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A Sociology of Small Things: Olive Schreiner, Eleanor
Marx, Amy Levy and the Intertextualities of Feminist
Cultural Politics in 1880s London

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DECLARATION

In accordance with University regulations, I hereby declare that:

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September 2013

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the cultural politics of a small group of women through their writing and other activities in 1880s London. Focussed on Olive Schreiner, Eleanor Marx and Amy Levy and the connections they had to one another and to other women, such as Henrietta Frances Lord, Clementina Black and Henrietta Müller, it explores key events in their everyday lives, the writings and texts they produced. It analyses a wide selection of textual sources, re-reading these for small details, intertextual connections and points of disjuncture, to allow for different ways of understanding the mechanics of feminist cultural politics as produced and performed by these interconnected women. Small things in texts can be revealing about such women's everyday lives and connectedly the cultural politics which underpinned their actions, thus contributing to knowledge about how writing was used strategically and imaginatively to challenge, side-step and overcome oppression and inequality, in these years in London and after.

Using the term 'writing' in a broad sense to include letters and diaries and other archival sources such as newspaper articles, reviews and manuscript drafts, as well as some selected published work and biographies, the thesis is anchored around four event-driven investigations: Olive Schreiner being accosted by a policeman; the first public performance of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*; the writing of a letter mentioning Eleanor Marx; and, the death of Amy Levy. Relatedly, there are discussions concerning working with historical documents, documenting and archiving the past, researching and representing the past in the present.

These investigations allow for the operationalization of a research approach framed by ideas concerning micro, small-scale, everyday life and its qualitative aspects, which together contribute to a re-conceptualisation of a 'sociology of small things.' Specifically, it is argued that close and small-scale studies of women's writing, whether undertaken alone or connected to others, sheds light on the importance of relationship dynamics in connection with writing output, on what writing was produced and what role each text played in larger scale political agendas. Concepts such as palimpsest, liminality and *bricolage* are interrogated with respect to researching and representing the spatial and temporal interconnectedness of the selected authors and textual sources. And contributions are made to contemporary thinking about epistolarity and social networks, focussing on reciprocity, gift-giving and receiving and notions of 'letterness,' along with the defining of boundaries, and the value of determining the nature of ties between women. The thesis also argues that the relationships between intimacy and distance, interiority and exteriority, public and private, are frayed with complicated overlaps.

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If researching and writing this thesis had been the only thing going on in life for the last few years it would have been a lot easier. But, like the women I have researched and whose lives I have tried to do justice to, there are many other events threaded through these words and pages. The most momentous thing to have occurred was the loss of our lovely and loving Mam. She would be proud to know I became a doctor, but more concerned to know I was happy. After all this Mama, I can honestly say yes, as this acknowledgement also marks a new beginning, of life with our little bright buttercup, Arianna Valerie, a small and very precious thing indeed.

DEDICATION

“It was a small thing; but life is made up of small things”

(Olive Schreiner, *The Story of An African Farm*, 1883, p. 216)

This thesis is dedicated with love to my Mam

Valerie Anne Hetherington (d. 4.4.2012)

who I miss each and every day

for all the small things we shared.

It is also dedicated with love to my daughter

Arianna Valerie (b. 24.10.2013)

a small miracle who came along when I needed her most.

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¹ This idea and subtitle has been inspired by Jacobs (2005) on ‘A Geography of Big Things.’

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² From the Preface to Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of An African Farm*.

³ Ibid.

ABBREVIATIONS

- ALP Amy Levy Papers, Camellia Plc., Kent
- BL British Library, London
- EMP Eleanor Marx Papers, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam
- GBS George Bernard Shaw Papers, British Library, London
- LCH Louise Chandler Moulton Papers, Library of Congress, Washington
- MHP Margaret Heitland Papers, The Women's Library, London
- OSLO Olive Schreiner Letters Online
- OSLP Olive Schreiner Letters Project
- PC Passfield Collection, London School of Economics, London
- PMG *Pall Mall Gazette*
- RA Radford Family Archive, British Library, London
- UCLA Dollie Radford Papers, William Andrews Clark Library, University of California, Los Angeles
- VLC Vernon Lee Collection, Colby College Special Collections, Maine
- WPP *Women's Penny Paper*

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: The ‘New Woman,’ Writing and Cultural Political Practices in 1880s London

This thesis is situated around a broad encompassing view of ‘New Woman’ writings as cultural political practices carried out by the people, specifically women, who produced them, in the 1880s in London. There is a focus on a small number of New Woman writers, and around detailed studies of their multifarious writings and lives. The women I am most interested in are the South African writer and social theorist Olive Schreiner, the socialist, writer and translator Eleanor Marx, and Anglo-Jewish poet and writer Amy Levy. The term ‘writing’ is used here in a broad sense, to include letters, diaries, memoirs, manuscript drafts, as well as a small selection of published works (poetry, novels, short stories, articles and translations) and also performance texts such as plays and play readings. The thesis focuses almost entirely on the former non-literary texts, with some engagement with literary texts at particular points, specifically ‘A Doll’s House Repaired’ by Eleanor Marx and Israel Zangwill, ‘The Woman Question’ by Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling, *A London Plane Tree and Other Verse* and *The Romance of a Shop* by Amy Levy. These various writings were produced and used in a variety of pragmatic, creative and experimental ways to represent and communicate the political interests, beliefs, hopes and desires of the women writers concerned, and among other things to challenge or overturn some of the prevailing ideas, behaviours and beliefs of the time.

Writing was a strong feature of the lives of the women I am most interested in, taken up with verve often, and supported by the development of some newer literary platforms including women’s newspapers and journals, which allowed greater access for publishing or for publicly presenting their work otherwise. My

discussion of the construction, enactment and purpose of such writings is located in relation to the context in which they were produced. This is London in the 1880s, the changing concerns of the literary profession, the everyday life circumstances of the authors and of other women, the friendship and other network groups which often provided vital support, and both overt and more subtle forms of opposition to these women's political and cultural activities, particularly their writing (Kelly 1996). I also include events which occurred farther afield, beyond London's boundaries, and which were refracted in writings, such as initial discussions about the New Woman and developments in the expanding women's movement.

Cultural politics, a relatively new interdisciplinary area of scholarship, offers a suitably encompassing and helpful framework in which to locate my research (Humm 1991; Weedon and Jordan 1994; Ledger and McCracken 1995; Thornham 2004). I adopt the broad and critical nature of this field's concern with "what is *cultural* about politics and what is *political* about culture" (Armitage et al 2005 p. 1). Women's writing practices are seen here as both cultural production and also political action; these were text spaces created for the contestation and creation of social, economic and political matters. The various texts to be examined will contribute to understanding the women writers as cultural political activists engaging with issues of gender, class and 'race' (which they would have called the 'Woman, Labour and Native Questions') doing so in different ways through their writings in 1880s London. As Ledger and McCracken (1995 p. 1) point out, this was the period leading up to the 'cultural fragmentation' of the *fin-de-siècle*, which "threw the norms of the Victorian age into crisis: empires were threatened, feminism was on the march, and the first socialist parties in Britain were formed." How this challenge and the overturning of Victorian norms occurred in relation to newer forms of writing and representations more generally is at the heart of my discussion. It is also important to note that the literary texts I include were not always viewed as 'successful,' neither in its own time nor since, in terms of it being 'good' literature or promoting the writer in a positive way. Indeed, some of it can be seen as destructive and a contributory factor to a woman's personal and professional defeat, as they

crossed genre borders to achieve their goals, rather than building a reputation within the contemporary literary constraints and demands (Humm 1991).

The public face of the New Woman, which started as a label for, broadly speaking, a political woman, often literary and independent, and intent on making changes, was widely debated in print during the 1890s. The phrase was coterminous with what is now called feminism, which was coming into use as a political term in Britain around the same time. New Woman was then a political conception, providing the impetus for, and the creation of, representational spaces for women to debate and discuss women's social standing, political aspirations and other everyday life matters. In this sense, the New Woman was a type of woman (or types of women) collaboratively created; she was "predominantly a journalistic phenomenon, a product of discourse" whose connection to actual (feminist) women was to be much debated from the 1890s on (Ledger 1997 p. 3). The writing and other representational means which were used to create the New Woman as a cultural phenomenon were also political practices which shaped her into existence, along the way debating the whys and wherefores of her life. Connectedly, the writings and other forms produced by the women I am focussing on can be seen as a way of writing new and other selves into existence (Gordimer 1995).

Different textual incarnations of the New Woman appeared, with different ideological trajectories, although running in parallel, during the 1880s. An early mention of the term in 1893, in the British paper the *Women's Herald* (previously the *Women's Penny Paper*) in an article 'The Social Standing of the New Woman,' pointed to a non-radical "model social reformer" who neatly combined her politics with her domestic duties (Tusan 1998 p. 170). Some mainstream publications projected negative views of the New Woman as the rebellious daughter, the disreputable wife, the lonely spinster – products of "a dystopic vision of a society gone wrong" (Tusan 1998 p. 169). In May 1894 a debate erupted in *The North American Review* between novelists Sarah Grand and Ouida over what the term meant and who it referred to. Grand argued strongly and satirically against the negative image being presented: "which woman are the Bawling Brothers referring to when they ask: 'If women don't want to be men, what do they want?' ... is it the

‘cow-kind of woman’ he prefers: ‘it is the threat of any strike among his domestic cattle ... that irritates him into loud and angry protests’” (Grand 1894 p. 270). Grand went on to demand that she should not be judged in accordance with such women, but instead be viewed as someone who was figuring out intelligent answers to the ‘Woman Question’ and who was now ready to act on this. She used the language of the enlightenment – ‘let there be light’ and ‘no dark corners’ – and finished with her view that the Woman Question was actually the ‘Marriage Question.’ For Grand marriage needed a complete overhaul, both morally and practically, as it continued to stifle a woman’s abilities, maintaining her reliability upon men and limitations upon her movements and intellectual growth. Grand’s close tying of the New Woman to the debates surrounding the Woman Question and marriage points to her own impetus to write her New Woman article as clearly political in nature and suggests that Woman Question debates during the late Victorian era were more generally a form of cultural politics.

Ouida followed this by attempting to undermine Grand’s argument in two ways: by stating such views were arrogant and condescending, and by mocking her literary composition: “The ‘Scum-woman’ and the ‘Cow-woman,’ to quote the elegant phraseology of your contributor, are both of them less of a menace to humankind than the New Woman with her fierce vanity, her undigested knowledge, her over-weening estimate of her own value and her fatal want of all sense of the ridiculous” (Ouida 1894 p. 615). Ouida disagreed with Grand’s view that any resistance to the ideals of the New Woman by anti-suffrage men and women could be overcome by educating people. In Ouida’s view, women were as much if not more to blame for their situation as men, and consequently needed to take responsibility for this. Debates about the New Woman continued, around the complex and at times contradictory, yet always impassioned nature seen to characterise New Womanhood (Patterson 2005 p. 1).

As noted earlier, debates in 1880s London revolved around a number of interlinked questions, the Woman, Labour and Native Questions, which were variously engaged with by different women writers and fed into their writing practices. The Woman Question was concerned with expanding the roles women

played in social, cultural and political life in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The industrial revolution had brought many working class women, and increasing numbers of middle class women too, into the workforce and this led to questions about what was and was not a woman's place (Vicinus 1985). Women fought for suffrage, marriage rights, economic equality, and bodily rights (Crosby 1991; Helsing et al 1983). The women involved in such debates worked hard to be heard, read and viewed differently. They wanted access to the city, to education, sexual freedom and economic independence. Underpinning the 'Woman's Question' was thus the economic status of women, for how could women be equal in any walk of life if they were worth less in the public life of the city, and/or financially dependent on others (Powell 1992)? Similarly some women fought for marginalised people other than themselves, making the 'Native Question' an important issue for those who were determined on a just and equal society 'abroad' as well as in Britain. This was especially relevant for women such as Schreiner, whose concerns with South African race politics were clearly linked with her analysis of questions of class and gender inequalities (Barash 1987; Burdett 2001; Stanley 2002; Stanley and Dampier 2012).

The New Woman scholarly literature is now vast, but for crucial references see: Ardis 1990; Showalter 1993; Ledger 1997; Tusan 1998; Nelson 2000; Heilmann 2000, 2004; Richardson & Willis 2001; Stanley 2002; Jusova 2005; Hughes 2007; Shaw and Randolph 2007; Patterson 2005, 2008. Starting in the 1970s, the focus has been on a particular type of literary 'new' woman and also on published novels and short stories (Showalter 1993) rather than unpublished writings. The short story was particularly favoured by some of the women I am interested in, with Olive Schreiner producing some canonical examples and Amy Levy too exploring aspects of the city of London through this form. The depictions of a bicycling smoking woman in clothing adapted for outdoor activity and a proclivity for wearing glasses for studious work were mostly based on fictional characters in the literature and perhaps particularly on illustrations in magazines (Shapiro 1991). There continues to be much debate over whether this version ever actually existed, and this in turn has opened up enquiries concerning women's hidden and 'vanished' histories, with some women

writers co-opted as good examples of New Woman writers and others not (Crosby 1991; Thompson 1999). Patterson (2008 p. 25) goes further in defining the scope of New Woman representations: she could be a “degenerate highbrow, evolved type, race leader or race traitor, brow-beating suffragette, farmer, prohibitionist, mannish lesbian, college girl, eugenist, savvy professional woman, barren spinster, clubwoman, saleswoman, restless woman, bicyclist, anarchist, or insatiable shopper,” a list which can be argued for, against and added to. My own interest, however, is not so much in trying to pin down who the New Woman was, but more about wanting to work with the idea that New Woman writings were moulded and influenced by women writers’ surroundings, that these were broad and varied, and that their views were then reflected and refracted into their work as a way to move both into and out of social, economic, sexual and political brackets. The geographic and temporal specifications surrounding the writers are therefore important aspects in considering what was seen as possible or not in a particular time and place and by particular women.

Across recent literature about New Woman writers, some names are repeated, in particular those of Olive Schreiner, Mona Caird, Amy Levy and Vernon Lee (alias Violet Paget); and other women writers are less mentioned or completely omitted, including Eleanor Marx, Clementina Black, Henrietta Müller and Margaret Bateson. Just as these women would not have called themselves feminist, they would not have called themselves New Women either. They were just women who wrote, sometimes with the aim of becoming a professional writer, sometimes to project their feminist views in the form of an essay or allegory, and at other times to contribute to the shaping of opinions around issues of the day through their cultural politics. They did this across the newly-made textual spaces which were the rapidly expanding outlets of women’s magazines and newspapers (Tusan 1998), a format made possible by technological advances in printing during the Victorian period, such as the development of steam pressing and lithography for large quantity printing. Some examples are the *Women’s Penny Paper* (later the *Woman’s Herald*), *The Woman’s Signal*, *The Woman’s World* and *Shafts*. Some women, like Eleanor Marx, were more involved in collaborative and translation work, while others, like Amy Levy,

concentrated on producing and projecting their own voices in poetic and other forms. Indeed, there was a broad diversity in terms of how these and other women worked on their writing, who they engaged with in particular writing projects, as well as the heterogeneity of the actual writings produced. These aspects will be explored throughout the chapters following, along with how women chose to utilise writing in purposive ways sometimes and in more creative and expressive ways at other times.

More recent research has argued that New Woman writers often used complex discursive strategies across the different literary genres they contributed to (Heilmann 2004; Jusova 2005). Writing was often in dialogue with other representational forms – texts more broadly – and had different intertextual characteristics, depending on the writer, the point being made, and the audience the writing was intended for. Scholarly work has shown this group of women to be rather more heterogeneous than previously recognised. While they were mostly middle-class (albeit of fluctuating economic circumstances), their ethnicity, education, political allegiances and activities, family experiences and broader background histories, varied considerably. Consequently a fairly diverse but linked set of themes – on marriage, sex and relationships, love and friendship, work and education – were written about through these differing perspectives. By way of example, the South African landscape which Schreiner wrote about, her moves around it and long-distance travelling, her work as a governess, her wish to be a doctor and so on, are quite a contrast to the Bloomsbury Amy Levy wrote about and largely spent her life in, with only brief trips away, with her family frowning on her working, her health an on-going concern, and with her strong desire to be a writer above all else. Not surprisingly, they utilised space and scale in their writings differently, and this demonstrates further heterogeneities in the New Woman categorisation, with the women concerned communicating their differing perspectives locally, nationally and transnationally.

To understand New Woman writing it is necessary to go beyond and beneath the published writings to examine texts of a more close and personal nature, some of which have not been previously considered (Thompson 1999 p. 13). Consequently I argue for a return to the archive, to the documents of life (Plummer 2001; Stanley

2013) and related non-literary texts of the New Women writers I am interested in. This incorporates the substantive exploration of writing as cultural political practices, and relatedly recognising the methodological issues around researching in archives and working with historical documents. The type of research material available for research obviously impacts on what can and cannot be known, but in different ways. Therefore each chapter includes explaining the archival sources being used and what concerns have arisen while carrying out the research the particular chapter draws on.

The women I am most interested in, Schreiner, Marx and Levy, produced non-literary writing which can be compared and contrasted. And while they were friends they also had quite different lives and associated with their own circles. Investigating this small group of women allows for consideration of their entwined networks, therefore, and the role that this played in sustaining and inspiring their creative and political literary efforts. There is an interesting range of historical sources, including archival ones, on each woman, and this allows for close analysis of the aforementioned selected published literature in relation to their letters, diaries and manuscript drafts. In addition, through researching these sources it is possible also to research other women writers who were friends and associates of them at different points in time. This includes Henrietta Frances Lord, Clementina Black, Margaret Bateson, Vernon Lee, Caroline (Dollie) Maitland (later Radford),⁴ Margaret Harkness, Henrietta Müller and Beatrice Potter (later Webb).⁵ These women were all writers variously involved with the aforementioned Woman's, Labour and Native Questions and writing was a cultural and political practice employed by them all. In response to contemporary events, including the publication of other literatures, these women embedded their responses in their chosen literary genre or genres.

The women's writing was undertaken in different parts of the city – in homes, reading rooms, and make-shift offices – which points to the lack of public work-related spaces available for women and how they overcame such limitations in both creative and pragmatic ways (Bernstein 2011, 2013; Rosner 2003). Writing was scribbled, painstakingly scripted, transcribed, edited. It was inspired by other writers, by stage performances, by major and relatively minor political events. It was

⁴ I use Dollie Radford from hereon.

⁵ I use Potter in this thesis as her marriage was not until 1892.

published in *New Woman* journals, newspapers columns, letters to editors, essays and articles in established papers and periodicals, as well as books of poetry and novels. Other writing was circulated in the form of letters and notes, with other writing still, such as diaries, remaining in the possession of the writer until her death. When re-read together, these different forms of writing practices build upon one another to provide a rounded account of the writing lives of these women living in 1880s London and of the broader context of the writing process as they experienced and crafted it.

The substantive questions I have in-mind when reading and writing about the women's work are: How were these women's writings situated in relation to other literature and writers of the time? Was their writing a response to something? How was their writing purposive? Did it provide ways into otherwise exclusionary spaces? How much was writing shaped by life in 1880s London, and how much beyond it? What landscape of places, people and ideas are depicted in the women's documents of life and their published work? How did the different women choose where to publish? What were the limitations on their choices? And what audiences did they want and reach? I am also interested in methodological enquiries and these resulting questions: Which documents relating to the women's lives have and have not survived and why? How have the surviving materials been collected, organised and archived, and what impact does this have on using them for research purposes? And, how can non-literary texts be used to understand the social world of women writers in 1880s London? By focussing on the minutiae of the texts they produced, and relating this to these women's everyday lives, a deeper understanding is sought about their desire to change the social world for themselves and others.

Chapter Two explains a 'sociology of small things' and presents an argument for a close re-reading and multi-pointed non-linear analysis using historical documents of life. At its base is everyday life research (Simmel 1903,1950; Goffman 1990; Certeau 1984; Smith 1988; Felski 1999; Brewer 2010; Highmore 2011; Lefebvre 2008, 2009), with a focus on people in relation to an urban context. Examples are provided by Simmel's (1950 [1908]) well-known work on the stranger, the Jew as outsider and the importance of number, and Certeau's (1984) concern

with pedestrian perspectives. Scale plays an important role here, inasmuch as a macro lens is developed in this chapter and then used in what follows, with many of the sources closely interrogated, enabling a deeper understanding of the lives and literature of the women concerned. Building on this, each chapter presents a number of interconnected examples and vignettes (a term which is explained later) and creates a *bricolage* (also explained later), adding up to a set of linked accounts. This closely focussed approach brings to the fore some usually unnoticed aspects of these texts, which are fundamental to understanding things that have been missed, ignored, or more purposefully ‘vanished’ (Kelly 1996). One example concerns some of the women writers’ engagement with writings and plays of Henrik Ibsen, investigated in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three explores the intertextual nature of some women’s writing to show them in relation to other texts, events and incidences, and the importance of place and friendship connections in this process. Writing as a cultural political practice evolved over time and was worked on in particular places. Yet the places of literary production are most often not discussed as an important feature of what was being written. But having a ‘room of one’s own,’ as Virginia Woolf put it in her feminist text of 1929, was key at times, as this provided thinking, reading and writing space for women, both literally and figuratively. This did not necessarily have to be a secluded space, as increasingly women worked in communal and ‘exterior’ ways too, such as in the British Museum Reading Room (Bernstein 2013). More importantly, for Woolf and for my purposes here, writing can be seen as being closely attached to life itself (Rosenman 1995 p. 46). This chapter, then, focusses on the process of literary production as it was linked to particular places, in the first study to home, in the second study to the theatre.

In the first study I focus on home as a place of writing – where literature was formulated in practical terms. Writing could take place in many others places of course but generally women nurtured a writing environment, to allow for their work (and their cultural politics) to be thought about and brought to fruition. This might be a specific place in the city, or it might be at a particular table, in a study or a bedroom. It was, however, important for women to establish this place to write and

in this first example I explore Olive Schreiner's writing places as discussed in her letters selected from different points in time. Schreiner discussed and described the landscapes she experienced, which ranged from the vast open veld of South Africa to the streets and boarding houses of 1880s London. Such landscapes and places impacted greatly on Schreiner's health and energy and her capability to write, as well as on what she wrote about. How then Schreiner described 'home' throughout her many moves, and the changing types of residences and circumstances at different points in her life, is extremely interesting in this regard. Schreiner can be seen to have a rather *flâneur* take on this (Wolff 1990, 2010; Wilson 1991, 1992; Parsons 2003; Nord 1995), being unfixed in terms of place and instead focussed around her ability, or not, to write. Schreiner's home life too was different from other women writers she knew well, such as Amy Levy and Eleanor Marx. Her life experiences and shifting perspective on place and space are considered for how these were related to her political growth and viewpoints. This study, therefore, argues that places of writing are an important aspect when considering women's literary production and the cultural politics they espoused through their writing practices.

The second study argues for the theatre as an important site where the drive to engage in cultural politics and subsequently the inspiration to write could begin. I discuss the first public performance of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* on a London stage in 1889, which was attended by a group of like-minded proto-feminist women including Olive Schreiner, Eleanor Marx, Dollie Radford, Alice Corthorn, Honor Brooks, and Ellen Terry (Ellis 1924 p. 41). And I demonstrate how Ibsen's work was used and how some of the women I am interested in were inspired to write, read and perform his plays dealing with themes that were important to them. The interest and excitement regarding this play is evident in many letters and other documents, yet the engagement with Ibsen's work began much earlier in the 1880s, and the chapter backtracks to explore this. In doing so, I focus particularly on the writings and activities of two women, Henrietta Frances Lord and Eleanor Marx, who translated some of Ibsen's plays and held private readings for friends. I consider their choice of play, how they worked, the context and reviews of their translations. I also consider the importance of having a supportive network of friends, to encourage them and

also to discuss Ibsen's ideas with and to help them to spread the word about the work they produced. While Lord and Marx used their skills in writing and translation to bring Ibsen's ideas to a broader audience, their endeavours were almost simultaneously being 'vanished' by others in the literary scene, which must have impacted on their writing practices at the time (as will be considered) as well as having a major impact on how their work has been viewed since. Nonetheless, and as this study argues, the practices of reading and writing provided them with routes into the literary profession and allowed them to communicate their feminist politics on their own terms more than they would otherwise have been able to.

Chapter Four is concerned with women's writing as a mimetic cultural political practice – not so much inspired by other literature or landscapes, but as in utilising texts politically and creatively as a way of informing others. In this connection, I examine the literary activities and achievements of Eleanor Marx in more depth, demonstrating how she used writing mimetically, taking up the literature of other writers and working with texts for her political ends to re/present her ideas about and to the world. Marx was adept at representation, using performance and wide-ranging literary skills to communicate her political ideas through adopting and adapting cultural forms. Her different writing practices were a means to reach out to others, to pass on ideas, to challenge prevailing traditions. Her goal was not to be a writer *per se*, but to project selected writings further out into the world. She did this with the work of Ibsen (as introduced in Chapter Three), and then went on to translate Flaubert, Keilland, and also her friend Amy Levy's novel. Marx can therefore be seen as a proficient cultural and political practitioner, brokering between the original text and the copy (or next version) of the original, something I explore through the translations she published during the 1880s in London.

This chapter is divided into three vignettes (in brief, meaning snapshots which build one on another, like "a story that unfolds through a series of stages" (Jenkins et al 2010 p. 176)), to explore different writerly voices, in this case Marx's readings of plays, her self-conscious refusal to write original work, her collaborative voice and her communications across different languages in her translation work. As such the first vignette focusses on intimate relationships and the impact close

friendships and other acquaintanceships could have on authorship. Vignette two furthers this idea to show the effect of tensions within close relationships in terms of writing output. And the third vignette explores the extent co-authorship could reach beyond local matters and personal issues. Broadly speaking Chapter Four explores how writing was used with political intent and not necessarily with the aim of the writer becoming a professional literary figure. It then examines why collaboration might have been preferred over individual authoring and the consequences of this on the author and literary reception of the work produced. It also explores how political intentionality often collided with, and was inhibited by, everyday practical matters, such as the need to earn money, fill column space and concerning personal relationships. The chapter argues overall that there were close yet complicated intersections between personal everyday life matters, bigger political concerns and the writing being produced.

Chapter Five is concerned with how personal circumstances and city life influenced, shaped and inhibited cultural political practices. Amy Levy was determined to become a writer and poet from early in her life, and gained considerable success, ended only by her self-killing in 1889. Over time her final act contributed to the forging of an authorial persona around Levy. As such I explore the consequences of her death in terms of this overshadowing her life, the representations of London she left in letters and diaries, and the importance of intimate relationships and acquaintances in relation to writing practices. I also discuss Levy's final book of poetry, *A London Plane Tree and Other Verse*, which Levy constructed like a patchwork quilt from both old and new materials. Deconstructing the process by which the book was carefully choreographed points up her working strategies in the last year of her life and offers a new reading of the book. Re-reading this text using Levy's diary and letters points up the importance of friendships, the circles she was involved in, the types of places she visited and her reading while she was writing and editing.

Chapter Five is composed of four vignettes, again each one building on the one before, shifting through the personal and intimate, the public and professional aspects of Levy's everyday and writing life, as these are intertwined. The first

vignette focusses on the derivation of an authorial persona through texts written by others, based on the dramatic act of an unexpected death which, through repetition over time, has overshadowed other aspects of the author's life and intentions. Vignette two utilises Levy's private documents – her letters and diary – to analyse the representational interior world of a writer in connection with the broader exterior social world. This allows friendship groups, reading and other pursuits and the emergence of ideas over time to come into view, including political standpoints and aims. Vignette three focusses on intimacies and writing, on the importance and value of different friendships and acquaintances in connection with literary production in more depth. I consider different individuals, introduced in Vignette two, and various circumstances which together build the complex social world of a writer such as Levy. Vignette four is concerned with writing practices and the creation of an authorial *bricolage*, that is how a woman writer devised her own complex authorial positionality through textual composition. Levy's final book of poetry, *A London Plane Tree and Other Verse*, is the focus of attention. This was completed in the months prior to her death, and in it she creates her own poetic space in which to encompass her emergent views and ideas in both previously published and unpublished writing. As such this document demonstrates how the wider social, more intimate and writerly worlds of a writer interconnect. Overall the chapter argues that the cultural politics communicated through women's writing practices can be more fully understood through a close analytical perspective, re-reading life documents, whilst avoiding misleading yet repeated interpretations.

The Concluding Chapter draws together my interest in how a sociology based around 'small things' can help focus attention on the nature of the cultural political practices of the women writers included in this thesis, engaged in during the 1880s in London, but with reverberations beyond this time and place. It draws conclusions as to the usefulness of Schreiner's working method in relation to my own. It defines 'small' as I have used it throughout this thesis. And it shows New Womanhood to be a nuanced term and one which should be considered prismatically.

CHAPTER TWO

Researching Small Everyday Things: Methodological Issues

Human life may be painted according to two methods. There is the stage method. According to that each character is duly marshalled at first, and ticketed; we know with an immutable certainty that at the right crisis each one will reappear and act his part, and when the curtain falls, all will stand before it bowing. There is a sense of satisfaction in this, and of completeness. But there is another method – the method of the life we all lead. Here nothing can be prophesied. There is a strange coming and going of feet. Men appear, act and re-act upon each other, and pass away. When a crisis comes the man who would fit it does not return. When the curtain falls no one is ready. When the footlights are brightest they are blown out; and what the name of the play is no one knows. If there sits a spectator who knows, he sits so high that the players in the gaslight cannot hear his breathing. Life may be painted according to either method; but the methods are different. The canons of criticism that bear upon the one cut cruelly upon the other.

It has been suggested by a kind critic that he would better have liked the little book if it had been a history of wild adventure ... This could not be. Such works are best written in Piccadilly or in the Strand: there the gifts of the creative imagination, untrammelled by contact with any fact, may spread their wings.

But, should one sit down to paint the scenes among which he has grown, he will find that the facts creep in upon him. Those brilliant phases and shapes which the imagination sees in far-off lands are not for him to portray. Sadly he must squeeze the colour from his brush, and dip it into the gray pigments around him. He must paint what lies before him.

Olive Schreiner (1883) 'Preface' to *The Story of An African Farm*.

Introduction

The women I am focussing on in this thesis were influenced and inspired to write by other writing. So too am I, this thesis being influenced by and critically engaging with Olive Schreiner's aesthetic method of 'painting the life we all lead,' as in the epigraph to this chapter which appears as the Preface to her first novel *The Story of An African Farm* (SAF from hereon) published in 1883. This has led me to undertake close and intertextual readings of 'documents of life' (Plummer 2001; Stanley 2013), in order to understand and make meaning of some of the writing and the everyday activities of a small loose network of women writers in 1880s London. I see this approach as akin in some ways to Clifford Geertz's (1973) idea of 'thick description.' That is, it is about providing a close and detailed study of the facts available and putting forward a set of interpretations in writing which explain the meaning of these facts in their cultural context. Geertz (1973 p. 5) asserts: "man [*sic*] is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning." My thesis is similarly concerned with 'webs of significance' across women's writings and, connectedly, their relationships and this has led me to conclude that Schreiner's approach is a useful one in researching my chosen topic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it highlights the value of incomplete, small scale and often mundane everyday activities (not that 'which the imagination sees in far-off lands'); secondly, it draws attention to the complex and interwoven nature of networks ('a strange coming and going of feet'); thirdly, it promotes awareness that things often turn out differently from what might be expected ('When the footlights are brightest they are blown out'); fourthly, it leads to consideration of the possibilities and limitations of what can be known from the sources available ('the grey pigments'); and finally, it keeps the focus of attention on actual people, places and things (as 'the facts creep in upon him') rather than abstract concerns.

In keeping these ideas at the foreground of my research, this chapter advances a methodological and theoretical toolbox of ideas and approaches in order to frame

and deal with the sources available. Then, following this, each subsequent chapter utilises the toolbox approach and analyses the non-literary texts from archival sources and literary texts as already described. It is not my intention, however, to prescribe one way of working with these sources. This would be counter intuitive to the differences in the archives, the ways collections have been put together, the types of documents and so on. It would also assume that writing (this thesis presently), about writing (by women in the past) can be systematized, that a template can be devised and subsequently applied. But the women I am concerned with not only wrote differently they had different purposes and approaches, engaged with different genres, and produced writing of very different qualities and quantities, and these aspects should be reflected in this thesis too. Purbrick (2007 p. 11) has argued because of the complex nature of the Mass Observation Archive⁶ at the University of Sussex, that:

there is ‘no model method’ for working with Mass Observation material. To prescribe one way of researching in the Mass Observation Archive would not do justice to its contents. Mass Observation writing, entangled in everyday life and processes of its representation, inevitably leads researchers in multifarious directions.

This statement rings true for my research and each set of documents has led in different research directions. At times the women seemed at a great distance from one another, while at other times their paths crossed. They agreed and argued on some points, and put forward, like Grand and Ouida, different perspectives on the same topic. As such working with multiple narratives has provided a broad view on my research topic, enabling me to come at it from different angles. The initial impetus, however, was more straightforwardly connected to my interest in feminist women and letters.

My research is connected to the work undertaken by the Olive Schreiner Letters Project⁷ (OSLP from hereon). Olive Schreiner was a South African New Woman writer who wrote some thousands of letters, among other things, and is also

⁶ This archive specialises in material about everyday life in Britain and is made up of documents generated by the original Mass Observation social research organisation (1937 – 1950s) and the newer Mass Observation Project (1981 onward).

⁷ See www.oliveschreinerletters.ed.ac.uk and www.oliveschreiner.org

considered an important social commentator and theorist whose analytical focus was wide and predominantly sociological in character (McClintock 1995; Berkman 1989; Stanley 2002; Stanley & Dampier 2010). The Project has transcribed and is analysing all of Schreiner's extant letters, working with and developing ideas about epistolary practices, including theoretical and methodological issues concerning using letters for research in the social sciences. Schreiner's letters cover around a fifty year period, are written from numerous places, to many correspondents, and are held in over forty different archives across four continents. The circa 4800 extant letters survive from an estimated 20,000+ written by Schreiner. The scale and dispersed character of this 'collection' of letters gives significant scope, therefore, for exploration of the different ideas that the OSLP is working with and developing. Among other things, this includes the following, which are ideas I am also working with and developing in this thesis: the idea of the epistolarium (Stanley 2004; 2011a; 2011c); considering letters as gifts in terms of their reciprocal qualities (Stanley 2011a; Mauss 1954; Strathern 1988; Hurdley 2007); also, concerning notions of 'letterness' (Poustie 2010; Jolly & Stanley 2005 p.75; Barton & Hall 2000); and, considering letters as palimpsests which evolve, hide and reveal things over time (Stanley 2011a; D. Hetherington 2011).⁸

In addition to these concerns, thematically the contents of Schreiner's letters are broad and varied, and involve her commentary as it emerges over time on, for instance, colonialism under transition, issues regarding the South African War, international women's franchise campaigns, and, the areas which my research engages with, writing, feminist and socialist networks and related issues in London in the 1880s. Schreiner's letters are also significant in considering her published writings, that is, her novels, allegories and political essays, and her other activities too, such as her political involvements with particular groups and people. Each informs the other, with her letter-writing connecting with her other writing, and also underpinning her developing ideas regarding, for instance, socialism and feminism.

Olive Schreiner's letters and other writings, her interests and activities, have provided entry points for this research and the chapters to follow. My own interest in

⁸ See further team publications at <http://www.oliveschreinerletters.ed.ac.uk/TeamPublications.html>

researching women's writing, along with exploring their relationships to each other and to the city, meant I had an existing engagement with the time period that Schreiner spent in London in the 1880s. Here she established herself as a New Woman writer and became linked to, or part of, various 'official' and 'non-official' networks, literary and otherwise. In 1911 when Schreiner was in her 50s, her *Women and Labour* was published, after she had already written extensively on a range of subjects. The following extract, describing her 'circle of friends,' brings to the fore some particular aspects of the research I have engaged in:

You will look back at us with astonishment! You will wonder at passionate struggles that accomplished so little; at the, to you, obvious paths to attain our ends which we did not take; at the intolerable evils before which it will seem to you we sat down passive; at the great truths staring us in the face, which we failed to see; at the truths we grasped at, but could never quite get our fingers round. You will marvel at the labour that ended in so little; - but, what you will never know is how it was thinking of you and for you, that we struggled as we did and accomplished the little which we have done.

(Schreiner [1911] 1985 p. 30)

Schreiner's words connect two time periods, from her writing in her present, to the unknown future 'You' she addresses and which I have interpreted as the reader's present. My research similarly makes connections across time by researching Schreiner and other women writers in the past, which was their living present, and writing about this in the future, which has come to be the present in which I write. Schreiner also refers to an undefined 'us' and unspecified 'struggles,' 'paths' and 'ends,' which I have interpreted as being an unofficial network of women writers and their efforts to bring about change in their own and other women's lives, through their mainly literary activities. In this short extract, Schreiner uses the word 'little' in relation to 'our' accomplishments three times, which has led me to consider the often unnoticed little events and interactions in one time and place which can sooner or later amount to some bigger changes. My research shows, therefore, that by focusing on past 'small' events, which include some often intimate interactions within the loose network of women writers, and some of the minutiae in the writings they produced, the impact they had in bringing about such changes can be more clearly appreciated. The women's writing as a means to social change is contextualised and

understood in relation to the importance of the actual network connections: through influential and inspiring ideas being communicated across the aforementioned ‘webs of significance.’ Furthermore, these things are seen to occur in relation to the wider context, particularly of 1880s London, and are therefore refractions of bigger scale cultural politics.

London in the 1880s was a remarkable place and time when, as Judith Walkowitz (1992 p. 9) comments, “middle-class women were enabled to speak publicly about sexual passion and about sexual danger, thanks to new spaces, forms of social communication and political networks available in a redefined public domain.” They were enabled to speak, act and write about their other concerns too, including marriage and relationships more broadly, about a full education instead of a partial one at best, about their relationship to the changing cityscape, and about their limited or forbidden entry into certain professions, such as in the dominant literary structures of the time. With regards to literature specifically, Walkowitz (1992 p. 11) goes on to suggest that some women writers worked to reconstruct “the dominant literary mappings ... to accommodate their own social practices and fantasies.” With this in mind, and to better understand these ‘mappings,’ the thesis provides some close re-readings, analyses and interpretations of the literary ‘reconstructions’ in the different kinds of writing the women produced. The writings of Schreiner, Marx and Levy were indeed many and varied. As are the writings of other connected women writers such as Harkness, Lee and Lord. There are thousands of letters, for example, (some women wrote many, others few) and I am selecting from the 4800+ extant Schreiner’s letters, around 400 of Marx’s letters, and much fewer – around 60 – of Levy’s, along with some letters by others which have survived. Additionally there are diaries, and manuscript drafts of some published works with these materials held in archival collections in many parts of the world. I also make reference to some published poems (by Levy), novels (by Levy and Schreiner), allegories (by Schreiner), translated works (by Marx and Lord), and newspaper and journal articles (by all of these women). Consequently I have made some careful selections when it comes to the written materials, which I discuss later, and have given much consideration to the first methodological conundrum I faced:

given the impact that any beginning has on what follows, where is the 'right' place to start?

In 1922, Virginia Woolf (1976 pp. 175-177) wrote: "What is Bloomsbury? ... if we take for granted that Bloomsbury exists, what are the qualities that admit one to it, what are the qualities that expel one from it?... where does Bloomsbury end?" Woolf was referring to 'Bloomsbury' as a cultural phenomenon of which she was a part in the early 1900s. Such questions demonstrate the difficulties in defining boundaries, not only around a place but also around a "cultural phenomenon [which was] constituted through networks of conversation, contact, and exchange" (Blair 2004 p. 815). Similarly this issue has concerned me in a number of ways and while I eventually decided to focus on certain women, in the context of certain everyday small events, this came about after asking a number of questions, such as: Where is the beginning in a piece of research which uses many different kinds of texts, letters particularly, along with other kinds of documents and published literature, written during the 'New Woman' era? Should it start with one woman, Olive Schreiner perhaps, since she is present throughout, or instead a less well-known writer, to bring to light yet more presently 'invisible' or vague women's histories? Or should it start with an event, although which one is another question, since there were many major, and not so major, events occurring in this time and place? Should it perhaps start with a letter or a poem or a book, or should the beginning be a place, a living room, reading room, cafe or street? It could begin with the day that Schreiner first arrived in London in October 1881 and end the day she left on 11 October 1889. This would certainly provide a neat time, place and boundary within which to work, yet it would mean ignoring her repeated returns and departures from Britain in 1897, 1911, between 1913 and 1920 when, on 13 August, she made her final departure back to South Africa. When it came to researching my selection of women writers, any network construction escapes neat temporal and spatial boundaries. Friendship connections happen gradually, their form changes, their ends are multiple, and regarding these particular women, their friendships frequently started and continued beyond the remit of the 1880s. As such, the impact each woman had on another's writing also varied, changed, started and ended at different points in time.

The only strong sense I had about the beginning of this thesis is that wherever it started would have a major impact on what the rest of the thesis became and what it was about. For me, it is about the cultural politics of women's writing first and foremost, and this concerns not only what they published, but also scribbled and scrawled, and concerning letters penned to each other. So it is about textual objects, various of which are archived. But only some of what they wrote has survived, while what is extant has eventuated as a number of seemingly neat and complete 'collections' such as the Amy Levy Papers, raising some crucial methodological issues, including concerning the gaps which result from lost or destroyed texts. This thesis is about all of these things; and in addition it also concerns 'writing about writing,' that is, how I go about writing and presenting research in the present about lives in the past, and shape this into 'a thesis.'

How one selects and organises research materials has consequences for the writing and representation of the past, with numerous discussions of this including by Denzin & Lincoln 1994; Steedman 2001; Stanley 2002a; Benjamin 1999; Trouillet 1995; Certeau 1984; Plummer 2001. Denzin and Lincoln (1994 p. 9) comment: "the worlds we study are created through the texts we write," a succinct way of putting it which also reflects a *bricolage*-like 'crafting' process that connects with my ideas about 'writing-about-writing': visually, this idea is reminiscent of the artist M.C. Escher's 'Drawing Hands' of 1948.⁹ In this sense, the knowledge which is produced from the past, is in a state of flux, being redrawn over again, always changeable with the unearthing of new sources and shifts in methodological approaches and interpretational practices. Walter Benjamin's interest in issues concerning making knowledge-claims about the past can be seen regarding "his research materials [where he] demonstrates his organization of knowledge in rigorous and eccentric designs – which provide the connecting links between initial ideas and first drafts" (Marx et al 2007 p. 3). The focus is on what happens in the space between the original research material and the re-writing of and about this. Certeau (2000 pp. 7-8) focusses on the same 'object of study' – the space of historical narrative production – which he says occupies the 'interspace' between past and present, where they clash,

⁹ See Illustration p. 257 <http://www.mcescher.com/Gallery/back-bmp/LW355.jpg>

and where any notion of absolute knowledge of the past is dismantled. One moving and interesting exploration concerning ‘how to know and write about the past’ is Stanley’s (2002a) *‘Mourning Becomes ...’* which discusses “the irreducibility of lives lived and deaths died” in relation to feminist scholarship. Stanley considers the act of mourning in relation, firstly, to the death of Olive Schreiner’s baby daughter and, secondly, the deaths of Boer children during the South African War 1899-1902, and for her “Mourning ... compels, thoughtfulness about feminist research, feminist theory, the feminist production of knowledge and its concerns with doing justice to lives lived in the past” (Stanley 2002a, p. 12).

In thinking about these ideas in relation to researching women’s writing, my ‘object of study’ lies in the space between the original texts (which the women produced) and what is produced in this thesis. It is consequently not enough to say ‘I am writing (or I have written) up my research’ because, against what this statement implies, the research in the sense of investigation is not finished; relevant research materials are continually being unearthed and these add to or change the research already done. ‘Writing-about-writing’ therefore points to a cyclical process whereby the study of the women’s texts results in the writing about it which is this thesis. It also strongly connects to Schreiner’s ‘the life we all lead’ approach, that the writer “must squeeze the colour from his brush, and dip it into the grey pigments around him. He must paint what lies before him” (Schreiner 1883 p. 30).

The thesis also reflects aspects of the many texts I have encountered, with selected extracts woven throughout, starting with Schreiner’s preface as the epigraph to this chapter. This entails a gradual building process and the production of a *bricolage*, in which the research elements – some Schreiner letters, some Amy Levy diary entries, some ‘lost’ Eleanor Marx letters – are made into new assemblages, each having implications for the others. It is important that these women’s words should not get lost, be absorbed into near invisibility in my explorations and arguments, that they should, as Ben Highmore (2011 p.61) succinctly puts it, “always remain little islands of singularity, fractals of a life-world.” As such these small things, the *bricolage*, are explained in each chapter, in relation to the documents being used.

My thesis, then, encompasses a researcher and her reflexive analytical processes of interrogating the original production of texts in different times and places, the subsequent collection and organising of these texts in various collections and archival interventions, and contemporary interpretations and representations of such documents in research today, including my own. So, while it has been difficult to find the right start and also imagine the end, in order to start I have taken inspiration from David Frisby's (1984 p. 60) comment on Georg Simmel's view of this conundrum, which is that, since everything has the capacity to react to everything else, it is possible "to start out at any point within the totality of social life and arrive anywhere else." Also, Carolyn Steedman's (2001 p. 7) wry observation that: "There is and always will be, it seems, trouble in getting started and finished" offers comfort.

I now move on to discuss theoretical influences on my research and some methodological concerns which have arisen. As already intimated, working with extensive textual materials regarding these women writers in 1880s London itself raises issues and consequential choices. There are particular resonances concerning the 'smallness' of my research concerns and so the rest of this chapter focuses on theories and methodologies relating to 'small things.'

Defining 'A Sociology of Small Things'¹⁰

In a conversation with a well-established sociologist about researching in archives, they appeared somewhat baffled by my enthusiasm and went on to describe their own experience. They recalled wanting to research a well-known feminist writer for whom there was a vast archive collection available, but commented that after several days of going through many boxes and papers they 'found nothing.' This left me baffled in turn, since I mostly come away from archive collections with too much material, endless questions and more bookings in at other archives, in order to cross reference, add to and substantiate what I have found. What I do find, however, can be quite 'bitty,' an incomplete and mixed bag of varied texts, which often give no clear

¹⁰ This subtitle has been inspired by Jacobs (2005) on 'A Geography of Big Things.'

answers, only splayed leads and further unanswered questions. It is a strange mix of ‘stuff,’ as Steedman says (2001 p. 68) “selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past [along with] mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve.” I can understand, therefore, how such sources might be perceived by researchers who are used to more structured research materials and approaches. Yet, it is this ‘bittyness’ that I find interesting, charged and full of possibilities. Perhaps it is the not-knowing-ness of the research journey which is the hardest thing to get used to, but as Olive Schreiner pointed out in her aforementioned Preface to SAF (1883 pp. 29-30), life itself is not wholly predictable: “Here nothing can be prophesied.” So, what is ‘nothing’ for some researchers can hold great potential for others and I now pursue this by discussing my ideas about ‘A Sociology of Small Things,’ a set of ideas that frame particular aspects of my research approach. The term invokes influential theories, ideas, writers and practitioners engaged in researching the often unnoticed aspects of everyday life.

The Perspective of Researching Small Things

Researching ‘small’ things means adopting a different sense of scale, with long distance and wide angle lenses abandoned, and with a macro lens attached, as otherwise important micro things might be missed. This is not a scaling down of the sociological imagination, however, but a more nuanced and intricate approach to researching the social in a specific time and place through particular documents and their ‘small’ views of things. I will discuss some influential ideas here concerned with linking notions of the small-scale with everyday life and city-related research.

Small things which are often unnoticed aspects of people’s daily lives are the focus of attention in micro-history and for some everyday life thinkers, theorists and practitioners (Simmel 2002[1903],1950; Freud 1989; Goffman 1990; Certeau 1984; Smith 1987; Stewart 1993; Felski 1999; Brewer 2010; Highmore 2011; Bachelard 1994; Lefebvre 2008, 2009). John Brewer points out the importance of “ideas of space, size and distance and their relationship to affect an historical interpretation” and adds that “it is only by shifting the perspective, scale and point of view of historical analysis, [and by] creating small-scale history, that the relationship

between structure and agency can properly be understood” (Brewer 2010 p. 1, p. 7). For Georg Simmel, to study everyday activities in the city is akin to “the microscopic analysis of cells in biology [whereby] social ‘cells’ interact with each other continuously [and] make up day-to-day city life” (Gardiner 2008 p. 167). Simmel, therefore, favoured a macro sociological lens to focus on small numbers of people, isolates, dyads and triads, by way of seeing how their various forms of communications might usurp, undercut, and overturn ideological strictures which impacted on their lives.

The isolate for Simmel (1950 pp. 118-122) is not merely an individual who is disconnected from society but someone who has a more complicated set of relations with society: they have past relations and possible future ones; yet, they have their back to both of these at the point in time being focussed on. This, however, might simply “be an interruption or periodic occurrence in a given relationship between two or more persons” (Simmel 1950 p. 119), that is, one might be isolated only for a period of time. Additionally, Simmel says, to feel isolated when in a crowd is fundamentally different from choosing to be alone. And, it is something connected with a group’s structure – it being neither very ‘close’ nor ‘intimate’ – which allows for isolation to develop within it. A dyad – a ‘nation of two’¹¹ – usually comes about because of “A common fate or enterprise, an agreement or secret between two persons, [which] ties each of them” together (Simmel 1950 p. 123). This produces a strong tie but one which is accompanied by the knowledge of its inevitable end: a group can continue beyond its current members, because others can join; whereas a dyad is a unique relationship between the two concerned, and if one leaves or dies, the dyad ceases to exist. There is a strong sense of reliance and responsibility, therefore, one upon another and towards the ‘common fate’ which can be lacking in larger groups. This, for Simmel (1950 p. 135), gives the dyad “a special consecration as is seen in marriage and friendship,” and the addition of another to form a triad has both positive and negative consequences. The third person can operate as an intermediary to smooth out differences for the good of the overall goal. They might

¹¹ The writer Kurt Vonnegut uses this dyadic formulation in his book *Mother Night* (1961), about the impact of war on a married couple who attempt to exist outside of what is going on around them by creating their own ‘nation of two.’

also offer alternative perspectives, to which a dyad might be closed off. The third person, however, can also be viewed as an intruder who disturbs the harmony between two individuals. Simmel (1950 p. 136) evokes the scene: “It may ... be noted how extraordinarily difficult and rare it is for three people to attain a really uniform mood when visiting a museum, for instance, or looking at a landscape and how much more easily such a mood emerges between two.” More importantly, for Simmel (1950 p. 136), the addition of a third person prevents the two most important aspects of the dyadic structure to exist, that is the intense nature of the relationship, and a “pure and immediate reciprocity.” Importantly also, it is only the addition of one to two which causes these fundamental changes, since adding another two, three, four or more will make no further fundamental difference.

For Simmel (1950 p. 94), there was generally something more radical about smaller groups than larger ones, since there was less of a watering down effect of the overall objectives of the group, along with less difference and jostling over how to achieve these. He also considered small groups as catalysts to understanding much bigger structures, ideals and principles, commenting about socialist movements that: “The principal of socialism ... can easily be realized in a small group and, what is surely quite important, can be safeguarded there by its members. The contribution of each to the whole and the group’s reward to him are visible at close range” (Simmel 1950 p. 88). The importance here concerns understanding the smaller group in relation to the epistemological claims that can be made about the wider group. And such small formations are relevant in relation to the women writers I am focussing on since I am analysing aspects of loose, strong and changing connections from close quarters, most often between two or three individuals, as a means to understanding things about feminism in 1880s London.

Michel de Certeau (1984) writes about scale in relation to the city and describes how the urban landscape is experienced in different ways: from the massive panoptical views seen from the tops of buildings, to the pedestrian views down at street level. The former is more holistic but without detail, while the latter is filled with “paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poem in which each body is an element signed by many others” (Certeau 1984 p. 93). The close-up

smaller-scale approach, then, for Certeau, along with Simmel and Brewer, allows access to particular social phenomena, which in turn are key to understanding the relationship of these things to the holistic larger-scale landscape. Relatedly scale is important for the literary critic and poet Susan Stewart (1993 p. 95), who points out: “We cannot speak of the small, or miniature, work independently of the social values expressed toward private space – particularly, of the ways the domestic and the interior imply the social formation of an interior subject.” This is relevant to my research in that women’s writing displays exteriority and interiority in different ways according to their life view and personal circumstances, and interesting juxtapositions can be made between these.

Concerning the domestic and the interior, there is an important point to be made regarding everyday life studies in relation to time and gender which literary and cultural theorist Rita Felski (1999) has discussed. Felski (1999 p. 21) argues against what she sees as Lefebvre’s “persistent opposition of cyclical and linear time, the everyday and the modern, the feminine and the masculine.” In this she points up the negative dualism of cyclical time being made up of repetitive everyday actions which happen in small timeframes, usually daily, and are associated with the feminine and the domestic sphere. Whereas linear time is more about progressive ‘modern’ activities which occur over long periods of time, propel time forward, and this is associated with the masculine and metropolitan environments. Felski looks beyond these binaries and sees women not simply as victims of mundane everyday living, tied into cyclical time and boring repetitive activities such as cleaning, which in turn negates their ability to contribute in any meaningful way to the progress of history. Instead, and among other things, she sees repetition (I prefer routine) itself more positively, enabling rather than disabling “acts of innovation and creativity [which are] made possible by the mundane cycles of the quotidian” (Felski 1999 p. 21). In relation to the women writers I am researching this matters: firstly because of the repetitive nature of some tasks – the act of sitting down to write a letter or update a diary might be considered routine – yet letter-writing can be a creative endeavor at the same time. And secondly, because the women’s writing criss-crossed the so-called private and public spheres in interesting ways. For instance, often writing

occurred at home yet was about the city; letters made their way about the city and in and out of homes; and publications became part of the fabric and representations of the city. Also, as will be seen, some of these women situated themselves in public places in order to research, discuss and write, as well as publish their own new literatures, the British Library Reading Room and the late 1880s *Women's Penny Paper* (WPP from hereon) being just two examples of these practices.

Felski's articulation of 'home' is useful in terms of what it makes possible, not only in the sense of having 'a room of one's own,' for instance, but also in terms of it being both a beginning and end point in relation to the city. Thinking about this in relation to Olive Schreiner, was she 'at home' in London's boarding houses, which is most often where she stayed, or did she return 'home' to South Africa? And regarding Amy Levy, was she 'at home' in her parent's residence and how did her writing figure with regards to this and her relationship to the city? Also, concerning both Levy and Eleanor Marx, who both decided to end their lives in their respective homes, bedrooms more specifically, home became a place of both temporary (in sleeping) and permanent (in death) departures from everyday life. Felski (1999 p. 22) says "several philosophers of everyday life focus on the home as its privileged symbol ... a base ... which allows us to make forays into other worlds." The move here is from the home and not to it. In connection to this, 'home' is seen as antithetical to the language of modernity which "celebrates mobility, movement, exile, [and] boundary crossing" (Felski 1999 p. 22). Importantly, Felski points out, research about modernity has focussed mostly on city activities – states of flux and *flânerie* – yet there is little about 'returning home,' an often repetitive daily activity. For the women writers, there were many versions of 'home,' and indeed of returning there, which I will explore in the following chapters.

Places of everyday practices (whether inside a home or outside in a street) and the people involved are not easily divisible. Interestingly, cultural geographer Jane Jacobs (2005) draws attention to a research approach in which people and places are viewed as interacting, emphasising that buildings are not static objects to be researched in and of themselves, because a building can speak of "internationalised networks of professional architects and planners, globalizing taste

and cultures, transnational labour markets, and the imperial trade in technical knowledge's and skills" (Jacobs 2005 p. 4). In addition to these 'bigger' global networks, Jacobs also draws attention to the inclusion of the 'smaller' aspects which are the social and the situated, and in a case study involving the effects of living in high-rise buildings, questions arise for Jacobs concerning "the emotional disorientations that might be produced by a loss of sense of place and changes in scale" (Jacobs 2005 p. 14). This kind of research engagement is with the social events (or performances) which are afforded by buildings; and what feelings and actions are provoked in some residents when living in such places.

These ideas are extended by Rose, Degen and Basdas (2010 p. 340), who prioritise the performances over the building structure by asking what it is that people do, think and feel in a built environment. In a case study focussed on a shopping centre, they comment that "a more fine-grained account of diverse engagements" is communicated by those who use it, and that this is not just about shopping. The centre becomes – is made into – a place where friends meet, where all kinds of communications take place, verbal and visual, and where feelings are evoked. Indeed a particular place is not always described by building materials at all, but can be in such terms as: "Your flat always smells great and has a lovely homely feel about it" (visitor to my home). The smells and homeliness, it appears, are interlinked and contribute to how visitors feel and act. These ideas connect with the women writers, for in their letters and other writings they described, discussed and explored their relationship to city places and spaces. They wrote about travelling on an omnibus, the space behind a bar that barmaids occupied, the streets where they walked and prostitutes worked, the rooms they occupied, the East End, the West End, and so on. For Schreiner and others, such writing was itself political, focussed on women's access to and conditions in the city (see Stanley 2002 p. 24). Similarly my researching and writing about small things, about small groups and events, also has a political aspect, as I go on to elaborate.

The Politics of Researching Small Things

With regards to researching the activities of small groups of people, the political appeal is strongly communicated in the work of sociologist Jeffrey Goldfarb (2006) and post-colonial theorist Leela Gandhi (2006). In part, this is about redressing imbalanced histories which have been, for various reasons, 'hidden from history' or actively silenced (Trouillet 1995). In the case of researching women's everyday lives, there is now a large literature across different disciplines (Bland 1995; Nord 1995; Parsons 2003; Ross 1993; Stanley & Morley 1988; Vicinus 1985; Walkowitz 1992; Wilson 1991 are inspiring examples). But, since new research materials are continuously coming to light, such research needs updating and adding to. In the following chapter, for instance, I point up how biographies of the playwright Henrik Ibsen are particularly lacking in references to the contributions of women like Eleanor Marx and Henrietta Frances Lord, who translated and performed Ibsen's work, bringing it to a wider English-speaking audience. New methodological approaches can impact on how such histories are re-written and re-balanced, challenging and even overturning previous narratives, for instance, by employing recent epistolary theorising when using letters for biographical research purposes.

Focussing on 'small things' can contribute to this process of seeing the past differently, with Goldfarb's (2006 p. 1) commitment to researching marginal groups in association with major events communicating this well, in arguing that "Daily life shapes the economy, the polity, and civilization itself" and aiming to show "how people make history in their social interactions." Goldfarb focuses on key moments in recent history, including the dismantling of the Soviet Bloc in 1989, the bombing of the World Trade Centre in 2001, and the US Presidential campaign in 2004, in order to present a sociology of human interactions that start with small group activities, such as those of local theatre groups, and lead to much 'bigger' events. He writes that events such as these come about in part because of conversations around kitchen tables, poetry readings in people's homes, or when a private apartment is turned into a bookstore selling illegal literature (Goldfarb 2006 p. 10). In such situations, "Bonds of trust developed, enabling each individual who took part to forge an identity, a self, that was strikingly different from his or her institutionally

defined persona” (Goldfarb 2006 p. 15), a statement which reflects Simmel’s point in the earlier quotation concerning a group rewarding the commitments of individuals. Such bonds are evident with the women writers I am focussing on, in for example, the gradual forging of ‘New Woman’ identities.

