

Forgotten Intersections. Wilhelmina Drucker, Early Feminism, and the Dutch-Belgian Connection

In: Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire. Tome 77 fasc. 2, 1999. Histoire médiévale moderne et contemporaine - Meddeleewse, moderne en hedendaagse geschiedenis. pp. 440-472.

Résumé

Aux Pays-Bas, Wilhelmina Drucker (1847-1925) est considérée comme une des féministes les plus importantes de son temps. Néanmoins, ses rapports avec le féminisme belge sont largement ignorés et, dans l'historiographie belge, sa vie et son œuvre restent presque inconnus.

En plus d'une esquisse détaillée de la vie de Drucker et de sa pensée féministe-socialiste, cet article présente également une analyse des recherches nouvelles sur les années 1890, l'époque du Congrès de Bruxelles de la Seconde Internationale, tout en soulignant l'importance des rapports entre Drucker et Marie Popelin, Emilie Claeys et Louis Frank. Ainsi l'article montre que, sans doute, Drucker a joué un rôle décisif dans la création des premiers mouvements féministes belges.

En conclusion, l'attention est attirée vers quelques pistes de recherches prometteuses relatives aux rapports néerlandais-belges ainsi qu'aux interdépendances historiques du libéralisme, socialisme et féminisme à la fin du XIXe siècle.

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Everard Myriam, Aerts Mieke, Mltzman Lee K. Forgotten Intersections. Wilhelmina Drucker, Early Feminism, and the Dutch-Belgian Connection. In: Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire. Tome 77 fasc. 2, 1999. Histoire médiévale moderne et contemporaine - Meddeleewse, moderne en hedendaagse geschiedenis. pp. 440-472.

doi : 10.3406/rbph.1999.4367

http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/rbph_0035-0818_1999_num_77_2_4367

Forgotten Intersections Wilhelmina Drucker, Early Feminism, and the Dutch-Belgian Connection ¹

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In June 1893 interested Dutch readers learned of a minor skirmish between the authoritative progressive-liberal *Sociaal Weekblad* and the radical feminist *Evolutie*. An issue of *Evolutie* had expressed satisfaction with the *Sociaal Weekblad*'s appreciative review of the Belgian journal *La revendication des droits féminins* ². According to *Evolutie*, the *Sociaal Weekblad*'s frank characterization of the incipient struggle for women's liberation in Belgium as justified and deserving of universal support, signified retroactive recognition for the small group of women that had embarked on this same struggle a few years earlier in the Netherlands and had been championing women's rights ever since. *Evolutie*'s editors, Wilhelmina Drucker and Theodore Schook-Haver, of course expected their readers to understand the reference to a "small group of women" as pointing to the Vrije Vrouwenvereniging [Free Women's Society] (VvV) established by Wilhelmina Drucker in 1889, and led by her and Schook-Haver, as its president and secretary respectively. In a letter to the *Sociaal Weekblad* Drucker further substantiated her claim for recognition by noting "that all Belgian women's associations *en masse* are in fact the off-

1. We wish to express our thanks to all participants in the "Fabrics of Feminism" session at the Second European Social Science History Conference (Amsterdam, March 1998), especially to its initiator Hans Moors, the original champion of the Dutch-Belgian connection ; for help with archival sources we thank Annet Mevis en Annemarie Kloosterman of the Internationaal Informatiecentrum en Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging [International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement] (IIAV) and the staff members of the reading room of the Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis [International Institute of Social History] (IISG) in Amsterdam, and Wis Geysen of the Archief en Museum van de Socialistische Arbeidersbeweging [Archives and Museum of the Socialist Labour Movement] (AMSAB) in Ghent.
2. "Verscheidenheden : De rechten der vrouw", in *Sociaal Weekblad*, 7, 1893, p. 188-189 ; "Binnen de grenzen", in *Evolutie*, 1, 14 June 1893, nr. 11, p. 5. Little definitive information is available about the journal *La revendication des droits féminins* and the group it represented : it appeared from 1892 until at least 1894 in Brussels, and conveyed the views of a socialist-feminist group around the "demoiselles La Nauze and De Lummen", a group, which is known under the name of Union universelle des femmes (branche belge) or under no name at all. See Els FLOUR, Catherine JACQUES and Claudine MARISSAL, *Répertoire des sources pour l'histoire des femmes en Belgique I. Répertoire de la presse féminine et féministe en Belgique 1830-1994*, Brussels, Ministère de l'Emploi et du Travail, 1994, p. 389-390 ; Éliane GUBIN, Valérie PIETTE and Catherine JACQUES, "Les féminismes belges et français de 1830 à 1914. Une approche comparée", in *Le mouvement social*, nr 178, January/March 1997, p. 36-68, esp. 62-63.

spring of their Dutch parent the Vrije Vrouwenvereniging”³. The *Sociaal Weekblad* responded to these assertions in sovereign-paternalist style. Though they preferred to withhold comment as to whether the Belgian women’s movement was so deeply indebted to Drucker and her vvv as Drucker suggested, they expressed their hope that in any case the Belgian children would not become too much like their Dutch mother.

This short episod opens up several questions, some of which remain difficult to answer even over a century later. Who was Wilhelmina Drucker ? What type of organization was the vvv ? Was Drucker justified in suggesting that Belgian feminism originated from the Netherlands ?

Wilhelmina Drucker, a “person beyond sexes”

Surprisingly little has been written about Wilhelmina Drucker’s life⁴. Nevertheless, the available information reveals why in 1905 she could write that the difficult circumstances of her childhood predisposed her “more than anyone else” for the pioneering role in feminism that she had assumed twenty-five years earlier and for her retention of the vanguard, notwithstanding all opposition and derision⁵.

In 1847 Wilhelmina Drucker was born in Amsterdam as Wilhelmina Lensing, the second daughter of Constantia Lensing, who occupied a tiny apartment with her first daughter, an elder sister and her elder sister’s child in one of Amsterdam’s poorer neighbourhoods. At the time neither of these single mothers had any known profession, although they worked as seamstresses for a good part of their lives. Wilhelmina Drucker’s father Louis Drucker, also the father of her elder sister Louise, was a prosperous banker-financier of German-Jewish heritage. While he never married the mother of these two daughters nor officially recognized them, he appears to have been publicly acknowledged as the father by all parties : both girls used his surname from early childhood, and he contributed to their support, albeit according to the mother’s standard of living. Accordingly, his daughters had quite a frugal lifestyle

3. “Verscheidenheden : De Nederlandsche vrouwenbeweging”, in *Sociaal Weekblad*, 7, 1893, p. 198 : “dat al de Belgische vrouwenverenigingen *en bloc* slechts zijn kinderen van de Nederlandsche moeder : de Vrije Vrouwenvereniging”.

4. Deanna TE WINKEL-VAN HALL, *Wilhelmina Drucker. De eerste vrije vrouw*, Amsterdam, Stichting Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging, 1968 offers an initial attempt at a biography ; the ingredients provided here are condensed into a feminist melodrama by Hedy d’ANCONA in “Wilhelmina Drucker (1847-1925)”, in Aukje HOLTROP, ed., *Vrouwen rond de eeuwwisseling*, Amsterdam, De Arbeiderspers, 1979, p. 62-77 ; Fia DIETEREN, “De geestelijke eenzaamheid van een radicaal-feministe. Wilhelmina Druckers ontwikkeling tussen 1885 en 1898”, in *Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis* (hereafter *JVV*), Vol. 6, Nijmegen, SUN, 1985, p. 78-100 contains more reliable biographical data ; the following, however, is based largely on the research for Myriam EVERARD, “Een natuurlijke erfdochter. Wilhelmina Drucker en het kapitaal”, in *JVV*, Vol. 17, Amsterdam, Stichting beheer IISG, 1997, p. 137-151.

5. W. DRUCKER, “Een persoonlijke uiting”, in *Evolutie*, 13, 11 October 1905, nr. 14, p. 105-106.

as children and lived with their mother and a fluctuating variety of female relatives – as poor unwed women and their children typically subsisted in the big city in those years⁶. Regarding Wilhelmina Drucker's education, we know only that she attended a Catholic primary school and later turned her back on the Catholic Church, having been slighted in school for being born out of wedlock. After a period without any known occupation, she started supporting herself as a seamstress in 1875. As the quality of her early writings suggest, somewhere and somehow in these unlikely circumstances she was able to furnish herself with a good education that included at least a fairly impressive command of the French language.

A few years after Wilhelmina Drucker's birth, Louis Drucker met Therese Temme, an unmarried domestic servant who had a son (George David Temme) from a previous liaison. Again, Drucker fathered several children without marrying this woman. In 1869, after the birth of their fifth child, however, he wed her, thus legitimizing his five premarital offspring with Temme. This marriage was undoubtedly immensely rewarding for Therese and her five children – emotionally and especially materially. In addition to becoming the chosen woman and acquiring the respectability previously withheld from her and her children, she and her children began to live in far greater affluence and were in line to inherit a fortune. Conversely, Louis Drucker's marriage must have been a severe emotional and material blow to Constantia Lensing and her daughters: previously Lensing and Temme had been in the same position and had both depended on Louis Drucker's benevolence. The two sisters had lived in the same conditions and had the same prospects as their five half brothers and sisters. From that point onward, however, the inequality sanctioned by the law between legitimate and illegitimate wives and between legitimate and illegitimate children became painfully clear. Nor did George David Temme partake in the superior station that his mother entered upon her marriage. Forteen years old when his mother married, he was sent to board with a shoemaker in Amsterdam when she moved with her husband to an estate outside The Hague shortly thereafter. His death by drowning in 1879 remains mysterious to this day.

When Louis Drucker died in 1884, he bequeathed his fortune of millions to his legitimate children. In his will he left Constantia Lensing and her daughters a pittance. The next year Drucker and her sister published the *roman à clef* *George David* under the decipherable pseudonym Prezcier⁷. The novel relates

6. Monique STAVENUITER and Jeannette DORSMAN, *Nooit gehuwd, maar niet alleen. Vrijgezelle vrouwen uit de arbeidende klasse in de tweede helft van de negentiende eeuw*, Hilversum, Verloren, 1993, esp. p. 104-122 ("Ongehuwd moederschap").

7. G. & E. PREZCIER, *George David*, Amsterdam, J.M.E. & G.H. Meijer, 1885. The name Prezcier is a variation of the name Drucker: both names are nouns referring to an occupation or activity sharing the meaning of the verbs from which they are derived, namely "pressen" in Dutch ("press" in English) and "drücken" in German, which is synonymous for "pressure [somebody]". (We are grateful to Fred Spier, who solved the "Prezcier" puzzle by pronouncing "Prezcier" in such a way as to reveal its meaning.) This play on names continues through-

the sad life of George David Taamme, the natural son of the domestic servant Therese Taamme, who earns her living as a prostitute and sends her son out to board with others from early childhood on. In lurid detail the authors describe how the money-hungry Therese Taamme seduces the wealthy Ludwig Plucker, draws him ever closer with each of the many children she bears him, and finally convinces him to marry her after the birth of the fifth one. Eager to rid herself of her son George David, she sends him to board with a shoemaker, thus condemning him to a life of poverty. Following George David's bold request for money from his mother later on, his eldest half brother Ludwig Plucker begins to fear that this permanent reminder of his mother's irregular past will harm his promising career and decides to do away with George David, who promptly drowns under suspicious circumstances.

This scarcely concealed accusation of Hendrik Lodewijk Drucker, the eldest half brother of both George David Temme and the two authors, did not fall on deaf ears. Recently appointed as a professor of law at the University of Groningen and a young radical-liberal politician in the town, Hendrik Lodewijk Drucker was on the verge of a brilliant career and indeed seemed afraid of a scandal in 1885⁸. He had inquiries made with the authors as to what sum of money could convince them to forego additional publication. The two responded by publishing a second edition in 1886, in Groningen, including a preface that contained the complete correspondence about the hush money and explicitly discussed Hendrik Lodewijk Drucker as an individual living off an inheritance withheld from his half sisters⁹. While their preface revealed their desire for retribution and their willingness to play for high stakes, it conveyed a political message as well. The authors used the tale of George David in a more general sense to deplore the misery caused by the contrast between rich and poor and between men and women. It contained the seeds of Drucker's political involvement, which she brought to fruition through other means shortly thereafter. In 1887 she began working for the radical freethinker Joan Nieuwenhuis' *Groninger Weekblad*. Soon after joining the staff of this weekly, which united radicals and socialists in supporting universal suffrage, Drucker published a plea for paternity investigations and "legislation obliging a man to support his offspring according to *his* standard of living"¹⁰ and with Nieuwenhuis' assistance as director and publisher

out the book : the names of the characters reveal all too easily the identities of the individuals referred to by the authors.

