
‘Tussy’s great delusion’ – Eleanor Marx’s death revisited

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Abstract

The circumstances of Eleanor Marx’s death have been the subject of discussion and some controversy since she took her own life in March 1898. Particular attention has been paid to mistreatment by Edward Aveling, her partner since 1884. The revelation of Aveling’s secret marriage of 1897 is often cited as a decisive factor leading Eleanor to suicide. The recent discovery of a previously unknown letter written by Eleanor’s close friend and fellow revolutionary, Maria Mendelson, sheds new light on shocking contemporary accusations about the circumstances leading to Eleanor’s death, including sexual crimes, cruelty, blackmail and the poignant instructions Eleanor left for others to act upon after her death. This letter is considered alongside the evidence of others and the unsuccessful attempt by Eleanor’s closest friends to pursue Aveling through the courts.

Key words: Eleanor Marx, Edward Aveling, suicide, Maria Mendelson

The suicide of Eleanor Marx at the end of March 1898 came as a terrible shock to the British and international socialist movements in which she occupied a unique position. The youngest daughter of the movement’s acknowledged inspiration, Karl Marx, Eleanor – known in the family as ‘Tussy’ – had played an important role as speaker, translator, campaigner and journalist since the inception of British socialism in the early 1880s. Widely respected and admired by leaders and rank and file members alike, who often remarked on her optimism and cheery character, there were no obvious public signs that Eleanor would bring about her own destruction. Indeed, just four days before her death she confirmed attendance along with her common law husband, Edward Aveling, at a forthcoming dinner to honour H.M. Hyndman, the leader of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF).¹ It is legitimate, therefore, to ask about the circumstances that led

Eleanor to take her own life and consider whether it is possible to cast new light on events.

Eleanor Marx had become formally attached to Edward Aveling in the summer of 1884 when they jointly announced to friends that they would be living together in a 'free union' relationship. The couple were unable to wed legally because Edward's marriage to Isabel Campbell Frank of 1872 had ended in separation but not divorce. Uninhibited by prevailing notions of respectability, Eleanor told her close friend Dollie Radford that theirs would be a 'true marriage ... just as much as if a dozen registrar's (sic) had officiated'.² Eleanor paid little attention to the rumours of Aveling's recent past in the secular movement that he was an inveterate borrower and a womaniser, casting them off as 'calumnies' propagated by those, among them Annie Besant, who wished to harm the socialist movement which Edward had recently joined.³

Not that the negative opinions went away with their union. Olive Schreiner, who with Havelock Ellis met up with Eleanor and Edward in Derbyshire in July 1884, said from the first she had a 'horror' and 'dread' of Aveling.⁴ The German socialist Gertrud Guillaume-Schack and English novelist Margaret Harkness both refused to attend Sunday gatherings at the home of Frederick Engels because of Aveling's frequent attendance there.⁵ In money matters Aveling continued to borrow to maintain a lifestyle in the restaurants of London's theatre land, where as a playwright and critic he was a minor figure. Bernard Shaw, who knew Aveling from the socialist and theatrical scenes, advised the actress Ellen Terry when she was asked by Aveling for a loan to 'shut up your purse tight, or else give me all your money to keep for you ... His exploits as a borrower have grown into Homeric legend'.⁶ Shaw's depiction of the boulder Louis Dubedat in the play *The Doctor's Dilemma*, first put on in London in 1906, almost certainly drew on Aveling's character.⁷

The long-suffering Eleanor was unquestionably aware of Edward's transgressions. Three months after Eleanor's suicide, Olive Schreiner told Dollie Radford that during the eighties Eleanor had visited her 'nearly half mad having found him (Aveling) in her own bedroom with two prostitutes'.⁸ Some years later Eleanor had revealed many of her innermost thoughts to the young Aaron Rosebury, a Russian-born factory worker living in the East End, who wrote tenderly of their friendship which began in 1891. Recounting a visit to the couple's flat in Gray's Inn Square in 1895, Rosebury wrote that he knew her life with Aveling had deteriorated: 'Scathing articles about his unethical behaviour had appeared in the radical press, disguised but unmistakably pointing to him'. Eleanor told him

I suppose you are puzzled about the attacks on Edward. Alas, they are based on fact. But I have been with him for twelve years. All my friends are worried but most of them are half blind to the problem. You are one of the few who can understand. One alternative is to leave Edward and live by myself. I can't do that; it would drive him to ruin and wouldn't really help me. I could not have known that Edward would fail me. Even so, to turn away from him now would be to succumb to despair. I still have hope for him.⁹

Eleanor's touching if pathetic belief that she could reform Aveling stayed with her almost to the very end, making Yvonne Kapp's verdict that by the mid-eighties the relationship had found its level, an astute and accurate one. Kapp wrote: 'She could not rely on him; she did not honour him; but she did love him and nothing could shake her loyalty once given'.¹⁰ A shared passion for the theatre and literature, the common experience of freelance work with its financial insecurity, and above all the mutual commitment to the cause of international socialism, helped bind Eleanor to Edward. His increasingly poor health from the mid-nineties brought worry and nursing duties that effectively removed any prospect that she might leave the relationship.

Rosebury's observations related to the period immediately following Aveling's expulsion from the London district of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in 1894-95, ostensibly on the grounds of his failure to represent the party in preparations for the Labour demonstration in May 1894.¹¹ Doubting this and aware that rumours had circulated giving alternative explanations, Eduard Bernstein, a leading German social democrat who had lived in London since 1888, investigated the circumstances of the expulsion in 1898 only to find senior ILP figures stonewalling. He was, however, told that, 'The reason given was not the real reason. The matter is simply this, that we don't want to have anything more to do with the fellow'. Bernstein went on, 'The last words were spoken with a peculiar emphasis and I saw that it would go against the grain to say anything further. Yet he knew things of the excluded member which would have sufficed to land him in prison'.¹² In private correspondence with Victor Adler, a fellow German social democrat, days after Eleanor's death, Bernstein wrote of her depleted inheritance from Engels, remarking that, 'I don't know how much of it was spent on hush money to cover up the crimes with women and children, but there must have been a great deal'.¹³

Aveling, now out of the ILP, took every opportunity to snipe at

the party and its leader, Keir Hardie. On unemployment he accused Hardie of misleading workers that a solution to joblessness could be found without a fundamental change in the economic system. In electoral matters he criticised the ILP for its policy of abstention where no socialist was standing and followed others who apportioned a degree of responsibility to the party for the large Unionist majority won at the general election of 1895.¹⁴ Even minor matters, such as the accuracy of translations from German social democratic publications reported in Hardie's *Labour Leader*, were used by Aveling for political point scoring.¹⁵