Leela Gandhi’s (2006 p. 7) work is focussed on building a historiography of ‘internal’ activities by small groups who have in various ways actively critiqued empire and contributed towards an anti-imperialist standpoint through “innovative border crossing, [only] visible in small, defiant flights from the fetters [of] imperial similitude.” She sees the lifestyle and literary output of Edward Carpenter, who was a close friend of Schreiner and others, as a significant contribution to opposing imperialism. Gandhi’s (2006 p. 1) work is relevant, including in relation to the women I am researching, because of her focus on some of the “‘minor’ forms of anti-imperialism ... at the end of the nineteenth century,” which can be associated with the feminist and other activities of some of the writers I am concerned with. The phrase Gandhi uses, the ‘politics of friendship,’ refers to the individuals involved in such activities and particularly to their politics and ethical positioning which, in “weaving together the disparate energies of Marxism, utopian experimentation, and continental anarchism ... facilitated the mutation of ‘internationalism’ into a series of countercultural revolutionary practices” (Gandhi 2006 p. 9). The process of researching and analysing such ‘woven energies’ starts with selecting and organising sources, my approach to which is elaborated on next.

The Practice of Researching Small Things in Archives, Networks and Writing

When undertaking research such as this, questions are always ‘in waiting,’ to be defined and honed by what is found in archive collections, and what is there is most often an unknown entity. Archive collections are usually described broadly – the Amy Levy Papers, the Eleanor Marx Papers, and so on – with hand-lists and inventories of the contents of collections only fleshing these out to a degree. There are no short cuts therefore to spending time with documents, in order to read beyond short summaries more likely focussed on the major events of a time period rather

than everyday quotidian matters. In addition, Steedman (2001 p. 18) reminds those who choose to work in archives that these institutions actually hold very little historical ‘stuff,’ just bits and pieces selected through a process largely dependent on how things have been valued at different points in time: “There is the great, brown, slow-moving strandless river of Everything, and then there is its tiny flotsam that has ended up in the record office you are at work in.” Overall, then, an archival researcher does not always have full control over selecting the materials they want to work with, and they necessarily work with what is available at a particular moment in time and place.

My selection of sources has been influenced by two things: by being drawn to particular events (such as the Ibsen play) when doing preliminary reading about the women writers; and by finding interesting primary sources and archive collections of texts available for exploring such events and the individuals and interconnections composing them. Also, my selection process has been gradual: I started with one collection, this led to another and another and I made selections along the way. Some initial searches within archive and other private collections helped narrow down the list of possible women writers on whom to focus. I looked for collections which contained letters first and foremost. And, as already mentioned, I was interested in non-literary ‘working documents,’ that is, manuscript drafts and galley proofs relating to these women’s published writings, in particular those which have marginalia and visible amendments that can be analysed to explore their emerging ideas. Actual archival collections are described in each of the chapters. This also includes discussions of the many methodological issues arising from researching with particular collections and certain documents.

The chapters in the thesis deal with events and interconnections concerning the writers Olive Schreiner, Eleanor Marx and Amy Levy, who are all well-known, and there are biographies, some published letter collections and other more critical writings on each (on Levy, see New 1993; Beckman 2000; Pullen 2010; N. Hetherington & Valman 2010: on Marx, see Kapp 1972, 1976; Meier 1982; Tsuzuki 1967: on Schreiner, see First & Scott 1980; Berkman 1989; Schoeman 1989, 1992; McClintock 1995; Draznin 1992; Burdett 2001; Stanley 2002). To varying degrees,

archival sources have been used in these publications. There are, however, contents of the available collections concerning these writers which have been less or not considered at all; where they exist, for example, little attention has generally (there are exceptions) been paid to manuscript drafts and galley proofs. Also, regarding the women's letters particularly, I am interested in exploring those aspects which have not yet been considered, such as the 'counter-epistolaria' aspects, a term Stanley (2011a, p.146) uses to describe letters which: "depart from, play with, counterfeit, refuse or otherwise flout some of these more typical epistolary conventions but not others," with some examples of counter-epistolaria being "fictional letters, false letters, third-party letters, open letters, unsent draft letters, lost letters, last letters and destroyed letters." This approach is useful, for instance, regarding aspects of the lives and the deaths of Levy and Marx, where, for instance, last letters (or suicide notes), if ever written, have been lost or destroyed. And so my approach enables new interpretations from those already posited in some of the monographs listed above.

Much material from collections is unused and so many other research possibilities and historical narratives are side-lined or left only in peripheral view. As this indicates, there are many other interesting events, people and documents which could have been investigated. Those I have selected, however, allow me to explore the importance and political impact of writing for women. Also, the many kinds of textual materials used in my research allows for explorations of how connections varied between the different women writers. Schreiner, for example, was close friends with both Marx and Levy, yet there is no evidence (yet found) of a strong face-to-face friendship between Marx and Levy themselves. Also, whilst Levy developed a close friendship with poet and writer Vernon Lee in the late 1880s, Schreiner appears to have had only a brief early connection and then an equally brief epistolary one with Lee later on. And more perplexingly, there is no known connection at all between Henrietta Frances Lord and Eleanor Marx and also between Marx and Lee (again, yet found). Such connections and disjunctures allow further comments with regards to epistolary theorising and archival researching.

In addition to selecting 'stuff,' organising it is difficult. And just as selection has a pivotal impact on what research is taken forward and what is left behind, so

organising the materials which are chosen has an impact on how the narrative is told. This can have a constraining effect on the researcher, where the collecting of materials goes on and on, the planning and restructuring of the stuff is endless, and the actual project never begins; and perhaps the best example of this is Walter Benjamin's *'Passagen-Werk'* (Benjamin 1999). Between 1927 and 1940, Benjamin collected a mass of textual materials for a book about nineteenth-century modernity which he referred to as *Passagen-Werk*, later published in English as *The Arcades Project* (Benjamin 1999). To this collection Benjamin added his own notes, scribbles and sketches, and, as a way of managing these texts, he organised them into thirty-six themed folders, or 'convolutes,' each with a letter and title such as 'B. Fashion,' 'M. The Flâneur,' 'Y. Photography.' He also wrote two 'exposes,' book proposals of sorts, which, although outlining "the subject of [the] book" (Benjamin 1999 p. 14), do not give a clear indication of how he intended to structure the material for the final publication. Indeed, it is arguable that the issue of 'how to organise' complex research materials overrides and itself becomes the subject of the book. When Benjamin killed himself in 1940, the 'convolutes' were left in a semi-organised state, and this is how the published book was finally arranged, as a series of separate yet connected themes without any definite structure.

The process of collecting and organising can be different, however, as literary and feminist theorist Naomi Schor (1992) indicates. Schor collected postcards of Paris which she used very effectively to disrupt Lefebvre's binaries regarding representations of modernity. Whilst the images on the postcards display triumphant Parisian city life, the backs of the postcards communicate small everyday things: "From the backs of these cards emerges a murmur of small voices speaking of minor aches and pains, long-awaited engagements ... reporting on safe arrivals and unexpected delays; ordering goat cheese; acknowledging receipt of a bouquet of violets, a bonnet; in short, carrying on the millions of minute transactions, the grain of every-day life" (Schor 1992 p. 239). Unlike Benjamin's struggle with organising his documents, Schor considered each postcard to be part of a series, thereby dictating its position in the collection as this grew. For her, each postcard did not possess the 'mnemonic properties' (Schor 1992 p. 197; see also Benjamin 1968 pp.

59-67) which Benjamin attached to his books and other documents. They did not, in other words, evoke memories from another place and time, like Proust's madeleine. One postcard merely belonged after one and before another. The same might be said of letters in terms of their seriality, yet, there are added considerations made by gaps in collections, the complexly interwoven aspects of correspondences between multiple writers and involving palimpsest aspects also.

My research involves the bringing together of different, selected textual materials from various collections which are located in many archives. Such collections come about through a variety of processes; they might be donated, are often bought and sold, and do not always represent their original state inasmuch as things may be added and removed from a collection over time. Trouillet (1995 p. 52) says succinctly "Archives assemble," and adds: "By archives, I mean the institutions that organize facts and sources and condition the possibility of existence of historical statements." The practical aspect of making collections more 'manageable' is understandable, so that those in charge of the collections know where things are, and can enable researchers to find the things they need. However, this arranging of 'stuff' in a certain order, whether chronologically, by gender, place, or as is often the case with letters, by writer and date order, is in itself "an active act of production" (Trouillet 1995 p. 52) which is followed by further 'acts of production' by the researchers who use the collections to inform their investigations and the historical narratives which come about. I rely on the ordering of collections to some degree (it allows me to find things), and I resist this ordering to some degree also (so as not to be overly influenced by archival systems). Also, I research beyond collection boundaries by iteratively re-reading and cross-referencing across the different archives and collections. As such documents become intertwined in my thesis.

The analytic technique of 're-reading' can concern the changing opinions and reactions of a reader when engaging in re-reading a text at different points in time. Re-reading also prioritises interrogating the context of production of texts, considering texts in combination with other texts, because they can be seen to inform each other. Re-reading has been utilized in literary studies (Sicher 2003; Spacks 2011), feminist literary theory (Moi 1985; Mills and Pearce 1996), cultural studies

(Hermes 2005) and historical research (Dampier 2008; Bellofiore & Fineschi 2009), among other disciplines, and these are just a few example references. For literature scholar Spacks (2011) re-reading is a purposeful act likened to creating a palimpsest, where ones own views over time are layered in accordance to engaging with a text again and again. This is self-reflexive insomuch as it allows the reader to, in Spacks' view, "make sense of ourselves [as] It brings us sharply in contact with how we, like the books we reread, have both changed and remained the same" (interview) .

In addition to this re-reading has been used to work "against the grain' to identify patriarchy as the source of women's textual and material oppression" (Dampier 2008 p. 368). In this thesis I employ 're-reading as a methodology' with this particularly in mind, being inspired by the research of social historian Helen Dampier (2008) whose work on Boer women's testimonies of the 1899-1902 South African War 'set the history record straight.' Also, Elizabeth Wilson's (1982 p. 58) comparative re-reading of literature by Doris Lessing and Simone de Beauvoir, highlights differences and similarities across women writers considered post-war "rebels and social critics," thus providing a more nuanced interpretation of this social actor. I aim to provide such a nuanced interpretation of the 'New Woman' writers in this thesis also.

Re-reading is a complex form of narrative analysis which considers texts in a number of interrelated ways: to re-read is to interrogate the context of production – where and under what circumstances texts were arrived at; and texts are re-read at different points in time – so how Amy Levy's work was interpreted in, say, the 1980s, will differ from how she is interpreted today, and these different interpretations are taken into account; also, texts are re-read in relation to one another, to consider repetitions in language, which forge strong but not necessarily 'truthful' narratives. Absented narratives become more apparent through such an analysis pointing to silenced versions of history. It is therefore used (and used here) politically, to move beyond what is most obvious in a text, to understanding subtexts and subtle influences, and to (re)consider alternative readings such as things excluded from texts and from archival collections. While this approach makes it possible to draw out "the patterns across different kinds of texts" bringing "into sight

[the] differences and disjunctures” (Dampier 2008 pp. 372-4), I shall also explore similarities and points where ideas and practices converge and where texts overlap, and this moves to applying an intertextual approach as well.

Intertextuality, broadly defined as connections between texts, has its foundations in linguistics and development in literary studies, and is now utilized across different disciplines in different ways, depending largely on the research questions being posed. I will come to my own use in this thesis shortly. For a little background to intertextuality, feminist thinker Julia Kristeva, who was influenced by the linguist Saussure’s theory of the sign and literary theorist Bakhtin’s idea that language is dialogical, is credited with introducing the term into the French language during a period of transition in critical thinking in France in the 1960s (Allen 2000 p. 15). Kristeva advocated the notion that ideas should not be “presented as finished, consumable products, but [should be] presented in such a way as to encourage readers themselves to step into the production of meaning” (Kristeva 1986 p. 87). Barthes (1977 pp. 142-148) furthered this idea by challenging the author’s authority over the meanings of their textual productions, giving agency to the reader, each of whom interprets a text for themselves. This disruption to stable meaning, which is how a hegemonic ideology is maintained and ‘other’ thought is repressed, is where “intertextuality becomes a politically charged theory” (Irwin 2004 p. 231). The notion that intertextuality connects to transitional states, to having multiple meanings, to the readers active involvement in interpretations, and to having political usages, are some of the reasons why I use this concept and approach here.

Further to these aspects, I am interested in operationalizing an intertextual approach as it has been defined by literary and cultural theorist Graham Allen (2000) and sociologist Nicholas J. Fox (1995). With a main concern of intertextuality being critiquing language in the form of texts, such as understanding the discourses, ideologies and social structures of which they are representative, Allen (2000 p. 17) makes the important point that “language is utilized by individuals in specific social contexts ... [and] Meaning ... is unique, to the extent that it belongs to the linguistic interaction of specific individuals.” And Allen (2000 p. 5) defines intertextuality as a “concept [which] can be employed to make comments on, or even capture the

characteristics of, a section of society or even a period of history.” The language utilized by the women writers is closely observed in this sense. In a sociological context, such as is the case here, the aim is to understand connections between texts which shed light on the social world of the people being researched. This social world is one which is written and re-written as new materials are discovered and new approaches are developed and applied. The clearest articulation of this aim and argument for intertextual practice in social research is, for me, as follows:

Intertextuality “is not simply some dry academic or intellectual claim concerning the power of the pen. Rather, writing is *one* way to become other, and intertextuality is about the interplay of all kinds of texts, not just written, but the range of meaningful activities in which human being engage” (Fox 1995). Fox goes on to explain a case study whereby his ethnographic texts, which are heralded as ‘authentic’ articulations of his study about “the social which is called ‘doing surgery’,” are further enhanced by the intertextual inclusion of other non-literary texts – his scribbled field notes – which adds missing and important aspects to his research outcomes by providing a fuller representation of ‘doing surgery’.

Intertextuality in a literary studies context focusses on (mainly literary) texts in relation to literary history. By way of example, in Nadia Valman’s (2010) essay ‘Amy Levy and the Literary Representation of the Jewess,’ Valman first identifies intertextual aspects in Levy’s novel *Reuben Sachs* pertaining to Levy’s religious critique of Victorian Anglo-Jewry, such as concerning the position of the Jewess. This is used as a starting point for Valman’s deeper excavation of conversion novels in a nineteenth century Christian literary context. One example of intertextuality in practice, utilized in a sociological context, is conveyed in Liz Stanley’s *Mourning Becomes ...* (2006), a book which challenges what is known and accepted about the concentration camps run by the British during the South African War (1899-1902). Stanley, shifting between personal reminiscences, academic thinking mode and dreamscapes, brings together different ‘texts’ which influence her thinking about mourning: from the Eugene O’Neill’s play *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), (which is a retelling of the *Oresteia* by Aeschylus), to a sculpture of a Boer Woman in mourning by Charles Goddard, to televised images and reports about the hijacked

planes crashing into the World Trade Center's twin towers in September 2001, to Gillian Rose's book *Mourning Becomes the Law* (1996), to dreaming about films, treaties, Electra, death and mourning, among other things. This sets the scene for what is to follow, which incorporates all these modes of thinking and interesting intertextual relationships, as they inform the topic being researched.

My own engagement with the writings by Schreiner, Levy, Marx and others, aims to show a number of things, including: patterns of interest, influence and support between such women (Gilbert and Gubar 1979 p. 50); different views on the same topic, depending on individual circumstances; the strategic use of polyphonic voices, pseudonyms and other authorial positions; time and place aspects in thinking through the palimpsest nature of texts which both reveal and conceal other texts; and, since "All utterances are responses to previous utterances and are addressed to specific addressees" (Allen 2000 p. 20), who the women were communicating with through their many and varied texts.

Returning now to Benjamin, from the 'bigger' collections I select and build another, in a sense, uber-archive of material consisting of photocopies and digital scans of letters, newspaper articles, obituaries and other documents. I collect the archival references and add my own references. And I build a bibliography to inform my research, and the files get bigger with the stuff I know I will use, the stuff I think I might use, and the stuff I might possibly use later. In doing so, I coordinate information from different places, produced by different people, organised by other people, in order to understand, theorise, produce insights, and represent a historical moment in some women's lives in 1880s London. But this process is not as scatter-gun as it might appear: there is structure and purpose which becomes clearer through the research process by carrying out that process. And, in defining a conceptual framework for all the sources and other aspects of this research, the building concept of *bricolage* has been helpful.

I initially conceived of *bricolage* to be like a series of somehow connected little boxes of stuff, rather like Benjamin's convolutes. Barthes (1990 p. 87), however, described *bricolage* as a process: a "combining [of] elements (words, materials) in order to produce new systems (sentences, objects)" and this task is

‘demiurgic’ or the responsibility of a ‘craftsperson,’ a *bricoleur* (Mills 1959; Denzin & Lincoln 1994, 2000, 2008; Sennett 2008; Hebdige 1979). But *bricolage* has been criticised for being too much about anything and everything and nothing (Kincheloe 2001 p. 680). I do not think that this needs necessarily to be the case. Choices are made carefully, methodically, in response to materials found and located within a clear research framework. Furthermore, the way that collections are organised in relation to each other is also a major factor, because each part has an impact upon others. *Bricolage* is a way of getting beyond prescriptive research approaches and instead a ‘see-what-is-there’ approach is prioritised. I have not been able to predict what is in any one archive collection, let alone the details of their content, so it connects with my experience of researching, in which relevant things sometimes come to one’s attention unexpectedly, by happenstance.

Consequently the idea of creating a research *bricolage* and perceiving the researcher as *bricoleur* provides some interesting ideas and ways forward, which I now outline. Firstly, working with *bricolage* is a political act: cultural sociologist Dick Hebdige (1979 p. 104) has suggested ways in which this process of ‘taking and making’ can be more explicitly political, for people “could be said to be functioning as *bricoleurs* when they appropriated another range of commodities by placing them in a symbolic ensemble which served to erase or subvert their original straight meanings.” Hebdige (1979 p. 103), in further discussing *bricolage* as a process, cites Hawkes’ (1977 p. 51), who comments that it is “a ‘science of the concrete’ ... which far from lacking logic, in fact carefully and precisely orders, classifies and arranges into structure the *minutiae* of the physical world.” Secondly, *bricolage* “signifies interdisciplinarity ... in terms of using multiple methods and perspectives in our research” (Kincheloe 2001 p. 680; Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Humm 1991). Here ‘border-crossing’ involves using a variety of research lenses drawn from feminist research, archival and epistolary theorising, human and cultural geography, sociology, and literary criticism, which is important as it allows a more nuanced re-reading of the sources, to understand the literary endeavours of the women writers. Thirdly, a *bricolage* approach involves a close researcher engagement with “the ways [a *bricoleur* can] shape the production and interpretation of knowledge”

(Kincheloe 2005 p. 324). The aim here is to get beyond reductionist, one-dimensional views and monological knowledge, and to favour non-linearity, non-dualistic, web-like constructions in which ‘polyphonic voices’ are allowed to be heard (Certeau 2000 pp. 7-8; Sedgwick 2003 p. 1).

By way of figuring connections between writings and authors, my research engages critically with some aspects of a social network analysis (SNA) approach (Scott 2000; Wasserman and Faust 1994; Bruggeman 2008), regarding which Linton (2004 p. 2) comments that the aim of the “social network approach is grounded in the intuitive notion that the patterning of social ties in which actors are embedded has important consequences for those actors ... [It is therefore the researcher’s task to] determine the conditions under which those patterns arise and to discover their consequences.” Bruggeman (2008 p. 3) agrees that SNA “focuses on interdependent actors at the micro level [the women writers] and the consequences of their behaviour at the macro level [the broader socialist and feminist landscape in 1880s London]” (my inclusion in brackets). This is how I envisage ties between these women writers, who were differently connected in ways structured by the time and place in which they were situated and the events which both brought them together and also distanced them. As such, this is a loose and informal network concerning both “an individual’s friendship ties and all of the friendship ties between those friends” (Kirke 2009 p. 24), including the making and keeping of relevant acquaintances (Morgan 2009) which appears rather different when explored from, say, Amy Levy’s perspective in comparison to Eleanor Marx’s, and overall is more like a group of intersecting circles (Knoke and Kuklinski 1982 p. 84). As such, I will argue for a qualitative multi-pointed analysis of social networks (analysing the same group from different people’s perspectives), rather than a more single focussed ego network analysis (Edwards and Crossley 2009; Everett and Borgatti 2005; Hanneman and Riddle 2005; Knoke and Kuklinski 1984) or a more broadly focussed quantitative network study (Scott 2000; Wasserman and Faust 1994).

Research which uses qualitative rather than quantitative data and which focusses on small-scale groupings rather than large-scale structures remains fairly rare within the SNA literature. Technological and particularly software advances

from the 1960s on, which have provided the means to construct and handle large-scale datasets, have resulted in more fine-grained ‘pen and paper’ connections being demoted in importance (Crossley, Prell and Scott 2009 p. 2). In addition, letters have been relatively ignored in the social sciences, although life-writing has experienced a surge of interest since the publication of Plummer’s (2001) *Documents of Life 2* (see also Stanley 2010 p. 140; Stanley 2013). My research involves both small-scale connections and letters as well as other documents, and obviously I am interested in work which helps relate small-scale social network analysis and epistolary writing and analysis.

In this connection, Christina Prell (2009 p. 9) works with the idea of ‘small-worlds’ wherein “random strangers can be linked according to structural patterns,” in conjunction with social capital theory, which shows “how social relations benefit individuals and groups. Prell (2009 p. 12) defines ‘small-worlds’ as “large, thinly populated networks, where network members are embedded in clusters, yet at the same time linked together by a small number of steps. In short, such ‘small-worlds’ hold the three features of low-density, high-clustering, and short average path-length.” This goes some way to defining the kinds of connections I am interested in, which consists of a fairly small number of writers and some close-knit clusters. There are generally only one or two steps separating the women, meaning that they either know each other directly or have a mutual friend who bridges the gap. Prell mentions clusters and small steps as being an important feature of ‘small-worlds.’ These are in fact often in a state of flux, because relationships and circumstances change over time, with such changes coming in many forms. Therefore how the connections I am interested in appeared to Eleanor Marx in, say, 1885 is very different from how they appeared in, say, 1897. Individuals moved in and out of clusters; clusters can be event-specific; and also people can ‘disappear’ from these both temporarily and permanently, through moves away, emergent differences of opinion and also because of death. Also, it should not be forgotten that what I focus on is actually only one small part of a much larger network of women and writers and others in 1880s London. Prell also draws on social capital theory, where network connections are measured in terms of how individuals benefit from being connected,

particularly through being positioned as a broker. However, I am interested to consider the connections between people more broadly and in terms of ‘real’ friendships, ‘real’ communications, and ‘real’ influences, and for this I return to Simmel.

In discussing some small-scale SNA in conjunction with the everyday, I am interested in various aspects of Simmel’s ‘The Web of Group Affiliations,’ which Fischer (1977 p. 17) says presents “The challenge to sociologists [that] is to turn the ‘network’ from image to instrument, to apply the concept in ways that will inform us about the nature of society.” Simmel’s concern lies with the “myriad of micro-processes” (Jacobsen 2009 p. 13) as these play out in small groups and between friends, and involves researching ‘real’ people in the ‘real’ world rather than abstracted representations of connections. Simmel (1909 p. 11) asserts:

That people gaze at one another and are jealous of one another; that they exchange letters or dine together; that, apart from all tangible interests, they affect one another sympathetically or antipathetically; that gratitude gives to the altruistic act an after effect which is an inseparable bond of union; that one asks another to point out the way, that people dress and adorn themselves for another’s benefit – all the thousand relationships playing from person to person, momentary or permanent, conscious or unconscious, transitory or rich in consequences, from which these illustrations are quite casually chosen, bind us incessantly together. At each moment threads are spun, dropped, taken up again, displaced by others, with still others interwoven.

Thinking about this in relation to the women writers, the formation and cohesion of a group will differ depending on geographical location and personal propinquity – that is, someone can be associated with a social group in the place they reside (often involving family connections), and they may develop further connections to others because of their personal interests (such as feminist concerns and literary endeavors).

Of the latter type, Simmel says that such an association “tends to enlarge the sphere of freedom [because] it [is] possible for the individual to make his [*sic*] beliefs and desires felt. Hence, such groupings may be based upon relationships which grow out of the nature of the individuals concerned” (Simmel 1955 p. 130). What is also clear is that for Simmel reciprocity is a core component of social relationships and is performed in many different ways for different purposes, not just from the point of view of a broker who benefits from their position in a particular

network. Simmel comments about friendship and love that these constitute a “totally different configuration [which] do not centre around clearly circumscribed interests that must be fixed objectively” (Simmel 1950 p. 324). In relation to my research, this aspect of reciprocity is relevant, its benefits vary, and there are some circumstances in which reciprocity is not required at all. Letters are a particularly interesting source in this respect because they “emanate from members of a social circle, [and] they indicate patterns of inter-relationships” (Stanley 2010 p. 143). Consequently letters are important texts to study – in comparison to published work – for they help forge ideas, can be influential, and speak volumes of a particular relationship.

Regarding working with letters, as has already been noted, the idea of the epistolarium is being worked with and developed (that is, what constitutes an individual’s body of letters); exploring ‘letterness’ (that is, what are the elements that constitute a letter and variations on this); the palimpsest nature of letters (what can be known about other people and about no longer extant letters by reading between-the-lines of those which are accessible), and concerning the gift-like and reciprocal qualities of letters (and by association, altruistic epistolary acts). In addition, there are strong referential aspects of epistolary, for letters refer to the material world of the city, streets, meeting places, boarding houses, theatres, books, magazines, meetings, friendships made and broken, and so on; and as with the women writer’s commentary on places including London, representations of them change over time and with greater distances.

Ideas which emerged and changed over time across the women’s writings can be discerned in manuscript drafts produced prior to the publication of a finished work, and for this an approach known as ‘genetic criticism’ is drawn on. ‘Genetic criticism’ is a critical literary approach which originates in post-structuralist work (Deppman et al 2004) and focuses on manuscript drafts. Concerning the archive collections consulted, the majority of manuscript material, if it existed, has not survived. Fortunately, however, the Amy Levy Papers (ALP from hereon) includes a series of drafts of Levy’s last book of poetry, *A London Plane-Tree and Other Verse* (ALPT from hereon). The aim of genetic criticism is to focus on the process of ideas and writing over time, through analysing these ‘internal’ stages of textuality which

are then mapped in relation to ‘external’ social and cultural factors (Deppman et al 2004 p. 116). In other words, avant-textes are produced and influenced by “social, economic, and cultural circumstances on the text [which interact] with the texts development [producing] a *diachronous* play of signifiers” (Deppman et al 2004 p. 5). In this case, the collection of Levy’s drafts permits exploring her emerging ideas and the internal pre-production process of the book that was intended for publication, and I explore this in Chapter Five.

Beginning ‘Writing About Writing’

This chapter has argued that, in order to research the cultural and political significance of women’s writing in 1880s London, and to write in the present about writing in the past, the interdisciplinary toolkit I have outlined can provide the broad scoping equipment with which to explore the complexities and the sociological significance of the writers I am interested in and their literary efforts. This toolkit has been carefully choreographed to support working with the many texts drawn on. Each document, on first coming across it, is read in and of itself – only one letter, poem, obituary, can be read at a time – but with the following document, and the one after that, impacting upon previous ones. Consequently the researcher’s assumptions are constantly being challenged, added to or further clarified. This is a long and methodical process requiring the revisiting and re-reading of documents as their meaning shifts along the research journey. But this is par for the course with archival research and should be embraced because it allows for more rounded accounts of the women writers and their work along with a deeper understanding of the context of literary production in 1880s London.

This approach to researching texts, the social and literary connections that influenced their production, differs from more conventional social network approaches, in which complexities are ironed out and graphs suppress qualitative aspects. The latter has importance in ascertaining broad structural insights about a network but is not very useful for my purposes here. Instead I employ the strategies of iteratively re-reading documents, locating links between them and authors, bringing groups of documents together to form small assemblages, bringing these

together to form a kind of *bricolage*, and writing about this. In this, an awareness of small scale aspects – minor events, little details, brief meetings – are integral to my approach. The value of such close analysis is that the circumstances and relationships between women writers connects to women’s changing roles and relationships to London in the 1880s more broadly. Therefore I am concerned to position the ‘on the ground’ everyday life activities of the writers in direct relation to the broader cityscape, so that their actions, primarily literary, are constantly viewed in relation to the time and place of their happening. And, as the chapters following will demonstrate, this makes it possible to ‘map’ the places of significance for these women, to see how this plays out in alternative feminist representations of the city, whilst adding to the valuable literature already produced on this topic (see particularly Vicinus 1985; Wilson 1991; Walkowitz 1992; Edholm 1992; Ross 1993; Bland 1995; Nord 1995; Rosenman 1995; Parsons 2003; Rosner 2003; Stratigakos 2008; Bernstein 2013).

CHAPTER THREE

Women and Writing: Place, Intertextuality and Cultural Politics in 1880s London

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss, analyse and present – using a variety of textual sources – two small-scale studies; both concerning the intertextual nature of women’s writing. Texts can be seen to be in dialogue with other texts, with ‘text’ used broadly to include a performance, an event, an utterance. And writing can be inspired by many things, not only by another author, but also everyday occurrences, acts of kindness or harassment, in connection with a particular place, such as a home, a theatre stage, a city, or an open landscape. As such this chapter argues that a combination of sites, including ‘home,’ the theatre, the city and other landscapes, are important in terms of women writers’ cultural political production.

The first study is about the relationship between an author’s changing environment and their writing practice, particularly how the effect of place and space (home and landscape) can be seen to punctuate their letters. This starts with an event – Olive Schreiner being accosted by a policeman outside her then home in London – to show how this event prompted her to write an open letter to *The Standard* newspaper on the issue of men’s sexual harassment of women.¹² Schreiner’s letter points out that men and women could not act in the same way, that women were treated differently and unfairly, and emphasises that women living in London were

¹² see Olive Schreiner to Standard, 28 December 1885, Harry Ransom Research Center, University of Texas at Austin (Texas from hereon), OSLO.

not always as safe as might be thought (even outside their own front door). It also comments on women not always being free to do as they pleased, and that restrictions did not apply only to lower class women.

Schreiner's many references to her surroundings in her letters are then further explored, from the streets of Victorian London to the veld of South Africa, communicating aspects of an individual's biography in spatial terms. Schreiner accepted, adapted to and also rejected certain places, and these experiences were refracted in her letters. The comparisons and differences between places provided her with an interesting perspective on variations in how people lived. Her own often changing abode – with moves between family and friends to the numerous lodging houses across London and elsewhere – is discussed in connection with the concept of 'home' and having a 'home-life,' and the importance of this in terms of also having a place for writing. Schreiner's many moves appear to defy the stolid and static-seeming Victorian London city, whilst other women such as Amy Levy were much more bounded by its structures, as explored in Chapter Five.

The second study similarly concentrates on an occurrence in the city as a catalyst for women's literary responses, but it includes several women, rather than focussing on one. It draws attention to multiple connections between different authors, where one text – in this case a play – influenced others to write, to respond, so that the different authors and texts can be seen to communicate with one another in an intertextual way, to produce an interwoven cultural politics. This study starts with the play by Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*, and considers a selection of literary and performative practices by women inspired by Ibsen which are indicative of their drive for social change, in this instance focussed around marriage and relationships. Links are drawn between the texts, representations and the authors, which taken together demonstrate an overall influence on the time and place in which they were produced. This also points up who was at the forefront of what later became known as the 'Ibsenite movement' (Rowbotham 2008 p. 91). These linked texts and authors are also situated in relation to other writings on Ibsen, showing that these women's writings were and continue to be overlooked in the canon. And even though such a response at the time impacted upon the women's reputations and might also have

affected their confidence, their efforts nonetheless say much about their drive and the cultural politics within which they were situated.

In terms of using an intertextual approach, I start with the contexts of literary production – where writing took place – as this can be pinned down through close readings of selected sources. This investigation structures the first study, where I return to the beginning of the writing process and the places in which women could write. I use Schreiner's comments in her letters about the importance of home in connection to her ability to do good 'in the world' and 'put pen to paper.' I also consider what influences can be detected in the texts I discuss, and this points up connections with other texts such as W. T. Stead's 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' articles and the Contagious Diseases Act (drawn up as a text). Further to this I explore other influences on women writers in terms of what was going on in 1880s London, the factors which prompted writing and other representational activities. This focusses my second study by considering women writers' responses to the work of Ibsen, and subsequent responses to their work too, both positive and negative. Disparaging reviews and other comments are considered in terms of how the literary profession of the time (and since) viewed "radically social and interpersonal dimensions" of language, and at times "attempt[ed] to put the lid on such aspects" (Allen 2000 p. 21). Finally, the role of audience is considered as a factor in both studies, as this was important to the writers, and I explore this to decipher lines of communication for ideas of political significance which flowed between writers and readers in a reciprocal way.

In terms of advancing my ideas about women's writing practices and the relationship this had to their cultural politics, this chapter focusses on textual sources concerning two interconnected aspects of the Woman Question, namely work and marriage. In the first study, the importance of being independent is doubly evoked, firstly through Olive Schreiner being accosted on the streets of London without due cause, and secondly through her somewhat unconventional view of 'home' and its value to her as a space in which to focus on her writing. Schreiner decided on a writing life fairly early on and became successful upon the publication of her first novel in early 1883. Nonetheless, throughout the 1880s she experienced certain

restrictions on her movements around town (which were an important part of her writing process), and she had on-going difficulties in finding suitable places in which to concentrate on her writing. Such everyday matters fed into Schreiner's letters in sometimes subtle and at other times more explicit and public ways, and as such can be re-read as contributing to her feminist and socialist standpoint.

In the second study, the women's interest in the subject of marriage and politicised actions against this institution coalesce around some women seeing Ibsen's *A Doll's House* performed in London in 1889. Of this performance it was written that "all interested in the 'woman question' have lately been following with deep interest ... a query so powerfully put, that it has stirred the most indolently conventional into an angrily uneasy sense that it needs an answer."¹³ Tracing this interest back in time, women writers such as Eleanor Marx had been utilising their writing to promote their views on marriage and on relationships more broadly for some time already. They used different forms, from newspaper articles, private readings and translations, but all served to communicate the importance of Ibsen's message (and connectedly their own) to others. Consequently this study aims to clarify how influence and inspiration led to culturally and politically motivated activities, and especially writing, to spread the word and gain support and momentum in support of alternative ideas about unions between men and women, involving both equality and independence.

To provide context for the two studies I will give an overview of London in the 1880s, including in relation to socialism, the women's movement and particularly the literary scene. This latter point focusses on women's interventions in the writing profession, becoming a writer for instance, and concerning the platforms that were available for women's literary endeavours, as well as those they established for themselves as editors and publishers (Tuchman & Fortin 1989). The discussion considers why this was such a 'historic moment,' as Walkowitz (1992) has it, and how it afforded women writers opportunities to instigate change, through their writing and other cultural political activities.

¹³ Maria Sharpe (1889) 'Henrik Ibsen's Women, or, "Noblesse Oblige,"' WPP, Vol. 1, No. 36, 29 June, p. 6.

Overview of 1880s London

By the late nineteenth century, London was an imperial metropole, a major financial centre and political hub. Its architecture, railway system, great docks, busy Thames, bustling markets and thoroughfares were testimony to imperial power (Ackroyd 2000; Picard 2005; White 2008). The underbelly to this involved packed East End slums, workhouses, prostitution, child labour and other low paid street trades. Social class was easily distinguishable through the area in which people resided, the family they were a part of, the people they associated with, the places where their time was spent, how they travelled around town, and the clothing they wore. Any mingling between the classes was a rarity, undertaken mostly in carefully controlled ways, such as through servants and via philanthropic activities. However, there were some interesting ‘boundary crossing’ interventions made by some of the women writers discussed in this thesis, particularly by Schreiner regarding her peripatetic activities and also through her relationships with prostitute women.

During the 1880s there was a new and nuanced socialist tradition being established, as well as a related rapidly growing trade union membership and a large and still growing women’s movement including in relation to employment and unionisation. The emerging socialist tradition through the 1880s in London was multi-faceted, involving different groups with varying objectives, some more radical or even revolutionary, others more reformist and concerned with ethics (Crick 1994; Hannam & Hunt 2002; Newman 2005). What they had in common, on the face of things at least, was a commitment to equality, both class-based and to lesser or greater degrees regarding sexual equality. Yet, as Hannam and Hunt (2002 p. 2) have pointed out “there was less certainty as to what exactly that would mean in everyday life” for women. Indeed, within some groups there was hostility regarding the traditional roles of women and the Woman Question debates (Helsingier et al 1983). Consequently women often had a complex relationship with socialist and labour groups, and this sometimes led them to set up their own women’s branches of these (Crick 1994).

The socialist groups included the Democratic Federation, the first socialist party, which was founded in 1881 by the politician and writer H. M. Hyndman and became the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) in 1883. Helen Taylor, whose stepfather was the philosopher John Stuart Mill, who with Taylor's mother wrote *The Subjection of Women* published in 1869, was a founder member of the SDF and a close friend of Eleanor Marx, who was also an SDF member (Kapp 1972 p. 212). Disagreements in the SDF led to a small splinter group, which included Marx and her soon-to-be common law husband Edward Aveling, William Morris and others, to meet at Marx's home at 55 Great Russell Street, London (Kapp 1976 p. 63). In 1884 they formed the more anarchistic Socialist League. Also in 1884, the Fabian Society started. This has been described as more of a 'think tank' than a political party, and in collaboration with some other groups later it led to the founding of the Independent Labour Party in 1892 (Hannam & Hunt 2002 p. 3). Smaller socialist-leaning groups included the Progressive Association, which started in 1882 with meetings held in Islington Hall, and was made up of "a small group of freethinkers, cooperative pioneers, and ethical socialists" (First & Scott 1989 p. 130); and the Fellowship of the New Life, which had started in 1882, with "its members committing themselves to the cultivation of the perfect character and life" (First & Scott 1989 p. 130). Also in 1885, Karl Pearson initiated the Men and Women's Club (Walkowitz 1986), a discussion group with equal members of men and women which was dedicated to debates around the Woman Question including discussing the work of Ibsen. Olive Schreiner and other women writers were variously involved with these groups, being members or visitors, or involved in their founding, as Marx was with the Socialist League, and as Schreiner and Helen Taylor were when they organised the founding meeting of the SDF's women's branch (Crick 1994).

Alongside these emerging socialist groups were a number of campaigns and projects, in which some of the women I am interested in were involved. There was, for instance, the research into London life and labour led by philanthropist Charles Booth, which involved an extensive group of researchers, various of them feminist women, who ascertained detailed information about the extent of abject poverty. One of these researchers was Beatrice Potter. The overall findings, which were published

in the nine volumes of *Life and Labour of the People in London*, first appearing in 1889. Potter's cousin, Margaret Harkness, became a social realist novelist during the 1880s, after becoming disillusioned with "well meaning but ineffectual reformists" (Harkness 2003 p. 8). Harkness, some of whose work and writing is considered in Chapter Four, lived in the East End for a time to gather first-hand knowledge of the area and the people, with the main topics of her concern being poverty, work and women, reflecting some major issues of the time: cuts in wages, unemployment and housing shortages (White 2008 p. 374). Among other significant events in the 1880s, there was the London Match Girls' Strike in 1888 and the Dock Strike which started in August 1889. Both groups of workers fought for and won better working conditions, better pay and shorter working hours. The women I am interested in supported these activities. Concerning the Dock Strike, for instance, there was a massive demonstration in Hyde Park in September, which Schreiner attended and at which Eleanor Marx addressed a crowd of around 100,000 people (Kapp 1976 p. 328).

Like the socialist movement, the women's movement in Britain did not 'just happen' in the 1880s, but took shape over time, varied according to place, and really began gaining significant ground from the 1850s onwards (see Rowbotham 1973, Taylor 1983; Jeffreys 1985; Walkowitz 1992, Bland 1995; Jordan 1999; Crawford 2001; Caine 1997, Hannam & Hunt 2002, among others). Major political groups and organisations such as the Ladies' National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts (LNA) started out small-scale and grew in success over time (Walkowitz 1980; Crawford 2001; D'Ltri 1999). The members of such organisations were largely middle-class women who not only began to fight for themselves, but also – through class-based border crossing – for working women, prostitute women, and who relatedly began to challenge traditional ideas concerning women more broadly, such as being 'good' housewives, respectable and responsible mothers (Vicinus 1985; Walkowitz 1992; Wilson 1991).

As a consequence, physical boundaries within the city – such as the demarcation of and within the home, in which middle and upper class women largely remained – began to be challenged. Supportive women's networks outside of the

home were imperative and such complex and multi-dimensional ‘webs of friendships’ would become an important aspect of Schreiner’s London life during the 1880s (Stanley 1985) and of the other women’s too. One of the first of these ‘webs’ was the Langham Place Circle (LPC from hereon), which started in the late 1850s through the activities of two close friends, Barbara Bodichon (née Leigh Smith) and Bessie Rayner Parkes (Lacey 1987; Mendus and Rendall 1989). The LPC “worked out of a room in Cavendish Square, but as their numbers and their activities expanded, they moved in 1859 to a house at 19 Langham Place” (Caine 1997 p. 94). The women involved set up space for a library, teaching and networking, and they subverted the spaces available to them – for example, living rooms became libraries – as a step towards increased access to more public spaces. Indeed, it has been argued that the main priority for the English women’s movement was to gain access to public spaces (Caine 1997 p. 102), with campaigning (and standing on platforms in public spaces) and philanthropic work (and working in the streets) offering quite radical ways of starting to do this.

The LNA was formally established in 1869 and started small, being conceived between friends Josephine Butler, Mary Priestman and her sister Margaret Tanner. In a letter, Butler describes the meeting: ““You can picture these two ladies and myself, sitting face to face, in gentle consultation. ‘What shall we do?’ One of them replied, ‘Well, we must rouse the country.’ Brave woman! So gentle, so Quakerly, yet convinced that we three poor women must rouse the country”” (Jordan 2001 p. 110) They aimed to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts, which allowed for the forcible medical examination and treatment of prostitutes but not the men who were their clients, and their condemnation was therefore an attack on “the network of men who were engaged in the systematic surveillance, degradation, and oppression of women” (Caine 1997 p. 109). In order that this be successful, Butler considered it vital that women should stand together in force, and in only two years the collective of three had become a national movement with 57 branches which were “welded together through a central organizing committee and a periodical, *The Shield*” (Caine 1997 p. 122). Journals such as *The Shield* served to ‘do things,’ by this ‘welding together’ through passing on information, sharing ideas and encouraging responses

and action. The Act was repealed in 1886. There were similar collective responses regarding a campaign in the mid-1880s. This concerned child prostitution, a topic which Schreiner and others were deeply passionate about.

In 1885 the publication in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (PMG from hereon) of W. T. Stead's series of articles 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' caused considerable moral outrage (Bland 1995). Stead and some associates had investigated child prostitution and showed how widespread the practice was. Although Stead was sent to prison for his part in procuring a young girl, his defence had shown how easy it was to buy a child for sexual purposes. The more positive outcome of these events was the repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1885) and, among other things, the raising of the age of sexual consent for girls to sixteen. Schreiner was researching and writing about prostitution at this time and her letters show her emerging ideas on this topic, linking her own experiences in the London streets with Stead's research, one example being in a letter to Karl Pearson:

Thankyou very much for your letter. When I came home I carried on our conversation for an hour or more walking up & down my room. Yes, I knew you felt these things, but perhaps not in the way a woman can feel them.

Sometimes when I have been walking in Gray's Inn Rd & seen one of those terrible old women that are so common there, the sense of agonised oneness with her that I have felt, that she was myself only under different circumstances, has stricken me almost mad. Do you think any man could feel so? I feel so about all these poor women.

I agree with you that the Criminal Law Amendment Act, will not touch the matter, there will be not one prostitute in England less at the end of the year because of it, nor because of any law that could be passed. What then has the Pall Mall done? - Simply this - it may have warned a few ~~s~~ girls, & it may have roused a few thousand women from their long selfish sleep ^on sexual matters^; if it has done this it will not be a small thing; it's effects will tell after many days.¹⁴

This letter shows Schreiner's awareness of the importance of communicating to other women through public writing, even if this was only in the sense of 'rousing' them. To her this was no 'small thing' and the PMG, being a widely read newspaper, would

¹⁴ Olive Schreiner to Karl Pearson, 19 July 1885, UCL, London, OSLP transcription. Lines 5-22.

have reached a broad and varied audience. Schreiner's interest, however, appears focussed on women readers in this instance and their response to the articles. The letter to Pearson continued with interesting comments, about the responsibilities of mothers and their raising of males who, as adults, treated women badly, and that the 'whole system' needed to change. This view preceded Sarah Grand's similar view, made in her *New Woman* article (discussed earlier) by some eight to nine years. Schreiner was aware that the PMG revelations might not bring about immediate change, but thought they might be the beginnings of this. Yet Schreiner's response included writing about the event in letters to friends. As such, women's informal as well as formal writing and publishing can be seen as a way of over- (or side-) stepping traditional Victorian boundaries, with women's letters here operating in the interspaces between other texts. The increasing importance and relevance of particular publications in terms of creating textual spaces enabling women's cultural politics to be voiced in print form and providing spaces for *New Woman* ideas to come to fruition, is also involved. Schreiner and others utilized such publications to address and publicise issues that were important to them, including in the aforementioned open letter by Schreiner, regarding the different experiences of men and women on London streets, which I come to shortly. And they chose different publications for different purposes and audiences.

When the Langham Place Circle moved in 1859, among other things this brought about closer links with the *English Woman's Journal* (1858-1864). Bodichon had started this periodical in 1858 to provide a "public platform for the major feminist writings of the period" (Lacey 1987 p. 1), an opportunity not to be missed for the more literary minded in the Circle. Also, another publication set up later, the *Women's Suffrage Journal* (1870-1881), was edited by Lydia Becker, a leading figure in the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, thereby bringing different concerns within the women's movement together under the same literary umbrella. This journal "provided regular reports on all suffrage activity [showing] the close connection between the campaign for women's suffrage and the disabilities of women in the educational, legal, and domestic realms" (Caine 1997 p. 118). Periodicals such as these were important in forming links, passing around

information and encouraging more women to join ranks, and reaching larger audiences more generally (Calé 2006 p. 8).

In the 1880s in London there were many interesting periodicals, newspapers and journals concerned with women's movement issues more widely. An important example is the weekly newspaper the WPP, which ran from 1888 until 1893, changing its name mid-way to the *Women's Herald*. Women's rights activist Henrietta Müller, who Schreiner had met at the Men and Women's Club meetings, both funded and edited the paper under the editorial pen-name of Helena B. Temple. It is not known why Müller used this pseudonym, yet her choosing one at all can be seen in connection to the idea that "Giving a face, a name, a biographical referent to the multiple voices and modes of inscription of periodical publication limits the potential, specificity and freedom of their utterance" (Calé 2006 p. 4), something which Müller would have wanted to avoid. After 1893 the paper continued, but with a different editor and name. Müller, had helped start a women's printing society at Girton College, Cambridge as a student (Draznin 1992 p. 117). And she had strong reasons for starting the WPP, which she communicated in an interview: "One of the things which always humiliated me very much was the way in which women's interests and opinions were systematically excluded from the World's Press. [Women] should have a newspaper of their own through which to voice their thoughts."¹⁵ The paper printed interviews with inspirational writers such as George Eliot and George Sand, with articles cajoling readers to become involved in particular events, the first public performance of *A Doll's House* for instance, which was the latest 'must-see' in town: "Every woman, especially the married women, ought to have seen the play called 'The Dolls House' at the Novelty Theatre. If prevented from doing so let her read, and what is more, mark, learn, and ... digest the idea that is revealed ... the Development of Women."¹⁶ This article also goes on to draw parallels between Ibsen and Schreiner: "It seems strange that from two opposite ends of the earth, one land facing the North Pole and the other land facing the South Pole, should have issued a man and a woman who are grappling with the most

¹⁵ Henrietta Müller (1891) 'Interview,' *The Woman's Herald*, Vol. IV, No. 161, 28 November, p. 8.

¹⁶ K. M. (1889) 'The Doll's House,' WPP, Vol. 1, No. 36, June 29, p. 7.

stupendous problem of his age, that is, the Development of Women.” This was a comparison drawn by one of Schreiner’s friends, Edith Ellis, which I return to later.

Another important journal for publishing women’s literature in the 1880s was *The Woman’s World*, edited by Oscar Wilde between 1887 and 1889. Even a cursory look at its contents pages shows how important this publication was for various of the women writers I am concerned with, as it published numerous pieces by Olive Schreiner, Amy Levy, Clementina Black and others. The contents also show themes which interested women at this time, including references to women in relation to work and the city: Levy, for example, wrote about ‘Women and Club Life’ (1888b p. 364), and Black wrote on ‘The Grievances of Barmaids’ (1890 p. 383). Also, there are many review articles about women poets, writers and artists, and there is an almost voyeuristic aspect to *The Woman’s World* of women watching women and focussing on the influences of each woman’s writing (Heath et al 2001 p. 655). This has echoes of earlier women’s literary anthologies like *The Keepsake*, the *Gem* and the *Forget Me Not*, published in the 1840s and 1850s (Leighton & Reynolds 1995 p. xxvi), which encouraged women writers to consider and learn from each other. As Leighton and Reynolds (1995 p. xxx) point out: “This constant looking at each other’s work, valuing and assessing each other’s talent, marks not only the personal experience of the Victorian women poets, but spills over into their poetry too.”

Schreiner and many of her close friends and acquaintances were part of these and related literary, cultural and political developments in 1880s London. This was a time when their individual and collective ways of thinking underwent sea-changes that affected their own and other women’s everyday lives, and such actions and changes were refracted in the literature they produced. From their letters, what these women wrote about in very practical terms, such as concerning locating a ‘place of their own’ to produce the literature that was important to them, can be further understood and is the focus of my first study.

STUDY ONE: The Importance and Idea of ‘Home’ in Relation to Women’s Writing

In 1929 Virginia Woolf wrote about women’s lack of access to the means of literary production, that is, the importance of having *A Room of One’s Own* and the finances to support oneself in order to become a writer (Thornham 2000 p. 7). More than forty years earlier friends of Olive Schreiner were experiencing these issues ‘on the ground.’ Schreiner herself, even after gaining literary success following the publication of *SAF* by Chapman & Hall, London, continued to be confronted with restrictions and difficulties in securing suitable places for her to write. Not to ignore the importance of other city spaces, such as the British Library Reading Room and how writing could be a social experience, one of exteriority rather than interiority (Bernstein 2013 p. 1) and which I discuss elsewhere in this thesis, here I focus on the relationship between ‘home-like’ places and Schreiner’s writing practices. This is to understand some of the everyday contexts – finding, renting, moving into and out of places – which sparked, allowed for and inhibited her literary endeavors and impacted upon what she wrote about. Schreiner’s idea of ‘home’ was not based on time spent in a place but rather on the personal activities she engaged in. And such details are also indicative of Schreiner’s evolving method of ‘painting the life we all lead,’ and concomitantly my own research approach concerning ‘facts gradually creeping in,’ with her changing experiences and my detailed analysis of sources.

Olive Schreiner moved around often, in South Africa during her growing up years and early womanhood, and in England and Europe during the 1880s. This has been discussed negatively by some biographers who have assumed Schreiner to have a ‘restless’ character (Kapp 1976 p. 24; Schoeman 1989 p. 181). However, Schreiner’s moves from one place to another were most often for practical reasons, for employment, for her health and to be able to write. And, such long-term transience can be seen to have resulted in Schreiner having a rather different relationship to the idea of ‘home’ for this late-Victorian time, with it being of a more unfixed and temporary nature when compared to many of her friends. Schreiner’s articulation of her ‘home’ in her letters disrupts notions about Victorian home life as being static and formal, desirable and even safe for women. There was an event,

noted earlier, to have been of significance to Schreiner, when she was accosted by a policeman outside her front door, which prompted her to write the open letter to a newspaper. In doing so she used her writing (and her fame) as a political tool to point up the unfair treatment of women if they overstepped the mark (or even if they did not) of what was considered respectable behaviour on London's streets, and the perception of a safe home was central to her argument.

In December 1885 Schreiner was living at 9 Blandford Square, Paddington. This was a wealthy area and the square itself had the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy situated at one end. Schreiner had spent the evening with friends and was escorted home by medical doctor Bryan Donkin. In Schreiner's own words, in the draft of a letter later published in *The Standard*, was:

Sir,

A short time back the remark was made in my presence, that, ~~no~~ in London no Englishwoman was safe from the hands of the police.

I regarded this statement with the cool scorn with which we are apt to regard ~~what we consider~~ the uncritical, ~~assertions~~ generalizations of ~~hasty speakers~~ ^{those who we consider hasty thinkers} A few miserable & forlorn women without money or friends might suffer; ^{but} the ~~great~~ mass of Englishwomen, ensconced in their homes, armed with friends & intellectual power, were safe from this insult. ...

I wish to make Public, ^{to avoid mis-conception} it may be well to state that I am a writer, that I have taken interest in raising the protected age of girls, that my name will be found among the two hundred English women who signed a recently published letter on that subject.

On Sunday ^{evening}, ~~having~~ ^I spent the evening with a friend whose husband is a well known medical man ~~at~~ ⁱⁿ the West End; on leaving a friend, a well known physician ~~offered~~ connected with one of our large hospitals, offered to accompany me home. The square in in which I live is large, well lighed, & one of the quietest in London closed at one end by a convent.

We alighted from the cab, ~~the man had drawn up before the wrong number~~ ^{number} ~~& for some moments~~ we walked slowly up & down ^{the} square, & ~~then stood still~~ ^{before the house} finishing the dis-cussion we had begun ~~in the cab, I holding his arm.~~

~~Presently a~~ After a few moments a police man ~~came~~ up, & passing said something in an insulting tone, he then turned short, & said I wont have this whats up, ~~whats up~~, what are you doing here, & ~~came close to me in an insulting manner~~. My friend stated that I lived in the house before which we stood. I said you may ring & see. ^My friend offered him his card^ ^& said he would be at a loss to understand what right the police had to interfere with two ?people who were not breaking the public peace.^ ^he said politely, I've nothing to do with you, I don't want to interfere with you its her I want.^ We moved a few steps, he said you'd better stand still where you are, if you move a step I'll walk you off to the station.

~~My friend~~ I asked my friend for his pencil & a bit of paper I wished to take down the mans' number & his ~~exaet~~ word that I might be accurate

(~~He rang the~~ ^but it seemed somehow too lightly to be hear^) "Want to take my num do yer," he said "I'll walk yer off to the station". What are yer ^do out at this time of night^ ~~He rang the bell but too lightly to~~ He rang the bell again lightly & ?rushed down to us saying in a ?skimmking whisper something to the effect that if I told him my name he would go away. ^It was evident that he wanted money^. I told him to ring the bell louder & he would be answered. He touched the knocker lightly, but as some one was waiting for me the door was at once opened. We asked him if he were satisfied. He slunk down the steps with the look of a disappointed wild animal.

If any one thinks it a matter of importance that an individual ^well able to defend themselves^ should be insulted, that they are entirely mistaken; but there are in London more than a hundred thousand women unable to fend themselves against ~~the~~ our police.¹⁷

Schreiner had clearly written this in full pelt fashion, perhaps soon after the event so as not to forget the details. The idea of safety for a woman living in a respectable part of town, in 'good' company, immediately outside of her then home, is shattered by the threatening behaviour of the policeman. Schreiner claimed he wanted money. He was also insinuating that her being in the street at this time, with a man, was tantamount to prostitution. Schreiner used her letter to make public the vulnerability of all women in London, not only those of the lower classes.

The wider circumstances of this event are representative of Schreiner's relationship to the places in which she resided. She enjoyed independence, was financially secure at this time, was well-known through her writing, and most often she lived alone. Schreiner enjoyed socialising and interesting discussion and debate.

¹⁷ Olive Schreiner to Daily News, 28 December 1885, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 1-65.

And she had a propensity for walking up and down, both inside and outside, to think through ideas. The evening of this event, up until the appearance of the policeman, was not unusual because it was part of her everyday life. It might have ended with her writing a letter of the kind referenced earlier to Pearson: “When I came home I carried on our conversation for an hour or more walking up & down my room.”¹⁸ This letter is a testament to Schreiner’s first hand knowledge of the late night city, explaining her empathy with the ‘terrible old women’ and her ‘sense of agonised oneness’ she felt with them. It is also linked to W. T. Stead’s articles in the PMG in early July 1885, the subsequent Criminal Law Amendment Act passed in August 1885, and Schreiner’s continued interest in women’s relationship to, and treatment on, the streets of London.

Schreiner’s relationship to the city streets trades on the idea of having a home. The concept of home has been under scrutiny by many scholars across different disciplines (Friedan 1963; Heller 1984; Morris 1988; hooks 1991; Massey 1992, 2005; Rose 1993; Bachelard 1994; Young 1997; Gelder & Jacobs 1998; Miller 2001; Felski 1999; Rubenstein 2001; Hayden 2003; Bunkše 2004; Blunt & Dowling 2006). Home, it has been argued, acts as a firm and static base. It is ‘made’ daily through repetitive everyday life processes such as cooking, eating and sleeping. It is made up of memories (in familiar objects), and provides protection from the outside with its warmth and comfort (Heller 1984). Home has also been described negatively, as dull, conservative, anti-modernity (Lefebvre 1991), and by many feminist scholars as a restrictive space, a prison of sorts, a straightjacket on women’s capabilities (Friedan 1963; Morris 1988; Young 1997). However, hooks (1990) has argued that home can be a place of resistance from other ideological constraints, where one can more easily be oneself, while Young (1997) has pointed out that home can be important in terms of privacy, safety and individuation. In Felski’s (1999 p. 24) opinion home should be viewed more positively, as a space that is always in the process of being made and then remade, which has leaky boundaries and is not cut off from the world outside. Furthermore, it does not have to be “opposed to autonomy and self-definition: on the contrary, it has been central to many women’s

¹⁸ Olive Schreiner to Karl Pearson, 19 July 1885, UCL, London, OSLP transcription. Lines 5-6.

experience of modernity” (Felski 1999 p. 26). In connection to Schreiner, she often referred to the most temporary of accommodations as her home. This was because of how she viewed it – what it provided for her and enabled her to do – which was give both access to, and respite from, the city and her friends. It was also a place to continue her writing, of which as early as 1884 she wrote to Havelock Ellis: “I have made up my mind that scribbling will be my only work in life,”¹⁹ yet writing was something she was committed to much earlier on.

