

Olive Schreiner in Rhodesia: An Episode in

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Readers of biographies of Olive Schreiner – except for the pioneering work of Vera Buchanan-Gould (see 1948, 198-99) – could be forgiven for doubting whether Olive Schreiner ever *was* in Rhodesia. Although her husband's edition of her *Letters* includes three which cover this journey (Cronwright-Schreiner 1924a), he makes no mention of it in his *Life* (1924), and it is not touched on either in First and Scott (1980) or in Stanley's impressive biographical chapter (2002). Arguably, it does nothing to alter the by now well-established outlines of Olive Schreiner's life; yet, as we shall see, the visit itself might have meant the premature end of that life. Moreover, it documents Schreiner's visit to two sites of immense importance to her: the 'Hanging Tree' in Bulawayo which features in the (deliberately shocking) photographic frontispiece to the first edition of *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* (1897), and, secondly, Cecil Rhodes's grave in the Matopos. In just over a decade (13 Aug. 1921), she too would lie in her chosen mountaintop tomb.²

The trip was a treat – a gift to her from her brother, W. P. Schreiner, whose wife, children,³ and sister-in-law (Hannie Reitz) Schreiner joined to make up a "happy six" (Gregg 1957, 40). Schreiner attributes her brother's motive to his wish to give her "the chance of being with the children before they [went] to England" (Cronwright-Schreiner 1924a, 300), but Gregg places the trip as "when I came home from Cambridge" (1957, 41). Perhaps Schreiner was thinking specifically of the younger two, Oliver and Ursula, who did indeed leave for England with their father almost immediately after the conclusion of the Falls excursion.⁴

The Rhodesian journey seems to have been made, from Lyndall Gregg's account, on a special excursion train – "a good round trip, at an all-in fare,

which included the four days to be spent at [the railway's] hotel beside the Falls" (1957, 41).⁵ Schreiner (then living in De Aar) joined the train there, "with endless small bags, and 'Tucker,' her asthma cure,⁶ which only trusted persons were allowed to carry, and that under protest, for she always contended that anyone who brought anything should also carry it, a revolutionary idea for a Victorian lady". (40) (Gregg omits to say whether Schreiner had managed to carry all those "endless small bags" by herself.)

On 31 May 1911 (*Woman and Labour* had been in print but a matter of weeks), Schreiner wrote to her friend Mrs Haldane Murray about the projected trip, which would begin for her on 2 June (Cronwright-Schreiner 1924a, 300). We can safely surmise that this "Falls Special" would have left Cape Town some time the previous day.⁷ Gregg recalls that Schreiner "was in particularly high spirits, for she had been longing to visit Rhodesia and the Falls, but had rather given up hope of ever getting there . . ." (1957, 40).⁸ The reason for Schreiner's 'giving up' may be partly attributable to the dogged determination with which Cronwright – after all the vicissitudes and false starts to his legal career occasioned by the Anglo-Boer War and the strictures of martial law, and compounded by his wife's chronic ill-health and consequent inability to settle anywhere for long – insisted on sticking to the business he had built up in De Aar.⁹ Thus the trip may have been an attempt by part of the Schreiner clan to "rescue Aunt Olive" from the dreariness of life in De Aar. There was a distinct coolness between Cronwright and many of Schreiner's blood relations, though Will Schreiner himself seems to have done his studious, principled best to keep open channels of communication with his brother-in-law.¹⁰

Gregg records that the train was comfortable and "the food was good" (1957, 41). "Stopping places" included Modder River, Magersfontein, Kimberley and Bulawayo on the outward journey, and the Matopos and Mafeking on the return. In Gregg's account, Bulawayo seems to have provided the first significant stop for Schreiner:

At Bulawayo, Aunt Olive took us all to see the attractive Government House on the outskirts of the town, which bore, in its simple good taste, the stamp of Cecil Rhodes, that sincere lover of beautiful things. But beside it rose the tree, which she had really come to see – the tree mentioned in *Trooper Peter Halket* – from which were hanged the Matabele chiefs who had dared to oppose the white intruders on their land. In my First Colonial Edition of the book, the frontispiece is a photograph of this tree, bearing its grisly fruit, whilst Pioneers in big felt hats stand proudly around.

* * *

It amazes me, looking back, to remember how quiet and self-effacing Aunt Olive was that morning, making no mention to us of her great cry for Justice, although one did realise that seeing that tree meant a good deal to her.