8. On Hendrik Lodewijk Drucker (1857-1917), see W.R.H. KOOPS, "Hendrik Lodewijk Temme", in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland* (hereafter : *BWN*), Vol. 2, Amsterdam, Elsevier, 1985, p. 558-559, and more recently Gerrit VOERMAN, "Hendrik Lodewijk Temme", in *Biografisch Woordenboek van het Socialisme en de Arbeidersbeweging in Nederland* (hereafter *BWSA*), Vol. 5, Amsterdam, Stichting beheer IISG, 1992, p. 287-290.
9. G. & E. PREZCIER, *George David. Volksuitgave, met voorrede van de auteurs*, Groningen, W.H. Flink, 1886 ; in 1976 this edition was reprinted by De Engelbewaarder in Amsterdam.
10. Drucker in *Groninger Weekblad* of 22 October 1887, as quoted by DIETEREN, "De geestelijke eenzaamheid", *op. cit.*, p. 82 : de "wettelijke verplichting voor den man zijne kinderen naar *zijn*en staat op te voeden" [our italics].

started a weekly for women and girls (*De Vrouw*) in 1888 ¹¹.

Though we do not know of any response by Hendrik Lodewijk Drucker to the reedition of *George David*, Wilhelmina Drucker's next action, namely the "Mammon" story, which appeared as a serial in the *Groninger Weekblad* in the course of 1888 ¹² reveals that she had certainly not been mollified. In this story, for which Drucker adapted Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* to serve her purposes, the rich tightwad is the extremely wealthy solicitor Honorius, recognizably and in detail modelled after Hendrik Lodewijk Drucker. On Christmas Eve Honorius, who despite his social success is consumed with remorse, receives a visit from the ghosts of those he condemned to poverty by appropriating their share of the inheritance in his boundless greed. These spirits, in whom the informed reader will recognize his half brother George David Temme and his half sister Wilhelmina Drucker, suggest that he may save his soul by paying off his debt, and present him with a detailed account of the cost of his redemption. When he objects, the ghost of his half sister turns into Nemesis, the vengeful justice, who threatens to take away that which is dearest to him : his daughter.

No information is available about what transpired behind the scenes during the publication of this serial. It is known, however, that Drucker and her half brother reached a settlement negotiated by Joan Nieuwenhuis in 1888 ¹³. And while the actual terms of the settlement remain unknown until this day, we can see Drucker and her mother moving into a larger residence that same year. As of 1889 she was no longer registered as a seamstress and she never did another day of wage labour. Moreover, she was sufficiently comfortable to fund the movements and projects in which she became zealously involved from that point onward. So it is indeed probable, as Drucker herself said, that the difficult circumstances of her youth did predispose her "more than anyone else" for her subsequent pioneering role. The glorious victory she achieved in 1888 over the double standard and capitalism enabled her to fulfil this role and to progress toward the full-time feminist that she became in 1889 (the year she founded the VVV) and remained for the rest of her life.

This path toward feminism, surely unconventional by Dutch standards as well as any others, deeply influenced Drucker's career as a feminist and im-

11. On Joan Nieuwenhuis (1856-1939), see P.J. MEERTENS & Albert F. MELLINK, "Johannes Adam Nieuwenhuis", in *BWSA*, Vol. 2, Amsterdam, Stichting beheer IISG, 1987, p. 100-102. Additional details of Wilhelmina Drucker's publications in the *Groninger Weekblad* appear in DIETEREN, "De geestelijke eenzaamheid", *op. cit.*, p. 81-83.

12. GYPSY [Wilhelmina DRUCKER], "Mammon, een kerstavond in het rijk Fantasio", in *Groninger Weekblad*, 2, 12 February 1888, nr. 20 - 22 July 1888, nr. 43.

13. See the memoirs of Joan A. NIEUWENHUIS, *Uit den tijd der voortrekkers*, Amsterdam, Ontwikkeling, 1927, p. 116-118, and ID., *Een halve eeuw onder socialisten. Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van het socialisme in Nederland*, Zeist, De Torentrans, 1933, p. 75-76. Socialist leader Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis also refers to this settlement in his memoirs, see F. DOMELA NIEUWENHUIS, *Van Christen tot anarchist. Gedenkschriften*, Amsterdam, Van Holkema & Warendorf, [1910], p. 255.

bued her thoughts and actions with an unabashed streak of radicalism that made her a feared and controversial but later also a respected feminist. Her personal experience with the double standard sanctioned by the law, which so easily victimized women without ever placing men at the slightest disadvantage, made her a fervent advocate of amending all sections of the civil code legitimizing inequality between men and women, married and unmarried women, and legitimate children and those born out of wedlock. Likewise, she became an initiator or active member of countless committees and associations uniting women on these issues and encouraging the legislator to protect women and children from the consequences of unfair laws wherever possible, as well as a critic of the policy and achievements of those selfsame committees and associations if too not radical enough. Immediately after the founding of the Vereeniging “Onderlinge Vrouwenbescherming” [Women’s Mutual Support Society] (OV) in 1897 to emulate the French *Mutualité maternelle* to protect the interests of unwed mothers and their children – she entered a public debate about one of its core objectives : reversing the law prohibiting paternity investigations. Like OV, she advocated legalizing paternity suits again but – unlike the majority of the OV members – did not view this measure as a means to force the father into a marriage. Her past reverberates in her argument against such forced marriages, which she viewed as an insult to a woman’s honour :

“Prouder and more honourable is the woman who refuses to enter a bond with a man that cannot bear her company, and who chooses to brave the world rather than succumb to the constant insult : ‘What would you be if I had not married you ?’ than the woman who agrees to be chained to a man who deprecates her. Very few indeed would have the courage to answer in such a case : ‘We would have been equals, as we are now. I, an unmarried mother and you, an unmarried father’”¹⁴.

At the three-day Conference for the Promotion of Public Decency at the Hague National Exhibition of Women’s Labour in 1898, she advanced the following argument in the debate about equality before the law between legitimate children and those born out of wedlock (viewed by some as a direct attempt to undermine marriage) :

“To honour the institution of marriage, we should desire that children always be supported according to the father’s standard of living, regardless of who the mother is. Otherwise, affluent men will, for their extra-marital relations, select

14. [Wilhelmina DRUCKER], “Mutualité Maternelle”, in *Evolutie*, 5, 1 December 1897, nr. 18, p. 139-142, see 142 : “Fierder en fijner van eergevoel is voor ons de vrouw, die weigert zich te verbinden met den man, welke haar niet meer mag lijden, die liever de wereld trotseert dan zich te krommen onder de immer haar voor de voeten geworpen belediging : ‘Wat was je, als ik je niet getrouwd had ?’, dan de vrouw die zich laat overhalen om zich toch aan den haar minachtende te doen ketenen. Weinigen toch, zeer weinigen zij, die in dusdanig een geval durven antwoorden : ‘Dan waren wij precies gelijk, evenals nu. Ik, een ongehuwde moeder, gij een ongehuwde vader.’”

only women of modest means, so that a large progeny will cost little and will be a bargain”¹⁵.

As these two examples reveal, Drucker’s solutions to the double standard consistently advocated maximum freedom based on equality of the sexes. Unlike most of her contemporaries and frequently to their consternation or even disgust, she was remarkably forthright in discussing the double standard as both a moral and a sexual issue and – arousing still greater horror – related it to women as well as men. Convinced that women’s sexual urges were at least equal in strength to those of men, Drucker observed that women wishing to avoid a life of celibacy had a choice between two evils : marriage where they would lose their freedom while preserving their reputation, or prostitution, where they would retain their freedom while compromising their reputation. Drucker, who viewed this problem as one of the two central women’s issues, saw only one solution : complete economic independence for women, based on complete equality between men and women on the job market, the second central issue¹⁶. She had no patience with those who opposed her plea for total equality. She did not take the difference between the sexes for granted but considered it purely the result of views and customs, deliberate practices in child rearing and continuous influences dating back centuries¹⁷. For these insights Drucker’s opponents in and outside the women’s movement decried her as a “person above the sexes” *par excellence*. Around the turn of the century this description, that nowadays probably sounds like a compliment, actually denoted masculinity and deviant sexuality, or misandry and asexuality, or a combination of these abhorred characteristics¹⁸.

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15. *Nationale Tentoonstelling van Vrouwenarbeid : Driedaagsche samenkomst tot bevordering der openbare zedelijkheid, gehouden van 28-30 Juli 1898*, Amsterdam, W. Versluys, 1899, p. 76 : “als wij het huwelijk hooghouden willen, moeten wij willen dat het kind altijd komt in den stand van den vader, onverschillig wie de moeder is. Gaat het anders, dan is het alsof men tegen de mannen die geld hebben zegt : zoek u voor de vrouwen waarmede gij niet trouwt, geringen uit, veel kinderen kosten dan niet veel, ge hebt ze voor een koopje”.
16. This account conveys a summary of a great many articles in *Evolutie*, where Drucker (usually anonymously but easily recognizable by her style) shared her views on sexuality, marriage, and prostitution ; see e.g. “Zedelijkheidseischen”, in *Evolutie*, 1, 24 April 1893, nr. 8, p. 2-3 ; “Huwelijk en vrije liefde”, in *Evolutie*, 2, 25 April 1894, nr. 4, p. 25-27, 2 May 1894, nr. 5, p. 33-34, and 9 May 1894, nr. 6, p. 41-43 ; “De beide seksen en het mensch-zijn”, in *Evolutie*, 2, 5 December 1894, nr. 36, p. 284-285 ; “De prostitutie in de gemeenteraden”, in *Evolutie*, 3, 13 November 1895, nr. 33, p. 261-262 ; “Amstels prostitutie”, in *Evolutie*, 4, 18 February 1897, nr. 47, p. 377-378 ; “Nog eens Amstels prostitutie”, in *Evolutie*, 4, 17 March 1897, nr. 51, p. 409-410.
17. See e.g. [Wilhelmina DRUCKER], “De officieele wetenschap aan het woord”, in *Evolutie*, 3, 14 August 1895, nr. 20, p. 153-156, and 21 August 1894, nr. 21, p. 161-164 ; “Natuur en dwaling”, in *Evolutie*, 8, 12 December 1900, nr. 18, p. 137-140, 9 January 1901, nr. 20, p. 153-156, 23 January 1901, nr. 21, p. 161-163, and 6 February 1901, nr. 22, p. 169-172. On Drucker’s point of view here, see also DIETEREN, “De geestelijke eenzaamheid”, *op. cit.*, p. 88-95.
18. On the discord between the different schools in the Dutch women’s movement in the dec-

Such personal attacks never deterred Wilhelmina Drucker from any initiative or debate, regardless of her opponent. As she was fond of saying however, there was one opponent in particular she had to thank for her dauntless perseverance : early socialism, that had subjected her to ruthless harangueing right at the start of her involvement in public issues ¹⁹.

Wilhelmina Drucker : politician without a party

Drucker's initial contacts with the socialists did not forebode the stormy course that ensued. In pursuit of a political context to vent her indignation about the unjust relationships between rich and poor and between men and women after publishing *George David*, Drucker found kindred spirits in the different associations and factions – political parties did not exist in the Netherlands at the time – organized by contemporary socialists, radicals, democrats and progressive liberals ²⁰. After 1885 she joined the *Groninger Weekblad*, Joan Nieuwenhuis' "radical paper for all of the Netherlands", the radical association "De Unie" [The Union], which was also founded by Joan Nieuwenhuis "to inspire and enhance political involvement through mutual education" and focused on universal suffrage in the late 1880s, and the free-thinkers' association "De Dageraad" [The Dawn], which was yet another assembly of politically progressive men and women of various backgrounds. Drucker's first contact was with the Sociaal-Democratische Bond [League of Social Democrats] (SDB). *George David*, of which she gave the SDB chairman Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis a copy, may have served as her letter of introduction ²¹. The principles adopted by the SDB on women's liberation probably motivated her to seek her first allies there. In its programme for 1882 the SDB

ades around the turn of the century, when the opponents of Wilhelmina Drucker's egalitarian ideology became increasingly vociferous, see Myriam EVERARD, "De woede van Wilhelmina Drucker", in *Lover*, 19, 1992, p. 234-236 ; cf. Ulla JANSZ, *Denken over sekse in de eerste feministische golf*, Amsterdam, Sara/Van Gennep, 1990.

19. For instance, among many others, DRUCKER, "Een persoonlijke uiting", *op. cit.*, p. 106.
20. On this motley progressive political milieu and its diffuse boundaries and changing coalitions, see A.F. MELLINK, "Een poging tot democratische coalitie-vorming : de Nederlandse kiesrechtbeweging als Volkspartij (1886-1891)", in *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 81, 1968, p. 174-195, and G. TAAL, *Liberalen en radicalen in Nederland, 1872-1901*, Den Haag, Martinus Nijhoff, 1980, esp. p. 142-177 ("De radicalen tot 1891").
21. On Drucker's introduction to the SDB, see W. DRUCKER, "De Vrije Vrouwenvereniging", in C.M. WERKER-BEAUJON *et al.*, eds., *De vrouw, de vrouwenbeweging en het vrouwenvraagstuk. Encyclopaedisch handboek*, Vol. 2, Amsterdam, Elsevier, 1918, p. 136-149, esp. p. 137-138. On Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis (1846-1919), see Jan MEYERS, *Domela, een hemel op aarde. Leven en streven van Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis*, Amsterdam, De Arbeiderspers, 1993, and Ger HARMSSEN, "Ferdinand Nieuwenhuis", in *BWSA*, Vol. 6, Amsterdam, Stichting beheer IISG, 1995, p. 157-163. The library of Domela Nieuwenhuis, which contains a copy of the first edition of *George David* with a dedication by the book's authors, was part of the collection at the ISSG in Amsterdam until recently ; in 1999 it will be transferred to the new Domela Nieuwenhuis Museum in Heerenveen.

had stated “that persons of either sex should have the same rights and duties”, and that it therefore intended to “use all means available to elevate women from their current state of servitude” (a position that remained unique to the SDB in 1886)²².