Schreiner was born in 1855, grew up in the Cape Colony of South Africa and her parents were missionaries. After many years of living in a mission station in Wittebergen, her father was posted to run a teaching institution in Healdtown in 1861, travelling for around two weeks by oxwagon to get there. Journeys such as this, writes Schoeman (1989 p. 84), were recollected by Schreiner later in her fictional writings. Just how autobiographical Schreiner’s fiction is, however, is much more complex (and also debatable) than Schoeman’s comment suggests. In 1866, the Schreiner family moved to the small village of Balfour and after about two years Olive was sent by her parents to Craddock, a “small and simple town, [with] whitewashed houses, trees, orchards, gardens and water” (Schoeman 1989 p. 159) to live with her elder brother Theo and sister Ettie, where she stayed until around 1870. Throughout the early 1870s Schreiner was sent to live “as a guest in the houses of virtually unknown relatives and friends, acquaintances and strangers [between] Basutoland to the Diamond Fields, from Fraserburg to Cape Town” (Schoeman 1989 p. 181). With regard to Schreiner’s moving about in her early years, Schoeman interprets this negatively as years forming “a pattern of restless, unstable wandering, of never being at home and never settling down ... that was to mark the rest of her life” (Schoeman 1989 p. 181). Also, on the basis of little evidence, Eleanor Marx’s biographer Yvonne Kapp (1976 p. 24) commented erroneously about Schreiner: “She was, indeed, of a compulsive restlessness. During her first visit to Europe (1881-1889) she never stayed anywhere for longer than six weeks and generally not more than a fortnight.”

¹⁹ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 2 May 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 29-30.

These moves can be interpreted differently. Schoeman's view, for instance, of Schreiner's 'restless, unstable wandering' is undeserved because the circumstances were that Schreiner's family became destitute, necessitating that the younger children were sent away, Olive to stay with relatives and friends. Her later moves were every few years and for jobs. Schreiner did not want to be 'looked after,' she was keen to establish her financial independence and expressed this clearly in a letter when she was just twenty years old:

Dear kind Theo wrote very kindly offering to pay Papa & Mamma for my board if I liked to go home & live with them & also pay all my travelling expenses. It was just like his dear loving old heart to think of such a thing but I made up my mind when I was quite a little child that as soon as I was able I would support myself for I see no reason why a woman should be dependent on her friends.²⁰

This was not an easy choice to make for a woman at this time, especially in South Africa. But Schreiner's view was that to "live in a little room all by my-self" was the route to being "free freer freest"²¹ although it was some years before this was possible.

Kapp's view of Schreiner having a 'compulsive restlessness' is also undeserved. Not only is the 'six weeks and ... a fortnight' an exaggeration, but Schreiner's moves during the 1880s were for a number of actual reasons. She suffered from chronic asthma at times and certain places proved unsuitable for her health (see Stanley & Salter 2009 p. 15), one example being: "This place doesn't suit me at all. I want to find a place that is not low & damp. If I go Derbyshire I think I shall feel glorious like I used to in the karroo. My mind is so full of thoughts that want artistic expression it is almost painful I must go where I can work."²² Also, on occasion she purposely avoided places where people would make demands upon her time (and finances), preferring instead to find solitude elsewhere in order to write. One example of this was strongly expressed in a letter she wrote after leaving London in 1889 to return to South Africa: "I really came out to this country greatly

²⁰ Olive Schreiner to Catherine ('Katie') Findlay nee Schreiner, 19 February 1875, NLSA Cape Town, OSLP transcription. Lines 19-25.

²¹ Olive Schreiner to William Philip ('Will', 'WP') Schreiner, 20 October 1875, National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown, OSLP transcription. Lines 26-27.

²² Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 29 June 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 30-33.

to get ride of her ... if a tall thin woman comes to ask you or Will what my address is you wire up to me, & I shall not be in Matjesfontein when she comes here!”²³ This letter, about Margaret Harkness, is discussed further in Chapter Four. Other reasons for Schreiner’s moves were to stay with friends for a while, because rooms when she arrived at them were uninhabitable, and for holidays. She also prioritised being close to friends and being in a place which enabled her to work.

Schreiner, then, moved for many different reasons. In this sense she can be viewed as an independent single woman with the ability and drive to move when she wanted or needed to. She was also able to be ‘at home’ anywhere, rather than in a permanent family residence, writing in 1883 from Bexhill, East Sussex: “My dear Mr Kent I have pitched my tent here for the winter.”²⁴ Moves to the coast from London for the winter were not uncommon and most often for health reasons and ‘to escape fogs.’ Another interesting letter with regards Schreiner’s view of ‘home’ contains:

I don't know when I shall come down to Town; as soon as Captain Marriott can find me a big sunny room to work in ^perhaps^, or the rain & wind drive me out of this. I'm getting so fond of my tumble-down little house, I should like to carry it about on my back as a snail does its shell.²⁵

Schreiner expressed her reason for moving in this letter as needing to find a place suitable for writing. Indeed this was paramount with regards to her location: ‘home’ for Schreiner was largely synonymous with being able to write. I shall now focus on this idea and particularly on Schreiner’s ‘London years,’ between 1881 and 1889, (although the actual time she spent in the city amounted to around two and a half years overall, spread across the years 1885 to 1887 mainly, with shorter stays in 1884, 1888 and 1889).

Schreiner travelled from South Africa and arrived in Britain in March 1881 when she was 26 years old. The time she spent there until her return to South Africa in October 1889 afforded her new experiences and new social relations. During this time she not only established herself as a feminist writer but also broadened her social networks in a number of directions, which can be characterised as overlapping

²³ Olive Schreiner to Fan Schreiner, 1891-92, UCT Manuscripts & Archives, OSLP transcription. Lines 55-62.

²⁴ Olive Schreiner to Philip Kent, 23 October 1883, Texas, OSLP transcription. Line 8.

²⁵ Olive Schreiner to Mary Sauer, 27 April 1892, NLSA Cape Town, OSLP transcription. Lines 31-35.

feminist, socialist and literary ones. These networks varied greatly, some being more 'official' or 'organisational,' a club or political group, for instance, having fairly clearly defined boundaries such as a list of members, a regular meeting place and time, and literature by and about the club or group. Others were 'non-official' friendship networks which Schreiner developed and retained through her epistolary practices as well as her face-to-face meetings in the city and elsewhere.

Some examples of the more 'official' and London-based networks which Schreiner was linked to during the 1880s included the Progressive Association, about which she wrote to Ellis: "I think I should like to join that society, though, like you, I have not much faith in ~~them~~ societies. One old woman sitting in her bed room alone reading her bible is sincere, but six old women at a 'class meeting' make humbugs very often."²⁶ In the same letter and regarding the Fellowship of the New Life (1883-1898), which was "concerned about social as well as individual transformation" (Rowbotham 2008 p. 89-90), Schreiner wrote that "I like the 'New Life,' especially the clause on the necessity of combining physical with mental labour."²⁷ Schreiner was more closely involved in the women's branch of the Social Democratic Association, engendered by, among others, Eleanor Marx who was by now a very close friend of Schreiner. Also, Schreiner attended the meetings of the Men and Women's Club (1885-1889) (see Walkowitz 1986, 1992; Bland 1995; Porter 2004).

Schreiner's friendship networks have less definable boundaries to draw upon, but there is a sense of a 'community of writers' operating across the city, around radical and progressive interests (Beaumont 2006; Humphreys 2006 p. 2). This includes but reaches beyond Edward Carpenter, Constance Black (later Garnett) and her sister Clementina Black, Havelock Ellis, Margaret Harkness, Vernon Lee, Edith Lees, Amy Levy, Henrietta Frances Lord, Eleanor Marx, Henrietta Müller, Karl Pearson, Beatrice Potter, Dollie Radford and Helen Taylor among many others. The connections between these individuals varied considerably, from being close friends to more distant acquaintances, from being connected by literary interests to sharing feminist concerns, and these concerns changed over time as well.

²⁶ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 2 May 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 42-46.

²⁷ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 2 May 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 47-48.

Schreiner had been writing seriously for some years before arriving in England, dating from her New Rush days in the early part of the 1870s. She had already worked on three novels. These were *Undine* and what would become *From Man to Man*, both of which were published post-humously in 1929 and 1923 respectively, and the “little firstling of her pen” (Schreiner 2005 [1883] p. 27), SAF. Schreiner’s writing became increasingly important from this point on, as she became a professional writer and as she came to see writing as a vital “outlet for [women’s] powers” (Schoeman 1989 p. 408). On meeting Eleanor Marx soon after her arrival in London, and also becoming more familiar with socialist literature, Schreiner “realised that writing itself could be a political act, a form of social intervention capable of bringing about change” (Stanley 2002 p. 24). Later Schreiner wrote about this with regard to periodicals: “If spoken & delivered speeches ... ^have power^ it is not because they were spoken, but because they were repeated in all ‘the papers’ ... ^we must do it through these means^ ... The press is manifestly becoming the governing & ruling power.”²⁸ Schreiner used the periodicals of the time, as did Eleanor Marx, Amy Levy and others, to publish their writing and help engender change for women. Schreiner’s writing also brought about major changes in her own life as well.

The Story of An African Farm was published under the pseudonym of Ralph Iron. Using a pseudonym was not uncommon for women writers at this time – Mary Ann Evans used George Eliot for example – although not all women found it desirable; Amy Levy never used one, while later Schreiner used the more oblique ‘A Returned South African.’ From 1883, however, Schreiner’s own name became very well-known (fame was something Schreiner did not generally enjoy) and synonymous with feminism and socialist activities. As a result, her social circle widened, and subsequently her literary endeavours expanded to include political essays, allegorical novels, political commentary, as well as her life-long engagement with letter-writing. The 1880s were indeed a prolific time for Schreiner’s writing and just a few examples of well-known publications which included her work are, the *Fortnightly Review*, PMG, WPP and *The Woman's World*. The latter two periodicals

²⁸ Olive Schreiner to Karl Pearson, 25 October 1886, UCL, London, OSLP transcription. Lines 12-14, 21, 25-26.

included numerous of Schreiner's allegories. Henrietta Müller's radical weekly published 'I Thought I Stood,'²⁹ 'Once More I Stood,'³⁰ 'Truth,'³¹ and 'Life's Gifts.'³² And under Oscar Wilde's editorship *The Woman's World* included 'Life's Gifts,'³³ 'The Lost'³⁴ and 'A Dream of Wild Bees.'³⁵ This list points to Schreiner's continued engagement with writing during the 1880s.³⁶

When Schreiner arrived in late-Victorian London, she stayed mainly in lodging houses. Her visual world, regarding the places she had previously lived, was one of wide open spaces, pastoral landscapes, karoo farms and developing townships, very different from late-Victorian London city streets. She often lived alone and was, like other women who lived similarly, subject to the 'rules of the house,' which did not always align well with the attitudes and ambitions of the women themselves. Schreiner's behaviours were commented on at times, such as her not wearing gloves when in public, her energetic conversational style, and, as already considered, her late night and often lone walking in the city. As I illustrate next, it is possible to follow some of Schreiner's moves in the city through her letters, by reference to dates and place-names, and in a more referential way through what she wrote about particular places. These details depict independent women's actual living arrangements, and in particular Schreiner's own engagement with newer forms of independence.

Schreiner stayed in over thirty different places in England during the 1880s, around twenty of which were lodging houses in London (actual moves amounted to more since she returned to the same address two or three times on occasion). The length of time she stayed varied from a matter of days up to six months, most often two to three months. In between she spent time in Italy, Switzerland and France. Schreiner refers to a number of the places she stayed in in London and England in her letters as 'home,' even though she was only there a short period of time. A few

²⁹ Olive Schreiner (1888a) 'I Thought I Stood,' WPP, Vol. 1. No. 7, 8 December, p. 1.

³⁰ Olive Schreiner (1888b) 'Once More I Stood,' WPP, Vol. 1. No. 8, 15 December, p. 1.

³¹ Olive Schreiner (1889a) 'Truth,' WPP, Vol. 1. No. 35, 22 June, p. 11; (1889b) 'Truth,' WPP, Vol. 1. No. 36, 29 June, p. 5.

³² Olive Schreiner (1889c) 'Life's Gifts,' WPP, Vol. 1. No. 47, 14 September, p. 7.

³³ Olive Schreiner (1889d) 'Life's Gifts,' *The Woman's World*, Vol. 2, p. 408.

³⁴ Olive Schreiner (1889e) 'The Lost,' *The Woman's World*, Vol. 2, pp. 145-146.

³⁵ Olive Schreiner (1889f) 'A Dream of Wild Bees,' *The Woman's World*, Vol. 2, pp. 3-4.

³⁶ For a complete list of her publications go to <http://www.oliveschreiner.org>

examples are, firstly from 32 Fitzroy Street where she lived for around one month (from end May to end June 1884): “Got caught in the rain. Had to stand under a tree in Regent’s Park for half an hour, & then had to come home through it ... Now it is pouring outside & looks so dreary that I have drawn down the curtains & lit the gas.”³⁷ Secondly from 16 Portsea Place, Westminster, where Schreiner lived for around three months from August to Oct 1885: “I am almost always at home in the evening, ... I shall be at home tomorrow afternoon & evening, but shall have many visitors in the afternoon till six, so we could not well talk.”³⁸ And, thirdly from St. Leonard’s, East Sussex, where Schreiner stayed on a number of occasions: “My Henry, I came home & found your note, it’s finding your notes here makes the place seem like home.”³⁹ From these and other examples, home for Schreiner was a place of comfort, inside away from the city, for getting together with friends. It was also a place linked to other places through epistolary connections. Schreiner departed from, and returned to, her home after city or other outings. And, when away from London, her new ‘home’ provided a break from the city altogether, whether she stayed for one month or three. It was a beginning and an end point (Felski 1999 p. 22) which signified rest, warmth, sometimes company, sometimes not.

Having friends nearby where she lived was important for Schreiner and at certain times she lived only a stone’s throw away from some of her closest friends. In 1884, for instance, she lived in the same street as Eleanor Marx on Fitzroy Street and was geographically close to Amy Levy. And she resided in the Ladies’ Chambers, Chenies Street, when Clementina Black was also there in the summer of 1889. Yet Schreiner also liked her anonymity, requesting that Ellis and others not tell anyone where she was on a number of occasions. Such requests are linked to times when she was keen to get on with her writing. One example is: “I’m not going to let anyone know I’m in town, & I’m going to work so splendidly here in my little room.”⁴⁰ This need to have a ‘room of her own’ for the purpose of writing was very important and

³⁷ Olive Schreiner to William Philip (‘Will’) Schreiner, 3 June 1884, UCT Manuscripts & Archives, OSLP transcription. Lines 23-26.

³⁸ Olive Schreiner to Karl Pearson, 15 September 1885, UCL, London, OSLP transcription. Lines 7-9.

³⁹ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 27 October 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 3-4.

⁴⁰ Olive Schreiner to Edward Carpenter, 10 September 1887, Sheffield, OSLP transcription. Lines 48-50.

was repeated in her letters across the 1880s. When Schreiner had difficulty finding a suitable place to stay she expressed her frustration at what this meant regarding her work: “Henry I just feel in despair. I am so weary of roving about. I shall do no work I shall do no good in the I world if I can never find a place to rest in Now, for the next week or ten days till I am settled I shall not be able to put pen to paper.”⁴¹

These extracts from letters show Schreiner’s idea of home was closely linked to her ability to write. She could only write when she was well enough and this was an important factor in many of the moves she made. Friendships were important too, but as the end of the decade drew nearer Schreiner expressed weariness of her ‘roving,’ writing a moving letter in March 1889 to Ellis:

Oh I’ve been so desolate all my life Harry I’ve I never had a home I’ve never had anyone to take care of me of like other girls have I was thrown out in the world when I was eleven, & even before that I hadn’t a real home. Oh, you who’ve never been turned out of a house don’t know what it is. Long ago I could bear but now I can’t any more.

And Schreiner goes on to write:

Harry we mustn’t talk about this to any one to Alice or Louie. Every one will say again I am wandering with out a motive I have never moved without a motive.⁴²

When writing this letter, the analogy of a snail carrying its home on its back did not apply. The desire to be more settled appeared to be a strong motivating factor and perhaps even contributed to Schreiner’s decision to return to South Africa, which she did around six months after this March 1889 letter to Ellis. Schreiner didn’t specify who would say she was ‘wandering without a motive’ but she didn’t want Ellis to mention anything to Alice (Corthorn) or Louie (Ellis’ sister), so it was something she was clearly conscious about. Yet, as I have shown, Schreiner’s moves were motivated by many specific things, her health, her writing, her desire to be both in and away from the city, to be near her friends, and her need to be alone, making Schoeman and Kapp’s claims of her being an ‘unstable wanderer’ and having a ‘compulsive restless’ disposition over simplistic and misplaced.

⁴¹ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 3 September 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 13-16.

⁴² Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 18 March 1889, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 23-28, 59-61.

Just as the snail analogy is relevant at one time but not another, Schreiner's view of places varied across time and also in relation to distance. This was the case with her views of living in London while she was there, in comparison with her reflections in hindsight and what she wrote about it from elsewhere. In 1885 when living there, she wrote fondly of London and of her growing interest and personal engagement with prostitutes:

It is late. I have been walking up and down in the dark and wet in Blandford Square alone. I'm beginning to like the fog. I've found out what a wonderful thing it is; there's something so wild and uncanny in it. [...] When I've done this paper and my book (I'm not going to hurry myself), then I'm going to live among these women and know them.⁴³

However, during a visit to Alassio, Italy in 1887, Schreiner reflected that: "It's difficult to believe one's in the same world that holds the East End of London."⁴⁴ And later still, this time from Cape Town in 1890, she wrote: "It [South Africa] is my land, my own that I have been longing for in London fogs & summer mist & drizzels, shut-in with hedges & those terrible high walls in England that nearly break ones heart."⁴⁵ The passing of time, the greatness of distance and the places where she was writing from appears to have influenced Schreiner's shifting representations of living in London. It contributed to her political vision of how things were and how things could be. And her writing was the tool used in an attempt to bring about the latter.

In addition to these direct comments about London, it is also possible to re-read Schreiner's descriptions as more oblique references to places where she had previously lived. The following extract is from a letter Schreiner wrote in 1890 after returning to South Africa, yet it also says something about her life beforehand:

Never before, never when I was a child, have I been able to live such an objective life, ... Oh how my eyes love to look at the world & feed on it. I have the same kind of feeling to objective things that a person has to ^solid^

⁴³ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 16 November 1885, NLSA Cape Town, OSLP transcription. Lines 39-41, 44-46.

⁴⁴ Olive Schreiner to Henry Buxton Foreman, 6 November 1887, Raine-Rive/1, OSLP transcription. Lines 10-11.

⁴⁵ Olive Schreiner to Edward Carpenter, 31 January 1890, Sheffield, OSLP transcription. Lines 22-25.

food who has been ill for months & begins to eat again, it is something quite different from ordinary hunger.⁴⁶

Schreiner's exhortation that she has 'never before ... been able to live such an objective life' is an indirect comment concerning her move away from the many demands made on her, both financial and emotional, and a concomitant shift away from 'personalities' and gossip, all of which had become stifling for Schreiner, particularly in the later 1880s, and which prevented her from writing and therefore being more ethically effective. Her returning 'home' as 'A Returned South African,' afforded her the opportunity to see and experience things quite differently. The return enabled Schreiner to see her old world anew as well as reconnect with a landscape she loved, which was "the bedrock of her sense of being and belonging" (Stanley 2002 p. 5).

The impact of surroundings, whether past or present, is often embedded in both published writing and in letter-writing. An example from a letter Schreiner wrote while staying on the East Sussex coast in 1884 is: "Yes, our African sky gives one the same sense of perfect freedom & wild exhilaration; sometimes one feels as though, for no reason that could be given, one were almost in an ecstasy of happiness when one goes out alone. Here one never is alone."⁴⁷ Here Schreiner was invoking the vastness of the South African landscape as a means of commenting on her current surroundings, which did not allow her time alone. And time spent alone for Schreiner was time when she could think and write. Writing thus evolved more readily when she had a place to call home, even (and perhaps most often) when this was of a temporary nature.

Re-reading intertextually across Schreiner's letters, with a view on other influential texts of the time, and on what else Schreiner wrote and had published, such as her many allegories, demonstrates how Schreiner's writing engaged with, and was influenced, afforded and restricted by the many changes in her habitat. She relied on having a home as much as she did on changing it. This was important in terms of facilitating her writing output, since it was so closely linked to her health. Being in the city allowed her to dip in and out of street life, to come home and write

⁴⁶ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 25 April 1890, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 9-10, 18-22.

⁴⁷ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 28 March 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 16-19.

her thoughts down, and, as was the case with the open letter published in *The Standard*, to offer her critical comments on the unequal situation of women living in London mid-1880s. Schreiner was already a successful writer by this time. And continuing her literary output, which from the list of publications I have provided, she did, was important. But so too was writing the open letter, discussions about prostitution, the age of consent for girls, about Ibsen's work, and so on, and these were more often discussed through her epistolary practice, which often fed into other literary works.

In this intertextual presentation of excerpts I have also included commentary by biographers, Schoeman and Kapp, their views of Schreiner's moves being negative. I have aimed to overturn this idea by re-reading more broadly and showing the importance of place in connection to writing output. Yet this not only applied to Schreiner, but to other women writers too, who needed both access to, and respite from, the city, and the circumstances, topics and debates lying therein, which was often a difficult thing to achieve in itself. Writing was produced in relation to such experiences, as a way of 'painting the life we all lead' when 'the facts creep in' over time, reflectively and purposively. It was produced in private spaces and poured out through public media, each being equally important to the other, in terms of women journeying towards becoming not writers but New Women through their writing. This was an agenda which influenced many women to write, and Schreiner's experiences show up some of the everyday life complexities of reaching the goals which were in the process of being set.

What emerges in Schreiner's subsequent writing beyond the 1880s is her emphasis on the 'external' world and her preferred epistolary mode of a concern with 'objective things' (Stanley 2002, 2011b), meaning that her focus was on political and other outward concerns, rather than personal and private matters (the latter being not totally absented but bracketed). This can be compared with Eleanor Marx's life and writing which focussed on political matters which were at the same time reflections of, and affected by, her personal circumstances, things I consider in Chapter Four. And, can also be contrasted to Amy Levy's sense of isolation and being 'too much shut in with the personal' (D. Hetherington 2011), which I develop in Chapter Five,

and which could well have been in Schreiner's mind in writing this comment about Levy.⁴⁸ In terms of my wider thesis this points to the significance and overlapping nature of internal and external factors, how women writers responded to these, and how overall they did or did not manage to achieve their goals. A factor which has only been touched on in this study is the relevance of friendship connections in relation to writing and I develop this in the next study.

STUDY TWO: Adopting Ibsen's 'Nora' to Speak About Equality and Emancipation

In a brief discussion of her friend Olive Schreiner's work, Edith Ellis made an interesting comparison between two texts, similar to the one made in the WPP mentioned earlier: "Thirty years ago two significant matters drove thinking women further towards their emancipation. One was the publication of a book published under the name of Ralph Iron called *The Story of An African Farm*, and the other was the banging of the door in Ibsen's *Dolls' House*" (Ellis 1924 p. 41). While Schreiner's novel was being absorbed by British society Ibsen's play was being performed in European countries. Not everyone was ready for literary experimentalism in 1880s London, and a shift in thinking was required to accept what Ibsen had to communicate, reflecting Schreiner's phrase "when the curtain falls no one is ready" from the Preface to SAF. However, Ibsen's work was taken up by some of the women whose writings and representations I am exploring in this thesis and who were integral in bringing about an 'Ibsenite movement': they wrote letters to one another about the importance of his work, gave readings of his plays among friends, translated his work, and put on small-scale performances. These are part of the important cultural and political practices by women involved in critiquing the institution of marriage (including notions of safe and contented home lives) and relationships more broadly in the mid-1880s. In this second study, I explore the intertextual nature of Ibsen related texts and performances by women writers in

⁴⁸ From the letter Olive Schreiner wrote to Edward Carpenter, September 1889, Sheffield, OSLP transcription. Line 11.

1880s London and how these reflected their cultural and political viewpoints on the subject of marriage, equality and emancipation, as well as how their activities were received, both then and more recently.

Ibsen finished writing *A Doll's House* in 1879, and through the 1880s it was performed in various major cities. The first public performance in London was at the Novelty Theatre in June 1889. This theatre opened in 1882 and was located on Great Queen Street, just south of the British Museum where women such as Schreiner, Marx and Levy spent much time researching, writing and socialising (Bernstein 2013). The question on which Ibsen's play turns concerns the effects of marriage on women's lives and individuality, and concerning legislation which upheld men's rights within it. The last act of the play brings matters to a head when wife and mother Nora leaves not only her husband and home but also her children in order to break the legal bond of marriage and regain her freedom. She says:

Listen, Torvald. When a wife leaves her husband's house, as I'm doing now, I'm told that according to the law he is freed of any obligations towards her. In any case, I release you from any such obligations. You mustn't feel bound to me in any way, however small, just as I shall not feel bound to you. We must both feel quite free. Here is your ring back. Give me mine.

(Henrik Ibsen [1879] 1965 p. 103)

This final act, which ends with a slamming door, caused a stir in the late-Victorian period and was much written about in newspaper reports at the time, one example from the PMG being: "But how can she leave her children, even for a time? Well, that is, no doubt, the question upon which Ibsen meant to provoke, without pretending to settle it."⁴⁹ Regarding the media response, playwright George Bernard Shaw later wrote ironically: "our press made a prodigious fuss about Ibsen as he sent the revolted daughters of the business and professional classes flying from the domestic hearth 'to live their own lives' in all directions" (McCarthy 1933 p. 3). Not all women fled the home, of course, and as Shaw's words imply this was a middle class revolt anyway, but for some women Ibsen's play communicated ideas and life choices they had been discussing and were, to different degrees, living out already.

⁴⁹ Anonymous (1889) 'At "The Doll's House" Last Night,' PMG, 8 June, Issue 7558, p. 2.

Some of the women I am concerned with went to see the play at the Novelty Theatre: “How well I remember, after the first performance of Ibsen’s drama in London ... when a few of us collected outside the theatre breathless with excitement. Olive Schreiner was there and Dolly Radford the poetess, Dr. Alice Corthorn, Honor Brooks (Stopford Brooks’ eldest daughter), Mrs Holman Hunt and Eleanor Marx” (Ellis 1924 p. 41). However, for some of these women at least, their interest in Ibsen had begun some years before. For example, the subject of marriage and personal relationships had already been much discussed in the Men and Women’s Club (1885-1889) in which Schreiner was involved, and Ibsen’s work was written about there too. Also, Eleanor Marx had been living unconventionally with the already married Edward Aveling since 1884 and by the mid-1880s had been actively involved in translating and performing Ibsen’s work, something I expand on in Chapter Four. Another writer, Henrietta Frances Lord, had translated some of Ibsen’s plays, being the first translator of Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* in 1882 and *Ghosts* in 1885. The former she renamed ‘Nora’ as she thought the original title might sound too much like a children’s book (Crawford 2001 pp. 357-358). Her version of *A Doll’s House* was used for one of the first ‘non-official’ performances of the play in London on 25 March 1885, held at the School of Dramatic Arts and performed by an amateur group called the Scribblers.

Lord’s first translation and the play were publicly lambasted by another Ibsen translator, the Scottish critic William Archer, who wrote: “It has been proved of old that amateurs rush in where artists fear to tread ... I have not seen an audience so hopelessly bewildered as that which stoically sat out Miss Lord’s translation of Ibsen’s play ... Miss Lord’s translation is clumsy, and though I believe it has attracted attention in one or two narrow circles ... it has been little noticed by the press, and has certainly not reached the general public” (Meyer 1971b, p. 395). This dismissal of Lord’s work, which would have been widely read at the time, continued much later when the Ibsen biographer Michael Meyer (1971b, p. 306 n2) was also less than complimentary about Lord’s translation, saying it was only “a slightly (but not much) better” version than had previously been produced, adding that: “In the closing weeks of 1888, thanks to William Archer’s efforts, a publisher bearing the

illustrious name of Walter Scott issued a volume, in a series called the Camelot Classics, containing Archer's ... careful revision by him of Henrietta Frances Lord's version of *A Doll's House*" (Meyer 1971b, p. 112).

Olive Schreiner mentioned Lord's treatment regarding 'Nora,' in connection with Lord's other translation of Ibsen's work, in a letter to Havelock Ellis:

I will tell you about 'Ghosts' when you come. I ~~touch~~ deals with the question of equal moral laws for both sexes, & of physical relation ship even between a half brother & sister 'when good.' - & with what wonder-ful art it deals with the subject! It is a translation by Frances Lord. The book is considered too strong even on the continent, what with they think of it in England. She is trying to find a publisher for it, as she lost heavily on 'Nora.'⁵⁰

It is clear from this letter that Schreiner was impressed by Ibsen's *Ghosts* and must have appreciated Lord bringing this to the attention of English-reading audiences. Unlike Archer and Meyer, Schreiner focussed on the content and moral intent of the play, rather than on the standard of Lord's translating skills, and she also expressed concern for Lord's 'losing out' on 'Nora,' which suggests she knew Lord personally. In spite of these connections, I have been unable to locate any archival material regarding Henrietta Frances Lord directly, although there are comments in Schreiner's letters which provide some information about the relationship between them and how writing figured in this.

Earlier in March 1884 Schreiner had written to Havelock Ellis about her interest in Lord's translation: "Have you read a play called 'Nora' by Ibsen, translated from the Swedish by ~~my~~ Frances Lord?? It is a most wonderful little work. I should like it to be reviewed by some able reviewer that it might be more widely read."⁵¹ This was the first mention Schreiner made of Lord, but she mentions the translation only. The crossed out 'my' may have been a slip of the pen but it could be she was going to write 'my friend,' and clearly she wanted to give and get support for Lord's work and a broader readership for the play also. Then in July, Schreiner wrote to Ellis "Yesterday I heard part of Ibsen's play 'Ghosts,' still in MS"⁵² which, according to Eleanor Marx's biographer, was read aloud by Edward Aveling (Kapp

⁵⁰ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 2 August 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 34-41.

⁵¹ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 28 March 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 44-47. Schreiner writes Swedish although the original was published in Norwegian.

⁵² Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 29 July 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Line 27.

1976 p. 100). Ellis replied that he “would like to hear more about ‘Ghosts’ [and was] very much interested in Ibsen” (Draznin 1992 p. 116). He also enquired “Do you mean he hasn’t been published at all or that the *translation* is in MS?” (Draznin 1992 p. 116), intimating he was still not familiar with Lord’s earlier translation of ‘Nora’ at this point. In October of the same year, Schreiner wrote: “I am disappointed about ‘Ghosts,’”⁵³ presumably because Lord had not yet found a publisher. And less than a week later she wrote: “Have just got notes from Miss Müller & Miss Lord. Miss Lord seems to think it will all be arranged about ‘Ghosts.’ If I were in town I should go to see Champion & beg him to publish it. He must.”⁵⁴ H. H. Champion was a socialist, journalist and publisher who edited, among other things *To-Day*, “a Magazine of Bold Thoughts” which Marx contributed to (Kapp 1976 p. 33n).

The last letter extract points up a number of things concerning the links between, and supportive nature of, women writers’ friendships. Firstly, Schreiner’s view that Lord’s translation of *Ghosts* should be published is communicated strongly. This kind of support and promotion of each other was commonplace in the women’s letters and other documents I have studied. Of Eleanor Marx, for instance, Schreiner wrote “if you meet Eleanor you will be delighted ... She is like mental champagne.”⁵⁵ Also, Henrietta Müller included and promoted work by women writers such as Schreiner in the WPP. This was important in terms of the women developing their confidence in what they could achieve through cultural politics being practiced communally. It was against the idea of individual praise and achievement and showed strong cultural political links as the scaffold upon which social change would rest.

Secondly, Schreiner’s friendships with both Müller and Lord came about after her arrival in London, when she became well-known following the publication of SAF. This was important for her in terms of forging a ‘politics of friendship’ (Gandhi 2006 p. 9) with mutually beneficial connections based on shared political views and writing experiences. Müller and Lord had known each other for some time, both had attended Girton College in 1876 (Crawford 2001 p. 357), and Müller

⁵³ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 22 October 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 6-7.

⁵⁴ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 28 October 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 31-33.

⁵⁵ Olive Schreiner to Karl Pearson, 12 March 1886, UCL, London, OSLP transcription. Lines 21-24.

provided a brief on-going commentary on Lord's work and whereabouts in the weekly column 'News of Friends' in the WPP. For instance, there is the observation that "Miss Frances Lord, who is now in Chicago, is expected to arrive in England about December 1st"⁵⁶; subsequently: "MISS FRANCES LORD is spending the winter in California, and will, probably, not be in England until April"⁵⁷; and then: "Miss Frances Lord has returned to London."⁵⁸ These kinds of comments were not unique to Lord, as the WPP documented the movements of many other feminist women. Importantly, unlike Archer and Meyer, the WPP promoted Lord's translation of Ibsen's play and provided its own view on the importance of this work: "The play is known to the English public chiefly through Miss Lord's careful translation."⁵⁹ In terms of my wider argument, the coming together of these three women, at this time and place is important because each was making inroads in writing as cultural politics, and together their mutual support helped increase its impact.

Thirdly, concerning the importance of epistolary links and how mutual interests were passed around, Schreiner received notes from both Lord and Müller whilst out of town (she was in St. Leonard's, East Sussex at the time), although these have not survived. This kept Schreiner closely connected, although at a distance, and the women's ideas flowing when apart. Another mention in a letter suggests more lost correspondence, for in 1885 Schreiner wrote to Karl Pearson asking him to forward more copies of the paper he read at the first meeting of the Men and Women's Club, called 'The Woman's Question,' so she might "send to Miss Lord."⁶⁰ Lord was not a member of the Club and presumably did not know Pearson either, since Schreiner does not suggest Pearson send the paper directly. In this instance Schreiner acted as a network bridge by passing information from the Club 'circle' to Lord, who although outside of it had an interest in its work.

Schreiner's face-to-face friendship with Lord continued until late-1885 at least. While Schreiner was living at 16 Portsea Place in Westminster, she wrote

⁵⁶ Anonymous (1888a) 'News of Friends' WPP, Vol. 1, No. 1, 27 October, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Anonymous (1888b) 'News of Friends' WPP, Vol. 1, No. 8, 15 December, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Anonymous (1889a) 'News of Friends' WPP, Vol. 1, No. 46, 7 September, p. 2.

⁵⁹ Anonymous (1889b) 'Nora. By Ibsen' WPP, Vol. 1, No. 23, 30 March, p. 3.

⁶⁰ Olive Schreiner to Karl Pearson, 19 July 1885, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 51-52.

“Miss Lord came yesterday afternoon and was very nice.”⁶¹ Schreiner’s final mention of Lord, in the letters that have survived anyway, was to tell Pearson that Lord was “out of town.”⁶² Here their epistolary connection ends. According to Crawford (2001 pp. 357-8), Lord lived in America between 1887 and 1889 to further her interest in theosophy, something which is confirmed in the ‘News of Friends’ column in the WPP. She then returned to London by September 1889, just prior to Schreiner leaving England in October to go to South Africa.

The letters and other documents discussed above show a dedication to Ibsen’s work which Schreiner and Lord shared and Müller supported. And re-reading intertextually across letters and with a view on other texts being circulated, such as newspaper reviews, shows something of what these women were both up against and also supported by. Ibsen’s plays were adopted and utilised with specific purposes in mind, to engage with topics such as marriage for instance. And *Ghosts* dealt with largely unwelcomed themes at the time, such as incest, but women like Lord did not cower from associating themselves with such works. It is possible that Lord’s work on translating Ibsen came to an end with her move to America. Whether the negative reviews contributed to this can only be guessed at, although Lord continued her feminist activities for many years after (Crawford 2001 p. 517).

At the same time Lord was working on her translations, Eleanor Marx was engaged in promoting Ibsen’s work, although oddly there are no clear textual links between Marx and Lord. Marx’s work, however, received similar disparaging remarks from Meyer (1971b, p. 33) concerning her translations of Ibsen’s plays, in stating that she translated “(rather badly) *An Enemy of the People* and *The Wild Duck*.” Like Lord, Marx too instigated a non-official performance of an Ibsen play, with her version of *A Doll’s House* occurring some four years before the official opening in 1889. George Bernard Shaw recalled: “the first performance of ‘A Doll’s House’ in England, [took place] on a first floor in a London Bloomsbury lodging house, [where] Karl Marx’s daughter played Nora Helmer; and I impersonated Krogstad at her request with a vague notion of what it was all about” (McCarthy 1933 p. 3). Shaw provides no date for this event but other documents help to clarify

⁶¹ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 6 November 1885, Texas, OSLP transcription. Line 7.

⁶² Olive Schreiner to Karl Pearson, 7 December 1885, Texas, OSLP transcription. Line 5.

this and provide more detail about the circumstances, organisation and production of the play.

The first is a letter from Marx to Shaw, dated 2 July 1885, which comments: “If we do ‘Nora,’ & there is considerable virtue in that ‘if’ – I do hope you will act Krogstad.”⁶³ The second is a letter by Schreiner to Havelock Ellis which reads: “I have just got your letter. I enclose Eleanor Marx’s. I should much like to come up to that Nora reading. How would it be if I was to come up for a week in place of your coming here.”⁶⁴ The third is the diary of Marx’s close friend Dollie Radford, which begins in May 1883 and ends November 1889, and contains two entries regarding the performance: “Tussy & Aveling called in the evening, to ask us to read in Ibsen’s ‘Nora’”⁶⁵ and, “I have missed ... Tussy’s reading of ‘Nora’ yesterday.”⁶⁶ ‘Us’ here refers to Dollie and her husband, the writer Ernest Radford. Marx was known as Tussy by some close friends and her family, although not by Schreiner. The fourth is another letter, this time from Edward Aveling, in which he wrote: “We read Nora to our friends a week or two ago. It made an immense impression.”⁶⁷ Havelock Ellis’ essay on Marx, published in *The Adelphi* and *Modern Monthly* in 1935, is the fifth document in which he recalled two letters he received from Marx, the second of which has survived, and which he includes parts of in palimpsest form:

In December of 1884 she had written to me from Great Russell Street: ‘On Jan 15 evening we are going to have a reading here of ‘Nora’ ... I still half hope Olive will come – she would like to – and I very much hope you will come’ ... [and] A little later came the card with the names of the readers for the parts. Aveling as Helmer, Eleanor as Nora, Bernard Shaw as Krogstadt, and so on. Still later, the day before the reading, came another letter. ‘Olive has told you of my plans to have someone read or say a few introductory words on “Nora” tomorrow evening, and she has told me that since she can’t come up and is not well enough to write she has asked you to do this little “introduction” for her. I do hope you will.’⁶⁸

⁶³ Eleanor Marx to G.B. Shaw, GBS Papers Add. MS 50511 ff. 88, my transcription.

⁶⁴ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 17 December 1884. Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 3-5.

⁶⁵ Diary of Dollie Radford, 12 December 1884, UCLA R.126M3, my transcription.

⁶⁶ Diary of Dollie Radford, 16 January 1885, UCLA R.126M3, my transcription.

⁶⁷ Edward Aveling to Madame Edgren, 2 February 1885, EMP, my transcription.

⁶⁸ Havelock Ellis (1935) ‘Eleanor Marx,’ Havelock Ellis Papers Add MS 70557, BL, London, my transcription.

This surviving letter is the sixth and final linked document. In it Marx goes on to write that she knows he will say “just what one wants said” and that “We must make people know Ibsen. It is, it seems to me, a real duty to spread such grand teaching as his, & my little effort tomorrow is just a poor beginning. I long to do more, but to make but a few people the better by knowing Ibsen is something.”⁶⁹ The performance was on 15 January 1885.

These six documents provide insights into the relationships between the people Marx wanted to involve in her home-based performance of Ibsen’s play. They show how connectedness can come about around a common interest or a particular event which is time- and place-specific. They demonstrate that Ibsen was an important catalyst in engendering social change concerning the Woman Question. And they indicate how one individual could begin to make things happen. They also show how Marx worked to gather her friends together in the weeks leading up to the performance. It is clear that she had carefully thought through who should read what role, and that the importance of putting on the play was to make more people aware of Ibsen. The message concerning marriage had clearly made a strong impact upon her, and this was at a time when she had only recently committed herself to a union with Aveling outside of marriage, a relationship in which she surely hoped to find happiness but which proved difficult and destructive.

In addition to what Marx hoped for, it is interesting to note the passing of letters from Marx to Ellis via Schreiner, who acted as a connecting bridge between the two, as she had done between Lord and Pearson as mentioned earlier. Schreiner was close friends with both Marx and Ellis at this point in time. Marx and Ellis, however, had only met in the summer at a Progressive Association meeting, when, as Ellis (1935a, p. 343) recalled: “I think the first meeting with [Eleanor] was June, 1884, when Olive had rooms in Fitzroy Street, which had probably been found for her by Eleanor, who occupied rooms not far away (No 12 in the same street) with Dr. Edward Aveling, to whom she had just joined her life.” Some of the geographic links between women writers were very close, making meeting, walking and talking together possible on a regular basis, a point I come back to.

⁶⁹ Eleanor Marx to Havelock Ellis, 14 January 1885, MS 195:1:4, Yale, my transcription.

It is interesting also to note the absence of Dollie and Ernest Radford at the Ibsen reading, the significance being that personal matters often got in the way of political aspirations. Dollie Radford's diary shows she met with Marx quite often, mainly at their homes and the British Museum Reading Room. Radford, however, grew to dislike Edward Aveling and notes in her diary on 16 May 1885 "found Tussy here. She is in terrible trouble – poor Tussy: will she never have happiness!" followed three days later by "To see Tussy. Aveling is fit only for contempt: I was beginning to like him better, now I know exactly how to regard him!"⁷⁰ Eleanor had clearly relied on Radford's friendship at this particularly difficult time. Their absence was therefore probably due to Aveling's presence, rather than a lack of interest in Ibsen. Schreiner was also absent, yet had made it clear how much she would have liked to attend the performance as she was willing to change her plans for Marx, although in the event this did not happen.

There is further epistolary evidence of the importance of Ibsen's work, with Schreiner writing to Havelock Ellis in 1884 that:

With regard to Nora. I think Ibsen does see the other side of the question, but in a book which is a work of art & not a mere philosophical dissertation it is not always possible to show all the sides. I have a sense of something wanting in the book, but I do not see how he could have supplied it. In the ideal condition for which we look men & women will walk close, hand in hand, but now the fight has often^{est} to be fought out alone by both. I think men suffer as much as women from the falseness of the relations. Helmer's life lost as much as Nora's did through the fact that they never lived really together.⁷¹

Schreiner discussed different aspects of Ibsen's work in other letters as well, and as noted earlier there were discussions by members of the Men and Women's Club about Ibsen's work. Given the availability of such sources, therefore, it is disappointing to note that these women's active promotion of 'Nora' and Ibsen's work more broadly has had little recognition, signifying the lid that has been put on the championing of women's independent living in both marital and professional terms. This vanishing started in the 1880s with critics such as Archer, and with Ellis

⁷⁰ Diary of Dollie Radford, 16 May 1885 and 19 May 1885, UCLA R.126M3, my transcription.

⁷¹ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 8 April 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 46-55.

also, with the latter emphasising his own role over and above that of Marx, in bringing Ibsen's work to an English audience, in his 1935 essay on her.

This absence has been reinforced by biographies such as Koht (1931) and, as already discussed, Meyer (1971b). Koht (1931 pp. 266-268) skims over Lord's translations with the comment that she "won no considerable circle of readers," notes Marx's contributions as the translator of *An Enemy of the People* in 1888 and *The Lady from the Sea* in 1890, but with no mention of her other work on Ibsen. For Koht, William Archer was "The man who now took the lead in the work for Ibsen." Meyer (2004 pp. ix-x) states that the reason he wrote a biography of Ibsen was because the earlier one by Koht was unsatisfactory because more material had come to light in the intervening years: "There is much [about Ibsen] widely scattered in memoirs, letters, theses, and newspaper reports; for example ... the reaction to his work of his great contemporaries such as Tolstoy, Strindberg, Freud, Chekhov, Zola, Hardy, Henry James, Yeats, Rilke and Joyce." Meyer's (2004 p. x) aim is admirable: "to reassess [Ibsen's] work, both intrinsically and historically; ... and to show the impact of his achievements on various countries." But unfortunately it provides no reassessment of the role of women writers in promoting Ibsen's work such as those mentioned here, yet there is 'much widely scattered' about Ibsen in sources concerning them, as I have shown.

This discussion shows some of the analytical gains of using one event as a starting point, in this case the first official performance of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, for exploring some intertextual aspects of women's writing and the politics the interconnected texts represent. While I started with the link between 'two significant matters' as Edith Ellis described them, that is Schreiner's SAF and Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, these were of course two significant texts, each dealing with women's border crossing from homestead to outside world. In the former the character Lyndall leaves the farm on which she was raised in order to get better educated. In the latter Nora barges through the door, and from home life (private sphere) to city life (public sphere).

Nora's border crossing clearly had reverberations across this group of linked women writers, and women's connected involvements with Ibsen's representation of

a woman's emancipation included producing their own translations, having private performances in their homes, and communication about it in various of their writings, including their letters. Other texts, however, such as in the newspaper reviews, highlight reactionary responses to women's border crossing through public lambasting, and, as explored in the first study, street harassment, things which were difficult for independent women to avoid. Yet there was much mutual support and in this regard textual spaces such as in the WPP were important as were discussion groups such as the Men and Women's Club and the texts members produced. Together these seemingly 'small things' contributed to bringing about changes and shifts in consciousness over time, concerning marriage, the nature of the private sphere of home and of motherhood, women's desire for independence, their interest and activism in political life. Also, concerning women's ability to fend for themselves, by making money from their writing for instance, away from the protection and financial support of a husband. This discussion also shows the importance of women's friendships in supporting each other's writing and other cultural political engagements.

Women's Writing and Cultural Politics in 1880s London as Complexly Interior and Exterior

In this chapter I have argued for the importance of involving geographical aspects and site specific places which impacted on women's literary production, focussing on home, theatre, landscapes and the city. Consequently such locations influenced the cultural politics communicated in writing and these concerned women's access to, and restrictions from, certain places, marriage and relationships, and moral and ethical values. In turn these things reflect bigger issues regarding gender inequality in both professional and private life in 1880s London. Women, nonetheless, voiced their opinions across different literary forms, utilising established newspapers and creating new publications to do so, as well as adopting and adapting plays to suit

their needs. An integral part of this process was their communication and support afforded by epistolary practices.

These women's writings were often complexly purposive in nature. This was the case with Schreiner's open letter to *The Standard* newspaper which aimed to draw attention to how women were treated differently from men in 1880s London, using her views on an event she experienced at first-hand. This was also the case with both Marx's and Lord's translations of Ibsen's plays. Marx was the more clearly purposive in declaring her aim was to make Ibsen widely known, but this must also have been the case for Lord since her choice of play – *Ghosts* – was a highly controversial piece of literature at that time, and certainly not chosen as 'just work.' These women did not set out to gain praise for their writing but to enter into Woman Question debates concerning their sexual, economic and professional freedom. Indeed, they did not receive praise, nor on the whole good reviews, as these tended to focus on the quality of the translation rather than the subject of the text or the author's intentions. Still, Schreiner, Marx and Lord, and the other women mentioned too, did succeed in communicating what was important to each of them, in terms of pointing out a woman's right to independence, and utilised their writing to do so.

The idea of home was key to women having a suitable place to write in, as discussed in the first study. When considering the context in which literature was (and is) produced, the focus is often on the literary profession of the time – what was acceptable in terms of the quality of the writing, the topic chosen and in relation to other successful writers and so forth – not the everyday matters of having a suitable space, a desk, a chair, some time. Yet these things say more about the economic status of the writer and the everyday conditions under which writing was (and was not) possible (Rosner 2003). The significance of these things comes across in Schreiner's letters. There was of course women's increased access to public spaces such as the British Library Reading Room at this time. And women in the Langham Place Circle, as I explained earlier, set up working rooms for reading and writing. Schreiner, however, valued having her own writing space, regarding which there were no restrictions on the time she could work and for how long: she could if she

wished write all night. Home, then, for Schreiner, allowed her to be ‘free freer freest,’ as she communicated to her brother Will in 1875.

Home was important also in the second study which displays Marx’s strong drive to bring Ibsen’s words ‘to life’ through her home-based performance, and points to her past interest and personal passion for the theatre. There were many changes in the theatrical scene at this time, with theatre reflecting various of the social issues of the times. There was a boom in theatre construction, technical advances enabled more creative use of the stage, and so “the stage not only catered for entertainment but also began to express views on serious [public] issues” (Tsuzuki 1967 p. 159), including the work of Ibsen. Women became increasingly involved in this new theatre, with more women writers gaining prominence by setting up their own writing groups and publication outlets. So, while Marx had given up on the idea of an acting career, she nonetheless still appreciated the political power theatrical productions could communicate to an audience, even one made up of close friends and fairly new acquaintances. Her home was important in this respect, in terms of putting on the play when she might otherwise have struggled to find a suitable location elsewhere.

Expanding on the relevance of home, Schreiner’s moves around London are not necessarily indicative of how other women writers lived. Indeed some of the women whose work is discussed in this thesis had more settled and traditional home lives: Levy most often stayed with her family, Radford had a married home establishment, and Marx generally also resided in more fixed abodes. Schreiner’s experiences, however, are interesting in terms of how women’s lives were increasingly being opened up to different more transient ways of living. Other friends, Margaret Harkness and Clementina Black for instance, lived at times in similarly unfixed ways, including Harkness moving to particular places specifically for researching people and places for her novels. In this sense there is something of the female and feminist *flâneur* (Wolff 1990, 2010; Wilson 1991, 1992; Parsons 2003; Nord 1995) in this behaviour, in terms of utilising freer movement in the city, when this was possible, for the purpose of experiencing, studying and reflecting on

different aspects of people's lives in different forms of writing and effecting change in their and other women's lives.

I have focussed on some particular aspects of intertextuality in this chapter, to understand the types of influences as evidenced in and between texts, how lines of communication operated between writers and readers, and the context of literary production such as when and by whom writing was supported and suppressed. For instance, in the first study, Schreiner's draft letter written in December 1885 can be seen in connection to the 'Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' articles, published in the PMG earlier the same year, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act passed in August 1885. Schreiner expressed her doubt over the wide-scale effects of these texts, that they might only 'rouse a few thousand women' but which was itself no 'small thing.' Her open letter added her voice and views to the argument in a wider sense that all women, not only girls and prostitutes, were unsafe on London's streets, and were treated differently from men.

In the second study, in terms of communicating the importance of Ibsen's plays, there was a close set of connections between friends through letters and face-to-face meetings, and lines of influence are easy to follow. For example, the early reading by Edward Aveling of Lord's translation of 'Nora' led Schreiner to write to Ellis, and Marx to start planning her own home performance. This in turn led to the involvement of Shaw, Dollie and Ernest Radford (by invitation), and others. While this group of interested parties in Ibsen later came to be referred to as an 'Ibsenite movement' (Rowbotham 2008 p. 91), the actual linking of texts and the people involved also demonstrates a disjuncture, that is, there is no clear connection between Lord and Marx. This might be due to lost or destroyed correspondence, gaps in archival collections, or that these women were involved in different circles, yet had mutual friends such as Schreiner. Other linked texts are to Marx's other Ibsen translations, her mimetic use of *A Doll's House* rewritten as 'A Doll's House Repaired' and published in *Time* in 1891, and her writings about Woman Question issues, including her jointly authored essay of this name published in 1886. These texts and how mimesis is used are investigated further in the next chapter.

In terms of the context of literary production for women writers in 1880s London, aside from having a place to write, women's writing was published in such newly-established publications as *The Woman's World* and the WPP. This brought women writers together in a textual format, allowing ideas to be communicated across the pages of these publications. Readers could also engage with many women writers at once, and respond accordingly should they wish to do so, in the letters and comments pages. The value and importance of these papers cannot be underestimated: they provided important outlets where women's cultural politics were laid bare on the pages in terms of the ideas and arguments they were writing about and in relation to. These papers are therefore important in establishing the topics which dominated many women's thinking and actions.

There has been, however, a move to write some women's literary efforts out of history, such as with Marx and Lord's vanished contribution to the Ibsen canon. Their translations were denigrated at the time of writing when compared to the translations of William Archer, and their overall impact has been largely written out of biographies of Ibsen more recently. In addition to this attack on women's translations, at times the negative responses were about the women themselves, perhaps politely but still condescendingly put. Schreiner's letter to *The Standard*, while offering her view on the unequal treatment of men and women (which she describes ironically as the strong and the weak respectively), provoked a response in the form of another open letter, signed covertly 'B' and published the day after hers, denigrating Schreiner's views as those of an unfair and overzealous woman:

I think that "O.S.," and most especially the "well-known physician" who escorted her, have behaved unfairly to the Superintendent and the public, and, looking at all her story, I must confess that it impresses me with the belief that enthusiastic action and warm feelings about the defence of women have rather blinded your Correspondent.⁷²

Schreiner responded the following day, still involving the readers in interpreting and judging the situation for themselves. She did not write as a woman in sympathy with other women, she wrote as a political commentator with the aim of emphasising the bigger point she was intent on making concerning an unjust situation. Marx, Lord,

⁷² 'B' to The Editor, *The Standard*, 5 January 1887, OSLP transcription.

Müller and others similarly had the bigger Women and Labour Question debates in mind.

These women's various texts each form an essential yet complex part of larger debates concerning the treatment and status of women in the 1880s. Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* may have represented freedom from financial and marital constraints, but marriage was not being entirely denigrated. It was under scrutiny regarding the impact it had on women in its current form, with alternative ways of conducting unions being explored, such as with Marx's common-law relationship with Aveling. Schreiner too was acting out her own viewpoint on this subject, striving towards an independent way of living that was free of attacks on her choices. Both women faced criticism, however, but this was par for the course in an on-going fight for social change with respect to women's freedom in both private and public contexts. The negative reviews of their work, patronising responses to open letters, and personal attacks on their characters demonstrates not only the power of their words and actions but also the fear that was generated around them.

To sum up, in the two examples I have focussed on some writing and other activities connecting a small set of women writers and their cultural political attempts to bring about social change in their environment "by shifting the perspective, scale and point of view" (Brewer 2010 p. 1). In doing so, close re-readings across texts highlights a multi-perspectival view of the broader historical context within which these women were thinking, talking and writing about their hopes and desires, such as concerning the literary field and its traditions. Schreiner, Marx, Lord, Müller and others took advantage of textual spaces already available to them – newspapers, for instance – and they created new spaces – such as women's periodicals – where their writing and other cultural political activities could be utilised against oppressive structures and situations they were faced with in their everyday lives. In other words, their agency and the means through which they chose to exercise it was put to use against patriarchy as it existed regarding marriage and relationships, public and private spheres and professional discrimination. Yet, whilst writing cultural politics in 1880s London had positive effects, there were also personal consequences.

I have focussed on small numbers of people who were intertextually connected to other authors and texts. Sometimes this was in positive and influential ways, such as with Ibsen's plays, other times there were more troubling connections at work, such as with the negative reviews of Marx's and Lord's translations. This might seem a small matter but is indicative of negative factors affecting women's rights and their ability to be openly political and creative. Women were not always viewed as being strong enough for professional life and this is further explored in Chapter Five in connection with Amy Levy. Women were also not supposed to make public displays, such as with Marx's common-law union and Schreiner's glovelessness. They were admonished in a variety of ways. This may not have deterred them from continuing their work; it may perhaps have spurred them on. Yet their letters also express times of great frustration and difficulty. Schreiner chose to remove herself at various points from city life, most often for health reasons, yet this afforded her important time by herself which connects with Simmel's (1950 p. 119) view that being an isolate is more an 'interruption or periodic occurrence' from society. This was not possible for Marx whose on-going financial and other concerns may have contributed to her demise, as is explored in the next chapter.

In the next chapter I focus on the writer, editor, critic, translator, journalist and orator Eleanor Marx to explore the complexities around her authorial voice and the different kinds of texts she produced during the 1880s in London. Women writers asserted different aspects of themselves, including their cultural politics, in both subtle and more explicit ways. They wrote from different positions, including as translators and literary critics, to challenge oppressive boundaries, to comment on an event of the day, in support or opposition to ideas and views. Their texts could also incorporate different voices through the use of pseudonyms, by working in collaboration with others, and by aligning their work with that of other authors. At a surface level, choosing to use a pseudonym might conceal that an author was a woman, and this might also demonstrate other writing personas and perspectives. But what about choosing not to use a pseudonym? Marx, unlike some other women writers, chose not to use one and instead utilised her given surname Marx and her common-law surname Marx-Aveling carefully to mark out her writing endeavours

into different areas. She also wrote somewhat mimetically in comparison to the other women writers I am focussing on in this thesis, by which I mean she took up the work of others to express something of her political views, and translation work played a major part in this. Whilst the splitting of the authorial voice is often associated with later modernist authors such as Virginia Woolf, Allen (2000 p. 55) has pointed to an interesting earlier example of ‘many mes’ as expressed in a letter by the writer Elizabeth Gaskell in 1850:

at least to one of my ‘Mes,’ for I have a great number, and that’s the plague. One of my mes is, I do believe, a true Christian – (only people call her a socialist and communist), another of my mes is a wife and mother ... that’s my ‘social’ self I suppose. Then again I’ve another self with full taste for beauty ... How am I to reconcile all these warring members?

(Chappell and Pollard 1997 p. 108)

Such a complex ‘I’ might not have been self-consciously used until later, but is still present in the works of some women writers in the 1880s. Over time and by re-reading across Marx’s writing her ‘many mes’ become apparent. But rather than focussing on, say, Marx the socialist in comparison to Marx the feminist (Ledger 2000), I am concerned more with how Marx the creator became Marx the curator, with her creativity affected and absorbed by everyday matters and her socialist commitments. In addition I am interested to further explore how so-called New Woman writings actually appear more kaleidoscopic in nature – in terms of perspectival complexities.

CHAPTER FOUR

Eleanor Marx's Authorial 'I': Mimesis and Multi-Voiced Cultural Political Writing Practices

Introduction

Women such as Schreiner, Levy and Marx worked hard to establish themselves as writers of different kinds, including as novelists and poets, writers of allegories and political tracts, as translators, editors and journalists (Bernstein 2011). In doing so they often wrote letters to one another, reviewed each other's work, as well as working as literary hacks, and these were important means by which they shared ideas and obtained feedback, and improved their skills as well as making money. Their literary success in (and beyond) 1880s London varied, yet what they produced was important in other ways, such as in contributing to the advancement of feminist ideas, goals and hopes. As discussed in the previous chapter, their writing could, for instance, challenge conventional ways of living and thinking, inspire other women to join campaigns or pursue professional ambitions. As such, they and others like them, were protagonists of social change, even if they didn't set out to be this. The cultural political significance of these women's writings continues to be accessed here through a sociology of small things approach to researching their lives and the selected sources.

This chapter builds on Chapter Three, which was concerned with the importance of women finding places to write, the impact of their environment on their writing, how events and the work of other writers were catalysts for their own politicized actions, literary and otherwise, and, the importance of friendship

connections for support and the communication of ideas. The forms of writing and the strategies they employed were considered, as well as some of the barriers women writers met, including misogynist reviews and gendered difficulties getting work published. This chapter adds to the analysis and argues for more consideration of translation work and the strategies of co-authoring work as ways of communicating cultural political views. Such activities were often underpinned by close friendship support and, again building on Chapter Three, there is greater consideration of this, in terms of women supporting each other's work in view of some of the consequences of speaking out through textual means.