(41–2)

Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland, Schreiner's fierce allegorical polemic against the conduct of Rhodes's Chartered Company in Matabeleland and Mashonaland, was published in London in February 1897 while Rhodes was there, appearing before the British Parliamentary Select Committee charged with enquiring into the Jameson Raid and Rhodes's complicity in it as Prime Minister of the Cape. (The Jameson Raid was Rhodes's covert and abortive attempt to wrest control of the Transvaal and its goldmines from Kruger's Boer government by main force.) Schreiner and Cronwright had travelled to England with the manuscript, and found to their surprise (and dismay) that Rhodes was occupying the adjoining cabin on board the *Dunvegan Castle*. *Trooper Peter* is a strange, but strangely powerful short work, and, from its earliest reviews,¹¹ has aroused hostility and controversy – not least for the photographic frontispiece to which Gregg alludes.¹² As to the photograph's provenance, it seems that Cronwright-Schreiner had found a copy of the photograph displayed in a "hairdresser's" in Kimberley, and had bought it.¹³ Whether this was prior to Schreiner's conception of *Trooper Peter*, or after it, we have not been able to determine; certainly, though, the photograph is referenced in the text (on pp. 50-1 in the 1974 Ad Donker edition): "I saw a photograph of the niggers hanging, and our fellows standing round smoking; but I didn't see you [the Stranger/Christ] in it."

Peter Wilhelm sees *Trooper Peter* as Schreiner's attempt "[to lay] bare in . . . the highest court of moral judgment available to her – literature . . . [t]he continental fact and implications of Rhodes" (1982, 210). Schreiner had been living in Kimberley from mid-1894, when her asthma had forced her to leave Krantz Plaats, and Cronwright had, as a result, had to end his farming work there after nearly ten years. Their baby girl was born and died after only a few hours on 30 April 1895, and, it seems, both parents threw themselves into publicly opposing Rhodes in a town which was politically and financially Rhodes's wholly-owned subsidiary.¹⁴ They co-wrote – and Cronwright delivered in the Town Hall, Kimberley, on Tuesday 20 August 1895 – a paper on *The Political Situation*, which Edmund Garrett, editor of the Rhodes-owned *Cape Times*, even while

contradicting it in detail in his paper the next day, described as “the most tremendous anti-Rhodes broadside we have seen” (qtd. in Gray 2005, ix).¹⁵ Days later, Olive wrote to W. T. Stead,¹⁶ her friend and founding editor of *The Review of Reviews*: “Our history during the last five years has been the saddest that I think has ever been set down on the record of any Anglo-Saxon people. And we had such hopes of Rhodes years ago! We want an ‘If Christ Came to South Africa’ from your pen” (Rive 1987, 256). Sally-Ann Murray, in a footnote to her Introduction to the 1992 edition of *Trooper Peter* (24-5n7), makes the illuminating suggestion that Stead’s *If Christ Came to Chicago* (1894) might have provided Schreiner with the germ of a similar perspective on Mashonaland.¹⁷

The historical events which form the immediate context for the writing of *Trooper Peter* are as follows. 1895 had culminated for Rhodes (and the Colony of which he was Prime Minister) in the Jameson Raid. To conduct the Raid, Jameson (then in charge of the Chartered Company’s operations in ‘Rhodesia’) had withdrawn “a body upwards of 300 fighting men and most of the available rifles” (Sykes 1897, 3), leaving the newly conquered territory virtually defenceless. Lobengula’s heirs, aware of the military and political disasters that had befallen Rhodes and Jameson, and driven to the brink of starvation by the outbreak of that fatal cattle disease called ‘rinderpest’ which had swept the sub-continent in 1896-7 (Thompson 2000, 129) and decimated what remained of their herds after punitive ‘reparations’ demanded by the white colonists (Sykes 1897, 3-9), rose in rebellion in March 1896. The whites in Bulawayo formed a protective laager, and the photograph of the ‘Hanging Tree’ seems to date from this period of siege. The uprising spread north and east to Mashonaland within three months. It was not until late May that the Matabeleland Relief Force (recruited principally in Kimberley and Mafeking under Col. Plumer’s command and numbering 750 men) reached Bulawayo, and restored a measure of ‘peace’ to Matabeleland. Reprisals were fierce and merciless, as reflected in *Trooper Peter*’s ingenuous bragging to the Stranger. Rhodes used these uprisings as a pretext for ignoring the summons to appear before the Select Committee of the Cape Parliament charged with enquiring into the Jameson Raid.¹⁸ In August 1896 – about the same time as Olive Schreiner, holidaying at Port Alfred, woke with the allegory story of *Trooper Peter* fully formed in her head – Rhodes, in a display of considerable personal bravery, led a series of ‘indabas’ in Matabeleland which brought about a more lasting settlement in ‘Rhodesia.’¹⁹

Living in Kimberley, Schreiner was well placed to monitor events further north, and to talk to survivors of and returnees from the Matabeleland campaigns.²⁰ Writing to Betty Molteno from Kimberley in July 1896,

