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FORGING BONDS ACROSS BORDERS

Transatlantic Collaborations for
Women's Rights and Social Justice in
the Long Nineteenth Century

Edited by Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson and Anja Schüler



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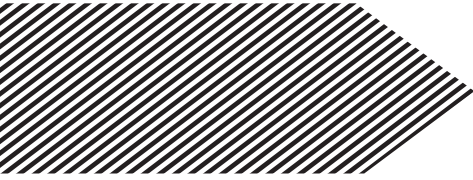
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Cover: Official board of the International Council of Women, 1899-1904; posed behind table at the Beethoven Saal, Berlin, June 8, 1904: Helene Lange, treasurer, Camille Vidart, recording secretary, Teresa Wilson, corresponding secretary, Lady Aberdeen, vice president, May Sewall, president, & Susan B. Anthony. Library of Congress P&P, LC-USZ62-44929. Photo by August Scherl.



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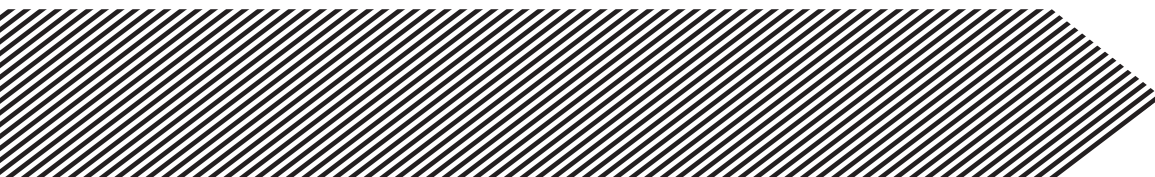
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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson and Anja Schöler

Often I wonder if you have an idea of how much you and Mrs. Stanton have influenced my life. You may know [...] how much you have influenced the women of your own country, but I want that you should know how vividly we Finnish women feel our gratitude to you, how we follow what you speak and write. Is it not wonderful how great ideas unite different peoples?¹

Finnish feminist Aleksandra Gripenberg penned these lines to her American counterpart Susan B. Anthony in 1903, three years before Finland, at the time a Russian Grand Duchy, became the first country in the world to grant women the right to vote, not the least because of Gripenberg's untiring efforts. Her letter provides evidence of the great importance of women's collaboration, the exchange of ideas and knowledge, and their mutual support for emancipation processes on both sides of the Atlantic and beyond throughout the long nineteenth century.²

From the wide international distribution and discussion of British feminist Mary Wollstonecraft's famous text *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* of 1792 to the creation of the International Council of Women in 1888 and the founding of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in 1919, feminists in many parts of the world were engaged in forging personal friendships as well as in creating intellectual and organizational networks within the transatlantic world. Their collaborations and achievements, which created the base for the modern women's rights movement, have remained rather neglected by historians for a long time.³ This volume aims to contribute to closing this scholarly gap. It explores how female activists exchanged ideas and cooperated on issues across national borders and bodies of water, sometimes also across borders of race, class, and gender. The collection of essays by various European and North American scholars shows how, even in the absence of formal political rights, women were able to develop effective strategies and bases of political power, working both within their own countries and through the transnational connections, alliances, and organizations they created.

Initially, women did not focus mainly on gaining rights for their own sex but were concerned about issues such as abolition, temperance,

1 Gripenberg's letter to Anthony, cit. in Margaret H. McFadden, *Golden Cables of Sympathy: The Transatlantic Sources of Nineteenth-Century Feminism* (Lexington, 1999), 171.

2 The long nineteenth century, as defined by the British historian Eric Hobsbawm, was the period between the years 1789 and 1914, i.e., the era between the French Revolution and the First World War.

3 In the introduction to the edited collection of source documents, Susan Bell and Karen Offen, eds., *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents* (Stanford, 1983), here p. 7, the editors state that "the international intellectual ferment surrounding the cause of women has, until recently, been one of Western civilization's best-kept secrets."

4 See Kathryn Kish Sklar, Anja Schüller, and Susan Strasser, eds., *Social Justice Feminists in the United States and Germany: A Dialogue in Documents, 1885-1933* (Ithaca, 1998); Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, eds., *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York, 1993).

5 See, e.g., the works of Jean Baker, Ellen Du Bois, Susan Conrad, Nancy Isenberg, Karen Offen, and Keith Melder for the USA; Ann Taylor Allen, John Fout, Ute Frevert, Ute Gerhard, Gabrielle Hauch, Carola Lipp, Renate Möhmann, and Gudrun Wittig for Germany; Patrick Bidelman, Sara Melzer, Claire Goldberg, and Joan W. Scott for France; as well as Christine Bolt, Barbara Caine, Philippa Levine, Marie M. Roberts, and Diane M. Worzala for Britain.

6 See Christine Bold, *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain* (New York, 1993); Richard Evans, *The Feminists: Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe, America and Australasia, 1840-1920* (London, 1977); Ute Gerhard, *Frauenbewegung und Feminismus: Eine Geschichte seit 1789* (Munich, 2012); Karen Offen, *Globalizing Feminism, 1789-1945* (London, 2010); Sylvia Palatschek and Bianka Pietrow-Ennker, eds., *Women's Emancipation Movements in the Nineteenth Century: A European Perspective* (Stanford, 2004). See also Kathryn Kish Sklar and James Brewer Stewart, eds., *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation* (New Haven, 2007); and Ian Tyrrell, *Reforming the World: The Creation of America's Moral Empire* (Princeton, 2010). For a survey of the theory and practice of international feminisms beyond the transatlantic context with a focus on the twentieth century, see Mrinalini Sinha,

child protection, pacifism, and labor. Yet through participation in these movements, which were often dominated by men, many women eventually became aware that they too were an oppressed group in need of emancipation. Some fought to link suffrage and women's rights to the struggle against the inequities of industrial capitalism in what came to be known as "social justice feminism." Others embraced "maternalist" ideologies that exalted women's status as mothers and, rather than seeking feminist alternatives to that role, sought to apply the values associated with that to society at large.⁴

By now, historians have produced a rather extensive literature on women's movements in single countries,⁵ as well as a number of binational and multinational comparative studies of female mobilization.⁶ There are also some excellent collections of primary sources.⁷ But so far, few scholars have focused on the *transnational*—and especially the *transatlantic*—collaborations of female activists throughout the nineteenth century.⁸ Two volumes deserve special mention in this context, since they were the first monographs to explore transatlantic connections between European and American feminists: Margaret H. McFadden's *Golden Cables of Sympathy: The Transatlantic Sources of Nineteenth-Century Feminism* (1999) and Bonnie S. Anderson's *Joyous Greetings: The First International Women's Movement 1830-1860* (2000). The main focus of McFadden's study is on the individual roles and networking skills of selected feminists whom she refers to as "mothers of the matrix." Anderson's book presents sweeping insights into feminists' activism in Europe and the United States but centers on developments in the United States during the antebellum era; it ends with the outbreak of the American Civil War. The research provided by McFadden and Anderson as well as that of other scholars

Donna J. Guy, and Angela Woollacott, eds., *Feminism and Internationalism* (Oxford, 1999).

7 See the collections already cited in notes 3 and 4 as well as Nancy M. Forestell and Maureen Anne Moynagh, eds., *Documenting First Wave Feminisms* (Toronto, 2012).

8 Recently there have been some new publications on transnational feminist

movements, especially with regard to women's organizing activities in the so-called Third World. However, almost all of these volumes deal with the post-World War II era. One excellent, comprehensive study of this kind is the *Oxford Handbook of Transnational Feminist Movements*, edited by Rawwida Baksh and Wendy Harcourt (New York, 2015). On over 900 pages this volume illuminates a great variety of

topics from body politics, human rights, citizenship, and state building to feminist political ecology, but the focus is on the period since 1990; another one is *Women's Activism and 'Second Wave' Feminism: Transnational Histories*, edited by Barbara Molony and Jennifer Nelson (London, 2017), which situates late-twentieth-century feminism within different global frameworks of women's activism.

has provided a great deal of valuable information for enhancing our understanding of the transnational and transatlantic connections of early feminists. Building on that base, this essay collection seeks to further broaden and deepen the approach by including race and social justice as categories of analysis; by embracing innovative biographical aspects;⁹ and by examining the collaboration of feminists in specific professions (such as medicine or the law), and also within large transnational organizations (such as the World Women's Temperance Union or the International Council of Women) in the transatlantic world from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century.¹⁰

A variety of factors led to the proliferation of social and political movements during this particular period: the emergence of Enlightenment ideals and political liberalism; urbanization; scientific advances, especially in medicine; and technological progress in transportation and communication. For women, especially those of the middle class, unprecedented access to education opened up new intellectual vistas, and then improved household technology freed them from conventional domestic responsibilities and gave them time for activities outside the home. Generally barred from paid employment, women turned in large numbers to missionary and charitable work in addition to social and political reforms as outlets for their newfound energies. Across industrializing countries, highly motivated and determined women's rights and social justice activists as well as maternalist reformers and female missionaries wrote countless letters, traveled widely, sought educational opportunities abroad, and worked for decades to establish personal connections and to collaborate with activists in other countries who shared their views. Their efforts eventually provided the foundations for worldwide organizations dedicated to issues as diverse as women's rights, protective labor legislation, racial equality, and temperance.¹¹

In the spring of 2016, the editors of this volume, together with Sonya Michel of the University of Maryland, organized a conference entitled

9 We are delighted that Bonnie Anderson agreed to contribute some of her newest research to this volume, focusing on one of the great heroines of the nineteenth-century movement for female equality as well as racial and social justice: Ernestine Rose.

Her new biography *The Rabbi's Atheist Daughter: Ernestine Rose, International Feminist Pioneer* was published in early 2017. Another noteworthy example of an exemplary transnational feminist biography is Marita Krauss's *Hope:*

Dr. Hope Bridges Adams Lehmann — Ärztin und Visionärin. Die Biografie (Munich, 2009), which illustrates the accomplishments of a British woman who, in 1880, became the first certified female doctor in Germany.

10 For a very good survey of the transnational mobilization for protective labor legislation, see, e.g., Alice Kessler-Harris, Jane Lewis, and Ulla Wikander, eds., *Protecting Women: Labor Legislation in Europe, the United States, and Australia, 1880-1920* (Urbana, 1995); for a detailed analysis of the challenges and accomplishments of the International Council of Women, see, e.g., Éliane Gubin and Leen Van Molle, eds., *Des Femmes Qui Changent le Monde: Histoire du Conseil International des Femmes, 1888-1988* (Brussels, 2005).

11 Leila Rupp's *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, 1997), traces the successful organization of a more institutionalized international feminist movement, but she focuses on the interwar period, not on the nineteenth century.

Forging Bonds Across Borders: Mobilizing for Women's Rights and Social Justice in the Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic World at the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC. About twenty scholars from both sides of the Atlantic presented their research in the field of nineteenth-century transnational women's rights and social justice activism from new and different perspectives. The discussions at that meeting served as the inspiration for this volume.

Many of this volume's contributions revolve around the concepts of "transnationalism" or "internationalism." While "internationalism" focuses on the practice and promotion of interstate cooperation, "transnationalism" includes the broader field of non-governmental political, social, economic, and cultural activities and exchange. It thus describes the movements of people and tangible items, but also of ideas, knowledge, and institutional know-how across national boundaries. We would also like to point that our use of the terms "feminist" and "feminism" is, of course, anachronistic, since the term, which originated from the French word "feminisme," was coined by the utopian socialist Charles Fourier and was not commonly used until the 1890s. However, in our view the radicalism and broad scope of early women's rights activists legitimizes the use of this term for the entire period examined in this volume. Finally, it should be mentioned that while our focus is on female activists, there were also quite a few male feminists who supported women's rights during the nineteenth century, such as the Marquis de Condorcet, Theodor von Hippel, Henry Maine, John Stuart Mill, and Parker Pillsbury.

The nine essays selected for this volume use the methodologies of cultural biography and *histoire croisée* to examine how early women's networks were established and continued to increase in density and scope despite disagreements and conflicts among activists and some external backlash at different points in time. Among the various topics they address are the role of publications and the flow of ideas and organizational know-how across borders. One of the key questions in this context is to examine how well strategies and rhetoric "traveled" from one national context to another, and what kind of difficulties the activists encountered in the process. Our authors analyze different aspects of struggles for social reform and for the legal, economic, social, and political equality of women and seek to identify instances in which women from one country were able to use policies established elsewhere to leverage changes in their own national systems.

Our collection also pays special attention to the challenges for women of color, many of whom were daughters or granddaughters of former slaves, who organized for purportedly universal feminist causes and participated in networks dominated by white middle-class women. While some essays focus on looking at how revolutions, migration, new venues for publication, and religion shaped individual feminists' lives and women's movements on the whole, others concentrate on the transnational mobilization of various groups, from abolitionists, feminist authors and orators, to suffragists, temperance activists, or promoters of women's health and educational equality.

The different chapters of our book cluster around four topics: new contributions to women's biography, in this case women who lived their lives "across borders"; women's networks formed around the turn of the century, in particular, but not exclusively, in the legal professions; women's global fight against alcoholism and slavery; and, finally, women's exchange of knowledge across the Atlantic.

The volume opens with a section on "new women's biography" focusing on personal connections. Some of these were tight-knit bonds forged in person as feminists criss-crossed the Atlantic over decades; others were rather removed, not based in personal contact but rather engagement with the writings and ideas of other women and social activists. Bonnie Anderson's opening essay looks at the nineteenth-century feminist and freethinker Ernestine Rose. Born in 1810 as a rabbi's daughter in Poland, Rose was one of the few atheists among nineteenth-century American feminists and an early women's rights leader. Anderson gives a glimpse into Rose's transnational life, which led her from her homeland to Berlin, Paris, London, New York, and back to London. Rose's activism on both sides of the Atlantic ranged from advocating for women's property rights and a change in divorce laws to associating herself with freethinkers and pacifists. Considered a superb orator, Rose was an early feminist who linked women's rights to human rights. The second contribution in this biographical section by Carol Strauss Sotiropolous traces the connections between Margaret Fuller, one of the foremost American promoters of German literature, and author Bettina von Brentano-Arnim. Sotiropolous points out that while Fuller introduced her readers to Arnim's literary writings, she remained silent about Arnim's social justice projects; this created the impression that Fuller was not interested in politics. Sotiropolous shows, however, that Fuller was very familiar with the political system and power structures on the other side of the Atlantic

but highly selective in choosing rhetorical strategies for her own purposes. Thus, this essay sheds light on how ideas were borrowed or dismissed.

The second section looks at the emergence of women's international networks in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century, a period many historians consider the heyday of early non-governmental organizations.¹² Part of a growing international civil society, these organizations negotiated cultural differences and gave their members an opportunity to exchange a great deal of information long before the information age. The contributions in this section show, among other things, how ideas traveled and how institutional knowledge and know-how crossed borders. Sara Kimble's paper on the transatlantic networks for legal feminism is a case in point. It documents the transatlantic alliance of legally-oriented feminists in the belle époque that preceded women gaining the right to practice law in France. Networks like the Women's International Bar Association developed along with the International Council of Women (ICW) and nurtured an international feminist lawyers' movement that worked simultaneously at the grass-roots and the elite levels. While suffrage was important for these French feminists, they also led parallel campaigns for the reform of family law and civil codes to achieve equality for wives and mothers within the family. Marion Röwekamp's essay then examines how the ideas and activism of the Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine contributed to the campaign for transnational family law reform within the ICW. She shows that the different ideas about legal reform in the national women's movements sometimes translated into serious problems on the transnational level. At the same time, the legal debates in the ICW reveal the dynamics of transnational legislative work at the turn of the twentieth century. The national and international efforts of these German feminists and their French counterparts put family law on the agenda of international reform. In the final contribution of this section, Noaquia Callahan explores the transnational career of African American feminist Mary Church Terrell. In particular, Callahan revisits the 1904 Berlin Congress of the ICW and sees in it a moment when black and white, American and European feminists came together to exchange ideas about education and professionalization, the franchise, and social issues like the abolition of prostitution and alcohol. Published as part of the widely circulated proceedings of the Berlin congress, Terrell's address on the "Progress of Colored Women" in the United States since the end of the Civil War met with great interest and made

12 See, for example, Madeleine Herren, *Internationale Organisationen seit 1865. Eine Globalgeschichte der internationalen Ordnung* (Darmstadt, 2009), pp. 1-3; Martin H. Geyer and Johannes Paulmann, "Introduction," in *The Mechanics of Internationalism: Culture, Society, and Politics from the 1840s to the First World War*, ed. idem (New York, 2001), pp. 1-25.

her an uncontested representative of American feminism abroad. It also is an early example of the international involvement of African American women activists.

Our third section turns to the global reach of female abolitionist movements that saw their work for social reform as part of the struggle that would ultimately bring about legal and political equality for women. The contributions in this section show that the antislavery movement crossed geographical and gender boundaries from the beginning and that the internationalism of the temperance movement reached far beyond the transatlantic reform community. Stephanie Richmond's essay looks at abolitionists abroad, particularly British and American abolitionist women who traveled to America, England, and France in the 1840s and 1850s to spread their antislavery message and strengthen international relations. Americans like Maria Weston Chapman, Sarah Pugh, and Sarah Parker Remond traveled alone and spoke to "mixed audiences" of men and women, thus challenging the social norms of their respective cultures, opening paths for women political activists, and establishing women as authority figures. British Quaker Anne Knight promoted the cause of antislavery throughout France after male abolitionists refused to take up the opportunity, again challenging the restrictive gender roles of the Atlantic world. The second contribution in this section looks at a different kind of global abolitionism: In the late 1880s, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), at the time the largest women's organization in the United States, branched out internationally, forming the W(orld)WCTU. Lori Osborne's paper contends that the WWCTU's work provided an important bridge between Christian missionaries and the Indian reform world. The international organization sparked the founding of the WCTU of India, a very early if not the earliest women's organization to operate in India. Temperance work on the subcontinent involved both indigenous men and women and maintained its own organizational culture but also brought American views, values, and organizational procedures to India. Osborne looks at the different paths to reform taken by the WCTU's "round-the-world" missionaries and other American missionaries.

The final section presents some examples of the ways women exchanged knowledge across the Atlantic and shows how this exchange contributed to their professional development. Like the first section of this volume, it gives us an idea of how ideas traveled in the nineteenth

century. Ann Taylor Allen analyzes the global impact of German education pioneer Friedrich Froebel. Women reformers around the world not only drew on his ideas for the sake of children's education but also promoted the establishment of kindergartens as a way of advancing themselves professionally. The kindergarten movement became part of the larger trend of international organizing, forming the International Kindergarten Union, which, in turn, was affiliated with the International Council of Women. As kindergartens became part of national education systems, however, international solidarity among their proponents waned. In the final essay, Mineke Bosch traces the international transfer of birth control knowledge by looking at how the "Dutch cap," an early contraceptive device, got its name. One of its chief advocates was the Dutch feminist Aletta Jacobs, the first female physician of the Netherlands, whose efforts were vital to the growing birth control movement, but who also encountered opposition from other feminists who feared that this kind of advocacy would taint the suffrage movement. Jacobs was undoubtedly well connected internationally, but Bosch also argues that the work of many prominent activists and less prominent contemporaries had quite an international scope.

Together the sections of this volume show how women's strategies for social change and for their own emancipation changed over the course of the long nineteenth century, particularly as permanent organizations were formed. At the same time, they also indicate that national, political and legal contexts, and diverging cultures did sometimes constrain reform efforts. The collection thus emphasizes the importance of considering philanthropy as well as government policies, compares individual and organizational techniques, and notes the irony in the historiography arising from the fact that international figures often drop out of national narratives. It demonstrates that women formed bonds across borders in different ways, as individuals, through organizations, and with the help of publications. In addition, the contributions identify themes like women's aspiration to create a "universal sisterhood" that would be able to culminate in social movements and the transfer of knowledge. Finally, all the essays contribute to the historiographic trend of "new biography," which is greatly enriched by transnational perspectives.

We would like to thank the German Historical Institute Washington, DC (GHI), the Heidelberg Center for American Studies (HCA), and the University of Maryland (UMD) for their generous financial support

of our collaborative effort. We are deeply grateful to our friend and colleague Sonya Michel, who, for personal reasons, could not serve as co-editor of this volume, but whose expert advice and organizational skills were of great importance to the success of this project. Moreover, we are very much obliged to the GHI and its director, Simone Lässig, for the opportunity to publish this work as a supplement to the *Bulletin of the GHI*. Another sincere “Thank you!” goes to Bryan Hart, who produced the cover for this volume. We are also especially thankful to Patricia Casey Sutcliffe for her thoughtful and meticulous copyediting and for her wonderful overall support throughout the final production phase of this work, as well as to GHI intern Sarah Beimel for helping us locate some of the photographs for this volume. Finally, we are, of course, indebted to all of our contributors for their willingness to share the fruits of their research with us and for the excellent collaboration throughout the revision process.

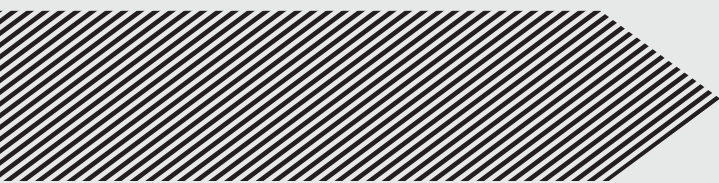
It is our hope that they and other scholars will continue to study the many areas of transnational women’s rights and social justice activism of the nineteenth century, large parts of which are still unexplored. Among these are, for example, diverse efforts to establish a transnational women’s peace movement, transatlantic collaborations of female socialist activists, as well as contemporary collective feminist publication projects. If this volume can help to inspire additional interest in this field of research, it will have fulfilled its purpose.

While we have seen incredible progress in the last century, the struggle against discrimination of women and minority groups continues on many levels. Therefore, we would like to dedicate this book to the individuals who devoted their lives to fighting for human rights, equality, and social justice in the past — and to those who are doing so today.

About the Editors

Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson has been a professor of Transatlantic History and Culture at the History Department of the University of Augsburg since 2016. She served as Deputy Director of the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC, from 2011 to 2016. Her major research interests are transatlantic relations, African American studies, as well as gender and religious history. Among her recent publications are *Dreams and Nightmares: Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X and the Struggle for Black Equality in America* (2012), *The Transatlantic Sixties: Europe and the United States in the Counterculture Decade* (2013), *Malcolm X: Eine Biographie* (2015), and *Inventing the Silent Majority: Conservative Mobilization in Western Europe and the United States in the 1960s and 1970s* (2017).

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New Women's Biography

TRANSATLANTIC FREETHINKER, FEMINIST, AND PACIFIST: ERNESTINE ROSE IN THE 1870s

Bonnie S. Anderson

Ernestine (Potowska) Rose's life developed transnationally.¹ Born the only child of a Polish rabbi in 1810, she defied her father's choice of a fiancé for her and left her homeland, religion, and family in 1827. Never returning, she lived in Berlin and Paris before settling in London in 1831. There she joined the Owenite socialist movement, where she met her future husband, English silversmith William Rose. The couple emigrated to New York City in 1836 and lived there until 1869, visiting Europe in 1856. In the United States, Rose became a well-known female orator, more famous in the 1850s than either Elizabeth Cady Stanton or Susan B. Anthony. She lectured and campaigned for freethought, feminism, antislavery, and pacifism. Even before she returned to England in 1869, she made "bonds across borders," always stressing the international aspects of her work. "We are not contending here for the rights of the women of New England, or of old England, but of the world," she declared at the first National Woman's Rights Convention in Worcester, 1850.² Ten years later, at the 1860 National Convention, she repeated this assertion:



Ernestine Rose. Available at https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c3/Ernestine_Rose_7.jpg. Published by S. B. Anthony, Rochester, NY — <http://archive.org/details/historyofwomansu01s-tanuoft>, created 31 December 1886.

Our movement is cosmopolitan. It claims the rights of woman wherever woman exists, and this claim makes itself felt wherever woman is wronged. In England, great efforts have been made of late years, and great accessions have been made to the rights and liberties of women. The same thing is taking place in France and Germany, and, in fact, everywhere.³

1 This paper is adapted from my book, *The Rabbi's Atheist Daughter: Ernestine Rose, International Feminist Pioneer* (New York: Oxford

University Press, 2017).

2 From the *New York Herald*, October 25, 1850, cited in John F. McClymer,

This High and Holy Moment: The First National Woman's Rights Convention, Worcester, 1850 (New York, 1999), 115-16.

3 Ernestine Rose, "Speech at the Tenth National Woman's Rights Convention, May 10, 1860"; cited in Paula Doress-Worters, ed., *Mistress of Herself: Speeches and Letters of Ernestine L. Rose, Early Women's Rights Leader* (New York, 2008), 262.

Inevitably, however, national contexts necessitated that different tactics and approaches prevailed. In the United States, Rose worked hard for married women's property rights, beginning by carrying a petition around lower Manhattan in 1836. She deferred discussion of divorce until Stanton raised the topic in 1860, believing correctly that any mention of the topic would tar her and the women's movement with the charge of "free love." In Great Britain, however, the two issues became intertwined. When Parliament received petitions for property rights amassed by the feminists Rose had met in London, its members refused to act on them. Instead they amended Britain's stringent divorce law in 1857, changing each divorce from requiring a separate Act of Parliament to allowing divorce for men if their wives committed adultery while women had to prove adultery plus another crime. The all-male legislature reasoned that since wives could now extricate themselves from the worst situations, they no longer needed property rights within marriage. Rose responded furiously to this maneuver. "The vitiated taste, the unblushing shamelessness exhibited by these civil and ecclesiastical law-givers in thus shielding and fencing around the depravity and corruption of their own sex, to the detriment of ours," she wrote, "far outdoes in impudence the Mormons themselves, and is a disgrace alike to the age, the country, and the sex."⁴ While New Yorkers achieved married women's property rights in 1860, Englishwomen did not obtain them until 1882.⁵

When the Roses returned to England to live in 1869, such national and cultural differences ensured that her actions had different impact and influence in their new home than in the United States. Initially settling in Bath, which they despised because it had "not one free-thinker,"⁶ Ernestine Rose soon became involved in local political life. Parliament had recently passed a law allowing women who owned or rented property and had paid taxes for a year to vote and stand for office in many local elections. While the United States then restricted the suffrage by gender and age, Great Britain added home ownership or rental and tax payments to those requirements. Under them only about one-third of adult men qualified to vote in national elections. The Roses went to the first meeting in Bath to nominate female candidates for the School Board. Although many women attended, none spoke to the audience. "A lady" asked the chairman to read a widely publicized letter by Angela Burdett-Coutts, the wealthiest woman in England and a major philanthropist. Burdett-Coutts argued forcefully that although women could serve on sub-committees, they should neither hold public office nor participate in politics. This roused Ernestine Rose to address the gathering.⁷

4 The "ecclesiastical" lawgivers refers to the fact that high officials of the Church of England automatically had seats in the House of Lords. Ernestine Rose, "Letter to the Editor [of the *Boston Investigator*], October 3, 1857," in Doress-Worters, ed., *Mistress of Herself*, 239.

5 On this subject, see Lee Holcombe, *Wives and Property: Reform of the Married Women's Property Law in Nineteenth-Century England* (Toronto, 1983).

6 Ernestine L. Rose, Letter, *Boston Investigator*, February 8, 1871, 2.

7 Ibid.

In 1870, women spoke publicly far less often in Great Britain than the United States. “It required considerable courage then for a woman to sit on a public platform and actually to speak from one was considered almost indecent,” writes an English historian.⁸ Rose began by explaining that “I have for all my life-time been interested in the education of all parties, particularly in the education of my own sex.” She then asserted: “Yes, the world moves. Woman is actually beginning to be considered as a human being...who has influences beyond the boudoir, the ball-room, and the theatre, for those, until very recently, have been the only places assigned to her except the kitchen and the cradle.” Supported by cheers, applause and approving laughter from the audience, Rose argued that the United States could educate Britain on this subject:

There it is almost a settled fact that woman is a human being; that she has a mind, and that that mind requires cultivation; that she has wants and needs, which wants and needs require assistance. Hence, we are over there — don't be frightened at the name — a “woman's rights” people...and remember that “woman's rights” simply means “human rights”....⁹

Rose swayed the meeting, which then nominated two women to run for positions on the board. Finding them “quite unprepared with any plan for future action,” Rose encouraged these candidates to hold another meeting where they would state their views. Overcoming their dislike of “the publicity of such a course,” Rose gave another “one of her stirring and eloquent addresses, which roused the meeting to a pitch of enthusiasm quite unusual for a decorous English audience.” The two women were then elected.¹⁰ A few weeks later, Rose spoke again at a Conference of the Women's Suffrage Movement in London, receiving praise from the English atheist newspaper, the *National Reformer*:

The speech of the meeting was made by...Mrs. Ernestine L. Rose of New York. The good old lady, with her white curls, her erect, healthy looking body, her clear, distinct voice, her occasional quaint phrases, her stern determination, and her real genius as a speaker, won from those present a far more hearty and lengthy tribute of applause than was accorded to any one else.¹¹

These speeches launched Ernestine Rose as a lecturer in Great Britain, as well as introducing her to numerous new reformist friends. One of the female nominees in Bath was Ann Ashworth, a member of a large radical family. Her uncle, the Liberal M.P. Jacob Bright, succeeded

8 Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide 1866-1928* [Great Britain] (London, 1999), 213, 260.

9 Emily Faithfull, “Letter from England,” *The Revolution*, March 9, 1871.

10 Ibid.

11 *National Reformer*, May 7, 1871, reprinted in the *Boston Investigator*, May 24, 1871.

in getting the bill for women's local suffrage passed, in addition to supporting married women's property rights and women's national suffrage. Her aunt was Priscilla Bright McLaren, head of the Edinburgh Women's Suffrage Society.¹² In the spring of 1871, Rose spoke in Bristol as well as again in Bath before she and William moved to London in April.

In London, the Roses were befriended by a number of members of the radical, feminist, and freethought communities. Among them were the Owenite editor, George Jacob Holyoake, whom they had met in 1856, his brother Austin, a printer and author, and Moncure D. Conway and his wife, Ellen. Conway was a reformist minister who invited Ernestine Rose to speak a number of times at his extremely liberal South Place Chapel. Raised in a slave-holding Virginia family, he rejected his heritage early on, converting to both antislavery and Unitarianism in his twenties. In 1864 he and his wife, who shared his views, moved to London, and in 1868 he was one of four speakers at the first British public meeting for female suffrage. In addition to women's rights, Conway shared Rose's devotion to Robert Owen and the freethinker, Thomas Paine, author of *The Age of Reason*.¹³ He moved his chapel away from Unitarianism to "the uttermost ends of Agnosticism," dropping formal prayer and reading from a variety of works, including Hindu scriptures and the poems of William Blake.¹⁴ Conway invited Rose to speak to his congregation about Robert Owen on Sunday, May 14, 1871 and wrote the *Investigator* that she was "something of a lioness in London." For her talk, the chapel "was crowded with a thousand people...and so completely did she charm the audience that three times applause began, and had to be checked."¹⁵

Rose's lecture took place on the actual centenary of Owen's birth; two days later a large "Festival" assembled to celebrate his life. Although many women attended, sang, and read poetry there, Ernestine Rose was the only female speaker. Owen was a "man of one idea, and that idea the happiness of the human race," she declared. "The time will come when that one idea will be understood," she continued, adding that "I have no doubt that he would have advocated the Woman's Rights Bill had he lived." After reminiscing about her years with Owen and praising his character and beliefs, she concluded by asserting that when the world followed Owen's principles, "we shall have a race of really superior, rational, healthy, and happy human beings." London liberal newspapers reported that "Mrs. Rose made the speech of the

12 For a chart of this and other radical families, see Crawford, *Women's Suffrage Movement*, 768; for Ashworth, 20-21.

13 Mary Elizabeth Burtis, *Moncure Conway 1831-1907* (New Brunswick, 1952), 132, and Warren Sylvester Smith, *The London Heretics 1870-1914* (New York, 1968), 105, 113.

14 Burtis, *Moncure Conway*, 178. For Conway's openness to freethought, see Burtis, 132.

15 Moncure Conway, *Boston Investigator*, July 5, 1871, 6.

evening — the most appropriate one and the best delivered,” while Moncure Conway wrote that “the enthusiasm at her burning words, her fine sarcasm, her clear statement was so great that the people pressed nearer and nearer, and fairly stood up....In voice and manner she is one of the very few real orators I have ever heard.”¹⁶

In addition to the Conways and the Holyoake brothers, Rose developed a close friendship with the atheist Charles Bradlaugh, editor of the *National Reformer*, and his two daughters, Alice and Hypatia, named for a female Greek philosopher stoned to death by Christians. Bradlaugh and Rose knew about each other before they met through the pages of the U.S. atheist newspaper, the *Boston Investigator*, which covered both their careers in detail. A generation younger than Rose, Bradlaugh became an atheist as a teenager and by the mid-1850s had achieved prominence among English radicals. He spoke and wrote widely, often under the pseudonym “Iconoclast.” Like Rose, Bradlaugh was a superb public speaker. “He was the most magnetic person I have ever known, and the greatest orator,” playwright George Bernard Shaw later wrote, “Bradlaugh was the heavy-weight champion of the platform.”¹⁷ He became editor of the weekly *National Reformer* in 1860 and helped found Britain’s National Secular Society in 1866. The government prosecuted him for blasphemy and seditious in 1868. Although he was acquitted, his reputation as an atheist, a republican, and an agitator placed him outside traditional Victorian values. “As a mere speculative freethinker, Mr. Bradlaugh might possibly have passed muster,” *The Times* of London wrote when he had been elected to the House of Commons in 1880, “but as a social reformer, with republican opinions and a very aggressive mode of displaying them he is thought to be deserving of Parliamentary ostracism.” These beliefs, which made him unacceptable to *The Times*, endeared him to Ernestine Rose. “She was greatly attached to Mr. Bradlaugh, who in turn felt a thorough admiration and reverence for her,” his daughter wrote.¹⁸

Charles Bradlaugh introduced Ernestine Rose to the British freethought community, which grew dramatically under his leadership in the 1860s and 1870s. His National Secular Society came to have thousands of members meeting weekly in numerous Halls of Science. In 1872, the American reformer Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a friend of Ernestine Rose, attended a London meeting of the Society where Bradlaugh spoke, followed briefly by Rose. He described a group of about fifteen hundred people “in the grasp of a born orator.... Nine-tenths were men; almost all were well-dressed.

16 *Report of the Proceedings of the Festival in Commemoration of the Centenary Birthday of ROBERT OWEN, the Philanthropist, held at Freemasons Hall, London, May 16, 1871* (London, 1871), 20-21; *Boston Investigator*, July 5, 1871, 6; September 6, 1871, 6.

17 For one early piece championing Bradlaugh, see the *Boston Investigator*, December 7, 1864, 2; Smith, *London Heretics*, 38ff.; Shaw cited in Susan Budd, *Varieties of Unbelief: Atheists and Agnostics in English Society 1850-1960* (London, 1977), 43.

18 *The Times* [London], June 25, 1880, cited in Anne Taylor, *Annie Besant: A Biography* (New York, 1992), 150; Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner, “Ernestine L. Rose,” *National Reformer*, August 14, 1892.

They looked as if all classes might be represented there, and while the majority were plainly artisans, I was afterward told that a peer of the realm stood just behind me.” In addition, Bradlaugh’s *National Reformer* became Britain’s premier and longest-running freethought journal, achieving a position similar to that of the *Boston Investigator* in the United States. By the time Rose joined the British freethought movement, Biblical criticism and debates about Darwinism, churchly intransigence, and the growth of skepticism had created a congenial community of non-believers in England.¹⁹

In addition to championing freethought, Rose supported the related cause of opening secular institutions on Sundays. Early nineteenth-century British sabbath societies had succeeded in forcing museums, galleries, and post offices to close on that day, as well as banning public music, dancing, theater, horse-racing, sailing, and rowing. This produced the notoriously tedious English Sunday — “this lugubrious holiday,” as the *Boston Investigator* termed it.²⁰ In 1873, both Ernestine Rose and Moncure Conway contributed “some able words toward the laudable object of opening a large Museum on Sundays”: the Bethnal Green Museum, located in a working-class area of London. The next year, Rose sent the *Investigator* remarks P.[eter] A.[lfred] Taylor made on this subject to the House of Commons. “It is an excellent and unanswerable speech, which was listened to with great attention and warmly applauded, and yet lost by a great majority” she wrote, because “the power of the Church is very great here, and the members have not the moral courage to go against the theological Mr. Grundies.” Rose went on to praise Taylor as “an independent member of the most radical type,” and both he and his wife, the feminist Mentia Taylor, became her friends.²¹

The Taylors had long been active in the same radical causes as the Roses. In his parliamentary campaign, P. A. Taylor advocated the separation of church and state and the abolition of mandatory taxes to support the Church of England. Both the Taylors actively opposed U.S. slavery. Wealthy and childless, the couple ran a school for working-class adults on the grounds of their home, Aubrey House, where they also hosted salons “open to all, friend and stranger, black and white, rich and poor,” as Louisa May Alcott wrote after she visited in 1873.²² George Jacob Holyoake attended their “open evenings” from 1861 on.²³ Ernestine Rose met Mentia Taylor either through one of these mutual friends or in the English women’s suffrage movement, which Taylor had helped to found. Mentia Taylor organized the petition for the women’s vote, which John Stuart Mill, the writer

19 *Report of a General Conference of Liberal Thinkers, for the “Discussion of Matters Pertaining to the Religious Needs of Our Time, and the Methods of Meeting Them” Held June 13th & 14th at South Place Chapel, Finsbury, London* (London, 1878), 28 (hereafter *Liberal Thinkers*); available online at books.google.com by searching for the book title. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, “An English Heretic: Charles Bradlaugh,” *Boston Investigator*, August 21, 1872, 3; Smith, *London Heretics*, 38.

20 Maurice J. Quinlan, *Victorian Prelude: A History of English Manners 1700-1830* (New York, 1941), 46, 54, 165, 208, 213; *Boston Investigator*, April 20, 1870, 5.

21 “Our London Letter,” *Boston Investigator*, written February 15, 1873, published April 2, 1873, 2; Ernestine L. Rose, Letter, *Boston Investigator*, October 21, 1874, 1. Taylor was always called “P. A.” His wife’s full first name was Clementia, but she only used “Mentia.” She attended Rose’s funeral; P. A. Taylor died in 1891, the year before Rose.

22 Elizabeth Crawford, “Taylor [née Doughty], Clementia,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online (oxforddnb.com).

23 Crawford, *Women’s Suffrage Movement*, 673-77, and “Peter Alfred Taylor,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Alfred_Taylor (accessed June 20, 2017); “Open Evenings,” *The Revolution*, January 19, 1871.

and philosopher, presented repeatedly and unsuccessfully to Parliament during his 1866-68 term as a member. Mill's feminist prestige increased with the publication of his *Subjection of Women* in 1869; Ernestine Rose referred positively to him and P. A. Taylor in her 1871 Owen centenary speech. But Mill also caused problems within early feminism by insisting that the women's rights movement proceed slowly and focus only on the single issue of suffrage.²⁴

This stricture arose because of a British feminist campaign, which had no American equivalent. In the 1860s, Parliament passed the Contagious Diseases Acts to protect the military from venereal disease. These acts gave police the power to subject any woman in towns near military bases whom they suspected of being a prostitute to a pelvic exam in the back of the station. If they found evidence of disease, the woman could be sent to a locked hospital; men were never inspected. Numerous English feminists, including Mentia Taylor, joined the Ladies' National Campaign for the repeal of these acts, which did not happen until 1886. Even though Mill himself testified against these acts in Parliament, he and others insisted that this campaign, which necessarily raised sexual issues, would contaminate women's bid for the vote. They succeeded in having Contagious Diseases activists removed as officers of the suffrage movement.²⁵

Ernestine Rose never became involved in the Contagious Diseases campaign, in part because it invoked Christian beliefs and prayer even more than the U.S. antislavery movement had done. Nor did she participate in the simultaneous push for married women's property rights in Britain. Instead, Rose focused on the ballot, as she had during her last years in the United States. American opposition to the woman's vote came naturally from conservative opponents, but also from feminists' allies — those abolitionists who prioritized “the black man's vote” over female suffrage. A similar situation prevailed in Britain, where many liberals working to extend the franchise to male citizens refused to include women. William Gladstone, the long-time Liberal Party Prime Minister, consistently opposed woman's suffrage on the grounds that it would “trespass upon the delicacy, the purity, the refinement, the elevation of her own nature, which are the present sources of its power.” U.S. feminists sometimes assumed that as a powerful female monarch, Queen Victoria would support their cause. The experience of Kate, Lady Amberley, among many others, proved this false. Amberley, who had visited the United States and remained in contact with women's rights leaders there, argued for the

24 *Commemoration of the Centenary Birthday of ROBERT OWEN*, 21. Rose also praised Thomas Henry Huxley, the freethinking biologist known as “Darwin's bulldog.” Crawford, *Women's Suffrage Movement*, 351. Thanks to Susan Pedersen for help with John Stuart Mill and the Contagious Diseases Acts.

