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Carleton University

***“Eine Politikerin von top to bottom”?:
Rethinking the life and legacy of Eleanor Marx***

**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts**

Institute of Political Economy

by

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Ottawa, Ontario

**May 2005
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Abstract

This thesis re-visits the life and legacy of Eleanor Marx, focusing on her complicated views regarding the Woman Question. It uses post-structuralist methods of textual analysis, in tandem with a more traditional biographical narrative written from a feminist standpoint, to challenge existing historiographic interpretations and offer new readings and observations. By exploring tensions and contradictions in her writings on the Woman Question and contextualizing them within her life and times, it aims to demonstrate that Eleanor Marx's views on this issue were by no means coherent, unified, or determined by socialism alone. Rather, they synthesized an eclectic array of ideas emanating from the various movements and individuals with which and with whom she was involved. Moreover, they were greatly informed by her social location, not only as the daughter of Karl Marx, but, more importantly, as a publicly-involved New Woman during the British *fin-de-siècle*. Thus, this thesis argues that her views were informed by both personal and social forces. Indeed, it is maintained herein that it is Eleanor's socio-cultural and political location at the confluence of disparate yet highly influential discourses, and her ability to unite them in her personage and her writings, albeit problematically, which makes an understanding of her life and thought so important in the modern era.

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“You say, dear, that you often think that by the time your life is finished you will have learned just enough to begin it well...No...we must live our lives, & what we have missed, who knows? ...[T]hough each one must work out his own salvation we can make the work perhaps a little less hard for those that shall come after...”

--Eleanor Marx to Dollie Radford, 1891

Eleanor Marx, the Woman Question, and the Politics of Other People's Lives

Eleanor Marx is elusively ubiquitous. Although the late-Victorian socialist, amateur actress, and New Woman of letters can be found seemingly everywhere “heterodox” in histories of bohemian London, she remains one of the most enigmatic figures of the British fin-de-siècle. Though Eleanor played a pivotal role in the development of what could now be described as a Victorian “counter-culture”, participating in most of the major political, social and cultural movements of her time, we still know very little of her intimate life, or how she privately conceived of her public involvements. Indeed, despite her multifarious political and personal associations, *who* we know as Eleanor Marx today is derived primarily from her public, political writings, as well as accounts left by contemporaries. The following diary entry of a young Beatrice Potter hints at the influence Eleanor must have had within political and social circles, and only adds to her historical allure:

24 May 1883 (*early morning*). [Prince's Gate]

Went in afternoon to British Museum and met Miss Marx in refreshment rooms. Daughter of Karl Marx, socialist writer and refugee. Gains her livelihood by teaching ‘literature’, etc., and corresponding for socialist newspapers... In person she is comely, dressed in a slovenly picturesque way with curly black hair flying about in all directions. Fine eyes full of life and sympathy, otherwise ugly features and expression, and complexion showing the signs of an unhealthy excited life, kept up with stimulants and tempered by narcotics. Lives alone, is much connected with Bradlaugh¹ set, evidently peculiar views on love, etc., and I should think has somewhat ‘natural’ relations with men! Should fear that the chances were against her remaining long within the pale of ‘respectable’ society. Asked me to come and see her. Exactly the life and character I should like to study. Unfortunately one cannot mix with human beings without becoming more or less *connected* with them.²

It was not until 1955, almost 60 years following her death, that the first biographical narrative on the “life and strange death” of Eleanor Marx was written by

theatre critic and historian Felix Barker.³ Like most who have come to study Eleanor, Barker “discovered” her quite by accident, in his case as part of his research on George Bernard Shaw; like most, he quickly “developed an affection” for his iconoclastic subject—for there was, and still is, “something romantic about a woman in that age flying in the face of convention and following so resolutely the ideals in which she believed”⁴; and, sadly, again like most, despite his determination to “find out all [he] could about Eleanor”, he merely found all available information to be “tantalizingly incomplete”.⁵

Despite the passage of fifty years and the publication of two detail-rich full-length biographies⁶, this situation persists today. In a recently published collection of conference papers on Eleanor’s life and legacy⁷, numerous scholars lamented the paucity of academic work on their subject. As Carolyn Steedman notes in her contribution, despite the fact that “[a]nyone who has worked on English socialism in the late nineteenth century...will have encountered...Marx”, Eleanor nonetheless “appears on the borderlines, in the liminal spaces and places of the historiography of British socialism”.⁸ Lyn Pykett goes as far as to compare her experience researching Eleanor to that described by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One’s Own* when researching “Woman”: “The present-day researcher on Eleanor Marx, whether electronically scanning the British Library catalogues, searching other databases, or poring over the indexes of dusty tomes, is more likely to be filled with stupefaction, wonder, and bewilderment on discovering how little discussed their subject is.”⁹

To Steedman and Pykett’s observations one could add that the bulk of what does exist is quite dated, and greatly reflects the political investments of its authors and their times. As the editor of the aforementioned collection remarks, most work on Eleanor was

undertaken during the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, a period when “rapidly developing feminism and a consequent interest in the heroines of history, [was] accompanied by a widespread desire to understand the origins not only of Marxist factionalism but of British radical sects in general.”¹⁰ Indeed, the writing of social history generally, and women’s history specifically, has been indelibly marked by the development of both “cultural Marxist” and feminist theory as part of the rise of the British New Left in the 1960s. Feminist historians have been particularly instrumental in “writ[ing] women into history” to “legitimize feminist claims about women in order to consolidate an effective political movement”.¹¹ With these intellectual and political influences and aims in mind, it is perhaps not surprising that the most politically active of Karl Marx’s progeny emerged as an ideal subject for further study among socialist and feminist historians: however, what is surprising is how few historians have considered the ways in which these political impetuses have influenced and framed how we write about and interpret Eleanor’s life and legacy.

Moreover, with the change in climate—both politically, with the “collapse” of communism, and academically, with the ascendancy of post-structuralism in the humanities—scholarly work on Eleanor has declined dramatically, with most recent studies focusing on her cultural, as opposed to political, commitments. While much may have changed since the initial period of enthusiasm over Eleanor, she remains an interesting historical figure worthy of study, particularly to those interested in studying issues of gender and sexuality. Recently, the late-Victorian debate on sexuality and gender relations known as the “Woman Question” has become a popular subject of study among historians of women and sexuality, who have come to recognize its influence in

shaping modern discourse on these issues. Little historical work has been done on Eleanor's unique role within these debates as her opinion is perceived to be known based on existing biographical treatments and interpretations of her essay "The Woman Question", which appeared in the *Westminster Review* in 1886. In "The Woman Question", Eleanor articulates a "scientific socialist" perspective on this issue, and is largely dismissive, and highly critical, of the Victorian women's rights movement; consequently, she has been viewed as hostile to so-called "bourgeois feminism", and her position on women's issues is maintained as explained by her socialism. However, one could argue that this interpretation is problematic for a number of reasons. First, it should be noted that Eleanor wrote fairly extensively on the Woman Question, and expresses quite different views in different texts. Second, with respect to the "Woman Question" essay itself, most historians have neglected to mention or stress the importance of the context in which the work was written. "The Woman Question" was written specifically as a public, political tract intended to publicize the English translation of German socialist August Bebel's text, *Woman in the Past, Present and Future*. Moreover, it was co-written with her lover and comrade-in-arms, Dr. Edward Aveling, to whom Eleanor's suicide at the age of 43 is attributed.

Thus, if one considers Eleanor's writings as a whole, and in the context of her life and times, one cannot accept the "Woman Question" at face value, and arrives instead at a very different conclusion. If one is sensitive to the tensions and contradictions within and among her writings, and is cognizant of the complex interplay between Eleanor's social location as a "bohemian" New Woman, political commitments as a socialist and Unionist, and unique upbringing as the daughter of an incredibly influential political

writer and theorist, one must conclude that Eleanor did not hold one unified position on the Woman Question. One will find that what she said or wrote publicly at any one time depended very much upon the context surrounding its expression, and was influenced not only by her socialism, but by all of the various political and social discourses and movements with which she was involved. Indeed, it is Eleanor's position at the confluence of the major debates of her time, and her ability as a New Woman to take this position, which make her so interesting and historically important.

Thus, this thesis, essentially a "mini-biography", will address the question of Eleanor Marx's position on the Woman Question. It will not only reflect the new methodological and political imperatives of late-twentieth/early twenty-first century feminist history, but also highlight one of the emergent "spaces" onto which Eleanor's story is now frequently plotted, namely her social location as a "New Woman". As well, this work will critically examine this position by interrogating what she wrote and said on the Woman Question, as well as the reasons why and how she came to her position. To do so, it will use post-structuralist modes of textual analysis to engage with concepts central to feminist research, namely power, agency, and experience alongside a more "traditional" biographical narrative which focuses on the private and seeks to give shape, form, and meaning to the events that constituted her life.

This thesis will begin with Chapter One, "Defining Terms and Times: Concepts and Context", in which the terms, ideas, discourses, and movements central to this study will be defined and explored. Chapter Two, "*We must each of us, after all, live our own life*": A brief biography of Eleanor Marx, will consist of a condensed biographical narrative, focusing in particular on the (limiting) effects of gender on Eleanor's life

course. Proceeding from the foundation thence established, Chapter Three, “*There are some, even among our friends, who will be shocked that a woman should speak of these matters: Eleanor Marx on the Woman Question*”, will analyze a selection of Eleanor’s public writings on said topic, grounding itself in both the overarching discourses and events of Eleanor’s time as well as the unique events of her life. Finally, this thesis will conclude with a discussion of the various questions its analysis provokes.

Guiding the ensuing analysis were three rather simple questions, namely: What can we ‘know’ about Eleanor Marx and her position(s) on the Woman Question through a concurrent examination of her life and writings? How can we best make sense of this knowledge? And, finally, Why is any of it at all important? First, given the variation, complexity, and plurality of Eleanor’s views on the Woman Question, we can “know” very little definitively about her “true” position, if *one* ever existed, or about why she made the personal and political decisions that she did. However, if we embrace the complexity of her views, one can learn a great deal about what it meant to be a “New Woman” in Eleanor’s time and place. Indeed, it will be argued in this thesis that her views can best be understood through her social location as a “New Woman” struggling to find her place in a highly gender-stratified society. Upon reading an array of available primary texts and secondary biographic materials, and focusing on underlying themes within Eleanor’s life and writings, one can frame her life as a constant struggle, often and ultimately ending in resignation, to cope with the gender(ed) exigencies created by the simple fact of being female in late-Victorian England. In recognizing and embracing the complexity and plurality of her views, we can also better imagine the sense of struggle she and other New Women must have felt in their attempts at affecting cohesion among

their competing public and private commitments. Thus, contra Kapp and other biographers, this thesis will challenge the assertion that her socialist career was inevitable—that it was somehow “bred in the bone”. Instead, it will argue that her socialist involvement was only made inevitable by the fact that it was the only ideological framework with which she was raised, that it in turn created and structured her personal and professional relationships and provided a viable, quasi-acceptable way of participating in public life. It will frame Eleanor Marx as neither faultless socialist heroine nor tragic victim undone by her devotion to a thoroughly unworthy man; instead, it will treat her as a woman of her time, struggling as many did against social limitations and for recognition and validation of an unconventional way of life. Framing her life and its meaning in this way may make her less of an “extraordinary woman”; however, it certainly makes her less iconic and more human, and can perhaps lead to more interesting conclusions on continuities and changes within women’s social, cultural, and political position over time and space.

Methodologies

Feminist Biography

Feminism, as theory and methodology, shapes this work. Though a highly contested concept with a plethora of possible meanings, “feminism” here refers to an ideology wherein the concerns of women, their lives, and the challenges they face as a result of their particular social position(s) as women are central to academic analyses and political activism. As Liz Stanley argues, feminist-inspired research holds within it the potential to be theoretically and epistemologically valuable as well as politically relevant.

According to Stanley and others, feminist methodology indicates “a continuing shared feminist commitment to a political position in which ‘knowledge’ is not simply defined as ‘knowledge *what*’ but ‘knowledge *for*’. Succinctly the point is to change the world, not only to study it.”¹² Resonating with the words and spirit of her father, Eleanor would have undoubtedly approved.

In many ways, biography is an ideal genre through which to conduct and distil feminist research thus defined. According to Michael Erben, the modern biography emerged during the eighteenth century as part of the Enlightenment’s commitment to understanding the relationship between morality, ethics and the vagaries of everyday existence. This new form strove to “distil both social structure and a story of an individual life without, in the process, either swamping the personal or subjectivising the social”; as such, it was meant to represent the point of tension “between verisimilitude and subjectivity.”¹³ As numerous scholars have noted, feminist historians of women have made particularly good use of the genre as it offers them the opportunity to challenge “traditional patterns of scholarship by bringing women from the margins to the centre of analysis”; in particular, it “allows women to challenge existing patrifocal renditions of the past” and potentially “represent the collected whole of female experience, [bringing] to light the lives of the obscure.”¹⁴

Like feminist history, the rise of feminist biography can be attributed to the consolidation of the women’s movement in the 1960s. According to Sheila Rowbotham,

The women’s movement...made the need to uncover every aspect of women’s experience an immediate political issue and in doing so...started to redefine the scope of what is defined as politics...Women [were] hidden from most history in the same way as the lives of men of the poor are obscured, because of class. But we are also hidden as a sex, and it takes a specifically feminist consciousness to come to terms with the full extent of this.¹⁵

She further suggests that, by providing insight into women's "hidden lives", biography played and continues to play a pivotal role in the rediscovery of women's history, one which constituted "an essential aspect of the creation of a feminist critique of male culture."¹⁶ With respect to biographies of late-Victorian socialist women in particular, June Hannam suggests that "[a] study of the complex relationships and allegiances in one person's life can help...to challenge the view that varieties of feminism and socialism in the period 1890-1920 can be easily compartmentalized. Single issues...could draw together women and men from varied political backgrounds, because they shared a framework of assumptions and beliefs which did not necessarily fit neatly into existing political groups. These links only become clear when [a life] is viewed as a whole". Thus, biographies can also help "to shed light on the complex nature of social movements and to reveal the rich texture of specific historical periods."¹⁷

However, early feminist history's focus on "reclaiming lives" often meant creating "heroines" of history, which certainly held consequences for the ways in which Eleanor's life was written. The writing of any biographical narrative—that is, a narrative which seeks to reconstruct an individual's lived experience with his/her specific socio-cultural context—poses unique theoretical and methodological challenges for the contemporary historian; however, these challenges are further complicated when the biographical subject in question is a controversial political figure, and when the biographical author is politically invested. Given the high stakes involved in politics, contested figures tend to be heavily politicized within the historiographic literature that emerges to document and "give meaning" to his/her life. "Facts" are obfuscated in the interests of safeguarding not only the individual's legacy, but also the integrity of the

ideology and organizations with which s/he was, or is now, associated. As Barbara Taylor writes of Mary Wollstonecraft, “Posthumous celebrity...poses a considerable challenge to interpreters, particularly when it is politically invested. Perched on her pedestal, Wollstonecraft has acquired a mythic patina that blurs and distorts her historical contours.”¹⁸ Consequently, figures like Wollstonecraft and Eleanor Marx are transformed from historical women into untouchable, unchanging icons whose lives take on meta-historical meaning, and their failures often become ours.

Furthermore, the early focus on heroines encouraged an unquestioning celebration of “extraordinary women” as role models while eliding less desirable characteristics. As Sheila Rowbotham observes,

There is a long socialist tradition...whereby the personal frailties of the great socialists, especially the women, are protected from hostile...scrutiny. In one sense this is a sound instinct, for opponents of socialism and anarchism take a particularly salacious delight in discovering any vulnerability in radical women, as if contradictory emotions somehow reduce the significance of their political work. However, like all chivalry, this protection in fact restricts the growth of our understanding.¹⁹

Similarly, with respect to Eleanor, E. P Thompson notes,

The Eleanor whom Marxists [and feminists] have always cherished [is] the passionate daughter of Marx who disproves in all her life the libeling of the family as cold-blooded materialists. Yet we have also to remember that the enthusiastic comrade, who combines a ready resource of emotion with an absolute conviction of her own political integrity, can sometimes be an unsettling, even disruptive, fellow worker...Eleanor Marx was not the incomparable paragon and the all-wise Marxist homing pigeon that Yvonne Kapp [and others] would have her to be.

“Such hagiography”, he maintains, “ends up...diminishing the subject.”²⁰

Moreover, the early political concerns of feminist historians, evident in their attempts to use biography to safeguard a feminist past, have subsequently come to define the “spaces” in which Eleanor’s story has thus far been written and read. According to

Carolyn Steedman. “We have a space already mapped out in which to read Marx’s story. in the history of British socialism (and a more dimly-perceived European Marxism)... Then there is a newer backdrop to it, set in place by modern historians who have considered female social action, philanthropy, and the developing field of professional paid work for middle-class women in the period 1870-1910.”²¹ An array of fictional and non-fictional works alike have used these spaces to portray Eleanor in a variety of iconic roles, the most popular being as a leading figure of the burgeoning British socialist movement; as a “daughter of the Revolution”; and as a tragic heroine whose life was cut short by her shocking suicide following her betrayal by Aveling.²²

Yet, while Eleanor has assumed various personae in various accounts—socialist, union agitator, translator, and, more recently, New Woman and “feminist”—there has been one consistency: the maintenance of what Barbara Taylor calls “an imaginary modernity”. As Taylor says of historical writings on Mary Wollstonecraft, “[w]hich ever face she turned to her interpreters, [she] appeared strikingly up-to-date”; similarly, within biographical literature on Eleanor, “the iconic woman pursues the original, leaving a trail of adulation and opprobrium—the twin children of idolatry—in her wake.”²³

Given these problems, some feminist historians now argue that the close ties between feminist biography and the political movement that gave rise to it make the former an unreliable historical resource—that the political and methodological aims of feminist history circumscribe the many possible ways in which an individual’s story can be told. Lori Williamson writes,

Implicit in feminist story-telling is the complete rewriting of history as ‘herstory’. Kathleen Barry has suggested that women’s biography ‘must break through the essentialisms [male, patriarchal and therefore repressive] that have a grasp on their [women’s] identities and give them their place in society’. Too often,

however, those identities continue to be rooted in ideas of repression and oppression, perhaps...because they reflect too much the identity of the individual creating the biographical self. [While] it is important to recognise that women labour under patriarchal constraints...it is counterproductive, not to mention tedious and inaccurate, to present constantly women's history in terms of what they could not/did not/were not able to achieve because of men...[it] ensures the perpetuation of the 'them versus us' dialectic which has characterized much feminist scholarship in the past.²⁴

Such trends can be seen in existing accounts of Eleanor's life; furthermore, it is interesting to note the prominent role Eleanor's relationships with men play in her biographies, to the point that her relationships with female family and friends receive little more than a mention.²⁵

Nonetheless, it is questionable whether Williamson's assertion that feminism or politics are the problems *per se*; after all, historians have long since recognized that their craft is not ideologically innocent. Yet, the question remains: how to overcome this impasse—to explore the complexities, contradictions, and contingencies of women's lives while remaining politically and intellectually relevant? While Williamson proposes that feminist historians “move away from the gendered dialect which allowed early feminist scholarship to flourish”²⁶, Martha Vicinus suggests an approach more enabling to twenty-first century feminist historians: that instead of “raiding the past to find satisfactory models for today, [feminist historians] should look to the difficulties, contradictions and triumphs of women within the larger context of their own times”.²⁷

Structurally, this thesis is modeled upon two texts which brilliantly embodied this dictum: Barbara Taylor's recent biography of Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (2003), and Liz Stanley's work on Olive Schreiner, *Imperialism, Labour and the New Woman: Olive Schreiner's Social Theory* (2002). Both seek to more fully historicize their famous subjects. As well, both Taylor and Stanley

attempt to make their subjects' words and actions comprehensible within the context of their own times; consequently, in their interrogations of the relationship between the individual and the social, they both openly explore tensions and contradictions within the life and thought of these women. Crucially, and with specific relevance to the issue of methodology, they both raised questions about the interpretive strategies we use to try and make sense of past lives, particularly those which involve political metanarratives.

Taylor in particular consciously engaged with issues of contradiction, complexity, and contextuality through her use of "paradox" as an organizing concept, which was extremely useful in problematizing Eleanor's "position" on the Woman Question. Taylor is quick to point out the intellectual value of contradiction:

Historians and critics tend to put a high premium on intellectual consistency, as if any failure in this respect were a mark of mental infirmity. But if we adopt a less donnish, more psychologically generous view of intellectual creativity, then paradox and contradiction are no longer embarrassments to be brushed aside, but keys to a realm of hidden meaning.²⁸

Given the overwhelming number of contradictions readily apparent in Eleanor's life and writings, her story should thus be rich in such "hidden meaning".

And Eleanor Marx is certainly an extremely complex historical figure: as Christine Stansell notes, while she was "revered by others", she was "deprecatory of herself"; while "courageous in public", she "[shrunk] in private"; though "passionately single-minded", she was unmistakably and "deeply conflicted"²⁹. Furthermore, the various "subject positions" she occupied were often themselves riddled with internal contradictions, and were indeed in conflict with one another.

Eleanor's status as a New Woman is one such example. The demographic category emerged at an interesting time in the history of single womanhood in Britain, as

overarching social trends like industrialization and urbanization, and concomitant to that, universal education, made it possible for the first time for a small group of middle class women to live off their own earnings. For these women, paid public work not only provided them with a modicum of dignity and respect (thereby canceling out the negative stigma associated with “spinsterhood”), but also served as a means out of “idleness and ignorance and into wisdom, service [and] adventure.”³⁰ However, as Martha Vicinus notes, “the public careers and private lives of single women represent the paradox of power and marginality, of enormous strength within narrow limits, of unity and support linked with division and doubt.”³¹ Despite their public bravura, New Women like Eleanor Marx were often submissive to the men in their lives and struggled to reconcile their beliefs with what they perceived to be their “innate” passions, as well as the strictures of their assigned social roles.

Eleanor’s involvement within the socialist movement is similarly problematic. Although late-Victorian socialists in both Britain and Germany devoted much theoretical and organizational energy to the Woman Question, it is clear from surviving sources that the principle of gender equality expounded in the abstract was not a lived reality within the movement itself. Rather, evidence suggests that women were largely excluded from leadership or any other meaningful roles within party organs.

Thus, I maintain that we can better conceptualize the historical importance of Eleanor’s life and its meaning, particularly when considering the specific issue of the Woman Question, only if we situate her within the context of the many, often conflicting, discursive and demographic positions she occupied during her lifetime, in both word and deed.

Problematic Post-structuralism

This work is influenced by feminist history's *rapprochement* with post-structuralism, which has affected a particularly rich synthesis of social and feminist history's traditional concerns regarding power, agency, and experience with the insights and techniques of post-structuralist literary theory regarding the socio-cultural importance and value of texts. Uniting the varieties of post-structuralist thought is their common reliance upon "a language-model epistemology, which views language not as a reflection of the world it captures in words but as constitutive of that world...[A]ll begin from the premise that language is somehow anterior to the world it shapes; that what we experience as 'reality' is but a socially (i.e., linguistically) constructed artifact or 'effect' of the particular language system we inhabit."³² While historians have long debated the benefits of following the "linguistic turn"³³, post-structuralism's approach to cultural meaning, truth, and knowledge, along with its attendant methods (most notably deconstruction), have greatly influenced the writings of history in the post-war era.

Some feminist historians, most notably Joan Scott and Denise Riley, have responded by adapting post-structuralist techniques to their own explorations of how texts as discursive practices constitute gender, positing gender itself as a "category of historical analysis". However, among feminist historians committed to the traditional methodological concerns of their discipline, responses to post-structuralism have ranged from receptive, to wary, to outright hostile.³⁴ In her critique of New Historicism, Martha C. Howell articulates the views of the wary³⁵ regarding the permeation of post-structuralism thusly:

As a social historian, I come to the new historicism committed in an old-fashioned way to a materialist and progressive version of history. But as a feminist, I long

ago had to take account of cultural theory in general and the new historicism in particular, because neither materialist theory nor the methods of social history allowed close enough scrutiny of gender...Linguistic theory, with its emphasis on systems of meaning, promised us much more...But few feminist historians would claim that the new historicism has fulfilled its promises...

The specific complaints are well known. Early efforts floundered on a crude separation of text and context, in which "history" was relegated to context, a flat field against which the interesting stuff of the text was read. New historicists working in this way also tended to turn to a limited number of secondary sources for their information about context...[furthermore] new historicist criticism seems devoted to analyzing the workings of male power systems, and it treats gender simply as the handmaiden of this "more important story". Another problem results from [its] inability to show texts doing social work, even to illustrate how they shore up the hierarchy; instead, they tend to imply, and occasionally assert, that texts do the work.³⁶

In a similar vein, Gabrielle Spiegel has argued that post-structuralist inspired approaches to history have resulted "inexorably [in] an aestheticizing of culture in which the term 'society' is implicitly emptied of its normal significance and reinscribed as 'social text'."³⁷ Again, with particular reference to New Historicism, she writes that post-structuralism's "insistence on the symbolic foundation of all social constructions—textual and otherwise—and its persistent deployment of deconstructive readings in the interpretation of cultural artifacts of all kinds" makes it unclear "how history is distinct from literature or context from text"³⁸.

Perhaps most damning, Spiegel asserts that post-structural approaches threaten to eliminate the human element from history:

What gets lost in the concentration on meaning in the place of experience is the sense of social agency, of men and women struggling with the contingencies and complexities of their lives in terms of the fates that history deals out to them and transforming the worlds they inherit and pass on to future generations. These are questions that have always engaged historians on the deepest level of their commitment to understanding the past, and it seems unlikely that a literary history informed by semiotic principles will be able to evade the issue of causality—of *why* and *how* a given form of literary work appeared *as* it did, *where* it did, and

when it did—and still satisfy even sympathetic historians’ demands for a historical, and not merely historicist, conception of cultural production.³⁹

Nevertheless, feminist historians have continued to try and bring valuable post-structural insights to bear on their practice, and have theorized politically and intellectually satisfying means of so doing.⁴⁰

One excellent example of how the approaches of post-structuralist, cultural, social and feminist histories can be brought into productive dialogue is Judith Walkowitz’s study of narratives of sexual danger in late-Victorian London, *City of Dreadful Delight* (1992). In her work, Walkowitz reformulates post-structuralist insights on texts and cultural meaning to service the traditional concerns of feminist history. As she notes in her introduction, she was inspired to undertake her cultural study by the “epistemological challenges posed by post-structuralist critics, who insisted that historians pay closer attention to the ‘complex ways meanings are constructed and cultural practices organized,’ in particular, the rhetorical, linguistic means by which ‘people represent and understand their world.’”⁴¹

While the focus of my study is not on narratives and discourse *per se*, I nevertheless found Walkowitz’s discussion of power as relates to women and authorial intent helpful in conceptualizing Eleanor’s role as a “woman of letters”. Moreover, I would argue that her insights apply more generally to the close biographical study of historical figures. Citing Foucault, Walkowitz reminds us that “no one is outside of power”, and suggests that this insight “has important implications for expressions from the margins”: “Just because women are excluded from centers of cultural production, they are not free to invent their texts...They are bound imaginatively by a limited cultural repertoire, forced to reshape cultural meaning within certain parameters.”⁴² The

recognition that we are all engaged with dominant discourses—even if we are opposing or are excluded by them—was enormously helpful to me in identifying the various “hidden” and thus far unexplored meanings latent in Eleanor’s writing, and to better understand, or at least empathize with, her contradictory and self-defeating behaviour. Furthermore, Walkowitz’s conceptualization of the balance between the influence of context and authorial agency was also instructive. While accepting Foucault and other post-structuralists’ questioning of the “authority of the subject as a free, autonomous author of a text”, Walkowitz asserts that “the fact that subjects are culturally determined does not mean that ‘human agency in a changing world is for the most part illusory.’ That individuals do not fully author their texts does not falsify Marx’s insight that men (and women) make their own history, albeit under circumstances they do not produce or fully control.”⁴³ In fact, for Walkowitz, delineating the meaning of cultural expressions in terms of “historically situated authorial consciousness”—that is, how historical agents mobilize existing cultural tools—is at the heart of the historian’s task.⁴⁴ It is for this reason that I included a biographical narrative and a discussion of dominant discourses during Eleanor’s time alongside my analysis of her texts: in so doing, I aim to suggest reasons why these works were and could be written by no one other than Eleanor Marx.

In terms of structure, Walkowitz notes that she had to resist “providing narrative closure to some chapters”⁴⁵, symbolic of the fact that these historical agents were also not in control of the outcome and reception of their texts. I too found myself resisting this same impulse in many aspects of my own work as a way of acknowledging that my interpretation is just that—another interpretation, and by no means the final word. Furthermore, this “open-endedness” reveals tensions and contradictions without having to

rationalize or resolve them into a coherent whole. More generally, it facilitated a plethora of possible readings and meanings, a particular boon for a woman whose life has been invested with so much single-minded political meaning that her legacy had become impervious to change. Finally, it also forced the recognition that, as Michael Erben suggests, the “approximations of a real life equal the configurations that are the biographical subject; [and] only by means of an endless rectification of our configurations [can] the inexhaustible resource of biography...become increasingly known to us.”⁴⁶

With this last sentiment in mind, it is ultimately my aim in this thesis to contribute some valuable insight to the dynamic, ongoing reconfiguration of the “tantalizingly”, and perhaps necessarily, incomplete story of the life of Eleanor Marx.

Chapter One:

Defining Terms and Times: Concepts and Contexts

This chapter will discuss the intellectual, social, political, and cultural context(s) germane to the Woman Question which Eleanor both influenced and was influenced by. Such a discussion must necessarily include not only a definition of what is meant by the Woman Question, but also an examination of the various events, discourses, and movements implicated in this multivalent—and highly charged—debate, beginning in the late eighteenth century and spanning an array of socio-political tendencies and developments, including the revival of British socialism, the emergence of the “New Woman”, and the birth of a distinctly British school of sexual science commonly referred to as sexology. Explicit discussion of Eleanor within the following pages will be minimal, as the focus is to explore the larger discourses and events that bore upon her views; Eleanor’s specific relation to what follows will be traced out fully in Chapter Three.

