

Edward Carpenter: The Forgotten Birth Control Advocate. The Progression of His Advocacy and
its Culmination

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Abstract

Edward Carpenter is remembered as an English Poet, Socialist, sex-reformer and gay rights activist. This work aims to illuminate another avenue of Carpenter's ventures, birth control. The previously overlooked avenue of Carpenter's interest is the focus of this work. Through analysis of selected work by Carpenter, such as his 1894 pamphlets, can his ideology and advocacy begin to be shaped and understood. This becomes further evident through his professional relationships with birth control pioneers such as Marie Stopes and Margaret Sanger. Carpenter's advocacy is made further evident through the analysis of his unpublished manuscript 'Birth Control and Bisexuality'. What becomes clear in this work is that Carpenter was advocating for birth control throughout his early work and, by the 1920s, was actively writing about the subject. Whether or not intentional, Carpenter was dropping breadcrumbs of birth control advocacy in early writing and later on was explicit and deliberate in his advocacy.

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Introduction

To state that Edward Carpenter was an advocate for many causes and movements would be an understatement. There are few ventures in which he did not participate throughout his life. Nowadays, he is most well-known for his writing on homosexuality, socialism, women's emancipation and sex reform.¹ Yet his ventures also extended to avenues such as educational and prison reform and even as far as a minimum wage.² Carpenter was a man whose perceptions were prescient yet highlighted his enamoured view of a model world.

Born in 1884 into an upper-middle-class family, Carpenter could have relegated himself to a life of a Cambridge mathematician; however, he rejected this in favour of a life which helped 'prod the modern world into being'.³ Instead, Edward Carpenter challenged capitalism as a social and economic system with an alternative lifestyle, contrasting the stereotype of the 'stuffy Victorian'.⁴ Carpenter was ahead of his time, cited as not only settling in Millthorpe (in the countryside outside of Sheffield) long before the intelligentsia did the same but also contemplated an organisation of homosexual men, later echoed through modern gay rights movements.⁵ With his vast range of involvement in causes and movements, it is unsurprising that he was remarkably influential during his lifetime. Writers, anarchists, feminists and politicians alike were within his network of friends.⁶ Since Carpenter had so many avenues and ventures, there has been a focus on his socialism, interest in Eastern Cultures and sex reform. Although Rowbotham has written an extensive biography on him, certain avenues have not received the attention they deserve.⁷ One of these avenues was his advocacy for birth control.

The historiography of Carpenter is one which has seen a resurgence. Between his death in 1929 and the 1970s, Carpenter was relegated from public view.⁸ The changes in economy and culture were possible factors for Carpenter's dwindling recognition, as mass production and the Depression overrode Carpenter's ideas of an alternative form of work.⁹ This is not to say that Carpenter's legacy completely vanished from the historiography, but in the 1970s, with new left politics linking sex and socialism did Carpenter begin to re-emerge.¹⁰ Carpenter's legacy has begun to shed the image of a 'crank', which has been noted by Twells,

¹ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* (London: Verso, 2008) p.1

² *Ibid*, p.306

³ *Ibid*, p.1

⁴ *Ibid*, p.5

⁵ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.1; Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter 1844-1929: Prophet of the Human Fellowship* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1980) p.xi

⁶ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.2

⁷ Alison Twells, "'Eros the Great Leveller": Edward Carpenter, Sexual Cosmopolitanism and the Northern Working Man' *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 22:3 (2021), p.1

⁸ Alison Twells, 'Iron Dukes and Naked Races: Edward Carpenter's Sheffield and LGBTQ Public History', *International Journal of Regional and Local History*, 13:1 (2018), 47-67, p.47

⁹ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, pp.442

for example, but this rhetoric can also be seen in the 1990s with Rose's reduction of Carpenter to a 'homosexual' 'communist' and 'Cambridge mathematician'.¹⁰ This underrepresentation of Carpenter belittles his influence and his vast array of ideology and advocacy for various movements. Fortunately, the historiography has begun bridging the gap and studying Carpenter and his impact on many movements. The change in the political climate is cited as one of the motivations behind the renewed interest, and with Carpenter's larger socialism, which included workers' rights and 'prophetic stature', this renewed interest is understandable.¹¹ Carpenter's work and influence held significance. This was in tandem with the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, which decriminalised private homosexual acts for people over twenty-one.¹² Carpenter's image of a homosexual 'Victorian rebel' was on the road towards acceptance and normalisation and, when combined with the political climate of the 1970s, allowed for a resurgence in interest.¹³ And with the third annual Edward Carpenter Equality Walk in September 2022, Carpenter's 'largely forgotten but positive story' is still being spotlighted.¹⁴

Although there have been references to his involvement in the birth control movement throughout works regarding both Carpenter and birth control pioneers, there has not been a significant analysis of his role in the birth control movement.¹⁵ Carpenter's role in the birth control movement has so far been viewed as a minor, insignificant supporting character to birth control campaigners such as Marie Stopes and Margaret Sanger.¹⁶ His involvement was much greater than that, as will be explored. Throughout this work, Carpenter's advocacy for birth control can be seen, from his early work on sexuality in the 1890s to his unpublished work in the late 1920s. Through the analysis of Carpenter's work and relationships, his advocacy and influence on the movement will become apparent. Carpenter, in his own way, was advocating for and aiding birth control campaigners. Therefore, another avenue of Carpenter's campaigns will be explored, providing another piece to his legacy and adding to his work on sex reform.

¹⁰ Mark Simpson, 'The Lost Utopian: Why have so Few of us heard of the Victorian Poet and Renowned Socialist Edward Carpenter' *Independent* (05.10.2008) <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/the-lost-utopian-why-have-so-few-of-us-heard-of-victorian-poet-and-renowned-socialist-edward-carpenter-949080.html> [accessed: 29.04.2023]; June Rose, *Marie Stopes and the Sexual Revolution* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992) pp.93-94

¹¹ Alison Twells, 'Iron Dukes and Naked Races', p.47

¹² 'Regulating Sex and Sexuality in the 20th Century' *UK Parliament* <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/relationships/overview/sexuality20thcentury/> [accessed: 21.04.2023]

¹³ Brian Anderson, *Edward Carpenter: A Victorian rebel fighting for Gay Rights* (Kibworth Beauchamp: Troubador Publishing Ltd, 2021) title page

¹⁴ Christian Massey, 'Derbyshire gay rights trailblazer honoured with cross country walk' *Derbyshire Live* (7.11.2022) <https://www.derbyshiretimes.co.uk/news/politics/derbyshire-gay-rights-trailblazer-honoured-with-cross-country-walk-3834810> [accessed: 21.04.23]

¹⁵ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* pp.13, 436 & 438

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.3

To begin the narrative of Carpenter's birth control advocacy, his early works on sexuality are the best sources to analyse from a birth control perspective. In 1894, Carpenter wrote a series of pamphlets regarding life 'in a free society' published in Manchester by the Labour Press.¹⁷ Heralded as an 'attack on Victorian sexual codes, covering issues from sexual fulfilment as a basic human need', the pamphlets are a perfect starting point to see Carpenter's birth control advocacy, even in implicit nature.¹⁸ In the historiography, the pamphlets titled *Woman and Her Place in a Free Society*, *Sex-Love and Its Place in a Free Society*, and *Marriage in a Free Society* are seen as works which aimed to inspire discussions about sex and sexuality.¹⁹ Sex reform was not the only issue Carpenter targeted in the pamphlets; the economic and social subjugation of women ran throughout the pamphlets, making Carpenter's feminist ideology clear.²⁰ And when discussing women's rights and sex reform, even implicitly, it is clear Carpenter was including birth control in his ideals for a 'free society'. Although there is a fourth 'in a free society' pamphlet, titled *Homogenic Love and its Place in a Free Society* (1894), it was only available for private circulation, unlike the other three.²¹ This was due to the contents advocating for same-sex relationships, and with Oscar Wilde on trial for homosexuality and gross indecency at the time, *Homogenic Love* was relegated to private circulation.²² The three that went into general circulation will be analysed as they reached a wider audience, and they also focused on heterosexual relationships and discussed sexuality in general terms rather than specifically.²³ Since these are pamphlets targeting sexuality, logically, they would reference birth control, and this is explored in the first chapter.

Later works on sex reform by Carpenter will also be analysed as they provide a timeline in the development of Carpenter's ideology but in the context of societal changes. The first one, *Love's Coming of Age* (1896), was written only two years after the pamphlets. The book is often overlooked as it is considered the three public 'in a free society' pamphlets in one publication.²⁴ This, however, is incorrect, as the book contains other writing regarding sex reform. *Love's Coming of Age* also includes chapters titled 'The Free Society' and 'Preventative Checks to the Population'.²⁵ 'The Free Society' can be best described as a conclusion to all three of the publicly circulated pamphlets, a wider overlook of the whole subject, whilst in 'Preventative Checks to the Population' Carpenter argues for 'the adoption of some kind of artificial preventatives to

¹⁷ Alison Twells, "Eros the Great Leveller", p.12

¹⁸ Ibid, p.12

¹⁹ Ibid, p.12

²⁰ Ibid, p.12

²¹ Ibid, p.13

²² 'Oscar Wilde Trial' *History.com* [history.com/topics/gay-rights/oscar-wilde-trial](https://www.history.com/topics/gay-rights/oscar-wilde-trial) (06.12.2019) [accessed: 05.04.2023]

²³ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, p.189-190

²⁴ Ibid, p.210

²⁵ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age: A Series of Papers on The Relation of the Sexes* (London: George Allen and Company Ltd, 1913) p. Contents page

conception'.²⁶ Here, Carpenter's advocacy is blatant and shows that he was solidifying an ideology surrounding birth control.

The Intermediate Sex (1908) was another of Carpenter's feminist works on sex reform. It was first published twelve years after *Love's Coming of Age*; it provides context towards societal changes and the progression in ideology alongside the changing landscape. The work has largely received focus on Carpenter's theory of 'the intermediate sex as a superior combining the best of both sexes and with a less sensual and more emotional nature than heterosexuals'.²⁷ However, Carpenter's feminist ideology is also seen in the work. As will be explored, *the Intermediate Sex* also explored and commented on the societal changes, but Carpenter's birth control ideology can be further seen in its development. These early works give an insight into Carpenter's ideology, albeit filtered to allow for public circulation. Although these works, particularly the pamphlets, are considered attacks on the Victorian sexual codes, they were not so radical at face value that their publications were private.²⁸

These texts begin the exploration of Carpenter's advocacy and the basis of analysis in the first chapter. As already established, unlike many of his contemporaries, Carpenter was clear about the existence of female sexuality.²⁹ And by this time, Carpenter's home of Millthorpe was, as Rowbotham argues, a place of pilgrimage for the politically correct, meaning ideas could flow freely.³⁰ An in-depth analysis of these early works highlights his early advocacy and provides context for his later work and his relationships with birth control pioneers.

The second chapter focuses on Carpenter's relationships with three prominent women, Olive Schreiner, Marie Stopes and Margaret Sanger. Carpenter's relationship with the South African author Olive Schreiner has begun to see exploration.³¹ This relationship is the first to be explored as it was a lifelong relationship and occurred during his earlier writings, which are explored in the previous chapter. Schreiner was a fierce feminist and one whom Carpenter held admiration for, an admiration which was mutual.³² By analysing this relationship, Carpenter's feminist ideology becomes clearer, but it also sets the stage for Carpenter's future relationships with known birth control pioneers.

²⁶ Ibid, pp.114 & 150

²⁷ Sheila Rowbotham, 'In Search of Carpenter' *History Workshop*, No. 3 (Spring, 1977), 121-133, p.128

²⁸ Alison Twells, 'Eros the Great Leveller' p.13

²⁹ June Perry Levine, 'Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism by Tony Brown (Book Review),' *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920*, 34:4 (1991), 466-469, p.468

³⁰ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.7

³¹ Stephen Gray, 'Two Dissident Dream-Walkers: The Hardly Explored Reformist Alliance between Olive Schreiner and Edward Carpenter' *English Academy Review* 30:2 (2013), 53-66

³² Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.91

The letters sent to Carpenter from Marie C. Stopes and Margaret Sanger are a platform for these relationships and are instrumental in the narrative of Carpenter's birth control advocacy. The way the letters were written, and their subsequent contents were useful in providing contemporary legitimisation of Carpenter's birth control advocacy.³³ These letters also give a platform to engage with the wider historiography and highlight the disparity between the birth control movement and Carpenter's inclusion. Marie Stopes, the British birth control pioneer, is mentioned a few times in Carpenter's historiography, such as in his biography by Rowbotham.³⁴ However, as Carpenter's role regarding birth control has hardly been explored, neither has his relationship with the birth control pioneer. By exploring the letter Stopes wrote to Carpenter and the surrounding historiography, Carpenter's influence on Stopes and his birth control advocacy will become clear.³⁵ This advocacy is made clearer with Carpenter's relationship with Sanger, as will be explored through her letters and Carpenter's inclusion in her magazine, the *Birth Control Review*. By analysing the letters after Carpenter's early writings, a timeline can be created, and Carpenter's influence and development of ideology can be seen clearly. Rather than starting at the end and working backwards and creating a confirmation bias, working chronologically allows the narrative to be viewed through its natural progression and the contemporary view of Carpenter's advocacy shine through. Here, Carpenter's interactions with birth control campaigners show that he was viewed as more than an insignificant character. Not only does this chapter further cement Carpenter as a feminist, but it also legitimises and emphasises Carpenter's interest and involvement in the birth control movement. It also sets the stage and the motivation for the final chapter on Carpenter's unpublished manuscript.

The unpublished manuscript titled 'Birth Control and Bisexuality' is the sole focus of the third chapter. In the historiography, the manuscript has received very little attention and, as a result, highlights the gap in the historiography.³⁶ The only reference to the unpublished manuscript Carpenter wrote at the end of his life is referenced in Rowbotham's biography.³⁷ This work was an unprompted piece regarding birth control and provides a sense of culmination of ideology. In its handwritten form, it is likely an early draft, but by its references, it was clear it had been thought through and planned.³⁸ In true Carpenter fashion, the manuscript transcends boundaries and retains his socialist and feminist stance.³⁹ The manuscript not only shows the progression of Carpenter's birth control ideology, but also a commentary on societal changes. It echoes his earlier work whilst providing a later commentary on society and birth control. The manuscript covered both topics but also clarified Carpenter's views.⁴⁰ As an amalgamation of his previous implicit and explicit

³³ 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA' Sheffield Archives Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29

³⁴ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.3, 384 & 406

³⁵ 'Letter from Marie Stopes, Leatherhead, Surrey' *Sheffield Archives*, Carpenter/Mss/386/428

³⁶ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.434

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.434

³⁸ Sheffield, Sheffield Archives (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', Carpenter/Mss/248, p.1

³⁹ *Ibid*, p.1

advocacy and relationships seen in the previous chapters, the manuscript provides insight into his ideology. It is evident through the previous chapters that Carpenter's ideology had grown and developed, and the manuscript is the culmination of this growth. Not only does this manuscript provide this progression, but it also makes Carpenter's advocacy for birth control paramount. Therefore, understanding and analysing this unpublished work gives further insight into Carpenter's advocacy and, through the previous chapters, shows it as a culmination of ideology and an explicit, unprompted piece regarding birth control. As a result, Carpenter's ideology is not only solidified but also highlights birth control as an important cause for him.

As stated earlier, the historiography of Carpenter has a dearth regarding his influence on birth control. This may be attributed to a tendency to do Carpenter 'in bits' according to Rowbotham and Twells.⁴⁰ And is largely due to Carpenter's refusal to acknowledge any boundaries between areas of knowledge.⁴¹ They all intertwined with one another, sex reform, socialism, domestic labour and many others. Carpenter was involved in so many ventures and movements in his life that it is necessary to cover certain aspects 'in bits' in order to fully understand and analyse them in depth.⁴² And since Carpenter's involvement in the birth control movement has received such little attention, an in-depth analysis of it is required to add it to the wider historiography surrounding Carpenter.

Rowbotham's 2008 biography of Edward Carpenter is excellent in understanding the breadth of his life and ventures. She covers a plethora of Carpenter's ventures, and through two of her articles on Carpenter, his ideologies are discussed, for example, his socialist ventures.⁴³ Rowbotham's 1977 article 'In Search of Carpenter' provides a beginning to her research regarding Carpenter, but also an overview of Carpenter's involvement in various movements, and her 2009 article follows in a similar fashion.⁴⁴ Whilst her biography of Carpenter is extensive, the task of encompassing every aspect of Carpenter's life and ventures is a difficult one, and, unsurprisingly, not every venture received equal attention. This is made clear with his birth control advocacy slipping through the cracks. Another historian who provides a comprehensive foundation for Carpenter is Twells. Her work aids in understanding the historiography and also Carpenter's sex reform interests.⁴⁵ Her latest work on Carpenter focuses on both his sexuality and Sheffield's wider LGBTQ+ history, but his pamphlets are also included due to their impact on wider discussions on sexuality. These two have been key in providing the foundations regarding Carpenter. Both provide not

⁴⁰ Alison Twells, "Eros the Great Leveller", p.1

⁴¹ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.6

⁴² Alison Twells, "Eros the Great Leveller", p.1

⁴³ Alison Twells, 'Iron Dukes and Naked Races', p.54

⁴⁴ Sheila Rowbotham, 'In Search of Carpenter', 121-133; Sheila Rowbotham, 'Edward Carpenter 1844-1929' *Key Words: A Journal of Cultural Materialism*, No. 7 (2009), 8-19

⁴⁵ Alison Twells, 'Iron Dukes and Naked Races', p.47

Other historians, such as Gray, provide an in-depth image of Carpenter, in Gray's case, Carpenter's relationship with Olive Schreiner.⁴⁶ Carpenter's relationship with the South African writer and feminist had hardly been explored before Gray, and yet Carpenter was a 'far warmer friend' to Schreiner than Havelock Ellis.⁴⁷ Gray's excellent work highlights the mutual influence between the two intellects and how this influence can then be applied to Carpenter's advocacy. Furthermore, Bongiorno's work highlights the transnationalism of birth control and provides context and analysis for the second chapter and where Carpenter fits regarding sex reform and birth control in a global setting.⁴⁸ Conversely, the historian Rose's biography of Marie Stopes is used regarding the relationship between the two. Her work on Stopes mentions Carpenter but highlights the reductive nature surrounding Carpenter's legacy.⁴⁹ Even with its publication in 1992, the categorisation and dismissal of Carpenter highlights this long-lasting negative image of him and the dismissal of his contribution to the birth control movement and juxtaposed against the letters, this reductive nature is evident.

Recent works by Rutherford, Cleghorn and Lister provide a wider context for Carpenter's life and what was occurring contextually. Cleghorn and Lister both provide a global context for birth control, highlighting the strides made and providing further context throughout the chapters.⁵⁰ Cleghorn is instrumental regarding Carpenter's relationships with context surrounding the two birth control pioneers, whilst Lister provides context to Carpenter's Platonian writing in the manuscript.⁵¹ Rutherford, conversely, is dominant in the second chapter regarding Stopes. His commentary on Stopes contrasts with Carpenter's beliefs and highlights the disparity in the relationship.⁵² Against Carpenter's established socialist ideology, a dialogue between birth control advocacy begins to form, and a clear comparison can be made between Stopes and Carpenter, which is highlighted through Rowbotham, Twells and Rutherford.

By analysing Carpenter's writing against the historiography, his advocacy and influence can be explored and understood. In turn, it will bring him to the forefront as an influence in the birth control movement and an early advocate for the movement. Although he remained spiritual in his writing, his advocacy is clear and will be explored in this work.

⁴⁶ Stephen Gray, 'Two Dissident Dream-Walkers', pp.53-66

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.55

⁴⁸ Frank Bongiorno, *The Sex Lives of Australians: A History*, (Collingwood; Black Inc, 2015) p.145

⁴⁹ June Rose, *Marie Stopes* p.93

⁵⁰ Kate Lister, *A Curious History of Sex* (London: Unbound Publishing, 2021) p.294

⁵¹ Elinor Cleghorn, *Unwell Women: A Journey through Medicine and Myth in a Man-Made World*, (London; Orion Publishing Group, 2021); Kate Lister, *A Curious History of Sex* p.256

⁵² Elinor Cleghorn, *Unwell Women* p.208; Adam Rutherford, *Control: The Dark History and Troubling Present of Eugenics* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 2022), p.19

As previously stated, Edward Carpenter's ventures and advocacy had no boundaries, and this work aims to begin to understand Carpenter's influence in the early birth control movement.⁵³ This narrative will highlight the progression of Carpenter's ideology but also his influence within the birth control movement, intentional or otherwise. What is clear is that the manuscript was not a standalone piece of writing by Carpenter but rather a culmination of a developing ideology. Carpenter had already opened discussion surrounding sexuality and, subsequently, birth control and had also in some ways influenced birth control campaigners long before the writing of the manuscript. Not only will the manuscript be analysed, but his work from the birth control lens combined with his relationships, a larger picture of Carpenter's birth control advocacy can begin to form. The gap in the historiography can start to be filled, but also Carpenter's role as an early advocate for birth control will be uncovered. Carpenter's early writing was full of implicit advocacy and these breadcrumbs show that the manuscript was not an outlier but rather further evidence of his advocacy. Carpenter was on the sidelines of the birth control movement, but by no means a silent member. Through his early work and his later explicit advocacy it is clear the movement was of significance importance to the reformer.