Schreiner says: “The way they are hounding the Mashonas for what they call *murders* – i.e. for killing people in time of war – is to me far more terrible than anything that is happening in the [Cape] Colony [as the aftermath of the Jameson Raid]” (Rive 1987, 287). Some time in July or early August 1896, after experiencing the second miscarriage since the death of Baby (30 Apr. 1895), Schreiner was taken to Port Alfred by Cronwright to recuperate. From here in August, she writes again to Betty Molteno: “The first four days we were here I did nothing but bathe and walk about barefoot on the sand, but the other morning I woke, and as I opened my eyes there was an Allegory full fledged in my mind! A sort of allegory story about Matabeleland” (Rive 1987, 288). The third Molteno letter is again from Kimberley: the story is finished, but Schreiner is beginning to sense its potential repercussions: “It’s curious but I would give hundreds of pounds if that story had never come to me, and yet now I feel I must publish it. It will make Rhodes and the Chartered Company very bitter against me and all conflict is terrible” (Rive 1987, 290). That the publishers (T. Fisher Unwin) were aware of the contentious nature of the work is made clear in a letter from Olive to her brother Will: “I was offered £2,000 if I would take out a few passages which of course I wouldn’t so I’ve only got £1,400. The publishers are all afraid of the libel action. I am myself doubtful whether Rhodes will dare to appear in a law court” (Rive 1987, 300). Schreiner was right: Rhodes did not sue (perhaps because he was afraid of what might come out in open court?), but when the Cronwright-Schreiners returned to Kimberley later that year, they discovered that Cronwright had been struck from the voter’s roll, and the struggle to get him reinstated involved them in protracted and expensive litigation.

Although *Trooper Peter* sold widely and well, it worked no change in the wider schemes of British and South African imperialism. A year after its publication, Schreiner was compelled to admit, in a letter to her brother, W. P. Schreiner, on 29 June 1898 (qtd. in First and Scott 1980, 231), that “the book had been a dead failure.” Nevertheless, she never regretted publishing it: “When I had that bad attack of the heart in Naples and they carried me into a chemist shop and I believed I was dying, the one thought that was with me was ‘Peter Halket’” (qtd. in First and Scott 1980, 231). Ten years later, she again wrote to W. P. Schreiner (from Hotel Milner, Matjesfontein, on 10 May 1908):

Peter Halket killed me, as the raid did old Robinson, only I haven’t ‘kicked out’ in the same way. It isn’t artistic; it failed in doing anything; yet if I were dead I would like them to write on my grave: “She wrote *Peter Halket*” – nothing else. It’s funny but

when I think of dying the only thing that comforts me is that I wrote that book.

(qtd. in Clayton 1983, 125)

Writing on *Trooper Peter* in the early 1980s, Alan Paton speculated on the work's survival in a future South Africa: ". . . if the miracle happens, if the new dispensation is established without recourse to extremes of violence, then *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* will remain an essential part of our literature and our history because it will explain many things that succeeding generations may otherwise find it difficult to understand" (1983, 34). It is possible to read *Trooper Peter* in a variety of different ways for a variety of purposes; what it is not possible to do is to dismiss it out of hand as merely a dated political polemic. Gray describes Schreiner's characterization of Peter as a "complex and tragic portrait of Colonial Man. [He] is the first to be tackled in this depth, and there are not many others" (1983, 203-4).²¹ The deceptively simple yet searing irony of Schreiner's fable seems to penetrate to the heart of the colonial endeavour.

"Seeing that tree," then, must have "meant a good deal" to Olive Schreiner – considerably more, perhaps, than her niece's rather worn phrase would suggest. And perhaps – under the circumstances – Schreiner's silence was the most appropriate response. The party returned to Bulawayo "to the central monument" so that Schreiner could see the name of someone whose parents she had known in England, and whom she had tried to help (in spite of himself). He had died of a fever "never having met the Matabele in battle," while his bereaved mother in England took up Spiritualism, and wrote to Schreiner to say what a comfort it was "to have got in touch with her brave son, and hear from him about his terrible fights against the cruel Black Men" (Gregg 1957, 43). Gregg comments: "We could well understand Aunt Olive's desire to see that name on the monument erected in honour of the men who made Rhodesia. She missed none of life's little ironies" (44).

The party then proceeded by train to the Victoria Falls and the railway-owned hotel, where, according to Gregg (44-5), "the food was quite good, whisky an exorbitant price, and a drink of water hard to obtain, whilst the world's greatest Falls thundered loudly near-by." Seemingly – like her aunt – Lyndall Gregg also enjoyed some of life's little ironies.