It is important to clarify what is meant by the Woman Question. The term itself is somewhat of a misnomer as it was not merely one question; rather, it was a rubric used to identify and encompass an array of competing debates that emerged during the late-Victorian period to define, debate, and contest “proper” gender roles and relations.¹ However, it is important to note that discussions of gender-based and sexual relations have a much longer socio-cultural history in Britain; as Roy Porter and Lesley Hall point out in their study *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain*, sexual doctrines were integral to the monumental cultural wars being waged in Britain (and

indeed throughout Europe) from the 1790s onwards², and were part of larger political, explicitly class-based contests over social order and organization during Britain's economic transition from mercantilism to industrial capitalism³. Echoing Foucault, Rita Felski argues that discussions of sex and sexuality—that notion that one's sexual behaviour constitutes the truth of the self and identity—have consequently come to be seen as a central category of modernity, a key to understanding the ways in which individuals perceive themselves as modern subjects.⁴

Consequently, it has been argued that the sexual discourses of the nineteenth century can only be understood through an examination of developments that took place in the eighteenth. It was in the eighteenth century that, according to Porter and Hall,

The politico-religious upheavals...and the urbane ideology of Enlightenment made for outlooks on sex that were secular in tendency and increasingly adapted to the notion of erotic enjoyment. Mercantilist doctrines underlining the national desirability of populousness, the new cult of motherhood, ameliorating economic prospects, and an emphasis on the family as the linchpin of the community all encouraged the institution of matrimony and promoted the notion that happy, fruitful sex within marriage was a personal blessing and a social cement. Against a swirling, kaleidoscopic background of sexual precepts and practices, sexual writings during the 'long eighteenth century' adopted as their central dogma a belief in the pleasures of procreation—the idea that the sexual drives should be fulfilled and would best find release within conjugal relations in circumstances likely to produce offspring.⁵

However, the end of the 'long eighteenth century' also saw the publication of Thomas Robert Malthus' *Essay on the Principle of Population* in 1798, in which Malthus argued that human sexual instincts were so overwhelming and unstoppable that they must be actively regulated, for if left unchecked they would lead to immoderate procreation (particularly among the lower classes), which would result in overpopulation and, by extension, famine, disease, and war. Malthus' thesis was highly influential; Porter and Hall maintain that it rewrote (and subsequently underwrote) the agenda of British sexual

debates. Specifically, it gave ample ammunition to moralists and Evangelical Christians who, convinced of the inevitability of overpopulation, “no longer saw the slightest reason for advertising the pleasures of procreation” and instead insisted that what was needed were “sermons in temperance and alternative mores—the pleasures of domestic affection, companionship, self-improvement, education, thrift, character-building and piety.” Consequently, “sexual self-restraint now became a central virtue”. Marriage in particular became “the true goal for the virtuous”, and was posited within early nineteenth century sex advice literature as being “peculiarly adapted to the position of the human race”⁶.

Given developments during the “long eighteenth century”, one can trace the sources of the Victorians’ notorious sexual anxieties; one can also hear how later discussions of marriage, reproduction, and sexuality reverberated within the writings of their Victorian predecessors. However, the Victorian period marked a completely new era in British sexual politics. Despite popular opinion, the Victorians’ views on sex were by no means monolithic, and cannot be characterized simply as repressive or prudish, as Foucault and other historians have amply demonstrated. Indeed, it was during the Victorian era that sex was first discussed and contested publicly by an array of stakeholders, and the period saw a proliferation of both discourses and laws aimed to define and regulate sexual behaviour and relationships. As Porter and Hall note, “Texts multiplied, conflicts grew, and issues hitherto present but subdued—questions of professional policing of lay knowledge, the authority of the medical profession, the involvement of the courts—were energetically discussed in the public domain.”⁷

Much public sexual anxiety during the Victorian era was focused on the great “social evil” of the era, prostitution. According to Porter and Hall, “In the 1850s

unrespectable sex was highly visible. Harlots of all ranges paraded in public places, offering outrageous ‘displays of incessant indecency’, leading to ‘familiarity of the young with depraving influence and conversation’; and yet, ironically, in light of public cries for the protection of wives and children from awareness of this scourge, Porter and Hall point out that “accounts of its existence entered respectable homes in the pages of the press” as sex scandals were the staples of not only the so-called “yellow press”, but also increasingly that of standard-bearers such as *The Times*.⁸

Discussions of prostitution and its causes and “cures” incited further discourse on venereal disease. Venereal diseases, along with those who suffered from them and those who studied them, were stigmatized within society at large and within the medical profession itself as a consequence of moral opprobrium; indeed, as a result of the “contorted moral agenda around venereal disease”⁹, the question of preventive measures, even in the context of sanitary reform became highly problematic. However, one must also recognize the later influence of eugenics on discussions and perceptions of venereal disease, as the “racial science” fanned fears of national and social degeneracy through “contaminated breeding”. It was inevitably left to the state to handle the question of how to regulate public sex and prevent the transmission of disease; under the guise of safeguarding the fitness of the country’s armed forces, parliament passed the first Contagious Diseases Act in 1864, which allowed for the arrest, examination (without consent) and, if deemed necessary, forcible hospitalization of all women suspected of being prostitutes. As the Acts did not apply to those men suspected of accessing prostitutes’ services, they bore almost exclusively upon women, working-class women in

particular, and were subsequently responsible for the definition and stigmatization of a distinct prostitute class.¹⁰

Consequently, the Contagious Diseases Acts¹¹, along with the passage of the Divorce Act of 1857, which established that adultery committed by a husband, as opposed to wife, was no matrimonial crime unless exacerbated by other offences, were viewed by contemporaries (and some present-day historians) as representing the apogee of the enshrinement of the sexual double standard in law¹². Indeed, these two developments and the institutions they sought to regulate, namely marriage and prostitution, became central to future discussions on the Woman Question; among socialists and feminists in particular, they were even treated as parallel institutions.

However, Porter and Hall argue that, despite the seemingly repressive regulation of sexual behaviour, and particularly that of women, “the triumph of the respectable Victorian male was far from obviously assured.” They note that under the Divorce Law women were afforded the right to petition for the dissolution of marriage, even if on unequal terms; additionally, there were proposals to extend the franchise to women, to grant married women the right to own (and, importantly, retain) property as well as grant them custody of their children in matrimonial disputes, and to widen the grounds of judicial separation, if not divorce. Thus, it can be argued that the vocal assertions of female difference and inferiority that were central to the subsequent, late-Victorian debate on the Woman Question were in fact attempts to establish threatened male superiority upon a scientific foundation, constituting “desperate efforts to cling to a pinnacle increasingly under siege”.¹³ It is important to recognize that, as a result of the vociferous opposition to the Contagious Diseases Acts, there emerged new and powerful

movements led and dominated by women, most notably those concerned with “social purity”, which became extremely influential in public sexual politics and discourse, and whose views will be discussed later in this chapter. Thus, while some historians have argued that the late-Victorian debate on the Woman Question implicitly served to justify and protect the hegemonic, dominant position of men as well as shore up support for heterosexual monogamy in marriage, others have noted that it also marks one of the first times in British history that women themselves were able to publicly contest and participate in both theoretical and practical discussions of issues that directly affected them; some have even argued that these debates mark the emergence of a distinctly, and self-consciously, feminist discourse. Indeed, an examination of the various socio-political and intellectual movements that emerged during the latter decades of the nineteenth century which played a role in the debate the Woman Question demonstrates the interconnections between the politics of sex and sexuality and broader social, political, and economic contests over class and gender positionality during the British *fin-de-siècle*.

The first movement to consider was one with which Eleanor was intimately involved, and with which she is most strongly associated, namely the British socialist revival, which emerged during the economic depression of the 1870s and 1880s. It was during this period of stagnation that the human cost of capitalism became apparent in the form of burgeoning urban poverty among the working classes, most notably in the streets and slums of the nation’s capital. London’s East End in particular was demonized as a “netherworld” that bred “disease, ignorance, madness, and crime”.¹⁴ It is perhaps unsurprising that the decline in material living standards led to demands for substantive

social, political, and economic change, and, thanks to the efforts of “urban investigators” like Henry Mayhew and Charles Booth and journalists like W. T. Stead, members of the middle class in particular were motivated by what Beatrice Webb described in the first volume of her autobiography as a “a new consciousness of [the] sin...that the industrial organization which had yielded rent, interest and profits on a huge scale...had failed to provide a decent livelihood and tolerable conditions for a majority of the inhabitants of Great Britain”.¹⁵

It was during the “crisis of the 1880s” that socialism as a populist movement found wide-scale expression. British socialism was quite ideologically diverse, with aims, claims and strategies that were anything but unified, as can be demonstrated by an examination of the platforms of the two parties in which Eleanor held membership at various times, namely the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and the Socialist League. Britain’s only Marxist party, the SDF, promoted a “scientific” form of socialism which it believed provided a “sophisticated rationalization of existing society.”¹⁶ Its platform consisted of core Marxist principles, such as the labour theory of value, class exploitation, and class struggle; however, it also incorporated Ferdinand Lassalle’s emphasis on the role of the traditional state in transforming society, along with a utilitarian view of human nature which maintained that human behaviour is governed primarily by the reasoned consideration of how to avoid pain and maximize pleasure.¹⁷ Conversely, the Socialist League, under the leadership of the highly respected poet-craftsman William Morris, “affected a remarkable marriage between Ruskin and Marx, romanticism and rationalism, moralism and materialism, and utopianism and scientific socialism”.¹⁸ Drawing upon both Marxism and “native” traditions, Morris formulated a

compelling critique of the “civilization” of industrial capitalism and its “leisure class, machine tyranny, destruction of nature and general vulgarity.”¹⁹ In its stead, Morris presented the socialist Society of the Future as one where social institutions would fully express the human capacity for fellowship and pleasure in creative work²⁰. However, the Socialist League’s existence proved short-lived; within a few years of its creation, it found itself plagued by internal divisions between socialists and anarchists.

It is important to recognize that the historical relevance of the socialist revival of the 1880s is not solely political; indeed, I argue that it served a larger social purpose by serving as a “locus of discontent” for disaffected members of the middle class, particularly those numbering among the new professionals. According to Eric Hobsbawm, the socialist revival represents “the middle-class’ reaction to the breakdown of mid-Victorian certainties [and] the rise of new strata, new structure, new policies, within British capitalism.”²¹ Thus, socialist organizations provided an alternate community for like-minded individuals, (who not-so-incidentally enjoyed similar class and educational backgrounds) and a feeling of belonging among those alienated from the “mainstream” of social life.

However, this feeling of belonging was not universally enjoyed: as numerous historians have pointed out, British socialism was influenced, in varying degrees, by the same gender stereotypes that permeated mainstream late-Victorian culture; its adherence to existing gender norms and roles ultimately contributed to a sexual division of labour that placed limitations on women’s participation within the movement. Although historians like Jane Lewis assert that women were able to participate as speakers, organizers, workers, and fundraisers, evidence suggests that women were largely

excluded from meaningful leadership roles.²² Using Eleanor Marx's life as an example, one can observe how intelligent women were relegated to administrative work within the various socialist organizations.

Nevertheless, it was within the socialist movement that one of the most nuanced theoretical renderings of the Woman Question was developed. Admittedly, the socialist position on the Woman Question is not unified or consistent; moreover, within the movement there existed varying degrees of willingness to discuss the "sex question" alongside the "class question". It is important here to note that, beyond the writings of Edward Carpenter²³, British socialists willing to debate the Woman Question largely "borrowed" arguments from emanating from classical Marxist theory and the German movement; consequently, much like the arguments put forth by sexologists influenced by their continental counterparts, socialist arguments were perceived as "foreign" by British audiences and thus viewed with suspicion. It took some effort on behalf of Eleanor and like-minded comrades to "naturalize" these views for an English audience.

Within the writings of Marx and Engels, parallels were drawn between the position of the married bourgeois woman to that of the prostitute in such works as the *Communist Manifesto* (1848); however, it was not until the publication of Engels' *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884) that one finds a more in-depth articulation of the connection between capitalism and the structuration of sexual social relations. It was this work, alongside August Bebel's essay, *Woman and Socialism* (1879), which was to have the greatest impact on nineteenth century socialist discourse on the Woman Question throughout Europe. As Eleanor incorporated Bebel's theories into her own writings, I will focus here on *Origin*.

Using “evidence from contemporary primitive societies” and anthropological data available to him at the time, Engels argued that changes in the family accorded to changes in the ownership of means of production²⁴. He maintained that the development of the family unit centered on monogamous marriage was the result of private ownership of property; for Engels, the institution of monogamy was conducive to the goals of capitalism, in that it ensured that the inheritance of property proceeded along bloodlines²⁵. In tracing the joint ascendancy of capitalism and monogamy, Engels believed that society had in fact passed through an era of pre-capitalist matriarchy which had been quashed due to the development of both these institutions; however, it was monogamy which was held responsible for not only the subordination of women, but also the acceptance of an ideology of male supremacy.

Nevertheless, monogamy, like capitalism, was framed as the necessary basis for a transformation of sexual relations; yet within a socialist society monogamy would not end, but would realize its full potential as the ultimate avatar of sex love²⁶, the true and “natural” relation of men and women. In freeing marriage from economic dependence, sex love too would be freed, and sex love, being “by its very nature exclusive”, would itself reinforce monogamy. This “fact” ultimately led Engels to argue that, under socialism, marriages would become indissoluble²⁷.

However, as Jeffrey Weeks points out, among other weaknesses this theory did not address how future socialist societies would deal with the possessive character of such relations, which had been so heavily critiqued by Fourier and the “utopian” socialists. Weeks further argues that Engels’ failure to explore the social and historical

determinants of (hetero)sexual and emotional behaviour underscores one of the key assumptions of historical materialism:

Engels, following contemporary views, assumed that the ‘personal’ was natural and given, and that once the constraints of a society dominated by the pursuit of profit were removed, private life would spontaneously adjust itself to a higher stage of civilization. There is no concept, that is, of the need for conscious struggle to transform interpersonal relations as part of the transformation necessary for the construction of a socialist society.”²⁸

Indeed, when reading Marx and Engels’ writings on sex and society, it is important to recall that they did not argue that sex relations would become a more public affair. Rather, they maintained that “communism was the means of enabling every individual to enjoy a far richer personal life than was possible under capitalism because the old economic subordination will no longer exist. It will transform the relations between the sexes into a *purely private matter* which concerns only the persons involved and into which society has no right to intervene”²⁹. Moreover, as Snitow, Stansell, and Thompson note, neither questioned the desirability of female chastity, marital fidelity, heterosexual romance, or the nuclear family—all cardinal bourgeois values³⁰.

Finally, within the writings of both Marx and Engels, true sex love did not extend beyond heterosexuals. Weeks writes that Engels “abhorred” homosexuality, and that he believed “its expressions [were] gross, unnatural vices symptomatic of the failure of sex love” which ultimately served to degrade women³¹. Therefore, as a result of the “narrowness of sexual theory in Marxian thought [and] its implicit acceptance of Victorian norms”, Snitow et al. argue that the British and American socialist movements were indelibly marked with “a sexual conservatism...that differed little from that of the respectable classes.”³²

Also posing a significant yet different challenge to established sexual-social relations was the emergence of the “New Woman” as a new social, political, economic and cultural demographic. When discussing the New Woman, one must acknowledge that the term implies both a popular cultural construction³³ and a socio-economic phenomenon. Historians have linked the rise of the New Woman as a social category to the “problem” of “surplus women”, a consequence of the Industrial Revolution and, as Martha Vicinus suggests, the consolidation of separate spheres ideology.³⁴ According to Deborah Epstein Nord,

the decade of the 1880s...produced a generation of women who imagined, and for a time lived out, the possibility of social and economic independence. London was the site of these efforts, and the metropolis served as the very material for their work, whether literary, philanthropic, or activist. Born in the late 1850s and early 1860s, these middle-class women...attempted to live outside the sphere of family...Whether thought of as ‘new women’ or ‘glorified spinsters,’ they were united by no single vocation or ideology but rather by their revolt against the constraints of bourgeois family life.³⁵

However, Judith Walkowitz argues that, in reality, “[t]he independent, ‘advanced’ woman constituted a small percentage of the female population in London”, and that her numbers have been exaggerated by the “public vitality and the discourses surrounding her”³⁶.

Nevertheless, there are a number of characteristics used to classify and define New Women upon which most historians agree. First, the New Woman was a largely middle class, largely urban phenomenon; according to Nord, for these women “the city...represented the antithesis of those private and protected spaces that middle-class women had traditionally occupied.”³⁷ Second, the New Woman was usually a “working woman”; however, this pronouncement should not obscure her class background, as the New Woman’s choice of occupation is highly relevant and rooted in her middle class

moorings. Journalism and theatre in particular held strong appeal; Roberts suggests a number of reasons for their allure:

both journalism and theatre offered women paid work, new means of expression, financial independence, and cultural visibility....[They] also shared a certain disrepute: both were considered seedy, marginal professions...As professions, both were relatively accessible, open to upwardly mobile, cultural marginal persons (like the new women)...Finally, in both the worlds of journalism and theatre, playacting and performance were acceptable forms of behaviour...Here they could—and did—act out the instability of gender identity, moving beyond a conventional life by exposing domestic ideals as conditional and volatile. They accomplished this kind of denaturalizing work through a series of disruptive acts including playacting, mimicry, parody, satire, hyperbole, and fantasy. In simultaneously assuming conflicting identities, they underlined the performative, as opposed to the fixed nature of gender norms.³⁸

Moreover, both occupations served to embody the New Woman's status as an outsider: as journalist or actress, she was an observer, peripheral to the activity of public life.

Third, New Women frequently, and self-consciously, expressed a desire for existential meaning. According to Walkowitz, “[t]he material and cultural features of late-Victorian metropolitan life helped to inspire a range of explorations into consciousness and identity”;³⁹ thus, the social climate encouraged New Women to “define a ‘personality’ apart from social convention—beyond their otherness to men—without getting trivialized or demonized by a set of stereotypes.”⁴⁰ Roberts offers a compelling argument, noting that,

while the New Woman often held feminist views, her primary goal was...somehow to matter...Linked to the twentieth century cult of personality, which swung attention away from moral qualities such as sacrifice, and self-denial, and emphasized instead self-development and self-fulfillment, the New Woman wanted a life of her own beyond traditional domesticity. In short, the New Woman became a symbol of rebellion against the stale Victorian truisms of bourgeois liberal culture.⁴¹

This sentiment surfaces most tellingly in the writings of New Women struggling between their desire for a life of “meaningful work” versus their longing for marriage and a family of their own.

Finally, and most likely strongly related to the previous point, the New Woman was often a political activist, and was involved in a number of emergent social movements. Richardson and Willis list among the New Woman’s political involvements changes in marriage laws, free love, pre-marital chastity for men and women, free access to contraception, rational dress, ending White Slavery, reform in treatment of victims of sexual assault, equal rights in education and employment, and the vote⁴²; to this list should be added socialism, social purity, and philanthropic campaigns. Such overt political involvements marked these women as marginal; according to Nord, by adapting critical political stances and social positions peripheral to the configurations of their class and gender, New Women were positioned at odds not only with social conventions, but also with their families.⁴³

And yet, the New Woman’s political and social location did not necessarily render her amenable to feminism. At this time it would be relevant to discuss what “feminism” meant, and who the feminists were, in the late-nineteenth century. Within twenty- and twenty-first century histories, feminism of this period is treated as synonymous with the so-called “woman’s movement”⁴⁴, an amorphous rubric that embraces groups as disparate as the National Vigilance Association and the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Society. According to Nancy Cott, the nineteenth century woman’s movement emphasized “the character and conditioning that women of all sorts were presumed to share by virtue of attachments to home, family, and childrearing”, and

that this mobilization of “women’s own ground of expected domesticity” was manipulated to advance “[the] goal of equality between the sexes: equality of access to education, a single sexual standard, equal suffrage.”⁴⁵

Indeed, it was through the subtle subversion of sex stereotypes that women were able to challenge Victorian ideals about a woman’s place, in particular those established by “separate spheres” ideology. Such a challenge was needed to facilitate opportunities for women’s fuller political participation, as middle-class women who traversed the public sphere risked attack or accusations of non-respectability, both of which were significant (and effective) constraints upon their freedom of movement, association and action.⁴⁶ As Lucy Bland notes, “the term ‘public woman’ was used interchangeably with the terms prostitute, streetwalker and actress; they all implied that the public world excluded respectable women. The ‘public’ was reserved for men and those women who ‘immorally serviced them...Indeed, the term ‘public’ was shocking in its juxtaposition with ‘woman’, the very antithesis of ‘public’.”⁴⁷ Thus, the presence of “respectable” women in public served to blur the boundaries of acceptable femininity, smudging the carefully maintained line between the good and the fallen, and thereby confusing class-based categories of acceptable eroticization.⁴⁸

By contrast, as Mary Louise Roberts notes, whereas “Feminists in this period often grounded their demands for legal and political rights precisely in their roles as domestic wives and mothers...the new women...only rarely invoked a domestic self in their writings...As a group, such new women sought and created independent lives without necessarily understanding their quest in the feminist terms of their day.”⁴⁹ Indeed, the New Woman enjoyed a highly ambivalent relationship to what has been

termed “female culture”, as she often found it difficult to reconcile the goals of her work with the dictates of femininity, often strategically identifying with masculine forms instead.⁵⁰

However, a great number of similarities can be found in the arguments and writings of feminists and New Women on issues related to the Woman Question, particularly in their views on marriage, which very few advocated abandoning; divisions most often occurred on the issue of whether or not women possessed sexual desires and drives. The nineteenth century women’s movement’s position on sex and gender relations was admittedly not unified; however, there are a few recurring motifs that can be identified which, to a greater or lesser extent, echo views articulated by women involved with the “social purity” campaign mentioned earlier in this chapter. Like the social purity campaigners, feminists like Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy⁵¹ were primarily motivated by a desire to transform public and private morality, especially in terms of sexual relations between men and women. They took particular issue with what they perceived to be the sexual double standard of Victorian society, which prescribed different standards of morality for the sexes, and argued that reformed sexual relations would transform the public world for the benefit of all. These reforms would include not only the suppression of “public vice” such as prostitution, but also the improvement of “private” institutions like marriage, which feminists maintained ought to be an egalitarian union based on spiritual, as opposed to physical, grounds. Social purity activists justified their activity through claims to feminine moral superiority, which was premised on a disavowal of the existence of sexual feeling in women. To this end, they relied on statist and philanthropic intervention to assist them in their ‘domestication’ and

‘civilization’ of the world of men; however, science at times also appeared to social purity feminists as “a potential ally in clarifying what were perceived as murky distortions of truth imposed by a male-dominated social order.”⁵²

However, the discourse which most openly dealt with sexuality, and from which many New Women, feminists, and socialists borrowed (albeit with varying degrees of critical awareness), was that of sexology. While sex had been a concern of the medical profession since the early Victorian period, and while scientists on the Continent, most notably Germany, had been studying sex “scientifically” at least since the mid-century, it was not until the publication of Darwin’s *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* in 1871, wherein he stressed the importance of sexual reproduction to the evolutionary process, that sex became a (somewhat) acceptable subject of scientific study in Britain. From the 1880s onward, within British scientific studies sex was no longer treated as a question of pathology or disease, but as a “natural” phenomenon; however, as Porter and Hall note, the science of sex was regarded for some time as eccentric and marginal, and consequently few engaged in such work.⁵³

Although sexology has experienced a “renaissance” in historical interest, incited works such as Michel Foucault’s monumental *History of Sexuality*, contextual questions about the field and its power and influence remain unanswered. As Rita Felski notes,

What is missing from Foucault’s version is any substantive account of the messy and complicated interaction, conflict and negotiation between the discourses of sexual science, other aspects of nineteenth century culture and the experiential realities of human subjects. How influential or marginal a field was sexology and how much power did sexologists wield? Did they simply impose forms of sexual classification on their patients, or were their findings significantly altered by their interactions with these patients? How much impact did the often inaccessible works of sexology actually have on popular attitudes to sex in the nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries? To what extent were the findings of sexology accepted or rejected in other areas such as art, journalism or the law?⁵⁴

Nevertheless, sexology provided “a corpus of evidence and theory that could provide a basis for very different agendas”, which was subsequently “raided by both feminists and anti-feminists, social reformers and social purists.” As such, sexology was a fluid discourse that could be simultaneously liberatory or oppressive, depending upon its use; however, at least in intention, sexologists attempted “to apply the rigours of scientific rationality to a highly emotive area” and “provided a radically new way to make, unmake and remake sexual knowledge.”⁵⁵ Thus, as Felski asserts, it would be wrong to “reduce sexology to a repressive disciplinary apparatus for the administration of psyches as it is to underwrite the self-description of sexologists as heroic pioneers aiding the cause of human progress.”⁵⁶ Indeed, while some feminist historians have identified sexology as part of the backlash against women’s growing autonomy and independence, pointing to its professional domination by men and its detrimental influence on attitudes toward female same-sex love; others have problematized this position, noting that sexologists like Havelock Ellis held relatively progressive views on women’s rights and were often marginal figures rather than representatives of an all-powerful medical establishment.⁵⁷

The first important text of the new British sexology was Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thomson’s *The Evolution of Sex*, which was published in 1889 as the first volume in Havelock Ellis’s Contemporary Science Series. As Porter and Hall note, *Evolution* most likely enjoyed a wider circulation than other sexological texts as it was a “cheap volume of popular science”. Ellis himself “found ‘the book was well received and...[enjoyed] a high reputation and many readers.’” The book’s influence on the

common reader is suggested by a contemporary's comment that 'multitudes of young men in Scotland and England owed their souls to the teachings of Patrick Geddes'. Similarly, within the field the book would become highly influential, although the contemporary medico-scientific establishment was largely dismissive; Porter and Hall report that "a colleague of Geddes's at [University College] Dundee reportedly remarked: 'I always stood up for you old chap...you know, the book on Sex. But I always told them you'd given up that sort of thing.'"⁵⁸ However, existing evidence suggests that the British medical establishment was negatively predisposed to sexology from the outset as they believed it to be a "dubious continental import": upon the English translation of Richard von Krafft-Ebing's monumental study of sexual deviancy, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, a *British Medical Journal* reviewer in 1893 wrote that while "many morally disgusting subjects...have to be studied by the doctor and the jurists...the less such subjects are brought before the public, the better."⁵⁹

Perhaps one of the reasons why Geddes and Thomson's arguments themselves were initially so objectionable was due to the fact that they were operating from an unconventional understanding of the relationship between the social and the scientific. As Porter and Hall note, Geddes and Thomson "viewed human sexuality as a 'fundamental unity underlying the Protean phenomena of sex and reproduction'". Based on their study of "the lower forms of creation", they maintained that the sexes had followed different evolutionary paths, endowing them with different skills and thus different roles to play in society; according to Geddes and Thomson, "what was decided among the prehistoric protozoa cannot be annulled by Act of Parliament". Nevertheless, they viewed the sexes as being "complementary and mutually dependent", with "each

being higher in its own way”: for example, whereas “Man thinks more, woman feels more”. Interestingly, however, such observations led Geddes and Thomson to argue in favour of a greater public role for women, and argued that social order and functioning was dependent upon increased co-operation between the sexes.⁶⁰

However, it was Havelock Ellis who emerged as the pre-eminent spokesman of British sexology, despite the fact that unlike Geddes and Thomson, Ellis lacked well-recognized (and well-respected) scientific credentials⁶¹. Surprisingly, in light of this fact as well as the self-consciously radical nature of his work, through which he sought to transform gender relations and perceptions of sexual behaviour, he was embraced by the medico-scientific establishment; his monumental *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1899-1910, 1928) was widely touted as being the result of serious scholarly labours, and commended by his professional peers for its moral earnestness and “honesty of purpose”⁶².

Ellis’ *Studies* drew upon an enormous variety of sources, from medical writings, the research of anthropologists, the work of biologists, classical and contemporary literature, and the self-disclosure of individuals about their own sexual experiences; as such, it marked an innovation in social scientific research, particularly in its validation of experiential knowledge. Within the pages of his *Studies*, Ellis argued that all sexual behaviour lay somewhere upon a continuum, “that the ‘perverse’ often merely exaggerated ‘normal tendencies’”; thus, he encouraged liberal toleration of diversity, and claimed it to be a high virtue.⁶³

While Ellis is primarily remembered for his contribution to studies of the “sexually anomalous” and his amazingly thorough taxonomy of sexual behaviour, Ellis.

like most intellectuals of his generation, was somewhat of a polymath, and was a great supporter of both socialism (through his participation in the Fellowship of the New Life, which later became the Fabian Society) and women's rights. With respect to the latter, like Geddes and Thomson he recognized essential biological differences between the sexes and yet supported a changed and more egalitarian relationship among them. However, he was unique among British sexologists (and intellectuals on the whole) in advocating the "erotic rights of woman" as a result of the great importance he accorded what he called the "play-function of sex".⁶⁴ Ellis' recognition of sexual desire among women did place him at odds with his Victorian peers; however, this particular aspect of his thought would greatly influence Edwardian men and women, ranging from D. H. Lawrence to Stella Browne.

Thus, although, as Felski observes, "to speak of sexology is surely to invoke...sepia-tinted images of earnest Victorian scholars labouring over lists of sexual perversions with the taxonomical zeal of an entomologist examining insects", and while the actual findings and conclusions of the field were diverse, often contradictory, and largely marginal to the medico-scientific establishment of the time, sexology is an important movement as it provided valuable discursive ammunition to protagonists on all sides of the Woman Question debate, as it was a mutable discourse highly amenable to political manipulation. Moreover, given the impact of Darwinian thought on late-Victorian intellectual life and socio-political movements, any argument smacking of the scientific endowed its proponent with immediate (if contestable) legitimacy. Finally, sexology's revelations served as an "incitement" to further discourse in an era already deeply engaged with questions of gender and sexuality, and historians have well-

documented attempts among the relatively educated and articulate to discuss questions of sex and gender through the formation of small, relatively informal groups drawn among networks of existing friends and acquaintances, such as the Men and Women's Club, the Legitimation League, and the aforementioned Fellowship of the New Life.

Clearly, the amorphously-defined Woman Question was a highly-contested, unsettled, distinctly public debate which involved a diverse array of participants from varying social, political, and cultural backgrounds. Protagonists drew upon numerous intellectual supports to legitimate their arguments, simultaneously building upon and breaking away from pre-existing, established British discourses on sex and sexuality, at times even borrowing from controversial continental sources. However, it is also notable that, while holding divergent political views (and even this fact is debatable), participants in the Woman Question were all drawing upon the same discursive constructions of sex and gender, ranging from the scientific to the moral, although the combinations and presentations they created did indeed vary and shift over time. Indeed, upon analysis, one can find numerous similarities among the writings of all these protagonists. One could further argue that what differentiates their views is the way in which they framed their views within the larger context of their divergent social and political aims. This observation further illustrates the interconnections between these discursive spaces, and between the politics of sex(uality) and those of class and gender.

Given the cacophony of competing voices, shifting positions, and internally contradictory discourses, it is therefore impossible to speak of a unified "Victorian" perspective against which one can measure the conservatism or radicalism of a movement

or an individual's views; thus, one can only explore similarities and differences between these competing arguments as they manifest themselves in the writings of individuals, and analyze and hypothesize reasons for convergences and divergences. This assertion has definite implications for an analysis of Eleanor's writings on the Woman Question. In demonstrating the mutability of discourse on this issue, one can trace how her involvement within various social, cultural and political movements informed her position within the debate, and can enable one to better understand and explore tensions and contradictions within her writings.

Ultimately, however, we cannot establish with any degree of certainty or accuracy what impact this discursive melee had upon the actions of the state or the beliefs of individuals. Beyond the enactment of well-known laws such as the Contagious Diseases Acts, the Divorce Act, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, it would be impossible to trace a direct correlation between public discourse and state regulatory activity. Similarly, the impact of these competing discourses upon the views of "ordinary" Britons cannot be known with any certainty; indeed, "posterity condescends if it imagines that the [publicly debated and circulated] ideas...were the sole shaping force of sexual knowledge even of the individuals who read [the] texts"⁶⁵. Indeed, an analysis of socio-cultural factors alone cannot explain how individuals develop their opinions on public issues, particularly those which politicize identity and intimate relations. One must also examine and account for the influence of personal factors, specifically the ways in which private life intersects with the public. It is only through an examination of the complex, dynamic interplay of the broad and the specific, the collective and the unique, that one can approximate an understanding of how individuals develop political consciousness.

