by the biographies of him.

The balancing of reciprocity and the rapidity of exchange are both relevant to the discussion and indicate a complex balance in the exchange of gifts, favours, criticism and time as well as letters. Many of these letters suggest that Smuts's elevated political and world position had the effect for some correspondents of increasing the 'worth' of any letters he wrote to them, however short they were or however infrequently he did so. These letters from women contain an interesting sub-set of eleven letters written by MCG in quick succession over the course of three days in July 1919, which suggest some of the temporal and ontological complexities which are involved. These eleven letters were written with the intention that they would be meted out daily to Smuts (by a travelling colleague of Smuts who was known to the letter-writer) during his return voyage to South Africa. They do highly complex things with past, present and future time, while MCG's ongoing social interactions with Smuts during the days immediately prior to his departure affected how she wrote them, as did her knowledge of when and where Smuts would likely receive and read them. This led to her projections of what the 'future' Smuts might be seeing, thinking and doing, juxtaposed with reminiscences about the time they had spent together during his stay

in Britain, and also musings about the ‘present’ Smuts who was still in London and in close contact with her as she was writing the letters.

Many of Smuts’s long term correspondences with women ended only with the death of the interlocutors, while multiple interconnections over time existed between the friends and their children (including a marriage between Smuts’s daughter Catharina Petronella Smuts (Cato) and MCG’s nephew William Bancroft Clark, son of Roger Clark). As a result, research on the letters as a whole, as well as from the women I am particularly interested in, indicate that this network extended over time and also over generations (something I examine in the following chapter).

The discussion which now follows concerns: what the women’s letters to Smuts I am focusing on indicate about what they and he expected or wanted from each other; how they wrote to Smuts and what aspects of their particular friendship with him may have affected or influenced this; and, what their letters indicate about how they felt they were perceived and related to by Smuts. I shall then analyse Olive Schreiner’s letters to Smuts and Isie Smuts, comparing and contrasting her letters to him and ‘ostensible letters’ to Isie with those from Emily Hobhouse to Smuts. From this, I shall consider what these sets of letters suggest about the shape and workings of Smuts’s network overall.

**“Do be the one”<sup>198</sup>: “Super Oom”<sup>199</sup> ...“We want you”<sup>200</sup>**

Focussing on the letters women wrote to Smuts can help avoid “the artifice and conventionalities of self-presentation” (Cardell & Haggis 2011: 129). However, the relationship between Smuts and the letter-writers, their relative statuses and how the dynamics of the exchange were perceived are important and will have affected what was written and how. In this connection, a comparison of Emily Hobhouse’s, MCG’s and Olive Schreiner’s letters to Smuts is particularly interesting. All three make explicit reference to being women and how this affected their lives and capacity to act. There are also direct and indirect references to how they think they are perceived by Smuts, and how they see their role and influence regarding him. These three series of letters indicate that they expected (somewhat different) great things from Smuts, while there are differences regarding what they supposed Smuts wanted or needed from them. This is reflected in their very different, and in Hobhouse’s and Schreiner’s cases, their often highly strategic, ways of writing to him.

<sup>198</sup> EH to JCS, 3 May 1917, NAR.

<sup>199</sup> EH to JCS, 29 August 1917, NAR.

<sup>200</sup> EH to JCS, 3 May 1917, NAR.

Smuts's relationships with these pacifist<sup>201</sup> women are intriguing. Despite the frequent existence of 'value homophily' and shared "attitudes, values and beliefs" (Spencer & Pahl 2006: 180) characterising epistolary and social networks, Smuts's political and military activities were largely abhorrent to them, and they made references to Smuts's duality as both a simple, peace loving farmer and a cold and often ruthless tactician.

The earliest extant letter between Smuts and Hobhouse is dated 5 October 1903 and concerns Hobhouse's welfare work and assistance to war widows in the Orange River Colony. In terms of doing things with letters, changes in the Smuts and Hobhouse correspondence over time show something interesting. As Hancock (1962: 182) notes, Hobhouse sometimes used information from Smuts as "ammunition" (and there are repeated metaphors and imagery surrounding artillery and weaponry around Smuts, and around Hobhouse and Schreiner in the biographies of Smuts) against the British government and its policies. Hobhouse clearly enjoyed being kept 'in the know', with her status as a member of the British haute bourgeoisie and respected family name (Hobhouse and, on her mother's side, Trelawny) allowing her access to powerful social and political connections which she used, not always very successfully, to pursue goals and influence others. Smuts, at the outset at least, also wanted something from Hobhouse. As H&VdP (1962: 182-183) note:

"the letters that he wrote to her were not altogether private: not that he intended her to publish them, but he did intend her to quote them to her friends and otherwise make use of them to help the good cause... he never told her explicitly what his tactics were... but he wrote... in alternating moods of spontaneity and calculation."

In 1904, Hobhouse did in fact publish one of Smuts's private letters to her, on the issue of importing Chinese labour into South Africa, in The Times (Times, 15 March 1904:8). This was without his consent, an action which, given the tone of his letter (intended solely for Hobhouse), could have seriously damaged his political career. Despite this, Hobhouse's network connections and her access to the right ears remained valuable for Smuts in some instances. For instance, she wrote to her brother Leonard Hobhouse on 6 July 1903, "I hope you received safely Botha's letter for publication, his hope being that you would receive and make it public".<sup>202</sup> This is an intertextual reference to a 13 June 1903 letter to Leonard Hobhouse that was ostensibly from Botha but which was actually carefully drafted by Smuts. Hobhouse's comment indicates her involvement in the chain of exchanges leading to its writing and publication. This letter appeared in The Times on 15 July 1903, along with a

<sup>201</sup> The qualified pacifism of EH and MCG differed from the absolute pacifism of Schreiner, something which later caused tensions in the relationship between EH & Schreiner.

<sup>202</sup> EH to LH, 6 July 1903 cited in Van Reenan (1984: 223).

covering letter recommending its publication written by Leonard Courtney. Leonard Hobhouse's involvement was anonymised by Courtney for reasons unknown and appeared as "a friend here who has read it to me" (Times, 15 July 1903:8).<sup>203</sup>

Many letters to Smuts from Hobhouse suggest that, in addition to friendship, they wanted other political things from each other. For instance, Hobhouse's letters reveal that Smuts explicitly asked for her opinion on political matters because he saw this based on direct information from those 'in the know':

"You ask if I think it likely a Liberal Govt would stop Chinese importation. Yes, I am sure of it, if they have not come, if they have the difficulties would be great and tho' I am sure they would stop more, yet I cannot see what course they might pursue with those already come. Gradually deport I suppose."<sup>204</sup>

While Hobhouse's British connections were undoubtedly useful to Smuts at the outset of their relationship, Beukes's (1992: 34) claim that Hobhouse "made Smuts world famous" is misplaced. It was primarily Smuts's political and military roles in Transvaal affairs, in the South African War (1899-1902) and in subsequent political events that brought him world recognition. As his fame, social standing and time spent in Britain increased, so did his direct access to people in high places. Later in their relationship, Hobhouse's belief in her usefulness in political spheres and diplomatic situations, the value she placed on her networks, and the capacity for action she believed these afforded her, not only greatly exceeded what Smuts desired of her but also immensely exaggerated her own influence.

Despite many frictions in their relationship and resultant breaks in their correspondence, the sense of obligation that Smuts felt was owed to Hobhouse for her welfare work during and after the South African War was real. Theirs was an enduring, although often mutually exasperating, friendship which lasted until Hobhouse's death in 1926. Hobhouse's ashes were shipped to South Africa from England, and Smuts, "her old friend and sparring partner" (Hall 2008: 295), made a speech upon their internment at the National Women's Monument in Bloemfontein.

In a letter of 11 November 1904, Hobhouse outlined to Smuts her post-war plan to set up home industries for Boer women and girls to learn basic craft skills. Stating that she was "fully prepared for all the criticisms you can launch at my head", Hobhouse added that

"I feel sure that it will add to your interest in my scheme when I tell you that the lady who is going to help me carry it out is a grand-daughter of John

<sup>203</sup> Read to him because Courtney was blind. Courtney's letters were dictated by him and penned by his wife.

<sup>204</sup> EH to JCS, 5 April 1904, NAR.



Bright and like yourself studied at Cambridge, and says that she often heard of you there!”<sup>205</sup>

MCG’s grandfather, John Bright, was much admired by Smuts and Hobhouse clearly believed reference to this connection would engage Smuts’s interest if not deflect any criticisms.

On Hobhouse’s death, MCG, once Hobhouse’s protégé, described Hobhouse as full of faults, gifts and devotion to duty (Hall 2008: 288). Having first-hand experience of these characteristics, MCG and Smuts shared a private nickname for Hobhouse, ‘the Missis’, a term used by domestic servants to describe their female employers. This is telling concerning an aspect of Hobhouse’s character adversely reacted to by many. When in England, Smuts regularly stayed with MCG and her relations in Street, Somerset, and later in Oxford and an “intricate web of friendship” (Hancock 1962: 211) grew up. Smuts’s first letter to MCG is dated 1 February 1906 and is written from the Horrex Hotel in London. This letter is described by H&VdP (1966b: 228) as “[t]he first letter of the most valuable correspondence, ranging from 1906 to 1950, in the Smuts Collection.”

Smuts was often referred to in South Africa as ‘Oom Jannie’, an honorific title meaning ‘Uncle’, with Isie Smuts known as ‘Ooma’ or Aunt. Both Hobhouse and MCG (and Schreiner in a more ironic way) refer to themselves, and are referred to by Smuts at various points, as ‘Tante’ or Aunt, an affectionate and respectful but diminutive and more old-fashioned version of ‘Ooma’. Smuts was an extremely powerful statesman, a fact which Hobhouse acknowledges in a typically “caustic or sharp” manner (Hancock 1962: 287) in a letter dated 29 December 1913 concerning Smuts’s relationship with Gandhi and the Indian Question:

“My dear Oom Jannie,  
Probably an invalid like myself who has hardly come back from the brink of the grave, ought in your opinion to lie quiescent and not mix in public affairs. But somehow I was not born that way & if once one has started a public conscience one can no more silence that than one can a private conscience. And we women, you know, are developing public consciences at a surprising pace.  
Well, dear Oom Jannie, this is my excuse for invading your New Year’s peace with a political letter, on a subject that is only my business in the sense it is everybody’s and upon which therefore I should not presume (since you are a Minister) to write to you, had it not been that Gandhi has asked me to do so and that gives a sort of right to do what might otherwise be deemed interference, were we not such old friends... oh! how many little things done by little people go to make up the turning points in history. It is not only what you big people do in your powerful offices.

<sup>205</sup> EH to JCS 11 November 1904, NAR.

You already know, by the light of your intuition, (unusually keen for the ‘mere man’) that I nourish much sympathy with the Indians. For year I have been much in touch with them. Lord Hobhouse was five years legal member of the Indian Government and from him I imbibed much – and afterwards he made his London home, where I lived with him, a centre for Indians visiting or residing in London. Also Lord Ripon (their Viceroy), Sir William Wedderburn, General Norman, and my old cousin Sir Charles Hobhouse and others, all of whom have held ruling posts in India, have talked to me much of India affairs. Men like those I have mentioned have always done immense good in India, (I believe my uncle was the first to refuse to flog his Hindu servants) and had or have deep sympathy with the existing national movement there. One can’t say the same of a large section of English officialdom in India, and in fact I often wonder how the Indians put up with us. Your so-called Union cruelties and injustices (?!!!) are pale in comparison...

To all this you would add if you were sitting by my sofa: - ‘Yes Auntie, and you have the natural disposition of the Irishman who defined his politics as being ‘always agin’ the Government’. And I should reply: that also is true. No Government pleases me for I am a Celt...

I wonder if it would fall more easily if you had a medium through whom to thresh out an agreement with Gandhi? If you thought me of any use in such a capacity I am willing, for I think Gandhi would trust me and come to see me. Also I think you might trust me, though I am not so sure about that, for I once sinned didn’t I? And you, like the wise burnt child that dreads the fire, have never forgotten though you forgive so sweetly. But remember, I sinned on the advice of Lord Hobhouse, a Judge of the Privy Council, Lord Shaw, present Lord of Appeal, Judge Mackarness and John Edward Ellis, M.P., a Quaker. Strong advice though I do not wish to hide behind it...

Not being South African, or Indian but in the fullest sympathy with both, it just struck me, since Gandhi asked (and the name of Hobhouse is so revered in India) that I might be of some use, so use me or refuse me or abuse me just as pleases you dear Oom. I am too old and benumbed to mind throwing myself down as a paving-stone and being trodden upon as result.

I do so as Gandhi has asked me to do what I can and often in my life I have been able to effect reconciliations and agreements, when it has been awkward for the principles concerned to lower their dignity without a human bridge to help facilitate.<sup>206</sup>

This letter comments on the ‘developing public consciences’ of women and sheds interesting light on Hobhouse’s network connections, how she was used by them, how she used or attempted to use them to accomplish ends, how she represented her role within this network, and also regarding the relationship between her and Smuts. Hobhouse’s apparent deference to Smuts’s ministerial status is typically double-edged. Whilst her letter stated that she “should not presume (since you are a Minister) to write to you” on matters of political import, she did this regardless. The phrase “Gandhi has asked me to” appears twice, emphasising the importance that Gandhi, a troublesome political force in South Africa,

<sup>206</sup> EH to JCS, 29 December 1913, NAR.

placed upon her assistance. The phrase “that gives a sort of right to do what might otherwise be deemed interference, were we not such old friends” artfully suggests that if Smuts viewed this as interference he would be calling their friendship into question. Relatedly, later in their epistolary relationship and particularly around matters relating to war and peace negotiations, Hobhouse challenged Smuts on political matters in almost every letter.

The comment concerning the “little things done by little people”, as opposed to what the “big people do in your powerful offices”, raises points made by Stanley (2010c) on the co-existence and inextricable nature of big and small stories in the quotidian of lives,<sup>207</sup> Hobhouse’s letters frequently relate to “big stories” and have a ‘big story feel’ but also deal extensively with the minutia of her life. Despite referring to her potential involvement as a “human bridge” and mediator as “little things done by little people”, Hobhouse is clearly indicating that she plays a big role in big stories and frequently refers to her network connections and the impact of her family name in support of this.

Hobhouse’s letter refers to the “turning points in history” and, obliquely, how she had earlier “sinned” by publishing Smuts’s letter in The Times. Commenting on the challenge in determining “what the Events, the major, life-changing moments, as opposed to just small-e events were in another person’s life”, Backscheider (1999: 133-34) notes that the “events history has singled out as turning points or of monumental significance may not have been the ones that contemporaries recognised as such or even noticed”. Whilst Hobhouse frequently downplayed her faux pas and justified her actions, her comments here indicate knowledge that these had heralded a “critical period” (Bogdan 1974) in her relationship with Smuts. This time is recurrently identified in biographical accounts more generally as a critical period in Smuts’s life and is frequently singled out in the discussions of Smuts that relate to Hobhouse. Stanley (2004) has discussed how to conceptualise the complex boundaries of an epistolarium, with the letters from Hobhouse and others in the Smuts Papers forming part of the remaining traces of a wider interconnected and inter-textual network that once existed. In addition, the references to Hobhouse in biographies of Smuts contribute in an ongoing and iterative way to the overall “epistolary construction” (Stanley 2004: 201) of her as, if not necessarily a “wild woman” (Hancock 1962: 184), then someone driven and insensitive in her desire to do public good. A further example demonstrates how extreme this insensitivity could be.

Hobhouse travelled secretly to Germany in June 1916 and met with officials there. This controversial escapade landed her in serious hot water with British authorities and

<sup>207</sup> In a letter dated 10 October 1919, Alice Clark wrote: “there really is no difference between big & little; they are all the stuff of reality”. AC to JCS, 10 October 1919, NAR.

resulted in many friends turning against her (Hall 2008: 259) and she narrowly avoided being charged with treason as a result. An incriminating piece of evidence in the resulting investigation was a letter accidentally left behind by Hobhouse after being interviewed by the British authorities. This was addressed to Dr Aletta Jacobs in Holland and revealed Hobhouse's intention to open up secret lines of communication with German leader Jagow, using Jacobs as an epistolary go-between.

In a series of letters between March and June 1917, Hobhouse repeatedly attempted to convince Smuts to draw upon the connections she had established in Germany in 1916 and to use her as "a bridge" to mediate for peace:

"A bridge is needed. Let me be that bridge. I have begun to build it & am not afraid to cross it alone to begin with... the greatest tact and gentleness is needed. Lloyd George would trust me I know & you would ^& the Germans will^ It need never be known. I ask nothing better of life than to make a bridge across the gaping chasm that divides the two countries I love. And you must love both to be able to do it... I cannot put much in a letter."<sup>208</sup>

The repeated references to 'bridge' here emphasise that Hobhouse perceived herself as working across networks in a way that others did not. However, a letter dated 26 April 1917 indicates that Smuts had rejected her offer:

"You were wrong the other day, when you laughed me to scorn because I said it was time to bring the forces of Reason to bear instead of the old exploded and wholly incompetent brute forces now seen to be unable to decide the conflict. That they are proving inadequate & helpless, powerful but powerless, these mighty physical forces, is the one hope in the darkness, for men may perhaps learn that they are to be henceforth & forever obsolete. We women will see to that. Believe me, however much you laugh at "mere women" Reason must get the world out of this war & the sooner you make use of this method and drop outworn methods of killing each other, the better for humanity at large."<sup>209</sup>

This and other letters portray Smuts as scornful towards women, their capacities and ways of working. Hobhouse writes of 'brute force' as masculine and 'Reason' its counter, operating through her network connections and capacity to act as a bridge. It is unclear whether she is directly quoting Smuts in the phrase "mere women" or, rightly or wrongly, projecting his views on the matter. However, during this period of their friendship Hobhouse repeatedly portrays Smuts as sneering, mocking and scornful concerning her schemes. Despite this, Hobhouse repeatedly attempted to gain his approval, perhaps due to the significance of her friendship with him, perhaps also because his support would not only

<sup>208</sup> EH to JCS, 25 March 1917, NAR.

<sup>209</sup> EH to JCS, 26 April 1917, NAR. (original emphasis)

have greatly facilitated her scheme but also (despite her claim that his involvement would remain forever unknown) citing his support would have considerably helped her if she had been caught again.

Hobhouse and MCG were both pacifists and frequently disagreed with Smuts's political actions, but they also repeatedly expressed their belief that he was 'the man' who could accomplish desired social and political ends. In a letter to Isie Smuts of 16 December 1912, Schreiner similarly comments that "every one I have met, English as well as Dutch speaks of 'onse Jannie'. They all feel that he is the man, & that he must be at the centre of things".<sup>210</sup> However, the use of "They all feel" as opposed to 'We all feel' distances Schreiner from this, as compared with Hobhouse and MCG. All three women were often disappointed in their expectations of Smuts, but it appears to have been Hobhouse's and MCG's faith in Smuts's capacities that drew them to him, with Smuts having a personal magnetism or attractiveness for MCG in particular (and others discussed later) over and above his powerful political position. In a letter dated 3 May 1917, Hobhouse, in the midst of trying to gain Smuts's support for her scheme to travel secretly to Germany, wrote:

"We want you, I own, perhaps no country ever wanted help more than ours does at present, but what we want are your great gifts of mind & experience & knowledge of human nature... Do be the one to say boldly the time has come to stop such carnage & to act as reasonable human beings."<sup>211</sup>

Quite unlike Schreiner, Hobhouse and MCG both frequently expressed sympathy for Smuts as a politician and the difficult decisions he faced. In this way, aspects of Smuts that were incongruous with what they wanted him to be, such as his frequent recourse to military violence to resolve political issues (Hyslop 2009), were often ignored, skirted around or attributed to matters outwith his control. However, they believed that Smuts might be 'the one' to make things right and, whilst they did not always agree with his decisions and questioned these, neither woman broke off her friendship with him, although Hobhouse's letters ceased for periods. Hobhouse's letter to Smuts dated 29 May 1904 helps explain the dynamics of how she legitimated his conduct:

"Perhaps nature intended you for a philosopher rather than a fighter, but circumstances made you that - & you braced yourself to fight and now both physically and mentally you are suffering from this re-action, & long naturally enough for the peace of a quiet life. I am however confident that if you transplanted yourself to some ideal spot far from Pretoria & from all worries you would soon be restless to return to the scene of action. The consciousness of power, the sense of justice & the impossibility of composure when one knows things are going wrong would not allow you to rest in rural peace [unreadable] is all very well as a thing to look forward to

<sup>210</sup> OS to IS, 16 December 1912, NAR, OSLO transcription. (original emphasis)

<sup>211</sup> EH to JCS, 3 May 1917, NAR.

and enjoy when your powers have had their full scope and done their work, but they would ~~work~~ ^stir^ in you like leaven if you attempted to retire into quiet life now. I suppose we have to accept this disadvantage of our powers as well as their advantages & amongst those disadvantages are to be reckoned a long strife against evil in its endless forms, a [unreadable] headed monster and the inability to share the rest that lesser folk enjoy until one's very last scrap of fighting power is exhausted."<sup>212</sup>

Possessed of powers, "great gifts of mind & experience & knowledge of human nature", Smuts is presented here as both a philosopher and due to circumstance a fighter, someone who could, and would, take action when 'things are going wrong'. It is interesting that "fighter" is denied as part of Smuts's basic character and seen instead as the result of circumstance, something which Smuts himself expounds, such as in writing to MCG on 8 February 1916, "Pray for your old friend who in these times is forced to do soldiering against his will".<sup>213</sup> This stands alongside comments elsewhere that the period he spent engaged in guerrilla warfare against the British during the South African War, and separated for many years from his wife and children, was amongst the most enjoyable of his life. Certainly, this military side of Smuts did not fit with what Hobhouse (and some others) wanted him to be, but her observation that he needed to be at the "scene of action" conveys her awareness that it existed.

On 9 May 1917, Hobhouse wrote to Smuts that she had been wholly focused on peace-making since August 1914 and considered herself "an expert in the art of making peace".

Her letter continues:

"If say for my health I were in Switzerland, unknown to anyone but the Tip Top and you, I know I could find out the necessary fundamentals & draw things close enough for the officials to meet and take it over. I have a strange feeling it is my mission, my call to do this bit of work, quite unknown & when done I will disappear to Bude & feel quite ready to die. And by your advice and intermission it could be arranged... I have had them [calls] several times. One of them took me to South Africa. Then out of it would grow I think very special work for you, far higher than Palestine could offer. Switzerland would cure my cough I think. Dear Oom, great power is in your hands."<sup>214</sup>

By denying her his "advice and intermission", Hobhouse suggests here that her 'mission' for peace will not come to fruition. She also pointedly reminds Smuts of the welfare work she did in South Africa. The reference to "very special work for you" implies that Smuts would gain an elevated future position as a consequence of her actions. The letter exerts pressure on Smuts in a number of ways including by drawing on both the past and future - his sense

<sup>212</sup> EH to JCS, 29 May 1904, NAR.

<sup>213</sup> JCS to MCG, 8 February 1916, NAR.

<sup>214</sup> EH to JCS, 9 May 1917, NAR.

of gratitude towards Hobhouse for past efforts, and the appeal that ‘special work’ might have for him.

In a 20 May 1917 letter, Hobhouse appears resigned to Smuts’s lack of ‘intermission’, stating “I have made my effort and failed... I have done and you need not fear that I shall trouble you with the subject again”,<sup>215</sup> while on 22 May 1917 she wrote that,

“I am not in the least offended... & of course we can continue the frankest speech... No, I agree peacemaking is no game but so serious that no stone however humble should be left unturned. Sometimes the mouse can free the lion, so the fable tells us.”<sup>216</sup>

Then, in a 2 June 1917 letter, Hobhouse refutes Smuts’s comment that she was disapproved of in her own country (because of her perceived Pro-Boer position, her anti-government stance, her peace agitation, and ultimately her association with German officials in 1916), instead claiming that:

“If you knew my country better & did not live & mix (as unfortunately all the Boer Generals & officials do when they come to England) only with the Governing & Imperialistic classes... you would find that amongst sturdy folk I am received with enthusiasm wherever I go and deeply admired and respected. It is the official and semi-official world that boycotts & cold-shoulders me & has done so since 1901. Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, before he took office upheld me in glowing terms... Lloyd George’s rise to prominence dates from the day he faced Chamberlain in the House armed with the facts I gave him of the conditions & sufferings of the Boer women & children... It is because I believe he trusts & understands me that I felt he could be approached with the suggestion I made to you recently, and I know with a dead certainty that I could help him now as the mouse nibbled the strands of the cord that had caught the lion, a suggestion which alas!... The links renewed last summer might & could be of value now. I made a bridge to cross the chasm & can tread it safely to the good of both, remaining quite unknown... I know I was meant to do this, it would supply & it alone the keystone of meaning to the arch of my life & my sufferings... wanted to explain these things before you leave as doubtless you will be gone ere my return.”<sup>217</sup>

Hobhouse repeatedly refers to the ‘tip top’ elevated circles Smuts moved in as compared to the ‘sturdy folk’ among whom she is admired, and to “mere women” and “MAN!”. She also equates the power of these and by inference warns Smuts not to underestimate the power of the ‘little’. Smuts as he is refracted by this letter, and unlike Hobhouse herself who she depicts as more knowledgeable, spends too much time moving in high society and therefore misses what is happening on the ground. Hobhouse’s mounting disappointment is conveyed in her 17 June 1917 letter. Her use of capital letters for ‘MAN’

<sup>215</sup> EH to JCS, 20 May 1917, NAR.

<sup>216</sup> EH to JCS, 22 May 1917, NAR.

<sup>217</sup> EH to JCS, 2 June 1917, NAR.

and 'HE' may be an epistolary representation of the 'bigness' required to bring about change, but may also more caustically suggest that it was not a MAN but rather Hobhouse herself who would have been bold enough to 'help our crooked world':

"The great statesman, the MAN I told you we were looking for (wondering if you were HE come to help our crooked world) must be bold... if you are indeed to be in this high position where you can show that you are the world's MAN... you will be swallowed up... by the great Work. So goodbye Super Man & good luck."<sup>218</sup>

The potential of Smuts to be "the MAN" or "Super Man" (and in other letters "Super Oom"<sup>219</sup>) who fixes the crooked world is, by this date, clearly in doubt. The following extract from a letter dated 20 June 1917 explicitly refers to a mounting distance in their relationship:

"I quite understand that you have & will have as you say no time for a "mere pacifist", & I have found out that the distance between us is not one of mileage for Hammersmith proved as far as Bude. I'm going back there next week I have no longer any expectation of seeing you..."<sup>220</sup>

The phrase "I have no longer any expectation" seems to carry the double meaning of no longer seeing him as the "MAN", as well as of just no longer seeing him at all. Despite this, Hobhouse's letters through July 1917 continue to "urge" and "weary"<sup>221</sup> Smuts to "send a quiet trusted emissary to find out precisely their point of view as I could do? Oh! you MEN. How much you have to learn!"<sup>222</sup> From being constructed and represented as unusually intuitive for a 'mere man', Smuts was now more ironically considered as a man with a lot to learn from a "mere woman".<sup>223</sup>

Smuts's continual refusal to support Hobhouse's scheme culminated in her 'categorical reply' to Smuts in a letter dated 29 September 1917. This seventeen point, extremely long and highly structured letter is too extensive to be cited in full, although its main points are extracted below. Its repeated and emphatic use of 'I' and 'You' stresses the existence of difference between them and, by inference, there is no longer an affinitive 'we' or 'us'. The opening lines again refer to a conflict in which the little prevailed over the big, namely St Michael and the dragon. Hobhouse also rather dramatically paraphrases Psalm 55 concerning the 'dishonour' Smuts has done her. In terms of intertextual references, citing biblical and classical themes provides a very theatrical and artful indication of who is right and who is wrong in this scenario:

<sup>218</sup> EH to JCS, 17 June 1917, NAR.

<sup>219</sup> EH to JCS, 29 August 1917, NAR.

<sup>220</sup> EH to JCS, 20 June 1917, NAR.

<sup>221</sup> EH to JCS, no date 1917, NAR.

<sup>222</sup> EH to JCS, 12 July 1917, NAR.