⁵³ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, p.6

Early Birth Control Advocacy Hidden in 'In a Free Society' and Other Works

To understand the manuscript written in the late 1920s, Carpenter's previous works and how it relates to birth control needs to be assessed. Throughout Carpenter's earlier work, birth control appears implicitly. Similarly to his unpublished manuscript, Carpenter's work from a birth control perspective has not yet been explored. The focus on Carpenter's same-sex activism and socialism is the most popular in the historiography, with current scholars focusing on the transnational dimensions of his same-sex writings.⁵⁴ Therefore, in order to understand the manuscript fully, an analysis of his previous works through a birth control lens will provide a solid foundation for the understanding of Carpenter's ideology when it came to the manuscript. Within his early work, Carpenter's ideology is seen developing. This can be seen as early as the 1890s. Several of Carpenter's pamphlets, along with later works, need analysis in order to provide this foundation. Through this examination, it will be made clear that Carpenter was an advocate for birth control long before his relationships with Stopes and Sanger and the creation of his manuscript.

In 1894, Carpenter published four pamphlets with the Manchester Labour Press Society, three for general circulation and one for private. Since Oscar Wilde's trial was looming at the same time as the pamphlets' publications, Carpenter's publisher had pulled out of the publication of these works.⁵⁵ *Homogenic Love and its Place in a Free Society* was already contentious due to its advocacy for same-sex relationships, but with Wilde on trial for his homosexuality and 'gross indecency', *Homogenic Love* bordered on dangerous and was therefore only available for private circulation.⁵⁶ The three that went into general circulation will be analysed as they are filled with references to birth control. In addition to the context of Oscar Wilde's trial, it should also be noted that during this time, explicit advocacy for birth control could lead to prosecution.⁵⁷ Therefore, Carpenter had to remain implicit with his advocacy at this time, particularly as *Homogenic Love* was in circulation, even if in private. All the pamphlets' titles included the phrase 'in a free society', denoting his hopes for the future. The pamphlets were split into two halves; the first was on Carpenter's current views of society, its failings and injustices, and the second was on his ideas and hopes for the future. These injustices focused on women, sex and marriage, and as Twells argues, these pamphlets aimed not only to normalise but to spark new public discussion.⁵⁸ Carpenter's socialism can be seen at face value in

⁵⁴ Alison Twells, 'Eros the Great Leveller' p.1

⁵⁵ Vincent Geoghegan, 'Edward Carpenter's England Revisited' *History of Political Thought* 24:3 (2003) 509-527 p.515

⁵⁶ Alison Twells, 'Eros the Great Leveller' p.14; 'Oscar Wilde Trial' *History.com* [history.com/topics/gay-rights/oscar-wilde-trial](https://www.history.com/topics/gay-rights/oscar-wilde-trial) (06.12.2019) [accessed: 05.04.2023]

⁵⁷ Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden From History: 300 years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against it* (London; Pluto Press, 1977) 3rd Edn p.75

⁵⁸ Alison Twells, 'Iron Dukes and Naked Races' p.57

these texts, along with his advocacy for women's rights and marriage reform. However, his advocacy for birth control can also be seen between the lines. All of these need greater analysis to understand the foundations made for the manuscript.

Following on from this, further works by Carpenter highlight his advocacy for birth control long before the manuscript and his relationships with birth control pioneers; works such as *Love's Coming of Age* (1896) and *The Intermediate Sex* (1908). The pieces further build on the narrative of Carpenter's contraceptive ideology, creating a timeline of its development alongside societal norms. As they are later than the pamphlets, they show the progression of Carpenter's ideology, but also its cementation. Combined with this, as will be seen, Carpenter was more transparent in his advocacy for birth control.⁵⁹ By shifting away from the spiritual dimension of *the Intermediate Sex* and the controversy of the 'woman question' in *Love's Coming of Age*, a narrative surrounding birth control becomes clear.⁶⁰ Carpenter was advocating for birth control, as part of women's rights at least.

Woman and her Place in a Free Society

“Turned Woman more and more – especially of course among the possessing classes- into an emblem of possession – a mere doll, an empty idol, a brag of man’s exclusive right in the sex”⁶¹

One of Carpenter's four pamphlets published in 1894, was *Woman and her Place in a Free Society*. This was explicit support of women's rights, not just in the political sphere but also in the private. As seen from the above quotation, not only does Carpenter's socialist ideology seep in, but his advocacy for women's rights. From Carpenter's own experiences, namely his sisters and mother, women were viewed more as a possession, a doll, than humans.⁶² The above quotation shapes the whole pamphlet. The private sphere, which women were typically resigned to, is central to the work as it is in the quotation. But it also marks the perceived decline, rather than improvement, in women's lives during an era of invention and production.⁶³ Carpenter's suggestion here is that although, as a whole, the nation was improving and progressing, women were being left behind and, as a result, appeared to be declining in their status. By this point, the *Third Reform Act* (1884) gave two million more men the power to vote.⁶⁴ Although this was not universal suffrage

⁵⁹ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age: A Series of Papers on The Relation of the Sexes* (London: George Allen and Company Ltd, 1913) p.150

⁶⁰ Vincent, Geoghegan, 'Edward Carpenter's England Revisited' p.515; Brian Anderson, *Edward Carpenter* p.xiii

⁶¹ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and Her Place in a Free Society* (Manchester: Manchester Labour Press Society limited, 1894), p.13

⁶² Sheila Rowbotham and Jeffrey Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life: The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis* (London; Pluto Press, 1977) p.28

⁶³ Edward Carpenter, *Woman: and Her Place in a Free Society* p.1

⁶⁴ Elena Rossi, 'Universal Manhood Suffrage' *National Archives Online* (12.4.2018)
<https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/universal-manhood-suffrage/> [accessed: 28.11.22]

for men, it was the second to last step. This came two years after the *Married Women's Property Act* (1882), which finally allowed women to keep control of any property owned before marriage. This was a small step towards making women an individual and not an accessory to their husbands.⁶⁵ Carpenter even references this in the pamphlet, referring to it as centuries of 'property marriage', not only linking women to property but also to marriage as transactional.⁶⁶ As seen from these two years, however, there is a clear difference between women's and men's rights in Britain. More men are being given the right to vote, whilst women lagged behind, only just being allowed their own property and not it becoming owned by their husbands. This disparity is one which Carpenter attempts to highlight in this work, and his argument of women being a possession held merit. Carpenter's argument that women were still possessions was a sentiment shared with Olive Schreiner.⁶⁷ Carpenter references the author, using her allegory from *Three Dreams in a Desert* (1887), where Schreiner argued that men and women were bound together, and one could not advance without the other.⁶⁸ Here, Carpenter may have been drawing a connection between his earlier statement that women were being left behind by society in this new age and a possible resulting stagnation of society as a consequence. This was not just, however, due to political restrictions, and Carpenter puts forward other arguments in the pamphlet. The argument, however, does show Carpenter's ideology and is a gateway to his views surrounding birth control.

In *Woman*, Carpenter argues against women's sole purpose being motherhood. Describing pregnancy and gestation as a 'burden' and 'the absorption of her life into the life of a child', Carpenter acknowledges and furthers this by stating that men cannot faintly imagine her willingness to die to ensure the child's safety.⁶⁹ His description of pregnancy is not littered with flowery positive imagery but rather a negative one, almost akin to referring to the child as a parasite. And his indication that the foetus absorbs the mother's life further supports this. Here, his feminist ideology extends beyond the political sphere and into the private. Rather than focusing on just female emancipation, Carpenter highlighted further discrepancies between the sexes. Carpenter did not believe in just emancipation and economic freedom for women, but also sexual.⁷⁰

He goes on to highlight that women being able to carry children is something which men would be unable to faintly imagine, showing a level of understanding of his limitations as a man and his advocacy for women.⁷¹ Within this, Carpenter's advocacy for birth control also shines through. The use of 'burden' suggests

⁶⁵ 'International Women's Day: Women's rights to own property' *Habito Hub* (1.6.22)

<https://www.habito.com/hub/article/international-womens-day-womens-rights-to-own-property> [Accessed: 28.11.22]

⁶⁶ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and Her Place in a Free Society* p.22

⁶⁷ Naomi Hetherington, 'Feminism, Freethought, and the Sexual Subject in Colonial New Woman Fiction: Olive Schreiner and Kathleen Mannington Caffyn' *Victorian Review*, 37:2 (2011), 47-59, p.49

⁶⁸ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and her place in a Free Society* p.17

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.24

⁷⁰ Sheila Rowbotham, 'In Search of Carpenter' p.127

⁷¹ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and her place in a Free Society* p.6

something unnecessary, and in terms of pregnancy, that not all women welcome it. As Brookes argues, excessive and uncontrolled fertility deepened working-class poverty.⁷² Combined with the use of 'burden', Carpenter is suggesting that not only is pregnancy a physical toll but also an economic one. In terms of the working class, birth control was a means to protect the body and the household economy; therefore, Carpenter was connecting the two as a method to improve working-class conditions.⁷³ Carpenter continues his campaign against motherhood and pregnancy by referring to it as a travesty.⁷⁴ These two combined suggest Carpenter's ideology and influences from strong feminists in his circle. As Rowbotham argues, Carpenter stereotypes feminists and the free woman as a Spartan Goddess.⁷⁵ This ideal was a far cry from reality. From 1861 to 1865, illegitimate birth rates were 63.6 in every 1000 in England, a high statistic supporting Carpenter's implications in *Woman*.⁷⁶ Birth control was clearly an issue; therefore, what Carpenter was engaging in during the 1890s, is reflected in his work. Alongside emancipation and economic freedom, birth control was a step towards sexual freedom for women. Pregnancy was not a positive experience shared by all, as Carpenter references in *Woman*, and his ideology of sexual freedom for women paves the way for his advocacy for birth control, as it was a tool to provide such freedoms.

Juxtaposed to Carpenter's argument of motherhood being a travesty, he continues in *Woman* by saying a woman's greatest function is motherhood. This alone appears to backtrack from his previous argument; however, he combines this with the need for a 'sane maternity for her future advance.'⁷⁷ This is a further attack on Victorian sexual codes along with implications on birth control.⁷⁸ Carpenter argues that perfect motherhood is necessary and the 'starting point for any new conception of the matter'.⁷⁹ Here, it could be suggested that Carpenter refers to a child being planned rather than pregnancy being a result of sex. The implication is that prospective parents should be ready to welcome a child rather than have the burden bestowed on them.

Carpenter also made transparent statements regarding women's bodies being superior to men but that these same bodies have been ruined by circumstance.⁸⁰ In this, Carpenter used contemporary science to state that women's vaso-motor system of nerves is superior to men's; however, with 'the poor', for example, is ruined due to excessive labour and unhealthy conditions.⁸¹ The combination leads to 'true motherhood' being

⁷² Stephen Brookes, 'Bodies, Sexuality and the Modernisation of the British working classes 1920s-1960s' *International Labour and Working-class History*, 69:1 (2006), 104-122, p.107

⁷³ Ibid, p.107

⁷⁴ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and Her Place in a Free Society* p.11

⁷⁵ Sheila Rowbotham, 'In Search of Carpenter', p.128

⁷⁶ Hera Cook, 'Unseemly and Unwomanly Behaviour: Comparing Women's Control of their Fertility in Australia from 1890 to 1970' *Journal of Population Research*, 17:2 (2000), 125-141, p.134

⁷⁷ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and her Place in a Free Society*, p.28

⁷⁸ Alison Twells, 'Eros the Great Leveller' p.13

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.28

⁸⁰ Ibid, p.8 & p.25

'unknown'.⁸¹ Carpenter argued that this was due to circumstances where 'excessive labour carried on under the most unhealthy conditions' and 'miserable social conditions' such as food and dwelling, led to this incompatibility with 'healthy maternity' regarding 'physical, mental and moral respects'.⁸² Women were unable to be the best possible mothers due to this. Carpenter was suggesting it is not one issue but a plethora. It is not only economic strife but also poor working conditions that cause an issue. However, this ruining by circumstance also links to birth control, as Carpenter made an argument against wifedom along with motherhood.

Throughout *Woman*, the theme of sex and possession is seen and is linked to the above analysis and birth control. In this theme, Carpenter consistently argued that women were a possession of men and men have the exclusive rights, which was a stance Carpenter disagreed with.⁸³ Carpenter's socialism appeared when he refers to the 'possessing' [upper] classes as treating women as a possession and a brag for men's exclusive right to sex'.⁸⁴ This is furthered by Carpenter referring to marriage as captivity and men ordering their wives' lives for the purpose of sex.⁸⁵ The socialist angle of Carpenter's words shows his disdain for the upper classes and the position of women in them. However, this also furthers the idea that his socialist views were not limited to economic and political standing. As Twells argued, democracy for Carpenter was not limited but rather a thing of heart, as shown in his poem *Towards Democracy*.⁸⁶ In terms of this pamphlet and birth control, it shows that sexual equality was as important as economic and political.

This is furthered by Carpenter's description of the 'drudge' and the 'prostitute'. Compared to the 'lady' who was sequestered as an idol, the 'drudge' had a life of 'abject slavery'.⁸⁷ Carpenter's description of the 'lady' can be viewed as being based on his sisters and mother, seeing the 'look of a prisoner' in his mother's eyes, meaning the 'lady' describes the life of a middle/upper-class woman.⁸⁸ Whereas the 'drudge' was an allegory for the working-class woman. In this, Carpenter recognised an endless monotonous cycle, or drudgery (hence the name 'drudge'), that working-class women faced every day and one which did not end like the man's wage-earning eight-hour day.⁸⁹ Unlike the 'lady', the 'drudge' has work which was always facing her, leaving her wearied and worried with a 'mind narrowed down', leaving her 'low spirited for want of change for society'.⁹⁰ And, much like with pregnancy, Carpenter argued that few men troubled

⁸¹ Ibid, p.25

⁸² Ibid, p.26

⁸³ Ibid, p.13

⁸⁴ Ibid, p.13

⁸⁵ Ibid, p.11

⁸⁶ Alison Twells, 'Eros the Great Leveller' p.6

⁸⁷ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age* pp.45-48

⁸⁸ Sheila Rowbotham and Jeffrey Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life*, p.28

⁸⁹ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age* p.46

⁹⁰ Ibid, pp.46-47

themselves to realise the work of the housewife.⁹¹ Considering the context of the actions of working-class women, such as spontaneous industrial action in the years prior (one example being the Matchgirl's Strike in 1888), Carpenter was attempting to begin a discourse not only regarding the unfair labour of women at work but also at work.⁹² However, it can also be suggested that due to Carpenter's separation from working-class women, his understanding of their lives, much like that of working-class men, is limited.⁹³ Carpenter is limited in his exploration of women in the workforce in this section, with much greater emphasis on the home, hence his use of housewife.⁹⁴ Although Carpenter does explore the home life for women in great detail, the added inequality of housework combined with wage-earning work would have cemented his argument and understanding. In Carpenter's writing of housework and drudgery, however, he included the need for the 'children to be kept in order' and 'a husband to be humoured', and this also begins to lend itself to the narrative of birth control for working-class women.⁹⁵ As seen earlier, Carpenter's argument of 'excessive labour...under the most unhealthy conditions' leading to 'true motherhood' being lost is essentially repeated, this time in terms of the 'drudge'.⁹⁶ In this, Carpenter highlighted how childcare was just one of many 'burdens' that women faced.⁹⁷

In terms of the 'prostitute', Carpenter argued that for women, the only livelihood they could earn was that of the surrender of their bodily sex, equal to that of a wage-earner selling his bodily labour.⁹⁸ From this alone, we can see the theme of sex and possession reappearing; this time, the 'prostitute' can be interpreted as an attempt to reclaim sexuality away from men having the exclusive rights to sex.⁹⁹ But as Carpenter states, women could surrender her bodily sex 'to one man for life, and have in return the respect of society and the caged existence of the lady or the drudge, or she could sell it night by night and be a "free woman", scorned of the world and portioned to die in the gutter.'¹⁰⁰ Essentially, it was either the life of the 'lady' or the 'drudge' and be respected by society, or be a version of free with no respect from society.¹⁰¹ This was by no means Carpenter arguing in defense of prostitution but rather as the only other alternative to a 'drudge' or 'lady', and an unappealing one in Carpenter's eyes at that.

Two years after the publication of this pamphlet, Havelock Ellis published the first volume of his well-known series, *The Psychology of Sex* (1896). Carpenter was a lifelong friend of Ellis and even contributed to

⁹¹ Ibid, p.46

⁹² Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden From History*, p.61

⁹³ Alison Twells, 'Eros the Great Leveller' p.13

⁹⁴ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age* p.46

⁹⁵ Ibid, pp.46-47

⁹⁶ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and her Place in a Free Society*. p.26

⁹⁷ Ibid, p.24

⁹⁸ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age*, p. 47

⁹⁹ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and her Place in a Free Society*, p.13

¹⁰⁰ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age*, p. 47

¹⁰¹ Vincent, Geoghegan, 'Edward Carpenter's England Revisited', p.514

the studies in Ellis's work.¹⁰² It comes as no surprise, therefore, that there was influence from Ellis in Carpenter's work and that he is even referenced in *Woman*. One reference is how Ellis described how men see women as a cross between an angel and an idiot.¹⁰³ The idea that women were viewed as pure ethereal fools highlights the imbalance in equality for women, both intellectually and sexually. The link between the emblem of an angel and the doll suggests this impossible image of women, but possession all the same. Carpenter again reinforced this notion of possessing by stating it gives the symbol that men have the exclusive right to sex.¹⁰⁴ This holds extra weight compared to Carpenter's earlier statement on how men would never be able to imagine pregnancy and the changes that occur.¹⁰⁵ In doing so, Carpenter also alluded to birth control. This parallel suggests that women's bodies are not their own but rather a possession of men and, by extension, their sex. It also highlights the lack of responsibility men had towards pregnancy. Men did not have to deal with the consequences of unprotected sex, in terms of pregnancy and abortions, for example. Therefore, for women to be on the same standing as men regarding sexuality, birth control would be a tool for this type of emancipation.

As seen from the pamphlet's title, Carpenter also highlighted his hopes for the future and how the growth of 'real equality' will cause mutual misapprehensions to disappear in favour of a happier and healthier relationship between the sexes.¹⁰⁶ This real equality did not just encompass the political, but also independence from men and large social changes which stretched beyond the sphere of women.¹⁰⁷ For example, in terms of the 'drudge', Carpenter argued that there should be a better division of domestic labour between men and women, but also through improved public institutions, for example, the cost and responsibilities of rearing children could be lessened.¹⁰⁸ Carpenter's Marxist ideology becomes obvious when he argued that women would only be equal to men through the communism of society.¹⁰⁹ This is where the public institutions would come into greater play, but also the shared responsibilities, along with simpler and healthier notions of food and furniture, which simultaneously reduce labour surrounding cooking and housework.¹¹⁰ A future like this was not based on lust, as Carpenter argued, but on open and mutual helpfulness and less of a differentiation between the sexes.¹¹¹ As for the 'prostitute', men would no longer dominate the matters of sex, and she would cease to exist as in a free society the free woman had won honour.¹¹²

¹⁰² Alison Twells, 'Eros the Great Leveller' p.5

¹⁰³ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and her Place in a Free Society*. p.11

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p.13

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p.6

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p.22

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p.24

¹⁰⁸ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age*, p.59

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.54

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.59

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p.57 & 60

This again was an attack on Victorian codes, for example, separate spheres, but also alludes to birth control.¹¹² Among calling for a new code of ideals and customs, Carpenter also argued that women should be able to 'dispose of herself and her sex freely, and not as a thrall must do.'¹¹³ The theme of sex and possession appears again in this argument as Carpenter advocated for women's sexual freedom. Women should no longer be enslaved based on their sexuality; therefore, this freedom would also encompass contraception. This can be seen when Carpenter included that through 'knowledge of the laws of health and physiology' along with other points such as 'economic independence', women can become equal to and comrades of men, taking up 'her own voluntary relation towards him'.¹¹⁴ The end of men's possession of women removes men's exclusive right to sex and, in turn, suggests sexual emancipation through birth control.¹¹⁵ Women should be able to do as they please, and this extended to their sexuality - no longer needing to conceal their sexual needs.¹¹⁶

Sex-love and its Place in a Free Society

Carpenter's argument in *Woman* that sexual needs should no longer be taboo is one he placed at the foreground of *Sex-Love* and one which was much later echoed by Marie Stopes. A key argument within the pamphlet was the damaging effect a lack of sexual education had on young people and that the failure to teach children leaves them picking up 'sacred information' from the 'mere gutter'.¹¹⁷ Considering his earlier argument in *Woman* for the improvement of public institutions, namely schools, it can already be suggested that Carpenter was linking the two together, however loosely.¹¹⁸ Carpenter expands on this by blaming society as a whole for this absence of knowledge, referring to 'our public opinions, our literature, our customs [and] our laws' being so saturated with the notion of the 'uncleanliness of sex' that it is not discussed.¹¹⁹ As a result, Carpenter refers to this absence of knowledge as a 'fetishisation' of sex, which was a contrast from other human natures.¹²⁰

Years after the pamphlet's publication, *Married Love* (1918) provided testimony of a young adult woman believing a kiss could cause pregnancy.¹²¹ This ignorance of sex and how pregnancy occurred over two

¹¹² Alison Twells, 'Eros the Great Leveller', p.12

¹¹³ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and her Place in a Free Society* p.24

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.26

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.13

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.27

¹¹⁷ Edward Carpenter, *Sex Love and its Place in a Free Society* (Manchester: Manchester Labour Press Society Limited, 1894) p.10

¹¹⁸ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age* p.59

¹¹⁹ Edward Carpenter, *Sex Love and its Place in a Free Society*, p.19

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p.3

¹²¹ Marie C. Stopes, *Married Love: A New Contribution to the Solution of Sex Difficulties* (London, 1925) 16th edn pp.30-31

decades after *Sex-Love*'s publication suggests that the absence of knowledge was a longstanding issue and information surrounding sex was taboo. It is clear that sexual education was not the norm, and resulted in unhealthy exploration, or as Carpenter argued, learnt from the 'lips of ignorance and vice'.¹²² Carpenter was blatantly stating, and predating Stopes, that the lack of sexual knowledge is detrimental to young people. In this, he is also arguing the naturalness of sex and how it should not be taboo, and in doing so, Carpenter is unravelling the social norms of the time. Weeks argues that sexual conservatism has become synonymous with the Victorian period, and from this pamphlet alone, Carpenter's assessment and distaste for this sexual conservatism can be seen.¹²³ One historian, Mason, goes as far as to suggest that this anti-sensual coalition against sexuality came about from remnants of the Enlightenment and evangelical ideology. The belief was that the powers of environmental conditions could overrule inner nature.¹²⁴ In other words, there was a belief in the period that the Victorians had reached a stage where innate behaviours, such as sexuality, were beneath them.

