

Repoliticizing Women and their Pasts

A Reconsideration of the Position of Women in the History of the
Netherlands (1795 – 1950)



Cecily Brown, *The Girl Who Had Everything*, 1998.

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voor Iris

“Wakkerschudden, opwekken tot belangstellen en medevoelen, tot onderzoeken en nadenken, dat is wat wij wilden! Of wij gefaald hebben in ons streven, kan alleen de toekomst leren.”¹

¹ Nationale Tentoonstelling van Vrouwenarbeid, 1898, IIAV00000110, no. 168, Archief Nationale Tentoonstelling van Vrouwenarbeid 1898, Atria, Amsterdam.

Abstract

In this thesis I reconstruct a section of the history of women's emancipatory activity in the Netherlands from 1795 until the 1930s. This reconstruction serves a dual purpose: firstly, to affirm that the current 'Feminist Waves' analogy, which has been widely used and criticized in feminist history, is indeed inadequate. This is the case because, as my thesis shows, a tide-like increase and decrease of emancipatory activity by women is demonstrably false — rather the contemporary socio-political climate largely determines whether this activity becomes situated at the forefront of the public stage. On top of that, the retrospective identification of any sort of starting point in history for feminism —or 'First Wave'— is a teleological historical fallacy. I demonstrate this through a content analysis and socio-political contextualization of a wide variety of primary sources which range from anywhere between public speeches, anonymous pamphlets and novels. I find that women have been structurally excluded from political history, both as subjects and authors, and have been forced into an isolationist position in the historical discipline. This connects to the second goal of this thesis, which is to propose a reevaluation of the current narrative of feminist history and the wealth of existing historical material surrounding it to integrate it into a general narrative of Dutch political history. As opposed to the isolationist and ignored position wherein political activity by women has been politically discredited as being part of a separate feminist history — solely based on an individual's gender instead of their political actions.

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0. Women and Politics in The Netherlands from 1795 – 1950

“A feminism that addresses only sexual oppression will pursue strategies that are of little use to women whose sex is just one cause of their political predicament. To make common oppression your rallying cry [...] isn’t just to ignore, but to guarantee, the oppression of the worst-off women.”² With this observation Amia Srinivasan succinctly identifies a continuously reoccurring issue in modern day feminism, and more specifically its history writing. In contemporary scholarship on feminism the ‘fourth wave of feminism,’ or sometimes ‘post-feminism,’ is currently in the process of being identified and constructed. With feminisms’ arrival at its fourth wave critical questions are posited as to whether the wave-metaphor is an adequate and sustainable analogy to describe the temporal development of feminism — and if it ever was.

In this thesis I will reevaluate the parts of the past that have been narrated as a history of feminism from the perspective of political history in order to incorporate women into mainstream history writing in a more sustainable, cohesive and complete manner. This will resolve the continuous internal conflicts that feminist history sustains as an isolated discipline, as well as offering a more nuanced perspective on the intersection between social and political spheres in Dutch national history. I will do so by offering an expanded and reappreciated analysis of the national political history of the Netherlands, specifically pertaining to the emancipatory activity taking place in the country from 1795 onwards. Not only will this allow for me to argue for the appropriate integration of women as political actors in the Dutch narrative of political history but it will also offer a critically constructive argument for the reconsideration of what political history as a discipline entails.

The majority of the studies of women in history have been conducted firmly within the theoretical framework constructed by the feminist wave metaphor and have thus been excluded from the general study of broader political history. Something that Karen Offen demonstrates as being inadequate through illustrating that women’s activism did not only go much further back chronologically than the turn of the 20th century, but it was also embedded much deeper, and entangled, in societal discussions, rather than being solely restricted to the particular topic of universal suffrage. Activism also took place pertaining to social injustice, women’s education, their position in marriage, the right to own property and on the topic of their financial independence.³

There is also a very clear contemporary need for this effort. As of 2022 the Supreme Court of the United States of America has officially overturned *Roe v Wade*, allowing for each individual state to draw up and execute its own legislation in regards to the right, or lack thereof, to abortion. Effective immediately abortion has now been criminalized in nearly half of the United States both for the administrator and for the recipient.⁴ Widespread reactions have proclaimed that this has set the United States back at least 50 years in time.⁵ It is exactly

² Amia Srinivasan, *The Right to Sex* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022) 162.

³ Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History*.

⁴ Nina Totenberg and Sarah McCammon, ‘Supreme Court Overturns *Roe v. Wade*, Ending Right to Abortion Upheld for Decades’, *NPR*, 24 June 2022, sec. *Roe v. Wade* and the future of reproductive rights in America, <https://www.npr.org/2022/06/24/1102305878/supreme-court-abortion-roe-v-wade-decision-overturn>.

⁵ Kevin Breuninger Mangan Lauren Feiner, Dan, ‘*Roe v. Wade*: Nation Reacts to the Supreme Court Ruling’, *CNBC*, 24 June 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/24/roe-vs-wade-supreme-court-abortion-ruling-divides->

this reaction which is extremely indicative for the persisting exclusionary relationship between women and history writing. This ‘going-back-in-time’ statement conveys the belief that there is—and always has been—one temporally linear course of progression in the improvement of gender equality.

Each wave was previously identified to encompass a time wherein a burst of increased activism for gender equality was, or is, being observed. Only at the time of the beginning of the second feminist wave was the first wave identified, and with that the wave metaphor was coined and a conventional timeline for the history of feminism began to be constructed.⁶ Despite the current criticism of the wave-metaphor the term remains in use.⁷ At the heart of the currently expressed criticism of the use of wave-metaphors when speaking of feminism lies an issue with the consecutiveness, and thus interrelatedness between each wave, that the imagery of numerically ascending waves creates.

Contemporary feminists believe their predecessors to be inadequate feminists for a variety of reasons, whether this be for a lack of activism relating to racial intersectionality or because of the re-enforcement of the gender binary construction.⁸ All these issues with preceding waves of feminisms still remain within in the conventionally constructed time-frame for feminism. Rather than a critique of the contents of each wave, a structural overhaul of the metaphor, and the history it has produced, should be undertaken. This will result in a more comprehensive understanding of the history of women’s emancipatory activity; embedding it in general political history both eliminates the need for the constant up-dating and reconstruction of each consecutive wave as well as reappreciating the role of women as political actors in society and the political climate as a whole.

In this thesis I will reconstruct women's political activism in the Netherlands during the period from the 1780s until 1919 to demonstrate the need for women to be reappreciated as political actors in Dutch history. I will cover a selection of examples of women’s (emancipatory) political activity in (mostly) chronological order and place these in their broader socio-political context in order to critically assess how the historical narrative and phenomenon that came to be known as the first feminist wave was constructed in the Netherlands. In doing so I will critically analyse both the temporal and ideological delineation of first-wave feminism in the Netherlands in order to de-isolate this narrative and demonstrate its values for the practice of political history. This will also highlight the current intentional erasure of the element of ongoing erratic struggle as a fundamental element of history and the use of only success stories to construct and isolated teleological narrative towards the establishment of women’s suffrage.⁹ It is necessary to include these examples of ‘failure’ as

[america.html](#), Jia Tolentino, ‘We’re Not Going Back to the Time Before Roe. We’re Going Somewhere Worse’, *The New Yorker*, 24 June 2022, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/07/04/we-are-not-going-back-to-the-time-before-roe-we-are-going-somewhere-worse>.

⁶ Martha Weinman Lear, ‘The Second Feminist Wave’, *The New York Times*, accessed 27 June 2022, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1968/03/10/90032407.html>.

⁷ Nicola Rivers, *Postfeminism(s) and the Arrival of the Fourth Wave : Turning Tides* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017)

⁸ Prudence Chamberlain, *The Feminist Fourth Wave: Affective Temporality* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017)

⁹ Fia Dieteren, ‘De vrouwenkwesie in de negentiende eeuw’, *De negentiende eeuw: documentatieblad Werkgroep 19e eeuw*, 1994; Maria Grever, *Strijd tegen de stilte: Johanna Naber (1859-1941) en de vrouwenstem in geschiedenis* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1994); Mieke Aerts, ‘Contesting Representations: Towards

they are no less influential even if their specific desired outcome was not realized. Case studies in upcoming chapters will demonstrate that in several cases legislation was made exactly in response to these failed attempts; thus in their failure these instances still shape the practice of politics. Especially since the standards for success have been defined according to patriarchal standards in a study of the activity of women in politics failures and their responses are prime indicators for political and social struggle.¹⁰ History is then no longer written as an account of the past, but rather constructed as a road to the present, and a map for the future.

Historiography & Theory: ‘Feminist History’ or ‘History of Women’? ‘Herstory’ or Gender History?

I will offer an overview of the existing historiography on the topics of the history of feminism, women’s history, herstory and the history of women’s political activism in the Netherlands from the 18th century and onwards. In order to conduct my research the differentiation between the four previously mentioned concepts needs to be clarified — they are semantically similar but in practice very different.¹¹ Feminism can be defined as the socio-political ideology which is put into practice through advocating for total egalitarianism between all genders. Its advocates are often politically active women— but not all women’s activism is necessarily feminist, and not all feminists are women.¹² In this thesis I will not be expanding feminist history by presenting a selection of earlier examples that fit the current criteria of feminism as this continues the exclusion of women from history covertly imposed by the historical profession.¹³

A concrete illustration of the problem with trying to practice a feminist study of history can be found in the changing understanding, throughout the writing of feminist history, of what gender equality actually entails.¹⁴ On the one hand there are those who believe that equality should preserve the differences between men and women, and should not strive for a ‘seat at the table’¹⁵ in modern society as this has been constructed on deeply patriarchal (and racist) foundation. Rather oppression should be eliminated and equal value should be ascribed to typically male and female characteristics and talents. Specifically in Dutch historiography this became known as ‘ethical feminism.’¹⁶ This sentiment is both expressed already during the 1830s but also in during the 1960s — albeit in different forms.¹⁷

New Histories of Women’s Activism’, in *Gender and Activism: Women’s Voices in Political Debate*, ed. Mieke Aerts, Jaarboek Voor Vrouwengeschiedenis ; 35 (Amsterdam: Verloren, 2015), 9–13.

¹⁰ Theory on politics being the practice of conflict.

¹¹ Cliona Murphy, ‘Women’s History, Feminist History, or Gender History?’, *The Irish Review* (1986-), no. 12 (1992): 21–26.

¹² Aerts, ‘Contesting Representations: Towards New Histories of Women’s Activism,’ 11.

¹³ Aerts, *Denkend aan Nederland: over geschiedenis, nationaliteit en politiek*, 52-3.

¹⁴ Ulla Jansz, ‘Denken over sekse in de eerste feministische golf’ (Amsterdam, Sara/Van Gennep, 1990)

¹⁵ This phrase originates from the poem ‘I, Too’ by Langston Hughes where he writes the following in 1926: “Tomorrow,/I’ll be at the table/When company comes./Nobody’ll dare/Say to me,/“Eat in the kitchen,”/Then.” It’s important to acknowledge that this poem has as its primary theme the racism faced by black people in the United States of America and that this injustice cannot be equated blindly to the oppression of women and their history in the Netherlands. Therefore, I am using this phrase to allude to a specific type of relation between one’s oppressor and themselves but I am in no way claiming that these situations are closely comparable.

¹⁶ Jansz, ‘Denken over sekse in de eerste feministische golf,’ 22.

¹⁷ See for example the works of Betje Wolff and Aagje Deken around the 1830s, as well as Audre Lorde’s essay ‘The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House’ from 1984 in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*.

On the other hand there is the understanding of feminism as a contribution to the establishment of individual freedom for everyone. Here the base assumption is that as individual human beings we should all be treated equally without any regard for what one's gender might be. In contrast with the aforementioned 'ethical feminism,' Dutch historians of feminism called this interpretation of equality 'rational feminism.'¹⁸ This is a sentiment that aligns strongly with enlightenment ideas and emancipatory activity of women during the Batavian revolution, in another form it can also be identified as an argument made by the women pleading for their inclusion in universal suffrage. Over time these interpretations have been alternating as dominant paradigm which means that not only did this influence the course of action for feminists at the time but also the history writing that was being done about women during this time.

On a more theoretical level, a distinction can be made between those who write history about women in the form of 'Herstory' versus those who write history through a gender-critical lens. It should be noted that Herstory is a concept which has been used to connote a multitude of slightly different types of history writing as well as philosophical ideas.¹⁹ However, the general consensus in amongst historians is that its goal is to highlight the presence of women in the already widely known historical narratives. Critically it has thus been called The History of Big Women.²⁰ A different approach to incorporating women into general historical narratives is through the analysis of history as being influenced by construction of gender as a social category.²¹ This approach was spearheaded by for example Joan Scott and Natalie Davis and closely aligned with the poststructuralist turn in academia.²² Scott argues that gender history is empathically different from women's history —and with that a better way to understanding history.²³ This approach pleads for the study of the way in which the construction of both the male and the female gender as social categories influenced both the events in the past and the history writing about it.²⁴ Although radically effective in deconstructing the pseudo-scientific biological understanding about the differing natures of men and women, this approach tends to fixate on gender as an institution and risks losing sight of historical actors in their own right.²⁵

A more niche group of historians of feminism argue that a 'first-wave of feminism' already occurred during the turn of the 19th century when the Batavian Republic existed. There was a notable burst in emancipatory activity with regards to women's positions in socio-political

¹⁸ Jansz, 'Denken over sekse in de eerste feministische golf,' 22.

¹⁹ Robin Morgan, *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books a division of Random House, 1970) 539; Isabelle Stengers, nY, From History to Herstory, in four stories, interview by Lieven de Caeter, 15 February 2016, <https://www.ny-web.be/artikels/history-herstory-four-stories/>.

²⁰ Francisca de Haan, *Sekse op kantoor: over vrouwelijkheid, mannelijkheid en macht, Nederland 1860-1940*, Publikaties van de Faculteit der Historische en Kunstwetenschappen ; 5 (Hilversum: Verloren, 1992); Sarah C. Maza, *Thinking about History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

²¹ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and The Politics of History*, Revised, GENDER AND CULTURE (Columbia University Press, 1999) 2.

²² Jansz, 'Denken over sekse in de eerste feministische golf,' 14.

²³ de Haan, *Sekse op kantoor: over vrouwelijkheid, mannelijkheid en macht, Nederland 1860-1940*, 36.

²⁴ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women's History in Transition: The European Case, " *Feminist Studies* (1 9 75-76) 3 : 90.

²⁵ de Haan, *Sekse op kantoor: over vrouwelijkheid, mannelijkheid en macht, Nederland 1860-1940*, 46.

sphere, as well as discussions about the cultural implications of gender differences.²⁶ However this ‘actual’ first wave is also repeatedly remarked to have been researched too little.²⁷ Also with the deconstruction of the Batavian Republic almost none of its revolutionary legacy has been believed to have been carried on into the 19th century, this includes the progressive ideas that were being developed in regards to gender equality.

During the 1970s in the Netherlands the ‘Landelijk Overleg Vrouwengeschiedenis’ observed the following: “In de regel schrijven historici over oorlogen, diplomatiek gearrewar, politiek, de kerk, cultuur (met een grote K) wetenschap etc. ... In dergelijke geschiedeniswerken komen vrouwen nauwelijks voor” in *Een tipje van de sluier* (1978).²⁸ This led to the belief that there was the need for history to be caught up to the reality that women had also been present at important historical events. Around the same time as this the notion of ‘Vrouwengeschiedenis’ was popularized in the Netherlands and became a political practice as well as academic — many researchers published in close connection to the women’s movement.²⁹ As this field developed into the 1980s, the practitioners in this field changed from historians that were active amongst feminist into feminists academics and thus depoliticized themselves up to a certain extent.³⁰ At the same time these scholars often still took up a fairly radical separatist position on the historical profession which has often led to oversimplification of the past and teleological anachronist projections from the ‘now’ the explain the current position of women.³¹

This example demonstrates a general historical fallacy; namely that of searching for origins in the past. This is something that historians in general often fall victim to, and those who attempt to diverge from the general historical narrative sometimes even more so. Samuel Moyn uses Marc Bloch to illustrate this issue with the following analogy: “It is tempting to assume that the trickle of melted snow in the mountains is the source of all the water in a great downstream flood, when, in fact, the flood depends on new sources where the river swells. They may be unseen and underground; and they come from somewhere else. History, Bloch concluded, is not about tracing antecedents. Even what continuity there is depends on novelty, and persistence of old things is due to new causes as time passes.”³² Rather than attempting to find the moment or event that served as catalyst for the development of feminism there is an urgent need to investigate and contextualize underground springs and their contribution to renewed continuity.

The ideological characterization of feminism in the Netherlands before 1900 has been identified as being a crossbreed of liberalism and Protestantism which together created the general communal goal of ‘moral reform.’ This goal can arguably be categorized as a conservative approach to social reform, as opposed to the radically progressive position

²⁶ Everard, ‘Vrouwen voor ’t vaderland : burgeres Van der Meer en de Bataafse politiek.’ & Lacquer ch6

²⁷ Haché, “‘Wat Zyn Toch Onze Nederlandsche Meisjens, over ’t Geheel?’ Onderzoek Naar Feminisme in de Eind-Achttiende-Eeuwse Nederlanden Aan de Hand van Het Revolutionaire Huishouden van Lieve van Ollefen (1798).’

²⁸ Els Kloek, ‘Wie hij zij, man of wijf: vrouwengeschiedenis en de vroegmoderne tijd: drie Leidse studies’ (Hilversum, Verloren, 1990)

²⁹ Kloek, ‘Wie hij zij, man of wijf: vrouwengeschiedenis en de vroegmoderne tijd: drie Leidse studies.’

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Olwen Hufton, ‘Survery Articles Women in History: Early Modern Europe’, *Past & Present* 101, no. 1 (1 November 1983): 125–41.

³² Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2012) 41-2.

feminism would later be identified as. However, contextualized these seemingly conservative standpoints, for example against prostitution or alcohol consumption, were exactly the areas of social life wherein the double standard between the sexes was most different. Thus rather than seeing the pleas for improved moral propriety as a conservative approach to women's emancipation they should be interpreted as an attempt to reduce the double standard.³³ [and with that a plea for continuity.]

These demands for moral reform were directly related to the political discussions on Dutch socio-economic reinvigoration during the 19th century and the solution was eventually found in the model of the nuclear family.³⁴ This relegated woman to the private sphere, at home and away from the public sphere wherein they took part in political debate during the Batavian republic. Traditional historical studies investigating women after the Batavian Republic thus often focus on this private sphere of women, for example through the study of the magazines that were published for the female public.³⁵ This exclusion of women, both in society but also in the approach to the study of the history of that time period, only reiterates the problem. Offen, Akkerman & Stuurman identify of 'the women question' being systematically presented as something separate from general politics and the active forgetting of the presence of women in history that takes place.³⁶ Political history, as one of the oldest traditions in the history profession, has for the majority of its practice been driven by the idea that the state and its servants are the most relevant indicators through which to understand human activity in the past. Political leaders were believed to be the most important drivers historical change, and the practice of "politics" was an activity exclusively occurring in the public sphere.³⁷

It is very clearly demonstrable through ego documents of figures like Thorbecke and his contemporaries that during their lifetime politics and private life were incredibly closely intertwined. There was hardly any different or separate experience of political and private events.³⁸ One way this can be demonstrated is for example through the use of ego documents of the previously mentioned 'big men.' The phrase the personal is political became increasingly popular amongst feminist in the 1960s; it drew attention to the fact that any political and public act or choice was never uninfluenced by one's personal life; both in motivating a decision and the consequences of said decision.

However, it is also exactly this sentiment that humanizes and normalizes political actors and creates an internalization for every individual that there is no private sphere for anyone as everything is political, this is deceptive as there is still very much a difference between politicians who make decisions that shape democracy and the lives of its citizens. It obfuscates

³³ Stuurman, *Wacht op onze daden: het liberalisme en de vernieuwing van de Nederlandse staat*, 340-1.

³⁴ Haché, "'Wat Zyn Toch Onze Nederlandsche Meisjens, over 't Geheel?'" Onderzoek Naar Feminisme in de Eind-Achttiende-Eeuwse Nederlanden Aan de Hand van Het Revolutionaire Huishouden van Lieve van Ollefen (1798).'

³⁵ Jensen, *'Bij uitsluiting voor de vrouwelijke sekse geschikt': vrouwentijdschriften en journalistes in Nederland in de achttiende en negentiende eeuw*.

³⁶ Tjitske Akkerman and Siep Stuurman, *Perspectives on Feminist Political Thought in European History: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, 1 online resource (x, 246 pages) : illustrations vols (London ; Routledge, 1998); Karen M. Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

³⁷ Maza, *Thinking about History*, 13.

³⁸ R.A.M. Aerts and Janny de Jong, *Het persoonlijke is politiek: egodocumenten en politieke cultuur* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2002) 184.

the fact that despite personal life influencing the political there still remains a political sphere which is shaped by few and influences the lives of many.³⁹ Therefore the rewriting of the political history to be expanded to include women's actions is not a merely a plea for the expansion of political history in accordance with the idea held by the statement "the personal is political." In this thesis I demonstrate that the criteria for what can be identified as 'political' need not only be analyzed and reconstructed in accordance with modern historiographical ideals but these criteria also need to be explicated and broadened because the belief that one's political activity and private life can be separated is merely an illusion.

Feminism and its Comparative History

Already at the time of the first women's activist movements in 1700s these groups were collectively excluded from 'real politics,' as they became known as concerning themselves with 'The Women Question.'⁴⁰ Something decidedly separate from mainstream politics, even specifically separate from 'The Social Question.'⁴¹ The designation of first emancipatory wave for the time period from around 1850 until 1920 is not a complete misnomer as there was a significant global increase in women's emancipatory movement activity and the previous structural institutional exclusion was somewhat lessened with the introduction of women's suffrage. Initial concerns that caused the increase in women's advocacy for equal rights at the time of the first feminist wave were on the topics of education for women and the possibility for women to work at 'man's' jobs. Yet in hindsight, the issue that came to define the first feminist wave was the matter of universal suffrage, moving other concerns to the background — or fully out of the picture.⁴²

The existing historiography within this scope on the topic of feminist history contains a relatively wide variety of nationally comparative studies. The British suffragette movement often serves as exemplary in and of itself as it was one of the earlier movements to reach a notably large following. On top of that there was also the reputation of their group of women's activists being exceptionally volatile and violent. In later studies the validity of this reputation has been criticized and researchers have found that the violent reputation was more a product of a myth-making as opposed to there actually being that many more violent incidents as compared to other European countries.⁴³

Other comparisons that have been made are for example between France and the United Kingdom wherein the conclusion is drawn that these had undeniable influence upon each other although these influences were varied, complex and multi-layered. This because in the different national contexts not all values of the different emancipatory values would apply similarly in

³⁹ Aerts and de Jong, *Het persoonlijke is politiek: egodocumenten en politieke cultuur*, 186-188.

⁴⁰ R.M. Dekker, 'Revolutionaire en contrarevolutionaire vrouwen in Nederland, 1780-1800', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* vol. 2 no. 3/4, pp. 545-563, 1989. Denise riley

⁴¹ Hans Moors, 'Fabrics of Feminism: Warps and Woofs', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 77, no. 2 (1999): 368.

⁴² Monique Leijenaar, Jantine Oldersma, and B. Niemöller, *De hoogste tijd: een eeuw vrouwenkiesrecht* (Amsterdam: Atheneum-Polak & Van Gennep, 2019); Josine (Josine Henriëtte) Blok *historica* (Klassieke Oudheid), 1953- and Werkgroep Vrouwengeschiedenis Groningen., *Vrouwen, kiesrecht en arbeid in Nederland, 1889-1919*, 2e dr., OWP ; 4 (Groningen: SSGN, 1978); Mineke Bosch and Groninger Museum., *Strijd!: de vrouwenkiesrechtbeweging in Nederland, 1882-1922* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2019).

⁴³ C. J. Bearman, 'An Examination of Suffragette Violence', *The English Historical Review* 120, no. 486 (2005): 365-97.

both countries.⁴⁴ Another comparative overview of feminism in both France and the United Kingdom finds their most notable comparability to be their identical structural exclusion from the general socio-political historical narratives of each respective country.⁴⁵

Another article that demonstrates difficulty of finding international alignment between the different nationally organised women's emancipation movements investigates the international women's emancipation groups which are the International Council of Women (ICW) and the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA). Both international organisations struggled with maintaining an international balance.⁴⁶ A general identifiable tendency in women's activist movements is, on the one hand their awareness and emphasis of international connectedness, whilst simultaneously having clearly distinct nationalist characteristics.⁴⁷ The majority of studies covering the long(er) term historical presence of women in the past, and the writing about it, do so from a general theoretical perspective. Like for example studies into the process of constructing gender as a social category and the consequences thereof.⁴⁸ In doing so the connection with specific cases can be lost, which then dissolves the social embeddedness of these theories thus reducing women in history incorrectly to an exceptional and abstract phenomenon.

Overall the conclusions of these aforementioned comparative studies are not conducive to concrete insights about the interrelation of political history and feminist history. Rather they highlight concrete differences between emancipatory activity of women only in contrast with other emancipatory activity in order to arrive at a generalized summary of similar tendencies that paint a one-dimensional teleological picture of European feminism. I will be limiting my research scope to a case study of the developments in women's activism in the Netherlands. I will focus specifically on one national history as this allows for the political history wherein the history of feminism will be re-embedded to be clearly demarcated and thus for more concrete insights in this process.

The Netherlands as a Case Study

In 1795 the Batavian Republic was established, in line with some enlightenment ideals propagated in the French republic but mostly with a decidedly Dutch interpretation. This first constitution would go on to be discarded again relatively soon when internal conflict forced it to make room for a moderate version and later on when the Netherlands were annexed by France again in 1806. After a short-lived annexation the Dutch monarchy was reinstated, for a

⁴⁴ Corinne M. Belliard, 'An Echo in France of the British Women's Suffrage Campaign', *Women's History Review* 29, no. 6 (18 September 2020): 1075–83.

⁴⁵ Gay L. Gullickson, 'Feminists and Suffragists: The British and French Experiences', ed. Claire Goldberg Moses et al., *Feminist Studies* 15, no. 3 (1989): 591–602.

⁴⁶ Susan Zimmermann, 'The Challenge of Multinational Empire for the International Women's Movement: The Habsburg Monarchy and the Development of Feminist Inter/National Politics', *Journal of Women's History* 17, no. 2 (2005): 87–117.

⁴⁷ Deborah Simonon, *The Routledge History of Women in Europe since 1700*, 1st edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005).