<sup>223</sup> EH to JCS, 26 April 1917, NAR.



Confidential

Michaelmas Day – Sept 29.

St Michael fought the dragon & prevailed

“For it is not an open enemy that has done me this dishonour for then I could have borne it, but it was even thou mine own familiar friend whom I trusted.”

To reply categorically:-

1<sup>st</sup>. You do not know me, never did, therefore you cannot judge for what I am fitted. You think because I chaff you & talk wild nonsense to you to get a ‘rise’ out of you that I would behave similarly to others. That I should urge extreme pacifism [unreadable] I am not a fool, tho’ I play the fool often with you, but know how to discuss grave matters & to uphold the prestige of my country.

2<sup>nd</sup>. You jump to conclusions, not always correct and “turn down” a project closely thought out & carefully prepared for, without examination thereof.

3<sup>rd</sup>. I put my proposal & my services therein at the disposal of the Premier & Lord Milner promised to convey the matter to him. Why have you usurped his place?... My mission – and it is mine even if frustrated by a few recalcitrants – is to draw together the broken threads as only one known & trusted by both sides can do, and place them in official hands to weave the web of Peace.

I planned and built a bridge last year believing the moment would come when it would be needed. That moment has now come...

8<sup>th</sup>. I did not propose to “get somehow” to Switzerland. I offered to go privately but on behalf of the Government...

9<sup>thly</sup>. I had no intention of “seeking” the enemy or kow-towing to him. But I know that were I in Switzerland He, the Enemy would seek me & make the first advances, I do not say this without grounds.

10. You can’t or shouldn’t meet a calm thought out, & reasonable proposal with soft-sawdor...

12. You preach patience, that is easy for those who are not the sufferers... if they have no Man! great enough to clear the Augean Stable then democracy must rise and do it...

15. It has grieved me that you have failed in this & let slip an opportunity for world-work which I ^had^ hoped was your high calling...

17. Remember that because I am a woman that does not make me a fool & that many as wise as those who form the Cabinet think I am right...

Yr Tante.”<sup>224</sup>

At this point in 1917, very far from being considered an unusually intuitive man, Smuts is represented as someone who “do[es] not know” and “cannot judge”. Through failing to support her, Hobhouse states that Smuts has failed in the ‘high-calling’ she once believed him destined for. Her frustration is apparent in her statement that there was “no Man! great enough” and that “democracy must rise and do it”. Democracy is therefore by implication feminised, and as Hobhouse is the one offering to “do it”, she is equating herself with this ideal and implying that she and “no Man!” had the capacity to bring it about.

The metaphor of weaving threads is employed in this letter but, unlike the “intricate web” (Hancock 1962: 211) of familial and friendship ties between MCG and Smuts explored later in this chapter, Hobhouse here states that her connections are pre-mediated and strategic

<sup>224</sup> EH to JCS, 29 September 1917, NAR.

– that she “built a bridge last year believing the moment would come when it would be needed”. Many of Hobhouse’s references to network connections are similarly strategic, used to underline points she is making and to emphasise her status, such as “many as wise as those who form the Cabinet think I am right”. Her comment that Smuts believed that women are fools is somewhat belied by the number of long-term relationships he held with women, but that is not to say that he did not enjoy the company of those who looked up to him. Nor is it to say that he thought women fitted for high politics. However, Hobhouse’s assertion that “being a woman does not make me a fool” certainly implies that Smuts questioned or rejected the capacity of any woman to operate at this (his) level.

There was then a break in the correspondence between Hobhouse and Smuts until 11 December 1917, when Hobhouse wrote to thank him for helping her relative Stephen Hobhouse, a high profile Conscientious Objector, to be released from prison.<sup>225</sup> Hobhouse and Smuts remained friends until Hobhouse’s death despite other breaks in contact. Smuts’s need or desire for Hobhouse’s assistance as an intermediary in political affairs at the outset of their relationship was brief. Towards the end of Hobhouse’s life, he gave financial support to her, frequently returning cheques she sent in repayment of loans and apparently forgetting to charge her for expenses incurred in maintaining her property in South Africa. Throughout the course of their relationship, Hobhouse continued to want things from him, whether this was ‘better’ things from him or his support for her schemes or that he should value and use her capacities more.

Hobhouse’s letters to Smuts shed interesting light on the complicated relationship between letter-writing and social networks. They show that, at the outset of their relationship, although Smuts was well known in South African political circles, Hobhouse had an access to a wider political network and knowledge of its members and their manoeuvrings that was very useful to the up and coming Smuts. Hobhouse’s letters repeatedly and explicitly underscore this. Later letters, however, indicate a shift in their relationship and a dwindling of any need on Smuts’s part for Hobhouse to assist in accessing these elite networks. An awareness of this shift, may account for the repeated ‘big’ and ‘small’ comments in Hobhouse’s letters, which also suggest that she attributed this declining need of her political services to Smuts’s views about her being ‘a woman’. As discussed

<sup>225</sup> In the Smuts Papers, a letter dated simply ‘Friday 23<sup>rd</sup>’ is archived in the file after the ‘categorical reply’ dated 29 September 1917. However, from consulting a calendar for 1917, other dates referred to within the letter (‘Saturday 31<sup>st</sup>’ and ‘Sunday 1<sup>st</sup>’) strongly suggest that it has been misfiled out of chronological order, and that it probably relates to March 1917. This is the basis for my claim that Hobhouse’s letter of 29 September heralds a break in their epistolary relationship until December 1917.

below, Schreiner also felt that Smuts ‘needed’ her but the strategic and artful devices she deploys in her writing surrounding this are very different to those used by Hobhouse.

Despite her strategic attribution of various negative aspects of his character to external factors, Smuts is refracted through Hobhouse’s later letters as sneering and mocking. Her letters also suggest that, once her networks connections had ceased to be useful for Smuts, he sought something else from his friendship with her, but that she failed to realise this. What these letters indicate is that many of Hobhouse’s network connections were often formed for strategic purposes by her. They also indicate that Smuts too was highly selective in the connections he pursued and elected to maintain. In addition, these letters indicate a difference between letter-writer and addressee concerning the purpose of the connection between them, a tension that is repeatedly expressed in frustration by Hobhouse. My discussion here has shown how this dyadic connection was formed and maintained and that Hobhouse and Smuts were also part of a densely interconnected social and epistolary network of people. The analytical use of references to these wider shared connections does not lie in the mere generation of names, as discussed by Heath et al (2009), but in how such connections are strategically deployed by letter-writers and for what purposes. In Hobhouse’s case this is primarily for self-promotion, as a proof of credentials and capacities which Smuts had a decreasing need of and later persistently refused.

Many letters in the Smuts Papers show that Smuts was frequently asked by both men and women to ‘use his influence’<sup>226</sup> so as, for example, to obtain passes for friends and family to travel during wartime,<sup>227</sup> to meet with the families and widows of those who had served under him,<sup>228</sup> and to use his influence to obtain leave from service for the loved ones of friends of friends.<sup>229</sup> Smuts also intervened on Olive Schreiner’s behalf when she was ‘bullied’ and overcharged for luggage at Pretoria rail station.<sup>230</sup> The idea that Smuts could be approached for assistance and would oblige seems to have been pervasive. Perhaps this is unsurprising given his powerful position and his capacity to pull strings. However, from reading across the Smuts letters, the extent of how accommodating he was to such requests is notable. The Smuts refracted by these frequent requests for assistance and equally frequent expressions of gratitude is of a person with a strong sense of duty, a ‘big man’ who helped ‘little people’. However, what Stanley’s (2011: 148) discussion of Schreiner ‘prodding’ Smuts to ‘throw it right’, and what Hobhouse’s letters discussed here, also suggest is that

<sup>226</sup> See for example Johannes Neser to JCS, 28 November 1918, NAR and MCG to JCS, 12 October 1906, NAR.

<sup>227</sup> Agnes Merriman (wife of John X. Merriman) to JCS, n.d 1915, NAR.

<sup>228</sup> Margot Asquith (wife of H.H. Asquith) to JCS, 28 July 1919, NAR.

<sup>229</sup> Ethebreda Currey to JCS, 26 November 1917, NAR.

<sup>230</sup> OS to IS, ‘Sunday’ September 1902 and OS to JCS, 26 September 1902, NAR.

those intimate with him had initial very high moral and political hopes of him, but were often ultimately disappointed and expressed their disaffection in a range of different ways.

Unlike with Hobhouse, there are no signs of a struggle for power, status or recognition in the letters of MCG to Smuts. On 2 March 1906, for instance, MCG explicitly wrote about her lack of connections to people in high or influential places:

“It is very hard... to be unable to go & talk to... these new MP’s... the way they ask questions & listen makes me feel it would really be useful if I could only get at more – but I am quite helpless for there is no-one in town to whom I can say ask this kind of MP casually for me to meet him. I don’t belong to any sort of London circle & here is a disadvantage of in what I am generally glad of.”

It seems to have been MCG’s lack of association with a London circle and people in high places that, among other things, appealed to Smuts, something which Hobhouse with her ‘useful’ connections failed to comprehend. On Smuts’s return to South Africa, MCG wrote to him on 6 February 1906:

“It has been hard to know how you were contending in great issues and to have been useless to help. I would have given a great deal to have been of use, and I feel annoyed with myself quite unreasonably but not the less vexatiously because I could not. But it really was hard to stand by useless, both because of the issues themselves and because I value your friendship very much.

Many times thanks.

Your grateful  
‘ou Tante’.<sup>231</sup>

In a variation of the theme of big and small, MCG here constructs Smuts as a man who “contends... in great issues” and herself as “stand[ing] by useless”. Given the extent of their correspondence and that it continued throughout the most demanding times of Smuts’s life, there was perhaps considerable divergence between MCG’s perception of her value to Smuts and how he saw this. On 22 February 1906, following Smuts’s visit to England to lobby for self-government for the Transvaal, MCG, a supporter of woman’s suffrage, commented on the relative positions of and opportunities for men and women. She expressed her ability to help Smuts’s causes as impaired because she was a woman, a sharp contrast to Hobhouse, who believed she could help exactly because she was not ‘a MAN’:

“It seems a long time that you are on the sea. I shall picture your arrival at home with much pleasure in sympathy. If you write me, tell me anything you can about my Missis...

It is stirring here... All the liberal M.P.s fling themselves into their work with fervid delight... All the old and middle-aged are young again...

But no use when you are a wretched woman. I am nearly stifled with what I want to say, and cannot say, about South Africa, and if I had been a man, all

<sup>231</sup> MCG to JCS, 6 February 1906, NAR.

this time I would be working with those Liberals who mean well but who are so ignorant that they will be the prey of any misleaders. So I have to explode uselessly to myself, and be content with the few people who come my way...<sup>232</sup>

The letters from both Emily Hobhouse and Margaret Clark Gillett suggest that they both expected and wanted great things from Smuts but were eventually disappointed in this. The pacifist and Quaker MCG sympathised with Smuts in his efforts in working towards peace, but not with his work relating to war-winning to accomplish it (Hancock 1962: 469). This is apparent in a letter dated 14 March 1916, which expressed MCG's simultaneous disappointment and sympathy that Smuts was to take up a command in British East Africa:

“Your letter of 9 February came ten days ago, and it touched me very much. You will have known how much I have wished that you would not need to do this, and it was grief to read about it in the paper almost the very day you wrote that letter. I have no belief that civilisation is saved by fighting, rather the reverse, but those who think ideas can be helped or defended by war seem now to be involved in joining in it and continuing and aren't able to help themselves. I would love to see you and hear how you can explain any way out of the blind ruin by your method, but the time has long gone by since I would be 'hard' on anyone, and every day I think of you, and of Mrs Smuts and the little ones.

My great hope is that your present work may soon be done and that, with the status of that, you may come to Europe and help poor Europe to see a way, for I believe you could reconcile difficulties, and someone will have to emerge to do this, for the old generation is helpless before the situation it has created – (from the European standpoint, you are not the old generation you know!)...

Our children are all well, very blooming with their rosy cheeks and blue eyes; Baby Nicholas is as full of energy and happiness as can be...<sup>233</sup>

Although Smuts's method will lead to “blind ruin”, he is amongst those who “aren't able to help themselves”. He is, in the eyes of MCG, both a victim of circumstance, and still the person to “help poor Europe to see a way”. This and other MCG letters are a mix of small and big stories. Her comments on the international and political affairs that Smuts was immersed in are interspersed, as here, with domestic stories concerning her children and parents, gardening, weather and so on. Unlike Hobhouse, however, she does not place herself within the big stories, nor see herself as a channel of support or assistance for Smuts in his dealings with them, but rather observes them with sadness from a distance in the relative safety of her family home and circle. Indeed, it appears to be the disassociation of MCG and her circle from the big stories that Smuts found so appealing: her network

<sup>232</sup> MCG to JCS, 22 February 1906, NAR.

<sup>233</sup> MCG to JCS, 14 March 1916, NAR.

connections were not ‘useful’ to him in any political sense, but the peace and respite they afforded him from the big stories was invaluable.<sup>234</sup>

However, MCG’s support and removal from the big stories did not mean that she failed to question Smuts’s political decisions. For instance, she wrote to him on 27 August 1909 that “Well I wish you weren’t going away, and I wish some big things had been different in your Act of Union, but perhaps some of these things you will be able to alter”<sup>235</sup> Another letter, dated 20 February 1914, epitomises the points made above. In it, MCG mixes comment on big stories with recounting small domestic stories, and she continued to express her spiritual if not political support for Smuts. It also seems she tried to “put off” expressing disagreements by attributing her criticism to being ‘badly ignorant’ about what she described as ‘after all a small point’:

“We have been thinking a great deal of you, but really it has been difficult to know what to write, or I would have written often, because of feeling what a stiff time you have been going through. Now your letter to Arthur has come, and I can’t put off longer.

It seems to be so much better to prevent bloodshed than to have soldiers in when damage is done, that I feel quite calm when our good friend the Manchester Guardian finds fault with you, and our well-intentioned but less weighty and rather excitable friend the Nation denounces you. But I confess I could no longer see what you were at when the deportations were done and were made prospective as well. Then I began to feel your political foundations a bit shaky. That your call-out of the Defence Force and suspension of law saved the country I can well understand, knowing what conditions of life are with you. But we have to await the full report of your long speech to make sure of this third point... you are very unpopular with Liberals and Labour, and the people supporting you are not the ones we like being united with.

It has been a bad time with you, and I do indeed sympathise. You must not think that because I have these doubts on what is after all a small point in your handling of things, that we are just coldly critical and unsympathetic... You see we are badly ignorant of things...

I have been often wanting to write to the Manchester Guardian or the Nation in reply to some of their letter, but am always pulled up with realizing that one ought to have either first-hand, or else thoroughly dependable, detailed information to back up one’s beliefs...

The babies are very well and jolly and companionable.”<sup>236</sup>

<sup>234</sup> Although Smuts’s letters are not part of this analysis, letters that appear in Hancock’s (1966) Selections from the Smuts Papers make explicit what is implicit through leaving his letters absent. From JCS to MCG, 24 Oct 1916, in Hancock (1966c: 407): “I was very glad to see all the domestic news in yours. With what eagerness one turns in these days away from the questions of war and public affairs to those of the quiet, neglected, and almost forgotten home, where some private happiness still continues to bloom to remind one of the lost world.”

<sup>235</sup> MCG to JCS, 27 August 1909, NAR.

<sup>236</sup> MCG to JCS, 20 February 1914, NAR.

While in the above letter MCG represents her mounting doubt about Smuts's actions to her own ignorance, clearly her belief in Smuts was shaken, with her letter reading as a self-minimising attempt to maintain it.

I noted earlier a series of letters from MCG to Smuts when he returned to South Africa in 1919. Written after the conclusion of the Paris Peace Treaty, in them MCG reflected on her relationship with Smuts and expressed regret she had not been more forceful in expressing her opinions. She also commented on the contradiction involved, that Smuts fought hard during the Paris Peace Conference to achieve a more equitable peace but had furthered the most brutal of wars:

“you have worked in means which are essentially incompatible with the ends you wanted & your means were bound to defeat your ends, but that is controversial & you didn't believe it & I am always obliged to confess that the Boer War doesn't really fit very well with me...

I believe I have been rather punctilious in abstaining from pushing my ideas & suggestions in intercourse with you, & I am not sure I was right. It was partly because I distrusted my capacity to put them in a helpful way, not an irritating way, learning from Arthur what a bad effect I had.

Then afterwards I have been sorry & thought well, perhaps it might have been useful ^if I had spoken my thoughts more^.”<sup>237</sup>

This is telling. Instead of explaining away the contradiction as the inevitable result of circumstances outwith his control, as she had done earlier, MCG had come to the view that these were “your means” and “your ends” and not the only possible course of action, with her belief in Smuts as someone who would accomplish great ends severely diminished.

**“I know him better than the lot of you!”<sup>238</sup>: An ‘intricate pattern’ of ‘exclusive relationship[s]’<sup>239</sup>**

Some of Smuts's female friends felt what seems to have been more than a purely plutonic friendship for him. MCG in a later diary, for instance, wrote that she had loved Smuts in the romantic sense of the word but had never expressed this. Also, the letters of May Hobbs leave little doubt of an almost obsessive attachment that demonstrably went considerably beyond wanting Smuts's friendship or company. There is no evidence that Smuts encouraged this, and indeed, he actively discouraged May Hobbs from writing letters that he considered too intense and open to misinterpretation by others. There are many rumours concerning

<sup>237</sup> MCG to JCS, 17 July 1919, NAR.

<sup>238</sup> MH to JCS, 13 December 1919, NAR.

<sup>239</sup> Hancock (1962: 286).

Smuts's relationships with particular women, this being the topic of Beukes's (1992) somewhat salacious book. However, these are conjectures which are neither confirmed nor denied by any epistolary material I have encountered. Hancock (1962: 286) suggests that Smuts's "friendships were seldom an exclusive relationship between two persons but were apt to sprout and ramify until a variety of persons found themselves joined together within their intricate pattern." I agree to an extent, although Hancock implies a fluidity and spontaneity to Smuts's network connections that I would question. However, contra Hancock's claim that Smuts's friendships were rarely 'exclusive', the evidence amply shows that Smuts's inner circle consisted of multiple relationships with interconnected women and many of them had a large measure of exclusivity.

Having formed a relationship with MCG, Smuts developed some intimate connections from among her circle of friends. He was proactive in forming and developing these and MCG, although she provided access (or a bridging relationship), did not actually actively 'broker' any of them. For example, on Smuts's departure from England in 1906, a letter dated 1 March 1906 from Alice Clark (MCG's sister) to Smuts states that he had asked her to write to him. Despite her comment "you would hardly have time to read letters and I certainly shall not expect a reply", Smuts commenced a correspondence with her, but which was then halted until 1915 because she contracted tuberculosis. On 5 August 1915, Clark renewed the correspondence by writing that she had been "Wishing to write to you for years and prompted to do it by a nice message sent [by Smuts] through Arthur". A long and intimate friendship then developed.

Tracing out all the interconnections within Smuts's epistolary network would result in a highly dense and intricate pattern, and as Hancock notes, particularly so around Smuts and MCG. Indeed, I suspect that this would be "so complicated as to be meaningless" (Riles 2001:9). Moreover, despite the fact that members of this circle were friends, relatives or met at social events, one-to-one relationships with Smuts were to a greater or lesser degree coveted and slightly jealously guarded,<sup>240</sup> even amongst people who had known each other before knowing Smuts. For instance, following her marriage to Arthur Gillett, MCG had been very concerned that Smuts should like her future husband and "would have been sad if you couldn't like one another".<sup>241</sup> But then, perhaps only half-jokingly, she later complained

<sup>240</sup> Beukes puts emphasis on Isie Smuts's jealousy regarding Smuts's friendships with women. However, his sources for this information are not stated and his book contains evidence of innumerable suppositions presented as assertions on the part of the author, including, Isie "must have been overjoyed and relived to hear" (1992: 64) of Margaret Clark's engagement but "must have kept her thoughts and feelings to herself" (1992: 66).

<sup>241</sup> MCG to JCS, 27 August 1909, NAR.



to Smuts that “You always write to Arthur not me. You were my friend before you knew him”.<sup>242</sup>

As Beukes (1992: Prologue) states, Smuts had “intimate relationships with a number of special women friends”. On return trips to England, he spent a considerable amount of time with Alice Clark and other female friends including Emily Hobhouse, MCG and the latter’s friend May Hobbs. They went on excursions and also they often visited him in his suite at the Savoy Hotel. There is no way to know if any of these relationships were also sexual ones. Beukes (1992: 9), who claims to have “know[n] Smuts well”, opens his book with the quotation from Smuts: “I have a weakness for women not in the sexual sense, but from some inner affinity and appeal”. The title of Beukes’s (1992: 9, 13) variation on a biography is The Romantic Smuts: Women and Love in his Life and this focuses on what he terms Smuts’s “romantic attachments” and the contemporaneous gossip surrounding some of these. Beukes (1992: 13) indeed makes a number of claims that are arguably beyond his knowledge, such as that “Smuts remained faithful to his wife during his entire married life”, and that on discovering that Smuts had kept all the letters received from “these women” his wife Isie had then “collected her own letters to him and burnt them all”. This comment is rather incongruent with Smuts’s later claim to biographer Sarah Gertrude Millin that “my wife has kept most of the material”,<sup>243</sup> much of which comprised of letters from female friends.

Whatever the nature of these relationships, there is some indication of rivalry for his undivided attention and to be the person who could claim to know him best. The impression given is that Smuts’s status and Smuts himself were magnetic and that it was time and connection with Smuts which was coveted. Whilst the letters of Alice Clark, Emily Hobhouse and Olive Schreiner give no indication of any romantic attraction to Smuts, his ability to be charming - or perhaps, to continue the imagery concerning weaponry – disarming, was noted by many.<sup>244</sup> An anecdote concerning Schreiner written by her niece Dot Gregg conveys this:

“We were all brought up by Olive & dad pro Gandhi and in opposition to your policy in the Transvaal. In fact I remember very well one evening at St James when Olive took me with her to your house, she said you had ^again^ been very wicked about the Indians and she was going to give you her opinion – well you came down the steps towards us, kissed her, called her “Auntie Olive”, and though we stayed ¾ hour the Indians were not mentioned, but that’s neither here nor there, you know how you do it, or perhaps you don’t, I

<sup>242</sup> MCG to JCS, 26 November 1913, NAR.

<sup>243</sup> JCS to SGM, 11 May 1934, NAR.

<sup>244</sup> See OS to JCS, 6 July 1912, NAR, OSLO transcription - “No other South African has his brilliant intellect, his charm...”.

don't, I've watched you do it in the House when there was no chance of establishing the personal link."

Whilst Smuts claimed to May Hobbs in 1920 that MCG had always been a "great pal",<sup>245</sup> in a letter to MCG's husband Arthur in 1913 he wrote, perhaps only half jokingly, that Arthur had stolen her away "(quite unsuccessfully) from my affections".<sup>246</sup> There also continues to be debate concerning the nature of Smuts's relationships with, in particular, Princess Fredericka of Greece. Interestingly, it is claimed that Fredericka also wanted something from Smuts and "used the friendship and admiration of... Smuts to try to regain the Greek throne for her husband and herself" (Beukes 1992: 12). The many letters read for my research suggest that Smuts enjoyed the company and attention of women and encouraged this by being charming and accessible to them. Combined with his worldly status, this resulted in some becoming enthralled with him, but at which point Smuts would emotionally withdraw. This is true of May Hobbs, who was first mentioned to Smuts by MCG in a letter dated 23 September 1910:

"last night Arthur & a friend of ours Mrs Hobbs & I went to one of these little towns & had a suffrage meeting. Arthur took the chair, Mrs Hobbs spoke & I sold literature. Mrs Hobbs' husband & father in law are rather famous breeders of Pedigree Shorthorn stock in the Thames Valley."<sup>247</sup>

Smuts met May Hobbs and her husband Bert while he was in Britain in 1917 and by late 1917 they were corresponding regularly. Smuts's letters to May Hobbs are also archived in the NAR separately and I shall refer to them where appropriate. Her opening letters to him comment on how much he was needed in Britain and that he was an inspiration to thousands. In a similar vein to Smuts's other intimate female friends, on 13 April 1919 May Hobbs (hereafter Hobbs) wrote that Smuts could do great good at the Paris Peace talks and "make people realise... they would believe you I think" (original emphasis) and further commented that she was "very sad not to have seen you & envy Alice going up tomorrow".<sup>248</sup> Later an intriguing letter, dated by an archivist as "June 1919?" indicates that Hobbs's relationship with Alice Clark was increasingly tense:

"I shall not be coming shopping with A & yourself today. Last night was more than I could bear. I always used to feel discomfort & [unreadable] in A's presence & just at present it nearly drives me to screaming. I would have given anything to have helped you over the tiredness, but my presence under these circumstances is certainly not a soothing one, & I think I am better away. You understand I know – but if I cannot owing to pressure of

<sup>245</sup> JCS to MH, 8 April 1920, NAR.

<sup>246</sup> JCS to ABG, 18 March 1913, NAR.

<sup>247</sup> MCG to JCS, 23 September 1910, NAR.

<sup>248</sup> MH to JCS, 13 April 1919, NAR.

your work see you again alone, I would rather not at all. It is too much pain. Make any excuse you like to Alice. Say I'm not up to shopping, it's true enough, this horrid faintness overtakes me again and again. I... shall lunch out somewhere & return here about 2.30 - & not go out again, in case you can run over to see me.

I am all alone here. Miss Kindersley is out all day till 6p.m or so... I shall ~~return~~ stay till tomorrow afternoon as I have promised to lunch with my nephew tomorrow although I would like to have gone today I can't bear being in London, knowing you are there.

Jannie, do try & see me."<sup>249</sup>

At the outset of this letter, the "discomfort" Hobbs feels in Alice's presence appears to be the problem, but later it is her desire to be alone with Smuts that is emphasised. Her comment "You understand I know" rather archly suggests that not only would Smuts understand how Hobbs felt about Alice but also why. This creates a sense of shared understanding between letter-writer and addressee, and also brackets Alice out of their exclusive relationship with each other.

Hobb's letters to Smuts are at times intense. Twice his letters rather cryptically warn her that her letters are "liable to be opened & not just by my private secretary. A word to the wise"<sup>250</sup> and that she sometimes writes "things which others may misunderstand".<sup>251</sup>

However, the letters that instigated these responses seem not to be in the collection, or else their remarks were less revealing than Smuts thought. There are repeated references to Hobb's warmth and affection and her innumerable handmade gifts for Smuts, but also to her "moods and vagaries",<sup>252</sup> her being a "funny creature",<sup>253</sup> her difficulty in getting along with many of her female associates, and her troubled marriage with Bert, who Smuts frequently implores her to be nicer to. Smuts's numerous comments about being too busy to write to anyone and repeated forewarnings that he would be unable to write for periods of time suggest that Hobbs reacted badly to epistolary silences. In an elliptical comment, Smuts wrote on 8 August 1921 that "you have perhaps considered me harsh and cruel, good friend and comrade... let us rejoice that Fate smiled on us once more than we deserved."<sup>254</sup> While Hobbs threatened "not to write to me at all", Smuts urged her to write "a little neutral line now and then",<sup>255</sup> and expressed a desire for them to be "dear constant comrades... not oppressive to each other. You understand me don't you dear?" Following this, Hobbs's

<sup>249</sup> MH to JCS, June 1919, NAR.

<sup>250</sup> JCS to MH, 14 June 1921, NAR.

<sup>251</sup> JCS to MH, 14 March 1929, NAR.

<sup>252</sup> JCS to MH, 25 October 1920, NAR.

<sup>253</sup> JCS to MH, 20 August 1920, NAR.

<sup>254</sup> JCS to MH, 8 August 1921, NAR.

<sup>255</sup> JCS to MH, 14 September 1920, NAR.

letters apparently became ones that could be “read with impunity”.<sup>256</sup> What such comments indicate is that, whilst Smuts’s intimate friends knew each other and were interconnected, in some cases people’s wish for Smuts’s undivided attention created tensions.