Carpenter juxtaposes this by suggesting the opposite is true. He also implies that this conservatism was resulting in fetishisation and ignorance.¹²⁵ Again, from a birth control perspective, it highlights a lack of knowledge of sex and pregnancy but also how the taboo nature has led to a lack of birth control and understanding. It may be implied here that this conservative view is not a true reflection of enlightened views but rather enlightened views having been made to fit evangelical doctrine.¹²⁶

Carpenter goes on, in *Sex-Love*, to describe sex as a physical allegory of love, and its 'prime purpose' is union.¹²⁷ At face value, this appears to be implicit advocacy for homosexuality, along the lines of *Homogenic Love*. However, it also suggests that sex is not for procreative purposes only, with Tsuzuki going as far as to suggest a subtle bias against procreation.¹²⁸ This is cemented by Carpenter adding that medical and similar authorities 'fix their attention too exclusively upon their childbearing function' when discussing sexual intercourse.¹²⁹ This stance by Carpenter leans towards implicit advocacy for birth control. The suggestion that sex is for union and not solely for procreation predates Stopes; however, this examination and appreciation is not reflected in the historiography. Here, again, Carpenter is going against Victorian sexual codes and explicitly stating that procreation is not the sole purpose of sex.¹³⁰ But rather,

¹²² Edward Carpenter, *Sex Love and its Place in a Free Society*, p.10

¹²³ Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulations of Sexuality Since 1800* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017) 4th Edn p.11

¹²⁴ Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) p.4

¹²⁵ Edward Carpenter, *Sex Love and its Place in a Free Society*, p.3

¹²⁶ Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality*, p.4

¹²⁷ Edward Carpenter, *Sex Love and its Place in a Free Society*, pp.22-23

¹²⁸ Edward Carpenter, *Sex Love and its Place in a Free Society*, pp.22-23; Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter* p.129

¹²⁹ Edward Carpenter, *Sex Love and its Place in a Free Society*, p.23

¹³⁰ Alison Twells, 'Eros: The Great Leveller', p.12

sex's primary goal is the union between two people. This shows implicit advocacy for birth control as Carpenter is making it clear that sex should be possible and is natural without the presumption that procreation is the goal. Instead, it is another way for people to connect and express love. Although considered shocking during the publication of his writing, his ideology and advocacy seeped through the turn of the century.¹³¹ Even with the implicit nature, Carpenter was advocating for birth control. Although not as focused as the writings of Marie Stopes and Margaret Sanger, it was nevertheless sparking public discussion and opening avenues for discussion around birth control in turn.

The argument of 'fixation on the childbearing function' in *Sex-Love*, shows a link between the pamphlet and Carpenter's *Woman* pamphlet. As previously stated, Carpenter alludes to women being the possession of men and that men hold exclusive rights to sex.¹³² By stating that there is a focus on a woman's childbearing function, Carpenter reinforces this idea that women were viewed as a possession for childbearing. Not only is Carpenter alluding to birth control in the case of a union between two people, but also in the case of women being more than a vessel for the next generation. Birth control would be the tool which would put women, in theory, on a similar standing as men and therefore, men would no longer hold the exclusive rights to sex.¹³³ Carpenter is showing that there is a systemic cycle of oppression occurring for women in society, and his implicit advocacy for birth control shows his belief it is one of the tools that would break the cycle.

Carpenter reinforces his stance later in the pamphlet when he describes the sentiment of love to be the highest expression of sex. He puts love as being a higher expression than procreation.¹³⁴ As Twells argues, this was a blatant disregard for the norm and opened a dialogue for further discussion regarding sex.¹³⁵ By placing the sentiment of love as the highest, Carpenter reinforces that sex is primarily about union, not procreation. Again, this lays down the foundations for birth control advocacy, as for the highest expression to be achieved, the fear of pregnancy will need to be eliminated. For this union to occur, the 'burden' of pregnancy needs to be removed from the equation; again, Carpenter's links between the pamphlets can be seen.

Sex Love, in the same fashion as the other '*In a Free Society*' pamphlets, highlights Carpenter's hopes for the future and how current wrongs will be corrected. The above ignorance and repression are things that Carpenter sees as obstacles for society to overcome. And in doing so, Carpenter implicitly advocates for birth control. Carpenter expresses his hope for young people to become prepared and educated in sexual

¹³¹ Sheila Rowbotham, 'In Search of Carpenter', p.126-127

¹³² Edward Carpenter, *Woman and her Place in a Free Society*, p.13

¹³³ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and her Place in a Free Society*, p.13

¹³⁴ Edward Carpenter, *Sex Love and its Place in a Free Society*, p.23

¹³⁵ Alison Twells, 'Iron Dukes and Naked Races' p.57

relations, and in turn, the state of 'forced celibacy' on women will be eradicated.¹³⁶ He was arguing the importance of sex education from childhood but also for teaching the dedication to the wellbeing of others.¹³⁷ In this, not only is he advocating for sexual education, as he goes on to explore in *Sex-Love*, but also he was advocating for birth control. Carpenter refers to many young women being in a state of forced celibacy and how he hopes it will be looked upon as a national wrong.¹³⁸ From a birth control perspective, this suggests Carpenter's advocacy. Through proper sexual education, young people would become aware of how pregnancy occurs and, therefore, how to prevent it. A comprehensive education rather than learning from ignorance would better prepare young people for sexual intimacy. Carpenter's argument of treating sex rationally shines through here, as he highlighted how to prevent what he perceives as national wrongs.¹³⁹ Birth control had begun to have been used by all Victorian classes by the 1860s; however, as seen from Carpenter's writing in the 1890s and Stopes' in the 1910s, it did not have a wide enough reach.

There is also a question of what birth control methods were being used.¹⁴⁰ A common form of pregnancy prevention was douching, which was the first form of birth control advocated by physicians.¹⁴¹ Education on birth control would, in theory, be a part of this sexual education, writing this national wrong. Again, by removing the fear of pregnancy and enforced celibacy, women could become sexually emancipated alongside men. This links back to *Woman*, as sexual needs would no longer need to be concealed, and in turn, sex would no longer be a taboo subject.¹⁴² And this would release the perceived embargo on sexual knowledge, including that on birth control.

Marriage in a Free Society

*'As it is the civilised girl is led to the 'alter' often in the uttermost ignorance and misunderstanding as to the nature of the sacrificial rites about to be consummated'*¹⁴³

The underlying birth control advocacy continued in his overtly feminist pamphlet *Marriage: In a Free Society* (1894), where Carpenter's language was filled with connotations and double meaning. Although one historian stated that *Marriage* was the dullest of all the pamphlets, due to its lack of real knowledge on the subject, it is still a fascinating piece littered with Carpenter's ideology.¹⁴⁴ In this, Carpenter's artistic and

¹³⁶ Edward Carpenter, *Sex Love and its Place in a Free Society*, p.5

¹³⁷ Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter* p.128

¹³⁸ Edward Carpenter, *Sex Love and its Place in a Free Society*, p.5

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p.5 & p.8

¹⁴⁰ Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* p.7

¹⁴¹ Kate Lister, *A Curious History of Sex* (London: Unbound Publishing, 2021) pp.256-257

¹⁴² Edward Carpenter, *Woman and her Place in a Free Society*, p.27

¹⁴³ Edward Carpenter, *Marriage: in a Free Society*, (Manchester: Manchester Labour Press Society Limited, 1894) p.10

¹⁴⁴ Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter*, p.131

poetic prose shines through and provides another literary layer. Carpenter used flowery imagery in the pamphlet but skewed it so that the imagery becomes negative, providing a thinly veiled commentary on marriage from Carpenter's perspective. It suggests that Carpenter was commenting on marriage appearing as an ideal until a closer look reveals its failings. This connotation-filled pamphlet not only cements Carpenter as a feminist but also furthers his previous arguments and advocacy for birth control.

The above quotation from *Marriage* highlights the connotations in Carpenter's pamphlet, along with links to his other works. In the quote, Carpenter is describing the marriage ceremony; however, as can be seen, he plays on the words but also highlights the ignorance as seen in *Sex-Love*. Carpenter refers to the woman about to take her vows in the ceremony as a 'girl'.¹⁴⁵ This may have been unintentional due to a myriad of misogynistic and societal norms, but it is more likely to be a reference to innocence. By referring to a woman as a girl, Carpenter highlights this innocence and naivety. This is reinforced by Carpenter stating that she is led to the 'altar' in the 'uttermost ignorance and misunderstanding'.¹⁴⁶ This, again, refers back to *Sex-Love*, as Carpenter argues that information on sex is learnt from the 'lips of ignorance'.¹⁴⁷ The parallel here highlights the lack of knowledge women had going into a marriage, to the point that they were unaware of the 'consummation' of marriage. By looking at Stopes' *Married Love*, this is clearly not a far cry from many experiences, such as the one discussed in *Sex-Love*.¹⁴⁸ This innocent ignorance towards sex extends to birth control due to the sheer lack of knowledge. It is not inaccurate to suggest that if they were unaware of the nature of the consummation, then the reality of conception would also be unknown.

Carpenter makes his connotation blatant with the word 'altar', using quotes to emphasise this. Here, the double meaning of alter can be seen, in the marital and sacrificial sense, which is evident later in the quote. The implication is that an altar is often a place where sacrifices occur. Carpenter also insinuates that marital vows are akin to sacrificial rites; therefore, marriage was a sacrifice for women which had been made in ignorance through a lack of education. This may link back to the *Property Act* and other laws, which left women at a severe disadvantage, where marriage for women also meant losing their property before the law was enacted.¹⁴⁹ However, it is more likely Carpenter is referring to the sexual sacrifices a woman must make for her husband. As seen from the previous pamphlets, such as in *Woman*, Carpenter cited the 'burden' women faced in pregnancy and gestation and the sacrifices made.¹⁵⁰ There was also the plight of the

¹⁴⁵ Edward Carpenter, *Marriage in a Free Society*, p.10

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.10

¹⁴⁷ Edward Carpenter, *Sex Love and Her Place in a Free Society*, p.10

¹⁴⁸ Marie C. Stopes, *Married Love*, pp.30-31

¹⁴⁹ 'International Women's Day: Women's rights to own property' *Habito Hub* (1.6.22)

<https://www.habito.com/hub/article/international-womens-day-womens-rights-to-own-property> [Accessed: 28.11.22]

¹⁵⁰ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and Her Place in a Free Society*, p.24

'drudge', where the woman's work was constant and included the raising and caring of children, another sacrifice women had to make over men.¹⁵¹

Through marriage being referred to as a sacrifice, the theme of possession again becomes apparent. Essentially, the woman is walking to the altar as a sacrifice to her future husband. The ideas put forward by Carpenter in *Woman* link heavily as it is akin to the transference of possession and the sacrificial rites for consummation are akin to men's exclusive right to sex.¹⁵² The innuendo of 'consummation' highlights the ceremony's completion and the perception of the marriage becoming official with sex between the couple. Since, for women, the subject of sex is a sealed book, according to Carpenter, this consummation is one she is likely oblivious to as she walks to the altar.¹⁵³ And therefore, the woman is a sacrifice but also the one sacrificing herself in other ways. Examples of this can be seen in both *Woman* and *Sex-Love*, with the transactional aspect of marriage.¹⁵⁴ For Carpenter, she is a sacrifice, as she does not have the same rights as men and is akin to a vessel. As for the woman, sacrifice relates to her virginity, body and items, as she becomes a possession of her husband.

Carpenter further explores this sacrifice for women and possession in the pamphlet. He argues that the disability of women during childbirth and rearing, along with strength differences, has resulted in what he refers to as the 'slavery of woman' and her subordination to man.¹⁵⁵ This narrow life and dependence had only improved recently, suggesting Carpenter was referring to changes such as the Property Act.¹⁵⁶ And it is clear from his writing that Carpenter saw that these changes were not enough. He refers to the relationship between husband and wife as that of an oak tree and ivy, as the ivy (woman) depends on the oak tree for survival, clinging to him as the 'frail and delicate female is supposed to cling round the sturdy husband's form' and yet in doing so is resulting in this death-struggle. And in this, either the oak tree perishes, or the ivy must be sacrificed.¹⁵⁷ This parasitic relationship, however, Carpenter makes clear, is the result of circumstance. The use of 'supposed' when referring to a wife clinging to her husband makes it clear that there was a societal expectation for this, as Carpenter views it. This devotion and sacrifice was a predicament he highlighted and bled into his other pamphlets.¹⁵⁸ In his parasitic allegory, women are described as an emblem of possession and in captivity, and Carpenter made it clear that it was understandable as it is the only possible way of survival. The tree can survive without the ivy; however, the

¹⁵¹ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age* pp.46-47

¹⁵² Edward Carpenter, *Woman and her Place in a Free Society*, p.13

¹⁵³ Edward Carpenter, *Marriage in a Free Society*, p.6

¹⁵⁴ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and her place in a Free Society*, p.22

¹⁵⁵ Edward Carpenter, *Marriage in a Free Society*, p.12

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.12

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.14

¹⁵⁸ Sheila Rowbotham, 'In Search of Carpenter', p.127

The disability women face due to childbirth and rearing links back to *Woman* as Carpenter reinforces that men will never be able to imagine the 'burden'.¹⁵⁹ By referring to this as a disability in *Marriage*, Carpenter was alluding again to birth control.¹⁶⁰ Pregnancy and child-rearing as a disability implies a disadvantage women face, particularly in marriage, as this is what the pamphlet focuses on. Not only were women subordinate to men, but pregnancy made them further dependent.¹⁶¹ Carpenter was implying that in order to retain autonomy, pregnancy prevention is required, which would be possible with birth control.

As seen in *Woman*, like Schreiner, Carpenter argued that men's and women's destinies were bound together but also that the ideal marriage was based on mutuality and freedom.¹⁶² And as can be seen from this pamphlet so far, Carpenter viewed contemporary marriage as far from this ideal. Schreiner was not the only international connection Carpenter, which is evident from his writings. For example, *A Visit to Ghani: From Adam's Peaks to Elephanta* (1892) was a homage to his trip to India and Ceylon.¹⁶³ This internationalism extends into the pamphlet, as Carpenter picks apart Western marriages and customs against the 'comparatively uncivilised'.¹⁶⁴ The transparent argument Carpenter makes here is against Western marriages, but also one against how the West sees different cultures. There is a clear implication that Carpenter was arguing that Western customs were the uncivilised ones.

In this, Carpenter compares Victorian society's customs and separation of the sexes to that of what is considered the 'uncivilised mass'.¹⁶⁵ Society kept the two sexes apart, causing one sex to hardly understand the other.¹⁶⁶ The Victorian ideology of separate spheres is made apparent in this passage of Carpenter's as he highlights how public opinion separates their rights and duties. In doing so, Carpenter highlights his disdain for these spheres.¹⁶⁷ Riddell argues that during this era, public discussions about sex had become a balancing act between moral panic and moral reform.¹⁶⁸ And this can be seen through Carpenter's commentary. The lack of knowledge provided to youths created this void, which made unsafe practices rife. Comparing this to the 'uncivilised mass', Carpenter argues that there is familiarity between the sexes before marriage, in which sex connections before marriage were not uncommon.¹⁶⁹ This contrast suggests an

¹⁵⁹ Edward Carpenter., *Woman and her Place in a Free Society* p.6; Edward Carpenter, *Marriage in a Free Society*, p.12

¹⁶⁰ Edward Carpenter, *Marriage in a Free Society*, p.12

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.12

¹⁶² Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* pp.216-227

¹⁶³ June Perry Levine, 'Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism by Tony Brown (Book Review),' *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920*, 34:4 (1991), 466-469, p.466

¹⁶⁴ Edward Carpenter, *Marriage in a Free Society*, p.11

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.6 & p.11

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.6

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.6

¹⁶⁸ Fern Riddell, *Sex Lessons from History* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2022) p.299

¹⁶⁹ Edward Carpenter, *Marriage in a Free Society* pp.11-12

implication for the Victorians being the uncivilised mass, as they are the ones who created the archaic customs and separation. Carpenter goes as far as to state that the opinions and separation have resulted in what he calls the 'special evils' of sex starvation, sex ignorance and pure licentiousness.¹⁷⁰ These special evils have been referred to repeatedly across the pamphlets, particularly in *Sex-Love*. In this instance, Carpenter suggested these created evils are uncivilised, bordering on barbaric. According to Carpenter, the created evils result from overfed ideals of masculinity and femininity but also can be seen as part of a vicious circle stemming from ideology.¹⁷¹ Carpenter attempted to highlight this Victorian hypocrisy in his writing against sexual constraints due to conservatism.¹⁷²

In terms of the birth control narrative, Carpenter never implies that these sex connections result in pregnancy in the so-called 'uncivilised mass of people'.¹⁷³ The omission of this is a telling sign. Carpenter's focus on the familiarity suggests a more harmonious societal structure, one which Carpenter sees as an ideal. This is reinforced when Carpenter cites the 'initiation' ceremonies that 'almost any tribe of savages' have, which made any misapprehensions of womanhood or manhood impossible.¹⁷⁴ In comparison, in his culture, Carpenter refers to the subject of sex and the information surrounding it as a sealed book.¹⁷⁵ Carpenter's language and referral to different cultures may have been the social norm at the time, but in this connotation-filled pamphlet likely serves as a tool to further emphasise the failings of the so-called civilised Western culture. The juxtaposition of the two cultures further highlights Carpenter's argument of Victorian social culture being uncivilised, as well as this void of information in his so-called civilised culture. These initiations into womanhood and manhood, which Carpenter argues make misapprehensions impossible, also suggest a high level of sexual education. For a perceived barbaric culture to receive better sex education than the civilised Victorians, birth control can be a part of this education. Although by no means to the extent of modern birth control methods, pregnancy prevention can be seen throughout history, long before the Victorian period.

An example can be seen with condoms made from animal guts, such as sheep, long before the latex condom was introduced in 1920.¹⁷⁶ This is just one indication of birth control being used throughout history; therefore, through these innovative methods, it would be likely that a form of contraception was known and taught by these 'savages'.¹⁷⁷ Therefore, it can be suggested that Carpenter drew the comparison between

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p.11

¹⁷¹ Edward Carpenter, *Marriage in a Free Society* p.11

¹⁷² Sheila Rowbotham, 'Edward Carpenter 1844–1929', pp.10-11

¹⁷³ Edward Carpenter, *Marriage in a Free Society* p.11

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, p.10

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p.6

¹⁷⁶ Kate Lister, *A Curious History of Sex* p.272

¹⁷⁷ Edward Carpenter, *Marriage in a Free Society*, p.10

the so-called civilised Victorians and the 'uncivilised' 'savages'.¹⁷⁸ Although Carpenter was undoubtedly unaware of all historical birth control methods, it is not a reach to suggest that during his travels, he came across some examples. These examples are what he was alluding to in the pamphlet. These examples juxtaposed the 'civilised' Victorians, as birth control in rudimentary form was used in other cultures but was not significantly circulated. Although Riddell argues that contraception information was circulated before the twentieth century in both oral and written form, there was still a high level of stifling.¹⁷⁹ If Carpenter's account in *Sex-Love* alone is anything to go by, the control of sexual lives in the Victorian era significantly impacted ignorance. This further links to Carpenter's referral to knowledge as a sealed book; although the information exists, it is locked away.¹⁸⁰

Love's Coming of Age

Two years after the pamphlets, Carpenter first published *Love's Coming of Age* (1896). This work continued to have editions released well into the early 1900s. In 1913, yet another edition was published, which is the edition in focus due to the plea for freer homosexual love inclusion after 1906 but also the more transparent advocacy for birth control.¹⁸¹ This was an amalgamation of several of his works, including the previously discussed pamphlets. However, there were new works in *Love's Coming of Age*, including 'The Free Society', 'Some Remarks on the Early Star and Sex Worship' and various notes.¹⁸² These works are the ones to be analysed as they clearly share the same rhetoric. The numerous editions of the work highlight its popularity and relevance throughout the changing landscape past the turn of the century. It should also be noted that explicit advocacy for contraception was less taboo than when Carpenter first wrote his pamphlets, although *Love's Coming of Age* was still considered daring, almost obscene when first published.¹⁸³

In this paper, along with the inclusion of *Woman*, Carpenter furthered a pro-women stance and descriptions of sex.¹⁸⁴ He also alluded again to birth control and outlined objections made by both sexes. For men, it is 'producing superfluous individuals only to kill them off again in a struggle for existence', which links to many issues Carpenter was enamoured with, such as anti-war and social issues such as housing and starvation.¹⁸⁵ As previously seen in *Woman*, unnecessary and uncontrolled fertility deepened working-class poverty, and Carpenter highlighted this in his use of burden.¹⁸⁶ This is seen again here, and Carpenter was

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, pp.10-11

¹⁷⁹ Fern Riddell, *Sex Lessons from History* p.237

¹⁸⁰ Edward Carpenter., *Marriage in a Free Society* p.6

¹⁸¹ Sheila Rowbotham, 'In Search of Carpenter' p.127

¹⁸² Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age*, p. Contents page

¹⁸³ Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden From History* p.91

¹⁸⁴ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age*, p.37 & p.62

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p.150

¹⁸⁶ Stephen Brookes, 'Bodies, Sexuality and the Modernisation of the British Working Classes 1920s-1960s' p.107; Edward Carpenter, *Woman and her place in a Free Society* p.24

providing a male perspective to the issue, along with the female. In the same argument, he cites women's objection to 'being a mere machine for perpetual reproduction'.¹⁸⁷ This addition furthers Carpenter's pro-contraception stance. The idea that women were still viewed as machines for baby production is one Carpenter highlighted and also showed his opposition to. In doing so, Carpenter is outlining his stance on birth control.