⁴⁸ Joan W. Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053–75; Denise Riley, *'Am I That Name?': Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1988); Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Natalie Zemon Davis, "'Women's History' in Transition: The European Case', *Feminist Studies* 3, no. 3–4 (1976): 83–103.

relatively long time the political legacy of the Batavian republic was believed to be almost fully eradicated by this monarchical period. However the constitutions that were drawn up during this period together with the fervent political and societal debates they sparked served as the foundation for what would serve as inspiration for what would later become the constitution wherein women's suffrage would first be excluded, but ultimately granted.⁴⁹

What all groups involved in the revolution and constitution shared —despite being in conflict— was their motivation to stop, and reverse, the perceived increasing socio-economic decline of the LowCountries. The continued ideological disagreement, paired with the conscious unwillingness to live through a violent revolution, resulted in a new-found public space that was created for discussions on what the political organisation of a (semi-)united Netherlands should look like in order for the decline of the Netherlands to be reversed.⁵⁰ As long as the three main players of the political field were in disagreement with each other, there was more space for minority groups, like women, to let their voices be heard through the rifts between the dominant political players.⁵¹ And although often omitted women were also actively participating in the discussions on this topic.⁵²

As the 19th century progressed the internal political situation of the Low Countries became more settled. In 1814 the first blueprint of the constitution was drawn up to turn the monarchy of the Netherlands into the constitutional monarchy it still are today. This stability allowed for the national gaze to once again be turned outwards towards the rest of the European continent, and beyond that— towards its colonies. It was also during this century that the 'Golden Age' of the V.O.C. started to solidify as a myth upon which the narrative of the Dutch nation state was built.⁵³ In the vein of this newly created legacy re-continued colonial exploitation became an important occupation for the Dutch state to combat the previously mentioned moral and economic decline; in the middle of the 19th century nearly half of the state income came from Dutch colonies.⁵⁴

The delineation of the temporal and geographical scopes are connected in my research. As has been previously demonstrated, the general body of comparative studies on the history of European feminism generally pays little to no attention to the Netherlands. Rather French, British, German an American movements are often the main players to be included in any comparison.⁵⁵ This makes the disregarding of the Netherlands a problematic oversight, as it is located between three of the four aforementioned countries and was also in close contact with

⁴⁹ M. J. Janse, Sarah de Lange, and Jasper Zuure, 'De Kracht van Beschaafd Protest: Een 19de Eeuws Perspectief', in #WOEST, *De Kracht van Verontwaardiging* (Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 104–19; Friso Wielenga and Lynne Richards, *A History of the Netherlands : From the Sixteenth Century to the Present Day* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

⁵⁰ Mart Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen : democratie, burgerschap en staat in Nederland 1795-1801* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij Vantilt, 2012).

⁵¹ Emma Haché, "'Wat Zyn Toch Onze Nederlandsche Meisjens, over 't Geheel?'" Onderzoek Naar Feminisme in de Eind-Achttiende-Eeuwse Nederlanden Aan de Hand van Het Revolutionaire Huishouden van Lieve van Ollefen (1798)', *Vooy's* 38, no. 4 (2020): 39–49.

⁵² Dorothé Sturkenboom, 'Spectators van hartstocht : sekse en emotionele cultuur in de achttiende eeuw' (Hilversum, Verloren, 1998)

⁵³ Siep Stuurman, *Wacht op onze daden: het liberalisme en de vernieuwing van de Nederlandse staat* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 1992) 37.

⁵⁴ R.A.M. Aerts, *Denkend aan Nederland: over geschiedenis, nationaliteit en politiek* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2022) 61-2.

⁵⁵ Simonton, *The Routledge History of Women in Europe since 1700*.

feminist movements in all countries.⁵⁶ Also politically the Netherlands served as essentially formative grounds for an exchange and hybridization of French ideas, during and after the French occupation. Dutch women would go on to become influential in French emancipatory circles but they would also return home to give that influence another Dutch shape.⁵⁷ There were also extensive exchanges of knowledge and people between English, American and Dutch emancipatory movements.⁵⁸ However women's emancipatory activity in the Netherlands has hardly been covered and even less so from a political perspective.

Through demarcating the geographical area for my research as the Netherlands, a logical delineation for a timeframe follows from Dutch national history. Conventionally the first feminist wave in the Netherlands established itself with the constitutional granting of women's suffrage in 1917. However it was long before this — already during the short-lived existence of the revolutionary Batavian republic from 1795 until 1806 — that political activity by women was happening *and* a topic for societal discussion.⁵⁹

Approach

In the book *European Feminisms, 1700 – 1950* Karen Offen demonstrates, through a very broad selection, what a more politically oriented approach to writing history about women as political actors in history might look like.⁶⁰ She opens her book with a cohesive deconstruction of the wave-metaphor, convincingly demonstrating its inadequacy. More importantly however she connects this phenomenon with the problematic exclusion of women's history from political history in general, and more specifically from the archives. She finds that merely sticking to material on women's emancipation in archives dedicated to the topic offer limited insights, as these archives were often only set-up recently. She argues for the search for, and selection of, primary sources by investigating and re-visiting collections on political activism that were not women-focussed. Here there is often material that is relevant for women's political participation. I have followed a similar approach to Offen in selecting source material by searching through archives covering other topics, like for example slavery, socialism and freethinkers, in order to find source material covering female activity on the topic. Paired with this selection of sources, and in order to test the applicability of Offen's thesis about the incompleteness of women's historical archives, I have also selected sources from said archives as well as material about its inception. I have also selected a small minority of source material based on their mention in the historical canon, this in order to understand how their canonical position has come about as well as the value of this position. Admittedly much more materials were available and not all could be included, both due to scope constraints as well as physical

⁵⁶ Mineke Bosch, 'Between Entertainment and Nationalist Politics: The Uses of Folklore in the Spectacle of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance', *Women's Studies International Forum*, Special Issue on Circling the Globe: International Feminism Reconsidered, 1910 to 1975, 32, no. 1 (1 January 2009): 4–12.

⁵⁷ R.M. Dekker, 'Revolutionaire en contrarevolutionaire vrouwen in Nederland, 1780-1800', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* vol. 2 no. 3/4, pp. 545-563, 1989; J.A. Vega, 'Geschiedenis Als Fictie', *Historica* 22, no. 3 (1999): 22–24.

⁵⁸ Mineke Bosch and Annemarie Kloosterman, *Politics and Friendship : Letters from the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, 1902-1942* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990).

⁵⁹ Myriam Everard, 'Vrouwen voor 't vaderland : burgeres Van der Meer en de Bataafse politiek', *Holland, historisch tijdschrift*, 1999.

⁶⁰ Karen M. Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950 : A Political History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000)

accessibility limits. However, overall the selected cases and source material cover a large part of the conventional political historical narrative of the Netherlands during this time period and thus allow for a constructive expansion and revaluation of this narrative to be made.

Offen argues that the wave allegory often used in writing about feminism is inadequate. This because the process of women's emancipation was ongoing and deeply embedded in other societal developments, rather than an external or alien phenomenon that was shortly all-encompassing but also quick to fade out. In taking this long-term perspective, rather than writing about 'women's history' as only occurring around the conventionally established waves, Offen elucidates the socio-political embeddedness of the history of women's emancipation in general political history. I will be following her in this method of contextualizing instances of emancipatory activity by women in their broader political context.

Historically both in the feminist movement itself, and the study thereof, a tendency can be observed towards an international birds-eye perspective. Whether this be comparative or conjunctive, the study of feminism is approached as if it solely concerns the international phenomenon consisting of the collective emancipatory actions of women separately from their respective national and socio-political context. The use of the internationally comparative lens in the study of women's history is in some way reasonable because of the close international relations and exchange of persons and information between several women's emancipatory movements in Europe and North America.⁶¹ However, it is incorrect to assume that these international relations served as the grounds for the formation and erection of the feminist movements and consequently so are the theoretical abstractions and analyses about general patterns therefrom about women's history. More so, in many cases of practical study of the history of women's emancipatory movements—including the Netherlands—these generalized theories about patterns for comparative analysis are not applicable.⁶² Therefore I will be focusing on one national case study, this will allow for a concrete analysis of how general observed tendencies in gender history might be put into practice—or if they apply at all.

Political history as a field within the historical discipline has had a wide variety of approaches, not only because it is one of the oldest fields of the historical profession but also because accessing the politics as a practice is something which has always required interpretation.⁶³ Important to note is that the classic subjects of political history (e.g. parliamentary texts or official documents) have become known as 'high politics,' and the criteria for what constitutes political history have broadened. A self-reflexive 'New Political History' has arisen more recently wherein the influence of culture and communication on politics have become important factors in the method for studying political history.⁶⁴

However, the self-aware character of this new method for political history is exactly something which has become self-undermining in its practice. The current methodological practice in political history calls for a hybrid between the classical understanding of political history as covering 'high politics,' and 'New Political History.' This because high politics has

⁶¹ Karen Offen, 'Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach', *Signs* 14, no. 1 (1988): 119–57.

⁶² Marianne Braun, 'De prijs van de liefde: de eerste feministische golf, het huwelijksrecht en de vaderlandse geschiedenis' (Amsterdam, Het Spinhuis, 1992)

⁶³ S. Pedersen, 'What Is Political History Now?', in *What Is History Now?*, ed. David Cannadine (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 37.

⁶⁴ David M. Craig, "'HIGH POLITICS" AND THE "NEW POLITICAL HISTORY"', *The Historical Journal* 53, no. 2 (June 2010): 453.

always also covered New Political subjects, even if it did not do this explicitly. Since New Political History mostly concerns itself with a critical assessment of how to expand High Politics it is incorrect to assume this methodology as wholly new and in their struggle to differentiate from one another a self-imposed reflexive paralysis has developed, which might be remedied by recognizing this. This thus indicates that the approaches to the study of political history are currently changing, something to which this thesis will contribute by exploring an integrative and revisionist approach. Not only will New Political topics be integrated into the traditional narrative of high politics, but what exactly constitutes high politics will also be assessed and expanded.

Outline

In the first chapter a variety of texts (e.g. pamphlets, letters, speeches etc.) from a variety of persons that were all engaged with the position of woman in the public and political sphere during the Batavian revolution, republic and its aftermath will be analysed. These sources will illustrate that during this time there already was a societal discussion about equal participation in politics for women thus serving as a parallel to analyse the struggle for women's suffrage during the 1910s.

In the second chapter political movements that concerned themselves with the abolition of slavery in the Netherlands. The abolitionist endeavours of local sub-divisions of women will be compared to their male counterparts, and more importantly integrated. A second example will be included of a women's association occupied with combatting poverty and prostitution (and immorality) which shared many of its members with the abolitionist association. Hereby demonstrating the multidimensionality of the political activism of women and the problematic reductionism that has taken place in their exclusion from political history.

In the third chapter extra-parliamentary movements, some of which become integrated *into* parliament, will be analysed, together with another association for public morality and health. This chapter will analyse the depoliticalization of women's activism and their exclusion from politics in general. This analysis will be conducted using the example of the integration of the extra-parliamentary freethinker's movement into parliament through an adaptation of its ideology into socialism.

In the fourth chapter the establishment of improved women's education and labour rights will be analysed. Their intersection and culmination will be analysed using the example of the National Exhibition of Women's Labour in the Hague in 1898. This chapter offers the most extensive insight into the extent to which women, who were seemingly united under the same cause for women's emancipation, had differing interpretations of what women's emancipation —and the 'path' towards it— was supposed to look like.

In chapter five another case study will demonstrate the multidimensionality of the struggle for suffrage in the Netherlands using 'de Neutrale' — a splinter of the national suffrage movement: 'Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht.' This will be paired with chapter six wherein an analysis will be made of how the first narrative of feminist history was artificially constructed in the Netherlands and to what end. This will be done through the analysis of the notes made during the initial meetings to set up the *International Archief voor Vrouwengeschiedenis* (IAV) in the Netherlands.

1. Women's Political Activism in the Revolutionary Netherlands (ca. 1800)

In this chapter I will analyse women's political activism during the Batavian Revolution (1794-1799) both by female actors as well as discourse about the role of women in politics. I will offer an overview of the debate in academic literature about the role women played during the Batavian Revolution and in the Batavian Republic. I will then go on to analyse a variety of primary sources to demonstrate how political history and women's history can move beyond the rift currently existing between them in the historiography about this time. I will move beyond the temporally isolated discussion and demonstrate that despite the lack of attention for the emancipatory activity, the presence of said activity is undisputable and can be clearly connected to a much longer tradition of women participating in society as political actors.

Establishment of the Batavian Republic

Although not within the conventional Dutch historical narrative of feminism there are many examples to be found of women-centred historical investigations scattered around the intersection between social, political cultural history of the 19th century.⁶⁵ Although adjacent areas of study might refer to each other as examples of where else inspiration for women's activism could be found by contemporaries there is no comprehensive overview of the general development of the activity of women during the 19th century, even less so any degree of integration into the main-stream political historical narrative. In this chapter I will start to create this overview by collecting a selection of these many individual instances of women's political activism and then start to consider how to integrate them into the current field of political history. In doing so I do not intend to convey a normative judgement on the past but rather to illustrate how many blind spots have been permitted to exist in the discipline of history and how these spots have become structurally overlooked.

The temporal demarcation for this research has been constructed based on the consideration of several factors. One of the central arguments I make is against placing the beginning of feminism in the Netherlands at the start of the 20th century, therefore a careful consideration has been made as to where then would be the right place to start research into feminism in the Netherlands. The temporal beginning of this research has been placed around the end of the 18th century. This is not because the true origins of feminism can be pinpointed around this time. Rather there are many earlier examples to be found of women's activism in public and political life, specifically their involvement in local protests was substantial.⁶⁶ However these instances are largely scattered. More importantly in using the timeframe that starts at the end of the 18th century more concrete insights can be gained as this demarcation creates the space for the discussion of particular examples in relation to the development of history as an academic discipline. This thesis will provide a more general understanding of the production process of historical knowledge during the beginning of the 20th century which can

⁶⁵ R.A.M. Aerts, *Denkend aan Nederland: over geschiedenis, nationaliteit en politiek* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2022) 53.

⁶⁶ Rudolf Dekker, 'Revolutionaire En Contrarevolutionaire Vrouwen in Nederland, 1780-1800', *Tijdschrift Voor Geschiedenis* 2, no. 3/4 (1 January 1989): 545-63.

then in turn also be applied to earlier history.⁶⁷ In order to demonstrate the persistence of women's emancipatory activity throughout the *long durée* of history I have demarcated this shorter time period, starting around the Batavian Revolution from which generally applicable reconsideration for the historical discipline will be extrapolated.⁶⁸

The Batavian Revolution and subsequent establishment of the Batavian Republic started during the ending of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch war (1780-1784).⁶⁹ General discontent with the lack of economic prosperity, diminishing of political importance and power in the international colonialization project had been brewing ever since the steep decline of success of the Dutch international trading companies; the V.O.C. and W.I.C.⁷⁰ The war with Great Britain had further emptied out any financial reserves that were still left and the Dutch Republic was in financial ruins, as well as battling political turmoil.⁷¹

At the time of the Dutch-Anglo war the Orangists were in power in the Dutch Republic as a consequence the Dutch defeat was believed to be their responsibility by the Republicans. The Republicans were unsympathetic to the Orangists' desire for a Royalist organization of the United Provinces of the Netherlands, rather they were inspired by the contemporary French Revolution and its ideals.⁷² The disagreement between the Orangists and Republicans escalated to such heights that the Batavian Revolution was the end result, albeit a revolution only in name without any violent conflict or bloodshed. The revolution would result in the establishment of the Batavian Republic by the Dutch Republicans under the protection of the Revolutionary French from 1795 until when it was dissolved by Napoleon Bonaparte's annexation of The Republic in 1806.⁷³

Development of the Gender Binary

In taking the Batavian Revolution as the starting point for the study of women's political activity in the Netherlands, Dutch activity can also be internationally situated. It is a time period wherein, on an international stage, some of the earliest European intellectual feminists developed themselves and their ideas. Individuals like Olympe de Gouges, Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill developed and circulated their ideas within the larger theoretically revolutionary network of the enlightenment. In the Netherlands no individual or organization that has been identified to have occupied themselves with the women's emancipatory cause in a similar way.⁷⁴ Despite the relatively safe revolutionary environment

⁶⁷ Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973)

⁶⁸ Richard E. Lee, 'Lessons of the Longue Durée: The Legacy of Fernand Braudel', *Historia Crítica*, no. 69 (2018): 69–77.

⁶⁹ Friso Wielenga and Lynne Richards, *A History of the Netherlands: From the Sixteenth Century to the Present Day* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

⁷⁰ Wielenga and Richards, *A History of the Netherlands: From the Sixteenth Century to the Present Day*, 132.

⁷¹ Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806*, Oxford History of Early Modern Europe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) 1097.

⁷² Ludo Milis et al., *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden*, (Amsterdam: Prometheus, Bert Bakker, 2014) 277 – 278.

⁷³ Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806*, 1128.

⁷⁴ Anika Broers, "Geeft Aan de Vrouwen Haare Rechten, Die Zy Als Mensch Kunnen Vraagen" (Nijmegen, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, 2015).

in the Netherlands compared to that of its neighboring countries there undeniably was a structural overhaul of the socio-political status-quo.

On an intra-European intellectual level there was the development of the two sex model occurring right around the time of the Batavian Revolution. Where previously there was only the male sex and women defined as the ways in which they were not the same as this male biology now the construction of two biologically different sexes took place. This came as a consequence of the social dichotomy between female and male characteristic which became increasingly rigid at this time. Previously men could be ascribed female characteristics—some of which were considered equally virtuous as the good virtues of men—and vice versa.⁷⁵ However with times of increasing socio-economic turmoil like those of the French Revolution order and structure were increasingly created and applied in aspects of daily life to have some semblance of grip on society; both by individuals and institutions like the church.⁷⁶ The revolutionary actions taking place in the public eye during the short reign of the Batavian public combined with the new understanding of the difference between men and women led to this new biological gender division also gained authority.⁷⁷ The construction of gender and sexes into two dominant categories that took place would serve as the foundations for the modern understanding of the difference between men and women, this intellectual paradigm was also prevalent during the conventional first wave.

A concrete example of the activeness of the discussion on women's position and role in society at the time of the establishment of the Batavian Republic can be found in the example of the procession that was held on march 3rd in 1795. This was a national event to mark the ending of the revolution and the official establishment of the republic.⁷⁸ The procession was full of incredibly carefully selected symbolic figures, many of which were notably women. The procession included a varied selection of different types of average citizens of the republic to ensure an adequate representation of the Dutch citizens.

In this group women were present in equal numbers, and dressed similarly to men, although their representation was decidedly as maternal and valuable for the production of new Batavian subjects.⁷⁹ This illustrates the presence and visibility of women in the socio-political sphere as they were equally present in a representation of the Batavian citizens. More interesting however, is the representation of freedom, which was personified by *burgeres* Van der Meer. Bartha van der Meer and her husband had fled the country in 1787 after being victims of robbery and plundering by the Orangists after they had to give up a failed coup d'état.⁸⁰ Her return after being a victim of the Orangists thus encapsulated freedom almost perfectly for the Batavian republicans, notably not her husband but her, a woman was chosen to represent freedom. A fact that that no organizer nor spectator could circumvent. Her presence in the procession did not mean there was a freedom for women that would equate them to men in the

⁷⁵ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) 17.

⁷⁶ Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806*, 1115.

⁷⁷ Laqueur, *Making Sexs*, 17 – 19.

⁷⁸ Myriam Everard, 'Vrouwen voor 't vaderland: burgeres Van der Meer en de Bataafse politiek', in *Holland, historisch tijdschrift* 31, no. 4/5 (1999): 272–81.

⁷⁹ Everard, 'Vrouwen voor 't vaderland: burgeres Van der Meer en de Bataafse politiek,' 276.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 278.

Batavian Republic.⁸¹ However her presence demonstrates another example of women in the socio-political sphere and thus a pavement towards the path of emancipation that requires a different way of looking at the history of these events in order for their value to be ascertained.

Revolutionary Political Activism and Women

The academic debate on the topic of revolutionary activity surrounding women's emancipation—albeit limited—is divided. In general, research into emancipatory activity during this time has resulted in a variety of works on individually prominent women: like the earlier mentioned burgeres Van der Meer, but also for example Etta Palm and Belle van Zuylen.⁸² These women are generally presented as exemptions from their time and thus mostly presented in an isolated context wherein is demonstrated how different and isolated they were from the society in which they lived. In this chapter the discussion and connection of several of these perspectives will demonstrate how incomplete solitary narratives like these are even if they are not incorrect.

The conviction that there was very limited to no emancipatory activity at this time in the Netherlands has been decisive for Dutch history writing about this time period. This was believe to have been the case because there was a structural exclusion of women from entering any political sphere through which they could participate. However, this argument of exclusion at this specific moment in time has been identified as a reaction to the political ambitions that had been expressed by women a little before the turn of the 19th century.⁸³ Recently there have been more historians who have found pamphlets and other remnants of public debate during the turn of the century time wherein the role of women in Dutch society is discussed, and emancipation is advocated for.⁸⁴

Whereas the political activity of women during this time period has been largely overlooked, the socio-cultural presence of women in this time period has been investigated for a much longer period of time. A concrete result of this is the inclusion of Betje Wolff & Aagje Deken in the Dutch canon.⁸⁵ I will first analyse the extent to which their example covers the socio-political activities in Dutch society at the time and then expand upon this with an analysis of a selection of much lesser-known primary source texts. This will also explain how these instances of emancipatory activity have become overlooked by the canonical narrative. Practically this means a re-evaluation of what has been deemed to qualify as women's emancipatory activity during this time and by whom, as well as how the political sphere was delineated wherein it was argued to have taken place for it to qualify as socio-political emancipation. In doing so I will argue for the need for a structural revision of the theoretical framework from which political history has been written.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Joke Hermsen and Riëtte van der Plas, *'Nu eens dwaas dan weer wijs': Belle van Zuylen tussen Verlichting en Romantiek* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1990).

⁸³ Maartje. Janse, *De afschaffers: publieke opinie, organisatie en politiek in Nederland 1840-1880* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2007).

⁸⁴ Dekker, 'Revolutionaire En Contrarevolutionaire Vrouwen in Nederland, 1780-1800'; Everard, 'Vrouwen voor 't vaderland: burgeres Van der Meer en de Bataafse politiek'.

⁸⁵ 'Sara Burgerhart', Canon van Nederland, accessed August 1st 2023, <https://www.canonvannederland.nl/nl/saraburgerhart>.

Elizabeth Wolff-Bekker & Agatha Deken on the Ideal Life for Women

One of the few women that is included in the historical canon of the Netherlands is Elizabeth Wolff-Bekker, or Betje Wolff. Together with Agatha Pieters Deken she wrote the first Dutch epistolary novel called ‘Historie van mejuffrouw Sara Burgerhart,’ published in 1782. This book serves as the canon entry, to discuss both the historical relevance of the book and its themes as well as the social position of its authors. This novel gained the qualification of being progressive as it touches upon the matter of marriage and education from the perspective of women. The main character of the book is a young girl called Sara Burgerhart, who after the passing of her parents struggles with finding her place in society as a young woman. Throughout the book an emphasis is placed on the need for a young woman to develop herself to the best of her abilities with the goal of marriage, on the condition that this development takes place in the right socio-cultural fields appropriate for women.⁸⁶ This notion is expressed even more explicitly in her work ‘Proeve over de Opvoeding.’⁸⁷ Whereas in their book Sara Burgerhart the claims about the rightful position of women in society are made by fictional characters, in her ‘Proeve’ Wolff explicitly speaks to the women of the Netherlands, more specifically the higher-class women.

Whereas it was normal for middle- and lower-class women to raise their own children, this was not the case for upper-class women as they often had domestic help to raise children. The general argument Wolff makes is that *all* women should be closely involved in raising their own children rather than outsourcing this to domestic help. She explicitly states:

“Ik wil niet dat gy Sterrekundige, Meetkundige, Overnatuurkundige Vrouwen, zelf niet dat gy Vaerzenmaaksters wordt - Niets van dit alles vordert het geluk der Maatschappy van Vrouwen, die haar oneindig grootere diensten doen - Ik wilde alleen, dat gy uw eigen waarde beter leerde kennen; en dat gy, redelyke en zedelyke Wezens zynde, U meer bekend maakte met zulke fraaije en nutte kundigheden, die voor U onontbeerlyk zyn.”⁸⁸

In saying this Wolff clarifies that total equality of the genders is not her goal, nor desirable for society. Rather the task of raising her own children is one that should befall all women in their own interest for happiness.

About the raising of children she goes on to say the following: “Kweekt veel meer in uwe Jongens eene rustige vertrouwenheid, en in uwe Meisjes eene levendige blymoedigheid; want ik ben er zeer voor, om van de vroegste jeugd af aan, het onderscheiden doelëinde der sexen, zorgvuldig in 't oog te houden.”⁸⁹ Thus reinforcing her emphasis on the importance of sustaining the societal difference between genders. Wolff has produced an extremely large body of written work during her lifetime on a wide variety of topics, one of the last works she produced in 1802 once again reflected upon the position of women in society.⁹⁰ More specifically on the education of young women. For the third time a reinforcement of her beliefs

⁸⁶ Betje Wolff and Aagje Deken, *Historie van Mejuffrouw Sara Burgerhart*, trans. Tonnus Oosterhoff (Kleine Uil, 1782).

⁸⁷ Betje Wolff, ‘Proeve over de opvoeding, aan de Nederlandsche moeders’ (DBNL, 1779)

⁸⁸ Wolff, ‘Proeve over de opvoeding, aan de Nederlandsche moeders.’

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Betje Wolff and Aagje Deken, *Geschrift Eener Bejaarde Vrouw* (Den Haag: Isaac van Cleef, 1802).

can be found in this publication: “Maar waar toe zouden wij [women] studeeren? Is de vrouw niet gemaakt, om den tot den arbeid uitgerusten man, in zijne moeilijkheden, door stille, zachte, minzaame, oplettende zorgvuldigheid, te verheugen en te verkwikken? Om hem het leeven aangenaam, en zijn huis tot een wooning van vrede en blijmoedigheid te maaken?” In this last discussion of the role of women Wolff & Deken acknowledge that there are societal discussions ongoing wherein more extreme positions are taken up; such as arguing in favour of a completely equal education of women but they renounce this. Rather they take up a position of moderation and restrict their realm of influence to the private sphere where women allegedly belong.

As mentioned earlier, influential thinkers like Mary Wollstonecraft were advocating on an international stage for an improved position for women in society. One of the causes wherein much could be improved according to her was the institution of marriage. An —then mostly socio-economic— agreement over which the church had held authority for over a century. During the tail end of the enlightenment the institute of marriage also became subject to a critical reconsideration of what it entailed, and more importantly, what it should entail.⁹¹ The previous socio-economic factors that held most authority in selecting an appropriate candidate for a marriage were being condemned by authors like Mary Wollstonecraft for turning marriage into a situation where one is ‘legally prostituted.’⁹² Betje Wolff and Aagje Deken have been shown by their biographers to have been familiar with Mary Wollstonecraft’s work. Not only were they aware of her work but their book *Sara Burgerhart* touches explicitly on the theme of marriage and a woman’s relation to it. Exactly the problem of being trapped in a loveless marriage is a situation they discuss at length, and warn against in this work.