In many biographies of Smuts, his connection with MCG is explicitly prioritised or ranked as the “most valuable” (H&VdP 1966b: 228) in his life. Beukes (1992: 11), for instance, describes MCG as the “most important”, with Alice described as the “[n]ext in line” and “then” Hobhouse, whilst “[m]eanwhile he was happily married to his wife”. Given such biographical prioritisation of Smuts’s relationship with MCG, a letter from Hobbs to Smuts on 13 December 1919 is interesting:

“I hope your ears were ringing today, because I took up the cudgels on your behalf, ~~you~~ ^with Margaret^ who suggests in true Margaretian fashion that your conversion to women’s suffrage was suspiciously like vote catching! I don’t mean to say that I altogether declared your innocence, but I said that ~~y~~ she must never forget you were an artist and also that it was a reflection on herself & myself if you hadn’t a little better views than you had. She thereupon reminded me of her much longer acquaintance with your mentality, & I caught myself just in time from saying Oh I know him better than the lot of you! & said unreadable instead that I was Jesuitical enough to think that anything you did to get in was justified & that after all men were men and not angels – Thank heaven they aren’t, we aren’t. It would be dull!

We had quite a party at 102 at lunch today Margaret Arthur Hilda & Alice myself & four children, it was so dear & homelike, we, Margaret & I, agreed that we wished you with us...

I am surprised you never received any of my U.S letters – I’m sure I wrote a great many, perhaps too many...

How much finer Margaret is than either of the others & they don’t see it. She has had too experiences that are lacking to the others, that nothing makes up for – life & death & creation of life – I love her very dearly.

It is late at night now, but you were so much in our thoughts today that I felt I had to write to you. Goodnight Dearest Jan in truest love,

May

Sunday...

When I ask Bert if he will ever go to S.A he says no he expects not, so I shall just have to come myself – which really suits me very well as travelling with Bert gets on my nerves. We get along alright when we see each other in small doses, but not unless; I’ve really seen comparatively little of him – ever, & lived my own life – I must stop now – this looks like egoism... Never mind “I know what I’ll do, I’ll take my own advice and wander the whole world over”. Do you remember that song?”<sup>257</sup>

While she writes of respecting and loving MCG, and wished that Smuts was with them, Hobbs also appears in rivalry with MCG concerning Smuts, almost claiming that ‘I know him better’. Hobbs had caught herself “just in time” from declaring this, although why she

<sup>256</sup> JCS to MH, 25 October 1920, NAR.

<sup>257</sup> MH to JCS, 13 December 1919, NAR.

thought this and why it had to remain unsaid is unclear. Hobbs's comments concerning separations from her husband Bert are reminiscent of Smuts's repeated and prolonged separations from Isie, and while her comment that they "get along alright when we see each other in small doses" reads as very honest, it was perhaps a little too close to home for Smuts.

The epistolary evidence shows that Smuts's inner circle was comprised of a small number of intimates, each of whom were sufficiently close to him to claim or believe that, out of all his intimate relationships, they "know him best". Whilst MCG gave Smuts access to an extensive network of her family and friends, Smuts appears to have been proactive and selective in regards to this in developing relationships with specific people, particularly women. In terms of bridging and brokering at a micro-level, MCG introduced Smuts to a cluster of people, only some of whom he developed intimate friendships with. The others are effectively "absent" ties, those "without substantial significance" (Granovetter 1973: 1361). In Granovetter's terms, MCG's role as bridge to this cluster was temporally located, in that once she had introduced Smuts to another member of the cluster she was no longer the only 'bridge' or sole means of access to the group. Acts of introduction that do not result in the formation of a relationship often leave little or no trace, and such micro-level interactions effectively drop out of existence in social network analysis. Consequently, they fail to inform "macro-level patterns" and are essentially bracketed out when theorising social interactions (Granovetter 1973: 1360). The result is that just who Smuts chose not to develop ties with, after being introduced to them, remains in the shadows. As Butts (2009: 414) points out, representational frameworks in social network analysis can be restrictive in setting artificial limitations, imposing simplifications and rendering relationships either "absent or present" depending on which data are selected and analysed. Butts (2009: 415) also notes that it is easier to study relationships than encounters, and that "selective tie removal" and "failure to consider dynamics can lead to extremely misleading results". Consequently one of the purposes of my research is to document and theorize the micro-dynamics of social networks through an in-depth analysis of a range of epistolary sources and by doing so develop methodological, conceptual and analytical thinking about both letters and networks.

The letters discussed so far in this chapter suggest that Smuts's social and epistolary network was not as fluid as Hancock implies and that he was highly selective in rendering connections 'absent or present'. He maintained or allowed connections to dwindle in response to specific events and his political needs at a particular moment. In particular, he actively sought and maintained some connections, especially with women, but also with MCG's husband Arthur, during the busiest and most arduous times of his life:

“it has been said of him (indeed, in times of strain he used sometimes to say it of himself) that he had no time for people, it would be truer to say that he had little time for many people, but a great deal of time for some people” (Hancock 1962: 281-2).

Whilst many of Smuts's connections were formed from the network of MCG (Arthur Gillett, Alice Clark, Hilda Clark, May Hobbs and to a lesser extent various other friends and family connections of MCG), he was extremely agentic in establishing and maintaining some relationships rather than others, as his enquires after Alice Clark in letters to Arthur Gillett suggest. MCG was the bridge to a cluster of people, but thereafter Smuts pursued his own ties.

Rather than Hobhouse's emphasis on her worldly connections, her role as a bridge and the political knowledge and people she had access to, Smuts seems to have wanted something more valuable to him from the connection with MCG. He appeared to find peace and respite from the demands of public life in what became a surrogate family when separated from his own. The strength of the bond between Smuts and MCG's children is signalled in their comments about Smuts which appear in her letters to him, while, during his time in England, he spent many of his weekends with MCG and her family and the majority of his new acquaintances were already established connections of hers (Hancock 1962: 488-9).

Drawing on the work of Valente (1996), the personal network of any given individual is concerned with their direct ties, whilst the analysis of a social networks considers the patterns of inter/connections amongst members of a wider but bounded network (Marsden 2003). Any diagrammatical representation of a personal network will place a subject at the centre, with nodes representing their direct ties positioned around this. As a result, this can give the impression that such an individual is at the centre of a social network. However, the impression of exclusivity around Smuts's relationships with people suggested by the women's letters discussed so far is very different from that conveyed by letters in the Edward Carpenter Collection discussed earlier. Both Smuts and Carpenter used their existing connections, albeit in different ways, to form new connections. However, as the earlier discussion of Lytton's letters to him strongly suggest, Carpenter (and also Lytton herself) was part of but not central to a large, diffuse and interconnected network of like-minded people in socialist, feminist and other radical circles. Although her references to these connections dwindled over time, Lytton showed no signs of pursuing an exclusive relationship with Carpenter that bracketed out other people, in the way that various friends of Smuts seemed to do. This is partly due to Smuts's character and modes of conduct, and partly because he was so proactive in engineering his own specific network connections

(something too readily accredited to MCG in the literature). Despite the fact that Carpenter was himself proactive in establishing a connection with Lytton, there is no indication in Lytton's letters, or by inference those of Carpenter, of any desire for exclusivity; and it seems to me that this has less to do with sexuality and more to do with the character of the people concerned.

The shape of Smuts's network suggested by analysis of the letters to him so far is one in which Smuts is very much at the centre – it is highly ego-centric. The 'ego-network' involves the ties of Smuts as the focal node, plus the ties amongst its various other members. In their discussion of ego-networks, Borgatti et al (2009, 894-5) state that 'structural holes' result from the absence of ties between a pair of nodes in the network and that

“egos with lots of structural holes are better performers in certain competitive settings... a node with many structural holes can play unconnected nodes against each other, dividing and conquering.”

Despite the centrality of Smuts in the network he constructed around himself, he was not necessarily a hub through which information between all actors flowed, as happened with the example of Jacobs discussed in an earlier chapter. Rather, whether intentionally or by default, and as result of his personality and circumstances, Smuts was instrumental in creating a sub-network in which he was central, but with different degrees or perceptions of exclusivity existing between himself and members of this circle. Although this sub-network was greatly interconnected, there was something specific about the relationships between various members of it and Smuts that divided ties and created competition around him.

The shape of Smuts's network is in fact more akin to Borgatti et al's (2009) depiction of an open network than the closed network which is suggested by simply recording the existence or pre-existence of ties between the letter-writers. What this means is that having a connection with Smuts gave little access to potential connections for the friend concerned, being limited to his family and a small number of low status professional administrators. His more elite network connections, certainly earlier in their friendships, could be accessed by Hobhouse and Schreiner in their own right; however, later no one person among his friends was sufficiently high profile to do so. Despite being well-placed in an elite network, he did not open up such connections to any of these women. Rather he served as a magnetic personality whose undivided attention was desirable to many and whose social status and ability (or potential ability) to act influentially was appealing for some, and this was largely lived out in privatised one-to-one relationships.

Using letters as a source through which to explore the micro-dynamics of social connections has led to a very different analysis of the social networks around Smuts than would be produced by a more quantitative approach. Such an analysis would, as with

Hancock, produce a different and less nuanced view of the bridging and brokering activities by MCG and result in her being attributed with primary responsibility for ‘weaving webs’ of connections around Smuts. The more detailed qualitative reading of the to-ing and fro-ing of letters I have presented here shows that Smuts was highly constructive and active in this regard and agentically created a circle around himself. Despite the existence of a multitude of interconnections between these people, there was something about Smuts which led various of these letter-writers to attempt to bracket out the rest of the network and lay claim to an exclusive relationship with him. Smuts himself, his personality, his charm, his capacities and his status provided the propulsion for each relationship with him. These same factors also worked to constrain the pens and the tongues of many of even his closest associates from challenging Smuts, even when he consistently failed to behave in ways they approved of.

### **“Just for yourself and your husband”<sup>258</sup>: Letters to ‘Nephew Jan’**

There are twenty-six extant letters from Olive Schreiner that are addressed solely to Jan Smuts. These date from 1 July 1886 to 28 October 1920, with the last written just six weeks before Schreiner’s death in December 1920. Ninety-six more letters were addressed by Schreiner to Isie Smuts. However, as noted earlier, some of those to Isie were explicitly intended to be shared with Smuts, while in others the ideas expressed seem to be there to plant seeds in Isie’s mind and subsequently influence her husband (Stanley & Dampier 2012, for work on ostensible letters and ostensible audiences, see Stanley 2006a, Osborn 2004). This ‘planting’ of ideas in her letters - or in this case in letters to people who have the ear of her intended audience – is a favoured strategy of Schreiner and much of Schreiner’s political and ethical ‘prodding’ of Smuts was done through artfully written letters to Isie (see Stanley & Dampier’s 2012, ‘I Just Express My Views & Leave Them To Work’). This strategy contrasts sharply with the impatient and repeated butting of heads that is evidenced in Hobhouse’s letters to Smuts. Schreiner appears to have deployed this strategy with other members of her circle too and on 18 September 1897 she wrote concerning her brother Will Schreiner, to close friend Betty Molteno that “I never argue with him. Seeds grow quickest under ground”.<sup>259</sup> Consequently, some letters ostensibly sent to Isie have been included in this analysis of Schreiner’s letters to Smuts because they are inextricably bound up with Schreiner’s relationship with and letters to him.

<sup>258</sup> OS to IS, 13 May 1905, NAR

<sup>259</sup> OS to BM, 18 September 1897, UCT, OSLO transcription. (original emphasis)



The letters to Smuts from women discussed so far have raised various points concerning micro-levels of interaction within social and epistolary networks. Firstly, while such networks can have an overarching purpose – such as circumventing censorship in the earlier Jacobs example – epistolary connections that seem to fall unproblematically under the heading of ‘friendship’ on closer scrutiny have been shown to have more nuanced meanings and fulfil more strategic purposes by their writers. Secondly, while such connections may appear to be inextricably part of a social network, the specificities of some relationships can work to isolate these from the wider network and give them a sense of exclusivity. Thirdly, the relative statuses of the people concerned, or rather their respective perceptions of this, can greatly influence how letters are written. And, fourthly, analysing the in-depth and over time content of letters can produce a very different account of how a network ‘looks’ and ‘works’ than just mapping the existence and flow of letters without this attention to their content.

The lens of Schreiner’s letters to Smuts and the ‘ostensible letters’ to Isie throw further light on these matters. In discussing them, I shall also make some comparisons between Schreiner’s and Hobhouse’s epistolary approaches and strategies. These two women are frequently invoked and contrasted in biographical material on Smuts, with Hancock (1962: 460) for example describing them as

“two glorious battlers... who in their different ways had cast him for the role of the world’s saviour and lamented his backsliding when he failed to live up to their expectations.”

Given their own social standing and public profiles, Hobhouse and Schreiner were not overawed by Smuts’s public position in the way that less ‘powerful’ or famous correspondents like Hobbs and MCG were. There are however important differences in how these women wrote and used their letters to Smuts.

One of the most cited and extracted of Schreiner’s letters to Smuts is the first she wrote, dated 8 August 1896, in which she described him as a “open enemy (politically)” and challenged him to a “political fight”.<sup>260</sup> Despite this, Schreiner’s letters to Smuts are overall not as confrontational as those of Hobhouse, and even where Schreiner expresses frustration with him, they remained encouraging rather than having the caustic and exasperated tone of Hobhouse’s letters. Across their correspondence, Schreiner repeatedly expressed her desire

<sup>260</sup> OS to JCS, 8 August 1896, NAR.

to discuss political matters with Smuts,<sup>261</sup> including in her last letter to him, written twenty-four years after their first epistolary exchange:

“I would like to have a long talk with you on the native question – not only South Africa’s great question, but the world’s great question... You are such a wonderfully brilliant and gifted man, & yet there are sometimes things which a simple child might see which you don’t! You see close at hand – but you don’t see far enough.”<sup>262</sup>

This extract points to something which runs through Schreiner’s entire correspondence with Smuts. As a letter dated 23 January 1899 indicates, Schreiner’s references to ‘small’ and ‘larger’ things relate to temporal and social matters – the ‘close’ and the ‘far’, the vastness of time and the potential ramifications of actions (or inaction) for future history – and not to her or Smuts and their relationship:

“God’s soldiers sometimes fight on larger battlefields than they dream of. To me the Transvaal is now engaged in leading in a very small way in the vast battle which will during the twentieth century be fought out... between engorged capitalists & the citizens of different races.”<sup>263</sup>

This concern with the long-term effects of current actions is reiterated in Schreiner’s last letter to Smuts:

“I wish I knew you were taking as broad & sane a view on our native problem as you took on many European points when you were there. The next few years are going to determine the whole future of South Africa in 30 or 40 years time. As we sow we shall reap.”<sup>264</sup>

With hindsight, Schreiner’s repeated advice to Smuts was prophetic. Smuts’s political stance on race issues had long-term and disastrous implications in South African and world history. Smuts developed the term ‘apartheid’ in a 1917 speech which proposed separation and separate development along racial lines, with Schreiner’s analysis of this “presciently foreshadow[ing] those made by ‘radical’ South African historians in the 1970s when analysing the development of apartheid”<sup>265</sup>. Similar ideas concerning Schreiner’s ability to ‘see’ and consider the ‘long long end’ compared to the short-termism of politicians was also a theme in a letter to Isie Smuts of 22 February 1904:

<sup>261</sup> See for example amongst many others: OS to JCS, 1899, NAR “There is much I should like to discuss with you”; OS to JCS, 7 June 1899, NAR “If I could have a few minutes talk with you”, and; OS to JCS, 13 June 1899, NAR “I wish I could have a longer talk with you”.

<sup>262</sup> OS to JCS, 19 October and 28 October 1920, NAR (one letter started then completed on two separate days).

<sup>263</sup> OS to JCS, 23 January 1899, NAR.

<sup>264</sup> OS to JCS, 19 October 1920, NAR.

<sup>265</sup> See the Dramatis Personae pages (for Francois Stephanus Malan) of the Olive Schreiner Letters Online at [www.oliveschreiner.org](http://www.oliveschreiner.org) <<http://www.oliveschreiner.org/vre?view=personae&entry=45>>

“I have always seen that these things & probably many much worse must happen before the day breaks. I cannot think how our leaders can have miscalculated so! It has also seemed to me they were living in a fools paradise. Of course things will come right in the end: the long long end.”<sup>266</sup>

Smuts and Botha founded the Het Volk party later in 1904, and given Smuts’s involvement in the peace negotiations at Vereeniging in 1902 and behind the scenes involvement in post-war political events, Schreiner is almost certainly including Smuts, albeit obliquely, in this comment. In a later letter to Isie, dated 13 May 1905 and concerning rumours circulating about Schreiner’s opinions of leaders de Wet, Botha and de la Rey, the focus on friendship as opposed to leadership and her excision of the word ‘always’ are telling in terms of Schreiner’s assessment of Smuts:

“I love your husband better than all three, not because I say he is ~~always~~ a greater leader but because he is my friend.”

Reading Schreiner’s letters to Smuts conveys that she maintained a belief in his potential and capacities but greatly regretted that he never realised these or used them to their full potential. Also, like Hobhouse, Schreiner’s letters give no indication of any romantic interest in Smuts or of being enthralled by his position of power. Indeed, at the outset of their relationship Schreiner had considerably greater fame than the up and coming Smuts.

A letter from Schreiner to Smuts dated 30 December 1908 was written when a National Convention was meeting to discuss the unification of South Africa. Schreiner’s high-selling political essay Closer Union expressed her belief that South Africa should avoid the “undue dominance of any interest, class, or individual” by having “strongly organised and individualised though confederate States” (Schreiner, 1909: 9). Her letter to Smuts is equally clear:

“Thank you for your letter. No, I don’t want to come to Cape Town while this Convention is sitting. The less I think of it the happier I am. I wish I had a copy of a letter I wrote to Milner when he first came here, to send to you (only substituting your name for his). It wasn’t clever, it wasn’t perhaps interesting, but it held a truth, when I tried to prove to him that from the moment when he accepted a high position of rule to this country his right to act as a mere party man was gone. That not only to the Englishmen but to every Boer and every little Kaffir child to every old Hottentot walking in the veld, he owes a duty. Our duty stretches as far as our powers of benefiting our fellow creatures goes. It doesn’t end till that ends. And from the man of wide powers, from him much is expected. Goodbye dear Nief Jan” (original emphasis).<sup>267</sup>

<sup>266</sup> OS to IS, 22 February 1904, NAR, OSLO transcription.

<sup>267</sup> OS to JCS, 30 December 1908, NAR, OSLO transcription.

There were, to put it mildly, strong political tensions around Milner in the run up to the South African War and consequently this letter underscores Smuts's political errors in Schreiner's eyes in a way that would have resonance for Smuts. Her letter emphasises the long-term ramifications of Smuts's actions and explicitly comments on her expectations of good political leadership. This December 1908 letter marked a break in Schreiner's direct epistolary connections with Smuts for over a year.

On 6 February 1910, Schreiner wrote to Isie Smuts:

“Please don't think I don't love you & Jan, or that any difference in my views in politics from yours makes any difference in my feelings to you. It seems to me more & more that there's nothing in the world matters but loving your fellow men & helping them if you can. And when one can't do anything one can still keep on loving.”<sup>268</sup>

Given the comments about Smuts's duty to his 'fellow creatures' in her December 1908 letter, the emphasis on 'loving your fellow men' seems to apply both to Schreiner in relation to Smuts and to Smuts's political conduct simultaneously. The break in her direct communications with Smuts, despite her proclaimed affection for him, is attributable to her inability to 'do anything' but her eventual return to simple affection in spite of this.

Many of Schreiner's letters to Smuts and Isie Smuts display a deeply ironic humour that was perhaps intended to go over the head of the addressee(s). It is likely that the Smutses read the reference to 'weak' people who 'may need you' made by Schreiner in the following letter dated sometime in 1911 as pertaining to the non-white groups mentioned by her:

“Love to you & the children & neef Jan – if he doesn't think that someone who loves niggers & Indians & all sorts of people is worth having love from! One has to love the people who you think are weak & may need you.  
Your Auntie  
Olive.”<sup>269</sup>

However, this letter is commented on by Alice Greene, a close friend of Schreiner's, when writing to Betty Molteno as one the Smutses would misunderstand, and that Schreiner was writing strategically using terms they would comprehend. Also, whilst the Smutses are likely to have realised that Schreiner was encouraging them toward racial equality, her reference to 'weak people' was probably also referring to Smuts and his moral weakness on matters of race.

<sup>268</sup> OS to IS, 6 February 1910, NAR, OSLO transcription.

<sup>269</sup> OS to IS, 1911, NAR, OSLO transcription.

Emily Hobhouse's letters to Smuts indicate she considered him scornful and mocking towards her because she was a woman. In similar terms, in a letter to Isie Smuts of 6 July 1912, Schreiner writes of Smuts 'in real life' seeing her as a fool:

"I had such a vivid dream ~~aff~~ about your husband the night before last. I was telling him how much I disliked the Defense Force; I told him he was shaping a knife with which other men would cut, not he. And that the day would come when he would find that the first civil war in this country whether against black men or white would end his career. And it seemed to me he was so angry & in such distress. Of course in real life he would only have laughed at me, & told me in his heart, that I was a fool. But the dream seems cut in my mind.

I am so anxious about the future of the country: but perhaps it is because I am ill that I feel so depressed about it. You don't know how much I care about your husband, & how I have hoped for his really great career in South Africa. No other South African has his brilliant intellect, his charm, his unwearied power of labour. But what I ask myself is "Does he always see far enough?" Old Jan Hofmeyr had not his charm, nor his brilliancy –but he saw far!"<sup>270</sup>

The juxtaposition of the present tense "I care about your husband" with the retrospective "I have hoped for his really great career" indicates that these hopes were ended. Schreiner's flattery of Smuts and his gifts is explicit but the idea of greatness here relates to the ability to "see far", something which Schreiner repeatedly points out that Smuts lacks. In a letter dated 21 December 1908, the only one written in a mixture of Dutch and Taal and not English (and translated by the OSLO), Schreiner explicitly comments on the respective capacities of herself and "Nephew Jan". Again, this is expressed humorously but with serious intent:

"I know you are rather cleverer than I; but God therefore allowed your old, small auntie to see something. You know, my dear Nephew Jan, when Hofmeyr and Rhodes sent you to Kimberley, that you were wrong, and the stupid, little auntie was right. You must not be like Milner, reading everything and listening to nothing!... Nephew Jan will not understand, therefore I will now stop."<sup>271</sup>

Schreiner plays on the ideas of clever and stupid around age and the honorific uses of the terms Aunt and Uncle in South Africa. Instead of the direct and combative 'MAN versus woman' expressed in many of Hobhouse's letters, Schreiner uses the familiar term of Aunt in an ironic and diminutive way, exaggerating how she felt she was perceived by Smuts. However, instead of the honorific title of Oom (Uncle) Jannie, Schreiner categorises Smuts as Nephew Jan to her as his "old, small auntie", and consequently implies he is less experienced and with something to learn from his elders, even if he listens 'to nothing'. Her

<sup>270</sup> OS to IS, 6 July 1912, NAR, OSLO transcription.

<sup>271</sup> OS to JCS, 21 December 1908, NAR, OSLO transcription.

comment that Smuts “will not understand” refers both to the ironic humour of her letter and also the wider political matters it implicitly refers to, concerning the role of Dutch or ‘Taal’ (Afrikaans) in public life.

As well as a friendship that Schreiner valued and enjoyed, the main purpose of her epistolary connection with Smuts was to encourage him to accomplish greater and long-term good. Over twenty of the twenty-six letters from Schreiner to Smuts refer to political matters, Smuts’s inability to ‘see far’, Schreiner’s wish to discuss political matters, and some form of ‘prodding’ (Stanley, 2011: 148) of Smuts in better directions. Schreiner also indicates her clear perception that Smuts undervalued her political acumen, and in 1918 she wrote to him about this:

“I have often wished to write you a long letter, & have almost done so – but I feel it would be no good. We two view life from such different angles... I know you will laugh to yourself & say, “A little old woman lying on a sofa, seeing no one and reading, fancies she sees more than we great men in the midst of affairs!” But don’t you know when two clever people are playing chess, & a chance on-looker comes in he sees at a glance what the men absorbed in the game don’t. But what’s the use of talking... I feel there’s no use in writing or talking. Whom the gods wish to destroy.”<sup>272</sup>

The ‘chance onlooker’ sees what the protagonists do not and Schreiner does not underestimate her acumen or self-minimise here in the manner evident in the letters of MCG, for example. Her juxtaposition of “little old woman” with “great men” is ironic as opposed to combative as in the letters of Hobhouse. At the same time, she indicates that Smuts was set on a course that she disapproved of.

Some of Smuts’s friends wanted exclusivity for their particular relationship with him, but there is no indication at all that Schreiner wanted this. There is one instance where Schreiner asks that a private letter should not be shared with “Miss Hobhouse or anyone”<sup>273</sup> and content shows that this was due to factors concerning Hobhouse and not those concerning Schreiner’s relationship with Smuts. Schreiner’s relationship with him was primarily for ethical and political purposes – she wanted to assist him in a particular direction, as well as liking him. Her letters are replete with references to mutual connections with no indication of any wish for Smuts’s undivided attention, just the desire to talk politics with him. Rather, Schreiner wished Smuts to focus his attention on the political future.

Schreiner’s letters support earlier comments about Smuts being proactive in forming and maintaining connections with various women over long periods of time. Schreiner’s first extant letter to Smuts thanks him “heartily for the letter I got just now. I respond sincerely to

<sup>272</sup> OS to JCS, Monday, 1918, NAR, OSLO transcription.

<sup>273</sup> OS to IS, 13 May 1905, NAR, OSLO transcription.

its sympathetic attitude”,<sup>274</sup> so it seems that Smuts instigated the correspondence with her and, as with his enquiries after Alice Clark, he was proactive thereafter in maintaining his correspondence with Schreiner. One example of this appears in a letter to Isie Smuts dated 12 May 1902, when Smuts and his wife were still separated by the ongoing South African War and had only heard from each other “off and on” in around three years and Smuts attempted to “sum up the last eleven months since I last saw you”. He also asked Isie Smuts to “Remember me to the other kind friends mentioned in your note, especially Olive Schreiner and her husband. In other letters of yours I also saw some reference to them.” (H&VdP 1996a: 512) The Schreiners are the only people mentioned by name. Smuts carefully kept Schreiner’s letters from 1896 on and, despite her frequent criticism, he maintained the correspondence until her ‘last letter’ in October 1920.

Schreiner’s letters to Isie and Jan Smuts provide an interesting contrast to those of the other letters from women analysed previously. They lend weight to the argument that Smuts was proactive in seeking out and maintaining connections with selected female acquaintances and particularly those whom he found intellectually stimulating. They also support the claim that a connection with Smuts often provided access to a friend who was willing to provide practical and financial assistance when required. However - despite Schreiner’s often repeated desire to talk politics with Smuts, and contra many of the other letters analysed here - Schreiner’s letters show no indications of competitiveness between herself and other network members for Smuts’s attention. Also, as may be expected from her own high public profile, there is no indication that she found Smuts’s status either attractive or intimidating and, in fact, ideas surrounding ‘bigness’ and ‘littleness’ were strategically and humorously played upon for comedic effect. Despite some similarities between Hobhouse and Schreiner’s letters concerning their willingness to openly challenge Smuts and failure to feel their tongues and pens constrained by his social standing, there is a major difference between the letters of Schreiner and those of the other women analysed here. This concerns Schreiner’s preoccupation, not with the network of which she formed part, but with a future, wider network. Her letters and ostensible letters deployed various strategic devices such as the planting of the seeds of ideas, humour and metaphor in attempt to focus Smuts’s attention, not on herself or on the immediate socio-political circumstances, but on a future network, something I discuss further below.

Despite acknowledging Smuts’s “charm [and] brilliancy”<sup>275</sup> Schreiner’s letters do not suggest that she is attracted or dazzled by these attributes in the way that MCG and

<sup>274</sup> OS to JCS, 1 July 1986, NAR, OSLO transcription.

<sup>275</sup> OS to IS, 6 July 1912, NAR, OSLO transcription.

Hobbs appeared to have been. In fact, her letters frequently indicate that Schreiner perceived these less as attractive personal qualities in Smuts and more as politically useful tools that Smuts's near-sighted decisions failed to take full advantage of. In this, Schreiner maintains a certain distance from Smuts, and despite their personal closeness, there is frequently a sense in Schreiner's letters that she is observing him more objectively than the other women discussed here, and doing so from a certain remove, and that this 'remove' is a temporal one.