This stance on birth control is made clear in the next paragraph of the text, in which Carpenter argued for the 'the adoption of some kind of artificial preventatives to conception'.¹⁸⁸ The need for birth control was made explicit here, and Carpenter's pro-birth control stance was clear. Carpenter's birth control advocacy and socialism are tied together, as he argued for the prevention of conception to prevent a struggle for existence.¹⁸⁹ His advocacy for women's rights is also clear here, as it was a commentary on society's view of women as machines.¹⁹⁰ By Carpenter making his views on birth control explicit, not only was he laying the foundations for the future birth control pioneers, but it also legitimises the notion of his implicit advocacy.

Following this, Carpenter argued that the only common way this is prevented is through total abstinence, which he argues was an unsatisfactory artificial check.¹⁹¹ This was clearly an advocacy for contraception. His argument that abstinence from sex is an unsatisfactory method of birth control is not unfounded and had been a point previously made in *Sex-Love*. Clearly, Carpenter had seen little change in society as the 'national wrong' was still occurring.¹⁹² Furthermore, Carpenter reinforces this connection between this paper and previous pamphlets in his description of the 'overhanging dread of undesired childbirth'.¹⁹³ Not only does this link to *Sex-Love* but also to Carpenter's argument of pregnancy as a 'burden' seen in *Woman*.¹⁹⁴ The recurrence in Carpenter's work cements his ideology across time and his commentary on society's failures. His referral to this as oppression further highlights his view of societal failings.¹⁹⁵ Since Carpenter had made the same argument in the 'in a free society' pamphlets, it can be deduced that Carpenter believed no significant change had occurred. But also, since it was a later addition, it also highlights public opinion by its lasting relevance. This also links back to the illegitimacy levels of children seen earlier in this chapter, but also Cook's argument that there was a decline in sexual activity rather than an increase in birth control use. Simply, the shift towards birth control had not yet occurred and had remained a sealed book in

¹⁸⁷ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age* p.150

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.150

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid* p.150

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p.150

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.150

¹⁹² Edward Carpenter, *Sex-Love and its Place in a Free Society* p.5

¹⁹³ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age* p.152

¹⁹⁴ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and her Place in a Free Society* p.6

¹⁹⁵ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age* p.152

Marriage is also scrutinised in this passage as he refers to how future marriages will be liberated into the 'free and pleasurable exercise of a human and intelligent relationship'.¹⁹⁶ This directly follows on from and reinforces Carpenter's stance in *Marriage*. Here, Carpenter clarified that contemporary marriage was inherently flawed and a wrong which needed to be righted. His idea of the future marriage was one of mutual compatibility and an enlightened relationship rather than the current squalid perversity he saw.¹⁹⁷ This future marriage based on compatibility and intelligence would also be one where undesired childbirth no longer existed. By Carpenter linking these two possibilities together, he is highlighting the issue the lack of birth control currently has on society. Although not explicit, Carpenter was clearly making an argument for contraception.

This argument becomes clearer when Carpenter later states that a solution for marriage and population will be found in time.¹⁹⁸ Not only are marriage and contraception further tied together in this argument, but Carpenter's allusion to birth control is also made transparent. A solution to the population was also a solution to undesired childbirth, which makes the suggestion of contraception clear. This solution, however, as Carpenter makes clear, was something which did not exist yet. Although forms of contraception existed, and Carpenter was likely aware of them, it was still in his infancy in comparison to the modern day. For example, the modern latex condom was only invented in the 1920s, a move away from animal intestines, and therefore, birth control was still limited in its form.¹⁹⁹ Carpenter was looking to the future for solutions to contemporary issues.

The Intermediate Sex

Carpenter's admiration and advocacy for women can be further seen in *The Immediate Sex* (1908). Here, Carpenter solidifies his ideology whilst the ideology for his birth control narrative develops. Written over ten years after the *In a Free Society* pamphlets, Carpenter's arguments remained largely the same. Within this, however, Carpenter expressed a shift he had noticed. He stated that the relations between men and women had recently shifted, explicitly highlighting the 'arrival of the new woman' in this statement.²⁰⁰ As Rowbotham argues, Carpenter's tribute to the new woman of the 1890s was positive, as they were refusing the gendered spheres Carpenter 'believed crippled his sister'.²⁰¹ This praise of the 'new woman' coincided with the increasing suffrage effort and was originally written just before the formation of the NUWSS. And

¹⁹⁶ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age* p.152

¹⁹⁷ Edward Carpenter. *Marriage and its Place in a Free Society* p.4

¹⁹⁸ Edward. Carpenter., *Love's Coming of Age* p.174

¹⁹⁹ Kate Lister, *A Curious History of Sex* p.294

²⁰⁰ Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (New York/London: Mitchell Kennerley, 1912) p.16

²⁰¹ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, p.213

This shift begins to become further apparent with Carpenter's continued appraisal. Women were starting to demand that marriage should mean friendship as well as passion, a comrade-like equality.²⁰² The socialist wording of comrade suggests that marriage should be two people working together in harmony, whilst the passion furthers this sense of love and sexual equality. Compared to Carpenter's ivy imagery in *Marriage*, this demand is a stark contrast.²⁰³ Another echo from Carpenter's earlier work can be seen in his imagery of an unequal marriage. Love, depicted as a bird 'with unequal wings, has fallen lamed to the ground', doomed to fail due to inequality.²⁰⁴ This move from marriage being about survival for women to their demand for equality further highlights a shift in perspective and progress. Women were demanding equality, and in terms of the symbolism, trying to keep the bird flying. Carpenter reinforces this in *The Intermediate Sex* by questioning how society would shape itself if it were free and what form marriage and love would take.²⁰⁵ This new version of marriage can be seen as part of Carpenter's ideal of marriage. In his eyes, the ideal marriage is one where both lovers understand the 'complexion of the other's mind, the wants, bodily and mental, the needs, the regrets, the satisfactions of the other' and, in doing so, makes the relationship infeasible.²⁰⁶ The comparison of this marriage to the parasitic one is stark. And an ideal marriage is what Carpenter had begun to see being demanded by women.

Regarding birth control, Carpenter's ideology seeps into the text when he argues that this free marriage is one he hopes will result in prostitution ending, much like his rhetoric in *Woman*.²⁰⁷ The freedom of marriage being the cause of prostitution's disappearance links to *Sex-love* and *Woman*. Carpenter's hope for forced celibacy to be seen in the future as a national wrong was something he saw almost as grievous as prostitution.²⁰⁸ This argument that equal marriage may lead to something Carpenter saw as grievous and akin to forced celibacy. The links here suggest that Carpenter saw the ideal marriage as linked to contraception. The disappearance of forced celibacy and prostitution due to free marriage suggests an intervention which makes it possible. The intervention possibly was birth control. Carpenter's ideal marriage did not include offspring, possibly to include same-sex marriage; however, based on his previous statements, it can be surmised that he was also referring to marriages, like sex, not being about procreation but rather the union.

²⁰² Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex* p.18

²⁰³ Edward Carpenter, *Marriage and its Place in a Free Society*, p.14

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p.17

²⁰⁵ Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex* p.115

²⁰⁶ Edward Carpenter, *Marriage and its Place in a Free Society*, p.28

²⁰⁷ Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex* p.118

²⁰⁸ Edward. Carpenter, *Sex-Love and its Place in a Free Society*, p.5

Carpenter was an advocate for a vast number of causes; no less was his advocacy for birth control. This advocacy, however, has largely been ignored as the focus has been on his other ventures. It can be seen that Carpenter's advocacy had its foundations long before his relationships with birth control pioneers. This advocacy appears to have been overshadowed by his other campaigns, or at best, a sidenote in his pro-women and sexuality stance.

His 1894 pamphlets were clearly aimed to spark discussion on sexuality, as Twells argues, but also embedded in the text were signs of Carpenter's advocacy for contraception.²⁰⁹ The language Carpenter used in these pamphlets highlights this implicit advocacy; pregnancy as a burden or travesty helps create this narrative of Carpenter's ideology.²¹⁰ His critique of Victorian sexuality and educational failings, combined with this language, further this progressive stance and was one that he was calling to be discussed. Later works show the evolution and cementation of his ideology, along with the notation of societal changes.²¹¹ These societal changes can be seen with the arrival of the 'new woman' and their demand for equality.²¹² This foundation of ideology helped shape his relationships and, in turn, will aid in understanding his manuscript.

These texts pre-date his relationships with Stopes and Sanger, making it clear that his advocacy pre-existed also. His early advocacy provided upcoming birth control pioneers with the foundation for their movement and is what led to his relationships with them. Carpenter's pre-existing stance not only explains the motivation behind the formation of these relationships but also his motivations for the later manuscript. His arguments in his early work shaped and inspired, and this foundation will be discussed with his relationships with birth control pioneers.

²⁰⁹ Alison Twells, 'Iron Dukes and Naked Races', p.57

²¹⁰ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and her place in a Free Society* p.24 & p.11

²¹¹ Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex* p.115

²¹² Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, p.213

Edward Carpenter and Relationships with 'New Women'

The connections and relationships Carpenter made were vast, much like his ventures. From socialist figures to sexologists like Havelock Ellis, Carpenter held well-established intellectual relationships. And these relationships extended across the globe. These transnational relationships can be seen throughout Carpenter's life and extended to people like South African Olive Schreiner and American Margaret Sanger. As to refer to Rowbotham, Carpenter's Millthorpe home as a haven for the 'politically correct' extended to international friends.²¹³ For example, Schreiner stayed with Carpenter in 1886 and later rented a property nearby.²¹⁴ Carpenter surrounded himself with feminists, socialists and similar; it is no surprise that they influenced one another. This was no different when it came to birth control. His works, such as *In a Free Society* (1894) and *Love's Coming of Age* (1896), sparked interest in Carpenter from birth control advocates. Carpenter had begun to lay the foundations for the birth control debate and, in turn, became a confidante for pioneers.

Carpenter's relationship with Schreiner is one which has had limited exploration. And yet one which was influential enough to be considered to be one of the intellectual strands which combined in his person, according to Rowbotham.²¹⁵ It can be surmised that Schreiner influenced Carpenter and, in turn, his writing. The combination of the changing attitudes towards personal pleasure and the new female role provided the context for sex-positivity and the emergence of the contraceptive movement.²¹⁶ Birth control, particularly in its infancy with Marie Stopes and Margaret Sanger. The two women were pioneers in their respective countries and had relationships with Carpenter. His work on women's sexuality piqued their interest and, in turn, led to mutually beneficial relationships. These relationships are ones which will also be explored in this chapter.

Through exploration of Carpenter's relationship with Schreiner, his work can be further analysed and understood, providing a foundation for Carpenter's later relationships. By understanding Stopes and Sanger as individuals, their motivation for their relationships with Carpenter could be understood. Through letters between the women and Carpenter, light can be shed on their relationships and any influence and aid Carpenter had on their work and lives.

²¹³ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.7

²¹⁴ Stephen Gray, 'Two Dissident Dream-Walkers' p.56

²¹⁵ Sheila Rowbotham, 'In Search of Carpenter Author' p.126

²¹⁶ Ellen M. Holtzman, 'The Pursuit of Married Love: Women's Attitudes toward Sexuality and Marriage in Great Britain, 1918-1939', *Journal of Social History*, 16:2 (1982,) 16:2, 39-51, p.41

Olive Schreiner

Schreiner was one of the 'New Women' appearing in the late 19th century, and her character Lyndall in *Story of an African Farm* (1883) reflected this.²¹⁷ Lyndall became the designated forerunner for the new woman in the mid-1890s when 'freethought was the literary signifier of advanced womanhood'.²¹⁸ The novel challenged both Christian decrees and male dominance, providing a feminist worldview and articulating a crisis of femininity amongst issues such as 'contemporary anxieties about sexual reproduction and marriage'.²¹⁹ The South African author was close friends with Havelock Ellis, a mutual friend of Carpenter's. Yet Carpenter was described as a far warmer friend to Schreiner.²²⁰ As Gray argues, their relationship was minimised, with Sam Cronwright (Schreiner's husband) dedicating 2,000 words to Ellis whilst Carpenter was relegated to a third of a page.²²¹ This is by no means telling of their relationships in comparison.

The feminist Schreiner had become a London celebrity after her novel *Story of an African Farm* (1883), and Carpenter joined in this admiration.²²² This admiration was mutual, as Schreiner was enthusiastic about Carpenter's *Toward Democracy*.²²³ Considering Carpenter's writing spread to the British Colonies coupled with his work being a discussion among both socialists and feminists, Schreiner's familiarity with Carpenter's work is unsurprising.²²⁴ This mutual admiration blossomed into a relationship where Schreiner would confide in Carpenter regarding the question of sex.²²⁵ Furthermore, Schreiner hired a cottage near Millthorpe for three months after staying with her dear 'Chips' for a time while he lectured on liberating topics.²²⁶ The two sparked a close friendship from a mutual admiration, which bled into their ideology and allowed them to influence one another as part of the intelligentsia. The pair were early members of the Fabian Society alongside Havelock Ellis.²²⁷ A socialist group filled with like-minded individuals, Carpenter and Schreiner were part of a larger group with similar ideals and hopes.

Story of an African Farm provided this fictional new woman, encroaching on contemporary issues such as reproduction.²²⁸ And considering the novel against Carpenter's relationship with Schreiner along with his

²¹⁷ Naomi Hetherington, 'Feminism, Freethought' p.47

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.47

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.49

²²⁰ Stephen Gray, 'Two Dissident Dream-Walkers' p.55

²²¹ *Ibid*, p.55

²²² Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, p.91

²²³ *Ibid*, p.91

²²⁴ Frank Bongiorno, 'Love and friendship: Ethical Socialism in Britain and Australia', *Australian Historical Studies*, 32:116 (2001), 1-19, p.7

²²⁵ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, p.93

²²⁶ Stephen Gray, 'Two Dissident Dream-Walkers', p.56

²²⁷ Paul Richards, 'A Forgotten Parent' *Fabian Review* (Autumn, 2018) p.34

²²⁸ Naomi Hetherington, 'Feminism, Freethought' p.49

pamphlets, the mutual admiration became an influence. In Carpenter's *In a Free Society* pamphlets, the theme of sex and possession appears throughout. One example can be seen when he refers to the 'possessing' classes as treating women as a possession and a brag for men's exclusive right to sex'.²²⁹ Not only, as seen in chapter one, does he refer to women as being possessions but also their dependence on men both sexually and economically. This theme is also one Hetherington argues in *African Farm*. The 'gap' between Lyndall's 'speaking and acting' is one Hetherington argues (among many other examples) articulates a relationship between women's sexual subordination to men and their economic dependency.²³⁰ In this, Carpenter's admiration for Schreiner's work bleeds into influence, working as a platform for him to explore further the inequality contemporary women faced.

This opposition to inequality is later seen in a 1912 letter Schreiner wrote to her niece, in which she refers to her as a 'problem girl'; however, this was not negative in any way.²³¹ Schreiner referred to herself as a 'problem girl' who was alone thirty years ago, and now the new problem girls were 'precious to [her] soul'.²³² With this being one extract of many letters regarding women's rights, such as suffrage, it is clear that Schreiner is welcoming the next generation of 'new women'.²³³ Carpenter's admiration for the 'new woman' can also be seen in *The Intermediate Sex*, with the shift he saw and women's demand for equal rights.²³⁴ Carpenter celebrated this new woman, as Schreiner did, and this admiration from Carpenter is seen again later in this chapter.

Schreiner was also an avid opponent of war, a sentiment Carpenter shared.²³⁵ With anti-war work such as *The Healing of Nations* (1915) and *Never Again!* (1916) written during the First World War, Carpenter's ideology was already cemented before the Great War. Rowbotham highlights the shared anti-war ideology as by 1897, Schreiner's letters to Carpenter warned of Cecil Rhodes' aggression leading to war with the Boers.²³⁶ This prophecy was fulfilled with the Second Boer War, which occurred in the second half of the 1890s. Interestingly, Carpenter's writing mirrors a 1900 interview Schreiner had with *the Time of India*. In her interview, she refers to the soldiers going out 'just to kill and be killed, just to please the Capitalists', not only outlining her stance but also showing her shared ideology with Carpenter.²³⁷ Not only did the pair share the same feminist ideology, but they also shared anti-war and anti-capitalist, allowing for a long friendship.

²²⁹ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and her Place in a Free Society*, p.13

²³⁰ Naomi Hetherington, 'Feminism, Freethought' p.49

²³¹ Liz Stanley, 'Olive Schreiner, War and Pacifism' *English in Africa*, 47:2 (2010), 59-78, p.61

²³² *Ibid*, p.61

²³³ *Ibid*, p.61

²³⁴ Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex* p.16

²³⁵ Liz Stanley, 'Olive Schreiner', p.59

²³⁶ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.248

²³⁷ 'Olive Schreiner Interviewed: The Colonists at War' *The Times of India* (Mumbai, 1900) p.8

The relationship between Carpenter and Schreiner has hardly been explored, and one which Stephen Gray has begun exploring and needs further exploration. The two had a longstanding friendship, ending with Schreiner's death in December 1920.²³⁸ As Rowbotham states, Schreiner bid farewell to Carpenter with 'the hope that one day a new world without hate and dominance would rise'.²³⁹ Schreiner and Carpenter had a relationship built on mutual admiration and, in turn, reflected and influenced one another in their ideology and work. Carpenter's relationship with the 'new woman' Schreiner helped shape his later relationships with birth control pioneers.²⁴⁰

Marie Stopes

The British birth control pioneer Marie Stopes attended a talk Margaret Sanger held in 1915. The Social-Darwinist and eugenicist was in the process of an annulment when she listened to Sanger advocate for birth control.²⁴¹ This began Stopes' inspiration for birth control, which led to her career. In 1921, after three successful books regarding birth control, Stopes opened her first clinic in London.²⁴² Aimed at married women, the clinic covered matters of sexual health and extended to birth control, such as contraceptive methods. By 1929, this clinic had advised ten thousand patients.²⁴³ However, the astounding success of Stopes is not one without its controversies. Her books are littered with her eugenicist and racist ideology, and in the 1930s, she attended a Nazi Party Congress.²⁴⁴ In this Stopes still positively impacted the early birth control movement in Britain. The question as to why Carpenter had a relationship with Stopes is clear, their mutual goal regarding birth control, and through their correspondence and the historiography this will be explored.

Stopes' first book was an instant success, with its sixth printing occurring after just two weeks.²⁴⁵ *Married Love* (1918) was her answer to the sex difficulties and a manual for young married couples. This 'affordable' book cost six shillings, which was up to ten per cent of a manual labourer's weekly wage.²⁴⁶ Along with over half a million copies sold by August 1925, it received copious correspondence.²⁴⁷ The manual was a guide for family limitations and happy sexual marriage. Stopes explored the lack of

²³⁸ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.403

²³⁹ *Ibid*, p.403

²⁴⁰ Stephen Gray, 'Two Dissident Dream-Walkers', p.56

²⁴¹ Elinor Cleghorn, *Unwell Women*, p.206

²⁴² *Ibid*, p.208

²⁴³ Deborah A. Cohen, 'Private Lives in Public Spaces: Marie Stopes, the Mother's Clinic and the Practice of Contraception' *History Workshop*, 35 (1993), 95-116, p.95

²⁴⁴ Elinor Cleghorn, *Unwell Women*, p.213

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.206

²⁴⁶ Marie Stopes, *Married Love: A New Contribution to the Solution of Sex Difficulties* (London, 1925) 16th edn, copyright page; Deborah Cohen, 'Private Lives in Public Spaces' p.107.

²⁴⁷ Marie C. Stopes, *Married Love*, editions page

knowledge surrounding sex, particularly for women, going as far as to recount the story of a 'highly educated lady'.²⁴⁸ This lady feared she was pregnant after a man 'snatched a kiss' from her at eighteen. And another who was affected so severely mentally that the fear she had become pregnant actually stopped her from menstruating.²⁴⁹ Stopes was writing *Married Love* to banish any myths and provide information that had been stifled up until that point. The manual also aimed to dispel the notion that women interested in and enjoyed sex were depraved.²⁵⁰ As her most well-known book and the one which started her career as a British birth control pioneer, *Married Love* was a beacon for knowledge and a signpost for furthering this knowledge.