25 On the Contagious Diseases Acts and the campaign to repeal them, Christine Bolt, *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s* (Amherst, 1993), 127-32.

vote on the same grounds as Ernestine Rose, asserting that the ballot would “make the life of a woman of the higher and lower classes more complete, less dependent...and give her the chance of leading an honest and happy life.” In a furious response, Victoria wrote that “The Queen is most anxious to enlist everyone who can speak or write or join in checking this mad, wicked folly of ‘Women’s Rights’ with all its attendant horrors, on which her poor feeble sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety. Lady Amberley ought to get a good whipping.” Many Britons shared these feelings, especially members of Parliament. In 1871, the M.P. Alexander Beresford Hope argued at length against enfranchising women, concluding that if it were done, “Our legislation would develop hysterical and spasmodic features, partaking more of the French and American system than reproducing the tradition of the English Parliament.”²⁶

Ernestine Rose repeatedly challenged Beresford Hope, first at a large London women’s suffrage meeting in May, 1872 where she pursued “the subject in a vein of pleasant irony which would not have caused that Hon. Gentleman quite so much amusement as it did the audience,” the London *Telegraph* reported.²⁷ She continued her attack during her time lecturing in Edinburgh in January of 1873 where she had been invited by Priscilla Bright McLaren, aunt of the candidate Rose had aided in Bath.²⁸ Rose mentioned that Beresford Hope opposed women’s suffrage in part because it would “bring sympathy and consolation into parliament.” “Mr. Beresford Hope; alas! What was in a name! he was exceedingly hopeless,” Rose joked, before asserting that fearing sympathy in Parliament was “exceedingly illogical.” This comment was a reference to parliamentary arguments that women should not be allowed to vote because they were “not logical.” “I am not going to stand here and prove that I am logical,” Rose declared, “The franchise was never given for logic. Had it been based upon logic, I doubt whether that member of Parliament would ever have been in his place.” Her remarks occasioned “great laughter and applause.” Rose went on to make points she had frequently used in her American speeches, maintaining that men and women should have equal human rights. She concluded by tackling the widely accepted view that “woman, if she got the franchise, would cease to be womanly”:

She might become stronger in mind, more faithful in convictions; she might become more intellectual; she might take a greater and wider view of the duties and responsibilities

26 Gladstone cited in Patricia Hollis, *Women in Public 1850-1900: Documents of the Victorian Women's Movement* (London, 1979), 320; Lady Amberley cited in Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism 1850-1900* (Tallahassee, 1987), 76; Queen Victoria cited in Crawford, *Women's Suffrage Movement*, 10; Beresford Hope cited in Hollis, *Women in Public*, 306.

27 Cited in the *Boston Investigator*, June 5, 1872, 6.

28 Crawford, *Women's Suffrage Movement*, 400-404.

of life; but would that unsex her? Would that change her nature? Would she be less a mother, less a sister, less a woman? No! Believe, trust in the right, do rightly, do justly, and leave all the consequences to themselves. (Loud applause.)

Rose repeated these points more briefly in speeches made over the next two days, asserting that she demanded justice for women “simply because she asked for it for men” and urging “those present to do all they could to elevate not women merely, but humanity at large.”²⁹

Ernestine Rose occasionally commented on the differences between the two nations she lived in, although she consistently maintained that “neither in America nor England are the obstacles to free thought and free speech removed, and Liberalism triumphant.”³⁰ But in terms of government, Great Britain could not match the United States. Although royal power had diminished, a conservative monarch still reigned. The House of Lords held equal power with the House of Commons, and British class divisions carried far more weight than those in the United States. Rose consistently championed American democracy, writing on the centennial of the U.S. Declaration of Independence in 1876 that “The glorious day upon which human equality was first proclaimed ought to be commemorated...until its grand principles are carried into practice.”³¹ Compared to the promise of the United States, Britain remained retrograde. “I see not much to admire in the English Government, though there are some very good people here,” she wrote later, “But, you know, I am a republican or a democrat all through, and so as I ‘put no faith in princes’ nor priests either, I am deeply interested in all the affairs of America.... may kings and tyrants soon learn from its grand example that the only true or legitimate power to rule is in the PEOPLE and not in any pretended ‘right Divine.’”³² Both nations continued to be extremely religious, but only Great Britain maintained a state church. “The Church of England would, if she could, stamp out every vestige of Free Thought rather than give up her strong hold on the State,” Rose wrote in 1877.³³ The British government prosecuted both Holyoake and Bradlaugh for blasphemy and convicted G. W. Foote, the editor of the secular newspaper *The Freethinker*, for that crime in 1883. He served a year in prison.³⁴

From the mid-1870s, Ernestine Rose alternated complaints about her health with accounts of speeches she made, which implies that she periodically recovered. The couple spent the winter of 1874-75 in

²⁹ Rose gave three speeches in Edinburgh, the long one I have quoted from on January 27, published in *The Daily Review* (Edinburgh), January 28, 1873. The *Review* printed her remarks in the third person, but I have changed them back to the first person she would have used. Her second Edinburgh speech was made on January 29, the third on January 30. Both appeared in *The Daily Review*, January 31, 1873. Her first Edinburgh speech was reprinted in the *Boston Investigator*, February 26, 1873, 3.

³⁰ Ernestine L. Rose, Letter, *Boston Investigator*, October 21, 1874, 4.

³¹ Ernestine L. Rose, Letter to Susan B. Anthony, July 4, 1876, in Doress-Worters, ed., *Mistress of Herself*, 346.

³² “Mrs. Ernestine L. Rose,” *Boston Investigator*, June 30, 1886, 4.

³³ Ernestine L. Rose, Letter, *Boston Investigator*, August 8, 1877.

³⁴ The *Freethinker's* editor was G. W. Foote. Smith, *London Heretics*, 62-66.

Brighton, “a very healthy place,” but one they found “very dull, very religious, and very anti-progressive.” In November, they attended an “anti-Woman’s Rights lecture,” given by a minister. “The whole thing was made up of Biblical quotations, misrepresentations, downright falsehoods, insults, and flattery,” Rose wrote the *Investigator*. After the minister cited John Ruskin’s pronouncement that “woman is Queen in her husband’s house — Queen over the crockery, jewelry, china, etc.,” Rose added, she “spoke about fifteen minutes, and told him he made a mistake to think that not a Women’s Rights woman was present.”³⁵ Two months later, in January 1875, she wrote that she was “too ill to...even” write a speech.³⁶ She was still sick at the end of March 1875, describing herself as “a prisoner” of the London weather, “not yet well enough to go out in this wretched north east wind which has now lasted over six weeks, with hardly a gleam of sunshine, and the Lord only knows (if he knows anything) how much longer it will last — What an awful climate!”³⁷ In October, her ill health was confirmed by Annie Besant in the London *National Reformer*: “Unfortunately, the party lost the services of one of its bravest and most eloquent platform advocates, the Mrs. Ernestine L. Rose, who worked with so much intrepidity and power. Now and then we notice an article from her pen in the *Investigator*, but ill health prevents her from using her tongue in the cause.”³⁸

But Rose continued to rebound. She wrote that 1876 was “a very sick year throughout,” but also mentioned that she had given two speeches in Yorkshire, “notwithstanding all the scolding about my heresies, for the people there are very religious.” The Roses had gone north to recover in Ilkley and Harrogate, where William “was taken very sick from drinking a little of what was called sulphur water, but which was more like poison, for it nearly killed him.... The anxiety and exertion of taking care of him pulled me very much down again.” Rose added that when they returned to Brighton that fall, they both felt better.³⁹ George Jacob Holyoake wrote about the same period that “Mention is made of her delicate health, which ‘prevented her from speaking with her wonted effect.’ It is pleasant to report that ... she is still a speaker of remarkable power.”⁴⁰

Ernestine Rose’s last major recovery came in 1878, when she spoke at length in favor of atheism at the London Conference of Liberal Thinkers in June. Moncure Conway had organized this meeting “for the discussion of matters pertaining to the religious needs of our time, and the method of meeting them.”⁴¹ He cast his net widely,

35 *Boston Investigator*, December 23, 1874, 2.

36 *Boston Investigator*, February 10, 1875, 3.

37 *Boston Investigator*, April 14, 1875, 2.

38 *National Reformer*, October 10, 1875, reprinted in the *Boston Investigator*, November 3, 1875, 5.

39 *Boston Investigator*, February 21, 1877, 2.

40 Holyoake was referring back to 1845 and wrote that his observation was made “more than thirty years later.” George Jacob Holyoake, *The History of Co-operation*, revised and completed, 2 vols. (New York, 1906), 2:463.

41 *Liberal Thinkers*, 3.

inviting liberal clergymen and rabbis, Britons and foreigners, as well as freethinkers like Holyoake and Rose, resulting in “the most inclusive group of its kind ever assembled.”⁴² Speaking forcefully on the afternoon of the first day, Ernestine Rose began by declaring her militant disbelief: “I belong to no religious sect; I profess no religion; and I have long ago discarded even the name. It is too indefinite and misleading, and is only calculated to divide the human family instead of uniting it. Well may we exclaim, ‘Oh! religion what crimes have been perpetrated in thy name.’”⁴³ Rose then criticized the U.S. Free Religious Association, touted by the previous speaker. Founded by liberal Unitarians, the FRA included Lucretia Mott, Rabbi Isaac Meyer Wise, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, among others. “Free is all right. But what is Religion?” Rose asked rhetorically, before proposing a name for the group, a gambit she had used many times before. Suggesting that this group “unite in a Society of Friends of Progress,” she maintained that then “the Christian, the Mahometan, the Jew, the Deist, and the Atheist” could “reform the laws so as to have perfect freedom of conscience, the right to think and to express our thoughts on all subjects. Progress opens as wide a field as the human race — it endeavors to remove the obstacles that prevent our growth.”⁴⁴ Rose, however, had trouble being open-minded about clergymen, and she then turned on two ministers who had spoken before her, saying that if they were “not too fixed in their bigotry” they could “all unite with us to form a union which should give us strength, strength not to injure anyone, not even to prevent the irrational views that some of the religionists have of their god, but a strength to take care that as long as they have them they should have a perfect right to express them....” One of the clergy she mentioned was the Rev. Charles Voysey, who had been expelled from the Church of England for his radical views. He did not return on the Conference’s second day.⁴⁵

Rose steamed on, declaring that the strength provided by such a union

shall enable us to assist each other to improve the world, to obtain rational and consistent laws, laws that will not deprive a mother of her child — (loud and continued applause) as has been done to Mrs. Besant, simply because she thinks differently from the judge; laws that will not incarcerate an innocent, respectable man, simply because he sold something he conscientiously thought would benefit society.⁴⁶

42 Smith, *London Heretics*, 115.

43 *Liberal Thinkers*, 26. Rose was echoing the French revolutionary Manon Roland’s comment just before she was guillotined: “O Liberty! What crimes are committed in thy name.”

44 Ernestine Rose, *Liberal Thinkers*, 27.

45 For Voysey, who then opened a “theistic church” in London and became a hero to both Conway and many liberal Anglicans, see Smith, *London Heretics*, 127-29; for his decision not to return the second day because of Rose’s remarks, Burtis, *Moncure Conway*, 171.

46 Ernestine Rose, *Liberal Thinkers*, 27.

Here, Ernestine Rose alluded to a cause célèbre of the previous year: the trial and conviction of Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh for publishing on birth control. Annie Besant had become a prominent lecturer and journalist in British freethought — she had written the 1875 *National Reformer* article saying that Rose was now too ill to continue speaking in public.⁴⁷ Almost forty years younger than Rose, she was married at twenty to an Anglican clergyman. Besant (who always used her married name) left her husband and son five years later, taking her daughter Mabel with her. She and Bradlaugh decided to bring a test case on contraception by reprinting the American Charles Knowlton's 1832 book *The Fruits of Philosophy or the Private Companion for Young Married People* as a cheap pamphlet in 1876. Anglo-American freethinkers had often published birth control manuals, but they were in book form, which made them unaffordable to many. Hundreds of thousands of copies of Bradlaugh and Besant's low-priced work sold, and the two were then tried and convicted of obscenity. The verdict was overturned on a technicality. Frank Besant sued for custody of his daughter Mabel and won. Rose's American friend, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, who attended this trial as well as the Conference of Liberal Thinkers, said the judge "damned" Besant "for her infidel opinions," ruling that the girl could "not be brought up in opposition to the view of mankind generally as to what is moral, what is decent, what is womanly, or proper merely because her mother differs from these views...the child might even grow up to write such things herself!" Mabel was taken away just a few weeks before Rose referred to the case.⁴⁸

At the conference, Rose used Besant's ordeal to show why women needed equality. "I want that woman should have the same rights as a human being," she declared, "Now when a judge says that if this woman had been the father instead of the mother, the child might have been left with her; I think that is one of the laws that should be altered." Higginson, a longtime activist reformer in the United States, followed Rose. First praising "my dear old friend Mrs. Rose, whom we used to be proud for so many years to claim as an American, while her sonorous eloquence filled our halls, and whom you, I suppose, now try to claim as an English woman, though she is not," he then criticized her proposal for a Society of Friends of Progress. Having been active in the U.S. Free Religious Association, he argued that "if our experience has proved anything, it has been this...limit your aims a little and not to expect to do everything at once, and with one organization." Asserting that this was almost the only point "on

47 See note 38 above.

48 Arthur J. Nethercot, *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant* (London, 1961): 69-70, 73, 77; *National Reformer*, October 10, 1875; Nethercot, 128-36; Taylor, *Annie Besant*, 109, 127, 135.

which I should dissent from the position taken by my old friend Mrs. Rose," he added that if they followed her strategy, in five years they would regret creating so broad a group. He closed by using the image of "Esquimaux" sled dogs pulling together. "I am not a Radical dog in the least," Rose responded, "but it is just as well to know, in the cause of freedom and expression of opinion, that 'we may aim at the sun, and at least hit the moon.'" "That was quite what I was afraid of," Higginson replied.⁴⁹

On the conference's second day, Rose again spoke at length. Conway and others attempted to organize the group as the Association of Liberal Thinkers with its goals as both the "collection and diffusion of information concerning world-wide religious developments" and "the emancipation of mankind from superstition."⁵⁰ Johnston Russell of Limerick asserted that "What Mrs. Rose calls the service of humanity, and what others call the service of God are identical. The names are different, but the goodness is the same."⁵¹ Rose disagreed. Declaring that she was "glad to see so good a meeting come together" and that she supported "all parts that...benefit the human family," she invoked her familiar stance of preferring to be right than to unite with those whose views she could not support:

I am placed in a peculiar position, for there are some parts that I entirely differ from, and I fear that when it comes to a vote on such parts that I shall be a minority of one, and if it should be so, it would not be the first time, and I would much rather be in a minority even of one, for the right, than in a large majority for wrong and oppression.

Rose insisted that she could not support any mention of religion, because "in my convictions, in my conscience, I call all religions superstitions, and consider them merely as superstitions. I cannot vote for what appears to me the great curse of the human mind, the great standing block in the way of human progress."⁵²

Yet Rose was torn, as so many good friends — from Higginson to Conway, both extremely liberal Unitarians — supported the inclusion of religion. "If you will allow me with all my heart to aid and assist you, I can say, — I wanted to say, 'God speed,'" she blurted. At this, "the audience burst into roars of laughter," the male reporter for the English *Unitarian Herald* wrote, adding that "It was the most extraordinary speech I ever heard from a woman; and coming as it

49 Ernestine Rose, *Liberal Thinkers*, 27. For Higginson, *The Magnificent Activist: The Writings of Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823-1911)*, ed. Howard N. Meyer (New York, 2000); Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Liberal Thinkers*, 28-31; Ernestine Rose and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Liberal Thinkers*, 31. I have been unable to identify the quotation she used.

50 *Liberal Thinkers*, 49.

51 *Ibid.*, 43.

52 *Ibid.*, 62-63.

did from a lady of advanced years, and spoken as it was with a really deep earnestness, it could not but touch all who listened sympathetically.”⁵³ The remainder of the conference politely and lengthily debated the wording of its proposals. Ultimately, “religion” was completely removed. Moncure Conway suggested that Ernestine Rose be nominated to a committee to implement the group’s aims, but Rose replied that she could not serve. However, she seconded the motion thanking Conway for the meeting “with a great deal of pleasure” and “the resolution was carried by loud acclamation.”⁵⁴

The good feelings aroused by this conference in June 1878 did not last, and the group disbanded the following year, unable to agree on a program.⁵⁵ Ernestine Rose’s health continued to fluctuate. On July 4, she wrote Susan B. Anthony that “I should like to write to you of the future, as well as of the present and the past. But I am too feeble, having hardly recovered from a severe illness, to even do that.”⁵⁶ She and William then “left London for the sea shore...which made us feel a little stronger.” In August they traveled to Paris, for the Exposition Universelle — the third Paris World’s Fair. “The whole ensemble was grand and magnificent beyond description,” Rose wrote the *Investigator*, “The whole world seemed to be represented in it.”⁵⁷ The couple remained in Paris five weeks, attending a peace conference there at the end of September.

This 1878 International Congress of the Societies of the Friends of Peace was Ernestine Rose’s fifth peace conference.⁵⁸ In the United States, she and William had been among “the first members of the Universal Peace Union,” going to meetings in both New York and Philadelphia.⁵⁹ The UPU affiliated with various French peace groups in the late 1860s, among them the one directed by the Roses’s friend, Charles Lemonnier.⁶⁰ He published a pamphlet advocating a United States of Europe, believing that a single, republican, federal nation would do away with war. The Roses went to a Congress he helped organize at Lausanne in the summer of 1871, where Victor Hugo presided. The next summer, Ernestine attended a Woman’s Peace Congress in London, organized by Julia Ward Howe, who also spoke at Conway’s South Place Chapel.⁶¹ Howe remained traditionally religious, and Conway criticized her for it. The *Boston Investigator* wrote that he “throws cold water” on Howe’s proposal to organize a “great prayer for peace” in London, adding that “He says that praying people generally believe the Lord is a man of war, a God of battles and all that sort of thing. Only Quakers and Infidels are in favor of peace.”⁶²

53 *Unitarian Herald*, cited in the *Boston Investigator*, July 31, 1878, 3.

54 *Liberal Thinkers*, 74, 77.

55 Burtis, *Moncure Conway*, 172-73.

56 Stanton and Anthony Papers, Microfilm, Reel 20, frame 317.

57 Ernestine Rose, Letter, *Boston Investigator*, December 25, 1878, 2.

58 *International Congress of the Societies of the Friends of Peace Held in Paris September 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, and 30th, and October 1 1878 (Congrès International des Sociétés des Amis de la Paix, tenu à Paris les 26e, 27e, 29e et 30e Septembre, et le 1e Octobre 1878)* (Paris, 1880), 36.

59 Merle Curti, *Peace or War: The American Struggle 1636-1936* (New York, 1936), 86.

60 Charles Lemonnier, *The United States of Europe (Les États-Unis d'Europe)* (Paris, 1872); Lemonnier published the bilingual monthly “The United States of Europe” (“Les États Unis d'Europe — Die Vereinigten Staaten von Europa”) until 1889.

61 *Autobiography, Memories and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1904), 2:284.

62 *Boston Investigator*, July 31, 1872, 6; April 9, 1873, 4.

In Paris, both Howe and Rose represented the United States at the International Congress of the Friends of Peace. Thanking the group for “allowing her the honor of saying a few words on this subject of peace, which is very dear to my heart,” Rose apologized both for her poor French and for not being “strong enough to speak for long.” She then expressed feminist concerns. “I just want to say that women should be represented in these universal peace societies,” she stated, to shouts of “Very good, very good!” War is worse on women, she continued, “because if it is unfortunate to lose one’s life, it is even more unfortunate to lose one’s dear ones.” After expounding on war as “the crime of crimes,” Rose maintained that peace could not exist without justice, since “one cannot remain quiet when one is under the yoke of oppression. Let us then do everything that we can for freedom and against war, and everywhere men and women will unite for this goal! (Lively applause.)” Other women supported her position, which resulted in a proposal that every peace society must include a “Women’s Committee.” After reassuring the women present that they had the right to vote, the group passed this resolution unanimously. These brief remarks were Rose’s last public speech.⁶³

Forced to retire from the platform because of her illnesses, Rose continued to write public letters to both U.S. and English newspapers. At the end of 1878 she began a long missive to the *Investigator* by congratulating them for working “for the repeal of bad laws,” referring to the Comstock Act. Passed to suppress “Trade in, and Circulation of, Obscene Literature and Articles of Immoral Use,” the law was widely used to prevent any distribution of contraceptive information as well as pornography. She then discussed her visit to Paris and the peace conference before adding that although “I am against war...I am not a ‘non-resistant,’ for self-defence is the first law of nature and when Russia, or any other highway robber attacks us we must defend ourselves.” Rose remained focused on Russia because it still ruled Poland. She then praised the German scientist Carl Vogt’s *Man, His Place in Creation and in the History of Earth* and quoted at length from its freethought conclusion which excoriated the religious for attacking “Materialism and Darwinism.” She gave a brief anecdote from a German satirical journal and concluded with a short reminiscence of the English freethought publisher, Richard Carlile.⁶⁴

One of her final letters was written in 1887, when she was seventy-seven. An English medical student urged her to convert to Christianity

63 *Amis de la Paix*, 36, 58, 89, 99, 142.

64 Ernestine Rose, Letter to the *Boston Investigator*, December 25, 1878, 2.

in a 15-page letter. In reply, Rose sent him her only book, *A Defence of Atheism*, and her 1851 lecture on women's rights. He returned them, torn up, with an insulting letter, saying he would not read them and asking Mrs. Rose where her bravery would be on her death-bed. "A woman who ventured to speak against slavery in the slave States is little likely to quail on her death-bed before the bogey pictures of a Christian god or a Christian devil," commented the London *Freethinker*, echoed by the *Boston Investigator*.⁶⁵ Many Christians continued to assume that atheists could be converted when they were dying. Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner reported that "Mrs. Rose had greatly dreaded that during her last illness she would be invaded by religious persons who might make her unsay the convictions of her whole life when her brain was weakened by illness and she did not know what she was doing," so she arranged for Hypatia to be with her "when she fell ill."⁶⁶ Hypatia arrived too late, but both her "kind and able doctor" and her "devoted attendant" protected Rose from religious interference. Her memorial service in Highgate Cemetery was completely non-religious, with George Jacob Holyoake delivering the eulogy to "many" mourners "who either knew and admired Mrs. Rose personally or honored her for the work she had done."⁶⁷

Since her death, Rose has been rediscovered by women's history scholars, who have emphasized her feminism. Yet, as I hope these pages have shown, there was far more to her than just that. In Rose's day, the *Boston Investigator* periodically praised her contributions to the U.S. women's movement while lamenting her exclusion from its tributes. "Certain it is that when the Woman's Rights Party, of which she was almost or quite the originator, count up their jewels, she seldom if ever shines among them in their papers," the paper wrote in 1870, criticizing Stanton and Anthony's journal, *The Revolution*, "but to omit her name from the catalogue, is like playing Hamlet with the character of Hamlet left out." The *Investigator* repeatedly argued that Rose was ignored because she was "not a Christian, and for this reason is not appreciated by her sex as her merits deserve.... At present, all bigotry is not confined to the masculine gender."⁶⁸ Whether or not her atheism is to blame for her exclusion from most history books, her rediscovery is to be welcomed. It is my hope that she will come to be remembered on both sides of the Atlantic for all three of the beliefs she consistently maintained throughout her life: pacifism, feminism, and freethought.

65 "Mrs. Ernestine L. Rose," *Boston Investigator*, October 19, 1887, 3.

66 Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner, "Mrs. Ernestine L. Rose," *National Reformer*, August 14, 1892.

67 George Jacob Holyoake, "Eulogy for Ernestine L. Rose," August 8, 1892, in Doress-Worters, ed., *Mistress of Herself*, 358.

68 *Boston Investigator*, July 20, 1870, 6; March 22, 1871, 6; February 11, 1874, 4; February 14, 1877, 3.

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SPEAKING TRUTH TO DIVERGENT POWERS: MARGARET FULLER, BETTINA VON ARNIM AND THE BROKEN BOND

Carol Strauss Sotiropoulos

Introduction

Margaret Fuller (1810-50), the foremost nineteenth-century American promoter of German Romantic literature, had every good reason to forge a transatlantic bond with the Romantic writer Bettina Brentano von Arnim (1785-1859). To Fuller and the Transcendental devotees of the German Romantics, von Arnim embodied an enviable good fortune:



she was the sister of one Romantic writer, Clemens Brentano; the wife of another, Achim von Arnim; and the granddaughter of the pre-Romantic popular novelist, Sophie von La Roche. La Roche's friendship with the Goethe family spawned a letter friendship between Bettina and Goethe, and, in 1835, three years after Goethe's death, von Arnim, then 50, published her first work, *Goethe's Correspondence with a Child* [Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde].¹ Fuller, self-taught in German and the translator of several works by

Margaret Fuller. Courtesy of the Library of Congress. LC-USZ62-47039 [P&P], Control Number 2002712183.

» *Bettina Brentano-von Arnim: Gender and Politics* (Detroit, 1995). This volume includes a translation of the outstanding "letter-essay" by Christa Wolf: "Your Next Life Begins Today! A Letter about Bettine," trans. Jan van Heurck [The original, "'Nun Ja! Das nächste Leben geht aber heute an!' Ein Brief über die Bettine" can be found in *Christa Wolf: Die Dimension des Autors*, ed. Angela Drescher, 2 vols., 2: 116-54 (Berlin & Weimar, 1986).

Note: all translations are my own.

1 Two sizeable and well-documented biographies of Bettina von Arnim are those by Konstanze Bäumer and Hartwig Schultz: *Bettina von Arnim* (Stuttgart-Weimar, 1995); and by Ingeborg Drewitz, *Bettine von*

Arnim. Romantik · Revolution · Utopie (Düsseldorf, 1984). Ursula Püschel's biographical volume pays closer scholarly attention to von Arnim's political dimension: *Bettina von Arnim — politisch. Erkundungen, Entdeckungen Erkenntnisse* (Bielefeld, 2005). A substantive and reliable biography in

English is waiting to be written. Loosely conceived is that authored by Arthur Helps and Elizabeth Howard, *Bettina: A Portrait* (London, 1957). The best scholarly edition of critical essays in English is the one edited by Katherine Goodman and Elke Frederiksen: »

Goethe, was naturally among the first Americans to read this epistolary novel based on von Arnim's late adolescent friendship with Goethe, then middle aged. In November 1840, Fuller authored an endearing letter to von Arnim, assuming a collective voice on behalf of the Transcendentalist circle:

Dear Bettine,

For how can I address you by any title less near than that by which you have become so familiar to our thoughts. I write to you in the name of many men and many women of my country for whom you have wrought wonders.... How many have counted each pulse of your heart of love, how many more been kindled into flame at the touch of your genius! ... We ask all men who come from your land, Have you seen Bettine? ... Thou art dear to us, thou art the friend of our inmost mood, ...²

Von Arnim's second epistolary novel, *Die G nderode* (1840), explored the intimate friendship and exchange of ideas between von Arnim and the poetess Karolina von G nderode (1780-1806).³ At the time of her reading (1841), Fuller was co-editor with Ralph Waldo Emerson of *The Dial*, the literary periodical they had co-founded in 1840. Here, where she had introduced readers to Goethe and the (male) German Romantics, Fuller published an extensive adulatory essay, "Bettine Brentano and Her Friend G nderode" (January 1842). Through her discussion of the Bettine-Karoline philosophical and poetic dialogue, Fuller generalized an intellectually and culturally superior German womanhood. To make the work accessible to others, especially women, Fuller translated the first third of its 600 pages.⁴

The few prior studies of the Fuller-von Arnim connection end here, with Fuller's ardor for von Arnim intact. And not without good reason have students of the connection ceased their exploration, for Fuller never referred to or attempted to communicate with von Arnim again.⁵ And yet: within two years of Fuller's reading of *Die G nderode*, von Arnim produced another major work. And yet: Fuller and von Arnim turned near concurrently from literary pursuits to urban social

(G ttingen, 2006), 214-24; Carol Strauss Sotiropoulos, "Fuller, Goethe, Bettine..."; Edith Toegel, "Margaret Fuller, Bettina

von Arnim, Karoline von G nderode: A Kinship of Souls," *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 23 (1988): 141-51;

Christina Zwarg, *Feminist Conversations: Fuller, Emerson, and the Play of Reading* (New York, 1995), 88-96.

- 2 Fuller to von Arnim, in *The Letters of Margaret Fuller*, ed. Robert Hudspeth, 6 vols., 6:328 (New York, 1984-91). Note regarding spelling: von Arnim spelled her first name "Bettine" in her epistolary novels; however, biographers have used the spellings interchangeably.
- 3 The friendship took place thirty years earlier, from 1804 to G nderode's suicide in 1806. For this work's impact on Fuller's re-evaluation of female friendship, see Carol Strauss Sotiropoulos, "Fuller, Goethe, Bettine: Cultural Transfer and Imagined German Womanhood," in *Toward A Female Genealogy of Transcendentalism*, ed. Jana Argersinger and Phyllis Cole, 80-101 (Athens, GA, 2014).
- 4 This was published in 1842 by Elizabeth Peabody. The last two-thirds were translated by Minna Wesselhoeft and published in 1861.
- 5 Her correspondence alone comprises six volumes and includes a lengthy list of non-extant letters that are mentioned within the correspondence. Prior studies that discuss Fuller and von Arnim include Konstanze B umer, "Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) and Bettina von Arnim: An Encounter Between American Transcendentalism and German Romanticism," *Internationales Jahrbuch der Bettina-von-Arnim-Gesellschaft* 4 (1990): 47-69; Anke Finger, "Bettine in Boston: Margaret Fuller and the Reception of *Die G nderode* in Transcendental America" (master's thesis, Brandeis University, 1995); Christel-Marie Maas, *Margaret Fullers transnationales Projekt: Selbstbildung, feminine Kultur und amerikanische National-literatur nach deutschen Vorbild*

activism. The parallels along their life trajectories in the turbulent decade of the 1840s — their record of social activism as well as their writings pertaining to social and political justice — invite one to ask why Fuller fell off the von Arnim fan wagon. By being attentive to the silence — an unspoken but deliberate dismissal or resistance — we gain new perspectives of women activists' transatlantic visions for societal transformation.

1840-45: Von Arnim in Berlin

During the 1830s the Prussian absolute monarchy became increasingly repressive under King Friedrich Wilhelm III. Social conditions worsened and the king, fearing rebellion, suppressed dissidents. In 1840, when von Arnim was fifty-five and completing *Die Günderröde*, she was also conducting personal charity missions into impoverished neighborhoods.⁶ Von Arnim's relief efforts were widely observed, as noted in the diary of her friend, the diplomat and literary biographer Karl Varnhagen von Ense: "I've read many reports about Bettine's multi-faceted, ambitious, and beneficial activities for the poor; everything she strives for and fulfills is just astonishing; from her own means and from donations she has accomplished so much ..."⁷

In 1840 the king died, and von Arnim could hope optimistically for reforms to alleviate social misery: the intellectual and culturally rounded Friedrich Wilhelm IV ascended to the throne. Six months into the new king's reign, however, with the repressive measures still in place and no structural reforms proposed, von Ense recorded von Arnim's concerns in his diary:

"She [von Arnim] is beside herself over the state of affairs ... she distrusts all those close to and favored by the king, she wants a constitution, freedom of the press, ... She wants to tell the king the truth, may she have the courage and skill to do it."⁸

Von Arnim exercised her agency — as the widow of a prominent author and member of the landed gentry as well as an established author in her own right — to embark on a crusade to "tell the king the truth" *via* a personal correspondence with him. The preserved letters, written between 1839 and 1850, include forty-four from von Arnim to the king and twenty-one from the king to her. The content astounds, for to educate the king, von Arnim graphically described conditions of social misery. Careful not to hold the king directly responsible, she accused his self-seeking court advisors of shielding him from

6 For highlights of von Arnim's charity missions, see Kathleen Hallihan, "Envisioning an Ideal State: The Literary Politics of Bettina von Arnim from 1830 to 1852" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 2005), 33-34.

7 Karl Varnhagen von Ense, diary entry of September 30, 1841, quoted in *Bettina von Arnim, Eine Chronik*, ed. Heinz Härtl, (Wiepersdorf, 1984), 47. ["Ich las in diesen Tagen viele Zeugnisse von Bettinens vielfacher, eifriger und segensvoller Wirksamkeit für die Armen, was sie alles erstrebt und vollbracht, ist zum Erstaunen, aus eignen Mitteln hat sie viel geleistet ..."]

8 *Ibid.*, 35, diary entry of December 7, 1840: ["Sie [von Arnim] ist außer sich über die Wirtschaft ... sie mißbilligt alle Vertrauten und Lieblinge des Königs, sie will Konstitution, Preßfreiheit, ... Sie will dem Könige die Wahrheit sagen, sie habe den Mut und das Geschick dazu."]

the people and their needs. She addressed the king as an innocent in need of sound, honest guidance to become a true advocate of the people and thereby a model leader. The letters have their own unique history: none were published for decades, until 1902, and several were discovered after World War II.⁹

While these letters were private, von Arnim also produced a lengthy conversational novel in the spring of 1843. Titled *This Book Is for The King* (*Dies Buch gehört dem König*) and known popularly as *The King's Book* (*Das Königsbuch*), it served as a platform for von Arnim to argue her positions on poverty, criminality, prison reform, education, corruption, and the death penalty. Fuller's silence at this particular juncture constitutes the most mysterious gap in the expanse of Fuller's public and private writings.¹⁰ Whether Fuller was aware of von Arnim's charity missions via verbal reports from friends traveling to Berlin cannot be ascertained. However, the furor that the *The King's Book* ignited, over both its content and its author, would not have eluded a von Arnim fan.¹¹ Although Fuller had turned over editorship of *The Dial* to Emerson in 1842, she continued to contribute and surely would have read the three-page review of *The King's Book* in *The Dial's* October 1843 issue.¹²

Fuller, from Boston to New York

In 1844 Fuller ended the intellectual forum for women she had conducted in Boston since 1839. Inspired in part by the women who conducted the Berlin salons, including von Arnim, Fuller had called her forum "Conversations" and had designed these to encourage women's critical thinking and articulation on a wide range of topics. Recruited by the *New York Daily Tribune* to produce a front-page column under her own byline, Fuller moved to New York. There she became actively engaged in urban social issues, as was von Arnim in Berlin. Like Berlin, New York was experiencing a population surge. Of the influx of new immigrants, 32 percent were Germans escaping political suppression as well as economic hardship. Like von Arnim, Fuller undertook personal charity missions into poor neighborhoods and initiated fundraising efforts.¹³

The excerpts below, taken from Fuller's eyewitness account, "Our City Charities: Visit To Bellevue Alms House, to the Farm School, the Asylum for the Insane, and Penitentiary on Blackwell's Island," showcase her metaphor-laden conversational style, wherein the pronouns "we" and "us" assume readers' compassion. In a blurring mix

9 Family embarrassment over von Arnim's political stance, the dispersion of family-owned documents at a 1929 auction, and a locked attic all conspired to prevent the letters' publication. See Marjanne E. Goozé, "The Reception of Bettina Brentano-von Arnim as Author and Historical Figure," in *Bettina Brentano-von Arnim: Gender and Politics*, ed. Elke Frederiksen and Katherine Goodman, 349-401 (Detroit, 1995), especially 360-61.

10 Hallihan, "Envisioning an Ideal State," 27.

11 For reaction and reviews see Ingeborg Drewitz, *Bettine von Arnim: Romantik — Revolution — Utopie* (Munich, 1969), 203-10.

12 *The Dial* 4.2 (October 1843), reprint New York, 1961: 267-70. Review translated from the September issue of the *Deutsche Schnellpost*.

13 For highlights of Fuller's charity missions, see Charles Capper, *Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life*, 2 vols. (New York, 2007), 1:204.

of pronoun usage, “they” hopscoches between victims, concerned public, institutions, and right principles.

The pauper establishments that belong to a great city take the place of the skeleton at the banquets of old. They admonish us of stern realities, which must bear the same explanation as the frequent blight of Nature's bloom. They should be looked at by all, if only for their own sakes, that they may not sink listlessly into selfish ease, in a world so full of disease. They should be looked at by all who wish to enlighten themselves as to the means of aiding their fellow creatures in any way, public or private For nothing can really be done till the right principles are discovered, and it would seem they still need to be discovered or elucidated, so little is done, with a great deal of desire in the heart of the community to do what is right.¹⁴

Fuller gestures vaguely toward governing powers to intervene, but more distinctly authorizes her audience's and thereby her community's reformist capacity, based on Christian charity, to predominate.

Newspaper journalism was of course a radically different medium for presenting social criticism than a conversational novel. Fuller was given free reign over topic selections: in addition to such eyewitness accounts, she used this most public stage to argue for abolition, voting rights, and women's rights; to censure American seizure of Mexican land; to review new books of essays, poetry, and fiction; and even to promote foreign language study. Regarding journalism's value with respect to a reformist agenda, she wrote an aunt, “I do not expect to do much, practically, for the suffering, but having such an organ of expression, any suggestions that are well-grounded may be of use.”¹⁵ She condemned the practice begun in the 1840s of jailing women for prostitution and public drunkenness. And she accused male policy-makers and prison administrators of hostility toward “fallen women,” of blaming women for men's crimes and denying them rehabilitation resources.¹⁶ In her use of the journalistic pulpit to expand private philanthropy, she creatively appealed across class and gender, as seen in *Asylum for Discharged Female Convicts*:

To all we appeal. To the poor, who will know how to sympathize with those who are not only poor but degraded, diseased, likely to be harried onward to a shameful, hopeless

14 *New York Daily Tribune*, March 19, 1845, in *Margaret Fuller, Critic: Writings from the New York Tribune 1844-1846*, ed. Judith Mattson Bean & Joel Myerson, 98-104 (New York, 2000), 98.

15 Letter from Fuller to Mary Rotch, January 15, 1845, in *Letters of Margaret Fuller*, ed. Hudspeth, 4:46.

16 See Estelle Freedman, *Their Sisters' Keepers: Women's Prison Reform in America, 1830-1930* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1981), 18-20.

death. To the rich, to equalize the advantages of which they have received more than their share. To men, to atone for the wrongs inflicted by men on that “weaker sex,” who should, they say, be soft, confiding, dependent on them for protection. To women, to feel for those who have not been guarded either by social influence or inward strength from that first mistake which the opinion of the world makes irrevocable for women alone.¹⁷

Fuller’s exposés did not go unnoticed. They energized many women to become active in public affairs, and her appeals succeeded in raising enough money to establish the first halfway house in New York State for women parolees.¹⁸

Fuller’s fellow Transcendentalists would surely have approved of her use of the press as a vehicle to critique the crass materialism they observed as deforming American character. But it is important to clarify that Fuller departed from Transcendentalist attitudes about social activism. Fuller scholar Larry Reynolds notes that in the early 1840s both Emerson and Fuller “subscribed to the concept of organicism ... and they believed that the soul, like the human race itself, was involved in an ongoing process of perfection...” For Emerson “the self was primary, social institutions secondary, for he believed that as one perfected the self the world would change for the better.” Fuller, however, gradually came to believe “that social conditions could thwart the spiritual growth of the individual, and thus one needed to strive to perfect society to allow for the more important perfection of the self.”¹⁹

Since philanthropic appeals rarely produce systemic change, we are invited to ask if and how Fuller addressed men of power. That is, was she committed solely to encouraging private philanthropy to combat social ills? Or did she hope for broader reforms based on institutional Christian charity? Or, did she envision the kind of systemic change achievable only through state political action? Regarding the potential for political action to reform the city’s charity institutions and prisons, she commented:

Nothing effectual can be achieved while both measures and men are made the sport of political changes. It is a most shameful evil ... that the men and measures are changed in these institutions with changes from Whig to Democrat, from Democrat to Whig. Churches, Schools, Colleges, the care of the Insane, and suffering Poor, should be preserved

17 *New York Daily Tribune*, June 19, 1845, in *Margaret Fuller, Critic*, ed. Bean and Myerson, 135.