Whilst Schreiner expressed a desire for and enjoyment of Smuts's company on a personal level, she also wished to meet for political reasons and discussion. Although Schreiner cared for Smuts,<sup>276</sup> claiming in December 1908 that it would break her heart if she "had to part from... you politically",<sup>277</sup> one of her concerns was to assist him in his needs, something which can be inferred from a letter dated "Saturday 1918":

"I've been feeling a little unhappy about you. You know if ever you were in trouble or needed love or friendship you could always look to me (as much as such a funny person as I could ever be of any good!). You know my nature I'm always with the under dog, not with the top dog. When people are very big & successful (or causes either) I don't feel very interest in them. They don't need me."<sup>278</sup>

Whilst Schreiner is recognising his present worldly importance she is indicating here that, should circumstances change, he could 'look to' her and she would help him in his 'need'.

Ideas concerning the 'close' and the 'far' in Schreiner's letters relate to time and her evaluative observations of Smuts, frequently referring to how Smuts's (in)actions will ramify over time and how these will be viewed in the future. Whilst MCG and Hobbs appear captivated 'in the moment' by Smuts and his prestigious position, and Hobhouse rails against his decisions as they occur, Schreiner concerns herself less with Smuts 'the Man' and more with the legacies of his political decision making.

Despite contact with Schreiner being sought out by Smuts in the same way that he later pursued connections with MCG, Alice Clark, and May Hobbs, and also despite Schreiner's feelings of friendship and affection for Smuts, her primary interest in him was her desire to talk politics and to assist him towards greater and further reaching ends than those he pursued. As with the other women discussed here, Schreiner's relationship with Smuts had more strategic purposes than purely friendship, but these did not serve immediate and personal ends or goals in the same way that they did for MCG, Hobbs and Hobhouse. Schreiner saw Smuts as someone who possessed the talents to do great good for the world. Schreiner's own strategic goals were aimed at the future global network of humanity rather

<sup>276</sup> see OS to IS, 29 September 1913, NAR, OSLO transcription.

<sup>277</sup> OS to JCS, 1 December 1908, NAR, OSLO transcription.

<sup>278</sup> OS to JCS, 1918, NAR, OSLO transcription.



than herself or her personal and political network. In pursuing them, she did not attempt to create an air of exclusivity around her relationship with Smuts but instead frequently drew humanity and its future generations into her letters and attempted to focus Smuts's attention beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of his immediate and highly selective personal network and onto the others whose future well-being could be, but was not being, served by Smuts's talents. This aptly demonstrates Schreiner's conception of a network. To return to the words which opened this research:

“internetting lines of action and reaction... bind together all that we see and are conscious of... everywhere the close internetted lines of interaction stretch; nowhere we are able to draw a sharp dividing line, nowhere find an isolated existence... I can see long unbroken lines of connection... I am able to see nowhere a shape line of severance, but a great, pulsating, always interacting whole” (Schreiner 1927: 180).

What Schreiner's letters to Smuts demonstrate are the “hopes, fears, expectations”<sup>279</sup> that Smuts acknowledged that his contemporaries placed on him, with Schreiner seeing him as a potential influence for the good in the “unbroken lines of connection” between the past, present and future. For the network of the future, Schreiner saw Smuts “action and reaction” as pivotal. Where Schreiner differed from the other women whose letters have been discussed here is that her disappointment in Smuts was ‘internetted’ with the inevitable disappointed of the future generations with whom she saw herself as inextricably linked.

### **Smuts and the Closeness and ‘Vision’<sup>280</sup> of his “women friends”<sup>281</sup>**

This chapter has discussed letters written to Smuts by a number of women, using these to explore how these women featured in his social network, what their letters suggest about what the letter-writer and Smuts as the addressee wanted from the connection, and what analyzing the content of various of these letters adds to comprehension of the shape and working of this network. Reading letters to someone provides a ‘double vision’ of the writer and their addressee, and Smuts is refracted by these letters in a different way compared with biographical accounts of him, and also existing scholarly thinking about the dynamics of this network.

Many biographies of Smuts focus on his political activities and often write Smuts's relationship with these women out of existence. The Smuts Papers contain various requests from would-be biographers for access to Smuts and his personal documents, which Smuts

<sup>279</sup> JCS to MH, 24 July 1922, NAR.

<sup>280</sup> JCS to MH, 28 April 1927, NAR.

<sup>281</sup> Beukes (1992: Prologue).

repeatedly and often sternly declined. He did however acquiesce to a request from one female biographer, the well-established writer Sarah Gertrude Millin, with whom he developed a long friendship. Millin's notes demonstrate her awareness of Smuts's close long-term relationships with a number of women and her musings on these.<sup>282</sup> However, Smuts himself frequently downplayed the importance of these relationships to Millin and his letters suggest that he wished for the focus of the biography to remain fixed on his political activities. Whilst Millin later downplayed the influence of Smuts on the contents and interpretations of her two volume biography, her research notes and letters between herself and Smuts indicate a high level of editorial impact by him. For example, despite Smuts's insistence on 17 October 1935 that he would assist "as far as possible with the facts, and leave the views to you" (original emphasis),<sup>283</sup> <sup>284</sup> a letter from 1935 reveals that Smuts proof-read Millin's Volume II and "made corrections or suggestions... advised deletions... This passage has to go. I don't like it and it is not true as far as I am concerned".<sup>285</sup>

In Millin's and other Smuts biographies, when, or if, women and their letters are referred to, this is typically to comment on 'turning points' in Smuts's political career. The two most cited examples are Smuts's speech in support of Rhodes at Kimberley juxtaposed with Schreiner's prophetic and highly public denouncement of Rhodes's conduct; and, Hobhouse's unauthorised publication of Smuts's letter on Chinese labour in The Times. Paradoxically, however, the letters from women analysed in this chapter frequently concern Smuts's inability to identify the turning points of history and his incapacity to fully comprehend the long term ramifications of his political (in)actions.

For most of the women whose letters I have discussed, the purpose of their association with Smuts was not only friendship but also a desire to propel him toward great things for humanity. On top of his apparent charm and magnetism, it was the convergence of abilities and position that made Smuts so attractive – he had sufficient skills and political position to be 'the one', someone who could make things right. However, reading these letters to Smuts with hindsight suggests that 'slim Jannie' had less political foresight than many of his female contemporaries, Schreiner in particular. Although this is fleetingly acknowledged by Armstrong (1937: 36), this is something even recent biographies ignore or confine to discussions of particular letters and isolated comments.

<sup>282</sup> SGM. A539/G2 'Research Material in connection with Smuts biography', WCL. (undated notes)

<sup>283</sup> JCS to SGM, 17 October 1935, NAR.

<sup>284</sup> Ironically, both volumes of SGM's biography open with a paraphrasing of Smuts's letter, stating that it has been "revised – as to its facts, but not its opinions – by General Smuts" (Millin, 1936a, xi and 1936b, vii).

<sup>285</sup> JCS to SGM, 25 October 1935, NAR.

In worldly terms, Schreiner and Hobhouse may be considered the ‘big guns’ of Smuts’s female friendships and they are certainly the letter-writers who challenged his political decisions most openly, albeit using their letters strategically in very different ways to do so. Despite the differences, both sets of letters show that they perceived Smuts as often sceptical and mocking towards them. Given Smuts’s evident appreciation of his connections with women, and his obvious efforts to form and maintain these connections, this view of his misogyny appears at first as incongruous. However, the letters strongly suggest that, despite the considerable political content of many letters to him from women, Smuts saw this and his high political activities and networks as very distinct things. Women had no place in the latter but were actively pursued for the former.

Some of these letter-writers wrote in ways which reinforced the exclusivity of their relationship with Smuts, indicated by them bracketing out other connections. Their letters therefore challenge the view of a densely interconnected web of relationships surrounding Smuts and woven by MCG, which dominates the literature. As with the earlier discussion of Jacobs’s international epistolary network, acts of bridging and brokering that are seemingly attributable to a specific social actor are often far more complex when analysed in-depth. In the case of Smuts, rather than MCG, it was in fact Smuts himself who was responsible for pursuing lasting ties from amongst her network. This indicates the existence of grey area between an introduction and purposefully brokering a tie, in which potential ties are pursued between those who have been introduced.

There was clearly something about Smuts and how he behaved in face-to-face and/or in epistolary relations that led some women, and particularly MCG and Hobbs, to believe that they knew him best. In terms of the wider network connections they were part of, this worked to create divisions in the relationships between them concerning their relationship to Smuts. Smuts was at the centre of a sub-network of women that he himself was formative in creating from among a larger group of people with whom he had existing ties; and its members were in what some perceived as competition over access to him and in exclusivity in this.

Ideas concerning propulsion or constraints within networks clearly need to recognise the existence of key figures and the specificities of their impact upon the networks in which they were perceived to be central. Also, although this network did not have one overarching purpose or goal, as with the Men and Women’s Club discussed earlier, each letter-writer wanted something from Smuts. This affected the strategic use and content of their letters, with significant shifts occurring in this over time.

My analysis of the letters of selected women within the Smuts Papers in this chapter has flagged up some important points about Smuts's network and social network analysis in general. Firstly, mapping the interconnections between people can work to create a false picture of how these connections were formed. In this instance, the volume of connections established as a result of Smuts's connection with MCG have led to MCG being attributed with 'weaving webs' around Smuts, when in fact he was highly selective and agentic in this regard. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, Smuts also contributed to the development of an air of exclusivity around a number of these relationships but not others, with the respective statuses of Smuts and the women in question seeming to have greatly influenced this. As a consequence, these letters indicate a more fragmented and far less fluid network than implied by previous literature, such as the interpretation of Hancock. This lack of fluidity is contributed to by the lack of connections being made accessible for these women via their connection with Smuts – extending only to an epistolary and/or face-to-face connection with Isie Smuts and their children and a very limited number of low level political colleagues at most. Smuts provided access to influence and often assistance, but not to people and networks. He seems to have been purposeful and proactive in keeping his network of women friends separate from the public spheres in which he moved, and in an interview with SGM later claimed "I suppose it's because my affairs are always with men that I find women a relief".<sup>286</sup>

It is evident in the letters from women I have explored that they wanted something from Smuts and that his capacities instilled high expectations in them. As discussed above, Smuts frequently indicated his awareness of this but also frequently downplayed both his influence and the extent of his involvement in major issues by often alluding to doing things against his better nature as part of his duty. He advised Hobbs in 1919 "I am a public slave and simply move in the great machine"<sup>287</sup> and that fate had given him work "in jobs for which I have distaste".<sup>288</sup> Hobhouse's letters indicate that some of his female acquaintances left such comments unchallenged or even advanced such explanations of his conduct themselves because it rendered incongruities and inconsistencies less problematic. However, on 4 July 1928 Hobbs wrote:

~~You~~ Are ^you^ like all of us a self deceiver? You keep on saying that you want to get out & cant but if you really wanted to badly enough, you would do it."<sup>289</sup>

<sup>286</sup> SGM, A539/G2 'Research Notes in connection with Smuts biography', WCL. (undated)

<sup>287</sup> JCS to MH, 6 December 1919, NAR.

<sup>288</sup> JCS to MH, 22 April 1920, NAR.

<sup>289</sup> MH to JCS, 4 July 1928, NAR.

Hobbs's amendment of the original statement 'You are' to the less confrontational question 'are you...?' is interesting and may indicate the constraints brought about by Smuts's position discussed previously. It certainly suggests that even Hobbs, Smuts's once obsessive admirer, could see flaws in his protestations surrounding being at the mercy of fate and destiny. Interestingly, on Smuts's election defeat in 1924, he wrote to Hobbs seemingly in a moment of uncharacteristic self-indulgence that it was "pleasant to feel your sympathy in my fall... More than any man living I have built up this country... And now I am booted out".<sup>290</sup> Whilst Smuts often attempted to downplay his influence in events as these unfolded, this extract demonstrates his awareness of his influence, with the long term effects of this something that Schreiner repeatedly underscored in her letters to him through her references to the 'far' future. In addition to her letters affording a 'double vision' of Smuts, Schreiner's letters therefore also point to her vision of him and the role he played and the repercussions that his actions would have in future events. Schreiner's vision of Smuts was not clouded by the desire for closeness to him that is evident in the letters of MCG and Hobbs in particular; rather she wished him to contribute to the closeness and unity of South Africans of the future by doing 'better'.

This chapter has used the letters of women to Smuts to comment on what these letters can reveal about the nature and purpose of the connection with Smuts for these women and, through the 'double vision' that these letters afford, what these relationships with women meant to Smuts. The letters suggest that Smuts actively developed intense relationships with particular people, in particular women, and devoted considerable time and effort to maintaining these ties. Although Smuts was immersed in extensive social, professional and epistolary networks, his maintenance of particular ties, perhaps intentionally, restricted the size of his 'inner circle' to a select few. This intensity of these relationships, as well as Smuts himself, was varyingly responded to by the women concerned, with their differing perceptions of the nature of their relationship - in terms of what each person wanted from the other - often causing tensions between Smuts and his correspondents. This analysis in this chapter has generated some interesting ideas concerning the nature of relationships and the effects of differing judgements concerning this, and of the effects of the future-orientated perspective of Schreiner on her letters to him. These ideas are however not confined to epistolary relationships. Rather, the letters are making visible aspects of social interactions which may be obscured or not accessible in other forms of analysis.

<sup>290</sup> JCS to MH, 22 July 1924, NAR.

In the following chapter, I pursue these ideas in the context of a family archive where the nature of the relationships concerned (predominantly those of kinship) are complicated by the passing of time and accession and succession to various family roles, blurring boundaries between ties such as mother, daughter, and sibling. I also carry forward ideas concerning the effects of ‘future-orientated’ network members on both the network and the letters associated with it, in particular regarding issues of provenance. I examine these matters in the context of the extensive family records of the Schreiner, Hemming and Brown families, known as the Schreiner-Hemming Papers. Given my argument concerning the analytical utility of using letters as a data source for social network analysis as well as epistolary analysis, the next chapter focuses on how such data sources come into being and explores who retains letters and why, who does not, who assumes responsibility for this and why, and how this responsibility is passed on.

“It is *through time* that we can begin to grasp the nature of social change, the mechanisms and strategies used by individuals to generate and manage change in their personal lives, and the ways in which structural change impacts on the lives of individuals” (Neale & Flowerdew 2003: 190).

## **Chapter Four**

### **Letters, Networks & the Future: Roles & Succession in a Family Archive**

In the previous chapter the analysis of the letters focused on suggested that the nature of relationships between people, and how these were mutually perceived, affected both the network and the letters associated with it. The letters analysed also indicated that some members of a network may be more future-orientated than others – something which affected their letters and the various strategies deployed within them. In the following chapter I carry these ideas forward in the context of investigating a family archive and in the analysis of letters in it deriving from three inter-connected families, namely the Schreiners, the Hemmings and the Browns.

As indicated in my opening chapter, a discussion of the complexities of time in relation to letters and networks could occupy a thesis on its own. Networks and the nature of the connections within them shift over time and letter-writing in itself as a social practice changes over time in response to shifting conventions (Barton & Hall 2000, Decker 1998), with “unconventional practices” often deployed in the “shape, form and function” of letters for strategic purposes or “in order to establish intimate and solidary relationships” (Kataoka 1997: 103). As Kataoka (1997) points out, these unconventional practices and other epistolary usages are often manipulated to achieve reciprocity and form part of the highly personalised balancing of this, and the various relationship-specific nuances of which have been teased out and discussed in previous chapters. In this chapter I draw upon the letters of an entire collection, the Schreiner-Hemming collection, which spans a one hundred and thirty year period and four successive generations. This family collection aptly demonstrates the “blurred binary” that exists between the public and the private and how “the family has gradations of public access” (Brewer 2005: 661). In what follows, the content of letters is used to consider the reasons behind the granting of public access to these private papers. The letters reveal interesting shifts over time in conventional letter-writing practices and in advancements in the postal and delivery systems, such as an early letter from the collection, dated 25 July 1831, which was addressed to “Trigonometts camp on a mountain near Tralee,

Kerry”. Whilst interesting, such conventional shifts in epistolary practices have been discussed at length by others (see the literature review list on p.17) and are not the focus of the following discussion.

The passing of time and shifts in the socio-historical and private contexts of the people concerned is a factor in all of my examples. Also, all of the networks discussed so far, and the letter content associated with them – with the exception of Schreiner’s letters to Smuts - have been primarily occupied with immediate matters and concerns. Schreiner letters to Smuts, however, indicate an “orientation to posterity” (Highmore 2010: 112) which, in the case of these letters, takes the form of ‘seeing far’ – and urging Smuts to do so - and considering the impact of current actions upon the future generations with whom they were ‘internetted’. Fundamentally, however, the existence of letters also points to future-orientated network members. Of course - whilst epistolary silences can in themselves be revealing – the analysis of epistolary materials requires the existence of actual letters and how such repositories of data come into being is worthy of investigation. Whilst letters can be kept for highly personal and sentimental reasons, or simply by happenstance, many are kept with an ‘eye on posterity’. In what follows, I combine ideas concerning the nature of relationships and the existence of future-orientated network members, by using the letters within the Schreiner-Hemming collection to comment upon the emergence of and succession to roles which relate to the retention and generational transfer of family documents over time. In pursuing this, other roles within this network have become visible. These roles appear to have been transferred down through the generations to particular individuals who had specific interests or qualities, something I expand upon below.

In discussing her particular version of qualitative longitudinal research, Yates (2003: 229) argues that in interpreting an individual story, the “research task is to elicit and demonstrate some patterns of broader significance” from data collected from “a particular person with particular agendas, making [his or] her life in particular circumstances”. In earlier chapters I have used letters and other archival sources as a resource from which to develop patterns of broader significance for both letterness and networks. This has involved consideration of the mechanisms and strategies that letters as “artful enterprises” (Stanley 1992: 3) afford to letter-writers. In the examples discussed so far, my analysis has used the letters of a small number of people from much larger collections, or all of the letters in a specific sub-set of a larger collection, and considered the significance of emergent analytical points, examining these in an iterative way as analysis has progressed.

As noted above, historical research using documentary evidence is dependent on one thing, and to paraphrase Hemmerman (2010: 8), this is the ‘problem’ of access and what is



or is not accessible in a given collection. In relation to letters, what is in a collection depends on the composition of the collection, who retained their letters (or those of others) or not, and what happened to these when they died. Those that are retained may be “miscellaneous, unsystematically saved documents” or selectively retained, including, for some, with an eye on posterity, before becoming subject to the decision-making of professional archivists (Schultz, 2008: viii). The problem of attrition that plagues many longitudinal studies (Bytheway and Bornat 2010) occurs in archival research before the researcher encounters the material, creating the epistolary silences which form a constituent part of any epistolarium. Nonetheless, as Weller (2010: 39) argues, longitudinal study “relies on the continuous engagement of participants over a number of years”, and consequently letters written over an extended period are an ideal resource for investigating changes over time, as exemplified by Thomas and Znaniecki’s (1958 [1918-1920]) canonical The Polish Peasant in Europe and America and by the ‘Whites Writing Whiteness’ project which uses letters and other historical documents to examine “how social change happens and the best ways for social science research to get to grips with this”.<sup>291</sup>

McLeod & Thomson (2009: 60) point out that social research which follows the temporal rhythms of lived lives is rare, as is research that follows “the same individuals or groups over extended periods”. However, using large family letter collections such as the Schreiner-Hemming collection enables a researcher to gain some “sense of life as lived (*durée*)” (McLeod & Thomson, 2009: 60) and the sense of “watching events unfold in ‘real time’” because they are written ‘in the moment’, do not have foreknowledge, and because the events unfold in the succession of exchanges. The Smuts Papers discussed in Chapter Three, for instance, are organised in ways which encourage such a response, being filed in boxes by year and within each year by correspondent, and chronologically (January to December) for each correspondent. As a result, reading through a box of letters allows the researcher to successively read a ‘year in the life’ of each correspondent, written in their ‘real time’ but not mine and at my temporal remove. Shifting from one correspondent to the next and starting the year again produces a sense of disruption, both in terms of temporality, and the engagement with the letter-writer. This shows that reading letters can work to create both a sense of *durée* and an immersion in the life and the era in which it was lived (Buckley 1999).

McLeod & Thomson (2009: 61) discuss the work of Liz Stanley and how letters as data sources “lend themselves to the exploration of temporal and associational process in such a way that helps us to understand the space that lies between the individual and the

<sup>291</sup> See <http://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk/> for further information.

social, the biographical and historical”. Archives and their collections have much potential for social science research because the strong longitudinal character of many permits change over time to be investigated. In addition, there is something interesting to be said about how such collections come into being, and then come into the public (or private) archive system.<sup>292</sup> Much of the literature on family archives and family archivists relates to the activities of present-day family genealogists and/or family historians (Sinko et al 1983), using archival resources and other often public data sources such as census data, parish records and so on, and also creating as well as maintaining the documents of life of a family (Mannon 2011). Greenstein & Davis (2012), Gilgun et al (1992) and Hofferth & Casper (2007) amongst others have produced comprehensive overviews of methodological and measurement issues in family research. Whilst archiving can often occur serendipitously (see Kirsch & Rohan 2008, Steedman 2001), some interesting sociological work (see Lambert 2002, 1996 and Bear 2001) points to the reasons why a particular person may actively take on the role of family archivist, in the sense of becoming the collector and retainer of family photographs, correspondence and other materials. Often this includes wanting to ‘personalize the past’ (Yakel 2004) and to create a coherent narrative of family connections through time, with the extension of this being the creation of a connection with future generations by passing on ‘the history’ (Lambert 1996, Yakel 2004). Yakel (2004) refers to this as the “comingling of temporal orientations”, while Lambert (2002) discusses the memory work done by family record keepers and the role they play in the construction of memory. In this way, a family archive works to actively contribute to the construction of those within it, either through their own letters, those written to them or via references to them made in the letters of others. Sinko & Peters (1983) and Yakel (2004) comment on what meaning this genealogical work of a family historian has, and suggest that this role is both important to this person’s identity and also “a necessary role in family life. As such, they were both seekers and creators of meaning.”

This chapter explores the ‘necessary role’ of family archivist and the keeper of family records in relation to the Schreiner-Hemming collection. It explores who adopted this role and how it transferred across four successive generations of the Schreiners and the Hemmings and three generations of the Browns to culminate in the collection that was eventually donated to Manuscripts and Archives at the University of Cape Town (UCT). In doing so, it develops ideas explored in previous chapters in a very different temporal context – one that extends beyond the lives of a particular letter-writer(s), or of the purpose of the

<sup>292</sup> Many archival collections, including the Smuts Papers, are divided into ‘public’ and ‘private’ papers. See Brewer (2005) for a discussion of the artificial nature of this dichotomous distinction in sociology.

network – and that spans the lives of interconnected generations of a family and many changes in socio-political circumstances, the network and the letters associated with it. Some contextualising information concerning the families in question and the interconnections between them is provided, followed by an overview of the collection. This chapter also explores whether and in what ways the analytical and conceptual ideas developed in previous chapters apply in the context of a family collection. In analysing letters in the collection regarding family archivism, some other important family roles have become apparent. These, which may or may not be specific to the context of the Schreiner Hemming materials, are also discussed in what follows.

### **The Schreiner-Hemming (and Brown) Families: Their Construction in Paper(s)**

Before going on to examine these roles in analytical depth, the following discussion provides some background information concerning family members, the (inter)connections between these families, the collection and how it came into being as housed at UCT. It also comments upon the analytical utility of ideas developed and discussed in previous chapters before moving on to focus upon ideas concerning family roles and future-orientated family members.

In biographical writing on both Olive and Will Schreiner (First & Scott 1990, Walker 1960[1937]), their elder siblings Henrietta Schreiner (variously referred to by Schreiner family members as Het, Hettie, Ettie, or frequently as ‘Old Girl’ by her brother Will Schreiner) and Theo Schreiner are described as having been harsh and intolerant towards the younger siblings in their care following their father Gottlob Schreiner’s insolvency in the mid 1860s. As an obituary of her comments, Henrietta Schreiner was the first woman in South Africa to publicly preach the Christian gospel and publicly lecture on temperance, and she was devoutly religious as her letters demonstrate.<sup>293</sup> When her elder sister Alice Hemming (née Schreiner) died in 1884, Henrietta Schreiner adopted Alice’s four surviving children with the agreement of their father Robert Hemming who, following some failed business ventures, became the Librarian of the Public Library in Johannesburg, visiting his children infrequently but maintaining a fairly regular correspondence with them. Henrietta Schreiner later married the widower John Stakesby Lewis<sup>294</sup> in 1893 (and she is referred to hereafter as HSL) and for many years ran a home for destitute people in Cape Town called The Highlands. Many of the letters in the Schreiner-Hemming collection are

<sup>293</sup> See undated news cuttings in folder C1.1, BC1080, UCT.

<sup>294</sup> Letters within the collection show that Robert Hemming’s daughter Effie Hemming (later Brown) had attended school alongside some of Stakesby-Lewis’s children from his first marriage.

addressed to HSL and there are in-passing indications in many letters that she retained correspondence with an eye on the organisation of such and possibly its retention.

The earliest letters in the collection relate to the Hemming family and are dated from 1829 into the 1830s. Many of these early letters are addressed to Bombardier (later Sergeant) John Hemming of the Royal Artillery and formerly of the Royal Marines, who was based at the time in Ireland. Many of these letters are from family members, including his parents John and Mary Hemming and his siblings, with the latter being globally dispersed and their letters discussing prospective marriage partners, the birth of children and letters received from other family members. These early documents include marriage certificates, references, other documents relating to employment, and they provide information on how this family came to reside in South Africa and how the connection with the Schreiners was formed. John Hemming married Eliza Harris of Ireland in January 1834. A 'Record of Service' for John Hemming gives information of his career progression and promotions, remuneration, and a physical description extracted from his attestation to the Royal Marines in March 1826 when aged twenty four.<sup>295</sup> This document also states that John Hemming, born in Feckenham, Worcester, "Embarked for the Cape of Good Hope at London 9 April 1840". Later letters indicate that the children of Eliza and John Hemming included George Ross Hemming, John Stevens Hemming, Robert C. Hemming and Elizabeth Hemming. Robert C. Hemming married Olive Schreiner's elder sister Alice in 1863. A pocket book belonging to Robert Hemming records the dates of various family births and deaths, including that he and Alice Hemming had fifteen children, ten of whom died in infancy with another surviving only until the age of ten - Alice Hemming and many of her children having inherited the congenital heart condition that plagued the Schreiner family through these generations. One of Alice and Robert Hemming's children, Ethelwyn (referred to by family members and hereafter as Effie, and in footnotes as EB), later married Arthur Brown.

Arthur Brown's father, John Brown was a London Missionary Society (LMS) missionary who married Eliza Read, the daughter of another LMS missionary. John and Eliza Brown later ran the mission station in Taung, beyond the frontier in South Africa. The letters reveal that John and Eliza Brown were well acquainted with HSL or 'Mrs Lewis' as she is referred to in John Brown's letters. As noted above, following her sister Alice Hemming's death in April 1884, HSL assumed guardianship of her four surviving children, namely Winnie, Effie, Guy and Elbert Hemming.

<sup>295</sup> The 'Record of Service' has been compiled on a form pre-printed with the date 'July 1839' – see file A2.1, BC1080, UCT.