Thus, in order to understand how Eleanor's views on the Woman Question were shaped, it is necessary to examine how the formative events of her personal life, as well as her unique social/historical position as the daughter of Karl Marx, interacted with the public discourses and movements in which she was involved. Chapter Two's biographical narrative therefore seeks to demonstrate how her unique experiencing of the various demographic and discursive spaces she inhabited—specifically, as a New Woman, a socialist, and a member of London's "bohemian" community—affected her political positioning. Moreover, it could be argued that her ability to inhabit these spaces simultaneously, albeit with considerable difficulty at times, further illustrates the tenuous interconnectedness among socio-political projects striving to affect public change.

Chapter Two:

“We must each of us, after all, live our own life: A brief biography of Eleanor Marx

Early Life

“Yesterday between six and seven o’clock in the morning my wife was delivered of a *bona fide* traveler—unfortunately of the ‘sex’ par excellence...had it been a male the matter would be more acceptable.”¹ These were the words used by Karl Marx to announce the birth of his sixth child (and fourth daughter), Jenny Julia Eleanor, to his close friend and colleague Friedrich Engels.² At the time of Eleanor’s birth, on 16 January 1855, Marx’s only son to survive beyond infancy, eight year-old Edgar, was slowly succumbing to tuberculosis; he would die in Marx’s arms in March 1855. As Chushichi Tsuzuki notes, Marx “felt keenly the loss of his male heir” and “almost broke down”: in a letter to Engels, Marx, no stranger to personal tragedy and misery, stated that it was only through the death of his son that he came to understand “what real misfortune is”.³ Subsequently, as Tsuzuki asserts, Eleanor came to fill the void created by the loss of a child (and a son at that) in her father’s life and mind.⁴ Indeed, Marx is known to have later ‘joked’ with his wife that the girl’s gender must have been an accident, and would come to form such a strong bond with Eleanor that he would later claim that while his eldest daughter Jenny was most like him, “Tussy⁵ is me”.⁶

Eleanor was the only Marx child born a British subject, and the only Marx who spoke English as her first language. Also unlike her siblings, she was spared the dreadful poverty and constant upheaval that had thus far characterized Marx family life. Since 1843, the Marxes had either been forced or had willingly moved from Paris to Brussels

and Cologne, then back to Paris again, before finally settling in London in 1849.

However, settling in London provided no respite from instability, for the Marxes were desperately, and chronically, poor, and were forced to live in small squalid tenements whose meager rental fees seemed to them a small fortune. Evicted from three flats in less than two years, the Marxes took up residency at 28 Dean Street in the Soho parish of St. Anne, the “squalid and noisy quarter inhabited by poor foreigners”.⁷ in December 1850.

Like her siblings, however, the infant Eleanor also struggled with illness, and for the first years of her life, her health was in constant question. Nevertheless, the child seems to have charmed everyone who met her acquaintance. Her mother proclaimed that “[i]t is true that there can hardly be a more loveable child, so pretty, simple and good-humoured.”⁸ German exile and Social Democratic Party (SPD) cofounder Wilhelm Liebknecht described the baby as “a merry little thing, as round as a ball and like cream and roses.”⁹ Apparently, Eleanor also served as the family’s diplomat within their neighbourhood. The Marxes’ domestic servant, Helena “Lenchen” Demeuth, recalled that Eleanor’s reputation as hostess was so widespread that the Marx family was known in their neighbourhood to both children and adults alike as “the Tussies.” From an early age, then, it is clear that Eleanor was attracted to public life.

Yet it was Karl Marx who appears to be most taken by the young girl. Writing to Engels in 1857, Marx exclaimed that “The baby is a remarkably witty fellow, and insists that she has two brains”.¹⁰ According to Liebknecht, Eleanor was, from an early age, “restless, curious, wanting to know everything and constantly widening the horizon of her mind”.¹¹ Eleanor soon became Karl’s constant companion¹², and he discussed religion¹³ and politics with her at an early age. As a result, Eleanor’s political activism began early.

Convinced Abraham Lincoln could not do without her advice on the conduct of the American Civil War, Eleanor wrote long letters to the President for Marx to read and post. Later, at age eight, she shifted her focus to nationalist struggles on the Continent, and wrote to her great uncle Lion Philips on the Polish Insurrection in 1863: “I hear from Papa that you are a great politician, so we are sure to agree. How do you think Poland is getting on? I always hold up a finger for the Poles those brave little fellows.”¹⁴ After the Irish Insurrection of 1867, Eleanor took up the Irish Republican cause, and quickly forged a friendship with Engels’ common-law partner, factory worker and “Fenian sister”, Lydia “Lizzie” Burns. As she grew older, she took an active role in researching, editing, and translating her father’s works, particularly *Capital*, upon which he was working at the time. Indeed, in a certain sense Eleanor grew up alongside *Capital*—or rather, it grew up alongside and through her.

However, according to Jenny Marx, the most striking aspect of Eleanor’s character was her love of telling and hearing stories. Tsuzuki writes that Eleanor was quite absorbed in her own world of imagination. She opened a “museum of curiosities” in her room, for which she sold tickets at various prices as “sole proprietor and manager”.¹⁵ Her “Confession”¹⁶, composed at age 10, gives further insight into her developing personality, of which the following entries are perhaps the most telling:

Your favourite virtue	Truth
Your favourite virtue in man	Courage
Your favourite virtue in woman	(no answer)
Your chief characteristic	Curiosity
Your favourite hero	Garibaldi
Your favourite heroine	Lady Jane Grey
Your favourite maxim	‘Go ahead’ ¹⁷

As he had done with his other daughters, Marx read to Eleanor the whole of Homer as well as the *Nibelungenlied*, *Gudrun*, *Don Quixote* and *The Arabian Nights*. On her sixth birthday, Marx gave his daughter her first novel, Frederick Marryat's *Peter Simple*, which recounted the eponymous naval captain's heroic actions at sea. Inspired by the tale, Eleanor declared that she would dress up like a boy and join a man-of-war—but was dissuaded by her father, who informed her that, “while ‘it might very well be done...they must say nothing about it to anyone until all plans were very well matured.’”¹⁸

While Eleanor's own early literary interests may have tended toward tales of adventure, a passion for Shakespeare was one in which the entire Marx family indulged. The Marx family staged plays in their tiny flat, and in later years Eleanor identified her favourite Shakespearean scenes as a child. Her choices speak volumes about both her emerging character and her relationship with her father. Eleanor wrote to Karl Kautsky, on 1 January 1898: “My favourite scenes were the soliloquy of Richard III (I can smile and smile and be a villain,’ which I *know* I loved because I had to have a knife to say it!) and the scene between Hamlet and his mother!”¹⁹ With Jenny Marx as the Queen and Eleanor as the tortured Dane, Eleanor reports having taken particular pleasure in the line, “Mother, you have my father much offended.” looking at her father “very pointedly” as she spoke it.²⁰ It could be argued that these performances enacted underlying familial psychodynamics; in any event, they clearly played a formative role in Eleanor's life, and fostered a love of dramatics that remained central to her life.

The sense of Eleanor one gains from this knowledge of her early socialization—that is, as a passionate, imaginative, charismatic, and notably not conventionally

“feminine”, girl is, I maintain, central to understanding how and why she handled herself the way she did during her adolescence and young adulthood, particularly in terms of her relationship with her father. Having been granted a great deal of intellectual freedom (and freedom from the strictures of gender), Eleanor struggled to cope with the new, contradictory demands and expectations placed upon her by virtue of her sex as they became more pronounced and rigid as she aged.

Although Eleanor’s independent socialist consciousness was not exercised until much later in her life—indeed, not until after the death of her father—her active participation in socialist causes can be said to have begun with her involvement in the First International and the assistance of refugees from the Paris Commune. Because Marx and Engels viewed the experience of the Commune as “the embryo of the first workers’ state”²¹, they seized on this moment as the time to hold another conference of the First International in London, in September 1871. The need for immediate action was also underscored by the presence of numerous Commune refugees in London, many of whom were staying with the Marxes. According to Tsuzuki, Eleanor attended the International’s conferences (“an irregularity that shocked even a sympathetic delegate”²²) and subcommittee meetings. Her participation led her mother to declare her “eine Politikerin von top to bottom.”²³ However, it should be noted that Eleanor’s involvement in the International and the political mobilization of ex-Communards was largely passive; her one active move was to become engaged to former Commune and journalist Hippolyte Prosper Olivier Lissagaray—a move which both her parents strenuously opposed.²⁴

Beyond their seventeen year age difference, neither Karl nor Jenny relished the prospect of their daughter marrying a French journalist in exile with no adequate financial resources. Despite their revolutionary politics, the Marxes held fast to the tastes, expectations, and beliefs of their (middle) class when it came to gender and propriety. In 1867, Marx wrote to Engels, “I live at a rate too dear for my conditions...But it is the only means with which the children can enter into connections and relations which can secure them a future.”²⁵ As Yvonne Kapp notes, “that [his daughters] might become self-supporting [Marx] looked upon as a mortification outweighing any to which they were daily and hourly exposed.”²⁶ Indeed, the Marxes were nearly bankrupted by their attempts to endow their daughters with the refinements appropriate to young women of their class, including lessons in French, Italian, drawing, and singing, dances, and “suitable clothes”. Had it not been for Engels’ generosity and Jenny Marx’s resourcefulness in always finding new items to pawn, Marx would surely have faced the poorhouse for the sake of propriety.

It was at this time, in May 1873, that Eleanor embarked upon her first attempt to establish herself independently. After securing a teaching position at a boarding school for women under the governance of the Misses Hall, she moved to Brighton. It was also at this point that her father forbade her to see Lissagaray. And, sadly, it was at this point as well that Eleanor first began to show signs of the depression, anxiety and disordered eating that would plague her for the rest of her life. Eleanor was often miserable in Brighton, and her health deteriorated rapidly.

Though handled gingerly by biographers like Tsuzuki and Kapp, it is clear that Eleanor began engaging in anorexic behaviour at the time when severe strictures were

placed upon her freedom by her father. Perhaps unwittingly, Tsuzuki describes her situation aptly when he writes that “she could not *swallow* [Marx’s] objections.”²⁷ Clearly, she felt torn between her desire to pursue her own course in life, and her sense of duty and love towards her father, with whom she had shared a special bond since infancy. By the end of the year, Eleanor was forced to take a leave of absence from work on account of her health, and was placed under the care of England’s first accredited female physician, Dr. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson. In August 1874, Marx wrote to Engels that “Tussy is much better. Her appetite grows in geometrical proportion, *but that is the peculiarity of this women’s disease where the hysterical element plays into it.*”²⁸ Interestingly, Eleanor’s rapid recuperation seems to have coincided with a relaxation of her father’s ban on visitations between her and her fiancé. In 1875 she was able to resume teaching and began work on translating Lissagaray’s *L’Histoire de la Commune de 1871* into English.

During this time Eleanor became involved in political affairs independent of those of her father, and which were of great relevance to the social position of women. She took an interest in the foundation of the London Medical School for Women, which was promoted by her own Dr. Garrett Anderson. Writing to Wilhelm Liebknecht’s wife Natalie in 1874, she asserted that “It is of course chiefly an advantage for ‘bourgeoises’ [sic]”, but acknowledged that “it is always something and it is time that women too may be able to work, and have other occupations than dress.”²⁹ She also took a keen interest in the debates over the Education Act of 1870, specifically the question of religious education as it played out in the London School Board election campaign of 1876. In the run up to that particular contest, Eleanor worked for the candidature of a Mrs. Westlake.

who had been involved in hospital work and had also expressed an interest in the question of higher education for women. According to Eleanor, Mrs. Westlake, “though bourgeois at heart like almost every Englishwomen [sic], is at least very much of a free thinker and is in any case worthier than the men who offer themselves as candidates.”³⁰ It is notable that in both instances Eleanor pre-emptively safeguards her “feminist” inclinations against potential attack by acknowledging their ideological inadequacy (that is, her apparent support of ‘bourgeois women’) according to the paradigm within which she was raised.³¹

However, it was the theatre that truly excited and engaged Eleanor, so much so that she seriously contemplated pursuing a career as an actress. Beyond her love of drama, the prospect of life as an actress held out other benefits; according to Eleanor’s sister Jenny, acting held out the “prospect of living the only free life a woman can live—the artistic one.”³² As Mary Louise Roberts notes, although acting was still considered a “seedy, marginal profession”, it was becoming increasingly respectable and served as an avenue to challenge gender norms and roles.³³ Eleanor began performing recitations and participating in staged productions in 1880, at age 25. Encouraged by her reception, she decided to take acting lessons from Jane Elizabeth Thompson (also known as Mrs. Hermann Vezin), a retired American actress. However, she was not without reservations: as her letter of 18 June 1881 to Jenny suggests, she had yet to ask her father for permission and money, and was clearly anticipating a negative response: “I feel sorry to cost Papa so much, but after all very small sums were expended on my education, compared at least to what is *now* demanded of girls—and I think if I succeed it will have been a good investment.”³⁴ Later in the same letter she underscores her restlessness:

“You see, dear, I’ve a goodly number of irons in the fire, but I feel I’ve wasted quite enough of my life, and that it is high time I did something.”³⁵

Eleanor was right to expect objections: her father forbade her to take lessons, despite the fact that she had taken on extra work to earn money for the lessons. Crestfallen, and with her father’s disapproval of her fiancé unshaken, Eleanor once again fell ill, and, if one is to believe Marx’s correspondence with his daughter Jenny, her condition was quite serious. Marx described Eleanor as being “pale and emaciated”, as “(f)or some weeks she has eaten nothing (literally)...Her nervous system is in a pitiable state, whence continual insomnia, trembling of hands, neuralgic convulsions of the face, etc...”³⁶ Eleanor’s illness coincided with that of her mother, who died at age 67 on 2 December 1881.

Little is known of or written about the exact nature of Eleanor’s relationship with her mother. Yvonne Kapp suggests that their relationship was distant, and that Eleanor bitterly regretted that her mother died not knowing how she truly felt about her. In later life, Eleanor wrote to friends that she feared her mother had died thinking her “hard and cruel”, and wished that she had known that in order “to save her and Father sorrow I had sacrificed the best, freshest years of my life”.³⁷ Kapp even asserts that it was Eleanor’s sense of guilt that fuelled her continued anorexic behaviour.

Kapp in particular paints a negative portrait of “Mrs. Marx” as a “hysterical”, petty bourgeois woman unable to escape her aristocratic moorings, who was therefore an unsuitable partner and parent for her socialist genius husband and children. As evidence she cites correspondence written by Jenny Marx in which she “laments” the consequences of her children’s upbringing³⁸ and blames her for stalling her children’s

attempts at independent womanhood (as socialist revolutionaries, of course).³⁹ However, while Eleanor's relationship with her mother was nowhere near as close as that which she enjoyed with her father, surviving letters suggest that it was her mother who strongly encouraged Eleanor in her attempts at independence. In April 1873, after Eleanor had moved to Brighton to teach, Jenny Marx wrote these words to her struggling daughter:

Be *brave*, be *courageous*...Do not let this fearful crisis [that is, Eleanor's depression and anorexia] overwhelm you. Believe me, despite appearances to the contrary, nobody understands your position, your conflict, your embitterment better than I do. Let your young heart triumph...I alone understand how dearly you long for work and independence, the only two things that can help one over the sorrows and cares of present day society.⁴⁰

Such words reveal not only the level of understanding that existed between mother and daughter, but also Mrs. Marx's own desire for independence. Furthermore, given Jenny Marx's astute observations of the inequities of the sexual division of labour that certainly existed between herself and her husband,⁴¹ she can be viewed as an early feminist influence in Eleanor's life.

Following her mother's death, Eleanor's own health grew worse, and was exacerbated by her perceived need as the youngest unmarried daughter to care for her aging, ailing father. According to Tsuzuki, while in Ventnor on the Isle of Wight with her father, Eleanor wrote to Clementina Black and Ernest Radford in January 1882, informing them that she was very ill and fearful of breaking down altogether as she would then become a greater burden on her father.⁴² At this point, Eleanor was sleeping less than six hours a week, and had taken various drugs (including, presumably, opium) without relief. Eleanor's letters of the 8th and 15th of January 1882 to her sister Jenny clearly articulate her sense of struggle—a struggle faced by many so-called “New

Women” of her age and generation. Regarding her illness, Eleanor wrote, on the eighth of January:

...What neither Papa nor the doctors nor anyone will understand is that it is chiefly *mental worry* that affects me. Papa talks bout my having ‘rest’ and ‘getting strong’ before I try anything and won’t see that ‘rest’ is the last thing I need...If I only had a *little* money I should distinctly say this; go in for hard work with Mrs. Vezin—and then see...what I can do. I am not young enough to lose more time in waiting—and if I cannot do this *soon* it will be no use to try it at all...⁴³

On the 15th, she wrote of her fears regarding her increasingly distant relationship with her father in light of her intensely felt desire for independence:

...Still more selfish does it seem that I think at all about myself—instead of thinking only of our dear Mohr. How I love him no one can know—and yet—we must each of us, after all, live our own life—and much and hard as I have tried I could not crush out my desire to *try something*. The chance too of independence is very sweet...Ah! It has been a terrible struggle. I sometimes wonder how I have lived through it all. I firmly believe that owing to my long intercourse with cats, I have acquired, like them, nine lives instead of one.

She also comments here upon her plans to “make something” of her life:

But this is over: I mean to try hard by dint of hard work to make something more and better of my life than it has heretofore been. After all *work* is the chief thing. To me at least it is a necessity. That is why I love even my dull Museum drudgery. You see I’m not clever enough to live a purely *intellectual* life, nor am I dull enough to be content to sit down and do nothing.⁴⁴

Though Marx finally assented to Eleanor’s acting lessons, writing to Engels that he “would not for anything in the world wish that *the child* should imagine herself to be sacrificed on the family altar in the form of the ‘nurse’ of an old man”⁴⁵, their relationship had been severely strained by their protracted battles over the course Eleanor’s life should take. In the future, Marx traveled alone and preferred to care for himself, and Eleanor largely internalized responsibility for the distance that had grown between them.

Almost in exchange for permission to take acting lessons, Eleanor ended her engagement to Lissagaray, and while Tsuzuki and Kapp suggest that the decision had been entirely her own, her ambivalence is obvious in her aforementioned letter of 15 January 1882 to Jenny:

There has been *much* else. For a long time I have tried to make up my mind to break off my engagement. I *could* not bring myself to do it—he has been very good, and gentle, and patient with me—but I have done now. Not only that the burden had become too heavy—I had other reasons...and so at last I screwed my courage to the sticking place. And now, dear, if possible see Lissa sometimes, and treat him just as an old friend. Remember *he* is blameless in this. I hope we shall continue the best and most intimate of friends...⁴⁶

There is no record of any further contact between Eleanor and Lissagaray.

Despite her sadness at the end of her relationship with Lissagaray, for which she had fought so hard and so long, she relished the modicum of freedom her father had afforded her, and socialized with literary celebrities as she tried to establish herself in the theatre world. As a consequence of the research work she was performing for her father and other private employers, she was spending a great deal of time at the British Museum's Reading Room, and became part of its bohemian literary subculture. In 1877, Eleanor joined the New Shakespeare Society, a literary organization founded by Frederick James Furnivall, which sought to promote study of the dramatist and also printed texts of his work. Eleanor also participated in a number of Furnivall's other literary groups, such as the English Early Text Society, the Browning Society, and the Shelley Society, and conducted research for them at the British Museum. From the New Shakespeare Society the "Dogberry Club" was formed. The Dogberry Club was a private reading group whose members figured prominently among London's bohemian intellectual scene, and included future socialists and artists George Bernard Shaw, Dollie

Maitland, and Ernest Radford. Moreover, it was during this time that Eleanor began earning money of her own in London. In addition to her “devilling” work⁴⁷, she took up a teaching position in Kensington and “ghost-wrote” essays and reviews for hire, a job she did not particularly enjoy but approached pragmatically. As she wrote to Laura in May 1884: “I don’t half like writing articles for other people to sign, but necessity knows no laws and 5/- is 5/-...”⁴⁸

However, only a year after her mother’s death, Eleanor once again found herself in mourning, this time over the death of her sister and confidante, Jenny, who died of tuberculosis on 11 January 1883. Compounding her grief was her anxiety at having to deliver the news to her father that his eldest, and favourite, daughter had died. Eleanor later wrote that she felt that she was bringing him his death sentence⁴⁹; and, within three months almost to the day of Jenny’s passing, Marx was dead. Eleanor was now 28 years old. No texts have survived which record the extent of Eleanor’s grief over the death of her father, which was no doubt immense; however, it is important to note that there is no evidence of anorexic behaviour on Eleanor’s part following March 1883. As Olga Meier suggests, “Though deeply grieved by her father’s death, the trauma seems also to have offered some kind of release, and a freedom that she could not contemplate during his lifetime.”⁵⁰

Thus, with all of Eleanor’s obstacles to independence seemingly cleared, one would assume that Eleanor would embark upon a new and freer “chapter” in her life. Indeed, most biographers have scripted their narratives accordingly, revealing in the process the fundamental teleology of their understanding of Eleanor’s life as predestined for socialist involvement and public life. Yet, one could question whether life really

changed for Eleanor; one could even read this transitional moment in her life as the beginning of her decline—as the “death” of the fledgling independent Eleanor. For within only months of her father’s death, she began a life-long, ill-fated “free love” union with Edward Aveling, whose notorious use and abuse of women, alcohol, and other people’s money would cause Eleanor no end of public and private grief. As well, it was at this time that she became involved in British socialist politics, joining the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) in 1884. Whether motivated by a sense of familial obligation or genuine inclination, Eleanor’s decision to become involved, particularly the SDF, is curious, not only because of her oft-voiced desire to act and to “do something” (usually meaning something literary or theatrical in nature), but because of her earlier critiques of the SDF, particularly its leader, Henry Hyndman⁵¹. Indeed, even after becoming involved with the SDF, she expressed little desire to assume a leading role. As she wrote to Laura on 19 March 1884. “I’ve no ambition that way, and want to keep out of it”.⁵²

Moreover, before becoming a so-called “platform woman” herself, she seemed to demure from public speaking—even in her own defense: after Annie Besant⁵³ and Charles Bradlaugh had published a personal attack on Eleanor and Aveling in the *National Reformer*⁵⁴ on 3 February 1884, Eleanor wrote to Laura, “I’ve more than once of late wished like Beatrice [from *Much Ado About Nothing*] that ‘I were a man’; and that I could inflict on Mr. Bradlaugh the sound thrashing he deserves”. In this same letter, she elides femininity with political servitude: after thanking Laura for sending her papers on the French socialist movement, she writes, “Tell Paul that I shall be *very* grateful for any little scrap he sends me. You’ll think I’m like the man in Mama[’s] old story: *Und nun*

geben Sie mir noch 'ne Tasse Kaffee und dann sind sie wirklich eine gute Frau’[“Now give me yet other cup of coffee, and then you’ll be a really good woman.”]⁵⁵ It is debatable whether these comments were meant ironically or not; however, in eliding masculinity with the ability to speak authoritatively in public and femininity with silent servitude, one must acknowledge that Eleanor was aware of the gendered nature of political participation that existed within the socialist movement. The degree to which she held these views herself, being unknown, consequently forces one to question accounts which do not problematize her entry into politics.

Furthermore, upon viewing her “socialist career” as a whole, one could describe it as marked by inconsistency and vacillation, flitting as she did from party to party, largely under the direction of Engels who became, or was adopted as, a father figure to Eleanor almost immediately following Marx’s death. Thus, I argue that it is questionable whether Eleanor found socialism to be as all-consuming and personally-fulfilling as previous historians have consistently assumed and written it to be. Even Kapp, the most stalwart supporter of the interpretation of Eleanor as “the happy warrior” of socialism “for whom the homely beauty of the good old cause was almost a literal truth”⁵⁶, suggests that it was Eleanor’s “abiding passion for literature and drama” that were the “brightest threads” of her life, remaining “her most pleasurable recreation” throughout her years of political work.⁵⁷

Adulthood

Shortly after the death of her father Eleanor finally acquired a room of her own. During the summer of 1883 she moved to 32 Great Coram Street to be closer to the British Museum Reading Room, to her newly married friends Dollie and Ernest Radford.

and to a man to whom she was becoming increasingly attached, Edward Aveling. At the time, Aveling, a respected Darwinian scientist, was a rising star within the burgeoning secularist, or “Free Thought”, movement. He was a popular lecturer for the National Secular Society, winning converts to his cause by virtue of what fellow secularist (and then lover) Annie Besant hailed as his “exquisitely chosen and...polished language”, which made “the mere music of [his] speech...pleasant to the ear.”⁵⁸ Aveling was also a drama enthusiast and somewhat of an amateur poet and playwright himself.

It is not known exactly why Aveling became involved in socialist politics, although he later proclaimed that reading *Capital* had been a life-altering event. Similarly, it is not known exactly how Aveling met Eleanor. As Tsuzuki notes, there were many occasions and locations during this period that would have facilitated their meeting, the most likely being the British Museum Reading Room.⁵⁹ Tsuzuki speculates that they came into closer contact while preparing her father’s obituary for publication in *Progress*, a secularist “monthly magazine of advanced thought”⁶⁰, of which Aveling was the interim editor. Beginning in late 1883, the two were to become inseparable—despite Aveling’s existing marriage, which he maintained had been effectively ended “by mutual agreement”.⁶¹ There are some discrepancies, however, among Aveling’s numerous accounts of his marital situation. On 30 July 1872, Aveling had married Isabel Campbell Frank who, it should be noted, was to inherit an estate worth £25, 000 upon the death of her father. To some, Aveling reported that he and his wife parted ways “by mutual agreement” some two years after their wedding; however, he told Engels and others within socialist circles that she had run off with a clergyman.⁶² Aveling’s dubious

honesty in this matter gives one a hint as to why and how he acquired his infamous reputation for unscrupulous behaviour with both money and women.

According to Havelock Ellis, “while it seems impossible to find any unfavourable references to Eleanor Marx, there is almost complete agreement in an opposite sense regarding Edward Aveling.”⁶³ Bernard Shaw wrote that Aveling was an “agreeable scoundrel...quite a pleasant fellow who would have gone to the stake for Socialism or Atheism, but with absolutely no conscience in his private life. He seduced every woman he met, and borrowed from every man.” Henry Salt⁶⁴ recalled, “Nearly everyone who had dealings with him, even those who were on the friendliest terms, found themselves victimized, sooner or later, by his fraudulence in money matters.”⁶⁵ In a more critical vein, Eduard Bernstein wrote, “His reputation in the radical and democratic world of London was already very bad, and it grew worse year by year.” Perhaps the most interesting comment, however, comes from Sidney Webb, who stated, “When we [Fabians] run down Marxism, we mean Aveling.”⁶⁶

However, it is important to note that Eleanor was fully aware of Aveling’s reputation when she began her relationship with him, and defended (and would continue to defend) him against all accusations of impropriety, regardless of their veracity. Interestingly, many historians like Tsuzuki suggest that Eleanor was able to tolerate the personal attacks she suffered as a consequence of their association because she believed them to be politically motivated and thus directed toward his radical views, not his character or private conduct—just as political opponents had done to her father.⁶⁷ Furthermore, perhaps crediting Aveling with a bit more artistic talent than is his due, she reiterated the words her father had used to defend his friend, the poet Heinrich Heine:

“Poets were green kittle-cattle, not to be judged by the ordinary, or even the extraordinary standards of conduct.”⁶⁸ Such behaviour led family friend Wilhelm Liebknecht to write, “The worse the reputation, the brighter the merit, and it is not saying too much that just the badness of Dr. Aveling’s reputation helped to gain him Eleanor’s sympathy.”⁶⁹ However, as Mullaney notes, “To Aveling’s credit, it can be said that he did something very few others did—he treated Eleanor as herself, not as the daughter of Karl Marx.”⁷⁰

Thus, it was incumbent upon Eleanor to make virtuous her decision to “set up” with Aveling, a move that was highly taboo not only within mainstream “bourgeois” society, but even within Eleanor’s bohemian and socialist circles. Eleanor recognized the social consequences of her decision, and out of a sense of customary duty and respect for her friends and family members’ reputations, she wrote each to inform them of the exact nature of their relationship. Upon reading the letters, what becomes clear is that Eleanor did not position herself as a champion of “free love”, dispelling some iconoclastic portraits of her. On the contrary, Eleanor emphasized the similarities between her relationship with Aveling and a “true marriage”, justifying her decision with recourse to the approval already granted to her by her surrogate parent, Friedrich Engels. To Dollie Radford, she wrote, “I am going to live with Edward Aveling as his wife... You know he is married, & that I cannot be his wife *legally*, but it will be a *true* marriage for me—just as much as if a dozen registrars had officiated... If love, a perfect sympathy in tastes & work, & a striving for the same ends can make people happy, we shall be so...”⁷¹

Interestingly, Eleanor changes her tone and approach in her letters to socialist colleagues, becoming bold and defiant, her act presented as an affront to bourgeois norms. Her letter

to John Lincoln Mahon, dated 1 August 1884, is exemplary. To him, she justified her act thusly: “We are doing no human being the smallest wrong. Dr. Aveling is *morally* as free as if the bond that tied him years ago, and that had been severed for years before I ever met him, had never existed. We have both felt that we were justified in setting aside all the false and really immoral bourgeois conventionalities, and I am happy to say we have received—the only thing we care about—the approbation of our friends and fellow socialists.”⁷²

There are a number of possible reasons why her letters to her (male) socialist colleagues should differ so greatly from those she wrote to her close (female) friends: the last line of Eleanor’s letter to Mahon is particularly suggestive of a political motivation. It can be argued that, while Eleanor did not necessarily regard her’s as a “free love union”, she recognized its potential political and propagandistic value vis-à-vis the socialist position on the Woman Question; however, what *is* clear is that she assumed different rhetorical strategies and positions given the requirements of the social, cultural, and political atmosphere in which she was operating in order to justify her behaviour. This observation should caution one against accepting Eleanor’s writings, particularly those on the politically-charged “Woman Question”, as her “opinion”, static and impervious to change over time and with context.

Whatever Eleanor’s “true” feelings on her relationship with Aveling, she moved with him into a flat on 55 Great Russell Street, opposite the British Museum, in July 1884. Strangely, though, the tone and content of letters written to friends at this time do not suggest happiness or confidence in her decision; they certainly do not suggest a woman deeply in love. On 2 July 1884, Eleanor wrote to Dollie Radford: “I have thought

of you very much, and often longed for you. For I am *very* lonely, Dollie, and I never felt lonelier than I do just now... The fact is I have been seriously unwell for the last two weeks, and as I was threatened with an absolute breakdown, I am just resting.”⁷³ Once more, Eleanor’s struggle with depression and anxiety resurfaced, ironically enough during what was ostensibly the happiest time of her life: she had just embarked on a new romance, and she was deeply involved in socialist activities. Her relationship with Aveling had not prevented bouts of mental illness from recurring; if anything, they exacerbated underlying problems. Clearly, the honeymoon was over before it had even begun; and yet, her belief in her union with Aveling as a “true marriage”, and the potential personal and political consequences of its dissolution, kept Eleanor loyal to the end.