18 The halfway house, known as the Hopper Home, continues its work today. See Joan von Mehren, *Minerva and the Muse: A Life of Margaret Fuller* (Amherst, MA, 1995), 219.

19 Larry J. Reynolds, “Righteous Violence: The Romantic Republic and Margaret Fuller’s Revolutionary Example,” in *Margaret Fuller: Transatlantic Crossings in a Revolutionary Age*, ed. Charles Capper and Cristina Giorcelli (Madison, WI, 2007), here 177. Reynolds also discusses the influence of Fuller’s activism on Emerson’s re-evaluation of activism (and violence) in the decade leading to the American Civil War.

from the uneasy tossings of this delirium. The Country, the State, should look to it that only those fit for such officers should be chosen for such, apart from all considerations of political party ... without an absolute change in this respect no permanent good whatever can be effected.²⁰

This critique of partisan politics and its capacity to undermine social welfare reform may well resonate with readers today.

Yet Fuller's frustration with the shifting political winds that paralyzed reform interventions incited her neither to political action nor to the formulation of a political ideology. On the contrary, Fuller defended the American political system when she perceived it under rhetorical attack. In her review of a leftist immigrant German-language newspaper in early 1846, she alludes to the superiority of American republicanism over monarchical regimes:

[T]hough we hail the spirit of Reform wherever it seems to us to be a vital, creative, healthy, and not a feverish, restless, morbid spirit, yet, precisely for that reason, would we say to all concerned, "you must be sure your light is in proportion to your heat." The spirit of defiance and haste exhibited by the *Volks-Tribun* is not the spirit for Young America. She needs it not. — She needs only a deep intelligence of principles, a religious devotion to them in practice, and all things would be hers.²¹

Clearly Fuller's optimism about a future based on "principles" precluded a turn to political ideology, at least at this point in her activist engagement.

1846-48: Von Arnim in Berlin

By early 1846, when Fuller wrote the review above, conditions in Prussia had deteriorated. In 1846 and 1847 hunger riots erupted, and the clamor for political reform intensified.²² The Prussian absolutist monarchy was essentially a police state where suppression of free speech meant not only press censorship but also curtailment of academic study of liberalism, and unequal standards of justice applied to different classes.

While liberals called for a constitution, von Arnim continued to hold to the ideology expanded in *The King's Book*, at least in her

20 *New York Daily Tribune*, March 19, 1845, in *Margaret Fuller, Critic*, ed. Bean and Myerson, 103-104.

21 *New York Daily Tribune*, January 5, 1846, in *Margaret Fuller, Critic*, ed. Bean and Myerson, CD 235. Note regarding the Bean and Myerson volume: particular selections of Fuller's columns are in print, while the remainder (and the entirety) are on an accompanying CD.

22 An excellent and precise summary on conditions is in Hallihan, "Envisioning an Ideal State," 33-34, 115-18; and Gertrud Meyer-Hepner, *Der Magistratsprozess der Bettina von Arnim* (Weimar, 1960), 15.

23 Bettina von Arnim, *Dies Buch gehört dem König* [1843], ed. Wolfgang Bunzel (Munich, 2008), 30. ["Der Fürst, im geistigen Sinn genommen, hat auch einen Leib. Das ist sein Volk."]

Note: this ideology was popularized by the romantic writer Novalis (1772-1801), who situated his vision of a Golden Age in medieval times. Neither *The King's Book* nor von Arnim's letters to the king have been translated into English.

24 "Rat" (spelled "Rath" prior to the twentieth century) means counselor; "Frau Rath" was the title bestowed on Goethe's mother as the wife of a magistrate; as her husband was an imperial magistrate, "kaiserlich" was added.

25 Von Arnim, *Dies Buch gehört dem König*, 303. ["Ich meine keinen Staat, wo mir die Zensur meine Ansichten streichen kann, ich mein einen ganz andern Staat hinter dem Himalaja gelegen, der ein Widerschein ist von dem Staat, den ich meinen könnte; sollte mir aber auch *das* die Zensur streichen wollen, nun, so mein ich den auch nicht. Ich meine nichts, was könnte gestrichen werden."]

26 *Ibid.*, 13. ["Der ganze Hofkreis kamen mir vor wie ein Tierkreis. Löwen, Büffel, Pfauen, Paviane, Greife, aber auf ein Gesicht, das menschlich schön zu nennen wär ... "].

27 The most complete edition of von Arnim's correspondence pertaining to her political life is "*Die Welt umwälzen, denn darauf läuft's hinaus.*" *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Bettina von Arnim und Friedrich Wilhelm IV.*, ed. Ursula Püschel, 2 vols. (Bielefeld, 2001), 2. See pages 2:459-63 for letters between the censor and three ministers; see page 2:472 for a minister's warning to the king.

28 Adolf Stahr, *Bettina und ihr Königbuch* (Hamburg, 1844).

ongoing letters to the king. This ideology, "*Volkskönigtum*" (populist monarchy), draws from romantic concepts of an organic, symbiotic relationship between the "*Volkskönig*" (people's king) and his people. Ancestral succession based on bloodline is assumed, as the king, representing the apex of evolution, is metaphorically united with his people in one body: "The ruler, considered from a spiritual perspective, also has a body. This is his people."²³ Von Arnim still hoped for reform from the top, believing in the power of the word, of her word, to transform the king.

The King's Book can be viewed as a clever strategy for delivering the same critiques von Arnim voiced in her personal letters to the king. In the fictional round table of the book, Frau Rath, a highly intelligent and perceptive older woman, debates a mayor and a pastor.²⁴ One questions immediately how the work passed the censors, for in addition to decrying serious societal ills, Frau Rath condemns censorship itself. Here she discusses a utopian state: "I have in mind no state where the censors can strike down my views; I mean a totally other state that lies beyond the Himalayas, one that is a reflection of the state to which I could be thinking of; however, should the censors even want to erase this one, too, then that's not the one I mean either. I mean nothing which could be stricken out."²⁵ For the king to act justly, his court must be purged of these advisors and administrators whom Frau Rath insults in base terms: "The entire court circle appears to me like a circle of beasts. Lions, buffalo, peacocks, baboons, griffins, all with but one expression, which to be kind could be called human ..."²⁶

How did von Arnim succeed in so publicly offending those who held the power to ban her work? First, she strategically lengthened it to 330 pages, as, to eliminate backlog in the censor's office, only printed material under 320 pages (twenty print sheets) was necessarily subject to censorship. Secondly, Alexander von Humboldt, a friend of von Arnim and a favorite of the king, secured the monarch's permission for the book to be dedicated to him — and thus to bear its unusual title. Naturally, this enraged the king's advisors, who cautioned the king against any such future exceptions.²⁷ Though these strategies thwarted Prussian censorship, *The King's Book* was immediately banned in Austria and Bavaria. Further, its length and metaphor-driven circuitous prose limited its audience. A fifty-six page pamphlet (by another writer) that simplified its points was immediately banned.²⁸

Because the book exposed social conditions and promulgated the vision of a freer society, von Arnim was perceived as an oppositionist and admired by freedom seekers despite the fact that the *means* the book advocated were *not* revolutionary. Most open oppositionists were already living in exile in Paris and London or had emigrated to America. Ironically, in a letter to the king in summer 1845, von Arnim placed herself imaginatively in that camp. Here she situates the king within a fog created by his advisors' disinformation, a fog that insulates the king from the truth. She, the people's representative, cannot penetrate the fog. Ultimately, the advisors have so vitiated the king's power that if he "should want to give me his blessing upon my emigration to America ... even that would be the option of the fog lovers."²⁹

Aside from her book, von Arnim could address social justice issues only in the public-private space of her salon. By 1847, as unrest escalated across Europe, von Arnim risked continuing her salon, where ideologies and goals were freely discussed. Two of von Arnim's older daughters did not share their mother's views and, justifiably alarmed about her guests and debates, arrived at a two-salon solution. Daughter Maximiliane's memoir offers a vivid, if somewhat biting, picture of von Arnim's fearlessness:

It was impossible for our friends to cross paths with the revolutionaries who came to see Bettina without friction and recriminations. We could hardly allow the former legitimate French Ambassador, Count Circourte to meet his republican successor Arago, who often came to visit mother. We made an amicable arrangement ... In the Arnim home there should be two salons, a democratic and an aristocratic. On the left, in our space, we received our friends, on the right, in her rooms, Bettina received her "noble" world reformers.³⁰

Interestingly, von Arnim resisted backing constitution seekers, many of whom frequented her salon. On the one hand, such support would have conflicted with her idealization, which rejected any mediation between the king-people dynamic. On the other hand, she had voiced her wish for a constitution to von Ense several years earlier in a private, informal conversation. It would be the topic of another study to determine whether she adopted the ideology of *Volkskönigtum* as a years-long subversive ploy to sway the king. In any case, the public

29 Letter from von Arnim to the king, July 23, 1845, in *Briefwechsel*, ed. Püschel, 1:147. ["Und wenn er mir auch seinen Seegen geben wollte zu meiner Auswanderung nach America ... das wär nach dem Wunsch der Nebelfreunde."]

30 From the journal of Maximiliane von Arnim, in *Maxe von Arnim, Tochter Bettinas, Gräfin Oriola, 1818-1894. Ein Lebens- u. Zeitbild aus alten Quellen geschöpft*, ed. Johann Werner (Leipzig, 1937), 173. ["Es [ging] ... doch nicht an, daß unsere Freunde ... in Bettinas Saal mit den Revolutionären zusammentrafen, ohne daß Reibungen oder doch Verstimmungen drohten. Wir konnten dem legitimistisch (?) gesinnten bisherigen französischen Gesandten Graf Circourt doch unmöglich zumuten, dem ihn von seinem Posten ablösenden Republikaner Arago, der oft zur Mutter kam, zu begegnen. So wurde ... die weise Einrichtung getroffen: Im Hause Arnim gab es zwei Salons, einen demokratischen und einen aristokratischen. Links in unseren Räumen empfangen wir unsere Freunde, rechts in ihren Zimmern Bettina ihre 'edlen' Weltverbesserer."]

perception of von Arnim as a firebrand accrued to her public outing of social and political ills.

And indeed, von Arnim's correspondence, her book, and her salon activities made her a target for increased surveillance. In summer 1846 the king's circle, clearly seeking any petty but airtight means to silence the rabble-rousing von Arnim, arranged to have her arrested for running a printing press without proper authorization and tax payment. These charges stemmed from her status as resident of the rural home of her husband's hereditary estate and not of Berlin. The authorities demanded she apply for Berlin citizenship; she, in turn, claimed that citizenship should be bestowed upon her for her manifold contributions to the city's neediest. An unusual feature of the laws concerning court proceedings worked ironically to open up public space for von Arnim's voice: court proceedings were reported in the newspapers! Major Berlin papers editorialized their support for von Arnim to receive honorary citizenship, in glowing recognition of her advocacy for the poor.³¹ The court case lasted seventeen months, ending in December 1847. Squarely in the public eye and in conflict with the regime, von Arnim used the occasion of her defense to articulate the need for expanded state assistance for the needy.

Fuller in New York

Fuller's silence on *The King's Book* and on von Arnim's circumstances, from her 1841 reading of *Die Gùnderode* to mid-decade, raises the question of whether she was informed about German conditions and the restrictions on public expression. Until mid-1846 her column occasionally highlighted news first reported in the *Deutsche Schnellpost*, a New York newspaper for liberal German émigrés. Further, until *The Dial's* closing in April 1844, she would have read reports submitted by members and friends of the Transcendentalist circle who spent considerable time in Berlin and other German cultural centers.³² Lastly, she would have received verbal reports from her friends in the New York German immigrant community. Her mention of Germany in a *Tribune* column about the value of newspapers indicates her awareness of censorship: "The lightest leaf of Germany shows the high culture which pervades that country, and her gazettes are a great class-book for the People, but owing to the circumstances of Government, they can only partially represent the popular mind in its present life."³³ Again, despite her cognizance of German conditions, Fuller avoided any reference to von Arnim.

31 For newspaper editorials, see Meyer-Hepner, *Magistratsprozess*, 17-18.

32 For example: under "Literary Intelligence" a letter from Germany signed CS Wheeler and dated Oct 20 1842, in *The Dial* 3:3 (January 1843): 387-96. F.B. Sanborn's *Recollections of Seventy Years*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1909) 2: 550-53.

33 *New York Daily Tribune*, September 24, 1845, in *Margaret Fuller, Critic*, ed. Bean and Myerson, CD 191. Note: the term "Germany" is loosely applied, as until 1871 geographical "Germany" did not exist; instead there were German states united by culture and language.

Fuller's European Odyssey

In mid-1846, during the period of rising tension in Europe that preceded the 1848 uprisings, Fuller realized a lifelong dream to travel to Europe, where she became the *Tribune's* first foreign correspondent. She not only socialized with and reported on famed literati but met political exiles such as the Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini in London and the Polish revolutionary poet Adam Mickiewicz in Paris. These reports she juxtaposed with eyewitness accounts of abysmal poverty in several industrialized cities. From France she might have continued to Germany, but circumstances made travel to Italian cities more feasible.³⁴ In April 1847 she arrived in Rome and lived in its environs until her death in a shipwreck en route to New York in 1850. Thus, during the seventeen months of von Arnim's court proceedings, August 1846 to December 1847, Fuller was in Europe. Persuaded by Mazzini, who had returned to Rome, to be an eyewitness to the upcoming insurrections there and across the Habsburg-controlled Italian landscape, she became the first accredited female foreign war correspondent.

In Milan Fuller developed an intimate intellectual friendship with a Viennese-born aristocrat and political activist, Costanza Arconati Visconti. Arconati Visconti, who had lived over twenty years in political exile in Belgium, spent long periods during the 1830s in Berlin. There she became a close friend of Bettina von Arnim's. In a close study of the extant letters between Arconati-Visconti and Fuller, Sonia DiLoreto emphasizes an intimacy between them, no matter the topic: "from the private self ... to the debate about political solutions viable for Italy, to further transnational considerations about republicanism."³⁵ It would be hard to fathom that von Arnim was not a topic of discussion between them. Despite the publicity surrounding von Arnim's legal proceedings as well as the public recognition of von Arnim's social and political activism, from Fuller there was once again silence.

Von Arnim in Berlin

In February 1847, embroiled in her court case, von Arnim seized the opportunity offered by this public space to respond to the magistrate's verdict in terminology redolent of the period's percolating socialist ideology:³⁶

The reasons why I hold the proletarian in the highest esteem, is because he is above disrepute, he is exempt from the baseness of profiting from the condition of society, for

34 "Italy" is loosely applied, as Italian states did not become independent and unified until 1861.

35 Sonia DiLoreto, "Forms of Exchange: Private Correspondence and the Formation of a National Idea" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 2010), 78. Fuller's *Tribune* dispatches during this period centered on the Italian states. Once the uprisings broke out in Paris, Vienna, and Berlin in February and March 1848, she naturally referred to these and applauded "the true Germans of Germany" for "showing [the native German heart] by their struggles." [*New York Daily Tribune*, March 29 1848, Dispatch 23, in "These Sad But Glorious Days," *Dispatches from Europe, 1846-1850*, ed. Larry Reynolds and Susan Belasco Smith (New Haven, 1991), 212.]

36 Von Arnim was sentenced to two months' imprisonment plus commuted fines. She wanted to be incarcerated to draw more public attention, but her jurist brother-in-law Karl von Savigny intervened to spare the family.

he gives everything, and in return he consumes no more than he needs in order to renew his energy so that others may profit ... And if I therefore prefer the crown of citizen to the state's medal of honor, yet instead of that crown I would prefer the approval of the people, whose renunciations are heroic and whose sacrifices are the most selfless.³⁷

37 Von Arnim's defense letter to the magistrate, Feb 19, 1847, in Meyer-Hepner, *Magistratsprozess*, 38. [Die Gründe warum ich den Proletarier am höchsten stelle, ist, weil er der Gemeinheit enthoben ist, als Wucherer dem Weltverhältnis etwas abzugewinnen, da er Alles gibt und nicht mehr dafür wieder verzehrt ... um neue Kräfte zum Gewinn anderer sammeln zu können ... Und wenn ich daher die Bürgerkrone dem Ordensstern vorziehe, so würde ich dem allem noch vorziehen, vom Volke anerkannt zu sein, dessen Verzichtungen heroisch und dessen Opfer die uneigennützigsten sind.]

38 Gene E. Lich, "Bettina, Texas," *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association: <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hvb55>
The *Adelsverein bei Biebrich am Rhein (Verein zum Schutze Deutscher Einwanderer in Texas / Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas)*, better known as the *Adelsverein* (Nobility Society), founded near Mainz in 1842, purchased Texas land and sponsored various groups of mostly young university graduates. Among these were the *Darmstädter Vierziger* (Darmstadt Fortiers), founders of the Bettina settlement.

39 Even Hudspeth, the editor of her letters, implies this in his commentary: "The intensity of her Italian life ... had made her a stranger to the United States" (6:5). For a full discussion, see Anna Scacchi, "Margaret Fuller's Search for the Maternal," in *Margaret Fuller: Transatlantic Crossings*, ed. Capper and Giorcelli, 66-99.

This terminology signaled a radical departure from von Arnim's romantic organicist and metaphorical expression as well as from her faith in reform from above. The king's betrayal of that faith, whether deliberate or passive, was a game changer: to subscribe any longer to *Volkskönigtum* was to be ideologically blind. The rhetoric von Arnim deployed in declaring her loyalty to the working class enhanced her public perception as a heroine of the opposition. In that same year a group of young German male émigrés sponsored by an organization of Freethinkers to establish a utopian "new Germany" in Texas named their settlement "Bettina" in her honor. As often happened with utopian missions, the community foundered for lack of structure and a poor harvest; it splintered in less than a year, its members joining other German communities in Texas.³⁸

Fuller in Rome

The conversations and readings surrounding Italian unification and independence nourished the development of a political ideology in Fuller. Her eyewitness awakening to social conditions, beginning in New York, had broadened during her travels to slums in London, Liverpool, Paris, and Lyon. Mazzini's and Mickiewicz's discourses on revolution as the means to unification, independence, and freedom informed her readings and informal discussions with Arconati-Visconti and others. Once the Italian uprisings began, her dispatches as foreign war correspondent melded reportage with sympathetic accounts of her partisan participation.

Most studies of Fuller view Rome as a topos where her search for self is fulfilled.³⁹ In Rome she fell in love with Marquis Giovanni Osoli, a lieutenant in the Italian Unification Movement, who had been disinherited by his family for his revolutionary activities. Fuller bore his child, they married, and all three perished in the shipwreck just off the coast of New York. The (male) Transcendentalist friends who compiled Fuller's "Memoirs" after her death elided her revolutionary engagement and ideology to create a narrative of womanly yearning

for love and domesticity. Instead, Fuller's Rome and its revolution became her passage to a political radicalization having more to do with America than Italy. I would argue, as has Leslie Eckel, that Fuller inverted the transatlantic paradigm wherein Old Europe looked to New America for revolutionary inspiration. While in (voluntary) exile, Fuller "turned her gaze back toward the United States and recognized the paradoxical fact that she ... could promote national progress more effectively from an offshore perspective than from a position at the hub of the country's literary elite."⁴⁰

Here it is essential to keep the American *Tribune* readership in mind when questioning Fuller's decision to deliver a brief summary of early American history in her dispatch of January 1848. Along the trajectory to the American Revolution, which, we do well to remember, had ignited just seventy years prior to her writing, she lauds the American ideal and evokes the Old World/New World dichotomy in romantic terminology. First, readers are transported from the familiar narrative of the Old to the New World:

A noble, constant, starlike soul, an Italian, led the way to its shores, and, in the first days, the strong, the pure, those too brave, too sincere for the life of the Old World hastened to people them. A generous struggle then shook off what was foreign and gave the nation a glorious start for a worthy goal. Men rocked the cradle of its hopes, great, firm, disinterested men who saw, who wrote, as the basis of all that was to be done, a statement of the rights, the inborn rights of men, which, if fully interpreted and acted upon, leaves nothing to be desired.⁴¹

From this inspirational narrative readers are brought to the present, to Fuller's presence in the "Old World," where the ideals that had been "America" are now to be found: "[T]hat spirit which made it [our country] of value in my eyes, which gave all of hope ... is more alive here at present than in America."

Having set the stage for *Tribune* readers to experience their common American world through her eyes, two months later Fuller levels a denunciation replete with censorious descriptors: spoiled, stupid, soiled, shamed, selfish, petty, frivolous, venal: "My country is at present spoiled by prosperity, stupid with the lust of gain, soiled by crime in its willing perpetuation of Slavery, shamed by an unjust war, noble sentiment much forgotten even by individuals, the aims

⁴⁰ Leslie E. Eckel, "Fuller's Conversational Journalism," *Arizona Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 27-50, here 44.

⁴¹ *New York Daily Tribune*, Dispatch 18, Jan. 1, 1848, in "These Sad but Glorious Days," ed. Reynolds & Smith, 164.

of politicians selfish or petty, the literature frivolous and venal.” The idea of “America” as a democratic ideal could not be supported by the actuality of 1830s and 40s America. “America” as a topos representing democracy has been relocated to Europe where, as she writes, “amid the teachings of adversity a nobler spirit is struggling — a spirit which cheers and animates mine. I hear earnest words of pure faith and love, I see deeds of brotherhood. This is what makes *my* America.” Such a narrative can brook only one possible conclusion: America needs to be revolutionized: “I do not deeply distrust my country. She is not dead, but in my time she sleepeth, and the spirit of our fathers flames no more, but lies hid beneath the ashes. It will not be so long; bodies cannot live when the soul gets too overgrown with gluttony and falsehood.”⁴²

The month of this dispatch, March 1848, marked the height of the European uprisings, including that of Berlin. In the transformative vocabulary of socialist ideology, the now radicalized Fuller confronted and challenged her American audience to reclaim the spirit needed to effect equality:

Whatever blood is to be shed, whatever altars cast down, those tremendous problems **MUST** be solved, whatever be the cost! That cost cannot fail to break many a bank, many a heart, in Europe, before the good can bud again out of a mighty corruption. To you, people of America, it may perhaps be given to look on and learn in time for a preventive wisdom. You may learn the real meaning of the words **FRATERNITY, EQUALITY**: you may, despite the apes of the past who strive to tutor you, learn the needs of a true democracy. You may in time learn to reverence, learn to guard, the true aristocracy of a nation, the only really nobles, — the **LABORING CLASSES**.⁴³

Like von Arnim, Fuller embraced socialist rhetoric to demonstrate full identification and unity with the underclass in the battle cry for freedom and equality. Fuller’s memoirists sought to excise this transgressive radicalization and justification of violence from her life narrative; Fuller fans can rightfully celebrate scholarship that counters the delimited domestic narrative.

Von Arnim’s and Fuller’s near synchronous rhetorical shift invites us to speculate whether they truly arrived at similar ideological

42 Ibid., Dispatch 24, April 19, 1848, 230.

43 Ibid., Dispatch 23, March 29, 1848, 211.

aspirations. Since Fuller did not break her silence, one cannot argue that she “heard” von Arnim’s testimony. What one *can* argue, however, is that their ideological trajectories originated in similar social activist endeavors. And, one can posit that socialist terminology supplied the endgame rhetoric in speaking to divergent powers.

Conclusion

To impute motives to one writer’s silence about another cannot, in good conscience, be the design of any comparatist. To conjecture, however, by mining one’s detective work, can enhance ongoing efforts to contextualize the two writers’ life works. I suggest that Fuller’s silence “speaks” to the following conjectures.

- 1) The “divergent powers” conjecture. In 1843, at the time Fuller learned of von Arnim’s *King’s Book*, her belief in American political superiority, grounded in a revolutionary break from monarchy and the pioneering of a republic, may have prompted her to dismiss it — and von Arnim — out of hand.
- 2) The “psychological conjecture.” Everything by and about Goethe fascinated Fuller, and thence came her appreciation of von Arnim. Fuller appears, however, to have distanced herself from Goethe by 1844: he is mentioned in only one of her *Tribune* columns, in reference to a monument dedicated to him in Weimar.⁴⁴ And by 1845 Fuller had severed the Goethe cord in her seminal feminist manifesto *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Though she lauds Goethe’s dynamic female characters, the philosophy of individual self-development — *Bildung* — she had earlier embraced no longer sufficed as a solution to women’s oppression: “Goethe thinks, As the man, so the institutions! ... A man can grow in any place, if he will.... Ay! but Goethe, bad institutions are prison walls and impure air that make him stupid, so that he does not will.”⁴⁵ For Fuller we could say this marked the end of an enthrallment in which she had found comfort as well as inspiration. She adopted and would continue to adopt new mentors and guides. Though von Arnim *might* have been included among these, based on shared social justice and literary-philosophical enthusiasms, Fuller had relegated her to a prior constellation, one that belonged to the “Goethe Years” of Fuller’s pre-New York intellectual and philosophical cosmos.
- 3) The “self-preservation conjecture.” Through her readings in German literature, culminating in von Arnim’s *Die Gunderode*,

44 *New York Daily Tribune*, December 16, 1844, in *Margaret Fuller, Critic*, ed. Bean and Myerson, CD 75.

45 Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* [1845], ed. Larry Reynolds (New York, 1998), 67.

Fuller perceived “Germany” as a topos where Woman is elevated, her education advanced, her intellect respected. For this imagined German womanhood to be sustained, Fuller needed to keep distance from Germany and its real-life women, including von Arnim. The closer such an encounter became geographically and socially possible — Fuller in Europe, Fuller intimate with von Arnim’s friend Arconati-Visconti — the louder the silence.

- 4) The “personal(ity) conjecture.” Could a transatlantic slight — intentional or not — have been operative in Fuller’s silence? The Transcendentalist and theologian Theodore Parker (1810-60) visited von Arnim in May 1843 and recorded in his journal: “She had forgotten Miss Fuller (though she remembered her at length), and the books, but had never read them.”⁴⁶ Perhaps von Arnim’s remark circulated within the Transcendentalist circle and reached Fuller. The timing would correlate with Fuller’s silence: within a month of Parker’s visit *The King’s Book* was published, and three months later the *Schnellpost* review of it appeared in *The Dial*. This in turn invites one to ask: Was von Arnim’s momentary memory lapse upon hearing the name “Fuller” — the name of *Die Günderoode’s* American promoter and translator — real or pretense? And perhaps the Arconati Visconti — von Arnim friendship should be questioned.⁴⁷ In 1847, when Arconati-Visconti befriended Fuller in Milan, did she attempt to mend the broken bond between Fuller and von Arnim? Or had her own friendship with von Arnim turned sour, such that negative mention of von Arnim would have intensified Fuller’s ambivalence — if not resentment — and silence?

Readers of Fuller’s letters and the reliable biographies⁴⁸ understand her complexity and can easily ascribe her silence to an intricate mix of these conjectures, as well as to any additional unknowables. And yet, what would appear meaningful for future studies is not a continued detective hunt about the loss of Fuller’s emotional, spiritual, or intellectual connection to von Arnim. Instead, broad-based questions about “speaking truth to divergent powers” open the door to wider exploration. To what extent did differences in national political systems complicate transatlantic bonds among nineteenth-century activist women? Did transatlantic differences also curb European activists’ borrowings of discursive and organizing strategies from their American counterparts? Von Arnim clearly saw no point to looking transatlantically, at least not in her writings. In fact, the only German women activists of this era who did so publicly were those who

46 Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, *Recollections of Seventy Years*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1909) 2:551; eventually Parker’s papers were turned over to the Andover-Harvard Theological Library, see bMS 101/2 (1). Journal, Volume Two, January 1, 1841-October 26, 1843. The books refer to a packet accompanying Fuller’s letter to von Arnim; included was the first issue of *The Dial* and a volume by the poet and German translator John Dwight. See Hudspeth 2:181-82, Fuller’s letter of Nov. 7, 1840, in which she told Emerson what she was sending along with the letter to von Arnim.

47 In 1834, while Costanza Arconati Visconti and her husband Giuseppe were residing in Berlin, King Friedrich Wilhelm III — acting under pressure from the Habsburg monarchy’s repressive foreign minister and chancellor Klaus Metternich — expelled them on the grounds of their support for the Italian Unification Movement.

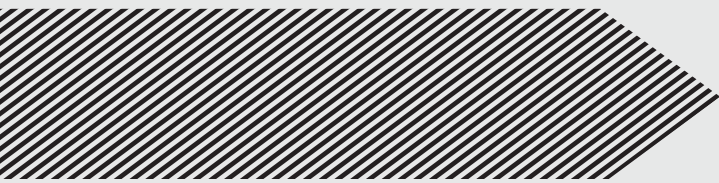
48 I have already referred to two of these in these pages, including Joan von Mehren, *Minerva and the Muse* (Amherst, 1995); and Charles Capper, *Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life* (New York, 2007); others include John Matteson, *The Lives of Margaret Fuller: A Biography* (New York, 2012); Meg McGavran Murray, *Margaret Fuller, Wandering Pilgrim* (Athens, GA, 2012 [2008]); and Megan Marshall, *Margaret Fuller: A New American Life* (Boston, 2013).

emigrated to the United States upon the failure of the 1848 revolution to achieve a constitutional government.⁴⁹

And these questions elicit still others: To what extent did awareness of divergent power structures contribute to transatlantic borrowing or dismissal? Which “lobbying” approaches — to monarchs, presidents, prime ministers, parliamentarians, congressmen, or local political figures — found transatlantic cross-fertilization? In which contexts were transatlantically shared outreach strategies empowering or, conversely, counterproductive? Along this line of inquiry, we might posit of Fuller and von Arnim that their synchronous turn to socialist rhetoric offered a transnational bridge across, if not a break in, the silence.

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⁴⁹ The most renowned was Mathilde Franziska Anneke (1817-84), a feminist newspaper editor, school founder, writer, and lecturer based in Milwaukee. Maria M. Wagner, “Mathilde Franziska Anneke,” *Encyclopedia of 1848 Revolutions*, ed. James Chastain: <https://www.ohio.edu/chastain/ac/anneke.htm>, last accessed July 12, 2017.



Women's International Networks

TRANSATLANTIC NETWORKS FOR LEGAL FEMINISM, 1888-1912

Sara L. Kimble

Introduction

Among the striking figures of the late nineteenth century were the new “Portias,” the female jurists and lawyers who emerged from American and European law schools. Frequently isolated from their female peers by geography and circumstance, these similarly situated women created networks that laid the groundwork for their most significant contributions: gendered analysis of laws, challenges to male privileges, and legal reform advocacy.

In academic scholarship, the term “legal feminism” is associated with Americans Catharine A. MacKinnon and Ann Scales, whose influential works from the 1970s and 1980s provided important critiques of gender inequality produced in and through the law.¹ Scales defined legal feminism as “the concrete analysis of systematic oppressions, which analysis has led to a critique of objectivity in epistemological, psychological, and social — as well as legal — terms.”² I contend that this type of concrete and systematic analysis of law as an oppressive force in women’s experience has its own history with origins located in the nineteenth-century transatlantic world. Legal criticism of women’s status existed before this moment, of course, but comprehensive analysis of the inequalities produced through law occurred systematically at the intersection of formal legal studies and the women’s rights movement. In 1868, French women’s rights leader Maria Deraismes wrote that women’s



“Portias of Today” from the *London Illustrated News*, November 13, 1897. Features Americans Florence Cronise and her sister Annette Cronise Lutes (Ohio), Ella Knowles Haskell (Montana), Clara Foltz (California), Mary Greene (Massachusetts), Catharine Waugh McCulloch (Illinois); Cornelia Sorabji (British colonial India); and Europeans Anna Akkeson (Finland), Anita Augspurg (Germany), Emilie Kempin-Spyri (Switzerland), and Lidia Pöet (Italy).

- 1 Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge, 1989).
- 2 Ann Scales, *Legal Feminism: Activism, Lawyering, and Legal Theory* (New York, 2006), 83.

inferiority was not a fact of nature but “a human invention and a social fiction” reinforced by laws.³ Deraismes’s central point was that gender relations were dynamic, subject to change, and the product of human decision-making. Deraismes’s description is familiar to us as the “social construction of gender.”⁴ She understood that sex inequality could be radically altered by human action, the logical consequence for those who favored the amelioration of women’s legal condition was to destabilize the politico-legal and social structures of oppression, a process facilitated by the bonds forged in the transatlantic world.

Historians have established that the term “*féminisme*” gained currency after French suffrage activist Hubertine Auclert called for women’s equal political rights and equal access to professional work in 1878 at the International Congress for the Rights of Women in Paris (Congrès international du droit des femmes) and used the term in her newspaper *La citoyenne* from 1882.⁵ Prior to Auclert’s usage, the term connoted “feminization” or to make “effeminate,” notably in medical literature.⁶ Florence Rochefort and I argue separately that university law classes and legal theses in the nineteenth century were influential in the dissemination of the modern definition of *féminisme* to mean a militant and subversive ideology favoring the equality of the sexes.⁷ In France, legal and political circles were closely aligned at the time, resulting in both abstract debates on gender and equality, and considerations of the practical application of equality in the law.⁸ Pivotal to these developments was Jeanne Chauvin’s defense of her doctoral thesis in law in Paris with its argument in favor of women’s equality and their admission to all professions (July 1892).⁹ Inequality was pernicious and unjustifiable, Chauvin argued: “It is the subordination of women, it is the principle of the subordination of women and their social uselessness that leads our society to ruin!”¹⁰ Legal feminists like Chauvin were critical of the multiple disadvantages experienced by women, especially wives, whether under family law, common law, the civil codes, or national legislation. Little wonder that legal observers remarked that discussions about “feminism” were habitual among “moralists,” “philosophers,” “eminent jurists,” and “gravely concerned professors.”¹¹

3 Deraismes (1828–1894), quoted in Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford, 2000), 143.

4 Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 9, no. 5 (Dec. 1986): 1053–75.

5 Hubertine Auclert, *Égalité sociale et politique de la femme et de l’homme: Discours prononcé au Congrès ouvrier socialiste de Marseille* (Marseilles, 1879), 14. On the role of Auclert (1848–1914), see Offen, *European Feminisms*, 19–20; Karen Offen, “On the French Origin of the Words Feminism and Feminist,” *Feminist Issues* 8, no. 2 (June 1988): 45–51.

6 Jean-Baptiste Richard, *Enrichissement de la langue française, dictionnaire de mots nouveaux* (Paris, 1845), 189.

7 Florence Rochefort, “Du droit des femmes au féminisme en Europe 1860–1914,” in *Encyclopédie politique et historique des femmes*, ed. Christine Fauré, 551–70 (Paris, 1997). See also Sara L. Kimble, *Women, Feminism, and the Law: Justice Redressed* (New York, forthcoming, 2018).

8 Charles Sowerwine, “Revising the Sexual Contract: Women’s Citizenship and Republicanism in France, 1789–1944,” in *Confronting Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle France: Bodies, Minds and Gender*, ed. Christopher Forth and Elinor Accampo, 19–42 (London, 2010).

9 Jeanne Chauvin (1862–1926), *Étude historique sur les professions accessible aux femmes: Influence du sémitisme sur l’évolution de la position économique de la femme dans la société* (Paris, 1892).

10 Jeanne Chauvin, “Conférence sur le féminisme en France,” *Salle de globe* [Paris], March 23, 1898, Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris.

11 Urbain Touchard, *De la condition légale*

de la femme, discours prononcé à la séance solennelle de la réouverture de la conférence des avocats stagiaires, le 17 décembre 1892. Barreau de Poitiers (Poitiers, 1893), 5.

Bordeaux's lawyer Urbain Touchard predicted that such debates would conclude with women's "imminent" emancipation by the French National Assembly, given that the acceptance of sex equality "yesterday seemed unlikely to leave the realm of utopia has become reality today."¹² In these late-nineteenth-century debates, feminism meant a change in the balance of power between men and women to render the opportunities for women in private and public life more expansive and thus more equal. Their critiques were systematic and comprehensive, and followed by instrumental legal reform proposals.

The central purpose of this article is to identify patterns of action within the transatlantic origins of legal feminism during the Belle Époque (1871–1914) to highlight examples of their cooperative efforts and their limitations. I argue that an analysis of the public debate on the role of law and legal action in the struggle for women's rights reveals a pattern of systematic thought and behavior among legal activists, evidenced in the records of international congresses, published documents, and archival materials. This research is inspired by the methods of *histoire croisée*, applied here to explore the exchanges of ideas about women's rights in preparation for a future evaluation of the impact of these interactions in societies located on either side of the Atlantic.¹³

This study examines three key areas of exchange among these legally oriented figures: ideas, alliances, and practices. First, these figures focused on the transfer of knowledge on women's rights that provided a foundation for how the oppression of women could be resolved through legal and political strategies. Second, women, and a few men, built transnational alliances in conference meetings, in the context of legal education, in the operation of legal aid clinics, and through the diffusion of popular legal knowledge.¹⁴ Third, their pattern of shared practices and approaches in multiple countries contributed to legal reform campaigns on the national and international levels. I

1890s to the Present, ed. Francisca De Haan, Margaret Allen, June Purvis, and Krassimira Daskalova, 15–28 (New York, 2012); Karen Offen, ed., *Globalizing Feminisms, 1789–1945* (London, 2010); Karen Offen, "Understanding Feminisms as 'Transnational' — an Anachronism: May Wright Sewall and the Creation of the International Council of Women, 1889–1904," in *Gender History in a Transnational Perspective: Networks, Biographies, Gender Orders*, ed. Oliver Janz and Daniel Schönplflug, 25–45 (New York, 2014); Marie Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism: Identity and Sisterhood between the World Wars* (London, 2015).

12 Touchard, *De la condition légale de la femme*, 6n2.

13 Listed chronologically: Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, 1997); Gisela Shaw, "Conflicting Agendas: The First Female Jurists in Germany,"

International Journal of the Legal Profession, 10, no. 2 (July 2003): 177–191; Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950*; Julie Carlier, "Forgotten Transnational Connections and National Contexts: An 'Entangled History' of the Political Transfers That Shaped Belgian Feminism,

1890–1914," *Women's History Review* 19, no. 4 (2010): 503–22; Karen Offen, "Overcoming Hierarchies through Internationalism: May Wright Sewall's Engagement with the International Council of Women (1888–1904)," in *Women's Activism: Global Perspectives from the*

14 I have discussed the rise of a genre of legal journalism in France: Sara L. Kimble, "Popular Legal Journalism in the Writing of Maria Verone," *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History* 39 (2011): 224–35.

contend that the promotion of women's rights through legal reforms accelerated with the entrance of women into the legal profession when the new practitioners frequently used their legal knowledge and networks to cultivate a social justice movement.¹⁵ Formally trained female lawyers worked with various others to bring the proposed reforms into actionable forms. The feminist critique of law and legal practice they promoted exposed the law as not nearly as neutral, objective, or just as was often claimed. Rather, they revealed that the law was fundamentally gendered, usually to the detriment of women. Collectively, these theoretical contributions and practical efforts contributed to the articulation of legal feminism. To write a history of legal feminism, defined in part as the advocacy of fair and just treatment of women under the law in recognition of their rights and capacities, necessitates a deep analysis of intellectual and political engagement with the forces and structures of inequality. This history is intimately related to the rise of transatlantic organized women's rights movements during the late nineteenth century.