The letters indicate that HSL was influential in securing work for Effie Hemming at the Taung mission station. There appears to have been some tensions, for despite claiming to “love the dear lassie very much”,<sup>296</sup> in letters to his son Arthur, John Brown describes many incidents of Effie’s petulance. She appears to have been unhappy and “depressed” in her position there.<sup>297</sup> In rather cryptic comments that hint at some unhappiness in Effie’s past (with later letters indicating that this referred to difficulties about HSL’s guardianship), John Brown wrote, regarding Effie’s departure from the school:

“it was better she should go. I think she was tired of her life with us & no one can wonder at this. Who knows was sort of a previous life hers has been. On the evening when we had the long talk that I wrote to you about before, Effie told me that she had no interest in mission work, nor any wish to be connected with it or engaged in it. Even with such, a native school work among Bechuanaland children is hard enough & without it, such work must be drudgery indeed.”<sup>298</sup>

While working at the school Effie had become acquainted with the Browns’ son Arthur who in turn became devoted to her and they later married in 1903. A letter from John Brown to his son Arthur indicates that he had some reservations regarding the connection:

“I think I may venture upon a remark relating to Effie & yourself. Since I last wrote, the conviction has been increasing in my mind that Effie had deliberately set herself to convince us that any future engagement with you was quite out of the question. So far as I am concerned I could only just accept the situation.”<sup>299</sup>

Arthur and Effie Brown had a number of children who died in infancy or childhood, with many letters referring to the illness and death of their son Robin (Robbie). Letters from Arthur to his children in the collection include Lyndall, Charles, Clarkson, Arthur, Joy, Barbara and Theo Brown, with the two latter being the descendants who later donated the collection as a whole to UCT.

Even with no background knowledge of the people concerned, clues about the connections between the Schreiner, Hemming and Brown families can be found from the handlist for the collection (numbered BC1080) which was created by archivist Jill Gribble in 1995. Olive Schreiner’s sister Alice is listed as ‘Alice Schreiner (Mrs Robert Hemming)’ and Alice and Robert Hemming’s daughter is entered as ‘Effie Brown (née Hemming)’. The papers were donated to UCT by ‘Miss Barbara Brown and Mr Theo Brown’.<sup>300</sup> Further documents regarding the provenance of the collection confirm that Barbara and Theo Brown

<sup>296</sup> JB to AB, 3 August 1898, UCT.

<sup>297</sup> JB to AB, 3 August 1898, UCT.

<sup>298</sup> JB to AB, 3 August 1898, UCT.

<sup>299</sup> JB to AB, 22 July 1898, UCT.

<sup>300</sup> Notes of archivist Jill Gribble (1995), UCT.

were the daughter and son of Arthur and Effie Brown. In exploring the role of family archivist and how this was transferred, how Theo and Barbara Brown came to possess and have legal ownership of this vast collection of papers pertaining to three interconnected families and what influenced the decision to donate them to UCT is a focus of attention.

A letter dated 12 December 1994 from Leonie Twentyman Jones, then Head of Archives and Manuscripts at UCT, thanks “Miss Brown, c/o Mr T Brown” for “agreeing to donate Brown, Hemming and Schreiner family letters”<sup>301</sup> to the library. This suggests that it was primarily Barbara Brown who was influential in this decision. However, the use of the term “agreeing” makes it unclear whether Barbara Brown approached UCT or vice versa in the first instance. The letter refers to the “lengthy procedure” of sorting and listing the papers and thanks Barbara Brown “for ensuring this important collection is preserved for posterity”. The final legal documents concerning the transfer of the collection from Barbara and Theo Brown to UCT were signed in November 1995. Following their deaths, copyright was to revert to UCT and not to any further designated family members. Despite the involvement of the Brown descendants in donating the papers, the name ‘Schreiner-Hemming Papers’ was mutually agreed, giving these family names precedence<sup>302</sup> and in particular it seems due to the name of Olive Schreiner among family members. A typed draft introduction giving contextualising background information to the papers has attached a handwritten note, “A very rough draft, more of an idea than a draft, just to get my thoughts in order”, at the top. This document opens with the comment that “Our department has recently acquired the papers of yet another branch of the well-known Schreiner family. An older sister of Olive Schreiner, Alice married Robert Hemming...”<sup>303</sup> Despite providing information regarding the links between the families, precedence is given to Olive Schreiner throughout this document:

“There are letters from nearly all the members of the Schreiner family to Ettie, including about one hundred and fifty letters from Olive. ^letters from family & friends incl such well-known people as Mary Brown^... The letters from Olive are important as they fill in gaps in the existing collections. Apart from the interest of yet another collection of Olive Schreiner letters, the collection is a repository of information about the way of life of a particular group of white English-speaking South Africans at the Cape round about the turn of the century... their... family relationships, religion are revealed through the letters of this unusual family.”<sup>304</sup>

<sup>301</sup> Leonie Twentyman Jones to BB, 12 December 1994, UCT.

<sup>302</sup> UCT/Brown Legal Agreement, 21 November 1995, UCT.

<sup>303</sup> Notes of archivist Jill Gribble (1995), UCT.

<sup>304</sup> Notes of archivist Jill Gribble (1995), UCT.

Other letters from staff at UCT show that Barbara and Theo Brown visited in late 1995 to see the “way in which the documents are preserved”<sup>305</sup> and this “alleviated any fears you might have had”,<sup>306</sup> although what the concerns on the part of the Browns were is unknown. In a letter dated 16 October 1995, Theo Brown thanked archivist Jill Gribble for the visit and commented “I’ve no doubt that in due course, the younger members of our family will interest themselves and avail themselves of these and other related documents in your library”.<sup>307</sup> I later argue that not only was Olive Schreiner given precedence by UCT, after being seen as the proverbial ‘black sheep’ of the family by members of her own generation, she also became of central interest for future generation of her family. Many of Schreiner’s friends and contemporaries publicly contested Cronwright-Schreiner’s highly selective constructions of her in his Life of Olive Schreiner and Letters of Olive Schreiner (discussed below) and letters within the collection (also discussed below) indicate the disapproval of some younger family members with these works. The decision to archive these family letters may have been fuelled by a desire to offer an alternative constructive of Schreiner to counter that assembled from fragments of a few of her letters by Cronwright.

The letters in the collection are arranged by family, with the ‘Schreiner Family’ listed as A1, the ‘Hemming family’ as A2 and the ‘Brown family’ as A3; and within this structure materials are arranged and classified by letter-writer. This typical form of archiving – filing by letter-writer as opposed to addressee – was useful regarding researching the Smuts Papers as it allowed me to easily locate, count and read the letters of particular people year by year. For the purposes of this chapter, which concerns which particular individual(s) within the families retained the correspondence of other members, this is not helpful and I had to work through each folder to establish the addressee and date (although many were undated) of every letter within it to investigate this.

The work on Schreiner-Hemming that I carried out has been an iterative process, drawing on previously developed analytical and conceptual ideas and exploring the utility of these in this further context of a large family collection. The impact of different events upon both letters and networks is evident, although wars and other large scale events do not reverberate in letters here as they do in other collections. The Boer/British War of 1899-1901, for instance, impacts differently as compared with for example the Smuts letters. A number of Guy Hemming’s letters from 1900 were written from a Refugee Camp and recount his activities and anxieties there, - and this represents a significant ‘turning point’ in the family history, certainly for their recipient. An envelope has been written on by HSL

<sup>305</sup> TB & BB to Miss Twentyman Jones, 25 October 1995, UCT.

<sup>306</sup> Miss Twentyman Jones to TB & BB, 13 October 1995, UCT.

<sup>307</sup> TB to JG, 16 October 1995, UCT.

with “My Guy’s last letter before going to the front” and “My boys letters from the front”, showing that the events were seen from a highly individual and personalised viewpoint and that it was the involvement of ‘the boys’ with the event and not the event itself that had most significance. In the main, the events concerned were family ones, such as the maintenance of relational ties through letters which reinforce the existence of love, affection and support and the sharing of family news relating to births, deaths (many of which were children), illnesses, work matters, practicalities, finances, and comment and news on the inter-relationships between family members and friendship connections. Some of the most significant events in this family collection are internal ones, as opposed to wider external events, and they include such matters as divergent views around the publication and content of Olive Schreiner’s The Story of An African Farm, the death of Alice Hemming and HSL’s guardianship of her surviving children, political divergence between Theo Schreiner and others including Will, Olive and Fred Schreiner, the handling and transfer of property and possessions, the declining mental health and long-term care of Guy Hemming, and many letters concerning the religious beliefs and doubts of various family members.

As with the other epistolary networks already discussed, this family network features propulsions and constraints and in a pronounced way. This comes across in many letters around the desire to fulfil familial duties, maintain ties and to share information and/or feelings with other network members. There is clear evidence that various family members over time attempted to preserve and make sense of these letters for future family network members, discussed below. Although time constraints are identified as significant in terms of network size, despite the size of this extended familial network there is little indication that the act of communicating via letters limited the time expended on maintaining particular epistolary connections. The letters also point to a significant constraint of this family network, the religious and political evangelicalism of some powerful family members, which was responded to as despotism by those experiencing it. The extent and effect of religious divergences between family members is significant and the letters suggest that a recognised but negative maternal role stemming from this was passed on both down and across the generations, as discussed later.

This existence of this role also indicates the existence of central figures within this network. As discussed previously in relation to Pearson and Smuts, a central figure in a network can achieve this position due to many factors, including formal or structural ones or because of the prestige, personality and activities of the central figure themselves. In the Schreiner-Hemming collection, the letters point to the existence of five very different kinds of central roles within this family network, with events internal to it affecting the network



and leading to particular family members becoming central at key periods or for particular purposes. There are also indications that some of these roles were passed on or picked up within and across generations, whether intentionally or otherwise. These relate to the roles of “little Mother”, family benefactor, family archivist or historian, something I refer to as the ‘family glue’ (drawing on the cementing, connecting and binding associations of this word), and the role of Olive Schreiner, suggested by the letters as having undergone an intergenerational volte-face from something akin to the proverbial ‘black sheep’ to being a kind of morally prophetic figure.

Given that the majority of the Schreiner-Hemming letters draw upon and relate to existing familial connections, the strategic use of letters to broker connections is not a prominent feature. However, the establishment of relationships with non-family members is evidenced, the most notable of which are marriage connections. The letters of Arthur Brown to family and friends and later to Effie Hemming provide the history of his admiration for her, his angst about this, their early relationship, marriage, children and various family deaths. Close attention to the flow of letters indicates one of the most significant non-familial connections concern John and Mary Brown, who are not related at all to Arthur Brown’s family, and who had a strong affection for Olive Schreiner, as did their daughter Ray (Rachel) Brown (later Ray Dick). The letters indeed indicate that Ray Dick was influential, albeit indirectly, in this collection being donated to UCT.

Methodologically and substantively, I am using letters differently in this chapter compared with the analysis in Chapter Three on Smuts. Whilst I still draw on the content of letters, and have found the ‘double vision’ that the letters to someone provide of both the addressee and the letter-writer analytically useful in understanding how various family roles come about and were perceived, an important focus in this chapter relates to who retained letters. The mere existence of letters to a person of course indicates that these letters were kept, but this does not in itself indicate that their addressee was a family archivist. Other documents in the collection, often other letters but also wills, can provide valuable information about how letters, documents and other personal effects were transferred across family members and ended up in the hands of a family member who had been given or else had assumed this role.

Ideas concerning letters as gifts are pertinent to analysis of this family collection but in different ways from the earlier discussion, which concerned the perceived value of letters based on their length, depth, frequency, the circumstances of the letter-writer and ‘enclosures’, whether literal or figurative ones, with them. There is a strong focus on acts of writing as expressions of love and as a means of maintaining familial bonds which are

'unbreakable' in themselves, but where the people concerned are separated by time and/or distance. There is also a sense of awareness in both the letter-writers and their addressees that a connection exists irrespective and independent of letters. In a letter dated 18 August 1889, Fred Schreiner, Olive Schreiner's eldest brother, who had been resident in England for many years, wrote:

"How strange that we have met after so many years of separation ... we must find time for occasional written words passing between us... across the water I grip your hand and kiss you."<sup>308</sup>

As this extract suggests, the family bond, equated here with the gripping of hands, is perceived to exist irrespective of how "occasional written words" are, supporting Mok et al's (2007: 453) suggestion that the maintenance of emotional intensity is "more dependent on the respective positions of the actors concerned, such as kinship ties, than on frequency of contact". Birthdays in particular are marked by the exchange of letters, with letters and the gifts enclosed with them working to reinforce family bonds. For example, a letter to Arthur Brown from his mother Eliza on his fiftieth birthday discusses the day and events of his birth, thereby 'personalising the past' in way that is generally confined to family members. Also, enclosed with a letter to Effie from HSL on Effie's eighteenth birthday were earrings which had belonged to Effie's mother Alice Hemming, who had died when Effie was very young and so were a particularly meaningful gift.

With regards to whether this network can be said to 'end', clearly in practical terms a family network will end when there are no future generations existing, or willing, to continue it. However, the network indicated by the Schreiner-Hemming letters is not a purely family one and extends across and down a number of families, and also encompasses friends who were so intimate as to be perceived as in effect family. These non-familial ties too can be passed down and across generations. For example, John and Mary Brown were initially friends of Alice Schreiner, but became firmer friends with Olive Schreiner. The Brown's daughter Ray Dick also formed a friendship with Olive Schreiner and with subsequent younger generations of Schreiner's family. In practical terms, the network that can be known from this collection was both initiated and also ended by the act of handing the papers to UCT as a closed collection. There is no indication that any further family members intend(ed) to contribute family documents to it. Although I would argue that concerns surrounding the 'death of the letter' are misplaced and that 'letterness' exists in many forms, for many in more recent times "[e]lectrons have replaced ink and paper" (Chatelain & Garrie 2007: 91) as a means of communication, and both archives and family archivists - as

<sup>308</sup> FS to HSL, 18 August 1889, UCT.

opposed to family genealogists - of the future may need to develop archiving strategies to respond to this. Such archival sources are of great value in exploring events and changes over time and thus issues and topics beyond those pertaining specifically to the particular letter-writers and addressees concerned. However, the potential interest in the family for researchers from the perspective of UCT, as I indicated earlier, hinged upon Olive Schreiner and her importance, rather than the ramifications of the family as represented in its long-term and multifarious letter-exchanges.

In what follows, my analytical focus was initially upon the role of the family archivist and such matters as: who assumed or was given this role; what network members retained their correspondence and what happened to it on their death; how it came to be in the possession of Theo and Barbara Brown; and what influenced the decision to donate the collection to UCT. In investigating this, other roles, noted earlier, emerged and are discussed, with the discussion concluding by considering Olive Schreiner's changing role within the family as evidenced within the letters.

There has been some emphasis on the role of 'kin-keepers' in keeping family members in touch, either through indirect means of communication or through family gatherings and the rituals that develop around these. For di Leonardo (1987), Lindahl & Back (1987) and Leach & Braithwaite (1996), 'kin-keeping' is a broader role and not only involves communication activities but also offering assistance – whether, financial, practical or commodity based – and performing administrative and organizational 'duties', including family record-keeping and in particular the development of family trees. The Schreiner-Hemming materials do suggest a "familial division of labor" as identified by Rosenthal (1985: 965) and the more emotional of these roles are frequently carried out by women and passed down from mother to daughter (although as discussed below, many of the relationships in the context of these families blur the boundaries between 'parent', 'sibling' and 'child'). Whilst the idea of a 'kin-keeper' is useful, the letters also suggest that specific family members adopted and acceded to specific roles within the family and these are teased out and commented upon in what follows. Of particular interest is the role of 'family archivist', which involves something more than genealogical record keeping, and how this role and its performance changed over time and why. As Lindahl & Back (1987: 203) comment, a family historian or family record-keeper's role can experience a change in focus from maintaining existing links to forging prospective links and this will greatly affect how the role of family archivist is performed.

In her discussion of kin-keepers as those assuming responsibility for maintaining connections with and between family members, Rosenthal (1985: 965) suggests that

specialized and “task-specific positions exist in families, constituting a familial division of labour” and “which contribute to familial solidarity and continuity”. These positions or roles include providing advice, financial and/or emotional support and representing the family at events. Kin-keeping is frequently equated with communication activities including letter-writing and is often assumed to be performed by a female family member. Another activity of kin-keepers identified was that of knowledgeable expert on family genealogy, with Rosenthal (1985: 966) suggesting that women are “important links or bridges between generations”. Like Rosenthal, I am interested in issues of accession and succession relating to family roles, analysing this within the context of the Schreiner-Hemming extended family network. Some of the roles identified may be specific to this family while some, such as ‘family benefactor’, appear to be a feature of many families. Rosenthal’s research identified a number of threats to familial continuity that may prompt a family member into assuming a kin-keeping role. These threats included the general ‘drifting apart’ of family members, geographical distance, mortality and the death of parents. The latter two points are relevant to the role of family archivist within the context of the Schreiner-Hemming family. The content of the letters analysed here (and discussed below) give indication of concerns surrounding family knowledge dying with particular family members. The very existence of letters give an indication of which people retained their correspondence, but their content often points to the letters written to particular people being kept for ‘posterity’. With regards to the death of parents, Rosenthal (1985: 970) argues that “parental death removes an important link between adult children”, because many children interact in adulthood only through mutual interactions with their parents. Whilst Rebecca Schreiner lived until 1903, her children were geographically dispersed following the employment issues experience by Gottlob Schreiner. Despite the disruptions to their lives occasioned by Gottlob’s ineptness – with his dismissal from missionary service and subsequent financial problems being an event with threatened family continuity (Rosenthal 1985: 967) - various letters indicate that the Schreiner children had a more affectionate emotional attachment to Gottlob and a more dutiful attachment to Rebecca, the ‘Little Mother’. In a letter to Havelock Ellis dated May 1912, Olive Schreiner wrote

“My father was infinitely tenderer to us as children and had a much greater heart than my mother... as for other people’s children, are not the words step-mother and mother-in-law the bitterest words in the world... I don’t for one moment believe in the moral superiority of women. Perhaps the noblest, most unselfish, tender woman-soul I know is Con Lytton.”<sup>309</sup>

<sup>309</sup> OS to HE, May 1912, Cronwright-Schreiner (1924: 307), OSLO. See <http://www.oliveschreiner.org/vre?view=collections&colid=137&letterid=501>

Given that Schreiner was often cared for by people other than her parents and that many of her family members acted as ‘step-mother’ for her and other younger family members, these comments are revealing concerning Schreiner first hand-experiences and observations of this. However, it also seems that these events and the non-volitional ties and sense of obligation between the members of the network meant that various siblings had to assume parental roles and that this led to the transference of the role of ‘little Mother’ down and across the family network, with considerable effects on the relationships and subsequently the letters within it. Rosenthal (1985: 966) suggests that the presence of a kin-keeper may be linked to the number of adult siblings in a family, as this makes the maintenance of ties more complex, creating the need for a “formalized kinkeeper position in the family”.

In terms of network size, the extended familial network of the Schreiner, Hemming and Brown families is considerable even with the high mortality rate caused by the congenital heart disease that plagued the Schreiner descendents. In line with Burt (2000), despite frequent tensions in the personal relationships between various family members, and the tendency for some members to write more frequently to some people than others (something influenced by who was perceived as the ‘family glue’ at a given point in time, discussed below), there is little evidence of decay in these highly embedded relationships. High levels of emotional intensity appear to be maintained across geographical distance and irrespective of frequency of contact, which in many cases was maintained at high levels, although these factors were no doubt influenced by the nature of the relationships between the letter-writers and addressees. Despite the size and extent of the family network, there is little evidence that this placed a constraint upon maintaining the friendship networks of those concerned. The analysis in this chapter draws upon all the letters in this family collection, irrespective of whether these were from, to, or between family members, and consequently many letters from non-familial ties contribute to and shed light on this discussion. Methodologically, the analysis of letters lends itself to the study of such roles. If the ideal is to gain “access to naturally occurring sequences of activity... as close to their occurrence as possible” (Leach & Braithwaite 1996: 207, see also Zimmerman & Weider 1977), then letters, written ‘in the moment’ and as part of exchanges, are an ideal source, as opposed to diaries which are retrospective accounts.

As with network size and assessments of levels of emotional intensity, frequency of contact is also used by Leach & Braithwaite (1996) to comment upon kin-keeping activities in its various forms. The letters investigated for this analysis indicate that measurements based on frequency of contact are misjudged. For example, on 9 October 1951, Ursula Scott (née Schreiner) wrote to her aunt Winnie Hemming about the death of Winnie’s sister Effie:

“You and she, for years past, have been leading me and helping me spiritually by your example and though there are often long times when we cannot seem to meet in person the binds of our present relationship and our past heritage are always there.”<sup>310</sup>

This suggests that the support the letter-writer received from her aunts Winnie Hemming and Effie Brown was more personalised than the types identified by di Leonardo (1987), Lindahl & Back (1987) and Leach & Braithwaite (1996) (discussed above). It also clearly indicates that emotional attachment here was not based upon frequency of contact. This supports Burt’s (2000) suggestion that kinship ties are less prone to decay because working to maintain ‘active’ network sizes, and also Roberts et al’s (2009) comment that a high level of embeddedness in a network means that links and bonds are maintained without continual contact being required.

In short, therefore, family letters written over extended periods of time and across generational changes are a useful source for examining, not only shifts in letter-writing conventions, but also aspects of family interrelationships which impacted upon the family network and the letters associated with it. These include: various systems and forms of familial support; who in particular both needed and provided these, when, why and how; what matters (including turning points and crises) were of immediate and of future concern to family members; what was the nature of the relationships between family members and in what ways were these rendered more complex than simply that of kinship; and, how have these documents survived and been passed on, when, how and to whom did this occur. All of these aspects have pointed to the existence of some distinct familial roles, some of which are present-orientated and some of which are future-orientated and which are discussed below.

<sup>310</sup> US to WH, 9 October 1951, UCT.

**“she does not treat Olive as a kind sister should do”<sup>311</sup>: Becoming “little Mother”<sup>312</sup>**

In the following section I use the letter-content, and intertextual sources such as biographical material which draws upon these, to comment on the emergence and transference of the role of ‘little Mother’ within this family network. This ‘maternal’ role was taken on by various female members of the family complicating existing relational roles such as that of siblings or of niece and aunt, and often resulting in conflicted and intense feelings that affected the nature of future relationships, something that comes across strongly in the letters.

In a diary sporadically maintained from August 1893 to April 1898, Ethelwyn (Effie) Hemming describes how she first met John and Eliza Brown on 28 August 1893 in Taung, then in British Bechuanaland, where her ‘Mother’ (by which she means her adoptive mother HSL) held temperance meetings. Whilst HSL travelled on to Kimberley, Effie and her younger brothers Guy and Elbert remained in Taung with the Browns. Alongside repeated references to feeling “Jesus very near”,<sup>313</sup> Effie’s diary at this time points to the fluctuations in her mood that were observed by John Brown and there are repeated references to feeling miserable and lonely. For an example, an entry in the diary dated ‘Thursday August 24<sup>th</sup> 1893’ reads:

“This morning I felt so happy... but I feel so miserable now I wonder why I was born to make every-one so miserable as well as my-self. I don’t expect I shall ever feel happy for any length of time. I fail so often. I never help or make any-one happy.”<sup>314</sup>

In later diary entries, Effie explicitly comments on her “tendency to depression”<sup>315</sup> and there are repeated references which indicate the intensity of her feelings for her ‘Mother’ (HSL). The diary indicates that Effie’s moods were affected by communication, or lack thereof, with HSL with her spirits soaring or plummeting depending on whether letters from HSL arrived in the post. Face-to-face encounters also had similar effects. Thus, following a visit from various family members which included the unexpected arrival of her ‘Mother’, on 11 September 1893 Effie wrote;

“And now they are all gone and everything seems so horrible and miserable and O so lonely. We had such a nice time this morning... I am glad despite the

<sup>311</sup> RS to TS, no date, UCT.

<sup>312</sup> WPS to WH, 22 December 1918, UCT.

<sup>313</sup> See for example, entries dated 23 August, 25 August and 2 September 1893 amongst many others.

<sup>314</sup> Effie Hemming diary entry 24 August 1893, UCT.

<sup>315</sup> Effie Hemming diary entry 9 May 1896, UCT.

loneliness that they came because I feel so much nearer to Jesus. Oh if only Mother will come back soon.”<sup>316</sup>

During HSL’s unexpected visit to Taung, Effie wrote “a very happy morning. I stayed at home with my mother (I do love her O so much)”.<sup>317</sup> Her emphasis on the word “my” is intriguing. It is unclear whether this underscoring was intended to emphasise the exclusivity of Effie’s relationship with HSL (a tendency observed in the letters of a number of women to Smuts discussed in the previous chapter), whether it was intended to emphasise that Effie thought of HSL, and not Alice Hemming, as her ‘real’ mother, or whether it related to misgivings about residing with another family who were not ‘hers’, despite the affection of this family for her.

Letters written by other members of the Brown family shed light on Effie Hemming’s life while at Taung. A folder of letters from Jean or Jeannie Brown (a sister of Arthur Brown) includes a number of letters to Di (and sometimes Dia or Diah), Jean’s “dear brother”,<sup>318</sup> although the bearer of this ‘pet name’ is not known. It also includes letters to Arthur Brown and points to the strong connection between the Brown family and the Hemming children. On 23 March 1894, Jean Brown wrote to Arthur Brown:

“I am sorry we did not write to you last week. Mother & I were helping Effie with her dresses. Poor child she has such a lot of other work to do for ^one of^ her age. Guy & Elbert keep her well employed in mending thier stockings and patching their trousers.”<sup>319</sup>

In this letter addressed from “Home Taung”, Jeannie describes how the “Lewis” family had recently departed for a farm located between Kimberley and Barkley after “the wagons have been standing here for nearly 8 months. This place is almost unbearably quiete. I do miss Effie so much, to have her was almost like having a sister.”<sup>320</sup> Effie’s elder sister Winnie Hemming appears to have been in England around this time, returning to South Africa in late 1895 to teach at the Worcester Seminary School, which Effie then studied at after she left Taung. Winnie then moved to The Highlands in Cape Town, a home for destitute people at which Arthur and his brother Charlie Brown were employed by HSL. Despite the affection for Effie expressed by various members of the Brown family, and despite HSL not being her birth mother, Effie’s “inordinate attachment”<sup>321</sup> to HSL seems to have caused great conflict during Effie’s younger life and caused tensions in her relationship with HSL in her adulthood.

<sup>316</sup> Effie Hemming diary entry 11 September 1893, UCT.

<sup>317</sup> Effie Hemming diary entry 10 September 1893, UCT.

<sup>318</sup> JeanB to DB, 12 June 1893, UCT.

<sup>319</sup> JeanB to AB, 23 March 1894, UCT.

<sup>320</sup> JeanB to AB, 23 March 1894, UCT.

<sup>321</sup> GH to EB, 12 February 1896, UCT.



Effie's diary resumes on 30 April 1898. She had returned to Taung and the entries rather cryptically point to some troubles Effie had encountered in Cape Town, which may relate to her feelings for Arthur Brown and another unnamed man, with whom she entered into an engagement which was subsequently broken off.<sup>322</sup> "Of my Cape Town life I can write nothing. It is all one mixture of pleasure & pain", and Effie also wrote of feeling "dull & miserable" but that her stay in Taung

"is only a temporary arrangement for six months. I don't think I should stand it for longer. After that I want to get my Aunt Olive to use her influence & get me into the Kimberley hospital with a view of becoming a nurse. I cannot & must not go back to Cape Town for a long time yet."<sup>323</sup>

Despite Effie's wishes as expressed in her diary, a letter to her dated 19 June 1898 from HSL suggests that HSL has other plans for her, which she wrote would not be met favourably:

"I am afraid it will grieve you when you hear that I think if possible you ought to stay on where you are till the end of the year. I want you to enter the Sanatorium to be trained as a nurse... The course begins in January and I don't think it would be well for you to come home [unreadable] a day or two before you enter... Pray about it my child, & I believe you will see thus too. Do believe that in thus deciding I am just loving you most tenderly, and yearning that only what is for your highest good may be arranged. I am so sorry to hear of your crying so in the night..."<sup>324</sup>

Some indications of conflicted feelings around herself, HSL and religion are also evident in the following diary entry of 9 May 1896. Commenting on her feeling nearer to Jesus, something she seemed to lose a sense of in adulthood and which later caused tension between herself and HSL, Effie wrote:

"not the dearest best loved friend or Mother can't altogether understand you but He knows everything and "was in all points tempted as we are... I still get very homesick and long for my precious Mother but I am trying to conquer my tendency to depression."<sup>325</sup>

Effie's references to temptation and a lack of full understanding are interesting here. The "diffuse sense of guilt" that First & Scott (1990: 48) proposed existed as a consequence of the strict religiosity of Olive Schreiner's upbringing is something evident in Effie Hemming's diary in comments such as:

"I am a woman with a woman's feelings & desires, and Oh God help me to be a good, true, noble woman... Oh that I might be a true woman... I have prayed to be forgiven for where I have failed in the past... I am such a poor weak

<sup>322</sup> See AB to RH, 14 April 1900, UCT.