The couple's application for readmission to the SDF in the winter of 1895 – they had left to form the Socialist League eleven years earlier – was blocked, Aveling believed, by his political opponents on the executive of the Federation. A statement had been issued by the executive in December claiming that Aveling had used his influence to 'prevent the establishment of cordial relations between the Social Democratic Federation and the German Social Democratic Party' (SPD). Edward suspected Dr Ludwig and Louise Freyberger, who lived with Engels in the final year of his life, of being behind the machinations and accordingly wrote to leading European social democrats with the request that they make representations on his behalf to the SDF.¹⁶ Hyndman later wrote that these commendations were crucial in persuading members to 'override entirely the views of the executive' which was originally for rejection of the membership application. Hyndman prefaced these reminiscences with the comment that the original position of the executive was, in fact, based on their knowledge of Aveling's 'unsavoury reputation ... the worst features' of which 'it would be impossible to make public without bringing in other people'.¹⁷ Soon after Eleanor's death, Harry Quelch, the editor of *Justice*, the Federation's weekly newspaper, indicted her in the regrettable decision to readmit Aveling through her 'striving, in season and out of season, to force upon the party a particular person about whose character opinion was now unanimous'.¹⁸

In the eighteen months following Edward and Eleanor's readmission to the SDF on 3 March 1896 the couple worked tirelessly for the socialist and trade union movements. Between them they edited and brought out previously unpublished works by Karl Marx, played central roles in the International Socialist Workers and Trade Union Congress in London of 1896, assisted the Amalgamated Engineering Union in the lockout of its members in 1897, ran science and language classes for socialists, contributed regular columns to *Justice*, as well as speaking at countless meetings

across Britain and Europe. At the SDF annual congress of August 1897 Aveling, reflecting the high regard in which he was held by many rank and file members, came out top of the poll for the executive.

It was during this period of intense activity that Edward, unbeknown to Eleanor, secretly married Eva Frye, a woman twenty-four years his junior, at Chelsea Registry Office on 8 June 1897. Aveling's first wife, Isabel, had died in September 1892 but he did not make this known to Eleanor. His second marriage, known only to a handful of Edward's friends in the theatrical world, remained a secret in socialist circles until after Eleanor's death. *Reynolds's Newspaper* claimed it had been informed of the event soon after the suicide but had been unable to publish because no record could be found under the name of Edward Aveling. A second search, however, in December 1898, this time using Aveling's theatrical nom de plume of 'Alec Nelson', confirmed the details.¹⁹

Following the marriage ceremony Edward returned to his home with Eleanor before departing to Margate in the third week of June on the advice of his doctor. Aveling had been suffering from an abscess in his side for more than two years, a symptom of the renal cancer that would end his life. We cannot be certain, but it is not unreasonable to assume that the period of convalescence in Margate also acted as an illicit honeymoon for the newlyweds.

The first sign of crisis in Eleanor and Edward's relationship came towards the end of August 1897 when he quit their home, 'The Den' in Jews Walk, Sydenham, with the advice to Eleanor that he could be contacted only through an intermediary in the theatrical world. In something of a frenzy, Eleanor wrote to Freddy Demuth to ask for help tracking down Aveling who had not replied to her letters.²⁰ Eleanor had known Freddy since childhood because he was the son of Helen Demuth, housekeeper, trusted friend and comrade to the Marx family. Over the next six months Freddy was Eleanor's closest confidant and it is through this relationship that we have nine letters to him that give an insight into the unfolding events and her state of mind.

Aveling returned to The Den on 1 September and was surprised, Eleanor wrote, that 'I did not rush into his arms. He has so far made no apology and offered no explanation. I have – after waiting for him – said one must consider the business position – and that I should never forget the treatment I have been subjected to. He said nothing.' On the following day Eleanor told Freddy that she was 'face to face with a most horrible position; utter ruin – everything, *to the last* penny, or utter, open disgrace. It is awful; worse than even I fancied it was'.

We will never be certain about what transpired between Eleanor and Edward on the evening of his return of 1 September. Chushichi Tsuzuki speculated that Aveling ‘threatened her with a cruel form of blackmail. He probably told her that he had been living with a woman from whom he could not separate without providing ample financial compensation. He did not tell Eleanor that he was already married, for this would certainly have led to her cutting him out of her will. But he could threaten her that he would have to marry his mistress legally if Eleanor refused to be generous to her’.²¹ Yvonne Kapp, stressing that all we have in this matter is ‘pure guesswork’, suggested that Aveling might have divulged his marriage and ‘exploiting her distress and humiliation, used some form of blackmail; possibly proposing that if she made over to him the remainder of the Engels legacy he would not openly desert her to set up a *Nelson menage*’.²² Most recently, Rachel Holmes has argued that although at this point not aware of Aveling’s marriage to Eva Frye, Eleanor did now understand that he ‘had not come back for her but for the money and a deal that they would be friends in public, as they moved in the same circles’. He was able to coerce Eleanor into acceptance of this because he held ‘two trump cards: Eleanor’s shame at having misplaced her faith in him and defended him to people who warned her otherwise; and the answer to the true paternity of Freddy Demuth’.²³

Holmes’ reference to Freddy’s ‘true paternity’ exposes a further layer of mystery to this story. Eleanor had long believed Engels to be Freddy’s father, but it is now widely accepted that she had been disabused of this by Engels himself who, on his deathbed in August 1895, told her that it was, in fact, Marx.²⁴

Whether the paternity story is true we will probably never be certain, but Freddy was certainly close to Eleanor and on hand to respond to her requests for support and advice. It is likely he made repeated attempts to persuade Eleanor to leave Aveling in these months, but this she refused to do carrying on after her letter of 2 September as if nothing had happened. A two-week stay in Paris with sister Laura and her husband Paul Lafargue in mid-September went off without disclosure, incident or any indication of what had recently occurred.

The New Year saw Eleanor more concerned about Edward’s health. She told Laura on 8 January that, ‘the doctor told me Edward might at any moment (his temperature was up at 103 at times) take a turn for the worse ... he is still terribly weak and terribly emaciated. He is a very skeleton – mere skin and bones ... The slightest chill would, the doctors say, be absolutely fatal’.²⁵ He was packed off to Hastings for two weeks

in mid-January and only returned when he had notice that he would be operated on at the University College Hospital.

With Edward back from Hastings, Eleanor wrote to Freddy on 5 February explaining that Aveling's request to see him was not, as Freddy obviously suspected, a ruse to borrow more money. She explained to Freddy: 'You know how ill he is. He wanted to see you because he believes he will not see you again after the operation'. She went on to describe how she was only now beginning to understand the reasons for Edward's behaviour: The

wrong doing is just a moral disease, one the morally healthy (like yourself) are not fit judges of the morally diseased ... It *seems* a certain *moral* sense is wanting, just as some are deaf, or have bad sight, or are otherwise unhealthy. And I begin to understand that one has no more right to blame the one disease than the other. I have learnt this through long suffering – suffering in ways I would not tell even you; but I have learnt and so I am trying to bear all this trouble as best I can.