A year after her first book on contraception, Stopes published a second, *Wise Parenthood* (1919). This smaller manual was not only cheaper but was also explicit in its information on contraceptives. Being half the price of *Married Love*, *Wise Parenthood* was a concise manual on how married couples 'could control the birth of the desired children' through means such as the cervical cap.²⁵¹ Stopes includes several pages in this work explaining the use and optimum conditions for the use, such as adding spermicides. Along with diagrams, Stopes also included where they could be procured from.²⁵² However, much like *Married Love*, Stopes' second book contained information which we now know to be incorrect. For example, Stopes cited quinine as a spermicide.²⁵³ Today, quinine is used to treat malaria and can be toxic if an overdose occurs; it is also 'teratogenic' in the first trimester, which is likely ineffective in pregnancy prevention.²⁵⁴ However, the scientific knowledge available during the infancy of birth control was limited, and therefore, Stopes was working with the accepted medical view. Simply, *Wise Parenthood* was informing married couples to the best of Stopes' available knowledge. This sequel further reinforced Stopes as the beacon for British birth control and provided the signposting for further information.

Marie Stopes: The Creation of *Married Love*

During the creation of *Married Love* was when Carpenter and Stopes began their relationship, and Carpenter's influence on Stopes can be seen. As previously discussed, Stopes became influenced by Sanger in 1915; this talk, however, was for the socialist Fabian Society.²⁵⁵ This, as seen from his relationships with Schreiner and Ellis, is where their interests met and may have provided a foundation for the relationship.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, p.30

²⁴⁹ Ibid, pp.30-31

²⁵⁰ Ibid, p.37

²⁵¹ Marie C. Stopes, *Wise Parenthood, a Sequel to 'Married Love': A Book for Married Couples*, (London, 1919), 4th Edn, p.1

²⁵² Marie C. Stopes, *Wise Parenthood* p.15

²⁵³ Ibid, p.17

²⁵⁴ British National Formulary, 'Quinine' *National Institute of Health and Care Excellence* <https://bnf.nice.org.uk/drugs/quinine/> [accessed:28.02.2023]

²⁵⁵ Elinor Cleghorn, *Unwell Women* p.206

Married Love was still in its manuscript stage when Carpenter and Stopes became acquainted. Rose stated that Stopes was sending her manuscript to doctors, scientists and sex experts when Carpenter wrote to her and suggested his publisher, Stanley Unwin.²⁵⁶ Unwin was one of two titled partners in Allen and Unwin Limited; previously, George Allen and Co.²⁵⁷ Carpenter had used this publisher for a long time; for example, *Love's Coming of Age* (1896) and *Towards Democracy* (1883) were both published through the company. Considering George Allen was a liberal thinker, and Carpenter's work shared his ideology, the suggestion of this publisher to Stopes is not unsurprising.²⁵⁸ Their relationship, however, went further than the suggestion of a publisher.

Multiple historians, such as Rose and Rowbotham, have discussed Stopes' trip to Carpenter's home in Milthorpe; however, there is a debate on the trip's significance. In May 1916, Carpenter read the manuscript for *Married Love*, having found it raised several essential points, and by June, Stopes was at Millthorpe reading *Married Love* with Carpenter.²⁵⁹ His approval of the manuscript was immediate, and he endorsed the work upon publication.²⁶⁰ Rowbotham focuses on Carpenter's influence on Stopes and also his studious disregard for factional disputes among birth controllers.²⁶¹ Simply, Carpenter was interested in spreading the word about birth control over political views. The pair shared a common goal regarding birth control. Rose, however, views Carpenter highly negatively, arguing that his comments reflected the 'hypocritical attitude of the English-educated classes who wanted to ban sexual knowledge from the working class'.²⁶² This statement highlights Rose's lack of knowledge of Carpenter and ignorance of his socialist and sex-reform ideology. From Rose's perspective, Carpenter was a 'homosexual', 'communist' and Cambridge Mathematician who 'had written a book in 1895, over twenty years earlier and had carefully avoided naming the sexual organs'.²⁶³ The failure to put context to Carpenter's *Love's Coming of Age*, and therefore the pamphlets, and reducing him to a mathematician severely misrepresents him and is only furthered by the suggestion that Carpenter wanted to ban sexual knowledge from the working class completely contrasts with his solidified ideology, as seen in the previous chapter.²⁶⁴ When compared with Rowbotham's argument that Carpenter had urged the working class not to play into the hand of the 'dividend-rich' regarding birth control combined with the suggestion that the contents of *Love's Coming of Age*, a lack of

²⁵⁶ June Rose, *Marie Stopes* p.93

²⁵⁷ 'George Allen & Unwin Ltd. Archive' Special Collections <https://www.allenandunwin.com/about> ; <https://collections.reading.ac.uk/special-collections/collections/george-allen-unwin-ltd-archive/> [accessed:27.02.2023]

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, [accessed:27.02.2023]

²⁵⁹ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, p.384

²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.384

²⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.384

²⁶² June Rose, *Marie Stopes*, p.93

²⁶³ *Ibid*, p.93

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.93

knowledge and a skewed assessment is clear.²⁶⁵ Therefore, her statement that Carpenter made ‘a few useful suggestions’ to *Married Love* must be taken skeptically.²⁶⁶ Particularly combined with Stopes’ visit to Millthorpe, a few suggestions does not warrant a visit.

The trip to Carpenter’s home is cemented in both the historiography and also from Stopes’ own writing, but its significance remains unclear. Since Stopes stayed at Millthorpe, arriving in early June 1918 with her ‘rucksack’ and sat with Carpenter in his garden reading *Married Love* the inclination is already there that he did more than recommend a publisher.²⁶⁷

Marie Stopes: Yours Ever

Although short, the letter Marie Stopes wrote to Carpenter is littered with information and provides the reader with further context surrounding Carpenter and his birth control advocacy. The date on the letter is illegible; however, from the content within, the letter was written in 1919. The letter shows a close relationship between Stopes and Carpenter, not one as two intelligentsia but also two people who influenced and aided one another.²⁶⁸ As it is handwritten over typed, the personalised element furthers this relationship. The lack of errors in the letter also suggests it was well planned or potentially rewritten without errors, furthering this personalisation.

The letter starts with Stopes writing that she wanted to give Carpenter her new book; this clearly means that a book came along with this letter.²⁶⁹ However, the book in question was not *Married Love*. Stopes praises Carpenter and thanks him for how much he ‘informed and helped [her] with its forerunner’. Not only does this emphasise Carpenter’s involvement with the creation of *Married Love*, but also that Stopes was so grateful for his involvement that she sent him her new book. The word ‘forerunner’ makes it clear which book she is referring to as the gift, *Wise Parenthood* (1919), the sequel to *Married Love*. This is made further evident by Stopes telling Carpenter that she ‘fear [the book] is less in your line’; considering the book surrounds heterosexual relationships and goes in-depth into contraception, it is not only a stark contrast to the language Carpenter used in his pamphlets and *Love’s Coming of Age* but also as a homosexual man the contents were not applicable.²⁷⁰ Saying this, however, as seen from Carpenter’s implicit language in previous work, along with Stopes writing that the world needs *Wise Parenthood*, it is clear that Stopes at least believed that Carpenter would understand its importance in a wider context.²⁷¹ This

²⁶⁵ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, p.385

²⁶⁶ June Rose, *Marie Stopes*, p.94

²⁶⁷ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, p.384

²⁶⁸ ‘Letter from Marie Stopes, Leatherhead, Surrey’ *Sheffield Archives* [Carpenter/Mss/386/428](#)

²⁶⁹ *Ibid*

²⁷⁰ *Ibid*

²⁷¹ *Ibid*

is possibly another reason why Carpenter received the book. What is clear, however, is that Stopes was not only thanking Carpenter for his involvement in creating *Married Love* but also showing him her progression. This makes Carpenter's advocacy for birth control paramount.

The relationship between the two is further cemented in the letter's second paragraph. Within the paragraph, Stopes hopes to meet Carpenter again 'before too long' and to 'have a real talk once more', suggesting that not only does Stopes enjoy Carpenter's company, but also his mind and that birth control was discussed avidly between the two.²⁷² Stopes' hope for Carpenter to visit Surrey, where she lived, furthers this relationship, almost a repayment for Carpenter welcoming her into his home three years prior.²⁷³ This personalisation again highlights not only a relationship between the two but also shows Stopes' appreciation for Carpenter's help in creating *Married Love*. The argument that Carpenter made only a few valuable suggestions falls short upon reading this letter, and therefore, the question of the extent of Carpenter's involvement arises.²⁷⁴ It is likely that these suggestions were significant, at least in the eyes of Stopes, based on her gratitude. But the extent of Carpenter's true involvement remains unclear; however, it can be surmised that Carpenter's aid went further than a publisher recommendation.

Marie Stopes: Diverging Ideology

In her first two manuals on birth control, Stopes' eugenicist ideologies remained implicit; however, in 1920's *Radiant Motherhood*, they became explicit. Cleghorn and Rutherford's view of Stopes as a 'Hitler-adoring virulent racist' who embraced her bigoted views, particularly in this book, becomes evident.²⁷⁵ For example, Stopes argues that reformatories, the feeding of schoolchildren and the reform of marriage laws (among many others) would never 'will ever cause freedom from degeneracy and ill-health'.²⁷⁶ This ideology diverges completely from that of Carpenter. Prison reform and criminology was an early avenue of Carpenter's, criticising imprisonment as a means for revenge rather than reform.²⁷⁷ Stopes stating her belief that prison reform would not cure so-called 'degeneracy' completely contrasts Carpenter's ideology and highlights the separation of beliefs. It is clear that the two had a common goal regarding the spread of birth control information, but that is where ideology diverged.

Eugenics was an avenue that Carpenter was interested in; however, his views differed greatly from Stopes. In *Radiant Motherhood*, Stopes drew a parallel between the middle and upper classes and ancient Greek

²⁷² Ibid

²⁷³ Ibid

²⁷⁴ June Rose, *Marie Stopes*, p.94

²⁷⁵ Elinor Cleghorn, *Unwell Women* p.208; Adam Rutherford, *Control* p.19

²⁷⁶ Marie C. Stopes, *Radiant Motherhood: A Book for Those Who are Creating the Future* (London: Putnam, 1926) 4th edn, pp.215-216

²⁷⁷ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, p.251

slaves. She drew to the 'high civilisation' of Greece, where enslaved people were only allowed to rear children on account of 'good behaviour' and implicitly compared it to the upper classes.²⁷⁸ This form of eugenicism contrasted starkly with Carpenter. A socialist, Carpenter saw eugenics as a key to a new model of people for a new model world.²⁷⁹ In *The Healing of Nations* (1915), Carpenter shared his belief that the upper classes did not want the lower classes to decrease the family size, as the mass of workers kept wages down.²⁸⁰ Carpenter did not consider the repressive or elitist aspects of the theory but was rather engrossed in the improvement of the working-class family.²⁸¹ His version of eugenics was more in line with the words' Greek origin, wellborn offspring - the ideology of having fewer children to improve their quality of life.²⁸²

This divergence of eugenic opinion became clear in *Contraception* (1923). In the manual, Stopes referenced Carpenter negatively, referring to his work having 'influenced many to view sex matters in a sympathetic and harmonious light'.²⁸³ This dismissal and belittling of Carpenter's work was elevated by her commentary on Oscar Wilde, arguing that Wilde's mother blames herself for moulding his perverted proclivities with her own thoughts.²⁸⁴ When *Contraception* was published, nearly thirty years had passed since the publication of the 'in a free society' pamphlets, and many steps of progress had been made. A key example is the ability to publish writing providing information surrounding birth control. In 1877, Annie Besant was charged with publishing obscene work - birth control information, and even in the 1890s, there were cases of people being sent to prison for birth control advocacy.²⁸⁵ Carpenter's method of writing at that time was necessary to avoid similar consequences.

Carpenter's involvement in *Married Love* has been understated and overlooked. The question comes as to why. Rowbotham stated that the acceptance of birth control since the 1960s has resulted in the openness Carpenter would have wanted, which helps explain the dismissal of Carpenter's involvement.²⁸⁶ And Week's argument that 'the sexual history that emerged in the 1970s took sexuality seriously' furthers this.²⁸⁷ The second wave of feminism focused on female sex reformers such as Stopes. Carpenter's resurgence in the 1970s focused on his larger socialism as it reflected the new political climate.²⁸⁸ Carpenter's influence on birth control in his sex reform was minimised compared to his other ventures and

²⁷⁸ Marie C Stopes, *Radiant Motherhood* p.210

²⁷⁹ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, p.385

²⁸⁰ Edward Carpenter, *The Healing of Nations* (New York, Charles Scribner's and Sons: 1915), p.192

²⁸¹ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, p.385

²⁸² Adam Rutherford, *Control*, p.14

²⁸³ Marie C Stopes, *Contraception (Birth Control) Theory History and Practice A Manual for the Medical and Legal Professions* (London, John Bale, Sons & Danielsson Limited: 1923) December 1923 edn p.304

²⁸⁴ Elinor Cleghorn, *Unwell Women*, p.215

²⁸⁵ Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden From History* p.75

²⁸⁶ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.454

²⁸⁷ Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society* p.2

²⁸⁸ Alison Twells, 'Iron Dukes and Naked Races' p.47

other birth control pioneers. The focus was on his sexuality and socialism, whilst the historiography of birth control relegated him to a footnote in his birth control ventures. For Carpenter, however, his influence on Stopes' early work is unclear but at least significant to the pair.

Margaret Sanger

Across the Atlantic Ocean, in 1914, Margaret Sanger was connecting women's reproductive choices to their economic emancipation.²⁸⁹ Her works, such as *The Woman Rebel* and *Family Limitation*, called for women to rise up against the slavery of motherhood and provided women with information on contraception.²⁹⁰ This extended to recipes for pessaries and homespun recipes to prevent missed periods.²⁹¹ Sanger was providing information on birth control and contraception when the information, however, at best, was considered immoral and, at this time, illegal.²⁹² The Comstock laws from 1873 had banned the sale, advertisement and distribution of contraception and were still enacted when Sanger was distributing her pamphlets.²⁹³ Sanger's effort for information, however, faced repercussions. In order to avoid trial and the potential of five years imprisonment, she fled to Liverpool, England, using a fake passport.²⁹⁴ This self-imposed exile fruited the relationship between Sanger and Carpenter, along with her involvement in the Fabian Society. As seen earlier in this chapter, Marie Stopes attended Sanger's talk on birth control in 1915. This talk was hosted by the Fabian Society, one of which Carpenter was an early member.²⁹⁵ It was unsurprising, considering many artists and writers became members during the late nineteenth century and combined with its heavily socialist ideology, made the society one Carpenter easily aligned with.²⁹⁶

Through similar circles, Sanger and Carpenter crossing paths whilst she was in Britain was likely. This came to fruition in January 1915. Rowbotham wrote that the pair first met in the Egyptian room in the British Museum, which directly correlated a letter Sanger sent to Carpenter in April 1918.²⁹⁷ In this letter, Sanger opens with their previous encounters but also how they had discussed her work along with what she 'was trying to accomplish.'²⁹⁸ This encounter, predating Carpenter's relationship with Stopes, solidifies Carpenter's interest in birth control and also suggests a knowledge of the subject, which predates his

²⁸⁹ Elinor Cleghorn, *Unwell Women* p.199

²⁹⁰ *Ibid* pp.199-200

²⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.200

²⁹² Joyce Berkman, 'The Question of Margaret Sanger' *History Compass* 9:6 (2011), 474–484, p.474

²⁹³ *Ibid*, p.476

²⁹⁴ Elinor Cleghorn, *Unwell Women*, p.200; Jane Carey, 'The Racial Imperatives of Sex: Birth Control and Eugenics in Britain, the United States and Australia in the Interwar Years' *Women's History Review*, 21:5 (2012), 733-752, p.743

²⁹⁵ Sheila Rowbotham, 'Edward Carpenter 1844–1929' p.8

²⁹⁶ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter; A Life of Liberty and Love*, p.604

²⁹⁷ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter; A Life of Liberty and Love*, p.384; 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA' Sheffield Archives Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29

²⁹⁸ 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA' Sheffield Archives, Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29

relationships with the women. Carpenter's foundational knowledge becomes further evident in the letter, as will be explored in detail, and the resulting relationship between Carpenter and Sanger becomes clear also.

Sanger returned to the United States shortly after meeting Carpenter in 1915 and several years before her subsequent letter. Shortly after her return in October 1915, the charges against her were dropped, allowing Sanger to open her first clinic the following year.²⁹⁹ Her return to the United States followed a letter sent to President Woodrow Wilson a month prior. This letter was one defending Sanger's work and one in which Carpenter was one of the signatories.³⁰⁰ Alongside prominent figures such as Marie Stopes and H. G Wells, Carpenter implored the President of the United States that Sanger should receive appreciation and that in other 'civilised countries' her work would be openly circulated as it was considered that this suppression was detrimental to human progress.³⁰¹ Carpenter's inclusion in this letter is unsurprising given his ideology and firsthand experiences with Sanger. Sanger acknowledges this in the letter she sent Carpenter in 1918, expressing her gratitude for his statement, citing that the American people are always eager to follow in the footsteps of the English, particularly English writers and thinkers.³⁰²

Margaret Sanger: Fraternally Yours

The typed letter may appear impersonal compared to Stopes' at face value, but it was far longer and more detailed than that of Sanger's British counterpart. Within this, Sanger's appreciation for Carpenter becomes clear and allows greater exploration of the relationship but also Carpenter's ideology.

As seen in chapter one, Carpenter discussed birth control in the late 19th century, yet his involvement has been vastly downplayed and underwritten compared to forerunners such as Stopes and Sanger. This can, in part, be attributed to the need for implicit advocacy as the repercussions were severe, and at the time, Carpenter's work was already pushing the boundaries of conventional morality.³⁰³ Carpenter was laying the foundations for the discussion of contraception through his writings on sex reform and women's rights. Sanger writes that her country has made great strides in birth control since her return, and 'much of this success we owe to [Carpenter]'.³⁰⁴ This statement by Sanger provides ample evidence of Carpenter's work being influential and including birth control, legitimising the previous chapter even further. Sanger furthers her appreciation for Carpenter by saying he sowed the seeds for birth control and opened a dialogue along with the 'minds of people through his books and articles on the sex subject'. Although this is directly

²⁹⁹ Elinor Cleghorn, *Unwell Women* p.203

³⁰⁰ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, p.384

³⁰¹ 'To the President of the United States' *Birth Control Review* 5:5 (May, 1921) p.15

³⁰² 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA' Sheffield Archives Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29

³⁰³ Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden From History*, p.75; Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.294

³⁰⁴ 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA' Sheffield Archives Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29

Sanger reinforces Carpenter as an influence on the birth control movement in the following paragraph. She recounts her 'lecture trips', where the spiritual significance of birth control is often an audience question.³⁰⁵ But also a more recent encounter where she received a letter from a Californian woman. The Californian woman stated that Carpenter 'belongs in the school of thought, which promotes the idea of connubial bliss over procreation'.³⁰⁶ This can be seen in the previous chapter in Carpenter's work, such as *Marriage in a Free Society* (1894), but is also repeated in Stopes' *Married Love*, which, as seen earlier, Carpenter was heavily involved in. Carpenter was viewed transnationally by his contemporaries as being an integral part of the birth control movement; however, this is not largely recognised in the historiography. This transnational influence is furthered by Bongourio's note of the revolt against 'Victorianism' in Australia, specifically the 'prudery' of the birth control period, as it directly correlates with Twells' argument of Carpenter's writing being an attack on Victorian sexual codes.³⁰⁷ And Carpenter's willingness to engage in Australia's Chidley's theories further highlights Carpenter's transnational birth control advocacy.³⁰⁸ This also further shows that Carpenter's work had a global audience; not only was he communicating with transnational intelligentsia on birth control, but his work was being read globally. In addition, Carpenter's books were reviewed in Sanger's *The Birth Control Review*, and he was referenced several times in the magazine, meaning his work was being read globally but also by a pro-birth control audience.³⁰⁹

Carpenter's involvement and influence are furthered by Sanger asking him to write for her *Birth Control Review*, a new magazine she was distributing.³¹⁰ A piece similar to that of Havelock Ellis's earlier piece, '*The Objects of Marriage*', was Sanger's desire for Carpenter to write. This piece was on spiritual development in sex aside from procreation, and Sanger believed it would be of great assistance for Carpenter to write a similar piece.³¹¹ In setting Carpenter this task, she also provided Ellis's piece for reference along with several copies of the fledgling magazine. She outlined that the task she was setting was unpaid; however, Sanger was willing to personally see to a 'remuneration' being paid to Carpenter for his 'trouble'.³¹²

The first letter ends with Sanger thanking Carpenter for any assistance he could provide for the cause, highlighting Sanger's belief Carpenter was crucial to the birth control movement. And a later letter from

³⁰⁵ 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA' Sheffield Archives Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29

³⁰⁶ Ibid

³⁰⁷ Frank Bongiorno, *The Sex Lives of Australians* p.145; Alison Twells, 'Eros the Great Leveller' p.12

³⁰⁸ Frank Bongiorno, *The Sex Lives of Australians*, p.150

³⁰⁹ See for examples: 'Book Review: Pagan and Christian Creeds by Edward Carpenter' *The Birth Control Review*, 4:7 (1920), p.16; 'Books Received', *The Birth Control Review*, 11:5 (1927) p.157; Stella Browne, 'Liberty and Democracy' *The Birth Control Review*, 5:2 (1921), p.6

³¹⁰ 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA' Sheffield Archives Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29

³¹¹ Ibid

³¹² Ibid

Sanger, dated October 1921, outlined that Carpenter wrote a piece for the *Birth Control Review*.³¹³ According to Sanger, Carpenter wrote clearly and beautifully on the issue.³¹⁴ Sanger's appreciation was evident in her second letter. She was thankful for the time Carpenter spent creating the piece and planned to send Carpenter a full report on the proceedings and various opinions.³¹⁵ This brings into question the article Carpenter wrote for Sanger and its contents.