Drucker soon attended the meetings of the SDB faithfully and thus established contact with its women’s association in Amsterdam “Door Vereeniging Verbetering” [Amelioration through Association] (DVV). Though she sympathized with the association, she also had profound reservations, especially because it was founded and run by men and was a vehicle for disseminating SDB propaganda among women rather than for promoting women’s interests²³. Though Drucker joined neither DVV nor SDB, the crucial distance she thus maintained did not initially impede cordial ties. In 1889 when the SDB wanted premises of its own, Drucker funded half the purchase and convinced a few affluent radicals to participate as well²⁴. When the SDB disbanded DVV around this time, and a few SDB women urged Drucker to found a “strong women’s association based on radical principles”²⁵, as she did by establishing the VVV in October 1889, however, the relationship between Drucker and the SDB quickly soured²⁶. The VVV, which aimed “to promote the social interest of women and their intellectual and political education”²⁷, openly stated that it would not subordinate this objective to any party or class interest, as its name indicated. Its autonomy compounded by the restriction of membership to women, the association aroused suspicion throughout the SDB, especially when its appeal to the female members of the SDB became clear²⁸.

22. W.H. Vlieggen, *De dageraad der volksbevrijding. Schetsen en tafereelen uit de socialistische beweging in Nederland*, 2 vols, Amsterdam, S.L. van Looy, 1905, Vol. 1, p. 32-35 (“Het eerste program van den Sociaaldemokratischen Bond”), see 32: “dat personen van beiderlei geslacht gelijke rechten en gelijke plichten moeten hebben” and 33: “alle haar ten dienste staande middelen aan te wenden tot algeheele opheffing der vrouw uit den staat van slavernij, waarin zij nu verkeert”.

23. DRUCKER, “De Vrije Vrouwenvereniging”, *op. cit.*, p. 138-139. See also [W. DRUCKER], “De vrouwenbeweging in Nederland” [II], in *Evolutie*, 2, 31 October 1894, nr. 31, p. 241-243, esp. 241.

24. See Vlieggen, *De dageraad*, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 175; DRUCKER, “De Vrije Vrouwenvereniging”, *op. cit.*, p. 138. Joan Nieuwenhuis’ role as the architect of the new building may have been a factor. Perhaps Drucker wanted to reward him for his services in the Mamon-affair by investing in the building.

25. DRUCKER, “De Vrije Vrouwenvereniging”, *op. cit.*, p. 139: een “flinke vrouwenvereniging op radicalen grondslag”.

26. Fia Dieteren & Ingrid Peeterman, *Vrije vrouwen of werkmansvrouwen? Vrouwen in de Sociaal-Democratische Bond (1879-1894)*, Utrecht, Fischluc, 1984, p. 37-45.

27. DRUCKER, “De Vrije Vrouwenvereniging”, *op. cit.*, p. 141: “het bevorderen van het maatschappelijk belang der vrouw en hare geestelijke en staatkundige ontwikkeling”. Previously, Drucker had written about the establishment, goal and method of the VVV in *De Vrije Vrouwenvereniging. Haar streven en haar werken*, Amsterdam, n.p., [1898]; her series of articles “De vrouwenbeweging in Nederland”, in *Evolutie*, 2, 24 October 1894, nr. 30, - 28 November 1894, nr. 35, which detail the early years of the VVV, are also enlightening.

28. The board of the SDB for the Amsterdam chapter even convened a separate meeting for its women members who attended the founding meeting of the VVV. See Dieteren & Peeterman, *Vrije vrouwen of werkmansvrouwen?*, *op. cit.*, p. 40-41.

As long as the VVV stuck to promoting women's intellectual and political education – by offering Dutch and French lessons to its members, by attending political science lectures at the University of Amsterdam, by exploring the literature about the women's issue (aided by the social-liberal Carel Victor Gerritsen, who generously opened the doors of his renowned library²⁹) – there was little ground for objection, although the plan to establish a grant for young ladies to study law or economics met with severe criticism in the SDB journal *Recht voor Allen* for its failure to serve the interests of working-class women³⁰. For its style of promoting women's social interest, however, which the VVV perceived as full equality between men and women in education, on the job market, before the law and in politics, the association quickly incurred the wrath of the socialists. Here, the VVV expanded its operations beyond convening meetings and publishing brochures and pamphlets and consistently provoked a general confrontation with the socialists and radicals³¹. In 1890 Wilhelmina Drucker was invited to argue the women's cause at myriad events and among a broad circle. Her appearances included a major lecture tour of several local chapters, as well as a speech at a national meeting of the *Nederlandsche Bond voor Algemeen Kies- en Stemrecht* [Dutch League for Universal Suffrage] before an audience of 12,000. She also attended a steady stream of meetings and gatherings to debate the speakers as a member of the audience. The differences of opinion between the VVV and the SDB quickly surfaced and centred on two issues. The VVV strongly opposed separate labour legislation for women and demanded suffrage for women as well. The SDB condoned suffrage for women only after its extension to all men and in addition to advocating separate labour legislation for women sought to exclude all married women from the workforce³². Unfortunately, the involvement of the

29. On the politician Carel Victor Gerritsen (1850-1905), known especially for his feminist library and his feminist wife Aletta Jacobs (1854-1929), see Gerrit VOERMAN, "Carel Victor Gerritsen", in *BWSA*, vol. 4, Amsterdam, Stichting beheer IISG, 1990, p. 49-53. Gerritsen's renowned library, which comprised over 3,000 Dutch and foreign works in 1900, is described in H.J. MEHLER, *La femme et le féminisme. Collection de livres, périodiques etc. sur la condition sociale de la femme et le mouvement féministe, faisant partie de la bibliothèque de M. et Mme C.V. Gerritsen (Dr Aletta H. Jacobs) à Amsterdam*, Paris, V. Giard & E. Brière, 1900. On the whereabouts of this library, which remains of great interest today, see Inge DE WILDE, "De bibliotheek van C.V. Gerritsen, de echtgenoot van Aletta Jacobs", in *JVV*, Vol. 3, Nijmegen, SUN, 1982, p. 245-255.

30. DIETEREN & PEETERMAN, *Vrije vrouwen of werkmansvrouwen ?*, op. cit., p. 41-42 and 43.

31. Works on the early years of the VVV include : W. DRUCKER, *Een woordje aan "De vrouwen van Nederland"*, Wolvega, Volksdrukkerij, [1891], and [Wilhelmina DRUCKER & Theodore SCHOOK-HAVER], *Stoomwasscherijen. Een woordje aan de Amsterdamsche arbeidstersvrouwen*, Amsterdam, n.p., 1891.

32. On the debate about protective labour legislation in the Netherlands, see Ulla JANSZ, "Women or Workers ? The 1889 Labor Law and the Debate on Protective Legislation in the Netherlands", in Ulla WIKANDER, Alice KESSLER-HARRIS & Jane LEWIS, eds., *Protecting Women. Labor Legislation in Europe, the United States, and Australia, 1880-1920*, Urbana-Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1995, p. 188-209. The article does not address Drucker's contribution to the debate, however.

SDB in the debate rarely entailed a frank exchange of views. Instead, the leaders of the SDB invested all their energies in personal attacks directed at Drucker, not only disqualifying her as a bourgeoisie but also accusing her of being a man hater and suggesting that she had become “embittered through experience with perhaps 100 men”³³.

Wilhelmina Drucker’s zeal was undiminished. In the early 1890s she seemed more belligerent than ever and willing to formulate women’s interests as a political issue without establishing an affiliation with any of the existing political factions. The libellous remarks from the SDB merely led her to state that she would become “the whip of the social democrats.”³⁴ As such, she prepared to represent the VVV at the second congress of the Second International in Brussels in August 1891.

Brussels-Ghent-Amsterdam, 1891-1896

The International Worker’s Congress held at the Maison du peuple in Brussels from 16 through 23 August in 1891 drew over 350 delegates from 15 countries³⁵. The Dutch delegation arriving on 16 August 1891 consisted of Wilhelmina Drucker representing the VVV, Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis and Jan Fortuyn as delegates of the SDB, Maria van der Miezen, delegate of DVV (which had been re-established in 1890), as well as 6 male delegates from various industrial associations (most of whom also belonged to the SDB)³⁶. Upon examining the credentials of the different participants attending the opening of the congress – to trace any anarchists present with a view toward barring them from the congress – the spokespeople for the Dutch delegation (Domela Nieuwenhuis and Fortuyn) publicly disavowed Drucker. They reproached her not for being an anarchist but for representing a bourgeois association that opposed men rather than capitalism³⁷. The audience became agi-

33. On this fairly blunt insinuation (that prostitution underlay Drucker’s views), cast by the freethinker and socialist A.H. Gerhard in a discussion following Drucker’s lecture on the role of women in different religions at “De Dageraad”, see *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 15 May 1890 : whose “bittere ervaring misschien bij 100 mannen was opgedaan”.

34. *Ibid.* : “de zweep der sociaal-democraten”.

35. For the congress proceedings and the reports of the Brussels congress, see *Congrès international ouvrier socialiste, tenu à Bruxelles du 16 au 23 août 1891*, ed. Michel WINOCK, Genève, Minkoff Reprint, 1977 ; see also Markus BÜRGI, *Die Anfänge der Zweiten Internationale. Positionen und Auseinandersetzungen 1889-1893*, Frankfurt/New York, Campus Verlag, 1996, p. 148-179 (“Der ‘Internationale Sozialistische Arbeiterkongress’ von Brüssel 1891”).

36. On the bookseller and SDB official Jan Fortuyn (1855-1940), see Luuk BRUG, “Jan Antoon Fortuijn [Fortuyn]”, in *BWSA*, Vol. 4, Amsterdam, Stichting beheer IISG, 1990, p. 49-53. It was Fortuyn who disbanded DVV in 1888 and subsequently tried to ban separate women’s associations within the SDB throughout the Netherlands. See DIETEREN & PEETERMAN, *Vrije vrouwen of werkmansvrouwen ?*, *op. cit.*, p. 37 and 54-59. On the domestic servant Maria van der Miezen (1854-1925), the secretary of DVV in 1891, see *ibid.*, p. 114.

37. Many contemporary newspapers printed the debate about Drucker’s exclusion. The most extensive coverage appears in CL[EMENS, i.e. Chr. CORNELISSEN], “Het Internationale

tated. Delegates from several countries expressed their support for Drucker and condemned the conduct of the Dutch socialists. Drucker, who after her training in socialist ideology was no longer intimidated by the conduct of her adversaries or by the large audience before her, took the offensive and accused her socialist compatriots of ill faith. She explained that the members of the VVV, all women earning a living, were far from bourgeois. Even when a delegate – who happened to be Eleanor Marx and wielded considerable influence in that company as a direct relative of Karl Marx – sided with Drucker’s adversaries by stating that only women who belonged to the Socialist Party were welcome, Drucker was undaunted and reminded Marx of the brochure she herself had written, which asserted that the liberation of women could only come from women themselves³⁸. Domela Nieuwenhuis then challenged Drucker to state that she did not view man as her enemy and would abandon her crusade against men, in return for which the Dutch delegation would withdraw its objection to her admission. Drucker remained ostentatiously silent. Following pressure from the female delegates in the audience, who rose indignantly and demanded the floor, the chairman’s proposal to admit Wilhelmina Drucker was welcomed with jubilation.

In her many recollections of the early years of the VVV, Drucker consistently highlighted the Brussels congress, especially the above incident. Its importance to the history of the VVV lay not so much in her victory over the Dutch socialists before the front of the socialist international and in the presence of the collective international press, though she noted with satisfaction : “If ever a mine missed its mark, it was this one, which was intended to shame eternally the Dutch women’s movement before the entire world !”³⁹. Rather, the incident’s value concerned an entirely different field : the VVV, though previously completely unknown, entered notoriety throughout Europe overnight as a result of all the publicity. Thanks to Drucker, who received moral

Socialistische Kongres te Brussel”, in *Recht voor Allen*, 18 August 1891, and in [B.H. PEKELHARING], “Persoonlijke indrukken van het Brusselsche congres”, in *Sociaal Weekblad*, 5, 1891, p. 319-321 ; see also “Au congrès socialiste”, in *La Réforme*, 18 August 1891B, and “Le congrès ouvrier”, in *L’Indépendance belge*, 18 August 1891.