The choice and deployment of different literary genres were closely linked to women's literary voices, and this chapter focusses on the complexities around the authorial 'I,' in terms of the influences, forms of expression chosen, and the purposiveness of writing. By this I mean that women chose to write as a novelist or a poet or a translator and their choices allowed them to use different authorial personas which offered ways of furthering their cultural politics. Using a pseudonym, for example, could afford the writer a purposive 'other' perspective for the critical analysis of a topic (Calé 2006). It might be used in order to speak from a different class perspective or from multiple points of view, as was the case with Margaret Harkness who used the pseudonym John Law but also inscribed many voices in her novels. Also, a jointly authored text, as the mutual alignment of a shared authorial position, a 'we' in agreement, could add gravitas to each of the authors involved in the production of a text, and to the message being put across in it.

Eleanor Marx is less well-known as a literary figure and more so for her socialist activities (France 2000 p. 28). She was also inspired to write in relation to what was going on around her, was influenced by other women writers, as well as with regards to socialist and feminist issues, and in response to other literary figures. She was an advocate, editor and translator of her father Karl Marx's work and a translator of Ibsen's plays. In addition to this, Marx translated novels by Flaubert and others, including some of Amy Levy's work. She often worked in collaboration too, with her common-law husband Edward Aveling and with the writer Israel Zangwill, a renowned Jewish scholar and novelist (Udelson 1990; Leftwich 1957). Marx,

however, chose not to use a pseudonym and did not, therefore, “shed [her] social position, personal interests, inclinations and particularity” (Calé 2006 p. 9), but remained connected to the Marxist socialist discourse and dynasty. She added Aveling to her own surname, presenting this married status without giving up her family connection. As such, Marx’s literary voice is a complex one, utilized to convey her views regarding Woman, Labour and Native Question issues of the time. This chapter explores aspects of the complex multi-voiced ‘I’ of some literary work of Eleanor Marx, and how the purposive nature of her authorial voice worked in her favour in some ways yet was detrimental in others.

The chapter is organised around three vignettes and I use these to explore and analyse Eleanor Marx’s cultural and political writing practices. Vignettes have been used in sociological research to elicit more distanced and generalised responses from participants in research situations by presenting a hypothetical situation to which responses are given, recorded and can be then analysed. They are seen as a useful way of breaking down a lot of information into smaller parts which “can help unpackage individual perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes to a wide range of social issues” (Hughes 1998 p. 384; West 1982; Finch 1987). They are most often short depictions of a situation or event, although more in-depth vignettes have been used also. Finch (1987), for instance, has used ‘longer and more complex’ vignettes to elicit responses of a more open-ended nature, to explore if there was a general consensus about what was considered the right thing to do in British society about providing assistance, financial or otherwise, to one’s kin. Each of Finch’s vignettes presented a set of circumstances which participants responded to, followed by another vignette which altered or added to the first response, and so on. The set of responses were then analysed and interpreted to understand beliefs and actions in connection with different circumstances.

For my research purposes I use vignettes in both similar and different ways compared to this. The approach provides a useful way of dealing with a lot of material, to present bite-size narratives, each with a different yet connected focus about feminist writing practices. Each vignette provides information or a set of circumstances which can then be explored before adding to it. Then the next vignette

works to alter or clarify what has been previously discussed. Where my approach differs is that for my purposes there is no need for inventing hypothetical situations, as I rely instead on exploring situations which are presented in the various texts, particularly in letters.

The first vignette focusses on different levels of intimacies and writing output, that is, on the importance and value of different friendships and acquaintanceships in connection with literary production, and in particular how this can now be re-read in letters. By way of example, this vignette will further establish the parameters of some of the friendships between women writers and why they mattered. And among other aspects, this will be explored in relation to what was going on in London in the 1880s and early 1890s. Overall, this vignette places Marx's literary voice in connection to other writers of her time, which can then be built on in the subsequent vignettes.

Vignette Two considers ways in which these women's lives and literature were interwoven, in terms of what was happening personally being refracted in writing, and vice versa, in both letters and publications. This vignette has a double-pronged approach, building on the previous vignette, firstly with a closer focus on the emerging friendship between Marx and Schreiner in the first half of the 1880s and the supportive nature of this in connection to what else was going on in Marx's life. And secondly in terms of Marx joining forces with Edward Aveling in name and for the purpose of co-editing and authoring. This vignette explores the importance of intimate friendships connected by shared cultural political views, but also how other life choices, such as co-living and co-writing, could cause tensions at the same time. It is focussed around letters and the jointly authored text 'The Woman Question' (1886) in order to consider questions about the different ways in which women authored their work and the consequences of that contemporaneously.

Vignette Three continues the investigation into co-authorship around a selection of translations which Marx completed between 1886 and 1890. Marx attempted to reach beyond immediate boundaries with her literary work (and concomitantly her cultural politics), particularly with her translations, which brought new literature to an English language readership as well as taking English literature

abroad. This vignette, therefore, explores what Marx's versions of other original texts 'do', including who and what inspired her, how she went about this work, and the kinds of barriers she experienced, such as literary censorship and less than enthusiastic reviews of her work.

In the previous chapter, utilizing an intertextual approach allowed me to outline and analyse some of the characteristics and connections between women writers in 1880s London who used their writing to explore and expand their cultural politics (Allen 2000 p. 5). The intertextual reading of these women's writings, in reviews for example, also provides a greater understanding of how their literary voices were at times suppressed (Allen 2000 p. 21). Further to this, the figure and authority of the author has been paramount in intertextual studies, with Barthes (1977 pp. 142-148) and now many others arguing for the 'Death of the Author' and otherwise prioritising the role and agency of the reader over the writer. The stability of a text is undermined in this process, allowing for more nuanced interpretations to come to the fore, rather than there being an over-emphasis on the author's biography.

This idea is important in thinking about the women writers I am concerned with, who were of course readers. With this in mind, rather than side-lining the author altogether, an intertextual reading can point to a far more complex notion of authorship, one "which foregrounds, celebrates and plays with the dissolution or abandonment of the single subject" (Allen 2000 p. 56). This in effect points to the polyphonic reader/writer utilising texts in order to represent different voices (Bakhtin 1981; Certeau 2000 pp. 7-8; Sedgwick 2003 p. 1), proffering different points of view rather than one 'official' position (Allen 2000 p. 24). Such an understanding of texts is that of a *bricoleur* and conjures up and presents new meanings. In terms of these women's writings, often they act as a critique of an original text, or they critique the follow-up reviews, with one example where this was the case being 'A Doll's House Repaired.' In this satirical imitation of Ibsen's play, Marx and Zangwill provided the critics of the final scene of the play, where Nora walks away from her marriage, husband and children, with a 'happy ending,' albeit one which leaves Nora in an unhappy and worsening situation for the sake of 'keeping up appearances' (Marx Aveling 1891).

The previous chapter also focussed on how women's writing communicated their cultural politics on issues concerning the Woman Question which involved also 'Labour Question' issues. This chapter continues this investigation, broadening out the scope of texts referred to, to include polemical essays as well as the translations. In the example of Marx and Zangwill's essay, I consider how authors not only added their voices to the debates of the day, but were also critiquing other aspects of literary production, in particular those who reviewed the original play negatively. These reviews focussed on how badly behaved Nora was, rather than the institution of marriage which left her with a stifled and unsatisfied life. And at the same time, these same reviews were tantamount to a kind of censorship on writers such as Ibsen, who were seen to be 'rousing' women's desires for independence. As such, some women's writing in response (Eleanor Marx's being one example) included their politically-charged beliefs in the right to write freely. Before moving on to the vignettes, I now provide an overview of Eleanor Marx and her life in 1880s London, the main literature about her, sources I am using and the methodological issues arising from these.

Introducing Eleanor Marx

Jenny Julia Eleanor Marx was born 16 January 1855 at 28 Dean Street, Soho, London, the youngest of Karl and Jenny Marx's six children. Within a year of her birth the family moved to middle-class Hampstead, an area they stayed in until the early 1880s. Eleanor Marx then moved to Bloomsbury alone, then to Soho with Edward Aveling, before making her final move with Aveling on 31 March 1895, out of the centre of the city to 'The Den,' Jew's Walk, Lewisham. Aveling suggested Marx wanted the house just because of the street name, yet it has been suggested this was originally Doo's Wharf, a place in Kent, and therefore not part of the Jewish historiography Marx assumed it was (Kapp 1976 pp. 525-526). Nonetheless, Marx clearly loved this home: she considered its position to be near enough to central London for easy access to the British Library for research, for her to attend socialist and other meetings, catch up with friends and go to the theatre, a regular tradition throughout her life.

Eleanor's and other family correspondences show she had mostly very close loving relationships with her parents, siblings, nieces and nephews (Meier 1982). She had an intense passion for literature and the theatre, was devoted to socialism and feminism throughout her lifetime, and wrote, translated and collaborated on a great number of articles, essays and political tracts, not to mention the many letters she wrote (Kapp 1972, 1976; Tsuzuki 1967; Meier 1982). There were, however, moments of great difficulty, involving financial concerns and family and other disputes. In the early part of the 1880s her mother Jenny died (1881), then her eldest sister Jenny (1883), followed closely by her father Karl (1883). At what must surely have been a time of enormous emotional upheaval, Eleanor had to leave the family home for more modest single living accommodation in the Bloomsbury area although, importantly, this was where many of her close friends were, including Olive Schreiner. She also began a relationship with the already married Aveling, adding his name to hers in 1884. Whilst this relationship offered Eleanor collaborative opportunities – Aveling being both a socialist and a playwright – it proved a less than satisfying relationship on a more loving level and Eleanor often commented in letters of her loneliness. Some close friends, such as Schreiner and Dollie Radford, provided Eleanor with all-important support during the 1880s, particularly by being a counterpoint to her otherwise busy work-life with Aveling and others. And, arguably, when such close friendships became distant ones, and when there was little time and energy for her more creative literary endeavors, Marx chose to end her life, at home, aged 43.

Eleanor Marx has been the subject of a number of biographical studies (Tsuzuki 1967; Kapp 1972, 1976; Meier 1982; Stokes 2000) and I provide a brief overview drawing on these here, and by way of pointing my own contributions made in this chapter, such as considering Marx's life and her literary works through the lens of cultural politics. And, by re-reading against the grain of some assumptions made in the biographies, relationships are considered in view of a broader range of non-literary sources, letters in particular, to add to the little that is known about Marx's close friendships with other women writers.

Tsuzuki's biography gives a broad overview of Marx's life with particular attention to her various attempts at theatrical success during the 1880s, the impact of her relationship with Aveling at its beginning and end, and her focus on socialist matters throughout. Importantly, and more than appears in any biography about Henrik Ibsen, Tsuzuki (1967 p. 160) points to "The Avelings [being] among the pioneers who introduced the Norwegian dramatist [Ibsen] to the English public." And connectedly, Aveling's editorship of the magazine *Progress*, a Secularist monthly started in 1883 by freethinker G. W. Foote, resulted in much space being given over to forward thinking Scandinavian literature, presumably to inform and inspire the readers. There was, for instance, the promotion of inspiring women writers such as Swedish author Anne Charlotte Edgren-Leffler, who was renowned for her progressive feminist views and support of Ibsen's work. And there was Aveling's review of Schreiner's SAF which he discussed favourably as "'bold and outspoken' about the relations between men and women" (Tsuzuki 1967 p. 107). Aveling also appears to have intended to write a preface for a translation of Schreiner's book, which he mentioned in a letter in February 1885 to Egdren, which does not seem to have materialised. These activities hint at Marx and Aveling's early engagement as spokespeople for the work of other writers, Ibsen in particular, which Tsuzuki takes no further, but which I explore in this chapter.

Kapp's voluminous biography in two volumes gives even greater detail to Eleanor's life growing up in London, her love of literature and the theatre, her involvement in the socialist movement, and concerning her family relationships, some friendships, common-law union to Aveling and ultimately her death. Kapp uses many life and other documents in her research, bringing the Marxes' home and family life into clearer view. Some relationships are treated in a skewed manner, however, Schreiner's friendship with Eleanor being one example. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Kapp (1976 p. 24) misrepresents Schreiner as compulsively restless and as having "an egotism so rampant that she insisted upon not only her house but also her husband [Cronwright-Schreiner] being known by her name" (Kapp 1976 p. 23). Kapp's biography (and Tsuzuki's biography) remain invaluable sources for understanding the life of Eleanor Marx in the context of this late-Victorian era in

London, yet there are clearly some areas which need further questions asked of, and so here closer consideration is given to the value of friendships such as between Marx and Schreiner.

Olga Meier (1982) presents letters written mainly between the three Marx sisters, Jenny (Longuet), Laura (Lafargue) and Eleanor, starting in 1866 and ending January 1898. In the Introduction to this book, Sheila Rowbotham explains that, from 339 letters in the Bottigelli Archive relating to the Marx family, Meier “confined her selection to letters to and from members of the Marx family, including husbands, up to Eleanor’s death” (Meier 1982 p. ix). It contains 107 letters plus four in the Appendices. Of these, unsurprisingly, the majority are from Eleanor to Laura – 51 sent after the deaths of their mother, elder sister and father. Only a very few are to Eleanor from Laura, however, and this may reflect the many remarks Eleanor made to her sister, such as “It was good to get quite a long letter from you – for your letters are not as plentiful as blackberries.”⁷³ The original letters are now housed in the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History, Moscow, with microfilmed copies available in the International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam. A small number of Eleanor Marx’s original letters are also held in Amsterdam. This edited collection is useful as it provides some of those aforementioned “little islands of singularity, [and] fractals of a life-world” (Highmore 2011 p.61) in letters, whilst this is only a partial view because of Meier’s editorial choices, which this chapter critiques and adds more ‘fractals’ to, through consultation across the whole of the letters collection in the Eleanor Marx Papers at the IISH, plus other letters which I have found elsewhere.

Also, in the Introduction to this book, Rowbotham overviews the lives of the Marx family and comments on researching with letters: “As our fancy wanders into someone else’s past we have to shake ourselves to remember that these people died long ago” (Rowbotham 1982 p. xvii). A researcher’s ‘fancy’ can also lead to an over-focus on certain areas of an individual’s life, leaving other areas concealed from view. Additionally, London is a much changed city now and the places where these women met, walked, ate and drank were all very different then. Some places were

⁷³ Eleanor Marx to Laura Lafargue, 10 January 1897, IISH, Amsterdam, my transcription.

difficult or impossible for women to access, certain clubs for instance; and meetings often required quite formal invitations, meaning spontaneous visits were less common; yet the postal system provided almost hourly collections and deliveries, making messaging relatively swift for the time. Friendships and other kinds of relationships were also conducted differently, with correct methods of address and introduction necessary. Consequently in re-reading Eleanor Marx's letters, as with Schreiner's and those of others, the context in which they were written needs to be kept in mind, to "give shape to a world ('real-world' and epistolary) and understand and represent its persons and events" (Stanley 2011b p. 21). Rowbotham (1982 p. xxxiii) also points out that, whilst Marx (among other writers) was clearly a significant figure in the socialist movement, feminism and in popularising Ibsen, very little is known about the women she worked with. This is important to know in terms of further contextualising her cultural politics in relation to other women writers she connected with.

Following these key features of the biographies and the introductory essay about Marx – that is, the importance of Ibsen and the significant work undertaken by Marx and Aveling in bringing his work to an English-speaking audience; the skewed representation of significant individuals in Eleanor Marx's life; and the sparse knowledge and literature about her women friends – my own contribution in this chapter adds to and addresses these areas. Firstly, as far as knowing more about the importance of Marx's women friends, there has been, since Rowbotham made this point, some interesting literature on this, not least John Stokes' (2000) collection of essays. In this questions are raised about what kinds of relationships were made possible in 1880s London between "intelligent, educated women in the socialist arena" (Hapgood 2000 p. 130), and how women writers represented political events in literature. Marx's friendships are explored at cross-over points between Marx 'the Ibsen scholar,' Marx the socialist feminist writer, and Marx's personal life (Ledger 2000). I consider, however, Marx's close friendships with Schreiner, Margaret Harkness and some others, who would have been strong influences on Marx's thought and writing early in the 1880s. Schreiner's letters, for example, regarding her views on Edward Aveling and concern for Marx show aspects of the relationship

between Marx and Schreiner not considered elsewhere. Secondly, Marx in her own words was little more than a literary hack. The reasons for her opinion can be more clearly understood in the broader context of her friendship network as well as in relation to the prevailing ideas about who was able to achieve literary success at this time. Yet this is a skewed perspective of Marx, similar to that of Kapp's negative spin on Schreiner, which I unravel to understand how women writers viewed themselves, and, more often than not, were viewed by others, as less than significant literary figures. And it connects, arguably, to how Marx's more creative writing was gradually overshadowed by her curatorship of the writings of other authors. Thirdly, I place Eleanor Marx as a writer and translator of some greater significance, not only in terms of her work on Ibsen but with respect to translating other authors, such as her friend Amy Levy's novel *Reuben Sachs*. This aspect of Marx's life and work has been peppered throughout the biographies (Kapp 1972, 1976; Tsuzuki 1967), but when drawn out it reveals things about Marx's intentions and more broadly about women writers working in the city. It points, for instance, to related topics and issues which were important to women writers such as Marx, in connection to the Woman, Labour and Native Question debates and the cultural politics they exercised through their writing.

Sources and Methodological Issues: “He must paint what lies before him”⁷⁴

The methodological approach employed in this chapter is guided by issues relating to both the extant and absent nature and archiving of letters by and about Eleanor Marx. Many of her letters to close family members and socialist colleagues have survived, yet the correspondence between her and some of her close friends has not survived, has been lost or destroyed. It has been necessary, therefore, to devise ways of re-reading across extant letters with a view to understanding more about those which are now lost, and this is reflected in my choosing Schreiner's Prefatory comment to SAF as the subtitle to this section. Schreiner's comment may be seen to refer to the

⁷⁴ From the Preface to Olive Schreiner's *The Story of An African Farm*.

importance of focussing on social life as it appears in research sources and which can be fully grasped for research purposes. Yet I take her notion of to ‘paint’ a life as artful, rather than referential, to stretch, challenge and play with it, bringing some of the more elusive aspects in letters to the fore through their close analysis.

All collections of letters have absences (Stanley 2011b), and this chapter argues for the importance of interrogating these, exploring how they can be examined, interpreted and incorporated into research outcomes. By absences I do not mean the publication of partial and selections of letters, such as Meier’s book of Marx letters (1982), or Cronwright-Schreiner’s *The Letters of Olive Schreiner 1876-1920* (1924b), which have “acknowledged deficiencies, and [yet] are often quoted from as though providing full and complete versions of Schreiner’s letters” (Stanley and Salter 2009 p. 7). Such edited selections are most often a small sub-set taken from a larger body of once, if not still, extant letters. And the selection process and additional editorial practices can significantly misrepresent an individual. Cronwright-Schreiner’s presentation of Schreiner as, amongst other things, isolated, without ‘long-term friendships and correspondences’ and dependent on her husband, being a case in point (Stanley and Salter 2009 p. 16 and p. 18).

My interest in absences lies specifically with a perceived ‘whole body’ of letter-writing – inside the Eleanor Marx Papers and connectedly the Marx epistolarium, for instance – as each of these have known about absences, which can be analysed productively to reveal things about the women’s lives. The idea of the epistolarium (Stanley 2004, 2011b, 2011c) takes such absent features into account as Stanley (2011b p. 19) points out: “It does so because ... all the different dimensions of someone’s letter-writing [are] emergent, perspectival, dialogical and serial, including – insofar as this is possible – what has been destroyed or lost as well as what is extant and accessible.” Specifically, I am focussing on these absences as liminal epistolary spaces which offer new analytical perspectives about the purpose and value of Marx’s writing and the importance of her friendships with other women writers. I interpret these spaces as in a state of flux and between other things, as spaces which have been created and keep other things at a distance. Iain Sinclair (2002 p. 304) provides one example of a man-made liminal space when he describes

walking the ‘acoustic footsteps’ or “liminal land, between [the M25] motorway and heritage countryside.” Here a space has been created where the noise and pollution from the motorway can dissipate before reaching the countryside or a housing estate. And this is a space which can be “interpreted as a relational construct and [a] dynamic milieu of in-between” (Küpers 2011 p. 46); things connect and disconnect within, and as such the space can be analysed and interpreted. I consider, therefore, how much more can be known about such spaces in terms of letters which once did but no longer exist, and how these spaces come about through various stages of collecting and discarding, through archival and other processes.

Epistolary spaces exist in archive collections of letters for many reasons, other than their being lost, kept private, or because of limited funds being available to add to collections. There are, for instance, absences concerning things not written about where one might expect to find them, such as issues and events which are known to be important in a person’s life, or concerning epistolary exchanges which never happened. For example, there is little evidence in Schreiner’s letters about her writing of a series of essays which she worked on intensively in the early 1890s (Stanley 2011c, p. 26). And, there are other known epistolary gaps amongst Schreiner’s extant letters. Schreiner herself requested that her correspondents destroy her letters in their possession, because she did not want them to be used after her death in biographies (Stanley and Salter 2009 p. 7; Stanley 2011b, p. 7 n. 1). Also, Cronwright-Schreiner destroyed many thousands of Schreiner’s letters after he completed *The Life and The Letters of Olive Schreiner* (see Stanley 2002 p. 25; Stanley and Salter 2009 p. 28 n.4), as is evidenced in his diaries (Stanley 2011b, p. 20). This was a mass burning of letters through which some of Schreiner’s correspondences ‘vanished,’ the connections all but disappearing, leaving only small fragments of researchable data, mostly mentions in other letters, with any letters to Eleanor Marx a case in point. Ultimately, this gave Cronwright-Schreiner greater control over his version and representation of Schreiner, as well as of himself, which has since being largely lambasted in Schreiner scholarship (Stanley and Salter 2009).

Similarly, in the case of Eleanor Marx, there are very few extant letters between her and her friends: there are none in the Eleanor Marx Papers in

Amsterdam, none to Marx in Schreiner's extant letters, and very few are traceable elsewhere. According to a number of contemporary newspaper and journal articles, Edward Aveling destroyed the last letters Eleanor Marx wrote, one being addressed to himself, the other to her solicitor, following her death in March 1898 (Tsuzuki 1967 p. 322; Kapp 1976 pp. 717-19). Stanley (2002 p. 24) also states that Aveling destroyed Marx's diary and other letters, including those from Olive Schreiner. This is a great loss because not only did Schreiner refer to Marx as her 'mental champagne,' but they shared political views and were influential on one another: Marx, for instance, influenced Schreiner's thinking so her ideas were framed more by socialist and labour theory; and Schreiner encouraged Marx to become involved in debates around the Contagious Diseases Act and raising the age of sexual consent for girls, following W. T. Stead's publication of 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' articles in the PMG in 1885 (Stanley 2002 p. 25). However, since a face-to-face and epistolary friendship between Marx and Schreiner did exist, and this is known about, to a certain degree anyway, it is possible to operationalise the no longer extant epistolary relationship between Schreiner and Marx so as to throw light on Marx's cultural political activities and aspects of her life as well. One example taken from the essay written by Ellis (1935a, p. 348) is: "Eleanor was also learning to know him [Aveling]. This is but too sadly apparent in an intimate letter she wrote next year ... to Olive, who passed it over to me." This hints at a level of support Schreiner provided for Marx. And many similar examples exist, showing a close friendship based around common hopes and desires, including their commitment to socialism and feminism, as well as to literature as a means of achieving their goals. The importance of such close and supportive friendships was touched upon in the previous chapter, with Schreiner valuing being geographically near to friends. My investigation into the importance of such friendships is furthered in the first of the interconnected vignettes.

Vignette One: The Importance of ‘Close Bosom Friends’ and Women Writing Cultural Politics

Vignette One starts with a seemingly small literary event, the writing and sending of a letter in 1891. The letter is actually a very long one from Olive Schreiner, and although its first page is missing, its content indicates it is to Margaret Harkness. In it Schreiner mentions Eleanor Marx and others and she describes her own letter writing practices in relation to her friendships. So, this letter to Harkness provides a starting point, and through it a sense of the relationships between Schreiner, Marx and their friends begins to unfold. From this letter further questions come to mind, concerning the character of women writer’s personal and professional relationships, how these conjoined and overlapped but also grew distant at times.

Olive Schreiner left London to return to South Africa in October 1889. As suggested in the previous chapter, Schreiner wanted to remove herself from the demands made upon her finances and more importantly her time, by many people, because this kept her from writing. Margaret Harkness, a feminist socialist writer and earlier a friend of Schreiner, seems to have been one of these people. Schreiner had wanted to focus on political rather than personal matters (Stanley 2002, 2011b), the latter being less important to her in relation to the wider feminist and socialist concerns of the time. In a ‘Private’ section of an undated letter written to her sister-in-law Fan, sent from Matjesfontein in South Africa, Schreiner stressed this point:

Do you remember my telling you & Will about a ~~M~~ woman who had caused me no end of trouble & would come out after me & stay with me. Well Mr Fort has just sent me a cutting from a paper in which it is said that she is coming out to ~~stay~~ pay a visit to her friend Olive Schreiner in South Africa!!! I really came out to this country greatly to get ride of her. [...] You can’t have any idea what a nightmare that woman is to me. Please don’t say any thing to your friends or anyone but if a tall thin woman comes to ask you or Will what my address is you wire up to me, & I shall not be in Matjesfontein when she comes here!⁷⁵

The cutting sent by Seymour Fort may refer to the following: “Miss Margaret Harkness, who is now studying the labour movement on the Continent, and writing

⁷⁵ Olive Schreiner to Frances (‘Fan’) Schreiner nee Reitz, 1891, UCT Manuscripts & Archives, OSLP transcription. Lines 49-62.

for the *Pall Mall Gazette* and other papers, will, when her work there is finished, visit Miss Olive Schreiner at the Cape.”⁷⁶ This is important in establishing more firmly the date of this letter, which must have been written after July 1890, and which could have prompted a following lengthy letter to both W. T. Stead and Harkness, which I will come to shortly. It also points to ‘trouble’ and then a break in the friendship network, the reasons for which will also be further explored.

This ‘tall thin woman’ was clearly a bugbear for Schreiner and one she preferred to keep at a distance. Schreiner, however, had a lot of respect for Harkness’ literary endeavours earlier as can be seen in some letter extracts: “I went to the Camden Church this morning with a Miss Harkness, a girl I like much & who is making a path for herself in the world,”⁷⁷ and, “I think Maggie’s book first rate. Great improvement on the last; though that was good. It is the little touches that are so true to life.”⁷⁸ The book referred to here was most likely Harkness’ second novel *Out of Work* (Law 1888) which struck Schreiner as being ‘painted’ from real life observations. Eleanor Marx knew Harkness well at this time, writing to her sister Laura “I know the East End well, and I know the people who have lived there for years, ... people like Maggie Harkness.”⁷⁹ In taking rooms in the East End, Harkness had set about constructing accurate representations of London’s poor, gathered through first-hand knowledge, and presented in novelistic forms. Thus her writing was creative yet strongly purposive, with the intention of drawing the reader’s attention to abject poverty in London (Hapgood 2000 p. 137). Writing also provided Harkness with a way to communicate her cultural politics concerning social reform, issues relating to the Woman Question, the Labour Question, and her alignment with socialism and Christianity.

Harkness was primarily a novelist and published using the pseudonym John Law. While such male aliases were nothing new, in choosing to reference the police (‘the long arm of the law’) Harkness’ sense of irony is apparent. Prior to *Out of*

⁷⁶ Anonymous (1890) ‘Personal Summaries’ Margaret Harkness, *Blackburn Standard and Weekly Express*, Issue 2838, July 12, p. 3

⁷⁷ Olive Schreiner to William Philip (‘Will’) Schreiner, 3 June 1884, UCT Manuscripts & Archives, OSLP transcription. Lines 29-31.

⁷⁸ Olive Schreiner to Beatrice Webb (née Potter), April 1888, Passfield Collection, LSE, OSLP transcription. Lines 10-11.

⁷⁹ Eleanor Marx to Laura Lafargue, 16 November 1887, IISH, Amsterdam, my transcription.

Work, she wrote *A City Girl* (1887), which was praised by Engels who wrote positively about this book, stating his ‘pleasure’ in reading it whilst encouraging Harkness to be even more true to life in her writing (Kapp 1976 p. 221). In 1889 *In Darkest London* was published, followed by *A Manchester Shirtmaker* (1890), and *George Eastmont: Wanderer* (1905). These are working-class life narratives which can also be described as combining micro and macro viewpoints and polyphonic strategies (Bakhtin 1981; Certeau 2000). In *In Darkest London*, for instance, Harkness deals with the extent of poverty in the East End through the interwoven perspectives of different ‘on the ground’ individuals. As such this story is told through various members of the Salvation Army: there is Captain Lobe, a dedicated member who oversees the area; the slum saviours, who are young women ‘called’ into service; and ‘Napoleon the midget,’ who is mocked by ruthless audiences in order to earn a living. Additionally there is Mr Pember the ‘capitalist’ and Jane Hardy the labour-mistress who works for Pember, but who since becoming educated in socialist and feminist issues despises all he stands for. The East End ‘masses’ act as a kind of backdrop and remain nameless and faceless throughout. Finally there is Ruth, who is soon to inherit her dead father’s business yet wants to join the Salvation Army, choosing moral over capitalist gains.⁸⁰ In summary, Harkness’ ‘project’ was “not with actuality but versions of it and their ideological roles” (Klaus 1982 p. 57), and so she aimed at establishing accurate representations of place defined by the relationships and perspectives of the people who lived and worked there (Klaus 1982 p. 53).

In addition to these novels, Harkness wrote journal articles and she was obliquely referred to as ‘the Author of ‘Out of Work’ etc.’ in the edited *Toilers in London; or, Inquiries Concerning Female Labour in the Metropolis* (Harkness 1889), which chronicled different types of women workers such as flower-girls, fur-pullers and barmaids. It is noted at the end of this publication that “Miss Clementina Black, Secretary of the Women’s Trades’ Union and Provident League, has given us active help; and we are glad to hear that her work is bearing fruit in the shape of Unions among the shop-assistants, laundresses, and others” (Harkness 1889 p. 263).

⁸⁰ *Ruth* is the title of British writer Elizabeth Gaskell’s novel (1853) which is about prostitution and illegitimacy, themes which are intimated in Harkness’ novel also.

Once again this points to the significance for Harkness of literature which ‘bears fruit’ in the city. In addition, it shows a direct connection between Harkness and Black in 1889, important because so little evidence in the form of letters, diaries and so forth, has survived about either woman’s life and friendship connections, which are unfortunate absences.

There are brief mentions in Schreiner’s letters about other friends too, whose company she enjoyed during the 1880s whilst in London. Schreiner’s comments are about the work her friends were involved in, rather than of a more personal nature. To recall from the previous chapter, Schreiner commented on Henrietta Frances Lord’s translations of Ibsen, rather than on Lord more personally, pointing up Schreiner’s view of the value of women writers utilising Ibsen’s work for the purpose of engendering social change. Schreiner wrote a letter to Harkness in which she emphasised that producing ‘useful’ literature was of the utmost importance, and that friendships and letter writing were closely related to this. It is archived among letters to the journalist and editor W. T. Stead, and its beginning and end are missing:

[missing page/s] ... I am giving up today & tomorrow in trying to answer.

I wrote to you last in June ^or July^ not yet quite two years ago, when I was in Chenie Street, but there are close bosom friends who were tender to me when I was a child that I have not written to for 8 years, though they often write to me. The woman I love best in the world, & who I think loves me better than anyone else has written to me ten times or more on political & social questions since I came out here: I have written her two post cards. yet if tomorrow I wrote ‘I need you she would leave her husband & home & come to me, & if she simply hinted that she needed me, I should be in England in three weeks. I know that my name is so sacred to her that she never dis-cusses me with anyone, & I never mention her & it would be over my body that anyone should touch her; but I don't feel I want to write to her, it is she who must give me food for thought in her large interesting life in the centre of political & social thought & action, & I would much rather she was doing her great work in England than hanging round ð in Africa where she sho, could not be of so much use.

I would rather have read that lovely little story of yours about the poor children in the P.M.G. than have five thousand letters from you; I would rather you wrote one great generous article in a news-paper showing how large & impersonal the soul of woman be, than of thousands of conversations with me. You ought to feel the same about me. I am doing my best to work, & what more can any one who values me want.

~~Mrs~~ I am sending this through Mr Stead as he wrote to tell me he was going to try to send you out to stay with me, in a way that implied you & he thought I was very lonely & were ~~wanting~~ making a sacrifice of yourselves for my sake. ^(& also because I can't make out your address.)^ I am afraid you & he will think me very ungrate full because of the letter I wrote him, but you who yourself write should understand. I have had something over 25 (twenty five) offers: of people from home to come & staying with me here. I am getting very worn out of writing 'No, I want to be quiet & work, & if I can have a day or hour free I should like to spend it in studying people here, & ~~the~~ in seeing the dear friends whom I must soon say good bye to forever when I return to Europe.' I know you & Mr Stead will be very angry with me I can't help it. I am despair, I try to help other people, & I try to satisfy every one, I try to love other people, & I have only one poor little life. I cannot do all things for all men.

[...]

I was going to write you a long letter the other week of three or four sheets about something in Booth's book, that I thought ~~my~~ might be useful to you & him; but I've come to the conclusion that there's nothing very useful in my idea. I can always write about impersonal things, art or s-cience, or poetry, or nursing, or education or ways of feeding babies, or managing a house. All these things are so beautiful & large, & use ful.

[...]

I will promise always to write to you if I've anything impersonal to dis-cuss; you must promise to write to me if we've any ~~the~~ ?line of thought we can thrash it out together. I will write to you if ever I want any material & practical service from you: ^you^ I will write to me if ever you want a like service from me. There is no need for us simply to write to say we are alive & well. I should always see in the papers if you were ill, you would always see from the papers if I were ill or dead.

[...]

// I don't think that in the last three years ^except Mrs Philpot & Mr Stead *unreadable & unreadable*^ anyone has ever mentioned your name to me so much as to say they had met you much less to tell me anything about you. Mrs Aveling has never even, that I know of, mentioned your name; I did not know you ever saw her; in the last year & a half all I have heard from her is a post card about some work she was copying for me. I should think she was the very last woman to sully her lips by dis-cussing other peoples affairs. [...] If anyone had come to talk against you or any one to me, I should have liked you or any one all the better for it. I judge of people by what they say to me, I never allow the opinions of others to influence me. I believe you are quite loyal to me. I believe you will yet do greater & greater good work in our world. I wish that all good & success always be with you.

Olive Schreiner

PS. If you are coming out here for your own sake & not for mine I shall be glad to give you any advice & help I can about interesting place to see, &

lines of travel to take. I know South Africa well. Please let me do anything I can for you: it would be a very great joy to me.

[... missing page/s]⁸¹

I have quoted at length from this letter as there are analytically relevant things to say about it. Aspects of its content are important and discussed in two ways, helping further define the parameters of the friendships, and that links between women writers were often forged purposively around the importance of writing and literature of different kinds. Also, there are methodological issues concerning its intended recipient/s, parts being missing and its location among the papers of W. T. Stead. Absent aspects of a letter, such as the date and intended recipient, can frequently be ascertained through its content and in comparison to other letters. This is the case here.

Schreiner lived in Chenies Street during June 1889. Therefore if her recollection about writing ‘not yet quite two years ago’ is taken literally, this letter was written in the first half of 1891. Concerning its recipient, this is Margaret Harkness for two reasons. Firstly, in a letter Schreiner wrote to W. T. Stead, Harkness is mentioned explicitly, and the above letter will have followed this. The letter also includes “I have come out to Africa entirely that I might be alone ... Will you show this letter to Miss Harkness because she might not understand if you did not.”⁸² Secondly, further indications that the long letter was for Harkness are Schreiner’s comment about literature, the story in the PMG which Harkness was writing for around this time, and the mention of ‘Booth’s book’ which was most likely William Booth’s *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890) (rather than Charles Booth’s *Life and Labour*, 1889, 1891). Harkness had changed the name of her novel, originally called *Captain Lobe: A Story of the Salvation Army* (1889), to *In Darkest London* (1891), for which William Booth wrote a new Introduction. The significance of this change can be read in a number of ways: That Harkness wanted her literature to connect with the social analysis presented by Booth (as his had

⁸¹ Olive Schreiner to Margaret (Maggie) Harkness, January – February 1891, National Archives Depot, Pretoria, OSLP transcription. Lines 1-105.

⁸² Olive Schreiner to William Thomas Stead, March – December 1890, National Archives Depot, Pretoria, OSLP transcription. Lines 20-21, 36-37.

connected with the explorer Henry Morton Stanley's book *In Darkest Africa* published in 1890), thus placing her work within this literary, ethical and social research genealogy; or that she hoped Booth's appreciation of *In Darkest London* would raise her own profile, and draw more attention to her representation of London's poor districts. There is also the possibility that Harkness wished to align her views with those of Booth, as Eleanor Marx and Henrietta Frances Lord had done with aspects of Ibsen's work, yet Booth comments against this: "I am quite aware that the author ... is in many respects very far from accepting our discipline, or subscribing to our theology ... [yet] we are glad to welcome this aid, to make known a little of the darkest depths of the moral, social, and material abyss" (Booth n.d. pp. i-ii). So, while Schreiner stated 'I am sending this through Stead,' indicating he was the main recipient, this part of the letter was intended for Harkness, and that it is still with Stead's correspondence may signify it never reached her.

As regards the contents of this letter, there are two particularly relevant aspects, firstly concerning friendship and letter-writing, and secondly regarding race and literature. Schreiner's wish is expressed from the outset – she wanted to spend her time working rather than writing letters or having visitors, and yet ironically she gave up two days to write this lengthy explanation. The notion of wasted time is also deflected at the reader of the letter, who Schreiner would much rather was writing 'one great generous article.' Letters, it is proposed, should be used for sharing and hammering out ideas, offering encouragement and feedback, for cajoling and, in this instance, mildly berating. Schreiner may well have found Harkness irritating on a personal level, but here she appears frustrated that 'proper' writing time was being wasted, and that both women's literary talents should be put to better use. Before closing, Schreiner stresses that Harkness will 'do greater & greater good work in our world.' In other words, she was encouraging Harkness (and women more generally) to write on 'large useful' topics – whether on art or science, poetry, nursing or education, feeding babies and managing a house – topics which, for Schreiner, were on a par with one another. These were, after all, about indeterminately educating women in all directions.

Schreiner goes on to make strong statements about not wanting to feel under pressure to reply, and she compares the last time she wrote to Harkness, less than two years previously, with the last time she wrote to ‘close bosom friends,’ some eight years ago. From this it might be surmised that Harkness was not considered such a ‘close bosom friend’ as others. Schreiner also mentioned a ‘woman I love best in the world’ who had written quite often, but to whom she had not felt the need to reply, aside from two postcards. On first reading this I thought this must refer to Marx. That Schreiner goes on to discuss ‘Mrs Aveling’ by name, having received not more than one postcard from her, acted as a reminder to read letters carefully and in the broader contexts of the life they are connected to, and the time and place of their production. Schreiner’s remark also problematises the notion that letter-writing is a reciprocal activity kept on an even keel by giving and receiving more or less equal quantities of letters (Stanley 2011b, 2011c). Yet it does not always follow that a greater number of letters to one correspondent necessarily points to a closer more intimate relationship. And indeed, some of Schreiner’s more regular correspondents were people she disagreed with politically, and she used her letters to persuade them, whilst for those on closer terms there are few or no letters (Stanley and Dampier 2010). Possibly, then, few letters may ever have been written between Schreiner and Marx, pointing to smaller epistolary gaps in the respective collections.

What is clearly pointed out in the long letter is that in Schreiner’s view there was little or no connection between Marx and Harkness. Yet other documents indicate there was not only a relationship between the two women but also a serious break not long before Schreiner wrote her letter to Harkness. Schreiner’s comment about Marx ‘not sullyng her lips’ points to two things. Firstly, regarding the friendship between herself and Marx, they did not talk about other people to gossip, but discussed other matters which were more ‘wordly.’ As such they did not keep in touch by letter to merely say they were ‘alive & well,’ nor it seems to discuss other friendships. Schreiner communicated strongly to Harkness why she saw little point in writing letters unless there was something ‘impersonal’ to write about. Secondly, Schreiner seems to be answering a query which Harkness presumably posited in a letter now lost, which must have been something like ‘has Eleanor Marx mentioned

anything about me?’ This seems to concern a breakdown in the relationship between Marx and Harkness (and between Harkness and others too), leaving Harkness wanting to get away from London, and an unsuspecting Schreiner unaware of the reason for the sudden need to visit her. The breakdown is connected to Harkness’ alignment with important political figures, as were self-professed through her public writing.

This friendship break is significant in a number of ways. Friendships and relationships were affected by events but also by other people. Sometimes individuals acted as bridges bringing like-minded people together. At other times their beliefs, behaviour and attitudes caused others to part. In the case of Eleanor Marx’s connections with her women friends and others, such as this vignette is exploring, there were significant moments of disconnection from certain individuals through serious rifts. For Marx, Edward Aveling was often the cause of such rifts, as perhaps was the case with the Radfords staying away from the reading of *A Doll’s House* at Marx and Aveling’s home in 1885, and more definitely was the case between Marx and Harkness. There is no evidence of a dislike emerging over time, only of the final break which came about following the London Dock Strike in 1889.

According to Henderson (1976 p. 685), Harkness refused to visit Engels “for fear of meeting Aveling there.” Engels, who (like Marx) supported Aveling seemingly unconditionally, apparently ostracised Harkness (Hapgood 2000 p. 133) and wrote to Laura Lafargue a letter dated 16 November 1889 stating “We have got hold of another Mother Schack in Miss Harkness. But this time we have nailed her, and she will find out whom she has to deal with” (Kapp 1976 p. 261n). ‘Mother Schack’ was a reference to Mme Gertrude Guillaume-Schack, an anarchist member of the Socialist League, and a gossip according to Engels, who had written to Engels in 1887 to say she would no longer visit him for fear of meeting Aveling because he “had committed disreputable acts ... and also had been slandering his own wife” (Tsuzuki 1967 p. 149; Kapp 1976 pp. 199-202). It is likely that Engels’ comments to Laura had something to do with Harkness’ views of Aveling. And this could have also concerned an article Harkness had published in *The Star* (18 September 1889), which had upset her second cousin, the social investigator Beatrice Potter.

Around the same time that Engels wrote to Laura, Potter wrote in her diary:

Maggie Harkness came in to supper. Sad to feel that I more and more distrust her. The last blow to my confidence, a letter appearing in the 'Star' at the time of the victory of the ~~strike~~ Dockers, a letter mad with vanity, claiming to have paid Keir Hardie's electioneering expenses. Afterwards to account for borrowing money she tells me that the money was ~~illeg~~ hers 'for that purpose and that purpose alone' wh. simply means that she served as go-between.⁸³

Potter's accusations amount to Harkness exaggerating her role and connection to Hardie in her own article, yet, that Harkness was making such connections through her writing is interesting. She did so with William Booth, as mentioned earlier, and in this instance with Hardie, both of whom were powerful figures. Her actions and alignments, however, had consequences such as the loss of some close long-term friendships, including with Potter and Marx. Not quite a year later, Potter recorded in her diary: "A curt letter fr. Maggie Harkness telling me she leaves England for 'always' & refusing my offer to come & see her. I suppose an end to our 15 year friendship. ... A strange nature with the two dominant impulses – Pity and Envy – Helpfulness and Treachery."⁸⁴ There are twenty extant letters from Harkness to Potter dated from around 1875 to 1887 now in the Passfield Collection, but a 'curt' letter cannot be identified among them. Potter was clearly upset about the break in relationship, but her words describe someone who was complicated and difficult to deal with. Harkness appears determined to leave England for good, seemingly undeterred by the idea of permanently fracturing this relationship. However, as I have suggested, she made attempts to keep in touch with Schreiner through Stead. Harkness in fact did not leave England 'for always' but wrote that she spent "twelve months on the continent of Europe, in America, the Australian Colonies, and New Zealand," writing her experiences up in a short essay 'A Year in my Life' which was published in the *New Review* in October 1891.

On a micro-level this appears a small-scale fall out between a few individuals, but it is also indicative of bigger-scale arguments and differences within socialist and feminist circles. Such bickering was internal and self-serving, not about

⁸³ Beatrice Webb Diary, 13 November 1889, Passfield Collection (PC hereon), LSE, London, my transcription.

⁸⁴ Beatrice Webb Diary, 9 September 1890, PC, my transcription.

building communal cultural politics. It may indeed have been part of what prompted Schreiner's departure from England to South Africa in 1889, and her sea-change to more outward concerns such as the possibility of revolutionary change, as she reflected on in a letter about this time:

In 1880s when I went to England a strong (from my standpoint) forward movement was setting in. It continued till (roughly speaking) about 89 88. Then we who there were working at ⁱⁿ the heart of things, felt a change becoming to come; subtle, but wide, & unmistakable ... There was from the liberal & advanced stand point a distinct & vast back-wash setting in.⁸⁵

This is just a small part of a letter in which Schreiner represents British society as overly focussed on wealth, power and superficial matters of appearance by the late-1880s and which, she wrote, continued “till it produced the Jameson Raid & the Boer War.” In turning away from these ‘unmistakable’ retrograde changes in Britain, Schreiner recognised the centrality of race and this is hinted at obliquely in Schreiner's letter to Harkness about spending her time ‘studying people here.’ This comment reflects what Schreiner was immersed in writing at the time, a set of essays, ‘Stray Thoughts on South Africa,’ using the pseudonym ‘A Returned South African’ which speaks volumes of her relationship to ‘back-wash’ Britain. And these essays build upon each other, as Schreiner worked out her thoughts on race and her “conception of it as something entirely plastic and socially constructed” (Stanley 2011b, p. 23). Stanley (2011b, pp. 23-25) discusses Schreiner's comment that “if a blank map is taken and red, blue, green and so on [are] used to depict on it the presence of whites, coloured, Indian and the various African peoples of South Africa, there is nowhere that is just one colour ... [even] at the micro level, in the mixture of people in households.” This resonates with Schreiner's appreciation of aspects of Harkness' writing, such as Harkness' description of Whitechapel Road, where she points to a ‘clash’ of different people who are not easily separated:

That road is the most cosmopolitan place in London ... there one sees all nationalities. A grinning Hottentot elbows his way through a crowd of long-eyed Jewesses. An Algerian merchant walks arm-in-arm with a native of Calcutta. A little Italian plays pitch-and-toss with a small Russian. A Polish

⁸⁵ Olive Schreiner to John X. Merriman, 11 August 1912, NLSA Cape Town, Special Collections, OSLP transcription. Lines 17-24.

Jew enjoys sauer-kraut with a German Gentile. And among the foreigners lounges the East End loafer, monarch of all he surveys, lord of the premises [with] his British air of superiority.

(Margaret Harkness [1889] 2003 p. 12)

This scene in Harkness' novel gives a strong sense of races mixing on the street and her focus is away from a more stratified economic or class categorisation. This also challenges the strategies used by Charles Booth, whose research had just been published as *Life and Labour* (Booth 1889, 1891). Booth and a team of researchers, which included Beatrice Potter, produced maps of London areas where distinctions were made between the 'lower class' represented in black and the 'upper class' represented in yellow, with several increments in-between. Whitechapel Road is represented in red, meaning well-to-do, with other mixed areas situated behind the main street. Booth's textual description of the Whitechapel area adds more detail and is more akin to Harkness' description, yet is at odds with the red colour coding:

Whitechapel is a veritable Tom Tiddler's ground, the Eldorado of the East, a gathering together of poor fortune seekers; ... Here just outside the old City Walls, have always lived the Jews, and here they are now in thousands, both old established and new comers, seeking their livelihood under conditions which seem to suit them on the middle ground between civilisation and barbarism.

(Booth 1889 p. 66)

This statement reflects something of David Englander's (1989 p. 555) claim, that "all the members of the Booth enquiry shared the dominant view of Jews as a peculiar people." It was Potter who wrote the chapter on the Jewish community, about which she was 'pleased' (Englander 1989 p. 557). And concerning Booth's colour classification system, Pfautz (1967: pp.192-93) points out that "At best the graphic expression of an almost infinite complication and endless variety of circumstances, cannot but be very imperfect ... every street is more or less mixed in character." More recently, Blair (2004 p. 825) has commented similarly about Booth's representation of Bloomsbury, as being 'obscuring,' rather than revealing, of "the welter of dominant, oppositional, and emergent cultural practices ... in all its seamlessness and vitality."

In her 'Returned South African' essays, Schreiner used a similar idea concerning race but emphasising that such binary divisions do not actually exist 'on the ground' in South Africa. In this Schreiner may also have been expressing the view that such race divisions did not actually exist elsewhere either, including in London, as recognised in Harkness' novel. In relating this back to women writers I am interested in, the idea that women should neither be grouped together nor kept apart because of race, nor because of their marital and economic status, is interesting. The crux here is that connections should be based on ideas and common goals. However, Schreiner, Marx and others would have been all too aware that divisions for women did exist on the ground in 1880s London, through both real and imagined city boundaries, family connections, upholding of reputations, through literary traditions, and decisions and alignments made by the women themselves. Yet, on the whole, they worked to forge links with women in different city spheres, crossing differences and boundaries, and used literature to erode them.

In attempting to 'paint' from what lies before me, I have re-read letters intertextually, unpacking their details whilst considering broader contexts, such as what Schreiner was working on when writing her long letter to Harkness. Other events have come into view from this micro perspective, concerning the circumstances around the small-scale break in relationship between Harkness and Marx, and what this says about women's varying sense of community and commitment to other women writers. And, concerning bigger-scale events such as the London Dock Strike in 1889, that was a major turning-point in labour history and in which Marx was a major player (Kapp 1976 pp. 328-334).

Yet, other things remain hidden from view, such as the journey the long letter has made since it was written in 1891 to the reappearance of part of it in this thesis as well as more widely through the Olive Schreiner Letters Online. The 'original' letter now no longer exists, just a microfiche version of a previously microfilmed copy of the original letter. This points to the complicated travels of the original, to the filmed copy, the microfilm, the transcribed version of the letter in the OSLO, and my copying it here. These transitions indicate a sense of historical layering, each signifying a part of the journey the letter has made, through other hands and various

archival processes. Yet it now has the same appearance as the other Schreiner letters online, with the ‘journey’ being indicated in a letter-header and a notation, although not marking the letter’s text. This raises the question, what journeys do historical letters make and how do these journeys impact upon how they are understood now and re-read? In terms of further understanding the connections between women writers in 1880s London, such vanished journeys act as a reminder that sources are simultaneously helpful and obscuring, at once revealing their content but without the extended context. This issue is furthered in the next chapter using palimpsestic ideas to explore different interconnected aspects in documents which build over time.

In terms of furthering my ideas about women’s writing and their cultural politics, this vignette looks behind published literature to the letters between women, and how, for instance, Schreiner used hers to convey the importance of women’s ‘bigger’ project. This was in terms of committing their time and energies to writing their cultural politics while avoiding gossip and small-scale bickering. As such, letters carried important messages to other women writers who were viewed as part of this project, and the long letter to Harkness is a testimony to the time given to persuade her to write more largely and impersonally, and by thinking more in terms of a unified ‘us.’ In the next vignette I build on this idea, arguing that letters were an important part in the process of women getting other women to work and write. Yet, as will be seen, there is evidence of a more subtle kind of intimacy between Schreiner and Marx than there was between Schreiner and Harkness, which relates to the kinds of ideas and writing Marx was engaging in.

Vignette Two: Women Living and Writing Cultural Politics

The life experiences and literary production of the women writers I am concerned with had varying overlaps, sometimes mirroring each other, and at other times divergent, contradictory even. While Marx was developing friendships with other women writers such as Schreiner and Harkness in the early part of the 1880s, both of whom used pseudonyms at times, Marx began presenting herself as a co-author, with the apparent married surname of Marx-Aveling. Her literary work often paralleled things she was affected by in life, such as with her reading of Ibsen’s play prompting

her to organise a performance at her home in 1885. This vignette considers the co-authored literature she produced, focussing particularly on the essay ‘The Woman Question’ (1886). The production of this essay reflects Marx’s life-choices at the time of writing, in terms of living unconventionally with Aveling, and also her trying to earn a living on her own terms. Such a close connection between literary production and what was going on in her life also occurred later, when Marx worked with Zangwill on their satirical response to the negative reviews circulating about the final scene of Ibsen’s play, something which was close to her heart and cultural political outlook.

In exploring this I rely mainly on letters published in the Olive Schreiner Letters Online, for although there are no extant Schreiner letters to Eleanor Marx, Marx does ‘appear’ in a number of the letters Schreiner wrote to other correspondents. There are nearly fifty letters which mention Eleanor and/or Edward Aveling. Thirty-two of these are to Havelock Ellis, six to Karl Pearson, three to Dollie Radford, and one each to Schreiner’s brother Will, her mother Rebecca, Maria Sharpe, Margaret Harkness, and secularist and editor George Bedborough. Re-reading across these letters demonstrates not only that connections and relationships varied widely, but also that Schreiner wrote about her friendship with Marx differently depending on who the recipient was. For example, Schreiner wrote much more ‘in the moment’ and generally more candidly about her to Ellis; she tried to introduce Marx to Pearson; and she wrote retrospectively to Radford about Marx’s death. Also, Schreiner expressed her concern with regards to Marx becoming a member of the Men and Women’s Club to Sharpe; and she wrote forthrightly about her epistolary relationships, including with Marx, to Harkness. These are small mentions which nonetheless contribute to understanding more about the friendship between Marx and Schreiner, about Schreiner’s varying forms of epistolary expression regarding this, and also about each woman’s literary endeavours. Additional letters come from the Eleanor Marx Papers, the Radford Family Archive and from Beatrice Webb’s (née Potter) diary in the Passfield Collection.

When and where Schreiner and Marx first met is not certain and Stanley (2002 p. 24) suggests this may have been in Eastbourne in June 1881 or Ventnor, Isle

of Wight, sometime between December 1881 and January 1882. One of Karl Marx's biographer's, McLellan (1973 p. 448), writes that Eleanor accompanied her father on a trip to Ventnor in January 1882 for his health, so their meeting then is possible. There is no evidence in the extant letters of Eleanor Marx about this. Marx was already close to the writers Dollie Radford, Ernest Radford and Clementina Black, however, who are mentioned in her letters to her sister Jenny. Also, she knew Beatrice Potter from the early 1880s, with the following extract from Potter's diary, which has been reproduced many times, saying much about Marx, Potter and the times:

Went in afternoon to B. M. & met Miss Marx in refreshment room. Daughter of Karl Marx, socialist writer and refugee. Gains her livelihood by teaching literature etc, & corresponding for socialist newspapers; now editing 'Progress' in the enforced absence of Mr. Foote. Very wrath ~~with~~ about imprisonment of latter. ... "We think the Christian religion an immoral illusion" ... It was useless to argue with her – she refused to recognise the beauty of the Christian religion. ... In person she is comely, dressed in a slovenly picaresque way with curly black hair ~~h~~eg flying about in all directions ... Lives alone, is much connected with Bradlaugh set, evidently peculiar views on love etc., & 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 & see her. Exactly the life & character I should like to study. Unfortunately one cannot mix with human beings without becoming more or less connected with them. If one takes one must also give, & a permanent relationship gradually rises up.⁸⁶

From this diary entry it is interesting to note Marx's repeated phrase 'We' in connection with beliefs on Christianity: even when having a one-to-one discussion with Potter, Marx spoke as part of a collective, giving a group rather than individual perspective. Marx was already working collaboratively by this time with Edward Aveling in editing, and she was both writing and procuring articles for the newspaper *Progress*. This was the beginning of a number of collaborative articles and ventures with Aveling. Other essays presented as jointly authored included: 'The Factory Hell' (1885), 'Shelley's Socialism: Two Lectures' (1888), 'The Woman Question' (1886), and, *The Working-Class Movement in America* (1887). The former two were authored by 'Edward Aveling & Eleanor Marx Aveling,' the latter two by 'Edward,

⁸⁶ Beatrice Webb's Diary, 24 May 1883, PC, my transcription.

and Eleanor Marx Aveling,' which might be construed as Edward having added Marx to his name as well, for these particular texts at least. Marx's marital authorship is significant here because of its purposive nature, through which she made a provocative statement concerning marriage, it being for her about self-fashioned relations between men and women based on economic, intellectual and sexual equality.

The B. M. is a reference to the British Museum, and the Reading Rooms therein were public spaces where literary women met and got to know each other at this time (Bernstein 2011). The lives of Potter, Marx, Levy, Black and others pivoted around its central location in Bloomsbury, close enough for many of these women to walk to. There was an apparent 'open to all' policy, yet some subtle restrictions: the minimum age was twenty-one, readers had to have a specific literary purpose, such as research, and they should be 'respectable.' This last vague requirement meant an application should be signed by another 'respectable' referee, such as a publisher, author of eminence, Member of Parliament, and so forth (Bernstein 2011 p. 5). Even with this discreet monitoring of access, there were still complaints about middle-class visitors having to mix with the lower classes, often made by staff who had to show the latter round (Wilson 2002 p. 36).

Whether real or imagined, some women felt they were a disturbance to male scholars in the Reading Rooms, as Amy Levy's words expressed in a satirical story called 'The Recent Telepathic Occurrence at the British Museum,' published in *The Woman's World* in 1888. In this Levy included a complaining Professor: "What had brought her? what cursed feminine impulse had prompted her to disturb him, to come between him and his work?" (Levy 1888a, pp. 31-32). Such boundaries provided yet more hurdles for women writers to negotiate. Also, some books were made unavailable to women as well, with Harkness writing to Schreiner about this, and only a fragment of this letter has survived, on the back of another letter: "I saw Eleanor in the Museum yesterday. She fairly danced with anger. I told her that the translation of the Karma Sutra was locked up in the Library, is refused to women. See if she doesn't get it!"⁸⁷ Harkness was of the opinion that Marx would not take no

⁸⁷ Olive Schreiner to Karl Pearson, 8 March 1886, UCL, London, OSLP transcription.

for an answer and was unconcerned about the consequences of demanding to see the book, although word would have circulated about this. Indeed word of mouth notions about Marx are clear in Potter's description of her as having 'evidently peculiar views on love' and 'somewhat "natural" relations with men!' Curiously this was written when Marx was still living at home, so before she had moved in with Aveling. Potter's views could not have been linked to economic status since the Marx residence was on Maitland Park Road, North London, a 'well-to-do' area according to Booth's map 1889. Her opinion therefore appears based on Marx's 'slovenly' appearance and also her connections to the 'Bradlaugh set.' Potter was clear about protecting her own reputation by keeping Marx at a distance. Yet at the same time she expressed intrigue about Marx's lifestyle by wanting to study her. Whether this was to do with Marx's controversial lifestyle or perhaps her Jewishness cannot be now known. Overall, however, this extract demonstrates how cautious women such as Potter were at this time to remain within 'respectable' society and how others such as Marx cared little about this (or underestimated the consequences of alternative ways of living). Schreiner, unlike Potter, had no reservations about being associated with Marx.