<sup>323</sup> Effie Hemming diary entry 30 April 1898, UCT.

<sup>324</sup> HSL to EB, 19 June 1898, UCT.

<sup>325</sup> Effie Hemming diary entry 9 May 1896, UCT.

failing mortal myself & can do nothing right. I think I am really one mass of faults,”<sup>326</sup>

Similar expressions of guilt and self-doubt are also found in the letters of Effie’s brother Guy, for despite some signs of resisting and perhaps resenting the apparently oppressive devotion of HSL, he wrote of similar feelings of guilt. Guy Hemming suffered from mental and physical breakdown in his adult life and from a refugee camp in Bloemfontein on 31 May 1900 he wrote:

“I have too much self in me to do any good... I shrink from humiliations and confessions which I ought to make, but my talk at table gets more frivolous, my interest in intellectual things has lessened, my moral faculty more blind. Pray for me dear Mother, if ever I needed your prayers it is now. I had rather a contretemps at table the other day when I refused to pass the port wine from one lady to another. I was called impolite but I think I was right. I feel my own weakness terribly, my instability but I know God is mighty.”<sup>327</sup>

It is hard to reconcile the images of frivolity and declining morality Guy Hemming mentions here with the strict adherence to the temperance values he also invokes in refusing even to pass wine from one diner to another. The extreme character of HSL’s religious views appear to have created conflicts for both Effie and Guy and both recognised their tendency towards depression.

Guy Hemming’s letters show interesting shifts over time in his feelings towards his adoptive Mother. Letters from circa 1892 are addressed to ‘Mother & Uncle Stakesby’ and signed “your loving little boy”.<sup>328</sup> However, in a letter to his sister Effie dated 12 February 1896, Guy comments that he had “not yet experienced those feelings of “desperation” and “homesickness”... so vividly described” by Effie and that his “mouth just waters”<sup>329</sup> at the prospect of leaving for boarding school. By 1896, in private at least, Guy Hemming was referring to HSL as Aunt Etty rather than Mother, and also commenting on the intensity of the relationship between Effie and HSL, that:

“with girls I suppose it is different. Of course with you your inordinate attachment to Aunt Etty makes you ready to die as soon as you get out of sight of her and if I may preach a sermon to you I think you ought to conquer this... last week Aunt Etty & Uncle Stakesby went down to Kalk Bay and they are not returning until next Friday week so there is a go-as-you-please air about the house which I take full advantage of.”<sup>330</sup>

<sup>326</sup> Effie Hemming diary entry 30 April 1899, UCT.

<sup>327</sup> GH to HSL, 31 May 1900, UCT.

<sup>328</sup> GH to HSL & SL, 3 March 1892, UCT.

<sup>329</sup> GH to EB, 12 February 1896, UCT.

<sup>330</sup> GH to EB, 12 February 1896, UCT.

This suggests that Guy found his Aunt and Uncle an oppressive adult presence and that he was prevented by them from doing ‘as he pleases’. However, later letters from Guy to HSL demonstrate that in later life he too experienced the “inordinate attachment” to and dependence on HSL that as an adolescent he had discouraged in Effie.<sup>331</sup>

HSL had become the guardian of Robert and Alice Hemming’s children in their time of need. However, there are a number of indications, particularly concerning Effie, that HSL’s decisions concerning their ‘highest good’ were not always appreciated. There are also some indications of tensions between Effie and HSL about religious matters, HSL being strictly and narrowly religious and ‘harshly evangelical’ (Stanley 2002a). There are also clear of tension regarding HSL’s influence over Effie’s husband Arthur Brown, with a letter of 27 May 1905 from HSL to Effie suggesting that Effie had expressed her resentment that HSL had encouraged Arthur to give up his paid employment and do ‘God’s work’ alongside HSL. Whilst HSL strongly denied encouraging this in “thought or word”, her letter encouraged putting “our own wills entirely aside”, suggesting a clash of wills over this matter. HSL’s letter recurrently drew attention to the current “plodding” and unfulfilling life of “poverty” and “drudgery” currently experienced by Arthur. The letter placed considerable and manipulative pressure upon Effie to cease to allow her “fears & doubts” concerning the care of her children to “stand in the way” of a “beautiful life of blessed usefulness” for Arthur. In highly manipulative comments, HSL shifted the burden of responsibility from herself to Effie in claiming that God had:

“in answer to Arthur’s cry made this way of escape for him to a freer wider life... ought you to let your fears... that this will fail, hinder his entering a work his whole being longs for. The responsibility is very great either way on each of you... I am so thankful that I never thought of or supported this for a moment, or the responsibility would be terrible on me. But as things have come, I feel the responsibility on you, of withstanding your husband, in what he so strongly feels led to do, is a fearfully heavy one.”<sup>332</sup>

HSL’s letter ends with the comment

“One word more little girl. Remember it is the man who has the responsibility resting on him of providing for his family, and it is he who must after all decide what he ought to do” (original emphasis).

The use of the diminutive ‘little girl’ juxtaposed with “man” puts Effie in her hierarchical place or at least reminds her of it. Also, various letters from HSL to the adult Effie encourage her “to let Jesus into your heart”,<sup>333</sup> suggesting some religious divergence between the two and a loss of faith in Effie since her childhood. A letter dated 1 August 1907 from HSL to

<sup>331</sup> See in particular GH to HSL, 29 May 1900, UCT.

<sup>332</sup> HSL to EB, 27 May 1905, UCT.

<sup>333</sup> See HSL to EB, 1 August 1907 and 13 September 1919, UCT.

Effie refers to making “a fresh start”,<sup>334</sup> also indicating the persistence of tensions in their relationship.

Together with Theo Schreiner, who is credited by Walker (1960[1937]: 10) with having “saved the situation”, HSL had assumed the role of carer of her younger siblings in the late 1860s following the insolvency of Gottlob Schreiner. Will Schreiner’s biographer Eric Walker (1960[1937]: 10) discussed the revulsion of Olive and Will Schreiner from the narrow beliefs, domination and “fraternal despotism” exercised by HSL and Theo at this time. The “dominating personalities and fierce convictions” that Walker (1960[1937]: 10) describes, which their younger siblings were at the mercy of, are evident in the letters of HSL to her adopted sons and daughters. But it seems that tensions lingered into adulthood between HSL and the siblings for whom she had assumed care. Letters from Alice Hemming to HSL, for instance, comment on Alice “shrinking from discussing religious matters with you”,<sup>335</sup> although frequently seeking her advice on medicinal and health matters in particular as relating to her children.

Whilst Alice Hemming received scant attention in Walker’s (1960[1937]) biography of Will Schreiner, First & Scott’s (1990) biography of Olive Schreiner suggest tensions existed between the two sisters and Alice Hemming’s scathing comments on the “moral aspect”<sup>336</sup> of The Story of an African Farm indicate that she and Olive Schreiner had apparently irreconcilable opinions about religious and other matters. On 3 April 1893, HSL wrote to her adopted daughter Winnie Hemming about a trip to her childhood home at Wittebergen. She described:

“the old house where most of my childhood was spent. The rocks where Jesus came near to me when I used to go & pour out my little heart to Him. The bush under which I used to creep & cry out my sorrows when my heart was too sore to bear its little burdens... the old “Pack House” in which your Mother [Alice] & Uncle Theo used to lock me up on holidays to test my being Christian... I wish I could take you to it one day. So much of your Mother’s childhood was spent there too. I could tell you much about her & show you her favourite spots.”<sup>337</sup>

Despite the matter-of-fact recounting of this story, it suggests that Alice Schreiner, like her mother Rebecca, became a tyrannical and “powerful authority figure” (First & Scott 1990: 52) for her siblings. An undated letter from Rebecca Schreiner to Theo Schreiner also

<sup>334</sup> HSL to EB, 1 August 1907, UCT.

<sup>335</sup> AH to HSL, 23 August 1883, UCT.

<sup>336</sup> AH to TS, 2 June 1883 and AH to HSL, 7 August 1883, UCT.

<sup>337</sup> HSL to WH, 3 April 1893, UCT.

indicates that this may be the case, stating that she thought that Alice “does not treat Olive as a kind sister should do”.<sup>338</sup>

First & Scott (1990: 46-47) also note that the eldest of Rebecca and Gottlob Schreiner’s children, Kate or Katie, was left in charge of three of her younger siblings during one of Rebecca Schreiner’s pregnancies. They describe Katie as being “[t]reated as a little woman” and discuss the ‘unnatural and unmotherly’ tyranny Theo observed in his mother Rebecca Schreiner towards Kate (something which he himself later perpetuated towards Will and Olive Schreiner on assuming their care). The mental health issues Katie Schreiner suffered in adulthood are referred to in a letter written by her daughter Katie Stuart,<sup>339</sup> which explicitly commented on her own difficulties with her mother, suggesting that Kate Schreiner’s role as mother was not always a positive and nurturing one. Interestingly, despite these difficulties Katie Stuart also demonstrated intense feelings for her mother. On 29 November 1888 she wrote to her “Darling Mother” that she was “my queen for whom I could die.”<sup>340</sup>

A frequent term of endearment used by the Schreiners towards their mother Rebecca Schreiner was that of the ‘little Mother’. In a letter to Winnie Hemming dated 22 December 1918, Will Schreiner commented on the death of Winnie’s younger brother Elbert, writing that “I know how you have always been, even while Aunt Het was still with us, a little mother to him, & what a gap is made in your inner circle of loved ones”.<sup>341</sup> The use of the term ‘little mother’ and the emphasise on ‘even while Aunt Het was still with us’ suggest that the title was in a sense passed on from Rebecca Schreiner to Henrietta Schreiner and then to Winnie Hemming, although with periods of transition and cross-over occurring. This is supported by an earlier letter from Will Schreiner to Winnie Hemming dated 31 October 1917 in which he refers to Winnie as ‘My dear old girl’, a term of endearment used formerly used by Will to address HSL. In keeping with his own role as family benefactor, discussed below, Will enclosed with this letter a slip enabling Winnie to be given “£5 on my account” which was to be split with Effie Hemming. There are no signs of the negative connotations or links with resented harsh behaviour when the title of ‘little Mother’ is applied to Winnie, with the letters from siblings and nephews and nieces conveying much affection, However, it should be noted that Winnie was never wholly and solely responsible for the care of younger family members in the way that older members of her family had been.

<sup>338</sup> RS to TS, no date, UCT.

<sup>339</sup> KS to EB, 8 August 1910, UCT.

<sup>340</sup> KStuart to KS, 29 November 1888, UCT.

<sup>341</sup> WPS to WH, 22 December 1918, UCT.

The letters discussed above show that high levels of emotional intensity existed between family members and that in some cases this created an almost obsessive need for frequent contact between particular people. Events which threatened family continuity, such as the dismissal, insolvency and death of Gottlob Schreiner and the inability of Rebecca Schreiner to care for all of her children as a consequence, meant that some family members at a very young age assumed roles which contributed to the continuity and solidarity of the family. The assumption of parental roles by various siblings blurred the boundaries between parent, sibling, aunt, niece/nephew, brother and sister and the resulting altered relationships and the attachments formed subsequently were intense but not necessarily positive. Whilst the intergenerational transfer of negative parental behaviours is certainly not something specific to the Schreiner family, how this occurred regarding the role of ‘little Mother’ is analytically interesting and letters strongly suggest that this ‘caring’ role was seen as a necessary one but with misgivings about the form that this role often took. The role of ‘little Mother’ was an emotional one, as a lynch-pin and often the focus of ambivalent feelings. This role was often taken on in response to events and in times of need and whilst present-orientated, had a serious impact of the nature of relationships, complicating these and adversely affecting them for the future.

#### **“I am a better hand at doing than writing”<sup>342</sup>: The role of “Dadda”<sup>343</sup> and family benefactor**

In contrast to the emotional role of ‘little Mother’, the role of ‘Dadda’ was a financial one. Again, those occupying this role responded to the immediate needs of the family but as the letters suggest, Fred Schreiner in particular was future-orientated in this role.

The Brown part of the collection contains a folder of condolence letters to Effie and Arthur Brown on the death of their child Robin. One is from Will Schreiner and points to the family role of benefactor. In it he writes that “I am sure that you must be in some anxiety which I can help you in, and I enclose a small aid in that respect”.<sup>344</sup> It suggests that the benefactor role is assumed by and requires the involvement of a family member who “can help”, that is, someone who is in a financial position to do this. However, not all family members who ‘can help’ do so, and consequently the role is not determined by or dependant upon financial resources. From the words used it is likely but not certain that Will Schreiner’s ‘aid’ was financial and that Effie’s ‘anxiety’ related to burial expenses. There is

<sup>342</sup> FS to RH, 24 March 1979, UCT.

<sup>343</sup> OS to FS, November 1884, Harry Ransom Centre (HRC), Texas, Austin, OSLO transcription.

<sup>344</sup> WPS to EB, 1 July 1910, UCT.

some blotching on the paper that this letter was written on which suggests that a substance other than paper might have been enclosed with it. However, whatever the form that ‘aid’ took in this particular instance, Will Schreiner frequently assisted family members financially and with legal matters. His role of family benefactor became particularly apparent after the death of his elder brother Fred Schreiner, who owned a private school in England and from whom Will had received financial assistance earlier, including during the period of his university education in England.

Letters to Fred Schreiner in Britain do not appear in this collection, while those from him are predominantly addressed to Alice and/or Robert Hemming from 1879 until circa 1880, and then to HSL until 7 May 1901, when HSL was sent a telegram from his widow Emma Schreiner advising that Fred had “passed away suddenly”.<sup>345</sup> This predominance of letters to Alice in the collection up until her death suggests that, had she lived longer, she might well have taken a prominent role in retaining family correspondence. It is possible, indeed probable, that the family documents of Fred Schreiner were retained by his wife. However, given his sibling connection to the high profile Olive Schreiner and Will Schreiner, the lack of letters to him in the Schreiner-Hemming collection and the absence of reference to sources on the UK National Archives database suggest that they no longer exist.

The only letter to Fred from Olive Schreiner found by the [Olive Schreiner Letters Online](#) refers to his role as the surrogate “Dadda”<sup>346</sup> within the family following the financial difficulties and general fecklessness of their father Gottlob Schreiner. There are however, repeated references to the financial assistance Fred Schreiner gave to various family members in his letters. On Fred’s death, his wife Emma wrote to her sister-in-law HSL,

“I feel anxious to know how the dear little Mother [Rebecca Schreiner] is bearing up under this terrible shock. I have written the Grannie this mail, sending her the usual £5 – that dear Fred always sent. I hope I may still be able to do it. I do not at all know how I am left off yet but I will do what I can for the dear little Mother whom my darling so loved.”<sup>347</sup>

This suggests that Emma Schreiner wished to assume the role of family benefactor at least in relation to Fred’s mother should finances permit. The impression gained from reading Fred Schreiner’s letters is that he was particularly concerned with the needs of the family and had a clearly defined idea of his role within it – he offered financial and practical assistance in doing “everything that a brother should”<sup>348</sup> and made repeated references to “family

<sup>345</sup> ES to HSL, 7 May 1901, UCT.

<sup>346</sup> OS to FS, November 1884, Harry Ransom Centre (HRC), Texas, Austin, OSLO transcription.

<sup>347</sup> ES to HSL, 24 May 1901, UTC.

<sup>348</sup> FS to RH, 24 March 1879, UCT.

members who rely on me”<sup>349</sup> and “with wife, child, Olive, Mother & other relatives (incl Emma’s) entirely dependent on me I have felt very anxious”.<sup>350</sup> Whilst the level of dependency of family members may have been exaggerated by Fred Schreiner - and this was certainly so in the case of Olive Schreiner – the comment above demonstrates his preoccupation with and anxiety surrounding the financial well-being of family members.

Fred Schreiner’s letters also indicate that he encouraged other family members to offer financial assistance to needful relatives, that he planned ahead financially for family members rather than just responding to emergent or immediate needs, and that he actively encouraged financial responsibility in younger family members. For instance, in a letter to his brother-in-law Robert Hemming dated 24 March 1879, Fred Schreiner suggested him giving a loan to their younger brother (in-law) Will who, after completing his studies in England was to return to South Africa:

“Willie is getting on finely, only he is of course not well up for cash. He makes his home here & I do something for him. Will you allow me to suggest that you offer him a small loan to be repaid to you after he comes out, not a gift, for a young fellow is all the better for having to scheme to make both ends meet. I think if you did so without ~~suggesti~~ letting him know I said anything about it he would accept it as a loan & it would do a world of good, & seem less like a gift than anything I might do. £30 or so would do him nicely.”<sup>351</sup>

The value these letter place, not only on assisting family members, but also on encouraging financial acumen, comes through strongly. The letter also details Fred’s intention to assist Robert’s wife (and Fred’s sister) Alice Hemming both practically and financially in her making a trip to England as recommended by her doctors.

That Fred planned ahead for potentially financially dependant family members and encouraged others to do so is made explicit in a letter to HSL dated 10 May 1891. It was written after she had assumed guardianship of Alice Hemmings children in 1884, and prior to her marriage to John Stakesby Lewis in 1893:

“I should like to have some sort of idea as to whether you & your charges are amply provided for now, whether your want will be amply provided for, & also whether you have good business grounds for knowing that they will be provided for. Your position is one of responsibility by no means slight, & though I don’t want to pry into your ways & means I shan’t be sorry to have such confidence as you can bestow.”<sup>352</sup>

<sup>349</sup> FS to HSL, 18 August 1889, UCT.

<sup>350</sup> FS to HSL, 31 July 1889, UCT.

<sup>351</sup> FS to RH, 24 March 1879, UCT.

<sup>352</sup> FS to HSL, 10 May 1891, UCT.



There are repeated references throughout the letters in the Schreiner-Hemming collection to the financial hardships faced by Robert Hemming; and it was Will and not his elder brother Theo Schreiner who assumed the benefactor role following Fred's death, including in relation to Robert Hemming. The intention of WPS to offer 'my share' of financial assistance to family members in the future is indicated in a letter of 14 July 1883 to his sister Alice Hemming:

"I hope to be able to marry before many months, but the income of a junior is very uncertain until he makes a real mark. However I hope for the best. In your letter you speak of Mother's income & refer to John's not seeing his way clear to assist. I am sorry for that, but as to Fred I know that he is always sending the mater some coin, I am sure that he would be perfectly ready to make it periodical (if it is not so already). I wish I were yet in a position to take my share, but must defer that for a time I am afraid."<sup>353</sup>

Following a period of financial hardship as he established his family and career, Will Schreiner then took on the role of family benefactor and there are innumerable examples in letters of him offering financial assistance and legal advice to family members even during periods when his own finances and time were stretched. Others too also saw the need to do 'my share' in helping others. Fifty years after the above letter, its contents were echoed in one written by Robert Stuart to his 'Cousin Winnie' (Hemming) on 27 September 1938. It details why he was unable to contribute to the upkeep of the "graves of Grannie [Rebecca Schreiner] & Uncle Theo"<sup>354</sup> at present but that he had forwarded letters about this to 'Dad' (Will Stuart). Whilst Winnie Hemming does not ever appear to have been in a position to assume the role of family benefactor, this letter from Robert Stuart concerning the family graves points to the existence of a role she did perform, that of 'family glue', discussed later.

How the term 'Dadda' and the practices of financial support associated with it are deployed in letters suggests that the role of financial benefactor in this family at least was gendered, with women performing the emotional work of kin-keeping which is "normatively defined as women's work" (Rosenthal 1985: 966). However, there are also letters which suggest that had some of the women in the family - and particularly HSL, Winnie Hemming and Fred's widow Emma Schreiner - had sufficient incomes they might have assumed this role. The family division of labour therefore seems to be along gender lines with Winnie, perhaps prematurely, looking to Robert Stuart to step into the role of financial benefactor. His response that "at

<sup>353</sup> WPS to AH, 14 July 1883, UCT.

<sup>354</sup> RS to WH, 27 September 1938, UCT.

present I cannot do anything about the graves” but that “I hope to take on the 25/- a year later”<sup>355</sup> indicates a future intention to assume a family financial role, perhaps in succession to his father, to whom he referred the request.

Other roles within this family network are performed and assumed more informally, with women “more likely than men to worry about their inadequate meeting of... duties” and non-financial obligations towards kin and in maintaining familial contacts (Rosenthal 1985: 966). Although the roles of ‘family glue’ and ‘family archivist’ have many similarities with that of a ‘kin-keeper’ these are nuanced, with the former more present-orientated and the latter more future-orientated.

### **Having “the drive and interest”<sup>356</sup>: The Role of ‘Family Glue’**

The following discussion considers the role of family glue with those assuming this role taking responsibility for maintaining the ‘togetherness’ of the family. In an epistolary sense, this is accomplished by the sharing and passing on of news and family stories. However, the actions of the family glue often go well beyond written communication and extend to such things as maintaining graves and family property and in evoking memories such as through the giving of gifts that evoke poignant family memories.

The early Hemming family letters indicate that these were written between globally dispersed family members attempting to keep in touch infrequently but as best they could through letters. Robert Hemming travelled to and remained in South Africa following his parents’ migration there. These letters suggest the existence of a close relationship between Robert Hemming and his parents and it is clear that he was a significant figure regarding the retention of family correspondence, as discussed further later.

Despite the careful retention of correspondence, there is no indication in the early Hemming letters of the existence of a specific family member who particularly maintained and preserved family bonds. Robert’s elder brother Henry (Harry) Hemming appointed Robert as his executor and the guardian of any minor heirs in a will dated 28 August 1879. This was prior to Alice Hemming’s death and it appears that, as Robert’s wife, she would assume care of Harry Hemming’s children in the event of his death. While Robert Hemming carefully retained correspondence, he visited his children infrequently, he did not correspond with HSL as frequently as she would like regarding decisions relating to their care and his letters often refer to financial issues and the unfulfilled desire to visit or write more

<sup>355</sup> RS to WH, 27 September 1938, UCT.

<sup>356</sup> EB to WH, 27 March 1953, UCT.

frequently.<sup>357</sup> The epistolary record then, points to the fact that Alice Hemming might have had a binding effect on the Hemming branch of the family had she lived longer.

Leach & Braithwaite (1996, see also Barnes & Duck 1994) note that the giving and receiving of support is not something that only occurs in times of crisis, such as family bereavements, but forms part of ongoing interactions and affects the reciprocal balance of relationships. The impression gained from reading many of Robert Hemming's letters to HSL is that, in assuming the ongoing care of his children, he was forever in her 'debt' in terms of reciprocal balance and this affected their relationship adversely. Although HSL did comment in her letters on the demands that acting as guardian placed upon her, the adversity arose more from a sense of discomfort on the part of Robert Hemming about this insurmountable debt. It manifested itself as an epistolary and face-to-face avoidance of HSL, and somewhat sheepish comments about his own shortcomings in this regard are recurrent in his letters to her.

Possibly due to their own experiences of fragmented families, it was HSL and later Winnie Hemming who adopted the role of 'family glue'. The children of Rebecca and Gottlob Schreiner were scattered across South Africa and some were in England due to large age differences between them, elder siblings marrying and/or moving away, and also because of Gottlob Schreiner's insolvency. Fred Schreiner, from his home in England, expressed a desire to assist family members and to get to know or renew contact with younger family members, with many of his own siblings born after or only shortly before his departure for England. As Gerstel & Gallagher (1993: 598) note, "the contemporary extended family does not simply persist. Someone expends a great deal of time and energy to maintain it" and this applies to key individuals in this family over time. Despite the size of the family network and the abundance of friendship ties of many of its members, particular members of the Schreiner-Hemming family expended considerable time in communicating via letters and, as frequent references to travelling and meetings indicate, also in meeting face-to-face. Therefore, whilst many letters suggest that ties remained strong irrespective of contact, nonetheless some family members devoted time and energy and in some cases also money to their maintenance.

When HSL reached full maturity, indications of the existence of the role of 'family glue' became apparent. HSL married the widower John Stakesby-Lewis when she was forty and he was fifty-three. A letter to Winnie Hemming from HSL dated 14 November 1892 indicates that they had wished to have children of their own but their hopes had been thwarted by a series of miscarriages. In a letter to her ailing sister in January 1884, HSL

<sup>357</sup> See for example RH to HSL, 30 July 1892, 20 April 1900 and 1 July 1902, UCT.

offered to look after Alice's children should Alice die before her and despite later offers to care for her grandchildren from his mother Eliza Hemming, Robert Hemming maintained that he was happy with the situation.<sup>358</sup> As discussed above, the relationship HSL developed with her adopted children was an intense and sometimes fraught one. In particular, her extreme religiosity appears to have caused both guilt and tension, with her letters filled with religious guidance and moral instruction. Her letters also give an indication of her relationship with her adoptive children. On 2 August 1884, HSL wrote to Robert Hemming that "children should not have a nurse in infancy or a companion in childhood except their Mother, or some equally reliable friend" and that she had "not a moment to myself from 6 till 8".<sup>359</sup> Given that Robert's wife had died just a few months previously, this comment reads as rather tactless as does her statement that she had no time to herself. Her letter also advised Robert Hemming that "it is my duty to write long letters to you" regarding his children and their progress. Whilst this latter point bears close resemblance to the kin-keeper role, HSL's adoption of the Hemming children clearly goes well beyond this.

The collection contains a large number of letters to Winnie Hemming from her sister Effie Brown's children. These letters from her nieces and nephews show that Winnie was seen as having a binding effect on the family, not only in retaining and preserving documents, but also of sharing family news, memories and stories. For example, on 9 December 1926, Fan Schreiner, wife of Will Schreiner wrote to Arthur Brown advising "I have not seen Wyn for some time, she always keeps me in touch with family news"<sup>360</sup> and, in a letter dated 16 December 1951, Lyndall Brown wrote to thank 'Aunt Winnie' for a "newsy letter on my birthday". She wrote:

"As for the book I have not a copy of it & would love to have one. I am afraid that my memory is so bad that if I don't have books to keep me reminded of the early days of the family in this country I would soon forget it all. I wish you had been able to commit ^to paper^ all the hundreds of stories and reminiscences, which I have heard and enjoyed all my life, its seems such a shame that more people have not been able to appreciate the many interesting & exciting incidents that you have witnessed or taken part in. Story tellers are so few & far between these days & I have never met another one as good as you...I feel I could spent hours absorbing some of your knowledge and reliving some of the past."<sup>361</sup>

This comment indicates that Winnie had not committed any family reminiscences to paper, yet some book existed which provided reminders of early family life in South Africa. Other letters from Winnie Hemming to younger family members from

<sup>358</sup> RH to HSL, 5 November 1884, UCT.

<sup>359</sup> HSL to RH, 2 August 1884, UCT

<sup>360</sup> FS to AB, 9 December 1926, UCT.

<sup>361</sup> LB to WH, 16 December 1951, UCT.

around this time show that she had recommended reading Olive Schreiner's works to younger family members. For example, in a letter dated simply '2<sup>nd</sup> Oct' which indicates that Winnie Hemming had encouraged Barbara Brown to engage with Schreiner's writing advises, Barbara Brown wrote "Aunt Win I have read Closer Union & think it's wonderful. Don't you remember me talking about it some months ago? I want to read it again"<sup>362</sup> (original emphasis). Younger generations of the family and their connections are discussed later and opinions concerning Schreiner's writings appear to influence decisions concerning the 'fate' of the family correspondence.

In addition to actively seeking the return of her letters to people and making efforts to secure the return of those of other family members upon their deaths, Winnie Hemming was also proactive in her lifetime in passing on family stories and in maintaining connections between herself and younger family members and regarding memories of those who were deceased. There are repeated references to her organising money for the upkeep of family graves, she assumed responsibility for her brother Guy who died aged 77 on 9 January 1958 of 'senility enteritis', and she also maintained strong connections with her nieces and nephews. Although Guy Hemming for a time was cared for by his sister Effie Brown, his later years were spent at the Valkenberg Mental Hospital<sup>363</sup> and numerous letters from the superintendent there demonstrate Winnie's ongoing involvement in Guy's care and wellbeing. One letter to Winnie Hemming from the Syfret's Trust shows how Will Schreiner's role as family benefactor continued well beyond his death:

"We were very sorry indeed to learn of the death of your brother Mr Guy Hemming... Your brother received £4.3.4d., monthly in terms of the will of the late W.P. Schreiner, and we have now been instructed by the heirs to that Estate to continue to pay the same amount to you."<sup>364</sup>

The role of family benefactor appears to have been assumed, amongst others who took on this role, by an unnamed heir of Will Schreiner's, with these instructions ensuring that Winnie Hemming received financial assistance in her later years.