The first afternoon, the party explored the environs of the Falls on foot, with an expedition up-river by motor-boat planned for the next day.²² Schreiner gives a glimpse of the whole visit in a letter to Havelock Ellis (1911a):²³

Victoria Falls Hotel, Zambesi
Thursday, [June (SCCS)] 1911

Dear Havelock boy,

We leave tomorrow this most lovely & beautiful & wonderful of earthly sights. No pictures, nothing that has ever been said of it, gives the faintest conception of *what* this is [:] the vast “*Spirit of the waters*”. A mile & a quarter of water leaping down into the almighty chasm with the roar that sounds for eighteen miles, & which as it falls leaps up again into the into (sic) clouds of white & rainbow tinted mists 4 000 feet high. The colours, the colours, the wild spirits of the mist, it is that that overpowers one & *fills one with joy*. One cries but only from happiness. We were nearly all drowned on Wednesday. The motor boat we were in broke down & we were drifting down on to the Falls. We were only saved by a canoe coming past & going for help to the landing & calling six more canoes which took us all out & towed the boat to land. The pluck of all the women & girls except one miserable old Christian was wonderful. I must tell you all about it some day. The curious thing is that having been so near death in its arms *instead* of making me feel horror of it, seems to draw me so much nearer it – my falls that I was nearly part of!! I have never loved any natural phenomenon so.

Olive

You’ve no idea what a wild splendid country we pass through coming here.

What Schreiner reviews in three sentences some days after the event,²⁴ Gregg takes nearly three pages to narrate, but the details are so telling that her account is worth quoting in detail:

An expedition was planned for next morning to visit the islands some distance above the Falls. We were to go by motor-boat with a white engineer and a native. All was well on the way up, though we passed a dangerous-looking shallow in the middle of the mighty river, where the rocks were just below the surface. We landed on one small island and strolled around, but found nothing of particular interest, and embarked in good time to get back for lunch at the hotel.

And then suddenly it happened. The engine spluttered and fell silent, and soon we were broadside on in the rapidly-flowing stream beside the shore, where the current runs faster – seventeen people rather tightly packed, in a small powerless launch, a mile and a half above the highest Falls in the world.²⁵

I am inclined to think that our moment of greatest peril was at the beginning, when we were broadside on, but the engineer, with a canoe paddle, got the boat head-on again. He and the native crouched in the bows with a paddle and a boat-hook. We were so close to the right bank that one felt reassured; it was only a few yards away. Why not land us at once? Luckily our man knew better than that. He knew that he could never succeed in doing so with such a current, and he guided the launch to that shallow in the middle of the river, and deliberately grounded her, taking a grave risk, of course, but a lesser one. She heaved up, as she hit a rock, then settled down, and the native produced an anchor, and they anchored us there, and sat down to wait.

* * *

Fortunately we had not long to wait; our luck was in, and a canoe appeared, coming down from the islands, the last out. Our native called to those in it, that they must hurry down to the landing-place, and fetch all the other canoes. This was soon done, and there, in the middle of the wide Zambesi, with the Victoria Falls roaring below us, we transferred with alacrity, the old as nimble as the young.

The engineer, of course, directed operations, and when he told Aunt Olive to get into the canoe that already held Mrs. Y., the latter protested loudly: "Don't put her in here. She is an Atheist, and will sink us!"

"I am coming," replied Aunt Olive grimly, "and I weigh two hundred pounds!"²⁶

She was naturally annoyed at the poor behaviour of Mrs Y., for, as she said later, she had been hoping that, if we were swept on to the Falls, we would all "go grandly over together, perhaps singing!" She had no fear. The rest took it all right, but I am sure that none but she actually dared to imagine, with triumph, that last awful moment. I know I never faced it myself.

And that wasn't the last of Mrs. Y., either.

* * *

Apparently, all the way to the landing-stage, Mrs. Y. kept saying to one of the natives: "Good kind Kaffir, just put me ashore anywhere, don't wait to go further, and I will give you twenty pounds." When it was over, and they were safe on the earth again, she was heard asking: "Has anyone a half-crown for the man?"

She had held prayer-meetings on the train coming up, which some of us had attended out of good fellowship, but no one went

on the return journey, and she was reported to have said that she could not understand why the passengers had become so unfriendly.

* * *

It was then that Aunt Olive made a healthy decision for us. It had been planned, before this incident, that we should go up river next morning by canoe, and we were inclined to cancel this arrangement. But she insisted upon our going, and I have been grateful to her ever since. She knew that we must not give way to any nervous fear, but immediately lay the ghost of that terrifying experience. And so we went.