The first mention of Eleanor Marx in Schreiner's extant letters is dated 3 June 1884 and was to her brother Will. The letter was in fact written over three non-consecutive days in a week, Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday, and is quite unlike Schreiner's long letter to Harkness, which is more carefully structured. It displays Schreiner's 'in the moment' and 'in-flight' epistolary style (Stanley 2011b, p. 9) with phrases such as: "I am expecting Dr Aveling & Miss Marx to lunch with me, the Dr to read me some of his new poems which are shortly to be published. Here they are," on Tuesday, at which point the letter-writing paused and was continued two days later. Then on the Sunday she wrote "On my way back [from visiting the Potters] I turned in at Dr Aveling & had an hour's chat with him & Miss Marx."⁸⁸ This was a time of 'strong forward movement' in cultural politics, as Schreiner later reflected in her letter to Merriman in 1912, and her epistolary mode in the 1884 letter to her brother can be interpreted as enthusiastic in that she was getting to know like-minded

⁸⁸ Olive Schreiner to William Philip ('Will') Schreiner, 3 June 1884, UCT Manuscripts & Archives, OSLP transcription. Lines 37-38.

and literary people whom she could share her passion for writing and politics with. She was making visits around town, to the Marx Avelings and to Beatrice Potter, who had no reservations about Schreiner visiting her home. Also, there is no indication at this time that Schreiner disliked Aveling. This, however, was soon to change and Schreiner's actions are interesting in light of this.

At this same time, Havelock Ellis considered Schreiner and Marx's friendship already to be a close one. Indeed a letter Schreiner wrote to Ellis at this time indicates as much:

Speaking of the effect sexual feeling has on the mind, it is very clearly proved in the case of women. I must make more inquiries among other women, my friends who will have noticed & been able to analyze their feelings. ... Eleanor Marx the only woman I have spoken to on the subject feels much the same. ... I am going to ask Mrs Walter & some of my intimate friends.⁸⁹

These comments are significant as they point to a small and intimate circle which included Marx and expand upon the characteristics of the group (Allen 2000 p. 5). And such conversations about women's sexual feeling and mind work are interesting, evoked in a letter but clearly emanating from private conversations between friends who felt at ease with one another. Living near one another must also have enabled such meetings and discussions more frequently, making geographic closeness an important part of these women's lives, as communicated in Marx's choice of accommodations, and other women's too.

Ellis' essay about Marx points to a geographical closeness between Marx and Schreiner in occupying rooms near each other: "Olive had rooms in Fitzroy Street, which had probably been found for her by Eleanor, who occupied rooms not far away (No 12 in the same street) with Dr. Edward Aveling, to whom she had just joined her life" (Ellis 1935a, p. 343). A letter from Marx to Edgren-Leffler was addressed 12 Fitzroy Street and helps to clarify Ellis' recollection: "I shall be at home at 32 Great Coram Street on Wednesday evening but I shall be alone. It would probably be far more amusing & interesting for you if you will come & spend the

⁸⁹ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 16 July 1884, National English Literary Museum, Grahamstown, OSLP transcription. Lines 11-14, 32-33, 35-36.

evening here (Fitzroy St) on Friday when Edward will be there too.”⁹⁰ The Fitzroy address, therefore, was Aveling’s accommodation, which Marx was staying at on occasion, with Great Coram Street being fairly close by. If Marx had helped Schreiner to find rooms, as Ellis supposed, it was not the only time her advice was needed in this regard, as the following September Schreiner wrote: “Would you go for me to Eleanor, or rather would you find out where she is ^at once^ & send this letter to her. I have written to both the addresses I thought would find her & got no answer. It is to ask her for the address of those rooms Miss Harkness had.”⁹¹ This extract points to a direct early connection between Marx and Harkness, and provides a small but important clue to Harkness’ location in London at this time, since no documentation concerning this seems to have survived.

Treating Schreiner and Marx to be close and intimate friends at this point in time is problematised by Marx’s following actions. Not long after the previous letter to Edgren-Leffler was written, Marx wrote to her again about a trip she was going to take with Aveling: “Of course I will let you know how we get on. For the next few weeks at all event you can write to me at my own address & to Edward at Fitzroy Street. After that we think of going away. If we go I will tell you our address & you must then write to me as Mrs Aveling for I am going to take his name.”⁹² Marx had already informed Engels by this time, and had also written to her sister Laura about her and Aveling ‘setting up together.’ And she wrote to Dollie Radford, as noted earlier, a letter stating “I have already told a few very dear friends, & so I want you & Ernest to know too, because then you can make up your mind as to what you will do.”⁹³ Radford most likely replied favourably, although her letter to Marx no longer exists, but as Marx responded, “My dear Dollie, Your letter has made me feel so glad. You know I care very little for what ‘the world’ may say or think, but I do care, & very much, for my friends, & the thought that I might possibly be losing you two has been a very sad one.”⁹⁴ This demonstrates the strength of commitment Marx had

⁹⁰ Eleanor Marx to Anne Charlotte Edgren-Leffler, 2 June 1884, IISH, Amsterdam, my transcription.

⁹¹ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 3 September 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 7-9.

⁹² Eleanor Marx to Anne Charlotte Edgren, 19 June 1884, IISH, Amsterdam, my transcription.

⁹³ Eleanor Marx to Dollie Radford, 30 June 1884, RA Add MS 89029/2, my transcription.

⁹⁴ Eleanor Marx to Dollie Radford, 2 July 1884, RA Add MS 89029/2, my transcription.

with regards her close friends, and even more so that which she had to Aveling at this time.

There is no known comparable letter to Schreiner from Marx regarding her union to Aveling. It is possible one was never written, since they saw each other regularly. On the same day of Edgren-Leffler's letter – 19 June – Schreiner had been with both Marx and Aveling, writing to Ellis: "I am going down to the Oxford [music hall] where Dr Aveling is waiting for us."⁹⁵ However, there is no indication that Schreiner had been told about Marx and Aveling's plans. The trip Marx wrote about to Edgren-Leffler was to Middleton, Derbyshire; this was near to Wirksworth where Schreiner was staying around the same time for health reasons. While there, she wrote to Ellis almost daily about her health and work, and commented that: "Dr Aveling & Miss Marx are coming up to Middleton next week. That is about a mile & a half from this."⁹⁶ During this trip Schreiner did know that Marx and Aveling had joined their lives. Concomitantly, her increasing dislike for Aveling is expressed in her letters and connectedly a growing concern for her friend, writing to Ellis: "Dr Aveling & Miss Marx have just been to see me. She is now to be called Mrs Aveling. I was so glad to see her face. I love her, but she looks so miserable."⁹⁷ Marx never used Mrs Aveling for literary purposes, only Marx Aveling from this point onwards. That there appears more than a month long delay in telling Schreiner of their plans is odd in light of the apparent closeness between the women. Yet, also from this point, Schreiner took on a discreet but caring role towards Marx in her letters, which was going on 'behind the scenes' of Marx and Aveling's co-authoring of the texts listed above, and which is revealing of the private issues going on beneath the women's outward cultural politics.

Only a matter of days after Schreiner's 24 July letter to Ellis, after she heard Aveling read part of Ibsen's *Ghosts* aloud as previously noted in Chapter Three, she wrote explicitly about her feelings in another letter to Ellis:

I am tired but I want to write to you. I have so many plans about your coming, & don't know which will be best. You see at Bole Hill it is nice, &

⁹⁵ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 19 June 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 9-10.

⁹⁶ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 11 July 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 28-29.

⁹⁷ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 24 July 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 21-23.

in some ways I want so much to be there, but the Avelings being at Middleton makes it all different. I am beginning to have such a horror of Dr. A-, other-self. To say I dislike him doesn't express it at all, I have a fear, a horror of him when I am near. Every time I see him this shrinking grows stronger. Now you see when I am at Bole Hill they come every-day to see me. We shouldn't be much alone, & we have so many things to talk about. [...]

You see, Henry, we have so many things to do & to talk about. It may ^{^be^} the last time we are together ^{^(^certainly for months,^)^} perhaps for years. [...] And if we are at Wirksworth the Avelings will be always with us. I love her, but he makes me so unhappy [...]

You can't think what a horror I am getting to have of Dr. A. He is so selfish, but that doesn't account for the feeling of dread. Mrs. Walters has just the same intuitive feeling about him. I had it when I first saw him. I fought it down for Eleanor's sake, but here it is stronger than ever.⁹⁸

Schreiner used this letter to get things off her chest, but discreetly and to an intimate friend, although it is clear a discussion had already taken place with Mrs. Walters concerning Aveling. Her horror of Aveling, repeated in this letter, was 'intuitive' rather than based on anything specific, of a personal rather than professional nature, so the extent of Schreiner's 'fear' remains somewhat elusive. Again the 'bird-in-flight' epistolary style expressed her thoughts and concerns as she wrote. As such the letter appears unplanned, cathartic almost, with the letter-writing process affording a space for her views to be aired. Schreiner most certainly kept her views about Aveling private, for her friend's sake, and perhaps as a way of separating more personal issues from broader cultural political engagements.

Schreiner continued to air her views about Aveling in letters to Ellis. She also pro-actively protected her friend, and after Ellis' visit to Derbyshire she wrote to him to say: "What of the Avelings? Be sure you don't mention to anyone ~~our~~ my idea about the debt, because it might set other people to whom he owes money on him."⁹⁹ Aveling certainly already had a reputation for bad debts (Kapp 1976 pp. 37, 171-87, 189-91, 205-6, 440), and Schreiner was fully aware of this. Indeed this would not be the only time she pro-actively but discreetly looked out for her friend. At the time

⁹⁸ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 2 August 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 3-12, 18-24, 56-60.

⁹⁹ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 28 August 1884, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 16-18.

when Marx chose to live with Aveling, this was unusual at best and shockingly immoral at worst, with Schreiner's protective feelings connected. In 1886 Schreiner once again put pen to paper, this time to obstruct Marx from being invited to join the Men and Women's Club . This Club ran from 1885 until 1889 with the primary aim of discussing relationships between the sexes and this included marriage, prostitution and the work of Ibsen, all important topics for Marx (Porter 2004; Bland 1995; Walkowitz 1986, 1992). Club membership was, in the beginning, controlled by Pearson and his friend Elisabeth Cobb. Cobb recruited women she knew and could 'trust' and sent suggestions to Pearson of both suitable and unsuitable candidates, some she deemed 'unrefined' or 'too conventional,' and yet others 'more sexually adventurous' (Walkowitz 1986 p. 40). With regards to Marx, however, it was Schreiner who appeared to see her as an unsuitable member, the reasons for which centre on the difference between talking cultural politics, and living, writing, and publishing cultural politics.

Schreiner was a member from the start and left the Club before the end of 1886 and Marx appears to have been a guest only once, at the ninth meeting on 10 May 1886. Schreiner had offered to introduce Marx to Pearson earlier in the year, although this was not with a view to her being invited as a Club member: "Would you care to meet my friend Eleanor Marx Aveling? She is a woman of genius though she never has done & probably never will do any thing. [...] I have heard much of that man Roberts I met at your rooms I think I should like him a great deal. Wouldn't he be good for the club?"¹⁰⁰ While Schreiner clearly wanted to introduce two of her close friends to each other, there was no mention of Marx being 'good for the club,' as is mentioned of Roberts. Also, Schreiner did not appear to know that Pearson, through Bryan Donkin, had already invited Marx to join, most likely because she had been out of London since mid-January. Havelock Ellis had, however, already written to Schreiner in February positing the possibility and also his own strong view: "You silly old sweet girl to think Donkin was ill because you had a telegram from Eleanor! It's much more likely to be about her joining the club. If they won't have her I shall look upon the club as irretrievably damned ... These sort of women are hateful & if

¹⁰⁰ Olive Schreiner to Karl Pearson, 8 March 1886, UCL, London, OSLP transcription. Lines 5-11.

the club can't control its members it'll rapidly go to the devil" (Draznin 1992 p. 404). On finding out about this, Schreiner wrote directly to the Club Secretary from Southbourne-on-Sea:

Dear Miss Sharpe.

[...] Thanks for telling me about B.D.'s paper. I wish I had heard it. About Eleanor Marx Aveling. I heard from Dr D that Mr Pearson had asked him to ask Eleanor to join the club. I should have written to remonstrate with K.P. on the matter, but knew she would decline. I have not written to her or any one on the subject. I am sure that all of us men or women would be proud to have her if she could spare time to join, & that we all know & respect her for having had the courage of her opinions; but while personally looking up to & admiring her for her fearless conduct (even if we disagree with her theory) I should not have felt at all sure that some man or woman might not have felt that they suffered in being connected with one whom the outside world holds to have broken the most important of its conventional rules. I should not have liked to think anyone was feeling distressed ~~unreadable~~ ^on her account because I love her so.^ Viewed in the abstract such women as she & George Eliot are the most desirable of all for the club. We single women; ~~unreadable~~ ^we^ have married women who are living under a legal contract, & it seems to me most desirable that we should ^have^ some married women who have not put themselves under the legal contract. She would, I am sure, have no false sensitiveness if the morality or immorality of the legal contract were dis-cussed. & if she were ever invited to the club the evening when that was discussed would be the time to invite her. She has thought over it more deeply than any of us, & no one I know would so well be able to put the pros & cons of the question as she. But personally I don't want her to join the club because there might be the one person or other who didn't like it.

Excuse confusion, but it is this or nothing:

[...]

I am sure you must all love Eleanor if you knew her. It is such a pure, brave, beautiful nature.¹⁰¹

From this letter it is clear Bryan Donkin had informed Schreiner about both Marx's invitation to join the Club and her subsequent decline. Donkin had also invited Engels to join the Club, but he had also declined, similarly being far too busy. Marx's letter to Donkin earlier in February is clear enough about her reasons for not joining the club:

¹⁰¹ Olive Schreiner to Maria Sharpe m. Pearson (1890), 23 March 1886, UCL, London, OSLP transcription. Lines 7-42.

My dear Dr Donkin,

I have heard of the Club – & I am much obliged to Mr Pearson for asking me to join it. But I cannot – & for these reasons. First, I think many members of the Club wd decidedly object to my belonging to it. You see, it is a very different matter to advocate certain things in theory, & to have the courage to put one's theories into practice. Probably many of the good ladies in the club wd be much shocked at the idea of my becoming a member of it, & I shd only be giving Mr Pearson trouble if I accepted his kindly suggestion. But there is also another reason. I have, as it is, hardly amount of time for real study, & half the work I ought to do I don't do. And apart from this, ... I feel I must give to what seems to me the highest & most important work I cd do – i. e. the propaganda of Socialism.

It wd not be right to join this club well knowing that I cd not undertake to “write papers” for it or ~~ill~~ attend its meetings regularly, or even take such an interest in it as a member ought to take. If, however, mere “visitors” are admitted, & no one objects to me, I shd be very glad to go to any meeting & take part in any discussion on ^{^a^} question of which I know something. Please thank Mr Pearson very much for asking me. I have often wished to meet him – but have always, somehow, missed doing it.

If I went to the Club on an evening, I shd be glad if it cd be when you are there!

Yours very sincerely

Eleanor Marx Aveling¹⁰²

There are a number of similarities in the above letters, from Schreiner to Sharpe and from Marx to Donkin, not least the claim that Marx was too busy to join the Club, that ‘others’ might be harmed by being connected to her, and that it was one thing to agree with common-law marriage in theory, but quite a different matter in practice: in other words, the discussion group was all very well but it operated in a relatively safe zone in comparison to Marx who was openly living and writing about her views on marriage and other things. Both Schreiner's and Marx's assumptions about some Club members being ‘shocked’ most likely points to those individuals who were either closed off to the idea of common-law marriage, or who were not ready to engage with it in practice, and therefore would not want to be closely associated with the likes of Marx, as Potter had written earlier. Schreiner's letter was in a way

¹⁰² Eleanor Marx to Dr Donkin, 8 February 1886, IISH, Amsterdam, my transcription.

unnecessary since Marx had already declined the invitation. But why does it have the final clear statement that ‘personally I don’t want her to join the club because there might be the one person or other who didn’t like it’? One possible reason is that Schreiner assumed further attempts would be made to persuade Marx to join the Club and felt that her friend should be protected from this. Also, Schreiner knew who the ‘one person or other’ was who would not like it with more certainty than is expressed in her letter. Schreiner, who was moving away from the Men and Women’s Club during 1886, worded her letter to Sharpe carefully, and no doubt had her friend’s interests at heart.

In considering Marx in relation to joining the Men and Women’s Club, there are a number of points to be made. The boundaries of the Club were closely monitored, and this had an impact upon who were seen as suitable members: this would in turn have impacted upon the work the Club produced. Marx was viewed as suitable in one sense, as she was different from other members in being neither legally married nor single. Yet she was at the same time unsuitable for this same reason, because her actions meant she was ‘committed’ and had ‘definite views’ about this, rather than being open to alternative forms of unions between men and women. She was also a radical rather than a reformist, a daughter of Karl Marx, and politically and in other ways provocative at times. Yet Marx’s letter to Dollie Radford in June 1884 shows Marx to have been sympathetic to all sides of the marriage question, knowing her own decision might not be for everyone, might impact badly on other more ‘respectable’ people and she understood this because “people [are] brought up differently, [and] with all the old ideas & prejudices will think me very wrong, & if you do I shall not mind it, but simply ‘put myself in your place.’”¹⁰³ Marx was living out her politics regarding marriage and this had consequences regarding her friendships. She was also involving her cultural politics in the literature she produced at this same time, not least by signing her work Eleanor Marx-Aveling, a strong statement in itself. The majority of her published work was signed as such, including the work she co-authored with Aveling, such as the essay ‘The Woman Question,’ published in the long-running *Westminster Review* for

¹⁰³ Eleanor Marx to Dollie Radford, 30 June 1884, RA Add MS 89029/2, my transcription.

‘philosophical radicals’ in January 1886, and with Zangwill, such as ‘A Doll’s House Repaired’ published in the progressive cultural paper *Time*, in 1891.

In the year prior to publication of the Marx and Aveling essay, Marx had reviewed the English translation of German Socialist August Bebel’s *Women in the Past, Present and the Future* (1879). Bebel’s original book had been banned in Germany and the translation had met with a “vituperative reception” in England (Marx Aveling 1886 p. 4). Also, Bebel had been “ascribed ... every possible and impossible vice” by the German press (Marx Aveling 1886 p. 1). ‘The Woman Question’ essay was therefore both an attack on Bebel’s critics and a textual space to air the author’s own views on the subject. At the outset it is stated that the authors “are giving utterance to their own opinions as two individual Socialists,” but they consider these to be widely shared by “the majority of their fellow-thinkers” (Marx Aveling 1886 p. 3), broadening out the authorial reach of the text in a similar way to Marx using ‘we’ in her conversation with Potter mentioned earlier. The essay can be summarised as being based on labour theory and inequality and was situated among other texts focussed on these things.

The surrounding context was one of moral and social upheaval reflected in the publication of W. T. Stead’s ‘Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon’ articles published in the summer of 1885, the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885, and debates surrounding the Contagious Diseases Act, repealed in 1886. Indeed it is Marx and Aveling’s view that “Society is morally bankrupt, and in nothing does this gruesome moral bankruptcy come out with a more hideous distinction than in the relation between men and women” (Marx Aveling 1886 p. 4). In terms of literary references, obviously the essay was predominantly inspired by Bebel’s work, although there are many other mentions in this relatively short text including Shelley, Shakespeare, Tennyson, Coleridge, John Stuart Mill, Isabella Beecher Hooker, Mary Wollstonecraft and Olive Schreiner. In making such broad references, the authors demonstrate how their topic and the associated debate had been on-going and was in the minds of writers, activists and critics. This pointed to the importance for the authors of understanding something historically, as it had evolved over time; to demonstrate that women had not always been subordinate to

men, but the current situation was a part of an on-going patriarchal agenda. Shakespeare's characters Miranda (*The Tempest*), Helena (*All's Well That Ends Well*) and Rosalind (*As You Like It*) are referenced as women displaying strong intellect and desires. Beecher Hooker was referenced to involve the argument about educating children about the subject of sex relations. And Schreiner's SAF is cited to include the view that men and women are born equal, something spoken of by the character Lyndall in the novel. Including these references added gravitas to the argument the authors wanted to project. This might be interpreted as a lack of confidence in their own authority, or as them wanting to collaborate with these other authors, critics and activists in an on-going argument about equality. Shortly after the publication of 'The Woman Question' Edward Aveling wrote of this essay to Edgren-Leffler, stating it was "written and signed by the pair of us [and is] very outspoken." Its outspokenness was certainly to add to this debate. Yet it might also have had negative consequences for Marx given her constant difficulty in getting work, and negative views and reviews about her person and literature.

Marx's life experiences, life choices and her cultural politics were reflected in the literature she produced, such as 'The Woman Question,' and with the 'married' authorial name she assigned to such texts. Her textual responses were often quickly undertaken and published, including under her own steam. Another instance concerns the first public performance of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in London in 1889, and the negative reviews that followed, when Marx went on to collaborate with Zangwill to produce 'A Doll's House Repaired' (1891). This is considered in the next vignette.

This vignette has focussed on the years 1880-1886, during which Schreiner and Marx were developing their friendship in London and Marx was joining her life to Edward Aveling, and this is an unexplored area in the biographies about Marx. Re-reading across Schreiner's letters to other people shows the relationship between Schreiner and Marx to be a close one, geographically, intellectually and emotionally at this time. It also demonstrates that Schreiner discreetly protected her friend on a number of occasions from contact with others who might not appreciate Marx's common-law union with Aveling. Marx had a somewhat forthright way of

expressing her beliefs and views (which she did energetically to Potter in the British Museum). Harkness also commented about Marx similarly, that she was not to be deterred when she set her mind to something. Similar comments were made about Olive Schreiner's behaviour. There is, however, a difference in how Marx connected her cultural politics in writing and her lifestyle choices, which for her were clearly inseparable.

Marx was not opposed to controversy. She chose not to use a pseudonym. She utilised her 'married' name for her literary output from 1884 as a way of pointing up her political standpoint on equal unions between men and women, and the narrow views of critics and the literary establishment. She also used the work of other authors mimetically to further her cultural politics more broadly through translation. The decisions Marx took during the early part of the 1880s had repercussions later, with the next vignette building on her literary 'outspokenness,' her bringing often unwelcomed literature to an English-speaking audience, and the consequences of such actions. In this, an intertextual approach is applied to access how Marx used translations purposively, and a sociology of small things once again draws to the fore details which have been otherwise overlooked to guide the research.

Vignette Three: Women Writers, Mimetic Voices, and Literary Translations

Eleanor Marx's authorial voice was at times mimetic – taking up the work of others in political, subversive and performative ways – and this was the case for various of her literary translations. She spent many years and much time and effort in completing translations, demonstrating her strong commitment to some other authors, the importance of aligning her name to their work, whilst also echoing (if not always strictly copying) their message. In this sense she can be seen to pick up the baton of where another author left off, moving the text forward to a broader readership, most often English-speaking. This vignette, therefore, explores mimesis as a cultural and political tool employed by Marx. And it builds on the previous vignette in two ways: By showing Marx as an active and provocative proponent in

spreading ideas presented in certain texts through her imitative translations and the importance of international literatures in affording her this outlet; and, by considering Marx as a collaborator of a different kind, in working with authors she did not know personally, and with others who commissioned her to undertake some of the translations. This vignette will show the value of her work in a difficult to access profession, along with the importance of friendships in inspiring and supporting Marx while she undertook such work.

The concept of mimesis is used in this vignette to point to various interpretations of original texts, how and why these are created in the same, similar and different ways. Mimesis can be strategically and reflexively employed by a writer to point to particular aspects in original texts, and to offer alternative interpretations in textual or other forms, thus working towards multi-voiced 'truths' (Platt 1989). Additionally, following Adorno (1984), Benjamin (1992) and Taussig (1993) in O'Neill et al (2002 p. 80), I do not use mimesis to mean only to imitate, but to point more sociologically to "the playfulness of our being in the world in critical tension to constructive rationality, reason, the 'out there' sense of our being in the world." As such mimesis is used here as a way of describing Marx's actions and intent when presenting her own versions of the original works of other authors, in order to express her political views, to subvert meanings, and to comment on issues pertaining to her feminist, socialist standpoints, and her 'sense of being in the world' in 1880s London.

When presenting a new version of a text, Marx's copy had at times explicit, and at other times more subtle differences from the original. It was, however, vital that the original work was well known and understood, as with *A Doll's House* (original) and 'A Doll's House Repaired' (essay and imitation), so that the audiences of both works would be aware of the differences between the two texts. If the original was un- or less well-known the imitation might be taken literally, and another message entirely might be read from it. Thus Marx and Zangwill's choice of text, in their 'repairing' of Ibsen's play, was all the more potent because of its then recent furore in London. What is also striking when reading this 'repaired' version is that the authors do not hold themselves back and their humour and sarcasm forces its

way through Ibsen's original work, in what must surely have been a satisfying and cathartic literary experience. The authors state that they had "the express purpose of complying with the demand of the English common sense" (Tsuzuki 1967 p. 182n), so in their version of the play, Nora is shamed by her husband as 'a hypocrite, liar and a criminal' who had 'ruined' his future and was incapable of caring for their children. Women of Nora's class and social standing who undertook paid work are described as 'degradable' and "what is worse, it makes the wife independent of her husband" (Marx Aveling and Zangwill 1891). The authors espouse their cultural politics strongly, not only regarding marriage but also their views of the literary establishment. Their opening statement clearly downsizes "the older, the respectable, the really responsible critics [who] have protested [and] shown how immoral the play is; how ridiculous – and hateful – the conception of a woman deliberately abandoning husband and children must be to an English audience" (Marx Aveling and Zangwill 1891). The authors also make the point of thanking other translators who have worked to 'correct' Ibsen's final scene, and who have inspired their own version, which "we are convinced that Ibsen himself will prefer ... to his own which is so weak" (Marx Aveling and Zangwill 1891). In this opening example, Marx and Zangwill were not criticising the author, indeed Ibsen's message is amplified, as they attacked those who sought melodramatic closure which further enforced gender inequalities. Yet, in other examples of translation works to follow shortly, different ends are achieved through mimetic means.

Eleanor Marx was a writer/translator who thought on an international level, beyond the city boundaries. She was often faced with difficulties, both personal and financial, and found getting work troublesome at times. Also, as already mentioned, some of her translations were publicly lambasted as mediocre in comparison to the translations of others. Yet she fought to overcome these difficulties. In December 1884 Marx wrote to Havelock Ellis (1935a, p. 35): "I feel I must do something to make people understand our Ibsen a little more than they do." Prior to this she had organised the reading of Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* at her home for "only people who we know do love and understand Ibsen already, or those who will love and understand him, and who in turn will go on preaching him to others" (Ellis 1935a, p.

35). Following this, Marx did not just leave it to others to ‘preach’ about Ibsen, but went on to translate a number of his plays as a way of spreading the word beyond her own circle of friends.

Marx actually wrote a great number of things prior to and beyond 1886-1890, mostly newspaper articles and essays, as well as her many letters. This included a translation of Russian anarchist Sergey Stepniak’s article ‘Russian Political Prisons’ in 1884 for the *Today* magazine (Kapp 1976 p. 33); a review of the English translation of August Bebel’s *Woman in the Past, Present and Future* (1885), already mentioned; and in 1886 her English translation of French journalist and revolutionary socialist Hippolyte Lissagaray’s *History of the Commune* was published. Marx had actually done the work earlier when she was engaged to the author (Kapp 1972 p. 180, 187), and this shows her commitment to translating as dating from the 1870s. Here I shall focus on the literary translations published between 1886 and 1890, to which Marx dedicated much time, not only in terms of the actual translating but also in learning new languages to do so. They are viewed here as copies or imitations of the originals to which Marx aligned her name. And such activities point to women like Marx thinking beyond the remit of texts they themselves produced, towards what the texts of others could achieve in wider circulation. For example, in bringing ‘difficult’ literature to London, such as Ibsen’s *Ghosts*, Lord prompted discussions about moral standards, marriage, love, sex, illegitimacy and incest, largely unwelcome topics at the time. What then did Marx intend regarding the literature and topics she translated? Some background to Marx’s interest in literature as well as the theatre from the 1870s on, and London’s emerging theatrical literary scene, forms the context.

Leading up to the 1880s, some theatre playwrights became increasingly concerned with social issues, such as poverty, class distinctions, education and marriage. Norwegian Henrik Ibsen and Russian Anton Chekov led the way, inspiring for instance, Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw to write more politically, helping change the bourgeois theatre scene from being predominantly about entertainment (Hartnoll 1985). There was a shift away from melodramas and the classics, to plays dealing with social relations in more everyday settings. Women such as Marx were

attracted to the theatre (and theatrical literature), as discussed in Chapter Three, and the reason for this was because the theatre was a space, or “a laboratory of social change, establishing the expressive conditions of possibility for new social selves and even collective mobilization in the public sphere” (Walkowitz 2012 p. 47).

As an aspiring literary scholar and actor Marx was a regular visitor to the theatre and was involved in a number of literary groups organised by the textual scholar Frederick James Furnivall (1825-1910) from the late-1870s to the early 1880s. These included the New Shakespeare Society, the Browning Society, the Shelley Society and others (see Pykett 2000 p. 18; Kapp 1972 p. 187; Meier 1982 p. 133). The New Shakespeare Society held its meetings in the Women’s Reading Room of University College in Gower Street near the British Museum (Kapp 1972 pp. 192-3). The ‘Dogberry’ Shakespeare Reading Club grew out of this, and was more private with meetings often held at the Marxes’ house (Kapp 1972 p. 193; Comyn 1922 p. 162). This was a significant time in Marx’s life, as she established life-long friendships with aspiring writers such as Dollie and Ernest Radford, started researching for Furnivall in the British Museum Reading Rooms, and took up acting lessons with a retired actress Mrs. Vezin (Meier 1982 p. 133). Marx had doubts about her skills as an actress, although she was aware the lessons would help with public speaking if nothing else, with her much complimented oratory in later years testimony to this. And while Marx’s acting career remained fairly low key, she went on to translate numerous works on both a voluntary and commissioned basis. These are mentioned in letters to her sister Laura, in which it is also possible to glimpse some interesting connections between Marx and Laura with Levy, Harkness, Schreiner and others, such as the controversial novelist George Moore. There are also mentions of some of the literature these writers were working on and these provided a frame of influence on Marx during this time.

In 1886 Marx translated Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary: Provincial Manners*, work which had been commissioned by Moore, whose writing Marx greatly admired (Tsuzuki 1967 p. 166). Marx also stated her reason for translating this novel in the Introduction as being that Flaubert was still so little known in England. Kapp (1976 p. 95) suggests Moore may have been introduced to Marx by Schreiner. Schreiner’s

letters certainly show she met with Moore during the mid-1880s, referring to him as a ‘genius’ at one point, and at this time he was involved in debates concerning literary censorship. Moore’s argument was that literature should not be banned because of perceived unpleasant aspects in the text as this was tantamount to “the suppression of authorial free expression” (Llewellyn & Heilmann 2007 p. 372). Moore went on to support his own publisher Vizetelly & Co., prosecuted in 1889 for publishing Zola, then considered obscene. This led to bankruptcy for the publishers, imprisonment for Vizetelly himself, and with Moore – who was involved in the translating process of Zola – being connected to criminal activities (Llewellyn & Heilmann 2007 p. 379). The National Vigilance Society, who had been the driving force behind the Vizetelly case, also had Marx’s translation of Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* on their list of indictable books (Apter 2007 p. 74). Nothing came of this, but in accepting this commission Marx was, by association, connected to this matter, and this is perhaps another one of the causes of her struggle to get enough work and gain financial or other rewards (Merkle et al 2010 p. 112). In effect then, Marx presenting her version of Flaubert’s novel not only brought attention to this author and literary work, but also to Moore’s argument for free expression, to censorship issues of the time, and to Marx’s impulse to freely express herself too. Marx also went so far as to state in the Introduction to her translation that differences abound between her version and Flaubert’s original, which I return to shortly.

After her work on Flaubert, Marx and Aveling spent time in ‘Shakespeare’s country,’ Stratford-upon-Avon, in August 1887. Marx wrote to her sister Laura to say “I am translating some of [Alexander] Kielland’s wonderful short stories from the Norwegian. You ought to read Keilland ... for I am sure you & Paul wd admire him immensely.”¹⁰⁴ Keilland, like Ibsen, was considered one of Norway’s great writers and dealt with social issues of the time, commenting on poverty and education among other things. Which of Keilland’s stories Marx was working on is unclear. One story she did translate, called ‘A Ball-Mood,’ was published in *Time* in May 1890. This focussed on a young girl swept up by riches, only to be reminded at a ball of her less than salubrious up-bringing and that she did not fit in with her

¹⁰⁴ Eleanor Marx to Laura Lafargue, 30 August 1887, IISH, Amsterdam, my translation.

present company. In this same letter Marx wrote, “Olive Schreiner has been talking to me a great deal about you & Paul ... If you can ... get the *Fortnightly*, look at Olive’s allegory on ‘Woman’ in the August number. As an allegory I think it perfect.”¹⁰⁵ The allegory was ‘Three Dreams in a Desert’¹⁰⁶ which, in brief, is about women’s oppression and having to endure a difficult struggle to get beyond the things that hold them back, similar to the message presented in ‘A Ball-Mood.’ In considering this allegory ‘perfect,’ Marx was empathising with its meaning and admiring and recommending its author. And by bringing another version of Keilland’s stories into literary circulation, Marx found another way of engaging with and expressing her views on class and gender inequality, as she did in her broader socialist activities.

Marx returned to working on Ibsen’s play in July 1888, completing *An Enemy of Society*, which was later revised (and superseded) by William Archer as *An Enemy of the People* in 1890. This was commissioned work, as she explained in a letter to Laura, which also makes clear what else Marx was doing at the same time: “I’m ‘hacking’ chiefly. I’ve just finished – for the magnificent sum of £5 a translation from the Norwegian (I think I told you I’d learnt Norwegian lately) of Ibsen’s *Folkefiede* & I’m going to edit for the ‘Mermaid Series’ that quaint Elizabethan play ‘A Warning to Fair Women’ – ... I am also still ‘sweating’ for Miss Zimmern.”¹⁰⁷ Whilst earning money was a major priority for Marx, she was most likely attracted to *An Enemy of Society* as it was Ibsen’s attack on the critics of *Ghosts*. She continued her commitment to translating Ibsen’s *The Pillars of Society and Other Plays* (1888), *The Lady from the Sea* (1890), and *The Wild Duck* (1890). This was clearly a busy time for Marx, but she earned only a little money. Additionally, she undertook another translation during the late 1880s, of Amy Levy’s novel *Reuben Sachs*, first published in 1888 with the translation appearing in German in the socialist theoretical newspaper *Die Neue Zeit* in 1889.

It is difficult to be certain why Marx translated Levy’s novel since it is not mentioned in Marx’s nor Levy’s surviving personal papers. Also, there is no record

¹⁰⁵ Eleanor Marx to Laura Lafargue, 30 August 1887, IISH, Amsterdam, my translation.

¹⁰⁶ Olive Schreiner (1887) ‘Three Dreams in a Desert,’ *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 42, pp. 198-203.

¹⁰⁷ Eleanor Marx to Laura Lafargue, 24 July 1888, IISH, Amsterdam, my transcription.

of any meeting with Marx in Levy's 1889 diary about the publication of the translation, which is odd since Levy usually logged such details. Nonetheless this must have been an important task for Marx to undertake, being the only translation she did "not into but out of her native tongue" (Kapp 1976 p. 258) and a number of interpretations have been put forward. Kapp (1976 p. 260) suggests it came about because of Marx's increasing draw to the plight of "poverty-stricken and persecuted working-class Jews," although in fact these are not represented in *Reuben Sachs*, which focusses on a middle-class Jewish people. Emma Francis (2000 p. 120), following Kapp's suggestion, proposes that translating *Reuben Sachs* allowed Marx "the opportunity to engage with her own Jewishness (despite the fact the subject was taboo within her own family)" and that she was drawn to women "whose complicity with bourgeois corruption brutalizes and impoverishes." And further to this Nord (1995 p. 203) states that Marx translating this particular novel is unsurprising "for its indictment of upper-bourgeois life – in this case Jewish life – is scathing." Marx might have identified with Judith Quixano in the story, who, because of her position in society, is deemed an unsuitable spouse for Reuben Sachs. And she might similarly have identified with some other key women protagonists: Emma in *Madame Bovary* and Nora in *A Doll's House*, for example. This has led some scholars to posit that Marx empathised with their circumstances, seeing reflections of her own life and issues (Pykett 2000). While it is possible to argue that Marx chose these texts because of women characters she was drawn to, it is also important to note that many of her translations do not fit this view.

My own view as to why Marx translated *Reuben Sachs* (and thus produced an imitation of the original) is based on Marx favouring work which had the potential to make people see and think about things differently. She was a protagonist of social change and this story brings home the consequences on the individual of adhering to traditions and societal expectations which are built on gender inequality. The narrative revolves around the economic status and social capital of the characters. Reuben Sachs – "the pride of his family" – chooses a life in politics (which is what is expected of him) and shuns marrying Judith Quixano (whom he loves but who is considered not good enough for him). Levy ([1888d]1993 p. 209) describes Judith's

situation as ‘repressive’ for: “This woman, with her beauty, her intelligence, her power of feeling, saw herself merely as one of a vast crowd of girls awaiting their promotion by marriage.” Judith’s ‘assets’ are overlooked, therefore, and she is rejected for being too lowly – of class, of wealth, of connections – thus of no real benefit to the Sachs family. With the idea of inequality and marriage being explored in Marx and Aveling’s earlier essay ‘The Woman Question’ (1886), Levy’s story offered a harsh vision of the consequences of relationships being based on economics and the kinds of connectedness Marx and Aveling criticised. In the end Reuben dies from over work and Judith marries for status not love. Being published in this particular newspaper, Marx’s copy of Levy’s *Reuben Sachs* was clearly aimed at and successfully reached a wider readership, especially political radicals, since other contributors to the paper included Rosa Luxemburg and Engels.

Regarding whether Levy (or someone else) commissioned Marx to undertake the work on *Reuben Sachs*, it is also only possible to speculate. There are, however, some hints in the following reminiscences by the socialist historian Max Beer. Beer met Marx in 1894, knowing her primarily as the translator of Amy Levy’s book (Beer 1935 p. 69). Beer was so impressed with the novel that, upon meeting Marx, he asked her about Levy, and later recollected Marx’s reply, which offers some indication as to Marx’s intent:

‘Amy,’ said Eleanor, ‘was a good friend of mine, and only a few years my junior. I am the only one of my family who felt drawn to Jewish people ... My happiest moments are when I am in the East End amidst Jewish workpeople. But Amy belonged to a middle-class family, and lived in Bloomsbury, not far from the British Museum. We used to meet there; I was working on Ibsen translations and she on the German poets, Lenau, Heine, and others ... There are a good many English writers who have tried their hand at translating Heine’s *Leider*. Amy was the best of them ... Her *Reuben Sachs* was a revelation even to those who thought they knew her ... The Jewish community did not relish the book, but did not show the animosity of which the many-tongued *fama* gossiped. Amy told me that she was treated to the last with great kindness by the best families of the community.’

(Beer 1935 pp. 72-73)

These comments, although from Beer’s recollection of a meeting which had occurred over forty years before, confirm that Levy and Marx were friends who met in the

British Museum Reading Room, where they both researched and worked on their various translations and other literary endeavours, and is the only text I have found which mentions this. Since Marx was working on her Ibsen translations in 1888, and Levy on Heine for Lady Katie Magnus's book *Jewish Portraits* (1888) (Beckman 2000 p. 144), it is likely that this was the year Marx was referring to in saying to Beer that 'we used to meet there.' Levy was also working on *Reuben Sachs* at this time, which can be seen as a collection of Jewish portraits, albeit ones which had not been well received by all: the PMG stated shortly after Levy's death that: "In her novel on Jewish life called 'Reuben Sachs' she by no means flatters the Jews."¹⁰⁸ Yet, to Marx personally the novel was 'a revelation.'

This same recollection from Beer also suggests that the friendship between the two women might have been primarily literary, for Marx enjoyed spending time with the East End 'Jewish workpeople' while Levy was inclined to Bloomsbury and more middle class circles. Levy was not mentioned in Dollie Radford's diary entries about Radford and Marx attending socialist lectures together (Beckman 2000 p. 83). Levy had also commented on her own middle class situation in a letter addressed to Violet Paget: "Miss Black & her sister are living on the top floor of a house in Fitzroy St; they do their own housework, ~~attend~~ & are quite & completely domestic unless when they are attending Socialist or Anarchist meetings. I confess, that my own Philistine, middleclass notions of comfort wd. not be met by their ménage."¹⁰⁹ Levy and Marx were quite different kinds of writers, therefore, with this overlapping interest in the presentation of Jewish communities unifying their views for a time.

Some translations, it is likely, were undertaken for a combination of factors, because of a mix of personal or political connectedness, or some interest Marx had to the narrative, a particular character, or the original author of a text, thus espousing her own cultural politics through these features. Or, for the more basic necessity of earning money, again tapping into feminist issues concerning a woman's right to support herself financially. And, to help spread ideas she considered important that might otherwise have a limited readership. One thing is more certain; while Marx was bold in her use of her 'married' authorial name, in her life choices, and in the

¹⁰⁸ Anonymous (1889) 'Death of a Jewish Authoress,' PMG, Issue 7642, 14 September, p. 5.

¹⁰⁹ Amy Levy to Violet Paget, 26 November [1886], VLC, Colby, my transcription.

literature she chose to mimetically reproduce and translate, there was at times an underlying vulnerability at play, suggesting that she had, at times, a fairly low opinion of herself. This can be understood more in relation to her friendships with other women writers and reading letters intertextually points up things about these connections.

In May 1884, while she was working on the ‘translation of a translation’ of Stepniak’s article, ‘devilling’ other articles for Miss Zimmern, and preparing material for the English translation of their father’s *Das Capital*, Eleanor Marx wrote to her sister Laura: “I don’t half like writing articles for other people to sign, but necessity knows no laws & 5\ is 5\ ... Indeed I really work from about 9 in the morning till late at night, so often till early the next day. ‘And yet not happy’ ... and am very poor.”¹¹⁰ Helen Zimmern (1846-1934) was a German born writer and translator who introduced German and Italian literatures to English audiences. She published in many newspapers and journals, yet did not credit Marx for any of the work she commissioned her to do. Marx’s description of ‘devilling’ is directed at her own situation: “It means that someone who is lucky enough to get more literary work than he or she can do, employs other less fortunate individuals to do his or her work ... She gets, says 30/ to 35/ shillings & pays me 5/ to 7/6!”¹¹¹ This sums up the future years in which Marx wrote and translated for little money or recognition, but out of love and loyalty to her father and other close friends and associates, often at the expense of her own well-being.

In the Introduction to her translation of *Madame Bovary*, as well as stating her reason for choosing this particular novel, Marx also described herself as a ‘conscientious worker’ albeit aware of her own “weaknesses, shortcomings, [and] failures of my work” (Marx Aveling 1886 pp. xxi-xxii). Not only do such ‘failings’ point to the differences between Marx’s version and the original text in a mimetic sense, there is more to be said about this hardly self-confident description, which, when compared to her other ‘methods of translation’ highlights what doing translation work actually meant to her. Marx comments, “the genius [translator]... re-creates a work in his own language” and “the hack translator, who, armed with a

¹¹⁰ Eleanor Marx to Laura Lafargue, 9 May 1884, IISH, Amsterdam, my translation.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

dictionary, rushes in where his betters fear to tread,” whereas, in comparison, the ‘conscientious worker’ does the best job they can to ‘induce’ others to go to the original. Marx then might not have viewed herself and understood her position in the literary world as a writer of original texts, as Schreiner, Levy and Harkness were, or were in the process of becoming. Instead she was a labourer communicating an important message and pointing her readers to the original work also. There is an important distinction here, in terms of Marx making readers aware of both versions of a work, and thus the differences between the two also. In his essay about Marx, Ellis did little to recognise this aspect or to rebut the opinion of Marx as a literary hack, however, praising her on the one hand yet positioning himself as her literary guide and commissioner of work on the other, something which has been repeated in biographies about Marx (Tsuzuki 1967; Kapp 1976). Yet this view can be argued against through a close re-reading of the essay as can the ‘Eleanor Marx’ he choreographed.

Some of the letters that Marx wrote to Schreiner were forwarded to Ellis, and other letters Marx wrote directly to him. Of the eighteen letters mentioned above, thirteen were written by Marx and at that point were still in his possession, but which are now untraceable, aside from four in Yale University Library. However, Ellis wrote that “Nearly all the letters of Eleanor’s I have preserved are concerned with literary work and often with schemes in which she could co-operate” (Ellis 1935a, p. 34). The dates of the letters Ellis used range from June 1884 to December 1888, with a final mention of a last letter Marx sent to Edith Lees Ellis in 1898. One letter which was particularly long, dated 16 June 1885, was sent to Ellis by Schreiner because, he stated, he was mentioned in it (Ellis 1935a, p. 348). Ellis relied primarily on this letter for his interpretation of Marx’s persona in and beyond this year.

The various extracts Ellis includes in his essay give a particular view of Marx as reliant upon Schreiner for her love and support and on Ellis for the literary work he gave her. The 16 June 1885 letter is described as “chiefly interesting as an intimate revelation of the real Eleanor,” by which he meant she was modest and needy (Ellis 1935a, p. 352). Ellis (1935a, p. 34) claimed he wanted to help Marx and did so by commissioning her to translate Ibsen rather than offering her financial

assistance. However, since Marx had translated various texts during the early 1880s and was by 1884 earning money by ‘devilling’ for Miss Zimmern among other things, she was clearly already active in her own literary direction, and searching for different commissions was part of this, although this was not always easy. I quote extensively from this long and intimate letter, as it provides further details about how some translations came about, yet leaves questions as to why this letter was given to Ellis, over and above his ‘being mentioned in it’:

‘My Olive, I wonder if I bore you with my stupid letters – as I wonder if, one of these days, you will get horribly tired of me altogether. This is no “figure of speech”. I really *do* wonder, or rather fear. I have such a terror of losing your love. I have such a strong feeling, borne of a pretty large experience, that to care over much for a thing is to make sure of losing it. I think of you, and one or two other real friends, in an agony of fear and doubt. Silly perhaps, but so it is, and I can’t pretend to you to be better, or stronger, than I am. I keep wanting to hear you *say* you love me just a little. You do not know Olive, how my whole nature craves for love. And since my parents died I have had so little *real* – i.e. pure, unselfish love. If you had ever been in our home, if you had ever seen my father and mother, known what *he* was to me, you would understand better both my yearning for love, given and received, and my intense need of sympathy [...]

Yet apart even from all the other troubles, we have mere money troubles enough to worry an ordinary man or woman into the grave. ... It is almost impossible for me now to get work that is even decently paid for, and Edward gets little enough. [...]

Just speaking of Dollie Radford reminds me that you said that you would like to know her better. She is most anxious to know you. Shall I call on you with her one of these days? She is a very sweet little thing, a true, staunch friend of mine, and I fancy you two would get on. [...]

I also want you, my dearie, to explain something for me to Mrs. Walters. She wrote me a letter that I was delighted to have – for you know what I feel about her – and yet I never told her I was, or wrote to her, or thanked her. She may think this unkind or rude. Will you make her understand that I only did not write because I like her far too well to send a mere formal letter? In fact, I feel that, to her, I could only write from my very heart or not at all, and I have had so much trouble that if I had written to her as to a strange, and not frankly about all, I should have felt as if I were telling a lie. Yet I don’t want to tell her my troubles. No one but you and possibly Dollie should ever hear a word of them if I could help it. ... How I wish Mrs. Walters were in London ! For you, dear, as well as for myself. [...]

When can we have that day you rather rashly suggested we should have with Henry [Havelock] Ellis? It is too delicious a thought to be given up, and my only dread is that H. E. with his unselfishness pretends to like me for your sake. There is so little in me to like or interest people.'

(Ellis 1935a, pp. 348-351)

This letter indicates that Marx had written other 'stupid letters' to Schreiner. Her fear of losing Schreiner's friendship is clear, and she compares this to losing her mother and father, events which had occurred recently. There is a sense of Marx's low sense of her self-worth, perhaps feeling deflated by negative reviews and narrow-minded comments, such that she needed Schreiner's reassurance and used this letter to connect with her, to offer and ask for love. She also asks Schreiner to explain to Mrs. Walters, a close friend of Schreiner's, the reasons Marx had not written to her. This also suggests something about Marx's epistolary exchanges, that for Marx letters between friends should be frank and open and not omit 'troubles' no matter how bad they were. Yet her own difficulties could only be communicated to Schreiner and Dollie Radford at this time. Finally, Marx makes it clear that money was a huge problem and the statement about it being 'almost impossible to get work' may point to a disinclination for some to be associated with Marx (and Aveling) because of their unconventional lifestyle, her being the daughter of Karl Marx, a close associate of Engels, and a radical socialist with a bold, assertive personality. After this, commissions came from George Moore, Helen Zimmern and Ellis himself. Why Schreiner had sent what seems an intensely personal letter to Ellis remains unclear.

Ellis's essay followed on, quoting from this letter but conflating two different time periods, April 1885, when he visited Marx and Aveling after receiving a letter from Schreiner about Aveling being very ill and them being hard up; and early 1887, when Marx was working on an Ibsen translation:

I duly went to the flat they occupied at 55 Great Russell Street ... I was anxious to be helpful; and in small ways it was possible for me as I was beginning to be active in a literary direction. I had planned the first English edition of some of Ibsen's social plays ... and as Ibsen was a congenial subject for her, I asked Eleanor to translate *An Enemy of Society*.

(Ellis 1935a, p. 34)

Ibsen was more than a congenial subject for Marx: She had already organised the private performance of 'Nora' in 1885 in her home, to which she had invited Ellis. And she had completed a number of translations prior to and after working on *An Enemy of Society* in 1888 that were not commissioned by Ellis. He continued:

The next letter I have preserved dates from March 1887 ... I had just planned the Mermaid Series of selected but unexpurgated plays of the Elizabethan dramatists ... Such a series could not fail to interest Eleanor, and at an early stage I wrote to her ... She had been away from London, perhaps in America, and wrote in March 1887: 'Many thanks for book. I am much interested in your Mermaid Series. If Vizetelly will send a copy Dr. Aveling or I will review 'Marlowe' for some of the theatrical papers. ... 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. So if you know of anything you think I *could* do, and have some chance of getting, I hope you will tell me of it.

I was sorely disappointed on my return to London to find Olive had fled. I hear from her now and then, but the letters are not satisfactory. I cannot but feel that she is *not* happy and that she seems to be wasting the genius that is in her.'

(Ellis 1935a, p. 36)

In the quoted part of her letter here, Marx expressed the reason for her difficulties in finding literary work as being because 'respectable' people would not hire her.

Therefore the need to find 'hack' work and to 'devil' was great. There were other reasons that women struggled to make a living for themselves, however, as Margaret Heitland (née Bateson), a close friend of Amy Levy, pointed out in her diary:

Because of 'the conditions of the labour market' which assumed that women had 'private means' or would marry, and so their earnings were 'seldom enough for her to live upon.'¹¹² Marx presented herself as married, yet the actual circumstances were also well known, and this may not have placed her in a favourable position for some involved in publishing. With all this against her, the number of translations Marx completed and published is more surprising.

This vignette has considered the translations Marx produced in the second half of the 1880s. By aligning these works with other aspects of her life and through

¹¹² Diary of Margaret Heitland, 26 February 1889, Papers of Margaret Heitland (MHP from hereon), 7MHE, Women's Library, London, my transcription.

letters, some of which are now only evident in a palimpsest form, it is possible to explore and comment on why Marx made the selections she did, what her working conditions were, in terms of payment and being credited, and how she viewed herself in the literary profession. These things reflect the broader feminist cultural politics at this time, which were about finding ways to break through oppressive barriers using language and writing strategies to do so. However, Marx's work has been largely overlooked in literary and translation historiography (another barrier), and I argue this is because of early reviews and some later comments about her work, which were not only unflattering but largely positioned Marx as second to 'real' literary scholars such as William Archer: "The man who now took the lead in the work for Ibsen" (Koht 1931 p. 266). Ellis (1935a, p. 39) also wrote rather patronisingly: "I could not give any important Elizabethan dramatist into her care as these were only entrusted to writers of literary or scholarly reputation already known in this field. [So] I offered to her a single play, little known but of considerable interest, *A Warning to Fair Women*." Ellis' essay is made up of two quite distinguishable aspects: the original yet absent Eleanor Marx letters, and his own editorial version of these letters. In the extracts he selected, Ellis focusses on Marx's desperate situation financially and her difficulty in getting work, which were quite real, but which nonetheless afforded him the opportunity to paint himself in a very favourable light, as her mentor. Their friendship did not endure. Yet Marx continued to work, bringing multiple texts to the attention of the English audiences, even if at times she felt the English sensibility was overly moral and closed minded. Something 'A Doll's House Repaired' points to.

Marx was on close terms with other women writers at this time. Schreiner was publishing allegories and writing another novel and other works, Harkness a number of novels, and Levy poetry and novels also. It may be that Marx considered her own work in comparison to these writers as 'mere hack work,' and indeed 'devilling' was a necessary part of her everyday life in order to make financial ends meet. However, she had a long and determined commitment to producing good quality translations of works she considered important and felt strongly should be better known and read more widely, something which her mimetic cultural political

actions enabled. As such Marx's activities should not be overlooked nor demeaned simply because they did not conform to later literary standards.

Conclusion Co-Authoring and Mimesis in Women's Cultural Political Writing

The chapter argues that 'outward' and public cultural political writings are imbued with and connected to more private everyday life matters, even if these are not immediately apparent, and should be read and analysed as such. The complicated intersections between the personal and bigger political concerns, and the writing being produced, are understood here using letters mainly, with reference to some other writings too. Intertextual readings allow for textual border crossings and are therefore taken advantage of, including what might be considered small intertextual mentions and connections, the brief inclusion of Schreiner's SAF in Marx and Aveling's essay 'The Woman Question' for example. Building a view of a writer's influences, concerns and connections through this kind of *bricolage* approach shows how a piece of literature is situated in relation to other texts, and the role of the author in terms of making a text fit, challenge or overturn cultural political ideas of the time.

This chapter has explored particular areas of Eleanor Marx's cultural politics as they are locatable in texts of different kinds, through letters and diaries, including her editing, researching and writing for other authors, doing translation work on a personal and professional basis, and working collaboratively on polemical essays. And by using a sociology of small things approach, the complex nature of her feminist and socialist cultural politics, are foregrounded, and much of this detail is largely absent in the aforementioned biographies about Marx's life. Importantly then this chapter highlights ways of accessing how literary outputs connected to wider issues such as Woman Question debates on the one hand, as well as being closely intertwined with women's everyday life on the other. And Eleanor Marx was selected from the other women I am interested in to demonstrate her non-differentiation between the two, with her life and writing being closely interwoven.

With many lost and destroyed letters other intertextual ways of re-reading were necessary throughout this chapter, using conceptual ideas around liminality and palimpsest as ways of locating otherwise absent utterances. Gaps in epistolariums are complicated, pointing to the activities of destructions, losses and lacks, and also to the choices certain individuals and archives have made, which are additional narratives in themselves. Why this matters is in considering what, at different points in time, was important enough for collecting purposes, what aspects of a person's life should be revealed and hidden from view, and how such decisions impact upon how lives are understood and represented. There are other reasons for gaps considered in this chapter also, such as no letters existing between Schreiner and Marx, from either side of the correspondence, which has been presumed a result of them being largely destroyed. However, as has been intimated there may have been fewer written than one would have hoped, actually due to the women's close proximity throughout the 1880s. With the Eleanor Marx Papers (as with any other collection holding so few letters concerning a particular aspect of person's life) the absence of correspondence with her close women friendships has resulted in this area of her life being largely underexplored, which I have intended to contribute to with this chapter.

In terms of advancing my argument concerning women, writing and cultural politics, this chapter has demonstrated that 'on the surface' political writing practices happened in relation to 'behind the scenes' friendship support. Eleanor Marx communicated her views strongly on a variety of topics, including marriage, relationships and economic equality. At the same time, some of her works were used to critique literary reviewers, critics, the establishment more broadly and women's ability to write freely. The methods she chose to undertake this endeavor were interesting: She utilised a 'marital' authorial voice at times, was a part of various collaborations, and mimetically created many literary translations in order to widen readerships, align herself with particular authors and their work, and perform her own cultural politics simultaneously. The clearest examples here are the essays 'The Woman Question' and 'A Doll's House Repaired,' with the first text incorporating many literary references to point out the historical longevity and necessity of the associated arguments; and with the second essay she took the original work, written

at a different point in time, and redeployed it into 1880s and 1890s London (and other) circles for re- or new consideration, using satire to communicate with authors of other versions of Ibsen's play and the critics of its final scene. Marx's actions were both radical and strongly purposive with regards to upsetting and overturning traditional views and literary stasis, for which there were consequences. So, while there is a strong sense of Marx's emergent political views in her writing, these views are at times at odds with what else was going on in her life, her constant struggle for financial independence, for example, a sense of her vulnerability and lack of self-worth, her self-fashioned yet in some ways unsuccessful union with Aveling, and her reliance on some close friends for day-to-day support.

Whilst this chapter has continued to focus on a small selection of texts and writers, within a compressed time-frame, the types of difficulties endured and the strategies employed by Marx and other women writers point to major general issues concerning inequality. Women were gaining access to areas of life they were previously absent from. If their class status, connections and financial situation allowed, they could go to university, gain access to reading rooms and knowledge, join social groups and debating clubs, travel around the city unaccompanied, and achieve success in certain professions. However, as this chapter has also made clear, there were often subtle (and not so subtle) barriers associated with these things such as restricted access to certain literature, and questions about a woman's respectability and even stability. There were some major feminist achievements, in terms of getting the Criminal Law Amendment Act passed in 1885 and the Contagious Diseases Act repealed in 1886, among other things, but it took time for changes to filter down to women's everyday life experiences. Women could write, but not too provocatively, and not to criticise the hegemonic voices of the literary echelons. They could become involved in politics as long as they did not challenge political power bases. Preferably, women like Nora in Marx and Zangwill's reworked ending of *A Doll's House* would realise the error of their ways and be more content with a 'home and hearth' existence.

Chapter Five further explores the complexities of emerging New Woman ideas and related texts, focussing on the writing and life of Amy Levy. Levy was a

different kind of writer to Marx and many contrasts between them come into view through close and intertextual re-readings of Levy's letters, diary entries and manuscript drafts, as well as concerning other texts written about Levy. Levy was, for example, not a committed socialist like Marx, appeared to be more closely connected to her family, she remained single, espoused her Jewish ancestry more openly, and she wrote using her own Anglo-Jewish voice. In terms of the cultural politics underpinning and promoted by Levy's work, there is a strong emphasis on women's relationship to the city, what it afforded and hindered modern women from doing. Levy's writing output, therefore, reflects a feminist imagination more closely bounded by London itself, and this is interesting in light of Levy's modest success in her life-time, her self-killing when seemingly on the cusp of greater literary recognition, and also concerning how Levy's life and work has been viewed since the 1880s.