There are also indications in the letters of Winnie Hemming from her various nieces and nephews that the role of family glue was transferred to the next generation. Letters from Lyndall Brown comment frequently on him being in debt to his aunt for replies to her letters and it seems that Winnie continued to write regularly despite receiving only annual or bi-

<sup>362</sup> BB to WH, 2 October, UCT.

<sup>363</sup> Guy Hemming was a resident there for over fifty years.

<sup>364</sup> Syfret Trust to WH, 9 January 1958, UCT.

annual replies at Christmas and birthdays. On two separate occasions Lyndall Brown asked her to pass on to other family members that he would write to them before Christmas, indicating that Winnie was known for maintaining connections, whether epistolary and/or face-to-face with family members.<sup>365</sup> A letter dated 3 July 1930 also reveals that Winnie Hemming sent her nephew a picture of the family home at Blaauwberg as a wedding gift, with such meaningful gifts working to reinforce and remind of family bonds to both people and places. Despite Lyndall being the eldest of Arthur and Effie Brown's children, letters from both him and his sister Ethelwyn suggest that the role of family glue was assumed by their sister Barbara. This may be due to Lyndall Brown's geographical distance from other family members. However, his own comments about the infrequency of his communications and the letters cited below suggest that there was something particular about his character that unfitted him for this, and also attributes of Barbara Brown that suited her for this role.

Following the death of his mother Effie Hemming, Lyndall Brown wrote to his aunt on 17 November 1951:

“I wished I could have been with you all & taken my share of the burden, as the eldest son I should have been there to have supported Dad & helped you all but the younger ones seem to have been wonderful in the crisis & I am deeply grateful to them.”<sup>366</sup>

The phrase “as the eldest son, I should have...” indicates his belief that he had a supportive role to fill in the family but that ‘the younger ones’ had actually assumed this. A letter from Lyndall's sister Ethelwyn to her aunt Winnie Hemming dated 27 March 1953 sheds light on specifically which ‘younger ones’ this referred to.

“I am so glad to hear from Dad [Arthur Brown] that Alice<sup>367</sup> is giving her share of the Blaauwberg house to Bar. [Barbara Brown] Joy will have the Fish Hoek house and it would be nice for Bar to have the Blaauwberg place when she retires. And she has the drive and interest... to help you now with all there always is to be done for it... I haven't seen Lyndall for weeks except in the distance on his verandah or something... I hope he doesn't forget to let me know when Howard passes through...”<sup>368</sup>

Barbara Brown had been identified by both older and younger generations of the family as someone willing to maintain family ties. The maintenance is literal in this letter, relating to the Blaauwberg house which had special significance for older family members, as indicated by its image being given and intended as a meaningful wedding gift. The letter

<sup>365</sup> See LB to WH, 9 December 1929 and 6 December 1931, UCT.

<sup>366</sup> LB to WH, 17 November 1951, UCT.

<sup>367</sup> HSL left the Blaauwberg House to her adoptive children and to her niece Alice H Mushet (née Findlay).

<sup>368</sup> EB to WH, 27 March 1953, UCT.

also indicates a number of reasons why the elder son Lyndall Brown did not succeed to the role of family glue, for even when living close to other family members his contact with them was infrequent and he was likely to forget or fail to communicate family news.

### **The Future-Orientated Role of Family Archivist**

The 'Brown family' papers are largely letters to Arthur Brown, who seems to have assumed responsibility for retaining correspondence. There are many letters to Arthur from his parents John and Eliza Brown, and also many letters addressed more generically to 'the boys' or 'dear sons' which were either retained by Arthur in particular or later came into his possession. The letters from Tom Brown in the collection were written to his brother Arthur or his parents, again suggesting that Arthur kept some of his parent's papers. Those from 'Charley & Hetty' (also one of Arthur's brothers plus his wife) are to Arthur plus one to Effie on the death of her father, and a similar pattern exists regarding the folders of letters from other letter-writers in the A.3 Brown family collection, where the letters are predominantly to Arthur but are interspersed with some addressed to Arthur and another sibling, or to his parents, or occasionally to his wife Effie. This, then, is not an archive of Brown family documents as such but a collection of the papers of Arthur Brown, (who was not the eldest son) and linked with the Schreiner-Hemming family collection because of his marriage with Effie Hemming

Of particular interest is a letter from Arthur Brown's mother, Eliza Brown, to HSL dated 31 January 1909. This strongly expresses the intensity of the friendship between the two women, writing that "dear Hettie you know me better than any one!"<sup>369</sup> It is unclear whether their friendship preceded HSL sending Effie to work on the Brown's missionary station or whether this precipitated the friendship. However, a letter from Arthur to Effie Brown dated 20 September 1901 indicates that HSL, whom he referred to as 'Granny' and later 'Mother', knew and "was very fond of my Aunt when a girl",<sup>370</sup> so HSL had known at least one of Arthur Brown's parents close family relatives since her girlhood. Eliza Brown's letter to HSL is filed amongst those from Eliza Brown to Arthur, showing how letters of various family members sometimes converge. It is also a good indication of who was retaining correspondence from each of the three families: Arthur Brown and HSL are notable in this regard from the Brown and the Schreiner sides. On the Hemming side, Robert Hemming, and Alice Hemming up to the point of her death in 1884, retained

<sup>369</sup> EB to HSL, 31 January 1909, UCT.

<sup>370</sup> AB to EB, 20 September 1901, UCT.

correspondence, while Effie solicitously retained the correspondence of Arthur Brown from the period of their courtship and also periods of absence in their marriage. As the 'family glue', much correspondence from the three families came into the possession of Winnie Hemming who, in Steedman's sense of the term, seems to have been someone who retained 'Everything'.

There are many envelopes in the collection with notes on them in HSL's, then later, Winnie Hemming's, handwriting evidencing attempts to order these papers or at least to label those considered particularly significant. For example, HSL wrote on one envelope "Father's last letters" with the envelope of a letter from Fred to Rebecca Schreiner reading "Uncle Fred's last letter to Grannie", with the familial titles used, as well as the handwriting, indicating who has written these. How the letters came to be in Winnie Hemming's possession, how Barbara Brown later gained responsibility for them, and what influenced her decision to donate them to Manuscripts and Archives at UCT, can be helpfully explored in analysing the family archivist role.

Rebecca and Gottlob Schreiner's letters are likely to have been retained, following the death of Rebecca Schreiner in 1903 by HSL. Whilst acknowledging that other letters written by Gottlob and Rebecca Schreiner (Olive Schreiner's parents) may appear in other collections, an examination of their letters in the Schreiner-Hemming collection strongly indicates that both Alice Schreiner and her sister HSL had from an early age retained correspondence and in this instance from their parents. Of five extant letters from Gottlob Schreiner - only two of which are dated as 1875 and 1876 - three are to 'Hetty' and two are generic to 'Dear Children' and "dear ones at the fields". The vast majority of letters from Rebecca Schreiner are to Alice Schreiner, and post 1884 to her son-in-law Robert Hemming after Alice's death and to HSL. There are also two to 'Ettie and Theo' who, as discussed in my Introduction, assumed responsibility for their younger siblings. Letters are not the only source of interest and information in archival research, and envelopes, whether the ones in which letters were originally posted or ones used many years later to store letters in, can sometimes provide valuable information. At some point post 1891, when Henrietta Schreiner had married John Stakesby Lewis, an envelope which originally contained something for the attention of "Mrs Stakesby Lewis", has been used to store "some letters of father, mother and Olive 1869-1876" and "Father's last letters 1876". This suggests that HSL not only saved correspondence but actively engaged over time in organising it into some kind of coherent system.

The sheer volume of letters addressed to HSL in the collection indicate that she was someone to whom many people wrote, and that she also retained correspondence. The



following letter dated 28 July 1884 from HSL to Robert Hemming and written following the death of Alice Hemming, indicates that Theo Schreiner was also known for this:

“I have been quite unable to write. I can never touch writing till the children are safe in bed and asleep & both Saturday & Sunday night by the time they were comfortably asleep I was too worn out to be able to write... I do so wish I had kept all her letters of the last three years, there was in them such ~~a growing~~ signs of a growing nearness to Jesus. They could comfort you about all He did for her more than words of mine could but unfortunately lately I have been getting into the way of burning my letters but I will ask Theo to try & find some for us. Yesterday, going to the desk in the parlour to look for a pen, I came across the enclosed letter of mine to her. I don't know if you have read it but feel I ought to send it. It will show you next best to her own letters how truly she was being prepared for the glory that awaits us for it was called forth by the breathings of her own spirit in a letter to me.”<sup>371</sup>

HSL's references to Alice becoming closer to God in the period before her death are intended to assuage Robert's concerns over this. The letter was written in the Hemming family home, where HSL was with Alice during “those last days & nights of pain”. HSL forwarded her own letter to Alice on to Robert, taking pains to explain to Robert how she happened across it, thus indicating the ‘double vision’ letters afford. This letter cited above also indicates the existence of another acknowledged retainer of family correspondence, Theo Schreiner. An envelope in the collection in Winnie's handwriting indicates that Theo, whilst know for retaining correspondence, did so in a haphazard way: “Letter found by Uncle Theo in an old book Victoria Court Flats shortly before he died” with the letter in question being from Winnie's mother Alice Hemming written many years previously to Theo regarding the two year old Winnie breaking her arm.

As noted in the handlist for the collection, papers pertaining to various members of the Schreiner family appear in a large number of other globally dispersed collections. The route these particular Schreiner papers took appears to be from Rebecca and Gottlob to HSL and Theo Schreiner and subsequently to Winnie Hemming, eventually joining up with those of the Browns, and then being succeeded to by Barbara Brown.

Letters written by Winnie indicate her purposeful attempts to document events and to retain a record of these. In a letter dated 25 July 1900 that extended to over forty pages and which was addressed to ‘Dear Friends All’, Winnie recounted her recent travels and stated:

“Please don't think you have to read all this at once... I know I shall never be able to do justice to the task I am undertaking of telling you of my journey to Kimberley... Don't groan too much over the length of this epistle as I might hear you out here... will you please send this letter back to me after it has been the rounds. I have not kept any kind of diary & I should like to have this to

<sup>371</sup> HSL to RH, 28 July 1884, UCT.

refer to if I should need it... though my letters to you all together are not exactly private, I want them for you only & not for the public.”<sup>372</sup>

Following the death of her brother Elbert Hemming and his wife Norah within a few days of each other during an influenza epidemic in 1918, it is clear from letters around this time that Winnie made contact not only with the solicitor handling their affairs but also with the friends of Elbert and Norah who had sent letters of sympathy, and she sought details from them concerning the circumstances of their deaths. A letter dated 5 November 1918 to Winnie Hemming from Elbert Hemming’s friends Mr and Mrs H.P. Steigerwaldt states:

“All the letters and papers that you ask for were put in the box, also pictures etc, the one large picture of the Highlands was too large for the box, we... will send it down to you the very first opportunity... I trust these things will reach you in good condition & will be satisfactory. It was difficult to sort the things out to send you what would be of value to you, we done our best.”<sup>373</sup>

It seems Elbert and Norah were also in possession of an image of a family property, The Highlands, that held particular significance for family members. In the previous generation, it was unmarried sister Elizabeth Hemming - who survived her brother Robert, who died in 1906, by many years - who mainly inherited from the wills of her siblings, with Winnie Hemming later acting as executrix for this aunt’s estate. During his lifetime, however, Robert Hemming was frequently appointed as Executor by family members. Alice Hemming’s personal possessions were retained by her husband Robert and, as an unsigned and undated list in this collection indicates, as the Executrix of Robert Hemming’s will HSL was sent many personal documents including those relating to his financial affairs upon his death, presumably by his former colleague and Executor Thomas Henry Farrar. Letters from Winnie Hemming to HSL at this time show that Winnie travelled to Johannesburg and attended her father’s funeral

“I found his Will among his papers this morning, and will send you a copy. You and old Mr Farrer – his faithful friend – are joint executors. I am going to hand everything over to Mr Farrar, except his letters from us all, and anything marked “strictly private”, which I shall take with me to you.”<sup>374</sup>

It is clear that the family letters of Robert Hemming came into the possession of either HSL or Winnie Hemming upon his death. The drafts of HSL’s will appointed

<sup>372</sup> WH to ‘Dear Friends All’, 25 July 1900, UCT.

<sup>373</sup> Mrs & Mrs Steigerwaldt to WH, 5 November 1918, UCT.

<sup>374</sup> WH to HSL, 9 October 1906, UCT.

Winnie Hemming as both heiress and Executrix, and she formally undertook the latter role on 19 June 1912 following the death of HSL. Any family documents held by HSL therefore passed to the care of Winnie Hemming at that point.

In this way, out of the four surviving children of Robert and Alice Hemming (Winnie, Effie, Guy and Elbert), all of the early correspondence of the Hemming family came into the possession of Winnie Hemming. Although Effie Hemming died in 1951, before her sister Winnie, her correspondence and that of her husband Arthur Brown (including the early papers of the Brown family) appears to have gone directly to their children, who included Barbara and Theo Brown.

A draft of Winnie Hemming's will from 1952 shows that she appointed her nephew Wilfred Hemming Brown and niece (Alice Helena) Barbara Brown as her executors. Although she does not refer directly to the family correspondence she has amassed, her will indicates that Winnie had specific intentions regard the transfer of responsibility for such things:

“I have already disposed of some of my personal effects and may dispose of more before my death, but I direct that any personal items and effects, such as clothing, books, family photographs of no monetary value shall be distributed... in accordance with a list which I shall prepare for their instruction.”<sup>375</sup>

Although the list in question was not found, the will makes it clear that Winnie Hemming had a precise idea of what should be done with items “of no monetary value”, while a letter from 1952 (discussed later) indicates that Barbara Brown had been singled out by Winnie Hemming as the next family archivist and that Brown's reason for donating the family papers to UCT seem to relate to Olive Schreiner.

**“I hope none of my young friends will read it”<sup>376</sup>: From ‘black sheep’ to a “strange growing understanding” of Olive Schreiner<sup>377</sup>**

Section B of the Brown family papers contains ‘Other Correspondence’ comprising of ‘Letters from family, and friends of various family members, especially those of Arthur and Effie Brown’. This correspondence includes letters from John & Mary Brown who had originally been friends with Alice Schreiner (later Hemming) and who assisted Olive Schreiner in pursuing a nursing and then writing career. There is not any connection between these Browns and the Brown family of which Arthur was part. Their letters are

<sup>375</sup> The draft will was enclosed with the following letter: John S Ince & Wood Solicitors to WH, 14 January 1952, UCT.

<sup>376</sup> AH to TS, 2 June 1883, UCT.

<sup>377</sup> HSL to OS, no date, UCT.

predominately to Alice and discuss Olive Schreiner's probationary nursing in Edinburgh and the death of Alice and Robert's son Leofric. There are also some letters from the Browns to HSL. These letters, therefore relate far more closely to the Schreiner and Schreiner-Hemming family connections than the 'Brown family' to which A.3 pertains. Despite the Browns' friendship with Alice Schreiner, their assistance in finding a publisher for The Story of An African Farm stand at odds with Alice's very negative opinion of the novel (discussed below).

The letters of Mary and John Brown contain an undated note signed by Winnie Hemming stating "Old letters for Ray to read". Ray Dick (née Brown) was the daughter of Mary and John Brown and a letter from Ray Dick discussed below contains the final clue as to how this enormous family collection finally came to UCT.

There are repeated indications within the collection that Olive Schreiner was not a central figure in this family network during her lifetime, although she became the key figure of the family collection following her death. An undated letter to HSL in Rebecca Schreiner's particularly challenging handwriting strongly denies the accusation that "I ever by word or deed gave Olive cause to think she was not welcome in my home" and First & Scott (1990: 68) discuss Alice Hemming's "cold reception" of Olive Schreiner in her home. Letters between Theo Schreiner and HSL express regret over Olive Schreiner's lack of faith and their "disappointed" hopes that she would eventually "come to Christ"<sup>378</sup> and Theo describes how he has been "helped by God not to feel sore & bitter & to bear what she says against God & Christ just as if she were another person and not my sister"<sup>379</sup> Discussing their brother WPS and his lack of abstinence from alcohol, his temperance siblings Alice and Theo Schreiner discussed Olive Schreiner's detrimental effect on him:

"He is a dear good fellow & you say he will come right at last but I fear Olive's example and doctrines has become his to a great extent. I am sorry but not surprised to hear from you of the character of her book. Have you read it? We have only seen the most favourable criticisms & reviews of it, which she sends to us, and perhaps Mamma has only done the same, & from them one can hardly judge of the godlessness of the book though I have read enough to make one feel very very miserable. Robert has ordered the book but I hope none of my young friends will read it, & do not think I will do so myself... Mama seems so pleased at Olive's literary success that she quite loses sight of the moral aspect of the case. I fear that we shall live to wish that Olive had never put pen to paper."<sup>380</sup>

Bearing in the mind shifting socio-historical and cultural contexts, Alice's assurances to HSL that she "should be more inclined to burn [The Story of An African Farm] than to put it in

<sup>378</sup> TS to HSL, 21 December 1892, UCT.

<sup>379</sup> TS to HSL, 28 December 1892, UCT.

<sup>380</sup> AH to TS, 2 June 1883, UCT.

the hands of young girls”<sup>381</sup> stand in sharp contrast to the obvious appreciation of the next generation of the family (discussed further below). Many years later and sometime in the early 1900s, HSL did read The Story of An African Farm, an act which seems to promote a spontaneous outburst of emotion indicated by HSL’s uncharacteristic omission of the date:

“Oh Olive my own! What is this strange growing understanding of you... changing from all you have been in my thoughts & ideas of you to something so other than I thought you to be... Do you know I have now for the first time read “Your Story of an African Farm” You never sent me a copy & when I came across one ~~that~~ something hurt me so deep, that from the very intensity of my love for you I shut it up & read no more – no doubt it was so ordered – but Oh! my old Olive, the years in which I would have known you if I had read it... has your soul-experience and mine, after all been so one – was childhood to you such a terrible aloneness...to us both then, there has been a time when the Bible has been hurled with all our force from us.”<sup>382</sup>

Despite Alice’s hope that no young girls would read Olive Schreiner’s work, it is evident that many years later attitudes had shifted and her daughter Winnie Hemming encouraged younger generations of the family to read Schreiner’s works. As discussed above, a letter from Barbara Brown to Winnie Hemming written sometime in the early 1950s reveals that Winnie Hemming had encouraged Brown to read Schreiner’s Closer Union and that is was well received. Other letters indicate that some members of the younger generation of the family did not agree with Cronwright-Schreiner’s construction of Schreiner in his Life of her. Family friend Nellie Leach wrote to Effie Hemming on 21 December 1914;

“Still cross with me for having enjoyed Cronwright’s book? ... I can imagine there ~~were~~ would be quite a number of things that hurt the family who were in the ‘know’ but as an outsider I have not spotted them. I am told he has gone and published her letters now, well without having read them even, I think that was quite unnecessary as letters written to personal friends & husbands are sacred to them & I call it sacrilege to publish such.”<sup>383</sup>

Another letter from Nellie Leach to Effie Hemming, dated 10 February 1925, reveals that Effie Hemming had enclosed a “scathing”<sup>384</sup> review of Cronwright-Schreiner’s Life and Letters, written by Schreiner’s friend Ruth Schechter Alexander (RSA), in a letter to Nellie dated 26 January 1925 – with the latter letter being an example of a missing but alluded to ‘shadow letter’ (Allen 2011, discussed previously). In the undated news clipping which had appeared in the Cape Times ‘R.S.A’ claimed that “out of Mr Cronwright’s interpretations have come the caricature of a great personality”. Winnie Hemming also wrote to the editor

<sup>381</sup> AH to HSL, 7 August 1883, UCT.

<sup>382</sup> HSL to OS, no date, UCT.

<sup>383</sup> NL to EB, 21 December 1914, UCT.

<sup>384</sup> NL to EB, 10 February 1925, UCT.

of the Cape Argus on 5 April 1924 claiming as she has “loved and admired [Olive Schreiner]. I am deeply pained at the tone of the whole book”.<sup>385</sup>

Schreiner was in some cases condemned and certainly misunderstood by members of her own generation, in particular Alice and Theo Schreiner. HSL struggled to reconcile herself to Schreiner’s rejection of religion and clearly did not fully understand her sister, claiming in a letter to Mary Brown, dated 20 August 1891 that:

“I do not feel I can answer, nor can I judge Olive Schreiner... Yes: Olive is a riddle, but I believe the light from her life is a reflection of an inward light that tho’ she does not yield to it, is shining there.”

However, as discussed above, in later life reading The Story of An African Farm instigated a change of heart in HSL regard to her sister, and a “strange growing understanding of you”.<sup>386</sup> In the next generation of the family, Effie and Winnie Hemming’s admiration for Aunt Olive and her writing is evident in the letters discussed in this chapter and they actively encouraged members of the younger generation to engage with her work, with Barbara Brown in particular emerging as a family member with a particular interest in this. The following letter shows that Barbara Brown had an epistolary relationship with Ray Dick the daughter of Schreiner’s friends John and Mary Brown. Ray Dick herself, in the context of her own family network, appears to have acted as the family glue and also as a family archivist. A letter from her to Winnie Hemming is dated 18 February 1958 when they had “known each other for 87 years” and contains an “Extract from notes written by Ray E Dick about her childhood” recounting how Winnie Hemming and Ray Dick had first met and referring to an “old letter of my father’s to my mother”.<sup>387</sup> Ray Dick was intimate with two previous generations of Barbara Brown’s family and explicitly states that she believes Barbara Brown to be the ‘right one’ to take possession of the family papers;

“June 28. 52  
Dear Barbara,  
I am glad you are pleased to have the hoard I think you are the right one to have it. I felt as you did as a child, - & as I grew older Olive’s writing & especially “Dreams” appealed to me more & more. Indeed the teaching expressed in “Dreams” became a great influence in my life, second only to the bible. Especially I read and re-read “ I thought I stood”, “In a ruined chapel”... Her political booklets ought to be re-read now & the passage “Who gains of war” should be published & broadcast through the world! Many of the utterances were prophetic. I had the advantage of knowing her from baby-hood right on till I saw her in London shortly before her death. I don’t think

<sup>385</sup> Letters from Winnie Hemming and Katie H R Stuart to the Editor of the Cape Argus dated 5 and 14 April 1924 respectively have been reprinted and appear in (C3) UCT. Both letters also complain of Cronwright-Schreiner’s representation of HSL and Theo Schreiner in his Life of Olive Schreiner.

<sup>386</sup> HSL to OS, no date, UCT.

<sup>387</sup> RD to WH, 18 February 1958 (plus enclosure), UCT.

there is anyone alive who loved her more than I did. Have you read her “Stray thoughts on South Africa”? ... I think her picture of Christ in “Peter Halkett” is most beautiful and fine.

This is enough of rhapsody. There are so few who feel as I do that I have to let loose my pent up feelings when I meet one!

Yours, with love,  
R E Dick.<sup>388</sup>

This letter indicates that members of this network considered Barbara Brown as the ‘right one’ to assume care of the family papers. It also strongly indicates that this was to a great extent fuelled by Brown’s admiration for Schreiner and her work. As discussed at the outset of this chapter, it was primarily the public interest in Schreiner that was influential in the archiving of this material, with Brown instrumental in this regard. As discussed previously, Schreiner - in the context of her interactions with Smuts at least - was future-orientated. Despite this, Schreiner was not a family archivist - her future-orientation concerned socio-political matters with her family concerns focussed primarily upon immediate matters, as the letter below, dated 17 November 1913, to Winnie Hemming indicates;

“I am burning all my old papers as I have no one to do it after I am dead  
I thought you might like to keep this letter from my darling Leo to me,  
& a sweet letter from your Mother...  
Good bye dear  
Aunt Ol.<sup>389</sup>

This letter suggests that Schreiner saw Winnie Hemming as a keeper of family correspondence and as, discussed by the OSLO, as the family member who succeeded to a caring role within the family after the death of HSL.<sup>390</sup>

## **Letters and Networks: The Construction and Context of a Family Archive**

This chapter has used the letters and other documents within a family archive to tease out ideas relating to family roles, the process of retention and archiving of family records, the (changing) influence and perception of key family members and the differences between present and future-oriented network members.

The context of a family network has differed from the non-family networks discussed previously in a number of ways. Firstly, the various epistolary strategies

<sup>388</sup> RD to BB, 28 June 1952, UCT.

<sup>389</sup> OS to WH, 17 November 1913, UCT, OSLO transcription.

<sup>390</sup> 'See the Dramatis Personae pages (for Wynnie Hemming) of the Olive Schreiner Letters Online at [www.oliveschreiner.org<http://www.oliveschreiner.org/vre?view=personae&entry=225>](http://www.oliveschreiner.org/vre?view=personae&entry=225)

deployed in the balancing of reciprocity discussed previously are not evident in this example. Rather, particular family members seem to assume roles that carried responsibilities in certain areas such as finance, care or communication. Whilst efforts in this regard were often acknowledged by family members - and in the case of Robert Hemming and HSL this appeared to cause some discomfort - there is little evidence that pains were taken to reciprocate and instead there appears to be an assumption that the 'familial division of labour' would be predominantly carried out by key individuals with particular interests or assets, rather than spread evenly across the family network.

Issues and strategies surrounding bridging and brokering do not play a large part in this context, with connections – including those with family friends - often predetermined, inherited through marriage or passed on from parents to their children, for example Ray Dick's friendship with Barbara Brown had its roots in Dicks's parent's relationship with Brown's aunts Alice and Olive Schreiner. Also, unlike many of the relationships between Smuts and his women friends, there is no indication of misunderstanding of the nature of relationships. Conversely, there appears to be a shared understanding that certain family members would perform and accede to certain roles. These roles, unlike the multifarious roles identified within the context of the Men and Women's Club, did not co-exist with or run alongside existing family connections, but were part and parcel of family interactions and the 'workings' of the family. For example, Fred Schreiner's letters indicate that he in particular saw his role as family benefactor as inextricably tied up with what any 'brother should' do. The fact that Winnie Hemming had the role of family glue is reflected in the letters to her which asked her to pass news on to family members and thanked her for this but she did this as part of her role as aunt, sister or niece not in conjunction with this, and the particular senses of 'duty' or 'interest' in certain family members (and not in others) referred to above influence this.

In terms of the existence of key figures within networks, these letters suggest that the role of family glue (a role often, but not necessarily, performed by those who act as family archivist, albeit having different emphasis) is central within this family network, with other roles such as that of family benefactor assuming greater or lesser importance depending on need. Of particular interest in this example is that of Schreiner, who was very much out of the inner family circle during her lifetime, but who became central for future family members and this determined the entire construction of the family for future generations. It was Schreiner's legacy that influenced the decision to retain and archive the family records. Regarding the changing nature of relationships, shifting constructions of Schreiner emerge over time in these letters as a new generation of letter-writers became predominant. From the



expressions of regret, bemusement and distaste variously expressed by siblings Theo Schreiner, HSL and Alice Schreiner concerning Olive Schreiner and her works, Olive Schreiner's nieces and the children of family members later expressed pride and a desire to resurrect and share her works as opposed to hiding or burning them in shame – and possibly to use the family letters to counter the negative construction of her created by Cronwright-Schreiner's activities. Greenstein (2006: 9) argues that the “public image that a family chooses to present to the outside world can be different from the private, internal image” and that letters between family members give access to this. In this instance the family letters appear to have been actively used by the family through their donation of the to UCT to counter the public image of Schreiner that Cronwright-Schreiner's highly selective use of her letters constructed.