One of the few bright spots in Eleanor’s life at this time was her growing friendship with South African novelist Olive Schreiner. Kapp suggests that Eleanor had known Schreiner since 1882, when the writer moved to London to find a publisher for her groundbreaking novel, *The Story of an African Farm*.⁷⁴ According to Schreiner’s life-long friend, sexologist Havelock Ellis⁷⁵, “Eleanor was at the time probably the nearest of Olive’s new women friends in London...and to meet Olive meant soon to meet Eleanor.”⁷⁶ Eleanor enjoyed a level of intimacy with Olive that she had not experienced in her previous female friendships. In their existing correspondence, of which little remains, the two can be found freely discussing their emotions, and also confiding and comparing the physical and sexual responses of their bodies, in the process revealing a familiarity with and interest in the increasing “medicalization” of feminine physiology. Ellis writes that it was Olive Schreiner to whom Eleanor disclosed “a sudden sexual

initiation”⁷⁷ that occurred during her adolescence “when she happened to be lying on the sofa at home, effected by a prominent foreign follower of her father’s”, who, unfortunately (and perhaps conveniently) Ellis had “long since forgotten”.⁷⁸ They also shared details on how their abilities to concentrate and work were affected by their menstrual cycles. Clearly, the women were on honest and familiar terms, and trusted and respected each other greatly.

However, as was the case with most of Eleanor’s personal and working relationships, Aveling’s presence strained an otherwise close and loving bond. Schreiner, renowned for her incisive observations of the human condition, disliked Aveling almost on sight; her apprehension only grew over time. In the summer of 1884, Eleanor, Aveling, Schreiner, and Ellis vacationed at Bole Hill, near Wirksworth, which served as a “honeymoon” of sorts for both couples. On 24 July 1884, only a few weeks after their arrival, Schreiner wrote: “Dr. Aveling and Miss Marx have come to see me. She is now to be called Mrs. Aveling. I was glad to see her face. I love her. But she looks so miserable.”⁷⁹ Less than two weeks following this letter, Schreiner wrote: “I am beginning to have such a horror of Dr. [Aveling]. To say I dislike him doesn’t express it at all. I have a fear and horror of him when I am near...I love her, but *he* makes me so unhappy.”⁸⁰

Sadly, after Olive Schreiner’s return to South Africa in 1889, the intimacy of their relationship gradually faded, and Eleanor lost one of the only people with whom she could be totally candid. Shortly after Schreiner’s return to South Africa, Eleanor attempted suicide by deliberately taking an overdose of opium. It was Havelock Ellis who found her, and “by administering much strong coffee and helping her walk up and

down the room the effects of the poison were worked off.” As Ellis later wrote of the incident, “I never knew what special event in her domestic life it was which led to the attempt. Her friends were grieved; they were scarcely surprised.”⁸¹

The importance of Eleanor’s friendship with Olive Schreiner (or with other women, such as novelists Amy Levy and Margaret Harkness) has been largely ignored within the existing historiography. Indeed, Yvonne Kapp, Eleanor’s most cited biographer, denigrates it and greatly downplays its value by attacking what she perceives to be Schreiner’s character flaws, including latent, voracious, destructive lesbian tendencies.⁸² Nevertheless, I would argue that emphasizing their intimacy is critical as the brief glimpses of Eleanor’s psyche during this pivotal period provided by the scant surviving correspondence give one a sense of her profound dissatisfaction with her “chosen” course in life, and do cause one to seriously question the myth of Eleanor the “happy warrior” of the “good old cause”. Given that the most intimate years of Eleanor’s relationship with Schreiner happen to coincide with her most intense years of socialist activity, it is clear that she was being neither personally nor politically fulfilled by her public and private lives, the two inextricably linked in the person of Aveling.

Indeed, it is difficult to understand why or how she could possibly have been fulfilled by her involvement in the British socialist movement, whose history can be read as an exhausting series of petty struggles, personally-motivated political machinations, indecisions, vacillations, and empty rhetorical battles. Tsuzuki’s biographical account of her socialist career in particular strikes one as a tale of political intrigue. Beyond the voluminous microfilms of their numerous publications and the existence of an institutionalized Labour Party, there remains little tangible evidence of the movement’s

achievements or very existence.⁸³ While socialism may have appealed to “a new consciousness of sin amongst men of intellect and property”⁸⁴ during the economic depression of the 1880s, its popularity seemed to fade with the increasing prosperity of the 1890s and was eclipsed by enthusiasm for a reinvigorated British imperialism.

Moreover, and with respect to her specific involvement, Eleanor was often left to “shoulder those humdrum little duties so apt to be overlooked”⁸⁵, despite her intellectual prowess, her personal acquaintance with leading international socialists, and her famous family. As Kapp notes with regard to Eleanor’s participation in the Socialist League, despite her position on the Executive Council, “She it was who ensured that the League’s journals and pamphlets were on display at meetings; she who found a window cleaner for the premises; who compared estimates for the most economical hire of crockery, cutlery and plate for Socialist repasts; who organized the sale of tickets for the various ‘entertainments’ in which...she generally played a part.”⁸⁶ That her relegation to the Party’s drudgework as a result of her gender is highly likely⁸⁷, and it is interesting the degree to which twentieth century historians in their interpretation of events have internalized and naturalized this gendered division of labour. To wit, Kapp writes of Eleanor’s role as treasurer of the Socialist League’s Christmas “Tree Committee”: “It drove her to distraction. Benevolent people kept on donating toys that they had bought or made which put out the accounts Eleanor so *manfully* tried to balance...It is not fanciful to discern the knitted brow and muddled arithmetic behind these lines.”⁸⁸ This pattern of sex-based labour assignment (and historians’ unproblematic acceptance thereof) would be repeated throughout her life, her public speaking engagements and writings like “The Woman Question” striking exceptions.

Eleanor and Aveling both joined the SDF either in late 1883 or early 1884. While a member of the SDF, Eleanor served on its Executive, having been elected to Council in August 1884, and contributed a continuing “Record of the International Popular Movement” for *Justice*, the party journal. She also translated articles from the Russian, French, and German socialist presses, which gave her the experience and confidence to adopt translation as a quasi-profession for the rest of her life, and had now begun to lecture on social and political subjects, her first lecture being on the Factory Acts in England (later published as “the Factory Hell” in April 1885 under the joint names of Edward and Eleanor Marx Aveling).⁸⁹

The Avelings left the SDF in December 1884, when a majority of the SDF executive, including Eleanor, Aveling, William Morris, E. Belfort Bax, Robert Banner, J. Cooper, W. J. Clarke, Joseph Lane, John Lincoln Mahon, and Samuel Mainwaring, resigned from the party en masse because they viewed as Hyndman’s attempts to control the organization, as well as his endorsement of the Federation’s involvement in parliamentary politics and his nationalism, as tyrannical and domineering. Hyndman, for his part, never trusted what he called the “Marx-Engels faction”; bad blood had existed between the two camps after Hyndman had plagiarized large sections of *Capital* in his own socialist tract, *England for All*. However, all estimations of the dissenting minority’s ability to effectively work together within a separate political organization were not overly optimistic.⁹⁰ According to Engels, “three more unpractical men for a political organization than Aveling, Bax, and Morris are not to be found in all England.”⁹¹ Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that the Socialist League, like its predecessor, was soon torn part by political infighting between its pro-and anti-anarchist factions, of which Eleanor

was in the latter camp. In August 1889, the 80 members of the Bloomsbury branch of the Socialist League reformed themselves into the autonomous Bloomsbury Socialist Society in August 1889.

While Eleanor remained with the Bloomsbury Society for several years, she returned to the *SDF* in 1896. As Jane Sunderland notes, almost as an understatement, “Eleanor’s movement from one group to another may seem strange.”⁹² Whereas Kapp asserts that Eleanor “did not really give a fig for these sects as such even when she worked with them in a disciplined fashion”⁹³, E. P. Thompson suggests that it was Eleanor’s commitment to and “blind faith” in her father’s political vision which caused her erratic political behaviour.⁹⁴ While both accounts entail some speculation, Thompson raises valuable questions: to whom or to what did Eleanor *truly* owed her loyalty? What exactly motivated her political involvement? Why she did not strike out on her own path professionally, particularly when she must have known that operating within the socialist movement would mean always working under her father’s shadow?

Throughout their involvement in the socialist movement, both Avelings had always emphasized the importance of the arts, and had organized various “uplifting” entertainments⁹⁵, including a series of “free evenings for the people” with the Socialist League featuring William Morris’ poetry and recitations by Eleanor and Aveling.⁹⁶ Earlier, they contributed literary and theatre criticism for Belfort Bax’s monthly journal, *To-Day*. For Eleanor, “the Socialist education meant ‘Art Education’ as well”⁹⁷, no doubt evidence of her co-mingled childhood memories of *Capital* and the canon. However, Eleanor also believed the reverse, and to this end she and Aveling gave two lectures to the Shelley Society on “Shelley’s Socialism” in 1885, later published in *To-Day* and as a

stand-alone pamphlet in 1888.⁹⁸ While Aveling set out to establish himself as a playwright and critic under the pseudonym “Alec Nelson”, Eleanor focused on popularizing the works of Ibsen, Flaubert, and other writers whose art boldly flouted the middle class position on the Woman Question. She also worked on a revision of an Elizabethan play, *A Warning to Fair Ladies*, for Havelock Ellis.

However, given Eleanor’s poverty, it is likely she would have accepted almost any work. In March 1887, Eleanor wrote to Havelock Ellis to thank him for offering her work. In this letter, her desperate tone gives one a hint of the gravity of her situation, and the consequences and limitations imposed by her unconventional lifestyle: “I should be glad to get *any* work I am capable of doing. I need work much, and find it very difficult to get. ‘Respectable’ people won’t employ me.”⁹⁹ During this time Eleanor continued to teach in Kensington, gave courses on Shakespeare through the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution, tutored, and “snatched at any literary hackwork that friends might put her way.”¹⁰⁰ Later, she took on additional employment as a typist.¹⁰¹ Yet these disparate money-making schemes failed to make ends meet, and, as Kapp notes, Eleanor’s years of deprivation and of chronic overwork took a physical toll on her health and appearance as she approached middle age.¹⁰²

And yet, her years of struggling made her particularly sensitive to the plight of unskilled labourers; as she wrote to a colleague in the Socialist League, “The prescription of ‘no work’ [i.e. strike action] is difficult for the poor to follow, and we cannot follow it entirely.”¹⁰³ Therefore, it should come as little surprise that Eleanor found herself involved in the nascent “New Unionism” and the International Labour Movement.

Indeed, it was here that she found her niche in socialist politics, free of her father's legacy and of Aveling's scurrilous reputation.

As Jane Sunderland notes, Eleanor's involvement in union activism began with the famous Dock Strike of 1889, which arose in the South Docks, Mewall, over a pay dispute.¹⁰⁴ To assist the Dockers' Union in their efforts, Eleanor managed their correspondence and performed other clerical tasks for the strike committee at Union headquarters in Poplar. In addition to what she herself described as the "drudgery of clerical work", Eleanor spoke to the crowds of strike supporters assembled at Hyde Park in September 1889. Cunninghame Graham, a voluntary helper at the strike committee, wrote: "Curious to see Mrs. Aveling addressing the enormous crowds, curious to see the eyes of the women fixed upon her as she spoke of the miseries of the dockers' homes, pleasant to see her point the black-gloved finger at the oppressor, and pleasant to hear the hearty cheers with which her eloquent speech was greeted."¹⁰⁵ While her contribution to their success may have been limited, her involvement provided her with valuable experience that would assist her in her most famous union-related work; namely, that which she undertook on behalf of the Gasworkers' Union.

The Gasworkers' Union represented not only gasworkers—its name in full was the National Union of Gasworkers and General Labourers—and yet for its president Will Thorne, the major goal of the Union was to achieve a reduction of daily working hours from 12 to eight in all workplaces represented. This goal ultimately led the Union and its members to participate in the "Eight Hour Day" campaign, perhaps the largest, most popular labour-oriented movement in Britain at the time. On 26 June 1889, Thorne was elected General Secretary; sometime after this date, Thorne visited Eleanor and Aveling,

both of whom helped him draw up the first formal rules of the union, as well as the first half-yearly report and balance sheet. In addition, Eleanor taught Thorne to read and write. Eleanor participated in the Union's first strike action, which began on 17 September 1889, when 1200 men and women downed tools at Messrs. Silver's India Rubber, Gutta Perch and Telegraph Works Ltd., in what came to be known as the Silvertown strike. Every day, she traveled to Silvertown and addressed the workers each morning. As well, she encouraged the women workers to form a union that would work in tandem with the men's organizations, and eventually helped to form the first women's branch of the National Union of Gasworkers and General Labourers. On the 26th day of the strike, the Silvertown Women's Branch was formally admitted within the larger union body, with Eleanor as its secretary. Furthermore, she organized vouchers for new boots for the young women workers who were going round collecting for the strike fund, and organized a collection for their union dues.¹⁰⁶ Her actions on behalf of women workers earned her praise from visiting German socialist Clara Zetkin, who enthused to Engels about Eleanor's work. "especially her getting on tables and chairs to harangue the Silvertown women strikers."¹⁰⁷

However, unlike the Dockers' Strike, Silvertown was not a success. The strike ended on 14 December 1889, with both funds and morale reaching new lows. The strikers' pay demand was not met, and they received no concessions from management other than an acknowledgement of their grievances and an expression of willingness to consider them.

Nevertheless, Eleanor remained active in the union, and was elected a member of Executive Council at its first annual conference on 19 May 1890. At this conference, the

Executive adopted new rules and a new set of demands (both written by Eleanor) which included a clause for equal pay for women and a pledge that male and female workers should be admitted on equal terms. Eleanor remained active with the Gasworkers' Union until 1895; why she left at this time remains unclear, but it coincides roughly with Engels' death and an amelioration of her working relationship with the SDF.

Throughout this period, Eleanor had also been involved in meetings of the Second International, the forum of the international workers' movement. In Paris, Brussels, Zurich, and London, Eleanor served as the congresses' interpreter as well as a delegate for the Gasworkers' Union. At Brussels, where she was the only woman officially listed in attendance, she prepared a report of the proceedings for the Gasworkers, and also presented a "Report from Britain and Ireland" on behalf of various British unions. Shortly after the Zurich Congress, Eleanor and Aveling were also involved in the formation of the Independent Labour Party, or ILP. The ILP conference provides yet another example of the sexual division of labour that existed within the socialist and labour movements at the time. As Mullaney notes, "Although [Eleanor] was a noted delegate to a variety of international congresses, the main task she was repeatedly called upon to undertake was not one that required tremendous theoretic insight, administrative skill, oratorical power, or leadership capacity. Her main role at such congresses was as translator and interpreter, and it was for this service that she was most consistently recognized and praised." She goes on to note that, "Although contemporaries repeatedly emphasized her unselfish and tireless devotion to the cause and her cheerful willingness to take up...the 'thankless and grueling work'...[they] admitted that although many socialists proudly boasted of their radical and progressive views, *few of them had any*

patience with such advanced women as Eleanor.’ Anti-woman sentiment was rife among some segments of British socialism.¹⁰⁸ In shouldering the “peripheral duties”, the “modest and often tedious chores”, and in such a self-effacing fashion as revealed by her letters, her participation within both the Socialist and Labour movements was in accordance with traditional sex roles; it is not for nothing that she was referred to as “Mother” among the Gasworkers. Indeed, it seems somewhat incongruous to the biographer familiar with her young, chatty, bold, imaginative nature—and with her famous “harangues” to the Silvertown and other women workers to organize themselves to protect their own interests—to see her also participating in “the pattern of silent female self-sacrifice inherited from the ages”.¹⁰⁹ This notion of “sacrifice”, whether in the form of physical deprivation, such as her earlier anorexia, her dogged determination to remain with Aveling despite his palpable flaws, or her “cheerful willingness to shoulder the peripheral duties”, was a creed that characterized and overdetermined her adult behaviour; I would argue that “sacrifice” was a behaviour that Eleanor adopted as a means of coping with her gender. While sacrifice was (and is) considered characteristic of traditional notions of femininity, and was certainly a behaviour Eleanor observed from her mother and the Marx’s erstwhile housekeeper, Helena Demeuth, it was the only way for her to gain a foothold within the socialist movement and, by extension, public life. Note the selectivity of her sacrifice: tellingly, she did not remain at home and observe separate spheres ideology—indeed, she rather abhorred housework¹¹⁰—but fully participated in public life, albeit in a subordinate role.

Moreover, it is quite possible that historians, in their zeal to establish the image of Eleanor the “happy warrior” of socialism, have overstated her cheerfulness in the face of

drudgery. The following letter, written to Laura on Christmas Day 1889, strikes a note of weariness as opposed to happiness; she almost seems envious of the life her spouse is able to live:

You want to know what we're doing...hard at it, as usual. Ed. writes plays, and newspaper articles and books on Botany, and essays and 'pomes'. He goes to the theatres to criticise other folks' plays; he occasionally travels for a Railway Paper; he keeps Bax in order, teaches and sometimes lectures...He seems well and happy withal. For my own poor part, look you, life seems to be becoming one long strike. First there was the Dock Strike. No sooner was that over than I was summoned to Silvertown, and for 10 mortal weeks I traveled daily to that out-of-the-world place; speaking every day—often twice a day, in all weathers in the open air. I began to hope for peace—when lo! The Gas Strike begins...¹¹¹

In light of statements like these and others, it would certainly be unfair to assert that Eleanor was not unaware of the inequalities of her position; surely we all vary in our levels of self-awareness during the course of our lives. She was clearly attuned to the disadvantages faced by other women, as was evidenced by her report at the Brussels Congress, as well as in letters she sent to her sister during the divisive struggle that ensued between the daughters and the German SPD for control of Marx and Engels' papers following the latter's death in 1895.

Legally, Karl Marx's vast collection of unpublished papers, books, and letters were the property of his surviving daughters and heirs; however, following his death they were immediately transferred to Engels who, historians have asserted, should have unquestionably taken on the job of sorting and "making sense of these documents"¹¹², despite the fact that Eleanor had served as her father's secretary during the final years of his life. However, given the historical and political documents, there was some concern among Marx's former comrades as to their appropriate fate; suffice it to say that they did not trust Marx's own daughters. They certainly did not trust Aveling, whose increasingly

close association with Eleanor gave impetus to SPD plans to “rescue” Marx’s *Nachlass* from careless, untrustworthy custodians.

In light of Engels’ own declining health, it was decided among leading *Genossen* that immediate action should be taken to convince Engels to will the papers to the Party. The SPD plotted a politics of influence and estrangement, which involved not only regular visitations from old comrades and admirers like August Bebel and Karl Kautsky, but also the provision of a “caretaker” for the increasingly frail Engels from among the Party faithful.¹¹³ Ultimately, it was Louise Kautsky, Karl Kautsky’s former wife, who was “sent”, having been convinced to abandon her own political, personal, and professional aspirations and commitments. The choice of a woman was deliberate, as Engels was notorious for his enjoyment of female companionship.¹¹⁴

Despite the fact that Eleanor was vaguely aware of the SPD’s machinations—and despite the fact that Louise was deliberately sent to estrange her from Engels—Eleanor felt compassion for Louise. On 19 December 1890, Eleanor wrote to Laura, “I am sorry for Louise. Bebel and all the others have told her it is her *duty* to the Party to stop. It hardly seems fair to her— no one would ask a *man* to do that... It seems not right to shut her up, and keep her from every chance of a fuller and happier life. And you know what her life here will be.”¹¹⁵ Eleanor’s compassion was clearly motivated by her sense of sympathy with Louise’s situation, knowing all-too-well the struggle women faced in their attempts at independence. In this letter, her old concerns for freedom and liberty—the right of individuals, particularly women, to seize “every chance of a fuller and happier life”—come to the fore, as does her awareness of the entrenched sexism within the

socialist movement, even among the authors of celebrated texts on women's emancipation, like Bebel and Engels himself.

In the end, the SPD was successful. Because Engels treated the papers not as items he had been entrusted with, but as his own possessions, he felt authorized to dispense with them as he saw fit, and upon his death, the collection of books, manuscripts, copyrights, and letters—including all those between Marx and himself—was willed to the German party. Eleanor was left only with a smattering of inconsequential letters and the least important of Marx's manuscripts, those still in his original hand. As Mullaney notes, one of the major consequences of this fiasco was the scattering of Marx's papers, meaning that neither Eleanor nor the SPD had enough material to publish an authoritative biography,¹¹⁶ and Eleanor was ultimately left in the pathetic position of having to beg any holders of her father's letters to contact her and provide her a copy.¹¹⁷

Although most of those involved in the *Nachlass* debacle could foresee its likely outcome, no one was prepared for Engels' deathbed revelation of the most closely held Marx family secret: the true paternity of Helena Demeuth's son, Freddy. Little is known about Henry Frederick Demeuth. Helena Demeuth had given him up for adoption shortly after his birth on 23 June 1851, and though he was known to the Marx family, they were not close to him. At the time of Engels' death, he was working in Hackney as a manual labourer. As Tsuzuki notes, Eleanor seems to have believed that Engels, "whose relations with women were after all very unorthodox", was his father.¹¹⁸ Eleanor later learned it had been decided that Engels would claim paternity "for the good of the movement", as it was Karl Marx who was Freddy's real father. Engels had acquiesced

and asked all those in the know not to reveal the truth unless he was “posthumously defamed for behaving badly to a natural son.”¹¹⁹

According to Kapp, “Freddy’s sad life...induced in [Eleanor] feelings of misery, guilt and shame whenever she met him.” At their first reported meetings following the revelation, Eleanor is reported to have “broke down and wept” at the sight of him.¹²⁰ However, Eleanor and Freddy eventually developed a close relationship, and it was to him she would turn during her final desperate days.

It would take somewhat longer for Eleanor to reconcile the fact of Freddy with her idolization of her father, and to overcome her feelings of deception at having not known the truth in spite of their extraordinarily close relationship. Reflecting on her father’s legacy, Eleanor wrote to her sister, “After all Marx the ‘Politiker’ & ‘Denker’ can take his chance...while Marx the Man...is less likely to fare as well.”¹²¹ The subsequent period of reflection also forced Eleanor to reevaluate her spotless memories of her childhood, her parents and their relationship—and in the process, to abandon illusions regarding her own relationship with Aveling. Eleanor had known that for many years after her birth her parents did not sleep together. She had also known that her mother had once deserted her father in London and gone to Germany and that for Marx, “the fear of a divorce from his wife...was ever present.”¹²² Instead of simply attributing her mother’s behaviour to irrationality and hysteria, she now began to feel compassion for the long-suffering woman, recognizing and appreciating the incredible burdens she was made to bear. One is certainly curious to know how this new understanding would have affected Eleanor’s views on women, had she lived longer.

The one *good* outcome of Engels' passing, from the point of the Marx sisters, was the £5 000 legacy he left to each Laura and Eleanor. As Olga Meier notes, for the first time in their lives both women achieved a level of financial security previously unimagined to them. Eleanor purchased a semi-detached cottage in Sydenham which she nicknamed "The Den". Eleanor's new home was a source of pride; it was something she could finally call her own. As her letter makes clear, her favourite room was her study.¹²³ The removal of the daily pressure to make ends meet also provided Eleanor with the time to arrange for the publication and translation of those papers of her father's in her possession, and afforded her the opportunity to embark on a new line of work that, unfortunately, was cut short by her death: namely, she became a historian, and hoped to write a history of the socialist movement in England.¹²⁴ As well, she had taken on work as a language tutor, this time teaching students to read the *Communist Manifesto* in German and the programme of the Parti Ouvrier in French. It would seem, then, that as Eleanor approached middle age she was finally gaining confidence that she may just be "clever enough to live a purely intellectual life."¹²⁵

Death

At this point Aveling was attempting to revive his theatrical career, and organized "dramatic entertainments" for SDF fundraisers under his old pseudonym, Alec Nelson. It was at one of these entertainments that Aveling met Eva Frye, a 22 year old actress, who played one of the chief characters in his comedietta *The Landlady*. Unbeknownst to Eleanor, the two embarked on an affair, and on 8 June 1897, while Eleanor was attending the International Congress of Miners, "Alec Nelson" married Frye at the Registry Office in Chelsea, where the bride was then living.¹²⁶ Nevertheless, Aveling continued to live

with Eleanor in their Den, for he was largely dependent on her financially. Sadly, only two years after Engels' death, Aveling had managed to spend almost half of Eleanor's inheritance.

While Eleanor was aware of Aveling's many infidelities, she did not recognize this latest to be any different. They continued to work together as always, and in August 1897, Aveling attended the annual conference of the SDF with Eleanor, where he was, unbelievably, elected to the executive. However, at the end of the month Aveling left Eleanor, taking with him everything of value and leaving nothing but the address of an intermediary through whom Eleanor could contact him. There is a great deal of ambiguity surrounding these events. The truth about his abrupt departure is not known, although most believe the immediate cause was a dispute over money; Eduard Bernstein suggests that Aveling had asked her to sell one of her father's manuscripts—"a request she would certainly have refused."¹²⁷ In any event, Eleanor was left in a desperate state, and she turned to her half-brother for help. In her letter to Freddy dated 30 August 1897, she implores him to help find Aveling, and chides herself for not having left him sooner; yet, as she herself acknowledges, "No doubt it is weak, but one *can't* wipe out 14 years of one's life as if they had not been."¹²⁸

On September 1, Aveling returned of his own accord, and, as she later wrote to Freddy, "[he] seemed surprised and quite 'offended' I did not rush into his arms." She continued: "He has so far made no apology and offered no explanation. I have—after waiting for him to begin—therefore said one *must* consider the business position [referring to his status within her will]—and that I should never forget the treatment I had been subjected to. He has said nothing."¹²⁹ However, while it may have seemed that

Eleanor now had the upper hand, in the evening of that same day, just after she had sent the above letter. Aveling apparently threatened her with a cruel form of blackmail: Tsuzuki suggests that he informed Eleanor that he was living with a woman from whom he could not separate without providing ample financial compensation. Aveling also knew the secret of Freddy's birth, which he could also have used to his advantage. The next morning, Eleanor sent this urgent message to Freddy: "Come, if you possibly can, this evening. It is a shame to trouble you; but I am so alone, and I am face to face with a most horrible position: *utter ruin—everything, to the last penny*, or utter, open disgrace. It is awful; worse than even I fancied it was." Sadly, by the time Freddy arrived, Eleanor had lost the courage to tell him what exactly had transpired. Apparently, Eleanor agreed to Aveling's financial demands, presumably on his promise to leave his mistress, for they resumed life together, despite Freddy's exhortations to Eleanor to leave her faithless husband. In what must have been a farce of a holiday, the Avelings spent two weeks in September with the Lafargues at Dravéil. In November, Aveling developed congestion of the lungs and pneumonia, while his open abscess worsened: Eleanor once again remained by Aveling's side, nursing him back to health, her devotion to him only increasing during this latest spate of illness.

By this point, Eleanor's loyalty appears pathological; thus, it is an appropriate time to discuss possible reasons why she remained with this man who, apparently from the onset of their relationship, was more a cause of misery and worry than of joy. I will argue that her loyalty relates directly to her sense of (gendered) self and her notion of sacrifice.

Upon examination of Eleanor's letters sent to friends and family throughout her relationship with Aveling, it would appear that for her the relationship was a means by which to prove herself as a socially acceptable woman, and to ameliorate perceived character flaws. She seemed, ironically, to want to model her adult self and relationships on the model established by her parents, and yet to break away from it at the same time. However, in the final years of her relationship with Aveling, it would almost seem as though Eleanor was suffering from psychological and emotional abuse as a result of their union and her dependence upon him for reinforcement of her femininity, her refusal to discuss her unhappiness, her self-effacement, and her constant excuses for Aveling's behaviour and character being key symptoms.

From the onset of their relationship, Eleanor berates herself for her perceived shortcomings and expresses incredulity that Aveling should want anything to do with her. Her reproaches are disarming. Although she had expressed doubts regarding her intellectual abilities to Jenny in earlier letters prior to her union with Aveling, in September 1884, approximately a year into their relationship, she wrote to Laura, "...I'm a born idiot and I swear at myself all day. If Ed. were not very good and kind he'd do the same."¹³⁰ This statement is exemplary of sentiments Eleanor would express throughout her correspondence over the course of their relationship. I would argue that the aforementioned statement is not mere rhetorical flourish; I believe it to be genuinely self-punishing. Somehow her prior doubts and worries were confirmed, despite her increasing public participation and recognition for cogent argumentation and lucid (if not somewhat overzealous) writing. Moreover, it is clear, by Eleanor's own admission, that she looked to Edward for sexual affirmation. According to Aaron Rosebury's

reminiscences of his friendship with Eleanor, she confessed to him: "I'm a strange mixture my friend. My father used to say that I was more like a boy than a girl. *It was Edward who really brought out the feminine in me.* I was irresistibly drawn to him."¹³¹

However, such attraction had since faded, and by February 1898, Eleanor had become quite hopeless. She wrote to Freddy, "I have nothing; and I see nothing worth living for...It is a bad time for me...I fear there is little hope, and there is much pain and suffering. Why we go on is the mystery to me. I am ready to go, and would gladly. But while he *wants* help I am bound to stay."¹³² The last excerpt was written exactly 30 days before she died. Her entire sense of self and purpose in life now revolved around Aveling. Yet despite her preoccupation with death and her palpable despair, she continued to work on translating her father's texts, participated in socialist activities, and attended labour meetings. Two weeks before her death, she had visited Liebknecht in Germany, following his release from prison.¹³³ Nevertheless, she committed suicide on March 31, 1898.

What is "known" of Eleanor's death is largely based on a report published on 8 April 1898 in the *Forest Hill & Sydenham Examiner and Crystal Palace District Intelligencer*, on second-hand accounts of observers at the subsequent inquest, and on the testimony of the Avelings' maid, Gertrude Gentry; thus, one cannot truly know what "really" happened on those days, nor can one understand why exactly Eleanor decided then to kill herself (though this has not dissuaded biographers from hazarding any number of Flaubert-inspired guesses). According to the inquest, Eleanor received an anonymous letter on the morning of 31 March 1898 which a subsequent reader described as throwing "a very discreditable light on a certain person." The exact contents of this

letter have never been revealed, though many like Eduard Bernstein, who led the charge to arrest the “murderer” Aveling, assumed that it informed Eleanor of Aveling’s marriage. Similarly, the author of said letter has never been revealed, though Bernstein and others have postulated that it was either a worried friend or Aveling’s wife. According to second-hand reports, Eleanor confronted Aveling, and engaged him in a suicide pact. Aveling later reported at the inquest that Eleanor had threatened to kill herself on a number of occasions, and so did not take this recent pronouncement seriously. Nevertheless, he signed his name to the following prescription: “Please give bearer chloroform and small quantity prussic acid for dog.” Gertrude Gerty was then sent to the chemist just before 10 o’clock, and returned shortly thereafter, bearing a small white parcel containing two ounces of chloroform and one drachm of prussic acid—an amount, as Tsuzuki notes, that could kill several people. At this point, Aveling left for London.