Married Women under Common Law and the Transnational Napoleonic Civil Code

Transatlantic women's rights movements called for legal reforms, yet these partners did not share the same foundation to their legal systems, which was a complicating factor in their ability to cooperate. Nevertheless, an essential commonality in English common law and the European civil codes was the similar treatment of married women wherein the act of marriage stripped them of their civil capacity. From the early seventeenth century, married women in England were denied the right to contract and control property because they were considered to have no separate legal identity, in contrast to unmarried women and to men.¹⁶ In defining the power relations within marriage under coverture, jurist William Blackstone famously remarked, "By marriage the husband and the wife are one person in law; that is, the very being or legal existence of woman is suspended during marriage."¹⁷ In France, a married woman's position had been more advantageous prior to the consolidation of the civil code under Napoleon in 1804. The call for a comprehensive overhaul of women's rights under the French civil code emphasized, on the questions of spousal "obedience" (Article 213), the requirement of joint residency and a common household (Article 214), and unequal punishment in cases of adultery. The notorious Article 1124 denied married women their legal rights and placed them on the same tier as minors,

15 For examples, see Sara L. Kimble and Marion Röwekamp, eds., *New Perspectives on Modern European Women's Legal History* (New York, 2017), part 2.

16 "Feme covert," *OED Online*, Oxford University Press (March 2015), accessed June 5, 2015.

17 William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 12th ed. (Oxford, 1973-1975; originally 1765), 445.

criminals, and the mentally deficient. Male authority also extended over children, communal property, and separate property. Due to war and conflict, this code broadly influenced women's legal status in Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, and their former colonies, as well as in Germany, Romania, Quebec, and Louisiana.

Female jurists and lawyers played sustained roles in extending the criticism of the legal oppression of women and the arguments for reform articulated at the 1878 Congress for Women's Rights, the world's first.¹⁸ Belgian law graduate Marie Popelin criticized the Napoleonic civil code in 1889 because it "contain[ed] all these absurd and unjust laws that abase the women, placing the girl, the widow, and the spouse, outside of thinking humanity."¹⁹ Concurrently, Swiss jurist Emilie Kempin-Spyri criticized the German civil code for subjecting married women to "the rusty fetters of a thousand-year old tradition."²⁰ Although the precise locus of their political animus differed, activists were convinced that legal reform of women's rights was an essential goal to be facilitated through multipronged transnational campaigns.

Intellectual Foundations within Transatlantic Exchanges, 1870s-1880s

Historians have documented the long history of intellectual arguments in favor of improving the legal, social, and political condition of women.²¹ The founding of the French League for Women's Rights (Ligue française pour le droit des femmes) in 1869 was a crucial development in the women's rights movement in France that would soon generate connections with transatlantic partners. When the feminist reformer Léon Richer and journalist Maria Deraismes created this association, they claimed equal rights for married women as persons and celebrated their American "overseas sisters" who "energetically demand[ed]" full equal and political rights.²² These respectful remarks sowed seeds of reciprocity. In 1874, American education reformer Elizabeth Thompson of the International Woman's Educational League (est. 1873) sought out Richer in Paris to consult with him on questions of women's education and how to reform "oppressive"

Rochefort, *L'égalité en marche: Le féminisme sous la Troisième République* (Paris, 1989); Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Albany, 1984); Karen Offen, "The Beginnings of 'Scientific' Women's History in France, 1830-1848," *Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History*, November 3-5, 1983, Riverside, California (Lawrence, 1984), 255-71; Sylvia Paletschek and Bianka Pietrow-Ennker, eds., *Women's Emancipation Movements in the Nineteenth Century: A European Perspective* (Stanford, 2003).

18 See Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950*, 151-54.

19 Marie Popelin (1846-1913), in *Congrès français et international au droit des femmes, Paris 1889*

(Paris, 1889), 238-45, 240.

20 Quoted in Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Western Europe, 1890-1970* (New York, 2005), 46.

21 Notable contributions from France include Edouard Laboulaye, Ernest Legouvé, Julie Daubié, and Paul Gide. On nineteenth-century women's emancipation efforts in France, see Laurence Klejman and Florence

22 Léon Richer (1824-1911), "La part des femmes," May 1, 1869, *Le droit des femmes*, quoted in Paulette Bascou-Bance, *La mémoire des femmes: Anthologie* (Cestas, Gironde, 2002), 226.

marriage laws.²³ In 1880, French lawyer Léon Giraud looked to the United States for models of gender equality. Giraud's comparative study of the legal condition of women in Europe and the United States, titled *Essai sur la condition des femmes en Europe et en Amérique*, called for women's equality and condemned the tyrannical nature of the Napoleonic code.²⁴ Consequently, Giraud's work directly influenced American journalist Theodore Stanton's *The Woman Question in Europe* (1884).²⁵ Stanton wrote: "Never, in a word, was the idea of justice to women more foreign to any code of laws than that of 1804."²⁶ Stanton's chapter on France relied on French publications by Richer, Giraud, and Auclert to convey the unequal nature of women's status and to chart a possible path for expanding their rights. Stanton's text reached British and American audiences and accordingly expedited transnational connections.²⁷ We need more evidence to determine the degree to which these events strengthened "the idea that America's vigorous young democracy was showing the Old World the way in respect of women's rights."²⁸ Nonetheless, multiple points of comparison demonstrate that the transatlantic relationships were complex, with activists and thinkers who viewed their counterparts in other countries as allies, models, or mirrors, within a landscape where information flowed multilaterally.²⁹

Women's Altruism and Legal Service

In Europe and the US, feminist legal action often took the form of services offered at the grassroots level.³⁰ Pioneering feminist lawyers

23 In 1874, for example, Richer was consulted in Paris by Americans representing the International Woman's Educational League, according to "Woman's Educational League: Objects of the Association Satisfactory Reports from Foreign Countries," *New York Times*, Oct. 27, 1874, 8. Thompson appears to have been drawn to Europe by the pacifist and international law movement animated by French Saint-Simonian Charles Lemonnier and the Ligue internationale de la paix et de la liberté. Thompson participated in the 1874 Geneva conference of the Congrès de la paix et de la liberté (Geneva) (*Le Temps*, Sept. 12, 1874). An American member writing as "K" (who was perhaps botanist and suffragist Kate Newell Doggett) asserted that the Ligue should support women "to conquer" the right to "exercise their rights." See "Correspondance," *Les États unis d'Europe: Organe de la Ligue internationale de la paix et de la liberté*, July 24, 1873, 4. On Lemonnier and the Ligue, see Sandi E. Cooper, *Patriotic Pacifism: Waging War on War in Europe, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 1991), 36-50.

24 See also Léon Giraud (1852-1893; pseud. Draigu), *Le roman de la femme chrétienne: Étude historique*, preface by Hubertine Auclert (Paris, 1880); Giraud, *Essai sur la condition des femmes en Europe et en Amérique* (Paris, 1880; 1882), 381-82.

25 Theodore Stanton (1851-1925), "France," *The Woman Question in Europe: A Series of Original Essays* (New York, 1884), 234-309. Stanton cited Giraud's *Essai* and also his *Souvenirs du congrès* [apropos to the 1878 Congress] in *The Woman Question in Europe*, 249-50.

26 Stanton, "France," *The Woman Question in Europe*, 251. Stanton's text, edited in part by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, was a collection of seventeen essays by female leaders of the movement.

27 See Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950*, 153. On editing, see Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences 1815-1897* (Boston, 1993), 344, quoted in Mineke Bosch, "'The Woman Question in Europe' in European History," contribution to the web feature "European history — gender history" in *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte* (2009), <http://www.europa.clio-online.de/2009/Article=418>, accessed March 22, 2016.

28 Bosch, "'The Woman Question in Europe.'"

29 Another important text to be considered is Louis Bridel's *Étude historique sur la condition des femmes* (Pichon, 1884), which considers the American family in comparative perspective (see pp. 123-33). Bridel (1852-1913) was a Swiss professor of law (in Geneva and Tokyo), a member of the Association genevoise pour la réforme de la condition légale de la femme, and active

in the cantonal laws that extended civic rights (*droits civils*) to women. He also directed the *Revue de morale sociale*.

30 Selected texts from the rich historiography on nineteenth century women's history includes Bonnie S. Anderson, *Joyous Greetings: The First International Women's Movement, 1830-1860* (Oxford, 2000); Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950*, and *Globalizing Feminisms, 1789-1945*; Rupp, *Worlds of Women*; Patricia Ward D'Itri, *Cross Currents in the International Women's Movement, 1848-1948* (Bowling Green, 1999).

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in the late nineteenth century worked to disseminate legal information to the public and provide legal aid to needy populations. Researchers have identified this pattern of practice in the late 1880s in the urban centers of New York, Paris, Dresden, and beyond.³¹ In New York, an unusual team of female attorneys ran the Arbitration Society (est. 1887) to provide legal counsel to indigent women.³² This society was spearheaded by American attorney Fanny B. Weber and her Swiss counterpart Emilie Kempin-Spyri. In 1888, Kempin-Spyri moved from Zurich (where the bar was still closed to women) to New York to work in her chosen field and provide aid to women through law.³³ Although little money was available to support their pro bono efforts, Weber and Kempin-Spyri's initial labors set a precedent of transatlantic cooperation and altruistic lawyering. Ultimately, however, their work was superseded by the establishment of professional legal aid societies.³⁴ Kempin-Spyri's efforts concluded with a return to Europe (Berlin) to participate briefly in the women's rights movement against the German civil code, with emphasis on family law reform.³⁵ Kempin-Spyri's story was part of a broader pattern whereby grassroots education, legal practice, and political activism were interwoven into her life and the structures of transatlantic exchange.

In the decades before German women were officially admitted to the legal profession, women's rights reformers established legal aid clinics to address women's needs and mobilized to build the women's rights movement. In 1894, Marie Stritt, catalyzed by Kempin-Spyri, established the first women's bureau of legal aid that assisted thousands of applicants annually in Dresden.³⁶ There were over ninety such legal aid societies by 1909.³⁷ Anita Augspurg and Marie Raschke both worked

31 This movement's *Cahiers féministes* (Brussels) published notices about Anita Augspurg's law classes for women on multiple occasions, including July 15 and August 1, 1898. This movement was larger than what I can address here. See details on the pioneering feminist lawyers' movement in chapters on Belgium, Estonia, Poland, Romania, Spain, and Yugoslavia in Kimble and Röwekamp, eds., *New Perspectives*.

32 Felice Batlan has argued that the kind of women-specific legal aid provided by the Arbitrary Society was replaced by rival organizations that sought to professionalize legal aid services and distance it from the world of sentimental charity. Felice Batlan, "The Birth of Legal Aid: Gender Ideologies, Women, and the Bar in New York City, 1863-1910," *Law and History Review* 28, no. 4 (2010): 931-72. Jill Norgren briefly mentions Weber and "Emily Kempin" [sic]

in *Rebels at the Bar: The Fascinating, Forgotten Stories of America's First Women Lawyers* (New York, 2013), 246n50.

33 Julie Carlier, "Moving beyond Boundaries: An Entangled History of Feminism in Belgium, 1890-1914" (Dissertation, University of Ghent, 2010), 58; "Emilie Kempin[-Spyri]," in *Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse*, <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/F/F9342.php>, accessed Feb. 2, 2011.

34 On women and American legal aid, see Felice Batlan, *Women and Justice for the Poor: A History of Legal Aid, 1863-1945* (New York, 2015).

35 Virginia G. Drachman, *Sisters in Law: Women Lawyers in Modern American History* (Cambridge, 1998), 123.

36 Frieda Bertha Zeeb, "The Mobility of the German Woman," *The American Journal of Sociology* 21, no. 2 (September 1915): 234-62, 254.

37 Ida Kirch, "Legal Aid for Women in Germany," *The Legal Aid Review* 7, no. 3 (July 1909): 17-19. Kirch (1870-1928) ran a legal protection office in Frankfurt and traveled to the US to observe American methods of legal aid and juvenile justice on several occasions. See Ida Kirch in Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine, *Jahrbuch* (Leipzig, 1912), 98.

as “lay lawyers” after completing their degrees abroad (Zurich, 1897; Bern, 1899, respectively), as they were barred from the practice of law in public or private positions within Germany.³⁸ Distressed by the legal inequalities that confronted women under the German legal code, Augspurg brought colleagues such as Stritt to petition for improved marriage and family laws. Stritt, a self-taught lay lawyer, called for full independence and civil equality for wives and mothers for the sake of the family, state, and society, emboldened by the solidarity gained through her role in the Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine (BDF) legal committee.³⁹ Collectively, these women used their legal expertise to disseminate legal knowledge and legal aid for the broader purpose of building the women’s rights movement.⁴⁰ By 1904, Augspurg became vice-president of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) where she prioritized women’s legal and political rights reforms. Stritt also campaigned against regulated prostitution with Josephine Butler (Britain) and in favor of women’s suffrage. Under IWSA auspices, Stritt coordinated with lawyers Maria Vérone (France) and Chrystal Macmillan (Scotland) on the book *Woman Suffrage in Practice* (1913). This was a systematic compilation of the current status of women’s political rights, which asserted societal benefits to women’s participation, and was designed to energize additional political action.⁴¹ This publication, a result of transnational cooperation, bought the “issue of women’s political rights out from the realm of utopia into the realm of objective realities.”⁴² The data collected transnationally were further disseminated by lawyers, including Vérone, who lectured her colleagues at the Société de législation comparée on the societal benefits of women’s enfranchisement in Australia and New Zealand.⁴³

The dissemination of legal and political information to women affected a discrete revolution. In France, Jeanne Chauvin spearheaded the effort to open the bar to all women, offered legal classes for women at municipal town halls, and taught female pupils on the foundations of legal and civic knowledge in the Parisian school system.⁴⁴ The French women entering the all-male profession of law emphasized that their work would serve the needs of the disadvantaged

38 On the work of Stritt (1855–1928), Augspurg (1857–1943), and Raschke (1850–1935) in Germany, see Elke Schüller, *Marie Stritt — Eine „kampffrohe Streiterin“ in der Frauenbewegung (1855–1928)* (Königstein, 2005); Christiane Berneike, *Die Frauenfrage ist Rechtsfrage. Die Juristinnen der deutschen Frauenbewegung um das Bürgerliche Gesetzbuch* (Baden-Baden, 1995), 44–66 (Augspurg), 67–80 (Raschke); Ute Gerhard, *Debating Women’s Equality: Toward a Feminist Theory of Law from a European Perspective* (New Brunswick, 2001), 104–105; Marion Röwekamp, “Women, Equal Rights, and the Legal Profession in Germany, 1895–1933,” in *New Perspectives*, ed. Kimble and Röwekamp, 247–71.

39 See Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, 45–46.

40 Gisela Shaw, “Conflicting Agendas: The First Female Jurists in Germany,” *International Journal of the Legal Profession* 10, no. 2 (July 2003): 177–91.

41 International Alliance of Women, Chrystal Macmillan, Marie Stritt, and Maria Vérone, *Woman Suffrage in Practice* (London, New York, 1913).

42 Odile Rudelle, “Political Rights of European Women: An Assessment of the Two World Wars,” in *Political and Historical Encyclopedia of Women*, ed. Christine Fauré, 327–45, 328 (New York/London, 2003).

43 Vérone’s lecture is quoted in “Séance du 21 mars 1914,” *Bulletin de la Société de législation comparée*, no. 4–6 (1914): 218–25. She argued that female voters catalyzed legislation that served the defense of the “family

and society,” e.g., married women’s property rights, equal pay for teachers, closure of brothels, and reduction of alcohol sales.

44 Sara L. Kimble, “Feminist Lawyers and Political

Change in Modern France, 1900–1940,” chapter 2 in *Women in Law and Law-making in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Europe*, ed. Eva Schandevyl, 45–73 (Aldershot, 2014).

and disenfranchised through their unique contributions as women. Chauvin characterized herself as a defender of “widows and orphans,”⁴⁵ and her counterpart in Toulouse, Marguerite Dilhan, devoted herself to the “weakest” in society, meaning women and juvenile delinquents.⁴⁶ In Dilhan’s case, this meant working within charitable associations (*sociétés patronage*) as well as in her legal practice.⁴⁷ As a whole, this cadre focused on addressing the legal needs of disadvantaged groups, including troubled youth, the urban poor, refugees, and women in difficult circumstances, and constituted a form of maternalistic legal feminism. As they exhibited a commitment to civil reforms and grassroots uplift, these women displayed their legal authority and demonstrated women’s capacity to operate in the public sphere in opposition to expectations about their roles. They secondarily conceded that financial necessity required some remuneration for their work.⁴⁸ The altruism exhibited among pioneering female lawyers in the United States and Europe reinforced traditional expectations of women as philanthropic and maternal, yet with adaptations for this era of the “new woman.”⁴⁹ Many feminist lawyers publicized their own efforts to protect vulnerable women and children in contrast to the alleged failures of masculine chivalry.⁵⁰ French Christian feminist Marie Maugeret called for these “*doctoresse[s]* in law” to be civically oriented and usefully employed: “to open a public class in law [*droit à l’usage*] for women” that would inform women of their situation under the Napoleonic Code in a protective manner, and “to open an office for free legal consultations for women without resources or too proud to turn to judicial assistance.”⁵¹ Other civic maternalists argued that women’s mothering skills singularly qualified them for roles in the public sphere and in the professions — whether as doctors, teachers, inspectors, or lawyers — that subverted women’s primary consignment to domesticity.⁵² By 1904, Dutch feminist lawyer E. C. van Dorp argued that feminine qualities such as “a gentle, kindly disposition, a sense of justice and protection towards the weak,” as well as a commitment to altruism, made women well suited for legal work.⁵³ Such gendered norms provided rationales for women’s

48 There are multiple cases in France and the United States of women seeking careers in law to earn a respectable income for themselves and their dependents. Jeanne Chauvin supported herself and her widowed mother.

49 Cf. Ann Heilmann and Margaret Beetham, eds., *New Woman Hybridities: Femininity, Feminism, and International Consumer, 1880–1930* (Routledge, 2004; 2012).

50 On masculinity in France, see Robert Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (Berkeley, 1998).

51 Marie Maugeret (1844–1928), “La femme avocat,” *Le féminisme chrétien* 6, no. 1 (1901): 1–7.

52 Linda L. Clark, “Feminist Maternalists and the French State: Two Inspectresses General in the Pre-World War Third Republic,” *Journal of Women’s History* 12, no. 1 (2000): 32–59; Linda L. Clark, *The Rise of Professional Women in France: Gender and Public Administration since 1830* (Cambridge, 2000). On maternalism in a comparative context, see Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, “Womanly Duties, Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain and the United States, 1880–1920,” *American Historical Review* 95 (1990): 1076–1108.

53 E. C. [Elisabeth Carolina] van Dorp, quoted in *The International Council of Women: From 1899 to 1904*, ed. May Wright Sewall (Boston, 1909), 51.

45 “Mlle Jeanne Chauvin, docteur en droit,” *L’éclair*, October 30, 1897, 2.

L’ouest France, March 7, 1929.

Congrès national du patronage des libérés et des enfants traduits en justice (Toulouse, 21–25 mai 1907), “*Bulletin de l’Union des sociétés de patronage de France*, 13, no. 1 (1907): 140–208.

46 J. L., “A Paris, les avocates fêtent la jubilé de leur doyenne,”

47 Dilhan (1876–1956) served as *rapporteur général* and instigated votes to improve women’s condition in detention, “VII^e

entree into work traditionally associated with masculine characteristics and previously reserved for men only.

Grassroots legal work provided feminist lawyers with a realistic understanding of the ways in which laws constrained human experience and exerted a disparate impact on girls and women.⁵⁴ Initial evidence reveals that the provision of legal services, usually by women for women, reached an underserved population through education, consciousness-raising, and pragmatic support. These grassroots efforts became the foundation of comparative legal criticism and political reform action, which was facilitated through national and transnational women's rights associations and professional associations.

54 The intertwined nature of the legal profession and political activism among female lawyers in France and Germany is the argument that Marion Röwekamp and I advance in *New Perspectives*.

55 The initial council consisted of president Catharine V. Waite (1829-1913) of Chicago; general secretary Ada M. Bittenbender (1848-1925) of Lincoln, Nebraska; general treasurer J. Ellen Foster (1840-1910) of Clinton, Iowa; and secretaries Eliza Orme (1848-1937) of London; Lidia Poët (1855-1949) of Turin, Italy; Madame Evreinova (dates unknown) of St. Petersburg; E. Kempin of Zurich, Switzerland; Almeda E. Hitchcock (1828-1895) of Hilo, Hawaii; and Lelia J. Robinson (1850-1891) of Boston and Seattle. Ada M. Bittenbender, "Woman in Law," *Chicago Law Times* 2, no. 3 (1888): 301-309.

56 Kathi L. Kern, "The Cornerstone of a New Civilization: The First International Council of Women and the Campaign for Social Purity," *Kentucky Law Journal* 84, no. 4 (1995-1996): 1235-47, 1246.

57 *Report of the International Council of Women, 1888* (Washington, DC: National Woman Suffrage Association, 1888), 176.

58 Mary Jane Mossman, *The First Women Lawyers: A Comparative Study of Gender, Law and the Legal Professions* (Portland, 2006), 63.

Formal Professional Network Building: The Woman's International Bar Association

The intimacy between the women's movement and the growth of a legal feminist movement is apparent in the creation of the Woman's International Bar Association (WIBA), the first formal legal sorority with international members. This sorority was created at the 1888 International Council of Women (ICW) meeting held in Washington, DC, and was spearheaded by Catharine V. Waite, an Illinois suffragist, lawyer, and publisher of *Chicago Law Times* (est. 1886).⁵⁵ WIBA would likely not have existed without the ICW, an organization that accelerated progress for women "by laying the groundwork for future coalitions of women in reform and professional work."⁵⁶ European and American members of WIBA shared the common goals of removing barriers to women's entrance into law schools, encouraging their advancement in the legal profession, disseminating knowledge about women's legal status, and promoting other legal reforms.⁵⁷

Canadian legal scholar Mary Jane Mossman commented that WIBA and equivalent American legal sororities confirmed the need among female lawyers for "support and collegiality" as "women members of the profession," as they endeavored to articulate their identity as professionals apart from nonprofessional women and distinct from the feminist movement itself.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, female lawyers overlapped significantly with the feminist movement. WIBA functioned as one node of activism that developed in and between European and American cities, and its members' individual dedication to breaking barriers made the most measurable contributions to challenging structural and textual inequalities. In the absence of

WIBA's association records, we must rely on other evidence for the networks that existed among transatlantic legal feminists. To some degree, they could organize around the need to establish professional equality even though the women were differently situated in terms of their rights. The American leaders, including founder Waite, Ada Bittenbender (Nebraska), and J. Ellen Foster (Iowa), had the right to work as lawyers.⁵⁹ Their European counterparts, including Eliza Orme (London), Lidia Poët (Turin), and Emilie Kempin-Spyri (Zurich), were excluded from legal practice.⁶⁰ Yet WIBA members went much further to advance women's rights in family law, constitutional law, and the organization of judicial systems, issues that extended well beyond their own concerns.

Transnational Cooperation to Break Barriers and Advance Women's Rights

The evidence located to date about WIBA reveals that a loose-knit transnational legal sorority functioned within and beyond women's rights associations with goals specific to breaking legal barriers and advancing legal rights. The campaign to secure women's entrance to the legal profession in Belgium and then in France was facilitated by transatlantic and intra-European cooperation. Belgian reformer Marie Popelin, who earned her law doctorate in Brussels in 1888, endeavored to open the Belgian bar to all women.⁶¹ At the spearhead of this campaign was Louis Frank, a Belgian lawyer, male feminist and author of many works including the influential treatise *La femme-avocat* (1888).⁶² Frank forged connections with the French through Chauvin and with the Americans through Boston lawyer Mary A. Greene. In turn, Greene translated Frank's defense of women's right to work in the legal profession, "The Woman Lawyer," which informed English readers of developments in Europe.⁶³ Among the beneficiaries were the Colorado State Supreme Court judges who cited Frank's evidence in 1891 when they decided in favor of women's admission to the bar on an equal basis.⁶⁴ Their reference to Frank's research signaled the

59 Lelia Josephine Robinson's *Scrap book, 1878-1890*, held at the Chapin Library, Williams College Library, Williamstown, Massachusetts, does not mention WIBA, but she did much to preserve newspaper cuttings and pamphlets concerned with women in the law.

60 *Report of the International Council of Women: Assembled by the National Woman Suffrage Association, Washington, D.C., U.S. of America, March 25 to April 1, 1888*, Volume 1 (Washington, DC, 1888), 177. J. [Judith] Ellen Foster (1840-1910) was admitted to the bar in

Iowa in 1872 and was active in women's suffrage and temperance movements. She traveled to Europe in 1887, to the Philippines in 1900, and later to China and India. David C. Mott, "Judith Ellen Foster," *The Annals of Iowa* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1933): 126-38.

61 See Mossman, *The First Women Lawyers*; and "Popelin, Marie," in *Dictionnaire des femmes belges: XIXe et XXe siècles*, ed. Eliane Gubin, Catherine Jacques, Valérie Piette, and Jean Puissant, 459-62 (Brussels, 2006).

62 Louis Frank (1864-1917), *La Femme-avocat, exposé historique et critique de la question* (Brussels, 1888); revised and reissued for Jeanne Chauvin as Louis Frank, *En cause de Mlle Chauvin: La femme-avocat, exposé historique et critique de la question* (Paris, 1898). Françoise de Bueger-Van Lierde, "Louis Frank, Pionnier du Mouvement Féministe Belge," *Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine* 4/3-4 (1973): 377-92; Ad Knotter, "Louis Frank (1864-1917) en de beperkingen van het mannelijk feminisme," *Historica* 33, no. 2 (2010): 3-5; Jean-Pierre Nandrin, "Le femme-avocate: Le long combat des féministes belges (1888-1922)," *Sextant* 19 (2003): 131-42.

63 Louis Frank, "The Woman Lawyer," trans. Mary A. Greene (1857-1936), in *Chicago Law Times* 3, no. 1 (January 1889): 74-86; 3, no. 2 (April 1889): 120-40; 3, no. 3 (July 1889): 253-68; and 3, no. 4 (October 1889): 382-411.

64 "Supreme Court of Colorado, opinion filed Sept. 14, 1891 in re: [Mary Sternberg] Thomas," *Chicago Legal News* 24 (1891-1892): 62.

global significance of legal feminism, and, in this case, contributed directly to the expansion of women's rights. Frank's correspondence with the US legal community catalyzed Popelin's membership in the legal sorority association called the Equity Club (1886–1890), and Popelin was invited by the American lawyer Belva Lockwood to take up legal practice in Washington, DC.⁶⁵ This reinforced an unequal power dynamic whereby Americans appeared to aid those in the so-called Old World in the modernization of gender relations while the Europeans contributed intellectual leadership to their New World counterparts.

65 The story of the creation of the Belgian women's rights movement itself, as Julie Carlier so effectively demonstrated (in her thesis "Moving beyond Boundaries"), is an entangled history of activism linking Belgian history with that of the French and the Dutch.

66 In the US, rights are state-by-state. See Carlier, "Moving beyond Boundaries"; Sara L. Kimble, "Emancipation through Secularization: French Feminist Views of Muslim Women's Condition in Interwar Algeria," *French Colonial History* 7 (2006): 109–28; Mossman, *The First Women Lawyers*.

67 The judges in Chauvin's case were influenced by Ernest Glasson's opinion, which relied on Frank's *La femme avocat* (1888 ; 1898), and Lucien Leduc's law thesis, *La femme et les projets de lois relatifs à l'extension de sa capacité* (Paris, 1898), as cited in *Dalloz Périodique*, 1898, pt. 2, 185–95.

68 Support from Viviani (1863–1925) was essential for Chauvin's success. See Archives nationales de France, AN C//5659, dossier no. 1734, November 23, 1898.

69 On Schmahl (1846–1916) and Chauvin, see Klejman and Rochefort, *L'égalité en marche*; Sara L. Kimble, "The Rise of 'Modern Portias': Female Lawyers and Activism in Third Republic France," in *New Perspectives*, ed. Kimble and Röwekamp, 125–51.

The debate on the question of women's right to work as lawyers and judges during the Belle Époque led to different outcomes, with transnational significance. In this era, some countries decided to exclude women from the bar (Italy, Belgium, Russia, and England) and others to admit them (United States, Romania, and Norway).⁶⁶ Frank's text *La femme-avocat* mattered not only in the US; it also entered the French legal record as an amicus brief when Jeanne Chauvin challenged her exclusion from the bar in 1897.⁶⁷ Through political maneuvers, Chauvin ultimately secured legislative support from independent socialist politicians, including René Viviani, which resulted in the opening of the bar to women in metropolitan France though not initially in its colonies (law of December 1, 1900).⁶⁸

The efforts in professional barrier-breaking also coincided with grassroots political reforms. In Paris, Chauvin collaborated with the Belgian Women's Rights League to promote women's education and civil rights in their newspaper and in her other publications. Chauvin also worked closely with British-born and French-educated activist Jeanne Schmahl in her association, The Forerunner (*L'avant courrière*). Chauvin used her legal skills to draft legislation that would secure for all women in France the right to serve as witnesses in civil acts (1897) and for married women the right to control their earned income (1907). Schmahl served as a lobbyist. Their legislative successes were, in turn, emulated by Frank in Belgium.⁶⁹ These Europeans fueled and reinforced each other and give historians the impression that they worked as equals, less divided by language, geographical distance, or power — factors that appeared to occasionally trouble the relationships between Europeans and Americans.

The power of this early form of legal feminism as ideology and practice is apparent in the history of international conferences where campaigns for legal equality were central to the platforms. Paris hosted two important congresses in 1889 in conjunction with the Universal

Exposition that fostered connections among legal activists. American ICW president May Wright Sewall (1899–1904), for one, provided an inspiring, even “contagious,” example of activism as she promoted the message of internationalism by emphasizing the solidarity of humanity, the Golden Rule, equality, and democracy at the Congrès français et international au droit des femmes.⁷⁰ At the Congrès international des oeuvres et institutions féminine devoted to women’s work and associations, Belva Lockwood, a pioneering lawyer from Washington, DC, celebrated the progress of women in the work world. She had secured a legislative triumph for women’s rights when she was authorized to plead cases before the US Supreme Court.⁷¹ Lockwood optimistically predicted to her audience that all those who claimed equality before the law would, eventually, benefit from it, and, in turn, society as a whole would be speedily transformed as women entered public life.⁷² A simple solution was proposed to establish equality in France: by altering the Declaration of the Rights of Man by two words so that it read “All citizens *and citizenesses* are equal under the law,” married women’s rights could be established (suppressing the detested Article 213 of the civil code, which required wives’ “obedience” to husbands), and all other laws could be applied equally to men and women.⁷³ The conferences reveal jurists’ and lawyers’ instrumentalist approach to law and an optimism in the power of law to work for, rather than against, women’s socio-political emancipation.

Comprehensive reforms were simpler to declare than to enact. At the ICW congress Popelin called for women of different nationalities to recognize their commonalities and band together to secure legal equality.⁷⁴ Popelin and her counterparts debated at length how to dismantle women’s unequal legal status and how to create an international court for arbitration — evidence of their belief that international law held great potential as a tool for instituting equality within national contexts.⁷⁵ They wanted to create a forum to address women’s rights internationally as they worked from a conviction that all humans were endowed with universal rights.⁷⁶

Transatlantic conferences brought women’s voices to prominent audiences and drew sharp contrasts between women’s intellectual prowess and their second-class citizenship. A direct confrontation occurred at

70 On Sewall (1844–1920), see Offen, “Understanding Feminisms as ‘Transnational,’” 35.

71 *Exposition universelle internationale de 1889: Actes du congrès international des oeuvres et institutions féminines* (Paris, July 12–18,

1889) (Paris, 1890), 437–39. Jill Norgren, *Belva Lockwood: The Woman Who Would Be President* (New York, 2007), 172.

72 *Actes du Congrès international des oeuvres*, 437–39.

73 Rapport by M. Beurdeley, lawyer and mayor of the eighth arrondissement of Paris, read by Mme C. De Ferrer in *Actes du Congrès international des oeuvres*, 506.

74 *Congrès français et international au droit des femmes, Paris 1889*, 238–45, 240.

75 *Ibid.*, 240, 207.

76 Among the important scholarship on internationalism and feminism, see Ann Taylor Allen, Anne Cova, and Jane Purvis, “International Feminism,” *Women’s History Review* 19 (2010): 492–501; Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*; Anderson, *Joyous Greetings*; Rupp, *Worlds of Women*. See also Karen Offen, *The Woman Question in France, 1400–1870*, and *Debating the Woman Question in the French Third Republic, 1870–1920* (both Cambridge, forthcoming, 2017).

the male-dominated Congress on Jurisprudence and Law Reform in Chicago (August 7–12, 1893), where female experts expounded on the intertwined nature of gender and law. Illinois lawyer Myra Bradwell secured the participation of her Boston colleague Mary A. Greene, who provided a comprehensive statutory overview in “Married Women’s Property Acts and Needed Reforms Therein,” and San Francisco lawyer Clara Foltz, who spoke on the role of public defenders. Indian jurist Cornelia Sorabji contributed a paper titled “Legal Status of Women in India,” which called for more legal representation by women for women in Hindu and Muslim courts. Chicago lawyer Mary Ahrens read Londoner Eliza Orme’s “Legal Status of Women in England,” which advocated for women’s improved control over their property.⁷⁷ Jeanne Chauvin’s essay on the subject of women’s legal rights in France argued that the French urgently needed to put their legal codes in agreement with “the needs of equality and social progress,” to “put reason above tradition” and root out prejudicial structures.⁷⁸ Chauvin argued for comprehensive reforms within the family, in society (e.g., education, employment, and civil legal action) in ways that affirmed a fundamental conviction that women merited equal rights. Chauvin later clarified her definition of “*féminisme*,” stating that feminists, since 1789, had argued that the phrase “*droits de l’homme*” must be understood as meaning “*droits de tout être humain*,” so rights would apply to every human being. Feminism, she wrote, existed because “the woman does not have, in either the family or society, the place that she must occupy, by virtue of her dignity as a human being, and in the interests of society.”⁷⁹ Consequently, feminists claim “the right to work, the right to exercise the professions of their choice; they demand civil equality and political equality.”⁸⁰

Legal Questions and Transatlantic Legacies, 1899–1912

By 1894, the ICW advisory council could call upon the intellectual skills of a handful of female legal experts including the Europeans Chauvin, Popelin, and Kempin-Spyri, as well as the Americans Bradwell and Foster.⁸¹ By bringing together jurists from various legal systems, the ICW provided a strong basis for a comparison of women’s legal condition. The analytical and comparative work they undertook occurred outside the supportive context of universities or government agencies; instead, it was led by volunteer associations whose members intended to make feminist voices heard directly or through elected representatives at a time when few women had formal political rights. By 1897, reforming national civil codes had become a mainstream goal within the European women’s rights movement, as it had been for the French for decades.⁸²

77 Bradwell (1831–1894) was the first female lawyer in Illinois and founder of *The Chicago Legal News* (est. 1868). “Law Reform Congress,” *The American Lawyer* 1, no. 17 (1893): 20. See Mary Jane Mossman, “Women Lawyers and Women’s Legal Equality: Reflections on Women Lawyers at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago,” *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 87, no. 2 (2012): 503–19.

78 Jeanne Chauvin, “La condition juridique de la femme française,” Congrès des femmes, Chicago, 1893; Société pour l’amélioration du sort de la femme et la revendication de ses droits; ms. copy in Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand (BMD) Dossier Chauvin, 24.

79 Chauvin, “Conférence sur le féminisme,” 15, 1.

80 Ibid.

81 May Wright Sewall, ed., *The World’s Congress of Representative Women: A Historical Résumé* (Chicago, 1894), Appendix D, 932–39.

82 Isabella Gatti de Gamond, “Qu’est-ce que le féminisme,” *Cahiers féministes*, November 1, 1897.

Marie Stritt condemned the strangling yoke exerted on women through marriage law, and she co-initiated the German women's campaign (*Frauenlandsturm*) to change the civil code.⁸³ Feminist jurists, including Stritt, possessed the requisite expertise to propose legislation, to debate the issues with men in the legal or political spheres, and to provide legal services to female clients; thus informed, they lent their voices to key public debates.⁸⁴ In so doing, they articulated concrete ways to rewrite the social contract along egalitarian lines.

Legal reforms were crucial to the transatlantic women's rights movement, but only in 1899 did the ICW create formal sections devoted to comparative family law questions.⁸⁵ During 1888 to 1899, the approach to legal concerns had been primarily focused within nations because of the difficulty of coordinating legal reforms across nations' legislative barriers and varied legal systems.⁸⁶ The new ICW laws committee was chaired first by German Baroness von Beschwitz (1899-1908), then by French feminist Marie [Mme Charles] d'Abbadie d'Arrast (1909-1913), and later by the Dutch lawyer E. C. [Elisabeth Carolina] van Dorp (1914-1920).⁸⁷ The committee sought expertise from Chauvin, yet (for unknown reasons) Stritt subsequently filled this role, resulting in an initial concentration of leadership by the Germans.⁸⁸ Popelin's vision from 1889 of a common campaign for the study and promotion of legal equality was finally launched at the 1909 Quinquennial Council Meeting in Toronto, when each national council was charged with reporting on the "unequal laws in their respective countries which deal with the relations of women in the Home, the Family, the Municipality, and the State."⁸⁹ The purpose of the reports was to prepare for political action in the form of letters to each government that spoke "to the need for betterment of many of these laws, and the desirability of women taking part in the deliberations equally with men on such laws."⁹⁰ Female jurists and lawyers called for the compilation and analysis of the legal position of women relative to their civil and political capacity, domestic relations, and economic position in order to develop a "comparative study and exposition of the laws concerning marriage and divorce."⁹¹ This

85 I continue to research the ICW's positions on women's access to legal education and advancement in the legal profession, as well as the unique role of women with legal education and/or legal experience in the promotion of the ICW agendas.

86 See Röwekamp in this volume.

87 The "committee on laws concerning domestic relations" changed its name to "committee on laws concerning the legal position of women" in Berlin in 1904. The report from the 1914 ICW meeting in Rome noted the participation of lawyers including Marguerite Pichon-Landry (France), Lydia Poët (Italy), and Ellen Spencer Mussey (United States; 1850-1936).

88 Sewall, *International Council*, 54 (regarding Chauvin). See Röwekamp in this volume.

89 ICW, *Women's Position in the Laws of the Nations: A Compilation of the Laws of Different Countries, Prepared by the I.C.W. Standing Committee on Laws Concerning the Legal Position of Women* (Karlsruhe, 1912), 186.

90 Ibid.

91 May Wright Sewall, *Report of Transactions During the Third Quinquennial Term Terminating with the Third Quinquennial Meeting Held in Berlin, June, 1904* (Boston, 1909), 127.

83 Ute Gerhard, ed., *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts. Von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 1997); Stephan Meder, Arne Duncker, and Andrea Czelk, eds., *Frauenrecht und Rechtsgeschichte. Die Rechtskämpfe der deutschen*

Frauenbewegung (Cologne, 2006); Marianne Weber, *Ehefrau und Mutter in der Rechtsentwicklung: eine Einführung* (Tübingen, 1907), 407-505.

84 There is a growing historiography on the 1893 conference including

Mary Jane Mossman, "Le féminisme and Professionalism in Law," in *Transcending the Boundaries of Law: Generations of Feminism and Legal Theory*, ed. Martha Albertson Fineman, 9-24 (Oxon/New York, 2010).

collaborative work created by male and female feminists was published as *Women's Position in the Laws of the Nations: A Compilation of the Laws of Different Countries* (1912). This pioneering report was an effort to insist that women's problems in the law, especially married women's status, transcended national boundaries.