Following Edward's operation in the second week of February, Eleanor spent the daylight hours attending to his needs in the private hospital room and on call during the night in lodgings in nearby Gower Street. The exploratory procedure confirmed the abscess was linked to a kidney condition which Eleanor was told might heal up or require the removal of the diseased organ. She was not immediately optimistic at Edward's chances of recovery, a prognosis that did not improve following an extended convalescence in Margate. While there she carried on extensive and medically challenging nursing while also managing the couple's affairs as costs spiralled. Under severe strain she told friend Natalie Liebknecht, 'sometimes I hardly know how I shall hold on'.²⁶

The couple returned to Sydenham on 27 March but the situation for Eleanor did not get any easier. Two days later she told Edith Lanchester, a friend and comrade whom she had helped when facing a crisis herself, 'I am so worried in *all* ways (material as well as others) that I hardly have the heart to write. I fear hopelessly ... I often wonder why one goes on at all with all this fearful suffering. I could not say to my poor Edward, but I often think it would be far easier to make an end of it. You see I have no little one as you have'.²⁷

Eleanor's obvious yearning for a child, rounding off her letter to Edith, written only two days before her suicide is poignant and a frequently expressed sentiment in her correspondence with friends and comrades in

the nineties. In her socialist activity Eleanor always considered the enthusiasms of the children of comrades and in her relations with friends an interest in the health and well being of their offspring was always present. In stark contrast to Edward who displayed no affinity with children, Eleanor told Karl Kautsky, a friend and comrade, in 1894 that she 'would rather have the good opinion of a child than all the grown ups', and it is tempting to draw the conclusion that a child of Eleanor's own would have saved her.²⁸

The official details of Eleanor's death on 31 March 1898 were revealed at an inquest held two days later at which Edward Negus Wood, the deputy coroner for West Kent and south east London, presided.²⁹

Aveling stated he had left the Sydenham home at 10.10 for town and did not return until five o'clock when he discovered Eleanor was dead. He said that he and Eleanor had not quarrelled that morning but she did not want him to travel to London because of his recent ill-health. He stated that Eleanor was of a 'morbid disposition' and had several times suggested that they commit suicide together. He said that he regarded Eleanor's threats to take her own life as 'idle because they were so frequently repeated'.

Gertrude Gentry, the twenty-six year-old servant at The Den, told the inquest that just before ten o'clock Eleanor had sent her with a note to the chemist from where she brought back a small parcel and a book for signing. After Aveling had left the house Eleanor went upstairs to her room. At about 10.45 Gentry went to Eleanor's room to find her undressed in bed, still breathing but obviously in distress. Gentry then went for help.

After being cautioned by the deputy coroner that his remarks might be used subsequently in any case against him for unprofessional practice, George Dale, the chemist, told the inquest that on 31 March Gentry presented him with a letter, to which Dr Aveling's card was attached, with the words 'Please give bearer chloroform and a small quantity of prussic acid for dog. E.A'. Dale believed this to be in Aveling's handwriting and as he understood him to be a qualified man, he thought it would be allowable to send the items requested. He did not notice that the poison book when returned was signed 'E.M. Aveling'. Wood was singularly unimpressed with Dale's failure to confirm Aveling was a registered medical practitioner and told him he might face a legal censure, which in the event did not materialise.

Dr Henry Shackleton, who lived close by and had been called to The Den on the fateful day, conducted a post mortem examination from which he was able to report to the inquest that death was due to poisoning by

prussic acid. Following this evidence, the jury returned a verdict of suicide whilst in a state of temporary insanity.

The funeral took place on 5 April with a service in the waiting room at the Necropolis Station, Waterloo, from where the body was taken to Woking for cremation. Eleanor's death was marked by speeches from Aveling, Bernstein, Hyndman, Will Thorne of the Gas Workers Union, Pete Curran of the ILP and Robert Banner, a socialist pioneer who would from this point play an important part in investigating the circumstances of Eleanor's death.³⁰

It is likely Banner had come into contact with Eleanor Marx soon after his arrival in London in 1882 when he recommenced activity with the Democratic Federation following a move from Edinburgh. Having already been in communication with both Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in 1880, Banner nailed his colours to the mast of their brand of scientific socialism before the Federation accepted socialism as its creed and changed its name to the Social Democratic Federation in 1884. By this time Banner was, along with Eleanor and Edward, serving on the executive of the SDF and playing an active role. However, within months Banner joined those unhappy with Hyndman's autocratic style of leadership and latent jingoism, breaking away to form the Socialist League at the end of 1884. With Eleanor and Edward, Banner signed the founding manifesto of the League and served on its ruling council.

Despite dropping out of the Socialist League in 1886 Banner stayed in contact with Eleanor and was always seen by her as somebody whose views should be canvassed and could be relied on to deliver support for any initiative emanating from the group close to Engels. Banner's views were sought in relation to the Paris Socialist International Congress of July 1889 and his political and organisational skills were on hand when the Legal Eight Hours and International Labour League was set up in the following year.³¹

From his Woolwich base Banner frequently used the newly established free ferry to go across the river to the East End where he had friends and political allies. Respected by Keir Hardie, Banner acted as his election agent in the victory at West Ham South in 1892 and in Hackney he worked closely with the East London Fabian group then attempting to win the Society to support an independent political party for labour. Here he linked up with Tom Mann, Harry Lowerison and George Samuel who, as 'Marxian' wrote for *Workman's Times* and *Labour Leader* and who probably provided the introduction to Freddy Demuth, a member of the Hackney Labour League in 1894. As soon as Banner made known to

Demuth his long association with Eleanor the two quickly became good friends and when the verdict of the inquest into her death was declared they worked together to secure justice.

To conduct investigations into the circumstances of Eleanor's death and advise on the prospects of convincing the Director of Public Prosecutions to look into the case, Banner sought out Alexander Karley Donald (known as A.K. Donald), like himself a Scot, a former Socialist League leading light and, since 1897, a barrister with chambers at Gray's Inn. Donald, who had known Eleanor and Edward since 1885 when he arrived in London, visited Gertrude Gentry for an interview at The Den in early to mid-April and from this Banner was able to 'assert positively' a number of details which he claimed had not been stated clearly or at all at the inquest. Among these were: that Eleanor's 'determined resolution to end her life by self-destruction cannot have been taken earlier than the morning of the fatal day, 31 March 1898'; that on that morning Eleanor received a letter 'on which someone who has read it says that "it throws a very discreditable light on a certain person"'; that Aveling was present in the house when Eleanor ordered the poison and when Gentry returned she took the small packet and the poison book for signing into the room where Aveling was; that before taking her life, Eleanor wrote to her solicitor Arthur Crosse, including the 'names of several persons' and enclosing the letter she had received on that morning; that these letters did not reach Crosse and that following the inquest – where their contents were not noted – the deputy coroner handed them to Aveling.³²

Kapp was puzzled by Banner's intervention because she believed it 'contained some highly curious points', including his assertion that Eleanor had received a letter on 31 March. How could he be sure of this, she asked, 'unless he had written it himself. Who else could have been privy to its contents? Only Gertrude Gentry. Was it then read aloud while she eavesdropped at the door?'. Similarly, Kapp was perplexed by Banner's statement that Eleanor had named 'several persons' to her solicitor in a letter written that morning. She wrote 'only the coroner and Aveling are positively known to have read these two letters: did either of them put the letters at Banner's disposal? There is only one – an extremely remote – alternative; namely, that the police, who must have been called in by Dr Shackleton, had taken possession of this and other letters written in Eleanor's hand – including the alleged suicide note – in order to produce these in the court and, violating their usual discretion in such matters, had shown them to Banner before the inquest'.³³