H. W. Lee, a fellow member of the SDF, testified that Aveling had visited him at the Federation’s office that morning, and had “called his attention to the exact time of his visit.” Aveling returned to the Den around 5 o’clock that evening. Reportedly, he then attempted to destroy the letters left by Eleanor, but was prevented by a police officer who had arrived on the scene. It was also said that he did not view the body, and the next day attended a cricket match.

While Aveling’s complicity in Eleanor’s death has been debated endlessly, an inquest ultimately ruled that Eleanor’s death was a “Suicide whilst in a state of insanity.”¹³⁴ Eleanor did leave a short note for Aveling, which read: “Dear, it will soon

be all over now. My last word to you is the same that I have said during all these long, sad years—love.”¹³⁵

Eleanor’s funeral was held on 5 April 1898 at the Necropolis Station, Waterloo. According to Rosebury, there were no rites: “Before the cremation, Eleanor’s friends bowed their heads in silence. Will Thorne spoke, his powerful voice breaking in a tremendous sob.” Rosebury also notes, “The Dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral thought it necessary to preach a sermon on Eleanor’s death. He linked the tragedy to her free mode of living”.¹³⁶ Laura did not attend the funeral; Aveling delivered a speech. Bernstein writes that “If there were no party interest to take into consideration [that is, how their actions would reflect upon socialists and socialism]...the people would have torn Aveling to pieces.”¹³⁷ While most of Eleanor’s friends were not satisfied by the outcome of the inquiry and sought to prosecute Aveling, her old friend Olive Schreiner provided a different perspective. She wrote to another old friend, Dollie Radford, from South Africa:

I have been desiring terribly further details with regard to Eleanor...I have little doubt in my mind she discovered a fresh infidelity of Aveling and that that ended all. I had thought of writing a short notice of her in one of the monthly reviews. Then I felt [that] as I could not speak the truth about him I could not write of her. It would have hurt her to have him blamed...I am so glad Eleanor is dead. It is such a mercy she has escaped from him.¹³⁸

On 16 April 1898 probate of Eleanor’s will and codicil was granted to Aveling. He was appointed sole executor. Aveling found himself completely ostracized from his former comrades in the socialist and labour movements, and was never prosecuted. However, on 2 August 1898, just four months after Eleanor’s suicide, Aveling himself was dead as a result of his chronically poor health.

Chapter Three:

***“There are some, even among our friends, who will be shocked that a woman should speak of these matters”*: Eleanor Marx on the Woman Question**

Given the socio-cultural and increasingly political centrality of the Woman Question within British life at the fin-de-siècle, it should come as no surprise that the British socialist movement formulated its own theoretical and practical position within the debate. Yet, as mentioned in Chapter One, the diversity of organizations and individuals involved in the movement meant that the socialist position on this issue was not unified or coherent. Interestingly, very few British socialists adhered to the theories advanced by Engels and the German socialists, who were certainly more engaged with the Woman Question than their British counterparts; moreover, the willingness to even discuss the Woman Question varied greatly within the movement, particularly when it came to issues of sexuality. At the most close-lipped extreme, it was felt, as *Clarion* editor and Christian socialist Robert Blatchford commented to Edward Carpenter, that “the whole subject is nasty to me.”¹

Unlike her peers at the time², Eleanor was willing to address the Woman Question, particularly the issue of women’s sexuality; moreover, her writings incorporated arguments emanating not only from the socialist movement, but from all of the various groups in which she participated. Thus, within her writings she affected an interesting (though oft-times contradictory) synthesis of Marxism, sexology, Darwinism, and what would now be called “liberal feminism”. While this theoretical and ideological eclecticism contributed to a certain dynamism within her texts, it also makes it rather difficult to place her within our existing ideological paradigms, as her views cannot

simply be tethered to one school of thought. Indeed, Eleanor Marx's complex, multi-layered views on the Woman Question can be said to represent the confluence of many of the major radical discourses of the British fin-de-siècle that came to intellectually dominate the twentieth century; and it is this fact that makes an understanding of her views on the Woman Question important.

This chapter will analyze a selection of Eleanor Marx's public writings related to aspects of the Woman Question, ranging from gender relations to union organization, and will reflect upon how the various debates and movements explored in Chapter One, as well as the personal factors detailed in Chapter Two, influenced her in the writing of these texts. Specifically, it will examine the following works: Eleanor's reflections on the Maiden Tribute scandal, "Pall Mall Gazette" (*Commonweal*, August 1885); her review of August Bebel's *Woman in the Past Present and Future* (*Commonweal*, July 1885); "The Woman Question" (*Westminster Review*, May 1886; co-authored with Edward Aveling); "A Doll's House Repaired"; and her series of articles on women and unions published in *Die Arbeiterinnenzeitung* (1892)³. In analyzing her writings, I wish to explore the variation that can be found within her arguments, and mine the influence of context upon her publicly-stated views. "Context" here is broadly defined, and is meant to include and account for factors ranging from the historical particularities of the moment of writing, to, crucially, the existence of co-authors. These latter points of consideration are particularly important as they help establish grounds for comparison between those works authored by Eleanor alone, and those she co-authored with men, especially with Aveling.

British socialist men and the Woman Question

I do not want the movement to be a depository of old cranks, humanitarians, vegetarians, anti-vivisectionists, arty-crafties and all the rest of them, we are scientific socialists and have no room for sentimentalists. They confuse the issue.

-H. M. Hyndman, leader of the Marxist Social Democratic Federation

In order to understand why and how Eleanor's writings differed from those of her peers, it is important to understand the views expressed by her fellow members of the SDF. It has long been recognized by historians that the theoretical and organizational heterogeneity of the late-Victorian British socialist movement was such that even within individual organizations, divergent understandings of the meaning of socialism and its position on an array of issues existed; such was certainly the case with the SDF and intra-party discourse on the Woman Question. As feminist historians such as June Hannam and Karen Hunt have demonstrated⁴, differences of opinion vis-à-vis the Woman Question existed not only between socialist men and women, but also among women themselves; however, one would not find any of this diversity within the pages of the party's journal, *Justice*. Indeed, in the SDF's early years, it was primarily men who wrote (or rather, who were published) on the Woman Question in *Justice*; consequently, one could argue that our modern-day understanding of the SDF position on the Woman Question, as expressed in *Justice*, is male-defined and male-dominated. However, it is worth noting the general lack of prominent women within the international socialist movement dealing with the Question. Beyond Eleanor in England, there was Louise Michel in France, Clara Zetkin in Germany, and later Alexandra Kollantai in Russia. Notably, most of these women's writings were completed after Eleanor's death.

Excluding Edward Carpenter and William Morris, most late Victorian socialist men both within the SDF and beyond maintained that a revolution in sexual and gender-based relations will naturally and unproblematically follow a revolution in economics: thus, discussing sex as part of a socialist platform for change was a mere “distraction” from larger goals. Moreover, their analyses of sexual social relations often relied upon biological arguments which attributed innate, dichotomous characteristics to men and women, and the use of science was frequently used to support (hetero)sexist biases.

According to SDF leader H. M Hyndman, sex reforms in and of themselves were not important enough to be worthy of discussion. He maintained that women would have to wait for revolution, which he felt was “immanent”. For Hyndman, “[s]ocialism meant subordination to the laws of history, and little else”⁵. English Marxist philosopher E. Belfort Bax adopted a curious position on sex relations and sexuality. On the one hand, Bax was virulently anti-feminist and extremely hostile toward the women’s suffrage movement. With regards to (heterosexual) sex, however, he describes it on the one hand as quasi-sacred in character, and on the other hand maintains that too much attention has been placed on the sex act itself. At the same time, he argued that women were the embodiment of sex, and therefore disqualified from the world of men, that is, political life⁶. Moreover, on the issue of homosexuality, Bax questioned “whether morality has anything at all to do with a sexual act, committed by the mutual consent of two adult individuals, which is productive of no offspring, and which on the whole concerns the welfare of nobody but the parties themselves”⁷.

Though not a Marxist, highly-influential Christian socialist Robert Blatchford agreed with Hyndman and Bax’s view that the reform of sexual relations would follow

industrial and economic change; as a result, he maintained, like Marx and Engels, that “sex reform will ‘not concern us personally, but can only concern the next generation’”⁸. However, unlike Bax, Blatchford was rather sexually conservative. He believed in the “sacredness” of family, which was connected to his eugenics-influenced belief in the rule of the “efficient”, his support for the resurrection of the British Empire, and his reverence for women as ‘civilizers’ and ‘angels’⁹. Blatchford regarded the family as the basis of the nation historically and morally, and the symbol of woman as the mother of the nation used alongside the metaphor of Mother England is common in his work. Beyond Blatchford, there was a large segment of the socialist movement whose view of sexuality bordered on asceticism. Guy Aldred, a Glasgow socialist, believed that under socialism people “would escape the prison of the flesh altogether”¹⁰. Based on his belief in eugenics, Aldred maintained that celibate comradeship would replace sexual relationships as “the tendency of the race...as it becomes more truly intellectual, is away from sexual passion”¹¹.

It is therefore interesting to note the ways in which these ideas are echoed in the writings of the following articles by male members of the SDF. The following analysis of three articles which appeared in *Justice* in 1884¹²— “Women’s Labour” by Henry Hyndman, “The Degradation of Women” by Reginald A. Beckett, and “Women Under Capitalism” by John L. Mahon¹³— demonstrate how male members of the SDF constructed their positions on the Woman Question, and give one a more concrete sense of what exactly Eleanor was up against. Tellingly, none of these articles (or any which appeared in *Justice* on the Woman Question) addressed the issue of sexuality (women’s sexuality in particular); furthermore, as the following will demonstrate, the degree to

which these authors appropriate and echo dominant arguments regarding women and their social role is quite striking.

In Hyndman's "Women's Labour"¹⁴, the question of women's labour is addressed as part of his ongoing exposition of the "Iron Law of Wages". Within this article, Hyndman uses the Law to exclude women from the realm of industrial labour, and to incite male workers to resist their entry. Interestingly, he never explicitly states that he reads the Law as applying to men alone; rather, it is implicitly understood, by both author and reader, that his use of the noun "worker" refers solely to male workers. Hyndman's recourse to the so-called Iron Law—a tenet, he maintains, of "scientific socialism"—gives his argument an air of legitimacy, and appeals to the Victorians' increasing fascination with and acceptance of rationale based in science for social phenomena. Should the Law itself be inadequate to convince readers of the merits of his argument, he later bolsters his argument by referencing other scientific discourses, including biological assessments of women's physiological capabilities as well as theories of racial degeneration. Finally, should Marxist theory and science not sway skeptics, he invokes the highly-charged moral issue of prostitution, that scourge of Victorian urban life, as a rather unsubtle, manipulative way of persuading readers into accepting his point of view.

The Iron Law of Wages, Hyndman argues, proves "that the workers under our present system [capitalism] were forced by competition to take just so much [in wages?] as would keep them in the way they were used to, all their life long, provided capital wanted to employ them." Within his understanding of the Law, it applies only to "the labour of one worker in a family": "It takes for granted that the one who works will earn enough to keep that family on the average, each having two children to take in due time

the place of the father and mother.” According to Hyndman, the Law is confounded, and the worker and *his* family doomed to suffer, if someone else from the workers’ family participates in the labour force simultaneously; it is especially problematic when that someone is the worker’s wife:

But now suppose that the mother works as well as the father what will be the law then? Why the family will get her wages in addition you say. So it seems no doubt; but in fact that is not so. For capital to have workers a few years hence must pay wages enough to keep women and children now. If therefore the wives work then the men and women together earn no more than the man or the woman alone would earn if the other stayed at home and looked after a garden or minded the house and children.

Hyndman provides no rationale as to why this situation would necessarily result from a deviation of the Iron Law, asserting only that, “Surely this is quite clear from what has been already said”, namely, that women would act as competition on the labour market, and would drive wages down:

wives who work under our present competitive system really compete against their own husbands and bring down still lower the already low rate of wages. The capitalists get you observe *two* adult workers for the same rate of wages that they would otherwise get *one* and profit as a class in proportion. A man and his wife in any trade where female labour is the rule earn on the average therefore no higher wages together than they would earn if either kept out of the way. Think of that.

While it is true that women’s labour was not compensated equally with that provided by men, it is interesting to note that Hyndman does not identify this fact as an injustice to women; nor does he call on women workers to organize, unionize, and demand higher wages, though admittedly few men or women did. The situation is presented solely in terms of how it will affect male workers. Furthermore, he uses it to stir fears of a displaced social gender order to justify his position: “Women are used...because they are cheaper than men, because they get for various [unspecified] reasons less wages, because

therefore more profit can be crushed out of them. Men therefore often stand idle while women are employed full time at miserable wages.” However, he does concede that, were the situation different—were they living in “a society where all were working to get the most they could for all and no one was over-worked light work would be as good for women as for men”; Hyndman suggests that “even three or four hours in a well-ventilated, nicely- decorated factory would rather do a woman good than hurt her.” However, this not being the case, women’s labour would clearly harm not only men but women themselves.

Hyndman builds upon his argument for the exclusion of women’s labour by referring to commonly held “scientific” beliefs regarding women’s physiological capabilities and the consequences of women’s labour on “the race”. According to Hyndman, “the work of women as at present carried on in factories and workshops, and even as domestic servants, is really a curse to the country.” Eliding fears about the degeneration of the family as a unit of social organization and the degeneration of the race as the basis of the nation, Hyndman writes,

women’s work and overwork as at present carried on necessarily means that the infants are conceived under bad physiological conditions, are born too often in unhealthy places, are fed with poor milk from ill-nourished breasts, and then are neglected all day by the mothers who have have [sic] to go off early to their work. Thus I say that womens’ [sic] labour now means continuous degeneration and injury to the people at large, and specially to the working-class themselves.

With statistical scientific data unavailable to him, Hyndman relies on personal observation to speciously prove his hypothesis: “I have myself noted since I was a boy of sixteen the steady deterioration of the size and physical stamina of the people in the cotton districts of Lancashire. The official reports which confirm this degeneration show clearly that it is in great part due to the manner in which women work and the neglect of

children before and after birth.” Thus, Hyndman concludes that, “women’s labour under capitalist rule is harmful to the men who are their husbands and brothers, by cutting down their wages and throwing them out of work, is injurious to themselves by lowering their strength and spoiling their beauty; and it is utterly ruinous to the children who, under our present family system of bringing up, are neglected and half-fed.”

Finally, he rests his argument on moral claims by alleging that prostitution is the inevitable outcome of any deviation from the Iron Law. Specifically, he ties what he believes to be an increase in prostitution to the phenomena of “independent women”, suggesting that they are ultimately to blame for the depression of wages by virtue of being away from their family: “Again, in some trades women work quite below the average sum needed to keep them in health. They are perhaps ‘independent’ women who are away from their family. Now in this case their wages are kept lower by the miserable fact that prostitution in our present society is absolutely brought in to eke out wages.” Yet, one could argue that these independent women, as the only member of their household, could constitute “the one worker in a family” of which Hyndman’s Iron Law speaks. However, Hyndman does not bother to discuss this possibility, for, according to him, the woman worker is a paradox.

Hyndman’s position on prostitution is further complicated by the fact that he presents two different accounts of how women fall into prostitution. On the one hand, he states that independent women become prostitutes as a result of their low wages; on the other hand, he suggests that prostitution is pre-existing work women have undertaken to support themselves as single urbanites, which in turn enables employers to justify paying them lower wages. While this contradiction may muddy Hyndman’s clarification of the

Iron Law, it speaks volumes of his understanding of the merit and desirability of women's independence, and on the sexuality of the single woman: in isolating independent women alone as susceptible to prostitution, Hyndman suggests that somehow they are unnatural, sexually deviant, and a disruptive, corrosive social force responsible for the "degeneration" not only of labour but also of the family, the city, and society as a whole.

Ultimately, despite grounding his arguments in the Iron Law of Wages, it is debatable whether Hyndman's arguments have any grounds in any dimension of Marxist theory whatsoever. Upon reflection on the content, tone, and conclusion of Hyndman's article, it would appear that his intention was to foment a negative perception of women's entry into the paid labour force in order to safeguard male privilege. Thus, the article is not supportive of labour; rather, it is divisive and encourages maintenance of the status quo, a somewhat ironic position for a socialist to take. Moreover, implicit throughout the article is the attempt to apply the norms of middle class gender relations, particularly the notion of "separate spheres", to the working class. While Hyndman alone can take responsibility for his position, his influence on readers as the founder and leader of the SDF is undeniable; moreover, his brandishing of arguments ostensibly-rooted in socialist theory and science as well as observable social conditions would make his case seem compelling to contemporary readers.

Similarly, Reginald Beckett's "The Degradation of Women"¹⁵ appealed to popular fears and beliefs regarding prostitution to support a "scientifically" justified position on women's proper social role, that is, one which is limited to hearth and home. Beckett begins by positing prostitution as a symptom of the way in which capitalism "has

eaten so deeply into the very heart of our modern civilization". and claims that the socialist alone "goes boldly to the root of the matter...and is able to labour for its destruction with an ever-increasing confidence and hope." Like Hyndman's worker, Beckett's socialist is gendered male. This identification is made clear through his suggestion that the socialist is roused to action by *his* sense of chivalry:

He [the Socialist] sees how such notions of honour and respect for women as were latent amid all the ignorance and brutality of the age of chivalry, became gradually crushed beneath the rapidly growing and hitherto unchecked impulse of commercial enterprise to which he can trace nearly all social evils from which we suffer. Men engaged in the absorbing pursuit of money-making have no time and no taste to sentimentalise about the health or morality of the weaker sex.

Beckett suggests it is therefore incumbent upon the socialist to not only fight economic injustice, but also safeguard the "weaker sex" from ruination in his struggle for "the emancipation of the whole human race." Clearly, women are not considered capable agents of their own emancipation.

Indeed, Beckett had a definite vision of women's role in a socialist society, one which, like Hyndman, idealized Victorian notions of the middle class woman's social role and applied it to all women regardless of their station; one could describe it as the equal opportunity Angel of the House. Like Hyndman, Beckett abhors the notion of women's paid labour, and also references discourses on women's physiological capacities and degeneration. Beckett argues that, as a result of women's work outside of the home, "Children [are] born into an atmosphere of moral corruption the counterpart of the polluted air they breathe: deprived too often of all parental care and guidance by the exacting tyranny of capitalist disorganisation of labour"; moreover, and more importantly, women's work has a negative impact on their physical appearance: "the sordidness and baseness of their surroundings may be seen only too faithfully stamped

upon their features". To Beckett, it is women's labour force participation, and not their increasing confinement within their homes, that represents the true "slavery of the sex"; indeed, by the article's conclusion, Beckett's argument against prostitution seem to have disappeared, revealing women's paid work as the true cause of "the degradation of women."

Ultimately, Beckett argues that true emancipation for women will come when they are able to exercise their feminine "power...of making human lives more happy, more hopeful, more beautiful", and urges readers "to think for a moment of the wasted gifts, the undeveloped faculties and lost opportunities of our fellow-countrywomen" caused by their entry into the labour market. Thus, in his conclusion, Beckett proposes marriage as the socialist panacea against further degeneration: "But what is the remedy for all this? Many will tell you that people ought not to get married and bring up children; but all the facts of physical and social life go to prove that people ought to get married, that they do not get married enough—and what is more, they *will* do that—or find some baser substitute for it." Like Hyndman, Beckett advances a conservative argument that discourages women from any form of public participation, particularly labour force participation, and instead promotes a middle class conception of women's social role and nature—all in the name of socialism.

John L. Mahon's article, "Women Under Capitalism,"¹⁶ takes a different tack, and is written as an inquiry into why women do not seem to be "interested in the Socialist movement as much as they ought to be". Such a statement suggests that Mahon, unlike Hyndman or Beckett, sees a role for women within the movement; moreover, he even seems to recognize the inequality of women's social and economic position, writing that

“The amount of misery and privation endured by women is much greater than that which falls to the lot of man.” However, as his article progresses, it becomes clear that Mahon does not view women as a homogenous category. Instead, he divides women into two classes: the “factory girls” and their working-class sisters; and their bourgeois counterparts, who he regards as being responsible for the privations of the former. Furthermore, by the time the reader reaches Mahon’s conclusion, it is clear that his intended audience does not include the “factory girls” whose plight he laments, but is meant instead for the consumption of “fashionable ladies”, who he suggests may find salvation through socialism.

According to Mahon, middle class women are truly responsible for capitalism’s cruelties. Commenting upon the firing of 30,000 workers in a Paris artificial flower factory, which he attributes to a change in fashion, he writes. “Modern society is so beautifully and beneficently directed by the capitalist exploiters that the caprice of the wives and whims of the daughters of the said exploiter mean that the lives of 30,000 girls shall be endangered...[Yet] should these girls be driven to prostitution, the fashionable ladies will shudder at the sight of them.” Here, middle class “ladies” are posited as manipulative, frivolous, irrelevant and hypocritical, while working class “girls” are idealized and presented as innocent and irreproachable. In both instances, women are upheld as symbolic of the attributes associated with their respective classes, and are presented as so different in their interests and characters that they are almost separate species devoid of any common experiences. To reinforce this division, he juxtaposes the misery and suffering of factory girls with the luxury of fashionable ladies, invoking the

powerful image of the prostitute and detailing the highly publicized dramatic death of a Perth Dye Worker.

Later in the article, middle class women are elided with “Society”, which is condemned in damning terms: “Be the outcome [of working class “girls” privation] death—‘Society’ is guilty of murder; be it prostitution—‘Society’ is guilty of a worse crime; and the only individuals in society who are free from guilt are those who stand out denouncing and trying to change the social system which is based on crimes such as these.” Ultimately, the only way for these women to escape blame for the deaths of innocents is to join the socialist cause: “If a few fashionable ladies joined hands with the factory girls, they would at least free themselves from the burden of blame which rests upon them as long as by their silence they sanction the system of society”. It seems strange that Mahon ends his article with an appeal to the guilty middle class, instead of the working class whose cause socialism is said to champion; perhaps more interesting is the fact that socialism is presented as something to join as a result of guilt, and not as a result of conviction and belief in its theoretical suppositions.

Upon reflection, one can identify a number of commonalities between the three articles. First, it is important to note that these authors address a distinctly male audience, save Mahon, whose audience is envisioned as female, but distinctly middle class. Second, all authors advance arguments which appropriate middle class ideals of women’s nature and suitable social role and suggest they should be applied to the working class; even Mahon’s seemingly more nuanced separation of women according to class relies on popular beliefs regarding the innate frivolity of “ornamental” middle class women. Third, the message presented about women is hostile: under the guise of morality, social

purity, biological integrity, and, somewhere among the arguments, socialist principles. the authors discourage women's labour and, by extension, any form of meaningful public participation. For the good of their male relations, for the good of the social order, and particularly for the good of the order to come, women are entreated to stay out of the labour force; Hyndman and Beckett in particular invoke the authority of science, especially evident in the language of degeneracy. Although Mahon does not explicitly write against women's labour, he nonetheless uses his article to highlight the hardships endured by working women, and not to suggest any benefits that work outside the home may hold for them, despite its difficulties. Markedly, none of the authors invoke the Marxist argument that women's participation in the public paid labour force is an essential step in their emancipation (and in the overthrow of capitalism). Even Mahon, who seems to encourage women's participation in the socialist movement, motivates potential converts to the cause through negative emotions (guilt, shame, fear) and not positive intellectual identification.

It was within this intellectual environment and tradition that Eleanor wrote on the Woman Question; however, upon analysis it becomes clear that she did not participate in this tradition or this debate in the same way as her male peers, nor did her arguments draw upon either British or German socialist theorizations on the Woman Question as their sole theoretical supports. As the following analysis will demonstrate, Eleanor wrote in a variety of different genres and publications, and espoused a far more emancipatory argument regarding women's rights and social role as a result of her eclectic intellectual pedigree and her own personal views born of experience; moreover, she often explicitly

addressed her writings to women themselves, calling upon them to become publicly and politically active.

Eleanor's early works: Prostitution and the *Pall Mall Gazette*

One of Eleanor's first major pieces of writing on the Woman Question was "The 'Pall Mall Gazette'"¹⁷, which appeared in the Socialist League's journal *Commonweal* in August 1885.¹⁸ In this article, Eleanor provides a socialist response to the prosecutions, moral panic and concomitant legal reforms incited by W. T. Stead's investigation of child prostitution, serialized in the pages of the *Pall Mall Gazette* as "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon". As Lucy Bland notes, "Whatever their sensationalism and prurience, the *Pall Mall* articles, in pointing to the existence of prostitution, some of it enforced, among young girls barely in their teens, raised crucial issues of sexual coercion and exploitation. The 'revelations' highlighted power imbalances between the sexes which were exacerbated by inequalities of class and age."¹⁹ While articulating a socialist theory on the causes of prostitution, it is clear that Eleanor's overarching aim is to use the issue of prostitution to illuminate and criticize what she perceives to be the universal hypocrisy and immorality of "bourgeois society", and argue that only the socialist movement offers a true solution to the problem of weak public morality. Both Eleanor's theory of prostitution and her concern with public morality were common among socialists of her time; however, what differentiates this article from others is her specific address to women of all classes as the primary agents of social and political reform. It was extremely rare to find women addressed as an active political constituency within the pages of *Commonweal*, *Justice*, or any British socialist journal of the time²⁰; indeed, her

appeal to women, coupled with her concern for public morality, shares many similarities with what would now be described as feminist discourse.

Eleanor's analysis of the causes of prostitution was shared by most European "scientific" socialists at the time, yet was quite radical according to the middle class Victorian sensibility. For Eleanor and the socialists, the matter was quite simple: prostitution was not a matter of individual morality, but rather a question of economics, an inevitable consequence of the "depraved" capitalist system. Thus, only through a radical transformation of economic relations could this problem be remedied. As Eleanor writes,

So long as this accursed system of capitalistic production holds...so long *must*—it is no question of individual will—this condition that is just now shocking us all continue also... So long, indeed, as we have two classes face to face, the one literally in position to buy, and actually buying, the *bodies* of the other, so long will the crimes that necessarily result from such a system continue. This special form of crime just now stirring even the middle-class is only one result of the whole system.

According to Eleanor, the socialists have long realized the corrupt state of contemporary society and humanity; the specific issue of prostitution is but representative of the entire sick state of morality under capitalism. Eliding the revolutionary Continental Communists of the 1840s with British socialists of the 1880s, she writes, "[Socialists] do not need sensational articles to make them realize to what humanity has fallen. The old Communist manifest of 1848, our own manifesto of 1885, equally declare that under the present unnatural *régime* we must expect unnatural crimes." Drawing in a brief discussion of the Woman Question, and echoing a charge made by many feminists at the time, she also notes that "With our property bourgeois marriage we must accept its

complement of venal prostitution.” Thus, Eleanor, like all socialists, asserts that it is society, and not individual or human nature, that is to blame for public immorality:

Our lives are unnatural and horrible, and engender sins not due to natural depravity and wickedness but to an artificial and abnormal state of society. We produce not only the victims, the poor helpless girls and children: we also manufacture the criminal men and women by the conditions in which we place them.

Yet, despite naming social forces as the cause of all moral corruption, she relies on medico-scientific metaphors in the articulation of her argument. Eleanor posits capitalism as not just an institution or system, but as a curse, a disease that has caused the ill health, both physical and psychological, of the body politic, a deviation from a state of nature. This metaphor—capitalism as sickness—recurs throughout the article and indeed throughout most of Eleanor’s writing, and is used to prove socialism as the only “practical” solution to the problem of weak morality as it alone “dare[s] go to the root of the ill”. Comparing socialists to physicians, she claims that only they possess the ability to heal and eradicate the plague that produces prostitution and other urban crimes:

Ask a doctor to cure a patient living under absolutely unhealthy conditions in the midst of pestilential air and unsanitary surroundings. He will tell you you must change these surroundings if you would save the life of the individual...And so, instead of trying to do what is impossible, and seeking to make healthy individuals where the whole system is diseased, we say, “do away with the unnatural state of things. Do not foster unnatural crime by unnatural conditions. Live free and healthy lives, and men and women will be free and healthy. Abolish the *cause* of the disease and the disease will disappear.

While it is unclear what led Eleanor to use such language, it is interesting to note that it coincides with what Foucault has called the “medicalization” of Victorian society, and with the transformation of scientific knowledge as a legitimating, hegemonic epistemology. Thus, it is possible that she framed her argument in such terms to make

them more acceptable to a readership increasingly swayed by appeals to reason and professional knowledge.

However, despite her allusions to medicine and science, both male-dominated realms, she appeals to women as vehicles of change. While one may question the political motivations behind this specific address to women—whether it was made to compete with the women’s movement for recruits and political support—it is noteworthy, and rather curious, that Eleanor begins her article with a caveat, claiming her views as belonging to her alone: “while I believe that I am speaking for many of my fellow-workers, I think it only fair to say that I alone am responsible for what follows”. Why such a statement opens this piece is not exactly clear, as no comparable notices preface the work of any male writers on this or any other issue; however, it is my contention that such a statement exists to distance *Commonweal* and the Socialist League from Eleanor’s article, for her assertions of the rights of all women to address the issue of prostitution, and more broadly their right to participate in public, political movements, begin to sound less strictly socialist and more “feminist”. Interestingly, she does not explicitly or harshly criticize the women’s movement and its sympathizers, and even supports their efforts as earnest and honest, though misguided: “I have no wish to insinuate that many of the good men and women whom the *Pall Mall* revelations have shocked are consciously...aiding in the continuation of the very crimes they wish to prevent. I believe [they] are thoroughly sincere.” Perhaps more problematic for socialists, however, is her reference to the sexism that exists within the movement she seeks to promote, which she uses to affirm women’s right to participate in public discourse:

There are some, even among our friends, who will be shocked that a woman should speak of these matters, and who hold that “womanly custom had left it

better unsaid.” Against this I protest with all my strength. If this is no woman’s question, what is? We may shrink from handling it as the young medical student shrinks from entering the dissecting room, but if we would heal, we have no *right* to turn aside.

Unlike any of the male writers examined herein, she addresses women of all classes,

arguing that it is incumbent upon women to unite and fight for the revolution:

While this wrong is being done—and as it is done to one child, to one woman, it is done to all women—we must face it, grapple with it, and vanquish it—not cowardlike, turn back. It is no pleasant task, truly,—but are the lives of the mass of us pleasant? We, the women, must, above all the rest, bestir ourselves. Us chiefly it concerns, and we must work only with those who can really help us; those who understand that the “salvation” of society means the revolution of society.