In the Dutch canon the entry of *Sara Burgerhart* is surrounded by a timeline of events all related to the developments of the Patriotic movement and the occurrences during the Batavian revolution. In constructing the Dutch canon choosing this work makes sense as it reached the largest audience out of all Wolff & Deken’s works.⁹³ However, simultaneously it illustrates two earlier hypothesized arguments. Firstly, the exclusion of women’s emancipatory movements from the mainstream historical political narrative. By making the novel about *Sara Burgerhart* an explicitly separate point in the Canon, as opposed to including a mention of the pamphlets by the likes of P. B. v. W. or *Armida Amazone* in the political narrative, the separation of a plea for women’s education makes the whole matter implicitly a narrative that ran separately from the general political developments of the country.

Secondly, the inclusion of *Sara Burgerhart* specifically illustrates the erasure that has continuously taken place in the recording of the historical activity for women’s emancipatory causes. As far as calls for the improvement of the societal position of women go the discussion of women’s education in *Sara Burgerhart* is an extremely moderate one.⁹⁴ There are several brief instances throughout the novel wherein the intellectual faculties of women are discussed and the possibility for them to be equally as developed as those of men through the right

⁹¹ Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History*, 36.

⁹² Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1792).

⁹³ Joke Brassier and Marie-José Klaver, “‘Alles komt evenwel goed’ – Heeft *Sara Burgerhart* echt een gelukkig einde?’, *Neerlandistiek*, 13 August 2022.

⁹⁴ Brassier and Klaver, “‘Alles komt evenwel goed’ – Heeft *Sara Burgerhart* echt een gelukkig einde?’

education is explicitly mentioned. However, the majority of the book, and the undisputable core message, is that the best possible life for a woman, that which would grant her the most happiness, is one married to a man, and not as an equal but as a subject loyal to him, and in his care and as a mother for his children.⁹⁵ As is demonstrated in this quote from the maternal

The often reoccurring argument is made that modern standards should not be project anachronistically onto the past and that ‘for their time’ Wolff & Deken were much more progressive than a majority of the population. However, as will be demonstrated by the contents of the pamphlets discussed in the next section, which were published simultaneously much more progressive discussions were taking place within society, as opposed to in a fictional world, during the lifetimes and authorship of Wolff & Deken. The referral to the work of Wolff & Deken as being characteristically progressive for their time is not something that was invented by the Dutch canon, rather this can be traced to the activists involved with women’s emancipation during the conventional first feminist wave at the beginning of the 20th century, something which will be explored further in chapter 5.

Armida Amazone in *Algemeene Vaderlandsche Letter-Oefeningen*

An influential participant in the discussion on what the position of women in Dutch society should—or could—be was Armida Amazone. This author published a letter in the journal ‘*Algemeene Vaderlandsche Letter-Oefeningen*,’ called ‘over de manlyke dwinglandy’ in 1781.⁹⁶ This journal concerned itself with a wide variety of topics but it focused primarily on literature reviews, however it also published opinion pieces on general societal concerns. Most of all publications in the journal were done anonymously, like the letter by Armida Amazone. The letter is unique in the sense that its contents are extremely progressive for its time albeit not as extreme as the letter by P. B. v. W. which will be discussed in the next section.

One of the passages that very clearly highlights the constrictions of its time is the following: “De vastgestelde burgerlyke wetten geeven den Mannen zekere magt boven de Vrouwen, om dat die wetten door Mans gemaakt zyn; en ik zie geene kans om vooreerst nog die wetten veranderd te krygen; met den tyd zal dit mooglyk nog wel komen; indien de Vrouwen zig maar toeleggen op het verkrygen van meerdere kundigheden, en voortaan hunnen Dogteren eene andere opvoeding geeven, dan tot nog toe gedaan is.”⁹⁷ The author of the pamphlet cannot in any way imagine a society wherein women would be equal to men before the law, the demands the author makes are what they deem to be within Dutch society’s realm of possibilities at the time.

Amazone disputes the idea that men would be intellectually superior by nature. Rather they write: “De Mannen, evenwel, zult gy zeggen, hebben meerder kundigheden dan de Vrouwen, en zyn dus geschikter tot eene wyze bestiering der zaaken. Doch, van waar komt hun die meerdere kennis? Zeker, niet van de natuur, maar van de opvoeding. Dat men ons van de jeugd af dom houdt, is onze schuld niet, maar wel die der Mannen; die zekerlyk onze verstandsvermogens met voordagt onderdrukken, om de heerschappy over ons te behouden [...]”⁹⁸ Going as far to put willful malicious intent behind the lack of education for women in

⁹⁵ Wolff and Deken, *Historie van Mejuffrouw Sara Burgerhart*, 354.

⁹⁶ Armida Amazone, ‘Over de Manlyke Dwinglandy’, *Algemeene Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen*, 1781.

⁹⁷ Amazone, ‘Over de Manlyke Dwinglandy’.

⁹⁸ Ibid

order to sustain their subjugated position in society. This accusation is one that is combative and confrontational and offers a perspective that aligns very well with the pamphlet by P. B. v. W. on the societal debate on the position of women, albeit that Amazone's demands are not as radical in their plea for equality.

Where Amazone diverges from P. B. v. W.'s pamphlet is in their re-imagined position for men in Dutch society, rather than striving for an equality that is moreso based on individual capability Amazone imagines a sort of reversal of the current gender roles. They write: "dat de Mannen sterker van lichaam zyn dan de Vrouwen, volgt veeleer, dunkt my, dat zy geschapen zyn om ons te dienen, voor ons te werken, te vegten, enz. even als uit de grootere sterkte van het Paard of den Os boven den Mensch volgt, dat deze Dieren geschapen zyn tot onzen dienst; en om door ons tot die einden gebruikt te worden, tot dewelken het ons goeddunken mag ze te gebruiken."⁹⁹ From this quote it becomes clear that a society wherein one gender in control over the other is still what is envisioned by the author but as an inversion of the status quo. These two texts by anonymous author represent a side in the debate on the position of women in Dutch society that has largely been excluded from history. Not only the canonical political history of the Netherlands but also the history of women's emancipation as will be demonstrated later in this chapter. The anonymity is simultaneously what allowed for the authors to express more radical standpoints whilst also possibly contributing to their disappearance from history into the unknown past.

P. B. v. W.'s Pamphlet

One of the earliest most explicit and most radically progressive accounts of a demand for political equality between men and women in the Netherlands comes in the form of the pamphlet: "Ten betooge dat de Vrouwen behooren deel te hebben aan de Regeering van het Land" authored anonymously by P. B. van W. in 1795.¹⁰⁰ The pamphlet was published in Harlingen by publisher Volkert van der Plaats, he published a variety of political works and national histories by notorious authors mostly inspired by the enlightenment. However, the author of this pamphlet remains anonymous until this day. The notoriety of the publisher gives an insight into the level of notoriety, and some of the reach, the pamphlet by P. B. v W. can have had. Since the publisher was relatively well established, and connected to other publishing houses in the country this pamphlet reached a substantial audience.¹⁰¹

In the lead up to the establishment of the Batavian republic several controversial works had been published that held a patriotic perspective, which was in opposition to the established orangist political organization. This resulted in legal restrictions to prevent the publishing of works that were controversial in nature, this means that before publishing van der Plaats would have carefully considered the contents of the pamphlet and their degree of controversiality. This thus suggests that the contents of this pamphlet either had some sort of possibility to gain a foothold in public debate, as a professional publisher would not decide to run the risk of legal repercussions on a whim. The careful consideration that was required before the publication

⁹⁹ Amazone, 'Over de Manlyke Dwinglandy'.

¹⁰⁰ P. B. van W., 'Ten Betooge Dat de Vrouwen Behooren Deel Te Hebben Aan de Regeering van Het Land', 1795.

¹⁰¹ Broers, "'Geeft Aan de Vrouwen Haare Rechten, Die Zy Als Mensch Kunnen Vraagen'", 20.

this pamphlet or not gives an indication of society's occupation with the topic of gender equality.

The plea that the author makes for the establishment of a position for women that is identical, and thus equal, to that of men is in part founded on the patriotic struggles at the time. P. B. v. W. writes: "En wie kan in twyffel trekken dat de Vrouwen, niet volmaakt alles, wat de geest betreft, zo goed als de mannen kunnen verrichten? Hoe veele Patriottische Vrouwen hebben wy, vol iever, proeven zien geeven van hare Vaderlandsliefde!"¹⁰² Thus referring to the politically tumultuous landscape in which this pamphlet was published whilst also directly connecting the matter of women's emancipation to the general political developments of the Netherlands.

The author of the pamphlet goes on to make some harsh points of criticism on the current position of women in Dutch society. They highlight the arbitrariness of the current subjugation of women in society with the example of the very different position women have (had) in other countries. "Dat omtrent de Vrouwen onze handelwijze volmaakt afhangt van de invallen en vooroordelen, bewyst de vergelyking van de eene plaats tot de andere, daar de Vrouwen met merkelyk onderscheid behandeld worden. [...] Dus is dit niet anders dan het bewys van volmaakte willekeur, de geen anderen regel kent, dan het geen wy zo hatelyk vinden, het Despotismus." They then go on to attack the institution of marriage: "Hoe weinige Huwelyken zijn uit neiging en liefde gesloten? Gy koft uwe Vrouwe als eene Slaavin; haar hart stede veelligt niet toe aan uwe verbintenis [...] Waarom mag eene Vrouw niet even zeer de neiging van haar harte volgen, en een Man verkiezen, al wij eene Vrouw?"¹⁰³

The author also criticizes women's inability to possess goods independently, the lack of education provided to them and the fact that they are rarely allowed to hold down 'skilled labour' jobs. The pamphlet offers a relatively large number of examples of the unfairness of the current gender division of society. Extremely extraordinary is the fact that this pamphlet calls for equality between men and women based on the natural rights of any human, regardless of gender. So this is not just an improvement of the position of women in society, which can be found in Betje Wolf's work which simultaneously confirmed female subjugation. Something that can be found in the works of Betje Wolf, rather P. B. v. W. calls for an equality that is different from that of (semi-)contemporary Betje Wolff. P. B. v. W. argues that current societal order has been constructed arbitrarily and that there are natural rights that should be similarly available to all humans. The author writes: "Ontwaakt dus, gy Vrouwen! Verbreekt uwe Ketenen, die gy zo lang gedraagen hebt; niet om heerschappy te voeren, maar om deelgenoot te zyn aan die rechten, die U uit de Natuur toekomen."¹⁰⁴ Where now only men have been able to appeal to those natural rights, women should also have the space to appeal to their natural rights as opposed to the restrictions society has placed upon them.

Etta Palm's Life & Work

Simultaneous to the publication of P. B. v. W.'s pamphlet the arrest and imprisonment of Etta Palm was taking place. In 1795 she was found guilty of being a double agent, ultimately in

¹⁰² P. B. van W., 'Ten Betooge Dat de Vrouwen Behooren Deel Te Hebben Aan de Regeering van Het Land.'

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p11.

service of the French. After a short marriage one-year marriage she left the Netherlands and went on to live in Paris, where according to herself she was in business.¹⁰⁵ The more generally accepted historical narrative makes her out to be a courtesan, which also offers an explanation for the creation of her position wherein she had access to political information of international relevance to grant her the role of double agent. Before her arrest, during her time in Paris, Palm would go on to facilitate a number of salons wherein the topic of women's emancipation would be discussed extensively.

She wrote speeches on the need for women's emancipation for political groups active in Paris during the French revolution. These speeches had to read aloud by one of the male members as women were not allowed to speak at almost all public gatherings of political organizations. Palm would go on to establish one of the first political women's groups in 1791. Etta Palm also calls upon the natural rights of men, to be more equal that society has made them out to be.¹⁰⁶ However there is once again a nuanced difference between the way in which she believes these natural rights to take shape and P. B. v. W. calls upon natural rights for equality.

Palm holds on to the fundamental division between the sexes, and argues that society has positioned one below the other; adequate education could — and would— make women men's equals, if not superiors. In her speech Palm writes: “Ja Heren, de natuur heeft ons geschapen om met u samen te werken en te delen in uw succes. Ze maakte u dan wel gespierder, maar wij zijn uw gelijke op het morele vlak, misschien is onze fantasie zelfs wel levendiger, zijn onze gevoelens verfijnder en leggen wij ons makkelijker neer bij tegenslag, verdragen we meer pijn, ondergaan we geduldiger leed en verdriet, en zijn wij tot slot edelmoediger en vaderlandslievender; en als deze natuurlijke kwaliteiten zouden worden aangevuld met een degelijke opleiding en door u zouden worden aangemoedigd en gesteund en publiekelijk beloond, durf ik wel te zeggen dat onze sekse vaak beter zou zijn dan de uwe.”¹⁰⁷ P. B. v W., makes a point out of explicitly saying that equality between men and women should not mean blind equal treatment of all individuals, but rather that each individual, regardless of gender should (be allowed to) contribute to society to the best their abilities and that it should not be determined socially what these abilities might be.

Conclusion

Many of the individual cases I connect in this chapter have been researched as stand-alone instances of emancipatory activity and are often presented as miraculous defiers of social convention and norms. To reframe this I have grouped several of these examples together and demonstrated their connection with each other and with the society that bred them. The similarities between their ideas demonstrate that although the public debate on the position of women in society differed from the UK or France this does not mean it did not exist. The Dutch

¹⁰⁵ Wil Schackmann, *Etta Palm : van Nederlands eerste feministe tot staatsvijand* (Amsterdam/Antwerpen: Atlas Contact., 2022).

¹⁰⁶ Judith Vega, ‘Feminist Republicanism. Etta Palm-Aelders on Justice, Virtue and Men’, *History of European Ideas* 10, no. 3 (1 January 1989): 333–51.

¹⁰⁷ Etta Palm, *Over de Onrechtvaardige Wetgeving Die in Het Voordeel Is van Mannen, Maar in Het Nadeel van Vrouwen*, trans. Iena Wierts (Parijs: 1790).

discussion was both influenced by the developments in its neighbouring countries as well as by its internal political turmoil. Comparing and collecting these previously only individually studied examples allows for a broader conclusion to be drawn about the multiplicity of developments in the political sphere in the Netherlands at this time. Both abovementioned pamphlets are propositions for the expansion of high politics, as they fit the conventional criteria of historical and political primary source material but are coming from conventionally excluded authors.

By contrasting this with the canon entry of Wolff & Deken I demonstrate not only why a revision of *what* is covered by the field political history is necessary, but also *how* the mechanisms which have restricted, depoliticized and isolated historical narratives about women from this time have done so. The development of a (biological) difference between division between genders at this time would go on to create the socio-biological framework from which the conventional first wave feminists would start to develop their arguments for equality between men and women. This dichotomy has also gone on to influence history writing starting from the direct aftermath of the ‘first wave’ up until now in the modern historical discipline. In the next chapter the examples that will be discussed will demonstrate how quickly, and deeply, the new-found biological difference between men and women will become ingrained in society.

2. ‘Committees’ versus ‘Associations:’ Political Organisations from 1820 until 1850

The word slave has had a variety of meanings and has also referred to a large multitude of different forms of enslaved people. Notably all three texts discussed in the previous chapter made a comparison between the socio-political position of women and that of enslaved peoples. Women’s position in society is repeatedly referred to, and described, as if she were enslaved. Later this century, in 1869, John Stuart Mill would go on to publish ‘The Subjection of Women,’ where the arguably the most famous comparison between the situation of women and enslaved peoples is made.¹⁰⁸ Before this publication but right after the comparisons made in the previous chapter there is notable activity from ladies committee in the quest for the abolition of slavery. This chapter further explores the relationship between the ideological concepts of ‘slave’ and ‘slavery,’ which are used in discussions about general emancipatory causes, and the social-political practices surrounding slavery and abolitionism in the Netherlands.

A selection of publications from early abolitionist movements will be compared. The focus will be on several different women’s committees which were founded to contribute to the abolition of slavery. These will be compared to a male contemporary abolitionist association, to illustrate the depoliticization of women as active agents of change in society. Paired with this will be an analysis of another committee called ‘Vrienden der Armen’ who concerned themselves with reducing poverty in the Netherlands. Together these examples will shed light on how the biological dichotomy between genders became an increasingly powerful social construct to depoliticize social action undertaken by women as their feminine nature became determinative for their capacities as political actors. As will be demonstrated in the next sections arguments relying upon the fundamental biological difference between inherently ‘feminine’ or ‘masculine’ qualities were also used in discussions about abolitionism and combatting poverty.

Abolitionism through a Comparative Lens

Although comparative studies on European feminisms and women’s activism have been conducted, and cover a several different time spans, a central ‘universal’ starting ground from which to connect these comparisons has been lacking.¹⁰⁹ Which—in part—leads to Offen’s approach of highlighting particular instances of increased emancipatory activity in different countries to corroborate her argument and work towards a singular basis to serve as grounds for comparison. In her intersectional research Offen demonstrates the multi-layered cohesion between geographically local particularities, and the international emancipatory tide that was sweeping over western Europe and the United States. Offen is thus discarding the distinctly national narratives that are used by others in comparative studies.¹¹⁰ However in this chapter I will re-embed this generalized approach within a particular national narrative to allow for a more detailed, concrete understanding of how local differences were distinctly influential on

¹⁰⁸ John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (London, 1869).

¹⁰⁹ Deborah Simonton, ‘INTRODUCTION: Writing Women in(to) Modern Europe’, in *The Routledge History of Women in Europe since 1700*, 1st edition (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 1–13.

¹¹⁰ Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History*, xii.

the development of each particular emancipatory instance. In taking this birds-eye view Offen demonstrates the intentionality that has gone into the creation of the existing historical narrative of the socio-political development of Europe that structurally excludes women; because they were in fact present.¹¹¹ Thus affirming the value of my returning to a specific national narrative in this thesis whilst incorporating the insights from her different methodological approach. In order for a reintegration of one of these excluded parties to be successfully achieved the political activity, both those occupied with emancipatory content or simply those operating in an emancipatory form, need to be fitted into the particularities of their national narratives.

Aforementioned literature has compared the difference between several Dutch and English emancipatory movements; for example women's emancipation, but also abolitionist movements and associations improving lower-class living conditions. In these comparisons the Dutch social justice movements are quite consistently typified as backwards and lagging behind.¹¹² Especially in contrast with its neighbouring position to the United Kingdom which served as the blue-print for 'the correct' form of abolitionism.¹¹³ It is true that the Dutch were late to the implementations of similar societal improvements that were made in other western-European nations, like the abolition of slavery, but it is questionable whether this is because their social justice movements were truly not as passionate or concerned with these matters or because there was a wholly different culture that could facilitate social change.

A concrete example of this can be found in a comparison of the different protesting cultures in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands during the process of the abolition of slavery. The abolitionist movement in Europe was strongly influenced by the American, Haitian and French revolutions. Specifically, the British movements held strong ties to passionate American abolitionists.¹¹⁴ There has also been demonstrable contact between the British and the Dutch abolitionists — albeit less fruitful.¹¹⁵

Dutch petition culture was focussed on keeping the abolition process civilized as opposed to the dramatic, explosive protests that were taking place in the United Kingdom and France. This in part due to the declining financial position of the Netherlands, there was a desire to return to the golden age, this was believed to only be able to be done through civilized political debate. Politics were not connected to the emotionally charged public sphere, rather the practice of politics was for the professionals who had the time and money to educate themselves on the topic.¹¹⁶

The United Kingdom saw the abolition of slavery realized through large-scale mobilizations of protesting groups in public gatherings, petitions and through the structural collection of funds to lobby and organize this. Paired with a newly revitalized impulse of missionary action, the British abolitionist movement operated in companionship and

¹¹¹ Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History*.

¹¹² Maartje Janse, "'Holland as a Little England'?" British Anti-Slavery Missionaries and Continental Abolitionist Movements in the Mid Nineteenth Century*, *Past & Present* 229, no. 1 (1 November 2015): 123–60.

¹¹³ William Palmer, 'How Ideology Works: Historians and the Case of British Abolitionism', *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 4 (2009): 1041.

¹¹⁴ Joseph C. Miller, 'Introduction: Atlantic Ambiguities of British and American Abolition', *The William and Mary Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (2009): 677–704; Maayke de Vries, 'Dutch and American Women Abolitionists: The Challenging of Prescribed Gender Roles 1840 – 1863' (Leiden, Leiden University, 2015).

¹¹⁵ Janse, "'Holland as a Little England'?"

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

accordance with a similar model to the missionary practice. Which is exactly what became the nature of the relation between British and Dutch abolitionist movements and would also lead to something Maartje Janse identified as an ‘inverse transfer.’¹¹⁷ The British missionary approach to the conviction of abolitionist ideas was too forceful as not only ideas were conveyed but also methods to achieve these ends were transported. Not only was there no way for this to be integrated into Dutch culture it also alienated their audiences through the assumption of a position that was too high and mighty.

The Rotterdam Ladies Antislavery Committee

Although small, and never on a fully nationally united level, there were some abolitionist movements in the Netherlands. Notably, in Rotterdam in 1842 one of these groups consisted predominantly of women and called themselves The Rotterdam Ladies Antislavery Committee.¹¹⁸ This committee was erected by a group of elite women who were in disagreement with the course of action taken by a previously established male dominated abolitionist group in Rotterdam.¹¹⁹ The group of ladies consisted of elite women with close ties to the United Kingdom and its abolitionist movements, which accounts for their diversion from the conventional Dutch course of non-agitational action when it came influencing politics. They wrote at least three pamphlets with an urgent call for the immediate abolition of slavery and wrote several appeals to King William II.¹²⁰

Although the fact that this committee consisted almost exclusively out of women who extensively discuss the matter of an(y) individual’s right to freedom could suggest a link to a possibly doubly feminist agenda — this is not explicitly the case. Rather it will be demonstrated in this chapter that earlier movements advocating for societal change were subject to extensive scrutiny with regards to their credibility. Too many women supporting a political cause could diminish the political seriousness of a matter and rather turn it into a matter of emotions, and thus something that only belonged in the —allegedly non-political— social sphere.¹²¹ Thus, the Rotterdam Ladies Antislavery Committee found themselves in the need to very explicitly conform to the tight social delimitation that decided what movements for societal change were credible and which were simply a matter of ‘hysterical’ public outrage.

This explicit effort to position themselves with a frame that would qualify them as credible can be found in several instances both in their correspondence and in the pamphlets. For example, when the comparison is made between Dutch and British abolitionist movements an empathic statement is made that off course comparing the two does not mean that the British should exert any influence over the Netherlands, rather that their abolition process serves as a case study for the (financial) success abolition could bring for the Netherlands. The argument

¹¹⁷ Janse, “‘Holland as a Little England’?” 125.

¹¹⁸ Alex van. Stripriaan and Gert Oostindie, ‘III. Rotterdam and Transatlantic Slavery’, in *Colonialism and Slavery: An Alternative History of the Port City of Rotterdam* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2021), 68–110.

¹¹⁹ Janse, *De afschaffers: publieke opinie, organisatie en politiek in Nederland 1840-1880*.

¹²⁰ Adressen aan Koning Willem II betreffende de bevordering van de afschaffing van de slavernij, 1842, 675.563, Archief en collecties van de Vereeniging der familie Van Oordt, Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Rotterdam. <https://stadsarchief.rotterdam.nl/zoeken/resultaten/?mivast=184&mizig=210&miadt=184&miaet=1&micode=675&minr=43692458&miview=inv2&milang=nl>

¹²¹ M. J. Janse and Zuure Jasper Lange Sarah L. de, ‘De Kracht van Beschaafd Protest: Een 19de Eeuws Perspectief’, in #WOEST, *De Kracht van Verontwaardiging* (Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 104–19.

that the Dutch might stand to gain financially from the abolition of slavery is only introduced near the end of the list of arguments presented by the Ladies committee, their primary arguments are based on maternal and religious positions.¹²²

To prevent this pamphlet from becoming another affirmation of the exclusionary practice of general women's history, which has been established by only studying the places and times in history where women position themselves as 'the other' on account of them being women, I am not only identifying the differences between the male counterpart of their movement but also emphasizing the similarities. This to illustrate the political nature of the women's associations as opposed to being merely social or cultural. This pamphlet offers relevant information as it allows for the comparison of the societal split between men and women without making their genders the centre point of its focus.

The structural exclusion of women from the political historical narrative both in the Netherlands and worldwide has left political history incomplete, in the sense that active attempts were made by men to exclude half the nation's population thus this indisputable shaped the way they practiced their politics. This means that both the practice of exclusion and that which was excluded need to be reconstructed in order for a completely accurate insight to be gained into political history. The abolitionist movement lends itself to a comprehensive reconstruction of the interrelation between men and women in political activities in the Netherlands as the ladies committee correspondence and pamphlets exist parallel to similar items on the topic produced by men. This ladies committee existed because the inclusion of large amounts of women in the mainstream activist association would fully discredit the reasonability of said movement. Attempts to incorporate women led to the structural prohibition of the participation of women in the public political sphere.¹²³ That this fact was widely known is explicitly confirmed by the Amsterdam women behind the publication of a petition with 733 signatures in the Monthly magazine of the Dutch Society for the Promotion of the Abolishment of Slavery wherein it was stated: "De ondergeteekenden treden niet op het gebied der staatshuishoudkune; zij wenschen alleen een kreet tot Uwen troon te doen opgaan van medelijden met die ongelukkige slaven en slavinnen (...)"¹²⁴

Comparing Abolitionist Movements

In comparing the two different abolitionist movements in Rotterdam, the first notable similarity they share is that they both strongly rely upon religion in the construction of their arguments for the abolition of slavery. Both groups start with an initial appeal to the reader's duty as a Christian which would, according to them, only naturally result in their agreement with the

¹²² Nederlandsche Maatschappij ter Bevordering van de Afschaffing der Slavernij, *Maandblad uitgegeven van wege de Nederlandsche Maatschappij ter Bevordering van de Afschaffing der Slavernij* (Nijhoff, 1855).

¹²³ Maartje Janse, 'Réveilvrouwen en de strijd voor afschaffing van de slavernij (1840-1863)', *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse kerkgeschiedenis na 1800*, 2003.

¹²⁴ Transl: "The undersigned take liberty to turn to the throne of Your Majesty with a most urgent plea. It may not astound you that this is done by the sex which does not engage in public affairs during ordinary instances. However, when the interests of her fellow creator is at stake she would violate her conscience if she would not raise her voice." *In Nederlandsche Maatschappij ter Bevordering van de Afschaffing der Slavernij, Maandblad uitgegeven van wege de Nederlandsche Maatschappij ter Bevordering van de Afschaffing der Slavernij* (Nijhoff, 1855).

abolition of slavery.¹²⁵ Also in both their appeals to the king (and those in charge) an appeal is made to the good Christian morality of the king which would surely mean he could not allow slavery to continue to exist.¹²⁶ Another similarity between the two is that both refer to the successful abolition of slavery in other European countries like France and the United Kingdom. This is no surprise as both movements who authored these pamphlets were closely connected to abolitionist movements in the united Kingdom. The presence of translated material from abolitionist movements from the united states and united kingdom in the personal archives of the persons involved in the dutch abolitionist movements illustrates the direct influence that the British movement had on the Dutch. The anglo-saxon movement was strongly religiously motivated, one of the individuals responsible for bringing the British movement to Rotterdam was a Quaker woman. The women's abolition movement had close ties with the UK due to many of them being wives British salesmen who were living in Rotterdam. They were able to find grounding for these conservative Christian idea with the dutch Reveil movement, which also had a very active female division.