Crucially, these conjectures overlooked the information that was garnered by Donald on the instruction of Banner from the only person, outside the deputy coroner and Aveling, who could have known all this information, Gertrude Gentry. Only Gentry could have known of the contents of the letter received by Eleanor on 31 March; only she could have been aware of the letter written by Eleanor to Crosse including the names of 'several persons'; and only she could have been sure that Aveling was still at home when Eleanor sent for and received the poison. This information was given to Banner who immediately offered it for publication in *Labour Leader* where it was eagerly taken up by Hardie who also had suspicions about Aveling's role in the affair. In the week following the suicide Hardie wrote to his deputy editor, David Lowe on the 'Pathetic end of Eleanor's life. The brute has killed her – although she was not a thing he loved – he is incapable of loving anything outside his own dirty cowardly hide'.³⁴ In a memorable phrase, Hardie was later to describe Aveling as a 'deadly incubus'.³⁵

In his *Labour Leader* letter Banner was also keen to dispel two explanations for Eleanor's death that he knew to be spurious. On the proposition that Eleanor's extensive nursing of Aveling had led to an 'attack of nervous prostration that she could not stand any longer', Banner wrote that 'From *facts* and *letters* put at my disposal, I am able to state the deceased bore the sad task she so nobly fulfilled until the last with undiminishing fortitude. Undeterred by it, she went on collecting materials for the preface to a book of her father's now in print. It can, therefore, not be the worries over the *physical disease* of Dr. Aveling which brought her to end her life in despair'.³⁶ In these statements Banner revealed two clues to his source of information. When he wrote of '*facts* and *information* put at my disposal' he referred to conversations with Freddy Demuth and exclusive access to the nine letters written by Eleanor to Freddy between 30 August 1897 and 1 March 1898. The emphasis given to Aveling's *physical disease* related to Eleanor's comments to Freddy in her letter of 5 February where she wrote of only now understanding his condition.

The second explanation given for Eleanor's suicide which Banner sought to dismiss was that of financial difficulties caused by 'the waste of her property' by Aveling. Against this Banner wrote that although aware of declining financial resources, Eleanor 'whose extremely modest personal requirements were known to her friends, took it, so far as the question of money alone, with the greatest forbearance'. Again, quoting from one of Eleanor's letters to Freddy (20 February 1898), Banner included her words of resignation, 'I can get on anyway'.

Believing there were enough questions left unanswered by the inquest, Banner made an application to the Director of Public Prosecutions on 7 May for an investigation into the circumstances of Eleanor's death. Along with copies of his letter to the *Labour Leader*, Banner submitted a 'statement of Gertrude Gentry', which must have been that obtained by Donald. The official at the Director's office dealing with the request communicated with deputy coroner Wood and from this concluded that no action be taken.³⁷ This decision put an end to the prospect of pursuing Aveling in the courts, making the suggestion by Holmes that if he hadn't died so soon after Eleanor, 'Bernstein, Library (Liebknecht), Hyndman and the Lafargues would have brought a civil case against him' a fiction.³⁸

When told of the Public Prosecutor's decision, Donald was not surprised as he didn't believe there was evidence to incriminate Aveling of complicity in Eleanor's suicide. He told his friend and comrade from the Socialist League days, John Mahon, that he had explained to Eleanor's friends how they might challenge her will, 'but they would have nothing to do with that. If they could not proceed criminally, they would not act at all. Brilliant geniuses they may be, but not much sense'. Donald went on to tell Mahon that he had seen Aveling in the Gaiety Bar 'glaring at me like a fiend from hell ... had it not been for me very likely he would have had to stand the racket of a trial for being accessory to E's suicide at the Old Bailey. He would certainly have been acquitted, however. He can't live long now; he looks very ill, kidney disease'.³⁹

Among Eleanor's close friends there was indeed shock, anger and some guilt at her death. Kautsky told Victor Adler, a fellow senior German social democrat, that

Aveling drove her to death and did nothing to prevent the act. He was there when she sent the girl for the poison and in his presence she signed the poison book. He was posing as terminally ill yet managed to stay out all day. Unfortunately the scoundrel will also enjoy the fruits of his crime. He is Tussy's sole heir, even of the Marxian estate. Now, of course, Ede (Bernstein) claims this is contestable, but Singer (another senior SPD official) already explained to me that the party had no money to conduct the case. I'm in favour of being ruthless to the villain. He himself is prepared for war because the day after the funeral Lafargue and Longuet invited him to a meeting at Crosse's. He wrote that as long these two gentlemen were in London, he would not visit him.⁴⁰

Bernstein wrote to Adler that, 'It's the most shocking, outrageous tragedy you can think of. You know that with Tussy's great delusion nothing could be changed, and yet you make the most bitter reproaches that you have not done your part to stop the villain'.⁴¹ He then wrote to Laura with the news that Aveling had been seen in London with a woman in a fashionable restaurant, 'feasting and joking. I don't know if I told you at the time that a rumour went (round) here that Aveling had at (sic) Tussy's life-time secretly contracted a legal marriage, and the news of this drove Tussy into death. The matter seemed to me incredible, but there are things which otherwise unexplainable, could by it be explained'.⁴²

With Freddy Demuth's permission Banner made available Eleanor's letters to Keir Hardie who published them at the end of July in *Labour Leader* and Karl Kautsky who added a note about the dubious circumstances of Eleanor's death in a reminiscence by Bernstein.⁴³ In mid-July 1898, with the possibility of a legal challenge removed, Bernstein set out his case against Aveling in the SPD journal *Die Neue Zeit*, under the title 'What drove Eleanor Marx to death', which was translated and appeared in *Justice* at the end of July.⁴⁴ The essence of Bernstein's argument – drawing heavily but not exclusively on Eleanor's letters to Freddy Demuth – was that despite the statements made by Banner at the end of April, Aveling had made no effort to 'clear himself from suspicion in which the facts cover him ... The suspicion is no other than this – that Dr. Aveling, when he left the house in Sydenham on March 31, knew that Eleanor Marx was determined to take her life, and also knew that she had procured poison for that purpose, and knowing this he yet made no effort to hinder her suicide'.⁴⁵

Beyond the details included in Eleanor's letters published for the first time in Bernstein's article, he added a number of new particulars, some of which he had first hand having known the couple well since 1888. Bernstein stated that: 1. The couple's financial insecurity was the result of Aveling's 'libertinism' which Eleanor was unable to appreciate to its full extent. When improvement came following Engels bequest at the end of 1895, it brought 'not improvement but the total degeneration of the man'; 2. When Aveling left The Den in the summer of 1897 he took with him everything that could be turned into money; 3. When he returned in September with the promise of 'reformation' he 'began anew his life of lewd enjoyment'; 4. Aveling's journey to London and absence from the house until five o'clock, took place the day after he had been too weak to stand; 5. Eleanor's last letter to Crosse, written on the morning of 31 March, 'may have altered the forms which gave him power by the last will'. It is possible that this letter

may have given legal rights to Freddy Demuth. But ‘according to his own statement to several persons’, Aveling had destroyed the letter; 6. Eleanor’s death had not disturbed Aveling’s ‘equanimity’. After the inquest he visited a pub and the day before the funeral he attended a football match which he spoke about to a number of people on the day.