Concluding on a rousing note that bespeaks violence, she casts all women, regardless of class background, as capable of affecting revolutionary change: “We need a deluge—aye! Though it were one of blood—to wipe out the sin and wickedness of this society of ours. It is with those who would revolutionise society that our work as women lives.” Clearly, her support of women’s involvement in politics is unequivocal, and in her call to action, she treats such involvement as akin to a civic duty. Moreover, she does not cast women in a subordinate role, but rather treats them as equals and potential movement leaders, endowing them with the same passion, fury, and capacity for violence that are traditionally attributed to male revolutionaries. Most notable, however, is the lack of emphasis on the need for male involvement or assistance. Thus, unlike some male socialist writers, Eleanor sees a place for women within socialist politics, not just as supportive wives, sisters, or mothers, but as coworkers, organizers, and leaders capable of their own movement.

What differentiates Eleanor’s arguments from those of many women’s rights activists at the time is that her justification of women’s political involvement, particularly

regarding the issue of prostitution, is not predicated upon a sense of moral superiority, but upon an appeal to shared experiences and sensibilities as women that cut across class and other boundaries. This egalitarian, notably class *un*-conscious, rhetoric is reminiscent of earlier liberal theorists of women's rights and utopian British socialists, as well as that which emerged in the twentieth century, particularly among "second wave" feminists. Indeed, Eleanor's appeal to the senses and the intellect appears distinctly "modern" to twenty-first century audiences, and is arguably connected to her social position and sensibilities as a New Woman at the *fin-de-siècle*. Like most New Women, she believed in her sex's right to self-determination and full mental, physical, and spiritual development, unhindered by social strictures and premised on their inalienable rights as free and equal human beings. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that it is upon these bases that she grounds her broad appeal.

Thus, while one could argue that Eleanor was merely "toeing the party line" in arguing for the economic basis of prostitution, her broader concern with public morality and her specific appeals to women differentiate her argument from those advanced by most socialists. Indeed, it shares much with "feminist" arguments of earlier (and later) periods, as well as those being articulated by other New Women from widely divergent political orientations. Her distinction from strict socialist arguments is reinforced by the caveat which begins the piece, in which she takes sole responsibility for her views. One could argue that being politically and ideologically isolated thusly, it is not surprising that she should appeal to women for comradeship and support.

“The Woman Question”: before and after Aveling

Following “The ‘Pall Mall Gazette’” and Eleanor’s review of August Bebel’s *Woman in the Past, Present, and Future*, which is addressed below, the majority of her texts were co-written with Edward Aveling. Indeed, the pair highlighted their authorial union, particularly when writing on the Woman Question, and promoted it as the textual manifestation of “a man and a woman thinking and working together”²¹. This proposition raises a number of difficult questions regarding authorial responsibility and gendered power dynamics. Given what we know of both Eleanor and Aveling’s interests and roles in the socialist movement, as well as Victorian society’s estimation and valuation of women’s intellectual abilities and the tenor of the writings completed by Eleanor alone, it is highly questionable that their co-authored texts reflect an egalitarian meeting of the minds.

While it is impossible to know where exactly Aveling’s influence and editing starts and ends, a comparative analysis of Eleanor’s review of Bebel’s *Woman in the Past, Present, and Future* and their co-authored essay on “The Woman Question” reveals telling differences.²² Both works were occasioned by the English translation of German socialist August Bebel’s influential treatise on the Woman Question, *Woman in the Past, Present, and Future*, and seek to popularize his views among British socialists and intellectuals. However, the elements of Bebel’s argument which are emphasized and developed in both works vary greatly. Whereas Eleanor’s review highlights religion and biological determinism as the primary extra-economic loci of women’s oppression, particularly in the British context, the co-authored “Woman Question” focuses on the “commerciality” of bourgeois marriage, and what the Avelings perceive to be the sexual

perversity of contemporary British society. While the review stresses women's public political participation (justified through their intellectual abilities) and their assertion of reproductive rights as crucial to the attainment of women's liberation. "The Woman Question" advances a "reason"-based argument rooted in contemporary scientific theories which maintained that considerations of women's physical and sexual needs ought to be used to determine their social and political roles. Moreover, in the latter it is argued that women's liberation cannot be achieved solely through political activism within the socialist movement, but only through the necessary union of man and woman in a sexually free, biologically efficient society. Indeed, in the co-authored "Woman Question" such Darwinist and eugenicist precepts displace the socialist argument as the only true guarantor of human happiness and freedom; as well, the concerns of the individual woman are subsumed by those of "Society".

Though Eleanor's review, which appeared in the July 1885 supplement to *Commonweal*²³, does take issue with some aspects of Bebel's work, particularly its historical survey and representation of the position of women in "primitive societies"²⁴, she reaffirms and supports most of its claims, and champions his argument that "[t]he so-called woman's question is therefore only one side of the whole social question" ("social" of course meaning "class"). However, despite her agreement and insistence that "the real cause of woman's enslaved position [could be found] in her economic dependence upon man, and that her 'emancipation' means nothing but economic freedom", she identifies factors extraneous to economics which she believes oppress women of all classes. She focuses specifically upon Christianity and theories based on

biological determinism, which she argues are the predominant forces within the British debate on the Woman Question.

Eleanor describes England as “a Bible-reading nation still imbued with the early Christian fear and hatred of nature and of woman (as the embodiment of all evil and temptation) which would forbid every open reference to either subject.” Eleanor also challenges “the idea—not, I fear, uncommon even among Socialists—that woman is at best a very inferior sort of animal, never by chance capable of such greatness as man.” In defense of her gender, she reiterates Bebel’s assertion (and that of English liberal feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft) that “if woman is an inferior creature to-day, she is only, like the proletarian, a victim of circumstances in which she is placed.” Again referencing Bebel, and quite like women’s rights activists and theorists of her time, Eleanor then turns Darwinian arguments on their head to dispute “the postulate that a different physical constitution justifies in a man what is considered criminal in a woman”. Based upon the findings of sexologists like her friend Havelock Ellis, Eleanor argues that “the passions of men and woman [are] the same”, and thus, “the moral rules applied to one should apply to the other.” She goes on to argue for women’s sexual and reproductive rights. Mirroring Bebel’s vision of the socialist future, she asserts that.

We must finally take into account that woman will occupy a totally different position in the society of the future, and will have no inclination to bring a large number of children, as ‘gifts of God’, into the world; that she will desire to enjoy her freedom and independence, and not to spend half or three-quarters of the best years of her life in a state of pregnancy, or with a child at her breast. Certainly there are few women who do not wish to have a child...

Based on Eleanor’s willingness to address the issue of women’s sexuality, one can trace a number of interesting connections to the women’s rights movement, particularly those concerned with socialist purity, as well as the burgeoning “science” of

sexology. However, by arguing that women's sexual passions were equal to those of men—or that they even existed, for that matter—Eleanor abdicated the position of moral superiority used by most women to defend their theoretical and political beliefs. Instead, her argument rests on more liberal concerns with rights and freedoms—sexual, intellectual, and spiritual—of the individual woman, translated to fit a socialist paradigm: “[Under] Socialistic administration for all...all are equals, and enjoy equal rights. In these ‘equal rights’ *all*—i.e. women as men—have their share. In the new community, women being entirely independent, she becomes a free being, the equal of man.” As was mentioned in the analysis of the preceding text, such discourse was common among New Woman writers and political activists. Indeed, it is this combination of traditions that makes Eleanor's writings on the Woman Question so interesting, important, and distinct from strictly socialist and feminist writings of her time.

Bearing all of this in mind, how different the co-authored “Woman Question” appears! Indeed, the differences between her review and the content of “Woman” should cause one to be wary of historians' and feminists' assertions that the latter serves as a genuine expression of her position on this issue.

“The Woman Question”²⁵ was first published in the *Westminster Review*²⁶ on 9 May 1886, later published as a stand-alone pamphlet alternatively titled *The Woman Question or Thoughts on Women and Society*. Like Eleanor's article “The ‘Pall Mall Gazette’”, the Avelings begin their essay with a disclaimer, acknowledging that what followed reflected “their own opinions as two individual socialists”. They nonetheless claim that their opinions “are shared by the majority of their fellow-thinkers and fellow-workers in England, on the Continent, and in America”, and feel this authorizes them to

refer to their position as *the* socialist position. As the promotion of Bebel's book is once more the point of departure, the Avelings spend the first three pages expounding the arguments contained therein. Interestingly, there is no clear demarcation between Bebel's position and that of the Avelings; moreover, it is noteworthy that they emphasize only the economic aspects of his argument vis-à-vis women's oppression, writing that

“[the] fundamental fact is, that the question is one of economics. The position of women rests, as everything in our complex modern society rests, on an economic basis. Had Bebel done nothing but insist upon this, his work would have been valuable.”

However, despite their stress on economics, the closest they come to making an economic argument regarding women's oppression is to note that married women are economically dependent upon their husbands. While Eleanor and Aveling attribute this dependency to the “commercialism” of modern-day marriage, they do not link their argument to any specifically socialist concepts, nor do they invoke the exploitation of women's labour as waged workers as one of the ways in which women are “degraded”. Indeed, rather than expound socialist theories of women, Eleanor and Aveling instead spend a good deal of textual space criticizing the efforts and ideas of “advanced women” as misguided and self-interested. Notably, this marks the first time in her public writings that Eleanor is antipathetic towards the women's movement. While praising their agitation against the Contagious Diseases Acts (“a monstrosity begotten of male cowardice and brutality”), Eleanor and Aveling insist that the multivalent women's rights' campaigns for “woman suffrage...for the higher education of women; for the opening to them of universities, the learned professions, and all callings” affected only “the well-to-do classes, as a rule”, maintaining that “all these ideas of our *advanced* women are based either on property, or on sentimental or profession questions.” In

particular, they argue that the notion of women's suffrage in particular reflects an "ignorance of economics...[and] the study of the evolution of society." They also question the women's movement's belief that change can truly occur in a society that is as "morally bankrupt", "putrefied", and "rotten". for the Avelings maintain that a "diseased" morality and unequal gender relations are but two of the many symptoms of the degenerative effects of capitalism.

However, their greatest criticism of the women's rights movement is the fact that none of their demands "touches them in their sex relations", and it is on the civil and sexual union of men and women that the remainder of the essay focuses. Thus, unlike Eleanor's review, the Woman Question is perceived here not as a matter pertaining primarily to women, but as something that affects both genders, and which can thus only be solved if men and women work together. Gone is Eleanor's criticism of Christian doctrine and biological determinism as the extra-economic causes of women's oppression; instead, they are replaced by the Darwinist and sexological arguments that it is the proper exercise of "feminine" physical functions, particularly with regard to her "gratification of the sex instinct", that is key to women's liberation.

Despite dismissing the notion that women possess "natural calling", they nonetheless argue that women are incomplete without men, not only spiritually, but physically as well. They assert that a lack of male contact bears consequences for women's health, and, further to that, society as a whole. Celibacy is posited as an affliction that unfairly and unnaturally affects that "sad sisterhood", meaning single women, who wear upon their "melancholy brows the stamp of eternal virginity". As was the case with most Victorians, they saw celibacy as a natural consequence of being a

single woman. Yet, it must be acknowledged that, unlike most Victorians, they deplored this imposed celibacy as they recognized the existence (and insisted upon the value of) women's sexuality. Moreover, like feminists at the time, the Avelings criticized the "sexual double standard", noting that "society provides, recognises, legalizes for [men] the means of gratifying the sex instinct", whereas "[i]n the eyes of that same society an unmarried woman who acts after the fashion habitual to her unmarried brothers...is a pariah". Nevertheless, bearing in mind that it was single women who played a preeminent role in the women's movement, it could be argued that the Avelings' suggestion that a woman's single status and celibacy was dangerous to both women and society was meant to further their attack on the women's rights movement; offhandedly, the Avelings comment that among the celibate "we find alike a want of ideas and of ideals."

Accordingly, the Avelings assert that the key to solving the Woman Question was greater sexual openness and freedom, which would ultimately improve both personal and social health. They criticize the fact that "As our boys and girls grow up, the whole subject of sex relations is made a mystery and a shame", and claim that it is this silence surrounding sex and sexuality contributes to poor mental and physical health in both women and men: "[The mystery and shame surrounding sex] is the reason why an undue and unhealthy curiosity is begotten to [sexual relations]. The mind becomes excessively concentrated upon them, remains long unsatisfied, or Incompletely satisfied—passes into a morbid condition." Conversely, the Avelings assert that in a socialist society, boys and girls would be co-educated and provided honest information about sex. "the reproductive organs...discussed as frankly, as freely, between parents and children as the digestive."

In a nod to the project embarked upon by Karl Pearson and his friends in the Men and Women's Club, they claim that, "Only when men and women pure-minded, or, at least striving after purity, discuss the sexual question in all its bearings, as free human beings, looking frankly into each other's faces, will there be any hope of its [the Woman Question's] solution."²⁷

However, for the Avelings, the matter of individual sexual pleasure was not part of the sexual question's bearings. As is suggested by their emphasis on purity in the preceding quotations, sex was not treated as something to be enjoyed; rather, given its importance in maintaining the health of the individual and society, it was more akin to a duty to be performed in the service of social reproduction. This understanding also clarifies why chastity is regarded with such horror. The Avelings write, "Always understanding by chastity the entire suppression of all instincts connected with the begetting of children, we regard chastity as a crime." This focus on reproduction, biology, sex, and race suggests the influence of Darwinian concerns, notably Aveling's realm of expertise.

One is subsequently left with an image of the socialist society as one wherein women's freedom essentially serves as a safeguard against racial degeneracy. Certainly, Eleanor and Aveling do not dissuade readers from such conclusions given their ambivalence regarding the form that marriage under socialism would assume, writing that "whether monogamy or polygamy will obtain in the Socialistic state is a detail on which one can only speak as an individual". Nevertheless, the Avelings themselves envision the ascendancy of an idealized state of heterosexual monogamy based on "love, respect, intellectual likeness, and commands of the necessities of life", which they believe will

“naturally” evolve once all capitalist pretenses are dispensed. Claiming monogamy to be the perfect existential state, representing “the highest ideal...the complete, harmonious lasting blending of two human lives”, they conclude by asserting that under socialism, “Husband and wife will be able to do that which but few can do now—look clear through one another’s eyes into one another’s hearts. For ourselves, we believe that the cleaving of one man to one woman will be best for all, and that these will find each in the heart of the other, that which is in the eyes, their own image.” Knowing what we do of the private lives of our authors, this last statement is steeped in irony.

Thus, upon examination one can find a number of important differences between Eleanor’s liberal, rights-based approach to Bebel’s treatise and the Darwinian, sexology-influenced interpretation articulated in the co-authored “Woman Question”. Whereas Eleanor’s review focused on women’s freedom, independent of men, the Aveling’s jointly authored text presented women’s freedom as dependent upon men, who they required for “completion”. The review defined freedom as the ability to develop one’s self intellectually, and to support one’s self economically, with women as active agents in the constitution of their individual identities; the “Woman Question” treated freedom as sexual freedom, arguing that increased openness would enable men and women to relate to each other honestly. Thus, although both texts claim to be working within socialist theory and claim social betterment as their primary goal, it becomes clear that they work from completely different intellectual traditions and come to very different conclusions regarding the solution to the Woman Question. Furthermore, I would argue that the former more closely approximates Eleanor’s “true” position at the time, as we have seen a similar approach used in the preceding article on the “Pall Mall Gazette”, as well as

in the following work, which revisits iconoclastic playwright Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*.

Ibsen Redux

The next major work concerning the Woman Question undertaken by Eleanor was an alternate ending to Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, entitled "'A Doll's House Repaired'", which she co-wrote with novelist Israel Zangwill²⁸. This piece, which appeared in *Time*²⁹ in March 1891, is quite different from the texts examined above as it was not specifically written for the promulgation of socialism. Furthermore, in terms of its inspiration, subject matter and content, it is arguably the most "feminist" of Eleanor's writings.

Like many in her social circle, Eleanor was enamoured of the Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen. As Sally Ledger notes, Ibsen came to inspire an almost cultish following among "left-leaning literati", and "Ibsenism" came to refer to a "political and cultural formation...consisting of Marxists, socialists, Fabians and feminists who jointly hailed Ibsen as spokesman for their various causes."³⁰ According to Ledger, Ibsen's preoccupation with the obstacles put in way of individual freedom by social strictures and middle class morality held great appeal to his contemporaries interested in women's rights; moreover, his challenging and subversive female character roles were immensely influential in the formation of the identity of the New Woman.³¹ By dissecting the constrictive nature of women's experience in contemporary society and its ill psychological and emotional consequences, Ibsen was able to poignantly criticize middle class social values, and offer New Women a sense of possibility. Recalling the London premiere, Edith Lees Ellis wrote:

A few of us collected outside the theatre breathless with excitement. Olive Schreiner was there and Dolly Radford the poetess...Emma Brooke...and Eleanor Marx. We were restive and almost savage in our arguments. What did it mean?...Was it life or death for women?...Was it joy or sorrow for men? That a woman should demand her own emancipation and leave her husband and children in order to get it, savoured less of sacrifice than sorcery.³²

Eleanor was perhaps one of the most enthusiastic proponents of this doctrine.

regarding Ibsen as “a herald of change, both recording and contributing to what she hoped would be a catastrophic implosion of the bourgeois social fabric.”³³ Thus, she was willing to do seemingly anything “to make people understand our Ibsen a little more than they do.”³⁴ In addition to the rewrite of *A Doll's House*, she learned Norwegian in order to translate the playwright's corpus into English, and hosted a private reading of *A Doll's House* for her socialist colleagues³⁵ As Faith Evans writes, “Just as she was partisan in her politics, so was she evangelic in her promotion of the works and authors she admired.”³⁶

Under the guise of correcting certain “shortcomings” identified by English critics, “whose sound English common-sense revolts at the manifestly impossible, nay, immoral conclusion of ‘A Doll's House’ ”, Eleanor and Zangwill claim to have written an ending more palatable to English audiences. Unlike the original, wherein Nora Torvald leaves her husband and children after finally realizing the former was “really not the noble man she takes him for and loves”, our authors have Nora remain with her husband and accede her duties as a proper middle class wife and mother—an ending, Eleanor and Zangwill suggest, which “cannot fail to satisfy the English sense of morality and decency.” As in “The ‘Pall Mall Gazette’ ”, Eleanor uses this work to criticize the hypocrisy of British middle class values, particularly as they apply to women. Indeed, one of the most striking aspects of this particular text is its pervasive sarcasm, which was used by the

authors to ridicule middle class Britain's poor reception of *A Doll's House*, particularly its "shock" at Ibsen's themes.

After providing a summary of the plot, Eleanor and Zangwill take up the story after Nora, knowing her husband has now read Krogstad's letter, "thinks of drowning herself to spare her husband's reputation, and to save him from taking her sin upon himself, as she is convinced he will do." The dialogue is unequivocal in its contempt for the "bourgeoisie", and overtly supports women's freedom from socio-cultural restraints. Moreover, in reading the dialogue as satire, one can infer the alternate visions of marriage and women's social role the authors espouse. Ironically, the authors use Nora's self-effacing apologies to give voice to these visions, whereas Helmer symbolizes middle class conservatism. An examination of several scenes from " 'A Doll's House' Repaired" will illustrate this point.

The first scene takes place before Torvald meets Krogstad to discuss the revelations contained in his letter. Nora begs her husband to allow her to stay and mediate their meeting; however, she is told to hide herself and let the men sort out "her" mess. In the process, Eleanor and Zangwill comment on the nature of middle class marriage—both how it is and how it should be:

Hel: Hide yourself, Nora. You mustn't be seen.

Nora: Oh! Let me stay. I cannot bear to think of what he may say to you.

Hel: No. You wouldn't understand. My shoulders are broad enough to bear the whole burden.

Nora: Let me share it with you, as wife and husband should.

Hel: You have done enough harm already. You have ruined my home. Let me save the shreds of it.

Clearly, Nora and Helmer's marriage is not based on the "love, respect, intellectual likeness, and commands of the necessities of life" Eleanor and Aveling argued characterizes "true" marriages made possible by socialism.

In the following scene, Eleanor and Zangwill comment on hegemonic "bourgeois" views on women's waged labour. Despite being bitter enemies since their youth, Helmer and Krogstad collude to punish Nora for "forgetting her place"; furthermore, in conceding to Krogstad's demand for a job at the bank, Torvald fires Christina Linde, to whom Krogstad is engaged. Commenting on women's work outside the home, Helmer proclaims:

Hel: Women of our class never should have to [work]. In women of the lower classes it may be a necessity, and even very laudable. But for ours! It is degradation, a destroying of all that is sweetest and most womanly. It makes them flat-chested and flat-footed. The women of our class should be the guardians of the hearth; the spirit of beauty and holiness sanctifying home-life. And then it is so ugly to see a woman work. It shocks one's sense of ideal womanliness. And what is worse, it makes the wife independent of her husband. What happiness can you hope for in a union with such a woman?

According to Krogstad, now that Christina was "free" of her job, she could now "become a true woman, and devote herself to the house and to [him]." However, Helmer warns Krogstad that domestic happiness cannot be that easily ensured, for "a woman who has once tasted the forbidden fruit of independence is like a pet tiger who has once tasted blood."

After Krogstad leaves, Helmer must deal with his own pet tiger, who demures like a kitten in the face of his attempts to make "the shreds [of their life together] into our beautiful home":

Nora: You loved me like a husband should love his wife. And I have been very wicked, very foolish. But you will give me back your love; for henceforth I will lean on you. You will counsel and guide me. You would be no true man if my

unwomanly independence had not made me less dear in your eyes. But you mustn't think any more of the foolish things I did before I understood the sin of a wife thinking and acting without her husband's leave. I have repented. Torvald; I swear I have repented.

Yet despite her apologies, Nora is exiled to the spare room, and is informed of the

“arrangement” Helmer has devised to enable them to keep up appearances. However,

before so doing, Helmer details all Nora's failings as a wife and, by extension, a woman.

Hel: ... You were never the helpless, silly song-bird I took you for. When I thought you my little lark, my squirrel, you were deceiving me. When I first learnt what you had done, I marveled. Could a little squirrel, a little lark, take such a step for itself? But now I see that all along you have been acting and thinking for yourself. This was no sudden transformation. You have been consistent all along. You worked to earn money. I should not be surprised if you had tried to feel like a man!... You resorted to tricks and dodges to conceal from me that you had worked to earn money, that you had saved my life in an unwomanly manner. It is all this concealment that has corrupted you, and makes you unfit to bring up my children in the way they should go.

It is obvious to Helmer that Nora is in need of an education on how to fulfill her

“womanly duties”. Once more, Nora implores him to forgive her, but is cruelly rebuked:

Nora: What! You would practically shut me out from my home, my husband, my children? Consider what the world will say!

Hel: The world! The world will know nothing unless you again forget yourself, and forsake your holiest duties.

Nora: My holiest duties? What are my holiest duties?

Hel: Do you ask me that? To keep up appearances.

Nora: Are there no other duties equally sacred?

Hel: None. Except to obey me.

Nora: My duties to my children—

Hel: Before all else you are my wife.

Nora: I know so now. My wicked dream, that I might become a human being as you are, is over. I will be nothing but a true wife and woman.

With social and religious custom his only supporting arguments, Helmer

dismisses the eight years of sacrifice, secrecy, and hard work Nora endured in order to

save her husband's life. Eleanor and Zangwill give the final word to the wronged

paterfamilias, while Nora is left to reflect upon her transgressions:

Hel: ...For eight years I thought of you as an ideal woman; one who did not understand anything, but who loved; a woman like millions of other women, sweetly sinking her own identity entirely in that of her husband. Then the miracle happened. I found you were not the woman I had taken you for... Until you quite understand, you are not the woman with whom I can share my life. When your terror was over—not for me, but for yourself—when there was nothing more to fear—then it was to you as though nothing had happened. You were to be my lark again, my play-acting doll—and I was to take twice as much care of you in the future because you were, in spite of all your efforts, so entirely incapable of thinking yourself correctly. (*Coming closer.*) Nora, in that moment it burst upon me that I had been living here these eight years with a woman I had not known—that my children may take after her! Oh! I can't bear to think of it—I could tear you into pieces!

The transparency of Eleanor and Zangwill's satire makes clear their sympathies for Nora and the plight of all middle class women who hope to transcend the arbitrary existential boundaries imposed by their gender and class. Furthermore, by making Helmer's reactions appear cruel, unfair, and ridiculous, our authors demonstrate the hypocrisy of the middle class' social conservatism, and the human consequences of blind adherence to customary beliefs.

Perhaps the "feminism" of " 'A Doll's House' Repaired" can be best demonstrated by juxtaposing it with "The Woman Question". Though they vary in genre, context, and time, they both deal with (middle class) women's socio-cultural role or "place", as well as the nature of heterosexual relations. " 'A Doll's House' Repaired" argues for women's independence, and their right to develop themselves intellectually; "The Woman Question" stresses women's necessary union with men to form the perfect individual. The former emphasizes women's intellectual and emotional agency; the latter their physical dependence on men for "biologically necessary" sexual functions. The former roots itself in individualistic, liberal notions of human freedom, the latter in "scientific socialism", sexology and Darwinism. The former leaves the question of what

constitutes femininity purposely undefined, suggesting their adherence to the view that women are defined by societal norms (including class) and not by nature, and implying that under a socialist regime women would be free to define themselves; the latter holds steadfast to a more rigid concept of what it means to be woman, suggesting that there is some core of femininity that capitalist society has perverted and degraded and that can be regained under socialism.

Thus, despite Yvonne Kapp's suggestion that "'A Doll's House' Repaired" "is more of Zangwill...than of Eleanor"³⁷, it is worth noting that, upon analysis, one can find more similarities between "'A Doll's House' Repaired" and "The 'Pall Mall Gazette' ", for example, than between this piece and "The Woman Question". The repetition of similar themes among all these texts, save "The Woman Question", further support the argument that the ideas and approaches expressed herein more closely resemble Eleanor's "true" opinion.

Eleanor, die *Arbeiterin*³⁸

In the following articles, which appeared in *Die Arbeiterinnenzeitung* in 1892, Eleanor addresses issues pertaining to the Woman Question, albeit with a much different focus and message. In the late 1880s, Eleanor became increasingly involved in the "New Union" movement, and, as was noted in the preceding chapter, was a great advocate of women-only unions. She herself took an active role in founding a woman's branch of the Gasworkers' Union, and, motivated by the suffering of the working women she observed, made all efforts to popularize their plight. Henceforth, when she spoke and wrote on the Woman Question, she focused on this demographic of women as her subject, although she did not explicitly address them as her audience.

However, in analyzing the content and mode of argumentation of these articles, it would seem that a dramatic shift had been affected in Eleanor's position on the Woman Question. Specifically, these articles contain repeated, harsh attacks on the "bourgeois" women's movement, and assert a strict interpretation of socialism and its benefits for working women. It would seem odd that such a drastic change could have transpired in the year since she wrote "A Doll's House Repaired", and certainly begs for explanation. What becomes apparent through an analysis of the context surrounding the writing of these articles, and a comparison with other statements Eleanor made on this subject, is that the *Arbeiterinnen* articles were tailored to the political needs of the continental socialist movement, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of their author.

Let us begin with an examination of earlier statements Eleanor made regarding the situation of working women. In August 1891, Eleanor presented her *Report from Great Britain and Ireland*³⁹ at the Second International Socialist Congress in Brussels on behalf of the Gas Workers and General Labourers' Union, the Legal Eight Hours and International Labour League, the Bloomsbury Socialist Society and the Battersea Labour League. While her *Report* was not specifically about the Woman Question, Eleanor does address the unique burdens facing working women, and hypothesizes the causes of their oppression. Furthermore, her presentation of the status of working women is not purely polemical; rather, it demonstrates a degree of sensitivity that bespeaks genuine concern borne of close observation and personal involvement.

Briefly, Eleanor writes that the organization of working women was "perhaps more difficult...[as] Even the working man for the most part still looks upon the women of the household as domestic animals, more or less his personal property". She also

recognizes the inadequacy of women's wages and the various other social and economic factors that prohibit working women from becoming more political:

the woman herself...earn[s] a wage that—even in the more skilled kinds of labour—generally means starvation...or where she is a widow, or unmarried mother with children dependent upon her, or even when she is alone in the world...what time could she have—even if she had the desire—for attending meetings or for organising?

Finally, she commends the “admirably conducted strike of Bryant & May’s match girls”—an action in which they were ably helped by middle class women like Annie Besant—and notes the strike’s effect on mobilizing their “sister workers”.

Her comments are markedly free of prescriptive, ameliorative direction; moreover, unlike the writings of her male peers highlighted earlier, there is no suggestion that women workers undercut male wages. Rather, Eleanor emphasizes the fact that working women often rely on their wages as their only source of income, particularly in the case of working widows and single mothers. Most important, however, is the fact that she names *working class men* among the oppressors, which suggests she regarded not only capitalism, but also patriarchal gender norms, as being responsible for working women’s hardships. This criticism is not often found among socialist writings on the Woman Question, even among those written by other leading Marxist women, such as Clara Zetkin of the German SPD.

These same themes articulated by Eleanor in her report reappear in a series of articles she wrote for *Die Arbeiterinnenzeitung*⁴⁰, a Viennese newspaper popular among Austrian socialist women (which was, coincidentally, edited by Louise Kautsky). However, the tone and message conveyed in these articles are vastly different from those which emerged in her *Report*. Here, she is unabashedly polemical and merciless in her

criticisms of the perceived oppressors—who, incidentally, constitute the same group whose rights she championed in earlier articles, namely middle class women.

To understand why these two texts should vary so greatly, and in such a short span of time, one must have a sense of the political impetus underlying the writing of these articles. First, one must understand that Eleanor wrote these articles after being approached by Engels to ‘straighten out’ Austrian socialist women’s attitude toward “bourgeois feminism”.⁴¹ Engels’ comments in his letter of 2 October 1891 to Eleanor’s sister Laura give one an idea of his own political motives in asking Marx’s daughters for contributions. Maintaining that the women’s articles would “create a sensation among the women’s rights [supporters] in Germany and Austria”, he hoped that the “antiquated semi-bourgeois women’s right ânesses [asses]” in the socialist movement “will soon be ordered to the rear.” Clearly, the continental socialists felt threatened by the strength of the burgeoning women’s movement, which, as Hal Draper and Anne Lipow note, like the British women’s movement had begun to gain momentum in the early 1890s, particularly surrounding the issue of suffrage, while no parallel socialist alternative had kept apace.⁴²

Second, one must read these articles in full remembrance of the debate over the Factory Acts⁴³ that split the rather tenuous links between the women’s movement and the socialist movement. As Barbara Caine notes, the complex question of ‘protective’ industrial legislation for women had been the subject of debate for some decades.⁴⁴ Figures associated with feminism ranging from John Stuart Mill to Millicent Garrett Fawcett opposed any industrial legislation for women which was not equally applied to men, on the grounds that it would only perpetuate the view of women as child-like and dependent. Likewise, some trade unionists like Women’s Trade Union League founder

Emma Paterson also opposed protective legislation on the grounds that she believed unionism and independent, sex-based organization to be the means by which women could establish and protect their interests. However, socialists like Beatrice Webb and Eleanor argued that middle class members of the women's movement could not understand the true meaning and impact of the Acts as they applied to working women whose needs were so different. In Webb's *Women and the Factory Acts*, she pointed out that middle-class women's pursuit of an end to restrictions which excluded them from professions was not affected by the protections provided by the Factory Acts, which were designed to curb the "appalling levels of exploitation" suffered by working women. She also noted that it was impossible for workers to set their own hours and conditions of work under industrial capitalism, and that, under capitalism, they could only be humanely established through the intervention of the state. Finally, she argued that such legislation could ultimately aid worker organization, as had occurred among the Lancashire textile workers.⁴⁵ Clearly, socialists and feminists were engaged in a struggle for the support of women—both working and middle class, apolitical and confirmed socialists—in pursuit of their political aims.