38. Drucker was undoubtedly referring to *The Woman Question* (1886) by Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling, which indeed contains the passage readily quoted by Drucker five years later : “Women are the creatures of an organized tyranny of men, as the workers are the creatures of an organized tyranny of idlers. (...) Both the oppressed classes, women and the immediate producers, must understand that their emancipation will come from themselves. Women will find allies in the better sort of men, as the labourers are finding allies among philosophers, artists, and poets. But the one has nothing to hope from man as a whole, and the other has nothing to hope from the middle class as a whole”. See Eleanor MARX & Edward AVELING, *The Woman Question* [1886], as reprinted by facsimile in Marie MULVEY ROBERTS & Tamae MIZUTA, eds., *The Reformers : Socialist Feminism*, London, Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1993, p. 7.
39. [DRUCKER], “De Vrije Vrouwenvereniging”, *op. cit.*, p. 13 : “Zoo ooit een mijn verkeerd sprong, was het wel deze, bestemd om voor het oog van heel de wereld zoodanig te ridiculiseeren de Nederlandsche vrouwenbeweging, dat zij niet meer zou durven opzien !”

support from feminists all over the world, the VVV also established a great many international contacts. At the congress in question, Drucker was among the group of women submitting a motion outside the agenda on 22 August urging all socialist parties to list support for full equality between the sexes at the top of their programme : “Abrogation de toutes les lois qui mettent la femme en dehors du droit commun et public”⁴⁰. The motion was adopted with very little resistance and near unanimity ; only the Belgian delegates Emile Vandervelde and August Mortelmans stated their objections⁴¹. This success, which unfortunately proved to yield little practical result, did not go down in Drucker’s memoirs on the list of conquests for feminism attributable to her performance at the Brussels congress. The list did, however, consistently mention the actual dawn of the women’s movement in Belgium, both in “a powerful (...) organization of the Belgian working women” and in “the maturation of the plan to found the Ligue belge du droit des femmes”⁴².

Drucker’s claim that the Belgian women’s associations were all the offspring of a Dutch mother, the VVV can thus be connected to a specific moment in history. So the question as to whether this claim is justified boils down to whether the wake of the congress of 1891 provides any indications of the role that Drucker ascribed to the VVV in the genesis of the Belgian women’s movement. Such indications are indeed present. Following the debate about her admission, Drucker was invited during the congress to substantiate her views. She accepted the invitation and delivered a public lecture on “Les droits de la femme” to a packed hall at the Maison du peuple⁴³. At this lecture, which according to the account in the Brussels liberal journal *La réforme* deeply impressed the audience, “notamment (...) les femmes qui assistaient nombreuses à la séance”⁴⁴, Drucker opened with a broad historical overview of all

40. *Congrès international, op. cit.*, p. 118-119 (“La question féminine”), see p. 119. The motion was submitted by Wilhelmina Drucker, Emma Ihrer and Ottilie Baader, both from Germany, the Austrian delegate Louise Kautsky and the Russian Anna Kuliscioff, whose revolutionary meandering had brought her to Italy, where she had been chosen as the delegate to Brussels. According to Pekelharing, Drucker and Ihrer were the driving forces behind this initiative ; [B.H. PEKELHARING], “Het Brusselsche congres”, in *Sociaal Weekblad*, 5, 1891, p. 347-350, see p. 347.

41. *Congrès international, op. cit.*, p. 118-119. In his memoirs, Vandervelde wrote that he became a feminist following Wilhelm Liebknecht’s vehement response to his conventional objections to full equality. See Emile VANDERVELDE, *Souvenirs d’un militant socialiste*, Paris, Denoël, 1939, p. 142-143 (“Le congrès de Bruxelles (1891)”) ; unfortunately, he wrote nothing about the response from Drucker, who, according to the conference proceedings (p. 119), also engaged in a debate with him. Our assumption that the individual described in the proceedings as the “delegate from Antwerp” Mortelmans (p. 118) was the Antwerp socialist August Mortelmans is informed by Albert VAN LAAR, *Geschiedenis van de arbeidersbeweging te Antwerpen en omliggende*, Antwerp, Ontwikkeling, 1926.

42. [DRUCKER], “De Vrije Vrouwenvereniging”, *op. cit.*, p. 13 : both in “een krachtige (...) organisatie der Belgische arbeidsters” and in “de rijping van het plan tot oprichting van de Ligue belge du droit des femmes”.

43. See “Chronique de partout”, in *La Réforme*, 22 August 1891C, and “Les droits de la femme”, in *La Réforme*, 24 August 1891C.

44. “Les droits de la femme”, *op. cit.*

areas of life where women were at a disadvantage or directly oppressed. She explicitly addressed the contemporary situation in Belgium – particularly the injustice of allowing women to study law but prohibiting them from practising professionally. This was, of course, a direct reference to what had just happened to the well-known feminist Marie Popelin⁴⁵. Drucker concluded her lecture by emphatically assuring women that only they could change their situation and then only by joining forces, which she repeatedly urged the women present to do. Here, the socialist Mortelmans, supported by Fortuyn, reminded the speaker that socialism was the sole course toward the liberation of the women, who should therefore join the socialist party. His remarks, however, failed to convince the audience, which applauded Drucker extensively at the end of her lecture.

As yet, it remains unclear who attended this lecture on 20 August 1891 and took Drucker's urgings seriously. No information is available as to whether the "demoiselles" La Nauze and De Lummen, who founded the feminist-socialist group "La revendication des droits féminins" in Brussels in August 1892, were in the audience, although La Nauze sent Drucker a newsletter of the Union pour la solidarité des droits féminins in early 1893⁴⁶. Nor do we know whether Marie Popelin, or her equally well-known supporter Louis Frank⁴⁷, attended Drucker's lecture. They may have, since Drucker reported that the two were trying to contact her at the time, after learning of the existence of the VVV in the Netherlands and consequently crystallizing their plans to organize a similar effort in Belgium⁴⁸. According to Drucker, the Ligue belge du droit des femmes was established following this conversation and Popelin's introduction to the VVV in the Netherlands. While lack of further details about the Ligue's origins precludes determining whether the account is accurate, Popelin definitely visited the Netherlands: on 23 February 1892 she delivered a lecture in Amsterdam organized by the VVV about the desirability of focusing girls' upbringing not on subsequent marriage but on an occupation

45. F. DE BUEGER-VAN LIERDE, "Marie Popelin et les débuts du mouvement féministe belge (1892-1914)", in L. COURTOIS, J. PIROTTE & F. ROSART, eds., *Femmes des années 80. Un siècle de condition féminine en Belgique (1889-1989)*, Louvain-la-Neuve/Brussels, Academia, 1989, p. 197-202; F. DE BUEGER-VAN LIERDE, "À l'origine du mouvement féministe en Belgique. 'L'Affaire Popelin'", in *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 50, 1972, p. 1128-1137.

46. On the two "demoiselles" and their group, see GUBIN, PIETTE & JACQUES, "Les féminismes belges et français", *op. cit.*, p. 62. Some of Drucker's papers, that have unfortunately been dispersed after her death, are in the archives of the Nationaal Bureau voor Vrouwenarbeid [National Office for Women's Labour] (NBV), Amsterdam, IIAV; for the circular of the Union pour la solidarité des femmes, reportedly founded on 1 December 1892, in which the signatories E. La Nauze and L. Verbist invited Drucker to become a member in April 1893, see Amsterdam, IIAV, NBV, nr. 459.

47. Françoise DE BUEGER-VAN LIERDE, "Louis Frank, pionnier du mouvement féministe belge", in *Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine*, 4, 1973, p. 377-393.

48. [Wilhelmina DRUCKER], "Marie Popelin", in *Evolutie*, 21, 16 July 1913, nr. 8, p. 59, and DRUCKER, "De Vrije Vrouwenvereniging", *op. cit.*, p. 146.

and the ensuing need to make all occupations accessible to women⁴⁹. As revealed by the complimentary copy of Frank's *Essai sur la condition politique de la femme* that Frank gave Drucker in March 1892⁵⁰, Frank stayed in touch with Drucker as well. During the extended run-up to the Ligue's establishment – from the initial preparations in April 1892 until the founding meeting in November 1892⁵¹ Frank visited the VVV : he was a special guest at the first public meeting of the VVV about women's suffrage in the Netherlands on 6 September 1892⁵². Both Drucker and Schook-Haver featured on the list of the League's foreign correspondents⁵³.

One person who did not attend Drucker's lecture on 20 August 1891 but read about it in the newspaper and resolved to invite Drucker to address her own group was the Ghent socialist Emilie Claeys, who had become the chair-woman of the city's socialist Propagandaclub voor Vrouwen [Women's Socialist Propaganda Club] a few months earlier⁵⁴. When the participants concluded the congress in Brussels by travelling to Ghent for an exuberant reception at this socialist bastion of worldwide renown⁵⁵, Claeys apparently seized the opportunity. On 25 August 1891 in the quarters of the Ghent cooperative "Vooruit", Drucker lectured in public on women's rights. Drucker repeated the message she had delivered in Brussels before a packed audience, urging the large group of women listening to unite and defend their rights, since only women could themselves achieve their liberation⁵⁶. As was to be expected, her remarks in Ghent were challenged. Edward Anseele, the leader

49. See "Mlle. Popelin in de Vrije Vrouwen-Vereeniging", in *De Amsterdamer. Dagblad voor Nederland*, 25 February 1892 ; "De vrouw in de maatschappij", in *Nieuws van den Dag*, 25 February 1892 (2nd edition of the day) ; "De voordracht van mej. Popelin", in *De Huisvrouw*, 22, 27 February 1892, nr. 11.

50. Louis FRANK, *Essai sur la condition politique de la femme. Étude de sociologie et de législation*, Paris, Arthur Rousseau, 1892. The copy given by Frank, that bears a personal dedication by the author to Drucker, is at the Amsterdam University Library, call N°. 1248 E 14.

51. See Françoise DE BUEGER-VAN LIERDE, "La Ligue belge du droit des femmes", in *Sextant*, 1993, nr. 1, p. 11-21, esp. 15-16.

52. Frank's presence is noted in "Stadsnieuws", in *Nieuws van den Dag*, 8 September 1892 (2nd edition of the day) ; cf. [Wilhelmina DRUCKER], "De vrouwenbeweging in Nederland" [VI], in *Evolutie*, 2, 28 November 1894, nr. 35, p. 273-276, see 274.

53. Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, papiers Louis Frank, cote II/7791 IV, nr 393.

54. See Emilie Claeys' letter to Wilhelmina Drucker dated 2 January 1892 ; Amsterdam, IIAV, NBV, nr. 479 and included here as an appendix. On Emilie Claeys (1855-1943), see Guy VANSCHOENBEEK, "Emilie Claeys (1855-1943). Feministische heilige, socialistische dissidente of speelbal van de wisselvalligheden van het lot ? Een kleine oefening in historische kritiek", in *Brood & Rozen. Tijdschrift voor de Geschiedenis van Sociale Bewegingen*, 1996, nr. 3, p. 67-81. Of all the available literature, his brief depiction of the modest activities of the Ghent women's club ties in best with Claeys' own account, see Guy VANSCHOENBEEK, *Novecento in Gent. De wortels van de sociaal-democratie in Vlaanderen*, Antwerp etc., Hadewijch, p. 139-140 ("Ik ben Marianne, proletaren").

55. Drucker's presence at the Ghent festivities of 23 August 1891 is noted in "Het Internationale Verbroederingsfeest", in *Vooruit*, 24 August 1891.

56. "Mejuffer Drucker te Gent", in *Vooruit*, 27 August 1891.

of the Ghent socialists, responded to Drucker in the traditional socialist vein. He reiterated the known view that only socialism could possibly bring about women's liberation and argued that women should therefore unite with men in the fight for socialism rather than team up with fellow women to struggle for their own rights⁵⁷. His tone was all too familiar. According to the account Drucker compiled years later of this lecture, Anseele was livid with rage because of her "daring to address his subjects about suffrage and equal labour legislation"⁵⁸.

This description corresponds fully with the letter that Claeys wrote Drucker about this evening a few months later. Apparently responding to a letter from Drucker about the history of the VVV, Claeys opened with a detailed history of the women's club in Ghent. According to Claeys, the club had merely been a vehicle for disseminating socialist propaganda among women since its establishment in 1886. Women could join, but men were in charge. Over the years, the club had taken virtually no public action, aside from evening sewing courses for girls and a relief fund for new mothers. After joining in 1888, Claeys had quickly resigned. In 1891, however, when the women's club was on the verge of collapse, and Anseele was looking for a new president, she had signed on again and had been appointed as the chairwoman. Her efforts to raise the members' awareness of the specific oppression of women and to steer the women's club along a new political course reverberated against the persistent habit of the members of standing behind Anseele in all matters. But now, Drucker's lecture had brought about "colossal revolution".

"Even more than your lecture, the ensuing debate was most beneficial. Anseele's brutal [verbal] attack made the women realize where they stood with him. The spell he had cast upon them was broken, and the objective I had been pursuing for six months was achieved in a few moments : the women decided not to be dominated by men anymore and to operate independently."⁵⁹

Following Drucker's lecture and after the young, headstrong Dutch socialist Johannes van der Veer, who had moved to Ghent in 1891, had publicly urged Claeys to join the struggle for general suffrage by demanding the right for women as well⁶⁰, the women's club truly got under way. Claeys began by opening a night school where women could attend classes in reading, writing, arithmetic and French and teamed up with Van der Veer to organize a course on women's rights, undoubtedly based on the example of the VVV. She also supported women's suffrage, first by harmonizing the views among the differ-

57. *Ibid.*

58. [Wilhelmina DRUCKER], "Het dogma der inferioriteit", in *Evolutie*, 21, 4 June 1913, nr. 5, p. 33-36, see 34 : [omdat zij] "het dorst wagen zijn sujetten te spreken van kiesrecht, van gelijke arbeidswetten".