Another similarity between the two Rotterdam pamphlets is that they both bring up a rebuttal to the possible concerns about the Dutch economy the anti-abolitionists might raise. The 'Golden Age' had long come to an end, and the decline of the growth of the Dutch economy was undeniable. The mythification of this 'Golden Age' was just beginning and phantom memories of enormous successes were fresh in the nation's memory. The desire to return to similar levels of wealth and affluence was deeply vested in society. In their address to the king the ladies committee uses the example of England to illustrate how the abolishment of slavery can lead to minimal losses. Although this concern is addressed it is not done adequately enough to dispel financial worries as becomes clear from the reply from the king's minister of colonial affairs. "Het voor *allen* beschermend Oppergezag, mag de belangen van het *geheel* niet opofferen aan die van *een gedeelte*."¹²⁷ In this reply he simultaneously highlights the enormous value that was attached to propriety and moderate protest, the interests of the group as a whole were always put before those of an individual group. Thus illustrating that in order to make a credible claim for political interest there needed to be proof that the contestation of current affairs was a matter that concerned the majority (or the whole population).

Besides these similarities there are also a few notable differences. Firstly, the portrayal of the enslaved differs largely. Whereas the women focus explicitly on the suffering of the enslaved and centre the contents of their pamphlets around the inhumane circumstances they are forced to live in the pamphlets authored by men primarily focus on how the mistreatment of the enslaved reflects badly upon the Dutch and how this could tarnish their good reputation. Concretely for example, a paragraph where a short account of the horrific treatment of the

¹²⁵ Stukken, ontvangen en opgemaakt door Willem Cornelis Mees alsmede publicaties betreffende de pogingen om te komen tot afschaffing der slavernij, 1842-1848, 39.438, Archief van de Familie Mees, Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Rotterdam. https://stadsarchief.rotterdam.nl/zoek-en-ontdek/archieven/zoekresultaat-archieven/?mivast=184&mizig=210&miadt=184&miview=inv2&milang=nl&mizk_alle=slavernij&micode=39

¹²⁶ Adressen aan Koning Willem II betreffende de bevordering van de afschaffing van de slavernij, 1842, 675.563, Archief en collecties van de Vereeniging der familie Van Oordt, Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Rotterdam.

¹²⁷ Stukken, ontvangen en opgemaakt door Willem Cornelis Mees alsmede publicaties betreffende de pogingen om te komen tot afschaffing der slavernij, 1842-1848, 39.438, Archief van de Familie Mees, Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Rotterdam.

enslaved in history is given ends with the emphatic statement that this terrible treatment has always reflected extremely badly on those who were mistreating their enslaved.¹²⁸ Throughout the rest of the text the safeguarding of the Dutch reputation is the main focus of the male activists' pamphlet. In contrast the Ladies Committee's pamphlet has a very extensive account of the abominable living conditions of the enslaved persons, putting them at the centre of their argument. Their pamphlet opens the body of the text with the question: "In welke opzigten dan verschilt het leven van een' slaaf van dat van iemand die zijne vrijheid heeft?"¹²⁹ The assumption underpinning this approach is that if the good Christian citizen's of the Netherlands were to know how their enslaved in the colonies were treated they would surely see the error of their ways and understand the necessity for the abolishment of slavery. It is thus not so much a call to the safeguarding of the Dutch' reputation but rather a call to their good Christian inner moral compass.

The difference between what each respective activist group chooses to be the central topic of their respective arguments offers a clear illustration of the differing socio-political positions of men and women. The general Dutch activist culture of the 19th century was one that lacked explosivity in comparison to France and the United Kingdom, rather the most credible forms of political activism were those that made a claim to reasonability. The ability to make appropriate use of their reasonability was something that only men were believed to possess, thus effectively excluding women from their participation in politics purely based on their woman-ness. This is illustrated through the fact that in the women's they focus solely on 'the facts,' which are provided through another account, of the poor conditions of the enslaved, rather than to make claims about the safeguarding of the Dutch reputation which would require the position to be able to say something sensible about national matters. The pamphlet authored by the movement that consists only of men is much more aggressive in expressing their judgement about the activities of the Dutch government in their colonies. Rather than suggesting that if only the public knew the facts they would see that abolition must occur they write: "zulke eene verongelijking jegens onze natuurgenoeten, kinderen van dezelfde God, is een smet op de natie, die het een heilige pligt is, zoo spoedig doenlijk uit te wisschen. Indien zelfs de stoffelijke bloei eener kolonie door zulk een ongeoorloofd misbruik bevorderd werd, de ondergeteekenden zouden dien bloei, dat voordeel voor hun vaderland, niet begeeren; ook de grootste schatte zouden door zulke middelen te duur gekocht zijn." A much more active and direct attack on the current actions of the Dutch state.

Another difference is that the Ladies committee's pamphlet specifically highlights the plight of enslaved women, and more specifically, mothers. In describing the abysmal living conditions of the enslaved both in their correspondence with the king and in their pamphlets, mothers are highlighted. In their third pamphlet the ladies committee highlights that enslaved women are treated equally as men, which is one of the points illustrating the inhumanity with which the enslaved are treated. In their third pamphlet they write: "Tot schande der

¹²⁸ Stukken, ontvangen en opgemaakt door Willem Cornelis Mees alsmede publicaties betreffende de pogingen om te komen tot afschaffing der slavernij, 1842-1848, 39.438, Archief van de Familie Mees, Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Rotterdam.

¹²⁹ Third pamphlet in Adressen aan Koning Willem II betreffende de bevordering van de afschaffing van de slavernij, 1842, 675.563, Archief en collecties van de Vereeniging der familie Van Oordt, Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Rotterdam.

menschheid, herinnere men zich – dat de vrouwen oner de slaven in ieder opzigt behandeld worden als de mannen (...)" In their correspondence with the king they write: "Als vrouwen, zouden wij bij Uwe Majesteit inzoudesheid ten gunste der slavinnen willen pleiten, want op haar drukt de slavernij dubbel zwaar." In both instances the committee makes a plea for the freedom of the enslaved, and from their own perspective as a group of women, they specifically plead for the freedom of enslaved women. Relevant to note is that the equal treatment of enslaved men and women is something the illustrates the wickedness of the treatment of the enslaved whilst on conventional feminist terms equal treatment of the genders is something to be desired. This confirms the need for reconsideration of the approach to the study of women's activism, because its divergence from the ideals of modern feminism is another reason which contributed to the overlooking of this ladies committee.

The women's association's plea is multi-layered, because parallel to the committee's assessment that men and women should not be treated equally, their very existence challenges consistent subordination of Dutch women in public and political life. There is also the clear indication of a self-awareness about this, in their second pamphlet the committee writes: "Wij hebben dikwijls onzen invloed te voren uitgeoefend; laten wij ook zulks nu doen. Laten wij onzen invloed uitoefenen op onze echtgenooten, op onze broeders of op onze andere betrekkingen. Laten wij niet rusten voor dat wij het roemrijk wer der Vrijstelling hebben zien aanvangen."¹³⁰ Thus making explicit the will to, and belief in, women's unification in order to bring about political change.

Arguably the plea for equal treatment is not something to strive for if the norm for that treatment has been set *by men for men*. Besides their existence, the appeal for the freedom of women *specifically* indicates that the establishment of liberties and rights for women remained a matter of public occupation and discussion. This is in contrast with the conventional narrative in women's history which posits that after the Batavian Republic all emancipatory efforts stilled for nearly a century only to pick up again with the struggle to secure women's suffrage. In the petition written by the committee of women in Amsterdam there is an even more explicit awareness of the unwelcomeness (and perceived inappropriateness) of women in politics as becomes clear from the repeated statements made by the committee itself:

"De ondergeteekenden nemen de vrijheid zich tot den troon van Uwe Majesteit te wenden met eene allerdringendste bede. Het verwondere Haar niet dat dit zoodanigen doen, wier sekse in gewonen gevallen zich met openbare aangelegenheden minder pleegt in te laten. Maar dáár, waar het belangen van hare medemenschen geldt, zouden zij haar geweten geweld aandoen, indien ook zij hare stem niet verhieven, hare beden niet tot Uwe ooren lieten doordringen."¹³¹

¹³⁰ Second pamphlet in Adressen aan Koning Willem II betreffende de bevordering van de afschaffing van de slavernij, 1842, 675.563, Archief en collecties van de Vereeniging der familie Van Oordt, Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Rotterdam.

¹³¹ Nederlandsche Maatschappij ter Bevordering van de Afschaffing der Slavernij, *Maandblad uitgegeven van wege de Nederlandsche Maatschappij ter Bevordering van de Afschaffing der Slavernij* (Nijhoff, 1855) 55.

In order to soften the boldness of their interference in politics even further the argument made for abolition in the pamphlet heavily relies upon lobbying for the enslaved women's chance to fulfil their womanly duties, as they were conservatively understood, by describing them as: "(...) die vrouwen, wier huwelijk niet erkend, [...]; die maagden, met wier eer en eergevoel gespot wordt; die moeders wier liefde tot hare kinderen zóó duur soms wordt geboet (...)"¹³²

In the pamphlet by the Rotterdam committee an explicit appeal is also made to allow women to fulfil their rightful role: "Moederlijke teederheid, welke men in zoo vele gevallen het hart heeft zien verbeteren en verborgene goede hoedanigheden voortbrengen, is voor haar slechts eene bron van ellende: want welke moeder kan zien dat haar kind slaaf is en gelukkig zijn?"¹³³ By embedding their relatively revolutionary existence as a politically active women's group in conservative rhetoric their arguments, and voices, were not immediately excluded from public debate on the topic but rather they engaged with 'credible,' predominantly male, abolitionist groups. This petition in combination with the platform whereupon it was published would result in the erection of a permanent Amsterdam ladies committee which concerned itself with the abolishment of slavery through spreading the word of the existence of an Amsterdam Ladies committee. There were yearly accounts of the activities of the ladies committee published in the magazine run by the Dutch Society for the Promotion of the Abolishment of Slavery with the intention of creating a national network of ladies committees occupied with the cause.

What becomes clear after a structural analysis of the pamphlets and petitions of some of the most well-known ladies' anti-slavery committees in the Netherlands is that they were self-aware about the deep social embeddedness, beyond merely the financial and political spheres, of both the abolitionist issues and causes, and their committees' existences. As the matter of slavery went beyond the financial and political spheres into the realm of religion and culture both the women who agreed with their exclusion from politics, and those who might not, found themselves agreeing on their need for interference — on the condition that they were pro-abolition of slavery. Which resulted in the unification of socio-politically involved women's activist groups on the fringes of the public political sphere who were concerning themselves with the matter of freedom in relation to gender, albeit not their own freedom. Rather than striving for freedom from female subjection to a patriarchal society the belief in the complementarity of the sexes was what fuelled female political activism.

This aligns this form of women's activism with what Offen names relational feminism — meaning that there is a belief in a fundamental difference between men and women.¹³⁴ Its most important achievement being that a new path back into the public sphere was being crafted through these women's unification and engagement with the active players of the public sphere. Essential about this movement is that it is an example of women uniting and coming into action on behalf of women to counter the structural erasure of their gender that is taking place both in

¹³² Nederlandsche Maatschappij ter Bevordering van de Afschaffing der Slavernij, *Maandblad uitgegeven van wege de Nederlandsche Maatschappij ter Bevordering van de Afschaffing der Slavernij*, 55.

¹³³ Second pamphlet in Adressen aan Koning Willem II betreffende de bevordering van de afschaffing van de slavernij, 1842, 675.563, Archief en collecties van de Vereeniging der familie Van Oordt, Stadsarchief Rotterdam, Rotterdam.

¹³⁴ Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History*, 22.

political action and decision making about the treatment of the enslaved. Rather than presenting these women's associations as unique societal outliers my emphasis of their similarities demonstrates that women's activism was embedded in the general landscape of public debate.

Combatting Poverty: 'Vrienden der Armen'

An element of the abolitionist movement that separates it from many of the other examples of women's emancipatory activity in the Netherlands during the 19th century is the explicit mention of, and relationship with, abolitionist movements in other countries. Although the phenomenon of an inverse transfer was observable in most of these relations there are other instances where international influences were welcomed and positively encouraged. These influences fostered women's contributions to socio-political matters, and more concretely inspired emancipatory activity. A concrete example of this can be found in Marianne van Hogendorp and her association called 'Vrienden der Armen' in 1847.¹³⁵ The goal of this association was to help the poor differently than the conventional way this was being done at the time, rather than giving them some money from time-to-time van Hogendorp's association aimed helping the poor to become self-sufficient and go back to work. Its members consisted primarily of Reveil women.

Unique about 'Vrienden der Armen' is that its active members were only women and that they conducted house visits to those they wanted to support. These visits exposed the horrible living conditions of the Dutch lower class; a major issue was the incredibly large number of children most families had, who all had to live in a very small living space. One of the first initiatives from the association was the establishment of a nursery.¹³⁶ This example demonstrates a unique instance of how the private sphere was accessed by women through a socio-political organisation of their own making. The issue of poverty was one of the main concerns in national political debate at this time, as it was believed to be closely connected to national moral decline. Its combatting generally occurred from institutions like the clergy or the state and could consist of monetary support, but could also look like transporting the poor to colonies in the country side.¹³⁷ On a smaller scale there were bottom-up initiatives, for example in the form of this women's association.

In initiating the association van Hogendorp was influenced and inspired by Elizabeth Fry. Later she would also go on to translate the work of Josephine Butler as a 'word to the women of the Netherlands.' The ideology of the association does not directly relate to the translation of Butler produced by van Hogendorp; that is to say it was not an association with as its main goal to emancipate women. However the erection and functioning of this association in the socio-political sphere paired with its international influences solidifies van Hogendorp as a political actor of her time. She occupied herself with the same issues as national politicians and participated in similar international knowledge exchanges as male political actors did. She herself is in a way aware of that, in the preface to the translation of Butler's work she writes:

¹³⁵ W. H. Posthumus-van der Goot and Anna M. Waal, *Van Moeder Op Dochter* (Brill Archive, 1968).

¹³⁶ Goot and Waal, *Van Moeder Op Dochter*.75-76

¹³⁷ Kathleen De Clercq, Programmabureau Koloniën van Weldadigheid, and Stuurgroep Koloniën van Weldadigheid, *De Koloniën van Weldadigheid: een uitzonderlijk experiment*, 3e druk. (Assen: Koloniën van Weldadigheid, 2018).

“Tegen de verordeningen onzer overheid vermogen wij als vrouwen weinig. Maar zoo elke vrouw in ons midden de overtuiging omdroeg, dat kwaad *kwaad* is en als zoodanig moet gebrandmerkt worden, en dat elke verordening die het in bescherming neemt een gruwel is in Gods heilig oog en het ook zijn moet in het onze, dan zullen de verordeningen, die ons smaadheid aandoen, wel moeten wijken.”¹³⁸

Thus confirming the fact that she is engaging with national politics. She sees this as her duty as a Christian, something which she sees as a stronger moral compass and driving force than her womanhood which would normally hold her back from engaging in politics.

This example is an interesting case study to affirm the political agency of women for a multitude of reasons. Firstly because the awareness and receptiveness of the founders for international influences is demonstrated; in general dutch national politics international influences played an important role, the influence of political theorists outside of the Netherlands can for example be clearly felt in colonial policies. Affirming that women also engaged with international knowledge networks solidifies their credibility and reach as political actors. Besides that this example illustrates the intersection of political matters and private lives and their inextricable connectedness. This demonstrates that approaching the study of political history as a merely public affair is incomplete and that this perspective should be broadened.

Conclusion

In this chapter the structural exclusion of women from participating in the political sphere is demonstrated through the specific case study of abolitionists. The similarities between the women's committees and men's associations are demonstrated in order to highlight the different positions they had in society. This comparison also illustrates the need for the expansion of the current historiographical definition of political history. Something which is demonstrated even more clearly in the last example of this chapter where the intersection of the private sphere with public policy is clearly demonstrated as being unavoidable.

In the selection of examples in this chapter there is also a clear illustration of the need to broaden the scope of political issues women involved themselves in, as well as the positions they took up regarding these issues. The arguments made by the female abolitionists emphasize the biological differences between men and women, and as a consequence argue for the naturalness of them having different positions in society. This demonstrates the impossibility of the existence of a historical narrative on women's emancipation that is linearly progressive. Informed and shaped by their social embeddedness women interacted with, and argued for their position in society in a broad variety of different ways.

¹³⁸ Marianne Catherine Klerck-van Hogendorp, *Een woord aan de vrouwen van Nederland* (Beschoor, 1883) 5-6.

3. Emancipatory Movement on the Fringes of Society from 1830 until 1890

During the second half of the 19th century general societal upheaval started to occur more frequently throughout Europe and the United States. Famously the year 1848 was known as the year in which radical revolutions swept the European continent, with general demands for the improvement of quality of life for the working classes and a decrease of power —both politically and financial — that was held over these working classes by the minority elite. The historical accounts of these revolutions have primarily been male-centred, whilst there is clear proof that women were often also significantly involved in social upheaval. The stage for these revolutions were spaces where women had been structurally pushed out from; e.g. politics and the workspace. However it is exactly the element of social upheaval that comes paired with revolution that allowed women to exert influence.¹³⁹

However, these revolutions created fissures in the status quo of societal organisation and the division of gender roles. Thus, increasingly more room started to appear for social emancipatory movements and individuals to slip through these cracks. An increasingly larger number of these movements preoccupied themselves with women's emancipation. Alongside this increase in numbers came diversification of what women's roles in the political sphere should, could and would entail.¹⁴⁰ As the general political landscape was a tumultuous one and the emancipatory action pertaining to women was taking place in fissures by fractured groups, discerning a singular historical narrative of feminism was difficult, if not impossible, during this time.

The women's emancipatory movements that were active during the second half of the 19th century are the ones that laid the groundwork in the socio-political sphere for what would go on to facilitate the 'first wave of feminism.' In this chapter I will identify some of the larger factions of women's emancipatory groups active during the second half of the 19th century and analyse their ideas and discussions in order to continue to sketch the outlines of feminist activity in the Netherlands before the official first wave. In this chapter I will repeatedly refer to discussions surrounding 'The Woman Question,' this is a term I adopt from contemporaries. It is used to refer to all matters surrounding women's emancipation from practical matters like laws surrounding prostitution to more abstract questions like to what end women should receive education.¹⁴¹

'The Social Question' in the Netherlands

The general historiographical analysis of the landscape of emancipatory women's movements during the second half of the 19th century finds that these movements were very much existent and were interconnected on an international level. There has been found to have been an

¹³⁹ Bonnie S. Anderson, 'The Lid Comes off: International Radical Feminism and the Revolutions of 1848', *NWSA Journal* 10, no. 2 (1998): 1–12; Suzanne Desan, 'Recent Historiography on the French Revolution and Gender', *Journal of Social History* 52, no. 3 (1 January 2019): 566–74.

¹⁴⁰ Karen M. Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 109-111.

¹⁴¹ Karen M. Offen, 'Birthing the "Woman Question"', in *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 108–43.

exchange of letters wherein ideas and literature were shared, interpersonal meetings were held and events with international attendees and speakers were organised. More specifically all this has been found to have happened between individuals from France, Germany, the United States and the United Kingdom. Conspicuously absent from these findings is the Netherlands, with the ongoing exchange of people and ideas between all its neighbouring countries it seems impossible for the Netherlands to have been excluded from this exchange, requiring further research.¹⁴²

As mentioned earlier there were many ongoing revolutions sweeping the European continent, the Netherlands however faced very little physically explosive upheaval during this time. This Dutch exceptionalism has been found to have happened for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is not the case that there was no socio-political unrest. Just like several other European countries the Netherlands were faced with the socio-economic repair of their kingdom after the expulsion of the French. Unlike most major European powers however, the Netherlands had been fully occupied and annexed. Previous to the French annexation was another period of political turmoil with the Batavian Republic. All this led to the development of a political culture that highly valued the preservation of peace and balance. In consequence this meant that all disagreements on the proper organisation of society were expressed in moderate ways.¹⁴³ However this moderation does not mean there was no progressive push for societal change. There were a number of socio-political movements during the second half of the 19th century that instigated the creation of political counter-movements, like for example a socialist movement. Many of these movements would go on to contribute to the establishment of the modern Dutch governmental organisation. Famous examples of this being the ‘Kinderwetje van van Houten,’ and the ‘Schoolstrijd.’¹⁴⁴

The Netherlands had been behind in the process of industrialization which had been taking place increasingly rapidly across western Europe. Both in the United Kingdom and in France, and notably in Belgium (which had until very recently belonged to the kingdom of the Low Countries) there was a rapid industrialization of the economy taking place. The Netherlands lagged behind in this for a multitude of reasons, a big one being the ease with which their colonial territories supplied wealth in the form of natural resources. Industrialization meant an increase in general population numbers, and an even steeper increase in city-dwellers, a flow of people from the countryside to the cities looking for work. As a result of this the labour conditions quickly became exploitative. Even though the Netherlands were behind in industrialization it did eventually occur.¹⁴⁵

A result of the Dutch lagging behind meant that the societal discussion on the new issues that came along with rapid industrialization had progressed further in countries that had industrialized further, thus making Dutch debate —when it finally formed— on these same

¹⁴² Gisela Kaplan, ‘Fringe Upheavals and Creative Traditionalism in France and the Netherlands’, in *Contemporary Western European Feminism (RLE Feminist Theory)* (Routledge, 2012), 149–78.

¹⁴³ M. J. Janse and Zuure Jasper Lange Sarah L. de, ‘De Kracht van Beschaafd Protest: Een 19de Eeuws Perspectief’, in *#WOEST, De Kracht van Verontwaardiging* (Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 104–19.

¹⁴⁴ J.C.H. Blom, ‘Nederland Sinds 1830’, in *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden*, ed. J.C.H. Blom and E. Lamberts (Amsterdam: Prometheus, Bert Bakker, 2014), 391.

¹⁴⁵ Friso Wielenga, *A History of the Netherlands: From the Sixteenth Century to the Present Day*, trans. Lynne Richards (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015) 180 – 187.

societal issues heavily influenced by foreign predecessors.¹⁴⁶ A spear point for societal discussion were the increasingly poor working conditions, eventually these discussions would lead to the establishment of new socialist movements throughout Europe. These discussions were exactly what created fissures in convention.

Dutch Freethinkers

Fissures wherein Dutch women's emancipatory movements can be found are the Dutch freethinkers, who would create a movement of utopian socialists which in turn offered the building blocks of for Dutch socialism.¹⁴⁷ There were also women involved in the battle for abolitionism, educational reforms, the Dutch Malthusian society and general prohibition of alcohol.¹⁴⁸ What is clear about the places where these women's emancipatory movements can be found is that they were strongly influenced by the ideas developed in the international network surrounding the Netherlands. An important influential group were the French utopianists (and adjacent socialists) who called themselves the Saint-Simonians and the Fourierists as well as the British Owenites. Both French movements placed, amongst other things, women's emancipation at the centre of their utopian visions for society's reorganisation, albeit in different ways.

The utopian vision Saint-Simon developed himself did not involve much consideration for the role of women in society but his students took the liberty to apply his theory in a way that did. In Fourier's ideal vision for the future society would be organized around labour and love between men and women as the reward for the execution of labour.¹⁴⁹

Both movements were relatively fractured and therefore do not have a single undisputable intellectual legacy but they are often referred to by almost all utopian socialists in Western Europe at the time.¹⁵⁰ At the core of both movements rests an idealism that strives for a 'better,' in this case meaning more equal, world. Their works were translated into Dutch and in the Netherlands there were attempts to set up utopian living communities in accordance with their ideals.¹⁵¹

These movements gained relatively large followings in France and the United Kingdom where they envisioned ideals for new and improved societies which would go on to inspire mainstream socialist political movements.¹⁵² In the Netherlands there were similar movements, albeit smaller but it is here that explicit women's emancipatory activity can be found in larger concentrations.¹⁵³ They were influenced by French (Saint-Simonian) and British (Owen)

¹⁴⁶ Hans Moors, 'Vrijdenkers over vrouwen', in *Feminisme en verbeelding*, ed. Mineke Bosch, Jaarboek voor vrouwengeschiedenis; 14 (Amsterdam: Stichting Beheer IISG, 1994), 61–85.

¹⁴⁷ Saskia Poldervaart, 'Utopian Socialism in Holland around 1900: Strategies and Gender', *Utopian Studies* 6, no. 1 (1995): 51–64.

¹⁴⁸ Anderson, 'The Lid Comes Off.'

¹⁴⁹ Saskia Poldervaart, 'Tegen conventioneel fatsoen en zekerheid: het uitdagende feminisme van de utopisch socialisten' (Amsterdam, Sara, 1993).

¹⁵⁰ Leslie F. Goldstein, 'Early Feminist Themes in French Utopian Socialism: The St.-Simonians and Fourier', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 43, no. 1 (1982): 91–108.

¹⁵¹ Poldervaart, 'Utopian Socialism in Holland around 1900';

¹⁵² Michael Drolet and Ludovic Frobert, 'Robert Owen and Continental Europe', *History of European Ideas* 47, no. 2 (17 February 2021): 175–90.

¹⁵³ Hans Moors, 'Vrijdenkers over vrouwen', in *Feminisme en verbeelding*, ed. Mineke Bosch, Jaarboek voor vrouwengeschiedenis; 14 (Amsterdam: Stichting Beheer IISG, 1994), 63–64.

examples. These movements were often started as dissidents from the freemasonry movement. In their separation from the original freemasonry sect the Dutch department already in 1863 explicitly permitted and encouraged female membership of their society. After multiple revisions of what the independently established freemasonry movement should look like the following prescription was established: “Laat dan het toenemen der verlichteling in en buiten de Vrijmetselarij het toe, dat zij de perken, waarin zij zicht beweest, verruimen en uitzetten kan, waartoe het opnemen der vrouwen en het veranderen van het geheim genootschap in een gesloten verbond behoort, dan zal zij veel nuttiger en heilzamer kunnen werken dan thans het geval is, en zal haar licht dan zijne zegenrijke stralen verspreiden over geheel de aarde [...]”¹⁵⁴ This was written and published by Frans Günst, the main publisher of Dutch freemasonry magazines, including *De Dageraad*.¹⁵⁵ The eponymous movement that became relatively large that was based on an original Dutch intellectual legacy is the freethinkers-association *De Dageraad* (which would be renamed to *De Vrije Gedachte*).¹⁵⁶ The founding of this association was strongly inspired by the works and intellectual legacy of Multatuli — or Eduard Douwes Dekker.¹⁵⁷

The association was founded in 1856 and concerned themselves with facilitating a space for critical discussion on the contemporary organization of Dutch society. They would go on to systematically criticize the extremely strong influence of religion on Dutch society and call for an atheist approach to societal organization, and later on politics. Notable members of this association were Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, Wilhelmina Drucker and later on Aletta Jacobs. Long before the membership of Jacobs there were already women present at the discussions that were held, and women were also members of their organisatory boards.¹⁵⁸ One of the main materials that spread their ideals was their magazine *De Dageraad*, and through pamphlets which were published by members. Some of which reached relatively large audiences for the time.¹⁵⁹ Despite there being proof of women being present for general assemblies and discussions they were still a significant minority. Women and their emancipation were not very often a topic for discussion in the earliest days, nor were they assumed to be the association’s natural target audience. Pamphlets and publications often call upon men and accounts of discussions taking place at assemblies recount discussion on what should be the appropriate code of conduct for men in general.¹⁶⁰

As mentioned earlier it is clear that during the first years of the existence of *De Dageraad* there was very little attention for ‘the woman question,’ this does not mean there was

¹⁵⁴ Frans Günst, *Adon-Hiram: de oudste legende der vrijmetselarij* (F. Günst, 1867) 30-31.