Whilst Schreiner was future-orientated in the context of Smuts's network, her burning of her letters indicates that she was not future-orientated when it came to preserving documents for posterity, and in fact she often expressed a specific desire for these not to be preserved or published. However, the future-orientation of some family members, particularly Fred Schreiner in relation to financial well-being and HSL, Winnie Hemming and Barbara Brown in relation to family archivism, comes through strongly in this context. Also, dependent on what is retained and what is not, it is the latter that provides constructions of family members for future generations and enables such resources to be explored by future family members and researchers.

Whilst at face value the size of a family network is determined by the number of family members, and the analytically boundary around this network is determined by the documents archived in association within it, the actual boundary around this network is elastic, stretching to family friends and the friends and descendents of these. Network size is less dependant on frequency of contact, time since last contact or emotional intensity, and rather the nature of these connections was perceived as inherently strong irrespective of contact – with connections with future generations created and reinforced by the existence of the collection.

This chapter has contributed to the argument being developed in this thesis in a number of keys ways. Firstly, it has allowed for the emergent conceptual and theoretical ideas presented previously to be examined in a very different context, that of a family network, with the applicability, or otherwise of these ideas to this letter-writing network discussed both at the start and the end of the chapter. In particular, ideas concerning the nature of relationships and the temporal orientation of key network members proved relevant and analytically useful in this family context. Secondly, whereas earlier chapters have

investigated a number of temporally located networks – whether this be determined by needs, events or to the lifespan of the letter-writers – this chapter has allowed for the analysis of letters over time and over subsequent generations of a network to be explored in depth. Doing so has not only shed light on the existence of family roles but also on how these roles were transferred, what attributes those performing them seemed to have, and, how key networks members, and opinion concerning them, can shift over time. Thirdly, this chapter has allowed ideas concerning the future-orientation of network members, initially raised by the analysis of Schreiner's letters to Smuts in the preceding chapter, to be teased out and further explored. This has suggested that some people are orientated towards the future in some contexts and in some networks but not in others and that this is primarily due to the stance, self-perception and perceived characters of the people concerned. To return to the opening lines of this thesis, perhaps due to the Schreiner's upbringing at the hands of various 'little Mothers' and the assessments made of her by her siblings, the people with whom she saw herself as being 'intertexted' were various peoples of the world - past, present and future - and less so with the members of one family, even, or perhaps particularly, her own. It is this side to Schreiner and the reflection of this in her work which so appealed to future generations of her family, resulting in a generational volte-face in how she was perceived within this network.

Succinctly, what this chapter has added to the main argument of this thesis is that certain networks 'bring out' certain characteristics and interests in its members and a person can be future orientated in one network but preoccupied with immediate matters in another. Whilst these insights are relevant to all forms of social interactions and their analysis and not just the epistolary, this temporal orientation affects not only the content of letters but also their accessibility – which in turn affects how their writers, addressees and those referred to within their pages are constructed for future readers and researchers. In this way, not only can the epistolary traces of network members vanish, in terms of no longer being extant, but also the extant epistolary material and how it is selectively retained and used can contribute to a person 'vanishing' from visibility or from public esteem, as evidenced by the short-term 'vanishing' of Olive Schreiner following Cronwright-Schreiner's highly distorted and hotly contested construction of her.

## **Conclusion: On Letters and Networks**

There is renewed interest in the importance and relevance of letters in sociological research, in epistolarity, auto/biography and other forms of ‘documents of life’ research (Plummer 2001, Stanley 2013). As the discussion in the different chapters of this thesis has demonstrated, letters can reveal analytically useful things both about letterness and about the dynamics of the networks of which they are constitutive and also strategically used within. Using letters as primary source material in an analytically informed way allows insight into the micro-elements of how connections were formed and consequently into the micro-mechanisms of both epistolary and face-to-face networks. Considering the effects of letters upon networks and vice versa, and upon the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of connection formation within the socio-historical context, is, I suggest, of more analytical use in social network analysis than simply commenting on the fact that connections were formed. The analysis of letter content in addition allows for the examination of the nature of these connections, which are not static and can be multifarious or shifting in their character. Letters can also be useful in recording introductions that do not result in an active tie being formed, something which is analytically useful when looking at brokering and bridging within networks and which often drops out of existence in other types of analysis.

The rhetorical and strategic devices used in letters and letter-writing, are also used, often artfully, within the micro-management of small-scale face-to-face interactions. Letters are simultaneously also part of a wider network of interaction (encompassing both written and/or face-to-face interactions) that extends well beyond the letter-writer and addressee. As such, although at the outset of epistolary relationships some correspondents have never met – and indeed, some correspondents never meet with the entirety of their relationships being conducted on paper - epistolary networks are not just face-to-face networks on paper. Epistolary networks are inextricably bound up with other aspects of the social world and the interactions that take place within it, with the letters and epistolary network that sprang up around the M&WC aptly demonstrating this. Non-epistolary interactions such as the face-to-face can create epistolary silences, allusions, inferences and shared understandings that are inaccessible to others but which draw on the ‘real world’ of the correspondents. A letter-writer’s awareness of wider networks and their (and their addressee’s) position within them is influential upon if and how letters are written, what they are used to accomplish and also how this is achieved. This is evidenced within the letters I have analysed by repeated

strategic references to people who become central within networks for network and character specific reasons, something I expand upon later.

Many conceptual ideas drawn from research concerning the analytical potential of documents and other epistolary forms were outlined in the Introduction and have been used as a starting point for the analytical ideas and arguments developed in this thesis. These ideas have informed and guided my analysis of the five major examples of epistolary networks discussed, which are all connected in some way to Olive Schreiner. I have used letters and other historical documents as a lens through which to examine and analyse these networks and how letters are used strategically and integrally within them. From this analysis, further conceptual ideas relating to networks have emerged and been developed, with the applicability, adaptability or otherwise of these ideas considered in an iterative way as the argument in the different chapters has progressed.

Along with ideas concerning reciprocity and the impact of events upon letter-writers, letters and networks, the analysis of Constance Lytton's letters to Edward Carpenter showed how the analysis of only one side of an epistolary correspondence not only affords a 'double vision' of both letter-writer and addressee but how references to mutual networks connections were used within the letters to strategic effect and to do connection-related work. Although these letters were part of a dyadic exchange, their content makes it clear that, perceptually for both letter-writer and addressee, there were, from the outset, never just two parties involved in their exchange, thus fundamentally blurring the analytical (and practical) boundary between dyad and triad. Borgatti et al (2009: 893-4) argue that, in

“the physical sciences, it is not unusual to regard any dyadic phenomena as a network... In contrast, social scientists typically distinguish among different kinds of dyadic links both analytically and theoretically... divid[ing] dyadic relationships into... basic types.”

with analysis conducted at “the dyadic level” tending to focus on matters such as the likelihood of contact between people, tie formation and the needs which necessitated it. Lytton's letters to Carpenter point to the fact that the preoccupation with the enriched possibilities opened up in triadic analysis may be misleading. Consequently, this thesis, with its focus on the micro-elements of tie formation and negotiation at ‘the dyadic level’ and using epistolary means, addresses an oversight in existing SNA which, according to Borgatti et al (2009: 894) has its “primary focus... in the social sciences... on the consequences of networks”. My research strongly points to the idea that the macro-elements of dyadic relationships merit greater attention in social network analysis.

The analysis of letters to Aletta Jacobs also questions the boundaries between dyad and triad. In response to events, Jacobs became central in a number of previously established

dyadic exchanges resulting in a new and purpose-specific epistolary network. Jacobs's relationships with the people concerned and her role and activities in this regard evolved over time. Instead of the 'one-for-one' type of reciprocal balancing evident in the Lytton to Carpenter letters, Jacobs's contribution to this network is not redressed until the network ends, something which is marked by her trip to Dorothy Von Moltke's home. In this respect, face-to-face connections mark the end of this epistolary network. Again strategic reference to mutual connections, and once more this was Olive Schreiner, pointed outwards to network members who were peripheral to the exchange in practical terms but central perceptually. This affected not only the formation of the network but also the shifting roles, propulsion and constraints within it. These letters also underscored the complexities of brokering and bridging that become apparent when conducting a detailed micro-level analysis. Their analysis also suggested that a 'disengagement' of the connections within this network occurred once the need for the network ended.

Analysis of the letters and other documents in the context of the Men and Women's Club raised interesting issues surrounding the constraining effects of the attributes of central figures, of seeking homogenous network members, of gatekeeping, and of the purpose of the network in itself. The letters also succinctly underscored the effects of the co-existence of multiple roles and relationships amongst Club members, something which influenced the content of letters. The rapidity of epistolary exchange possible within this network created a greater complexity of communications with chains of letters and letters 'interrupting' each other affecting letter content. The 'extinction' of the M&WC was more complex than the end of the previous two examples with the network-specific ties of roles such as that of Secretary and member ending, but some ties of friendship remaining, changing or disengaging following the end of the Club.

The letters of various women to Jan Christian Smuts further demonstrated the double vision that investigating 'letters to' a person can afford, providing evidence of what their relationship with Smuts meant to these women and also what these meant to Smuts. The analysis here suggests that Smuts was both proactive and selective in developing a restricted inner circle of female friends with whom he maintained intense epistolary relationships interspersed with extended periods of face-to-face encounters. In particular, a lack of consensus regarding the nature of the relationship between two people can cause tensions which manifest themselves in various ways in epistolary forms and cause some people within dyads to attempt to maintain an element of exclusivity from other network members. Specifically, the letters from Schreiner point to the fact that some letter-writers in certain

network contexts can be future-orientated and less concerned with immediate matters with this orientation also impacting on the content of letters exchanged.

The analysis of the Schreiner-Hemming papers shows that certain networks ‘bring out’ certain characteristics and interests in its members. Analysis of these letters showed the emergence of a number of distinct family roles which were taken up by younger family members. A future orientation affects not only the content of letters but also their accessibility – which in turn affects how their writers, addressees and those referred to within their pages are constructed for future readers and researchers. In this way, not only can the epistolary traces of network members vanish, in terms of no longer being extant, but also the extant epistolary material and how it is selectively retained and used can contribute to a person ‘vanishing’ from visibility or from public esteem, as Olive Schreiner’s short-term ‘vanishing’ following Cronwright-Schreiner’s Life and Letters demonstrates.

The ideas concerning networks that were generated by the analysis of letters in these five contextually different and incrementally sized networks have been expanded upon in-depth in the chapters of the thesis. The key points demonstrated about letterness and networks are: levels of connectedness, and subsequently, network sizes are not quantifiable by the numbers of letters exchanged; dyadic exchanges are both constitutive of and inextricable from networks and subsequently network analysis; particular people can become central figures within context-specific networks impacting upon the network and what is written in letters and blurring the boundaries between dyad and triad; letters and the literal or invoked ‘gifts’ that accompany them are used in nuanced ways in relationship-specific reciprocal exchanges; events impact upon both the content and the exchange of letters, and the formation or ‘end’ of networks; roles emerge within networks, and how these come about and how they are assumed and executed is important; and, differences between brokering and bridging come to light when teased out in micro-level analysis.

As discussed in Chapter One, the content of letters can indicate where analytical boundaries can be usefully drawn around networks, and shed light on how and why connections within these boundaries were formed, maintained or ‘disengaged’ from. Both the existence, or otherwise, of letters and their content affects what can be perceived regarding events, people and their activities. These letters and later selective consultation(s) and re-writings of them can influence the construction of letter-writers, addressees and those referred to or invoked within their pages. The existence of letters therefore condition what can be known about letters-writers and indeed about all aspects of the historical and/or epistolary networks of which they form part including the size of a network and context-specific factors which contribute to or inhibit this.

Both the Lytton/Carpenter and the Schreiner-Hemming letters suggest that it is the perception of continued connectedness and not the frequency or intensity of contact, nor any other objective or quantitative measurements, that keeps connections active in the minds of the people concerned. Also, the connection only has to be perceived as active to be active – something analysts should bear in mind rather than imposing arbitrary measurements upon this. That said, this can be relationship-specific, with Smuts's frequent forewarnings to May Hobbs that he might not be able to write at certain times suggesting that Hobbs reacted badly to epistolary silences. Such ideas are bound up with the relationship-specific and highly nuanced balancing of reciprocity. In some cases, such as that of Lytton and Carpenter, where news of each other was gleaned through mutual connections, 'gaps' in communication are not necessarily seen as such, and again it is the content of letters and not the frequency of contact that is revealing in this regard.

Mutual connections can therefore facilitate connection formation, and keep connections informed of each other. However, as noted previously, mutual connections may also constrain behaviour, by suppressing the expression of disagreement or dislike so as to avoid negative ramifications within a network. In the Jacobs example, the size of the network grew incrementally, and the invoking of Olive Schreiner at strategic points in the letters suggest that Jacobs's willingness to please this mutual connection contributed to this. Network analysis can usefully look beyond the activities of those connected to consider the influence of wider connections, and letters have proved an ideal source for doing so.

Once a friendship was sought and firmly established between Lytton and Carpenter, with Schreiner and mutual connections used strategically in this regard, the relationship ended only with the death of the letter-writer despite infrequent contact. In the Jacobs example, the end of the need for the network resulted in the disengagement of the connections that formed it. However, once formed, these connections cannot sensibly be said to 'disappear' with past interactions inevitably influencing the present and future. This size of this network therefore expanded and contracted in response to the need for the network. For the M&WC, size was everything with the simultaneous goals of expanding the network whilst at the same time restricting access to it proving fatal to its objectives. Again it is the content of letters that has pointed to restrictions on the size of this network with frequency of contact, intensity, the means of communication (which blurred the boundaries between conversation and writing) and the various and multiple types of relationship between members having little effect on this. Whilst some people, such as Smuts, seemed to be proactive in keeping their inner circle small and intimate, family networks such as that of the Schreiner-Hemming families progressively expand through marriage connections and the

arrival of new generations. These increments in size create the need for the ‘family glue’, or perhaps rather they prompt a network member to want to maintain ties between all of these connections – something which is contributed to intergenerationally by the family archivist and the transfer of family documents.

As stated previously, the means of communication between people affect their interactions and can impact upon network size. Due to the rhetorical and strategic devices offered by letters – or other forms of communication which have ‘letterness’ properties - how people interact by epistolary means is not the same as through the face-to-face, with the face-to-face opening up its own strategic devices such as body language, pauses and so on. Although, as shown above, letters can sometimes blur the boundaries between letters and other forms of communication, engaging through epistolary means is not a conversation, nor is it an act only engaged in in lieu of the ‘ideal’ of conversation. It is a kind of relationship and a way of communicating in its own right which is inextricably integrated with other aspects of social life and has elements of other communicative forms.

Networks can emerge and then ‘end’ in response to events or specific goals. Such networks can draw on ties from across existing networks or result in ‘out of the blue’ connections being sought or formed due to an awareness of shared interests. This is indicated, for example by unsolicited requests to join the M&WC once word of its activities spread. Purpose-related connections between actors, formed in response to these needs or goals, can disengage once the need for the network ends resulting in altered relationships existing between people. This has ramifications across networks. For example, when the need to use Jacobs as an epistolary go-between ended, this resulting in a dwindling of communication between the actors concerned and effectively an end to the epistolary network that had sprung up in response to events. However, Jacobs’s relationship with these actors was altered and they became part of her personal network in an active sense during her face-to-face time with Von Moltke, and then later in a more inactive sense as their communication and interaction dwindled. As analysis of the letters of Lytton to Carpenter and the family letters of the Schreiner-Hemmings have shown, whether or not a connection is considered active does not necessarily hinge on communication or frequency thereof, and relies more on a perception of continued connection.

Therefore how a network is studied and the perspective it is studied from can greatly influence ‘the network’ that becomes known. Also, as I have shown, this extends from issues such as the setting of analytical boundaries; to which actors emerge as brokers; where bridges appear; and, which actors emerge as central or ‘vanish’ from a network. Whilst this is true of all networks and network analysis - and I am emphasising here that the study of



letters can shed light on non-epistolary social network analysis more generally - epistolary networks are characterised by their use of letters to communicate and by the temporal delay between these acts of communication. Foreknowledge of this temporal delay and also of its anticipated duration has a considerable impact upon the content of letters. This is aptly demonstrated by the rapid exchanges of the M&WC and also by the series of letters from Margaret Clark Gillet to Smuts written with the intention of being meted out to him during his return journey to South Africa. While not all epistolary exchanges are necessitated by distance between actors - something often too readily assumed in epistolary research – the material nature of letters and the sense of the bodily presence of the letter-writer that letters conjure up work to complicate ideas around separation and distance and to maintain a sense of connectedness. It is this sense of connectedness that the family archivists of the Schreiner-Hemming and Brown families sought to maintain through their retention and subsequent donation of the Schreiner-Hemming papers to UCT.

Many social relations have strong gift aspects with reciprocity central to their maintenance. However, this is not an absolute, and reciprocity can be bracketed or abandoned in some contextual circumstances or relationships. For example, the role of family glue appears to involve some inherent inequalities in terms of the time devoted by specific network members to maintaining ties and sharing news which are unproblematic in terms of the relationships concerned. This is influenced by the strength of the bond that is perceived to exist irrespective of communication acts. Letters and epistolary exchanges have strong gift aspects but superficially reciprocity takes many different forms in epistolary relationships, whether this is exchanges of literature and literally criticism or practical assistance reciprocated by hospitality. Essentially, however, it involves some notion of balance in a relationship-specific form that is deemed essential for equilibrium to continue. Many letters suggest that considerations such as length, depth and frequency of letters are factors in maintaining the balance of epistolary exchange. Given this, letters are a particularly useful source for examining the reciprocal dynamics of relationships. The letters of various women to Smuts indicate that such considerations are influenced by who is doing the letter-writing and that the status and circumstances of a person can influence judgements concerning the value of this ‘work’. In this way, letters have been particularly useful in pointing to the ‘some are more equal than others’ aspects of network relationships and reciprocal balance within these.

Martinez et al (2003: 353) argue that SNA should be complemented by qualitative analysis in order to achieve a fuller understanding and to account for the occurrence of actions. Epistolary networks are notable for the permanent traces they leave of acts of

brokering, bridging and gate-keeping. In other words, they shed light on the actual workings of these acts and not simply on their end result. In other forms of network analysis, these acts or attempts at them often leave no trace – efforts to keep individuals out of networks will often result in them not featuring in that network but belie the activities of the network to accomplish this. Epistolary networks however can provide evidence concerning acts of introduction which are not developed by the parties concerned into a relationship, or of the efforts of people to keep others out. In doing so, they shed light on the actual activities of network members. Due to the familial bonds between network members in the Schreiner-Hemming example, such issues are less relevant. However, in all other examples the working definitions of brokering, bridging and gate-keeping are varyingly problematic, not applicable or unhelpful and the qualitative analysis here produces a very different account of who is integral than that which would be produced by other methods. Despite the directness of the connection between Carpenter and Lytton, letter content indicates that Schreiner was actually central to this connection and the same applies to the Jacobs example. Similarly, the chains of letters connected to the M&WC indicate Pearson's proactive and selective involvement in their writing and his centrality in considerations regarding affiliation to this network. The highly selective and proactive activities of Smuts, carried out and evidenced by epistolary means, also complicate ideas concerning brokering and gate-keeping. To impose these terms and their associational properties upon these networks would render the actual micro-dynamics of these networks invisible and therefore be counter-productive. The responsive analysis conducted here points to the need for a more nuanced method of analysis that reflects more accurately what is actually occurring at ground-level and starting from dyadic analysis.

This thesis has looked at bounded examples of Olive Schreiner's epistolary networks. These examples do not come across as elements of one large network pertaining to Schreiner but instead as separate networks to which Schreiner was variously connected. This is because, although Schreiner features in all of these examples, she features differently and 'acts' differently in each, in terms of both her strategic and artful performance(s) in her letters and in her orientation within the network. This is of course true of most networks, in that how we act and communicate in a given situation is influenced by contexts such as that of professional, familial, friendship and so on. Schreiner's letters and those that afford a double vision of her however point to something different than to simply the existence of contextually specific, different or multifarious roles. They point to whom Schreiner saw herself connected with and this can be the main propellant of active network connections. It is clear from the Smuts example that Schreiner did not see networks as bounded entities

and that she perceived connections between herself and her contemporaries to exist across various ‘lines’ included racial (Stanley & Dampier 2010), national and temporal ones – something many of her contemporaries strongly resisted or rejected. Although for the purposes of this thesis boundaries had to be drawn ‘somewhere’, this appears to be contra Schreiner’s ethos. Her letters to Smuts and the strategic devices deployed within them demonstrate her association with a future network and indeed many of her ideas were prophetic and ‘ahead of their time’. Schreiner was misunderstood by her own generation of her family and, as the discussion of this has shown, it was future family members with whom her ideas were more aligned. This complicates the idea of ‘active’ network members. Schreiner clearly became increasingly important to many families members after her death. This influenced the decision to donate the family material to an archive, which in turn influences what can be known about this network. Whilst Schreiner was on the edge of this family network in her own time, she later became central in terms of letters and in terms of a sense of familial connectedness.

The discussion of letterness and networks drawn from my in-depth analysis of epistolary networks has examined: connectedness, dyadic relationships, central figures, reciprocal exchanges, events, the end of networks, people’s roles within them and acts of bridging and brokering. By using letters as a means of investigating the micro-dynamics of networks, the contribution of this thesis to the analysis of social networks and social interaction is to draw attention to five key issues.

These relate firstly to the paramount importance of the perception of connectedness, something supported by dyadic analysis and which seems to outweigh all other considerations regarding the active or inactive nature of relationships, including the frequency of contact or time since last contact. This sense of connectedness is not necessarily limited to living actors as Barbara Brown and Ray Dick’s strong identification in their later years with the ideas of the deceased Olive Schreiner indicate - as does Schreiner’s own strong sense of connection with the people of the future. Schreiner, and this sense of connectedness of future generations of her family with her, has also greatly influenced what can be known about this network, through influencing the decision to make the collection accessible to the public and perhaps thereby redressing some of the misconceptions about her that stemmed from her less positive connection with Cronwright-Schreiner.

Secondly, the examples I have investigated repeatedly point to the influence of central figures upon network size and the roles that emerge within networks. In the Lytton/Carpenter example Schreiner was made central and projections regarding her positive or negative judgements of situations were used strategically within Lytton’s letters to

influence Carpenter. Something similar emerged in the Jacobs example, whilst in the M&WC example Pearson's influence and centrality acted as both propulsion and a constraint within the network in various ways influencing both the size of this network and the behaviours of those within it. The personality and selective activities of Smuts worked to ensure that he was – to continue the association of letters with performances – at 'centre stage' of an inner circle of intimate acquaintances, all of whom found him to be a major attraction, but for different reasons. The family papers of the Schreiners, Hemmings and Browns developed this idea by indicating that different network members can become central at different times and for different reasons, sometimes in response to financial crisis, sometimes to counter the crisis of familial drifting. As stated, various family members were influential over time in the role of family archivist and although Schreiner herself never assumed this familial role she was the primary influence behind the accessibility of its epistolary remains.

Thirdly, the formation and maintenance of connections relates to the micro-elements of exactly how connections are formed. My analysis here points to the need for the development of conceptual ideas and terminology that relate more closely to what is actually happening at ground-level within networks – with existing conceptual ideas failing to 'fit' in practice. This supports my broader argument that conceptual ideas should be emergent and teased out from analysis as opposed to applied to it. This also relates to relationship 'work' such as the negotiation of early relationships – using references to, and the influence of, central figures strategically in this regard – to the balancing of reciprocity and, to the continuation of communications as the efforts of those performing the role of 'family glue' demonstrate. Whether or not connections are maintained or, as they often do, continue in an altered or disengaged state, can be impacted by the purpose of a network. Both Jacobs's international epistolary network and the M&WC effectively ended with the purpose of the network.

Fourthly, my analysis here makes an empirical contribution to discussions concerning the distinction between dense and sparse/loose networks. Density of network refers to the degree to which the ties of network members know each other, with dense networks having high levels of interconnectivity. As discussed by Valente (2010: 110), dense networks are associated with more rapid communication and diffusion of innovation and ideas with,

“a tradeoff [existing] between the desire to form groups that are exclusive and consist of dense communications and commitments among its members versus having a group that maintains substantial ties outside the community.”

Multiple interconnections existed between network members in many of the examples discussed above. Despite this however, greater network density did not necessarily correlate with greater efficiency in the transmission and diffusion of information and ideas throughout the network (Valente 2010). The Lytton/Carpenter epistolary exchanges strongly indicate that pre-existing interconnections between network members led to foreknowledge of and between the correspondents that facilitated the formation of the tie. However, in the M&WC the ties of ties were explicitly considered to be ‘strangers’ - primarily due to reticence surrounding the challenging nature of the topic under discussion. Despite the high level of density in Smuts’s network his personality, position and character created divisions and seemingly also competition between network members, with many indicating a desire to bracket off their relationship with Smuts from the rest of the network. Diffusion therefore, appears to be something subject to the specificities of a network, whether that is: the existence of central or key figures and the influence they have upon network members; how reference to them is used by network members, or; the subject matter and/or purpose of a network. Furthermore, whilst epistolary exchanges have provided the means of theorising this, again, the examples discussed here suggest that it is not the medium of communication that enables or hinders diffusion. Network density is not restricted by letterness or epistolary methods of communication, and in fact can contribute to the formation of ties; however diffusion, irrespective of density, can be restricted by the specificities of a network.

Lastly, the analysis here makes an original contribution to the study of longitudinal historical sociology. Thornberry et al (2004: 15, my emphasis) argue that, in networks, “[d]ensity is the degree to which each member of a social network knows or likes all other members of a network” with the “structural characteristics of the social networks includ[ing] homophily, density, intimacy, multiplexity and stability”. The family network examined here is of particular interest because, despite its intimacy, the homophily of this network, particularly surrounding the foresighted social and political views of Olive Schreiner is questionable and created many divisions, instabilities and tensions. Although the emerging high profile nature of this family is likely to have contributed to some family members retaining documents for posterity, it seems that many ‘family archivists’ emerged primarily due to their role within the family. Any construction of the Schreiner/Hemming/Brown family that is now possible is dependent upon the merging of documents from various family archivists and family branches into the hands of Barbara Brown, and upon her subsequent decision to formally archive these. Whilst this family network was an - albeit limited - source of social capital for Olive Schreiner during her

lifetime in terms of practical and, to a far lesser extent, financial support, social capital in the form of solidarity, reciprocity and bonding over political and social issues was limited creating tensions within the network and leading to Schreiner being, in her own time, the proverbial ‘black sheep’. Cherti (2008: 129) argues that

“reciprocity amongst family and kin is an ongoing process which can take many years to realise... [it] enables uneven levels of exchange, delayed exchange and indirect exchanges (favours for others) to occur.”

The letters and other epistolary material in this archive suggest that, for Schreiner, the social capital to be gained from her family network was ‘delayed’ and that it did take ‘many years to realise’ the prophetic nature of Schreiner’s socio-political ideas. Contra Cherti (2008), Schreiner’s actions, opinions and behaviour were not constrained by her familial network however, the divergence of her religious and socio-political ideas from those held by many family members certainly reduced the social capital to be obtained from them. As a result of being ‘ahead of her time’, Schreiner had greater solidarity with future generations of family members than with her own. Barabra Brown’s act of archiving, based on an admiration for and affinity with her ideas as they became realised are a delayed source of social capital for Schreiner - and Schreiner, a source of cultural capital for future generations, something studying the extant longitudinal epistolary data strongly points to. In terms of network analysis, the use of longitudinal epistolary data can reveal social capital, reciprocity and bonding at work and the reasons behind these in a network even if they ‘take many years to realise’.

My thesis has contributed new ideas and insights regarding some fundamental questions about social life and social interaction. ‘Who do you see yourself as connected with?’, ‘Who do you see as a key figure in your social relationships and why?’, ‘How were these relationships formed and maintained?’, ‘What kind of epistolary and other networks are these relationships part of and how has this impacted on the relationships?’ and, where epistolary communications occur in social network and interactions, ‘In what ways does the writing and exchanging of letters in correspondences over time make a difference to these other questions?’ The answers to these questions will undoubtedly differ regarding different networks in different times and places, but, as the letters analysed here have shown, they are integral to a sociological understanding of social life.

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