59. Claeys to Drucker, 2 January 1892, see Appendix.

60. J.K. V[AN] D[ER] VEER, "Algemeen Stemrecht ook voor de vrouw", in *De Volkswacht*, 15 November 1891. On Johannes van der Veer (1869-1928), see P.J. MEERTENS & Bert ALTENA, "Johannes Koenraad van der Veer", in *BWSA*, Vol. 3, Amsterdam, Stichting beheer IISG, 1988, p. 208-211.

ent socialist women's clubs throughout the country and then through a joint effort with Van der Veer in late 1891 to get women's suffrage on the programme of the Belgische Werkliedenpartij [Belgian Labour Party] (BWP) in the national campaign for general suffrage. As she was not entirely successful, she resolved to present the arguments in favour of women's suffrage herself wherever possible in the general campaign, which started in early 1892.

At this point Claeys wrote the aforementioned letter to Drucker, requesting advice and assistance in Ghent and Antwerp. Drucker accepted the invitation and delivered lectures in Ghent on 23 and 25 January 1892 and in Antwerp on 27 January 1892⁶¹. While the gatherings of 23 and 27 January addressed women's rights in general, the public meeting on 25 January, organized by the Ghent women's club and chaired by Emilie Claeys, was devoted to women's suffrage. In advocating women's suffrage, which she believed was due especially to women who were self-supporting, Drucker encouraged her listeners once again to join forces and cautioned them against expecting men or some party to improve their situation – words with which Claeys agreed wholeheartedly. This time, Drucker experienced no direct attacks from the socialists: both Van der Veer and Ghent's socialist leader Edmond van Beveren expressed their support for women's suffrage. Nonetheless, a biting reaction to Drucker appeared in Ghent's socialist weekly *De Volkswacht* from an individual initially identified as “a female friend” of the writer, E.B. Following Drucker's remark that she believed she was dealing not with the female friend of E.B. but with her male friend (i.e. with E.B. himself), the author signed as “a common woman”⁶². In his response, E.B. chose the same line of attack on Drucker's person as the Dutch socialists⁶³: with her fine hat and good overcoat, she unmistakably belonged to the affluent class and had no business addressing the common women. The strongest proof for that was Drucker's assertion that men were turning working women against their wealthy sisters to divide them as a means of continuing their oppression. Surely, working women knew that the fine clothes of their wealthy sisters were sticky with the blood of an exploited seamstress and therefore had every right to

61. For Drucker's lecture in Ghent on 23 January 1892 to the teacher's union, see “Over ‘Vrouwenrechten’”, in *Vooruit*, 26 January 1892; for the one on 25 January 1892 before the Ghent women's club, see “Meeting in Parnassus”, in *Vooruit*, 27 January 1892; on her lecture in Antwerp on 27 January, see “Uit Antwerpen”, in *Vooruit*, 29 January 1892.

62. E.B., “Een knap antwoord”, in *De Volkswacht*, 7 February 1892; W. DRUCKER, “Enkele vragen naar aanleiding van ‘Een knap antwoord’”, in *De Volkswacht*, 28 February 1892; EENE VOLKSVROUW [a common woman], “Een wederantwoord aan Mej. Drucker”, in *De Volkswacht*, 6 March 1892.

63. We are going along with Drucker's assumption that E.B. was not a woman. In the second round, by then posing as “a common woman”, he reproached Drucker of disgracing herself by thinking that common women were illiterate. In her aforementioned letter to Drucker, however, Claeys indicates that such was indeed the case among the women who belonged to the women's club. The remaining possibility is that Claeys herself was the “common woman”, as has been presumed earlier. This appears highly unlikely. Claeys, as president of the women's club, was usually mentioned by name in the socialist press. She apparently did not need to adopt a pseudonym such as “a common woman” impressed upon Drucker that

begrudge them their wardrobes. Drucker parried this attack by explaining her statement about the socialist divide-and-conquer policy once more. She had not discussed wealthy women in her lecture. Nor had the socialist leaders never turned on wealthy women concerned with the plight of common women, or incited such action among the common women. In fact, the only women “worthy of being presented to the women of the masses as bourgeois were the teachers, telegraph operators, seamstresses, shop clerks, and the like”⁶⁴, that cared about the plight of the common women. The gazettes were referring to *these* women’s clothes, not those of wealthy women, of whom one need not fear they might join forces with their poorer sisters. The response from “Mr. E.B.” illustrated this socialist policy perfectly by suggesting to common women that the female enemy wore her clothes at the expense of those who toiled day and night, implying that such women had not worked just as hard to earn such clothes and did not sometimes make their clothes themselves (which Drucker undoubtedly did). Finally, she refuted the clothing argument on yet another ground : the blood sticking to Anseele’s clothes never seemed to be an issue.

This clash between feminism and socialism did not daunt Claeys. She continued along the same course and became the publisher of the Ghent socialist daily *Vooruit* that same year and a board member of the Bond Moyson [Moyson Union], Ghent’s socialist health plan. In 1893 she joined the national board of the BWP. Her relationship with Drucker remained unchanged following the incident. On 16 June 1892 Claeys delivered a lecture to the vvv in Amsterdam⁶⁵. When the vvv organized the first public meeting on women’s suffrage in the Netherlands on 6 September 1892 – the one Louis Frank attended – she sent a message of support on behalf of the Ghent women’s club⁶⁶, while keeping Drucker posted on her activities at the Bond Moyson⁶⁷.

In early 1893 Wilhelmina Drucker and her partner from the vvv Theodore Schook-Haver started the women’s weekly *Evolutie* [*Evolution*]⁶⁸. She

socialist women in Belgium needed to do, and usually signed her contributions to newspapers with her own initials E.C. Moreover, Claeys had publicly expressed her agreement following Drucker’s lecture, was on good terms with Drucker according to her previous letter and did not break with her afterwards either, as will become apparent.

64. DRUCKER, “Enkele vragen”, *op. cit.* : [vrouwen] “die de hooge eer genieten aan de vrouwen uit het volk als bourgeois te worden voorsteld, zijn : onderwijzeressen, telegrafisten, modisten, winkeljuffrouwen, naaisters en dergelijken”, referring here to the vvv membership.

65. *Recht voor Allen*, 21/22 June 1892. The next day Claeys delivered the same lecture to DVV (see *ibid.*) and the day after to the social-democratic women’s association “Gelijke plichten, gelijke rechten” [Equal Duties, Equal Rights] in The Hague (see the announcement in *Recht voor Allen*, 18/19 June 1892).

66. [DRUCKER], “De vrouwenbeweging in Nederland” [VI], *op. cit.*, p. 274.

67. Emilie Claeys to Wilhelmina Drucker (Ghent, 23 August 1892), Amsterdam, IIAV, NBV, nr. 479.

68. On Theodore Schook-Haver (1856-1912), who continued to work alongside Drucker both in the vvv and on *Evolutie*, see Corrie VAN EIJL, “Theodore Petronella Bernardine Haver”, in *BWSA*, Vol. 6, Amsterdam, Stichting beheer IISG, 1995, p. 80-83.

remained the weekly's editor and financier until her death in 1925, which also marked the end of its publication. Its name reflected Drucker's definitive abandonment of the socialist revolutionary ideal: *Evolutie's* objective was "gradual rectification of social wrongs that mainly affected women", as stated in the trial issue of 8 March 1893⁶⁹. She kept her distance from the political party structure: "We do not wish to belong to any party or to merge with any; rather we intend to appreciate every movement's strengths and to discredit what is amiss"⁷⁰. This mission was also reflected by the heterogeneous composition of *Evolutie's* staff. The men and women who flocked to *Evolutie* included a Utopian socialist, a current member and a former member of the SDB, a radical from Nieuwenhuis' ranks and a great many feminists from the Netherlands and abroad espousing freethinking, radical, socialist and even spiritist principles. The contributors from Belgium were Emilie Claeys, Marie Popelin and Louis Frank.

The broad Belgian-Dutch collaboration that seemed to be forming in *Evolutie* never truly came to fruition. While Claeys initially submitted an article, she soon became fully occupied with the *Hollandsch-Vlaamsche Vrouwenbond* [Dutch-Flemish Women's Union], which she established with the Dutch feminist Nellie van Kol in June 1893, and the socialist monthly *De Vrouw*, which she published with Van Kol from that point onward⁷¹. The critical reviews in *Evolutie* of these initiatives were especially abrasive toward Van Kol, whose socialist commitment Drucker repeatedly labelled as insincere. In early 1895, however, when *Evolutie* suggested that *De Vrouw's* existence was attributable to the good graces of and a grant from the BWP, Claeys resigned⁷². As for Popelin, she wrote only one article during her three years on the staff of *Evolutie*. Frank was the most regular contributor of the three. In addition to submitting about ten articles during those three years, he provided frequent updates from Belgium. The collaboration with Frank grew closer following Drucker and Schook-Haver's translation of his *Grand catéchisme de la femme* (1894), which appeared as *Catechismus der vrouw* in 1895⁷³, as well

69. "Ons doel", in *Evolutie*, trial issue, 8 March 1893, p. 1: "langs geleidelijken weg maatschappelijke misstanden verbeteren, vooral die waaronder de vrouw gebukt gaat".

70. *Ibid.*: "Wij verlangen tot geen enkele partij te behooren, bij geene enkele te worden ingelijfd; maar in iedere richting het goede te waardeeren en het verkeerde af te keuren".

71. To our knowledge, no research has been done on the *Hollandsch-Vlaamsche Vrouwenbond*. On Nellie van Kol, née Porreij (1851-1930), see Fia DIETEREN, "Een eigen tehuis in het land der vreemdelingschap. Privé en openbaar in het leven van Nellie van Kol", in *Tijdschrift voor Vrouwenstudies*, 9, 1988, p. 262-275, and Fia DIETEREN, "Jacoba Maria Petronella Porreij", in *BWN*, Vol. 3, The Hague, Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 1989, p. 462-464.

72. E. CLAEYS, "Ingezonden", in *Evolutie*, 3, 3 April 1895, nr. 1, p. 7, with a response from the editors on p. 7-8. Claeys responded to "'De Vrouw' en 'Evolutie'", in *Evolutie*, 2, 13 March 1895, nr. 50, p. 397-398, and 20 March 1895, nr. 51, p. 404-406, where the statement about the grant for *De Vrouw* from the BWP appears on p. 405.

73. Louis FRANK, *Catechismus der vrouw*. Translated by Th. SCHOOK-HAVER & W. DRUCKER, Amsterdam, W. Versluys, 1895.

as Frank's lecture to the VVV in late 1894⁷⁴. Frank's favourable reference to Drucker and the VVV in an article on the Dutch women's movement is likely to have benefited the relationship as well⁷⁵. Nevertheless, he also resigned from the staff of *Evolutie* after three years.

In retrospect, the *Evolutie*'s establishment was less a new stage in Belgian-Dutch relations than an indication that they had run their course. The relations among the Belgians – Claeys finding a new sparring partner in Van Kol and Frank locking horns with Popelin in late 1893 and being expelled from the Ligue – may have hastened the departure of these three staff members. Undoubtedly, however, the frenzied changes in the Dutch women's movement, which gave rise to myriad organizations and periodicals shortly after *Evolutie* was established, forced Drucker to reconsider her position and especially that of *Evolutie*. Though she was used to attacks from male adversaries, now she began experiencing opposition within the growing feminist movement itself. One of her letters to Louis Frank contains an unusually communicative account of her initial sense of discouragement. Explaining why she had not sent word for so long, she wrote to him on 14 December 1894 :

“Il faut que je lutte continuellement contre une opposition rusée, mystérieuse, insaisissable, mille fois plus misérable, formidable que la lutte ouverte d'auparavant.

Que me touche au cœur, parmi les diverses piqûres, portées de ci de là, pour m'affaiblir dans ma force et ma fortune, c'est que des femmes intelligentes, s'occupant de la cause féminine, poussées par la jalousie, aident des personnes qui contrecarrent le 'féminisme', s'il est à faire de me gêner. Cela étouffe mon énergie et fait que je suis lasse de temps en temps d'aller plus loin. J'ai sacrifié tout, tout ce qu'un homme peut sacrifier : les restes du printemps de ma beauté, ma santé, une grande partie de ma fortune et je moissonne la haine, la calomnie. C'est triste, ça ! Oh, ce n'est pas vrai le mot : comme tu sèmeras, tu moissonneras.

Pourquoi je vous dis cela ? Qu'est-ce que cela vous fait ? Rien, n'est-ce pas ? Peut-être, un sentiment de camaraderie, de rapport entre des personnes qui éprouvent la même ingratitude”⁷⁶.

74. On this lecture, which was held in Amsterdam on 24 December, see [Theodore SCHOOK-HAVER], “Vergaderingen”, in *Evolutie*, 2, 29 December 1894, nr. 39, p. 311. Frank had delivered the same lecture to the Rotterdam chapter of the new Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht [Women's Suffrage Society] two days earlier, see “De rechten der vrouw”, in *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 23 December 1894.