Bernstein’s references to ‘libertinism’, ‘degeneration’ and ‘lewd enjoyment’ should be seen in the context of his observation to Victor Adler of 5 April, quoted above, that Eleanor had spent sums of money ‘to cover up his crimes with women and children’. Bernstein went on to say that at the funeral service ‘comrades told me about various cases by name. Anger and bitterness prevailed, of which one has no idea ... If it wasn’t for the party, I think people would have torn him to pieces’.⁴⁶

In a similar vein were remarks by Maria Mendelson to Vera Zasulich, made less than two weeks after Eleanor’s funeral. This letter, in the archives of revolutionary, historian and archivist Boris I. Nicolaevsky, held in the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, has been completely overlooked by scholars interested in the death of Eleanor Marx. The remaining section of this paper will consider the contents of this letter and discuss its significance.⁴⁷

Maria Mendelson arrived in London from Paris with her husband, Stanisław Mendelson, in the summer of 1890 after both were pursued by the French police for support given to Russian revolutionaries seeking to overthrow Tsarist autocracy. Both born into wealthy families, Maria and Stanisław took up socialism independently of one another in the 1870s gravitating to those who were seeking to establish a Polish socialist party. Stanisław was particularly active setting up Polish language socialist newspapers and linking with German social democrats in exile from Bismarck’s repressive state.⁴⁸

The Mendelsons’ arrival in London from Paris saw them quickly taken up by émigré social democrats and soon they were regulars at Engels’ famous Sunday gatherings at his Regent’s Park Road home. Bernstein later remembered Maria as fluent in several European languages and having an ‘extremely winning’ appearance. Stanisław, he thought ‘extraordinarily well read and a highly critical thinker’ if sceptical on the future of socialism.⁴⁹ Both spoke from the ‘international’ platform, with Aveling as the chairman, at the Labour Day demonstration in London, May 1894.

Maria established good relations with Eleanor, collaborating on a social event for Polish socialists in 1893 and in preparations for the International Congress in London in the summer of 1896. On Congress planning, Maria remembered Eleanor working flat out, ‘She found time for everything, but

not her own rest', and on one occasion comforting her while she wept.⁵⁰ On at least one occasion the Mendelsons visited The Den for a social gathering.⁵¹

There also at the Engels dinner parties, and on good terms with Eleanor and Edward, was Vera Zasulich, a Russian revolutionary who lived in London between 1894 and 1897.⁵² It seems certain that Maria and Vera established a close friendship because their correspondence continued when Zasulich moved to Zurich in 1897. The Mendelsons stayed in London through the decade as Stanisław was at the time taking examinations to qualify in law; he was called to the Bar of the Inner Temple in June 1898.

Maria's letter to Vera of 18 April 1898 was written from their address in London's legal quarter, at 4 Harcourt Buildings, Temple.⁵³ Written in Russian, French and English, the letter began with some chatty comments before moving on to news of Eleanor's death. Maria wrote: 'So, you want me to tell you about Tussy. It is all too dreadful that I feel quite sickened by it and shudder to think about it. But I will tell you about it in order'.

Maria identified four letters written by Eleanor:

1. 'To Johnny Longuet – you know about this'.⁵⁴
2. 'To Madame Lafargue'.

This is undated and transcribed by Maria in English. The only possible source for this was Laura who must have made a copy for Maria.

My dear Laura,

I trust you to look through all papers and take charge of all Mohr's MSS, letters, etc. I wish all my letters – I mean letters to me – to be destroyed. You must get out the 'Essay' and the other things.

Your sister, Tussy.⁵⁵

Mendelson then transcribed a second note which appears to have been the second part of the first:

Dear Laura,

I should like some small things – books or anything else – to be given to Dollie Radford, to Dr. Alice Corthorn, to Olive Schreiner, to Mrs. Despard, Gina et Ede Bernstein, Karl Kautsky, Dear Old Liebknecht, Singer and to my good friend Will Thorne.

Tussy.⁵⁶

3. 'Letter to the Maid: Gentry shall take the cats to be killed at Battersea. Gentry shall have £10. Aveling replied to the maid – nothing of the kind; the cats and money belong now to me'.⁵⁷
4. 'To Aveling, Dear _____ I have but one thing to say: how sad was life all these last years! Yours, Eleanor'.⁵⁸

Mendelson then wrote with her own words: 'This swindler garbled the letter, as you can see from the excerpts'. She then went on:

And now, this is what everyone was saying at the funeral: Three years ago, A (Aveling) was staying with a worker (it seems this was the time of the tour with Liebknecht) whose daughter he gave a child.⁵⁹ This daughter was 16 years old, considered to be a minor in England. Her parents blackmailed him and Tussy was constantly paying out. Last autumn A went to these workers (it seems they are members of the Wimbledon branch of the SDF) with Tussy's calling card and tickets for the theatre, asking them to let the sister of his mistress, a girl of *nine* years old, come to the theatre, where Tussy was waiting for them. He took the child and raped her. Then her parents got back to Tussy and the blackmail intensified.

Mendelson went on: 'I add that A boasts that towards the end Tussy was so repelled by him that he used *chloroform* to have relations with her; it is easy to see why she took her own life'. She goes on: 'Two days before her death she (Eleanor) wrote to Crosse, her solicitor: "Don't pay any more – I am sick of it"'.⁶⁰

The letter then tails off with the words: 'Incidentally, the letter to Crosse about which ...' indicating that the concluding page(s) has either been lost, detached or destroyed from the first four sides. Staff at the Hoover Institution Archives were unable to locate the missing page(s), a major disappointment as the incomplete sentence may have provided information about Eleanor's letter written to Crosse on 31 March.

A number of things about the content of the letter confirm its authenticity making it convincing as a letter of some importance: The Mendelsons' address in the Temple was stamped on the letter from a hand block in common use at the time; the use of multiple languages shared by Mendelson and Zasluch; the use of family 'pet' names, 'Tussy' and 'Mohr' in the quoted letter from Eleanor to Laura; the characteristic seriousness given by Eleanor in her letter to Laura on finishing the 'Essay' and carrying on with the arrangement of their father's papers; the list of friends and comrades,

especially the inclusion of Dr Alice Corthorn, an often forgotten close acquaintance from the late 1880s, whom Eleanor wanted to receive a keepsake; and the reference to Eleanor's cats in the letter to Gentry.