In total, Eleanor wrote four articles on the subject of working women and union organization, taking the Brussels resolution in favour of equal rights⁴⁶ as her point of departure, and ostensibly focusing on the question of how to organize in pursuit of that goal. However, a major part of the latter involved harsh criticism of "women's rightsers...who recognised no class struggle but only a struggle of sexes, who belong to the possessing class, and who want rights that would be an injustice against their working-class sisters". Indeed, it is in these articles that Eleanor for the first time posits

class as more important than sex in the solution of the Woman Question, arguing that the “present adverse position of working-women” can only be ameliorated by “wag[ing] a common fight hand-in-hand with the men of their class against the common enemy, viz. the men and women of the capitalist class.” Here she stresses that women ought to “organise not as ‘women’ but as *proletarians*; not as female rivals of our working men but as their comrades in the struggle”, and champions the socialist party as the “real women’s party”. In emphasizing a gender neutral interpretation of the term proletariat, it can be argued that Eleanor was trying to undermine the claim articulated by some male socialists that women workers undercut male wages, and instead emphasize their mutual oppression. It is also possible that this act of leveling was intended to politically empower women and endow them with a sense of purpose and place in the working class struggle. However, it could also be that such statements, well intentioned as they may be, were meant more for a male rather than female readership.

While Eleanor is quick to point out the benefits of unionization for women, she is also careful to note the difficulties involved in the task, of which discriminatory sex stereotyping on the part of male leaders and administrators and the “double duties” women perform as proletarians and “household slaves” are predominant. Nonetheless, Eleanor maintains that, although “the job will not be easy” and “the conditions of female labour are such that it is often heartbreakingly difficult to make progress”, “from day to day the job will become easier, and it will begin to look less and less difficult in proportion as the women and especially the men learn to see what strength lies in the unification of *all workers*.” Unlike her *Report*, Eleanor fails to explore how the existing

“conditions of female labour” are to be overcome in order to “make progress”, and instead offers only optimism.

Of particular interest is Eleanor’s article on women’s trade unions in England, in which she outlines what she feels to be the major differences between middle class “women’s rightsers” and socialists. Like Beatrice Webb before her, Eleanor insists that the interests and goals of working and middle class women are very different, comparing these “women’s rightsers” to misogynists and proclaiming that she “see[s] no more in common between a Mrs. Fawcett and a laundress than...between Rothschild and one of his employees.” While she agrees that, “As women we certainly have a lively concern about winning for women the same rights as men, including working men, already possess today”, she maintains that “women’s rightsers” cannot see “that there is the exploiter woman of the middle class and the exploited woman of the working class”. Consequently,

If every demand raised by these women were granted today, we working-women would still be just where we were before. Women-workers would still work infamously long hours, for infamously low wages, under infamously unhealthful conditions; they would still have only the choice between prostitution and starvation. It would be still more true than ever that, in the class struggle, the working-women would find the good women among their bitter enemies; they would have to fight these women just as bitterly as their working-class brothers must fight the capitalists. The men and women of the middle class need ‘free’ field in order to exploit labour. Has not the star of the women’s rights movement, Mrs. Fawcett, declared herself expressly in opposition to any legal reduction of working hours for female workers?

Thus, Eleanor maintains that “this ‘women’s question’ [markedly not phrased as the ‘woman question’] is an essential component in the *general* question of the emancipation of labour”, and that “there is only the working-class movement.” However, she does not

totally dismiss the women's movement, and with realpolitik pragmatism suggests that socialists can support women's rightsers when it is in their best interests to do so:

We can understand, sympathise, and also help if need be, when women of the upper or middle class fight for rights that are well-founded and whose achievement will benefit working-women also. I say, we can even help: has not the *Communist Manifesto* taught us that it is our duty to support any progressive movement that benefits the workers' cause, even if this movement is not our own?...

We accept these benefits as weapons, weapons that enable us to fight better on the side of our working-class brothers. We are not women arrayed in struggle against men but workers who are in struggle against the exploiters.

Throughout this article and the others, Eleanor's message to the socialist women of Vienna is clear: those who believe their interests can be satisfactorily and successfully represented by the middle class women's movement are mired in a state of what was later termed "false consciousness", and that any socialist woman who sympathized or aligned with the women's movement would be failing not only the working class, but also herself. Despite the urgency of Eleanor's calls for unionization, the reader is not left with a greater sense of how working class (and socialist) women should and can organize, but only knows with whom Eleanor believes they should not organize.

In spite of the willingness of writers like Yvonne Kapp, Hal Draper, Ann Lipow, and others, to claim the views Eleanor expresses in *Die Arbeiterinnen* as her "true" position, I would argue that an analysis of earlier statements on the position of working women, as well as of the political context in which they were written, proves the issue to be less straightforward. While not discounting the fact that she deeply believed in socialist principles, and acknowledging that she did not drastically alter her views on the difficulties facing working women, it does seem strange that all of the earlier concerns of New Woman-hood articulated in earlier texts have seemed to disappear. As well, her

newfound aversion to feminist ideas seems rather sudden. Thus, it could be argued these articles were written out of, and informed by, at best a sense of strategic realism, but more likely a sense of obligation and duty to Engels and the international socialist movement.

Conclusion

Upon examination of a selection of Eleanor's writings on the Woman Question, it becomes clear that her views on that issue were anything but unified. Nor were they strictly "socialist" in message or content. What differentiates Eleanor's writings from those of her socialist peers was her willingness to address the Woman Question in its numerous manifestations. Moreover, her texts incorporated arguments emanating from the various groups in which she participated, from the political to the theatrical, and can also be attributed to her socio-economic position as a New Woman. Thus, she affected an interesting yet complex synthesis of Marxism, sexology, Darwinism, and what would now be called "liberal feminism". Indeed, Eleanor Marx's complex, multi-layered views on the Woman Question can be said to represent the confluence of many of the major radical discourses of the British fin-de-siècle that came to intellectually dominate the twentieth century; and it is this fact that makes an understanding of her views on the Woman Question important.

Moreover, this examination of difference has demonstrated the context dependency of her views, especially in terms of co-authors and political motives. In recognizing divergences and contingency within her stated position, one is forced to ask not only why historians are so quick to accept "Woman Question" as Eleanor's "position" on this matter, but also why such issues have not been previously addressed.

Moreover, such considerations raise important theoretical and methodological questions regarding the analysis and understanding of an individual's textual legacy, particularly when it is said to contribute to an ideology. These latter questions and considerations will be more fully explored in the conclusion.

Conclusion: *Some Reflections on the Life and Legacy of Eleanor Marx*

In her epilogue to the second volume of her monumental study, Yvonne Kapp offers the following observations on the life and legacy of Eleanor Marx:

The two strongest motive powers in Eleanor's life had been her deep love for her father, with whom Engels was closely identified, and her zeal for the cause that had been theirs. Magnificently, she had carried into action their theoretical guidance and, with its loss, it may be surmised that she felt herself inadequate...

Of course her voluntary death was an admission of defeat; yet by none but her own subjective standards can she be seen to have failed. She took the tirelessness, the dignity and the dedication of her father, and the capacity for self-sacrifice and womanly *caritas* of her mother into the streets and to the assemblies of working people; she was modest, well-tempered and gentle but she carried a fiery message imparted in the diction of common life to reach the hearts and minds of multitudes...

Some may think that throughout Eleanor's years with Aveling she had been sublimating an unsatisfactory relationship in compulsive political activity, but that is to misinterpret the story of a life moulded and directed from earliest youth to that end. As a mature woman she followed through with quite remarkable consistency—thus proving a fundamentally steadfast character—the work into which she had been initiated since childhood.¹

While many subsequent historians have challenged Kapp's conclusions regarding the causes of Eleanor's death, very few have challenged her fundamental claim that Eleanor Marx was a tireless, willingly self-sacrificial "happy warrior" for the socialist "cause", whose commitment to "the Movement" was bred in the bone. Indeed, Kapp's account of Eleanor's life, views, and greater historical relevance, particularly on the Woman Question, has been repeated rather unproblematically throughout the related historiography. Even within the work of feminist historians, Kapp's highly-gendered narrative has been echoed and used to frame Eleanor as a prototypical socialist feminist, a

unique and extraordinary “woman [and] a mass agitator, thoroughly schooled in Marxist ideas.”²

Read retrospectively, however, Kapp’s work, along with that of her contemporaries, provides much more insight on the historical moment in which she was writing than on the life of Eleanor Marx. At that time, history as a discipline was undergoing major changes: influenced by the New Left and women’s movements, socialist and feminist historians of the 1960s, ‘70s and early ‘80s, particularly those working in Britain, sought to account not only for the lives of women and working people, but also for the native origins of their own political ideas and movements. With these intellectual and political influences and aims in mind, it is perhaps not surprising that Eleanor Marx, the most politically active of Karl Marx’s progeny and, notably, his only “English” daughter, emerged as an ideal subject for further study.

Yet, while these political impetuses encouraged the writing of groundbreaking social histories, they also resulted oftentimes in conspicuously ideological biographies of politically influential and (subsequently) iconic figures like Eleanor. As Sheila Rowbotham and others have noted, there was a tendency within socialist and feminist biographies of the time to overlook, ignore, or explain away difficult questions regarding tensions and outright contradictions in the lives and writings of their subjects—questions whose answers could potentially frame not only their subjects but also their politics in an unflattering or problematic light. While understandable from a political perspective, this willful ignorance and self-censorship have had definite consequences for our historical understanding of the life and thought of important political figures. Arguably, the unwillingness of previous works to engage with tensions, ambivalences, and

contradiction within the lives of their subjects had the effect of stripping these individuals of their complexity and humanity, and denying them any wider historical relevance.

Moreover, to paraphrase Rowbotham, it also conveys the message that the existence and recognition of contradictory thoughts, behaviours, and emotions within the lives of those perceived as politically pure somehow reduces the significance of their contributions.

However, much has changed since this period, both politically and academically. With the official end of the Cold War, the strength, power and influence of party-based socialist movements and states has declined significantly. The neoconservative turn among Western states during the 1980s resulted in an effective public “backlash” against political feminism, and, one could argue, women’s rights more generally. At the same time, post-structuralist theory and methodologies became increasingly influential within academia, particularly history. While post-structuralism has raised important disciplinary questions and, with its challenges to established knowledge and “truth claims”, forced greater reflexivity among practitioners, its “language-model epistemology” has also destabilized the very concepts used by socialist and feminist historians to write progressive histories, namely power, agency, and experience. In light of these developments, and given that her identification with the intellectual and political concerns of the “old ways” is so strong, academic interest in Eleanor Marx has unsurprisingly subsided.

Yet, to characterize the past three decades thusly without further comment would be to tell but one side of the story, for other developments offer great promise for a revival of interest in the historical roots of socialism and feminism. While nominally socialist parties and politics may have waned, there has been an international

proliferation of grassroots, left-leaning “new social movements” with diverse, yet markedly anti-capitalist, political agendas that recognize interconnections among various sites of oppression, including class, race, gender, and sexual orientation. Similarly, within feminism’s “third wave”, there has been a recognition and celebration of multiple sites of identity; along with this embrace has come an increased acknowledgement of the complexity and difficulty of advancing a “woman first” theory and politics which encompasses these diverse identifications. Within academia, moreover, there has been a general retrenchment from post-structuralism as a hegemonic methodology. Scholars, particularly historians, appear increasingly willing and able to challenge its merits and epistemological tenets, while also theorizing ways of bringing various methodologies together in productive dialogue. Clearly, our twentieth century *fin-de-siècle* was and is a time of political and intellectual ferment; as such, it bears striking similarities not only to the period during which initial work on Eleanor was undertaken, but to the time in which Eleanor herself lived, worked, and wrote.³ All of these reasons make now an ideal time to critically examine Eleanor Marx’s life and legacy.

To that end, this thesis has re-visited Eleanor Marx, specifically her complicated views regarding the Woman Question. It has used post-structuralist methods of textual analysis, in tandem with a more traditional biographical narrative written from a feminist standpoint, to challenge existing historiographic interpretations and offer new readings and observations. Unlike earlier accounts, it has considered a broad range of writings on the Woman Question selected from different periods during Eleanor’s life, which vary widely in terms of topic, authorial intent and genre. By exploring tensions and contradictions in her writings on the Woman Question and contextualizing them within

her life and times, it has tried to demonstrate that Eleanor Marx's views on this issue were by no means coherent, unified, or determined by socialism alone. Rather, they synthesized an eclectic array of ideas emanating from the various movements and individuals with which and with whom she was involved or affiliated, such as Ibsenism and the sexological studies of her friend Havelock Ellis. Moreover, they were greatly informed by her social location, not only as the daughter of Karl Marx, but, more importantly, as a publicly-involved New Woman during the British *fin-de-siècle*. Thus, this thesis has argued that her views were informed by both personal and social forces. Indeed, it is maintained herein that it is Eleanor's socio-cultural and political location at the confluence of these disparate yet highly influential discourses, and her ability to unite them in her personage and her writings, albeit problematically, which makes an understanding of her life and thought so important in the modern era.

Although this thesis has shown that it is difficult to arrive at any firm conclusions regarding Eleanor's views on the Woman Question, it has also demonstrated that a number of common themes can be found within her writings and speeches. Most prominent among them is her consistent stress on her sex's right to full and total self-determination, unhindered by social strictures and premised on their inalienable rights as free and equal human beings. Eleanor's emphasis on issues of independence, individuality, and intellectual and bodily freedom were common to New Women like herself; however, they were also shared by so-called "bourgeois" liberal feminists of her time. Indeed, the presence of these themes in her writings link her not only to feminists of her own time, but connect her to a much older British liberal feminist tradition, as well as to the writings of "second wave" twentieth century feminists. It is for these reasons

that Eleanor's writings appear to us to be both quite contemporary and yet participating in a much longer theoretical tradition *outside* of socialism. As Mary Cullen writes, "the roots of feminism lie in the behaviour-patterns societies have prescribed for women and men. While these have differed over time and place, feminism has always grown from women's perception that the sex roles prescribed by their own society conflicted with their knowledge of themselves and with their development of autonomous individuals."³ It should be noted that feminism has also grown as a result of theorists and activists' recognition and analysis of the differences and commonalities of women's experiences over space and time, as such reflections facilitate assessments of the potential for progressive socio-political change.

Ultimately, this thesis connects with questions which have always dominated feminist history. Reflecting on the preceding biography and textual analysis, one is forced to ask, is Eleanor Marx a feminist? If not, who can be considered a feminist? Must one be involved in organizations or affiliated with institutions which are self-consciously and self-declaredly feminist? Who does such a classification include or exclude? Is it anachronistic to describe someone as being feminist when the term did not exist in their lifetime? Moreover, is it unfair or dishonest to label someone thusly when they had at times publicly disavowed a gender-based politics? If one bases his/her assessment of an individual's feminism upon his/her public pronouncements alone, does this definition preclude those women who, whether consciously or not, lived by ideals associated with feminism? Finally, should we evaluate one's feminism through her thoughts or actions, or a combination of both, and must they be coherent and concomitant with each other? Using a definition of feminism which acknowledges not only the public

but also the personal as political—which thus recognizes one’s lifestyle choices as reflecting one’s politics (and these choices need not always be rational, consistent, or coherent)—then Eleanor Marx is arguably a feminist, and embodies the complexities and ambivalences of this markedly diverse and difficult ideology.

At this time, the future directions of socialist and feminist histories are entirely unclear. Equally unknown is the political outcome of the dispersed political energy of the new social movements. Nevertheless, with respect to Eleanor, a “tantalizing incompleteness” will always exist surrounding her life, regardless of changes within the political and academic worlds. Given the lack of historical evidence, as well as the complicated nature of individual psychology, there are some things we simply cannot and will not ever know. Yet, almost certainly, the writing of both biography and history is premised on this very lack, which is exactly what makes it both so problematic and so politically powerful.

APPENDIX: PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure 1: Marx "family" photograph, 1864;
left to right, Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx,
Jenny Marx, Eleanor Marx, Laura Marx

Figure 2: Friedrich Engels

Figure 3: Jenny Marx

Figure 4: Laura Marx

Figure 5: Jenny Marx (von
Westphalen)

Figure 6: Eleanor at age 18

Figure 7: Eleanor Marx in later years, wearing, as Yvonne Kapp notes, “her favourite dress of dark blue velvet”

Figure 8: Edward Aveling

Figure 9: Hippolyte Prosper Olivier Lissagaray

Figure 10: Olive Schreiner

Figure 11: Havelock Ellis

Endnotes

Introduction

¹ Charles Bradlaugh (1833-1891) was the president of the National Secular Society, founded in 1866. Bradlaugh is most famous for publishing *The Fruits of Knowledge*, Charles Knowlton's tract on the merits of birth control, jointly with fellow secularist (and future socialist and theosophist) Annie Besant. Both he and Besant were charged with publishing material that was "likely to deprave or corrupt those whose minds are open to immoral influences", and were sentenced to six months in prison. Upon Appeal, however, the sentence was quashed.

² *The Diary of Beatrice Webb Volume I. 1873-1892: 'Glitter Around and Darkness Within,'* Edited by Norman MacKenzie and Jeanne MacKenzie (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1982): 87-88.

³ Felix Barker, "The Life and Strange Death of Eleanor Marx," *Cornhill Magazine* 168 (1005), Autumn 1955: 167-179.

⁴ Barker, 173.

⁵ Barker, 168.

⁶ Chushichi Tsuzuki's *The Life of Eleanor Marx, 1855-1898: A Socialist Tragedy* (1967), and Yvonne Kapp's extensive two volume study, *Eleanor Marx (Family Life 1855-1883, published in 1972, and The Crowded Years 1884-1898, published in 1977).*

⁷ *Eleanor Marx: Life, Work, Contact*, Edited by John Stokes, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000.

⁸ Carolyn Steedman, "Fictions of Engagement: Eleanor Marx, Biographical Space," *Eleanor Marx: Life, Work, Contacts*, Edited by John Stokes (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000): 23, 24-25.

⁹ Lyn Pykett, "'A Daughter of Today': The Socialist-Feminist Intellectual as Woman of Letters," *Eleanor Marx: Life, Work, Contact*, Edited by John Stokes. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000): 13.

¹⁰ John Stokes, "Introduction," *Eleanor Marx: Life, Work, Contacts*, Edited by John Stokes (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000): 10.

¹¹ Joan Wallach Scott, "Introduction," *Feminism and History*, Edited by Joan Wallach Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996): 4.

¹² Liz Stanley, "Feminism and the Academic Mode: An Editorial Introduction," *Feminist Praxis*, Edited by Liz Stanley (London; New York: Routledge, 1990): 15.

¹³ Michael Erben, "The Problem of Other Lives: Social Perspectives on Written Biography," *Sociology* 27 (1) February 1993: 15.

¹⁴ Lori Williamson, "Women's History and Biography," *Gender and History* 11 (2), July 1999: 379.

¹⁵ Sheila Rowbotham, "Search and Subject: Threading Circumstance," *Dreams and Dilemmas: Collected Writings* (London: Virago Press, 1983): 188. Rowbotham does not define what constitutes this "specifically feminist consciousness".

¹⁶ Rowbotham, 1983, 173.

¹⁷ June Hannam, "Usually Neglected in Standard Histories: Some issues in working on the life of Isabella Ford, 1855-1924," *Writing Feminist Biography*, Edited by Denise Farran et al. (Manchester: Manchester University, 1986): 13.

¹⁸ Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003: 9.

¹⁹ Sheila Rowbotham, "Introduction," *The Daughters of Karl Marx 1866-1898*, Edited Olga Meier (London: Andre Deutsch, 1982): xxix.

²⁰ E. P. Thompson, "Eleanor Marx," *Making History: Writings on History and Culture* (New York: The New Press, 1994): 19-21.

²¹ Steedman, 2000, 26.

²² John Stokes provides an interesting overview of fictional biographical accounts of Eleanor Marx in his Introduction to *Eleanor Marx: Life, Work, Contacts*. See especially pages eight to twelve.

²³ Taylor, 9.

²⁴ Williamson, 381.

²⁵ To be fair, there exist more letters between Eleanor and her male socialist colleagues and friends like Eduard Bernstein and Wilhelm Liebknecht; however, I would argue that, based on what documents have

survived between Eleanor and her mother and sisters, or friends like Olive Schreiner, that more can and ought to be said on these relationships and their role in Eleanor's life.

²⁶ Williamson, 383.

²⁷ Martha Vicinus, "'They Wonder to Which Sex I Belong': The Historical Roots of the Modern Lesbian Identity," *Homosexuality: Which Homosexuality?* Edited by Denis Altman et al. (London: Gay Men's Press, 1989).

²⁸ Taylor, 21.

²⁹ Christine Stansell, "Eleanor Marx," *Monthly Review* 29 (11) 1977: 39.

³⁰ Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985): 1.

³¹ Vicinus, 1985, 9.

³² Gabrielle Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text," *Speculum* 65 (1) January 1990: 60.

³³ The most famous of these debates took place between Linda Gordon and Joan Scott in the pages of *Signs*. See: *Signs*, Summer 1990: 848-860.

³⁴ This ambivalence is evident particularly in reactions to Joan Scott's theoretical and historical work. See Joan Hoff's critique of Scott, "Gender as a post-modern category of paralysis," *Women's History Review* 3 (1994): 149-168.

³⁵ See also Susan Moller Okin, "Gender and Relativism in Recent Feminist Historical Scholarship," *The New Zealand Journal of History* (October 1995), 211-25.

³⁶ Martha C. Howell, "A Feminist Historian Looks at the New Historicism: What's So Historical About It?" *Women's Studies* 19 (1991): 139.

³⁷ Spiegel, 69.

³⁸ Spiegel, 71.

³⁹ Spiegel, 75.

⁴⁰ However, most are keenly aware to the monumental difficulties inherent in such a task. For an articulate elaboration of such difficulties, see Gabrielle Spiegel, pp. 75-76.

⁴¹ Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992): 7.

⁴² Walkowitz, 8.

⁴³ Walkowitz, 9.

⁴⁴ Walkowitz, 9.

⁴⁵ Walkowitz, 10.

⁴⁶ Erben, 19.

Chapter One

¹ Interestingly, the use of the rubric "Woman Question" originated within Marxist discourse. According to Cheris Kramarae and Paula A. Treichler's *Feminist Dictionary*, the Woman Question is the term classical Marxists used to refer to "the question of women's historical status and role within current social arrangements" (Kramarae and Treichler, 496). Eventually, however, it was adopted in the 1880s/90s and used to refer to a broader discourse with views emanating from a variety of socio-political sources.

² Roy Porter and Lesley Hall, *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650-1950*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995): 126.

³ See Porter and Hall, 125-131.

⁴ Rita Felski, "Introduction," *Sexology in Culture: Labeling Bodies and Desires*, edited by Lucy Bland and Laura Doan, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 1.

⁵ Porter and Hall, 125.

⁶ Porter and Hall, 127-128.

⁷ Porter and Hall, 12.

⁸ Porter and Hall, 133.

⁹ Porter and Hall, 136.

¹⁰ Porter and Hall, 137.

¹¹ Contagious Diseases Acts were also passed in 1866 and 1869.

¹² Porter and Hall, 132.

¹³ Porter and Hall, 132.

- ¹⁴ Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: gender and culture at the fin de siècle* (New York: Viking, 1990): 3.
- ¹⁵ Beatrice Webb, *My Apprenticeship*, (New York: Green and Company, 1950): 154-155.
- ¹⁶ Stanley Pierson, *British Socialists: The Journey from Fantasy to Politics*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press; 1979): 27.
- ¹⁷ Pierson, 1979, 27.
- ¹⁸ Anthony Wright, *British Socialism: Socialist thought from the 1880s to 1960s* (London and New York: Longman Group, 1983): 8.
- ¹⁹ Wright, 9.
- ²⁰ Morris' critique of industrial capitalist society was adopted and expanded by men like Robert Blatchford, Edward Carpenter and John Trevor, who spread the doctrine in the industrial areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire through Labour Churches and publications like *The Clarion* and *Merrie England*, and who presented socialism not as a mere political system, but as a complete way of life requiring a degree of devotion once reserved for religion. Pierson, 1979, 34.
- ²¹ E. J Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964): 266.
- ²² June Hannam, "Women and Politics," *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945*, Edited by Jane Lewis, (London: UCL Press, 1995): 227.
- ²³ Edward Carpenter was perhaps the most influential and radical British socialist in terms of sexual politics. Carpenter's sexual politics were attendant upon his understanding of socialism as a new way of life, which in turn required a transformation of ways of living now as a precondition of new socialist relations. As a result, he supported, in thought and deed, initiatives such as simple living, dress reform, vegetarianism, mysticism, feminism, and "homosexual reform". Carpenter himself identified as gay and lived his sexuality openly within his social circle. Both his socialism and his sexual politics stemmed from a fundamental critique of bourgeois morality, termed "civilization". He believed that civilization "stunted natural possibilities" which could only to be countered by freer sexual relations. Thus Carpenter aimed to "free love from darkness and shame, and to place sex in the vital heart of the new awareness". However, even Carpenter's arguments can be viewed as "borrowed", as one can detect within his writings the influence of Eastern mysticism and the American poet Walt Whitman.
- ²⁴ Sheila Rowbotham, *Women, Resistance and Revolution* (London: Lane, 1972): 69.
- ²⁵ Rowbotham, 1972, 67.
- ²⁶ Marx and Engels' ideal of (hetero)sexual relations, "individual sex love", was also inherited from their "utopian" forebears. It was a belief in the all-embracing nature of true love between men and women that included a recognition and valuation of "mutual erotic attraction" (Snitow *et al*, 14). Jeffrey Weeks describes sex love as having for Marx and Engels "a degree of intensity and duration which made both lovers feel that non-possession and separation were a great, if not the greatest calamity. [They believed] sex love had been distorted by commodity production, particularly because of the [sexual] double standard, but would flourish on a higher plane under socialism, so that 'monogamy, instead of declining, finally becomes a reality, for the men as well'" (Weeks, 1981, 168-169).
- ²⁷ Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800*, (London: Longman, 1981): 169.
- ²⁸ Weeks, 1981, 169.
- ²⁹ Rowbotham, 1972, 72; my emphasis.
- ³⁰ Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, "Introduction", *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, Edited by Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983): 15.
- ³¹ Weeks, 1981, 169.
- ³² Snitow *et al*, 15.
- ³³ Most Victorian scholars trace the origins of the New Woman to novels written by authors like Sarah Grand and Mona Caird in the late 1880s/early 1890s. However, the New Woman as icon soon took on a media life of its own beyond the control of her progenitors; as Richardson and Willis (2001) note, journalists and cartoonists played a significant role in establishing the cultural status of the New Woman. Consequently, the New Woman as a cultural construct is by no means stable or homogenous.

The New Woman as cultural construct was, as Sally Ledger (1997) points out, a discursive response to the various political, economic, and social changes that had transpired over the closing decades of the nineteenth century, but especially to changes in gender roles affected by the woman's movement. As a result, the New Woman featured prominently in the Woman Question. While the New Woman was represented by her opponents as, variously, "a 'mannish', overeducated bore (frequently a 'Girton Girl'), a bad mother (if not an embittered spinster), and as lacking in all the attributes usually associated with ideal Victorian womanhood (a penchant for self-sacrifice, a talent for home-making, a willingness to defer to men)", among her supporters she was represented as an intelligent, sensitive, and sexually healthy woman with ambitions beyond motherhood. Thus, she enjoyed a multiple identity, alternately appearing in the popular press as a feminist suffragist and a barren vamp, a social reformer and a shriveled spinster, an iconoclastic novelist and a dull-pedant. See: *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*, Edited by Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis, London: Palgrave Publishers, 2001; and Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and feminism at the fin de siècle*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997.

³⁴ Single women became a focus of discussion and concern in the 1850s and 1860s, as census figures revealed a growing sexual imbalance within the population during this period. According to Richardson and Willis, in the census of 1851 it was revealed that there were 400 000 'surplus' women; this number continued to increase in subsequent decades. As Richardson and Willis note, to many male commentators these women posed a "considerable, if inadvertent" threat to the separate spheres ideology, for "uncontained by their spouses they risked spilling out into the public sector, becoming public and visible" (Richardson and Willis, 4). However, as Barbara Caine suggests, single women's ability to challenge social norms was highly compromised by their exceptionally difficult and anomalous social position. Despite their possession of legal rights and personal freedom denied to wives, they were often confined by social stigma, financial dependence and familial demands to lives of servitude and humiliation (Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992: 28). See also Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920*.

³⁵ Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995): 181.

³⁶ Walkowitz, 72.

³⁷ Epstein Nord, 182.

³⁸ Roberts, 12-14.

³⁹ Walkowitz, 10.

⁴⁰ Mary Louise Roberts, *Disruptive Acts: the New Woman in fin-de-siècle France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002): 28.

⁴¹ Roberts, 21.

⁴² Richardson and Willis, 28.

⁴³ Nord, 1995, 186.

⁴⁴ The term "woman" or "women's" movement is extremely contentious as it is unclear within most secondary accounts what historians are referring to when they invoke the phrase. Does it refer to and include all women involved in political reform movements, or should it only be applied to women's organizations whose political energy was concentrated upon challenging women's subordination to men? Concomitant to this problem is the question of the meaning of "movement": Because women could challenge patriarchal privilege from a variety of political positions--that is, within and through both mixed sex and sex-segregated organizations--should the "woman/women's movement" be considered a set of discourses designed to mobilize women to political action, or as one, or a series of, concrete, woman-centered organization(s)?

Some historians, such as Nancy Cott, advocate a broad conceptualization of the nineteenth century woman's movement, using it to denote "the many ways women moved out of their homes to initiate measures of charitable benevolence, temperance, and social welfare and to instigate struggles for civic rights, social freedoms, higher education, remunerative occupations, and the ballot." (Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987): 3)

3) Within this definition, the woman's movement includes, but is not limited to, the suffrage. Others, such as Lucy Bland, elide the woman's movement with feminism and identify it as one which seeks to challenge the sexual double standard between men and women. This challenge encompasses not only moral issues

but also political, economic, and legal rights; more specifically, it seeks to transform sexual relations between men and women, in part by making the streets and other public places safe and accessible for women, both literally and symbolically (Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: Sexuality and the Early Feminists* (New York: The New Press, 1995): xiii, 119). Thus, according to Bland, the "woman's movement" could refer to an array of specifically woman-centered campaigns such as the suffrage and social purity movement.

Within this chapter, I use the term to invoke the rhetorical arguments advanced by women to motivate members of their sex to political action. I do not see these arguments originating from any one political campaign or tradition; rather, I maintain that it can be found anywhere women were politically active, and thus conceptualize it, perhaps somewhat confusingly, as a diffuse, individually-held ideological orientation possessed by members of a specific, oppressed subject position aware of their collective experience.