75. Louis FRANK, “Le mouvement féministe aux Pays-Bas”, in *L'Indépendance belge*, 1 January 1895 : “L'organisme féministe qui a servi le mieux jusqu'ici la cause émancipatrice aux Pays-Bas, est l'association des femmes libres, la *Vrije Vrouwenvereniging*, fondée le 1er octobre 1889, à Amsterdam, par Mme Wilhelm. Drucker, qui appartient à la bonne bourgeoisie et qui est l'âme de cette association. Elle brava les sarcasmes de ses adversaires, et, grâce à sa persévérance tenace, elle a fortement contribué à rendre la thèse féministe très populaire aux Pays-Bas”.

76. Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, papiers Louis Frank, cote II/7792 II, nr. 146 : Wilhelmina Drucker to Louis Frank (Amsterdam, 14 December 1894).

Notwithstanding the suggestions conveyed in this letter, Drucker differed from Frank in her successful resistance to any opposition and lack of appreciation. Accordingly, she focused all her attention and energies on the changes in the Netherlands and bid the Belgian alliance farewell in 1896.

Possible intersections

At this point we may conclude that Wilhelmina Drucker is unjustly absent in modern historical accounts of Belgian feminism. Her claims regarding her role in early Dutch and Belgian feminism may be slightly overblown, they are not at all unfounded. Accordingly, this preliminary tentative reconstruction of Drucker's Belgian connections merits complementary research. Some matters remain unresolved, such as the identity of Drucker's critical adversary "E.B." in *Vooruit*, the significance of the group of women behind the journal *La revendication des droits féminins* and their ties with the radical French feminists of the Union de la solidarité des femmes and the historical truth behind Drucker's assertion that the Ligue belge du droit des femmes was established thanks to the efforts of the VVV. The scope of complementary research should certainly extend beyond these details, however, as Drucker's actions in Belgium relate to far broader fields of research as well. We will identify four in these concluding observations.

The first area concerns Dutch-Belgian and Belgian-Dutch contacts in general. Remarkably, neither Dutch nor Belgian research on the history of feminism has given serious consideration to this subject⁷⁷. While researchers in both countries have mentioned the collaboration between Emilie Claeys and Nellie van Kol in the Hollandsch-Vlaamsche Vrouwenbond and the journal *De Vrouw*, they have not yet covered this aspect exhaustively. Nellie van Kol has been under-appreciated in Dutch historiography thus far⁷⁸. Several Belgian historians claim that she inspired Claeys to establish the Women's Socialist Propagandaclub in 1886⁷⁹. Their assertion, however, must be mistaken as can be seen from Claeys's letter to Drucker of January 1892, which is published for the first time with this article. Claeys apparently had no part in establishing the club. Nor did she indicate that she knew Nellie van Kol at the time of her letter. It appears much more likely that Van Kol and Claeys met later on and in a different setting, in Brussels rather than in Ghent. In her

77. Lack of interest in each other's cultures and the similarities pervades virtually all nineteenth and twentieth-century history and historiography of the neighbouring countries after 1830, as the Belgian-Dutch editors of a much used historical reference work have noted. See J.C.H. BLOM & E. LAMBERTS, eds., *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden*, Rijswijk, Nijgh & Van Ditmar, 1993, p. 374.

78. Nevertheless, see publications cited in note 71.

79. Denise DE WEERDT, *En de vrouwen? Vrouw, vrouwenbeweging en feminisme in België (1830-1960)*, Ghent, Masereelfonds, 1980, p. 93; Nele BRACKE, "Tussen twee stoelen: Emilie Claeys (1855-1943), feministe en socialiste", in *Historica*, 20, June 1997, nr. 2, p. 3-5, esp. 3; GUBIN, PIETTE & JACQUES, "Les féminismes belges et français", *op. cit.*, p. 61.

contribution to the *Evolutie* issue of May 1893, Emilie Claeys mentioned the first lecture by the new chairwoman of an association to which she belonged : the Union pour la solidarité des femmes. Nellie van Kol was this chairwoman⁸⁰. Two months later Nellie van Kol reported that she and Emilie Claeys had established a Hollandsch-Vlaamsche Vrouwenbond to serve women whose lack of French prevented them from joining the Union⁸¹. This is obviously a subject that merits additional research⁸².

The second important area of research is the shift in focus among the international contacts of feminists and women's organizations. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries such contacts were undoubtedly reinforced by the establishment of the International Council of Women in 1888 and the International Woman Suffrage Alliance in 1904. These organizations, which exist to this day in a somewhat modified form, offer a clear legacy of conference proceedings, journals and personal archives. Understandably, historians today have focused on these successful organizations. Leila Rupp's study is a case in point. Rupp has limited her study of "the making of the international women's movement" to the International Council of Women, the International Alliance and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (established in 1919), as if this choice were self-evident. She covers other previous initiatives in two paragraphs⁸³. The focus on these same organizations in the pathbreaking source publications by the Dutch historians Mineke Bosch and Annemarie Kloosterman is even more understandable, as Aletta Jacobs, one of the best-known feminists from the Netherlands, figured prominently in these groups⁸⁴. Though understandable, this one-sided attention is problematic, as it unintentionally designates a specific international network, which might be described as unaffiliated, liberal and dominated by West-European and North-American influences, as a feminist-internationalist standard. The British historian Richard Evans, one of the most outspoken supporters of the idea that only liberal feminism is true feminism, has noted that liberal networks were little more than interesting meeting places for a select company, while the truly international women's organizations were more in-

80. E. CLAEYS, "De beweging in België", in *Evolutie*, 1, 10 May 1893, nr. 6, p. 4-5. "Voor onze vrouwen (eene redevoering van Nellie)", in *De Sociale Gids. Socialistisch Tijdschrift voor Noord- en Zuid-Nederland*, 1, 1893, p. 233-248. It is interesting to note that both Nellie van Kol and Emilie Claeys were among the staff of this journal.

81. NELLIE [VAN KOL], "Ingezonden", in *Evolutie*, 1, 5 July 1893, nr. 14, p. 8.

82. The 66 letters of Emilie Claeys to Nellie van Kol written between 1897 and 1927 (Amsterdam, IIAV, archives of Nellie van Kol, nrs. 3 and 49), might compensate for the lack of information about Claeys' life after 1896 that is often noted in the existing literature.

83. Leila J. RUPP, *Worlds of women. The making of an international women's movement*, Princeton N.J., Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 14.

84. See Mineke BOSCH & Annemarie KLOOSTERMAN, *Lieve Dr. Jacobs. Brieven uit de Wereldbond voor Vrouwenkiesrecht 1902-1942*, Amsterdam, Sara, 1985 ; Mineke BOSCH, with Annemarie KLOOSTERMAN, *Politics and friendship. Letters from the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, 1902-1942*, Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1992.

clined toward non-liberal principles⁸⁵. Aside from the question of which tradition is the most internationalist, we might examine why some networks proved stronger than others instead of taking the success of certain traditions for granted. The Swedish historian Ulla Wikander, who has initiated such research, has concluded tentatively that the decisive changes took place in Europe during the 1890s. This period marked the dramatic decline of an unaffiliated social or socialist feminism that was oriented mainly toward France, and for which there no longer was a place between the rigid anti-feminism of the socialist parties and the semi-apolitical style of the women's movement that conformed increasingly to the North-American model. After the turn of the century this socialist feminism was briefly in the international limelight through its rejection of special labour legislation for women via a small organization known as International Correspondence/Correspondence Internationale, which was established by the Dutch feminist Marie Rutgers-Hoitsema in 1911⁸⁶.

Though Drucker is not mentioned by Wikander, her radical and socialist connections, her familiarity with French literature and her clear stand for absolute equality between men and women on the job market perfectly match Wikander's definition of a representative of this socialist feminism. The description is especially appropriate in light of Drucker's years of collaboration with Rutgers-Hoitsema, her role in founding the International Correspondence in 1911 and the fact that both Drucker and Rutgers-Hoitsema announced the organization's official establishment in 1912 at the International Feminist Congress in Brussels (where they convinced Marie Popelin to become the correspondent for Belgium)⁸⁷. As stated, however, this premise is merely a foundation for additional research. While such a description might elucidate the category of feminists and the type of network that came off worst internationally, the causes and circumstances remain far from clear. Research on the subject might redefine or even review the category "social" or "socialist" in this context.

The third research area follows from the second : comparative research on the history of feminism. In the Netherlands, few scholars have shown an interest in this practice⁸⁸. Belgian historians, though more sensitive to the benefits

85. He was referring to a broad spectrum of initiatives, such as Frances Willard's international temperance movement, Josephine Butler's abolitionist movement and Clara Zetkin's socialist women's international. See Richard J. EVANS, "Appendix : International feminist movements", in ID., *The feminists. Women's emancipation movements in Europe, America and Australasia 1840-1920*, London etc., Croom Helm, 1977, p. 246-253.

86. Ulla WIKANDER, "International women's congresses, 1878-1914. The controversy over equality and special labour legislation", in Maud L. EDWARDS *et al.*, eds., *Rethinking change. Current Swedish feminist research*, Stockholm, HSFR, 1992, p. 11-36, esp. p. 21. For a general overview of international networks, see Bob REINALDA & Natascha VERHAREN, *Vrouwenbeweging en internationale organisaties 1968-1986. Een vergeten hoofdstuk uit de geschiedenis van de internationale betrekkingen*, De Knipe, Ariadne, 1989.

87. M.W.H. RUTGERS-HOITSEMA, "Wat mevrouw W. Drucker op arbeidsgebied al voor de vrouw heeft gedaan", in *Evolutie*, final issue, February 1926, p. 6-8.

of comparisons, have thus far focused exclusively on Britain and especially France, probably because of the close ties between French-speaking feminists in Brussels and various groups in Paris⁸⁹. Wilhelmina Drucker's Belgian connections provide the framework for a comparison between the Netherlands and Belgium. A quick glance will reveal that the desire expressed in the *Sociaal Weekblad* of 1893 that the VVV not impart too many of its characteristics to its alleged Belgian progeny was indeed realized. Neither the socialist women's club in Ghent nor the Ligue had much in common with the VVV. Unlike the VVV, the socialist women's club quickly regained its loyalty to the party. The Ligue, though formally always unaffiliated, differed greatly from the VVV, an extra-parliamentary women's action group, by being a respectable and moderate pressure group comprising men and women with important connections in parliament. These differences would become clearer, given a broader comparative history of Belgium and the Netherlands, which would obviously cover the years before 1890 as well. Several issues appear relevant to this context.

Éliane Gubin has observed that the Ligue's political style, including the membership of and connections with leading parliamentarians, such as Hector Denis, Célestin Demblon, Jules Destrée and Emile Vandervelde, may be related to the anti-clerical coalition between feminists and male freethinkers that tackled the issue of education for girls in the 1870s and 1880s⁹⁰. These kinds of observations might give rise to questions about the Dutch situation like: why did the issue of education for girls never enter the struggle of the confessional schools for public funding, did other political coalitions emerge in the Netherlands, and what role did feminists play there?

Answering these questions will also enhance our understanding of another striking difference between the Netherlands and Belgium: the course of the struggle for women's suffrage. In both countries 1893 was a turning point, because then people realized that expansion of the male electorate was on the horizon but that women's suffrage would remain a long-term objective, despite the support expressed by various liberal and socialist groups. In the Netherlands Drucker and her VVV concluded that only women could realize

88. The only recent comparative studies on related themes are Berteke WAALDIJK, *Het Amerika der vrouw. Sekse en geschiedenis van maatschappelijk werk in Nederland en de Verenigde Staten*, Groningen, Wolters-Noordhoff, 1996; Hettie A. POTT-BUTER, *Facts and fairy tales about female labor, family and fertility. A seven-country comparison 1850-1990*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 1993.

89. Éliane GUBIN, "La citoyenneté féminine. Réflexions sur le suffrage des femmes à partir de l'exemple de la Belgique", in *Provence historique*, 46, 1996, p. 583-599; GUBIN, PIETTE & JACQUES, "Les féminismes belges et français", *op. cit.* Remarkably enough, the seemingly self-evident comparison with France already appears in the work of nineteenth-century Belgian feminists. See Isala VAN DIEST, "Belgium", in Theodore STANTON, ed., *The woman question in Europe. A series of original essays*, New York, Source Book, 1970 [facsimile reprint of the original from 1884], p. 364-373.

90. Éliane GUBIN, "Féminisme et société en Belgique avant 1914", in *Cahiers marxistes*, 1993, nr. 191, p. 11-26, esp. 19-21; Éliane GUBIN, "Signification, modernité et limites du féminisme avant 1914", in *Sextant*, 1993, nr. 1, p. 39-56.

this objective. She sought women sympathetic to her cause within and outside her own circle and eventually initiated the Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht [Women's Suffrage Society] in the winter of 1893/94. During the years that followed, it evolved into an active organization with an impressive membership⁹¹. In 1917 the association, which had been chaired by Aletta Jacobs from 1903 onward, achieved some of its goals with the elimination of the constitutional impediments to women's suffrage and the subsequent eligibility of women for election to parliamentary bodies. Two years later, in 1919, women were granted active suffrage as well. In Belgium the course of events was entirely different. From the outset the Ligue had resigned itself to the absence of widespread support for women's suffrage, while the socialist women's organizations agreed to drop the issue from the programme of the BWP from 1902 onward. Nevertheless, in 1912 and 1913 national women's suffrage organizations were established. Women obtained the right to vote in municipal elections in 1920 and in national ones in 1948, nearly three decades later than their counterparts in the Netherlands⁹². Examining the causes of these differences highlights another interesting difference between Belgium and the Netherlands : the political position of the Catholics.