In what was obviously a charged atmosphere at Eleanor's funeral there was resentment at Aveling's presence and speech as many believed he had either driven her to suicide or been compliant in the act. Behaviour that had been noticed but ignored because of the harm it would have caused Eleanor if exposed was now discussed openly.⁶⁰ The family names of those comrades who had been the victims of abuse were freely discussed. Bernstein's remark, that 'if it wasn't for the party, I think people would have torn him to pieces', is also relevant here. Party members, who in this context meant those belonging to the SDF, would have undoubtedly feared damage to the organisation if shocking news leaked out. Hyndman, who probably knew something of Aveling's abuses after Eleanor confided in his wife, Matilda, during a visit to the University College Hospital following the operation, later wrote a whole chapter devoted to the couple in the second volume of autobiography which he began pertinently:

There are certain episodes in the socialist movement which up to now have been passed over in silence by those who know the circumstances. This is natural enough; for although sad and unpleasant events occur in connection with all parties, anything ugly which happens in the ranks of socialists is sure to be treated by the outside world as if this were the rule rather than the exception with men and women who hold our obnoxious opinions.⁶¹

Maria Mendelson's transmitted account of Aveling as an abuser of children corroborated Bernstein's comment to Adler made on the day of Eleanor's funeral that she had paid 'hush money' to cover up these crimes. If true, and we have no way of proving or disproving the allegations categorically, Eleanor was complicit in the crime(s), making it a tragedy for one so devoted to children. It is possible that her letter to Crosse of 29 March, cited in Mendelson's letter, 'Don't pay any more – I am sick of it', was prompted by a fresh demand for money to cover up for Aveling's actions, bringing Eleanor finally to her knees.

Mendelson's concluding reference to Aveling's hideous boasts that he used chloroform 'to have relations' with Eleanor is conceivable as George Dale, the permissive Sydenham chemist, reported that he had 'served Dr. Aveling from time to time with chloroform and laudanum'.⁶² Following this, Mendelson's sad comment that 'it is easy to understand why she took

her own life', was echoed and strengthened by Olive Schreiner when she wrote to Dollie Radford in June 1898, 'I am so glad Eleanor is dead. It is such a mercy, she has escaped from him'.⁶³

In what remains the outstanding biography of Eleanor Marx, Yvonne Kapp was at pains to present the self-destruction as not simply an act to which Eleanor was driven by Aveling. Kapp wrote: 'Edward alone could not have destroyed Eleanor, though his cold heart, incapable of love, undoubtedly froze her eager hold on life. The dire resolve to kill herself must surely have been taken because she believed she was no longer needed by anyone or anything'.⁶⁴ The deeply felt loss of her father (1883), then Engels (1895) and the severing of the 'organic connection with masses of working people' when in 1895 she resigned her position on the executive of the Gas Workers Union, weakened 'her resistance to the blows that subsequently fell upon her'.⁶⁵ Moreover, Kapp believed Eleanor sensed that the working class movement was in these years 'flowing ever more swiftly, broadly and deeply into channels far removed from Marxism, to leave her in a rivulet whose current would not be strong enough to bear her forward'.⁶⁶

Kapp's commendable and largely successful effort to redeem Eleanor's own agency in bringing her life to an end needs, however, to be informed by evidence that necessarily shifts some direct responsibility onto Aveling's shoulders.

That Kapp was unable to fathom Robert Banner's role in the two months following Eleanor's death, meant she did not appreciate his role in gathering intelligence to challenge Aveling's evidence at the inquest which was shown to be incomplete and misleading. The deputy coroner accused Aveling of being 'a most difficult man to deal with', but let him off lightly by failing to put crucial supplementary questions to evasive answers. When asked about their 'marriage', Aveling stated it had no legal status, later adding disingenuously that 'he had been married before and that was the reason he was not legally married to the deceased'. Crucially, Wood failed to acknowledge and explore further Gentry's statement that Aveling left the house only **after** Eleanor had received the poison and had signed the poison book. This was subsequently reaffirmed by Gentry in her interview with Donald and if, as was reported, Aveling was in the same room as Eleanor when she received the packet and signed the poison book, it seems unlikely he would have been unaware of her plans. Wood's action of passing Eleanor's final letter to Crosse and the one she had received on 31 March to Aveling after the inquest was also questioned as dubious practice, especially as it had been stated that their union had

no legal status and therefore Aveling had no right in law to these documents.⁶⁷ From this it can be fairly said, that if Dale, the chemist, was guilty of unprofessional conduct in dispensing poison without proper procedure, Wood failed in his duty to retain vital documentary evidence and probe witness's statements in order to establish a true picture of events at The Den on the morning of 31 March.

We only have newspaper reports of the proceedings at the coroner's court, the official transcript and associated papers have been destroyed, but from these one suspects deputy coroner Wood was of the opinion that the case was unproblematic and a verdict of suicide would result from the inquest, which in the event was cursory. Aveling's evidence that Eleanor was of a 'morbid disposition' and had several times suggested they commit suicide together, would have acted to confirm this preconception.

Kapp was less agnostic in her verdict on Bernstein's account, 'What drove Eleanor Marx to suicide', which she described as a 'fictionalised version of Banner's letter to *Labour Leader* in which he 'overreached' and 'without foundation ... Built up a chilling picture of this monster'.⁶⁸ In considering this assessment it must be remembered that Bernstein was a close friend of Eleanor and would have seen her and been able to assess her mood almost weekly at Engels' gatherings. His position as one of the leading socialist intellectuals in Britain in the 1890s meant he was in regular contact with prominent figures of the movement – Hardie, Hyndman, Shaw, Blatchford among them – who were aware of Aveling's reputation as a womaniser and it seems implausible that this was not discussed from time to time. Bernstein thus had access to a range of information – not just the letters to Freddy – about the couple's relationship that informed his essay.

Of particular significance was Bernstein's observation that Aveling's behaviour descended into 'total degeneration' in late 1895 when Engels' bequest became available. This dating, it will be noted, corresponds to Rosebury's recollection of his meeting with Eleanor in 1895 where he observed the relationship with Aveling had deteriorated since they had last seen one another. The infusion of available spending money into the relationship which had been marked by pecuniary difficulties would have meant Aveling's hankering to be a man about town could be sated, and doubtless through this, numerous opportunities to fulfil his sexual proclivities presented themselves. It is also possible to conjecture that it was around this time that Aveling became aware that the abscess in his side might be life threatening, it would just not heal up, and he should, therefore, make the most of his available time with the aid of Eleanor's money.

All this was available to Bernstein as context for his account of Eleanor's suicide which, while undeniably written with the motive of securing justice, cannot be assessed as wholly 'fictionalised'. It seems likely that those who were close to the couple in the eighties and nineties would have recognised much that was written by Bernstein, and that his account, to paraphrase his own words, would have helped precisely those people understand much that was previously unexplainable.

Of all Eleanor's comrades and friends, Bernstein seems to have felt her loss most deeply. He felt also he could have done more to stop what was happening, but repeatedly came up against what he described as Eleanor's 'great delusion' that she could change Aveling's behaviour. His subsequent attempts to unravel the reasons behind Aveling's expulsion from the ILP, while inconclusive, threw up the suggestion of a very serious crime, what the Victorians were likely to call 'indecent assault', which was then repeated at the funeral.⁶⁹ Maria Mendelson's letter substantiated the allegation by citing two cases of abuse concerning an SDF family, kept secret only by the payment of hush money.

Bernstein's account of Eleanor's demise was adamant in stating that towards the end Aveling was only concerned to get his hands on 'her property, her money'. At the time of writing in late June early July 1898 Bernstein had suspicions that Aveling had been secretly married but did not have the necessary corroboration to include it in his account. Had he been able he would undoubtedly have explicitly linked Aveling's return to The Den in early September 1897, less than three months after his marriage to Eva Frye, to his obvious desire to have what was left of the Engels bequest. That this was indeed a strong motivating factor in his dealings with Eleanor is confirmed by the insistence in 1896 that she amend her will in his interest. Eleanor's first will, drawn up in October of the previous year, bequeathed the bulk of the estate to Aveling, but ring fenced the royalties payable for the sale of her father's writings, and making these over to the children of her dead sister, Jenny Longuet. Eleanor's codicil of November 1896 amended these arrangements by making Aveling the sole beneficiary.