CHAPTER FIVE

Amy Levy's Writing, Cultural Politics and Cityscapes

Introduction

The women writers whose activities and cultural politics I am investigating responded to their surroundings in different literary ways, exploring ideas and issues through particular genres, authorial voices, and using fantasy, irony and satire among other means to communicate their views and concerns. As such the complexities of the life of a literary woman in 1880s London can be grasped and traced in their writings, albeit with these providing different perspectives depending on their individual circumstances. In Chapter Three I demonstrated how the idea of home was a presence in some of Olive Schreiner's letters and the importance of this in terms of women having a place, some time, and the financial means to write. I also explored how the theatre and playwrights such as Henrik Ibsen inspired various of these women to write, translate and perform, reflecting their alignment with ideas presented in a play. In Chapter Four I focussed on how Eleanor Marx wrote and translated work connected to her socialist and feminist views on such things as marriage, relationships and equality and how her literary practice was also closely connected to her everyday life on a more personal level.

Each chapter has so far demonstrated that the cultural politics of the women writers I am focussing on, far from emerging in a vacuum (and within a tight network), build over time and in a complicated relationship to everyday factors. There are strong connections to past and future cultural politics, showing the women writers to be rather a smaller part of a much bigger political landscape, with the pace of social change altering at different points in time, starting, stopping and indeed

going backwards at times as well. Women responded in literary and other ways differently as well, choosing what to get involved with and what to include in their writing. As such it is possible to assert that Woman, Labour and Native questions were at the heart of the women's cultural politics, yet the explorations and representations of these issues, as well as the effectiveness of the writings produced varied enormously.

Chapter Five considers another focus of attention by a woman writer, in this case women and the city, by exploring selections of Amy Levy's writing, whose literature has been closely aligned with the emergence of the New Woman. As such, Levy's cultural political views regarding women and city life can be seen to emerge, and are refracted, in her letters and diary, which in turn reflects her personal difficulties as well as successes in achieving the status of an acknowledged writer in 1880s London. The importance and nature of her friendships and related associations with other literary women is also strongly communicated in these documents and helps to point up differences from, and similarities to, the women whose cultural politics I have considered in previous chapters.

This chapter considers Levy's relationship to city life, as distinct from Marx's close association with socialist life, although these connections had by no means such sharp boundaries: Levy's life involved socialism through her close associations with women such as Marx, Schreiner and Black; and Marx's socialism was very much about aspects of life in the modern city, particularly concerning equality for women in public as well as private life. Levy's life, however, can be seen to have been circumscribed by different family and financial conditions from Marx, and these things impacted upon her views and aspirations, for herself and for women generally. She wrote, for example, more with a view to becoming a successful woman writer than did Marx, with Marx focussed on 'spreading the word' of other writers and using her translations to do so. Levy also never had the same pressures of having to work, or to 'devil' for other writers, although she was keen to earn her financial independence and the kinds of freedoms this would afford her. Like Marx, Levy never adopted an actual pseudonym, but, as Hughes (2009 p. 275) has described, she strategically aligned herself with others, adopting for instance

classical figures such as Xantippe, in order to express her views about women's positionality.

Levy is now celebrated as a New Woman writer, and, as Francis (2010 p. 47) has pointed out, "a Jewish intellectual, as a sexual dissident ... as the possessor of a strong and culturally pivotal poetic identity." Such labels reflect what feminism has most wanted to find within itself. Yet there have been slippages and assumptions made which on closer analysis show Levy to be less of, say, a socialist than has been supposed. This is what Francis goes on to explore in her essay, finally positing the possibility that Levy's modest socialist activities may have been due to her friendship and devotion to her friend Clementina Black (Francis 2010 p. 76).

Within Levy's life and writing there are also displays of her melancholic disposition, a condition which is thought to be the cause of her untimely death at the age of 27. There is a strong sense in Levy's writing of her being one of the first women to venture around town on an omnibus, creating the impression of, and defining strategies by, a New Woman in the city, and in some respects a female *flâneur* (Wolff 1990, 2010; Wilson 1991, 1992; Vadillo 2002; Parsons 2003; Nord 1995). Of this Vadillo (2002 p. 250) argues that Levy's "greatest achievement [was her] figuration of the female mass-transportation passenger as an icon of modernity." Using the omnibus both actually and figuratively allowed Levy to engage and become a central author concerning the importance of such modern transport systems in connection with women's cultural and political aspirations. Important to this idea is the woman's gaze which allowed for a kind of travelling beyond boundaries, as "spectator's of modern life," about which women poets (and writers more broadly) could comment and reflect (Vadillo 2005 p. 40). Yet, running parallel to this, Levy's difficulties with aspects of city life are also apparent, concerning access to places such as literary clubs, and the constraints (and comfort) of belonging to a middle class Jewish family. Indeed it is possible to reread Levy not as a woman at ease in the city, but one who experienced professional difficulties and had personal trepidations leading ultimately to her demise.

Following an introduction to Amy Levy, and how she has been written about in biographies and other texts, the chapter presents my own contribution followed by

four vignettes. In the first vignette I demonstrate how one dramatic event – Amy Levy’s death – can overshadow other aspects of a life, tainting how that life is remembered and thought about from that point on. However, here Levy’s death is considered differently from other interpretations, not as the act of a desperately unhappy woman but as the choice of death over life, as the most radical of her political acts. Vignette Two utilises Levy’s life documents – her letters and diary – to analyse the textual representation of the interior world of a writer in connection with the exterior social world of which she was a part. This allows for some broad mappings of friendship groups, reading habits and the emergence of ideas and other pursuits to come into view, within the context of the 1880s London literary establishment, the press and late-Victorian patriarchal society. Vignette Three focusses on intimacies and writing in terms of the importance and value of different relationships in connection with literary production. It considers three different individuals introduced in Vignette Two and the various connections involved – friend, acquaintance, advisor – which together contribute to understanding the ‘on the ground’ social world of Levy as a writer. Finally, the fourth vignette focusses on a particular piece of writing – Levy’s final book of poetry *A London Plane Tree and Other Verse* – to explore how the more intimate and the wider literary worlds of a writer interconnect and overlap.

Introducing Amy Levy: “When the footlights are brightest they are blown out”¹¹³

Amy Levy was an Anglo-Jewish writer and poet born in London in 1861 to a middle class Jewish family. She was the second of Lewis and Isobel Levy’s seven children and was particularly close to her older sister Katie. Levy was educated at the prestigious Brighton High School for Girls, which had just opened in 1876, the year of her entry, followed by Newnham College, Cambridge. She also developed a passion for, and commitment to, writing from an early age (N. Hetherington 2005). There are some interesting writings by Levy and her friends held in the ALP in Kent,

¹¹³ From the Preface to Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of An African Farm*.

dating from when she was young, including the ‘Popular Club Journal’ devised when she was eleven and the ‘Harum-Scarum’ when she was at school in Brighton. Of the latter she wrote to her sister Katie, expressing her disappointment about the journal not being up to scratch and commenting on some of the other contributors: “How weak the ‘Harum’ is this month. Conny Leon doesn’t shine, but I don’t think the Mosely’s bad, though she personally is odious.”¹¹⁴ Levy had high expectations from early on, for herself and others she worked with.

Some friendships from Levy’s school years lasted into her young womanhood. She developed close friendships with the Black sisters early on, through going to school in Brighton where the Black family lived, and then to Newnham College, as did Constance Black. Levy appears to have enjoyed living away from home when she was at school and college, at one point writing: “it’s so luxurious living away from everyone & not being rubbed all the wrong way.”¹¹⁵ Her letters at this time to her parents and to Katie are full of stories and escapades, detailing her various friendships and explorations around town, such as: “This morning Connie came, & we fetched Grace, & all four went for a walk. We went over the Pavillion (it being the 1st Monday in the month) & enjoyed ourselves, sentimentalizing, lounging in the drawing rooms, & inspecting the pictures.”¹¹⁶ The letters also give some insight into the experiences of young women in private education around this time, often with humour: “Yesterday morning the Geo came off – I did filthily; in the afternoon we had viva voce (French and History). It was a perfect farce. All of us were scared, excepting Conny who poured volumes at his head (wrong facts & all), wh. he accepted with a sort of reverential bewilderment.”¹¹⁷ These are invaluable sources since, according to a letter written many years later, concerning Constance Black, no documents exist of the first years of Brighton High School: “To my horror I don’t think we have mentioned Constance Black in the History of the School ... [I] explained that in our early days we did not keep such careful records as we do now ... I have never met a school which thoroughly destroyed its early records as Brighton

¹¹⁴ Amy Levy to Katie Levy, n.d., ALP, my transcription.

¹¹⁵ Amy Levy to Katie Levy, n.d., ALP, my transcription.

¹¹⁶ Amy Levy to Katie Levy, n.d., ALP, my transcription.

¹¹⁷ Amy Levy to Katie Levy, n.d., ALP, my transcription.

seems to have done – perhaps the difficulty was that Miss Creek was so young when she came and only stayed for six years.”¹¹⁸ If there were any records on other students these are also now lost.

Throughout the 1880s Levy travelled in Europe and when in London became involved in both organisational and looser friendship networks. She was, for instance, a visitor and then a member of the early A Men and Women’s Club (1879-1885) between 1882 and 1885, a socialising and discussion group which preceded The Men and Women’s Club (1885-89). Levy did not join the latter, apparently a decision made by Pearson because of Levy’s deafness (something which Clementina Black later said was ‘slight’). According to the attendance book of the earlier Club,¹¹⁹ the group met at different locations in the city with Levy’s family home being one of these. Many of Levy’s friends attended including the Black sisters, Dollie and Ernest Radford, Mary Robinson and Evelyn Wimbush who were both close friends of Vernon Lee, and Pearson too, all of whom are mentioned in Levy’s letters.

Another club of which Levy was a member was the University Club for Ladies, situated on Upper Bond Street, and she wrote about women’s clubs such as this in a short article called ‘Women and Club Life’ (Levy 1888b, p. 536) published in *The Woman’s World* in 1888, acknowledging their importance in terms of networking:

What [professional] woman engaged in art, in literature, in science, has not felt the drawbacks of her isolated position? ... She has had to fight her way unknown and single-handed; to compete with a guild of craftsmen all more or less known to one another, bound together by innumerable links of acquaintance and intercourse. It is all uphill work with her, unless she be somebody’s sister, or somebody’s wife.

It is interesting to note Levy’s use of words and phrases such as ‘isolated’ and ‘uphill struggle,’ perhaps things she was beginning to feel herself. Levy visited other clubs too, including to hear her friend Clementina Black speak: “Heard C.B at The Somerville Club.”¹²⁰ The diary also mentions a connection with the British trade union for women workers, the Women’s Protective and Provident League, based in

¹¹⁸ Miss Ashcroft to Mr Lister, 2 June 1861, Girl’s Day School Trust Archive, GDS/12/4/1 Institute of Education, University of London, my transcription.

¹¹⁹ The Men and Women’s Club Attendance Book, Pearson Papers, University College London, 10/1.

¹²⁰ Amy Levy’s Diary, 9 April 1889, ALP, my transcription.

Bloomsbury, of which Clementina Black was the secretary (Beckman 2000 p. 179). Places and organisations such as these were important for getting together, to share ideas and to network for career purposes (Hughes 2007). But it was also possible to do this in London in the 1880s more informally, by visiting each other at home, for example, or through holidaying together.

In terms of the less official networks, Levy became close friends with many other women writers and translators in London of the time, including Olive Schreiner, Eleanor Marx, Vernon Lee, and as already mentioned, Dollie Radford and the Black sisters, among others (Beckman 2000; Hetherington & Valman 2010; Pullen 2010). My initial thoughts on the connections between women writers such as Levy, Schreiner, Marx and others were based on broad descriptions such as:

Beatrice Potter Webb, her cousin Margaret Harkness, and the poet and novelist Amy Levy were all part of a scattered London network that also included Eleanor Marx and Olive Schreiner ...

(Nord 1995 p. 185)

and

It was most likely at the British Museum, ... that Levy became acquainted with Eleanor Marx (Karl Marx's daughter), Olive Schreiner, Margaret Harkness, Beatrice Potter (later Webb), and Dollie Maitland, who married the poet Ernest Radford ...

(Beckman 2000 p. 79)

and

When back home, [Levy] threw herself into London life, forging a network of intellectual and literary connections [such as] Ernest and Dollie Radford and Constance Black and her sister Clementina ... In London, Levy met Olive Schreiner, Eleanor Marx, East End investigator Beatrice Potter (later Webb) and her cousin Margaret Harkness ...

(N. Hetherington & Valman 2010 pp. 3-4)

While these description left the impression of a set of literary women who all knew each other, shared ideas, wrote and met in the city, and that there was a clearly definable boundary around this set of friends, with the connections easily verifiable, my initial research into Levy's diary showed much variation in terms of types of connections. According to her diary, Levy saw Clementina Black often, Dollie Radford occasionally, and spent sporadic and brief moments of time with Olive

Schreiner. There are no clear connections between Levy and Marx and no mention of Beatrice Potter or Margaret Harkness. In this chapter, therefore, I will present a reconceived version of the connections between these women writers in 1880s London, which I build from non-literary texts relating to Levy. This will demonstrate how letters and diaries show particularities about both connections and disconnections, which have not been explored elsewhere, and would otherwise go unseen through a less small-scale approach to understanding social networks. Yet further questions around the nature of a ‘collection’ and the reliability of sources (Plummer 2001 pp. 154-55) are also brought to the fore. And, perspectival issues are raised, about how a woman such as Levy experienced the city, constructed her cultural politics, and represented these things in writing. In doing this work I critique some of the ideas presented in biographies and other texts (considered next) about Levy, particularly the overarching representation of her as an outsider, by considering the complicated process of becoming less connected, more isolated, and the consequences of this.

Deborah Epstein Nord (1990 p. 753) represents Levy as an outsider, not only by being Jewish but also a well-educated woman, when “the creation of an autonomous existence outside of family or residential community remained elusive for single women in the 1880s,” asking: “does this account for Levy’s return to her parents’ home after studying in Cambridge?” Yet, contra Nord’s view and as shown in Chapter Three, Schreiner successfully managed an autonomous existence, which goes to highlight the importance of friendships as ‘family’. Nord goes on to state that the network of ‘odd’ but “independent women [such as Levy, Schreiner and others] ended with the close of the 1880s: Amy Levy committed suicide in September of 1889 and Olive Schreiner sailed for South Africa” (Nord 1990 p. 752). Yet friendship connections have more complicated beginnings and endings, such that Levy’s death, which might be considered a quite definite end-point, has had continuing reverberations across other women’s lives, and I explore these complexities in this chapter. Nord (1995 p. 197) also depicts the plight of the woman writer somewhat romantically at times: “she is the quintessential woman writer alone with her work in a London garret,” an image no less convincing and narrow as the

bicycling, smoking image of the New Woman. And she relies exclusively on published works which do not reveal the working processes of developing ideas and communicating cultural politics through writing, which is an overarching aim across this thesis.

In a similar vein to Lask, Melvyn New (1993 p. 2) has attempted to rectify Levy's literary absence, because in his opinion her work "deserves a modern audience it does not presently have." New discussed possible reasons for this, including Levy being politically controversial and offensive to the London Jewish community, although he does "not completely share so suspicion-laden a thesis" himself (New 1993 p. 2). Again this is related to Levy choosing to be cremated, and also concerning her negative representations of Anglo-Jewish society in her novel *Reuben Sachs* (1888d), with one example being that "his figure was bad, and his movements awkward; unmistakably the figure and movements of a Jew" (New 1993 p. 201). New also comments on the contemporary explanation, that Levy was a lesbian whose sadness and ultimate despair was due to unrequited love, particularly for her friend Vernon Lee (Beckman 2000 p. 121; see also Pullen 2010).

Linda Hunt Beckman's (2000 p. 208) biography raises the possibility that Levy may also have felt "hurt and humiliated" by Lee, who had asked Levy to care for her invalid half-brother Eugene, thus – according to Beckman's interpretation – quite possibly devaluing the friendship between the women, which would have been devastating for Levy. The idea that Levy was indeed in love with Lee is based largely on a poem Levy sent to her in November 1886, called 'To Vernon Lee,' in which she recalled a time in Florence the women spent together: "On Bellosguardo, when the year was young, /We wandered, seeking for the daffodil /.../You broke a branch & gave it to me there; /I found for you a scarlet blossom ~~the~~ rare."¹²¹ Selected lines from the poem do give the impression of a deep affection, but Levy wrote such epistolary 'To' poems to a number of her friends, as with 'To Clementina Black' and 'To Sylvia' (D. Hetherington 2011). And this goes some way to challenging this assumption. Beckman (2000 p. 5) also says that, following her death, there was "an attempt to bolster Levy's reputation in the face of a 'sordid' end for the sake of her

¹²¹ Amy Levy to Violet Paget, n.d., Colby, my transcription.

literary reputation,” although whether sordid because she had killed herself, or because she requested to be cremated, or for some other reason, is not made clear.

In a broadly researched biography using primary sources, Christine Pullen (2010) too pursues an unrequited love and abandonment thesis, this time focussed on Karl Pearson. Pullen refers to a number of documents which, she claims, demonstrate that an intimate connection between Levy and Pearson had begun earlier in the 1880s when both were on holiday, and concludes that his subsequent neglect of her, including Levy not being asked to be a member of the Club, excluded from the visit to see Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* on its opening night, and then the engagement between Pearson and the Men and Women Club’s secretary Maria Sharpe in August 1889, contributed to Levy’s death. If this was the case, that Levy felt abandoned is more likely for, as Moran (2006 p. 37) points out, women who displayed or acted upon sexual feelings outside of marriage often faced exclusion. So, though there was a strong feminist movement throughout the 1880s as evidenced by the virulent Woman Question debate, by progress in women’s education, independent living arrangements, and the conduct of relationships, there was also a strong Victorian culture regarding sexual matters particularly. For middle class women speaking and acting against these expectations there were consequences. This was most certainly the case for Eleanor Marx. Yet, there is no actual evidence of Levy writing about any ‘sordid’ episode in her own life which led to her expulsion or exclusion.

In agreement with Lask, New, Beckman and Pullen, Deborah Parsons (2003 p. 87 n.4) points out that Levy has been “shamefully neglected as a feminist writer.” Levy has been recouped somewhat by their work, yet links continue to be forged between suicidal tendencies, being abandoned and the literature Levy produced, and this is so in recent discussions of Victorian women’s poetry too. For instance, Joseph Bristow (2000 pp. 243-4) describes Levy as “female, lesbian, and Jewish, and therefore located triply outside even the marginalized group of Decadent outsider,” adding that “poetry is a good example of this ‘wounded’ temperament” (Bristow 2000 p. 295). Bristow (2000 p. xxi) acknowledges Levy as “one of the Victorian women poets ... who has declined since [their time] only to be recouped, along with others such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning.” Yet this begs the question of how

women from the past are recouped in the present and with what associations and consequences, particularly when many ideas come from newspaper reports such as those I considered earlier. Many of these were anonymous which makes it difficult if not impossible to pin down where and with whom such suggestions originated. Indeed, that Clementina Black was prompted to write her open letter also points to there being error or exaggeration in the ideas circulating.

The more recent contribution to recouping Amy Levy is the edited collection of essays by Hetherington & Valman (Eds. 2010). This is an exciting set of works which considers Levy's life, death and writing in relation to the social, political and intellectual contexts of which they were a part. In the Introduction (2010 p. 16) it is stated: "A new departure in scholarship on Levy is an increasing interest on the part of both literary and feminist historians in tracing the social, cultural, and professional networks in which women moved" and it is within this departure I would place my own research on Levy and the contributions I make in this chapter.

For my own contribution I return to the ALP and start afresh, to recoup things about Levy's social world from her own handwriting, using letters, diaries and manuscript drafts, the latter being in particular need of closer analysis. Using such documents allows for consideration of the networks in which she operated, the importance of different kinds of relationships in her life relating to her cultural political development and forms of textual expression, and of how these things 'map' onto and enrich the idea of what it meant to be a proto New Woman at this time. Levy, therefore, is a starting point and as the research develops around her attention is paid to other 'minor' individuals, including some other writers, who have been largely left out of scholarship about Victorian and feminist literatures. Also, some theories which have persisted, about Levy being an outsider and feeling abandoned, are questioned. This gives impetus to a more complex interpretation of Levy's situation (and women like her), as she shifts across insider and outsider positionalities. It also allows for construction and further consideration of the kind of 'London' that allowed for and obstructed the activities and intentions of women writers.

Meetings with friends often took place at homes, in cafes and restaurants, on trips into town, or to the British Museum Reading Room, which, according to Levy's diary, she visited often. Levy did not shy away from entering into places previously dominated by men and she became an ardent advocate and important figure in supporting women's clubs at this time. Levy also placed a great deal of value on women achieving a 'place of their own' in the city, not in terms of having a room to write in at home necessarily, but in terms of having their own careers, clubs and publications. She wrote about aspects of her life in London in letters and conjured up representations of it her writing, including in the following poem extracts:

Here from my garret-pane, I mark
The plane-tree bud and blow,
Shed her recuperative bark,
And spread her shade below.

(Levy 1889b, p. 1, from 'A London Plane-Tree')

From end to end, with aimless feet,
All day long have I paced the street.

(Levy 1889b, p. 3, from 'A March Day in London')

Some men to carriages aspire;
On some the costly hansom wait;
Some seek a fly, on job or hire;
Some mount the trotted steed, elate.
I envy not the rich and great,
A wandering minstrel, poor and free,
I am contented with my fate –
An omnibus suffices me.

(Levy 1889b, p. 4, from 'Ballade of an Omnibus')

These examples are from Levy's final book of poetry, published in 1889 shortly after her death, called ALPT. They introduce in a small way Levy's varying perspectives about the city, relating her experiences from above looking out through a top-floor window "out of the city's grasp" (Certeau 1984 p. 92), in close proximity through walking the streets "below the thresholds at which visibility begins" (Certeau 1984 p. 93), and whilst moving through the streets on an omnibus. Hers is a multifaceted and complex viewpoint represented also in different literary forms: she wrote three novels, many short stories and poems, journal articles and letters.

During the night of 9-10 September 1889 Levy died. This was a self-killing at the family residence in Bloomsbury, London; she was 27 years old. Her death in this way was a great shock to many and seemingly less so to others. Some newspaper reports at the time declared it a great tragedy with suspect reasons behind it; yet some friends of Levy, such as Schreiner, appeared to be almost resigned to it being inevitable at some point. There have also been more recent suppositions in biographies about Levy, that she killed herself because of unrequited love (Beckman 2000 p. 121; Pullen 2010). Some interpretations give the impression of Levy as a sad and lonely woman, yet in other ways she can be seen as fully engaged in city life in interesting and adventurous ways, enjoying, for instance, flouting conventions by lone walking and riding the omnibus. She was, apparently, the first Jewish woman in England to request cremation (Pullen 2010 p. 158), and the first Jewish woman to go to Newnham College (Hetherington & Valman 2010 p. 2). Also, perhaps surprisingly, at the time of her death she appeared to be on the cusp of success in terms of her literature, reflecting my choice of Schreiner's words for the title to this section: "When the footlights are brightest they are blown out."¹²² Levy's death had multiple reverberations aside from the numerous suppositions around this event, including, at the time, final breaks in some friendships and connections, and later being the catalyst for multiple research outputs. This event can therefore be seen in the Lefebvrian sense of being a 'moment' of "dramatic change and disruption in everyday routine" (Elden 2004 p. 170). I use it as a starting point to research what is known about Levy, her writing life, the other women writers I am focussing on in this thesis, and the documents of her life which have survived.

Sources and Methodological Issues: Small Things in Levy's Life and Texts

What follows draws on a wide array of primary sources, although I mainly rely on the Amy Levy Papers, owned by Camellia PLC. This collection is composed of materials that Levy left, yet over time other items have been added, and some

¹²² From the Preface to Olive Schreiner's *The Story of An African Farm*.

perhaps lost. Levy's will, written in late 1887, states "I bequeath all books papers letters & documents of every kind & copyrights if any to Clementina Black,"¹²³ yet, for an unknown reason, these things went to her sister Katie Solomon (née Levy). In 1952, Katie gave the collection to Jewish Scholar Beth Zion Lask; then, following the latter's death, the whole collection was sold at Sotheby's in March 1991 for £6,000 and bought by Camellia PLC. Having passed through several hands, it is likely there have been changes in the ALP from precisely what Levy left in 1889, but little information regarding this exists.¹²⁴

In the collection there is a fairly small number of letters, around 47 sent from Levy to her mother, father and sister Katie, with a few to friends. It is 'around' because there are some fragments which are difficult to piece together with certainty. It contains Levy's 1889 one-year diary (of Italian origin, it is a Calendrier) and is a daily log in which Levy states succinctly who she met and where, what she read and wrote. The collection also contains copies of Levy's birth and death certificates, some drawings, photographs, newspaper articles and books. Finally, there is a set of manuscript drafts and proofs which preceded the publication of Levy's final book of poetry ALPT.

In addition to the ALP, through broader searches across other collections, I have found more letters written by Levy: three to Dollie Radford (Radford Family Archive); eight to Violet Paget (Vernon Lee Collection); and five to American journalist Louise Chandler Moulton (Louise Chandler Moulton Archive). And, as well as Levy's own letters, there are other letters concerning Levy where she is neither writer nor recipient, such as a letter from Grace Black to Ernest Radford, and an open letter by Clementina Black printed in the *Athenaeum Journal*¹²⁵, both of which concern Levy's death, as well as some Olive Schreiner letters, which I return to later. Finally, there are a number of important publications referred to, such as the WPP and *The Woman's World*, among others, in which Levy published her work or was mentioned. My discussions focus primarily on the 1889 material, including the

¹²³ Handwritten Will, 4 December 1887, ALP, my transcription.

¹²⁴ Levy's biographer Christine Pullen, who worked in a freelance capacity for Camellia PLC. when they bought the Levy material, advised me by email that following restoration of the papers outwith the company, some appeared to be returned in a different order from how they were sent out.

¹²⁵ Clementina Black (1889) *Athenaeum Journal*, October, p. 457.

death certificate, diary, letters to Moulton and Paget, other letters written in 1889 which reference Levy, some of the draft material for ALPT and selected articles in newspapers. This assemblage of material forces a focus on ‘small things’ since there are only a small number of letters, few and sparse diary entries, minor changes on proofs, and short newspaper entries such as reviews and obituaries. There are inevitably consequences on the substantive findings because of this, which are explained throughout the chapter.

Working with such a range of sources, in spite of their sparseness, allows for a re-reading of Levy’s life and death (rather than the latter being called by one specific term, suicide, for example) and opens up new interpretative possibilities. And while overall this chapter is concerned with Amy Levy’s cultural politics and concern with city life for women, her friendships and writing practices, it also discusses some of the forgotten or ignored minutiae around her life, pertaining to, say, what buying a dress meant to her and represented more broadly. Researching Levy’s death in relation to network connections and disconnections, significant events and smaller ‘moments,’ has taken my research in different directions in time and place, and rather than a linear chronology (as largely presented in the biographies) it has produced a web-like set of linkages. This chapter, therefore, is constructed as a *bricolage* (Hawkes 1977; Hebdige 1979; Denzin & Lincoln 2000, 2008; Kincheloe 2001, 2005) of ‘small-things’ about Levy’s death and her life which are considered for their bigger implications.

Intertextual strategies are employed to adjoin texts, and as such, ideas concerning women’s feminist cultural politics, as these are being thought about, discussed, honed and communicated. Further, the sources available for researching and writing this chapter invite a focus on palimpsestic features (Huysen 2003; Dillon 2005, 2007), inasmuch as there are intertextually layered texts in which parts of other texts re-appear, whilst other parts have been erased or partially obscured. This follows the original meaning of palimpsest, where an original text is quite literally erased and written over, but could later be made visible once more by using modern chemical processes and imaging techniques (Dillon 2005 p. 244). In terms of the letters I am using, these provide references from lost or destroyed letters, which

re-appear in another letter, and these are often verbatim passages rather than paraphrased sections. If one letter writer chooses to present the words of another in this way, the original voice and intentionality of the author is to an extent retained (Halldórsdóttir 2010). Yet, with palimpsests being places where texts are brought together, it is important to recognise the ways in which the processes of combining, layering and embedding have been undertaken, and the reasons why. These texts were once separated by time and space, as Dillon (2005 p. 249) aptly describes: “The presence of texts from the past, present (and possibly the future) in the palimpsest does not elide temporality, but evidences the spectrality of any ‘present’ moment which always already contains within it ‘past,’ ‘present’ and ‘future’ moments.” With such future moments wrapped up in a palimpsest there is a sense of a continuation. And as such an individual who is (in a writerly sense) ‘present’ within a palimpsestic text is in the state of “a reprieve or an afterlife, ‘life after life’ or life after death” (Dillon 2005 p. 249). This idea is considered in relation to letters written after Levy’s death but which include her words, and also to ALPT as a literary work in which Levy purposively curated a complex version of herself, as narrated through her differing authorial voices, into a poetic tapestry. Through this method there is a longer reach into texts which allows for women writer’s lives in 1880s London to be viewed in connection with what went before and after, with their feminist cultural politics being seen as a small part of a much bigger dialogue.

Vignette One: Overshadowing a Writing Life by a Textual Death

Some of the less dramatic aspects of a person’s life can be overshadowed by a more dramatic event, such as a seemingly untimely and unusual death overshadowing everyday city excursions. And in turn this can leave its mark on how that life is then represented and understood. As Randolph (2005 p. 198) has argued: “New Woman writers of the fin de siècle met with resistance from critics who subjected their work and persons to socio-scientific scrutiny,” which, in the case of Levy and others, forged a strong link between female intelligence and creativity with their subsequent suicides. This has sometimes been the case with Amy Levy’s death, often mentioned

at the beginning of any biography or introduction about her. Levy's cultural politics, concerning becoming a woman writer in 1880s London, for example, which are strongly communicated in her literature, are to differing extents imbricated by this. This first vignette explores a number of aspects of Levy's death in relation to her writing, comparing newspaper depictions and importantly drawing attention to the more feminist representation of Levy in the WPP. I also provide an alternative reading of her death, considering it an extension of Levy's cultural politics; a chosen permanent fracture from the life of a writer, rather than the action of an unstable young woman. There are methodological issues in researching where there are relatively few surviving documents, and certainly doing so with letters which only appear in palimpsest forms in other letters, and I discuss these. Also, some of Levy's relationships which have been less researched or completely overlooked, such as peripheral but nonetheless important individuals who were connected to Levy, are included in my discussion.

The research journey begins from Amy Levy's room in the family residence at 7 Endsleigh Gardens, a large Victorian property in Bloomsbury, London. The house is represented on Charles Booth's 'Descriptive Map of London Poverty 1889' in golden yellow, meaning 'Upper-middle and Upper classes. Wealthy.'¹²⁶ On the morning of 10 September 1889, Levy's body was discovered: she had killed herself by sealing her room and inhaling charcoal fumes, dying sometime during the night. The reason for Levy's death is uncertain. She left no last letter to explain her act. And there is no inquest report.¹²⁷ There have been a number of explanations put forward, both at the time of her death and more recently. However, when closely examined, these are largely based on disparate pieces of information strung together and can be challenged and even overturned when such documents are re-read together. Consequently, I return to the scene of Levy's death and explore this event in a 'close to home' way, using a number of different documents starting with a letter by Grace Black, Clementina's younger sister. This letter was written by Grace to

¹²⁶ <http://booth.lse.ac.uk/static/a/4.html>

¹²⁷ The current archivist at the London Metropolitan Archives informed me by email that "all the coroners' inquests and depositions for the County of London dating from after 1875 but before 1927 appear to have been destroyed" (19 October 2011).

Ernest Radford, a writer and close friend of the Black family and also of Levy, a few days after Levy's death:

My dear Ernest

Clemie wrote to me on Friday this:- "When I arrived here on Tuesday morning I found the woman who was in charge of the house at Endsleigh Gardens had been to say Amy was ill and would I come round. I went as soon as I had had some breakfast expecting to find her slightly unwell and found Mrs Levy and Katie in the most terrible grief. She had got charcoal, shut herself into a little room and so painlessly killed herself during the night."

This is all I know.

I had thought she had been so much more hopeful and happy lately. She had seemed so. If she had only had more patience!

I cannot bear that this should grieve Dollie [Radford]: as I know it must.

Clemie's address is 18 Chenies Street Chambers, Chenies, Gower Street, WC. – Chenies Chambers is a large redbrick mansion: Clemie dwells at the top. She is ^too^ busy, and is unhappy about this: I have been wishing I could be in town with her: and a visit from you or Dollie would be very grateful.

Much love to you both.

Yours as always

Grace Black.¹²⁸

This letter interests me for a number of reasons and opens up some research possibilities regarding Levy's death. Firstly, it has strong palimpsest qualities, with Grace Black referencing another letter written by Clementina Black, a letter I have been unable to trace. Grace is careful to quote from, rather than choosing to paraphrase, Clementina's words, as if copying directly from the letter. This places Clementina as the figure of authority regarding what had happened and Grace as a messenger. It is therefore important to consider Clementina's views on Levy's death. Secondly, Grace chose to write to Ernest rather than to Dollie Radford (or both), giving him the job of breaking the news gently because, as Grace indicates in the last line of her letter, she knew how upset Dollie would be. This says something about

¹²⁸ Grace Black to Ernest Radford, 16 September 1889, RA Add MS 89029/2, my transcription.

the closeness between Levy and Dollie, which can be further elaborated on. It also establishes an epistolary connection between the Black sisters and the Radfords. Thirdly, Clementina's words show that the news was broken gradually, since the woman in charge of the house first reported that Levy was ill, and as a result Clementina expected to find Levy only 'slightly unwell.' Fourthly, the words 'When I arrived here on Tuesday morning' indicate Clementina was away at the time of the death, a point I expand on later. And finally, there were three people who could have found Levy – the woman servant, Levy's mother or her sister Katie. However, Katie lived in Kensington and not Bloomsbury and, according to the aforementioned open letter written by Clementina, Levy's mother was away. The involvement of the woman servant, which has not been researched elsewhere, allows me to consider some of the difficulties in exploring the role of potentially important individuals who are only mentioned obliquely in extant documents.

Clementina Black's biographer describes researching past lives as a "groping ... through the darkness that had grown very dense with the years gone by" (Glage 1981 p. 11). Glage is referring to relying on people's memories (which falters over time) and historical documents (which can be lost, damaged or destroyed). In collections such as those I rely on in this research, Glage's 'groping' comment can indeed be applied to researching the lives of anyone who did not leave diaries and letters behind. In such cases, it is necessary to research more obliquely, searching out fragments of information as these re-appear in other documents, such as in census records.

The census records of 1861 to 1891 shows that the Levy family had live-in servants: Five women from 1861 to 1881, and two women in 1891.¹²⁹ Each ten yearly census records not only a different address for the family but also the moves of new servants. Census information is limited but it is possible to use it to construct a general idea about the women who became servants in 1880s London, where they were from, their likely ages, and the families such women were employed by. The women employed by the Levy family were mostly in their 20s, born in England, mainly in the London area, as London's boundaries are understood today. Two

¹²⁹ National Archives, 1861 England Census RG 9/358.

exceptions stand out: Genereve Falose from “Surman Boulongue” (*sic*),¹³⁰ and Marie A. Behrens from “Hannover” (*sic*).¹³¹ The place of birth for Genereve is clearly misspelt and by returning to the original hand written document it appears to be Boulongne Sur Mer, then a small fishing port in northern France. Also, when Marie Behrens is followed up, there is some evidence that she married in November 1880 yet, for reasons I can only speculate on, appears as unmarried in the 1881 census. It is difficult to know which woman servant actually found Levy’s body on the morning of 10 September 1889. What is certain, however, is that sometime between Levy’s death at Endsleigh Gardens and the next census in 1891, the Levy family moved to 7 Campden House Road in Kensington, where Florence E. Pinchin aged 22 from Devon, and Emily E. Jones aged 27 from Worcestershire, were employed. Could one of these women have discovered Amy Levy’s body, or is it more likely to have been one of the previous servants? Further ‘groping’ in the dark might well reap some additional information.

With difficult to comprehend links, limited information and misspelt names and places, perhaps incorrect data also, census records yield limited information and leave unanswered questions. It may be possible to find out more about, say, Isabel Finch from Lambeth, or Mary Sleen from Middlesex, two other servants that the Levy’s employed, through searches in local records offices and of birth, death and marriage certificates. There are also other registers which could be considered, such as prison, hospital admissions, orphanage and asylum registers and so on. Indeed, historian and human geographer Caroline Bressey’s (2002 p. 41) discussion of black women in Victorian and Edwardian London used all these documents and others, and Bressey comments that “evidence ... is often collected from hints in lists, and searches of newspapers and periodicals that sometimes yield small facts here and there.” Such ‘small facts’ are important and show that some lives were only partially documented at that time, and are gradually ‘vanished’ over time by other documents and ‘facts,’ only to re-appear occasionally in research such as this.

Questions are left unanswered about the circumstances of Levy’s death such as concerning the woman servant. And, what did Grace Black mean by ‘If she had

¹³⁰ National Archives, 1861 England Census RG 10/176.

¹³¹ National Archives, 1881 England Census RG 11/157.

only had more patience'? These are just some of the frayed ends which, because of their incompleteness, are often omitted from research outputs. However, they are revealing about who can be researched, and who cannot, whose lives were documented at different points in time, and of those which have become more relevant with growing interest in researching 'ordinary' lives (Highmore 2011; Stewart 2007; Purbrick 2007). Importantly also, such a lack of concrete 'evidence,' including no extant last letter written by Levy, has been the catalyst for the circulation of different ideas concerning her death.

From Grace Black's letter it is possible to establish a number of friendship links and from such details consider who Levy's closest friendships were, what these were based on and how these women thought of Levy's death. Clementina Black's views on the death of her friend were published in the form of an open letter just over three weeks after Levy's death:

I have lately learnt that various reports, some exaggerated and some wholly untrue, have been made in various papers concerning the late Miss Amy Levy, and are being largely copied by the provincial press. I was a close friend of Miss Levy for many years, and my testimony is that of personal knowledge. It is not true that she ever left her father's house otherwise than on visits to friends or holiday journeys; nor that she suffered from failing eyesight, nor from the loss of her sense of humour; nor that she devoted herself to work in the East End. She did suffer for several years from slight deafness and from fits of extreme depression, the result not of unhappy circumstances or of unkind treatment, but as those believe who knew her best, of her lack of physical robustness and of the exhaustion produced by strenuous brain work. Most emphatically, it is not true that her family or her personal friends among the Jewish community treated her coldly on account of the publication of 'Reuben Sachs,' and thus indirectly hastened her death. Her parents were justly proud of her; it was impossible to be more uniformly indulgent, more anxious to anticipate her every wish than they were. At the time of her death they were out of town; but she had been with them only a few days before, had parted from them on the best of terms, and was expected to rejoin them the next week. Her sister was with her on the afternoon before her death, and from her also she parted affectionately. I cannot imagine anything which would have caused more pain and indignation to Miss Levy than the circulation of such reports; and it is in her name that I make this protest against them.¹³²

¹³² Clementina Black (1889) *Athenaeum Journal*, October, p. 457.

Black had clearly felt it necessary to write on behalf of her dead friend and the reasons for this can be shown in relation to the ‘various reports’ she mentions. In the weeks following Levy’s death, many dedications, comments, reports, poems and obituaries were printed in a wide range of publications, including the *Jewish Chronicle*, the *Glasgow Herald*, and the PMG. There are nearly fifty pieces of writing concerning Levy’s death, from full page articles to a few lines from ‘a friend,’ and I am particularly interested in the sense of suspicion which gradually gathered around Levy’s death. Phrases, both exaggerated and untrue, were repeated and acquired a kind of “‘truth’ about what happened” (Halldórsdóttir 2010 pp. 44-45), considered next.

Perhaps the most simple textual representation of Amy Levy can be found in the words and phrases on her death certificate: “Female,” “27,” “a Spinster an Authoress,” “Asphyxia from the inhalation of Carbonic Oxide Gas from the burning of charcoal Suicide when of Unsound Mind.”¹³³ The cause of death was given by George Danford Thomas, the coroner for the central district of the County of London, in the inquest held on Thursday 12 September. From this point on, however, reports began circulating which intimated that Levy’s death was peculiar, and these led to stronger suspicions. The first appeared on Friday 13 September in an obituary where Levy’s death was described as “peculiarly sad” and her as being “Somewhat shy and reserved, even to her own relatives, [she] possessed a keen insight into human affairs, and exhibited a strength of mind far beyond her physical strength, which, combined with over-work, no doubt, contributed to her sad death.”¹³⁴ This was repeated verbatim the following day in the *Daily News*,¹³⁵ and in the section of the PMG called ‘Today’s Tittle Tattle.’¹³⁶ Also in the PMG on the same day and under the heading ‘Death of a Jewish Authoress,’ there is the statement that: “In her novel on Jewish life called ‘Reuben Sachs’ she by no means flatters the Jews.”¹³⁷ The PMG subsequently published a few lines written by an anonymous ‘lady correspondent,’ describing Levy as a “delicate dark beauty [who] was rather silent

¹³³ Copy of Death Certificate of Amy Levy, ALP, my transcription.

¹³⁴ Anonymous (1889) ‘Obituary. Miss Amy Levy,’ *The Jewish Chronicle*, 13 September, p. 6.

¹³⁵ Anonymous (1889) ‘Death of Miss Amy Levy,’ *Daily News*, Issue 13554, 14 September, p. 2.

¹³⁶ Anonymous (1889b) ‘Today’s Tittle Tattle,’ PMG, Issue 7642, 14 September, p. 6.

¹³⁷ Anonymous (1889a) ‘Death of a Jewish Authoress,’ PMG, Issue 7642, 14 September, p. 5.

[and] smoked her cigarettes very thoughtfully.”¹³⁸ And three days after the following was published: “I hear, says a London correspondent, that the death of the gifted young Jewish authoress ... took place under more sad and tragic circumstances than have hitherto been made public.”¹³⁹ This report goes on: “More than once she was found in possession of quantities of charcoal, and her intention being surmised by her friends it was taken from her.” Succinctly, but with more pathos, the *Lady’s Pictorial* said: “in absolute loneliness, friends and family far from her, the sad end came.”¹⁴⁰

By 21 September, eight days after the first report, links were being made between Levy’s unhappiness, her ‘distant’ family relationships, alienation from the Jewish community, and her determination to kill herself. Also, another link was being made, between Levy and Schreiner, as in the following report: “Sharing to a large extent the views upon religious belief of which her friend Miss Olive Schreiner has made brilliant confession in her famous book, Miss Levy, by instinct simple and trustful as a child, once more her nature at deadly feud with her intellectual conclusions.”¹⁴¹ By November, it was reported: “That poor Amy Levy’s suicide was premeditated is now, says a writer in the ‘Hawk,’ beyond a doubt” and “By the courtesy of one who is her intimate friend I am enabled to quote a verse from the volume at present in the press ... entitled ‘Felo de se.’”¹⁴² Levy’s poem *Felo de se* (translated as killing of self) was written some years before 1889 but was included in ALPT, for which she prepared the proofs just prior to her death. The conclusion made by the newspaper was that Levy revealed her intention to kill herself by its inclusion.

More than two years after Levy’s death, a short untitled and anonymous comment appeared in the PMG which did more than implicate Schreiner:

Agreements to commit suicide are all very well but how can one party to such an agreement be sure that the other will keep it? ... [Such as when] two literary ladies were the actors. These authors – one of whom is widely famous – were spending a holiday at the seaside together, and both were indulging in

¹³⁸ Anonymous (1889c) PMG, 16 September, p. 6.

¹³⁹ Anonymous (1889) ‘Sad Death of a Novelist,’ *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, Issue 10931, 19 September, p. 8.

¹⁴⁰ Anonymous (1889) *Lady’s Pictorial*, 21 September, p. 358.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Anonymous (1889) *Trewman’s Exeter Flying Post*, Issue 7016, 20 November, p. 1.

very gloomy views of life. After discussing the question they both decided to commit suicide, and the younger hurried home and but too effectually carried out her purpose. The other happily thought better of the matter, and refused to fulfil her terms of the contract. The only pity is that she did not let the other party to the agreement know in time.¹⁴³

These various documents form a strong narrative thread, that Levy's depressive state and subsequent death were the result of her being repeatedly abandoned. This was, firstly, supposedly by the Jewish community because of Levy's book *Reuben Sachs*, or as was pointed out in a dedicatory paper later published: "It is a matter for surprise that the Jewish press of the period has little to say of Amy Levy [and] It might not be quite out of place to mention that Amy Levy was the first Jewess ... to be cremated" (Lask 1929 p. 188). Secondly, she was supposedly abandoned by members of her family. There is some indication in her letters that Levy was disgruntled when her sister Katie, who she was very close to, was married, although they continued to see each other regularly as evidenced in Levy's 1889 diary. Also, her younger brother Alfred, had died in 1887 and this must have been a great loss to Levy (Beckman 2000 p. 136). But apart from this, there are only minor everyday grumblings about family members. Thirdly, Levy is seen to have been abandoned by certain friends, and there are no recorded visits from friends in Levy's diary between 7-30 August, when she scrawled in large handwriting down the page: "Ill at Endsleigh Gardens."¹⁴⁴ And fourthly, in the 1892 PMG article quoted above, Levy was represented as abandoned in death by her friend Schreiner not going through with their purported suicide pact, agreed upon during the few days they spent away together at the end of August and beginning of September.

This sense of abandonment can usefully be thought about in connection with Simmel's (1950 p. 119) notion of isolation as a by-product of a group's structure when "Close and intimate communities often allow no such intercellular vacuums." Simmel's use of a quasi-biological term is interesting, choosing inter- rather than extracellular, and regarding Levy it raises the question of whether she was situated awkwardly between the various groups and friendships with which she was associated. Also, in connection to Simmel's (1950 p. 119) view, discussed in Chapter

¹⁴³ Anonymous (1892) 'Occasional Notes,' PMG, 1 April, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴ Amy Levy's Diary, ALP, my transcription.

Three in connection with Schreiner's alone time, the position of an isolate can be an 'interruption' from society and perhaps can be applied to choosing death over life.

The representation of Levy as a sad, tragic and abandoned figure re-emerged in later biographies and essays. Beth Zion Lask (later Abrahams) was the first scholar to address what was seen as Levy's neglect in Jewish literary history. Lask set about redressing this, initially presenting a paper to the Jewish Historical Society of England in June 1926 called 'Amy Levy' (Lask 1929). Lask suggested that the claimed neglect could be related to Levy's insistence on being cremated, and pointedly commented: "Even the Jewish Encyclopaedia is at fault, for the date of the death is given as 1899 – ten years after the actual event" (Lask 1929 p. 188). She also added, "[Levy] received some recognition from the outside world in her own day; but in ours no voice has been lifted up in her praise" (Lask 1929 p. 189). As already mentioned, Lask was later given Levy's papers by Katie Solomon in order to further her research, and subsequently the papers were bought by Camellia PLC. The ALP forms the backbone of most contemporary discussions of Levy and her work, including the biographies by Beckman (2000) and Pullen (2010) and a number of other essays, which I considered earlier. Therefore, I will now consider some alternative perspectives and ideas around Levy's death, by focussing on how she was represented in the WPP, a publication of great significance to Levy and other women writers and which dealt with her death differently.

The WPP started in 1888 and was edited by Henrietta Müller, who described the paper as a progressive weekly for women and by women (Bland 1995 p. 165). On the Saturday after Levy's death, an editorial 'we' published the following brief announcement: "We deeply regret to announce the death, in London, on Tuesday 10th, of Miss Amy Levy, the talented authoress and poetess, at the age of 27."¹⁴⁵ Appearing just above it was an allegory written by Olive Schreiner called 'Life's Gifts,' placed as a dedication to the memory of Levy. This was probably an editorial selection rather than written for this purpose by Schreiner herself.¹⁴⁶ Despite this, the meaning of 'Life's Gifts' is interesting in connection to Levy's death.

¹⁴⁵ Anonymous (1889c) WPP, Vol. 1, No. 47, 14 September, p. 7.

¹⁴⁶ Schreiner had previously been disgruntled about Müller publishing another allegory which she had not finalised and was just in draft form.

The announcement of Levy's death in the WPP differs from other announcements of it at the time by not using an extract from one of Levy's sadder works. Instead Schreiner's 'Life's Gifts' offers an optimistic and hopeful view of life, while the version which appeared on 14 September 1889 has both connections with, and differences from, an allegory of the same name published in *The Woman's World* journal in 1889 and then in Schreiner's book *Dreams* in 1890:

"LIFE'S GIFTS."

Life came to me, and she gave me a flower; and I wore it on my breast.
Life came to me, and she gave me a jewel; and I set it in a diadem and wore it
in my hair.
Life came to me, and she gave me a draught of water when I was thirsty unto
death; and I drank it up.
Life came to me, and she shot a ray of light on me; and I did not try to catch
it. I cried, "Shine on! Thou art not to be held within the hand. Thy mission is
to go forward. Shine on!"
O.S.
London, 1887.¹⁴⁷

LIFE'S GIFTS.

I saw a woman sleeping. In her sleep she dreamt Life stood before her, and
held in each hand a gift—in the one Love, in the other Freedom. And she
said to the woman, "Choose!"
And the woman waited long: and she said, "Freedom!"
And Life said, "Thou hast well chosen. If thou hadst said, 'Love,' I would
have given thee that thou didst ask for; and I would have gone from thee,
and returned to thee no more. Now, the day will come when I shall return.
In that day I shall bear both gifts in one hand."
I heard the woman laugh in her sleep.
*London.*¹⁴⁸

Are these different versions of the same allegory? There are no original manuscripts extant for either, so it is impossible to be certain about the actual 'moments of writing' (Stanley and Dampier 2006). Yet Stanley (2002 p. 63) comments that Schreiner often "re-worked her allegories so as to strip from them any detail that had accrued in the writing process" and that this perhaps explains the relationship between versions of the same allegory. The similarities in this particular case are,

¹⁴⁷ Olive Schreiner (1889c) 'Life's Gifts,' WPP, Vol. 1, No. 47, 14 September, p. 7.

¹⁴⁸ Olive Schreiner (1889d) 'Life's Gifts,' *The Woman's World*, Vol. 2, p. 408.

firstly, the title: That both allegories have the same title might lead to the assumption that the 'second' allegory is a re-working of the earlier one, although the differences between them are considerable. Secondly, Schreiner uses 'Life' as a female form which has the power to give and take away opportunities for women, considered here for what this message implies about Levy's death (and her life).

The question of whether one version of 'Life's Gifts' is more stripped of detail than the other also arises. They are almost exactly the same length, and there is no discernible paring back when they are compared. They are, however, different in other respects. The 'first' version here (published for Levy's memorial notice) is written from a first person and feminist perspective, using 'me' and 'I.' The 'second' allegory, however, includes an 'I' but this has a more residual presence and opens and closes by looking at another woman's (any and all women's) response to 'life's gifts.' It demonstrates more strongly Schreiner's allegorical writing from an "ethical basis [which] was sometimes socialist or feminist or anti-war; [and] sometimes it concerned the literal and symbolic ties of sisterhood" (Stanley 2002 p. 63). It is perhaps connected with the major change which occurred around 1889/1890 in Schreiner's thinking, writing and epistolary practice: This was her shift from more inward and personal concerns, to more outward 'objective,' 'material' ones (Stanley 2002 p. 31). Schreiner's writing and cultural politics, therefore, reflected bigger things, as she also hoped would other women writers she was connected to. A strong reminder of this, as noted earlier, was communicated to Margaret Harkness in the long letter discussed in Chapter Four. These two particular allegories do not seem to demonstrate Schreiner paring things back but rather this change in outlook and form of expression. If Schreiner had any hand in the choice of the 'first' being printed for Levy, this might also reflect Schreiner's view (and Levy's own reflection) about her being overly involved in the personal, so much so as to inhibit her engagement with the 'bigger' concerns Schreiner had in mind. There is no evidence, however, that Levy's death was involved in Schreiner's change of approach. Yet, as Levy and Schreiner had quite different perspectives by the late 1880s, and, as such, the communication of their cultural politics became very different – increasingly inward looking and focussed around the authorial 'I' for Levy; increasingly outward looking

and focussed on the authorial ‘we’ for Schreiner – and this seems refracted in writings they each produced.

The WPP dealt with Levy’s death (and life) differently from other publications in other ways too. Just two weeks before her death, the paper had celebrated Levy and other women graduates of Newnham College in a piece called ‘Distinguished Newnhamites.’ This noted “on the whole the record of Newnham College speaks well for the movement in women’s education.”¹⁴⁹ Later a more ‘official’ obituary for Levy was written by ‘A Friend’ as a celebratory piece about Levy’s literary achievements: “Miss Levy’s chief characteristic was veracity.”¹⁵⁰ What is also distinctive here is the way Levy’s novel *Reuben Sachs* is described, not as an attack on her ‘own people,’ as was commonplace in other articles, but where “The characters ... remain stamped on one’s own memory almost indelibly ... as very striking individualities, full of their own originality; sometimes it is the originality of a noble nature, sometimes that of a mean one.”¹⁵¹ The feminist appreciation continued with: “in her [poem] Xantippe we cannot but know that were truth seen by the Historian as it is by the Poet, the world would hold the wife of Socrates in a different estimation.”¹⁵² The following week, two different poems by Levy were printed without any additional authorial intervention under the title ‘Hope and Death.’¹⁵³ Then in the summer of 1890, Levy was remembered in a report about the yearly ‘Literary Ladies Dinner’ held at the Criterion Restaurant, Piccadilly; in this she is celebrated as a woman poet whose work “spoke of her genius, her zeal, her sympathy for the afflicted.”¹⁵⁴ The anonymous author of this article also defended Levy and other women poets regarding an article by the “editor of *The Scots Observer* – himself a poet – [who] declares women to be disqualified from writing poetry of the highest excellence.”¹⁵⁵ This defence continued in late August 1890 in an article entitled ‘Science and Women,’ which was a response to the writer: “Grant Allen, in the name of Science, attacks the woman movement in two articles – ‘Plain

¹⁴⁹ Anonymous (1889b) ‘Distinguished Newnhamites,’ WPP, Vol. 1, No. 46, 7 September, p. 7.

¹⁵⁰ Anonymous (1889d) ‘In Memoriam,’ WPP, Vol. 1, No. 48, 21 September, p. 8.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Anonymous (1889d) ‘In Memoriam,’ WPP, Vol. 1, No. 48, 21 September, p. 8.

¹⁵³ Levy (1889e) ‘Hope and Death,’ WPP, Vol. 1, No. 49, 28 September, p. 4.

¹⁵⁴ Anonymous (1890) ‘Literary Ladies Dinner,’ WPP, Vol. 2, No. 85, 7 June, p. 392.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

Words on the Woman Question' and 'The Girl of the Future.'"¹⁵⁶ Grant Allen had stated that Girton and Newnham Colleges (women's higher education, in other words) were responsible for the deaths of the likes of Levy, because, he claimed, women were being taught to demand too much of themselves but were not robust enough to cope. On this and more broadly speaking Randolph (2005 p. 199) has argued that "medical theories ... declared that female physiology was unable to withstand the rigors of intellectual creativity that poetic work demanded." However, re-read together the articles and reports made by the editorial 'we' and the numerous anonymous contributors of the WPP, used their paper to challenge the likes of Allen and others who were disparaging about women entering the literary and other professions. Making these connections also introduces an alternative interpretation about Levy and women more broadly, from those mentioned earlier which focussed on linking her sad poetry to her persona and actions.

Some of the documents discussed in this vignette also have strong palimpsest qualities, revealing and obscuring things about other texts simultaneously. Grace Black's inclusion of Clementina Black's words in her letter led me to consider what else this close friend of Levy had written about her death, which in turn led to questions about the dominant depiction of Levy as a sad, lonely figure rather than a woman writer of strong convictions, whose relationship to city life was both interesting and complex and with her many writings reflecting this. In 1880s London, 'life' had gifts to offer some women, but these were often difficult to attain, and, as seen in the previous chapter, there were also consequences to be faced for more radical life choices. Levy sometimes wrote with a radical voice. At other times she supplied readers with easy to access 'pot boilers.' Her work was sometimes accepted and at other times disparaged. By 1889 she was, it seemed, gaining some success as a woman writer. But as a close friend of Schreiner and others, she must also have been aware of the 'vast back wash' setting in, when "Literature was at its lowest ebb ... The whole press ^almost^ was in the hands of the capitalists – because they represented the spirit of the nation."¹⁵⁷ As such she was situated awkwardly both

¹⁵⁶ Anonymous (1889a) 'Science and Women,' WPP, Vol. 2, No. 97, 30 August, p. 530.

¹⁵⁷ Olive Schreiner to John X. Merriman, 11 August 1912, NLSA Cape Town, Special Collections, OSLP transcription.

within and without the literary profession, her position an unstable in-between one where, as Simmel describes it: “larger groups ... produce a distinct number of temporarily or chronically isolated existences. They form a social deficit in the same way as the forlorn, the criminal, and the suicide” (Simmel 1925 p. 130). Levy’s decision to bow out at this moment in time is less surprising considered in light of this. Her actions, like Schreiner’s ‘periodic interruptions,’ can be seen as a purposive withdrawal from a society in which she considered herself placeless, and this was refracted in her writing and particularly in her last book ALPT.

The WPP presented a very different image of Levy, with no reference to her as a sad, lonely or abandoned figure. Instead Levy’s life and work were both celebrated and defended, as was the case with other feminist papers of the decade (Randolph 2005). This feminist paper also offered a different perspective from many other newspapers regarding Levy’s death, being more focussed on her life and literary achievements and the value of her work for the women’s movement. Similarly, through a close examination of a number of other sources, Levy’s life can be re-read in other ways, as showing not just a depressed young woman, but a woman engaged in a complexly layered life in the city. Indeed Levy’s main biographers (Beckman 2000; Pullen 2010) acknowledge that she had a busy social network, as is evidenced in her 1889 diary. I now take up this ‘busy-ness’ in an analysis of her diary and some other sources including letters, to open up Levy’s social networks, city life and, connectedly, her cultural political endeavors.

Vignette Two: Documents of a Literary Life in 1880s London

It is possible to get a sense of someone’s cultural politics in their more intimate writings, in letters to friends, for example, and in diary or journal entries. Both letters and diaries are textual spaces which enable small detailed communications about how a life is lived, what things are important, ideas at their inception, and commentary on other everyday life matters. Levy’s letters and her only surviving diary for the last year of her life are used here as a way of mapping Levy’s relationship to the city of London. This includes her proximity to particular people,

both in the physical sense in the city and also in epistolary ways, including who she wrote to and why, and how places did or did not support the activities of women writers in 1880s London. What emerges is a woman writer complexly engaged in city life, who was both critical and complimentary about city spaces such as clubs for women, who was culturally and politically a part of and apart from the literary world, and who maintained and forged relationships around her interests before foregoing them altogether. While much biography operates in a fairly limited way, focusing on those who are 'easier' to research, ignoring those who are more obscure and flattening out the connections overall, here I will discuss a number of women in Levy's diary who vary in visibility – some have a greater presence and are easier to trace textually, others are only detectable through brief glimpses. As a backdrop to this I first consider Amy Levy's writing life and 'London' as represented in her letters.