Richard Evans has submitted that the emergence of a large and relatively successful feminist movement in the Netherlands rather than in Belgium (where the economy was far more developed) is attributable to Dutch culture's Protestant tradition. In all countries where the Catholic Church prevailed (e.g. France, Belgium, Italy), women obtained the right to vote only after World War II⁹³. While the political hegemony held by the Catholic Church in Belgium from 1884 onward obviously never existed in the Netherlands, Evans' simplistic view seems to merit revision. His reference to the power of the Catholic Church primarily concerns the fear among liberals and socialists that a female electorate might provide Catholic parties with a majority⁹⁴. But in

91. DRUCKER, "De Vrije Vrouwenvereniging", *op. cit.*, also M.W.H. RUTGERS-HOITSEMA, "De 25-jarige strijd voor vrouwenkiesrecht in Nederland", p. 12-25, and Martina G. KRAMERS, "25 Jaren vrouwenkiesrechtstrijd", p. 26-38 in *Gedenkboek bij het 25-jarig bestaan van de Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht 1894-1919*, Amsterdam, n.p., [1919]. In 1917 the Vereeniging had 22,000 members and collected 165,000 signatures supporting women's suffrage through its petitions.

92. D. KEYMOLEN, G. CASTERMANS & M. SMET, *De geschiedenis geweld aangedaan. De strijd voor het vrouwenstemrecht 1886-1948*, Antwerp/Amsterdam, De Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1981 ; additional details appear in GUBIN, "La citoyenneté féminine", *op. cit.*, and of the same author, "Les femmes et la citoyenneté politique en Belgique. L'histoire d'un malentendu", in *Sextant*, 1997, nr. 7, p. 163-187, plus her contribution elsewhere in this issue. Focusing on the remarkable course of events among the socialists is Marcel LIEBMAN, "Militants et militantes : la question des femmes", in *id.*, *Les socialistes belges 1885-1914. La révolte et l'organisation*, Brussels, Vie Ouvrière, 1979, p. 225-238.

93. EVANS, *The feminists*, *op. cit.*, p. 134-136 ; for a more subtle but largely similar rationale, see Siep STUURMAN, *Verzuiling, kapitalisme en patriërchaat. Aspecten van de ontwikkeling van de moderne staat in Nederland*, Nijmegen, SUN, 1983, e.g. p. 234-236 and 242-244.

94. EVANS, *The feminists*, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

the Protestant Netherlands too this omnipresent fear that women would vote conservative existed. Because of it Dutch liberals and socialists agreed to constitutional parity between public and confessional education in return for general male suffrage in the major appeasement compromise with the confessionals in 1917. They did not press on for female suffrage. As a consequence active female suffrage did not appear imminent at all⁹⁵. Many feminists were deeply disappointed. Wilhelmina Drucker was not among them. In 1916 she and a few like-minded spirits had left the Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht because they were convinced that under Aletta Jacobs' leadership the association was relying far too heavily on the good graces of the liberals and socialists⁹⁶. In 1917 Drucker simply noted once again that the course of events had confirmed her mistrust of party politics. The sudden parliamentary majority supporting women's suffrage in 1919 largely reflected the desire of the confessional cabinet (led by the Catholic Ch. J. M. Ruys de Beerenbrouck) to adopt a series of reforms that would neutralize the socialists, who had followed the example of their German counterparts by proclaiming the revolution in November 1918. The supporters of the confessional parties stated that they expected the women's vote to be a moderating influence⁹⁷. A few years later the leader of the liberal party relativized the entire situation in the Lower House as follows :

“Who knows what would have happened had the issue gone unresolved during the calm that followed 1918 ! The matter's course in other countries has provided some valuable lessons”⁹⁸.

While he was probably referring to the history of women's suffrage in Britain, the course of the fight for suffrage in Belgium might be viewed from the same perspective, i.e. as a tool in the short-term electoral power play. Belgium's extended lag behind the Netherlands in approving parliamentary women's suffrage is more likely a coincidental result of the political constellation than a consequence of Catholicism's intrinsic conservative strength⁹⁹. This view is substantiated by the remarkable tendency of Catholic women's organizations – and to a lesser degree the Catholic party – to campaign for women's suffrage. The fact that Catholic feminism in Belgium was considerably more

95. See also STUURMAN, *Verzuiling, kapitalisme en patriarchaat*, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

96. W. DRUCKER, “Waarom ik niet langer lid wil en kan zijn van de Ver. v. Vrouwenkiesrecht”, in *Evolutie*, 24, 17 May 1916, nr. 4, p. 25-28. Drucker then established De Neutrale [The Neutral], her own, unaffiliated association for women's suffrage, and recruited a few hundred members.

97. A concise but thorough account appears in Marianne BRAUN, *De prijs van de liefde. De eerste feministische golf, het huwelijksrecht en de vaderlandse geschiedenis*, Amsterdam, Het Spinhuis, 1992, p. 263-289.

98. H.P. MARCHANT in *Handelingen der Tweede Kamer 1921/22*, Session of 1 November 1921, p. 281 : “Wie weet wat er geschied ware, indien ook over [deze] vraag de kalmeerende jaren sedert 1918 waren heengegaan ! Het verloop van deze zaak in andere landen heeft ons daaromtrent het een en ander geleerd”.

99. Cf. GUBIN, “La citoyenneté féminine”, *op. cit.*, p. 586.

radical, dynamic and political than in the Netherlands merits study as well¹⁰⁰. It should be noted in passing that neither in the Netherlands nor in Belgium the female electorate appears to have dramatically strengthened the right¹⁰¹.

A fourth, independent research field connects the three already mentioned and involves the areas of common ground between socialists, liberals and feminists. Thus far, Belgian historiography seems to agree with historians like Richard Evans by regarding only one feminism, usually classified as bourgeois-liberal as authentic. Socialist and Catholic women's organizations are disqualified as only party-politics, and research has virtually overlooked women's organizations focusing on morality issues (i.e. prostitution, aid to unwed mothers and the like)¹⁰². In recent years Dutch historiography has discarded this model, which seems to be a mirror image of the old socialist polemic against feminism, and is charting a history of feminism that abandons party labels as an interpretative scheme¹⁰³. Despite the ensuing immense differences in perspective, examining individuals such as Wilhelmina Drucker to identify the distinctive features and established links between feminism, radicalism, socialism and liberalism would be of great relevance to both types of historiography. Comparative research in this area might be highly enlightening. Dutch researchers will find the Ligue's largely liberal-bourgeois label remarkable, given that most known male members and sympathizers were socialists. Such an equalization of liberalism and socialism is most unorthodox in Dutch literature. Conversely, Belgian researchers will be surprised at the cursory coverage by Dutch historians of a tradition where radicals, socialists, liberals and feminists came together, even in the Netherlands: the movement of freethinkers and possibly that of freemasons, such as encountered by Drucker in "*De Dageraad*"¹⁰⁴.

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100. Paul GÉRIN, "Louise Van den Plas et les débuts du 'Féminisme chrétien de Belgique'", in *Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine*, 1, 1969, p. 254-275. A similar type of Catholic feminism arose in the Netherlands only during the interwar years. See Mieke AERTS, *De politiek van de katholieke vrouwenemancipatie. Van Marga Klompé tot Jacqueline Hillen*, Amsterdam, SUA, 1994.
101. On Belgium, see GUBIN, "La citoyenneté féminine", *op. cit.*, p. 593. On the Netherlands, see Monique LEIJENAAR, *De geschade heerlijkheid. Politiek gedrag van vrouwen en mannen in Nederland, 1918-1988*, The Hague, SDU, 1989, p. 38-40.
102. In addition to the works by GUBIN listed in the notes above, see DE WEERDT, *En de vrouwen?*, *op. cit.*; Denise KEYMOLEN, "Vrouwenemancipatie 1844-1914", in *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, Vol. 13, Haarlem, Van Dishoeck, 1978, p. 66-76, and KEYMOLEN, CASTERMANS & SMET, *De geschiedenis geweld aangedaan*, *op. cit.*
103. In addition to Myriam EVERARD, "Het burgerlijk feminisme van de eerste golf: Annette Versluys-Poelman en haar kring", in *JVV*, Vol. 6, Nijmegen, SUN, 1985, p. 106-137, see JANSZ, *Denken over sekse*, *op. cit.*, and recently Maria GREVER and Berteke WAALDIJK, *Feministische openbaarheid. De Nationale Tentoonstelling van Vrouwenarbeid in 1898*, Amsterdam, Stichting beheer IISG/IIAV, 1998.
104. The only exception is the work of Hans MOORS. See e.g. his "Vrijdenkers over vrouwen. Seksenverhoudingen in levensbeschouwelijke maatschappijkritiek (1855-1898)", in *JVV*, Vol. 14, Amsterdam, Stichting beheer IISG, 1994, p. 61-85, or "Helpt vrijdenken? Vrijdenkersorganisaties in negentiende-eeuws Nederland en België: naar een compara-

Research on the history of feminism in the Netherlands and Belgium thus offers ample room for further study and possibly even fundamental research. We hope the above introduction to Wilhelmina Drucker and the provisional reconstruction of a period in her life when she was at the intersection of different political traditions and national cultures has revealed the potential contribution of such research to our historical insight. It might also lead to a more accurate appreciation of Drucker. In her native country a recent survey among a hundred well-known Dutch people indicated that not she but Aletta Jacobs has come to personify nineteenth- and early twentieth-century feminism¹⁰⁵. Perhaps those adopting the perspective of the Dutch-Belgian connection will derive inspiration from a designation that is surely auspicious : on both sides of the border the most prominent new feminist movements in the second half of the twentieth century have chosen to carry on the name of Wilhelmina Drucker rather than that of Aletta Jacobs by calling themselves Dolle Mina's [Mad Minas]¹⁰⁶.

Translation : LEE K. MITZMAN

tieve benadering", in *Brood & Rozen. Tijdschrift voor de Geschiedenis van Sociale Bewegingen*, 1998, n° 2, p. 13-29, and on freemasonry "Hulde alleen is onvoldoende. Denken over vrouwen en vrouwelijkheid in vrijmetselaarskringen", in A. VAN DE SANDE and J. ROOSENDAAL, eds., *'Een stille leerschool van deugd en goede zeden'. Vrijmetselarij in Nederland in de 18e en 19e eeuw*, Hilversum, Verloren, 1995, p. 99-136.

105. "De vrouw van de eeuw", in *Historisch Nieuwsblad*, 7, 1998, nr. 6, p. 16-22.

106. Lately in the Netherlands several former "Minas" have claimed to be the name's spiritual progenitors. We will never know who actually coined the term in the heat of those collective debates. Nevertheless, all versions of this incident mention Wilhelmina Drucker. Remarkably, nothing suggests that Drucker's contemporaries ever referred to her as a "Mad Mina" or Dolle Mina.

Appendix

Letter of Emilie Claeys to Wilhelmina Drucker (Ghent, 2 January 1892)
Amsterdam, International Information Centre and Archives of the Women's Movement, archives of the Nationaal Bureau voor Vrouwenarbeid, nr. 479 : ingekomen stukken van bekende feministen, afkomstig van Wilhelmina Drucker, 1892-1907.

Spelling as in original ; changes made in punctuation or otherwise will be indicated by the use of square brackets.