¹⁵⁵ Hans Moors, ‘GÜNST, Frans Christiaan’, in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Het Socialisme En de Arbeidersbeweging in Nederland* (BWSA, 2 October 2003), <https://socialhistory.org/bwsa/biografie/gunst>.

¹⁵⁶ P. H. J. M. Derkx et al., ‘De Kern van Het Vrijdenken: Een Reflectie Na Honderdvijftig Jaar Vrijdenkersorganisatie.’, in *God Noch Autoriteit: Geschiedenis van de Vrijdenkersbeweging in Nederland* (Boom, 2006).

¹⁵⁷ Jaap Grave, ‘Wat Doen We Met Multatuli? Antwoorden van Schrijvers, Humanisten En Vrijdenkers, Anarchisten En Feministen’, *Over Multatuli* 34, no. 68–69 (2012): 30–42; Vincent Stolk, “De Natuur Zal Spreken” Multatuli En Andere Pedagogogen over Opvoeding En Onderwijs’, *Over Multatuli* 35, no. 70–71 (2013): 45–60.

¹⁵⁸ Vrijdenkersvereniging "De Dageraad", and Vrijdenkersvereniging "de Vrije Gedachte". *Archief Vrijdenkersvereniging "De Dageraad,"* 2.3.1: ‘1856-1899.’

¹⁵⁹ F. van der Goes, ‘Dominee, Pastoor of Rabbi?’, *De Nieuwe Gids* 6 (1890): 408–31.

¹⁶⁰ Vrijdenkersvereniging "De Dageraad", and Vrijdenkersvereniging "de Vrije Gedachte". *Archief Vrijdenkersvereniging "De Dageraad,"* 6.001 – 6.005.

no attention for the topic at all. Rather it became clear that it was a topic that was too radical and with very little audience for it. A separate magazine called *De Tijdgenoot der Rede, gewijd aan de bevordering der kennis van de hedendaagse wijsbegeerte, de leer der humaniteit en de emancipatie der vrouw* was created in 1858. However, as there were no more than 50 subscribers it did not continue to exist for long after its inception.¹⁶¹

A revival of the discussion on this topic started during the 1860s and ever since discussion on the topic of women's emancipation has been sustained. In 1863 there were speeches by (male) members of the association called Willem Westermann and Hendrik Huisman criticizing the different treatment of women before the law. They pled for the discarding of the double moral standard that society held for men and women and on top of that they argued that women should enjoy the same rights to education as men.¹⁶² These speeches caused a wide range of reactions, from some vehemently agreeing to others dismissing them as incitement of violence.¹⁶³

Discussion about the position of women in society remained active amongst the members of the association but no single dominant narrative developed. The association could not be qualified as a women's emancipatory ally or group according to the standards of first wave feminists.¹⁶⁴ However because of their a-religious intellectualism the discussion on women's emancipation at de Dageraad took on a different, and more extensive, character than the limited discussion of the topic in mainstream Christian society.

Conventional and conservative discussions on the role of women in society around the middle of the 19th century also touched upon education for women but only in the context of bettering the development of women into wives and mothers.¹⁶⁵ During the 1860-70s various small local socialist organisations discussed and developed Saint-Simonian ideas; for example *De Rotterdamsche Lantaren* advocated for "het regt der vrouw, om als burgers van den staat deel uit te maken van de kiezers!"¹⁶⁶ The development of the 'Women Question' into a broader societal issue as opposed to a merely religious one happened in socialist movements on a larger scale at the end of the 1870s. Members of De Dageraad seemingly reached consensus on the right to education for women regardless of their marital status, something that the conventional emancipatory movements of the time did hold on to.¹⁶⁷

The secularization process of the societal discussion on 'The Women Question' can be clearly demonstrated by the sequence of publications on prostitution, starting with: "De Prostitutie-Quaestie" in 1879. The societal 'issue' of women prostituting themselves is discussed over several issues of De Dageraad magazine but rather than only discussing the Christian immorality of the matter, several authors highlight the importance of education for women to prevent women from becoming prostitutes. One author writes: "Zij is wat zij onder

¹⁶¹ Moors, vrijdenkers

¹⁶² Moors, 'Vrijdenkers over vrouwen,' 67.

¹⁶³ Moors, brijdenkers

¹⁶⁴ Gay L. Gullickson, 'Feminists and Suffragists: The British and French Experiences', ed. Claire Goldberg Moses et al., *Feminist Studies* 15, no. 3 (1989): 591–602.

¹⁶⁵ Hans Moors, 'Vrijdenkers over vrouwen', in *Feminisme en verbeelding*, ed. Mineke Bosch, Jaarboek voor vrouwengeschiedenis; 14 (Amsterdam: Stichting Beheer IISG, 1994), 61–85. See also the text by Betje Wolf 'Proeve over de opvoeding' mentioned in a previous chapter.

¹⁶⁶ Moors, 'Vrijdenkers over vrouwen.'

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 75.

de de gegeven omstandigheden zijn moet. De opvoeding van der vrouw laat in het algemeen nog veel te wenschen over. Moge er voor de meisjes red- middel- en hogere klassen in de laatste jaren veel gedaan zijn, de vrouw uit het volk is schier van alle opvoeding verstoken.”¹⁶⁸ Thus illustrating that education could serve as a means to prevent women from resorting to prostitution, as well as highlighting that the position of women in society depends on their class as well as their gender. This contrasts with the moral condemnation conventional public discussion predominantly entailed on the topic of prostitution.¹⁶⁹

From the 1970s onwards De Dageraad would continuously publish discussions of the Women Question by both male and female authors. Not only on the content matters of emancipation but also on a more meta level of how this fight for emancipation was perceived. The trend seems to be that these discussions cover topics that would much later reach the mainstream. For example, on the topic of universal suffrage, already in 1880 an author criticizes the use of the world universal. The author writes: “[...] wanneer men de stelling vindt dat het stemrecht algemeen is, maar dat het ontkend moet worden aan zoo wat 5/8 van de meerderjarigen in Nederland, dan weet men niet meer of het den schrijver ernst is met zijn pleidooi.”¹⁷⁰ Thus illustrating that early on in the discussions about the topic of universal suffrage there was already attention for the lack of universality this suffrage actually entailed. On top of that, as was mentioned in the previous paragraph there was also explicit attention for the influence societal class had on the ability for one to emancipate oneself. This consideration for the difference of the process in emancipation of women of the working class would only rear its head in the second wave of conventional feminism.¹⁷¹

Another notable element in De Dageraad publications is the structural attention they had for the international developments of women’s emancipatory movements. In part because of the international connections the free-thinkers association itself had, but they also paid attention to the achievements of international women’s emancipation movements that were not affiliated with the freethinkers movement.¹⁷² International awareness, and consequently entanglement, is one of the elements that is often used as a qualifier to identify early women’s emancipation movements.¹⁷³ Thus illustrating that although the Dutch freethinkers might not have been deemed to be attached to the feminist cause by self-proclaimed first wave feminists, a reconsideration of the activities of De Dageraad can shed a new light on how early feminist movements might be redefined.

¹⁶⁸ ‘De Prostitutie-Quaestie’, *De Dageraad: Tijdschrift Toegewijd Aan de Verspreiding van Waarheid En Verlichting in Den Geest van de Natuurlijke Godsdienst En Zedeleer*, 1879, ZO 17062, Internationaal instituut voor sociale geschiedenis.

¹⁶⁹ Gé Nabrink, *Seksuele hervorming in Nederland : achtergronden en geschiedenis van de Nieuw-Malthusiaanse Bond (NMB) en de Nederlandse Vereniging voor Seksuele Hervorming (NVSH), 1881-1971*, Werkuitgave SUN. (Nijmegen: Socialistische Uitgeverij Nijmegen, 1978).

¹⁷⁰ ‘Kiesrecht’, *De Dageraad : Tijdschrift Toegewijd Aan de Verspreiding van Waarheid En Verlichting in Den Geest van de Natuurlijke Godsdienst En Zedeleer*, 1880, ZO 17062, Internationaal instituut voor sociale geschiedenis.

¹⁷¹ Anna Tijsseling, ‘De Tweede Feministische Golf in Nederland. Een Historiografische Inleiding’, *Leidschrift: Vrijheid, Gelijkheid, Zusterschap. De Tweede Feministische Golf* 30, no. mei (2015): 7–30.

¹⁷² De dageraad 6^e jaargang 1884-5

¹⁷³ Susan Blackburn, ‘Winning the Vote for Women in Indonesia’, *Australian Feminist Studies* 14, no. 29 (1999): 214-17.

De Dageraad's most renowned publication is the pamphlet 'Dominee, Pastoor of Rabbi' in 1890.¹⁷⁴ At least sixty thousand issues were sold, the work elicited strong responses — some of which were published.¹⁷⁵ The pamphlet was written by Jan ten Bokkel with the very clear and explicit intent to illustrate how religion lies at the root of many of society's fundamental issues. Poverty and mistreatment of fellow countrymen is condemned and connected to Christian scriptures, as well as colonial exploitation and international violent conflicts.¹⁷⁶ There is no explicit mention of the subordinated position of women. In several instances in the pamphlet reaffirms the subordinated position of women in society. This happens repeatedly as women are referred to, to illustrate an example of a societal group that is helpless and must be cared for.¹⁷⁷ For example: “[mijn overbuurman] drinkt, vloekt, ranselt vrouw en kinderen in plaats van ze eten te geven, en Is in één word ellendig.”¹⁷⁸ However, this does not mean a complete disregard or irrelevance for the women's emancipatory movement.

In the pamphlet the example of the European witch hunts are used as an example of the atrocious levels of violence both the catholic and protestant churches were willing to go to. The unfairness of the treatment of these women is explicitly highlighted: “En dan die onzinnige heksenprocessen, die nog zoo kort achter ons liggen. Wat al arme oude vrouwtjes — en ook jonge — werden ten brandstapel verwezen, nadat zij, aan het martelen op de pijnbank niet meer kunnende uithouden, aan hunne rechters (?) alles bekenden, wat deze maar wilden. [...] zooveel als de rechter maar verkozen.” Although there is no active argumentation for any sort for female emancipation in this section it does demonstrate the changing societal attitude towards women's emancipation. Offen, and other experts on the topic of early feminist movements identify the erasure of women's history as one of the major problems which allowed for the long-sustained suppression of women and this would later on also lead to the incorrect artificial construction of the first feminist wave.¹⁷⁹ Thus the explicit acknowledgement of the systematic execution of specifically women in the context of a larger history breaks with the general trend of the erasure of women in historical narratives.

The most specific criticism on the treatment of women is presented in chapter 10 of the pamphlet wherein the banishment of Adam and Eve from paradise is analysed. The general argument is made that for a God that is supposed to be merciful and loving of all His children His decision to cast man out of paradise does not align with these properties. Almost as a side note, although placed in the middle of his argument, ten Bokkel writes: “[...] Eva – die nota bene zonder vragen aan Adam was gegeven als eene Hulpe! [...]”¹⁸⁰ Both with the general argument the author is making, and with this sidenote, the foundations for the gender hierarchy of contemporary society at that time were criticized and not accepted as self-evident but rather presented as one of the many incongruencies of Christianity. A critical reconsideration of the

¹⁷⁴ Jan G. ten Bokkel, *Dominee, Pastoor of Rabbi? Populaire Kritiek* (Amsterdam: Vereeniging 'De Dageraad', 1890).

¹⁷⁵ F. van der Goes, 'Dominee, Pastoor of Rabbi?', *De Nieuwe Gids* 6 (1890): 408–31.

¹⁷⁶ ten Bokkel, *Dominee, Pastoor of Rabbi? Populaire Kritiek.*, p. 16.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20 & p. 27.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁷⁹ Tjitske Akkerman and Siep Stuurman, *Perspectives on Feminist Political Thought in European History: From the Middle Ages to the Present* (London; Routledge, 1998), 19.

¹⁸⁰ ten Bokkel, *Dominee, Pastoor of Rabbi? Populaire Kritiek*, p. 24.

validity of Christianity as a foundation for the organisation of society was encouraged, inherent to this is a reconsideration of Christianity's traditional gender roles.

Neo-Malthusian contraception in the Netherlands

When the trend of rapid population growth alongside industrialization finally became significantly noticeable the Netherlands in the form of overflowing cities and poor public health the matter of population control became an increasingly discussed public topic. The deplorable living conditions and poverty of labourers both in the cities and the country side were a major factor contributing to the establishment of socialist movements.¹⁸¹ Alongside the increased popularity of socialism in response to the population growth other, lesser known, social movements were established. One of these being the *Nieuw Malthusiaansche Bond* which was established in 1881.¹⁸² Named after Thomas Malthus who believed that there was only so much space and so many materials available on earth to sustain a limited population, thus leading to the belief that population growth should be controlled.¹⁸³

This association thus promoted population control by providing information and means for both male and female contraception. A renowned member of this association was doctor Aletta Jacobs. Alongside her, several male doctors also provided information about contraception in their practices but there was only a small minority of doctors who were willing to speak publicly about sexual health.¹⁸⁴ Their association released a pamphlet in 1885 wherein arguments for population control through contraception were offered and different practical methods for efficient contraception were explained and demonstrated. The pamphlet specifically targeted parents of large families, giving them a large variety of arguments for the use of contraceptive methods.

The first argument places the health of women at its centre, as the following statement is made:

“1°. De veelvuldige en spoedig opvolgende zwangerschap heeft ten gevolge, dat in de meeste gevallen de gezondheid der vrouw wordt ondermijnd. Indien het lichaam der vrouw tenauwernood tot zijn natuurlijken toestand is teruggekeerd, en de zwangerschap treedt opnieuw in, dan lijdt daaronder niet alleen het lichaam der vrouw, maar het kind, dat geboren wordt [...]”¹⁸⁵

Presenting safeguarding of the health of the mother as their first argument shows how this movements deviates from the general contemporary stance on the control of the production of children. A woman's primary task was to birth and raise children, they themselves as an individual became subservient to this higher purpose. Especially when the economy started to

¹⁸¹ F. P. I. M. van Vree, 'De Stem van de Vrijheid. Over de Publicitaire En Propagandistische Activiteiten', in *God Noch Autoriteit. Geschiedenis van de Vrijdenkersbeweging in Nederland*, ed. B. Gasenbeek, J.C.H Blom, and J.W.M. Nabuurs (Amsterdam: Boom, 2006), 115–44.

¹⁸² Henny Brandhorst, 'From Neo-Malthusianism to Sexual Reform: The Dutch Section of the World League for Sexual Reform', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 1 (2003): 38–67.

¹⁸³ Brandhorst, 'From Neo-Malthusianism to Sexual Reform.'

¹⁸⁴ Annemiek de Groot, 'De lust tot last. De Rein Leven Beweging als pionier in de strijd om de nieuwe mens', *Groniek*, no. 120 (1 March 1993)

¹⁸⁵ *De Middelen Ter Voorkoming van Groote Gezinnen* (Nieuwe Malthusiaansche Bond, 1885) 3-4.

decline in the Netherland the production of healthy new children was seen as a divine higher purpose that could also save the economy.¹⁸⁶

The three reasons that are given after the first one all increasingly concern themselves with the general improvement of society. The pamphlet finds that poorer families were often larger, only increasing their poverty. Thus, it was believed that a decrease in family size would automatically result in higher wages and less poverty.¹⁸⁷ After the section that presents the arguments to make a favourable case for the use of contraception comes a section which explains how a woman becomes pregnant and consequently which contraceptive methods are safe to use to prevent her from becoming so.

Notable is the discussion of contraceptive methods which are moderately successful, namely the ‘withdrawal method.’ “Daartegen bestaan evenwel eenige bezwaren. Niet iedere man bezit die groot mate van zelfbeheersching, welke daarvoor vereischt wordt, terwijl het bovendien in sommige gevallen en den man en de vrouw onbevredigd laat, waardoor het, op den duur toegepast, nadeelig zou kunnen werken.”¹⁸⁸ Sexual pleasure for women is not only explicitly mentioned but also presented as equally important as male pleasure. The discussion of sexual pleasure was already an unconventional topic, as the mainstream attitude towards sexual intercourse was that it was only needed to achieve the divine purpose of human procreation.¹⁸⁹

The contraceptive methods that the pamphlet goes on to explain are all for women to use and bear responsibility for. On the one hand this affirms the image that the responsibility for a child (and its conception) lies completely with its mother and is not in part its father’s responsibility. In promoting these methods the assumption is also created that women will accept all the discomforts and safety risks that come along with the use of said methods. However, alongside this comes an increase in bodily autonomy for women as they can now (almost) control for themselves when they fall pregnant. With the increased possibility to control pregnancy women could build up a more independent life from their husbands as they could work more and increase job security, on top of that they could control the number of children that had to be provided for.¹⁹⁰

The beginnings of socialism and its ties to women’s emancipation
Notable is that many members of these utopian organisations would go on to become fundamentally important figures in the establishment of the first Dutch socialist party, for example Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis and Jan Fortuyn.¹⁹¹ With their move towards the political mainstream advocacy for the cause of women’s emancipation was discarded by many, if not all. This trend of social activists discarding the women’s emancipatory cause when moving into more mainstream politics did not go unnoticed by those who remained loyal to the cause. This might be a reason for the adoption of a-politicalness some emancipatory women’s

¹⁸⁶ Wielenga, *A History of the Netherlands*, 160 – 167.

¹⁸⁷ *De Middelen Ter Voorkoming van Grootte Gezinnen* (Nieuwe Malthusiaansche Bond, 1885) 4-5.

¹⁸⁸ *De Middelen Ter Voorkoming van Grootte Gezinnen* (Nieuwe Malthusiaansche Bond, 1885) 8.

¹⁸⁹ Brandhorst, ‘From Neo-Malthusianism to Sexual Reform,’ 41.

¹⁹⁰ Offen, *Globalizing Feminisms, 1789-1945*, 214.

¹⁹¹ ‘Jan Antoon Fortuyn’, tussen taal en beeld, accessed 10 January 2023, <https://www.tussentaalenbeeld.nl/A60b2.htm>.

movements held as a core value.¹⁹² Consequently this also meant a division between women who were active in socialist movement and those who were active in emancipatory movements. Possibly the former held the belief that if equality for men was first achieved, equality for women would follow.

An example of this dynamic is personified in the relationship between Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis and Wilhelmina Drucker, who were members of the freethinkers society De Dageraad around the same time. As has been established women were allowed to become members of this association almost immediately after its independent inception in 1856. After that the woman question has been demonstrated to have remained a topic of discussion. For example, equality of any individual before the law, regardless of their gender, became something on which many members agreed specifically in relation to the example of laws surrounding divorce.¹⁹³ This demonstrates that ideas of fundamental equality between the sexes had been circulating the association.

One of its most renowned members was Domela Nieuwenhuis who would go on to found the first Dutch socialist political party, the Sociaal Democratische Bond in 1881.¹⁹⁴ The development of his socialist thought was strongly influenced by his time as a member of De Dageraad and the people he met there, however in his following political career Domela Nieuwenhuis would not adhere to the general sentiment of gender equality as became the norm at De Dageraad. Rather he contributed to changes in labour laws that allowed for discrimination against women on the work floor, allegedly for their own safety.¹⁹⁵ In 1889 law regarding working conditions was changed, after there first being placed constraints upon employers to ensure some base level of the quality of working conditions in 1874 with the Kinderwet van Van Houten.¹⁹⁶ These constraints were further expanded in 1889 to not only ensure a safe work environment for children but also for women. What this practically meant is that women were not allowed to work the same number of hours as men, as well as them not being allowed to work dangerous jobs for four weeks after giving birth.¹⁹⁷ The consequences were detrimental for women's financial independence, as their position on the labour market was very seriously weakened. They became less attractive employees for employers to hire because of their lawfully limited availability, besides that even if they were hired a pregnancy would most often lead to permanent dismissal if they were working in what qualified as a dangerous work environment.¹⁹⁸

Domela-Nieuwenhuis expressed his explicit approval of this change in the law, not only for women's safety but also because he believed that women should have enough time left to

¹⁹² Marianne Braun, 'Die groote, machtige vereeniging "vrouw" : de Vrije Vrouwenvereening: van civil society naar public sphere.', *Negentiende eeuw*, 2009.

¹⁹³ Hans Moors, 'Vrijdenkers over vrouwen', in *Feminisme en verbeelding*, ed. Mineke Bosch, Jaarboek voor vrouwengeschiedenis ; 14 (Amsterdam: Stichting Beheer IISG, 1994), 61–85.

¹⁹⁴ J.M. Welcker, 'J. Charité, De Sociaal-Democratische Bond Als Orde- En Gezagsprobleem Voor de Overheid (1880-1888)', *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 89 (1 January 1974)

¹⁹⁵ *Handelingen Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal II, 1888-1889*, 19 maart 1889, p. 839 en 843.

¹⁹⁶ Coen Brummer, "'Een koele beschouwing van het maatschappelijk organisme": De Kinderwet van Sam van Houten als economisch idee en het politiek debat over sociale kwesties', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 134, no. 4 (1 December 2021): 583–602.

¹⁹⁷ *Handelingen Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal II, 1888-1889*, 19 maart 1889, p. 839 en 843.

¹⁹⁸ Brummer, "'Een koele beschouwing van het maatschappelijk organisme"'.

do all the housework as this is the role that befalls them naturally.¹⁹⁹ Drucker and Domela Nieuwenhuis exchanged correspondence about the matter of women's emancipation and his lack of commitment to the equality ideals that were developed at De Dageraad. In a series of letters between Drucker and Domela Nieuwenhuis between 1889 and 1890 the latter defends himself against the accusations from the former that he was not willing to fight for the establishment of equality between the sexes. Domela Nieuwenhuis responds:

Mij is het ernst om ons sociaal program te verwezenlijken en te ijveren voor gelijk recht van man en vrouw en zelfs geen optreden eener vrouwenbeweging, die zich tot doel wil stellen om den man per se als vijand voor te stellen van elke poging der vrouw om haar vrijmaking te verkrijgen, zal mij daarvan terugbrengen.²⁰⁰

From this response it becomes clear that although Domela Nieuwenhuis claims to also be invested in 'The Woman Question,' he will not let this come before the propagation of his socialist program. Later on the same letter he writes: "[...] daar zij op dit punt gevoeliger zijn dan anderen [...]"²⁰¹ referring to the, according to him, excessive criticism he had received from emancipatory groups on his (lack of) effort for women's emancipation. Simultaneously this sentiment shows that Domela Nieuwenhuis believes there to be a difference between the nature of men and women, as women are 'more sensitive.' This interaction would contribute to Drucker going on to refuse to attach her emancipatory movement to any political party.²⁰² The socialist party would go on to remain an important and valued ally of some parts of the women's emancipation movement, for example the group led by Aletta Jacobs.²⁰³

Conclusion

The selection of examples discussed in this chapter all intersect in their occupation with resolving the social question, albeit from the fringes of society. The Freethinkers movements served as precursors for the (slightly) more generally accepted socialist movement. An important element of all these movements was their ideas about the position of women in society, only when the socialist party entered into mainstream politics was this topic discarded. This indicates two things; firstly, it demonstrates the continued engagement of women with a variety of political matters, as opposed to them solely occupying themselves with the singular cause of emancipating women. Secondly, it demonstrates the structural and intentional exclusion of women from both the practice of politics and its records. This can be seen very clearly in the correspondence between Domela Nieuwenhuis and Drucker.

¹⁹⁹ Marianne Braun, 'Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis En Nog Iets', *Onvoltooid Verleden*, accessed 2 January 2023, <http://oud.onvoltooidverleden.nl/index.php?id=531>.

²⁰⁰ Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, 'Ingekomen Brieven van F. Domela Nieuwenhuis Uit Den Haag van 11 Mei 1889 Betreffende de Aankoop van Een Gebouw En van 6 Mei 1890 Betreffende de Vrouwenzaak.', 1990 1889, Archief Wilhelmina Drucker 1889-1917, atria.

²⁰¹ Domela Nieuwenhuis, 'Ingekomen Brieven van F. Domela Nieuwenhuis', 1990 1889.

²⁰² Marianne Braun, 'Mannen Gaan Vóór: De Neutrale Vereeniging Voor Vrouwenkiesrecht En de Pacificatie van 1917', *Tijdschrift Voor Genderstudies* 20, no. 1 (2017): 9–21.

²⁰³ Monique Leijenaar, Jantine Oldersma, and B. Niemöller, *De hoogste tijd: een eeuw vrouwenkiesrecht* (Amsterdam: Atheneum-Polak & Van Genneep, 2019).

In combining these two insights the need to broaden the definition for what political activity entails is demonstrated. As well as offering a suggestion of what source materials might be considered to revise and expand the current definition. Overall this chapter illustrates the fact that political activity cannot occur in a vacuum and proposes a variety of roads to take to expand the current demarcation of the political arena which is strongly determinative for the historical accounts of Dutch political history. This chapter demonstrates the extent up to which the private and political spheres were intricately intertwined and consequently the falseness of the dichotomy between these two. It also demonstrates that even if the conventional demarcations of the political sphere are retained the intricacies of the development in this sphere are often oversimplified because of contemporary anachronistic projections.

4. Education & Labour: Women in the Public Sphere (1860 – 1900)

The first feminist wave in the Netherlands is a topic that has been broadly covered; from historical education and research to discussions about the requirements for general historical awareness about Dutch heritage in mass media. Since this first wave, Aletta Jacobs has been one of the leading figures in the discussions about this topic. In the Dutch historical Canon Aletta Jacobs' person represents the theme of women's emancipation in the Netherlands as she was the first woman to be allowed to complete a university education in medicine, as well as being the leader of the Vereniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht (VVK).²⁰⁴ Not only has Aletta come to represent feminism through the Dutch canon but there are also streets, schools and prizes named after her. The general consensus in historical scholarship about Dutch feminism is that the first wave started around 1860 and Jacobs and her plea for women's suffrage have come to represent the crest of the first wave.