⁴⁵ Cott, 7.

⁴⁶ Bland, 1995, 119.

⁴⁷ Bland, 1995 118.

⁴⁸ Walkowitz, 21.

⁴⁹ Roberts, 8.

⁵⁰ Nord, 1995, 205.

⁵¹ As Lucy Bland notes, Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy enjoyed a long career in feminist politics, participating in an array of campaigns relating to women's rights. She was involved in the fight to gain women entry into institutions of higher education, the campaign for the Married Women's Property Acts, the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts, and the struggle for women's suffrage. Moreover, she played a central role in the movement to transform marriage legally, practically, and ideologically in the 1890s. See Bland, 1995, 135-139.

⁵² For a more in-depth discussion of the various ways in which feminists exploited the "multivalency of Darwinism", please see Bland, 1995, Chapter One: "The Men and Women's Club" and Chapter Two: "Woman Defined"; also see Porter and Hall, 160-2, 201-3.

⁵³ Porter and Hall, 155.

⁵⁴ Felski, 1998, 3.

⁵⁵ Porter and Hall, 176-177.

⁵⁶ Felski, 1998, 3.

⁵⁷ Felski, 1998, 6.

⁵⁸ Porter and Hall, 157.

⁵⁹ Porter and Hall, 158.

⁶⁰ Porter and Hall, 156.

⁶¹ Ellis had acquired the licentiate of Society of Apothecaries, the minimum qualification necessary for medical practice, after a mystic revelation while teaching in Australia had directed him to the study of sex (Porter and Hall, 160).

⁶² Porter and Hall, 162.

⁶³ Porter and Hall, 166.

⁶⁴ Porter and Hall, 167.

⁶⁵ Porter and Hall, 283.

Chapter Two

¹ Marx to Engels, 17 January 1855, *Werke* 28, 423; cited in Tsuzuki, 9.

² Marx's wife, Jenny von Westphalen, bore seven children: Jenny (1844-1883); Laura (1845-1911); Edgar (1847-1855); Heinrich Guido (1849-1850); Franziska (1841-1852); Eleanor (1855-1898); and an unnamed last child who died shortly after birth on July 6, 1857. Of these seven, only three lived to adulthood.

³ Marx to Engels, 12 April 1855, *Werke* 28, 444; cited in Tsuzuki, 9.

⁴ Over time, the entire family would expend their undivided love and attention on the baby; in a letter to her friend and political ally, Luise Weydemeyer, Jenny Marx comments that upon Edgar's death "all affection for him was transferred to the baby sister. The elder girls fostered and fondled her with most motherly care." Jane Sunderland, "The Feminism of Eleanor Marx" *Hecate* 9 (1-2) 1983, 54.

⁵ Eleanor's "pet name".

⁶ Marie Marmo Mullaney, *Revolutionary Women: Gender and the Socialist Revolutionary Role* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983): 19.

⁷ Tsuzuki, 6.

⁸ Jenny Marx to Luise Weydemeyer, 11 March 1861, *Reminiscences of Marx and Engels*, 245; cited in Tsuzuki, 9.

⁹ Wilhelm Liebknecht, *Reminiscences of Marx and Engels*, 115; cited in Tsuzuki, 9.

¹⁰ Marx to Engels, 23 April 1857, *Werke* 29, 130; cited in Tsuzuki, 10.

¹¹ Liebknecht, *Social Democrat*, September 1898; cited in Tsuzuki, 11.

¹² Evidence of their closeness can be found in the touching letters Eleanor wrote to her father during his frequent absences. In April 1867, while on a trip to Hamburg to negotiate the publication of *Capital*, Eleanor wrote to him the following: 'I have not as I used to do looked [sic] in the beds for you, but I constantly sing "Oh! Would I were a bird that I might fly to thee & breathe a loving word to one so dear to me'." Eleanor Marx to Karl Marx, 26 April 1867, Bottigelli Collection; cited in Tsuzuki, 18.

¹³ As Yvonne Kapp notes, Karl Marx somewhat adjusted his "religious scruple" on Eleanor's account. When five or six years old, Eleanor and her family visited a Roman Catholic Church to attend a music concert. Mystified and enchanted, Eleanor felt the call of religion and implored her father to tell her the story of the Passion. According to Kapp, Marx framed it as the tale of a "carpenter whom the rich men killed", reflecting that "much could be forgiven Christianity because it had taught the adoration of the child." Kapp, I, 34.

¹⁴ Eleanor Marx to Lion Philips, n.d. (December 1863?), International Institute of Social History (IISH); published in *International Review of Social History* I (1956), 94-95; cited in Tsuzuki, 20.

¹⁵ Manuscript handbill, February 1866, IISH; cited in Tsuzuki, 17.

¹⁶ As Yvonne Kapp notes, "Confession" was a popular party game in England during that time.

¹⁷ Eleanor Marx, "Confession", 20 March 1865, photocopy, Institute of Marxism-Leninism (Moscow); cited in Tsuzuki, 17.

¹⁸ *Österreichischer Arbeiter-Kalendar für das Jahr 1895*; cited in Kapp, I, 34.

¹⁹ Eleanor Marx Aveling to Karl Kautsky, 1 January 1898, IISH; cited in Tsuzuki, 12.

²⁰ Tsuzuki, 12.

²¹ Cited in Sunderland, 55.

²² Miklos Malnor, *Le Déclin de la Première Internationale*, Geneva, 1963, 112; cited in Tsuzuki, 28.

²³ Jenny Marx to Wilhelm Liebknecht, 26 May 1872; Liebknecht, *Briefwechsel, Briefwechsel mit Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels*, Edited, and with an Introduction, by Georg Eckert (The Hague: Mouton and Company, 1963):170.

²⁴ According to Eleanor's friend Havelock Ellis, Marx viewed Lissagaray as an "untrustworthy phrasemonger". (Havelock Ellis, "Eleanor Marx," *Modern Monthly* 9 (September 1935): 285.) Tsuzuki suggests that Marx's disapproval was more political than professional, stating that he was wary of the idiosyncratic socialism of the "Basque individualist" whose views often conflicted with his own (Tsuzuki, 34).

²⁵ Marx to Engels, 31 July 1865, *Marx-Engels Briefwechsel* 3, 333; cited in Tsuzuki, 18-19.

²⁶ Kapp, I, 44.

²⁷ Tsuzuki, 34; my emphasis.

²⁸ Marx to Engels, 14 August 1874, *Marx-Engels Briefwechsel* 4, 501; cited in Tsuzuki, 36; my emphasis.

²⁹ Eleanor Marx to Natalie Liebknecht, 23 October 1874, Liebknecht, *Briefwechsel*, 419; cited in Tsuzuki, 48.

³⁰ Eleanor Marx to Karl Hirsch, 25 November 1876, Ohara Institute, Society for the Study of Labour History; in Tsuzuki, 49.

³¹ Despite writing widely influential theoretical tracts on women's emancipation, many of the socialist men in Eleanor's circle had a definite understanding of the role women would, and should, play in politics. Consider the following statement, made by Engels, regarding the School Board Elections: "When we [socialists] take power, not only will women vote, but they will be voted for and make speeches, which last has already come to pass on the School Boards... Moreover, the ladies on these School Boards *distinguish themselves by talking very little and working very hard*, each of them doing on an average as much as three men. Ought one to say 'new brooms sweep clean? Though most of these 'brooms' are rather old." (Kapp I, 183) As we will see in Eleanor's case, socialist men valued modesty and humility in their female comrades above all other virtues, forcing one to question exactly how different muted participation is from any at all? Men like Engels would only stand to benefit from the silent, background work done by women like Eleanor, leaving them to the "important", more highly valued tasks of theory building, strategizing, and

mobilizing; thus, to some degree, the emancipatory rhetoric was merely that. It is a commonly known flaw of the late 19th century international socialist movement that sexism was alive and rampant, despite their own theoretical postulations on the issue of women's freedom.

³² Kapp I, 235.

³³ Roberts, 12-14.

³⁴ Eleanor to Jenny, 18 June 1881; *The Daughters of Karl Marx: Family Correspondence 1866-1898*, edited by Olga Meier (Middlesex, England: Andre Deutsch Ltd, 1982), 134.

³⁵ Eleanor to Jenny, 18 June 1881, Meier, 134.

³⁶ Marx to Jenny Longuet, 18 August 1881, *Familie Marx in Briefen*, Edited by Manfred Müller (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1966): 150.

³⁷ Ellis, 287.

³⁸ "Mrs. Marx" wrote, with regards to Jenny and Laura: "the peculiar bent of their education is bound to bring them into painful conflict with their friends. They have been brought up with notions and views that form a complete barrier to the society in which they move, and at the same time they are not materially independent." She continued: "I often think that if one cannot offer one's children riches nor complete independence of others, it is hardly the right thing to bring them up in harsh disagreement with society. They will always find themselves in a false position and these matters weigh heavily upon me." (Jenny Marx to ?, March 1866, Bottigelli Archives; cited in Kapp I, 69) Whether Jenny was bourgeois or pragmatic is a matter of debate; clearly, she recognized that, according to Victorian beliefs regarding the educative role of the mother, her daughters' failings would reflect poorly on her, and not her husband or the general conditions of her daughters' upbringing.

³⁹ See Kapp I, 68-69; 45.

⁴⁰ Kapp I, 146-147.

⁴¹ As she wrote to Natalie Liebkecht on 26 May 1872, "In all these struggles, the harder because the pettier part falls to us women. While the men are invigorated by the fight in the world outside, strengthened by coming face to face with the enemy, be its number legion, we sit at home and darn stockings. It does not banish care and the little day-to-day worries slowly but surely sap one's vitality...I can truly say that I did not easily allow my spirits to flag. Now I am too old to hope for much any more..." (Jenny Marx to Natalie Liebkecht, 26 May 1872, *Marx-Engels Werke*; cited in Kapp I 41-42.)

⁴² Tsuzuki, 64.

⁴³ Eleanor to Jenny, 8 January 1882; Meier, 145-146.

⁴⁴ Eleanor to Jenny, 15 January 1882; Meier, 148.

⁴⁵ Marx to Engels, 12 January 1882, *Marx-Engels Briefwechsel*, op. cit. 619-620; cited in Tsuzuki, 65; my emphasis.

⁴⁶ Eleanor to Jenny, 15 January 1882; Meier, 148.

⁴⁷ Family friend and German socialist Eduard Bernstein described devilling as "taking excerpts or doing research for a pittance to save well-to-do people who wated to write books the trouble of looking things up for themselves." (Kapp I, 206).

⁴⁸ Eleanor to Laura, 9 May 1884, IISH; cited in Kapp II, 32.

⁴⁹ Tsuzuki, 70.

⁵⁰ Meier, 165.

⁵¹ Arguably, SDF leader H. M. Hyndman embodied the contradictions inherent within the British socialist movement. Originally a wealthy stockbroker and Radical Tory, Hyndman renamed the Democratic Federation the Social Democratic Federation in 1883 after "discovering" Marx; however, over the forty years he worked to promote Marxist socialism, Hyndman continued to wear his top hat and frock coat while lecturing, and continued to engage in financial speculation (Hulse, 15; Pierson, 1979: 26). In spite his efforts to popularize Marxian theory in Britain through *England for all* (1881) and *The historical basis of socialism in England* (1883), he was hated by Marx for plagiarizing large parts of *Capital in England for all*, and detested by Engels, who described him as "an arch-conservative [and] an extremely chauvinistic but not stupid careerist". However, Hyndman gained true notoriety for the dictatorial way in which he wielded power within the SDF. According to James Hulse, Hyndman's "legendary conceit and tactlessness" took him from one quarrel after another with prospective colleagues (Hulse, 14). The "domineering manner" of the "would-be patriarch of British socialism" (Hulse, 14) has subsequently been blamed for the failure of SDF to become a populist Marxist party within Britain (Wright, 8). Surprisingly, aside from Chushichi Tsuzuki's biography, *H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism* (1961) and Hyndman's

autobiography, *Further Reminiscences* (1912), very few accounts of Hyndman's attraction to socialism exist. Kapp II, 44; Tsuzuki, 54-55.

⁵² Eleanor to Laura, 19 March 1884; Meier, 177.

⁵³ Annie Besant is perhaps one of the most fascinating figures of late-Victorian political, social and religious life. Besant's public involvements ran the gamut of "free thought" (as a leader of the National Secular Society, along with Charles Bradlaugh), socialism (as an active member of both the SDF and the Fabian Society), "neo-Malthusianism" (an pro-reproductive rights movement), women's suffrage (as a member and supporter of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies), and theosophy (a religious movement founded by Madame Blavatsky in 1875 which was based on Hindu ideas of karma and reincarnation, which held nirvana as the eventual aim of all human life).

⁵⁴ The National Secular Society's newsletter

⁵⁵ Eleanor to Laura, 13 February 1884; Meier, 172.

⁵⁶ Kapp II, 677.

⁵⁷ Kapp II, 93.

⁵⁸ Kapp I, 269.

⁵⁹ Tsuzuki, 96.

⁶⁰ Tsuzuki, 97.

⁶¹ Kapp I, 257.

⁶² Kapp I, 258.

⁶³ Ellis, 1935, 290.

⁶⁴ Henry Salt was an early vegetarian and animal rights activists with connections to socialist movements and leaders like William Morris and George Bernard Shaw.

⁶⁵ Cited in E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: From Romantic to Revolutionary* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955): 429.

⁶⁶ Mullaney, 48.

⁶⁷ Tsuzuki, 99.

⁶⁸ Eleanor to Karl Kautsky, 7 September 1895, IISH; cited in Tsuzuki, 99.

⁶⁹ Wilhelm Liebknecht, *Social-Democrat*, September 1898; cited in Tsuzuki, 99.

⁷⁰ Mullaney, 49.

⁷¹ Eleanor Marx to Dollie Radford, 30 June 1884, Radford Papers; cited in Tsuzuki, 105-106.

⁷² Kapp II, 18.

⁷³ Kapp II, 21.

⁷⁴ Kapp II, 23.

⁷⁵ Havelock Ellis and Eleanor Marx first met in early 1884 at a meeting of the Progressive Association, a group organized by printer and publisher J. C Foulger. Inspired by Radical and socialist political ideas, the Progressive Association aimed at promoting "intellectual and social well-being" among its members. Of their first meeting, Ellis writes, "I can still see her, with the radiant face and expansive figure, seated on the edge of my secretarial table"; though, perhaps tellingly, he could "recall nothing that was said" (Ellis, 1935, 283).

⁷⁶ Ellis, 1935, 284.

⁷⁷ Interestingly, neither Tsuzuki nor Kapp deal with this incident in their biographies, while others, such as Ronald Florence and Mullaney, mention this vague incident. See Ronald Florence, *Marx's Daughters: Eleanor Marx, Rosa Luxembourg, Angelica Balabanoff*, New York: The Dial Press, 1975.

⁷⁸ Ellis, 1935, 285.

⁷⁹ Ellis, 1935, 286.

⁸⁰ Ellis, 1935, 286.

⁸¹ Ellis, 1935, 292.

⁸² Of Olive Schreiner, Kapp writes, "Remarkable woman and fine writer though she was, Olive Schreiner had certain unamiable traits, the most powerful of which was an egotism so rampant that she insisted upon not only her house but also her husband being known by her name [!]....There is no doubt, however, that this dumpy little woman...fascinated those who met her and, while she preferred women, she had a considerable effect upon the many influential men who sought her acquaintance." (Kapp II, 23-24) This is but a selection of Kapp's critique; for her views in full, see Kapp II, 23-29.

⁸³ Elsewhere, I have argued that the true value of the late-Victorian socialist movement lay in its value as a *social*, as opposed to *political* movement. See Kirsten Leng, "Reconceptualizing the late-Victorian Socialist Movement" (January 2004), unpublished.

⁸⁴ Beatrice Webb, 1950, 154-155.

⁸⁵ Kapp II, 72.

⁸⁶ Kapp II, 72-73.

⁸⁷ Writes William Morris, who is generally regarded as being sympathetic to women's equality: "...don't you know that it is a great pleasure to a clever woman to manage house skillfully..." (Kapp II, 31) Though but a small quotation, this statement is indicative of the belief held by some socialist men that they knew what women's capacities were, and where their strengths (from an organizational view) lay, which had implications for the roles women were able to play in the movement.

⁸⁸ Kapp II, 73.

⁸⁹ Kapp II, 41.

⁹⁰ Kapp II, 60.

⁹¹ Cited in Kapp II, 61.

⁹² Sunderland, 60.

⁹³ Kapp II, 651.

⁹⁴ Thompson, 1994, 14.

⁹⁵ Eleanor had definite opinions on what constituted entertainment. As she wrote to the League secretary, "I like fun—any fun no matter how rough as [sic] it be wholesome...but I fail to see fun in pure (or impure) & simple vulgarity. Brainless middle class cads my like this sort of things: I don't believe working-men who have a real sense of humour do." (Eleanor to Secretary, Socialist League, 1 March 1886, IISH; cited in Tsuzuki, 123)

⁹⁶ Tsuzuki, 123.

⁹⁷ Eleanor Marx Aveling to Secretary, Socialist League, 1 March 1886, IISH; cited in Tsuzuki, 123.

⁹⁸ Kapp II, 250.

⁹⁹ Ellis, 1935, 292.

¹⁰⁰ Kapp II, 33.

¹⁰¹ Kapp II, 308.

¹⁰² Kapp II, 650.

¹⁰³ Eleanor Marx Aveling to an unnamed "comrade", 6 April 1885, IISH; cited in Kapp II, 32.

¹⁰⁴ Sunderland, 71.

¹⁰⁵ Cunningham Graham, *Labour Elector*, 7 September 1889; cited in Tsuzuki, 196-197.

¹⁰⁶ Sunderland, 72.

¹⁰⁷ Engels to Laura, 14 November 1889; cited in Kapp II, 344.

¹⁰⁸ Mullaney, 40-41; my emphasis.

¹⁰⁹ Mullaney, 41.

¹¹⁰ Eleanor made her views on housekeeping clear in letters such as the following, sent to her sister Laura on 12 April 1885, written while Edward was in Ventnor convalescing:

"I am in the midst of a 'whitewashing and cleaning' during Edward's absence...How I wish people didn't live in houses and didn't cook, and bake, and wash and clean! I shall never, despite all efforts, develop into decent *Hausfrau*. I am horribly Bohemian in my tastes." (Meier, 186)

Elsewhere, she was more direct: "Who is the fiend that invented housekeeping? I hope *his* invention may plague him in another world." (Eleanor to Laura, 22 September 1884; cited in Kapp II, 31; my emphasis)

¹¹¹ Eleanor to Laura, 25 December 1889, IISH; cited in Kapp II, 361.

¹¹² Mullaney, 42.

¹¹³ Helena Demeuth, who, like Marx's papers, had been transferred to Engels following his death, had died on 4 November 1890.

¹¹⁴ This companionship was not necessarily of a romantic or sexual nature. For most of his life Engels hosted and provided for the niece of his common-law wives, Lydia ("Lizzie") and Mary Burns, Mary Ellen Rosher (nee Burns; referred to as "Pumps" within the Marx sisters' correspondence). Moreover, there is no record of any relationship beyond friendship between Engels and Helena Demeuth.

¹¹⁵ Eleanor to Laura, 19 December 1890; Meier, 223-225.

¹¹⁶ Mullaney, 42.

¹¹⁷ Eleanor crafted the following request, to be published in various newspapers:

To the Editor of...

Sir,

May we appeal through your columns to all those who have any correspondence of Karl Marx, or any other papers of Marx to be good enough to forward them to one of us? We are anxious to get as complete a collection of our father's letters as possible with a view to publication. Any letters or documents that may be sent, will, of course, be taken the utmost care of, and if the senders wish it, returned as soon as they have been copied. We should carry out y instruction that the possessors and senders of the letters might give as to the omission of any passages they might desire not to have published.

Yours, etc.

L.L. (Le P[erreux], etc.)

E. M. A. ([Green] S[treet] G[reen])

¹¹⁸ Tsuzuki, 243.

¹¹⁹ Kapp I, 289.

¹²⁰ Kapp I, 292.

¹²¹ Eleanor to Laura, 24 December 1896, photocopy, IISH; cited in Tsuzuki, 264.

¹²² Kapp I, 295.

¹²³ See: Eleanor to Laura, 10 December 1895; Meier, 285.

¹²⁴ In 1895 her article "The Working-Class Movement in England" was published in Emanuel Wurm's *Volks-Lexikon* and was also issued separately as a pamphlet with a preface by Liebknecht. Within 24 pages, she attempted to trace the whole history of socialism in England from the Peasant Rising of 1381 to the SDF and her own day. She also researched sixteenth century English history and wrote an article on the "Evil May Day" of 1517, when London artisans attacked the foreigners in the city who, they felt were threatening their own living. According to Tsuzuki, this article was also meant to serve a political purpose, which was to emphasize "the traditional prejudices of Englishmen against foreigners as a reminder for the May Day celebrations of the 1890's." However, he also notes that this research acquainted her with social and economic conditions in early modern England, and she became familiar enough to challenge her father's old critic, Lujo Brentano, on controversial quotations he had made in his study of the English guilds. Furthermore, she assisted Kautsky in his research on the Lollards and Anabaptists.

¹²⁵ Eleanor to Jenny, 15 January 1882; Meier, 148.

¹²⁶ Aveling's legal wife, Isabel Campbell, had died in 1893.

¹²⁷ Meier, 297.

¹²⁸ Tsuzuki, 301.

¹²⁹ Tsuzuki, 302.

¹³⁰ Eleanor to Laura, 22 September 1884; cited in Kapp II, 31.

¹³¹ Rosebury, 45-46; my emphasis.

¹³² Eleanor to Freddy Demeuth, 1 March 1898; cited in Tsuzuki, 314.

¹³³ Liebknecht was jailed as a result of Bismarck's restrictions on socialist activities.

¹³⁴ *Forest Hill & Sydenham Examiner and Crystal Palace District Intelligencer*, 8 April 1898; cited in Tsuzuki, 320.

¹³⁵ *Reynold's Newspaper*, 10 April 1898; cited in Tsuzuki, 319.

¹³⁶ Rosebury, 49.

¹³⁷ Eduard Bernstein to Victor Adler, 5 April 1898; cited in Tsuzuki, 321.

¹³⁸ Olive Schreiner to Dollie Radford, June 1898, Radford papers; cited in Tsuzuki, 323.

Chapter Three

¹ Cited in Weeks, 1981.

² I make this temporal distinction as later socialists, namely Edward Carpenter, would address sexual issues, including the Woman Question, but at a later period, closer to the turn of the century.

³ These are not the only writings in which Eleanor addresses the Woman Question; however, I feel these works in particular lend themselves to a textual analysis. Those major works not included, yet which are still germane to this issue, include the full text of her speech to the Second International in Brussels, "Report from Great Britain and Ireland" (1891); *Shelley's Socialism* (1887); and *The Working Class Movement in America* (1887).

⁴ See Karen Hunt's excellent study of women and the Social Democratic Federation, *Equivocal Feminists* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

- ⁵ Weeks, 1981, 171.
- ⁶ Weeks, 1981, 171.
- ⁷ Weeks, 1981, 171.
- ⁸ Weeks, 1981, 171.
- ⁹ Rowbotham, 1972, 7.
- ¹⁰ Weeks, 1981, 171.
- ¹¹ Weeks, 1981, 171.
- ¹² 1884 was chosen deliberately as it was the year of Eleanor's participation within the SDF.
- ¹³ I have excluded one article, "Women in Politics" (June 21, 1884), as the gender of its author, "M. C", could not be ascertained. I attempted to discover the author's identity; however, given the sheer number of possibilities, I decided ultimately to exclude this particular work.
- ¹⁴ Henry M. Hyndman, "Women's Labour," *Justice*, 22 March 1884.
- ¹⁵ Reginald A. Beckett, "The Degradation of Women," *Justice*, 27 September 1884.
- ¹⁶ John L. Mahon, "Women Under Capitalism," 20 December 1884.
- ¹⁷ Eleanor Marx-Aveling, "The 'Pall Mall Gazette'," *Commonweal* 1 (7), August 1885: 69-70.
- ¹⁸ Unlike *Justice*, *Commonweal* featured far fewer socialist commentaries on the Woman Question. While one could assume that this suggests the Socialist League held a more positive view of women's participation in public life, it is noteworthy that there were far fewer women members of the Socialist League than the SDF; thus, it is also possible that the men of the League simply did not perceive women and their issues to be of pressing importance.
- ¹⁹ Bland, 1995, 9.
- ²⁰ Although Karen Hunt has done work on the politicization of women as consumers within socialist journals (See: "Negotiating the Boundaries of the Domestic: British socialist women and the politics of consumption," *Women's History Review* 9 (2) 2000: 389-410.), I would argue that Eleanor's text and address function quite differently. Unlike the authors studied by Hunt, Eleanor does not try to incite women to activism through traditional, socially-sanctioned sexual roles and practices, although she does appeal to a shared sense of womanhood.
- ²¹ Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx Aveling, "The Woman Question," *Westminster Review*, 9 March 1886.
- ²² Bebel's text forms the theoretical basis of both. Had time and space allowed, it would have been interesting to contrast these articles with Havelock Ellis' review of Bebel's text, entitled "Women and Socialism" (*Today*, October 1884), for his interpretation of the work.
- ²³ Eleanor Marx Aveling, "Review: *Woman in the Past, Present, and Future* by August Bebel," Supplement to the *Commonweal* 1 (6), July 1885: 63-64.
- ²⁴ Eleanor recommends Engels' *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884) as a far superior source for such information; that text is now itself considered decidedly flawed and inaccurate in its anthropological assertions.
- ²⁵ Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx Aveling, "The Woman Question," *Westminster Review*, 9 March 1886.
- ²⁶ The *Westminster Review* was a quarterly periodical established by James Mill and Jeremy Bentham in 1824. It was conceived as the organ of the Philosophical Radicals and in its early days the journal published work by Lord Byron, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Stuart Mill, Alfred Tennyson and Thomas Carlyle.
- ²⁷ Ironically, when offered membership in the Men and Women's Club, Eleanor declined.
- ²⁸ Israel Zangwill was also recognized in his lifetime as a spokesman for Anglo-Jewry, and was involved in both the woman's suffrage and pacifist movements. Born in London in 1864, he first gained fame writing novels about Jewish life in London. He became a leading member of the Order of Ancient Maccabees, a Zionist Society established in 1891, and founded the Jewish Territorialists Organization (ITO), whose objective was to acquire a Jewish homeland wherever possible. Following the Balfour Declaration, which he believed signaled the death of the Zionist movement, Zangwill suffered a nervous breakdown, and died shortly thereafter, in 1926. While it is unknown when, why, or how Eleanor and Zangwill decided to write this satire on mainstream English audiences' reaction to *A Doll's House*, it is known that the two had come into contact as a result of Eleanor's increasing involvement in East End politics and interest in exploring her Jewish heritage.
- ²⁹ Israel Zangwill and Eleanor Marx Aveling, "'A Doll's House' Repaired," *Time*, March 1891. *Time* was a socialist journal edited by E. Belfort Bax which endeavored to "deal in each number with some political

or economic subject of immediate interest" while also dealing with matters of "historical, philosophic, or scientific interest" and "Literature, Art, Music and the Drama." As a well-rounded journal aimed for erudite members of the socialist movement, *Time* was much in keep with the Victorian vogue for self-improvement.

³⁰ Sally Ledger, "Eleanor Marx and Henrik Ibsen," *Eleanor Marx: Life, Work, Contacts*, Edited by John Stokes (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000): 54.

³¹ Sally Ledger, "Ibsen, the New Woman, and the Actress," *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*, Edited by Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis, London: Palgrave Publishers, 2001: 81.

³² Ledger, 2001, 80.

³³ Ledger, 2001, 80.

³⁴ Ellis, 1935, 291.

³⁵ This reading took place at the Avelings' Russell Street flat. It must have been an ironic, almost surreal performance for their colleagues, as Eleanor played the part of Nora, Aveling Helmer, Bernard Shaw as Krogstadt, and May Morris as Christine Linde.

³⁶ Faith Evans, "Eleanor Marx and Gustave Flaubert," *Eleanor Marx (1855-1898): Life, Works, Contacts*. Edited by John Stokes (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000): 87.

³⁷ Kapp, II, 517.

³⁸ "The worker"

³⁹ In my analysis of Eleanor's *Report*, I am relying on excerpts contained within the second volume of Yvonne Kapp's biography as I have been unable to access a copy of the document, which Kapp maintains was "subsequently published as a penny pamphlet" (Kapp, II, 483). While she cites her forthcoming *Eleanor Marx: Selected Works*, this document was either never written or never published, as I have sadly been unable to find any record of its existence.

⁴⁰ All of the following quotes, unless otherwise cited, are taken from these articles as they appear in Hal Draper and Anne G. Lipow, "Marxist Women Versus Bourgeois Feminism," *Socialist Register* 1976: 217-226.

⁴¹ Draper and Lipow, 217.

⁴² According to Karen Hunt, with specific reference to the SDF, the socialist attitude toward feminism developed alongside the feminist movement itself. She also notes how divisive the issue proved, and how responses were often contradictory and paradoxical in their attempts to reconcile the question of sex and class. See Hunt, *Equivocal Feminists*, 1996.

⁴³ For a good account of the history of the Factory Acts, please see Robert Q. Gray, *The Factory Question and Industrial England 1830-1860*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

⁴⁴ Barbara Caine, "Beatrice Webb and the 'Woman Question'," *History Workshop Journal* 14 (1982): 23-43.

⁴⁵ Caine, 1982, 39.

⁴⁶ The resolution reads, "We call upon the socialist parties of all countries to give definite expression in their programmes to the strivings for complete equalisation of both sexes, and to demand first of all that women be granted the same rights as men in the civil rights and political fields."

Conclusion

¹ Kapp, II, 707-708.

² Lindsey German, "The Acceptable Daughter," *Women's Voice* 46, (November 1980): 19. German was, and is, an active British Trotskyist politician and member of the Central Committee of the Socialist Workers' Party.

³ Elaine Showalter's *Sexual Anarchy* provides a much more thorough and articulate comparison of the nineteenth and twentieth century *fin-de-siècles*.

³ Mary Cullen, "History Women and History Men: the politics of women's history", *History Ireland*, (Summer 1994), 43.

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Biography of Eleanor Marx with intertextual hyperlinks

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/socialistwomen/sw12.htm>
On Eleanor's Trade Union involvement

<http://www.erincurrierfineart.com/eMarx.html>
Eleanor Marx iconography

<http://www.ex.ac.uk/Projects/meia/Bio/Marx-Karl/elean.htm>
"Biographical Comments on Karl Marx by his daughter Eleanor Marx"—originally published in *Neue Zeit* [Journal of the German Social Democratic Party] Vol. I 1897-1898

<http://www.womenofbrighton.co.uk>
Biographical information on Eleanor Marx, focusing on her life in Brighton

<http://www2.cddc.vt.edu/marxists/index>
Marxist Internet Archive; primarily theoretical writings

<http://www.indiana.edu/%7Elets/vwwp/index.html>
Victorian Women Writers Project

<http://www.victorianweb.org/>
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