The scope of *Women's Position in the Laws* ranged widely from family law (e.g., marital authority, property, divorce, residence, parental rights, illegitimacy, guardianship, and inheritance) to penal law, public law, and statutes or laws affecting the professions. The gender inequality documented therein was simultaneously a social and legal problem, and reformers argued that the state was responsible for its rectification. As such, women defined the priorities for reform and provided documentation potentially useful to legislators. The compilation highlighted the pervasiveness of women's subordinate status, the unevenness of reforms, and the energy with which national councils sought satisfaction. The question of women's political rights was connected to their status under family law. Scottish ICW president Ishbel Aberdeen argued that women's inequality in society was not, as was often claimed, offset by their influence within the home as evidenced by multiple legal constraints on women in family law.⁹² Volume editor d'Abbadie d'Arrast also underscored that the national councils could promote legislative and civil code reform and wield legal influence in the pursuit of gender equality.⁹³ Her comments reinforced the notion that national legislatures and courts remained the primary sites for legal reform even as activists aspired to achieve change transnationally.

At the same time, international activism seemed to energize national projects, even if it did not lead consistently to cooperation. For example, American lawyer Ellen Spencer Mussey, who wrote the report on the United States for the *Women's Position in the Laws* volume, actively promoted a variety of legal reforms domestically, including equal guardianship rights for mothers, women's equal rights to serve on juries, and married women's property rights. Mussey had founded, with Emma Gillett, the Washington College of Law (est. 1898), a coeducational — though not racially integrated — law school.⁹⁴ She lived to see that the controversy about married women's autonomous nationality rights, a controversy of long-standing importance to the ICW, was mollified through the Married Women's Independent Nationality Act (the US Cable Act of 1922). This nationality act halted procedures whereby women would automatically acquire the

92 Aberdeen, "Foreword," in ICW, *Women's Position*, v–viii.

93 D'Abbadie d'Arrast, "Lettre d'introduction," in ICW, *Women's Position*, 1–8.

94 Drachman, *Sisters in Law*, 150–54.

citizenship of their husbands without their consent. André Verne, a French lawyer and author of the chapter on France in *Women's Position* also wrote about married women's autonomy. He called for political action to reform the French civil code to equalize women's rights in the family and political sphere (specifically, married women's property rights, guardianship, marital property, divorce, inheritance, and labor rights and representation).⁹⁵ Progress in any nation was understood to contribute to the potential of women's progress worldwide because arguments, evidence, and rationales could be re-deployed in parallel campaigns (admittedly with mixed success).

The comparative legal analysis of women's position in this text, published in English, French, and German, was a result of the productive collaboration among feminist legal experts, facilitated by the ICW, the "mother" of the League of Nations. The ICW's *Women's Position* reflects a broader historical pattern whereby women's organizations played a conspicuous role in articulating and lobbying for legal reform in the early twentieth century that bore fruit only later. As Ann Taylor Allen has highlighted, the work undertaken at the turn of the century by the Scandinavian Committee for Family Law to issue new legal code guidelines eventually led to laws that equalized parental responsibility in the family, even though passage of such reform was delayed until the 1920s.⁹⁶ Likewise, legal reforms that improved women's rights in the second half of the twentieth century were possible as a result of women's political action that was, in turn, facilitated by decades of cross-cultural exchange. Incremental legal reform was pragmatic, if agonizingly slow.

In these years, international contact and comparison energized national movements and inspired progress toward a comparative vision of feminist legal action. Effective coordination through international binding agreements, however, would hang in abeyance until the feminists catalyzed a platform within the League of Nations where reforms on important common questions could be addressed.⁹⁷

Conclusion

By 1914, female lawyers and jurists had undertaken and published comprehensive analyses of women's legal status, fueled in part by their transatlantic networks. The knowledge they shared was based in part on women's lived experiences as mediated through legal conflicts, which revealed the disparate impact of law on women versus men. Systematic feminist critiques of the law reached new

95 *Women's Position*, 125–26.

96 Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, 49.

97 Ellen Carol Dubois, "Internationalizing Married Women's Nationality: The Hague Campaign of 1930," in *Globalizing Feminisms, 1789–1945*, ed. Offen, 204–16. See also Catherine Jacques, "Tracking Feminist Interventions in International Law Issues at the League of Nations: From the Nationality of Married Women to Legal Equality in the Family, 1919–1970," in *New Perspectives*, ed. Kimble and Röwekamp, 321–48; Sara L. Kimble, "Politics, Money, and Distrust: French-American Alliances in the International Campaign for Women's Equal Rights, 1925–1930," in *Practiced Citizenship: Women, Gender and the State in Modern France*, ed. Nimisha Barton and Richard Hopkins (Lincoln, forthcoming 2018).

audiences through the popular press and academic publications and in speeches and lectures, thus promoting national and international debate.⁹⁸ The implementation of piecemeal gender equality under the law occurred unevenly in North America and across Europe, but each success inspired emulation among social reformers. The American model of gender equality under the law was particularly salient for French feminists seeking to deploy parallel strategies in their sister republic.⁹⁹ The overarching goals within these transatlantic alliances were the desires to secure legal equality for married women and to open opportunities for all women in modern society.

The larger purpose of all this activism was to secure a voice for women in political and legal reforms that would also prompt state-driven changes in private life. How to enact such reforms would turn out to be controversial at nearly every turn. Nevertheless, legal feminists deployed their knowledge and activism in an international context to seek the application of the change they envisioned. Through this process, they articulated and disseminated their feminist visions and attempted to direct the political power in each nation to shape the circumstances surrounding the personal lives of female citizens. Tracing the history of the relationships that emerged, as well as their characteristics and limitations, offers productive territory for future explorations of the history of early twentieth-century legal feminism.

During the interwar years (1919–1938) international women’s associations took advantage of the opportunities presented by the League of Nations to debate and to promote women’s rights through intergovernmental cooperation, policy, and legal agreement. These groups had prepared in the prior years by conceptualizing international solutions to redress the fundamental inequalities that structured life for women across different national contexts in the Western hemisphere. They advocated for peace and the advancement of women’s rights in family law, labor law, civil law, and political law at the Paris Peace Conference (1919), in the campaign for married women’s independent nationality, and through the Committee on the Status of Women at the League of Nations.¹⁰⁰ Scholars would do well to recognize that the work of preceding decades contributed to these later transnational efforts.

This article draws attention to a history of transnational legal feminism within the broader history of the women’s rights movement during the Belle Époque to highlight the centrality of legal concerns

98 For France, see Kimble, “Popular Legal Journalism.”

99 Principally but not exclusively: Giraud, *Essai sur la condition des femmes en Europe et en Amérique*; see also Jeanne Chauvin, “L’homme et la femme sont-ils égaux?” *Les annales politiques et littéraires: Revue populaire paraissant le dimanche* 11 (1893): 362.

100 On European women in the League of Nations, see Jean Marc Delaunay and Yves Denéchère, eds., *Femmes et relations internationales au 20e siècle* (Paris, 2007); Susan Hinely, “The Global Parliament of Mothers: History, the Revolutionary Tradition, and International Law in the Pre-War Women’s Movement,” *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 87, no. 2 (2012): 439–61; Carol Miller, “Geneva — the Key to Equality’: Inter-War Feminists and the League of Nations,” *Women’s History Review* 3, no. 2 (1994): 219–45; Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950*, chap. 12; Rupp, *Worlds of Women*; and D’Itri, *Cross Currents*.

and female lawyers' contributions. Feminist lawyers and legal thinkers worked both independently and in conjunction with international women's organizations, notably the WIBA and the ICW, to campaign to reform women's rights in the family as well as in society. While suffrage was the linchpin to secure an official political voice for women, the reform of family law and civil codes was essential to create the possibility of equal standing for wives and mothers within the framework of the family. Political and legal reform campaigns, both national and international, would eventually begin to level the playing field, creating more equal opportunities under the law such that men and women might experience the world with the same expectations, unfettered by legal constraints and able to contribute their talents to their societies.

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REFORM CLAIMS IN FAMILY LAW AND LEGAL STRUGGLES OF THE BUND DEUTSCHER FRAUENVEREINE WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN, 1888-1914

Marion Röwekamp

One of the major topics for international feminism during the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century was the reform of family law. A patriarchal foundation of civil law that legalized the subordination of married women permeated all Western legal cultures. Though the legal cultures and means were different in each country, women found themselves in a common struggle.¹

This article analyzes the campaign for transnational family reform by investigating the actions and ideas of the German National Council, the “Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine” (BDF), within the International Council of Women (ICW) in the years between 1888 and the outbreak of World War I on the basis of the published congress material of the ICW and the German women’s movement as well as archival material from the Helene Lange Archive at the Landesarchiv in Berlin. When the German civil code came up for codification in the 1870s, the legal aspects of women’s equality became a focus of the women’s movement, next to education and welfare matters. From its founding in 1894, the BDF was also open to international cooperation and tried to transfer its concrete ideas and working strategies into the ICW. However, these attempts failed at the first international conferences, as the English and American feminists, in particular, opted for broader legal definitions and set different priorities.² But the BDF managed to place family law as a focus on the schedule of the ICW by establishing a legal standing committee at its second quinquennial in London in 1899, which was headed by the German Olga von Beschwitz until 1904. On the transnational level, feminists struggled to find a common denominator, especially for legal reform that would be valid for all countries involved. Eventually, they reported their collective findings in *Women’s Position in the Law of Nations* (1912), but the arrival of World War I halted the search for common solutions.

In this history of the battle for equality in family law, it is especially rewarding to examine the different strategies that evolved around the internal fighting and dissidence in the ICW through the lens of the German feminists. This perspective relates to one aspect in transnational women’s history that has been largely neglected thus far: the

1 Stephan Meder and Christoph-Eric Mecke, eds., *Family Law in Early Women’s Rights Debates* (Cologne, 2013); *ibid.*, eds., *Reformforderungen zum Familienrecht International*, Vol. 1: *Westeuropa und die USA (1830–1914)* (Cologne, 2015); Sara Kimble and Marion Röwekamp, “Legal Cultures and Communities of Female Protest in Modern European History, 1860–1960s,” in *New Perspectives on European Women’s Legal History*, ed. Kimble and Röwekamp, 1–43 (New York, 2016).

2 In this article, the term “American feminists” refers to feminists from the USA. As the term US-American feminists sounds awkward, I prefer to use “American feminists,” although I am aware that all feminists from Canada to Argentina are also “American.”

3 The basic research on the ICW so far has followed the top-down-approach, while mostly focusing on the English-speaking actors: May Wright Sewall, *Genesis of the International Council of Women and the Story of Its Growth 1888-1893* (Indianapolis, 1914); Leila Rupp, *Women in a Changing World: The Dynamic Story of the International Council of Women since 1888* (London, 1966); *ibid.*, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, 1997); Eliane Gubin and Leen Beyers, eds., *Des femmes qui changent le monde: Histoire du Conseil International des Femmes 1888 — 1988* (Brussels, 2005). Anna Cova's research on the national councils of Italy, France, and Portugal in a comparative perspective follows the idea of focusing on the less-explored actors: Anne Cova, "International Feminisms in Historical Comparative Perspective: France, Italy and Portugal, 1880s-1930s," *Women's History Review* 19, no. 4 (2010): 595-612; *ibid.*, "Legal Position of Women in Portugal: The Case of the Standing Committee on Legislation of the National Council of Portuguese Women (CNMP), 1914-19477)," in *New Perspectives on European Women's Legal History*, ed. Kimble and Rówekamp, 376-93.

4 Cited in Marie Stritt, "Der Internationale Frauenbund (International Council of Women)," *Centralblatt* 5, no. 9 (1903): 65-67, 67. All quotes are translated by the author.

5 Irmgard Remme, "Die internationalen Beziehungen der deutschen Frauenbewegung vom Ausgang des 19. Jahrhunderts bis 1933," PhD. diss., Freie University Berlin, 1955; Ute Gerhard, "National oder International. Die internationalen Beziehungen der deutschen bürgerlichen Frauenbewegung," *Feministische Studien* 12, no. 2 (1994): 34-52; Heiner Thurm,

national-transnational interconnectedness of women's engagement. Clearly, feminisms did not develop in isolation but were often inspired by and thrived on a vibrant exchange of ideas and actions on both sides of the Atlantic.³ After all, the success of the ICW could only be measured, as Lady Aberdeen pointed out at the London congress in 1899, by the results of the national councils' work, so the national councils do matter in judging the work of the organization.⁴ In fact, it is startling that so little work has yet been done on the relationship between the BDF and the ICW.⁵

As my research shows, the transnational struggles in the ICW were shaped by the cultural and legal understanding of the different national women's movements, which in turn led to a communication problem on the transnational level that can only be understood if cultural differences, the different legal systems, and the legal position of women within them are considered. I focus on the international congresses of the ICW from 1888 to the beginning of World War I and German women's participation in and around them. These show that the German and French women's movements concentrated on legal issues in the years up to 1914 across the legal systems, as well as on the importance of the legal inequality married women endured in all legal cultures, albeit to different degrees. But these congresses also illustrate the tension over class and culture and challenge the idea of "sisterhood." They also represent the development of transnational spaces in their complexity but also fragility concerning the difference between nationality and transnationality. The congresses were the knots in the multiple nets of women's relationships where the leading feminists of the national countries had the opportunity to meet, make friends, exchange ideas, and suggest common campaigns for

"Einbahnstraße' oder nutzbringende Wechselwirkung?: Zur Interdependenz von Frauenemanzipationsbestrebungen auf nationaler und internationaler Ebene um 1900 am Beispiel der Beziehungen International Council of Women — Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine," *Frauen in der Geschichte: Zeitschrift des Vereins Frauen in der Geschichte* 1 (1992): 22-35; Leila Rupp, "Zur Organisationsgeschichte der internationalen Frauenbewegung vor dem Zweiten

Weltkrieg," *Feministische Studien* 12, no. 2 (1994): 53-65; Christa Kersting, "Zur Konzeption weiblicher Bildung und Bildungspolitik des 'International Council of Women' (ICW), 1888 bis 1945," in *Gender-Geschichte/n: Ergebnisse bildungshistorischer Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung*, ed. Walburga Hoff, 171-89 (Cologne, 2008); *ibid.*, "Frauenbewegung und Bildungstransfer: das Beispiel des International Council of Women um 1900," in *Zirkulation*

and Transformation: pädagogische Grenzüberschreitungen in historischer Perspektive, ed. Marcelo Caruso, 93-114 (Cologne, 2014); Georg Brandtner, "Der International Council of Women (ICW). Entwicklung und Struktur der Organisation und Reformforderungen zur Rechtsstellung von Frauen in der Familie auf den ICW-Kongressen zwischen 1888 und 1914," in *Reformforderungen zum Familienrecht*, ed. Meder and Mecke, 724-69.

political and legal change.⁶ For the campaigns, in particular, feminists created a classical space for the transnational transfer of knowledge, which made common political action on legal questions increasingly possible and changed the identity of the national actors into global players. The legal debates in the ICW at the turn of the century were one of the first instances of trans- and international common legislative work beyond the national level and were only surpassed in the twentieth century by the international law conferences of the Hague or the League of Nations.

It would be beyond the scope of this article to describe the different status of women in family law in the different countries in detail; therefore, my focus in the first part of the essay will be on the use of family law relating to German women's politics within the ICW, comparing their ideas and tactics to those of feminists from other countries. The second part will highlight the two different levels of feminist action on legal issues — one related to the “legal matter of family law”; the other, the “political level,” characterized by the use of family law as a tool for gaining influence within the ICW, making it a double-edged sword. After all, the ICW was not only a platform for the exchange of ideas but also for learning how to take political action and to make allies and — inadvertently — enemies.

The Social and Legal Background for the Women's Struggle in Germany

In order to better understand German women's struggle for emancipation, we have to compare the range of actions German women took to those within the English and U.S.-American women's movements. These struggles took place in different political systems. Unlike their English and American counterparts, German women had to deal with issues like freedom of speech, censorship, and the right of assembly. Answered the ICW's call to the founding congress in 1888, the “Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenbund” stated: “In Germany we have to work with great tact and by conservative methods ... The difference between our position and that of our American sisters is largely due to the fact that you live in a Republic, we in a monarchy — you in a young country where everything is new, we in a land centuries old, where the ideas and habits of thought are, so to speak, encrusted in the people.”⁷ German activist Minna Cauer pointed out another difference in 1899 when she explained to her German readers that the English women's movement was based on the notion of personal freedom as one of the basic features of the English system:

6 Susan Zimmermann, “Frauenbewegungen, Transfer und Trans-Nationalität. Feministisches Denken und Streben im globalen und zentral-osteuropäischen Kontext des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts,” in *Transnationale Öffentlichkeiten und Identitäten im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Hartmut Kaelble et al., 263-302 (Frankfurt/New York, 2002).

7 *Report of the International Council of Women. Assembled by the National Woman Suffrage Association, Washington, D.C., March 25 to April 1, 1888* (Washington, DC, 1888), 218-20, 220; Remme, *Internationale Beziehungen*, 17.

Hence the position of women, their work, and their struggles are entirely different from here in Germany or in other countries. English women do find support for their struggles in the aristocracy, in the church, in public opinion, and in the parliaments; with real English humor they ponder the pros and cons of women's questions and are amused about the brave fight their women are putting up even though the fights might be strongly criticized and counter-acted. But everybody does understand that English women do have a right to fight for their rights, and this is a big difference to the German women's movement.⁸

The idea that women could fight for their rights as a matter of principle was certainly a minority position within Germany. The German gender ideology and ideas about the roles of men and women within the family and the state were far more rigid than British and American women could imagine. German women who traveled within the U.S. and encountered the way men behaved towards women often expressed great amazement about these differences, not only about the fact that middle-class women were gainfully employed in meaningful numbers or the professionalism with which British and American women acted in public functions, but also about gender roles in everyday family life. Alice Salomon, for example, mentioned one episode from her trip to the ICW congress in Canada in 1909 in her biography: "I shall never forget the wife of a young scholar who, when I rose to help clear the table, said indignantly: 'In our house the men do that work!' Off he went with the male guests to wash the dishes while his wife entertained the women in the living room. I had never seen anything like this before. It would have shocked a strong German male!"⁹

Just like German men would not have washed the dishes, they would also rarely collaborate in the cause for women's emancipation, and few men supported women's rights in principle. The English and American women's movement, on the other hand, had early on joined the cause with other reform movements; U.S. feminists, for example, joined forces with the anti-slavery movement; in 1850s England, the Langham Place Group around Barbara Leigh Smith cooperated with the Law Amendment Society, which fought to end the double standard in common law and equity justice.¹⁰ This kind of collaboration was generally not practiced in Germany; advocates for women's causes worked in isolation.¹¹ Furthermore, had the German women's movement assumed

8 Minna Cauer, "Gedanken über den Internationalen Frauenkongress in London," *Die Frauenbewegung* 14 (1899): 121-24, 122-23.

9 Alice Salomon, *Character Is Destiny: The Autobiography of Alice Salomon*, ed. Andrew Lees (Ann Arbor, 2004), 88.

10 Stephan Meder and Christoph-Eric Mecke, "Familienpolitische Reformforderungen der Frauenrechtsbewegungen in Westeuropa und den USA im langen 19. Jahrhundert," in *Reformforderungen zum Familienrecht*, 78.

11 Especially in the very beginning of the German women's movement, men took an active role in the different organizations like the Letzte Verein and also within the ADF. There were individual male supporters of the women's cause but no institutional support as in England and the U.S. For the individual support, see Katherine E. Hubler, "Man's Duty to Woman: Men and the First Wave Of German Feminism, 1865-1919," PhD thesis, Boston College, 2012.

an inter- or transnational perspective, it could have hurt its standing since “internationalism” was associated primarily with the international socialist movement. To be “international” in an imperialist, national, and colonial society was perceived as anti-nationalist.¹²

Like the socialist movement, the women’s movement was not very popular with the government or with society at large in Germany, so German women, like socialists, had to steer their ship carefully through troubled political waters. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that German women chose to focus on topics that were not as openly political as “voting rights” but were more in line with the traditional “female sphere” of influence: education and welfare. A remark Käthe Schirmacher, who attended the ICW congress 1893 in Chicago, made about her observations confirms this focus: “I would like to summarize that the six German delegates represented all the claims of the German women’s movement in the areas of professional education, higher education and their demands in the context of the kindergarten movement and universities. All of these are naturally the areas in which the women’s movement focuses at home as well.”¹³ Many English and American women considered the approaches of their German sisters to be conservative, backward, and tame¹⁴ and felt like pioneers when it came to enlightening the women of the other nations, as suggested in this comment by Marie Stritt in her report on the ICW congress in London: “I don’t think that our gracious English and American sisters in spirit will deduce any kind of obligation on their part to be better informed about the work of their like-minded sisters in the future. The pleasant awareness to have brought the ‘late-comers’ onto the right way should remain enough prospect for them.”¹⁵ German women were strongly aware of (and hurt by) these judgments and often mentioned that other feminists were amazed by the fact that the interests of German women went beyond “Kinder, Küche, Kirche,” the infamous “children, kitchen, church.”¹⁶

There was another difference we have to keep in mind when comparing the ranges of action of German feminists with their American and English counterparts, who dominated the ICW: the legal difference. The respective legal cultures strongly shaped the fights women waged and their approaches to legal struggles.

12 Marie Stritt, “Der Anteil der deutschen Frauen an der internationalen Friedensbewegung,” in *Handbuch der Frauenbewegung*,

Frauenbewegung und soziale Frauentätigkeit in Deutschland nach Einzelgebieten, ed. Gertrud Bäumer and

Helene Lange, 201-204 (Berlin, 1901), 201; Gerhard, “National oder International,” 39.

13 Käthe Schirmacher, “Der internationale Frauencongress in Chicago 1893,” *Lose Blätter im Interesse der Frauenfrage* 11 (1894): 1-24, 8; Schirmacher published a number of texts on the topic: “Der internationale Frauenkongress in Chicago. Vortrag, gehalten in Dresden, Königsberg i.Pr., Danzig und Stuttgart — Herbst 1893,” in *Sociales Leben - Zur Frauenfrage* (Paris, 1897), 76-102; and “Der internationale Frauenkongress in Chicago,” *Nationalzeitung* June 25, 1893; an English translation of the latter is available in Kathryn Kish Sklar, Anja Schüler, and Susan Strasser, eds., *Social Justice Feminists in the United States and Germany* (Ithaca, 1998), 140-47. On the BDF, education, and the ICW, see Kersting, “Frauenbewegung und Bildungstransfer,” 93-114, *ibid.*, “Zur Konzeption von weiblicher Bildung,” 171-89.

14 E.g., as mentioned in Bäumer, *Lebensweg*, 207, as well as the other examples in the main text.

15 Marie Stritt, “Der Internationale Frauenkongress in London,” *Die Frau* 6 (1899): 641-47, 644.

16 Käthe Schirmacher, “Die Stimmrechtsfrage auf dem Internationalen Frauenkongress in London,” *Die Frauenbewegung* 5, no. 15 (1899): 138; Marie Stritt made a similar argument in “Die Generalversammlung des International Council of Women und der internationale Frauenkongress in London,” *Centralblatt* 1, no. 9 (1899): 66-70, 69.

Common law in England and the U.S. is based on case law, which means individual women could construct strong cases that carried consequences for other women. An example in family law was Caroline Norton; she pushed for the first changes in English custody law, the Custody Infants Act in 1839, as an individual — a wronged wife — rather than as a representative of the broader women’s movement.¹⁷ Likewise, in the U.S., Ann Hora Connelly pushed a similar case successfully through the courts in New Jersey when the efforts of the women’s movement, which had worked tirelessly to achieve the same success with their petitions, had come to nothing.¹⁸ Common law provided a framework within which women were able to obtain individual decisions, which then had a tremendous impact on women’s rights.

This was not the case in Germany or in France. An advantageous individual court ruling had no precedence whatsoever for other women, even in similar cases. That meant women could not use the courts to change the law, nor could they file petitions officially in the parliaments; they needed male allies in the legislative bodies, since their petitions were not legally binding. Only after their enfranchisement in 1918 could German women file their own petitions from outside and inside the legislative bodies. The character of these petitions differed again from those of their English and American sisters. German women’s petitions were generally not based on individual cases of breaches of family law, though the feminists broadly knew these cases. They had even asked for a collection of these cases as “material for female martyrdom” but were unable to use it. Instead, they used only the essence of the cases in drafting their legal bill, which was written by Louise Otto-Peters.¹⁹ Because of their legal system, German women had to proceed in a highly abstract way but also to the point as they filed “legal petitions” that already contained legal changes and paragraphs. Thus, the German women’s movement acted as a legislator in its own right.

In this context, I would like to turn to the concrete family law struggles, as it was in this area that the German women started to practice their work as “imagined legislators.” When the first draft of the new German Civil Code was published in the 1870s, women within the movement slowly came to realize that the new draft provided no progress for married women in terms of equal rights within the family, neither as mothers nor as wives. Indeed, the opposite was the case: the Civil Code was retrograde compared to the legal

17 Barbara Caine, *English Feminism, 1780-1980* (Oxford, 1997); Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England* (Princeton, 1989), 22-39.

18 Marion Röwekamp, “Equal Rights for Mothers. Custody Law Reform and the Equal Rights Movement 1848-1930,” in *Family Law in Early Women’s Rights Debates*, ed. Meder and Mecke, 200-37.

19 Louise Otto-Peters, *Einige deutsche Gesetzes-Paragraphe über die Stellung der Frau*, ed. ADF (Leipzig, 1876), 4-5, from NL-K-08 Deutscher Staatsbürgerinnenverband, Nachlass Louise Otto-Peters, Archiv der deutschen Frauenbewegung, Kassel. See also Susanne Schötz, “‘Einige Deutsche Gesetzes-Paragraphe’ — Louise Otto-Peters und das Engagement des Allgemeinen Deutschen Frauenvereins für Frauenrechte,” in *Menschenrechte sind auch Frauenrechte*, ed. Ilse Nagelschmidt et al., 53-78 (Leipzig: 2002).

position of women in earlier legal codes. Especially in the 1890s, it dawned on German feminists that they had to put all their efforts, which had previously been focused on women's education and social charity work, into fighting the newly drafted Civil Code, making the women's question also and foremost a legal question. As lawyer Anita Augspurg once put it: "The women's question is to a considerable degree a question of economics, but maybe to an even greater extent a question of culture . . . but first and foremost it is a *legal* question because only upon the foundation of *warranted rights*, not the imaginary ones . . . can a definite solution even be thought about."²⁰ German feminists realized that women only had a chance for equal social, civic, and political rights if they achieved legal equality with men. In order to do so, the movement needed its own female lawyers who were able to lead this fight on equal terms with male lawyers, to change the law gradually from within the justice system as judges and attorneys, and to bring forth women legislators who would work for legislative progress.²¹

Women's legal struggle not only involved improving their understanding of the important role the law had in women's lives, but also united the BDF more quickly into a strong working group than other national councils of the ICW. In a way the struggle around family law was the bond that tied the women together and made the BDF a success, as Marie Stritt pointed out in 1899:

Undoubtedly, the common danger of the new Civil Code has brought the different [women's] movements closer to each other and has awakened the long-missed awareness of solidarity This rally of women [about the family law], which has no precedence, shows most clearly how, in a short time of two years, also the most tentative members grew into the work of the national council, and it proves how the common work on some few areas made us aware and promoted the inner connection of all women's interest and goals.²²

Family Law on the Agenda of the ICW Congresses

Perhaps BDF women came to understand at this point that the struggle for equal rights in family law might turn out to be more difficult than the struggle for suffrage in the long run. In any case, they had found the topic they wanted to lobby for within the ICW,

20 Anita Augspurg, "Gebt acht, solange noch Zeit ist!," *Die Frauenbewegung* 1 (1895): 4-5. Italics in the original quote.

21 On the so-called Frauenlandsturm, see Marianne Weber, *Ehefrau und Mutter in der Rechtsentwicklung* (Tübingen, 1907), 407-505, 546-73; Ute Gerhard, ed., *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts. Von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 1997); Sabine Klemm, *Frauenbewegung und Familienrecht 1848 bis 1933: Eine Betrachtung anhand von Quellen* (Tübingen, 1999); Stephan Meder et al., *Frauenrecht und Rechtsgeschichte: die Rechtskämpfe der deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Cologne, 2004); Tanja-Carina Riedel, *Gleiches Recht für Frau und Mann. Die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung und die Entstehung des BGB* (Cologne, 2008); Kimble and Röwekamp, "Legal Cultures and Communities of Protest," 1-43. On the debate on the necessity of the first female lawyers in Germany, see Marion Röwekamp, *Die ersten deutschen Juristinnen. Eine Geschichte ihrer Professionalisierung und Emanzipation 1900-1945* (Cologne, 2011).

22 Marie Stritt, "Der Bund deutscher Frauenvereine," *Frauen-Rundschau* 2, no. 17 (1899): 473-74.

understanding the importance it carried not only for them nationally but for all women globally. Women were more immediately affected by these laws in their self-image as mothers and wives in everyday life than by the limitations of having or not having the franchise or other civil rights. BDF feminists might have believed that family law as a general focus in the ICW could eventually serve the same function as it had for the BDF in Germany: to reunite the disparate ICW around one common topic that seemed to be — at least superficially — less political than suffrage or peace, the two topics broadly discussed in the ICW around the turn of the century. These were both issues the BDF and other German women’s movements inside and outside the BDF disagreed upon so that German women could not possibly join the cause. Yet, they strove to leave their mark in the work of the ICW. Women’s education, another important BDF priority, was also a central focus on the ICW agenda, but it was not a unique selling point — almost all the member councils of the ICW worked for more educational opportunities for women.²³ The BDF could not win points in the debate about women’s labor protection, either, as it took a conservative stand in supporting women’s labor protection.²⁴ But family law gave German feminists in the ICW the topic they could pursue in order to gain competence and influence within the ICW.

Family-related questions had been on the agenda of the ICW congresses from the beginning as such laws hurt women most around the globe. In Washington in 1888, a section on “legal conditions” chaired by Susan B. Anthony focused on women in common law in the USA, Great Britain, Ireland, and India.²⁵ But at the time it was a minor topic, and other areas clearly took precedence. In 1893 at the ICW Congress in Chicago, for example, 23 out of the 77 panels dealt with religious questions. The rest were overwhelmingly concerned with questions related to alcohol, education, moral issues, working conditions, and politics.²⁶ Consequently, in the 1890s French, Belgian, and German women organized international congresses outside the ICW that were primarily dedicated to legal issues. The international congress of Brussels in 1897, for example, organized by the Belgian League for Women’s Rights, was dedicated to the legal situation of women and headed by the Belgian lawyer Marie Popelin. All the leading figures in the German women’s movement gave talks on family law, including Selma Proelss, Marie Stritt, Anita Augspurg, and Minna Cauer. They lectured on German women’s fight against the Civil Code and on one of the women’s movement’s

23 On the differences in the educational politics within the ICW, see Christa Kersting, “Weibliche Bildung und Bildungspolitik: Das Internationale Council of Women und seine Kongresse in Chicago (1893), London (1899) und Berlin (1904),” *Paedagogica Historica, International Journal of the History of Education* 44, no. 3 (2008): 327-46.

24 Remme, *Internationale Beziehungen*, 21.

25 *Report of the International Council of Women, Washington*, 226-45.

26 May Wright Sewall, *World’s Congress of Representative Women* (Chicago, 1893); Schirmacher, “Der internationale Frauencongress in Chicago 1893,” 2-24.

informal petitions on the discrimination of women in family law in the Bundesgesetzbuch to the Reichstag, although the recent submission had not been successful. By this time, they were fully aware that equality was foremost a legal question: “Women have to keep going on fighting,” Marie Stritt concluded her talk, “because they can only achieve full equality if they gain equal rights to men in the laws and legislation.”²⁷

The London Congress in 1899

When the ICW congress took place in London in 1899, the BDF was ready to launch a project with a twofold purpose: First, to strengthen the position of the BDF within the board of the ICW in terms of improving the position of the single national councils within the ICW, and, second, to provide its own area of focus for women’s equal rights: family law.

The German national council was founded in 1894 and joined the ICW in 1896. It was one of the first members of the ICW, which was reflected in German being one of the three official languages of the ICW, along with English and French. At the time of the London Congress in 1899, the BDF was greatly disappointed in the ICW and the leadership of Lady Aberdeen and especially in her corresponding secretary, Teresa Wilson, with whom Germany’s corresponding secretary, Anna Simson, had strongly disagreed on numerous issues.²⁸ The German women thought that the English leadership was responsible for the disorganized state of the council, that the English women’s movement was not strong enough to unite the different countries, and that the ICW simply needed a broader common idea to achieve such unity.²⁹ German feminists also thought that the ICW had accomplished so little up to that point because it lacked real solidarity among the member nations. They were convinced that a strong common idea and fight like the one the BDF was waging against the Civil Code in Germany would also give ICW member nations a chance to grow together on the international level. Another German proposal was to have each of the national councils submit status reports twice a year that would then be distributed to all member councils so they would be informed about each other’s activities on a regular basis and thus strengthen their international ties. The Austrian, Swiss, and German women all considered the ICW too disorganized and too apolitical; yet at the same time they saw its aim as primarily to be an umbrella organization founded

²⁷ Anonymous, “Der Internationale Frauenkongress in Brüssel vom 4.-7. August 1897,” *Frauen-Reich: Deutsche Hausfrauen-Zeitung* 24, no. 33 (1897): 386-87, here 386, 399-40, 410-12; Dr. AG (Anna Gebser?), “Einige Bemerkungen zum internationalen Frauenkongress in Brüssel,” *Frauenberuf: Blätter für Fragen der weiblichen Erziehung, Ausbildung, Berufs- und Hilfstätigkeit* 1, no. 1 (1897): 19-20; Anna Gebser, “Der internationale Frauenkongress in Brüssel,” *Schwäbische Frauenzeitung: Organ für die Interessen der Frauenwelt und der Familie* 2 (1897): 1-3; Anna Simson, “Der internationale Frauenkongress in Brüssel vom 4.-8. August 1897,” *Neue Bahnen* 32, no. 17 (1897): 159-62; Minna Cauer, “Stimmungsbilder von dem internationalen Kongress in Brüssel, 4.-7. August 1897,” *Frauenbewegung* 3, no. 16 (1897): 161-64; Elisabeth Winter, “Der Brüsseler Internationale Frauenkongress,” *Die Frau* 4, no. 12 (1897): 739-41.

²⁸ Marie Stritt, Letter of June 8, 1899, HLA Abt 17 IV, 83-328.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

30 Marianne Hainisch, *Bericht über die Generalversammlung des International Council und den Frauencongress zu London im Juni 1899* (Vienna, 1900), 7. On the history of the Austrian and Hungarian National Council, see Susan Zimmermann, *Die bessere Hälfte. Frauenbewegungen und Frauenbestrebungen im Ungarn der Habsburgermonarchie 1848 bis 1918* (Budapest, 1999); Ilse Lenz, "Equality, Difference and Participation: The Women's Movements in Global Perspective," in *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective: A Survey*, ed. Stefan Berger and Holger Nehring, 449-83 (London, 2017).

31 Marie Stritt, Letter of June 8, 1899, LA Berlin, HLA Abt 17 IV, 83-328.

32 Letter from Anna Simson to Teresa Wilson, Feb. 4, 1899, *ibid.*

33 Marie Stritt, Letter of June 8, 1899, LA Berlin, *ibid.*

34 "In consideration of the desire of the German Council that in view of the International Conference of 1903 meeting in Berlin, it would be well for the President to be in or near Germany, so not to be far from the place of Conference, it was suggested" International Council of Women, *Pamphlets, nos. 1-7, Report of the Executive Committee* (London, 1898), 5.

35 Teresa Wilson to Anna Simson, Jan. 26, 1899, LA Berlin, HLA Abt 17 IV, 83-328.

36 Anna Simson to Teresa Wilson, Feb. 4, 1899, *ibid.*

37 To the BDF they sold the election as a "sole exchange of offices" between Lady Aberdeen and May Wright Sewall. See Anna Pappritz, "Die Neuwahl des International Council of Women," *Neues Frauenblatt* 3, no. 2 (1899): 559-60, 559.

on neutrality so that it would not alienate some of its members by taking strong political stances.³⁰

Furthermore, BDF women thought that t Lady Aberdeen's position as the president of the ICW tipped "the principle of checks and balances in the different nations" of the ICW too much in favor of English women.³¹ Moreover, living in a monarchy themselves, they resented the influence of the large number of noble women in the English movement and did not want to be represented by one. As Anna Simson informed Teresa Wilson in 1899: "The German women's movement is a thoroughly 'bourgeois' one and as a women's movement rejects all mere charity work by aristocrats, the conservatives, and the Church."³² As most European councils were not yet established and the ICW was dominated by English-speaking councils that were somewhat prejudiced against the German movement, the German women were realistic enough to see no German woman would get elected as president in that climate.³³ This was especially upsetting as there seemed to have been an earlier agreement dating from the executive meeting in London 1898 (or even earlier) that the BDF's offer to host the 1903 congress in Berlin would go hand in hand with the ICW presidency.³⁴ Lady Aberdeen seemed to be willing to go along with this agreement and suggested that the German empress Victoria be elected president of the council. Teresa Wilson suggested that, if not the empress, then perhaps the German council could "nominate some well known & outstanding German woman, of rank & social position," someone such as the Austrian baroness Bertha von Suttner or the Finnish Baroness Alexandra Gripenberg.³⁵ Simson, in turn, suggested that German women valued achievements over social position.³⁶ As they could not agree on a German candidate, the BDF realized that they would not be able to obtain enough votes for a German candidacy. Thus, they decided to work against the reelection of Lady Aberdeen as president and supported the candidacy of the American May Wright Sewall instead, not only because of her personality and her middle-class background, but also because no representative of the US council had yet been at the helm of the ICW. Sewall prevailed, becoming the new president, and the German Jeannette Schwerin was elected treasurer and thus a member of the executive board.³⁷ Still, the broken promise of a German presidency hurt, and the BDF also contemplated how it might withdraw the offer to host the next congress without losing face. ICW members, for their part, doubted that an international

women's congress could take place in Berlin "as so many subjects were not permitted for discussions by women in Germany" because of the German association laws.³⁸

The other BDF strategy for gaining ground within the ICW was to launch its own area of expertise: family law. To introduce it, the BDF formulated a petition with the character of a bill, complete with legal reasoning and a literature list, reflecting a style and strategy it had acquired in the struggle against the German Civil Code. The petition had "the goal of eliminating the barriers which the laws had drawn against the right of the woman to exercise her rights freely."³⁹ It is not surprising that German feminists did not follow through with these concrete suggestions, as the ICW had committed to abstaining from adopting concrete political goals, which would obligate member states to pursue them. Another basic ICW principle was that resolutions could only be passed unanimously, without any dissenting vote. And, in fact, how would a common goal be achieved, especially in family law, an area in which countless different legal systems and cultures with different levels of existing equal or discriminating laws for women had to be considered? Progress in one country could be a setback in another. On the other hand, it might have been possible for the ICW to address common characteristics on a general level. There is some evidence that the ICW did this in its first years but less so later, when national priorities became increasingly important. Only in some legal areas, such as the nationality of married women or women's labor protection, did a broader long-term discourse evolve.⁴⁰ While the BDF failed to push its concrete petition through in London, it did manage to establish a new legal committee — ironically headed by a German noblewoman, Countess Olga von Beschwitz, who had authored one of the family law petitions to the German Reichstag.⁴¹ In addition, the BDF succeeded in determining the appointments of all the legal experts, especially in the "Women in Industrial Life" section; the group for "civil disabilities of women" featured the German lawyer Anita Augspurg and Marie Stritt as well the Belgian lawyer Maria Popelin and the French feminist Jeanne Oddo-Deflou.⁴²

It seems as if BDF delegates also succeeded in getting their second idea taken up in the ICW: to strengthen the bond between the councils by exchanging information on a regular basis. At least the

39 The original handwritten petition from 1899, LA Berlin Fiche 81-322 HLA 3219 BFG.

40 Catherine Jacques, "Tracking Feminist Interventions in International Law Issues at the League of Nations: From the Nationality of Married Women to Legal Equality in the Family, 1919-1970," and Susan Zimmermann, "Night Work for White Women and Bonded Labour for 'Native' Women? Contentious Traditions and the Globalization of Gender-Specific Labour Protection and Legal Equality Politics, 1926 to 1939," both in *New Perspectives on European Women's Legal History*, ed. Kimble and Röwekamp, 321-48, and, 394-428, respectively.