From the relatively few letters that have survived, and since none written to Levy are extant, it is not possible to know the extent of Levy's letter-writing practice across her lifetime. In addition, it is not possible to draw any conclusions about the epistolarium of her letter-writing in a broad sense (Stanley 2004, 2011a, 2011b), including such aspects as the total number of letters she wrote, to whom, from where and under what circumstances, in comparison to say the circa 4800+ extant Schreiner letters. However, because the numbers are small, it is easy to think about the letters in relation to each recipient and consider the differences and similarities across these. It is also possible to know something of the letters Levy received, since she often wrote thanks for them and referred to their contents. Through this analysis, therefore, it is possible to see the kinds of people who figured both large and small in Levy's London life.

The early letters in the ALP are to her parents and her sister Katie. Eight letters to her parents are dated between 1872 and 1881 and were written while Levy was away from home, first at school, then college, then in Dresden, where she spent time in 1881. The sixteen letters to her sister start when Levy was at school in Brighton and continue to 1888, when she was in Florence. The family letters say much about Levy's broader family circumstances, such as changes in the family

finances, Levy's growing awareness of the importance of making a living from her writing (she logged what she was paid for her writing regularly) and, regarding her mother's concern about Levy's well-being and reputation, Levy responded with: "But seriously, you needn't have any fears on my account. I regret to say that I am safe as Grandma could be ... I have never excited in any one a desire to 'forget themselves' in any way."¹⁵⁸ One difference between the letters Levy wrote to her parents and those to her sister involved her passions for certain women, which the letters to Katie are full of, such as one she wrote while at school in Brighton: "After lunch I obtained the maternal consent to visit my heart's love, & accordingly at about 3:45, with a clean face, a beating heart & Ella for a protector, set out (in my green) for the Temple ... But ... Miss Creak had 'gone out for a holiday.'"¹⁵⁹ The letters to Katie and the regular meetings which are documented in Levy's 1889 diary testify to the Levy sisters having a continued close relationship, regardless of Amy being disgruntled about Katie's marriage, perhaps because she valued having a close confidante, or she thought the marriage (to an older widowed barrister) was based less on love and more on financial security and having 'good' family connections.

What these letters say is that Levy used this form of writing to communicate things about herself such as becoming educated, becoming a writer, and sometimes this involved using the epistolary form in imaginative and private ways, akin at times to a diary, of things she could only dream about but never attain. For example, in another letter, while at school in Brighton, Levy wrote about her 'heart's love' on a torn cover from an exercise book, which is addressed to herself, and signed off with her high school tutor's name Miss Edith Creak. An excerpt is as follows:

My dear friend, I do not know how to reply to your letter of yesterday – I was both grieved and surprised to receive it. I had had no intention that the pleasant intercourse of the last weeks should end in anything important ... you will perhaps better understand when I say that I am already betrothed to the worthy Professor ... hoping you will consider this decision final, I am yrs. very sincerely E.E.M. Creak.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Amy Levy to 'Mama', 2 December 1881, ALP, my transcription.

¹⁵⁹ Amy Levy to Katie Levy, n.d., ALP, my transcription.

¹⁶⁰ ALP, n.d., my transcription.

This letter, apart from showing Levy to have had a crush on her teacher, is interesting in other ways. It is an imagined situation played out in epistolary form, about two women – student and teacher – the former (Levy) expressing her unrequited love for the latter (Miss Creak). It is written from Miss Creak’s perspective, in reply to another letter Levy most likely neither wrote nor sent, in which she denied noticing Levy’s affections and was unable to return them anyway because of her imminent marriage to a ‘worthy’ man “when his great work on ‘The Sages of Greece’ (wh. has already occupied 10 yrs of his life) is completed and sold.”¹⁶¹ In this statement Levy might otherwise be declaring the unworthiness of a woman in comparison to the great Professor. And her reference to the ‘Sages of Greece’ is interesting, these being seven aphorisms which supposedly lead to worldly wisdom, teaching, among other things, ‘moderation in all things,’ ‘knowing thyself,’ ‘avoiding extremes,’ ‘avoiding impossible desires,’ and ‘choosing the right options.’¹⁶² The irony in Levy’s words is clear, as is her use of letter-writing for self-reflexive purposes, to try out different authorial voices, whilst this one in particular hints at her views on forbidden desires and traditional marital relations. These things connect to Levy’s growing sense of what was and was not allowed for a woman such as herself, and her cultural politics appear to develop around a sense of dissatisfaction at being between the two.

Friendship connections with like-minded women, or women who would understand her point of view, were important to Levy, and this is communicated even in the few surviving letters she wrote to her women friends. The three extant letters to Dollie Radford were all written in 1884, two posted across London and one sent from Baden in Germany, and are largely about literature and cultural events. The friendship between Levy and Dollie, and also Ernest Radford, endured until Levy’s death, as is shown by the letter quoted earlier from Grace Black to Ernest. There is a sense of closeness in these letters, with Levy using phrases such as “Good-bye, my dear little Dolly”¹⁶³ and signing off with “Yrs. Affectionately” which is otherwise only used in letters to her parents. Also, in the London letters to Dollie, the nearness in proximity is indicated in Levy’s request for a visit: “if by any chance you should

¹⁶¹ ALP, n.d., my transcription.

¹⁶² http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Seven_Sages_of_Greece.html

¹⁶³ Amy Levy to Dollie Radford, 10 August 1884, RA Add MS 89029/2, my transcription.

venture to call (I'm nearly well today) you might bring with you anything particularly sparkling, airy, piquant, wh. might chance to be lying around."¹⁶⁴ Such closeness as expressed in Levy's letters towards Dollie is comparable to that which Eleanor Marx also expressed about her, making the lack of clear connections between Levy and Marx odder still: perhaps a result of more letters destroyed or lost, or a reflection of the different lifestyles the women had.

There are only two letters from Levy to her close friend Clementina Black (Clemmy), one dated 1882 and another undated but most likely 1888, with both written when Levy was away from London. These show the friendship between them to have a private and personal aspect which is not present in any of the other letters: "Of course Clemmy any feeble twaddle I write is for your benevolent eye."¹⁶⁵ The eight letters addressed to Violet Paget – Levy used this name rather than Paget's alias Vernon Lee, except for in the aforementioned poem – are dated between 1886 and 1889 and were mostly sent from Levy's home to Florence. In the earliest of these, Levy is in a reflective mood: "It is beginning to be very foggy in London & my thoughts turn often to Florence."¹⁶⁶ Levy and Lee had spent time together in Florence and this was clearly significant for Levy: "I am almost afraid to ~~come~~ ^go^ to Florence; it was so nice last year; & nice things never come over again."¹⁶⁷ The correspondence between the two women began in 1886 and ended with Levy's death, with Lee being one of the last people Levy wrote to. Additionally, there are five letters to journalist Louise Chandler Moulton, not so much a close friend but an important acquaintance, all of which were written in 1889, initially to Moulton in Boston and then across London from Levy's home to Moulton's temporary residence in Langham Place, a short distance away from Endsleigh Gardens. These are mainly short notes, neither overly formal nor informal, about meeting to discuss literature. I will return to the significance of the relationships between Levy and Black, Lee and Moulton in the next vignette, each being differently connected to Levy in terms of intimate professional support.

¹⁶⁴ Amy Levy to Dollie Radford, 1884, RA Add MS 89029/2, my transcription.

¹⁶⁵ Amy Levy to Clementina Black, n.d., ALP, my transcription.

¹⁶⁶ Amy Levy to Violet Paget, 26 November, no year, Colby, my transcription.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

From even a small number of letters such as Levy's, it is possible to detect not only a strong sense of intimacy but also of reciprocity and obligation, with her thanking correspondents for letters and apologising when she had taken too long to reply. This was a significant feature of women's feminist cultural politics in terms of women supporting each other in different ways, through letters and gifts in this instance. Levy's letters were often sent with gifts: "I send you some little verses of my own,"¹⁶⁸ and gifts were similarly received, pointing to gift-giving and receiving playing a part in Levy's and other women's epistolary worlds (Stanley 2011b; D. Hetherington 2011). Indeed, as already mentioned, poetry was often passed between these friends, with Lee being not the only close friend of Levy to have received personalised epistolary-style poems. This seems to be more about a pattern of emotionally-expressive friendships.

In drawing some conclusions from the small things in a few letters written by Amy Levy about her emerging life as a writer in 1880s London, the following observations are pertinent: Firstly, in terms of expressing herself, Levy most often wrote about what was going on in her everyday life, her studies, who she spent time with, where she had visited and how she was feeling. In this regard her letters are mostly of a personal nature rather than discussions of outward concerns. They do, however, explore ideas about relationships, including marriage, and the difficulties of becoming a writer in London in the 1880s, when, for instance, Levy complained about the harshness of literary critics regarding her own work and that of others. In one example she wrote: "It's a good thing we are not of Keats-like sensibility, otherwise we shd. have long ago been 'snuffed out' by the various 'articles' of kind critics."¹⁶⁹ Secondly, there is a detectable shift in Levy's letter-writing and concomitantly her social world, when she largely stopped sending personal family letters (which were mostly written in her younger years), and started writing more letters to her women friends and new literary acquaintances (later on, when in her twenties). As such Levy's network connections changed over time, from a Cambridge set in the early 1880s, to a broader literary network later, which was maintained largely through epistolary gift-giving and receiving, and thus her focus

¹⁶⁸ Amy Levy to Violet Paget, 26 November, Colby, my transcription.

¹⁶⁹ Amy Levy to Dollie Radford, 10 August no year, RA Add MS 89029/2, my transcription.

on, and dedication to, writing increased as the decade progressed. To add to these points, a close analysis of Levy's diary contributes further details to these broad brush strokes.

Levy's 1889 diary is the only one to have survived and there is no evidence of other diaries from previous years. The diary itself is a flimsy little booklet with flimsy shiny patterned paper, and was a gift from Bella Duffy, a close friend of Vernon Lee. Duffy had met Levy in November 1888 in Florence and clearly thought a lot of her. Levy soon considered Duffy as one of her own close friends, writing in a letter to her sister that "Miss Duffy is the chief social feature of Florence for me, & I see her nearly every day."¹⁷⁰ The diary can be seen as significant to Levy as a reminder of her new friendship when she left Florence in mid-January 1889. It is now "an invaluable document, [for researchers,] providing a record of who Levy saw and what she did every day in 1889 until her death" (Beckman 2000 p. 176). I re-read it here intertextually with other documents to fill gaps, explore connections and influences, which contribute to knowing more about Levy's view of the world at the time of its writing.

The 1889 diary is a kind of textual space in which Levy logged elements of her daily life. Here she left the textual traces of the people she met, where she went and what she read, among other things. The format is always brief, such as: "Read M.M. to Clemmy. Bought a hat. Hair cut. To M. Bateson's in the evening. Mrs Eve called,"¹⁷¹ and, "To Bertha's. Met Stepniak at the Ford's. Dined at Effie's. Read Salt's Life of James Thomson,"¹⁷² to give just two examples. Levy often used single short forms: 'M.M.' for her novel *Miss Meredith*; 'B.M.' for British Museum; 'K' for her sister Katie; and, 'Club' for the University Club for Ladies, of which Levy was a member. These examples are straightforward to decipher. Other aspects, however, are not so clear. Some phrases, for example, such as "The M.S. tragedy!"¹⁷³ remain a mystery which, going by the exclamation marks which Levy rarely used, must have been somewhat significant. In terms of chronology, the diary demonstrates that Levy

¹⁷⁰ Amy Levy to Katie Levy, n.d., ALP, my transcription.

¹⁷¹ Diary, 18 February 1889, ALP, my transcription.

¹⁷² Diary, 7 April 1889, ALP, my transcription.

¹⁷³ Diary, 8 March 1889, ALP, my transcription.

did not necessarily log things in the order they happened within a day. Also, it is not possible to ascertain Levy's views from the diary, as she makes no remarks concerning her thoughts or feelings on particular events and people. And, although Levy's diary notes what she was reading, it does not register her writing, which gets only the odd mention such as: "Seedy in all day. Wrote letters & read a novel of Ouida's."¹⁷⁴ One final point worth mentioning is that Levy occasionally used small symbols in the margins. On the 22 May, for example, there is a star in the margin, and on the 25, 27 and 31 May small crosses are made. These obviously had some meaning for Levy, but whether they refer to things she did not want others to know about, or were some kind of prompt, it is impossible to say. In some entries Levy expands a little more: "Literary Ladies Dinner at Criterion. Mona Caird in the chair. I received thanks for fiction. Clemmy went & slept here. British Museum. Read An Author's Love."¹⁷⁵ And broader archival and other research can help to unpack such entries further in order to ascertain who else was at this important dinner for women writers, and how the likes of the feminist novelist and activist Caird figured in such circles.

This was the first dinner organised by the Literary Ladies Club of which Caird was a founder member. Originally Olive Schreiner was to chair (Hughes 2007 p. 238), but she was away from London at this time due to illness: "Have very bad hay fever, am going to Brighton to look for rooms."¹⁷⁶ Linda K. Hughes (2004 p. 850) has argued that this Club, along with publications such as the literary periodical *The Yellow Book*, were important to New Women writers as they provided both actual and textual spaces to vocalise views and establish feminist spaces. Importantly, Hughes (2004 p. 866) adds, "women were important to the periodicals, whether as professional writers, purchasers, or readers," and this gives a more nuanced view of the relationship between such periodicals and women writers of the time. The Club was set up because "Women could [still] not be proposed for membership in the most influential literary [male] clubs" (Hughes 2007 p. 234).

¹⁷⁴ Diary, 15 May 1889, ALP, my transcription.

¹⁷⁵ Diary, 31 May 1889, ALP, my transcription.

¹⁷⁶ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 17 May 1889, NLSA Cape Town, Special Collections, OSLP transcription. Line 4.

Clubs were a topic high on Levy's agenda: The year before she had written the essay called 'Women and Club Life,' which communicated her being in favour of this kind of reformulation of city space, and her enthusiasm about entering into it: "From the high and dry region of the residential neighbourhood the women come pouring down to those pleasant shores where the great stream of human life is dashing and flowing" (Levy 1888b, p. 532).

In relation to the diary entry about the Criterion dinner, other earlier entries begin to have more meaning, such as Levy's several trips to a dressmaker (in preparation for the dinner) and also concerning some of her reading, or research, such as of the writer, journalist and critic Andrew Lang's *Letters on Literature*,¹⁷⁷ and author, dramatist and critic J. M. Barrie's *When a Man's Single*.¹⁷⁸ In a newspaper article printed the week after the dinner, Levy is described as having "a charming animated face, and [she] responded briefly to the toast of Fiction, giving a gentle dig at Mr. Andrew Lang, whom she evidently does not admire."¹⁷⁹ A number of other articles were published in the days after the dinner, berating the women, their literature and the event itself. One, by Barrie, mocked the gathering and the women's behaviour: "among other celebrities present were several who have contributed to the leading waste-paper basket" and they "were talking and laughing so like men."¹⁸⁰ The consequences of this disparagement had "In some quarters ... its intended effect" (Hughes 2007 p. 242), with reduced numbers attending the dinner the following year, and some women withdrawing from the event for several years. Levy obviously never attended the dinner again. At the next year's dinner in 1890 her absence was marked and honoured by something comparable to the left-over empty pages in her diary, an empty chair (Hughes 2007 p. 244).

Broadly speaking, there are around seventy places mentioned in Levy's diary, with the ways in which they are described varying. At times Levy simply logs that she went to the theatre and at other times she is more specific in saying she went, for instance, "To Sarasate's concert with E. Cross."¹⁸¹ She wrote, "Walked & lunched

¹⁷⁷ Diary, 21 January 1889, ALP, my transcription.

¹⁷⁸ Diary, 3 May 1889, ALP, my transcription.

¹⁷⁹ Anonymous (1889) *British Weekly*, 7 June, p. 103.

¹⁸⁰ J. M. Barrie (1889) *Scots Observer*, 8 June, pp. 67-68.

¹⁸¹ Diary, 25 May 1889, ALP, my transcription.

with Pauline”¹⁸² and also that she “Walked in Kensington Gardens,”¹⁸³ the first being specific about the person, the second about the place. There are many entries which refer to Levy visiting friends, such as “Called on the Ford’s”¹⁸⁴ and, even though people’s addresses are not logged, it is possible to follow up some of these by researching more widely across other sources, such as other letter collections and census records. As such, keeping within the boundaries of a diary, or a collection, only serves to limit the scope of the research.

There are around a hundred and twenty people mentioned in Levy’s diary demonstrating Levy’s varying attachments between intimates, acquaintances and strangers (Morgan 2009). This can only be an estimate since some of the entries may be the same person differently named, such as Maggie and Margaret. Also, some initials may be repeated in other forms – ‘A.T.’ is most likely Kit Anstruther-Thomson, whilst other entries are in the plural, like ‘The Stevens.’ And, some names are not necessarily people Levy had met, such as the actor Ellen Terry who was performing in *Macbeth*. Examining the people in Levy’s diary in this way, however, does show something of who she spent her time with, how that time was divided among particular friends and acquaintances, and in relation to different activities. Patterns of behaviour arise around particular events and kinds of experiences (Bruggerman 2008 p. 3). ‘Clemmy’ (Black), whose presence is the most strongly felt throughout, is the person who Levy spent much of her time with, to loaf with and visit publishers. Yet, Black is completely absent in the diary from the beginning of August 1889. And was not the person who Levy went into town with, to the theatre, to concerts and galleries, perhaps because her interests lay elsewhere. Her companion for these excursions was more often the novelist Bertha Thomas. As such the diary presents a striated version of Levy’s social network: That is, there are different people for particular purposes – Clementina for everyday catch-ups, Bertha for cultural outings, Ernest Radford for discussions about poetry, and one elusive M. Smart for literary advice. With so few entries concerning Olive Schreiner, however,

¹⁸² Diary, 3 February 1889, ALP, my transcription.

¹⁸³ Diary, 22 April 1889, ALP, my transcription.

¹⁸⁴ Diary, 24 March 1889, ALP, my transcription.

it is difficult from the diary alone to ascertain much about the relationship between her and Levy. And there are no mentions of Eleanor Marx.

In drawing some conclusions from Levy's 1889 diary, the following observations are pertinent. A life document such as this can intimate a lot about the writing life of women such as Levy in London in 1889. But, as with the letters, there are limitations, and therefore other documents need to be drawn on which can corroborate, challenge and add to what can be known. There were still major issues around women gaining entry and acceptance to men's clubs and the literary establishment. The Literary Ladies Dinner was a response to this and an important coming together for women writers. That the likes of Barrie and Lang wrote such condescending remarks about the event and the women involved demonstrates clearly the extent of the resistance to accepting women in a 'man's world.' That membership numbers dropped following this was unfortunate, but women continued to write and some, like Mona Caird, Sarah Grand and others were further spurred on, through the connections made and the work achieved in the 1880s, to produce strong feminist literature and engage with the New Woman debate, which followed in the early 1890s.

The letters and diary show Amy Levy to be very much engaged in city life, in developing her writing, her friendships and literary contacts. She hardly comes across as the sad and lonely figure represented later following her death. There was a persistent melancholic aspects in much of Levy's writing, however, but this should not overshadow her drive, commitment and humour. Levy engaged with women's struggle to gain access to places for their meetings and events. She wrote about this, attended a number of clubs herself, and supported events such as the Literary Ladies Dinner, as did many like-minded literary women who were getting a foothold in the literary profession on their own terms. As this chapter argues, each short story, article, essay and poem, played a small but important and connected part in establishing this long term vision, as did the letters, introductions and invitations, through which bonds and friendships were formulated and maintained. The next vignette focusses more closely on three individuals and their significance in Levy's

final months to consider friendships, associations, women's writing and cultural politics.

Vignette Three: The Importance of Friendships and Acquaintances

This vignette focusses on intimacies and writing and the importance and value of different friendships and acquaintances in connection with literary production, thereby adding to the argument that a combination of private factors underpinned the public face of the development of women's cultural politics. It considers in more depth three individuals introduced earlier – Clementina Black, Louise Chandler Moulton and Olive Schreiner – the particular circumstances around these connections, and what they indicate about the social world of a woman writer such as Levy. There were different influences upon Levy, including from Black's commitment to trade unionism and reform, Moulton's usefulness as a journalist, and Schreiner's encompassing political outlook. And through these three examples I consider some of the issues regarding researching with life documents: Firstly, there is the significance of changes in patterns in Levy's diary by considering the absence of Black in the last weeks of Levy's life. Secondly, there are gaps not made through the collecting and archival processes but by writers themselves, such as where Levy does not log a meeting with Moulton but which other sources show did occur. Thirdly, such gaps are further interrogated by focussing on the relationship between Levy and Schreiner, about which few documents exist.

Clementina Black and Levy saw each other several times a week, which Levy recorded in her diary with such low-key references as 'To Clemmy's,' 'Clemmy to tea' and 'Clemmy slept here,' with gaps in this pattern usually indicative of Black working away. The women's friendship began in Brighton when Levy was at the High School for Girls with Constance Black, who was Levy's own age, yet a closer friendship grew between Levy and Clementina Black who was eight years older. This was perhaps because both Levy and Clementina remained unmarried, but also due to their shared interests in reform and in writing. Black wrote and published from the 1880s until her death in 1920, with her literature being focussed largely on

women's work. In the weeks before Levy's death, however, there is a notable absence of mentions of Black in the diary, with the last recorded entry of the two women meeting occurring on 3 August 1889. Was this significant in relation to Levy's death? The diary reveals little on this, and so it is necessary to look to other documents.

As previously mentioned, Black wrote "When I arrived here on Tuesday morning"¹⁸⁵ to her sister Grace, which suggests she was away at the time of Levy's death. This can be corroborated by two other sources: a report in *The Women's Union Journal*, 'organ' of the Women's Protective and Provident League, about a women's meeting in Dundee on 2 September, stated "Miss Black ... was received with applause"¹⁸⁶; and Glage's (1981 p. 32) biography of Black includes: "On the 9th [September, Clementina] went to Edinburgh, to a meeting for the general promotion of Trade Unionism." Glage also lists a series of events which Black attended in various places around the UK during the preceding weeks, which accounts for her lengthy absence in Levy's diary.

Having been away for some time, Black must have been horrified to find that her best friend had killed herself, not least because the women were so close in terms of their day-to-day proximity in the city, as Chenies Street Chambers was only a stone's throw from Endsleigh Gardens, but also because Levy had confided and relied on Black in the past, as can be seen in the following extract from a letter of which only a part survives: "O Clemmy, Clemmy, is everybody's life like this? I ought to have made something out of mine, but it is too late. Forgive me if I trespass too much on yr. friendship & tell me; but it's a relief instead of dragging round all day, crying half the night ... Burn this & don't think too badly of."¹⁸⁷ Black did not burn this part of the letter, and it is unknown if she (or someone else) destroyed the first part of it. Also, as noted earlier, Black did not have possession of Levy's papers, as Levy had requested in her will. Because of this, and with some letters surviving only partially, Pullen (2010 p. 11) states: "The fact that Amy's remaining family correspondence has been interfered with suggests to me that the documents that were

¹⁸⁵ Grace Black to Ernest Radford, 16 September 1889, RA Add MS 89029/2, my transcription.

¹⁸⁶ Anonymous (1889) *The Women's Union Journal*, 16 September.

¹⁸⁷ Amy Levy to Clementina Black, n.d., ALP, my transcription.

destroyed contained material that the family wished to suppress.” This is possible, but there is no actual evidence of it being a ‘fact’; and since it is impossible to know what state Levy left her estate in, there is really no way of knowing if material was destroyed, lost or burnt by recipients. It is also impossible to say if Black’s presence might have made a difference with regards to Levy’s death.

What it is more reasonable to surmise is that Levy’s death prompted a number of actions in Black. Black had helped Levy get her first book of poetry published in 1881 (Glage 1981 p. 21), and now she continued to promote Levy’s work beyond her death, achieving some success by getting a short play called *Unhappy Princess* published in 1898. Black’s open letter¹⁸⁸ was written to rectify and clarify points made in the press about Levy’s death and her life, yet Black did not say explicitly why she thought Levy had killed herself. Black did confirm, however, in both the open letter and through the comments in Grace Black’s letter that there were people near enough to Levy had she wanted to call on them. Both Levy’s sister and mother were at the house very quickly. Olive Schreiner was living in the same place as Black on Chenies Street, and there was the ‘woman servant’ in the house at the time. As such Levy did not die with all ‘friends and family far from her,’ but chose to be alone and considered life no longer worth living. Additionally, eleven days after Levy’s death, the WPP reported: “Miss Clementina Black has resigned the Secretaryship of the Women’s Trades Union Provident League and will in future devote herself to literature.”¹⁸⁹ Reading this, it is difficult not to think that Black’s decision was closely linked to Levy’s death and may have reflected the last line of Grace Black’s letter, that her sister was “^too^ busy, and is unhappy about this.”¹⁹⁰ However, Black had made the decision to resign somewhat earlier, as it is stated in *The Women’s Union Journal*, that there was need for a new secretary in the June 1889 Issue. Black continued her feminist and socialist activities. She also continued to write, producing many more articles, reviews, and reports, along with some translations (Glage 1981 pp.189-191).

¹⁸⁸ Clementina Black (1889) *Athenaeum Journal*, October, p. 457.

¹⁸⁹ Anonymous (1889d) ‘Current News About Women,’ WPP, Vol. 1, No. 48, 21 September, p. 2.

¹⁹⁰ Grace Black to Ernest Radford, 16 September 1889, RA Add MS 89029/2, my transcription.

Re-reading Levy's diary alone can lead to one idea, yet re-reading it with a range of other documents points up more clearly the reasons for changes in patterns in life documents, and in turn this reflects on what is known about an event more broadly. Such a constancy in life-long friendship, as existed between Black and Levy, was an important fulcrum for Levy and there were intense moments of intimacy. Yet Black's increased devotion to trade union matters, reform and the women's movement, and the time she spent away campaigning showed her to be more committed to the bigger political landscape, while Levy's life became more insular and fragile in comparison. Levy focussed more on her own literary projects with, among other things, visits to publishers about getting ALPT into print in April 1889, and with M. Smart helping her to prepare the proofs of her third novel *Miss Meredith* also during April 1889. By the summer, Levy was trying to further her success through new acquaintances, such as with the journalist Louise Chandler Moulton. Exploring the significance of this relationship points up other considerations about researching with letters and diaries and how 'moments of intimacy' can occur between acquaintances as well as with long-term friends (Morgan 2009 p. 3).

Louise Chandler Moulton was an American writer, poet and literary journalist. In 1889 she was writing literary reviews for the *Boston Herald*. Amy Levy was a writer and poet trying to establish her credentials in the press and elsewhere, and, as Beckman (2000 pp. 183-84) states, Moulton would have been an important professional contact for her. In the spring of 1889, when Levy began actively promoting the manuscript of her ALPT to publishers such as Macmillan and then Unwin; and when Moulton was intending to visit London from Boston, Levy wrote Moulton a letter which ended with a polite suggestion that they meet. This was the beginning of a significant epistolary exchange, of which five letters from Levy to Moulton have survived. It is also clear from remarks Levy made in her letters that Moulton also wrote to Levy but these letters are now presumed destroyed. The letters to Moulton are important because they contribute information about Levy's hopes of establishing herself as a writer at this point in time, and that she was still making new

connections in the summer prior to her death, yet some meetings which took place are not logged in the diary. The first letter also indicates a prior encounter, if not a face-to-face meeting, between the two women:

Dear Mrs Moulton,

I must thank you for yr. kind note, & for sending me the Boston Herald. By the bye, I am not the daughter of the proprietor of the Daily Telegraph – nothing half so opulent. I had the pleasure of seeing you at the dinner given by the Society of Authors to distinguished Americans last year, & have heard much of you fr. our own common friend, Mr. Ernest Radford. It would be nice if we could meet when you are in town.

Yrs sincerely Amy Levy.¹⁹¹

This is the first extant letter in their correspondence and it demonstrates how connections could begin, in epistolary terms. From this point other forms of reciprocation come into play, such as sharing literature and in terms of support. Like the giving and receiving of letters, however, reciprocation was not always balanced and equally satisfying to both parties.

The contents of this letter show that an actual first letter, or rather note, had been sent by Moulton to Levy, and that Levy's letter, thanks and invitation was in reciprocation of this. With this, Moulton had sent Levy a newspaper cutting in which she had reviewed her work, perhaps to flatter, to give a sign of approval, or in the hope that Levy would respond. What is also clear is that Moulton knew little else about Levy, since she had got personal details wrong, which Levy corrected in her reply. Nonetheless, Levy also made it clear she knew much about Moulton through Ernest Radford, and that she had seen her the year before at the Society of Authors event in London. She also makes an overture concerning a meeting between them in concluding.

The first meeting between Levy and Moulton took place when Levy attended "Mrs Moulton's at Home" on 2 July, and then again on 16 July.¹⁹² The second very brief letter is on headed paper from the University Club for Ladies and Levy more confidently requests Moulton's company: "Dear Mrs Moulton, I shall be delighted if

¹⁹¹ Amy Levy to Louise Chandler Moulton, postmark 1 April 1889, Louise Chandler Moulton Papers (LCM from hereon), Library of Congress, Washington, my transcription.

¹⁹² Diary, 2 July 1889, ALP, my transcription.

you can come to tea with me here at the Club on Saturday at five. I hope to see you & am yrs. Sincerely.”¹⁹³ The Club was at 31 New Bond Street and Levy wrote about this earlier in ‘Women and Club Life’ (1888b, pp. 364-367) that: “Not least interesting of female clubs is the University Club for Ladies ... a club of workers; and the working women not being apt to have much spare cash at her disposal, it has been organised on a more modest basis than [others, in] ... a small but daintily-furnished set of rooms on the upper floors of a house in New Bond Street.” Interestingly, in relation to Levy’s own explorations around town, she goes on to mention the *flâneuse* in this text: “The female club-lounger, the *flâneuse* of St. James’s Street, latch-key in pocket and eye glass on nose, remains a creature of the imagination” (Levy 1888b, p. 536). For Levy, the Club represented a ‘republic of scholars’ which individuals “join[ed] in the pursuit of such a highly general goal as knowledge” and “these scholars belong to the most varied groups” with regards age, nationality, and so on (Simmel 1955 p. 135). She knew also that whilst such clubs were a major breakthrough regarding women’s entry into city life, there was still much to do, for exploring the city as a *flâneuse* was still beyond the boundaries of respectability for most women.

Women’s clubs like the University Club for Ladies were very important to the likes of Levy at this time. They allowed women “possibilities of social intercourse; possibilities which, save in exceptional instances, have hitherto for her been restricted to the narrowest grooves” (Levy 1888b, p. 533). In other words, they allowed women to branch out and make new acquaintances and friendships. Levy certainly used the rooms at Bond Street for this purpose and her meeting with Moulton went ahead, as documented in Levy’s diary: “Mrs L. C. Moulton & Margaret Bateson had tea with me at the Club.”¹⁹⁴ It is interesting to note the presence of Margaret Bateson (later Heitland) here, as she was a friend of Levy’s who was trying to establish herself as a journalist and writer, and perhaps Levy sought to introduce the women because of their mutual interests or to help her friend out. Bateson is significant in other ways too, in connection to the small matter of Levy not being invited to the opening performance of Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* with

¹⁹³ Amy Levy to Louise Chandler Moulton, 17 July 1889, LCM, Washington, my transcription.

¹⁹⁴ Diary, 20 July 1889, ALP, my transcription.

others of her close friends, but also concerning the lack of research and literature about her life, when she clearly made some important contributions to the women's movement and to writing in and about 1880s London.

Margaret Bateson was very active in the women's movement and became assistant secretary of the Cambridge Women's Suffrage Association in 1884. She wrote for *The Queen*, a leading women's journal, from 1888 and published among other things *Professional Women Upon Their Professions* in 1895, a book based on Bateson's interviews with various women. Levy and Bateson met, during 1889, around once a month according to Levy's diary and they did a mix of things together, such as: "To M. Bateson's in the evening,"¹⁹⁵ "Dined & to the theatre with M. Bateson"¹⁹⁶ and "To Ibsen's Doll's House with M. Bateson."¹⁹⁷ Levy began by refraining from using Bateson's forename, as she had done with the elusive M. Smart. Also, regarding the trip to see Ibsen's play, much is made by biographers of Levy not being invited to see *A Doll's House* with some of her close friends such as Schreiner, Radford and Marx, who attended this the week before, as discussed in Chapter Three. According to Pullen (2010 p. 152), "On the opening night, on Friday 7th June, [Karl] Pearson booked a dozen tickets in the dress circle ... [and] his party included three of Amy's closest friends ... [yet] Amy was not included in the party, although she was in London that day." If true, this was tantamount to Pearson purposely omitting Levy, and since Levy was purportedly in love with Pearson, again according to Pullen (2010 p. 204), this could have contributed to her disappointment and demise. This is speculation and there are other likely explanations for Levy going to see the play with Bateson instead of the other women. One concerns the growing friendship between Levy and Bateson, based around the literary ambitions both women had, and in July 1889 Levy entered her name as Margaret and not M. Bateson in the diary.

Bateson's diary for the years 1884 to 1928 consists of just one notebook with entries made every few weeks and sometimes every few months. There are no

¹⁹⁵ Diary, 18 February 1889, ALP, my transcription.

¹⁹⁶ Diary, 20 March 1889, ALP, my transcription.

¹⁹⁷ Diary, 13 June 1889, ALP, my transcription.

mentions regarding her friendships; it is mostly a log of her attempts at becoming a successful writer, which at times she is frustrated about:

I have had private disappointments of my own this week resulting from a struggle with the conditions of the labour market as they affect women's work – a struggle in which defeat is always a foregone conclusion. At present the earnings of a woman of the highly educated class are seldom enough for her to live upon ... Employers now all on the assumption, first, that a woman has some private means, & second that her future will be ninety-nine cases out of a hundred be bounded by marriage.¹⁹⁸

Bateson's view about the on-going struggle for women to find suitably paid work to give them independence is strongly put, with failure being a 'foregone conclusion.' These were difficulties felt by Marx, Levy and others. There is no June 1889 entry and so no mention of Levy and Bateson's trip to see Ibsen's play. There is, however, the following entry on 19 September 1889: "On the night of Sept 9 my dear little friend Amy Levy brought her short sad life to an end. 'Melancholy had marked her for her own'; she was a Jewess, and a woman of the present Generation: - those were the three conditions of the tragedy."¹⁹⁹ This links Levy's death to her literary attempts and 'foregone' defeat as a Jewish woman writer.

Concerning Levy's connection with Moulton, even the small number of surviving letters shows this was important to Levy, and carefully choreographed through letters of thanks, invitations and apologies as well as face-to-face meetings occurring over a short space of time. Levy, it seems, was stepping outside of her existing close friendship and support group to make links with significant literary figures, something which has been seen as necessary for achieving greater professional success (Granovetter 1995). Even when Levy was unable to meet with Moulton she wrote to her to explain why, adding also she was "going out of town again on Saturday but I cd. come to you anytime to-morrow instead ... I am greatly interested in yr. article on Jewish novels, & shd. like to talk it over with you."²⁰⁰ On 2 August, seemingly the last meeting took place between Levy and Moulton: "B.M. To Miss Archer's & Mrs Moulton's."²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Diary of Margaret Heitland, 26 February 1889, MHP, London, my transcription.

¹⁹⁹ Diary of Margaret Heitland, 19 September 1889, MHP, London, my transcription

²⁰⁰ Amy Levy to Louise Chandler Moulton, 1 August 1889, LCM, Washington, my transcription.

²⁰¹ Diary, 2 August, 1889, ALP.

The next two letters Levy wrote to Moulton were sent during an apparently difficult time for Levy, when she recorded vertically down the page of her diary covering the dates 7 to 30 August, 1889: “Ill at Endsleigh Gardens. Corrected proofs of A London Plane-Tree et.c.” There are no other names or places or meetings logged over these dates, which gives the impression that Levy had no contact with anyone during this time. Apart from correcting proofs, however, Levy wrote to Moulton: “I am not likely to be well enough for calls for some days to come, but I shd. be delighted if you wd. come here to tea on Tuesday at 4.”²⁰² Working from the postmark, this meeting would have taken place on Tuesday 20 August, and Levy’s final letter to Moulton suggests that she did in fact visit Levy and took with her some stories for Levy to read. Moulton had also requested a copy of proofs for ALPT, which Levy had to refuse because of her publisher:

Mr Unwin won’t let me send advance proofs to anyone, but I will let you have an early copy. I am sending back the stories, wh. I kept a day or two in hope that you might come & fetch them! I am still very unwell, & am going off to-morrow to the country, to see if that will do any good. It has given me great pleasure to make yr. acquaintance & I hope we shall meet next year.²⁰³

This extract from the last letter from Levy to Moulton is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, Levy felt she had to emphasise why she could not send the proofs for ALPT by underlining ‘anyone,’ which intimates that Moulton’s request was seen as an important one. Secondly, Levy returned ‘the stories’ she had been given after giving up on Moulton visiting her again, something she intimates she had hoped for. This was the last opportunity for the women to meet, with Levy writing that she was going ‘to the country’ and she did indeed go away with Olive Schreiner on 31 August. Thirdly, Levy comments about being ‘still very unwell,’ but deflects its seriousness by pointing up the importance of their acquaintance and the hope of meeting in the future.

Re-reading Levy’s diary along with a range of other documents points up how small omissions can become the kernels for much bigger claims, which build over time and overshadow other important aspects. They skew an investigation and

²⁰² Amy Levy to Louise Chandler Moulton, postmark 17 August 1889, LCM, Washington, my transcription.

²⁰³ Amy Levy to Louise Chandler Moulton, 29 August 1889, LCM, Washington, my transcription.

lead to knowledge claims that are off the mark. That Levy was still meeting with literary figures such as Moulton and most likely her own publisher Unwin demonstrated glimmers of hope about her writing. Yet, increasingly, the less than flattering reviews and on-going difficulties of making a living as a woman writer were becoming overwhelming. These were not hurdles unique to Levy, but more general to women trying to establish themselves as writers, as Bateson pointed out in her own diary. Women writers could depict female characters as independent and successful professionals, whilst still struggling to meet these aspirations themselves. Levy, it seems, gradually failed to see a way forward for herself even with advice and support from another close friend, Olive Schreiner, when the women holidayed together early in September 1889. There have been a number of claims made about the relevance of this time together to Levy's death a week later, and Schreiner is not portrayed favourably (Pullen 2010 pp. 157-8). What is more important to recognise is that by this point in time Levy's and Schreiner's life views were at odds with each other, with their cultural political perspectives and practices going in opposite directions.

According to Mary Brown's reminiscences of her friendship with Olive Schreiner, Schreiner had sent her "a favourite book of hers ... 'Towards Democracy'²⁰⁴ by Edward Carpenter" (Brown 1923 p. 2). This was in late 1888 or early 1889. In September 1889 Schreiner also sent a section from Carpenter's book to Amy Levy in the hope of 'cheering her up,' probably to guide and inspire her. She mentioned this in letters to both Carpenter (in 1889) and Ellis (in 1892). In both letters Schreiner seemingly quotes verbatim from a note Levy had sent back the night before her death, in which she stated: "It might have helped me once it is too late now, philosophy cannot help me."²⁰⁵ In Schreiner choosing not to paraphrase, some of Levy's last words now exist in this palimpsest form, and give a strong sense of Levy as being very much bound up in the self and unable to be reached by ideas and indeed by friendship.

²⁰⁴ Edward Carpenter (1885) *Towards Democracy*. London: John Heywood.

²⁰⁵ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 23 April 1892, Texas, OSLP transcription.

The week before the two women had been away together and this was logged in some of Levy's last diary entries: "To St. Leonard's & Folkestone with Olive Schreiner," "To St. Margaret's Bay with O.S." and "Back to town."²⁰⁶ This three day trip must have been discussed and planned for, yet there is no indication in the diary of the two women meeting or contacting each other beforehand, which again shows Levy did not log everything in her diary but was selective around unstated and perhaps changing criteria. There is actually no mention of Schreiner in Levy's diary during the first half of 1889, which is also not necessarily indicative of there being no contact. Schreiner had lived away from London for much of this time: She was in Mentone and then Paris until mid-April; and from late April to early June she lived near Woking and in Brighton. The first mention of Schreiner in Levy's diary is on 11 June, a few days after Schreiner's return to London from Brighton: "B.M. To Olive Schreiner's & Clemmy's"²⁰⁷ which means Levy went to the British Museum and then onto the Ladies Chambers in Chenies Street, where Schreiner was staying. They met again later in the month, a few times in July, and then it seems, not at all until going away together late August. It is interesting that they always met at Schreiner's accommodation, which is unlike Levy's other meetings with friends, which occurred at her home or 'the Club' or elsewhere, a restaurant perhaps. Yet it is only possible to surmise why: Schreiner may not have been made welcome at the Levy residence because of her unconventionality, as Marx was not welcome at the Potter family home.

There are no extant letters between Levy and Schreiner, and Levy does not mention Schreiner in any of her letters to other people. Yet from Schreiner's letters to Ellis, as in: "This letter of Amy's may interest you ... I am going to St. Leonard's with Amy Levy from Saturday to Tuesday as my chest is getting worse,"²⁰⁸ it is clear that some letters were sent between the two women. And this comment to Ellis implies that the trip was because of Schreiner's asthma, rather than because of Levy's illness or depression. Whilst they did not see each other as often as, say, Levy

²⁰⁶ Diary, 31 August, 1 and 2 September 1889, ALP, my transcription.

²⁰⁷ Diary, 11 June 1889, ALP, my transcription.

²⁰⁸ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 28 August 1889, NLSA Cape Town, Special Collections, OSLP transcription. Lines 4-5.

and Clementina Black, this shows their connection to have been a meaningful one, although some biographers take a different view.

Pullen (2010 pp. 157-8) suggests a link between Levy's "fateful visit to Olive Schreiner" and Levy's handwriting deteriorating, which she claims with no evidence at all, was because Schreiner told Levy about Pearson's engagement to Maria Sharpe. This is similar to the comment by Eleanor Marx's biographer Yvonne Kapp, whose heavy-handed bowdlerisation of a letter Schreiner wrote to Dollie Radford presents Schreiner in a highly negative way. Kapp (1976 p. 700) writes: "[Schreiner] then indulged her hatred of Aveling by recounting with gloating prurience some of his more *outré* sexual escapades, ending her letter with a sentiment not untypical of her destructive personality: '*I am so glad Eleanor is dead. It is such a mercy she has escaped from him ...*' (My italics. Y.K.)." Presumption also underpinned the anonymous PMG article in 1892 which implicated Schreiner in Levy's death, in phrases such as "both were indulging in very gloomy views of life [and] After discussing the question they both decided to commit suicide."²⁰⁹ My own view sits at odds with these versions of Schreiner, and of the women's relationship at this point in time, in reflecting perspectival differences about private life and political engagement, not of one woman being negatively influential over the other.

Rather than gloom, a more generous aspect of Schreiner's character is presented by Mary Brown, quoted from a letter received from a mutual friend, Sir William MacKenzie, who wrote of Schreiner: "There is one point of her character which the life (written by her husband) does not notice ... her unselfishness in helping others. This help was not confined to words or counsel, which many people are good at, but meant actual deeds" (Brown 1923 p. 8; Brown 1937; see also Stanley 2002; Stanley & Salter 2009). Such deeds were evident in Schreiner looking out for Eleanor Marx, as discussed in Chapter Four. Schreiner, it seems, had tried to convey in both words (Carpenter's text) and deeds (the trip away) to Levy there were good reasons to live, writing about this twice, first to Carpenter himself:

²⁰⁹ Anonymous (1892) 'Occasional Notes,' PMG, 1 April, p. 2.

The sandals are quite perfect. I have already lent one to a woman who wants to have a pair made like them. But no others will be like them to me. I value them immensely.

I should have written yesterday but I had had a blow that somewhat unfitted me. My dear friend Amy Levy had died the night before. She killed herself by shutting herself up in a room with charcoal. We were away together for three days last week. But it did not seem to help her; her agony had gone past human help. The last thing I sent her was the Have Faith page of Towards Demo. She wrote me back a little note, "Thank you, it is very beautiful, but philosophy can't help me. I am too much shut in with the personal." You need not refer to all this when you write. I only tell you that you may know why I didn't write sooner. They say the East End women are getting terribly tired of the ^strike.

Olive^

^I send you an allegory of mine. Return; don't show to anyone else as it is only to appear in the Fortnightly next month.^

Olive²¹⁰

There are many interesting things to say about this letter, such as the exchange of letters between Schreiner and Levy which no longer exists, the mention of Levy's last letter to Schreiner (quite possibly her last letter to anyone), and the multiple giving of gifts, the sandals, the text Schreiner sent to Levy, and the allegory Schreiner included for Carpenter. When Schreiner wrote 'I should have written yesterday' but could not because she had just received the news of her friend's death, which was the night before that, it dates this letter as having been written on Wednesday 11 September 1889. This means that Schreiner knew of Levy's death very quickly, most likely through Black, as there is neither evidence of Schreiner knowing the Levy family nor of her being involved in the inquest at all. Schreiner's letter also implies the trip away the previous week was intended to help her friend, and so was sending her the Carpenter text. Then the letter makes a sharp shift back to Schreiner's present 'moment of writing' and away from reflection and the personal: She requests Carpenter not mention Levy's death when he replies and swiftly moves on to other outward concerns about the Dock Strike.

²¹⁰ Olive Schreiner to Edward Carpenter, September 1889, Sheffield, OSLP transcription. Lines 3-25.

By the time Schreiner wrote in a letter about Levy's death again, in 1892, the spatial and temporal aspects are at a greater distance:

Matjesfontein

April 23 / 92

A funny idea has struck me about the enclosed cuttings, that perhaps I am meant!!! So many lies have been told about me already that now I wonder at nothing, & I think feel pained at nothing, not even at being told that I was ^am^ a Roman Catholic. What makes it likely that I am meant is that it is exactly the opposite of the truth, that I was ^always^ trying to cheer up Amy Levy (if it be intended for her,) & professing that I found life so delightful & worth living I've often felt since that if I'd been more sympathetic to her melancholy mood, I might have done more for her. In her last note to me she said, "You care for science & art & helping your fellow men, therefore life is worth living to ^you, to^ me it is worth nothing," & the last thing I sent her was Ed Carpenters "Do Not Hurry, have faith." which she sent back to me the night before her death with the words, "It might have helped me once it is too late now, philosophy cannot help me." *Unreadable* It's very funny how exactly the opposite of the truth as the stories in papers, a sort of inversion!! The It's very funny. I should have

^minded once but I think I am getting hardened now!!

Olive.²¹¹

In this letter Schreiner is recalling the same events from a greater distance, both in terms of time – over two years have passed, and place – she was now in South Africa. In it she is more self-reflective and there is the comment she might have done more for Levy had she been more sympathetic to her condition. It also expands on the contents of Levy's 'last note' to Schreiner professing Levy's life had no worth for her anymore. Schreiner also clarifies that this note was sent the night before her death. Was this Levy tying up loose-ends, returning gifts, and saying her last goodbyes? Was it her last letter, as it appears she did not leave a 'suicide note'?

Another letter, this time from Amy Levy to Violet Paget, adds to the impression that Levy was indeed beginning to tie-up loose-ends. This letter was sent on 'Saturday' with no other date given:

²¹¹ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 23 April 1892, Texas, OSLP transcription. Lines 1-24.

My dear Miss Paget, I have put off answering yr. most kind note, as I wished to think it over. I can't tell you how good I think it of you to have asked me to stay with you, & had circumstances been otherwise, I shd. have been delighted to come. But I'm not well – either in soul or body - & I have refused all invitations to stay with my friends. And I must refuse yrs. too, one of the most attractive.²¹²

It is possible to pin down the date of this letter as very likely written on Saturday 7 September because of a postcard Paget sent to her mother Matilda on Sunday 8 September, in which she wrote: “Miss Levy can't come [to Florence] either, says she is ‘too ill in body & soul.’”²¹³ Like Schreiner, Paget too provides a kind of palimpsest version of some of Levy's last words in this postcard. She also gives no indication of being overly concerned about Levy's well-being. If Levy's words are taken at face value, she had not been abandoned by her friends, who had sent invitations, but had rather refused help and chosen to be alone. She appears also to be very well aware of the severity of her own condition.

And another letter throws up more questions than answers. This is from Bella Duffy, who gave Levy the diary, and is addressed to Vernon Lee. It demonstrates that Levy was likely to have been more active in her letter-writing during August 1889 than it appears from her diary:

[...] The death of dear little Amy Levy was really a great shock to me. I was quite fond of her, with a fondness born of admiration for her clear cut luminous little mind ... I had miserable scraps of notes from her all the time I was at Brighton, telling me she was ill, but never till quite at the very last, speaking of herself as very ill. Her last note written at most a fortnight ago, told me she had been for three days ^at^ the seaside with Olive Schreiner but feeling no better, she had returned to London and “crept back into her hole”. And the note ended with her usual prayer for death. I wished so much to go up to her then, but my hands were tied – I was only just convalescent from those ridiculous measles ... I wrote to Amy begging her to send me a line to Florence & then at Lucerne on the Railway Platform Isabella McDougall told me she had been dead, nearly a week! I fear she must have been quite alone – alone in that ghastly house! I only trust she did not put an end to herself. She had looked ill all the summer, perhaps she died from natural causes. I am most anxious for particulars & have written to Clementina Black who was in London at the time, I believe. Fisher Unwin is to bring out a tiny volume of her poems in Octr. Could you, would you not write a preface to them?

²¹² Amy Levy to Violet Paget, n.d., Colby, my transcription.

²¹³ Violet Paget to Matilda Paget, 8 September 1889, Colby, my transcription.

Somebody who can write ought to do it. As it is, the poor [illeg] pitiful, bright little creature will be all too soon forgotten. What made her so interesting to me was a forlorn sort of [illeg] wh she had, & the manner in wh at her very worst an intellectual stimulus could rouse her.²¹⁴

This letter shows that, as with Black, Schreiner and Lee, Duffy recognised the severity of Levy's illness, without realising its final stage. Indeed, the comment on Levy's 'clear cut luminous little mind,' is something which sits awkwardly with the coroner's comments on the death certificate that Levy was of 'Unsound Mind.' Duffy confirms that Levy had written 'scraps of notes' to her and Levy's last letter to Duffy was 'written at most a fortnight ago,' which would have been around 9 September, Levy's last night. From Duffy's comments it is possible to know something of what Levy wrote about: Her trip to 'the seaside with Olive Schreiner' and that this did nothing to help her. Duffy too includes some of Levy's own words, that she 'crept back into her hole,' strongly communicating Levy's sense of insularity. Duffy's concern that Levy 'must have been quite alone – alone in that ghastly house!' is also a strongly worded comment. Her reply to Levy, sent from Florence, would have reached Endsleigh Gardens after Levy's death.

In the last days of her life, Levy was not abandoned and had received different offers of visits and took some of them up. But she took time out of 'her hole' only to creep back into it. She also wrote a number of letters to friends which together show a woman aware of her own condition. And it was to Schreiner to whom she expressed the very clear distinction between her own perspective and Schreiner's; her sense of being 'too much shut in with the personal' being at odds with the more philosophical and 'larger' ideas Schreiner was leaning towards. Levy could no longer see the 'bigger picture.' Duffy's fear about her friend being forgotten has not come about, however, and she has been remembered (and revived) as, among other things, a New Woman writer.

In this vignette I have focussed on three individuals connected to Levy; Black, Moulton and Schreiner, to explore the value and importance of intimate friendships and acquaintances, and a number of others have come into view as well. This has been made possible by exploring different textual sources for their

²¹⁴ Bella Duffy to Vernon Lee, 23 September 1889, Colby, my transcription.

palimpsest qualities, adding to what is presently known, and challenging some ideas concerning Levy's social world. Levy's 'last letters' now only exist in palimpsest forms, in the letters and notes of Schreiner, Lee, Moulton and Duffy, yet they are significant in showing Levy's outlook as being very different from her friends, and her awareness of this is also clear.

Levy was close to Black, Schreiner, Lee, Duffy, Radford and others. Yet in trying to understand her place in this set of relationships, there are only small mentions in letters and other texts to draw upon, such as Levy's signature in the attendance book for the early A Men and Women's Club meetings, a few letters to Dollie Radford and Clementina Black, mentions in some of Schreiner's letters, and the logging of persons and meetings in Levy's diary. Some of Levy's letters and her 1889 diary also indicate her association with various major and minor literary figures, including Louise Chandler Moulton, the Rossettis and Margaret Bateson among others, and to other social groups like the University Club for Ladies. And some of Levy's writings emphasise the importance of women's clubs where like-minded women were able to network to further their literary (and other types of) careers.

Yet, Levy appeared to be in-between so many things: Old friends and new; their growing concerns with political matters, her overarching commitment to becoming a writer; their increased movements out of the city, her retreat back into the family house. As such Levy was an isolate, and even though connections were still apparent, her increasing level of disconnection was not necessarily felt or fully understood by friends and others. The letters afforded Levy her final moments of connection with her friends, and by accessing her words and phrases through small mentions in other letters, light has been thrown on valuable aspects of Levy's life. This is continued in the next vignette which asks what Levy was communicating to her audience, or 'friends' of her past, present and future, in the way she coordinated her final literary work.

Vignette Four: Literary Cultural Politics as Self-Curated *Bricolage*

This vignette explores aspects of Amy Levy's cultural politics through her final book of poetry, *A London Plane Tree and Other Verse*, left as a completed manuscript and unpublished at her death. The process by which she (and others) brought this compilation of poetry together is interesting in light of what she hoped to communicate with the book, to her friends and wider audience, and also how it has been interpreted at the time and more recently. Consideration is given to who else was involved in this working process and how exploring this adds to the "characteristics of a section of society" (Allen 2000 p. 5), in this case, of women writers' friendship circles and the literary establishment they engaged with. I also consider the intertextual nature of this work, with Levy bringing together different poems, and as such the different moments in her life in which they were produced. This work has prompted many more writings about it, particularly in relation to Levy's death, and some are discussed in this chapter. In a sense these writings "can continually revive her" (Dillon 2005 p. 249), something, I argue, Levy may have been aware of. Yet there are questions to be asked around how this revival has been undertaken, what kind of a woman writer has emerged and what Levy's own intentionality might have been with regards to this.

Preparing ALPT for publication involved Levy selecting, organising, proof-reading and copy-editing the collection of fifty-one poems which make up the book, a lengthy and concentrated task which Levy appears to have done alone at home during August 1889. It is surprising, then, that none of the speculations about Levy's death have been based on a thorough analysis of the manuscript sources of this book in its entirety. Most often certain poems or extracts have been selected and used to underpin the particular explanation being put forward. For example, the last lines of the final poem in ALPT, which is called 'To E,' reads: "Beneath an alien sod; on me / The cloud descends" (New 1993 p. 403); and these have been 'spotlighted' as providing evidence of Levy's final depression and intentions (see New 1993 p. 38; Pullen 2010 p. 59). Levy certainly communicated much about her life through her writing, sometimes explicitly and sometimes less so. However, while there may be

something in this idea, the extraction of particular 'key phrases' leaves out what does not fit this idea. Consequently, and recalling Beckman's (2000 p. 191) comment that "There is a need for serious discussion of Levy's final volume of poems," a broader analysis of the process of producing ALPT from its inception in Levy's imagination (as represented in a letter) to its reception upon publication will now be considered.

Particular poems in ALPT have been discussed by Ana Vadillo (2005) where the focus is on Levy's 'urban aestheticism' and women's relationship to the city in various forms, as, for example, a spectator, a passenger, a 'poet of modernity.' And ALPT has also been interpreted as being different from Levy's other books of poetry in being "almost totally a lyric volume [which] may have galvanised Levy's anxiety about how her first person, lyric voice attached to her Jewish signature would be interpreted" (Scheinberg 1996 p. 195). 'Lyric' here means that the work was being utilised to portray the feelings, views and state of mind of the poet directly to the reader, not through characters and plots. Levy was all too aware about how she presented herself to the world and how she was perceived, and her self-reflexivity is evident in some of the letters she wrote. Levy also persisted in never using a pseudonym, and consequently she wrote as a single, educated, Anglo Jewish woman and explored these characteristics in different literary ways. Levy's final book of poetry can be seen as a text she constructed purposively, to communicate things about herself, including interests and views, everyday life experiences, and her death.

ALPT can in fact be viewed as a *bricolage*, a textual space in which Levy carefully assembled work from different periods of her life and placed it into different sections. This coordinated a narrative across the whole book, which it is possible to analyse using the extant manuscript drafts, proofs and other notes, available for consultation in the ALP. This process included various stages of writing, from scribbling down initial ideas, practising book cover designs and planning the order of the poems, to the almost finished stages where final adjustments were made. This has resulted in an interesting array of documents, or 'avant-textes' (Deppman 2004), because they come before the final stage of publication. In re-reading these documents, therefore, intertextually with other documents, Levy's working processes, her friendship and other connections, and her

'presentation of self' (Goffman 1990), which seem equally if not more important than the individual poems making up the book, are more apparent.

The production of ALPT connects a number of events including Levy's death. The link between the book and her death was made in many of the articles appearing soon after, including:

Shortly before her death [Levy] had completed the revision of the proofs of a volume of poetry called 'A London Plane-Tree,'²¹⁵

and:

Yet another 'series' is to be commenced ... entitled the 'Cameo Series' [by] the publisher Mr. Fisher Unwin. The first volume is to be Mrs. Marx-Aveling's translation of Ibsen's latest drama, *The Lady from the Sea*, ... and this will be followed on December 1st by 'A London Plane-Tree and other Verse,' by the late Miss Amy Levy, whose early death a few weeks since aroused much attention.²¹⁶

Also, when the book appeared in December 1889, following the title page it is stated that "The proofs of this volume were corrected by the Author about a week before her death" (Levy, ALPT 1889). In working on the final proofs of ALPT in the last weeks of her life, this was one of her last literary acts (aside from some letters she wrote to friends) because less than two weeks later she was dead.

As representative of Levy's death, the book also became a signifier of a woman poet's character (not robust enough for public life), and even her destiny (to fail). Here I argue for a different interpretation, one based on, and more closely connected to, Levy's cultural politics, concerning what women faced in their attempts to become successful in a difficult to access literary establishment. Whilst ALPT appears closely connected to Levy's death, both temporally and spatially, it can also be discussed in other ways too. For example, considered more broadly, it can tell of the life of a woman writer in London in the 1880s, in terms of what things affected her life, influenced her writing, and enabled or prevented success, involving larger scale politics (gender inequality) and interlinked smaller everyday matters ('waste paper basket' comments).

²¹⁵ Anonymous (1889) 'Obituary. Miss Amy Levy,' *The Jewish Chronicle*, 13 September, p. 6.

²¹⁶ Anonymous (1889) *Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 November, Issue 9797, p. 5.