* * *

It seems to me, looking back, that the importance for us of our aunt's resolution cannot be exaggerated. She was the born leader in time of trouble, and anxious to make us realise, whilst young, that fear is never any good.

(1957, 45-9)

This incident brings out Schreiner's innate courage (and wisdom in helping others to overcome their fears), but a Christian might lament Mrs Y's funk in Schreiner's presence. *She* needed no further reasons for despising those around her who professed to be Christians, yet behaved with less courage and greater selfishness than those who, like Schreiner herself, kept a critical distance.²⁷

After the planned four days at the Falls, the return trip – “to see the Matoppos[sic] and Mafeking on the way home” – began:

Aunt Olive, who had known Cecil Rhodes so well, was determined, in spite of her asthma, to make the long climb to his grave. What that pilgrimage meant to her, who loved England so much, and who had realised both the greatness and the weakness of this outstanding Englishman, no one can say. She herself uttered no word of comment, as we mounted the narrow path up the vast granite boulder that leads to the top.

* * *

Olive Schreiner stood for a time looking in silence at the tomb of that fearless man, who had so ruthlessly secured for England

the great country which bears his name.²⁸ Here lay the last of those romantic British adventurers, who went adding, bit by bit, to the largest Empire which the world has ever known.

Quietly we all went down from the hilltop

(49-50)²⁹

Schreiner's dignified silence again speaks volumes, while Gregg's rather platitudinous and adulatory – not to say jingoistic – gloss but heightens the contrast between the older and the younger woman's perspective. It also suggests how much W. P. Schreiner must have kept from his children of what he had suffered both from and on behalf of Cecil John Rhodes.³⁰

Schreiner's fraught and multifaceted relationship with Rhodes is reasonably well documented (apart from Cronwright-Schreiner 1924 and 1924a, see Buchanan-Gould 1948, First and Scott 1980, Rive 1987, Wilhelm 1982, and Stanley 2002). All but Stanley, however, antedate the 1987 publication of Rive's *Letters: 1871-1899*, in which there are two letters worth citing for the light they shed on the Schreiner—Rhodes tensions. The first (dated 30 Aug. 1895) is to W. P. Schreiner from Kimberley:

I never gave up all hope of him till one day on Matjesfontein station when he and Sivewright and Logan were talking together. [Note 2: Apparently because of a transaction between Rhodes and Sivewright involving a piece of government ground, which Olive believed 'flagrantly and shamelessly dishonourable'.] I didn't even say goodbye to them. I just went back to my house. *One day you will turn away as I did then.*

(1987, 27)³¹

The second letter (dated 7 Aug. 1897) is also to W. P. Schreiner, this time from Eastbourne, outlining the Cronwright-Schreiners' intention to return to South Africa in the *Tantallon Castle* on 21 August, thus concluding the trip which had seen the publication of *Trooper Peter*: "Perhaps it is because I myself am so played out that I feel everyone else must be, but I have a feeling about Rhodes that he will soon grow smaller and smaller, in five years we shall look for him: his place will be there, but it will not know him" (313). Rhodes died in his small thatch and iron seaside cottage at St James, Cape of Good Hope, on 26 March 1902, almost exactly five years after Schreiner wrote these words.

Let Schreiner's niece have the last words on this episode: "Too soon the trip was drawing to its close, and Aunt Olive left us at De Aar, sad to break up the party, but full of memories that must have meant far more to her than we could understand" (Gregg 1957, 51).

NOTES

1. This article is written in the awareness that Professor Liz Stanley has been commissioned to do a Collected Letters of Olive Schreiner, which may well illuminate much about Olive Schreiner's life and relationships which is at present dark or obscure (or accessible only in archives scattered across the globe), and may well contradict or at least alter the opinions and information available to the present writers. We eagerly await Stanley's *magnum opus*.

2. Wilhelm (1982, 209) suggests that Olive Schreiner's choice of a mountaintop burial was influenced by Rhodes's grave, though the evidence of Cronwright-Schreiner's *Reinterment* points to Schreiner's original choice of Buffelskop as their burial place as belonging to April/May 1894, and records transfer to Olive's ownership as taking place in November 1896 (see Walters and Fogg 2005, 52), which antedates Rhodes's death by some six years, and Olive's visit to the Matopos by some fifteen. Beeton (1987, 77-8) cites a letter (in the Havelock Ellis collection at Austin, Texas) from Erilda Cawood to Rebecca Schreiner (Ganna Hoek, 8 April 1886) which contains the sentence: "She [Olive] . . . told me once she should like to be buried here." The Cawood letter antedates Schreiner's first meeting with Rhodes by at least four years, and refers to a period in the 1870s when Olive was a governess. All these facts must cast doubt on Wilhelm's statement that: "Her own burial rites – the interment at the top of a mountain, for example – were modelled to some extent on Rhodes's" (1982, 209), though it does not rule out the possibility that Rhodes rhapsodised about the Matopos to Olive during the friendly phase of their relationship in the early 1890s. Maylam appears to echo Wilhelm when he asks: "[w] as it this experience [of visiting Rhodes's grave in 1911] – and perhaps a strange, lingering identification with Rhodes – that led her to choose a remote mountaintop near Cradock for her own burial?" (2005, 87). We suggest the choice was made much earlier – earlier, perhaps, than even Cronwright guessed.