Aveling lost no time in securing probate of Eleanor's will, granted on 16 April, with a net value of close on £1,500. His move from The Den to Stafford Mansions, Albert Bridge Road, Battersea followed, where he died on 2 August 1898. The death certificate recorded: 'Malignant disease of kidney (4 years); lardaceous disease of kidney (1 month); and operation (6 months)'.

Like Eleanor, four months earlier, Edward was cremated at Woking

on 5 August. The reporter for *Justice* noted the presence of 'a young lady attired in deep mourning' who 'upon her arrival in the chapel ... sank into a chair in a state of collapse and was unable to accompany the others into another room to make the final arrangements for the disposal of the doctor's remains'.⁷⁰ There can be no doubt that this was Eva Aveling, Edward's wife for little more than a year. Unlike Eleanor's funeral, at which the full breath of the trade union and socialist movements were represented, 'not a single representative man ... put in an appearance' at Aveling's cremation, testimonies both to how contemporaries esteemed each of the dead, a verdict that has stood the test of time.⁷¹

Notes

1. *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 10 April 1898, p6.
2. Eleanor Marx to Dollie Radford, 30 June 1884, cited in Yvonne Kapp, *Eleanor Marx, Vol II: The Crowded Years, 1884-1898*, London, 1976, p16.
3. Eleanor Marx to J.L. Mahon, 8 May 1884, included as Appendix II of E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, London, 1955, pp858-859.
4. Olive Schreiner to Havelock Ellis, 2 August 1884, in Richard Rive (ed.), *Olive Schreiner, Letters, Vol 1: 1871-1899*, Oxford, 1988, p49.
5. Eduard Bernstein, *My Years of Exile: Reminiscences of a Socialist*, London, 1921, p202.
6. Bernard Shaw to Ellen Terry, 5 January 1898, in Dan Laurence (ed.), *Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters, 1898-1910*, London, 1972, pp7-8.
7. Bernstein discussed the similarities between Eleanor and Aveling and the Dubedats in *My Years of Exile*, pp162-163.
8. Olive Schreiner to Dollie Radford, June 1898, British Library, Add Ms 89029/1/26.
9. Aaron Rosebury, 'Eleanor, Daughter of Karl Marx: Personal Reminiscences', *Monthly Review*, January 1973, p45.
10. Kapp, *Eleanor Marx, Vol II*, p123.
11. Minutes of the London district held at the Archives of the British Library of Political and Economic Science (BLPES), ILP 9/56, 9/57.
12. Bernstein, *My Years of Exile*, p203.
13. Eduard Bernstein to Victor Adler, 5 April 1898, in Victor Adler, *Briefwechsel mit August Bebel und Karl Kautsky*, Vienna, 1954, pp243-244.
14. See Edward Aveling 'Les sans-travail en Angleterre', *Le devenir social*, April 1895, pp61-73; see also comments and analysis by Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling in *Letters from England, 1895*, Stephen Williams and Tony Chandler (eds), London, 2020.
15. *Labour Leader*, 23 November 1895, p6.

16. Edward Aveling to Karl Kautsky 8 February 1896, International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam, Karl Kautsky Collection, 448. For the Freybergers see Kapp, *Eleanor Marx, Vol II*.
17. H.M. Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences*, London, 1912, p143.
18. *Justice*, 23 July 1898, p1.
19. *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 25 December 1898, p8.
20. Eleanor's letter to Freddy Demuth of 30 August 1897, *Labour Leader*, 30 July, 1898, p251. All further references to these letters are taken from this edition of *Labour Leader*. Bernstein stated that when Eleanor asked Freddy to seek out Aveling she also asked 'another friend', possibly himself. Eduard Bernstein, 'What drove Eleanor Marx to suicide', *Justice*, 30 July 1898, p2.
21. C. Tsuzuki, *The Life of Eleanor Marx, 1855-1898: A Socialist Tragedy*, Oxford, 1967, p303.
22. Kapp, *Eleanor Marx, Vol II*, p683.
23. Rachel Holmes, *Eleanor Marx: A Life*, London, 2014, p418.
24. The most recent biography of Marx provides a useful summary of the evidence regarding the paternity of Freddy Demuth. Gareth Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion*, London, 2016, pp373-375. This view is challenged by Terrell Carver in his *Friedrich Engels: His Life and Thought*, Basingstoke, 1991, pp164-165.
25. Eleanor Marx Aveling to Laura Lafargue, 8 January 1898, in Olga Meier (ed.), *The Daughters of Karl Marx: Family Correspondence, 1866-1898*, Harmondsworth, 1984, p299.
26. Eleanor Marx Aveling to Natalie Liebknecht, 1 March 1898 in Georg Eckert (ed.), *Wilhelm Liebknecht Briefwechsel mit Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels*, The Hague, 1963, p464.
27. Eleanor Marx Aveling to Edith Lanchester, 29 March 1898, Eleanor Marx Papers, IISH. For Lanchester see Kapp, *Eleanor Marx, Vol II*, p621n.
28. Eleanor Marx Aveling to Karl Kautsky, 10 November 1894, Karl Kautsky Papers, 1701, IISH.
29. Details of inquest summarised from reports in *Forest Hill and Sydenham Examiner*, 8 April 1898, p5, and *Woolwich Gazette*, 8 April 1898, p2.
30. For Robert Banner see Stephen Williams, 'Banner, Robert (1855-1910): Trade unionist and socialist', in Keith Gildart and David Howell (eds), *Dictionary of Labour Biography Vol XIV*, London, 2018, pp5-20; Stephen Williams, 'Robert Banner, William Morris and the Socialist League', *Journal of the William Morris Society*, Vol XXII, No 3 (2017): 38-55.
31. Eleanor Marx Aveling to Laura Lafargue, 1 June 1889 in Meier, *Daughters of Karl Marx*, pp216-217; Williams, 'Banner', p13.
32. *Labour Leader*, 30 April 1898, p139.
33. Kapp, *Eleanor Marx, Vol II*, pp717-718.
34. Keir Hardie to David Lowe, 7 April 1898, BLPES, ILP 4/1898/140. The