In this chapter I will offer an overview of the Dutch creation and evolution of 'the Woman Question,' I will briefly explain how this resulted in the (in hindsight constructed) first wave. This conventional narrative steers all signs of emancipatory activity at the time towards the culmination of the establishment of women's suffrage. I will expand upon this selection with several examples of temporally conjunctive emancipatory activity that have been overlooked in the most conventional writings of the Dutch history of feminism. For all of these examples I will demonstrate how, rather than them necessarily culminating into the isolated establishment of women's suffrage, they were deeply interwoven with the 'non-feminist' political fabric of the time and their emancipatory precursors. This approach offers an complete and cohesive perspective on the role of women in political history because the conventional examples of 'proto-feminist' action are expanded upon as well as better integrated into general national political history.

The selection of examples will cover all aspects of public life in Dutch society, namely the right to education and its contents, labour rights, improved marital terms and financial independence, public health and social security. This selection of examples are all matters that have been shaped by political decision making, something of which women were clearly excluded. However, as these examples will demonstrate women occupied themselves with these political matters in almost every way they could. Despite their persistent occupation with these matters they have been excluded from many of the political records. However, as the upcoming examples will demonstrate many women were eventually successful in realizing their goals up to a certain extent.

Women's education

The earliest instance of women's emancipatory activity, which has been appropriated into the conventional narrative of the establishment of women's suffrage, are the societal discussions and activist activity around women's education. Women like Eliza van Calcar-Schiotling and Minette Storm-van der Chijs wrote and published pamphlets on the ideal contents and form of girls' and women's education. For example, van Calcar wrote *Wat is noodig? Eene vraag over*

²⁰⁴ Aletta Jacobs', Canon van Nederland, accessed 1 October 2023, <https://www.canonvannederland.nl/nl/alettajacobs>.

vrouwelijke opvoeding, aan het Nederlandsche volk in 1864 wherein she resisted Storm-van der Chijs' ideas. Not only did their publications elicit a wide range of public responses from men, they were also in discussion and disagreement with each other. Through their publications, interactions and activities the Dutch 'Woman Question' as a specifically isolated feminine social phenomenon started to take shape and was created.²⁰⁵ This was taking place parallel to the acceptance of new legislation by Thorbecke in 1863 wherein a law on education was passed that would go on to found the HBS (hogere burgerscholen) exclusively for men. This case demonstrates the importance of placing emancipatory activity for the women's cause in a broader societal context. The discussion of women's education, which became 'the Woman Question,' was part of a larger societal movement which realized more accessible and improved education for the lower classes in general. Only in 1870 would the first woman — namely Aletta Jacobs— be allowed to audit university lectures. However, before this the discussion surrounding women's education had already been going on in the public debate on The Woman Question during the middle of the 19th century in the Netherlands. Notorious figures in this debate that I will discuss are Barbara van Meerten-Schilperoort, Eliza van Calcar-Schiotling and Minette Storm-van der Chijs. These three demonstrate a comprehensive overview of the different positions participants in favor of education for women in this debate took.²⁰⁶

Anna Barbara van Meerten-Schilperoort (1778-1853) is one of the earliest women on record to have contributed substantially to the development of educational material and opportunities for girls. At the beginning of the 19th century, she started producing educational materials on topics like the Dutch language, geography and history. She decided that she would take up the education of her own children after being deeply dissatisfied with her own very brief education. In 1811 Schilperoort started publishing the educational periodicals she made and in 1820 much of her work was known and used nationally.²⁰⁷ With these publications Schilperoort gained a credible reputation as educator and she became successful as a teacher for a selection of well-off girls in the Netherlands. Thus creating the first semblance of a private girls boarding school.

What becomes clear from the combination of the contents of the educational booklets she published and the articles she published in her 'women's' magazine *Penélopé* is that Schilperoort had a very clear image of what topics women should be educated on. The educational texts she published covered a much broader range of topics than what was conventionally taught to women. In a manual for young adults she writes:

“(...) de meeste [men] het niet kunnen verdragen, dat de vrouw voelt, en weet, dat zij even zoo wel als de man eene voor beschaving en veredeling vatbare ziel heeft; dat zij de vrouw liever over een kleed of kous dan over een goed boek

²⁰⁵ Marijke Huisman, 'Strijd Omschrijverschap. Publicatiestrategieën van Vrouwelijke Autobiografen', in *Publieke Levens: Autobiografieën Op de Nederlandse Boekenmarkt 1850-1918*, vol. 9 (Uitgeversmaatschappij Walburg Pers, 2008), 210–80.

²⁰⁶ Nelleke Bakker, 'Cylinders and Séances: Elise van Calcar and the Spirit of Froebel', *History of Education* 42, no. 2 (March 2013): 159.

²⁰⁷ Riet Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, ed., *Met en zonder lauwerkrans: schrijvende vrouwen uit de vroegmoderne tijd 1550-1850: van Anna Bijns tot Elise van Calcar : teksten met inleiding en commentaar* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997) 785.

hooren praten dat verre de meeste mannen egoïsten zijn, die vreezen dan hun persoonlijk belang er bij lijden zou, als de vrouw nu of dan een goed boek in de hand nam(...)"²⁰⁸

This statement was not only radical in its nature of claiming that women possess similar mental faculties to men but also in the fact that it explicitly attacks and condemns men for their unwillingness to educate women as it would threaten them and their interests. At the same time she empathically does not plead for total equality between the sexes, rather for an equal opportunity for women to be educated, in a manner similar to men, in the fields that naturally befall them. In the education on more masculine subjects, like national history, an approach that accounts for 'the sensitivities' of women should be taken. A position similar to that of Betje Wolff.²⁰⁹ The contents of *Penélope* —a magazine whereof she was editor-in-chief— also primarily covered topics deemed to be relevant for women; namely handicraft. Although its contents were not necessarily progressive, the creation of a magazine specifically for women was a novelty that increased visibility and independence.²¹⁰

Elise van Calcar (1822-1904) was a renowned author of (pedagogical) literature and convinced spiritualist. Although she became more well-known for her spiritualist practices during her life, her pedagogical literature would later on be identified as a proto-feminist contribution to establishing women's access to education. During her lifetime she was also one of the few women whose reviews of literature would be published in mainstream media outlets like *Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen*, as well as being allowed to hold public speeches from 1862 for *de Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen*.²¹¹ Van Calcar's feminism is multi-layered and in order to understand the full scope of influence her work had these layers require some deconstruction. At face value van Calcar advocates for the normalization of education for women to improve their ability to fulfill all women's true natural purpose; namely being a mother. In her book *Onze Ontwikkeling of de magt der eerste indrukken* she writes:

“Het is der vrouwe gegeven aan de toekomst der menschheid te arbeiden — de strijder toe te rusten, die de ouden vervangen moeten tot nieuwe worsteling. Niet aan sommige vrouwen is het gegeven, niet enkel aan gehuwde vrouwen, niet enkel aan de moeders, niet enkel aan de opvoedsters van beroep; aan alle vrouwen.”²¹²

²⁰⁸ Anna Barbara Meerten, *Gids voor jonge lieden van beschaafden stand, tot regeling van hun gedrag bij hunne eerste intrede in de wereld, zoo wel als in hunne huisselijke betrekkingen* (G.J.A. Beyerinck, 1821).

²⁰⁹ Mineke Van Essen, 'Anna Barbara van Meerten-Schilperoort (1778-1853): Feminist Pioneer?', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 77, no. 2 (1999): 383–401.

²¹⁰ Lotte Jensen, 'Bij uitsluiting voor de vrouwelijke sekse geschikt': *vrouwentijdschriften en journalistes in Nederland in de achttiende en negentiende eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001).

²¹¹ Annette Faber, *Elise van Calcar (1822-1904): een gedreven en begeesterd leven* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2022) 124, 235; Schenkeveld-van der Dussen, *Met en zonder lauwerkrans: schrijvende vrouwen uit de vroegmoderne tijd 1550-1850: van Anna Bijns tot Elise van Calcar: teksten met inleiding en commentaar*, 902-3.

²¹² Elise Van Calcar, *Onze ontwikkeling of de magt der eerste indrukken* (Van Gelder, 1861) vol. 1, 5.

Child-rearing was for her not only the business of educators or governesses, but rather it was the ultimate calling for all women.²¹³ More than a calling, it was a duty that women could not shirk. In order for women to be able to fulfill this purpose their appropriate education is a prerequisite. For van Calcar this already starts with the right primary education, separate for boys and girls from age 8 onwards.²¹⁴

The ascription of motherhood to women as their sole purpose and the reasoning that therefore their education should be in accordance with this purpose was at odds with the conventional goal for women's education. At this time women from higher social classes rarely raised their own children, these were often also the women who were in a financial position to be able to afford an education. This being said women's education at this time still mainly focussed on teaching women traditional feminine values to serve as a good wife. At first glance van Calcar's ideals seem similarly traditional but upon closer inspection there is a difference. Namely that she calls for these universally feminine tasks to be taken as seriously as any other masculine profession. She writes: "Doch indien wij dit erkennen, dan erkennen wij tevens, dat men de vrouw moest leeren, hoe die pligten waardiglijk te vervullen, dus ook, dat het vrouwlijk geslacht behoefte heeft aan eene "science des mères.""²¹⁵ This call for the scientification of motherhood underpins the truly revolutionary feminist nature of her argument. The consequence of this statement would entail that the social value of motherhood would be equal to that of any other (male-dominated) profession that requires a scientific education. Rather than arguing for women's access to societies male-exclusive public and professional spheres van Calcar unintentionally argues for radical equality between the labour division of the sexes and thus a restructuring of gendered social hierarchy. In doing so van Calcar politicizes women's education more radically and explicitly than had been done before in the traditional education for women.

A clear illustration of this intersection of women's education with the general political developments can be found in the objections that the ministry of internal affairs has against the establishment of a school (kweekschool) for female educators around 1857 was that it would impede upon the number of women that could serve as viable marriage candidates. They observe the following about women who are educated to become educators: "welke [uitkomsten] de opleiding tot onderwijzeressen dikwijls oplevert, aangezien de daartoe opgeleide personen dikwerf het meest begeerlijk toeschijnen om tot echtgenooten te worden ver kozen, en zij daardoor aan hare bestemming worden onttrokken." The concern with women's education is thus very clearly also related to ensuring women's availability to men as marriage partners, and not solely occupied with women and their positions in society as an isolated phenomenon.

Minette Storm-van der Chijs (1814 – 1895) contributed extensively to the establishment of several different types of first public schools for girls. In 1846, together with a group of other upper-class ladies in Delft they established the 'Leer- en Werkschool voor behoeftige Meisjes,' which would provide education for girls from upper-class families who had fallen into poverty as it was socially unacceptable for them to work industrial jobs like middle- and

²¹³ Bakker, 'Cylinders and Séances,' 155.

²¹⁴ Faber, *Elise van Calcar (1822-1904): een gedreven en begeesterd leven*, 233, 253.

²¹⁵ Calcar, *Onze ontwikkeling of de magt der eerste indrukken*, vol. 1, 3.

lower-class girls might do. As motivation for her involvement with women's education Storm-van der Chijs writes: "opdat zij door een hoogere ontwikkeling en door meer degelijke vorming in kennis en wetenschap in staat worde gesteld zoo noodig geheel zelfstandig en vrij van vernedering in hare behoeften te voorzien."²¹⁶ The importance of the ability for girls to be able to grow up to be independent and free is something that perfectly aligns with her own lifestyle of independent travel around the world.

Storm-van der Chijs was very little involved with the actual execution of the education, rather she went on to travel to the north and south Americas for many years at a time to further investigate the possibilities for modern girls (and boys) education. Inspired by the wide variety of vocational trainings for girls in North-America Storm-van der Chijs started pleading for the establishment of the first 'Industrieschool'²¹⁷ for girls with the departments of the 'Maatschappij tot Nut van het Algemeen.' Which after two years, in 1865, resulted in the successful creation of the first Industrieschool for girls. Beyond this she also plead for vocational farming education for women in rural areas.²¹⁸

A unique aspect of Storm-van der Chijs her life is the fact that she travelled almost all around the world independently. She did so with the intent to expand her knowledge on what what education could look like for boys and girls in other parts of the world to serve as inspiration for her vision of Dutch education. She collected signatures of many of the figures that inspired her. Notably in this collection there are not necessarily only signatures of conventionally 'important' people, but rather she collected an assortment of signatures of people who served as a source of inspiration for her. Among them are for example signatures of principals of girls schools in Greece, Turkey and Lebanon.²¹⁹

Storm-van der Chijs was a contemporary opposer for van Calcar. Their ideas for girls and women's education publicly clashed, for example when they both attended the same provincial assembly on education in 1870 in Zuid-Holland. Here Storm-van der Chijs advocated explicitly for health education and handicraft, which van Calcar had deemed to be irrelevant for women's education.²²⁰ Hereby demonstrating the conflicting multidimensionality of women's emancipation. In this case a factor equally important to gender seems to have been class, and the concern of what activities were (in)appropriate for members of different social classes.

Despite their disagreements they were two of the few —if not only— women who had been allowed to deliver public speeches at this time. During a public speaking event in Amsterdam van Calcar says herself: "Ik weet dat ik op de uiterste grens sta van hetgeen een vrouw past." This act of public speaking in itself, regardless of the topic matter they discussed, brought about a broad variety of reactions. One spectator of Storm-van der Chijs goes on to

²¹⁶ Speech by Antoinette Boissevain van der Chijs in biographical map, 1814, 1845-1846, 1864, 1872-1878, IIAV00000160, Collectie Anna Maria Margaretha Storm-van der Chijs, Atria, Amsterdam.
<https://collectie.atria.nl/archives/item/441347-collectie-anna-maria-margaretha-storm-van-der-chijs1814-1845-1846-1864-1872-1878>

²¹⁷ This would later become known as the gemeentelijke hogere burgerschool (HBS)

²¹⁸ M. van der Burg, "Geen tweede boer": gender, landbouwmodernisering en onderwijs aan plattelandsvrouwen in Nederland, 1863-1968", 2002.

²¹⁹ Naber in 'De Hollandse huisvrouw,' Biographical map speech by Antoinette Boissevain van der Chijs, 1814, 1845-1846, 1864, 1872-1878, IIAV00000160, Collectie Anna Maria Margaretha Storm-van der Chijs, Atria, Amsterdam.

²²⁰ Faber, *Elise van Calcar (1822-1904): een gedreven en begeesterd leven*) 253.

write: “Wanneer ik de rechten der vrouw zoo mannelijk door u heb hooren verdedigen op het Taal congres te Leuven, dan heb ik tevens gedacht, dat er een tijd komen moet, wanneer de vrouw de steun zal worden van den breinzieken man, die hare rechten durft betwijfelen.” Hereby demonstrating the uniqueness of a woman treading into the public sphere, as it is something that he could only conceive of as being ‘masculine.’²²¹

Women’s Labour

Something that propelled women even further into the public sphere, beyond the semi-private realm of education, were their concerns with labour opportunities. Concerns about the labour activity (and rights) of women were closely intertwined with the improvements that were being demanded (and realized) in women’s education. As demonstrated in the previous section there was no one unequivocal demand made by those occupying themselves with the improvement of women’s education. For van Calcar the idea that women would go on to do any labour other than rearing children was appalling and fundamentally undesirable. For van Meerten-Schilperoort it was unthinkable that the upper-middle class girls she taught at the beginning of her career would (need) or be taught do any sort of labour that was below their social class. Storm-van der Chijs on the other hand pleaded persistently, and successfully, for the establishment of the first HBS for girls which offered vocational education for an increasingly broad variety of jobs to be done by women. Similar discrepancies can be identified amongst the individuals who emphasized the importance of the possibility for women to work. In this section I will discuss Betsy Perk and Mina Krüseman and their contributions to the improvement in the nature of, and opportunities for work for women. Not only did these women collaborate but they also complement each other with very different ways in which they engaged with the political sphere. This sheds light on the multidimensionality of women as political actors and emphasizes the need for them to be integrated into the general historical narrative. This, as opposed to their being excluded and reduced to a one-dimensional narrative of women in history — as is often done in feminist history.

Besty Perk has been identified as the founder of the first feminist magazine of the Netherlands called *Ons streven* in 1870, as well as the first national labour organisation for women in the Netherlands called *Arbeid Adelt* in 1871.²²² A year after its creation internal conflict would cause a rupture resulting in the establishment of a new association called *de Algemene Nederlandsche Vrouwenvereeniging ‘Tesselschade.’* Although the reasons for this rupture are mostly grounded in personal disagreement as opposed to ideological, the duration of their separation and persistent co-existence again demonstrates the lack of uniformity in women’s emancipatory activity. Rather than a transcending emancipatory cause that unites all women, emancipatory activity was deeply embedded in broadly diversified personal and private life. The two would go on to exist very closely next to each other until merging again into *Tesselschade-Arbeid Adelt* (TAA) in 1953. To this day TAA still provide financial support for the education of women who fit their criteria. The initial call for sponsors to fund the

²²¹ Collectie Anna Maria Margaretha Storm-van der Chijs, 1814, 1845-1846, 1864, 1872-1878, IIAV00000160, Collectie Anna Maria Margaretha Storm-van der Chijs, Atria, Amsterdam.

²²² Locally there has already been politically assembled activity as has been demonstrated in chapter two with the women involving themselves in abolition.

founding of the association was placed in Perk's magazine. As a call to action the initiators painted a vivid picture of the problems an increasing number of upper-class women faced:

“(…) vrouwen, die door ‘t verlies van echtgenoot of vader, als tot den bedelstaf vervielen; vrouwen, die wat opvoeding betreft onze gelijken – nochtans, door gebrek aan middelen om in eigen onderhoud of dat der haren te voorzien – zwaarder lot te torschen hebben dan degenen, wien hij keer op keer een aalmoes schenkt; vrouwen, behoeftiger zelfs dan die armen, omdat zij van jeugd af aan gewoon zijn aan zekere weelde en gemak, en bovenal zooveel te lijden hebben door het streng gebod: fatsoen.”²²³

The root of the problem that is identified is similar to the reason for the inadequacy in women's education, namely societal conditioning of women into taking up subservient and dependent roles. The fundamental goal of the organisation was to provide a respectable form of work — namely handwork— for women from the middle-upper class who had fallen into poverty. This initiative was controversial not only because it was the first (known) women's organisation in the Netherlands, but also because of the group of impoverished individuals it concerned; namely women from the upper-middle class. They were expected to be supported and maintained financially by their husbands, and if they did not have one then by their family. In no way were they expected to work to earn their living.²²⁴ In creating the *Arbeid Adelt* association Perk set the first steps towards increased financial independence, a matter that was far more political and religious than merely selling products of handicraft.

Different from ideological precursors (and descendants) *Arbeid Adelt* was relatively quickly accepted and supported in Dutch society. Not in the least because of the public support they got almost immediately from queen Sophie when she became their patroness, but also more generally society seemed to be surprisingly receptive to the initiative. Surprising because many of the earlier examples of emancipatory initiatives in this chapter were met with much resistance and although all examples were to some extent successful in realizing emancipation none of them ever got royal patronage. In 1883 *Tesselschade* and *Arbeid Adelt* (TAA) together gave the push to establish a department for 'Art-Needlework' at the state school for arts and crafts. With this they facilitated a new possibility for women to follow a vocational education and obtain the necessary credentials to establish themselves as independent crafts(wo)men.²²⁵

Already in 1860 Storm-van der Chijs published an article wherein she advocated for the establishment of industriescholen for girls, something she had gotten the idea for after observing similar institutes in the United States of America. Her pleading would eventually result in the creation of an industrieschool for girls but as a separate institute, as opposed to the integrated department that was established in 1883. The reasoning used by Storm-van der Chijs

²²³ Ciruclaire 'landgenooten!', 1871, IIAV00000003.179, Archief Algemene Nederlandse Vrouwenvereniging 'Arbeid Adelt' 1871-1952, Atria, Amsterdam. <https://collectie.atria.nl/archives/item/440282-archief-algemene-nederlandse-vrouwenvereniging-arbeid-adelt-1871-1952>

²²⁴ Vilan van de Loo, *Toekomst door traditie: 125 jaar Tesselschade-Arbeid Adelt* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1996) 11.

²²⁵ van de Loo, *Toekomst door traditie : 125 jaar Tesselschade-Arbeid Adelt*, 12-13.

was primarily founded upon the belief that women needed better education in order for them to successfully fulfil their duties as women (and mothers) in society.

Whereas TAA focussed on creating the possibility for women to maintain themselves independently in society. The differing angles and receptions of what is basically the same issue also demonstrates the influence of the political zeitgeist and developments that were taking place outside of the ‘women’s history,’ or ‘the woman question.’ Namely the general economic and moral decline, poverty and poor living conditions resulting in the beginnings of socialist movements.²²⁶ This thus again demonstrates the inadequacy of writing the history of women’s emancipation as an isolated linear narrative. At the same time it also offers an explanation for the intentional forgetting that has taken place with many of the examples mentioned in the previous section and chapters. Since the wave analogy requires a consistent linear progression the tidings going back and forth in progress being made in women’s emancipation does not fit. This observation only becomes stronger when it is contrasted the achievement that has been ascribed explicitly to the person of Aletta Jacobs as the first woman to enrol in university and be granted a degree.

Another illustrious figure, who was —for a while— closely connected to Perk but permanently concerned with women’s right to independent work was Mina Kruseman. She toured around the country together with Perk to perform a reading of their respective original works. Respectively a ‘fairy tale’ for Perk and a fictional family history for Kruseman, both works were deeply permeated with social and gender critiques. Although Perk’s performance was not received well and the notion of two women touring the country to perform public readings was highly controversial in itself, Kruseman’s performance received enthusiastic reviews all throughout the country.²²⁷ On this tour she read the work called: *Zusters. Een schetsje uit onze dagen*.²²⁸ This story is an account of the lives of five sisters, they represent some of the most likely varieties in walks of life women at that time were most likely to go down. The story very clearly serves as a vehicle for strong criticism on the prospects of women in the Dutch society of Kruseman’s lifetime.

The sister expressing the large majority of criticism in the story is called Norah. She bears strong auto-biographical —albeit an idealized biography— similarities to Kruseman herself. The sentiments expressed by Norah also closely align and sometimes overlap with opinions expressed by Kruseman herself in later correspondence and appearances during her time in the Dutch indies.²²⁹ She would also go on to publish the text that she performed on tour together with some of her correspondence and articles in a collection called *De moderne Judith: allerhandbundeltje*. Kruseman’s performances and characters were thus very closely intertwined with her socio-political opinions as a private person. At the peak of her popularity, around the year of 1873, Kruseman’s appearances —whether they be performative or not— were the topic for extensive media coverage and public discussion. Thus, although her views

²²⁶ J.B.D. Simonis, ‘Socialism between Jesus and Marx: Life and Work of F. Domela Nieuwenhuis’, *International Journal of Social Economics* 22, no. 5 (1 January 1995): 50–76.

²²⁷ Annet Mooij, *Branie: het leven van Mina Kruseman, 1839-1922*, Sleutelfiguren-reeks ; dl. 5 (Amsterdam: Balans, 2013).

²²⁸ Wilhelmina Jacoba Paulina Rudolphine Kruseman, *De moderne Judith: allerhandbundeltje* (Revers, 1873).

²²⁹ Mooij, *Branie: het leven van Mina Kruseman, 1839-1922*.

remained controversial they were not unknown, moreso they featured prominently in mainstream media.

The core issue that Kruseman criticized in *Zussen* is the institute of marriage. Two of the sisters in the story are engaged to be married whilst two others struggle to find a match, Norah stands outside of this and offers undisguised criticism:

“En dan wacht ze weer voort “op den man die niet komt!!!” Beken toch dat we dwaas zijn, of liever dat we belachelijk opgevoegd worden. Als we werken mochten zouden we niet behoeven te wachten, op een man die werken moet en dikwijls geen tijd en geen lust heeft om aan ons te denken — aan ons! Vervelende, goed gefatsoeneerde automaten, die met onze voorname gedachtenloosheid en goed bestuurde zielloosheid de volmaaktheid der marionnetten zóó nabij komen [...]”²³⁰

A little further in the text Norah also touched upon the surplus of young women eligible for marriage compared to the number of eligible bachelors; two in five according to this text.²³¹ The resulting problem was an increasingly large number of unmarried old women who are unable to provide for themselves, this matter was also known in the public under ‘the woman question.’²³² This issue is something that motivated Betsy Perk when she started *Arbeid Adelt*. After Perk’s politicization of the matter through the erection of an association Kruseman further demonstrates how granting women access to work is not merely a socio-economic matter but one that also intersects in private (and religious) life.²³³

In *Zussen* a variety of the problems with marriage is demonstrated, both in the way relationships between husband and wife are constituted by the current form of marriage as well as the detriments of marriage for a woman’s autonomy and social position. In the eyes of the law married women belonged in the same category as underaged children. Around the same time as Kruseman’s tour with this story the creation of a labour law restricting child labour was one of the main topics in parliament; resulting in the *Kinderwetje van van Houten* in 1874.²³⁴ The inadvertent result of this law was that more women were employed in factories in harsh conditions for long hours to fill the places of child labourers. This then in turn resulted in the ‘Wet tot het tegengaan van overmatige en gevaarlijke arbeid van jeugdige personen en vrouwen’ in 1889 which explicitly restricted the hours women were allowed to work.²³⁵ This political context illustrates the social embeddedness of the emancipatory activities that were undertaken relentlessly by Perk and Kruseman, rather than them stirring up the beginnings of a first wave of feminism from a vacuum.

²³⁰ Kruseman, *De moderne Judith*, 101.

²³¹ Ibid., 102.

²³² Mooij, *Branie: het leven van Mina Kruseman, 1839-1922*.

²³³ Marianne Braun, ‘De prijs van de liefde: de eerste feministische golf, het huwelijksrecht en de vaderlandse geschiedenis’ (Amsterdam, Het Spinhuis, 1992), 23.

²³⁴ Braun, ‘De prijs van de liefde: de eerste feministische golf, het huwelijksrecht en de vaderlandse geschiedenis,’ 73.

²³⁵ Ibid., 65.

First Ripples of the Feminist Wave

Although Perk and Kruseman only worked together for a relatively short time and did not remain friendly afterwards their combined efforts culminated in the creation of a social environment which indirectly facilitated the organization of the hugely successful National Exhibition of Women's Labour (Nationale Tentoonstelling van Vrouwenarbeid) in The Hague in 1898. The exhibition was fully organized and executed by women, as men were not allowed to partake in any element of the exhibition except for visiting it. The exhibition had almost 94.000 visitors and displayed a large variety of products and processes of women's labour as well as regional specialties. As well as dedicating a part of the exhibition of to a recreation of women's labour and living conditions in the Dutch colony of Indonesia.²³⁶

The association erected to realize the exhibition writes the following in its statutes: "De Vereeniging stelt zich ten doel: de uitbreiding van de werkkring der vrouw in Nederland te bevorden. [...] door gedurende de Tentoonstelling aan vrouwen de gelegenheid te geven tot het uitoefenen van bedrijven, tot het houden van bijeenkomsten ter bespreking van al hetgeen bevorderlijk kan zijn aan de uitbreiding van den werkkring der vrouw in Nederland en tot het organiseren van muziek- en andere uitvoeringen"²³⁷ The contents of these goals align nearly perfectly with Perk's motivations for the inception of Arbeid Adelt. The method for realizing this goal aligns very well with Kruseman's approach to spreading emancipatory ideas; publicly and creatively.