3. W. P. Schreiner's children in age order were: Frances Lyndall, or 'Dot' (later Mrs Lyndall Gregg), Oliver Deneys, and Ursula Helen. A letter of Olive's to Havelock Ellis seems to refer to an infant daughter who only lived a short time: "my brother Will's little girl just came into the world & then died" (Draznin 1992, 186).

4. Kahn notes that Oliver Schreiner left for Cambridge on the *Edinburgh Castle* in "early June 1911" (1983, 6), accompanied by his father W. P., and his younger sister, Ursula Schreiner. Like his father before him, Oliver had won a Jamison Scholarship, endowed, as Cronwright-Schreiner tells us, by a Mrs Jamison (née Hiddingh) "a lady of Africander descent" (1924, 47). Cronwright-Schreiner's *Letters* allows us to date the duration of the train trip with some precision: leaving Cape Town on 1 June 1911, the party arrived at the Falls on 5 June, spent four days there (Gregg 1957, 49), and, presumably, took a further five days to get back to Cape Town. Thus the sailing date for the *Edinburgh Castle* could not have been earlier than the afternoon of Friday, 16 June 1911 (the regular sailing time for Union-Castle liners). Clark gives the duration of the ocean voyage as seventeen days: "It takes seventeen days by mail-boat, twenty-one by intermediate steamer" (1936, 221).

5. Cronwright-Schreiner took the trip the following year, and informs his readers that there were three "special excursion trains . . . run by the Government every

winter The distance is one thousand and forty miles Three people are put in each compartment, leaving one upper bunk for luggage” (1925, 131). Puzzlingly, Cronwright omits all reference to the fact that Schreiner had taken the trip the year before. Durrant, Lewis and Jorgensen state: “The main north line reached Victoria Falls via Wankie in 1904; the Zambesi was bridged in 1905” (1981, 164). A current website for the Victoria Falls Hotel notes that it celebrated its centenary in 2004, while the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2003) states that the township and hotel date from the construction of the steel-arch railway bridge in 1905. (Clark’s *Guide* gives August 1905 [n.d., 17]).

6. In *Life*, Cronwright-Schreiner quotes briefly from a letter of 14 December 1907 in which Schreiner writes that she finds “much help from my new asthma remedy” (1924, 353).

7. Cronwright-Schreiner records that in 1921 the regular train (on which he travelled, with his wife’s coffin in a special guard’s van) left Cape Town at 11h00 on 9 August, and reached De Aar at 11h30 the following morning (“some fifteen minutes late”!) [see Walters and Fogg 2005, 101].

8. In *Life* (1924, 197-98), Cronwright quotes a letter from Olive to Mrs Erida Cawood of Ganna Hoek which he dates to early February 1890. Apparently Mrs Cawood had mentioned in a letter to Olive a plan for Cronwright to accompany her two eldest sons to Matabeleland and Mashonaland, and Olive replied: “My great plan in coming to this country is to go up to Matabele and Mashona Land, and it may be if possible visiting the Zambesi Falls Will Crone [sic] Wright be up in Matabele Land then? Cecil Rhodes must be a splendid man, the only man of genius we have in this Colony.” (She had not met either of these men at this time.) Olive had been back at the Cape less than three months, and the Pioneer Column of the Chartered Company was only to reach Fort Salisbury in September of 1890.

9. See Cronwright-Schreiner (1924, 360): “. . . it was a strictly personal business and could not be left without very heavy loss. When once established at De Aar, I had determined that nothing should again make me pull my business up by the roots, and that I should stick to it without wavering, and concentrate upon it until I left it for ever.” (This does not quite square with his taking the Falls trip the very next year without Olive.) For Schreiner’s own ‘take’ on De Aar see her letter to Edward Carpenter of 6 Feb. 1908 (qtd. in Clayton 1983, 125): “For five months I have been living at a Railway Camp in the desert called De Aar [It] is a low, drunken, cursing place; but anyhow it’s free! [of Sabbath Observation restrictions].”