For most of August 1889 Amy Levy was present in the family residence, working on correcting the proofs of *ALPT*. This work constituted the final stage of the book before the corrected copy was sent to T. Fisher Unwin, Levy's publisher. There were, however, stages before this, including selecting material for the book, meetings with prospective publishers, and readings of its proposed content with friends, a small cluster of whom are identifiable from Levy's diary. The idea of a cluster within a broader friendship network is interesting and has similar properties to Simmel's 'webs of group affiliation,' inasmuch as different kinds of people come together because of a particular event or purpose. The purpose in this instance was to contribute towards the completion of the book, or more straightforwardly to support and encourage a friend in their endeavors. It was Levy who brought the book's 'working party' together, and this is similar to the way Eleanor Marx gathered individuals to her home to discuss her views and interest in Ibsen. Marx, however, was not one of those involved in Levy's group.

Beckman (2000 p. 83) notes that Dollie Radford's diary of 1883 through to 1889 shows that Dollie and Eleanor Marx were close friends who attended socialist lectures together. Amy Levy is also mentioned frequently, "but is conspicuously lacking in entries that refer to left-wing activities" (Beckman 2000 p. 83). This is a rather over-simplified summary of these friendships, yet it serves to point out that although the three women knew each other, there were separations and 'clusters' because of different interests. There were also spatial aspects to be taken into account – Levy was absent at the socialist lectures, but present in the British Museum Reading Rooms which both Radford and Marx visited often. Marx (and seemingly Schreiner) were absent at Levy's tennis parties and 'At Homes' to which the Radfords and others were invited. As such, the social network involving women writers in 1880s London begins to display characteristics of smaller dyadic and triadic clusters within the whole, an idea useful in considering who contributed to getting Levy's book into print, when and where things happened.

The first edition of *ALPT* is small in size and, like Levy's diary, there is a delicacy about it and some floral designing on each page. From written comments on the early proofs and in her diary, Levy appears to have had quite a say in the book's

overall appearance, including in organising its two illustrations. She wrote on the final draft: “I think the book will look very well A.L.”²¹⁷ From the set of proofs in the archive it is clear attempts have been made over time to give the different versions a sense of coherence. The black folder in which they are kept have two main sections. The first half of the folder contains a mix of texts: There are poems which have been published previously and which appear to have been torn from the original publication and glued to another piece of paper: There are poems which have been re-written in 1889 but which are known to have been originally written by Levy previously. And there are seemingly original poems written specifically for this collection, as there is no evidence of their earlier existence. All of the above have, to varying degrees, Levy’s additions and amendments handwritten on them, either directly on the cut-out texts or written in the margins of pages in black ink. This half of the folder appears to be Levy’s workings-out of the collection and, at a total of fifty-one poems, it far exceeds her two previous published collections: *Xantippe and Other Verse* (1881), made up of just seven poems, and *A Minor Poet and Other Verse* (1884) with eighteen poems. The second half of the folder contains the final proofs from the publisher, on which Levy made the final adjustments, and presumably this is what she was doing at Endsleigh Gardens before going away with Olive Schreiner in the week prior to her death. The different drafts allow for the analysis of Levy’s changing vision of ALPT overall. There is clearly much consideration given throughout its stages, from Levy’s first handwritten version of the collection, to giving the fifty-one poems order, to making amendments on the final proofs. Before they were published Levy progressed these poems through the different stages of development with various people helping her along the way.

In one of Levy’s eight extant letters to Violet Paget, sent from her home at Endsleigh Gardens to Paget in Florence, she mentions her idea of writing a new book of poetry. Levy produced no other book of poetry following this letter, so it is highly likely to be ALPT to which she was referring. The letter is a lengthy one detailing a number of women friends Levy was spending time with, places she was visiting, and what she was reading. Part of the letter is as follows:

²¹⁷ Final Proofs of ALPT, ALP, my transcription.

My dear Miss Paget,

I have to thank you for a long & delightful letter; how nice it will be when you come to London; I do so want to see you.

I am so good that you wd. hardly know me; am in the 19th chapter of my novel, & am thinking seriously of a new volume of verse. [...]

There are two novels this season, worth reading; I wonder if you have read them? The Woodlanders; a finished, unpleasant, clever book; & The Silence of Dean Maitland; a crude, unsympathetic extravagant production, yet powerful in its way, & carrying one over many absurdities by the force of the author's belief in them. It is by an invalid woman of 40, who has lived in the country all her days [...]

I hear you have Helen Zimmern in Florence; have you seen anything of her & is she at all better; it is dreadful, the way in wh. she has broken up. When are you coming here? Is it true that you are going to live en garçon instead of staying with the Robinsons? I wonder if I shall see anything of you? It seems simply ages ago that I said good-bye to you in the Underground Railway (of all places); do you remember? ...

This is a stupid letter, but you don't know how difficult it is to write to a person like yr. self; talking is so much easier & so very much pleasanter. Perhaps soon I shall be talking to you.

Yrs. always sincerely Amy Levy²¹⁸

This letter is undated. It is possible, however, to situate it in relation to the two books Levy mentions, which were published in 1887 and 1886 respectively. Also, the novel Levy was writing was her first, *The Romance of a Shop* (published in 1888), a story which “opens up a representational landscape for Victorian feminism when middle-class women's lives were expanding ... into the streets of the city” (Bernstein 2006 p. 11). The novel is about the four Lorimer sisters who, forced into making their own living after their father's death, relocate to the city and start a photography business. Each sister represents a transitional stage in the turning of a domestic life into an entrepreneurial and independent one, and consequently each sister's life turns out differently according to the choices they make (Levy 1888c). The novel demonstrates Levy's awareness of the many complexities of such a transition and

²¹⁸ Amy Levy to Violet Paget, n.d., Colby, my transcription.

was written at a time when she was not so much ‘shut up in the personal,’ but engaged with the city both in her every day and literary life.

It is interesting that Levy expressed her initial idea to Paget, a woman she had much admiration for, even perhaps to the extent of feeling something of a neophyte in the literary sense. Paget’s life and literature explored transitional stages, and, as Levy’s letter points out, she was about to live ‘like a bachelor’ in preference to staying with close family friends the Robinsons. Paget, who became better known by her pseudonym Vernon Lee, chose masculine dress also. These kinds of lifestyle choices were not available to Levy, even had she wanted them, her family being closely tied to traditions and appearances and her reliance on her family always, with only small bursts of freedom, as with her time in Brighton. Yet, with Schreiner’s alone living, the Black sisters’ unconventional living arrangements without domestic servants, Marx’s radical personal relationships and Paget’s ‘bachelor’ lifestyle choice, all of which point to multiple directions taken by different women in terms of achieving their independence, Levy was well aware of other ways in which women could live and included aspects of this in her writing. Levy at once relied on the comfort of her middle-class home life, whilst also gravitating towards women who experienced very different home lives too. And this too points to the difficulties some women had in terms of breaking free from family traditions and expectations.

As Levy worked towards the completion of *The Romance of a Shop*, she began to imagine this ‘new volume of verse,’ as yet unnamed. It would eventuate as less new verse and more a collation of works previously written, covering six years of her literary life. It included, for instance, some early poems, ‘In the Black Forest’ and ‘The Dream,’ which were published in the *Cambridge Review* in 1884, and several poems she had sent together with a letter to Lee in 1886. Also, between 1887 and 1889, Levy worked on two other novels, *Reuben Sachs* (1888d) and *Miss Meredith* (1889a), as well as many articles, so ALPT was not all-consuming but a project which ran along side other literary work until the last few weeks of her life, when her publisher’s deadline had to be met.

T. Fisher Unwin had not been Levy’s first choice of publisher, as she had approached Macmillan’s Publishers earlier in 1889. On 1 April Levy set off from

Endsleigh Gardens for Macmillan's, based in Bedford Square only a short distance away, and noted this in her diary. A week later she returned there: "To Macmillans with poems."²¹⁹ That is, she took them a rough first draft of the book, which would later be added to: Levy had cut out her poems from various publications, glued them onto larger sheets of paper, and made a booklet which she took to the prospective publishers. On the same day Levy wrote the sonnet 'London Poets,' which would be added to ALPT, and she read Henry Salt's *Life of James Thomson*, which had just been published.

Levy's 'London Poets' has interesting palimpsestic qualities in terms of her use of phrases pointing to others having gone before her, and these are like Certeau's (1984 p. 93) 'intertwining paths': "They trod the streets and squares where now I tread, /With weary hearts, a little while ago; ... /Today, it is the shadow of a dream, .../'No more he comes, who this way came and went.'"²²⁰ Thomson was a poet who had died earlier in the 1880s after suffering from depression and alcoholism, with his final book of poetry being *The City of Dreadful Night and Other Poems*. Levy added 'In Memorium' beneath the title of her own poem, obliquely referencing city writers including him. In her portrayal of the city streets as being littered with ghostly (failed) poets, she also revives Thompson and his work. A little over two weeks later, however, she wrote "Macmillan chucks poems"²²¹ but made no comment as to how she felt about this. Her poems were rejected for being 'puny' (see Vadillo 2005 p. 58). The following day she went to Paternoster Row, a publishing area just north of St. Paul's Cathedral which no longer exists, to visit the relatively new publishing firm of T. Fisher Unwin, again logging this in her diary. She made a follow-up visit there five days later on 30 April, before setting off on a two-week visit to Dorking, and on her return to London she received news of Unwin's acceptance, confirmation which may have prompted an event a week later: "Had a party in my room (about 40) Maggie came and slept."²²²

²¹⁹ Diary, 8 April, 1889, ALP, my transcription.

²²⁰ ALPT Manuscript, ALP, my transcription.

²²¹ Diary, 24 April 1889, ALP, my transcription.

²²² Diary, 22 May 1889, ALP, my transcription.

Thomas Fisher Unwin set up his publishing business in 1882 and as a newcomer initially found it difficult to attract already-established writers. Instead, Unwin focussed on launching new writers (who required less money), and on producing more affordable literature by moving away from the three-volume novel to smaller, shorter publications (Bassett 2004 p. 143). Unwin also broke with the convention that women's poetry should be published collectively, as in earlier anthologies such as *The Keepsake*, the *Gem* and the *Forget Me Not* (Leighton & Reynolds 1995 p. xxvi). Such collections meant that women's writing was kept separate from the dominant literary canon, rather than it being allowed to stand among the literary figures of the time. Yet such collections also allowed women writers to learn from each other, as Margaret Reynolds points out: "This constant looking at each other's work, valuing and assessing each other's talent, marks not only the personal experience of the Victorian women poets, but spills over into their poetry too" (Leighton & Reynolds 1995 p. xxx). This 'valuing and assessing' of each other's talents continued through some of the women writer's epistolary practices as well when, for instance, Levy sent her poems, along with letters, to selected friends such as Vernon Lee and Clementina Black: "I don't feel much like writing to-night ... so here are some verse to make up."²²³

In the late 1880s Unwin had embarked on a new idea to publish books in a series, as a way of bringing together the work of different writers whilst offering readers a format which could be collected over time. The most successful was the 'Pseudonym Series' of the early 1890s, which required all the authors to use pen names as a marketing strategy, which also worked to conceal the gender of the author (Bassett 2004 p. 144). Prior to this he produced the 'Cameo Series,' mainly for poetry, and ALPT was a part of this collection of eleven books (which included Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea* as translated by Eleanor Marx Aveling), and these were brought out periodically at intervals of about one a month. It is not known if Levy wanted her work to be part of Unwin's series: Perhaps so, as the idea of making literature more widely available must have been approved of. Yet, perhaps not, since Levy had approached the more established and reputable Macmillan's first, even

²²³ Amy Levy to Clementina Black, n.d., ALP, my transcription.

though Unwin had published her first book of poetry *A Minor Poet and Other Verse* in 1884. She had, however, no say when, following her death, Unwin republished *A Minor Poet* also as part of the Cameo Series.

Levy's diary shows that between Unwin's confirmation and the party she held, she wrote letters and visited J. B. Partridge about the illustrations for her new book. As was usual, she also caught up with friends for tea, for dinner and at 'the Club'; she also spent time in the parks, wrote and read, and received several payments for her other work. This should have been, and perhaps was, a very exciting time for Levy, which brought together her writing about the city and her love of being in it. What is also evident in her diary during April and May is Levy's closeness to a small group of friends who she met with regularly, particularly 'Clemmy,' 'M. Smart' and her old friend Ernest Radford. On the day she made her first trip to Macmillan's she also "Loafed with M. Smart"²²⁴ and on the day she took her poems to Macmillan's she "Loafed with Clemmy, E. Radford & M. Smart."²²⁵ Also, regarding her visits to Fisher Unwin's, she "Lunched with Clemmy & M. Smart" on 25 April, and she "Lunched with Clemmy & M. Smart at the vegetarian restaurant" on 30 April. Finally, on 13 May she logged "London. Fisher takes poems ... Clemmy & Margaret..." Is this Margaret perhaps M. Smart? And is this Levy's small circle of friendship support regarding her work at this time? There are some further hints that make this likely.

M. Smart, like the 'woman in charge of the house,' has eluded further investigation: "a woman referred to in the calendar only as 'M. Smart'" (Beckman 2000 p. 176) is all the information there is available. And it is unclear how Beckman concludes that M. Smart was actually a woman. It is difficult to trace oblique and difficult-to-get-at people, even if they are clearly of some significance, as I believe M. Smart to have been to Levy. Yet, in this case, there are some important 'hints' (Bressey 2002 p. 41) when all the entries to M. Smart in Levy's diary are brought together. This is important inasmuch as understanding how to re-read an individual's personal archive takes time, and should not be approached in an overly prescribed way, but with consideration for the small details and nuances they subtly portray.

²²⁴ Diary, 1 April 1889, ALP, my transcription.

²²⁵ Diary, 8 April 1889, ALP, my transcription.

On 7 January 1889 Levy left Florence with her gift of a diary and returned to London via Paris, arriving on the evening of Thursday 17 January. Over the next few days she caught up with many friends: “Saw Clemmy. Dined at Katie’s,”²²⁶ “Jenny to lunch. Dora in the evening ... Called on M. Smart at “the office,”²²⁷ “Pauline called. I called on Bertha T. & dined at the de Passes,”²²⁸ and so on. What is clear from such entries is that Levy’s close women friends are logged most often by their forenames, yet ‘M. Smart’ remains as such throughout: There are only two possible variations out of the twenty-seven references to this person, aside from the aforementioned reference to Margaret; one on 8 March which reads: “The M.S. tragedy!!” although it is uncertain if this refers to M. Smart (it could possibly mean Manuscript); and the other on 4 July, which reads: “dined at the Smarts,” showing Levy’s association with the Smart family also. Consequently it is difficult to discern if M. Smart is male or female: Perhaps male, since Levy rarely used forenames for men apart from her siblings and nephews; perhaps female, since there are numerous mentions of Levy and M. Smart spending time alone. Perhaps M. Smart was Levy’s senior and so it was more respectful not to use her first name. Importantly, M. Smart had helped Levy with the proofs for her novel *Miss Meredith* during April 1889,²²⁹ a short story serialised in *British Weekly* between April and June. All of these meetings with Levy demonstrate M. Smart as someone who was significant in Levy’s social network, in connection with her writing, and perhaps her cultural political outlook also.

The relevance of these links can be understood more through additional ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973). Levy and M. Smart met Clementina Black, Ernest Radford, A. H. Bigg, Katie Solomon, Richard Garnett, Mr Young, Mr Cohen and H. Burrows. The places mentioned, apart from tea shops and restaurants, are ‘the office,’ St. George’s Hall, and “Tea to working girls at Stepney.”²³⁰ From here it is possible to connect M. Smart to Clementina Black and as a possible member of the Women’s Protective and Provident League (‘the office’) (WPPL), of which Black was secretary at the time. *The Women’s Union Journal* was the ‘organ’ of the WPPL,

²²⁶ Diary, 18 January 1889, ALP, my transcription.

²²⁷ Diary, 19 January 1889, ALP, my transcription.

²²⁸ Diary, 20 January 1889, ALP, my transcription.

²²⁹ Diary, 10, 11 and 13 April 1889, ALP, my transcription.

²³⁰ Diary, 19 June, 1889, ALP, my transcription.

printed monthly from 1876 to 1890, with the intention of “spreading a knowledge of the movement.”²³¹ Meetings were held at Essex Hall on the Strand. Black became secretary in February 1887, Henrietta Frances Lord subscribed as a member in July 1882, Henrietta Müller spoke at the twelfth Annual meeting. And, in addition, Miss M. Smart made a donation in 1887 and by July 1888 was a member of the Committee along with Black,²³² therefore further establishing a clear connection between these women around the League’s aims and activities.

Levy appears to have remained in a peripheral yet supportive position: she made monetary donations in 1888 and 1889 and, following her death, her sister Katie gave some books to the League.²³³ She may well have been otherwise focussed on her writing during this time, and less interested in a deeper level of involvement with trade union debate, which Black and Smart were now a part of. M. Smart fell off Levy’s social radar in the last weeks of her life: what seems to have been their last meeting occurred at the beginning of July 1889. This was, as already established, the case for Black too, perhaps indicating that Smart could have been away campaigning with Black. Levy’s retreat into preparing the proofs and ‘creeping back into her hole’ occurred around this time too.

Looking at these dates when specific activities took place concerning the progress of ALPT enables the cluster of people supporting and advising Levy in this to be identified, including Clementina Black, M. Smart, Ernest Radford, Fisher Unwin and J. B Partridge. She said of the latter’s illustrations for the book: “Mr. Partridge’s horrid pictures came.”²³⁴ Vadillo (2005 pp. 58-61) posits the possibilities of Levy’s disappointment as being because of the Christian church in one of the pictures, the lone male figure as representing the Jewish poet as an outsider, and the figure in the other picture as being more “like a caricature of a New Woman” whose back was turned on the city: all these elements demonstrating that Partridge did not understand the book at all. Why Levy disliked the pictures so much is not certain, but it was too late or too costly to change them, and this was one aspect of the production

²³¹ Minutes from Third Annual Meeting, 19 June 1877, Borthwick Institute, University of York.

²³² *The Women’s Union Journal*, 16 July 1888, p. 51, Borthwick Institute, University of York.

²³³ *The Women’s Union Journal*, 15 November 1889, p. 90, Borthwick Institute, University of York.

²³⁴ Diary, 15 June 1889, ALP, my transcription.

of ALPT which was out of her hands. It was, however, still possible for Levy to make changes to the final proofs.

The title of the book points to the first section of the collection, called 'A London Plane-Tree,' but there are also London references in the other three sections too. Levy's organisation of the fifty-one poems in four sections can be seen as forming a kind of journey which takes the reader from the urban exterior (out in the city), in section one, through a gradual shift inwards (perhaps to Levy's sense of 'being shut in with the personal') in section two called 'Love, Dreams and Death,' section three called 'Moods and Thoughts,' and finally to section four called 'Odds and Ends.' With regard to the dominant theme of the plane-tree (and one appears in one of the illustrations), Deborah Parsons (2003 p. 96) writes that "Levy expresses herself as an urban woman with an urban muse through the personification of the tree." Vadillo (2002 p. 215) offers a more complex interpretation: that Levy's use of the plane-tree points up a mirroring of the woman poet and the plane-tree; it also points up the differences between the two, the woman being incarcerated behind the windowpane, the plane-tree being free in the city; and, it demonstrates Levy's use of metaphor as well as the woman poet's spectatorship, as forms of transgression and transportation. The Plane-trees are a common sight in London, and they survive particularly well in the city because they continuously shed their bark (and the accumulating toxins) and are therefore in a permanent state of renewal, of transition. Might Levy have used the 'plane-tree' in the singular to refer to herself as one among many like-minded women, equally 'at home' in the city, yet invisible to the passer by? And did she choose this particular image of urban decay and renewal to demonstrate that this was a desire of hers, to rid herself of a (perhaps perceived) poisoned body, one she felt only renewable through death?

There are numerous instances in her letters where Levy comments on her body and state of mind, with two examples being: "[I] am standing as it were with my hand on the Colney Hatch door-knob,"²³⁵ which was a reference to a London insane asylum; and in her last letter to Violet Paget: "But I'm not well – either in soul

²³⁵ Amy Levy to Clementina Black, n.d., ALP, my transcription.

or body.”²³⁶ Such comments are sporadic throughout Levy’s letters from being fairly young, which can be too easily interpreted as Levy always having suicidal intentions. However, there are also instances when Levy was more positive and which should be included in an analysis of these final months of her life, such as reflecting Grace Black’s comment that ‘she had been so much more hopeful and happy lately,’ and also moments when she expressed intending to meet up with her family in Brighton, as Clementina Black professed in her open letter, and when she wrote to Louise Chandler Moulton “I hope we shall meet next year.”²³⁷

Regarding the fifty-one poems in ALPT, Melvyn New (1993 p. 35) states that almost all of them were new, that is, written in the months before Levy’s death presumably. Yet a closer study of the poems which were published previously, in addition to those that Levy had sent together with letters to her friends, shows that actually less than half of them were new works, with some dating back to 1884, and one to 1881. In a direct sense, then, this collection does not actually reflect Levy’s mood and intentions during the summer of 1889 and should not be read as such. Yet, presuming that Levy made careful selections from her previous works regarding what was to be included and excluded, and also that she ordered her selection in a particular way, ALPT as a whole can be seen as choreographed to represent Levy’s view of her world across past times, as well as representing that particular moment of its assemblage. Of the latter ‘moment,’ the fact that the early drafts of ALPT do not contain one of Levy’s poems which appeared in the final publication seems a significant part of the process of production of ALPT. She wrote on the final proofs: “To this section let Felo de Se be added when reprinted.” This poem had been published in 1881 as part of Levy’s first collection of poetry called *Xantippe and Other Verse* and was the only poem to be selected from this book.

This vignette has explored aspects of Amy Levy’s cultural politics through the production of her final book of poetry, ALPT. Reducing the process of producing this book to a few weeks in August 1889 does not do the work justice in terms of how it related to her life over a longer period of time. Consequently, the focus has been the process by which she (and others) brought this compilation of poetry

²³⁶ Amy Levy to Violet Paget ‘Saturday’ September 1889, Colby, my transcription.

²³⁷ Amy Levy to Louise Chandler Moulton, 29 August 1889, LCM, Washington, my transcription.

together as relevant regarding what she hoped to communicate with the book. There is a journey communicated across the contents, which Levy spent time curating, and this can be summarised as mirroring her own shift in thinking and outlook from being engaged with representing women's experiences of city life, which for Levy incorporated Woman, Labour and Native Question issues, to her creativity, hopes and dreams being consumed by the late Victorian conventions she observed and experienced. She had, like the other women writers considered in this thesis, some successes mixed with some negativity around her writing. She made valuable contributions concerning the importance of women's clubs, yet, she was also reminded through reviews of her work, which included comments about her person, of what she was seen to 'lack' in terms of physical robustness and intellectual skill. She expressed her frustration about such reviews in a letter to her close friend Dollie Radford:

I sympathise with Mr. Radford on the subject of reviews. ... I suppose you've seen the Literary World? I don't know wh. makes one more scornful of one's reviewers – their praise or their blame. ... I saw Mr. Shaw's article in To-day. Perhaps he thinks it is criticism – I don't. I'm sure Mr. Radford feels with me the indignity of figuring as in a "comic" article. However, I'm getting accustomed to the high spirits invariably produced by my work in my critics.²³⁸

The review in the *Literary World* has not been found. But Shaw's article published in *To-day* on 1 August 1884 provided a sustained attack on Levy's *A Minor Poet* (1884) and Radford's *Measured Steps* (1884). Shaw described Levy's writing as immature, unbelievable and with little promise. And of the second section in Radford's book called 'Fits and Starts' Shaw reported there are "humorous pieces ... more fitful than startling" (Shaw 1996 p. 26). Shaw's tone is 'comic' throughout but it raised little for Levy to smile about and her 'getting accustomed' to reviews which were often less than flattering must have been upsetting, as conveyed by her own sarcastic tone in the letter extract. Marx and Lord had similar responses to their work, and this extract makes clear that Ernest Radford had too. This would make the support of friends even more important, to counterbalance the difficulties of 'belonging' in the literary world and its stringent gatekeeping.

²³⁸ Amy Levy to Dollie Radford, 10 August 1884, RA Add MS 89029/2, my transcription.

When considering the process of bringing ALPT to fruition, the enormous support of friends is apparent. Yet friends like Black and Smart, as well as Schreiner and Marx, were also dedicated to other kinds of activities too, which kept them away from the city and away from Levy. What she chose was to use her writing, right up until the moment of her death, to state her past and present views about women and the city. Consequently ALPT can be interpreted as a communiqué to other women writers of her time. It does not end with a full-stop but has many frayed edges – ‘Odds and Ends’ – which prompted many others to write about her life. Viewed in this way Levy’s death was actually a beginning, of the numerous claims about her life, as well as the many interpretations about her death (Dillon 2005 p. 249).

Conclusion: Cultural Politics in Literature and Documents of Life

This chapter has continued investigating women’s writing in relation to cultural politics and everyday life circumstances, involving negotiations with the literary world, having supportive friendships and other relationships, receiving negative reviews and knock-backs by publishers, and making headway through women’s publications and literary clubs. Concerning these things, Amy Levy’s life and writing are marked by different aspects at different times, and in comparison to other women writers. As such her authorial voice was a complex one, that of an educated Anglo-Jewish woman whose interests and literary expression were focussed around women’s place in the city, involving financial independence, sexual freedom and Jewish culture, topics which were not always welcomed, as some reviews make clear. This points to New Woman perspectives being located in a complicated mix of personal experience and the broader political landscape in 1880s London.

Levy’s writing was a response to the circumstances she experienced at first hand, but also through other people she was close to, who had different kinds of life experiences, such as Schreiner, Marx, Lee and Radford. She did not necessarily desire the same things and at times stated her personal preference as being dependent on middle-class comfort. But this view was not so clearly defined and her flouting of some conventions, her support of women’s clubs, alternative kinds of relationships, explorations of the city, even her request for a cremation, all point to a departure

from other traditional values and expectations. There is something of a sense of in-betweenness with Levy: She supported some clubs without necessarily joining them; she was friends with members of political groups whilst remaining on the periphery; she was a writer who wrote as both a radical and more conventionally. Described at times as quiet and shy, she was also bold, daring and funny, particularly with pen and paper in hand, the tools of her chosen trade and profession.

The differences in how women wrote about their cultural politics has been brought to the fore through close and intertextual re-readings across the selected sources, as part of a sociology of small things approach to research. This has allowed for a multitude of perspectives to be considered, beyond linear based representations, and aside from continuing previously established lines of thought. More consideration has been given to ‘writing about writing’ in this chapter, that is, considering the various writings about Levy’s life and death, not by her, as in the first vignette. This demonstrated how skewed views about a person can come about over time, as a result of gaps in knowledge, because of frayed edges, and the desire to complete a story, to give it an end point. In this instance Levy’s death has sometimes overshadowed things about her life, imbricating valuable aspects such as those concerning her use of writing as a way of communicating her cultural political views about women and the city. The many newspaper reports published around the time of her death, and the repetition of language therein, formulated strong narratives which have continued in more recent literature. As such the argument for returning to the archive, and to primary source materials is a strong one, to begin research threads again, without influential but nonetheless misleading ideas.

Intertextual re-readings of other sources, such as in the reports and poems presented in the feminist paper the WPP, proffered a different way of viewing Levy’s life and writing. And the inclusion of Schreiner’s allegory ‘Life’s Gifts’ provided an opening by which to consider differences in life and political perspectives between the women, in this case between Schreiner’s sense of exteriority and Levy’s sense of interiority, as these developed over the years the women were friends. There is evidence of some of the women writers I have investigated providing crucial support to others, even though their perspectives were at odds, or their lifestyle choices

differed. In this lines of communication, through letters and by other means, lay beneath and behind what is more apparent in the women's everyday lives, such as concerning the literature they produced, and the activities they engaged in. What also becomes clearer is that any notion of a close network of women writers largely dissolves, or is much more nuanced and fragmentary than initially conceived of, and connections 'happen' around the possibilities of a New Womanhood, not yet stipulated or prescribed.

The connections between the women writers included in this thesis, in 1880s London, were complex, they could change dramatically over time, and alter in relation to the places and events of which they were a part. At the outset my view about the network of women writers, based on other literature about the women, was of a close-knit community. Yet intimacies varied a great deal, some friendships lasting beyond the boundaries of the decade, while for others it has been difficult to find actual evidence of a connection, yet knowing there must have been one. Some connections are more like a dotted rather than solid line. And this is more representative of, for example, Levy being involved in quite different social circles to Eleanor Marx, with linkages between them composed by mutual friends, occasional meetings, and through brief overlapping literary endeavors as with *Reuben Sachs*, the original by Levy and the translation by Marx. As such, and because of my concern with cultural political writings, the focus was on how connections were visible through writing itself, not only epistolary ones, but such as literary influences passed between women writers which are traceable through the texts they produced: For example, 'Life's Gifts' between Levy, Schreiner and Müller; *A Doll's House* between Ibsen, Marx, Lord, Schreiner, and others; *In Darkest London* between Harkness, Schreiner, Marx, Engels and William Booth. Writing as such provided the textual spaces for a cross pollination of ideas, as with other actual spaces in the city where ideas were exchanged, such as clubs and reading rooms.

Women's literary clubs and associated events were an important part of networking opportunities. Even though the Literary Ladies Dinner in 1889 was demeaned in the press, what was more important was the fact that women were making their own literary spaces in the city, rather than relying on gaining entry to

the already established men's clubs. This was also the case with feminist papers and journals, the number increasing across the decade. Novels, short stories, allegories and poems, such as those by Levy, Schreiner and others, spoke about women, and to them, and as such women writers communicated with women readers, who in turn might be inspired to write themselves. 'Successful' or not, this was a purposive use of the literature which gradually worked to formulate New Woman lives through a series of small interconnected stages across the 1880s. Letters played an important role in forging ties between women, both weak and strong, between intimates and acquaintances, by which they organised, planned and shared ideas and knowledge. Such networking in the city and in textual form is clear from Levy's 1889 diary and to a degree from the few letters from and about her that are extant.

Women's writing was very much shaped by life in 1880s London and some writers wrote from a 'street life' perspective, as in Margaret Harkness' novels and some of Levy's work also. Levy's literature refracted both 'life's gifts' (what modernity could offer women) and also the more negative consequences of being a feminist and part of the women's movement in London at this time. While she was involved in neither socialist nor philanthropic activities to the extent some of her closest friends were, Levy wrote more about London streets from subjective positionalities. She depicted cosmopolitan life in her writing, new forms of travel, restaurants and cafes, theatre and park life. She wrote of walking the streets and riding the omnibus, of love, loss, desire and death. She attended social events, parties and 'At Homes' but appeared more at ease with much lower key get-togethers with just a few friends, where their common interests and projects could be discussed. Therefore this chapter has focussed on these smaller gatherings, to understand their value in terms of providing vital yet subtle forms of support.

The remaining ALP challenges the researcher to focus on small things: small numbers of letters, details in diaries and manuscript proofs, obscure individuals mentioned briefly. Of the latter there is a sense of lives left undocumented, as the invisible cogs of society. These were not seen as important lives until fairly recently with the turn towards the 'ordinary,' life documents and histories (Plummer 2001; Stanley 2013; Highmore 2011; Purbrick 2007). Yet delving more deeply into the

sources that have survived can reveal things about everyday lives and matters concerning class structures and gender hierarchies that these women experienced. While some women writers like Harkness and Black included these themes in novels and essays, others included class, gender and race issues in letters, often in subtle ways, as with the way a household was run and such figures as ‘the woman in charge of the house.’ As such other ways of researching across these sources becomes necessary, involving close re-reading, sometimes against the grain, and with a concern for the palimpsestic elements.

Many ‘documents of life’ have palimpsest qualities which hint at another lost document and stifled voice. By piecing ‘hints’ and mentions together, more about such individuals can come into view. With Amy Levy’s writings, her cultural politics were embedded in various of her texts. Not only in what she pronounced about women and city life, but also in connection with how she went about bringing together her final book of poetry, *ALPT*. Across this she coordinated a narrative about different aspects of her life and her death. And as such it can be seen as her final communication to her friends, family and her wider audience also. It has prompted a number of questions and suppositions, and many other essays, articles and other writing also. As such Levy’s last literary act has been a catalyst for dialogue around what it meant to be an Anglo-Jewish writer in 1880s London. And this kind of repeat resurrection “offers the reassurance that erasure and death, even if they appear permanent, can always be reversed – that nothing can properly and truly ‘die’” (Dillon 2005 p. 246). Levy, I would argue, in her careful construction of *ALPT*, was aware of this, and so her last literary act was also her last cultural political act.

CHAPTER SIX

Writing Cultural Politics and a Sociology of Small Things: Some Women Writers in 1880s London

This thesis explores the cultural politics of some women writers in London in the 1880s, using a micro-perspective approach to investigate how they lived their lives in connection with the writing they produced, using documents from different archives and collections. Specifically, the focus is on understanding the feminist cultural politics of Olive Schreiner, Eleanor Marx, Amy Levy and other interconnected women in 1880s London, through and in relation to non-literary texts such as letters, diaries, manuscript drafts and other archival sources, with reference to some selected published works also. These women have all been described, to varying degrees, as key thinkers and activists in relation to developments in socialism and feminism and as contributing to the idea of the New Woman and its associated literature, and close friendship links have been perceived between them. Close re-reading of their letters, diaries and other documents, however, have also shown areas of disconnection, differences in their everyday life circumstances, and in their choice of literary output to express their views, ideas and cultural politics. Instead of putting these women together, therefore, under the umbrella of proto-New Women writers, my thesis has instead investigated how each woman's cultural politics developed over time, in relation to the people they engaged with and also what else was going on, in terms of writers, writing and the wider political landscape in 1880s London, which I discussed at the start of the thesis.

This thesis argues that writing in a very broad sense was an important strategy used by these women writers in 1880s London, enabling them to reflect on

how other lives had been lived, to articulate the lives they were leading at the time, and to imagine lives that could be led in the future. As such, their writing was kaleidoscopic with fragments of past, present and future aspects intermingling on the page and across texts in interesting and innovative ways. This was not always writing that was undertaken with the purpose of becoming a successful writer, to enter into the literary profession, but scribbled and scrawled, practiced and passed around, as a way of thinking through and sharing ideas, opinions, political views and concerning everyday matters. Their writing, therefore, was purposive and embedded with cultural political aspects that are carefully unravelled across the chapters.

The thesis argues that a sociology of small things, as discussed in Chapter Two, provides a method for this unravelling, and a framework whereby the intricacies of the relationship between writing and everyday life can be commented upon, including daily aspects, bigger political concerns, how and why friendships and other connections mattered. Importantly these things are considered together regarding how they impacted on each other, in order for them to show how the ‘life we all lead’²³⁹ connects to the bigger political landscape of past, present and future times and the feminisms considered within them.

Writing was an activity taken up with verve, often early on in these women’s lives, and developed over many years. Consequently, considering the merits of, say, the publication of a successful novel, provides only a glimpse into the overall development of the author’s cultural politics as engaged in across a life-time of writing. Analysed more broadly as a literary landscape, the ways in which life, politics, friends and other people figured in changing viewpoints over time become more apparent. An example here was to Schreiner’s involvement in feminist and socialist politics ‘on the ground’ throughout the 1880s, and her gradual shift towards a bigger scale of thinking, which she encouraged in other women writers like Harkness and Levy also. Yet, concomitantly Levy’s shift was from the exteriority (as represented in her cityscape writings) to interiority (as represented in texts from her final months). These women writers, therefore, were not following clearly laid out

²³⁹ Olive Schreiner (1883) ‘Preface’ to *The Story of An African Farm*.

and ‘obvious paths’²⁴⁰, but not-at-all defined ways of reaching their goals, helped along the way by like-minded friends, and often hindered by traditional Victorian values. The paths taken, therefore, were united by the dream of a better future for women, but were undertaken in different ways, largely because the writers concerned had different life experiences in terms of their education, family backgrounds, cultural and political attachments, and also because of their propensities towards different literary genres.

What the chapters in this thesis have shown is that Schreiner, Marx, Levy and other people too moved across literary genres as was both necessary to convey what they set out to communicate and the audiences they wanted to reach. After a focus on, say, novel-writing for a time, there might be a shift towards allegorical or short story writing. International interests and connections, and the development of linguistic skills, contributed to and enabled translation work. Also, editorial experiences, often dating back to school years, facilitated more professional journalistic and editorial work later on and the bringing together of women’s writing in new publications and periodicals. These women often recognised where their strengths lay, what part their contribution might make in the overall scheme of things, and how their work connected to that of other like-minded woman. The choices they made provided the textual spaces for dreamscapes, personal commentary, reviews and criticism, and alignment with other writers. A multitude of ideas were being communicated, which together make up literary feminisms, as these were being developed across 1880s London. This added up to a political use of writing in which they sought less to distinguish between genres and more on drawing from the range of what was available for their particular political purposes.

The cultural politics embedded in women’s writings were often confrontational, exploring relationships that were conventionally viewed as morally suspect, belittling outdated establishments, and gaining access to places that were previously inaccessible. They secured entry and success into some previously inaccessible professions for example, had sexual experiences outwith marriage, and roamed the landscapes they inhabited more freely and expressively. Not surprisingly,

²⁴⁰ Olive Schreiner ([1911] 1985) *Women and Labour*, p. 30.

what was imagined in a textual form often clashed with what was actually possible, and such honesty in literary terms had consequences. This was sometimes at the cost of the writer's 'respectability,' leading among other things to difficulties in finding well-paid work. Nonetheless, these women writers were, through their writing, adding their voices to the on-going struggle for a widening sphere of activity for women (Vicinus 1980). And in part, their letters and other forms of connection they engaged in played an important role in them supporting one another.

Some 'documents of life' (Plummer 2001; Stanley 2013), including letters, manuscript drafts and other ephemera, can be seen as lying behind and supporting other 'finished' literary outputs. These sources can help the researcher explore ideas at their inception, through stages of influences and development, and which sometimes culminated in a textual object – a book, article or pamphlet, for example – which was read, re-read, passed around, collected, lost or destroyed. These are sources, therefore, which provide the 'genetic' mutations or written formations of ideas (Deppman et al 2004), as they grow and morph over time, which demonstrate these women's relational or intertextual connections to other people and groups, and which show the signs of them being inspired by political and cultural factors. There were many discussions of Acts of Parliament which had an affect on women's lives, importantly including the Contagious Diseases Act. There were also more mundane things, such as being considered a nuisance and a chatterbox in the British Library Reading Room by male readers. These 'big' and 'small' matters are viewed as of equal importance in this thesis, as significant parts of the broader landscape being contested.

An important argument in the thesis is concerned with supporting a sociology of small things approach, which shows that these women's lives were shifting and kaleidoscopic, a rather different view of these women writers and the work they produced in 1880s London from that found in much prior scholarly work (Ardis 1990; Ledger 1997; Showalter 1993; Tusan 1998; Nelson 2000; Stanley 2002; Jusova 2005; Shaw and Randolph 2007; Patterson 2005, 2008). This approach does not separate out one activity from another, but views writing as being connected to other cultural and political aspects of everyday life matters, including the building

and maintaining of friendships. Importantly, this method of researching these women's lives, using archival sources primarily, also reflects a concern with how their lives and writings have been cared for since, and how they have been written about more recently. What has been learnt about this research approach can now be reflected upon, in terms of its usefulness, and how it reflects the women's own working methods also, in terms of their perspectives, politics and practices.

It was with the small details of these women's writings that this thesis began, explored using tools constituting a sociology of small things. This approach is made up of three interwoven areas of activity – a change of perspective, a politics of expression, and the practice of researching small things – which I engaged in as a response to the sources available, as these are the remaining evidence of the working practices of the women writers I am concerned with. There is a close alignment between this research method and these women's writing practices, because both are concerned with representing the complexities and multitude of perspectives of everyday life, with 'on the ground' experiences engaged with, so as to understand the bigger scale things that influenced and shaped these experiences, and also with utilising what was available at a particular point in time. These concerns were articulated by Schreiner's 'method of life,' as discussed and described in Chapter Two.

Adopting and sometimes re-shaping these guiding principles has aided an increased knowledge of these women's writing lives as they connected to, disconnected from, challenged, overturned and also reflected the world in which they lived. This approach prioritises a sociological lens while encompassing interdisciplinarity in order to construct connections, establish narratives and analyse materials, contributing to an overall depiction and understanding of the "characteristics of [this] section of society (the women writers) [and] period of history (1880s London)" (Allen 2000 p. 5). And while an early question here concerned where to begin and the consequences of this, a later one has been what it is that constitutes small in terms of this thesis and why this matters.

Everyday life activities, such as writing a letter, sending an invitation, visiting the theatre to see an Ibsen play, walking to the British Library Reading Rooms, are

small mundane things when compared to major historical events. Yet they are not necessarily small things in the lives of the individuals concerned, for they can instigate important contacts and ignite life-changing events. They are relational and smaller parts of bigger things: a letter is a part of an epistolarium, for example; women visiting radical theatrical plays help constitute a shift in theatre history; a once inaccessible place becoming accessible to women points to a shift in gender equality matters. These same things can also be considered less small when tracked beyond their ‘moment of writing’ or their ‘moment of occurrence.’ This is because seemingly small moments fill bigger chunks of time and constitute larger events, because they are thought and talked about and are a part of historical debates and changes, making them larger in temporal and spatial ways and also in social significance. An example here concerns the letter Schreiner sent in 1912 to Merriman, referred to in Chapters Four and Five. In terms of its ‘moment of writing,’ this can be considered small, yet the contents of the letter connect back across the years to past circumstances in late 1880s Britain, and represent Schreiner’s thinking and reflecting on a significant moment in a past time and a different place. As with this letter, the cultural politics of the women writers I have discussed were not necessarily communicated as finished ideas, but were more often parts of on-going conversations and communiques with others and part of a broader landscape of cultural political ideas and activities.

These women writers were not always focussed on the exterior ‘out there’ in the city or societal level topics and concerns, but also dealt with the interior life. And in addition to small happenings, I have also considered smaller, more intimate spaces, including the home, and how location too affected and helped shape their cultural politics. Interiority, regarding the writing space constituted by a table and chair, in bedrooms and rented rooms in lodging houses, and in other rooms re-made for meetings and networking, were important. These spaces became places for thinking and reflecting as well as writing, and the thesis has discussed examples, such as in Schreiner’s letters about her relationship to ‘home,’ which demonstrated the importance of a place to write, while also disrupting notions about the stability, comfort and safety of late-Victorian home-life. The experience of living in lodging

houses in the 1880s points to newer forms of abode for single, independent women, albeit with consequences attached in the form of behavioural and monetary expectations. But such places were chosen to reside in because they were overall enabling rather than disabling, in terms of giving access when wanted to the city, to friends and also to a newer world of ideas and things. Margaret Harkness, for example, lived in the East End to research for her books. Schreiner similarly used her geographic location to get to know the city more intimately, including through late-night walking. Home in this sense was a politically charged space which afforded these women an attachment to the city, and simultaneously somewhere to return to, to belong to and meet others in. It was a space for writing, and in turn that writing was attached to all four corners of life (Woolf 1929 p. 41).

Interiority appeared in other forms too, as underlying issues of a more discreet and personal nature, located beneath the public sides of life and becoming apparent across the textual sources I have used. There were, for instance, mentions of Eleanor Marx in other people's letters which were suggestive of her vulnerability, low self-esteem and her reliance on close friendships, and these were backdrop aspects to an otherwise busy life committed to socialist activities. Also the variety of documents relating to the creation of Amy Levy's *A London Plane Tree and Other Verse* (1889) provide evidence of her journey from city-life to personal destruction. By analysing such texts at close range, links can be seen between the exterior (cityscape) and interior (affective) dimensions of social life for these women writers (Jacobs 2005), with these closely interwoven in their everyday lives. There were both cross-overs and contradictions between literary personas and 'real-life' experiences, the former at times projecting future possibilities, the latter returning to past confines.

Across this thesis, the broader impact of something which might be considered small has been explored around the connections existing between people inhabiting the same time and place, and the intertextuality of texts of different kinds. It has also presented explorations of liminality (making connections across gaps in collections), palimpsests (connections between the past, present and future), and *bricolage* (how selecting and organising influence what can be known and

represented). The result does not give the impression of one large web of connection regarding relationships, but instead a number of webs, varying in size, connected to each other with threads of different thicknesses and strengths.

In terms of social networks, the thesis has investigated what social connections meant in the development of these women writing feminist cultural politics. Broadly speaking, these women's perspectives revolved around the woman, labour and race questions, but in ways that differed according to their individual viewpoints and circumstances. They all engaged with small-scale and large-scale politics, but they made connections between them differently from each other. For instance, Marx's outlook and her use of translating as a tool for communication was on a more international scale in comparison to Levy's, with Marx's upbringing and her own association with socialism providing a wide platform on which to place and shape her views. Levy, on the other hand, focussed more on subjective aspects of women's relationship to the city, and she represented a largely middle-class perspective. However, connections between the two women emerged through translation work (particularly Levy's novel *Reuben Sachs*, which Marx translated), through them being Anglo-Jewish writers, and through them having mutual friends. And regarding wider connections, for instance, Schreiner's writing impacted upon and influenced many other women and women writers. Such as seen in some of Schreiner's letters written before and after she returned to South Africa in 1889, to Levy and to Harkness, which were discussed, and in both cases she encouraged them to engage in 'bigger' political matters, in "science & art and helping your fellow man,"²⁴¹ as it seems Levy put it.

Bruggerman's (2008) 'intuitive notion' that social ties can be understood from the kinds of patterns it is possible to discern in letters and diaries, has helped and provided me with some broad ideas about who these women spent time with, as well as what their relationships were based on. This led to my identification of clusters of people around some activities, and absences in relation to others. For instance, the analysis of Amy Levy's diary showed her to be connected to many people in the literary scene, and mostly absent from the trade union and socialist

²⁴¹ Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 23 April 1892, Texas, OSLP transcription. Line 13.

events attended by her closest long-term friends. And rather than indicating clear boundaries around groups of women writers, small groups came together at particular times and places. One example concerns the Ibsen play performed at Eleanor Marx's home in 1885, in comparison to the first public performance at the Novelty Theatre in 1889, with these attracting different audiences, under different circumstances, perhaps around the same idea yet in relation to different versions of Ibsen's play.

In focussing on the connections between small numbers of people, important particularities about relationships become clearer than they would have done if using more abstract notions of connectedness. Being a social isolate, for instance, was at times a temporary position taken up for a particular purpose, in order to have a break from places, people, situations, and to allow time for thinking, reflecting and working. The isolate, therefore, is someone who variously temporarily removes themselves from the usual social circumstances to experience or consider new or different ones. For Schreiner, such time was important in being able to see a situation more holistically from a distance. This was a perspectival choice, to consider the bigger picture, rather than being immersed in small matters. Yet in contrast the isolate positionality was also taken up in more permanent ways, regarding for instance the deaths of Levy in 1889 and Marx in 1898, with nonetheless complex reverberations about these women's lives continuing beyond their deaths.

Dyadic relationships occurred in co-authoring. This was a common practice with Marx, whereby two authorial voices melded in professional writerly ways. Other dyadic relationships concerned close supportive friendships, such as there was evident between Schreiner and Marx, and Schreiner and Levy. The former was subtly communicated through letters to others, while the latter reached its final conclusion through letters between the two women. Letters, then, played an important role in my being able to understand and recognise these relationships and how they fitted in to these women's lives more broadly.

Triadic relationships and clusters appeared around a theme, an event, an occurrence, such as the production of Levy's final book of poetry, which involved publishers, friends and acquaintances, with Levy connecting these. On the periphery

were Levy's other friendship groups, present in her life but not associated with the production of the book directly. The complexities and significance of such connections are not easily verifiable, but they can be discerned within and across letters and other related documents.

The actual mechanics of feminist cultural politics and the practices involved that I have explored in this thesis connect a number of women writers who were not only differently related to one another, but were part of other networks and family relationships as well. This complexity illustrates Simmel's (1909 p. 11) point that "At each moment threads are spun, dropped, taken up again, displaced by others, with still others interwoven," so that social connections are best understood by focussing on points at which these women and their texts cross and depart, as ideas were worked out and written about. In addition, the cultural politics and writing strategies of the women writers I have discussed appear differently according to their individual perspectives and circumstances. For example, the 'Woman's Question' was more economically driven for one, more about freedom in the city for another, although clearly there were also overlaps. The result is a kind of 'polyphonic voice' that was often taken up by these women writers themselves, in their novels and other writings, not only to put across their own views but those of others as well. In light of this, 1880s London can be viewed in terms of intersecting lives rather than by city boundaries, divisions and zones. Some connections came about as women were gaining greater access to certain spaces in the city, which opened up new possibilities for meeting both like-minded people as well as those of differing opinions. Consequently the networks they were a part of, or associated with, had more free-flowing boundaries shaped by these broadening experiences. However, the evidence also suggests that Schreiner, Marx and Levy, and probably others like them, needed to feel closely connected to friends in a more intimate way, and that they achieved this by residing in close proximity to one another when possible.

An intertextual approach to re-reading the documentary evidence has enabled me to explore the connections between these women writers and the texts they produced, focussing on the different literary influences and writing strategies used, as these are re-readable across the associated texts. There were, for example, purposive

connections with other writers through co-authoring and through translating work, such as with Marx's multiple associations with Aveling, Zangwill, Ibsen and Flaubert. There were other authorship choices made too, such as using a pseudonym or a marital persona, and these choices were discussed earlier in this thesis in relation to the writer's overall intentionality concerning the messages they wanted to communicate and the audiences they wanted to reach. Re-reading feminist cultural politics in this way allows these connections, which are textual (through using quotes, paraphrasing or writing verbatim, authorial references and pseudonyms), political (involving debates and language), spatial (in both literal and figurative ways), and temporal (constituting past, present and future times), to be pieced together. Schreiner's words are demonstrative of this in *Women and Labour* (1911 p. 30), commented on in Chapter Two: "You will look back at us with astonishment! [...] but, what you will never know is how it was thinking of you and for you, that we struggled as we did and accomplished the little which we have done." This statement indicates her intention to communicate with and inspire feminists of future times as well as current ones, a clear sign of the feminist cultural politics she was engaging in.

The success of Schreiner's novel *SAF* in 1883 and her method of painting 'the life we all lead' can be seen as a guiding principle for the women writers I have focussed on, in terms of them using what was before them, what they experienced at first-hand, and what they knew to be the case, as the foundation upon which their feminist cultural politics were built. In addition, Schreiner's method has been used as a guiding principle in piecing this thesis together, by highlighting the aforementioned value of incomplete, small-scale and often mundane everyday activities, drawing attention to the complex and interwoven nature of networks, promoting an awareness that things often turn out differently from what might be expected, considering the possibilities and limitations of what can be known from the sources available, and keeping the focus on actual people, places and things. These inform what a sociology of small things means and how I have put it into practice in this thesis, not in an overly prescriptive way, but in order to guide the research process engaged in and also the written thesis too.

Researching archival collections is often a lengthy process with the fruits of labour unpredictable and varying greatly. Initial research can lead to a sense of there being only fragments of a life left behind, a bittyness which could easily be dismissed as not having any real significance in relation to larger scale social issues, political, economic or otherwise. What, for instance, could the relatively few letters constituting the ALP contribute to knowing more about late nineteenth century feminist cultural politics? Yet, spending time working on such papers, re-reading across the different kinds of texts, including the marginalia, crossings-out and additions, and considering ‘whole’ collections for what is and is not there, has led to many further points of enquiry. These include why these documents are extant while others are not; concerning the numerous people who have had some kind of responsibility and influence over the collections across time; and how the collections have been used since to make knowledge-claims about a life, for instance, in more recent biographies. My interest in these matters has impacted upon everything which has followed, in dealing with the substantive concerns as set out in the Introductory Chapter to this thesis and how to represent the research findings. There are things which can be known with some certainty, and things which can only be surmised about, unless further sources become available.

Starting from Steedman’s idea that archives actually hold very little ‘stuff’ compared with the magnitude of the past, it became increasingly apparent that the term ‘collection,’ indicating a selection of sources in one archival holding, can limit seeing other relevant sources in a broader research context. ‘Collection’ implies a boundary and remaining within this can give a limited view of an individual or group, or set of activities or events. Such boundaries should be seen as both complex and porous. What constitutes the Eleanor Marx Papers, for example, can be better understood when sources from other collections are brought into play, from the Havelock Ellis Papers, the Olive Schreiner Letters Online, and even in the remaining traces in, say, the George Bernard Shaw Papers. The first set of papers gives the impression that Marx only wrote letters about socialist activities and concerns, and even those to her family members can be read in this way. Yet the mentions in other letters about Marx, point to other different kinds of letters having been written, such

as those concerning her more intimate relationships. Consequently, any notion of Marx's epistolarium is at times fixed (when focussing within the Eleanor Marx Papers), and is at times in a state of flux (when looking out to other collections), and Marx as a person appears and then re-appears in this switch of vision. A person's life is viewed, therefore, by the smallness or expansive nature of the boundaries a researcher sets for conducting their research.

Each chapter in this thesis has used materials from a number of collections, re-reading across the sources in different archives, making connections along the way and investigating gaps when these became apparent. In this way my research has forged new links by going against the grain of archives organisation, and it is an example of the *bricolage* 'crafting' process discussed in Chapter Two. Referring back to the politics of a sociology of small things, the importance of this way of researching in and across archives is that it affords new research possibilities, because different questions and meanings come into view, revealing, in this instance, the interconnections between these women writers regarding their links with others and their involvement in shared events and similar writing projects. In other words, their cultural politics.

This thesis has made three interconnected points concerning how its sociology of small things approach has allowed a greater understanding of the writings and cultural politics of the particular women writers I have included, regarding their intentionality, perspectival differences, consequences and outcomes. It has pointed up how writing was used agentially by these women writers as a way of expressing their views and communicating with others, and also as a means of participating in cultural and political debates in 1880s London, and also beyond this. New perspectives and levels of understanding have been brought to bear on how these writers put thoughts and ideas into words and texts so as to communicate their feminist cultural political views. Writings of many different kinds played a role in what can now be seen as a tapestry of words which spanned epistolary practices, scribbles on manuscript drafts, translations, writing newspapers articles and reviews, and also essays, allegories, poetry and novels, each affording perspectival, purposive and expressive variations of literary feminisms. There was a broad variation in terms

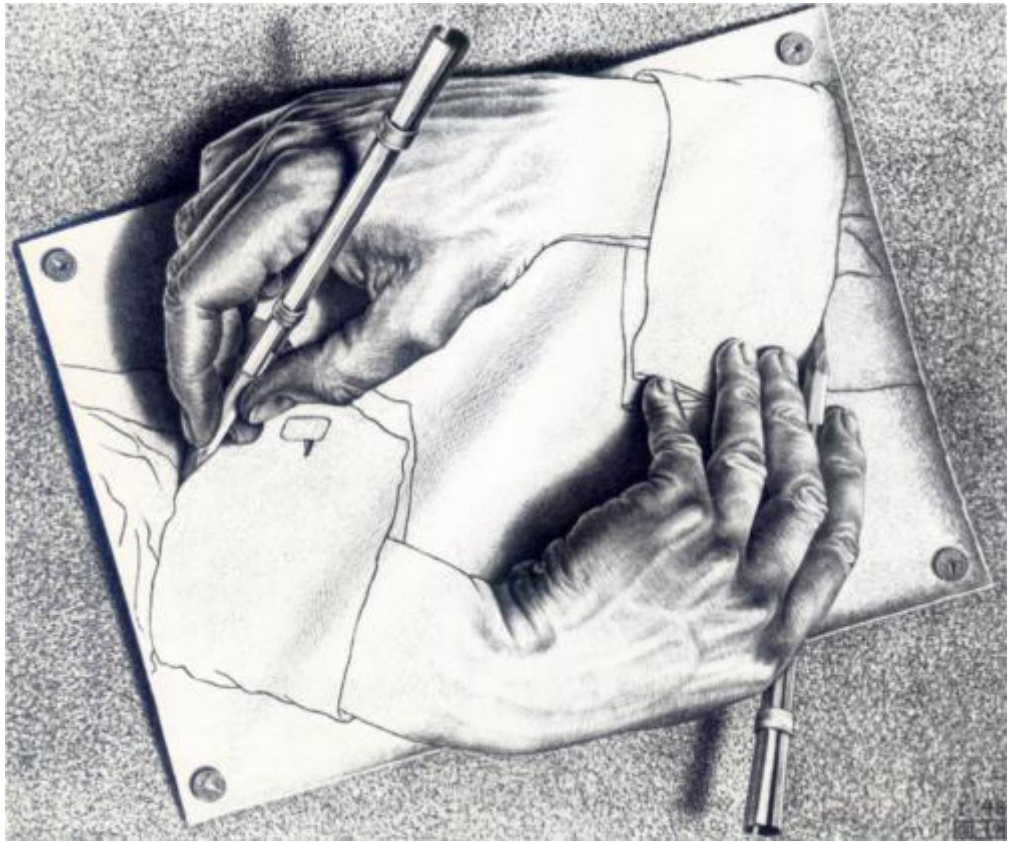
of consequences and outcomes with some women gaining success, being inspirational, changing courses of events through their activism, while others struggled personally and professionally, sometimes choosing to end their lives. But writing was only a part of the social life and these women engaged in other activities besides. They walked and talked, organised events, put on performances, joined and left groups and campaigns. As such, writing was one activity taken up among many other things that were happening, and in my thesis it has been viewed relationally to these other aspects of their lives and the broader political landscape of which they were a part.

While these women writers shared a set of values in a wider sense – revolving around woman, labour and race issues – there was a great deal of variation in terms of how these were viewed and responded to in their writings. The typical broad way of depicting the New Woman has been both stimulating and restrictive. The hampering aspects of what the New Woman ‘was’ can be seen to be thrown into relief by the varied and changing ways in which these women writers questioned the boundaries setting the political culture of the day, and challenged and usurped these in a multitude of ways. This thesis has therefore sought to offer a more nuanced depiction of the New Woman, or rather, the idea of a New Womanhood, as it emerged through the 1880s in London. By exploring these women’s feminist cultural politics through their writing practices, and by elaborating their writing lives and other activities, a more fragmented and complex understanding of the New Woman comes into view. This revaluation has been possible through a sociology of small things, as perspective and method. The use of a sociology of small things, and its attention to and engagement of the intricacies of these women’s writings and writing lives, has provided a purposively broad set of tools with which to see more clearly many aspects in their texts, and so the grounded-in-life complexities of their writing lives. This is a sociology that has prioritised textual analysis without losing sight of the women writers who sat down to write, who looked at their social worlds, asked questions and proposed changes. Their writing practices were less about writing per se in the sense of Escher’s ‘Drawing Hands’²⁴² illustration alluded to earlier but

²⁴² see page 257.

rather, they were about the creation of textual spaces to communicate what was for these women ‘*cultural* about [their] politics and *political* about [their] culture’ (Armitage et al 2005 p. 1). This is interpreted as a conscientious creation of a multifaceted and more prismatic feminist politics, one with shards of different coloured lights emanating from one source, as each woman writer produced a different, yet connected, vision of the world in which she lived and of a possible future world.

ILLUSTRATIONS



M.C. Escher 'Drawing Hands' 1948²⁴³

²⁴³ <http://www.mcescher.com/Gallery/back-bmp/LW355.jpg>

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