41 Besides Olga von Beschwitz, it consisted of Dr. phil. Alexandra Skoglund (Sweden), Emily Janes (England), Ragna Schou (Denmark), Rose Scott (New South Wales), Boddaert (Netherlands), Sievwright (New Zealand), Book-Jegher (Switzerland), Marie d'Abbadie d'Arrest (France), Marie Spitzer (Austria), and Dr. iur. Nanna Meyer (Norway). Olga von Beschwitz, *Begleitschrift zu der Massenpetition des Bundes deutscher Frauenvereine, betreffend das Familienrecht des neuen B.G.B. für das Deutsche Recht* (Leipzig, 1899); reprint in *Centralblatt: Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* 1, no. 5 (1899): 1-36.

42 Ishbel of Aberdeen, ed., *The International Congress of Women of 1899: Women in Industrial Life* (London, 1899), 6:112-44.

38 International Council of Women, *Report of*

the Transactions of the Second Meeting, March

1899 (London, 1899), 80.



Breakfast given by Mrs. Sewall to the executives of the International Council of Women, Palast Hotel, Berlin. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-87797 Sewall Collection, 2002716228.

International Committee on Laws concerning the Legal Position of Women gave reports annually on the legal situation of women, which were then reprinted in the publications of the German women's movement.⁴³

The Berlin Congress of 1904

In the end, the BDF decided to proceed as planned with hosting the next ICW congress, even though no German woman had become president.⁴⁴ They made sure to make a lasting impression on their international guests by organizing the congress themselves. This became possible because unlike previous ICW conferences and in accordance with new bylaws passed in London, the Berlin conference was not organized by the executive board of the ICW but by the hosting national council. As expectations were low, the surprise was great that German women were not, after all, as backwards as their English-speaking peers had thought — not in terms of the program, the organization, or the social events. It was “the most remarkable Congress of Women ever held,” Lady

⁴³ For example: “Bericht der Kommission für Familienrecht (Committee on Laws Concerning Domestic Relations) für das Jahr 1901,” *Centralblatt* (1901): 75-76; “Bericht des International Committee on Laws Concerning the Legal Position of Women für das Jahr 1904,” *Centralblatt* 7, no. 11 (1905): 83-84.

⁴⁴ Lady Aberdeen had been elected with 45 of 49 votes (3 not valid, 1 void), while Marie Stritt was elected vice president; Sewall, *The International Council, 1899-1904*, 192.

Aberdeen remarked.⁴⁵ The luxury displayed at the Congress once more revealed the split within the German women's movement. Apparently, there was a significant gap between the BDF, on the one hand, and left-liberal and socialist women, on the other, who did not feel represented by this Congress at all.⁴⁶ International socialist, working-class, or trade unionist women like Margaret Bondfield also complained that the luxury "exceeded anything we had ever seen: orchids by the hundred for table decoration, sprays for each guest, many courses, and six glasses for wine, etc. beside each plate," while she could not detect any delegate who had practical experience with industrial working conditions.⁴⁷ The once problematic relationship between Lady Aberdeen and the German council, though, was forgotten, as Helene Lange developed a close friendship with her. Lange had previously been rather suspicious of international meetings and had hardly ever participated in them before.⁴⁸

On legal issues, the standing legal committee gained momentum in Berlin with the appearance of the first feminist lawyers. These delegates knew the dry material of the law and were often able to translate the legal language into concepts that the majority of feminists, most of whom lacked a legal education, could easily understand.⁴⁹ The French national council, the Conseil National des Femmes Françaises (CNFF), reestablished in 1901, in particular, had started to address issues related to family law once again following the second international congress on women's rights in Paris in 1899.⁵⁰ In France, where, according to Jeanne Oddo-Deflou, the legal situation was "about the worst in Europe, such as to render any intelligent and energetic woman hesitant to plunge into marriage,"⁵¹ the centennial celebrations of the Code Napoleon and a new extra-parliamentary commission set up to study the possible reform of the code brought family law back to the forefront of public debate. In October 1904,

45 Ida Husted Harper, *Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony: Including Public Addresses, Her Own Letters and Many from Her Contemporaries during Fifty Years* (Indianapolis, 1908), 1323; John C.G. Aberdeen and Temair, Ishbel G.M. Aberdeen and Temair, "We Twa": *Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen* (London, 1925), 2:301; Mary Gray Peck, *Carrie*

Chapman Catt: A Biography (New York, 1944), 141.

46 Gertrud Bäumer, *Lebensweg durch eine Zeitenwende* (Tübingen, 1933), 205; Else Lüders, "Der Internationale Frauenkongress," *Frauenbewegung* 10, no. 13 (1904): 34.

47 Cited in Veronica Strong-Boag, *Liberal Hearts and Coronets: The Lives and Times of Ishbel*

Marjoribanks Gordon and John Campbell Gordon, The Aberdeens (Toronto, Buffalo, London, 2015), 178.

48 Helene Lange, *Lebenserinnerungen* (Berlin, 1925), 234.

49 Kimble and Röwekamp, "Legal Cultures and Communities of Protest," 1-43; as well as Sara Kimble's chapter in this volume.

50 Käthe Schirmacher, "Der Bund französischer Frauen-Vereine," *Centralblatt* 5, no. 5 (1903): 37-38; Christine Bard, *Les Filles de Marianne: Histoire des féminismes 1914- 1940* (Paris, 1995); International Council of Women, ed., *Histories of Affiliated National Councils. Historiques Des Conseils Nationaux Affiliés. Aus der Geschichte der angeschlossenen Nationalbünde* (Brussels, Lielens, 1938).

51 M. Pégard, ed., *Deuxième congrès international de oeuvres et institutions féminines. Compte rendu des travaux [...] 2:547ff.*, cited in Karen Offen, "National or International? How and Why the Napoleonic Code Drove Married Women's Legal Rights onto the Agenda of the International Council of Women and the League of Nations: An Overview," in *Family Law in Early Women's Rights Debates*, ed. Meder and Mecke, 47.

Hubertine Auclert, Caroline Kaufmann, and Jeanne Oddo-Deflou tried to burn a copy of the Code Civil on the Place Vendome in Paris to protest the subordination of married women within the family that this body of laws codified.⁵² The French national council founded a standing legal committee chaired by Marie D'Abbadie d'Arrast with Oddo-Deflou as secretary. By the time of the Berlin Congress in 1904, the CNFF was ready to support the German approach to pursuing issues of family law within the ICW. It made this point clear at the congress when d'Arrast took over the chair of the legal standing committee.⁵³

The German organizers of the Berlin conference also made sure that one of the four sections on the program was dedicated exclusively to women's legal position. They divided this section into six panels dedicated to family law questions, including one that compared married women's property laws in France, the Netherlands, and England, and one that discussed family law as it related to children with talks on parental power, guardianship law, and the status of illegitimate children and their mothers. A number of legal specialists presented their national cases: Marianne Weber opened the section with a talk based on her 1907 study of the comparative historical development of marriage law;⁵⁴ Belgian lawyer Marie Popelin talked about the legal position of married women in Belgium; Mrs. Napier discussed "Laws concerning Domestic Relations" in New Zealand; and Mrs. Blankenburg and Susan B. Anthony covered the same topic regarding the U.S. situation. Other presentations included one by Oddo-Deflou on women's property law in France as well as on illegitimate children, a discussion of German marital property law, illegitimate children and their mothers by German lawyers Marie Raschke and Frieda Duensing; and another on Dutch marital property law by Dutch lawyer Elizabeth van Dorp.⁵⁵

Other talks related to legal questions included one by Margarete Bennewiz on the first legal aid clinics for women, which had been founded in 1894 in Dresden. She highlighted the incomparability of German legal aid clinics because other nations had not undertaken them to the same extent, and concluded: "It would be a great pleasure to me if my short talk would motivate my foreign sisters in the international women's movement to establish similar programs in their home countries."⁵⁶ The other legal panels were dedicated to public and social law with a strong focus on the progression of voting laws, from the church to the local level and finally national suffrage.

52 [Isabelle] Gatti De Gamond, "Le Feminisme et le Centenaire du Code civil 1804-1904," *Cahiers féministes* 9, no. 12 (1904): 1-3; "Protestation des Femmes contre le Code civil," *Cahiers féministes* 9, no. 15 (1904): 2; H. Ludwig, "Zur Zentenarfeier des Code Napoléon," *Die Frau* 12, no. 3 (1904): 151-52; Käthe Schimmacher, "Die Frauen und der Code Napoleon," *Die Frauenbewegung* 10, no. 22 (1904): 170-71.

53 Offen, "National or International?" 42-58; Kimble and Röwekamp, "Legal Cultures and Communities of Female Protest," 5-6.

54 Weber, *Frau und Mutter*, 394-403.

55 Marie Stritt, ed., *Der Internationale Frauen-Kongress in Berlin 1904. Bericht mit ausgewählten Referaten* (Berlin, 1905).

56 Margarete Bennewiz, "Rechtsschutzstellen," in *ibid.*, 384-90, 390.

At the Berlin Congress, not only the ICW but also the BDF committed itself to fully supporting women's suffrage for the first time.⁵⁷ As a result, a new committee on Women's Suffrage and Rights of Citizenship was established with Anna Howard Shaw as a convener, along with a sub-committee on Married Women's Nationality led by Camille Vidart. The sub-committee dealt with the legal issue of women's nationality being determined in almost all countries on the basis of their fathers and later their husbands. It was a problem for women when they automatically lost their nationality once they married a foreigner.⁵⁸ Ultimately, family law worked its way onto the ICW's agenda; the German council was supported by the French council, which would eventually take over the push for family law issues in the ICW.

The Toronto Congress of 1909 and "Women's position in the Law of the Nations"

At the ICW's fourth quinquennial conference in Toronto in 1909, the German project went one step further. Based on their earlier critique of the superficiality of the congresses, German delegates suggested focusing on fewer topics and selecting those that were important to all ICW members, and inviting specialists on those issues. For example, Alice Salomon asked the moment had not arrived to leave the "big, general overviews in favor of a focus on some chosen *special* topics."⁵⁹ French women were absent from this congress, as were unfortunately most of the committee conveners except for Anna Shaw, which made the work more complicated. But the German delegates⁶⁰ still managed to recommend that a generalized survey be created of ICW members on the status of women in the law, in "the home, the family, the municipality, and the state."⁶¹ The Scottish delegate Ogilvie Gordon, seconded by the Austrian Marianne Hainisch, asked that a report on "Women's Position in the Law of the Nations" be drawn up in the executive committee. When it was generated, the purpose was stated in the introduction as being to educate a broader audience of women in questions of law, and "to provide a clear statement,

57 The BDF had in fact already made up its mind in 1902 but could not pass the resolution; there were dissenting votes; see Gertrud Bäumer, "Die Geschichte des Bundes Deutscher Frauenvereine," *Jahrbuch des Bundes Deutscher Frauenvereine* 1921, ed. Elisabeth

Altmann-Gottheimer, 27-29 (Leipzig, Berlin, 1921); in general on German women's suffrage, see Chrystal Macmillan, Marie Stritt, Maria Véronne, eds., *Woman Suffrage in Practice* (London, 1913), 104-10; Ute Rosenbusch, *Der Weg zum Frauenwahlrecht*

in Deutschland (Baden-Baden, 1998); Gisela Bock, "Das politische Denken des Suffragismus: Deutschland um 1900 im internationalen Vergleich," in idem, *Geschlechtergeschichte der Neuzeit. Ideen, Politik, Praxis* (Göttingen, 2014), 168-203.

58 Catherine Jacques, "Tracking Feminist Interventions in International Law Issues at the League of Nations: From the Nationality of Married Women to Legal Equality in the Family, 1919-1970," in *New Perspectives on European Women's Legal History*, ed. Kimble and Röwekamp, 321-48.

59 Alice Salomon, "Der Internationale Frauenbund in Kanada," *Die Frau* 16, no. 12 (1909): 705-14 (citation 711, italics in the original); Remme, *Internationale Beziehungen*, 35.

60 Marie Stritt, Dr. Franziska Tiburtius, Dr. Agnes Bluhm, Bertha Pappenheim, Ida Kirch, Eleonore Drenkhahn, Ella Hagemann, Dr. Alice Salomon.

61 International Council of Women, *Women's Position in the Laws of the Nations: A Compilation of the Laws of Different Countries* (Karlsruhe, 1912), v-viii.

suitable for circulation in many lands, which should serve to show that existing laws often bear adversely and with entire injustice upon women, and can no longer be regarded as in harmony with that higher standard of enlightenment, that broader culture, and stronger grasp of public duties and responsibilities which are characteristic features of present-day womanhood in every great nation of the world.”⁶² The survey was finally published in Karlsruhe, Germany, in the three official council languages in 1912.⁶³

Most of the reports of the 1912 survey dealt with women’s loss of their legal position as soon as they married — that is, they lost the right to manage their own property as well as their salary and income, and there were other disadvantages related to inheritance laws, parental custody, divorce, alimony, personal marriage law, guardianship and illegitimate children, as well as nationality law. While there were slight differences in the treatment of married women in the various ICW membership countries, all of them still had strong legal discriminations against married women. Most member states pointed to problems such as the need for financial independence of married women and equal salaries for equal work. They suggested that women’s housework be recognized as an economic asset to a marriage, that separate property regimes with separate administration of husbands’ and wives’ properties be introduced and that their common assets accumulate during marriage in case of divorce. Most members also pointed to a double moral standard in the existing legal codes, an issue the ICW had addressed as early as 1889, when it established a committee for “equal moral standards.”⁶⁴

A great number of the national reports in the 1912 survey were written by female lawyers, but most remained rather descriptive, not least because some authors wished to focus on women’s suffrage rather than individual laws. The report by the American lawyer Ellen Spencer Mussey, for example, stressed the legal and political achievements of women rather than pointing out the remaining problems.⁶⁵ Mussey was convinced that suffrage would lead automatically to equal rights in other areas and stressed public before private rights. Suffrage clearly was the hinge the U.S. women’s movement believed in. While reserved and descriptive, the American report still presented a national action program: suffrage first, then other rights would follow automatically.

The German report, by contrast, written by Camilla Jellinek, a self-trained lawyer, went beyond merely stating an agenda of action but

62 Ibid., vi.

63 The report has so far rarely been the topic of deeper research. One exception is Arne Duncker, “Die ‘Stellung der Frau im Recht der Kulturstaaten’ 1912. Eine offizielle Bestandsaufnahme nebst Handlungsvorschlägen im Auftrag des International Council of Women,” in *Reformforderungen international*, ed. Meder and Mecke, 770-83.

64 Aberdeen, *Women in Industrial Life*, 128.

65 *Women’s Position in the Laws of the Nations*, 9-18.

also included a thoughtful assessment of the legal situation of German women and introduced new ideas that could serve as a common denominator for national and international feminist action. First, Jellinek redefined the rough guideline of topics that all chapters were supposed to deal with, described the differences within the German women's movement, and called for legal changes in divorce and other laws. Many other reports had merely described the existing legal situation. Jellinek suggested concrete reform changes in the form of a bill, as was quite typical of the German women's movements. Also typical was her focus on questions related to private law without excluding public law. But what also becomes clear from Jellinek's report is that German women did not expect rapid legal change but rather hoped to be able to influence male legislators until a change of the political system and, with it, women's suffrage would eventually improve their situation.⁶⁶

Despite the variations in the tone and focus of the individual reports, with the 1912 survey, the ICW committed to the goal of equal laws. For the moment, it prioritized them over protective laws, focusing especially on labor legislation for women, even if more descriptively than prescriptively. The descriptive reports nonetheless enabled national members to employ transnational arguments in their national struggles. To my knowledge, this was the first such report ever assembled by a collective international group of women. The BDF finally had its first concrete result, which, although it was not a political guideline for member states of the ICW, could be used politically in the national member states. Moreover, the supposed modernism and progress in other countries in comparison to the backwards situation in Germany that it made apparent did have some impact.

The First World War ended any ICW efforts to promote major legal changes. Only the legal aspects of married women's nationality survived the war, remaining on the ICW's agenda.⁶⁷ The German women's movement, as almost all other ICW members, returned exclusively to national causes supporting the government's war efforts, as Minna Cauer wrote sadly at the ICW Congress in Rome in 1914: "There is no news about Germany because even the bigger women's organizations like the BDF only give lip service to international work, but they purposely, if not to say principally, don't work on it anymore. Germany is immobilized by the military and the weapons and will always remain so. German women show more enmity than willingness concerning the idea of initiating an international peace of all nations."⁶⁸

66 Ibid., 19-35.

67 Jacques, "Tracking Feminist Interventions," 321-48.

68 Minna Cauer, "Generalversammlung des Internationalen Frauenbunds in Rom vom 5.-14. Mai 1914," *Die Frauenbewegung* 20 (1914): 73-75.

69 Offen, "National or International?," 42-58; Sara L. Kimble, "Justice Redressed: Women, Citizenship, and the Social Uses of The Law in Modern France, 1890-1939," PhD thesis, University of Iowa, 2002; idem, "The Rise of 'Modern Portias': Feminist Legal Activism in Republican France, 1890s-1940s," in *New Perspectives on European Women's Legal History*, ed. Kimble and Röwekamp, 125-51. Also see Kimble's chapter on "Transatlantic Networks for Legal Feminism, 1888-1912" in this volume.

70 Ute Gerhard, "Women's Movements and Law: Legal, Historical and Sociological Aspects of Research in International Comparison," in *Family Law in Early Women's Rights Debates*, ed. Meder and Mecke, 36.

71 Alice Salomon, *Character Is Destiny*, 48.

This was a sad conclusion to the BDF's first contribution to international work within the context of the ICW. All in all, looking at the interaction of the BDF and the ICW reveals three things. First, it shows that it does not suffice to use a top-down approach to describe the history of the transnational women's movement; we have to involve the national member states and their work and thoughts about the international movement. This is especially so as national and international work originated from the same ideas and actors and consequently influenced each other. The interaction between the national campaigns and the international community clearly needs further study. In addition, the focus on other areas like suffrage provides new perspectives on the history of the international women's movement, which also clearly needs to be further explored. And finally, the BDF pushed family law on the agenda of the International Council of Women. When Germans withdrew, the French council and especially its legal experts joined the cause and brought it alive, as Karen Offen and Sara Kimble have shown.⁶⁹ Because of the pressure of the German and the French women's movements, both nationally and internationally, family law became a focus of international reforms. This was truly a "revolutionary" step.⁷⁰ Beyond that, the ICW itself was a revolutionary organization, in spite of its self-proclaimed "unpolitical" principles. It worked as a transnational women's parliament long before the idea of a league of nations was born, as Alice Salomon stressed in her autobiography: The ICW pooled "the efforts of women of all classes, creeds, and nations for the advancement of their sex and the welfare of mankind. It was long before the League of Nations had been conceived, but this was a Women's League of Nations, with all the birth pangs such an ambitious body was bound to have."⁷¹

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A RARE COLORED BIRD: MARY CHURCH TERRELL, *DIE FORTSCHRITTE DER FARBIGEN FRAUEN*, AND THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN'S CONGRESS IN BERLIN, GERMANY, 1904

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On June 13, 1904, at the International Council of Women's (ICW) congress in Berlin, Mary Church Terrell, a prominent African American feminist and civil rights advocate, delivered her speech, *Die Fortschritte der farbigen Frauen* [The Progress of Colored Women] before a large audience of leading international social and political activists. In her autobiography, Terrell recounted the significance of her presence at the conference: "I represented not only the colored women in my own country but, since I was the only woman taking part in the International Congress who had a drop of African blood in her veins, I represented the whole continent of Africa as well."¹ Terrell was likely correct in her observation of being the only woman of color in attendance, as the ICW did not expand its membership beyond Europe and North America to include women activists from the "non-West" until the interwar years. She discussed issues such as the sexual virtue of black women, their unequal access to quality education, and the discrimination professional blacks faced in employment opportunities. The closing remarks of Terrell's speech captured the hope and deep dedication to the struggle for gender and for racial equality that lay



Mary Church Terrell.
Courtesy of the Library of
Congress, LC-USZ62-54722
97500102 Biog. File,
Terrell, Mary, Church.

1 Mary Church Terrell, *Colored Woman in a White World* (Washington DC, 1940), 204. For readings on debates about civilization, progress, and social Darwinism and its intersection with black middle-class respectability politics, racial uplift ideology, and, by extension,

African Americans' attitudes towards the "redemption" of Africa, see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago, 1995); Elisabeth Engel, *Encountering Empire: African American*

Missionaries in Colonial Africa, 1900 — 1939 (Stuttgart, 2015); and Michele Mitchell, "'The Black Man's Burden': African Americans, Imperialism, and Notions of Racial Manhood 1890-1910," *International Review of Social History* 44 (1999): 77-99.

at the heart of her international work: “If I have succeeded at interesting just a few women outside of North America in the fight that the colored woman is waging in the United States ... then my mission here in Berlin will be happily fulfilled.”² Terrell’s ability to explain in German and French the kinds of racist and sexist barriers that threatened African American women’s progress earned her a standing ovation. German feminists who had enthusiastically anticipated the arrival of “*die Negerin*” (the Negress) from the United States were impressed with the performance of this “rare, colored bird,” as Terrell referred to herself.³ Terrell’s speech made headlines in Germany, France, Norway, and Austria, all of which subsequently requested more information on America’s racial dilemma.⁴

Mary Church Terrell successfully wove the mission of the black women’s club movement into the agenda of a predominantly white and predominantly transatlantic women’s organization and the broader European public. The overwhelmingly positive reception Terrell received before a European audience marked the international sphere as a fruitful site for African American women’s pursuit of gender and racial equality in the United States. In some ways, the reception was reminiscent of Europeans’ ardent support (especially in Great Britain) of American abolitionists in the nineteenth century. Though organizations such as the International Council of Women did not extend membership to individuals, on rare occasions, African American feminists were invited to give lectures at international women’s conferences. Terrell and others seized these opportunities to share the “good news” of the rapid progress African American women had attained in all realms of society despite the obstacles that stood in their way. Notable anti-lynching supporter Ida B. Wells may have put it best after her lecture tour in Europe in 1893: “My trip abroad had shown me more clearly than ever the necessity of putting our case before the [European] public.”⁵

This essay offers a reconsideration of Mary Church Terrell through the lens of her European activist endeavors. Black women’s activism abroad emerged at the juncture of complex domestic and international issues including Jim Crow discrimination, the rise of international labor organizing, woman’s suffrage, U.S. imperial efforts in the Philippines, scientific racism, colonialism, and claims to national citizenship. A close examination of Terrell’s 1904 Berlin appearance sheds light on the ways domestic concerns and debates regarding racial and gender inequality informed African American feminists’ agenda within transnational women’s groups.

- 2 Mary Church Terrell, “Die Fortschritte der farbigen Frauen,” in *Der Internationale Frauen Kongreß, Berlin 1904*, ed. Marie Stritt, 567-73 (Berlin, 1905); I am using the translation provided by the editors Kathryn Sklar, Anja Schüler, and Susan Strasser in *Social Justice in the United States and Germany: A Dialogue in Documents, 1885-1933* (Ithaca, 1998), 115. The conference proceedings of the 1904 International Council of Women congress in Berlin, Germany are available online: <https://ia800204.us.archive.org/26/items/derinternationa00fraugooog/derinternationa00fraugooog.pdf>
- 3 Terrell, *Colored Woman in a White World*, 198.
- 4 Terrell, “Die Fortschritte der farbigen Frauen,” 115; “Bilder vom Internationalen Frauen-Kongress 1904,” *Die Woche*, June 1904, 22. German-language newspaper advertisement announcing Mary Church Terrell’s participation in the congress in Mary Church Terrell Papers, Box 14 Folder 270; Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University. Mary Church Terrell’s lecture at the ICW Congress continues to be viewed as an important contribution to Berlin history, as well as German-American transatlantic dialogue. See Ingo Juchler, *Amerikaner in Berlin: Der historische Reiseführer* (Berlin, 2016), 18-19.
- 5 Michelle Rief, “Thinking Locally, Acting Globally: The International Agenda of African American Clubwomen, 1880-1940,” *Journal of African American History* 89, no. 3 (2004): 203-22, 205.

The emergence of transatlantic feminist organizing at the end of the nineteenth century provided leading feminists of the North Atlantic an opportunity to establish a more permanent transnational dialogue. For them, forging an international sisterhood was one strategy for overcoming the challenges that confronted their sex. Holding regular women's conferences in locations as diverse as Paris, London, Zurich, and Washington DC made feminist transnationalists visible players on the international scene. But practicing international sisterhood proved to be difficult, particularly when it came to matters involving race. African American women's participation in the early transnational women's movement often challenged white leaders to live up to the great principles the ICW and other organizations claimed to uphold. Yet, up to now, African American feminists' contributions have remained nearly invisible in scholarship on first-wave transnational feminist organizing.⁶

This essay is part of a larger project that explores the career and networks of Mary Church Terrell, an African American feminist prominent on the international stage, as a window into the international activism of African American women. First, I will place Terrell in her local and global contexts. Next, I will examine Terrell's participation at the International Council of Women's Congress in Berlin 1904 and her subsequent travels in Europe to engage with European activists. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion on the significance of Terrell's early transnational activism and its importance in the historiography of African American women's international work.

African American Feminist Transnational Activism: Taking "Race Work" from the Domestic to the International Sphere

African American women's activism needs to be understood in the context of the post-Reconstruction revival of discrimination at home. Most historians recognize the years 1890-1920 as the Progressive Era, a time in which ordinary citizens' participation in political and social reforms thrived. In this era, "ordinary folks" began to organize to challenge exploitive working conditions and demanded fair political representation. But it was also a time when elites gained even greater authority by supporting policies that helped strengthen class distinctions, and upper-middle-class white women reformers made significant strides toward gender equality. For African Americans, as opposed to white reformers, the Progressive Era was "the Nadir," a time of legally sanctioned (*de jure*) discrimination and racism, as well as socially permissible (*de facto*) terror and violence.⁷

6 Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, 1997). Although literature on feminist transnational organizing has focused primarily on the post-World War I era, scholars who use the long nineteenth century as historical context for later developments in the transnational women's movement often include little on the involvement of African American women. See Harriet Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights* (Syracuse, 1993); Carrie Foster, *The Women and the Warriors: The U.S. Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915-1946* (Syracuse, 1995); and Marie Sandell, *The Rise of Transnational Activism: Identity and Sisterhood Between the World Wars* (London, 2015). Joyce Blackwell, *No Peace Without Freedom: Race and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915-1975* (Carbondale, 2004), is the first comprehensive study of black women activists in an international women's organization, but, like the other works, provides a meager discussion on black women's participation in first-wave transnational feminist organizing.

7 The term "Nadir" was coined by Rayford Logan, a scholar of African American history, and introduced in his seminal monograph, *The Negro in American Life and Thought, The Nadir, 1877-1901* (New York, 1954). I will use the term and spelling in the same way as Logan hereafter.

“The Nadir” was not only a period in which blacks’ and whites’ social relationship deteriorated but also captures the extent to which national and local law aided the process. The U.S. Supreme Court’s 1883 decision declaring the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional set precedent for state legislatures to pass laws that would create two separate societies — one for blacks and one for whites. In the South, state ordinances — also referred to as Jim Crow Laws — restricted African Americans from sitting next to whites on trains, chained them to a cyclical debt system known as sharecropping, and kept them disenfranchised at voting polls through intimidation, high poll taxes, literacy laws, property qualifications, and “grandfather clauses,” which denied the vote to African Americans but not to illiterate whites.⁸ The 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court ruling formalized the infamous “separate but equal” doctrine, thus endorsing the growing trend among Southern states to pass more formal segregation laws. Jim Crow policies were generally supported by courts; thus, the power and privilege that came along with being white in America was extended in the South by building “a culture of segregation” in all areas of public life. This system, which constantly reminded African Americans of their inferior status, was not only enforced by regulations, electoral fraud, negative racial stereotypes, and economic pressure but also by unprecedented terror and violence through lynching, cross-burning, and mob violence. Lynching was, arguably, the most diabolical form of domestic terror waged against African Americans — especially African American men. Southern white men sought to revive pre-Reconstruction white male supremacy. Before the Civil War, abolitionists successfully conducted a public campaign that depicted Southern white men as sexual predators raping black women. In the Jim Crow era, white men manipulated racial and sexual politics to create the “black rapist.” White women then used this mythical threat for their own political gain in the New South. For white men, constructing a political discourse that made rape a crime committed by black men against white women not only gave them permission to lynch black men with impunity but to continue sexually assaulting black and white women alike.⁹ In the main, Jim Crow was a deliberate campaign crafted by white elites to prevent African Americans from obtaining any political, economic, and social power.¹⁰

This is important because part of C. Vann Woodward’s thesis is that for a long time, even in the post-Civil War and Reconstruction Era, blacks and whites lived

in close proximity and shared many public facilities. Although there were informal practices of segregation, and most Southern states had racial segregation laws on

the books, these were not always strictly enforced. Initially, several Southern states were not in favor of adopting Jim Crow laws into their state legal codes.

8 See Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill, 1996), for more on tactics used to remove black men from the public sphere and the role rising populism and shrinking support of black male politicians in the Republican Party played in empowering Southern white supremacy.

9 Crystal N. Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching* (Cambridge, 2009), 5. See Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago, 1995), for a discussion on how anti-lynching crusader Ida B. Wells’s counter-use of “civilization” rhetoric criticized Southern whites and convinced Northern white men to view lynching black men as a violent “uncivilized” act that reflected unfavorably on all white men.

10 Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York, 1998); C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow: A Commemorative Edition* (New York, 2002), 31-34, 65, and 97-102. “Jim Crow” has a complex history. The term originated in the 1830s when a white performer, Thomas Rice, performed minstrel routines in blackface for white audiences as the fictional character “Jim Crow.” The shows exacerbated negative representations of African Americans through jokes and songs in an exaggerated slave dialect. By the nineteenth century, Jim Crow took on a new life as the term was used for anti-black laws. Jim Crow became a reaction to interracial organizing (e.g., American farmers’ alliances).

African Americans responded to Jim Crow by strengthening their own communities; they established social and cultural institutions such as churches, secondary schools, philanthropic clubs, banks, and secret societies. These sites produced a thriving African American public sphere and offered support for civil rights organizations that included the National Afro-American Council (AAC) in 1898 and W.E.B. Du Bois and William Monroe Trotter's Niagara Movement in 1905.¹¹ To understand Mary Church Terrell's and other middle- and upper-class African American women's life decisions, it is imperative to contextualize them within the hostile and rapidly changing environment of "the Nadir" of the Progressive Era.

Jim Crow segregation laws eroded black masculine authority and power through disfranchisement, terror, and violence — thus engendering tensions between African American men and women activists. Just as it had done during the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, for some black men — and a few black women — the proposition of gender equality threatened mobilization efforts to fight racial injustice. Feminist black women responded to this resistance by starting their own organizations in which they could advocate for gender and racial uplift simultaneously. They held that because racist laws and violence aimed to restrain the political power of black men, the progress of the race rested on women's shoulders. In the words of Martha Jones, a historian of black women, "If the nadir was the problem, the woman's era was the solution."¹²

By the late nineteenth century, African American women had expanded the reach of their "race work" beyond the black community through interracial cooperation with white women activists and organizations. For black women involved in the temperance and suffrage movements, having access to white activists' networks also brought opportunities for international work. In 1888 prominent white suffragists Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton of the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) invited women activists from all over the world to Washington DC to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention.¹³ It was at this gathering that Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, a notable black abolitionist, suffragist, and member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), delivered an address on temperance; it also saw the founding of the first international women's organization, the International Council of Women.¹⁴ U.S. suffragists envisioned the ICW as an umbrella organization comprised of national councils

11 Mary Church Terrell was an active member of the AAC. Though short-lived, the AAC is considered to be among the early organizations that laid the groundwork for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) founded in 1909. Terrell was a founding charter member, helped establish the Washington DC branch, and served as its vice-president.

12 Martha S. Jones, *All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830-1900* (Chapel Hill, 2007), 176.

13 Mary Ann Shadd Cary Papers, Box 1 Folder 53; Moorland-Springarn Research Library, Howard University.

14 Rief, "Thinking Locally, Acting Globally," 203-204.

representing independent women's groups from each respective country. By establishing a more formal relationship between women of the North Atlantic, the organization aimed to strengthen transatlantic dialogue concerning the shared barriers confronting women. To this end, the ICW sought to strengthen its international ties by establishing two international standing committees in 1899 — one focused on peace and international arbitration, and the other on the legal position of married women.¹⁵

Despite the progress that the founding of the first international women's organization symbolized, the ICW, similar to the NWSA and other white women's organizations, did not consider the challenges confronting African American women. Yet African American women nonetheless spoke at ICW conferences and gatherings as guests because they understood the larger reward: these events constituted a means for them to make an impression on an international crowd, thus injecting U.S. race issues into the organization's larger agenda. A shared commitment to woman's empowerment brought black and white American feminists together; however, it was often white women's insistence on maintaining racial hierarchies that made cultivating a successful interracial cooperative environment challenging. White women needed black women's political influence to mobilize black communities behind their causes (e.g., local elections), while black women needed a powerful organization into which they could channel their demands for an end to social and institutional discrimination.¹⁶

The ICW held its first quinquennial conference, the World's Congress of Representative Women, in Chicago in 1893 to coincide with the World's Columbian Exposition. A number of African American feminist women attended, including Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, who gave a keynote address, Anna Julia Cooper, Fannie Jackson Coppin, Sarah J. Early, Fannie Barrier Williams, and Hallie Quinn Brown, who also delivered a lecture entitled "Woman's Political Future." In her keynote address, "The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Women of the United States since the Emancipation Proclamation," Harper declared before an international audience: "to-day we stand on the threshold of the woman's era."¹⁷ The Board of Lady Managers excluded these African American women from participating in the organization of exhibits and events to be held in the Woman's Building, citing internal divisions and a lack of a national organization as the reasons.¹⁸ But black women suspected racism to be the real

15 Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 15 and 19. Those hungering for a more assertive suffrage association established the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) at the first ICW conference in Berlin in 1904. The IWSA also criticized the ICW for not taking a firmer stance on suffrage.

16 Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 45–50. Also see Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848–1898* (Chapel Hill, 2014).

17 Elisabetta Vezzosi, "The International Strategy of African American Women at the Columbian Exposition and Its Legacy: Pan-Africanism, Decolonization and Human Rights," in *Moving Bodies, Displaying Nations National Cultures, Race and Gender in World Expositions Nineteenth to Twenty-first Century*, ed. Guido Abbattista, 67–88 (Trieste, 2014), 68.

18 Vezzosi, "The International Strategy," 69.

motivating factor behind these exclusionary policies. The Columbian Exposition was a celebration of the progress of Western civilization. White men aimed to establish a direct correlation between white manhood, white supremacy, and the advancements of the West. To this end, they ensured their dominance by keeping the exhibits predominantly male and by keeping the World's Fair spatially segregated along racial and ethnic lines.¹⁹ White male organizers had rejected the Lady Managers' plans to showcase women's progress and contributions to the advancement of [white] civilization, reinforcing white women's marginal status in American society in relation to their white male counterparts. This failed attempt to establish equality between women and men made maintaining the racial privileges and power that came with being white over African Americans that much more important to the Lady Managers.²⁰

After being denied the opportunity to manage exhibits representing African Americans, Hallie Quinn Brown penned a letter to the Board of Lady Managers to protest the lack of representation of African American men and women in the design of the exposition:

It seems to be a selected conviction among the colored people, that no adequate opportunity is to be offered them for the proper representation of the World's Fair [...]. If, therefore, the object of the Woman's Department of the Columbian Exposition is to present to the world the industrial and educational progress of the breadwinners — the wage women — how immeasurably incomplete will that work be without the exhibit of the thousands of the colored women of this country.²¹

While Brown and others defied American racial etiquette before a global audience at the exposition, anti-lynching crusader Ida B. Wells began work on a critical pamphlet, *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition* (1893), during her anti-slavery lecture tour in Great Britain to educate foreign visitors on the lack of African American representation and to tell the truth about race relations in the United States. Frederick Douglass, former U.S. ambassador to Haiti (1889-1891) and a prominent abolitionist, supported Ida B. Wells's efforts, writing the introduction and contributing a chapter on "The Convict Lease System" to the edited volume. The success of Wells's pamphlet garnered international attention from France, Russia, Germany, India, and England. African American

19 Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 31.

20 Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 33-40.

21 *Ibid.*, 70.

women's demand for inclusion sparked international debate about the limits of American citizenship when it came to race and gender, and, as a result, "expanded the civic space that they occupied in Chicago and the nation."²²

African American women's efforts to obtain leadership positions within black male and white female-dominated organizations were often thwarted by sexism and racism, leaving black women little choice but to carve out a niche within black public culture to call their own. The establishment of independent black women's clubs in the 1890s provided sites of intellectual community wherein black women articulated a shared vision for uplifting their race and sex, agreed on the fundamentals that shaped their daily activities in the larger community, and presented themselves as a respected and unified political body. Though not monolithic in their thinking, Mary Church Terrell and other prominent African American feminists shared the belief that the elevation of the race hinged on the progress of its women.²³ The Colored Women's League (CWL), founded in 1892 by Terrell, Anna Julia Cooper, and Mary Jane Patterson, served as an early model for African American women nationwide. Drawing on the philosophies of racial uplift and self-help, CWL members brought social services to poor black neighborhoods, for example, educating mothers on the latest advanced domestic skills and tools; for them, the quality of home life was directly linked to racial improvement.²⁴ The rapid growth of independent black women's clubs made evident the urgency with which black women sought to fulfill the public service needs of government-neglected black communities in urban centers and the rural South. As a result, in 1896 prominent club women Anna Julia Cooper, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, Josephine Silon Yates, Mary Church Terrell, Fannie Barrier Williams, and others established the first African American women's national organization, the National Association of Colored Women (NACW).²⁵

Terrell was elected as the first president of the organization, and during her tenure (1896-1900) she worked hard to advance the strategies with which black women's clubs confronted Jim Crow and gender discrimination through community engagement and fundraising. The organization increased its impact by establishing public institutions such as kindergartens, medical clinics, and nursing schools to train black nurses and help them pass state examinations.²⁶ Of equal importance, the NACW expanded its leadership role in the public sphere through political agitation. Black clubwomen challenged

22 Kathryn Kish Sklar and Erin Shaughnessy, "Introduction," in *How Did African-American Women Define Their Citizenship at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893?* (Binghamton, 1997).

23 Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy A Load: African American Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994* (New York, 1999), 42.

24 White, *Too Heavy A Load*, 27-28.

25 The Colored Women's League and the National Federation of African American Women merged to form the National Association of Colored Women. For a comprehensive history of the black women's club movement, see White, *Too Heavy a Load*.

26 Mary Church Terrell, "The National Association: The Efforts and Aims of Our Negro Women," *The Freeman*, December 24, 1898.

discriminatory state laws that undermined their rights as U.S. citizens, for example, petitioning against Jim Crow street car laws and the exploitation of female prisoners by the convict lease system.²⁷ Though community building was the cornerstone of the NACW, when the organization implemented initiatives it sometimes incited tensions between middle-class and working poor African Americans, engendering accusations of elitism against Terrell and other leaders.