10. See unpublished letters at NELM in the Cronwright-Schreiner Collection SMD 30 (42), and at UCT Libraries in the WP Schreiner Collection BC 112 B8.

11. For hostile reviews, see for example *The Spectator* 78 (27 Feb. 1897): 303-5, and *Blackwood’s Magazine* 161 (Apr. 1897): 476-80. *The Athenaeum* 109 (27 Feb. 1897): 271-72), however, finds it “a well-sustained and eloquent parable, and several of the minor parables contained in it are told with rare grace of style and vigour of expression.” See also the quite amazingly percipient review from the *New York Tribune* of 21 Feb. 1897, rpt. in Clayton (1983) and discussed above.

12. We consider the history and provenance of this deeply disturbing photograph in a forthcoming article entitled “When is a Frontispiece ‘In Bad Taste’? The Short Sorry Tale of *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*,” which was originally

delivered at the conference A World Elsewhere, Centre for the Book, Cape Town, 2-4 Apr. 2007.

13. The evidence for this is in Cronwright's own hand opposite the frontispiece of his copy of the Dutch first edition (there were two Dutch editions in 1897: Veen of Amsterdam [rept. 1899], and J. H. de Bussy of Pretoria, who was the publisher of Cronwright's copy). This book was among those which Cronwright donated to the Cradock Public Library in Olive's memory and which are now in the Schreiner House, Cradock, (owned by the National English Literary Museum (NELM), situated in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape).

14. See Thompson (2000, 117): "The mining companies dominated Kimberley and overrode the merchants and traders on most issues when interests clashed."

15. As Gray states (2005, ix), the Schreiner paper was subsequently carried in full in *The Diamond Fields Advertiser*, and published as a 148-page book by T. Fisher Unwin in London in 1896.

16. According to M. van Wyk Smith (1978, 127-30), Stead, while not being anti-imperialist, was the main propagandist of the pro-Boer movement.

17. And, indeed, Stead picked up on this referencing by entitling his review of *Trooper Peter* "If Christ Came to Matabeleland" in *The Review of Reviews* (Mar. 1897).

18. See Maylam (2005, 116-17).

19. See Maylam (2005, 34-8) on the initial respect showed by the Ndebele for Rhodes's Matopos gravesite, but note that although Rhodes provided generously for the Matabele by buying and then giving them huge tracts of land, these were merely a portion of the land which they had originally won by conquest from the Mashona, and regarded as theirs by right. Rhodes's 'generosity' served ultimately only to reinforce the Matabele's new tenant status.

20. Schreiner writes as follows to W. P. Schreiner from Rome, 15 Mar. 1897:

With regard to *Peter Halket* being over drawn, dear Laddie; perhaps as much as you know about most points connected with South Africa more than I do, I *may* know some aspects of the Northern [i.e. Rhodesian] matter better. You see I have known intimately such numbers of young men up there, and from their letters, the journals they have sent me, and from the conversations we have had with some of them in Kimberley when they came down. It would take me too long to tell you about things, but *Peter Halket* is a very toned down dead picture of the reality. (Rive 1987, 305-6)

21. Gray lists Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as one of only two other in-depth portraits of what he calls "Colonial Man" (1983, 208n4). *Heart of Darkness* was first serialised in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in Feb., Mar., and Apr. 1899 – only two years to the month after the publication of *Trooper Peter*. We are indebted to Simon Frost of Aarhus University, who makes this point in an unpublished conference paper delivered at the conference A World Elsewhere, Centre for the Book, Cape Town, 2-4 Apr. 2007.

22. Known to its first discoverers as “Mosi-oa-Tunya” (The Smoke that Thunders), the Falls were ‘discovered’ for the Western world on 16 Nov. 1855 (the year of Schreiner’s birth) by David Livingstone. They are a mile wide (1.6 km) with a maximum drop of 420ft (128m). Flow varies from less than 20 000 cu m per min at Low Water (Nov/Dec) to 550 000 cu m per minute at peak flood (Feb/April). The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* notes that the river does not speed up as it reaches the lip of the Falls. Cf. Godwin for a contemporary ‘take’ on the Victoria Falls:

From there we embark on what they call here the ‘booze cruise’ on one of the boats that chug leisurely up the Zambezi River above the Falls. The trip is always laced with the frisson of what would happen should the engines cough and die. Will you get sucked down the biggest drain in the world and spat out a thousand feet below in the so-called Boiling Pot, the deep pool carved out of the black basalt bedrock by the staggering force of the water?

(2006, 105)

23. Holograph in NELM’s collection. We print Fogg’s transcription. Cf. the edited form of this letter published by Cronwright-Schreiner in *Letters* (1924a, 301-2).