Margaret Sanger: Carpenter - The Birth Control Review

From the letters, it can already be seen that it was regarding the spiritual side, something which was Carpenter's forte.³¹⁶ Published in the December 1921 edition of *Birth Control Review*, the article was short but targeted and made Carpenter's stance on birth control publicly clear.³¹⁷ The implicit ideology Carpenter had, as seen in chapter one, along with Sanger's statement that can be owed for much of the movement's success, is solidified in the piece and made explicit.³¹⁸

Carpenter opens his piece by stating that he finds the current birth control movement to be of utmost importance.³¹⁹ This clearly indicates his stance and ideology, which was already seen from his involvement in *Married Love*. And this ideology becomes clearer with a later statement that 'to interfere, even artificially, with an age-long habit, it is surely less harmful and immoral than to produce unwanted children, destined in most cases to poverty and neglect'.³²⁰ This echoes the letter sent to President Wilson, with the reinforcement of it being an age-long habit, but also reflects Carpenter's approach of the working class not playing into the hand of the dividend-rich or Capitalist classes.³²¹ Carpenter was knowledgeable on the subject, which is clear from his opening opinions, therefore making it further evident why Sanger had asked him to write for *The Birth Control Review*.

The piece answers specific points to be discussed in the November conferences. The first is whether birth control would contribute to the loss of youth. In this, Carpenter reinstated his belief that birth control prevents unwanted children and, in turn, would create more forethought in childrearing, citing that a sense of responsibility would decidedly increase.³²² Here, it can be seen that Carpenter viewed birth control as a

³¹³ Ibid

³¹⁴ Ibid

³¹⁵ Ibid

³¹⁶ Ibid

³¹⁷ 'Messages to the Conference: From Edward Carpenter', *The Birth Control Review*, 5:12 (1921), p.15

³¹⁸ Ibid p.15

³¹⁹ Ibid p.15

³²⁰ Ibid, p.15

³²¹ 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA' Sheffield Archives Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29; Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.385

³²² 'Messages to the Conference: From Edward Carpenter', p.15; 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA' Sheffield Archives Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29; Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.385

positive for society and future children. He argued that providing this choice of when to have children and how many would improve a child's future. Carpenter conceded that it would 'diminish some responsibility attached to sexual intercourse', but he weighed this against 'forethought', which is better than a 'mere casual subjection to chance'.³²³ Carpenter clearly viewed birth control as a positive solution not only for women but also for future children, as they will be wanted.

Promiscuity was one feared outcome of birth control and one which Carpenter addressed in the piece.³²⁴ As previously discussed in chapter one, Carpenter viewed birth control as a means to eradicate prostitution.³²⁵ This ideology remained when Carpenter wrote this piece. The 'rein of promiscuity' due to birth control is a belief not shared by Carpenter. Although he believed that a 'latitude' of sex relations will follow, which suggests an increase in upward mobility, he argued that it was not a great evil.³²⁶ As someone who has advocated for the working class, this opinion is unsurprising and in line with the formation of his birth control ideology. Carpenter then furthers this by referring to this latitude as in the view of 'the evils and falsity of the present system'; this again shows not only Carpenter's socialism but also refers back to his eugenicism of the working class not playing into the hands of the Capitalist classes.³²⁷ Contraception as a tool for the working class was a clear part of Carpenter's ideology, and this is explicit in the piece. Going back to promiscuity, Carpenter's dismissal of the belief that birth control would lead to promiscuity can be seen in his earlier work. As stated in the previous chapter, Carpenter argued that procreation should not be the sole purpose of sex.³²⁸ His hope that the importance of sex will diminish to a mere factor of greater love becomes possible with birth control.³²⁹ The consequence of birth control is that it removes the likelihood of pregnancy and, in doing so, allows this great love to flourish. Therefore, Carpenter clearly saw this as a 'gain, rather than a loss', as it had positive spiritual and social consequences.³³⁰ Carpenter was clearly writing in the spiritual way Sanger wanted, as seen from her letter; however, he was also writing to give the reader pause and further thought. Just like in his early work, Carpenter was still sowing seeds.³³¹

The final question regarded men imposing on their wives, one to which Carpenter responded positively regarding the growing power of women. He stated that birth control is part of this growing power. As seen at this time with the 1918 *Representation of the People Act*, allowing women over thirty to vote, women were

³²³ 'Messages to the Conference: From Edward Carpenter', *The Birth Control Review*, 5:12 (1921), p.15

³²⁴ *Ibid*, p.15

³²⁵ Edward Carpenter, *Sex Love and its Place in a Free Society* p.5

³²⁶ 'Messages to the Conference: From Edward Carpenter', p.15

³²⁷ 'Messages to the Conference: From Edward Carpenter', p.15; Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.385

³²⁸ Alison Twells, 'Eros: "The Great Leveller"', p.12

³²⁹ Edward Carpenter *Sex Love and its Place in a Free Society*, p.21

³³⁰ 'Messages to the Conference: From Edward Carpenter', p.15

³³¹ 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA' Sheffield Archives Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29

gaining power both socially and politically.³³² Although this Act was a small step and left women under thirty disillusioned, it was still a step forward and one Carpenter reacted to positively.³³³ And this is partly what Carpenter refers to in the piece. He referred to the 'new order of things', which would lead to the 'imposition' of men on women becoming unusual.³³⁴ Carpenter denied that the introduction of birth control could lead to an increase in rape, rather than its introduction would lead to greater autonomy for women.³³⁵ As seen in the previous chapter, Carpenter acknowledged the systematic wrongs women were subjected to. In this piece, over twenty years later, Carpenter acknowledged and celebrated the steps forward for women's rights. Birth control, Carpenter saw, was a tool for women to enter a state of freedom and self-determination previously unknown by 'her sex'.³³⁶ Compared to the 'travesty of motherhood' and men's 'exclusive right to sex' twenty years prior, growth had occurred for women's rights, and as Carpenter correctly wrote, it was still growing.³³⁷ The seeds Carpenter sowed in his 1894 pamphlets and other works, as Sanger wrote in her letter, were having a long-lasting impact.³³⁸ Furthermore, his hopes were coming to fruition.

Carpenter had many avenues and ventures, and birth control was certainly one of them. He did not just surround himself with socialists and feminists, but they also surrounded him, and he helped in part with their careers. His home was this haven for like-minded individuals, and as seen from Stopes' stay, he went further than the suggestion of publishers.³³⁹ And from Sanger, further than a signature on a letter.³⁴⁰ Even with Sanger's blatant statement of Carpenter's influence on the birth control movement, his contribution has not received much recognition.³⁴¹ Much Like his relationship with Olive Schreiner, Carpenter's relationships and influences have yet to be truly explored, leading to an absence of information and understanding of his impact.

Through Olive Schreiner, Carpenter was able to develop his ideologies and converse with a like-minded individual who became a close friend. And much like how Carpenter was influenced by Schreiner, she was

³³² C. N. Trueman, 'The 1918 Representation Of The People Act' *The History Learning Site*, <https://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/the-role-of-british-women-in-the-twentieth-century/the-1918-representation-of-the-people-act/> (2015) Accessed: 25 Apr 2020

³³³ Selina Todd, *The People: the Rise and Fall of the Working Class 1910-2010* (London: John Murray, 2014) p.14

³³⁴ 'Messages to the Conference: From Edward Carpenter', *The Birth Control Review*, 5:12 (1921), p.15

³³⁵ *Ibid*, p.15

³³⁶ *Ibid*, p.15

³³⁷ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and her Place in a Free Society*, p.13

³³⁸ 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA' *Sheffield Archives Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29*

³³⁹ June Rose, *Marie Stopes* p.93

³⁴⁰ 'To the President of the United States' *Birth Control Review* 5:5 (1921) p.15

³⁴¹ 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA' *Sheffield Archives Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29*

Even though Stopes' relationship with Carpenter was brief, the acknowledgement of Carpenter's aid in creating and publishing *Married Love* in her letter seems overlooked in the historiography.³⁴² However, from the relationship, it is clear that Carpenter had a pre-existing advocacy and interest in birth control long before his relationship with Marie Stopes. Through implicit references in his work, Carpenter was paving the way for birth control, which became increasingly explicit through these relationships.

As previously stated, Carpenter, in his own way, helped to lay the foundations for the birth control movement, and Margaret Sanger legitimised this in her letter to Carpenter.³⁴³ Through Carpenter's involvement in the letter to President Woodrow Wilson, asking for Sanger's pardon, her letters to him, and his piece in *The Birth Control Review*, it is clear that Carpenter was a long-time advocate for birth control. This is furthered by his global influence, not only as a longstanding feature of *the Birth Control Review* but also transnationally with the intelligentsia.

By the 1920s, Carpenter was no longer sowing the seeds for the birth control movement, as Sanger wrote in her letter, but was becoming active in it.³⁴⁴ The foundations for his advocacy had already been set in his earlier works, and with birth control now a topic of discussion, Carpenter made his ideology explicit. His piece in Sanger's magazine made clear that this was an active avenue of advocacy for him.³⁴⁵ This pre-existing implicit advocacy, combined with his relationships with birth control pioneers, makes it clear that his unpublished manuscript was part of a larger advocacy and not an outlier. The manuscript was another piece of Carpenter's ideology, which, as seen from this chapter, was established before he began relationships with Stopes and Sanger.³⁴⁶ Carpenter had sown the seeds for birth control discussion and had, in some ways, bolstered birth control pioneers into the foreground, and the manuscript was an unprompted piece that furthers what was discussed in his piece in *the Birth Control Review*.

³⁴² 'Letter from Marie Stopes, Leatherhead, Surrey' *Sheffield Archives Carpenter/Mss/386/428*

³⁴³ 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA' *Sheffield Archives Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29*

³⁴⁴ *Ibid*

³⁴⁵ 'Messages to the Conference: From Edward Carpenter', p.15

³⁴⁶ *Ibid* p.15

Birth Control and Bisexuality: The Unpublished Manuscript

Among many of Carpenter's works, one which has received little attention has been his manuscript on *Birth Control and Bisexuality*. A handwritten draft among the volumes of letters and publications in the Sheffield Archives. However, compared to his important work on gay rights and socialism, Edward Carpenter's involvement regarding birth control bears only a few sentences in many works on his life.³⁴⁷ The manuscript's brief mention by Rowbotham in her excellent biography retains the focus on androgyny in a comparison to *Light from the East* (1927).³⁴⁸ This androgyny is more applicable to the second half of the manuscript on Bisexuality. Only furthering this literary void in Carpenter's influence on birth control. Furthermore, as seen in chapter two, his involvement in Marie Stopes' holy grail, *Married Love* (1918), has barely registered as more than a footnote and has been greatly reduced in importance. The letter between the two, along with Rowbotham's inclusion of Stopes visiting Carpenter at Millthorpe, only further cemented this involvement.³⁴⁹ In addition, as seen, his relationship with Margaret Sanger has not been explored in detail besides his signature on the letter to President Wilson in 1915.³⁵⁰ Again, although it is acknowledged that Carpenter had a relationship with the American birth control pioneer, the importance of their relationship had received little attention from the historiography. His appearance in her *Birth Control Review* and constant reviews of his work appeared in editions only further a relationship between the two and highlighted his knowledge and understanding of the movement.

And as seen in previous chapters, birth control has been an underlying theme in Carpenter's work long before his relationships with Stopes and Sanger, but rather an implicit theme alongside his other ventures. Sanger even wrote in her letter to Carpenter that he had sown the seeds for the birth control movement.³⁵¹ This explicit acknowledgement of his influence on the birth control movement by a pioneer of the subject has not garnered much attention, and analysis of Carpenter's work through a birth control lens has not occurred. Carpenter's stance on birth control has hardly been explored, and his influence on birth control in the 1920s has yet to be identified. Carpenter's stance on birth control will be transparent through analysis of this text, combined with the foundations made by the previous chapters, such as the letter to Sanger. It is already clear that Carpenter was an advocate for contraception, as seen in his early work, such as *Woman and Her Place in a Free Society* (1894), and this advocacy was later acknowledged by birth control pioneers.

³⁴⁷ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* pp.434-435

³⁴⁸ *Ibid* pp.434-435

³⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.384

³⁵⁰ 'To the President of the United States' *Birth Control Review* 5:5 (May 1921) p.15

³⁵¹ 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA' Sheffield Archives Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29

In essence, this manuscript ties together Carpenter's previous involvement in the birth control movement and solidifies his pro-birth control stance. The manuscript makes Carpenter's stance explicit and provides clear evidence that birth control was a subject Carpenter was invested in for a long time. Although Carpenter does not recommend types of birth control, as expected, he still emphasised its importance in his manuscript. Carpenter was not a doctor by any means; therefore, it is understandable why he does not suggest any birth control methods in his manuscript. His expertise was in, for example, Plato, which he referenced several times in the manuscript.³⁵²

From references made within the text, the manuscript was written between late 1926 and 1927. Sheffield Archives also cited it as being from 1927. Sanger's February 1926 *Birth Control Review* is cited on the second page, not only furthering the relationship between the two but also providing a timeline.³⁵³ The review had been published and arrived across the Atlantic to Carpenter for him to cite the work. In the same vein, a quote from a member of the University of Chicago suggests that Carpenter was in a network of like-minded individuals on birth control, as he had been in his other ventures.³⁵⁴ Carpenter was clearly not writing the work without knowledge of the subject. As made clear from Chapter one, this was already a subject he was engaged with, and in Chapter two, he had relationships with prominent individuals in the field. Simply, the evidence of citations, even in handwritten form, suggests a level of research and knowledge that Carpenter had applied to this writing. The manuscript suggests a result of a culmination of knowledge. Even in its draft form, it shows not only a research level but also how important the topic was to Carpenter.

When Carpenter began writing *Birth Control and Bi-sexuality*, Stopes' first Birth Control clinic had been open for approximately six years.³⁵⁵ As the first British Birth control clinic, it is heralded due to Stopes' platform as the forerunner of birth control in Britain. This was, however, not the only one, as, by the end of the 1920s, eleven other clinics were run voluntarily.³⁵⁶ The smaller clinics, although overshadowed by Stopes, highlight this increased recognition of the need for birth control. Since the first voluntary clinic opened in 1926, five years after Stopes' clinic, this shows that there was a nationwide desire for birth control and an increased need for accessibility.

Refocusing on Carpenter, his opening line argued, "The enormous importance of birth control has, even yet, hardly been recognised." Furthermore, he continued with his surprise "that it is only lately that the subject

³⁵² Sheffield, Sheffield Archives (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', Carpenter/Mss/248, p.3

³⁵³ Ibid, p.2

³⁵⁴ Ibid p.4

³⁵⁵ Elinor Cleghorn, *Unwell Women* p.208

³⁵⁶ 'Historians mark Debt to Forgotten Birth Control Pioneers' *The University of Manchester*, <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/article/?id=7220>, [Accessed: 10.11.2022]

has at all been seriously tackled.³⁵⁷ It is clear, therefore, that Carpenter believed birth control was still in its infancy. This statement from someone who had corresponded with both Margaret Sanger and Marie Stopes, suggests that Carpenter was not only up to date with contemporary birth control issues, but also saw the current limitations. Although Carpenter was involved in the transnational movement of birth control, he still believed much more could be accomplished. For example, in 1925, the Sheffield Council rejected a vote to allow medical officers to give information on birth control.³⁵⁸ Simply, birth control was unimportant to authorities and did not warrant policies. Information such as this makes it clear why, a few years later, Carpenter was writing about birth control's lack of recognition. This can be seen from his earlier writings but also extends to his later writings and involvement with Sanger and Stopes. What is also clear is who he is referring to when he describes the issue as only recently being seriously tackled.³⁵⁹ Not only were Stopes and Sanger in the spotlight for pioneering birth control in their respective countries, but both women's relationships with Carpenter involved their interest in birth control. This advocacy for birth control was still in its infancy, as Stopes only began her ventures after attending one of Sanger's talks in 1915, and Sanger's ventures began a few years prior.³⁶⁰

As seen from letters written and publications, for example, in Sanger's *Birth Control Review*, Carpenter was well versed in the topic. It is no surprise, therefore, that Carpenter was writing on the topic and at this time. Considering the failure of Sheffield Council regarding birth control, the topic was one which he could see the repercussions of, particularly for the working class.³⁶¹ Hence, it may have been one of a plethora of reasons which motivated Carpenter to write the manuscript. Since the manuscript is not yet in the public domain, although it is publicly accessible through the Sheffield Archives and is essentially a first draft, understanding the contents without access is needed. Therefore, a brief synopsis of the contents is needed to understand the manuscript.

The Art of Creation: a Brief Synopsis of an Unpublished Manuscript

Carpenter began his handwritten manuscript, as seen above, stating that the importance of birth control has hardly been explored.³⁶² He continued the opening by exploring why, up until this point, birth control was not needed and why advancements made to the quality of life have culminated to this point.³⁶³ Carpenter then reverted to Plato and Ancient Greece; Carpenter's idea of a Utopia through Platonian ideas is

³⁵⁷ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.1

³⁵⁸ 'Minutes of the Sheffield City Council December 1925-November 1926' *Sheffield Archives*, CA-MIN/64, p.417

³⁵⁹ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.1

³⁶⁰ Elinor Cleghorn, *Unwell Women*, p.206

³⁶¹ 'Minutes of the Sheffield City Council December 1925-November 1926', p.417

³⁶² Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.1

³⁶³ *Ibid*, p.1

juxtaposed with infanticide.³⁶⁴ Carpenter then moved on to Women and birth control. Carpenter did not minimise the strides made by women towards birth control; far from it, as will be seen, Carpenter celebrated the achievements made by women. Even more so, the modern woman is heralded and praised to the point Carpenter used nature as imagery but in a way which contrasted previous writing.³⁶⁵ Carpenter ended the section of the manuscript with his hopes for the future, much like he had done previously in his 'in a free society' pamphlets, and his hopes for birth control.³⁶⁶

The second half of the manuscript focuses on Bisexuality, with the first part essentially being how Carpenter defines bisexuality.³⁶⁷ In this, he explores ways a person may be bisexual. He then links back to the first half of the manuscript and explores how bisexual people may be an answer for birth control issues.³⁶⁸ Carpenter then referred to and expanded upon his previous work on Percy Shelley. He took a bisexual perspective on Shelly and his work. Finally, again, much like with the section on birth control, Carpenter expressed his hopes for the future whilst also linking back to birth control again.³⁶⁹

Overpopulation: Causes and Cures

The 1921 census recorded 38 million individuals living in England and Wales, an increase of approximately 2 million from the 1911 census.³⁷⁰ This increase is one which Carpenter referred to as a 'threat of limitless increase of population' and one which previously was culled by famine, war and other 'checks'.³⁷¹ This is one case Carpenter puts forward for the need for birth control. He argued that this overpopulation could lead to war and famine resulting from the lack of an adequate framework.³⁷² In saying this, Carpenter was not reacting negatively to the current climate and standard of living. Within the same points above, Carpenter referred to the removal of these 'checks' being due to the 'simultaneous increase in the amenities and securities of life' along with a 'promised removal' of the 'checks'.³⁷³ It is clear from Carpenter's involvement in the Sheffield Socialist Society, along with his blatant socialist views, that this improvement was not seen negatively by him.³⁷⁴ Furthermore, Carpenter's socialism emphasised changing everyday

³⁶⁴ Ibid, p.3

³⁶⁵ Ibid, p.4-5

³⁶⁶ Ibid, p.10

³⁶⁷ Ibid, p.11

³⁶⁸ Ibid, p.13

³⁶⁹ Ibid, p.17

³⁷⁰ '1911 Census: Population', *A Vision of Britain Through Time*, <https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/EW1911GEN/3> [accessed: 11.11.2022] & 'The 1921 Census', *National Archives*, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20s-people/the-1921-census/#:~:text=The%201921%20Census%3A%20the%20largest,online%20for%20the%20first%20time>, [accessed: 11.11.2022]

³⁷¹ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.1

³⁷² Ibid, p.1

³⁷³ Ibid, p.1

³⁷⁴ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.68

living and behaviour.³⁷⁵ This can be seen in his advocacy for better housing, the feeding of schoolchildren, and redistribution of wealth, just to name a few.³⁷⁶ Evidently, Carpenter approved of any improvements to the standard of living, which makes it clear that he sees birth control as another step in improving living standards, lest his fears of overpopulation come to fruition.³⁷⁷ This is again furthered by the line that ‘the reasonable course’ is ‘to refuse (before it is too late) to bring into the world more children than we can actually provide for’, which was a similar view to many birth control supporters, but also shows a socialist element since he is focusing on the ability to provide.³⁷⁸ The quotation also echoes an earlier one Carpenter made in Sanger’s *The Birth Control Review*, where he argued that artificial checks such as birth control are more moral than producing unwanted children, which would likely be destined to poverty and neglect.³⁷⁹ The reinforcement of this ideology not only bolsters his advocacy but also links heavily to Carpenter’s socialism. The reflection this has on Carpenter argument for the working class not to play into the hands of the upper classes through having multiple children and increasing the workforce is clear.³⁸⁰ Carpenter was not only arguing for birth control from a workers’ rights angle but also that on the qualitative nature of raising children. As seen in the previous chapter, regarding Carpenter’s relationship with Stopes and his version of eugenics, his concern lay with the children and ensuring they were not neglected or impoverished. This ideology is still clear in his manuscript. For Carpenter, a large part of birth control was ensuring children were provided for, particularly in a world which was improving through positive reform.