In her 1904 presidential address, Terrell's chose the motto "Lifting As We Climb" to underscore the "duty" of educated black women to elevate their less fortunate sisters:

I no way could we live up to such sentiment better than by coming into closer touch with the masses of our women, by whom, whether we will or not, the world will always judge the womanhood of the race. Even though we wish to shun them, and hold ourselves entirely aloof from them, we cannot escape the consequences of their acts. So, that, if the call of duty were disregarded altogether, policy and self-preservation would demand that we go down among the lowly, the illiterate, and even the vicious to whom we are bound by the ties of race and sex, and put forth every possible effort to uplift and reclaim them.²⁸

Terrell's statement not only confirmed class tensions within the African American community but highlighted the hypersensitivity of black middle-class women and the urgency with which they sought to preserve their image as respectable women.²⁹ As she had in her speech in Berlin, Terrell attempted to associate Africa's potential with the progress of African American women, reflecting anxieties about negative images of the supposed "dark continent": if properly westernized, Terrell and others implied, Africans could advance, just as African Americans were doing. Terrell's unequivocal claim to being a qualified representative of Africa suggested an imperialist impulse in African American feminists' political consciousness at the turn of the twentieth century. In both instances, we see the ambivalence of her simultaneous privilege and position of speaking for "all" African Americans, or even all people with "African blood."

The establishment of the NACW in 1896 also proved beneficial for black feminists as it enabled them to continue their engagement with foreign and "progressive" North American white women activists,

27 Mary Church Terrell, "Club Work of Colored Women," *The Southern Workman*, August 8, 1901.

28 Mary Church Terrell, "The Duty of the National Association of Colored Women," *A.M.E Church Review* (January 1900). This essay, along with others by Terrell, can be found in Beverly Washington Jones, *Quest for Equality: The Life and Writings of Mary Eliza Church Terrell, 1863-1954*, *Black Women in the United States History* 13 (Brooklyn, 1990), 144.

29 Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), 206-207.

now with the status of being representatives of a national organization. In 1899, while on tour in Europe, Hallie Quinn Brown and Margaret Murray Washington attended the ICW conference in London as NACW representatives. When a white American woman only spoke of the hardships experienced by European immigrants in the U.S., even though the topic of the day was “Underprivileged Races,” Brown gave an impromptu speech exposing the racial indignities imposed on blacks by white Americans. In her unpublished autobiography, Brown reflected on that moment: “My opportunity had come to tell of the Negro’s sufferings ... to tell of brutal lynchings, ... of the barbarity of constant discrimination. I fairly shouted my catalog of outrages against a helpless people. I was later told that my speech covered thirty minutes. I stopped of my own accord.”³⁰ These black feminist internationalists, by being present at the ICW conference, marked a new era of black feminism; as a cohort, they would establish a foundation for and consistency in engaging in international debates.³¹ But no other African American feminist would test the boundaries of bringing the ideals of transnational interracial cooperation to bear on her own world to a greater extent than Mary Church Terrell.

Mary Church Terrell Vindicates Her Race in the Chicago of Europe

As highlighted in this chapter’s opening, Mary Church Terrell left a truly exceptional impression on an international audience at the 3rd Quinquennial Congress of the International Council of Women in Berlin in 1904. At that time, the city had become a modern metropolis, having overcome its formerly cheap, unsanitary, and pestilent conditions to develop into a tidy, tree-lined capital with theater patrons, university students, and government officials. This transformation had prompted Mark Twain to describe it just over a decade before Terrell’s visit as the European Chicago.³² Though invited to Berlin based, in part, on her activist reputation in the U.S., Terrell enjoyed an unusual social position for an African American at the turn of the twentieth century that distinguished her from other African American feminist transnationalists at the time. As the daughter of the first black millionaire family of the South, Terrell had a very privileged upbringing. She attended an integrated secondary school, earned post-secondary degrees from Oberlin College, and studied abroad for two years in Paris, Lausanne, Florence, and Berlin. Her husband, Robert H. Terrell, earned degrees from Harvard and Howard Universities and became the first black municipal court judge for Washington DC. This upbringing

30 Rief, “Thinking Locally, Acting Globally,” 206; racial politics in national groups often trumped such optimistic rhetoric and even erupted at international gatherings. Such a moment came in 1921 when white U.S. women blocked African American transnationalist Mary Talbert from entering the dining room of the American Women’s Club in Paris. She was en route to attend an ICW congress meeting in Kristiania, Norway. See Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 74–75.

31 The emergence of black women transnationalists marked a turning point from pre-Reconstruction-era debates on international issues that African American women engaged in (i.e., abolitionists, missionaries, and novelists).

32 Mark Twain, “The Chicago of Europe,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 3, 1892. Also see Eva-Maria Schnurr, “Berlin’s Turn of the Century Growing Pains,” *Spiegel Online*, November 22, 2012, accessed November 28, 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/the-late-19th-century-saw-the-birth-modern-berlin-a-866321-druck.html>

and social position made her conversant in the world of her affluent white American and European counterparts, a necessary precondition for her role at the congress in Berlin, since the ICW was an organization comprised of well-connected women — whose wealth, national prominence, education, and aristocratic lineage qualified them as elites.³³ Access to financial resources made it possible for Terrell to afford a first-class ticket on the Nord Deutsche Lloyd steamer, elegant gowns and hats to wear each evening to events, and visits to major cities following the Berlin congress.

The issues Terrell brought to the attention of her primarily white European audience related to her long-standing activism and leadership in organizations in the U.S. as a civil rights advocate, educator, and lecturer on rights for women and African Americans.³⁴ Drawing on her German language skills and cultural acumen, Terrell impressed those she encountered — from German stewards, maids, and journalists to the high-ranking German statesmen Count von Bülow (the Minister of Foreign Affairs) and Count von Posodonsky (the Minister of the Interior). Terrell was equally captivated by the modern metropolis of Berlin. In Terrell's description, the events organized by the ICW German delegation mirrored the opulence of the city: "[E]legant homes were made available to the [foreign] committees, delegates, and speakers ... [T]he banquet ... seemed less like reality than a dream ... no expense was spared."³⁵

Factors such as socioeconomic status, educational background, nationality, and an ambiguous racial identity shaped Terrell's experience in Berlin more than current scholarship suggests. Though Terrell was fair-skinned — and even passed for white occasionally — she was fully aware that those eager to get a glimpse of a black woman from the United States likely imagined her as dark-skinned with "rings in her nose" and "conjoning" or "cakewalking" about the streets.³⁶ German newspaper reporters competing for an interview unknowingly asked Terrell when "*die Negerin*" would arrive, to which she responded, "Haven't you seen her?"³⁷ Terrell made a point of counteracting such stereotypes in her personal appearance as well as in her lecture on "The Progress of Colored Women," which both reflected her embrace of the ideology of black middle-class and elite women's respectability and racial uplift — and confirmed the necessity of "respectability" for black women involved in international work. Subsequent reports on Terrell's success underscored this reality in the international media:

33 Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 52.

34 Mary Church Terrell was the first black woman to be appointed to the Washington DC Board of Education in 1895, where she served a total of eleven years (1895-1901 and 1906-1911), and was involved in a wide range of organizations, such as the Colored Women's League, Afro-American Council, and Young Women's Christian Association; Alison M. Parker, "What Was the Relationship between Mary Church Terrell's International Experience and Her Work against Racism in the United States?," in *Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600-2000*, ed. Kathryn Kish Sklar and Thomas Dublin. Accessed October 14, 2015.

35 Terrell, *Colored Woman*, 205-206; Mary Church Terrell, "The International Congress of Women," *The Voice of the Negro* (October 1904): 454-55.

36 Terrell, *Colored Woman*, 199.

37 *Ibid.*, 198.

The woman who made the best appearance on the platform was Mrs. Terrell, of Washington, a lady of Andalusian complexion, who in ease of manner, gracefulness, and force of gesture and naturalness of expression was ahead of all the other “oratrices.” Mrs. Terrell spoke in German with the same fluency and ease as in her native tongue.³⁸

Terrell’s presumptions about what the German delegates expected of an African American woman were not improbable. German intellectuals (particularly anthropologists) had long been fascinated by the daily practices of Jim Crow segregation in a so-called democratic society, and how — despite such prejudice — a class of upwardly mobile African Americans had developed.³⁹ Though it is difficult to pinpoint any one factor eliciting Germans’ reactions to Terrell, her success in Berlin is, nonetheless, surprising given the ethno-racial character of German nationalism, the influx of commercial goods reinforcing negative stereotypes about Africans and African Americans into German markets, and Germany’s entanglement in a colonial war against the Herero in Namibia at the time.⁴⁰

Mary Church Terrell’s Travels and Publications after the Berlin Congress

By participating in this international conference, Terrell made institutionalized racism in the U.S. visible to international audiences. This gave her a firm concept of what race work overseas could do. In a 1904 article for *The Voice of the Negro*, Terrell articulated her new outlook:

I have made up in my mind ... that for the rest of my natural life, I shall devote as much of my time and strength as I can to enlightening my friends across the sea upon the condition of the race problem in the United States, as it really is.⁴¹

Among other things, her success on the international stage convinced Terrell to make use of contacts with prominent reformers and writers on the other side of the Atlantic to speak out against racism at home. For instance, after the congress, Terrell traveled to London to meet with William T. Stead, the famous journalist and editor of the *Review of Reviews*, as well as the Countess of Warwick, a prominent British reformer and philanthropist.⁴² The meeting with Stead was particularly

38 “French View of the Women’s Congress,” *The Independent*, July 14, 1904, Mary Church Terrell Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, reel 19.

39 Charles Griffith Hoffman, “Die Neger Washingtons,” *Globus*, February 5, 1898, accessed March 2, 2015, Nineteenth Century Collections Online; Dr. C. Steffens, “Die Verfeinerung des Negertypus in den Vereinigten Staaten,” *Globus*, 1901, accessed March 2, 2015, Nineteenth Century Collections Online.

40 For further reading, see David Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge, 2011); Mischa Honeck, Martin Klimke, and Anne Kuhlmann, eds., *Germany and the Black Diaspora: Points of Contact, 1250-1914* (New York, 2013); Larry Greene and Anke Ortlepp, eds., *Germans and African Americans: Two Centuries of Exchange* (Jackson, 2011); and Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire* (Durham, 2001).

41 Mary Church Terrell, “The International Congress of Women,” *The Voice of the Negro* (October 1904): 460.

42 Following the congress, Mary Church Terrell first traveled to Paris, where she met briefly with Jean Finot, the editor of the French magazine *La Revue des Revues* and well-known critic of scientific racism. Terrell, *A Colored Woman*, 209–20.

fruitful and beneficial to both parties. Before her appearance in Berlin, Terrell had published an article entitled “Lynching from a Negro’s Point of View” in the *North American Review*.⁴³ The article’s international success, along with the attention Terrell gained in Berlin, had motivated Stead to seek her expertise on the “race problem” in the United States. Stead helped Terrell expand her international readership by introducing her to British editors who were willing to publish articles that white American journals had rejected. As a result, Terrell published two articles in the British journal, *Nineteenth Century and After*, in 1906 and 1907. The first article, “A Plea for the White South by a Coloured Woman,” presented the hard-hitting argument that white Americans’ propensity for violence against African Americans reflected a spiraling moral demise that could only be resolved by other (non-Southern) whites.⁴⁴ In Terrell’s second article, “Peonage in the United States: The Convict Lease System and the Chain Gangs,” she exposed a degrading and racist convict lease system that exploited the labor of many African Americans in the South.⁴⁵ In return for this favor, Terrell published an interview she conducted with Stead during his visit to Washington DC later that year, in which he shared his thoughts on the ongoing struggles for racial equality outside of the United States, in the *Voice of the Negro*.⁴⁶ This introduced Stead as an ally to the African American community.

Terrell’s meeting with the Countess of Warwick, like that with Stead, was precipitated by the attention Terrell had garnered in Berlin and by her article on lynching. When the countess learned that a black woman from the United States had delivered an address at the International Women’s Council congress, she invited Terrell to her residence, as she was deeply interested in Terrell’s work and in grasping America’s race problem.⁴⁷ The countess, like Stead, expressed horror and astonishment at the practice of lynching, the barbarity and violence of which Terrell had detailed in her article: “[I]t cannot be possible that colored men ... are still hanged, burned, and shot in the United States by mobs.” Yet, as Terrell knew, even disgust at the barbarity of lynching did not necessarily translate into doubt about the soundness of the accusations made against those who were lynched: false information concerning African American men’s sexual practices circulated freely within and outside the United States. Terrell seized the moment to enlighten the countess: “I felt it my duty ... to tell her Ladyship the truth — that out of every hundred colored men who are lynched in this country, from seventy-five to eighty-five are not

43 Mary Church Terrell, “Lynching from a Negro’s Point of View,” *North American Review* 178 (1904): 853–68.

44 Mary Church Terrell, “A Plea for the White South by a Coloured Woman,” 1905, Reel 21, Papers of Mary Church Terrell, Library of Congress. An edited version appeared in *Nineteenth Century and After* [London], Vol. 60 (July 1906): 70–84.

45 Mary Church Terrell, “Peonage in the United States: The Convict Lease System and the Chain Gangs,” in *Nineteenth Century and After* [London], Vol. 62 (August 1907): 306–22.

46 Mary Church Terrell, “An Interview with W.T. Stead on the Race Problem,” *The Voice of the Negro* (July 1907): 327–30.

47 Due to sudden illness, the Countess of Warwick canceled her lecture at the ICW. The countess and Mary Church Terrell were scheduled to speak on the theme of “Wage-Earning Women” the same morning.

even accused by the South of what is so maliciously and falsely called “the usual crime.”⁴⁸ Despite clarifying the daily challenges for African Americans in the South, Terrell was, nonetheless, reluctant to leave a negative impression of home: “I took special pains to emphasize the loyalty of the colored people to the country in which they and their parents had been born, and this seemed to please her Ladyship very much.”⁴⁹ Terrell’s meeting with the Countess of Warwick showed that carrying out race work abroad required a delicate balance. African Americans’ deep sense of patriotism and loyalty to the United States complicated advancing the black clubwomen’s political agenda at times.⁵⁰

Upon returning home, Mary Church Terrell was able to place race relations in the United States in a global comparative framework on the basis of her international experiences, which she did in an article for the African American press organ, *The Voice of the Negro*, later that same year.⁵¹ As she described life for people of color “across the sea,” she observed that there was “absolutely no prejudice against a man on account of the color of his skin” in Europe.⁵² She asserted that there were “innumerable cases of inter-marriage between black and white” in France, and that “a colored man of ability might become an officer in the German army.” In England, by contrast, Terrell ascertained a “slight antipathy toward all dark races,” but individuals with exceptional talent would find no social obstacles to hinder their success — like the composer and conductor Samuel Coleridge Taylor, the son of an African father and English mother (whom Terrell met while visiting London).⁵³ Terrell acknowledged the rise in German anti-Semitism and the violent repression that characterized British colonialism but nevertheless drew the same conclusion as many other African American intellectuals in Europe: that societies abroad were seemingly colorblind, allowing them to be the determiners of their own destiny.⁵⁴ For Terrell and other African American intellectuals such as Alain L. Locke, Georgiana R. Simpson, and W.E.B. Du Bois, Europe was a refuge from America’s racially hostile environment during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

48 Terrell, *A Colored Woman*, 216–17.

49 *Ibid.*, 217.

50 The double burden African Americans felt of being both American and black is well documented by historians. It is perhaps most powerfully described by W.E.B. Du Bois in his seminal book *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). He coined the term “double-consciousness” to describe the “... two-ness — an American, a negro ...” that African Americans struggle with in their sense of identity. Historians have successfully shown that this internal conflict was most pronounced in times of war and domestic unrest. See Nikki Brown, *Private Politics and Public Voices: Black Women’s Activism from World War I to the New Deal* (Bloomington, 2006); Lisa Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era* (Jackson, 2009); Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, 2006); Nina Mjagkij, *Loyalty in Time of Trial: The African American Experience During World War I* (Lanham, MD, 2011).

51 Mary Church Terrell, “The International Congress of Women,” *The Voice of the Negro* (October 1904): 459.

52 *Ibid.*, 259.

53 *Ibid.*, 259; Jinx Coleman Broussard, “Mary Church Terrell: Captivating Crusader,” in *Giving a Voice to the Voiceless: Four Pioneering Black Women*

Journalists, ed. Graham Russell Hodges, 46–68 (New York, 2004), 65.

54 Corey D. Walker, “Of the Coming of

John [and Jane]’: African American Intellectuals in Europe, 1888 — 1938,” *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 47, no. 1 (2002): 7–22.

Conclusion

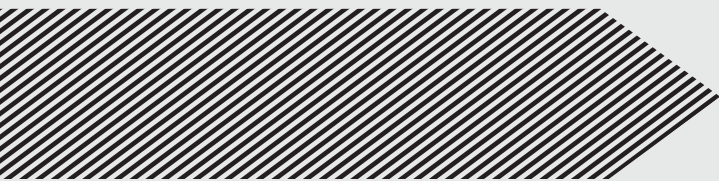
This essay has expanded the definition of African American women's activism based upon their embrace of the international stage as a powerful platform for demanding change. Considering Mary Church Terrell's transnationalist career in the dual contexts of the black feminist experience in the United States and international political debates shows that her participation at the ICW congress in 1904 Berlin proved to be a critical moment for African American feminist transnational activism. Terrell's success in Berlin is a concrete example of how African American women played a role in shaping transnational feminist organizations. This is crucial, as Terrell's later involvement in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) following World War I positioned her to convince her white American and European colleagues to adopt resolutions on "Race Equality" and the "Military Use of Native Populations of Colonies."⁵⁵ As the first African American woman elected to serve on the United States' executive board of the WILPF, Terrell proposed policies that stressed the inextricable link between social justice, equal human rights, and world peace; and, as a result, connected the black freedom struggle for civil rights at home to demands for black liberation abroad.⁵⁶

A reexamination of Mary Church Terrell through her transnational activism and connections abroad opens up the little-known world of African American feminist transnationalism and first-wave international feminist organizing. Equally important, Terrell's involvement in the ICW's early years — along with that of other African American women — raises questions about periodization, suggesting that events in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were more critical to shaping African American women's international history in the twentieth century than previously thought.

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55 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, *Report on the International Congress of Women: Zurich, Switzerland May 12-17, 1919*, 260. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, *Report on the Third International Congress of Women: Vienna, Austria, July 10-17, 1921*, 76-78.

56 Mary Church Terrell, "Colored Women and World Peace," Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Pamphlet [1932], in Mary Church Terrell Papers, Box 13 Folder 263; Manuscript Division, Moorland-Springarn Research Center, Howard University.



Women In Social Movements

ABOLITIONISTS ABROAD: WOMEN, TRAVEL, AND ABOLITIONIST NETWORKS

Stephanie J. Richmond

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, British and American women rarely traveled abroad. Travel was expensive, unreliable, and dangerous. As a result, many women (and men) who participated in the transatlantic antislavery movement never met their counterparts on the other side of the Atlantic, although they exchanged letters, read the same tracts and donated to one another's efforts. Those few abolitionists who did travel abroad in the early nineteenth century can be divided into two categories: those who could afford the trip, and those who felt they had to leave their native country to escape re-enslavement or racism. This dichotomy was true for both male and female travelers, although men were more likely to go on voyages sponsored by antislavery societies. The few women who did travel abroad in the early nineteenth century made important connections between groups of like-minded reformers who could sustain and support one another's work for a common goal. The transatlantic networks formed by women like Maria Weston Chapman, Anne Knight, Mary Anne Estlin, and others strengthened the antislavery movement and sustained it through the schisms that wracked the movement in the 1840s and 1850s.

Travel between Europe and the United States became more common in the 1840s and 1850s because technological improvements shortened ocean crossings and lowered costs, opening up the possibility to far more women than before, not least among them the abolitionists.¹ The trips abolitionists took abroad led to deeper friendships and stronger female networks, which was increasingly important to sustaining the movement after 1840. This was because in 1839-40, a number of large antislavery organizations split in two over the question of the role that women were to play in the movement after Abby Kelley was elected to the executive council of the American Antislavery Society (AAS). William Lloyd Garrison, a far-left founder of the AAS, and his associates supported women's and African Americans' equal participation in antislavery work. More moderate activists supported gender-segregated societies and a more traditional role for women. Garrison and his supporters reformed the AAS before sailing for London's World's Antislavery Convention in 1840, and their opponents founded the American & Foreign Antislavery Society

¹ Abolitionist women were not the only women who traveled more frequently in the 1850s. Travel was an increasingly popular pastime among upper-middle-class and elite women across the Western world. See Barbara Korte, "Travel Writing in *The English Woman's Journal* (1858-1864): An Area of Leisure in the Context of Women's Work," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 45, no. 2 (Summer, 2012): 158-74; Jeanne Kay Guelke and Karen M. Morin, "Gender, Nature, Empire: Women Naturalists in Nineteenth Century British Travel Literature," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 26, no. 3 (2001): 306-26; Amanda Claybaugh, "Toward a New Transatlanticism: Dickens in the United States," *Victorian Studies* 48, no. 3 (Spring 2006): 439-60.

(AFAS) and waged a slander campaign against Garrison and the AAS in Britain. Several American women undertook journeys to Britain in an effort to correct the misinformation spread by the AFAS in the 1850s. African American reformers were caught up in the schism as well, and most of the African American women who worked with interracial antislavery organizations allied themselves with those who supported women's equal involvement. However, African American women were not always seen as equals by those who supported women's participation in the antislavery movement. African Americans faced both sexism and racism from their allies in the antislavery movement as well as the general public. This essay will discuss some of the trips these white and African American women took to abroad at mid-century in an effort to mend the divisions in the antislavery movement and to spread its message; it also will discuss some of the border crossings of earlier women travelers from both sides of the Atlantic before the schism.² It will be shown that women activists succeeded in strengthening the antislavery movement with their travels but, after the split, failed to fully mend the divisions between the various factions or to fully integrate African American travelers into the close-knit network of female reformers they constructed.

2 For a detailed discussion of the division in the antislavery movement, see Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008); and Dorothy Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time: Abby Kelley and the Politics of Antislavery* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991).

3 Elizabeth J. Deis and Lowell T. Frye, "British Travelers and the 'Condition-of-America Question': Defining America in the 1830s," in *Nineteenth-Century British Travelers in the New World*, ed. Christine Devine (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 178 and 190-91.

4 Deborah Anna Logan and Christine Devine, "'My Dearly-Beloved Americans': Harriet Martineau's Transatlantic Abolitionism," in *Nineteenth-Century British Travelers in the New World* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 272; Deborah Anna Logan, *The Hour and the Woman* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002), 87.

When women did travel in the early nineteenth century, they rarely traveled alone. Notable early female travelers like British reformer Frances Trollope and actress Frances Kemble Butler came to the United States accompanied by family members. Both women mostly confined their writings to observations of domestic scenes. Despite their restraint, Trollope's and Kemble Butler's critics expressed their concerns about the impropriety of both women's experiences, a common theme in critiques of women travelers.³ Yet, there were a few women who made transatlantic voyages without a male chaperone or companion in the early nineteenth century. A case in point is Harriet Martineau, a travel writer who traveled around the United States from 1834 to 1836 to conduct research for her book, *Society in America* (1837). Although Martineau traveled without a designated companion, she was seldom alone. While in the United States, she spent much of the early part of her trip with a group of other British travelers. She visited other authors or notable figures and spent most nights as a guest in someone's home when not actively traveling from place to place. Accommodations became harder to find after her participation in antislavery meetings in Boston in 1835. She found that the South, which had previously welcomed her as a celebrity, was now outraged, and her new abolitionist friends worried about her safety.⁴ Traveling

alone or at least without male family members left Martineau more vulnerable when her antislavery leanings became more widely known in the United States.

Some British women who traveled around Europe in the 1820s also did so with a party whose membership changed from city to city. Anne Knight, for example, who later became one of the most outspoken advocates of women's rights and antislavery in Britain, began her career as an international reformer in the 1820s, traveling with a group of other radical Quakers through Europe and conducting missionary work. Knight's letters to her siblings asked them not to spread word of what she was doing and to keep her letters private from her controlling mother. Although Knight traveled without a male family member, the group she accompanied allowed her to travel as a single woman; the trip also coincided with the growth of her philosophy of women's rights. Knight was thirty-eight when she embarked on her first European tour and was still living in her family home with several of her siblings.⁵ Knight's experience shows us that travel, particularly international travel, allowed many reforming women to experience some independence from family and to develop intellectual and reform interests outside the family sphere.

Other women were able to use family connections to engage in travel abroad. American men began to travel to Britain in the early 1830s to expand their abolitionist networks and raise funds for their cause. British audiences were important for radical American abolitionist writers, and British readers' interest in America was fueled by travel writers like Martineau.⁶ Some married American women joined their husbands in traveling to Britain in the 1830s, and some of them received a warm welcome. Boston abolitionist Ann Phillips, for example, accompanied her husband Wendell on his visit to Britain as a representative of the American Antislavery Society in 1839. After meeting British abolitionist George Thompson and his wife as well as Elizabeth Pease, the organizer of the Darlington [England] Ladies Antislavery Society, Phillips wrote to her abolitionist American friend Maria Weston Chapman (whose own foreign travels will be recounted below) and told her about the hearty invitation she received from them. Thompson, she reported, had said, "What would, what would I give to see them, Maria Chapman, all. All must come next year [to the World's Antislavery Convention], men and women too, do they not mean to?" and that "Elizabeth Pease too [was] very anxious, those of you who can possibly come should, she longs to

5 Gail Malmgreen, "Anne Knight and the Radical Subculture," *Quaker History* 71, no. 2 (Fall 1982): 104. See Box W2 of the Knight Papers, Friends' Library, London, for Anne Knight's letters to her family about her 1824 trip to Europe. It is unclear if Knight was the only single woman with the group.

6 W. Caleb McDaniel, *The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery: Garrisonian Abolitionists and Transatlantic Reform*, Antislavery, Abolition, and the Atlantic World (Shreveport: LSU Press, 2013), 77.

see you all, hopes you will come, Maria. Miss Pease I like much.”⁷ Thompson’s invitation and Phillips’s warm reception from British abolitionists encouraged American women to come to the World’s Antislavery Convention, which was held in the summer of 1840. The interest of British abolitionists encouraged American women to seek connections with British women’s organizations.

Not every British family who hosted Phillips was as welcoming as Thompson and Pease. In the same letter where she described her excitement at meeting her fellow abolitionists, Phillips recounted an awkward conversation with a Mrs. Joshua Bates, who “thought us rather odd folks, what with living in a warren st[reet]., riding in hackney coaches, caring for such things as slaves, everywhere we pass for queer folks not drinking spirit. We find we are not thought much of. ‘What will you have to drink? Nothing.’ They look at us in mute amaze[ment].”⁸ As this illustrates, abolitionists like Phillips, particularly radicals who followed AAS founder William Lloyd Garrison in embracing a variety of reform ideas including temperance, dress reform, and living simply, as some Quakers in the United States did, found themselves the objects of curiosity when they visited with the British elite. Garrison and his closest allies adopted a number of very radical stances in addition to antislavery, and Garrison promoted a variety of radical causes in his paper, *The Liberator*. This radicalism attracted criticism from both proslavery forces and less radical abolitionists. Most British abolitionists did not give up the comforts of middle-class and elite life as quite a few of the radical American abolitionists did, and temperance efforts had hardly crossed the Atlantic yet.⁹ As more abolitionists from the United States began to travel across the Atlantic, the differences between British and American reformers’ lifestyles and religious beliefs became points of contention.

Several abolitionists, including many women, did take up Thompson’s kind invitation and traveled to London in the summer of 1840 to attend the World’s Antislavery Convention.¹⁰ Two of them, Pennsylvanians Lucretia Mott (with her husband James) and Mary Grew (with her father Henry) kept journals of their travels. The differences between these two accounts demonstrate the ways in which exposure to a wider world and the women’s goals for their trip shaped their experiences. Lucretia Mott, a forty-seven year old Quaker minister and grand dame of American antislavery, was not a woman who normally kept a diary, but she recorded her trip to England with

7 Ann Terry Greene Phillips to Maria Weston Chapman and Caroline Weston, July 30, 1839, Ms.A.9.2 v.12, p.6, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library. Emphasis in source.

8 Ibid.; for a discussion of plain dress in the American Quaker community, see Frederick B. Tolles, “‘Of the Best Sort but Plain’: The Quaker Esthetic,” *American Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (Winter 1959): 484–502.

9 David Turley, *The Culture of English Antislavery, 1780–1860* (London: Routledge, 1991), chap. 2.

10 For a full description of the group of Americans who attended, see Kathryn Kish Sklar, “‘Women Who Speak for an Entire Nation’: American and British Women Compared at the World Anti-Slavery Convention, London, 1840,” *Pacific Historical Review* 59, no. 4 (1990): 454–55; and Frederick B. Tolles, ed., *Slavery and the “Woman Question”* (Haverford, PA: Friends’ Historical Association, 1952).

her acerbic wit. Mott's journal was written for others to read, and her husband used it when he compiled his own published account of the convention.¹¹ The other diarist was twenty-seven year old Mary Grew, who was excited at the prospect of overseas travel. She dedicated it on the frontispiece to her "own use, in deepening and retaining first impressions of a sea voyage and a tour in England, and with the hope of imparting in a slight degree, to the members of her 'household band,' the pleasures thence derived..."¹² Mott's diary covers the convention and the social scene around it in careful detail and skims over the excursions the group took before and after. Grew, however, filled her pages with anecdotes about the cities and towns they visited and the people they met. She spent little time talking about the convention itself unless something notable happened, like the day a man who was trying to close a skylight fell into the crowd.¹³ The two diarists give us very different pictures of the women's trip to England — differences that highlight their varying expectations and personalities.

That expectations shaped women's experiences on their travels is clearly evident in the different attitudes towards the trip to England reflected in Mott's and Grew's journals. Grew was excited to see historical sites and tour the countryside, while Mott was more curious about British reform and religion. Grew gleefully recounted her first time exploring London's streets on her own and recorded her excitement at climbing the tower of St. Paul's Cathedral even though ladies were not supposed to do so. She convinced the guard to allow her to attempt the climb after being told ladies were not allowed to ascend the tower.¹⁴ Mott simply recorded that they saw the sights and that the "girls," as she called the younger women with whom she traveled, enjoyed themselves. Even when she visited William Shakespeare's home, she simply noted the excursion.¹⁵ Grew was deeply affected by the sights she visited, as is evident from her comment after seeing Jewry Wall, a Roman ruin in Leicester: "To an American, fresh from his new and young country, it is deeply interesting to stand amid such antiquities as these, and they inspire him, not only with wonder and veneration and solemnity, but they oppress the intellect and heart with awe. At least, I found it so."¹⁶ Grew's amazement at historical sites reflects her larger attitude toward the trip, which she saw as a once in a lifetime opportunity to expand her knowledge of the world and her circle of friends. Mott saw the trip much differently, instead comparing American and British institutions. She wrote extensively of visits to poor houses and factories and commented

11 Carol Faulkner, *Lucretia Mott's Heresy: Abolition and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 92; Tolles, *Slavery and the "Woman Question,"* 13-14. Tolles's volume contains a full transcript of the journal; the original is housed in the Mott Family Papers, Friends' Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.

12 Mary Grew, "Diary, 1840" 1856, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Harvard University.

13 Ibid., June 17; Mott also related this accident in her journal: Tolles, *Slavery and the "Woman Question,"* 36.

14 Grew, "Diary, 1840," June 17.

15 Tolles, *Slavery and the "Woman Question,"* 19.

16 Grew, "Diary, 1840," July 10.

only briefly on the many social gatherings she attended unless there was a conflict.

Both Mott and Grew commented extensively on their experiences in British churches. Grew attended one British church where she found the preacher boring and was insulted to discover that the pew doors were locked to strangers and she would have to stand throughout the service. When she attended services at Westminster Abbey, she found “the sermon was not above mediocrity.”¹⁷ Mott had low opinions of British religious services as well. Shortly after arriving in Liverpool, the Motts attended a Quaker service at Isaac Crewdson’s evangelical church. Mott concluded, after spending the day with Crewdson and his meeting, as Quakers call their congregations, in their opulent hall, that she and her husband “respected their zeal and sincerity, while we mourned such a declension from the simplicity of the Faith of the Society of Friends.”¹⁸ Although she was better received by and had a higher opinion of Scottish Friends, Mott’s attitude towards British Quakers set the tone of her entire visit. At each stop she compared British institutions to those in America and usually found them wanting. Religious tourism made up a large part of the trip that the women delegates made in 1840, and they found religious adherence and performance disappointing.

Mott and Grew also noted that restrictions on women’s behavior and public speaking were much more deeply entrenched in England than in the United States in the early nineteenth century. They were both upset by their exclusion from the Antislavery Convention in London, and they both also commented on the many times they were informed that women were not allowed to do one thing or another or when space was not available for women in churches and meeting halls. At the same time, they noted that these discriminatory rules and prohibitions were sometimes practiced inconsistently. Grew was told women could not climb the tower of St. Paul’s only to find out after she had done so that, in fact, women had climbed it in the past.¹⁹ Mott was not allowed to speak at the convention only to be invited to speak at one of the sessions afterwards.²⁰ Both women’s experiences illuminated the barriers to women’s participation in public life in Britain. American women visiting Britain were more often allowed or even encouraged to speak in public or participate in activities normally restricted to men only because their foreignness made it acceptable for them to break the rules of British society. Mott was left feeling “disappointed to find so little independent action on the part of women” in Britain.²¹

17 Ibid., June 22.

18 Tolles, *Slavery and the “Woman Question,”* 17. Crewdson was part of a controversy over the role of the inner light in Quaker worship. He had repudiated the teachings of the American radical Elias Hicks, whom the Motts followed, and eventually Crewdson and his followers left the Society of Friends to form their own meeting, which they called the “Evangelical Friends.”

19 Grew, “Diary, 1840,” June 17.

20 Tolles, *Slavery and the “Woman Question,”* 47.

21 Ibid., 38.

Some British women also felt constrained by the boundaries on women's public participation in the antislavery movement in England, which may have prompted them to travel abroad to work for their cause. Although fewer British women traveled abroad to promote antislavery, those who did formed their own networks of supporters in Europe and the United States. For example, Anne Knight, mentioned above, decided to undertake a speaking tour through France in the 1840s after George Thompson and other British antislavery leaders refused to do so, even though she had never before spoken to a public audience in England. After her mother died, she felt less constrained by her family, with whom she still lived, and she was frustrated by the lack of transnational cooperation among male activists. She left England in 1846 and spent nearly three years in France, attempting to convert the country's revolutionary government to an antislavery position and to support the newly independent French colonies in the Americas.²² She relied heavily on her female compatriots in England and the United States as well as members of her family to supply her with literature and other antislavery materials, which she translated into French.²³ She made a number of close friends while in France, including French feminist Jeanne Deroin. When Deroin was exiled from France in 1852, she stayed with Knight in England. Knight also helped Deroin and her colleague Pauline Roland publish the *Women's Almanack*, an international magazine dedicated to women's rights.²⁴

After her time in France, Knight's interests expanded beyond the antislavery and peace movements to include women's rights more than any other reform movement, not least she found herself relegated to writing and raising money in these other causes. When her sister and brother-in-law traveled to Jamaica and then the United States after the 1840 World's Antislavery Convention, Knight was disappointed in what they reported about women's rights in American antislavery efforts. She wrote to Maria Weston Chapman, telling her, "it was a disappointment to me that my sister was so little instructed of your woman principle; her husband's prejudice indeed was almost as weakened as hers." Knight was disappointed in American abolitionists for their lack of clear commitment to women's rights; she had hoped that her sister and brother-in-law would be persuaded by American feminists where she had been unsuccessful. She continued, "but it is a greater vexation still to see so little on this from you when we had hoped the brethren would have sent so full & largely supplies of comfort to the family of warriors; pray my dear if you think us claiming any regard, show it by some help from your storehouse

22 Malmgreen, "Anne Knight and the Radical Subculture"; Bonnie S. Anderson, *Joyous Greetings: The First International Women's Movement, 1830-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 164-66.

23 Anne Knight to Maria Weston Chapman, October 30, 1839, Ms.A.9.2 v.12, p.73, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

24 Jane Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States, 1780-1860* (Chicago: Lyceum Books, 1985), 291-96; Anderson, *Joyous Greetings*, 191-92.

of womanism.”²⁵ The American antislavery movement, despite the outrage of the female delegates about their exclusion from the 1840 convention, did not back women’s rights to the extent Knight thought necessary.

Knight faced discrimination based on her sex in both the antislavery and the peace movements and sometimes found French society more open to her appeals for the equality of enslaved people and of women. Her letters and appeals to politicians both in Britain and France called for women to gain political rights, but the rhetorical strategies she employed verged on being insulting. She once asked, “Is not the poor woman as fit to vote—as fit to *legislate*—as the man who entertains the House by relating how the donkey goes before...?”²⁶ Her blunt words and insistence that women have an equal say in politics and reform work alienated many other reformers who thought that antislavery or peace were more important than women’s rights. Travel did not always help her make the connections she wished when it came to agitating for women’s rights, but Knight’s journeys to France did allow her freedom to pursue political causes her family did not fully support. She also met lifelong friends and allies in the causes she worked for and created a transatlantic women’s rights movement out of the antislavery movement whose lack of “womanism” had so disappointed her.

One of these friends was Maria Weston Chapman, the American abolitionist and recipient of letters by both Knight and Phillips already quoted above. Like some other American women in the antislavery movement, she traveled with her family to visit European sights and to visit other antislavery activists in England. During an extended seven-year stay in Europe that began in 1848, she provided her children with a European education and the American antislavery movement with a steady flow of European information and goods for the bazaars. Having been widowed in 1842, Chapman managed the stint abroad with the help of her sisters Caroline and Anne. Her sisters helped her manage her four children and then embarked on their own tours of Europe and Britain. The Chapman family apartment in Paris became the center of antislavery activity in the city. Chapman hosted visitors from England and America between her children’s classes and excursions. At first she tried to distance herself from antislavery work, telling Elizabeth Pease that, “I hope to be more useful here than at home to our Cause for I can do more financially, at least I hope to be able to do so. My time is entirely occupied for the present moment

25 Anne Knight to Maria Weston Chapman, November 12, 1841, Ms.A.9.2 v.15, p.107, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

26 Anne Knight, “Woman—Her Mission,” *The Anti-Slavery Bugle*, December 6, 1851. The joke about the donkey may refer to the 1820 debate over the Bill of Pains and Penalties Against Her Majesty, during which Lord Thomas Denman cracked an unfortunate joke about placing the princess upon a donkey and remarking that the donkey preceded her ass. See T. C. Hansard, *The Parliamentary Debates* (London, 1821), 3:1167.

with the education of my children, but my thoughts are at the same time devising plans for the cause.”²⁷ Chapman’s children spent their time learning French, taking dance and deportment lessons, and studying art. Chapman’s energies went into collecting items for the bazaar boxes she shipped to Boston every fall, filling them with lace shawls, dolls dressed in Paris fashions, and other items she thought would appeal to upper-middle-class shoppers in Boston.²⁸ She was unable to remain separate from antislavery activity for very long, as her proximity to European abolitionists and the regular visits of American reformers kept her closely connected to the cause.

In the summer of 1851, Chapman and her sister Anne Warren Weston left Paris for England and traveled around the country visiting women’s antislavery societies with two of Chapman’s children. With each visit, a declaration of similar sentiment and sisterhood was issued by the organization they visited, strengthening women’s ties across the Atlantic.²⁹ Chapman and her sister’s visit to England coincided with the shift of the women’s antislavery organizations away from supporting the British & Foreign Antislavery Society and its American counterpart, the American & Foreign Antislavery Society, and towards Garrison’s American Antislavery Society and its emphasis on immediate emancipation, women’s equal participation, and secularity.³⁰ American women’s visits to the societies and individuals with whom they had corresponded for years cemented relationships and changed the direction of the antislavery movement in Britain. These visits allowed women to meet face-to-face, something that had not happened in almost a decade as American women were busy trying to mend divisions in the American movement. Chapman had gained great notoriety for her pamphlets, chiefly *Right and Wrong in Massachusetts* (1839), and her presence in Britain excited antislavery women to new zeal. After this visit, British women once again began making and donating items to antislavery fairs in the United States. Chapman and Weston’s society, the Massachusetts Antislavery Society, benefited enormously from British donations, and their fair in Boston became one of the highlights of the antislavery social scene, drawing wealthy members of society from all political backgrounds.