24. Although Schreiner says “Wednesday” in her letter to Ellis, she says “Tuesday” in the letter to Cronwright-Schreiner which immediately precedes it in *Letters* (1924a, 301-2), and the one preceding *that*, written just before setting out on the expedition is dated 6 June. From this, we can fairly safely say that the motorboat expedition took place on Tuesday, 6 June 1911. Both motorboat and canoes may have been the property of Percy M. Clark. However, in chapter 18 of his *Autobiography*, Clark records the hotel buying a launch for itself when he refused to sell his business to the hotel. Clark’s description of the hotel is perhaps worth quoting:

The hotel, at the beginning, was simply a long structure of wood and iron containing a dining-room and bar, bedrooms and offices. Later on it was enlarged by the addition of two large engine-sheds removed from railway headquarters. One of these was converted into a dining-room and the other into bedrooms. Later still two annexes of wood and iron were put up, complete with bathrooms, for the *haut ton*. In the hot weather the rooms were ovens, and in the cold, refrigerators – but nobody grumbled much. After all, what could one expect in the heart of Africa?

(1936, 204)

25. For the record, Schreiner says “half a mile” in *Letters* (Cronwright-Schreiner 1924a, 301).

26. This was presumably a deliberate exaggeration. See Schreiner’s description of a visit to a wedding on a “Boer farm”: “The mother and three other elderly ladies were sitting on one long sofa; they must all have been over 200lbs in weight!!” (Cronwright-Schreiner 1924a, 295).

27. This is not the place to discuss Schreiner’s complex relationship with the Christianity of her upbringing. Suffice it to say that it would richly repay more detailed treatment than it has received to date (but see Kissack and Titlestad 2006, 23-46).

28. On the naming and renaming of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, see Wilhelm: “The historic alteration of the name Rhodesia to Zimbabwe says more about the validity of Schreiner’s vision [in *TPH*] than any examination of the details of the alleged atrocity. The continental fact and implications of Rhodes were what she was laying bare in, as it were, the highest court of moral judgment available to her – literature” (1983, 210).

29. Compare Maylam’s description of Rhodes’s burial site:

Rhodes himself had chosen where he would be buried; he had discovered the spot while riding in the Matopos in 1896. It commanded a spectacular view and was relatively accessible Rhodes was well aware that Mzilikazi was buried nearby Aspects of the grave lend weight to the idea that Rhodes had prepared for his own immortality in his lifetime No birthplace, no date of birth, no date of death – such details, normally inscribed on a tombstone, were superfluous. Rhodes was placing himself beyond time, declaring himself immortal.

(2005, 34-41)

30. How much W. P. Schreiner kept from his children is, in fact, revealed earlier in Gregg’s chapter, where she reflects on the cost of the Falls trip:

The whole thing must have cost quite a lot of money, but we had not been brought up to consider expense, because our father had been hard up in his youth, and wished to shield us from unpleasantness whenever he could. Aunt Olive considered this wrong, no proper preparation for the realities of life. She accused him of being like the upas-tree, which, in the long run, destroys those plants which shelter beneath it. And she may have been half right, but it is a great thing to look back on a happy childhood and adolescence, when money simply wasn’t talked about, but was considered a private and personal matter, so long as one had enough of it.

(1957, 41)

It is interesting to compare this lofty quasi-patrician attitude (“cost” being associated with the euphemistic catch-all of “unpleasantness”) with the hard-scrabble existence

that Olive and Will Schreiner had known almost from their earliest breath. Will Schreiner, of course, later enjoyed the privilege of the gender bias of the age – educated at the South African College, Cape Town, and later Cambridge, where he was known as the “Star of South Africa” in recognition of his intellectual prowess (see Cronwright-Schreiner 1924, 47-8), while Olive Schreiner recounted more than once that scarcely sixpence was spent on her education after she learned to read and write. See Cronwright-Schreiner’s comment that “she often said that the only education she ever had was what she picked up from her mother and from her reading” (1924, 87), and Schreiner’s words to Havelock Ellis: “It will be the first time anyone has ever helped me to learn anything except when I was very little and my mother taught me to read. I have never been to school you know or had one sixpence expended on my education” (Rive 1987, 47). Gregg’s Schreiner grandfather died bankrupt, and her grandmother and namesake, Rebecca (née Lyndall) Schreiner, depended for the last twenty-seven years of her life on the charity of her children and of a community of Roman Catholic nuns in Grahamstown! “Unpleasantness” indeed!

31. See Lewsen (1982, 157-63). Sivewright, Logan and Rhodes seemed to form an unholy and corrupt trinity. Sivewright’s award of a railway catering monopoly to Logan in September 1892 contributed directly to the downfall of the first Rhodes ministry.

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