Fast forward to 1979, and China implemented its one-child policy.³⁸¹ This may seem odd to refer to whilst discussing Carpenter’s manuscript; however, the manuscript Carpenter referred to China. As previously stated, Carpenter quoted a member of the University of Chicago. In this quote, the member stated that China needed birth control.³⁸² This is enlightening at face value as it gives a sense of hindsight, what the need for birth control can result in if not enacted. It also presents a continuation of Carpenter’s global vision, as Twells argues, a mix between “allyship” and orientalist attitudes.³⁸³ This inclusion of China is further unsurprising as Sanger visited twice to promote birth control and used China as an example to validate the Malthusian theory.³⁸⁴ And considering Carpenter’s involvement in the *Birth Control Review*, this would be unsurprising to Carpenter. In addition, Carpenter wrote a poem on China, published in later editions of

³⁷⁵ Ibid, p.1

³⁷⁶ Alison Twells, ‘Iron Dukes and Naked Races’ p.47; Sheila Rowbotham, ‘In Search of Carpenter’ p.132

³⁷⁷ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter ‘Birth Control and Bisexuality’, p.1

³⁷⁸ Ibid, p.2

³⁷⁹ ‘Messages to the Conference: From Edward Carpenter’ *The Birth Control Review* 5:12 (December 1921) p.15

³⁸⁰ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.385

³⁸¹ Adam Hayes, ‘What was China’s One-Child Policy? It’s Implications and Importance’ *Investopedia*, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/o/one-child-policy.asp> [accessed: 13.11.2022]

³⁸² Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter ‘Birth Control and Bisexuality’, p.3

³⁸³ Alison Twells, ‘Eros the Great Leveller’ p.3

³⁸⁴ Z Wang, M Yang, J Zhang and J Chang, ‘Ending an Era of Population Control in China: Was the One-Child Policy Ever Needed?’ *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 75:4 (2016), 929-979, p.936

Towards Democracy as part of a culmination of many of his poems.³⁸⁵ In the poem, he referred to China as having 'a population denser, on a large scale, than anywhere else on Earth'.³⁸⁶ It is clear to Carpenter, therefore, that China was a key example of the need for birth control and a potential future if birth control was not given the correct attention. Although by modern standards, Carpenter's opinions are seen as condescending in his orientalism, it must be noted that Carpenter's home in Milthorpe became 'a place of pilgrimage for the politically correct of his day' according to Rowbotham, which shows the contemporary forwardness of his ideas.³⁸⁷ Furthermore, Carpenter was open-minded regarding different cultures and customs. One example can be seen in his homage to his trip to India and Ceylon, going as far as querying the 'superior benefit' of Western 'civilisation' and religions over Eastern equivalents.³⁸⁸ Furthermore, at no point in the manuscript does Carpenter steer away from the birth control issue regarding China. His focus was on birth control and birth rates, suggesting that he was citing a large population and the possible repercussions if family limitations did not occur. At this time, China's population was estimated at over 411 million, which, compared to Britain's 38 million in 1921, appears staggering, but considering the land mass at face value, it was in line with expectations.³⁸⁹ In other words, Carpenter's inclusion of China in his manuscript is another example of his transnationalism and future-thinking along with his advocacy for birth control; it was to further his argument using other opinions in the birth control movement.

Carpenter also used ancient population control methods to advocate for contemporary birth control. In this, he referred to the practice of infanticide as a method used to control population size. Arguing that birth control was not known to the Ancient Greeks, and therefore, in to retain a stationary population, infanticide was practiced.³⁹⁰ Drawing from Plato and Aristotle, Carpenter used their depictions of Greek life in his manuscript. This depiction, however, is not accurate. Although not sanctioned by doctors as a form of birth control, evidence of douching can be traced to ancient times.³⁹¹ Furthermore, although not from Greece, Ancient Egyptian texts reference a homemade form of pessary.³⁹² This information and its availability, however, could be attributed to the social taboos of the period. Considering Carpenter's writing in *Marriage and Sex-Love*, the taboo nature of sexual education and going as far as to refer to it as a 'sealed book', it is not unlikely that this information was also sealed.³⁹³ The dismissal of birth control in contemporary times

³⁸⁵ Edward Carpenter, 'China' in *Towards Democracy*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1918) 6th Complete edition pp.471-476

³⁸⁶ *Ibid*, pp.473

³⁸⁷ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: Life of Liberty and Love*, p.7

³⁸⁸ June Perry Levine, 'Edward Carpenter' p.466; Sheila Rowbotham, 'In Search of Carpenter', p.126

³⁸⁹ Walter F Willcox, 'The Population of China in 1910' *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 23:161 (1928 pp.18-30 p.18; 'The 1921 Census', *National Archives*, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20s-people/the-1921-census/#:~:text=The%201921%20Census%3A%20the%20largest,online%20for%20the%20first%20time>, [accessed: 11.11.2022]

³⁹⁰ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.6

³⁹¹ Kate Lister, *A Curious History of Sex* p.256

³⁹² *Ibid*, p.267

may have influenced the analysis/nature of scholars and historians, as this side of the ancient times rebuked the romantic view. In addition, relying on philosophers such as Plato may have skewed perceptions. Carpenter's referral to infanticide being 'certainly practiced' causes further contention.³⁹³ Evidence suggests that, although infanticide may have occurred, it was by no means government-sanctioned.

Furthermore, Archaeological evidence suggests that contrary to Plato's writing, active assistance to weak or disabled infants was evident, an example being ceramic baby bottles.³⁹⁴ Sneed argues that if infanticide occurred, it was likely due to poverty and not a default response.³⁹⁵ This contrasts the depictions on which Carpenter based his argument. The lack of accuracy may be a source of invalidation. However, this classical view is one which, during Carpenter's lifetime, was widely accepted. This, combined with previous suggestions of information being stifled due to its taboo nature, suggests Carpenter was working with the best contemporary knowledge. The manuscript used information on Ancient Greece as an example of how even a civilised nation can resort to barbaric behaviour to prevent overpopulation.³⁹⁶ Carpenter used infanticide as a contrast to the contemporary form of birth control. It presents the morality of birth control and how it is a far better option than infanticide. The use of infanticide in a civilised nation due to birth control not being available ties to the beginning of the manuscript.³⁹⁷ The notion of overpopulation resulting in a barbaric practice was a possible future if the need for birth control was not met. By using contemporary knowledge, which Carpenter was astute in, he aimed to use the example to highlight the benefits of birth control. Conversely, infanticide in Ancient Greece due to poverty still links to Carpenter's argument for birth control, as seen in *The Birth Control Review*.³⁹⁸ In which he described children being left in poverty and neglect due to a lack of birth control, and infanticide can be seen as an extreme result of this.³⁹⁹

The use of Ancient Greece also ties to the previous chapter regarding Marie Stopes. In *Radiant Motherhood* (1920), Stopes drew on the 'High civilisation' of Ancient Greece and compared the middle and upper classes to enslaved people, as in Ancient Greece, they were only allowed to bear children on account of 'Good behaviour'.⁴⁰⁰ By Carpenter including infanticide, a barbaric practice, he diminished and countered Stopes' earlier argument. It suggests a lack of civilisation. Since Plato suggested it as a means of population control, it indicates that Carpenter was attacking Stopes' argument and providing evidence of the uncivilised reality of Stopes' 'high civilisation'. When combined with Sneed's argument of poverty being

³⁹³ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality' p.6

³⁹⁴ Debby Sneed, 'Disability and Infanticide in Ancient Greece' *Hesperia*, 90:4 (2021), 747-772, p.749

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p.768

³⁹⁶ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.6

³⁹⁷ *Ibid*. p.6

³⁹⁸ 'Messages to the Conference: From Edward Carpenter' *The Birth Control Review* 5:12 (December, 1921) p.15

³⁹⁹ 'Messages to the Conference: From Edward Carpenter' p.15; Debby Sneed, 'Disability and Infanticide in Ancient Greece' p.768

⁴⁰⁰ Marie C Stopes, *Radiant Motherhood* pp.210

Eugenics: a Study in Social Evolution

“Birth control by diminishing the number of children born into the world may need in a great improvement in their quality”⁴⁰¹

Carpenter’s socialist eugenicism is further emphasised and contrasted against Stopes’ ideology in the above quote. Unlike Carpenter, Stopes failed to acknowledge that the working class did not easily procure contraception.⁴⁰² Carpenter’s argument echoes an earlier one by Annie Besant. In 1877, she was arrested and charged due to her republication of Knowlton’s book regarding birth control; Besant argued that the cheap edition of the book (6d) allowed working-class women to access the same information on birth control that middle-class women could already buy at W H Smiths for a few shillings.⁴⁰³ Considering a shilling was approximately 12d, Besant was highlighting that it was not about the information but about the contents but rather power over the working class and male authority.⁴⁰⁴ As seen earlier, Stopes picked out which people were ‘worthy’ of having children whereas Carpenter did not as seen from the lack of class differentiation regarding the reduction of the number of children born.⁴⁰⁵ These two arguments are a stark contrast and show Carpenter’s socialist ideology. It also offers a different opinion on birth control and its impact, along with Carpenter’s interpretation of eugenics.

As Rowbotham argues, Carpenter, like other socialist birth controllers, believed that eugenics could lead to a new model of people and a new world.⁴⁰⁶ In the same vein, Carpenter urged the working classes not to play into the hands of the dividend-rich.⁴⁰⁷ Much like Besant 50 years prior, for Carpenter, birth control was a tool to uplift the working class. Although eugenicist, Carpenter’s final argument in the manuscript was that its practice would diminish the number of children born into the world but lead to a ‘great improvement in their quality’.⁴⁰⁸ This clearly links back to his stance on birth control being a positive tool for the working class as it would improve the quality of life. This is further evident from his earlier work, one prominent example being that in Sanger’s *Birth Control Review*.⁴⁰⁹ Carpenter’s eugenicism was clearly on the socialist side, repeatedly made evident through his writings. And it becomes paramount in this quotation. Children and their futures were an explicit part of his contraceptive ideology. The removal of this ‘burden’, which

⁴⁰¹ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter ‘Birth Control and Bisexuality’, p.10

⁴⁰² Jules Giles, ‘Narratives of Gender, Class, and Modernity in Women’s Memories of Mid-Twentieth Century Britain’ *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28:1 (2002) 21-41 p.36

⁴⁰³ Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden From History*, pp.74-75

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid* p.75

⁴⁰⁵ Marie C. Stopes, *Contraception* pp.34-35

⁴⁰⁶ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, p.385

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p.385

⁴⁰⁸ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter ‘Birth Control and Bisexuality’, p.10

⁴⁰⁹ ‘Messages to the Conference: From Edward Carpenter’ p.15

Carpenter wrote about in *Woman*, extended to unwanted children, children who were unwanted due to poverty and other issues the working class were enamoured by in Carpenter's view.⁴¹⁰

Carpenter's socialist ventures extended to work on prison reform, humanitarian causes and social reform.⁴¹¹ This is again was a stark contrast to Stopes in *Radiant Motherhood*. The most poignant part of her statement was that the improvements to society 'hovers in the dreams of our reformers'.⁴¹² Although not direct, this stance by Stopes' undermined Carpenter and his beliefs. As an advocator for reforms including the above, Carpenter's views on birth control blatantly misaligned with Stopes'. Carpenter clearly envisioned an amalgamation of these reforms and practices as a way to improve lives. This is made clear through his referral to the decrease of 'checks' and the 'simultaneous increase in the amenities and securities of life'.⁴¹³ As previously stated, Carpenter's long advocacy for these amenities and securities shows that he views them positively. And this can be seen throughout his work and advocacy for birth control. His focus on the working class in terms of birth control highlights his ideations regarding class equality and struggle.⁴¹⁴ As an advocate for the working class, it is clear that this manuscript aimed to impact members positively.

Woman and her Birth Control in a Free Society

As seen earlier, Carpenter strongly advocated for women's rights. This can be seen in his previous work; the manuscript is no exception. Surrounded by women such as Olive Schreiner, Carpenter was clearly of the same calibre. His previous works, such as *Woman and her Place in a Free Society (1894)*, show his feminist views. In the text, he displayed his socialist and feminist views in a direct line where he refers to women being treated increasingly like a possession or doll, particularly among the 'possessing classes'.⁴¹⁵ In this, he refers to women being powerless compared to men. When writing, women were 'owned' by a male relation (husband or father), hence Carpenter's referral to women as akin to objects and prisoners to the upper classes.⁴¹⁶ This was even more so reinforced in the middle and upper classes. This gives a clear example of Carpenter's ideology, which is seen to have developed when he wrote the unpublished manuscript.

Before the unpublished manuscript was written, women over the age of thirty were given the vote in 1918. Although not universal suffrage, as all men over twenty-one could vote by 1918, it was still a step in the right direction. Carpenter's feminism is well documented, and it is no surprise that this advocacy would be

⁴¹⁰ Edward Carpenter, *Woman and Her Place in a Free Society* p.24

⁴¹¹ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: Life of Liberty and Love* p.1

⁴¹² Maire C. Stopes, *Radiant Motherhood*, pp.215-26

⁴¹³ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.1

⁴¹⁴ Vivian Gornich, 'The Lost Radical' *Boston Review* (2009) 36:6 pp.25-27 p.27

⁴¹⁵ Edward Carpenter, *Marriage in a Free Society* p.13

⁴¹⁶ Vincent Geoghegan, 'Edward Carpenter's England Revisited' p.513

included in his manuscript on birth control.⁴¹⁷ Since the manuscript was likely written in 1927, the 1928 'Flapper Vote' had not yet been passed; it was a topic of debate at the time.⁴¹⁸ There was conservative fear that a 'flapper vote folly' of young and working-class voters would deliver a labour government, and this fear for conservatives is one which Carpenter would have welcomed.⁴¹⁹ In addition, with his previous advocacy for women's suffrage, the referral of women's suffrage in the manuscript is unsurprising. Carpenter directly referred to women's suffrage in the manuscript as a form of great outgrowth of political activity.⁴²⁰ And he furthered this as being part of a wider evolution or gradual expansion of activities.⁴²¹ Carpenter used images of nature to describe how this expansion still occurs against the odds. The tree's growth is used in this metaphor, 'as the bark strangulates growth for a time'; however, 'inner forces gather strength' and cause a new bud to form.⁴²² This imagery explicitly ties into political activity and women's suffrage. The effort of the bud in order to break through the bark was not without struggle, as Carpenter acknowledged in the manuscript. Here, Carpenter clearly alluded to women's struggle to be granted the vote and showed his support for the movement. Using positive and natural imagery, Carpenter reinforced that female emancipation is part of natural progression.

This flowery imagery is juxtaposed with his earlier writing, seen in *Marriage*.⁴²³ Carpenter's writing in 1894 referred to the union of marriage akin to that of ivy and an oak tree, with women being the ivy. As previously suggested, this was a parasitic relationship, but women needed men to survive in the relationship due to societal expectations and survival.⁴²⁴ This change in imagery from 1894 to the manuscript tells of changing views, as highlighted by Carpenter's commentary. In the new analogy, society was now the tree, and women were part of the tree, a new part working to break free.⁴²⁵ Rather than a parasitic relationship, Carpenter argued natural progression and the creation of a new part of the tree which would make it more striking and larger, a new branch of progression forming.

Carpenter echoed Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) in his manuscript. In the novel, Mrs Dalloway sees her daughter being driven by ambitions and possibilities which were not available to her at that age.⁴²⁶ He also echoed Olive Schreiner in her letters to her niece as a 'problem girl' and her pride that there are

⁴¹⁷ Sheila Rowbotham, 'In Search of Carpenter' p.121

⁴¹⁸ Selina Todd, *The People: the Rise and Fall of the Working Class 1910-2010*, (London: John Murray, 2014), pp.63-64

⁴¹⁹ Ibid, pp.63-64

⁴²⁰ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.9

⁴²¹ Ibid, p.9

⁴²² Ibid, p.9

⁴²³ Edward Carpenter, *Marriage in a Free Society*, p.14

⁴²⁴ Ibid p.10

⁴²⁵ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.9

⁴²⁶ R Bowlby, 'Thinking Forward through Mrs Dalloway's Daughter' in S Reid, *Mrs Dalloway and to the Lighthouse: Contemporary critical essays* (Basingstoke, 1993) pp.142-155 p.143

more problem girls than when she was young.⁴²⁷ As Carpenter wrote in the manuscript, he cited his admiration for the 'new' women and the changes in their condition compared to his sister 50 years ago; a clear comparison can, therefore be made to both Schreiner and Woolf.⁴²⁸ These examples show the progress made for women in a short period; in this case, Carpenter acknowledged the progress made in his lifetime. And as seen from the first chapter, the manuscript shows the shifts in society. In the manuscript, he wrote about this in explicit admiration.⁴²⁹ Carpenter's clear favour of the modern woman reinforces his advocacy for birth control due to her connection to the birth control movement.⁴³⁰ This can be seen when Carpenter referred to the women spearheading the movement as focusing on the community's needs, not just their individual ones.⁴³¹ Again, Carpenter's feminist and socialist ideologies appear here, with this inclusion in the manuscript as just one example.

Young women in the 1920s had more possibilities than their predecessors, and Carpenter writes about this positively.⁴³² Carpenter notes that he can hardly express his admiration sufficiently for the outspokenness of contemporary young women, and warm gratitude for the changes that have occurred.⁴³³ It is clear from the manuscript, particularly this line, that Carpenter favoured the progress women were making. And this extended to the 'new' woman. As an avid supporter of both women's suffrage and sexual reform, it is unsurprising that the manuscript includes this. Carpenter explicitly referred to women being barred from 'normal sexuality' when his sisters were young, and his hope that, like suffrage, the same emancipation will occur.⁴³⁴ As previously seen from his early pamphlets on sex reform, sexual representation was now occurring; adding to this change, Carpenter had noted and admired.⁴³⁵ By including this in his manuscript on birth control, Carpenter alludes to the same liberation of birth control. Compared to when Carpenter and his sisters were young, birth control had developed significantly and had a multitude of literature on the subject. The United Kingdom and the United States of America had their respective birth control figureheads. Furthermore, it was openly discussed in national newspapers, such as the *Daily Mail* and the *Times*.⁴³⁶ Support and opposition were published in newspapers, allowing a broader audience to engage and become aware of the matter. Not only was there greater literature on the subject, but there were also more forms available than previously. 1920 saw the invention of latex condoms, and with several different forms

⁴²⁷ Liz Stanley, 'Olive Schreiner', p.61

⁴²⁸ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.8

⁴²⁹ *Ibid*, p.8

⁴³⁰ *Ibid*, p.8

⁴³¹ *Ibid*, p.4

⁴³² *Ibid*, p.8

⁴³³ *Ibid*, p.8

⁴³⁴ *Ibid*, p.8

⁴³⁵ Alison Twells, "'Eros the Great Leveller'", p.1

⁴³⁶ Dawson of Penn, 'The Birth Rate' *The Times* 3 September 1929 p.8; Freer. A. S. B., 'The Birth Rate' *The Times* 10 September 1929 p.10; 'Woman Official to Go', *Daily Mail*, 20 December 1922 p.5

of diaphragms or caps, the literature combined with the options was a stark contrast to when Carpenter's sisters were young.⁴³⁷ In this manuscript, it is clear Carpenter is stating that birth control is part of the natural progression, in addition to its necessity.

Bisexuality and Other Poems

Carpenter continues his advocacy for birth control in the second half of the unpublished manuscript titled *Bisexuality*. He argues that bisexuality could be a solution to overpopulation.⁴³⁸ Without the need for a Platonic or Malthusian solution, bisexual people may combat overpopulation since they produce smaller families.⁴³⁹ However, there is the question of how Carpenter defines bisexuality. The term bisexual in modern times refers to someone who is attracted to both men and women; however, Carpenter's definition differs. At the beginning of this section, Carpenter writes that the two types, male and female, overlap and combine and only at the later stage of maturity does a divergence occur. He then referred to a child, therefore, being considered bisexual.⁴⁴⁰ This definition appears to somewhat, by modern standards, resemble a non-binary person.⁴⁴¹ A non-binary person does not identify with the binary of male or female and instead may only identify with some aspects, all or none. This difference in definition, therefore, influences analysis as modern and contemporary definitions differ.

The reason why Carpenter believed bisexual people would aid the overpopulation crisis is one he does not explore in great detail. In the manuscript, Carpenter refers to 'bisexual people or those tending that way' would 'automatically' produce smaller families.⁴⁴² A possible assumption is that Carpenter was writing of a more accepting future, where bisexuality is accepted along with birth control. It may also be that Carpenter was surmising that, through his experiences, bisexual people were more forward-thinking, and birth control would be commonly used in the group. This can be alluded from Carpenter's previous work on Percy Shelley, which he referenced in the manuscript. The radical romantic poet, and husband of the esteemed science-fiction writer Mary Shelley, held several beliefs which aligned with Carpenter's own, such as Platonism. Shelley's sexuality has also been of debate even today, and Carpenter included this in the manuscript.⁴⁴³ This debate of Shelley's sexuality combined with his poetry is one which Carpenter wrote

⁴³⁷ Kate Lister, *A Curious History of Sex* p.274

⁴³⁸ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.14

⁴³⁹ *Ibid*, p.14

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.11

⁴⁴¹ Stonewall Staff, '10 Ways to Step Up as an Ally to Non-Binary People' *Stonewall* <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/news/10-ways-step-ally-non-binary-people> [accessed: 16.11.2022]

⁴⁴² Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.14

⁴⁴³ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.14; Edward Carpenter & George Barnefield, *A Psychology of the Poet Shelley* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1925) p.64

about in *The Psychology of the Poet Shelley* (1925) along with George Barnefield. Considering it was a recent piece of writing it is unsurprising it was referred to again in the manuscript.