Besides aligning with the causes Kruseman, Perk and their predecessors advocated for, the exhibition was also embedded in larger societal discourse on the social question; the living conditions of the labourers (specifically *arbeiders*). Not only the scale of the exhibition made it out to be a unique event —namely national— but also the use of the word *Labour* in the title. In the 1870s there had been a few rare instances of local exhibitions of women's handicrafts, for example in Delft and Leeuwarden.²³⁸ However in these cases the explicit connection between women and labour had not been made.

At the time of the exhibition, labour (*arbeid*) had become a word that was strongly associated with industrial labour, poverty and poor living conditions. Women's labour specifically had become associated with national moral decline as women were only believed to have needed to work if the man of the household was unable to do so.²³⁹ More generally political and the social spheres were closely interwoven in many western European countries, including the Netherlands.²⁴⁰ Therefore even if the general analyses of women's emancipatory

²³⁶ A. Ribberink, 'Feminisme Revisited', *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 115, no. 1 (1 January 2000): 60–74, <https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.5142>; Maria Grever and Fia Dieteren, *Een vaderland voor vrouwen = A fatherland for women: the 1898 'Nationale Tentoonstelling van Vrouwenarbeid' in retrospect* (Amsterdam: Stichting beheer IISG; 2000).

²³⁷ Statuten en huishoudelijk reglement, 1896, 7 & 8 in IIAV00000110, Archief Nationale Tentoonstelling van Vrouwenarbeid 1898, Atria, Amsterdam. https://collectie.atria.nl/archives/item/440924-archief-nationale-tentoonstelling-van-vrouwenarbeid-1898-1895-1901-1923?offset=#file_465585

²³⁸ Maria Grever and Berteke Waaldijk, *Feministische openbaarheid: de Nationale Tentoonstelling van Vrouwenarbeid in 1898* (Amsterdam: Stichting Beheer IISG, 1998) 17.

²³⁹ Braun, 'De prijs van de liefde: de eerste feministische golf, het huwelijksrecht en de vaderlandse geschiedenis.'

²⁴⁰ Grever and Dieteren, *Een vaderland voor vrouwen = A fatherland for women: the 1898 'Nationale Tentoonstelling van Vrouwenarbeid' in retrospect*, 87.

movements relegates these activities to the social sphere this does not equate them being excluded from influencing the political sphere.

In the Netherlands it can be found that women appropriated elements of Dutch political culture in the vocabulary they used to legitimate their social activities.²⁴¹ This is illustrated by a selection of the aforementioned examples like the ladies' committee against slavery or the royal patronage of *Arbeid Adelt*. Hereby the entanglement of the exhibition with its contemporary socio-political climate is demonstrated and the logic of identifying this exhibition solely as serving as a necessary stepping stone towards the unequivocal quest for women's suffrage that defined the first feminist wave is flawed.²⁴²

However, the exhibition went beyond the 'brand' of emancipatory activity undertaken by Kruseman and Perk. The organisation of the event was not without its conflicts and hindrances, both practically and ideologically. Most practical issues were tackled efficiently and had limited influence, however ideological conflicts had more noticeable consequences for the exhibition. Most political engagement with the exhibition came from contemporary Dutch socialist parties, like the SBN and SDAP, in the form of ideological conflict.²⁴³ Generally both socialist groups believed the exhibition to be a bourgeois exercise, and feminist movement as a whole to be detrimental to the socialist cause as they were —supposedly— blindly egalitarian.²⁴⁴ In chapter 3 the stance of SBN-leader Domela-Nieuwenhuis on women's suffrage has been demonstrated through his correspondence with Drucker.

The SDAP criticized the exhibition itself more specifically, and thus focussed on women's labour instead of suffrage. They found women labourers should remain within the general proletariat as this would secure equality for women in a manner that was appropriate for their delicate natures. Members of the SDAP believed that women would, and should, be equal through protective legislation.²⁴⁵ These accusations of the exhibition being organized from the luxury of bourgeois liberalism were supported up to a certain extent by the leaders of the women's unions for diamond cutters and seamstresses. They argued that the organizing committee of the exhibition looked down on them as they performed uncivilized work, specifically in contrast with *Tesselschade* and *Arbeid Adelt*. The goal of these associations was to provide women with financial support exactly to prevent them from having to resort to jobs like theirs.²⁴⁶ The diamondcutters and seamstresses ended up leaving the exhibition early as they did not receive their normal wages and were unwilling to work for free, or a reduced fee as many other women present (were expected to do) did.²⁴⁷

²⁴¹ Ibid., 87-88.

²⁴² Maria Grever, *Strijd tegen de stilte: Johanna Naber (1859-1941) en de vrouwenstem in geschiedenis* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1994) 62.

²⁴³ Grever and Waaldijk, *Feministische openbaarheid: de Nationale Tentoonstelling van Vrouwenarbeid in 1898*.

²⁴⁴ Ulla Jansz, 'Women Workers Contested: Socialists, Feminists, and Democracy at the National Exhibition of Women's Labour in The Hague, 1898', *Yearbook of Women's History / Jaarboek Voor Vrouwengeschiedenis* 35, 1 January 2015, 78.

²⁴⁵ P. L. Tak, *De vrouwenbeweging en het arbeidersvraagstuk: rede*, 1898, 121-137.

https://www.google.nl/books/edition/De_vrouwenbeweging_en_het_arbeidersvraag/XClmAAAACAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0&bsq=P.L.%20Tak,%20De%20vrouwenbeweging%20en%20het%20arbeidersvraagstuk

²⁴⁶ Jansz, 'Women Workers Contested,' 78-80.

²⁴⁷ Jansz, 'Women Workers Contested,' 79; Grever and Waaldijk, *Feministische openbaarheid: de Nationale Tentoonstelling van Vrouwenarbeid in 1898*, 101.

Conclusion

A general overarching theme in this chapter are the many conflicts that arise; between the different types of women involved in emancipation and general political activity. These conflicts are par for the course in general political developments as contention makes up the general political praxis in a democracy.²⁴⁸ These conflicts illustrate the irreducibility of women's emancipatory activity to just a one-dimensional first wave of feminism focussed on suffrage. None of these examples are discussed or included in the conventional general historical narrative on the phenomenon. Rather the literature that has previously covered these examples emphasized the uniqueness of these women and movements, and in doing so separated them from the societal context that shaped and influenced them. This chapter embeds them as well as reinterpreting their value — not as outliers but rather as crucial, and relatively normal, elements of the general political discourse of the time.

²⁴⁸ Claude Lefort, 'The Question of Democracy', in *Democracy and Political Theory* (1991: Polity), 9–20.

5. VvVK vs. ‘de Neutrale,’ IAV: Naber & de Iongh

The last decennium of the 19th century saw the establishment of the Dutch emancipatory women’s movement — the ‘Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht’ (VvVK)— to whom the success of establishing women’s suffrage would be attributed. There are several general trends that have been used to characterize, and temporally demarcate, European first-wave feminism. Firstly the struggle element, in all places the call for equality of the sexes was not met graciously. This is why so many activist movements were erected, in order to actively lobby for the establishment of (a few) equal rights. (not limited to suffrage)

Secondly, the earlier mentioned Western-European and white international character of the women’s movements. There was a very rich and active exchange of ideas, tactics going on amongst western feminists, with many international events taking place. Lastly, the racial exclusivity perpetuated by white women’s activists is something that most European first wave feminists shared. This means that both in Europe and North-America the activist groups lobbying for, for example suffrage, did so empathically only for ‘civilized’ white women.²⁴⁹ What the arguments made for this exclusivity looked like, varied from nation to nation depending on their colonial organisation.

The struggle for the general right to vote — without a census threshold — had been occupying the political bodies? of most European countries for a while now. Starting more than a century before with the French revolution, the demand for adequate representation of society as a whole, not just of the upper-class, became increasingly violent. At the end of the 18th century a distinction was made between active and passive citizens, in deciding who to grant the right to vote. Over the course of the 19th century persistent demands would be made to expand suffrage to be ‘universal,’ meaning for all men. A concrete example of this are the revolutions in 1848.²⁵⁰ The Netherlands, for example, saw the introduction of census suffrage in 1848 allowing for a larger group of citizens to participate in the voting for elections — if they met the requirements.²⁵¹ In 1887 a further expansion was made of the right to vote. An important part of this constitutional change was the first ever explicit legal exclusion of women from the group that had the right to vote.²⁵²

In this chapter the socio-political context that birthed the Dutch suffrage movement will be analysed to reappraise the multiplicity of political concerns and influences the VvVK was connected to. Concretely this means that the development of the Vrije Vrouwenvereniging (VVV) into the VvVK will be discussed as well as the political embedding of these two movements through their interactions with allies as well as opponents. As well as a breakaway movement from the VvVK in 1916 called ‘de Neutrale’ which will be used to illustrate this continued political plurality of the movement. Analysing the relationship between these two

²⁴⁹ Susan Blackburn, ‘Winning the Vote for Women in Indonesia’, *Australian Feminist Studies* 14, no. 29 (1999): 207–18.

²⁵⁰ Luciano Canfora, *Democracy in Europe: A History of an Ideology*, trans. Simon Jones, The Making of Europe (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2006) 86.

²⁵¹ ‘Kamerleden tussen 1848 en 1917’, accessed 24 April 2022, <https://www.staten-generaal.nl/begrip/kamerleden-tussen-1848-en-1917>.

²⁵² Mieke Aerts, ‘Om de kans op één vrouw in het parlement. De vrouwenkiesrechtbeweging tussen neutraliteit en richting’, in *Jaarboek Parlementaire Geschiedenis 1999*, ed. C.C. van Baalen et al. (Den Haag: SDU Uitgeverij, 1999), 36.

will illustrate the mechanics that reduced the broader Dutch emancipatory women's movements to their focus on women's suffrage. As has been demonstrated in the chapters before this the founders of the women's emancipatory movement engaged with a wide variety of socio-political themes, like for example contraception and poverty, but came to be known as the suffragettes — distinctly suffrage centred. This chapter will demonstrate the contemporary development of this historical narrative as it happened. The last section of this thesis will reflect on how the accounts of the historical events were constructed in such a way that this suffragette narrative was solidified.

Contextualizing the VvVK

'Universal' suffrage for men was agreed upon in 1917 in the Netherlands by a $\frac{2}{3}$ rds majority of the parties after many debates concerning the topic. Women would be granted this right in 1919.²⁵³ Only in 1922 would the constitutional change be made that equated men and women in their right to vote and be elected.²⁵⁴ In order to grant universal (male) suffrage a constitutional change needed to be made, which required an agreement of $\frac{2}{3}$ rds of the second parliamentary chamber in order for the change to be made. Thus in order for this majority agreement to be reached compromises had to be made, one of which was the explicit exclusion of women in this new law proclaiming universal voting rights. The initiative for the establishment of universal male suffrage came from the Dutch liberal parties. Their defence and motivation for the singular focus on male suffrage came from their anticipation of the conflict with the confessional political parties.²⁵⁵

Even parties that were previously in talks with women's activist movements about supporting their demand for suffrage, like the SDAP, pulled their support for the movement in anticipation of being found too radical for proposing universal suffrage to include both all men and women. This anticipatory approach means that initially women's suffrage was not even proposed in the discussions on the establishment of universal suffrage. Despite the fact that previously the labour parties had been in support of the VvVK, and its predecessors, causes. It was a matter of self-evidence that this suffrage would only apply to men, more specifically only the men living in the low countries because this was the only way conservative Dutch parties would agree upon the needed constitutional revision.²⁵⁶

The first women's movement advocating for (equal) rights for women in the Netherlands, not exclusively limited to voting rights, was erected in 1889 under the leadership of Wilhelmina Drucker. It was called the Vrije Vrouwen Vereeniging (VfV).²⁵⁷ This movement would become the precursor to the Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht, the most

²⁵³ Mineke Bosch and Groninger Museum., *Strijd: de vrouwenkiesrechtbeweging in Nederland, 1882-1922* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2019) 339.

²⁵⁴ Monique Leijenaar, Jantine Oldersma, and B. Niemöller, *De hoogste tijd: een eeuw vrouwenkiesrecht* (Amsterdam: Atheneum-Polak & Van Gennep, 2019) 126.

²⁵⁵ Marianne Braun, 'Mannen Gaan Vóór: De Neutrale Vereeniging Voor Vrouwenkiesrecht En de Pacificatie van 1917', *Tijdschrift Voor Genderstudies* 20, no. 1 (2017): 9–21.

²⁵⁶ Braun, 'Mannen Gaan Vóór: De Neutrale Vereeniging Voor Vrouwenkiesrecht En de Pacificatie van 1917,' 11.

²⁵⁷ Marja. Borkus, Marieke. Hilhorst, and Francisca de (Francisca Maria) Haan historica, 1957-, *Vrouwenstemmen: 100 jaar vrouwenbelangen: 75 jaar vrouwenkiesrecht*, 2e dr. (Zutphen: Walburg pers, 1994) 21.

well-known Dutch suffragette group. The initial Vrije Vrouwen Vereeniging also concerned itself with women's education, job security and general social independence for women. This movement followed other international women's activist movements after discontent sentiments about the neglected position of women gained traction. This was also an ideological remnant of the earlier revolutions that had ravaged the established order of the European continent during second half of the 19th century.²⁵⁸ A general call for the expansion of privileges which had previously been exclusively for socio-political elites was the result of a variety of emancipatory revolutions. An example being 'universal' suffrage being granted to all adult men in the Netherlands.

Although I have been very critical of historians who identify a line of progression (or succession) in women's associations, the VVV was indisputably the precursor of the VvVK. However, as is clear from the name difference, the VVV did not necessarily intend to evolve in the one-issue association that the VvVK became in their occupation with suffrage. Rather the initial goal of the VVV was to ensure that the law would refer to "‘mensen’ zonder commentaren," more specifically this meant without the exclusion of women.²⁵⁹ This would be realized through the following points of social reform:

- a. "Openstelling van alle vakken van onderwijs, zonder onderscheid, voor de vrouw;
- b. Het recht om onder dezelfde voorwaarden en dezelfde bekwaamheid als de man staats- en gemeenteamt- en betrekkingen te kunnen bekleeden;
- c. Om bij het bezit van den doctoralen rang een leerstoel te kunnen bezetten;
- d. Het recht als rechtsgeleerde om, door het verlenen van rechtskundigen bijstand, bij de rechtbank op te treden;
- e. Het recht van voogdijschap, onder dezelfde voorwaarden, bij de wet voor den man voorgeschreven;
- f. Het onderzoek naar het vaderschap;
- g. In gehuwden staat, hetzelfde recht op het beheer en de uitgaven van het gemeenschappelijk vermogen als de man, enz."²⁶⁰

The political climate wherein the association was created was one with a very active socio-political sphere, associations and public assemblies were rampant. On top of that, the right to vote had gradually become more and more accessible for the majority of Dutch men. The above-mentioned bullet points were topics of political and public discussions, regardless of gender, and divisive amongst the existing political fault lines. Whilst the public and the political were becoming more and more intertwined, for example through the increasing voter influence from men with a larger variety of differing social backgrounds, the structural mass exclusion of women from all of this became increasingly clear — and painful.²⁶¹

The VVV founded itself on the basis of two emphatically neutral core principles. These two were that firstly, the VVV would remain impartial to, and independent from, any political party until their very end. And secondly, they would achieve their goals without the help from

²⁵⁸ Canfora, *Democracy in Europe: A History of an Ideology*, 57.

²⁵⁹ 'Vrije Vrouwen Vereeniging', *Evolutie*, 1894, 251.

²⁶⁰ Marianne (Marianne Johanna Elisabeth) Braun 1946-, 'Die groote, machtige vereeniging "vrouw" : de Vrije Vrouwenvereeniging : van civil society naar public sphere.', *Negentiende eeuw*, 2009, 198; 'Vrije Vrouwen Vereeniging', *Evolutie*, 1894, 251.

²⁶¹ Aerts, 'Om de kans op één vrouw in het parlement. De vrouwenkiesrechtbeweging tussen neutraliteit en richting,' 37.

any man.²⁶² The guise of neutrality was tightly held on to as a necessary precaution, because it was the only position that would not inadvertently place women in diametrical opposition to the political establishment that had previously excluded them. When this neutrality was discarded, all those outside of —and opposed to— the emancipatory women’s movements were handed the excuse they needed to continue to isolate and disqualify women as political actors. Contemporaries of the VvVK noted that they had served as highly efficient propaganda tools to ensure suffrage for all Dutch men in 1917 (with the exception of the colonies)²⁶³ Thus rather than engaging with the content of the association’s request and recognizing it as the political demand that it was the members were attacked and condemned for their immoral unwomanliness and made out to be misandrists and lesbians.²⁶⁴

The need for the revision of what is included in political history is very clear in this case. When the demands of the VVV were concretized by focusing on suffrage and transforming into the VvVK a concession was made. The founding members of the VVV explicitly emphasized that their main goal was constitutional equality for men and women, and that (true) universal suffrage would automatically follow once equality was achieved.²⁶⁵ Members of the VvVK flipped this logic around and argued that securing the right to vote for women would allow for the first step of the path towards full constitutional equality for women to be paved.²⁶⁶ Drucker left the VvVK and expressed the following critique about the practice of the VvVK:

‘Van alle kanten dit genoemd: praktische politiek. [...] Mij klinkt dit “practisch” wel wat zonderling. Op dit oogenblik er niets dan positief dan de Grondwetsvoorstellen, die het kiesrecht voor de vrouw verschuiven tot onbepaalden tijd. Is het werken voor “die voorstellen” nu heusch praktisch beleid? Te Zwollen beweerde de preesidente dan ook, dat het was een quastie van gelooven; als men zeker gelooft komt ‘t vrouwenkiesrecht er wel! Het geloof verzet bergen; of het Grondwetsvoorstellen zal omzetten, ben ik, onprachtisch mensch, lang niet zeker van.’²⁶⁷

Practically this second logic allowed for women to enter the conventional political stage — but only according to the rules of those who had been structurally excluding them. For example, the VvVK was able to form an alliance with leftist Dutch parties like the earlier mentioned SDAP because they were willing to concede to their cause of granting suffrage to all men first, and then women secondly. Once the demands of the VVV were reduced to just the request for

²⁶² Braun, ‘Die groote, machtige vereeniging “vrouw” : de Vrije Vrouwenvereeniging : van civil society naar public sphere,’ 199.

²⁶³ Aerts, ‘Om de kans op één vrouw in het parlement. De vrouwenkiesrechtbeweging tussen neutraliteit en richting,’ 39.

²⁶⁴ Braun, ‘Die groote, machtige vereeniging “vrouw” : de Vrije Vrouwenvereeniging : van civil society naar public sphere,’ 208.

²⁶⁵ Braun, ‘Militarisme is mannelijk, maar vrouwen zijn geen haar beter. Wilhelmina Drucker: van Lombok tot Transvaal’.

²⁶⁶ Monique Leijenaar, Jantine Oldersma, and B. Niemöller, *De hoogste tijd: een eeuw vrouwenkiesrecht* (Amsterdam: Atheneum-Polak & Van Gennep, 2019).

²⁶⁷ Drucker, W. (1916, 17 mei). Waaron ik niet langer lid wil en kan zijn van de Ver. v. Vrouwenkiesrecht. *Evolutie*, pp. 25-28. (28)

suffrage, a tactic decision could be made based on the anticipated costs and benefits. Once the one-issue association would be granted their requests they would not have much other input or influence in the political sphere.²⁶⁸ The political opposition was aware of with whom it would be strategic to collaborate, and who to structurally exclude to prevent radical demands from getting too widespread. I will further demonstrate this in the next section by detailing a major internal conflict within the VvVK and offer further socio-political context of this conflict.

Conflict and the Creation of the ‘Neutrale’

The founding of the VvVK was a product of the more general emancipatory association the VVV but its main concern would become female suffrage, as opposed to the more general causes that were advocated for by the VVV. The first president of the VvVK was Annette Versluys-Poelman and its founding members were all closely connected to the VVV. She would be succeeded by Aletta Jacobs who, during her presidency, saw the establishment of female suffrage become a reality. Their main methods for lobbying were (international) public events that facilitated discussion on the topic of female suffrage, protests and marches. In the Dutch suffragette movement there were persistently contentions between sub-groups of activists who disagreed in some sense with the course the mainstream movement set.

Within the VvVK there developed a variety of internal conflicts; for example based on anti-Semitic sentiments, as well as based on class difference between the women advocating for equal rights for women.²⁶⁹ There were also tensions between ‘ultra’s’ & ‘gematigden.’ Those who took on a more extremist position in regards to achieving equality were called ultra’s, those who were willing to make concessions became known as gematigden. An ideological conflict along this fault line eventually resulted in the creation of the ‘Neutrale Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht’ (Neutrale). The group deciding to diverge from the VvVK disagreed with the slogan that was to be used during a protest march in 1916. During this march the VvVK agreed to protest for universal suffrage for both men and women, as opposed to focussing on women’s suffrage. This concession was made to the Vrije Democratische Bond, who argued that expanding suffrage first to only including all men would be a better move strategically.²⁷⁰

The acceptance of the VvVK of this initial exclusion of women’s suffrage is one of the things that drove Wilhelmina Drucker away from the VvVK and into the establishment of her Neutrale Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht. VvVK members like Wilhelmina Drucker and Josephine Baerveldt-Haver were unwilling to follow this moderate path of emancipation, already when Jacobs allied herself with the socialists in 1913 tensions started to rise.²⁷¹ According to allying oneself with party politics transformed the issue of gender equality into a political issue as oppose to a matter of principle, transcending political affiliation or squabbles.²⁷² In the minutes of the De Neutrale meetings in 1916 the following observation is

²⁶⁸ Aerts, ‘Om de kans op één vrouw in het parlement. De vrouwenkiesrechtbeweging tussen neutraliteit en richting,’ 43.

²⁶⁹ Leijenaar, Oldersma, and Niemöller, *De hoogste tijd: een eeuw vrouwenkiesrecht*, 81.

²⁷⁰ Braun, ‘Mannen Gaan Vóór: De Neutrale Vereeniging Voor Vrouwenkiesrecht En de Pacificatie van 1917’.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Marianne Braun, ‘Militarisme is mannelijk, maar vrouwen zijn geen haar beter. Wilhelmina Drucker: van Lombok tot Transvaal’, in *Grenzeloze gelijkheid: historische vertogen over cultuurverschil*, ed. Maria Grever, Ido de Haan, and Dienne Hondius (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2011) 153.

recorded: “De politieke partijen werken voor Algemeen Mannenkiesrecht. Er zal natuurlijk een [voorstel] voor Vrouwenkiesrecht komen, maar daar zit geen kracht achter. [...] de Groen wetsvoorstellen zoals ze daar liggen, die het mannenkiesrecht in de kleinste der kleinigheden regelen en den vrouwen niets brengen. Daaraan kunnen we niet meedoen.”²⁷³ This gives a very clear account of the disagreements with the VvVK’s alliance with mainstream political parties and de Neutrale’s perceived issues with that alliance.

The political developments surrounding the establishment of ‘de Neutrale’ offer a very concrete illustration of what the notion of being granted ‘a seat at the table’ entails in the context of this research. In 1916, as a by-product of the proposals for a constitutional change to expand suffrage for men, women acquired passive suffrage. This means that although they could not vote, they were actually allowed to be voted for. With the constitutional change women were allowed to become candidates for political parties and be voted in to the cabinet; however only men could vote for them.

In this case women were quite literally offered a seat at the table but could only take a seat if they adhered to a set of rules specifically designed to continue their structural exclusion. It was even explicitly acknowledged by the politicians who voted in favour of this constitutional change that a practical execution would be highly exceptional — and any changes and effects would thus be minimal.²⁷⁴ De Neutrale highlights how this mechanism of taking a seat at the table works when they posited that any woman who decided to make themselves eligible for the elections would in doing so condone the ongoing structural exclusion of women from active suffrage.²⁷⁵

Conclusion

The two clusters of primary source material in this chapter are connected more implicitly than some of the other examples in the previous chapters. One of the reasons for this is that the amount of available archival material on women’s activity in the political sphere drastically increases starting with the organization leading up to the National Exhibition of Women’s Labour that took place in 1898. However this material was being collected in the aftermath of the successful securing of women’s suffrage, therefore mostly material was collected that aligned with a linear narrative building up to this success. Women’s emancipatory activity became narrowly focussed on, and more or less equated with, suffrage.

However in bringing these two clusters together a clear illustration has been given of the tumultuous relationship between the mainstream women’s emancipatory movement and its ‘dissidents.’ In highlighting the interrelation of these movements their broader socio-political entanglements become clearer, because their divergence was instigated by the movement’s interactions with mainstream politics. Most studies covering these topics approach the movements in their individuality and focus on their internal —or personal— disagreements, and in doing so much of its political embedding is lost. For example, nearly all of the literature

²⁷³ Notulen van bestuurs- en algemene vergaderingen, 21 mei 1916-30 juni 1918, IIAV00000120, Archief Neutrale Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht, Atria, Amsterdam. https://collectie.atria.nl/archives/item/441261-archief-neutrale-vereiniging-voor-vrouwenkiesrecht-1916-1918?offset=#file_475172

²⁷⁴ Braun, ‘De prijs van de liefde: de eerste feministische golf, het huwelijksrecht en de vaderlandse geschiedenis,’ 280.

²⁷⁵ Braun, ‘Mannen Gaan Vóór: De Neutrale Vereeniging Voor Vrouwenkiesrecht En de Pacificatie van 1917’.

on de Neutrale is primarily focussed on the disagreements its founders had with the members of the VvVK, not so much on what interactions they had with their broader socio-political context. Which is illogical since the founding of de Neutrale had as its primary goal to be able to engage differently with other socio-political groups, and not to continue conflict with the VvVK.

Through the analysis of the changing relationships between these Dutch emancipatory women's movements I have demonstrated the multi-dimensionality of the content that they occupied themselves with. I have also started to explicate how the emphasis on suffrage in these movements became so overpowering, but will make this even more clear in the next section. More generally it is important to note once again that from this period there is significantly more source material on women's emancipation available. Arguably this increase in available material necessitates the more intentional construction of a historical narrative to make sense of all the pieces of the past that are available. At the same time, the fact that this narrative almost solely focusses on suffrage seems to create an artificial break with the themes that women's emancipatory movements had long been occupying themselves with — as has been demonstrated in previous chapters. Thus raising the need for a further investigation of the intentions with which this historical narrative might have been created and demands a reflection upon the power this narrative construction holds.

6. Inception of the Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV)

The final selection of primary source material of this theses will consist of the written materials from the founders of the IAV to reconstruct and analyse the intellectual and ideological motivations for founding the archive. The inception of the first Dutch international archive of women's history (IAV) in 1935 will be analysed. This will be done through a comparison of two very strongly contrasting perspectives of two of its original members on the archive's creation and future; namely Johanna Naber and Jane de Iongh. Through deconstructing these events I will demonstrate how they directly culminated in what became the isolationist feminist historical narrative of women's history in the Netherlands.