- original letter is not dated by David Lowe. He later gave it as 7 April 1898, *Forward* (Glasgow), 19 August 1922, p2.
35. *Labour Leader*, 30 July 1898, p3.
 36. The work by Marx that Eleanor had been preparing for publication was *The Eastern Question*, released by Swan Sonnenschein in early 1898.
 37. National Archives, DPP 3/19 (application number 398). This information is listed in the DPP register. Sadly, the individual case file that would have existed has not survived.
 38. Holmes, *Eleanor Marx*, p439.
 39. A.K. Donald to J.L. Mahon, 4 June 1898, included in Thompson, *William Morris*, p874.
 40. Karl Kautsky to Victor Adler, 9 April 1898, in Adler, *Briefwechsel*, pp244-245.
 41. Eduard Bernstein to Victor Adler 5 April, 1898, in Adler, *Briefwechsel*, p243.
 42. Eduard Bernstein to Laura Lafargue, April 1898, in Meier, *Daughters of Karl Marx*, p312.
 43. *Labour Leader*, 21 May 1898, p8. Kautsky's footnote to Bernstein's reminiscence of Eleanor was the first reference in print that the circumstances of the suicide were not as straightforward as presented at the inquest. The issue of *Die Neue Zeit* in which this appeared had a date of 13 April on its masthead. Kautsky wrote how Eleanor's last letter to him on 15 March told of her future plans of work which did not 'betray the slightest desire to leave the field of battle on which she always fought wherever the struggle was fiercest'. He went on: 'It must have been a suddenly appearing cause that drove – yes, drove – her to her death. This powerful, completely healthy, contentious nature could not willingly depart this life which still held such great tasks in store for her; only an overwhelming, irresistible compulsion could force her out of her life. And our fear is that it was no storm that felled this oak, but a creeping worm that undermined its root'. Eduard Bernstein 'Eleanor Marx', *Die Neue Zeit*, 16, 1897-98, 2.bd. H.30. p119. Two weeks later, *Vorwärts*, the SPD newspaper, included Banner's letter which also appeared in *Labour Leader* of the same date. *Vorwärts*, 30 April 1898, p9.
 44. Bernstein's article 'Was Eleanor Marx in den Tod trieb', was originally published in *Die Neue Zeit*, N 42, J XVI, Band II, 1897-98, pp481-491. This appeared in Germany in mid-July. The article was translated and appeared in *Justice* on 30 July 1898, pp2-3. The *Die Neue Zeit* and *Justice* articles incorrectly give the date of Eleanor's letter to Freddy of 20 February as 10 February. The *Labour Leader* article by Hardie of 30 July stated this date correctly.
 45. *Justice*, 30 July 1898, p2.
 46. Eduard Bernstein to Victor Adler, 5 April 1898, in Adler, *Briefwechsel*.
 47. For Boris Ivanovich Nicolaevsky (1887-1966) and his collection see Anna

- M. Bourguina and Michael Jakobson, compilers, *Guide to the Boris I. Nicolaevsky Collection in the Hoover Institution Archives, Part 1, and Part 2* compiled by Michael Jakobson, Stanford, CA, 1989.
48. Lucjan Blit, *The Origins of Polish Socialism: The History and Ideas of the First Polish Socialist Party, 1878-1886*, Cambridge, 1971, p46. See also George J. Larski (ed.), *Historical Dictionary of Poland, 966-1945*, Westport, CT, 1990, p348.
 49. Bernstein, *My Years of Exile*, pp217-218.
 50. Dionizja Wawrzykowska-Wierciochowa, *Pani Maria Janowska-Mendelson*, Warsaw, 1968, p371.
 51. Eleanor Marx Aveling to Karl Kautsky, 10 February 1896, Karl Kautsky Collection, IISH.
 52. Jay Bergman, *Vera Zasulich: a biography*, Stanford, CA, 1983, p129. Aveling interviewed Zasulich for a profile article in *Clarion*, 23 February 1895, p64.
 53. Maria Mendelson to Vera Zasulich, 18 April 1898, Boris I. Nicolaevsky Collection, Box 40, Folder 4, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.
 54. Eleanor's letter to 'Johnny' Longuet was published by Bernstein in his *Die Neue Zeit* article of April 1898. 'My dear Johnny, My last word is addressed to you. Try to be worthy of your grandfather. Your Aunt Tussy'. Kapp, *Eleanor Marx, Vol II*, p697.
 55. The 'Essay' was Eleanor's edit of her father's *Value, Price and Profit: Addressed to Working Men*, published by Swan Sonnenschein at 15 shillings in August 1898.
 56. Caroline 'Dollie' Radford (1858-1920) poet and writer and friend of Eleanor Marx since 1880.
 Dr Alice Corthorn (1859-1935) friend of Eleanor Marx, Olive Schreiner and Dollie Radford since the late 1880s. Lived next door to Eleanor and Edward in Chancery Lane in the 1880s.
 Olive Schreiner (1855-1920) South African born novelist who was a close friend of Eleanor from 1882.
 Charlotte Despard (1844-1935) socialist, suffragette and Irish nationalist. Eleanor gave elocution and drama classes at Despard's hall in Wandsworth Road, Battersea, in 1897.
 Regina (1849-1923) and Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932) prominent German social democrats exiled in London between 1888 and 1901. Close friends of Engels, Eleanor and Edward. Eduard spoke at Eleanor's funeral.
 Karl Kautsky (1854-1938) Czech-Austrian born intellectual who became a leading member of the German Social Democrats. He lived in London for a time during the late eighties and became a close friend of Engels and Eleanor.
 Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826-1900) founder of the German Social Democratic Party who was a close friend of Karl Marx, Engels and Eleanor.
 Paul Singer (1844-1911) leading German social democrat.

Will Thorne (1857-1945) socialist founder of the Gas Workers Union to which Eleanor and Edward belonged in the late nineties and early nineties. Eleanor lent Thorne considerable assistance establishing the union and he supported all the initiatives of Eleanor and Edward to win support for socialism in the trade union movement. Thorne spoke at Eleanor's funeral.

57. On Eleanor's cats see Holmes, *Eleanor Marx*, p441.
58. *Justice* reported that Eleanor 'left a letter directed at Dr. Aveling, which was read at the inquest, but which has not been published'. *Justice*, 10 April 1898, p6. It is extremely unlikely the letter was read at the inquest as no other newspaper report included reference to it. The words written by Mendelson are close, but not identical, to those published in *Reynolds's Newspaper*: 'Dear. It will soon be all over. My last word to you is the same that I have said during all these long, sad years – love'. *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 10 April 1898, p6.
59. Wilhelm Liebknecht's tour of Britain in 1896 commenced on 16 May and concluded on 6 June.
60. A notice of Aveling's death in *Reynolds's Newspaper*, possibly written by the editor, W. M. Thompson, who would have known the man, makes this point more generally: 'Strange to say, in spite of an exterior that almost recalled Quasimodo, he always exercised a remarkable fascination for women, and the effect of his lecturing tours in the provinces was frequently discounted by tales of victims that he left behind him. That these offenses were only known to a few persons, who were unable to speak in fear of injuring the innocent, is the explanation of the position he occupied in the political world'. *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 7 August 1898, p8.
61. Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences*, p138; pp144-145.
62. *Woolwich Gazette*, 8 April 1898, p2.
63. Olive Schreiner to Dollie Radford June 1898, British Library Add Ms 89029/1/26.
64. Kapp, *Eleanor Marx, Vol II*, p707.
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.*, pp707-708.
67. *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 25 December 1898, p8.
68. Kapp, *Eleanor Marx, Vol II*, pp719-720.
69. Louise A. Jackson, *Child Abuse in Victorian England*, London, 2000, p2.
70. *Justice*, 13 August 1898, p3.
71. *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 7 August 1898, p8.