Gent, 2 Januari 1892

Geachte medestrijdster,

Gelief mij te verontschuldigen dat ik zoo lang gewacht heb u te antwoorden, maar wezentlijk , in de laatste drie weken had ik zulke drukke bezigheden dat het mij niet mogelijk is geweest zulks vroeger te doen. In uwe correspondentie begint u, zoo als u het zeer te recht noemt[,] met het begin, het is te zeggen met het ontstaan uwer vereeniging. Zoo ver kan ik niet terug keeren, de Socialistischen Vrouwenclub van Gent heeft nu twee maanden geleden haar vijfde verjaringsfeest gevierd, eerst sedert drie jaren ben ik er lid van. Tot over een achttal maanden deed ook die vereeniging weinig van zich hooren, het stichten van een onderstandsfonds voor kraamvrouwen, en eene avondnaai-school voor jonge meisjes was het eenige dat zij tot stand bracht. Zich alleen bezig houdende met de Socialistische Propaganda, dacht men volstrekt aan gene vrouwenrechten en nog minder aan zelfstandigheid. Gedurende twee jaren, werd deze vereeniging geleid door een man-voorzitter, geen enkele der vrouwelijke leden dorst het voorzitterschap op haar nemen, om wat reden weet ik niet. Het moet u dus niet verwonderen wanneer ik u schrijf dat onzen kring uitsluitend onder den invloed der mannen stond, die ons wel van onzen stoffelijken toestand spraken, maar zelden en slechts oppervlakkig van onzen zedelijken en polietieken toestand gewaagden. Gedurende het vierde jaar van haar bestaan was de Soc. V.V. op het punt gansch uiteen te spatten, het getal leden was van 200 op 60 gedaaldt. Ik zelf had reeds sedert een jaar mijn ontslag gegeven, omdat dien kring aan mijne verwachtingen niet beantwoordde en ik begreep dat er voor den oogenblik niets aan te vangen was, toen over een tiental maanden, eene openbaare vergadering werd belegd met voordracht door den heer Anseele[.] Na de voordracht[,] zoo luidde de agenda[,] zou men overgaan tot het kiezen van een nieuw bestuur, men deed terzelfdertijd een oproep tot al de vrouwen en voornamelijk tot de oud[-]leden die haar ontslag hadden gegeven om den kring erop te richten. Even als eenige anderen beantwoordde ik dien oproep, en werd ik na de vergadering als bestuurslid gekozen. Toen ik op de eerste bestuurszitting verscheen, en ik de vrouwen opmerkzaam maakte dat er voor ons nog ichts anders te doen was dan Socialistische propaganda te maken, dat wij ook rechten te veroveren hadden, dat wij zoowel op stoffelijk als zedelijk en polietiek terrein werden vertrap en verdrukt, en diensvolgens niet alleen te strijden hadden tegen den kapitalist-uitbouter, maar

ook tegen de alleenheerschappij des mans, dan keek men mij net zoo verbaasd aan als of ik op eenmaal eene vreemde taal had gesproken welke niemand verstond. Men schrikte voor dien strijd terug welke men niet begreep. Tot nadere verklaring moet ik u zeggen dat onzen kring uitsluitend uit ongeleerde en dus onwetende vrouwen bestaat, de meer begoede en ontwikkelde vrouwen willen hier totaal van geene vereeniging weten, het is zoo erg dat in onzen kring geene enkele vrouw gevonden wordt die behoorlijk een brief of verslag zou kunnen schrijven, eene bestuurszitting of algemeene vergadering kan geen plaats grijpen wanneer ik er niet bij tegenwoordig ben, onze vrouwen hebben een schrik van dat alles en verbeelden zich dat men een advokaten geleerdheid moet hebben om zulks tot een goed einde te brengen. Hieruit kan u begrijpen, met wat moeilijkheden ik te kampen heb. Ik ben voorzitter, verslag-schrijfster, correspondentente en wat weet ik nog al meer, en moet al de aangelegenheden van den kring zoo huishoudelijke als anderen, regelen en beheeren, tevens moet ik als spreekster optreden om door gansch Vlaamsch België onze belangen te gaan verdedigen. U ziet dus dat ik de handen vol heb en naar geene bezigheid behoef te zoeken. Wanneer ik nu door den kring als voorzitter was benoemd, dacht ik niet beter te kunnen doen dan de brochure te schrijven "Een woord aan de Vrouwen" om haar den toestand klaar te doen begrijpen en de noodzaakelijkheid van den strijd te doen inzien. Het lezen van dit schriftje klaarde de geesten een weinig op, maar toch bleef men noch steeds onder den invloed der mannen en dierf men niets doen zonder daar eerst den raad van den heer Anseele over in te roepen. Reeds de dien tijd was het mijn gedacht, optetreden voor onze politieke rechten, maar ik leerde alras inzien dat dit voor den oogenblik niet mogelijk was, omdat ik in dien strijd gansch alleen zou hebben gestaan, en ik op voorhand wist zoo van wege vrouwen als mannen, op geen hulp of steun te kunnen rekenen. Zoo stonden de zaken, toen omstreeks dien tijd het international Congrès te Brussel plaats greep, en wij in Vooruit lazen dat u eene voordracht gaf voor de aldaar aanwezige vrouwen, ik stelde voor in de bestuurszitting welke dezelfde week plaats had, u, indien u met de congresleden naar Gent kwam om eene voordracht te verzoeken. Ik dacht dan in de verste verte niet, wat gevolgen daar gingen uit voortspruiten, en wat colossale ommekeer uwe voordracht in den geest der vrouwen ging te weeg brengen. Niet alleen uwe voordracht, maar meer nog het debat dat daar op volgde werkte heilzaam, de brutale wijze waarop den heer Anseele u aanviel, opende de vrouwen in eens de oogen, en deed haar inzien wat zij van dien kant te verwachten hadden. De betoovering die haar onder dien invloed hield werd als met een slag verbroken, en hetgeen ik zes maanden lang vruchteloos had getracht te bewerken, werd dan op enkele oogenblikken verwezentlijkt, de vrouwen besloten zich niet langer door de mannen te laten leiden en zelfstandig op te treden. Van die verandering gebruik makende, wierp ik weder de vraag op of wij niet even als de mannen moesten opstaan voor onze politieke rechten. [E]ven als de eerste maal mislukte mijn pogen, toen over een tweetal maanden in ons blad "De Volkswacht" een artikel verscheen getiteld "Algemeen Stemrecht ook voor de Vrouw"[.]

Dit artikel sloot met de volgende woorden "Komaan burgeres Emilie Claeys, gij die in uwe brochure toondet gevoel te bezitten voor de verdrukten uwer klasse, laat van u eene stem uitgaan om de vrouwen tot deelname aan dezen strijd optewekken." Dit artikel deed mij veel genoeg. Ik dacht bij mij zelf : zie zoo : dien schrijver heeft door dit artikel niet alleen mij, maar ook zich zelf zedelijk verplicht, ik ga hem dus eens opzoeken, en wil hij mij in dezen steunen, dan ben ik bereid den strijd aan te gaan. Ik onderzocht de zaak en kwam te weten dat schrijver er van, zekeren heer Van der Veer was. Ik kende dien heer niet bij naam, en had hem slechts een maal gezien, bij gelegenheid eener voordracht welke hij eenige dagen vroeger had gegeven. Twee dagen later had ik het geluk hem te ontmoetten en verzocht hij mij om een onderhoud. Uit dit onderhoud nu bleek, dat onze vereeniging in hem niet alleen een steun maar ook een knappen onderwijzer zou vinden. Op de bestuurszitting gaf ik van dit alles verslag, en voor de derde maal hernieuwde ik mijn voorstel, den strijd voor onze polietieke rechten aan te gaan, ditmaal na eene tamelijke hevige discussie had ik het geluk te slagen, en werd er besloten met dit doel een national Vrouwencongrès bijeen teroepen op 25 December. Wat den heer Van der Veer betreft die hield trouw zijn woord ons uit al zijne krachten te zullen steunen. Van de eerste partijvergadering welke plaats had acht dagen voor den landdag maakte hij gebruik om daarover te interpelleeren, en deed de mannen inzien wat groote fout zij begaan hadden, met niet van bij den aanvang der beweging gelijke polietieke rechten, èn voor mannen èn voor vrouwen te hebben geeischt. Alhoewel[,] sprak hij[,] den strijd reeds ver gevordert is, toch is het niet te laat, om zulks te doen[.] [L]aat ons dus konsekwent wezen, laat ons wel bedenken, dat op het international Congrès te Brussel, de volledige gelijkheid der beide geslachten, in het programma der arbeiderspartij is opgenomen, en wij dus verplicht zijn dit zooveel in onze macht is te verwezentlijken. Diensvolgens verzoek ik daarover een stemming en vraag dat deze zaak op de agenda voor den landdag worde gebracht. Daarover ontstond eene discussie tusschen een viertal personen waarin ook ik mij mengde, natuurlijk om den heer Van der Veer te steunen in zijne eischen. Wat wij nu ook deden, tot een stemming kon het niet komen, dit werd geweigerd onder het voorwendsel dat gansch de vergadering het over dit punt eens was, dat zij dien eisch gewettigd verklaarden, en de sprekers zich verplichten voortaan op alle vergaderingen voor algemeen stemrecht ook het stemrecht voor de vrouwen te verdedigen. Dit alles was heel mooi, maar, (tusschen twee haakjes gezegd, ik betrouw er niet erg op.) Intusschen verkregen wij de toelating op het Congrès te verschijnen om er zelf onze rechten te verdedigen. Hetgeen ik dan ook heb gedaan, [e]n dat nog wel met veel succès. Nu een woordje over het congrès zelve. De naam van congrès verdiende het eigenlijk niet, het mocht eer eene voorbereidende zitting heeten. Den tijd ontbrak om ernstig en grondig de punten van de agenda te onderzoeken en te bespreken. Rekening houdende dat voor dit idée nog in het geheel niet was gepropageerd, mogen wij ons toch om den uitslag verheugen, een vijftiental afgevaardigden vertegenwoordigende verscheidene vrouwenvereenigingen en vakbonden van Vlaamsch België namen er aandeel

aan. De volgende besluiten werden genomen. Ten eerste[:] In elke stad welke vertegenwoordigt is, zal in Januari eene groote openbaare vergadering worden belegd , welke bij middel van plakbrieven en circulairen aan de bevolking zal worden bekend gemaakt. In elke stad waar zulks mogelijk is zullen wijk-meetings worden ingericht. Op de agenda voor die meetings staat : Het Vrouwenstemrecht. Ten tweede : Eene brochure onder dien titel zal binnen de veertiendagen verschijnen, elke vereeniging die vertegenwoordigd is, zal aan deszelfs verspreiding mede werken. Ten derde : gezien den tijd ontbreekt om de besprekingen voort te zetten uit rede dat wij ons naar den landdag moeten begeven, wordt met algemeene stemmen besloten : Een tweede congrès zal plaats grijpen op 15 Augustus 1892. Als zetel voor dit Congrès wordt Antwerpen aangeduid. Intusschen moet ik u zeggen, dat er is voorgesteld u te vragen het woord te komen voeren op die meetings van de maand Januari die te Gent en Antwerpen zullen plaats grijpen. Ik denk dat u dit niet weigeren zal. De meeting zal te Gent waarschijnlijk plaats grijpen den laatsten maandag der maand Januari en de daarop volgende dag te Antwerpen, in elk geval zal ik u voor dien tijd nog eens schrijven. Zoover staan wij nu met onze werkingen gevordert . Ik persoonlijk heb ook besloten, zoo veel mogelijk met onze sprekers mee te reizen naar het platte land, om ook daar voor onze rechten te gaan propageeren, zij hebben wel beloofd het zelf te zullen doen, maar zooals ik u reeds zegde : ik betrouw er niet erg op. Natuurlijk zal ik niet alleen onzen politieken , maar ook onzen zedelijken en économischen toestand bespreken. Wanneer u die in dit alles veel meer ondervinding hebt, en meer tijd en gelegenheid vindt om u te ontwikkelen, mij daarover een goeden raad kunt geven zal zij met vreugde en dankbaar worden aanvaardt. Op den oogenblik ontvang [ik] een briefje van eene hoofdonderwijzeres die mij gelukwenscht met hetgeen zij mijn moedig gedrag op den landdag noemt, ik ben van plan haar om een onderhoud te verzoeken, om eens met haar te bespreken of er geene mogelijkheid ware eene vereeniging te stichten voor de burgervrouwen die hetzij om haare positie of andere reden zouden verhinderd wezen van onze vereeniging deel [uit] te maken. Wat ik u ook melden moet is dat wij eene avondschool voor meisjes hebben gesticht, ik heb mij persoonlijk verbonden drie maal in de week les te geven, in lezen [,] schrijven, rekenen, en fransche taal. Voeg daarbij een cursus welke om de veertien dagen plaats heeft en waar den heer Van der Veer zich mede gelast, en zoo durven wij hopen dat onze leden die nu zoo onwetend zijn binnen eenigen tijd in een kern degelijke ontwikkelde vrouwen zullen veranderen, die allen het hare tot het propageeren van onze ideeën zullen bijbrengen, gij ziet dus dat wij noch moeite, noch tijd sparen, om het zoo ver te brengen. En nu om te sluiten, wensch ik, dat het jaar 92 welke wij ingaan, voor u en voor ons allen, een goed strijdjaar weze, met verdubbelde iever en propagande, opdat het ons met reuzenstappen vooruit brenge naar het doel van ons streven :

De vrijmaking van onzen stand.

Hopende op een spoedig antwoord

EMILIE CLAEYS

P.S. : Den heer Van der Veer laat u groeten.

Résumé

Aux Pays-Bas, Wilhelmina Drucker (1847-1925) est considérée comme une des féministes les plus importantes de son temps. Néanmoins, ses rapports avec le féminisme belge sont largement ignorés et, dans l'historiographie belge, sa vie et son œuvre restent presque inconnus.

En plus d'une esquisse détaillée de la vie de Drucker et de sa pensée féministe-socialiste, cet article présente également une analyse des recherches nouvelles sur les années 1890, l'époque du Congrès de Bruxelles de la Seconde Internationale, tout en soulignant l'importance des rapports entre Drucker et Marie Popelin, Emilie Claeys et Louis Frank. Ainsi l'article montre que, sans doute, Drucker a joué un rôle décisif dans la création des premiers mouvements féministes belges.

En conclusion, l'attention est attirée vers quelques pistes de recherches prometteuses relatives aux rapports néerlandais-belges ainsi qu'aux interdépendances historiques du libéralisme, socialisme et féminisme à la fin du XIX^e siècle.