This example illustrates the earlier discussed observations from scholars like Offen, Grever, Akkerman & Stuurman about the intentional and structural amnesia that had occurred in regards to women in history. This sentiment was also already felt by the contemporaries of the suffragette movement, up to such an extent that it moved them to start the structural organization and archiving of historical materials regarding women. Besides a reconstruction of the creation of the Dutch historical narrative on feminism this section will also offer a historiographical analysis of the political implications of history writing. This will allow for an overarching, more theoretical, conclusion to be drawn about the wide variety of historical examples I have discussed and demonstrate their ongoing relevance.

In December of 1935 Johanna Naber, Rosa Manus and Willemijn Posthumus-van der Groot officially incepted the international archive for women's history in the Netherlands. Since its founding the archive grew steadily through donations of materials, like for example Aletta Jacobs correspondence. At the beginning of the second world war in 1940 the archive was almost completely emptied out and transported to Berlin. After the German capitulation nearly all material was lost, only a part of the collection to be found in Russia in 1992. The seizing of the archive emphasizes its political power, accounts of a shared past can serve as a strong foundation upon which to unite and face an oppressor. On top of that the archive was explicitly internationally oriented in nature, as well as implicitly pacifist as Manus was closely involved in international pacifist activism.²⁷⁶

Not only is the archive as an institute a place that holds cultural and political power, the process of archivization does so to. Achille Mbembe writes:

“Archives are the product of a process which converts a certain number of documents into items judged to be worthy of preserving and keeping in a public place, where they can be consulted according to well-established procedures and regulations. [...] The archive, therefore, is fundamentally a matter of discrimination and of selection, which, in the end, results in the granting of a privileged status to certain written documents, and the refusal of that same status

²⁷⁶ Francisca de Haan, ‘A “Truly International” Archive for the Women’s Movement (IAV, Now IIAV): From Its Foundation in Amsterdam in 1935 to the Return of Its Looted Archives in 2003’, *Journal of Women’s History* 16, no. 4 (2004): 157.

to others, thereby judged 'unarchivable'. The archive is, therefore, not a piece of data, but a status."²⁷⁷

This quote illustrates the disciplinary transition from seeing the archive as offering a 'positivist perspective on history' to understanding its subjective nature.²⁷⁸ It is exactly those groups that have first-hand experience of being excluded, and being denied this status, both from society and from the archives that go about their archivization process most intentionally and self-aware.²⁷⁹

Founders of the IAV

All three IAV-founders had been closely involved with the Dutch women's emancipation movement. Naber, had been closely involved with the struggle for suffrage and was —due to a lifelong passion for history— very aware of the many years of activism and struggle that had led up to that monumental achievement. Manus had been very closely involved with the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship (IAWSEC) and its president Carrie Chapman Catt. As the president's assistant she had travelled broadly and organized a large number of events for the IAWSEC around the globe. After being the first woman to obtain a PhD in economics in 1930, Posthumus-van der Groot developed a strong interest for women's activism, and more importantly the history thereof.²⁸⁰

Together the three established the IAV with the following as its official goal: "[...] het bevorderen van de kennis en de wetenschappelijke studie der vrouwenbeweging in den uitgebreidsten zin."²⁸¹ Its initial methods to construct the archive were collecting books, photos, prints and other written or printed material. As well as creating of a scientific library concerning everything published in regards to the women's movement.²⁸² Many more individuals were involved with the archive both as financial supporters as well as through archival material donations. The IAV also had close ties to, and received support from the Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (IISG) which was founded by Posthumus-van der Groot's husband Nicolaas Posthumus.²⁸³ Another fundamentally important individual involved in the construction of the archive was dr. Jane de Iongh. De Iongh had obtained her PhD in history and wrote the first publication produced by the archive in 1936; herein she

²⁷⁷ Achille Mbembe, 'The Power of the Archive and Its Limits', in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton et al. (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2002), 20.

²⁷⁸ Antia Wiersma and Renée Römkens, 'The Archival Turn: Archiving as a Tool for Empowerment', in *Gender and Archiving: Past, Present, Future*, ed. Noortje Willems, vol. 37, Yearbook of Women's History / Jaarboek Voor Vrouwengeschiedenis (Amsterdam ; Verloren, 2017).

²⁷⁹ Another example that illustrates the need for a critical assessment of the power of historical representation can be found in the essay 'Can the Subaltern speak?' by G. C. Spivak

²⁸⁰ de Haan, 'A "Truly International" Archive for the Women's Movement (IAV, Now IIAV)' 151-2.

²⁸¹ Archief Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV), 1938, IIAV00000077 no. 2: artikel 2, Atria, Amsterdam.

²⁸² Archief Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV), 1938, IIAV00000077 no. 2: artikel 2, Atria, Amsterdam.

²⁸³ Internationaal Informatiecentrum en Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging., *Overzicht van archieven in het Internationaal Informatiecentrum en Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging*. (Amsterdam: Internationaal Informatiecentrum en Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging, 1991) 15.

described—or maybe prescribed—the IAV’s academic mission statement, which will be analysed in depth in the next section.²⁸⁴

The description of the initial methods to realize the IAV’s goal are a relatively passive way of knowledge collection and construction. However, the founders were very actively occupied with the archive’s construction and expansion. So much so, that shortly after its creation the archive started publishing a series of portraits of exemplary women, as well creating new material to be archived.²⁸⁵ For example through a questionnaire sent out in 1937 to the ‘veterans’ of the women’s movement. This questionnaire entailed straightforward questions about the selected women’s contributions to the women’s movement but also more speculative questions like: “Wat vindt U de tekortkomingen van de tegenwoordige generatie van vrouwen?” and as a follow up: “Wat de deugden?”²⁸⁶ Posing this question to ‘veterans’ of the women’s movements very clearly invites the respondent to compare and contrast. In doing so a continuity—or discontinuity—is created, together with a historical narrative. Which is consequently made to be a narrative of linear progression by some of the other questions in the questionnaire like: “Hoe stelt U zich het doel der Moderne Vrouwenbeweging voor?” and “Welken weg meent gij dat deze Moderne Vrouwenbeweging moet inslaan om dit doel te bereiken?”²⁸⁷ With this a singular continuous line was created, establishing that the women who were included in the archive and approached to answer the questionnaire were the ones constituting **the** women’s emancipatory movement. On top of that in adding the prefix ‘modern’ to the question a line of temporal progression was created in the history of Dutch women’s emancipation.

The aforementioned methods to construct and expand the archive comes to very different expression depending on the vision of the individual involved with the archive. A concrete illustration of this can be found in a comparison between the works of Naber and de Iongh; both were closely involved in the founding of the archive and passionate about the study of history. Naber produced the large majority of her work before the creation of the archive, de Iongh’s body of work is significantly smaller and produced during and after the creation of the archive. They intersect because they cover the same topic—the history of women—from nearly opposite perspectives. Naber was never allowed to pursue a formal academic education in the study of history but spent nearly her whole life studying and (re)writing Dutch national history from the perspective of the women who had been present in the Dutch past but had been excluded. De Iongh was formally educated in the historical discipline and worked at the Nederlandsch Economisch Historisch Archief (NEHA) before contributing to the IAV.

De Iongh reflects upon the practice of history writing in relation to women in one central work: ‘Documentatie van de geschiedenis der vrouw en der vrouwenbeweging,’ a

²⁸⁴ Jane de Iongh, *Documentatie Van de Geschiedis Der Vrouw en Der Vrouwenbeweging* (Brill Archive, 1936); M. Grever, ‘Iongh, Adriana Willemina de (1901-1982)’, ING Folder, Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland (Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 12 November 2013), <https://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn5/iongh>.

²⁸⁵ Anette Mevis, ‘No Documents, No History’, *Historica* 2 (2016) 21.

²⁸⁶ Archief Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV), 1938, IIAV00000077, inv. 472, Atria, Amsterdam.

²⁸⁷ Archief Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (IAV), 1938, IIAV00000077, inv. 472, Atria, Amsterdam.

complimentary publication for the founding of the IAV.²⁸⁸ Naber often shortly touches upon the purpose and method of her historical research in the introductions or conclusions of her publications. Despite the differing contexts for the production of this primary source material the similarity in content allows for a structural comparison and analysis.

Johanna Naber in the Archives

Reflecting on the topic of women's emancipation in one of her later works called 'Wegbereidsters' Naber writes the following in 1928: "[...]een beeld gaf van het aanvankelijk nog zuiver philanthropisch, later sociaal streven van vrouwen gedurende den loop der 19de eeuw, welk streven tenslotte met een onvermijdelijke consequentie is uitgelopen, heeft moeten uitloopen op den feministischen strijd om gelijkstelling van man en vrouw in wet en zede. Die strijd is thans als afgelopen te beschouwen [...]"²⁸⁹ Firstly this statement very clearly demonstrates Naber's belief in a necessarily teleological, and linear, historical narrative for women's emancipation with the struggle for women's suffrage being its climax. As a logical consequence Naber then observes that this struggle has now been won, as women's suffrage had been realized.

Arguably when Naber writes about this 'finished struggle,' she could be referring specifically to suffrage as just one element of the struggle for women's emancipation. However, later on in the same work, still referring to the same struggle, she writes: "Wij voelen ons verstrooid en vereenzaamd nu er geen leuze meer klinkt, waaronder vrouwen van de meest onderscheiden richtingen nog eens, evenals vroeger, zich schouder aan schouder kunnen scharen."²⁹⁰ Thus further solidifying her statements about the struggle being finished as referring to the struggle for women's emancipation as a whole. At another point in the book she reflects on the changing purpose of the book 'Wegbereidsters' and writes: "Wegbereidsters [is] van een propaganda-geschrift, dat het was, nu echter geworden een gedenk-schrift, een getuigenis van een grooten tijd, die thans tot het verleden behoort."²⁹¹ As these reflections were published near the end of Naber's career and only shortly before she became involved in founding the IAV they give a clear and timely indication of both her opinion on women's emancipation as well as to what end its history should be conserved and produced. Naber's understanding of, and approach to, women's history is very similar to the narrative that would be constructed during the next 100 years after her reflections in 'Wegbereidsters.'

De Iongh and the Study of History

In drastic contrast with this stands de Iongh's approach to the study of women's history in 'Documentatie van de geschiedenis der vrouw en vrouwenbeweging' from 1936. Firstly, a reduction of the women's emancipatory movement to merely leading up to the struggle for universal suffrage is undetectable in her work. Rather she writes about the importance of contextualization of historical actors and events: "Slechts wanneer wij al deze verschijnselen zien als onderdeelen van één breeden stroom van sociale ontwikkeling, zullen wij aan de

²⁸⁸ de Iongh, *Documentatie Van de Geschiedis Der Vrouw en Der Vrouwenbeweging*.

²⁸⁹ Johanna W.A. Naber, *Wegbereidsters : Elizabeth Fry, Florence Nightingale, Josephine Butler, Priscilla Bright MacLaren*, 2e geheel omgew. en verm. dr. (Utrecht: Erven J. Bijleveld, 1928).

²⁹⁰ Naber, *Wegbereidsters : Elizabeth Fry, Florence Nightingale, Josephine Butler, Priscilla Bright MacLaren*.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

vrouwenbeweging haar werkelijke waarde kunnen toekennen.”²⁹² However de Iongh does show a tendency similar to Naber in trying to establish a singular line of women’s activism, albeit in a much broader sense. De Iongh writes: “De geestelijke wereld, waaruit de voorlopers en voorloopsters der eigenlijke beweging zijn voortgekomen, zal gereconstrueerd moeten worden, de invloeden waaronder zij zijn gevormd zullen moeten worden opgespoord. Pas daarna zullen wij de uit hun denkbeelden voortvloeiende individueele daden en groepshandelingen in hun juiste verhoudingen kunnen zien. Want vooral in den aanvang der beweging is veel van de inspireerende energie der nieuwe denkbeelden gevloeid in kanalen, die met het doel der vrouwenbeweging in de praktijk weinig te maken hadden.”²⁹³ Thus, although a belief in the existence of predecessors whose activism was passed down as the instigator for contemporary women’s activism is similarly present, it is much more nuanced.

The difference of her approach to the study of history —and the construction of the archive— from Naber’s approach becomes even clearer when she writes: “Slechts een nauwkeurige bestudeering van de historische ontwikkeling der vrouw als individu én als lid der samenleving kan, dunkt mij, licht brengen in de vraagstukken, die het heden en de toekomst beheerschen.”²⁹⁴ In her works Naber nearly always only focused on a female individual of the past, although her works are complimentary to national history in some sense the emphasis always lies on the individual. In ‘Van Revolutie tot Restauratie’ Naber writes for example: “De drie vrouwen, wier beeld in de volgende bladzijden wordt geteekend, zijn van den loop der geweldige gebeurtenissen getuigen geweest; maar zij hebben er geen invloed op uitgeoefend.”²⁹⁵ The national historical context of the women’s lives that are covered in the book is given to some extent but at the same time they are explicitly separated from it, and even isolated from it.

One of the most explicitly comparable statements de Iongh posits is the following: “Van dezen grooten strijd voor de losmaking van het individu uit de banden van autoriteit die het sinds menschenheugenis hadden omkneld gehouden, is de vrouwenemancipatie een ook nog heden niet voltooid onderdeel.”²⁹⁶ This diametrically opposes Naber’s observation that the struggle has been won and the women’s movement has become a relic of the past. On top of that it also, once again, contextualizes women’s emancipation in the much larger global phenomenon of emancipation as opposed to reducing it to an isolated singular narrative.

Besides advocating for the need for the broader historical and geographical contextualization of women’s activism in the past she also highlights the equal importance of being aware of historical continuities next to its discontinuities. She writes: “De desillusie, die door vele “ge-emancipeerde” vrouwen over de resultaten der vrouwenbeweging gevoeld wordt, de sterke behoefte aan vernieuwing van het standpunt der vrouw ten opzicht van de brandende politieke en sociale vraagstukken van het heden, die in onzen tijd naar voren komt, zullen ongetwijfeld hun verklaring vinden in het licht van een historische zienswijze, die de gebeurtenissen en omstandigheden van het tegenwoordige niet als geïsoleerde verschijnselen

²⁹²de Iongh, *Documentatie Van de Geschiedis Der Vrouw en Der Vrouwenbeweging*, 24.

²⁹³ Ibid., 23-4.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 14-5.

²⁹⁵ Johanna W.A. Naber, *Van de revolutie tot de restauratie : Madame Campan, Eugénie de Coucy, Letizia Ramolino*, 3e dr. (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1913).

²⁹⁶ de Iongh, *Documentatie Van de Geschiedis Der Vrouw en Der Vrouwenbeweging*, 23.

ziet, doch ze afleidt en verklaart uit wat de historie te aanschouwen, en vooral te begrijpen heeft gegeven.”²⁹⁷ Although de Iongh veers into the territory of a presentist interpretation of history with this statement the existence and importance of historical continuities that she emphasizes in this quote are yet another element wherein she differs greatly from Naber’s approach to history.

These two represent a larger discrepancy within women’s history, Naber veers into the territory of writing history of famous women, whereas de Iongh seems to be an early disciple of gender history. Naber became more renowned than de Iongh because she has a much larger, and older body of work. When the IAV started its rebuilding after WWII a general overview work of the history of the women’s movement was published by Posthumus-de Groot called ‘Van moeder op dochter.’ This work became one of the foundational referential works in Dutch women’s history as it was one of the first comprehensive overview accounts of said history. Naber’s works served as a large source of material for this book whereas the majority of the work that de Iongh would publish was not yet done so at this time. In that sense the isolationist direction in which women’s history went in the Netherlands was influenced by its material restrictions of being strongly influenced by Naber’s work and historical method. This is not to say that Naber’s method was felt to be restrictive by the majority of producers or consumers of women’s history.

Conclusion

The analysis of the founding documents of the archive allows for a layer of contemporary meta-analysis to be added to this modern depoliticization process. In highlighting the differing opinions on the right construction of the archive of the women’s emancipation movement during the founding of the archive the level of self-awareness and intentionality that went in to constructing the current historical narrative of women’s history in the Netherlands becomes clear. As mentioned in the conclusion of the previous chapter the focus on suffrage is demonstrably artificial, albeit possibly unconsciously so.

Clearly observable is the struggle between making concessions in order for the ‘revolutionary’ ideals for women’s emancipation not to be so radical they are no longer feasible. Naber, being from an older generation, saw the leaps of improvement that were made during her lifetime in the socio-economic position of women as reaching the limit of what was desirable. De Iongh on the other hand, could imagine the many steps that were yet to be taken in furthering equality between men and women — in large part thanks to the leaps made by Naber and her contemporaries.

Close attention should be paid to these tensions as they are exactly what allows for the existence of the type of in-fighting which was in the previous chapter identified as one of the factors which led to the reduction of the women’s emancipatory movement to just the women’s suffrage movement. Admittedly there is nothing in history which has a singular cause-effect relationship but an explicit awareness of the intentionality with which historical narratives of cause and effect can, and will, be crafted is helpful for a better understanding of the past. It is not the case that these ‘temporally internal’ conflicts should not be uncovered, rather they are exactly the inroads for historians to reflect upon how their own contemporary prejudices might

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 25.

be influencing them. This allows for a more in-depth study and understanding of history, as possibilities for how the past could differ from the now —and from itself— are reconsidered.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have reconstructed the history of women's emancipatory activity in the Netherlands starting at the end of the 18th century up until the end of the conventional first feminist wave. I have demonstrated the need for women to be reappreciated as political actors in Dutch history and initiated the first steps in this direction. My approach in doing so has been two-sided; on the one hand I have highlighted how the commonly known examples of women's emancipatory activity were depoliticized in their incorporation in a one-dimensional isolationist historical narrative. On the other hand, I have put forward a selection of much less well-known examples of women's emancipatory activity, both to demonstrate the multiplicity of emancipatory activity that was taking place in contrast with the current canonical —one-dimensional— narrative, as well as to offer constructive suggestions of what a re-politicized account of women's history might look like.

Although the contents of the selection of examples varies greatly I have observed several general trends which tie them together and prove my thesis statement. Firstly, I have identified the individualistic and isolationist approach to writing about women in the past as one type of dominant historical perspective. This category strongly contributes to the depoliticization of women as actors in history as it reduces them to their private lives, which was believed to automatically exclude them from participating in political matters. In chapters 1, 4 and 5 a selection of women are included as examples. For nearly all of them most literature about them studied them as individual exceptions, or pioneers of their time, placing a strong emphasis on their personal lives. The circumstances of their personal lives had to be included in order to understand how such an exception as themselves might have come about. In my approach to these examples, I have socio-politically contextualized their —often trailblazing— actions, to see how, and to what extent, these were related to the political climate they found themselves in and engaged with as opposed to being a product of an exceptional private life.

An example of this can be found in chapter 1 where Etta Palm, P. B. v. W. and Armida Amazone are clustered together. All three were spreading extremely progressive beliefs about the role of women in politics but only Palm did so non-anonymously. It is a matter of privilege to publicly proclaim these statements but it also led to her being the subject of relentless scrutiny of her private life. The other two published their works anonymously, and did not directly manage to bring about a change that would count as significant according to feminist standards. The difference between the way these two anonymous figures were treated by historians in comparison to Palm is exactly illustrates the aforementioned point. Palm became by far the most famous figure from that time, but primarily for her private life: as courtesan and spy. The other two were structurally forgotten, if not erased, due to their lack of success and anonymity.

In bringing together a number of these pioneering women, I am not attempting a comparison, but rather a negation of their uniqueness and its implicit consequences that only a few women were politically engaged. A concrete illustration of this can be found in the examples of chapter 4; three women who all contributed to the improvement of women's education are discussed. However, rather than comparing them or emphasizing their respective uniqueness a collection like this very clearly emphasizes that a more general socio-political development was taking place in Dutch society; a shared experience of these political developments motivated these women.

A second category that binds a selection of the examples in this thesis together is the discrediting of women as *political* —and consequentially feminist— actors when their ideals do not align with the modern emancipatory ideals. This trend already becomes explicit in chapter 5 through the study of the founding of the archive for women's history (IAV) when taking a closer look at what source material has been included in the archive for woman's emancipation, and more importantly what has been excluded. An explanation for this that women's history has shown itself to be particularly susceptible to reducing the study of history to 'tracing antecedents,' and in doing so projecting an anachronistic teleological perspective on the past.²⁹⁸ Although this is a general pitfall in the historical discipline, when one's history becomes so closely tied to the right to exist equally, —as it did in the case of women's history— defense rather than exploration becomes the starting point for all historical investigations. Examples of this can be found in chapters 1, 2 and 3.

For example, the women's anti-slavery committees that were active during the 1830s argued for the abolition of slavery using the argument that it was not right for women to have to work in the same circumstances as men. This because the feminine nature was too delicate to do slave labour, and a woman's main purpose was to take care of her children — something that enslaved women could not fully commit themselves to. Although the nature of this argument is not the reason that these committees were not allowed to enter the political sphere at the time the contents of the argument have contributed to its structural 'forgetting' by feminist historians. This because in researching the history of feminism modern criteria for emancipation demarcate the search area of the past. The search for women in history started during a time where the right for women to work as much as they wanted and in the type of job they wanted was only thinly protected. A similar example can be found in the freethinkers' societies in chapter 3, in their utopian revisions for society men and women would retain different roles in the community, based on what fits them best. Different from the society they criticized would be that fact that these roles would be valued equally and equal compensation would be given to all members of the freethinking community.

The third general claim put forward in this thesis several examples is the exclusion and erasure of women's political activity from general political activity. Concretely this means that many accounts of political history in the Netherlands only include sources based on what adheres to the classical criteria for what falls under the practice of politics; like parliamentary documents. Whilst women were structurally excluded from these institutions there are clearly identifiable instances where they undertook actions in relation to the exact same topics that were being covered in the political sphere, using nearly identical methods. Examples of this can be found in chapters 2, 3 and 4.

One instance of this are the women's committees against slavery, which were nearly identical to male abolitionist associations. However, since women were not allowed to enter the political sphere —both physically and intellectually— their 'associations' were called 'committees,' and were relegated to the social sphere. This exclusion has been sustained as political historians do not directly concern themselves with social history and feminist historians focus on contextualizing these committees in a temporally linear sense. Resulting in the including of women in a linear narrative but not their embedding in political history.

²⁹⁸ Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 42.

Another example of this can be found in the evolution of the freethinkers' association into the first socialist party together with the broader societal discussion on labour legislation during which the role of women in this association and discussion was dissolved into a general occupation with the improvement of living conditions for man(kind.) This observation is not an argument for the explicit, separate highlighting of the role of women in these cases but rather an argument for a more seamless integration. A canonically famous example surrounding labour legislation is the Dutch law restricting child labour by Samuel van Houten. During the development of this law labour restrictions for women were also seriously considered, on top of that the eventual law also caused a large increase female workers in the jobs previously held by children. During the socio-political developments women's involvement in these debates is not qualified as political engagement and in the historical accounts thereof a continued blind-eye is turned.

In practical terms the lack of integration of the selection of examples that I have covered in this thesis into a more generally known historical narrative is due to the difficulty in finding the primary source material. Although the material that exists is relatively easily accessible — some digitally and some through analogue archives— it is much harder to know how and where to find the material. In terms of keywords? one has to be extremely specific because nearly all examples I have mentioned are treated as unique examples and thus each have their unique key words like for example a specific name of a person or event. Finding the material through another approach, for example by searching for archival material related to larger general themes like the development of education also results in an incomplete collection of results because much of the archival material related to women's activity on this topic is stored in a separate archive. The existence of a separate storage place for this archival material is extremely important, as without it much of the material that gives us insight into the history of the political activity of women would have been lost as it might not have qualified as valuable source material. However, the goal of such an archive should be its dissolution into general archives related to the topics it contains, as to fully deconstruct the 'outsider' position women have long had in history.

In offering a chronological overview of this selection of examples I have demonstrated how these three categories of scientific neglect have continuously intersected and together contributed to the depoliticization of women in history. More importantly I have demonstrated not only what a repoliticization and integration of women into political history might entail, but also demonstrated the benefits that this will yield for the field of political history and feminist history. I have demonstrated how women were clearly an integral part of the general political landscape at the time as opposed to a separate field of societal discussion on the women question. Rather than arguing for 'a seat at the table' or exceptional emphasis for these historical examples I have demonstrated the need for a revision of what constitutes political history because of the structural blind eye that has been turned in the writing of Dutch political history. This requires not only an expansion and revision of the previously existing body of work in the field of political history but also a reflection upon the anachronistic influence of contemporary appropriations of the past.

More generally this thesis has demonstrated the influence theoretical and disciplinary frameworks have on practical history writing. There is no such thing as an objective approach to the study of the past, it is influenced and shaped by a multitude of personal and societal

factors. Not only are there material constraints upon the available source material but its find- and accessibility are also wholly determined by the context in which it is placed by its contemporary collectors. In setting up the IAV necessary groundwork was laid to improve the representation of women in history, but its foundations and selection criteria are more a reflection of the historical practice at the time than they are of women in history in general. I have raised the question in this thesis of how these criteria have been shaped, as well as how they have influenced the production of historical knowledge both of material before their creation as well as after.

Although I have showcased a variety of historical examples in this thesis its insights are of great value to the contemporary practice of the historical discipline. One indicator of the unsustainability of the current historical approach to women in the past—and feminism as a by-product—is the current difficulty in finding a general consensus about the development and number of feminist waves, as well as the general irreconcilability between different intersectional feminist positions; for example, between critical race theorists and Marxists. Outside of the historical discipline the narrative of the ever upward progressing line in women's emancipation is also losing its credibility. A reflection upon the implicit framework that shapes these narratives, as I have demonstrated in this thesis, allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the position and role of women in history.

Important to note is that rather than a deconstruction of the current narratives of women in history and feminism I am proposing a reassessment, revaluation and integration of the existing historical material to rescue women from their isolated position as practitioners and subjects of the historical discipline. So long as the metaphor of feminist waves remains in use one must always overtake the other, with the guarantee that eventually all efforts will be washed away with the pulling back and rising of the tides. Rather I have striven for the earlier mentioned understanding of history by Bloch as interpreted by Moyn: "It is tempting to assume that the trickle of melted snow in the mountains is the source of all the water in a great downstream flood, when, in fact, the flood depends on new sources where the river swells. They may be unseen and underground; and they come from somewhere else."²⁹⁹ It is exactly these underground springs that should be made explicit as they sustain history and the narratives that are made and remade.

To conclude the most important findings of this thesis come in twofold. On the one hand, there is a wealth of historical material covering the contributions of women to history yet to be uncovered which will offer valuable insights into the history of the Netherlands as well as the political history of women in general. However this can only be done through a reconsideration of the political power a historical narrative holds, not only as a finished product but also in its constructive process.

²⁹⁹ Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 42.

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PLAGIARISM RULES AWARENESS STATEMENT

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