Shelley's sexuality fluctuated between homosexuality and heterosexuality, according to Shih, which was made evident in his works.⁴⁴⁴ For example, in *Epipsychidion*, Shelly inferred that it was desiccated to a 'non-female lover'; his use of 'if you *were* a lady' makes this clearer.⁴⁴⁵ This question of Shelley's sexuality and suggestion of being attracted to the same sex was of great interest to Carpenter, which was clear in *The Psychology of the Poet Shelley*. The co-written book with George Barnefield was Carpenter's last new work before this manuscript. Clearly, therefore, it was still on his mind. In his section of *Psychology*, Carpenter stated that Barnefield's theories needed consideration. These theories centered around Shelley having 'homosexual tendencies', which he had not come to the realisation of before his premature death.⁴⁴⁶ Barnefield's argument was supported by Carpenter, as is made clear in the co-written book, however more so with the inclusion in the manuscript's section *bisexuality*.

In both the manuscript and *Psychology*, Carpenter fixated on Shelley's poem, *the Witch of Atlas* (1820). In which a witch creates a 'being' of double sex, referred to by contemporaries as a 'hermaphrodite'.⁴⁴⁷ This 'being' is the central focus in Carpenter's analysis in both works. In 1925, Carpenter argued that the 'hermaphrodite' showed the 'poet's wide-ranging interest in whatever might possibly fall within the domain of human experience'.⁴⁴⁸ In doing so, he referred to the 'creature' as being a symbol of all of Shelley's interests, both male and female and neither at the same time. The 'creature' was not written as half of each, but rather as 'double sex' according to Carpenter and holds the central theme in the poem.⁴⁴⁹ Carpenter's fixation on Shelley's 'Hermaphrodite' continued into his unpublished manuscript. In his manuscript, Carpenter argued that the 'creature' in *the Witch of Atlas* presents the 'possibility of a new type arising of a human being', and this combination of both sexes also held the same grace, providing inspiration.⁴⁵⁰ This reinforcement that the 'creature' is not half of either but two wholes shows that Carpenter regarded his version of a bisexual person as the embodiment of the ideal qualities in both sexes working harmoniously. He also referred to this as a 'dream' and 'inspiration' for a new world order.⁴⁵¹ Carpenter clearly saw this image as the future and a key to an improved world. Utilising Shelley's

⁴⁴⁴ Terence H W Shih, 'Shelley's Quest for Love: Queering Epipsychidion' *Romanticism on the Net* (Spring-Fall 2019) p.4

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.5

⁴⁴⁶ Edward Carpenter & George Barnefield, *A Psychology of the Poet Shelley* pp.7 & 59

⁴⁴⁷ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.14; Edward Carpenter & George Barnefield, *A Psychology of the poet Shelley*, p.18

⁴⁴⁸ Edward Carpenter & George Barnefield, *A Psychology of the Poet Shelley* p.17

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.18

⁴⁵⁰ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.14

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp.14-15

'hermaphrodite', Carpenter used historical fictional characters, whom both writers held in high regard, as people Carpenter argued had bisexual tendencies but also highly regarded leaders. These figures were not limited to Apollo, Osiris and Dionysus. Carpenter argues these leaders, although relegated to myth, were likely real people lost to time and legend. And these bisexual men, as Carpenter argued in his manuscript, were great leaders in part due to their bisexual temperament.⁴⁵²

Carpenter's argument of bisexual types leading to a new world order extends its reach into birth control as he argued this type of person leads to smaller families. He argued this is due to temperament and indifference to the pursuit of a partner. Carpenter went on to state that prospective parents and justice magistrates needed to be made aware of these facts.⁴⁵³ In regards to birth control, the emergence of bisexual people leading to smaller families and would, therefore, curb the increasing population, ceasing the need for birth control.

The seeds sown for birth control advocacy by Carpenter in his early work, and in this work, his advocacy is clear and explicit. This manuscript highlights the shifts in perspective on birth control and the positive changes which Carpenter had seen in his lifetime.⁴⁵⁴ In comparison to his writings such as 'in a free society', the advocacy no longer needed to be implicit and could be explicit. The manuscript provides an unprompted view of Carpenter's birth control advocacy and his beliefs and hopes. Through exploration of the piece, Carpenter's ideologies are further cemented. His socialism and eugenicism are made further evident in this manuscript and further cemented Carpenter's subscription to the belief that having fewer children would lead to them having better lives.⁴⁵⁵ Whilst his admiration for the steps forward made by women and the changes which had taken place highlights his advocacy for sex reform and women's rights.⁴⁵⁶ The second part of his manuscript highlights Carpenter's refusal to acknowledge boundaries between areas of knowledge, as seen from his belief bisexual people would have fewer children.⁴⁵⁷ The beginnings of a model people for a model world were coming to fruition for Carpenter.⁴⁵⁸

Carpenter's manuscript also shows, as with many of his works, that more was needed to be done, which was made clear in his opening line.⁴⁵⁹ His refusal to leave sex reform to the next generation is clear from his long

⁴⁵² Ibid, p.16

⁴⁵³ Ibid, p.13

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, p.9

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid, p.10

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid, p.8

⁴⁵⁷ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.6; Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.13

⁴⁵⁸ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, p.385

⁴⁵⁹ Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.1

-lasting writings on the subject and is further clarified in the manuscript.⁴⁶⁰ Birth control had made many great strides, but more was to be done. The question of the potential impact of the manuscript, if it was published, will remain unknown. However, it can be estimated based on previous sales of Carpenter's work and birth control writing. *Sex-Love* had sold over 2,000 copies by March 1894, making it a best seller by the publisher's standards, and with *Married Love* having sold over 400,000 copies by 1923, birth control was a topic gaining a lot of interest and with Carpenter's previous work on sex reform, the manuscript would have received a lot of contemporary criticism at the very least.⁴⁶¹ The reality of the contemporary response to the manuscript will remain unknown, but its contents are still of utmost importance.

As a culmination of Carpenter's ideology, it shows that the issue was important enough to him to warrant writing. Even without the knowledge of the previous chapters, it is clear from the manuscript, through its references and the research, that Carpenter held proficient knowledge of birth control and had a socialist ideology surrounding this.⁴⁶² Birth control was a topic Carpenter had followed closely since the 1890s, and through this manuscript and his writings in *The Birth Control Review*, it was more than an extension of sex reform by the 1920s. Through analysis of this, the literary void regarding Carpenter and birth control can be further bridged. Carpenter was an avid supporter of the movement, but he also laid the foundations and continued supporting figureheads. This manuscript was simply another piece of his broader ideology.

⁴⁶⁰ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, p.219

⁴⁶¹ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, p.213; Marie C. Stopes, *Wise Parenthood*, Editions page

⁴⁶² Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.3

Conclusion

*'Much of this success we owe to you for the seeds that you have sown in opening the minds of people through your books and articles on the sex subject.'*⁴⁶³

Edward Carpenter passed away at the end of June 1929, a few months short of his eighty-fifth birthday, after showing signs of dementia, along with 'seizures', which were likely strokes, leaving him unable to walk and made speaking and hearing difficult.⁴⁶⁴ After his death and funeral, obituary writers struggled to summarise his life, as it defied categorisation.⁴⁶⁵ Carpenter had been so enamoured with so many ventures and causes that a short obituary could not do him justice. This is later echoed by the historiography tending to do Carpenter 'in bits', as there were so many avenues that Carpenter explored.⁴⁶⁶ Hence, why in this work, Carpenter's influence on the birth control movement has been the focus.

His immediate legacy was filled with tributes from *The Times*, *The Telegraph* and other newspapers, along with figures such as Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald and E. M. Forster.⁴⁶⁷ Tom Swan updated his biography of Carpenter two weeks after his death, adding a 4-page prologue.⁴⁶⁸ In the addition, Swan stated that he believed 'that Mr. Carpenter's contributions to modern thought have not been adequately recognised or examined'.⁴⁶⁹ And although Carpenter's immediate legacy was the outpouring of tributes, his legacy began to fade in the 1930s.⁴⁷⁰ With George Orwell's description of the left attracting 'every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, 'Nature Cure' quack, pacifist and feminist in England' was a clear discredit to Carpenter and further emphasised his public image at the time and his relegation underground.⁴⁷¹ Although Carpenter has begun to see increasing recognition, such as with the Edward Carpenter Equality Walk and a recent resurgence in the historiography, he is still lingering in the underground and has not received as much praise as his contemporaries.⁴⁷² This work aimed to bring

⁴⁶³ 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA' Sheffield Archives Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29

⁴⁶⁴ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* pp.13, 436 & 438

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.439

⁴⁶⁶ Alison Twells, 'Eros the Great Leveller' p.1

⁴⁶⁷ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, pp.439

⁴⁶⁸ Tom Swan, *Edward Carpenter: The Man and his Message* (London; Charles Whittingham and Griggs Printers Ltd, 1929) pp.i-iv

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.i

⁴⁷⁰ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* pp.439 &441

⁴⁷¹ Mark Simpson, 'The Lost Utopian: Why have so Few of us heard of the Victorian Poet and Renowned Socialist Edward Carpenter' *Independent* (05.10.2008) <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/the-lost-utopian-why-have-so-few-of-us-heard-of-victorian-poet-and-renowned-socialist-edward-carpenter-949080.html> [accessed: 29.04.2023]; Sheila Rowbotham., *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* pp.449 & 453

⁴⁷² Christian Massey, 'Derbyshire gay rights trailblazer honoured with a cross country walk' *Derbyshire Live* (7.11.2022) <https://www.derbyshiretimes.co.uk/news/politics/derbyshire-gay-rights-trailblazer-honoured-with-cross-country-walk-3834810> [accessed: 21.04.23]

Edward Carpenter's birth control advocacy to focus and begin bridging the gap in Carpenter's historiography.

As seen throughout this work, Carpenter's birth control advocacy was apparent even in his early writings, even in its necessary implicit nature. This is made clear in his 'In a Free Society' pamphlets and other writings on sex reform. Sex and possession, as clear from the chapter, was a clear theme in the pamphlets regarding the subordination of women. But birth control was another theme. His pamphlets not only aimed to spark discussions surrounding sex and sexuality but also extended to birth control and contraception.⁴⁷³ Carpenter's criticisms of the lack of sexual education and the language used showed that birth control was part of the conversation he aimed to highlight through the pamphlets. And the visible challenge against conventional morality further highlights Carpenter's support for sexual education, which included birth control.⁴⁷⁴ This implicit advocacy became explicit in Carpenter's *Love's Coming of Age* (1896), with his arguments for an artificial method to prevent conception.⁴⁷⁵ Carpenter's implicit advocacy became explicit in this line and furthers the argument that he was sowing the seeds for a discussion on birth control. Furthermore, Carpenter's later work highlights shifts in society, for example, in *The Intermediate Sex* (1908), where he both praised the emerging new woman and also their demand for marriage, meaning friendship as well as passion.⁴⁷⁶ This shift also showed Carpenter's continued birth control advocacy among the societal changes occurring at the time.

Not only did Carpenter have relationships with feminists such as Olive Schreiner with mutual admiration and influence, but he also had relationships with birth control campaigners.⁴⁷⁷ These relationships, as seen, extended much further than brief talks and recommendations of publishers. Schreiner view of herself, and later her niece, as a 'problem girl' highlighted the emergence of the new woman in a global setting but also provided an insight into Carpenter.⁴⁷⁸ The relationship between the two intellectuals lasted until Schreiner's death, and it is clear that the two shared ideologies from the pair's work. Both held admiration for the new woman emerging, and it is evident even through their writings and through a relationship which has hardly been explored.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷³ Alison Twells, 'Iron Dukes and Naked Races' p.57

⁴⁷⁴ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.204

⁴⁷⁵ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age* p.150

⁴⁷⁶ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.213; Edward Carpenter., *The Intermediate Sex* p.18

⁴⁷⁷ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A Life of Liberty and Love* p.91

⁴⁷⁸ Liz Stanley, 'Olive Schreiner', p.61

⁴⁷⁹ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.403; Stephen Gray, 'Two Dissident Dream-Walkers' p.56

As seen with Marie Stopes, there is evidence to suggest Carpenter was somewhat involved in the creation of *Married Love* (1918), for example, her visit to Millthorpe.⁴⁸⁰ Carpenter was not just a 'Cambridge mathematician' but also a heavily influential sex-reformer, and a suggestion of a publisher did not warrant a visit to Carpenter's home by Stopes.⁴⁸¹ Although the extent of Carpenter's contribution can only be speculated. His early advocacy not only sparked discussion but also provided a steppingstone for development. As seen with Margaret Sanger, not only did they discuss birth control in their meeting in 1915, but Carpenter's signature on the letter to President Wilson alongside that of Stopes provided clear evidence that Carpenter was at the very least, sanctioning the movement.⁴⁸² This advocacy for birth control seen in Carpenter's earlier writings was also further legitimised by Margaret Sanger's letter to Carpenter.⁴⁸³ Not only was Carpenter acknowledged by a birth control pioneer for his influence on the movement, but Sanger also wanted further input from Carpenter. This was seen in his piece in the *Birth Control Review*.⁴⁸⁴ Carpenter was clearly involved in the birth control movement and in such a significant way that birth control pioneers reached out to him, yet these relationships have been downplayed. Through the chapter, the relationships between Carpenter and these women have started to be unearthed, with the full extent still yet to be uncovered.

The unpublished manuscript was unprompted compared to the piece in *The Birth Control Review* and has received little attention in the historiography.⁴⁸⁵ In it, Carpenter's views on birth control became further evident, but also of changing attitudes from earlier works. Carpenter's earlier work shined through in the manuscript, and how he saw the changes as positive.⁴⁸⁶ His admiration for the new woman and his view that the birth control advocacy had only started to be tackled highlights his view on the progression he has seen since the pamphlets.⁴⁸⁷ The manuscript clarified that Carpenter was enamoured by the movement but also involved. And in true Carpenter fashion, his prophetic nature also appeared in the pamphlet with his inclusion of China.⁴⁸⁸ The manuscript showed Carpenter's stance but also potential. Due to its creation being so close to his death and dementia, it was never able to receive attention and publication, leading to it not significantly appearing in the historiography. The question of its impact, if published, is one which remains unknown. But what is clear is that birth control was of serious importance to Carpenter, as seen

⁴⁸⁰ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love* p.384

⁴⁸¹ June Rose, *Marie Stopes* p.93

⁴⁸² 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA' Sheffield Archives Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29; 'To the President of the United States' *Birth Control Review* 5:5 (1921) p.15

⁴⁸³ 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA' Sheffield Archives Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29

⁴⁸⁴ Edward Carpenter, 'Messages to the Conference: From Edward Carpenter', *The Birth Control Review*, (December 1921), 5:12, p.15

⁴⁸⁵ Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter A life of Liberty and Love*, pp.434-435

⁴⁸⁶ Sheffield, Sheffield Archives (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', Carpenter/Mss/248 p.8

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p.1 & p.8

⁴⁸⁸ Alison Twells, 'Iron Dukes and Naked Races' p.47; Sheffield, (SA), MS Carpenter 'Birth Control and Bisexuality', p.3

from the very first line of his manuscript.⁴⁸⁹ Contraception was of ongoing significance to Carpenter and had been for many years, and the manuscript was just a culmination of all of his ideology and advocacy.

The question as to why Carpenter had been left from the birth control narrative is one which has been throughout this work. One answer is that it is a 'bit' that the historiography has not covered yet.⁴⁹⁰ As Carpenter had so many ventures and was involved in so many movements, birth control is simply one which had been overshadowed by others. Another can be seen through Rose's reduction of Carpenter as a 'communist', 'homosexual', and 'Cambridge mathematician' in her work on Marie Stopes.⁴⁹¹ The focus on birth control pioneers such as Stopes and Sanger in the historiography provides some insight, as Carpenter was not part of the narrative during the second wave of feminism, as there was a focus on earlier women's opposition to enhance contemporary issues.⁴⁹² And with the introduction of the contraceptive pill in 1960, the focus on early birth control pioneers aligns with this narrative.⁴⁹³ As a far more spiritual writer, Carpenter's writing contrasted with the medical and instructional style of Stopes and Sanger. These two reasons combined suggest that, for Carpenter's legacy, birth control was not included as it was one of many avenues for Carpenter, and there were already obvious figureheads for the history of birth control. This work, however, aimed to begin bridging this gap in the historiography of Carpenter and birth control. It is clear from his early work and relationships with Stopes and Sanger that the manuscript was not a lone piece of writing. Carpenter was an early birth control advocate and supporter throughout his life. This was a lifelong endeavour for Carpenter and is made clear from this work.

Work such as the 'in a free society' pamphlets and their advocacy for sex reform and women's rights are obvious choices for implicit birth control advocacy.⁴⁹⁴ Yet further attention is needed on his other works to truly grasp Carpenter's birth control advocacy and development. Through an extensive analysis of his literature, his ideology can be seen developing and cementing. As seen in chapter one, Carpenter was implicit and explicit in his birth control advocacy in his writings, which was developing. By looking further into Carpenter's work, such as his autobiographical works *The Story of My Books* (1916) and *My Days and Dreams* (1916), can insight into Carpenter's ideology and birth control stance be further uncovered. What is clear from the pamphlets and other work analysed in chapter one is that Carpenter was already advocating for birth control, even if it was explicit, due to fear of rebuttal. Through his other writings and autobiographies, this advocacy would become further clearer.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid, p.1

⁴⁹⁰ Alison Twells, 'Eros the Great Leveller', p.1

⁴⁹¹ June Rose, *Marie Stopes*, pp.93-94

⁴⁹² Krista Cowman, "Carrying on a Long Tradition' Second-Wave Presentations of First-Wave Feminism in Spare Rib c.1972-80' *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 17:3 (2010), 193-210, p.194

⁴⁹³ Kate Lister, *A Curious History of Sex* (London: Unbound Publishing, 2020) p.275

⁴⁹⁴ Alison Twells, 'Iron Dukes and Naked Races' p.47

Another avenue is the Fabian Society mentioned in chapter two. As seen, the talk Sanger held was through the Fabian Society.⁴⁹⁵ The society that still exists today had early members who were birth control pioneers, such as Annie Besant.⁴⁹⁶ Carpenter was an early member, and as seen from the Carpenter collection in Sheffield Archives, he sent and received letters from several other members, including Annie Besant and Sydney Olivier.⁴⁹⁷ This opens up two further avenues of research, the Fabian Society and birth control, and further relationships Carpenter had with birth control pioneers. McClearley has analysed the speech Sanger gave to the Fabian Society, bringing to focus the question of birth control and its importance in the Fabian Society.⁴⁹⁸ Considering Besant's critical involvement in the Society and her birth control ties, advocacy, and relationship with Carpenter are of interest.⁴⁹⁹ Furthermore, Besant was an admirer of Carpenter, and her advocacy for birth control notably extended to the working class, meaning their shared ideology would lend itself well to an analysis of a possible relationship.⁵⁰⁰ This additional relationship and study of the Fabian society regarding birth control would further Carpenter's scope and interest in birth control and provide further historiography on the birth control movement in Britain preceding Marie Stopes.

To conclude, this work has only begun to analyse Carpenter and his advocacy and involvement with the birth control movement. Still, it is clear that Carpenter was a part of the early birth control movement. Long before the publication of *Married Love*, Carpenter was writing pro-birth control rhetoric. This rhetoric was recognised and appreciated by figureheads such as Sanger. Carpenter had indeed sown the seeds and ignited a discussion on birth control, paving the way for the next generation.⁵⁰¹ His early work on sex reform provided a form of signposting for later pioneers, in a time the advocacy could be more freely written about, and his later works on the subject further his advocacy but also suggest a proactive element. Combined with his support for both Stopes and Sanger, it is clear that Carpenter was an active voice enamoured with the birth control movement. Carpenter's advocacy for birth control occurred alongside his socialism, women's rights and sex reform, and by bringing this avenue into focus, they can be further understood. His advocacies blended into one another and, therefore, are inextricably linked, and from this work, it is clear. Carpenter's legacy as a socialist and reformist should not be without his birth control advocacy.

⁴⁹⁵ Sheila Rowbotham, 'Edward Carpenter 1844–1929' p.8

⁴⁹⁶ Adam J. Sacks, 'The Socialist Pioneers of Birth Control', *Jacobin* <https://jacobin.com/2019/08/socialism-birth-control-annie-besant-margaret-sanger> [Accessed: 05.05.2023]

⁴⁹⁷ See for examples: 'Letter from Annie Besant of 79. Avenue Road, St. John's Wood, London', *Sheffield Archives*, Carpenter/Mss/386/27, (7.7.1888); 'Letter from Sydney Olivier, 1st Baron Olivier of Ramsden at the India Office', *Sheffield Archives*, Carpenter/Mss/386/403, (24.7.124)

⁴⁹⁸ Kevin E. McClearley, 'A tremendous awakening': Margaret H. Sanger's speech at Fabian Hall', *Western Journal of Communication*, 58:3 (1994), 182-200, p.186

⁴⁹⁹ 'Fabian Society', *Working Class Movement Library*, <https://www.wcml.org.uk/our-collections/protest-politics-and-campaigning-for-change/the-fabian-society/> [Accessed: 5.5.2023]

⁵⁰⁰ Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter 1844-1929* p.90

⁵⁰¹ 'Letter from Margaret Sanger, of New York, USA', *Sheffield Archives*, Carpenter/Mss/375/28-29

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