Visiting Britain gave Chapman and her family the opportunity to deepen ties with British abolitionists and to grapple with the religious and moral questions that were dividing British activists. After her arrival in London in July 1851, Chapman met with some longtime correspondents for the first time, including Elizabeth Pease. Pease

27 Maria Weston Chapman to Elizabeth Pease, November 29, 1848, Ms.A.1.2 v.18, p.41, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

28 Chambers, *The Weston Sisters*, 149-52.

29 “Special Report of the Bristol and Clifton Ladies’ Anti-slavery Society during eighteen months, from January, 1851, to June, 1852 with a statement of the reasons of its separation from the British and Foreign Anti-slavery society.” London, 1852. British Library.

30 There is a long historical debate over the connection between the 1840 World’s Antislavery Convention and the rise of women’s rights efforts in the United States. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, when she compiled the multi-volume *History of Woman Suffrage* in the 1880s, pointed to the convention as the origin of the idea for the Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Convention. However, Lucretia Mott, who played a major role at the Seneca Falls convention, including contributing to the writing of the Declaration of Sentiments, never mentioned meeting Stanton at the meeting or referenced any conversations there as part of the reason for her involvement in Seneca Falls and the women’s rights movement. See Judith Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Women’s Rights Convention* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 2004); and Faulkner, *Lucretia Mott’s Heresy*, 96, for discussions of the alleged connection.

wrote to Chapman to arrange the visit, but noted that she “must not be late in returning in the eveng. [sic] as I have a great objection to wandering about London alone, after dark.”³¹ Pease’s reluctance to stay late in London reflects the unease many women felt about traveling alone. Pease was a reluctant traveler in general, and rarely traveled after her father’s death in 1846 despite many invitations to visit friends both in Britain and abroad.³² The visit strengthened a friendship developed through letters about antislavery and fundraising for the Boston fair.

While in London, Chapman also met some of Pease’s fellow Quakers and engaged them in a debate over antislavery and faith. In a letter to Pease, for example, she asked: “Does it [the Society of Friends] really then, think it a greater crime to believe in ‘the inner light’ than to buy & sell men? Had it really rather support slavery than a free Antislavery platform? Can it really embrace a slaveholder & excommunicate an abolitionist?”³³ This debate had begun while Chapman was visiting and continued in British newspapers throughout the summer and fall. Both Pease and Chapman had chimed in repeatedly to support the American Antislavery Society (AAS), which was accused of immorality due to Garrison’s support of “come-outerism”, i.e., the call to leave one’s church if the minister refused to denounce slavery from the pulpit. Both women also recruited other abolitionists to join them in supporting the AAS. Chapman, Anne and Emma Weston along with William and Ellen Craft, William Wells Brown, and several other formerly enslaved men also attended a meeting of Unitarians in London, where the topic of debate was antislavery. Their appearance at the meeting attracted a great deal of attention and pressed British Unitarian churches to adopt antislavery as an official stance.³⁴

Although the pressures of commitments in England were heavy, Chapman and her family missed the closeness of friends and supporters when they returned to Paris in October 1851. Chapman wrote Pease upon her return that “It grieved me to leave England without another sight of you. We all said every hour in the day while at Bristol, Oh that Elizabeth Pease were here.”³⁵ Although life in Paris was less demanding and more focused on social activities and the children’s education, Chapman and her sisters did not always enjoy their time off from antislavery work. Friends in England wrote to remind them of how much they were missed at gatherings for the cause. Emma Michell, a friend of Chapman’s whom she had met through British abolitionist John

31 Elizabeth Pease to Maria Weston Chapman, July 3, 1851, Ms.A.9.2 v.16, p.70A, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

32 Karen L. Halbersleben, “Elizabeth Pease: One Woman’s Vision of Peace, Justice, and Human Rights in Nineteenth-Century Britain,” *Quaker History* 83, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 26–36.

33 Maria Weston Chapman to Elizabeth Pease, October 1, 1851, Ms.A.1.2 v.20, p.137, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library. Believing in “the inner light” in this passage refers to Quakers’ belief that all humans carry a piece of God’s light within them, but Quakers disagreed on the primacy of the inner light over the Bible.

34 “Selections: American Slavery,” *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 17, 1851; Lee V. Chambers, *The Weston Sisters: An American Abolitionist Family* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 43, 132–35.

35 Chapman to Pease, October 1, 1851.

Bishop Estlin and his abolitionist daughter Mary Anne Estlin, noted that one of her friends “cannot speak of you all without tears in her eyes.”³⁶ The deep emotional ties between antislavery women were forged in these visits abroad, and the feelings of support, security, and relaxation that came when they surrounded themselves with likeminded people attest to the importance of these friendships for many of the movement’s leaders.

These friendships provided personal support but also became a new source of stress during the tumultuous decade of the 1850s. As revolutionary violence and political strife tore at French society, Chapman and her sisters wrote regularly of what they witnessed, and friends expressed concern for their safety. The Estlins wrote to Chapman in December 1851, “Now I wish that you could see it right to come away from it all, not to put it less, but because you are so valuable to others, so very precious to some, that the thought of danger for you saddens my spirit and makes it very fearful—it seems to us if all Anti-Slavery hope must be banished from Paris.”³⁷ The political turmoil of Napoleon III’s 1851 coup d’etat overwhelmed any other concerns in the city. Letters went astray, and information was implied rather than stated outright as no one was sure if French censors were reading the mail. John Bishop Estlin wrote to Anne Warren Weston, who had returned to Boston, that her sisters in France “write most guardedly, not signing their names & requiring of us the same precautions. We presume they have sheltered some proscribed person.”³⁸ Although their letters do not reveal whom they sheltered, Chapman took a deep interest in the political developments under the regime of Napoleon III and wrote extended critiques of French society and politics. Friends in England provided Chapman and her family with a connection to the antislavery movement and a space to reflect on how “The Anti-Slavery cause is dearer to me than other things because its principles include all other things.”³⁹ Although the coup focused Chapman’s thoughts on the connections between simultaneous struggles for human rights on both sides of the Atlantic, she and her sisters also felt it necessary to enlist help in the ongoing efforts to dispel misinformation in England about American antislavery efforts.



Eliza Wigham, Mary A. Estlin, and Jane Wigham, ambrotype, c 1850. Cab.G.3.118. Courtesy of Boston Public Library print department.

36 Emma Michell to Maria Weston Chapman, October 2, 1851, Ms.A.9.2 v.25, p.122, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

37 J. B. (John Bishop) Estlin to Maria Weston Chapman, December 3, 1851, Ms.A.7.3.37, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

38 J. B. (John Bishop) Estlin to Anne Warren Weston, December 12, 1851, Ms.A.9.2 v.25, p.136, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

39 Maria Weston Chapman to Mary Anne Estlin, January 24, 1852, Ms.A.7.2.p.54A, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

Concern over growing divisions in the antislavery movement in the 1850s drove some abolitionist women to take their own journeys across the ocean and to forge new contacts with other reformers. Philadelphian Sarah Pugh organized a trip to England in 1852 in an effort to correct misinformation and gather materials for the antislavery bazaars held in Boston and Philadelphia. The idea for her trip originated in a series of letters between the Weston sisters, Mary Anne Estlin, and Pugh herself. Eventually, Pugh volunteered to undertake the trip to Britain to meet with women's antislavery organizations and explain the differences in the two groups within American antislavery. Pugh arrived in Britain in June 1852 and quickly met up with the Estlins. She also spent time with travel writer Harriet Martineau and Elizabeth Pease before embarking on a trip to Ireland, where she visited radical abolitionist and Irish nationalist Richard D. Webb and his family and friends. Webb was an ally of the American radical abolitionists and had been a regular correspondent with Garrison and the rest of the Boston clique since the 1830s.⁴⁰ It was on her trip to Ireland that Pugh first encountered abolitionists who opposed the "Old Organization," including opposition to Garrison, Chapman, and the Philadelphia organizations, and espoused a philosophy of abolition that insisted on a separation from a government and churches they saw as corrupted by slavery, and that also entailed a call for equal rights for African Americans and equal participation of women in the movement. Thankfully, Pugh did not find herself alone in defending her friends. Scottish abolitionists Eliza Wigham and Mary Edmondson, who were both visiting Dublin as well, supported her efforts. Pugh wrote to Chapman and her sister Emma that, "It was a special delight to me to hear such staid Friends as they are pour out their righteous indignation upon the opposers of Garrison & Garrisonian abolitionists."⁴¹

Pugh initially intended only to stay in Britain for the summer, but soon found herself an integral part of the Estlin household and an important speaker in the antislavery circles of southern England. But after a while, Pugh became homesick and almost returned to the United States with Caroline Weston, who returned to Massachusetts in September 1852 to nurse her ill brother. Mary Anne Estlin also wished to accompany Weston back to Boston but was unable to do so. Pugh's homesickness stemmed as much from feelings of inadequacy as from missing home. She remarked that "Each day develops some new phase of their [the Estlins] ever active goodness—Of their A[nti].S[lavery]. labors one half had not been told me!"⁴²

40 McDaniel, *The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery*, 76–77.

41 Sarah Pugh to Maria Weston Chapman and Emma Forbes Weston, August 31, 1852, Ms. A.9.2.26.52, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

42 Emma Michell to Maria Weston Chapman, August 30, 1852, Ms. A.9.2.26.51, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library; Pugh to Chapman and Weston, August 31, 1852.

Comparing herself with the extremely productive Estlin family made her feel as if she was not contributing enough to the cause. The Estlins were in final preparations for the release of the *Antislavery Advocate*, the newspaper edited by Richard D. Webb, and they enlisted Pugh in the preparations, perhaps to help her feel more engaged in the cause. Emma Michell and the Estlins conspired to keep Pugh in Bristol until November, when they hoped to gather the antislavery supporters together. Michell and the Estlins served as a nexus of antislavery connections in Britain, they had befriended most of the Garrisonian Americans who traveled abroad and knew many British activists as well. They set out to defend Garrison and his American supporters and establish new antislavery vigor in England.⁴³ Michell reported that despite what Pugh said, “She has already done good service at Bath,” where her audience “eagerly listened to Miss Pugh’s exposition, gave forth their fears and doubts touching Garrison and the

Infidel question, and were comforted in her replies.”⁴⁴ She and the Estlins hoped that over the winter she would do more to convince other British women to break from the British and Foreign Antislavery Society’s auxiliaries.

Sarah Pugh was not the only American woman touring Britain in the mid-1850s. Pugh’s letters make frequent reference to former fugitive slave Ellen Craft, who was touring with her husband and William Wells Brown. Ellen and William Craft had traveled to England in November 1850 to escape being returned to slavery under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. They had made a daring escape from Georgia to Massachusetts via train in 1848, during which Ellen posed as a wealthy white man and her husband as her servant. Ellen, who spent several years in England, attended a normal school with the help of antislavery supporters, bore a child in 1852, and continued to participate in public speaking and in the busy social life of the antislavery scene while nursing her infant. Unlike Pugh or the Weston sisters, Ellen Craft took to speaking publicly in support of antislavery



“Ellen Craft” dressed as a man to escape from slavery in William Henry Seibert, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1898).

43 See Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), chap. 5, on the free produce campaigns of the 1850s.

44 Emma Michell to Miss Weston, September 25, 1852, Ms.A.9.2.v.6.p.54, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

alongside her husband, both as a way to earn a living while in England and as an activist. The Crafts were also caught up in the disputes over religion and abolition that divided the antislavery community in the 1850s. They sided with the Garrisonians, who had supported their efforts to gain their freedom on both sides of the Atlantic. Unfortunately, Ellen Craft left very few letters of her own, but she is frequently mentioned in the correspondence of the white women with whom she socialized. This correspondence also illustrates that while the white women clearly considered Craft to be one of their circle, they did not regard her entirely as an equal.⁴⁵

Mary Anne Estlin and Emma Michell took particular interest in Ellen Craft's welfare after they were introduced in early 1851. Estlin invited the Crafts and William Wells Brown to visit them in Bristol, possibly in response to her father's concern about the fact that they were charging money for their speaking tour in order to pay for their lodgings.⁴⁶ Although John Bishop Estlin may have disliked their methods, both Mary Anne and her aunt soon became deeply attached to Ellen Craft, who returned the sentiment. Michell related to one of the Weston sisters that "They are quite like the family in this house, indeed Ellen calls it 'coming home' when she returns to it and it is pleasant to hear her murmured song and light step of happiness as she moves about it, when on the stair one day I heard her singing, 'I shall not be a slave any more' springing forward at the same time with a sense of newborn freedom."⁴⁷ Ellen Craft's experience under slavery and her personality, often described as gentle and humble, won her many friends in England, and they remarked that her manner and carriage made her life story all the more shocking in its contrast. As a result, she became a popular lecturer, both on the stage and in private gatherings where she discussed her experiences and her thoughts about slavery.⁴⁸

Once the Crafts had been persuaded not to charge money for their public tours, they had to rely on the charity of their antislavery friends, whose affection turned into protective concern. When the Crafts went to London after visiting Bristol, for example, Mary Anne Estlin worried about how they would support themselves "or what power their friends will possess of providing or arranging for them."⁴⁹ Most visiting abolitionists either rented rooms in boarding houses or stayed with other abolitionists. The Crafts' financial precariousness was only one problem the Estlins saw; their health was another. Mary Anne's letter continued, "I think Ellen's health has never sufficiently

45 Scholars have long argued over the meaning of Ellen Craft's silence about her position within the traveling lecture group consisting of William Wells Brown, her husband and herself. For a discussion of this debate, see Teresa Zackodnick, *Press, Platform, Pulpit: Black Feminist Publics in the Era of Reform* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2011), 70-71. Michell to Weston, September 25, 1852.

46 Zackodnick, *Press, Platform, Pulpit*, 66.

47 Emma Michell to Miss Weston, May 9, 1851, Ms.A.9.2 v.25, p.88, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

48 Richard Davis Webb, "Foreign Correspondence," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, September 18, 1851.

49 Mary Anne Estlin to Caroline Weston, May 16, 1851, Ms.A.9.2 v.29, p.10, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

recovered the shock of their cruel persecution in Boston, to make her equal to all the tossing about she has since had to encounter & I am never as happy as when she is under our immediate protection.”⁵⁰ The Estlins assumed that the couple were unable to manage their own affairs and inserted themselves into managing them even though there was no evidence that the Crafts had encountered any difficulties obtaining lodging in their travels. It is unclear how the Crafts responded to this paternalism, although they spent a good deal of time with the Estlins and Pugh for much of the summer. They then enrolled in a school in Surrey, where they remained through the fall of 1852, when they had a son. In 1853, William Craft remained deeply involved in antislavery work while Ellen attended few events as she was nursing her baby. After completing their studies at the normal school, the couple decided to open a boardinghouse and remained in Britain until after the American Civil War.⁵¹

Just before the outbreak of the Civil War, another American abolitionist traveled to Britain: Sarah Parker Remond, the daughter of one of the wealthiest African American families in Massachusetts. She had begun her antislavery speaking career in the United States, where she toured with her brother, Charles Lenox Remond. After fighting for the right to attend the theater in a well-publicized court case in 1857, she decided to become an antislavery speaker. The abolitionist leader William Lloyd Garrison commented on her speaking ability after she spoke at one of his movement's meetings: “Sarah spoke but once in our meetings, but acquitted herself admirably. She only needs a little more confidence and a little more practice to make her a good lecturer.”⁵² The entire Remond family was friendly with many of the Garrisonians, and Charles Lenox Remond was a close friend of Garrison's. By the time Sarah became active as an antislavery speaker, her brother had had a falling out with some members of Garrison's circle, including the Weston sisters. Within a year of Garrison's comments on her abilities, Sarah Parker Remond had left the United States for Great Britain and set out on a speaking tour, which regularly overlapped with events held by the Crafts and William Wells Brown.⁵³ She was popular with British audiences, and she had to turn down invitations to speak as news of the power of her speeches spread.⁵⁴

Like the Crafts, Remond found friendship tinged with paternalism in the British women she met. She knew even before leaving the United States that she would continue to face racism in Britain. Thus, she wrote in a letter before her journey that she “did not fear the wind nor the waves, but I know that, no matter how I go, the spirit of prejudice

50 Ibid.

51 “William and Ellen Craft,” *Frederick Douglass' Papers*, October 29, 1852; Richard Davis Webb to Maria Weston Chapman, May 29, 1853, Ms.A.9.2 v.27, p.39, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library; Zackodnick, *Press, Platform, Pulpit*, chap. 2.

52 William Lloyd Garrison to Helen Garrison, February 12, 1857, Ms.A.1.1 v.5, p.37, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

53 Zackodnick, *Press, Platform, Pulpit*, 50.

54 Sarah Parker Remond to Maria Weston Chapman, October 6, 1859, Ms A 9.2.29.71, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library; Sirpa A. Salenius, “Negra d'America Remond and Her Journeys,” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 14.5 (2012), <http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2156>.

will meet me...so I shall gather up all my courage, and endeavor to depend upon myself.”⁵⁵ Although her contacts in England encouraged her to rely on the friends her brother had made during his trip in 1840-41, she knew those ties were thin after eighteen years.⁵⁶ Remond’s financial security did temper some of the paternalism she may have faced. In addition to financial support from her family, Remond also had money from the speaking tour, which she donated to antislavery organizations. Moreover, she also received some indirect financial aid from antislavery activists in Britain. Mary Anne Estlin reported that Remond’s tuition at a London medical college was being paid for by wealthy abolitionist and philanthropist Elizabeth J. Reid because Remond “has won many to the love of the cause thro’ her personal influence & her public advocacy.”⁵⁷ Unlike the Crafts, Remond had the financial resources to support herself, and her decision to become a physician allowed her to remain in Europe for the rest of her life. Remond moved to Italy in the 1860s seeking to escape racism that was still present in England and find a new home for herself and her sisters.⁵⁸

Antislavery women with the means to travel crossed the Atlantic to continue reform work with new communities or to expand their own horizons. Women travelers, particularly those who spent considerable time abroad such as Maria Weston Chapman and Anne Knight, developed their own networks and also facilitated connections between other women by encouraging them to travel, as in the case of Sarah Pugh, or providing safe space for their work, as Knight did with Jean Deroin. Travel was one way in which women could build personal relationships that supported their antislavery work and one another, even as it also illuminated the growing divisions over the question of gender roles, race, and social class between American and British abolitionists. African American women travelers’ experiences, including those of Ellen Craft and Sarah Parker Remond, give us insight into the racial and class dynamics of international travel, as both women were treated very differently due to their race and class status than white abolitionists. Women’s roles as hostesses and parents continued to overwhelm their reform work even when traveling abroad, and visitors placed additional burdens on antislavery women’s households. Maria Weston Chapman struggled with the burdens of educating her children and the demands of reform work during her seven year stay abroad, but that same stay allowed her to develop lasting friendships with European reformers, particularly with the Estlins and Emma Michell. Traveling allowed women to

55 “Letter from Miss Remond, From the London Anti-Slavery Advocate.” *The Liberator*, November 19, 1858.

56 Remond may have had reason to worry about the strength of her brother’s ties to British abolitionists. In 1849, Richard D. Webb informed Caroline Weston that he thought Charles Lenox Remond was a “shameless beggar” and was unsurprised to hear of his falling out with the Westons. Richard Davis Webb to Caroline Weston, March 25, 1849, Ms.A.9.2 v.24, p.69, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

57 Mary Anne Estlin to Maria Weston Chapman, October 20, 1859, Ms. A. 9.2 v 29, p 73, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

58 See Willi Coleman, “Like Hot Lead to Pour on the Americans... Sarah Parker Remond — From Salem Mass. to the British Isles,” in *Women’s Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation*, ed. Kathryn Kish Sklar and James Brewer Stewart, The David Brion Davis Series (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 173-88; Zackodnick, *Press, Platform, Pulpit*, chapter 3; and Salenius, “Negra d’America Remond and Her Journeys” for a fuller accounting of Remond’s life.

reflect upon the differences between their own society's treatment of them both as reformers and as women and that of the countries they visited. Their conclusions regarding this experience also brought diverging ideas about gender roles to the fore as women commented upon the political and social structures of other countries. Discussions about the limitations of women's lives and the differences between Britain, France and the United States emphasized the ways in which women were kept from fully expressing their artistic and political ideas or were criticized by men for doing so. African American women also sought new friendships and opportunities for personal growth abroad but discovered that racism disguised as paternalism shaped their interactions with white reformers even in England. All of these conversations and experiences heightened the desire for women to gain equality for themselves as they sought freedom for the enslaved.

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THE WORLD WOMAN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION: AN EARLY TRANSNATIONAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION AND ITS WORK IN INDIA, 1883-1900

Lori Osborne

In 1887 Indian activist Pandita Ramabai traveled to the United States, giving presentations and seeking support for her work with child widows in India. She and Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) president and social reformer Frances Willard met in July of that year, and this meeting proved a turning point for both of them.¹ For Ramabai, it opened the American reform world to her work and garnered key moral and financial support for the new school for child widows she was planning. For Willard, it revealed a way to act on some long-held concerns and goals, including the global need for women's education and her idea of making the WCTU a worldwide reform organization. Willard quickly mobilized the WCTU, inviting Ramabai to attend and speak at the WCTU convention in

November 1887. Willard called upon WCTU members to support Ramabai, encouraging them to join her in forming Ramabai Circles, where each member would pledge to give a minimum of a dollar per year for ten years to support the Indian activist and her school. In the spring of 1888 Ramabai visited Willard's home in Evanston, Illinois, and their mutual respect and interest in each other's work led them to further plan and organize. Ramabai returned to India in June of 1888, not only with Willard's and the WCTU's support, but also as National Lecturer for the WCTU. That same year, Mary Clement



Portrait of Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati (1858-1922), frontispiece from Ramabai Sarasvati, *The High-Caste Hindu Woman* (Philadelphia: Press of the J. B. Rodgers Printing Co., 1887).

1 No actual date or location of their meeting is mentioned, but the first report by Willard of their meeting and of Pandita Ramabai's work was published in *The Union Signal* (Chicago, Woman's Temperance Publishing

Assn, microfilm edition) on August 4, 1887, and is dated July 21, 1887. Robert Erik Frykenberg, ed., *Pandita Ramabai's America: Conditions of Life in the United States* (Cambridge, 2003), details the connection

between Willard and Ramabai, and Ramabai herself includes a section on American women in the book that highlights her connection to Willard and the temperance movement.



Photograph of Frances Willard from the Bain News Service, n.d. Library of Congress, LC-B2- 598-10 [P&P] ggb2004002864.

Leavitt, the World WCTU's first Round-the-World Missionary, stopped in India on her world tour and formed the first unions there.

Scholars in recent years have discovered the World WCTU (WWCTU), and its story is part of the growing conversation about the nineteenth-century development of a transnational women's movement.² Taking this new scholarship into account, I believe an in-depth look at the work of the WWCTU in India, especially in its founding years, is fruitful to increase understanding of the significance of its global work. Newly discovered records of the organization in the WCTU archives in Evanston, Illinois (where I serve as a processing archivist), reveal how the WCTU of India developed

and influenced the growth of the worldwide organization.³ The relationship of Pandita Ramabai, Willard, and the WWCTU is just one of many discoveries that show the depth of the connection between the organization and India. More importantly, I believe that the work of the WWCTU in India furnished an experimental space for the organization in its earliest years, providing key knowledge and experience that allowed it to develop into one of the earliest and most influential transnational women's organizations and a model for other transnational movements. A re-examination of the WWCTU's work in India, therefore, helps us more fully understand how this movement was organized and grew to be as successful as it was from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century.

² Ian Tyrell is the pioneering scholar of the history of the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union in his books *Woman's World, Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1991); and more recently *Reforming the World: The Creation of America's Moral Empire* (Princeton, NJ, 2013). The Japanese WCTU has been written about in some detail by Rumi Yasutake, *Transnational Women's Activism: The United States, Japan and Japanese Immigrant Communities in California 1859-1920* (New York, 2004). Edith Blumhofer discusses the connection between the organization and Pandita Ramabai, in "From India's Coral Strand," in *The Foreign Missionary*

Enterprise at Home, ed. Daniel Bays and Grant Wacker, 152-70 (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2003). Eric Colvard writes about the temperance movement in India and includes the WWCTU: Robert Eric Colvard, "A World Without Drink: Temperance in Modern India, 1880-1940," Ph.D.

diss., University of Iowa, 2013.

³ Primary sources consulted for this paper include Records of the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union; Records of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of India; Papers of Frances E. Willard; and *The Union*

Signal: A Journal of Social Welfare (originals and microfilm edition), 1880-1900, all held in the Frances Willard Memorial Library and Archives in Evanston, Illinois. *The Union Signal* was the weekly newspaper of the National (U.S.) WCTU but also included news from the World WCTU.

Background

Born in New York in 1839, Frances Willard moved to the Midwest early in her life, spending most of her childhood in Wisconsin. She came to Evanston to attend North Western Female College in 1858⁴ and started her working life as a school teacher, eventually rising to the prestigious position of Dean of Women at Northwestern University. Willard early on felt the limitations placed on her because of her gender, and as she grew older she sought ever wider arenas for working on what she called “the woman question.” The American temperance movement was gaining momentum in the 1870s, and women were showing a growing interest in temperance activism due to the overwhelming problem of alcoholism in many families. Willard followed news of the women’s temperance crusades in the spring of 1874, and when the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union was organized later that year, she joined it and was elected corresponding secretary. She quickly saw the potential of the movement, realizing that through it, women could take on public roles that they would hesitate to take on otherwise. For Willard, the WCTU was from the beginning about training women for a wider sphere of public action and providing the skills needed in this larger world.

Willard was elected president of the WCTU in 1879. Within a short period of time, she built it into the largest and most influential women’s organization the world had ever known, increasing its membership from 13,000 in 1876 to 200,000 in 1890 in the United States alone. This dramatic success was due to the strength of Willard’s organizational strategy, captured in her motto: “Do Everything.” By this she meant that “every question of practical philanthropy or reform has its temperance aspect.”⁵ She organized the WCTU into departments, each with its own activity and leadership. There were national departments for work in a wide array of issues and causes, including Work Among Foreign People; Health and Heredity; Non-Alcoholic Medication; Physical Culture (Exercise); Relation of Temperance to Capital and Labor; School of Methods and Parliamentary Usage; Narcotics; Kindergarten; Penal and Reformatory Work; Securing Homes for Homeless Children; Work Among Lumbermen; Purity; Peace and Arbitration; and Franchise (Woman Suffrage).⁶ State or local unions could choose which of the national departments they would set up, according to their members’ interests and political persuasions or the issues they were facing in their own communities. New departments could be created as new issues arose and interests developed — and these could come from the local or state unions as

4 Willard attended for three terms, graduating with a “Laureate of Science” in 1859.

5 *Minutes of the World WCTU Convention*, 1893, 39.

6 This list is a selection from the *Minutes of the National WCTU Convention*, 1895.

well as from the national organization. The organization was led both from the top down as well as from the bottom up, and everyone could find a place within it to work on something personally meaningful. This in turn gave WCTU members the skills to become leaders in their communities and active participants in their own lives. This flexible leadership approach and Willard's growing personal appeal attracted younger women looking for a way to become active in the world.⁷ For Willard, the most important words in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union's name were Woman and Union. Christian and Temperance were important too, but came second to the idea that the WCTU was a women's organization where women worked together for their own advancement.⁸

Ideas were circulating for an International Women's Temperance Union as early as 1875, but only informal work beyond U.S. and British borders took place before 1883.⁹ That year, Willard formally called for the formation of the World WCTU and started to adapt her successful strategy to a worldwide organization. She was creating the blueprint for this as she went along because there was no existing model to follow.¹⁰ Tapping into relationships she had established with other reformers, especially her good friend and co-worker Isabel Somerset in England, Willard outlined the goals of the new organization under the slogan "For God and Home and Every Land."¹¹ Just as it did in the U.S., the WWCTU would become a world protective agency, not solely by providing actual protection (by working toward changing policies and laws) but by giving women the tools and skills they needed to protect themselves. Margaret Bright Lucas was appointed president in 1884, but the work of the WWCTU was limited due to its loose organizational structure and far-flung workers. During these early years, the organization expanded primarily through the work of Mary Clement Leavitt, who spent eight years traveling the globe for the organization. It was not until 1891 that the WWCTU was formally organized and held its first convention. Willard was appointed president at this time and, as the WCTU had done in the U.S., the reach of the WWCTU began to grow dramatically under her leadership.¹²

7 Key background sources for Willard and the WCTU include: Frances E. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years: The Autobiography of an American Woman* (Chicago, 1889); Ruth Brigitta Anderson Bordin, *Frances Willard: A Biography* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1981); idem, *Women and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty: 1873-1900* (New Brunswick, 1990); and Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford, ed., *Writing Out My Heart: Selections from the Journal of Frances E. Willard* (Urbana and Chicago, 1995).

8 It is in Bordin's *Women and Temperance* published in 1990 that an argument for the WCTU's global significance and a description of Willard's truly feminist stance are first included in a well-researched and objective history of the organization. Bordin also discussed how historians (particularly women's historians) often ignore the impact of this early women's organization. Bordin, *Women and Temperance*, xxv — xxvi.

9 Willard and the WCTU leadership discussed forming an international organization in anticipation of the celebration of the centennial of the United States at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876. Tyrell, *Woman's World, Woman's Empire*, 524.

10 Though missionary organizations operated globally at this time, and the WCTU was intimately connected to their work with many women being members of both, they were not looking to grow their membership per se. They were looking to expand the church, which is not the same thing as growing an interdenominational, interfaith organization that is made up only of women and for their benefit. Patricia Ruth Hill, *The World Their Household:*

The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation, 1870-1920 (Ann Arbor, MI, 1985); Dana Lee Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, GA, 1996); and Tyrell,

Reforming the World, provide context.

11 The leadership of the WWCTU officially adopted this slogan at the first convention of the organization in Boston in November of 1891. *World WCTU Convention Minutes*, 1891.

12 Forty countries were listed as being members of the WWCTU in 1891 at the first convention of the organization. In 1900, after Willard's death less than ten years later, there were an additional twenty-three.

One of the ways the organization first began working internationally was to tap into relationships Willard and other leaders had established with other reformers through the expansive world of the British Empire. The British Empire had spread to India starting in the early 1600s, but its full impact came about a century later as the worldwide trade network grew and the substantial number of British citizens and military began to make their presence felt on the Indian subcontinent. By the time of the Revolutionary War in America, the British Empire was a significant presence in South Asia; its presence only grew more pronounced by the 1850s, when the British government took over control from the East India Company and began managing India under its own administration.¹³

The WWCTU also turned to the network of Christian missionaries in places around the globe as they were an existing and ready source of connections.¹⁴ Christian missionaries began working in India in the early nineteenth century after prohibitions against them were lifted by the East India Company in 1813. Their network grew dramatically and quickly, especially as the American missionary movement and the involvement of women picked up steam in the years leading up to and then after the Civil War. The WCTU leadership knew the advantages of working within Protestant church networks as this had been one of the primary ways the WCTU expanded in its early years within the United States.¹⁵

In India, the WCTU also connected to an emerging indigenous movement for social reform, including a small temperance movement that had begun in the 1830s and reached an apex with the first Indian National Congress in 1885. Alcohol itself was not a significant problem in India before the British arrived; neither was the use of opium. But the trade in opium and the distribution of alcohol both became significant tax and license revenue sources for the British in the nineteenth century as the empire expanded. Consequently, the problems of substance abuse also rose. Increased activism in the 1860s and 1870s by a growing nationalist movement, including activism by indigenous women, effectively spurred the Indian temperance movement on.¹⁶ By the time the WWCTU was founded and looking

13 There are numerous histories of India in the colonial time period. Those I consulted for this paper include William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a*

Dynasty, Delhi, 1857 (London, 2006); Charles Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform* (Princeton, NJ, 1964); John Keay, *India: A History* (New York,

2000); Pankaj Mishra, *India In Mind, An Anthology* (New York, 2005); Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity* (New York,

2005); Alex von Tunzelmann, *Indian Summer: the Secret History of the End of an Empire* (New York, 2007).

14 Much work has been done on the presence of American missionaries in India. Key sources for this paper were Ruth Compton Brouwer, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions: 1876-1914* (Toronto, 1990); Leslie A. Flemming, *Women's Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia* (Boulder, CO, 1989); Dana Robert, *American Women in Mission*; Maina Chawla Singh, *Gender, Women and the Heathen Lands: American Missionary Women in South Asia, 1860s-1940s* (London, 1999); Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, Connie Anne Shemo, eds., *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960* (Durham, NC, 2010).

15 Borden, *Women and Temperance*, 29.

16 Sources for the development of the indigenous social reform movement in India and women's involvement in it are numerous. For this paper, these provided important background information: Uma Chakravarti, *Rewriting History: The Life and Times of Pandita Ramabai* (New Delhi, 1998); Geraldine Hancock Forbes, *Women in Modern India* (Cambridge, 1996); Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*; Radha Kumar, *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India, 1800-1990* (London, 1993).

to grow in India, all three of these networks (British colonials and institutions, American Christian missionaries, and the Indian reform movement) were well established and poised for use.

The Work, Accomplishments, and Challenges of the WWCTU in India, 1887-1900

The WWCTU's active work in India began in August of 1887 when Mary Clement Leavitt arrived. Leavitt stayed in the country for almost a full year. She landed in Calcutta (Kolkata), the capital of British India, but quickly left for the hill station towns in the mountains to escape the summer heat. In Simla (Shimla), Leavitt connected with Rev. Robinson of Union Church (British, Nondenominational Protestant) and held several public meetings for Europeans, indigenous Christians, and British soldiers. She met with the viceroy's wife, Lady Dufferin; Mr Lyell, the governor of the Province; and Sir Frederick Roberts, the commander-in-chief of the Army. Leavitt continued to visit hill stations, holding public meetings and forming unions, including the first official union in Mussoorie. In Bareilly, she was especially impressed by her first meeting with a large group of Hindu men and "begged them to form native total abstinence societies" to protect themselves, their families, and communities, and the elderly leader of the group promised to do something.¹⁷

She followed a similar pattern throughout her year in India, holding public meetings with separate groups; having private meetings, teas, and receptions with interested European ladies; and forming unions as she went. Her reports show a growing understanding of the country "after some months of study." She began to see the need for work with indigenous men: "If I do good work in India I must organize men's societies as well as women's." And she began to see that temperance might not be the main issue: "The women's unions will help the temperance cause, but they will help the women more." She remarked on the difficulty of working with such a stratified and segregated society: "Many classes are to be reached who cannot come together." She also discovered that the language of the WCTU could not just be translated. The pledge and constitution needed to be changed "to suit the needs" of this new audience, especially removing references to Christianity and allowing for different issues on the ground than in the U.S.¹⁸

17 Leavitt made regular reports to the WCTU leaders, which *The Union Signal* featured. Her annual reports (as well as those of other leaders in India) were published in the minutes of the World's and National WCTU Conventions. *The Union Signal*, November 17, 1887, p. 4.

18 *The Union Signal*, December 15, 1887, pp. 4-5; and January 12, 1888, p. 4.

Leavitt finished her visit to northern India with a return to Calcutta, where she met with existing reform and temperance organizations

and with the viceroy, Lord Dufferin. Heading south to Madras (Chennai) and Hyderabad, Leavitt had her first encounter with unenthusiastic British church officials who did not approve of her public speaking. She pressed on and met with the British minister of education to discuss the creation of educational materials for indigenous children. She concluded her year with a report on the “present posture of the drink traffic and habit in India,” noting that though it was the British who had the biggest problem with excessive drinking, the problem was getting worse in the indigenous population, and “European influence and English power” were the cause: “The drink traffic has been created and pushed for revenue in India.” At the end of her year, sixteen European unions had been formed and thirteen Indian temperance unions “composed of gentlemen of all religions.”¹⁹

However, a survey of the status of the WWCTU in India in the April of 1889 by Rev. V. B. Knox showed that much of Leavitt’s progress did not last without her presence in the country. He outlined the reasons for the lack of stability, which included the resistance of the British to women speaking in public as well as to woman suffrage or other women’s rights activism in general; the use of alcohol by the British as regular practice; the limitations of British women associating with indigenous women; the lack of awareness of the problems caused by alcohol; alcohol use by clergy; the busy lives of missionaries that made adding temperance work impossible; and the small number of Americans in India, the WWCTU’s natural supporters.²⁰ As sporadic reports showed, some WWCTU work did continue in these years, even if on a small scale. In Madras in 1889 there was a joint union of forty-three members including English, Eurasian, and indigenous women. They had formed a WTCU children’s group called “Band of Hope” to work with indigenous boys and girls and were active in writing and translating temperance literature into the indigenous languages.²¹ In Lucknow, the work included pledge and petition signing, working with female prisoners; creating temperance literature, working with children, and reaching out to sympathetic newspapers.²² Pandita Ramabai’s school for young Hindu widows opened in Bombay (Mumbai) in the spring of 1889, and the WWCTU was actively supportive of her work. The 1891 report for the first WWCTU convention in Boston listed Mrs. M.D. MacDonald (a Scottish Presbyterian missionary) as the provisional national president, but there was actually no formal national organization yet, just the scattered local unions that remained.

19 *The Union Signal*, June 28, 1888, p. 4.

20 *The Union Signal*, April 18, 1889, p. 5.

21 *The Union Signal*, May 16, 1889, p. 11. The Band of Hope was a WTCU children’s group.

22 *The Union Signal*, July 18, 1889, p. 10.

In 1893 Jessie Ackerman, the second Round-the-World missionary of the WWCTU, was sent to India to formalize its organization. She traveled to many of the same communities as Leavitt and either met with existing unions or started new ones. She once again tapped into the missionary network and increased the focus on working with indigenous Christians. Ackerman also started “zenana visits” (to women in purdah/seclusion).²³ During her time in India, it also became clear that a big focus of the WWCTU would be the issue of state sponsored prostitution. The WWCTU’s Social Purity Department had been formed under the leadership of Josephine Butler in 1891 to work on this issue around the globe.²⁴ Kate Bushnell and Elizabeth Wheeler Andrews, the third and fourth Round-the-World missionaries, were sent to India in 1893 to research the issue there, surreptitiously visiting a number of cantonments where British soldiers were stationed. They published reports on the matter in *The Union Signal* in May of 1893 and then presented their official findings before the British High Commission formed to investigate the issue in June. The work of Bushnell and Andrews in India solidified the idea of the organization’s functioning as a “great world’s protective agency” to protect women from those who would exploit them. Though their critique of British reliance on revenue from the trade in alcohol and opium remained strong, their focus on the exploitation of women and girls became equally important. Wheeler and Andrews articulated this growing connection and concern for indigenous women and girls: “The white ribbon woman does not recognize that gulf [between races], she has passed it long ago.”²⁵

23 *The Union Signal*, May 11, 1893, p. 3. It was common for Indian women, especially Muslim women, to be restricted to their homes and allowed contact only with close family members. The members of the WCTU of India worked hard to figure out ways to make their contact with these women appropriate and accepted.

24 Josephine Butler was a British activist instrumental in bringing worldwide attention to the issue of state-sponsored prostitution by the British government in its colonial outposts. In 1891, Butler was well known throughout reform circles for her successful campaign to repeal the Contagious Diseases Act, which controlled the spread of venereal diseases through the forced examination of prostitutes.

25 *The Union Signal*, November 2, 1893, p. 4. The symbol of the WCTU was the White Ribbon, and many WCTU members wore actual white ribbons to demonstrate their support.

In 1893, the WCTU of India was officially organized as the 19th international union of the WWCTU. Jeannette Hauser, a longtime missionary in India, was appointed president (a paid position) in August 1893, and Pandita Ramabai was listed as a national lecturer. The headquarters of the organization moved to Lucknow, where Hauser was based, and Hauser quickly began to work. She started the publication of a new national newsletter, *The White Ribbon*, and arranged for its production and distribution through the Methodist Publishing House. She began the process of replicating the organizational model of the WCTU in India: forming departments for work on various issues and creating regional and local divisions to disperse responsibility and workload. Creating literature in the many vernacular languages of India became an important focus as well as a great challenge. Hauser held a national essay contest and a short story contest in Hindi and had the WCTU pledge (which all members

were required to sign) as well as speeches and other presentations translated. She called for increased work at railway stations, especially literature distribution, and with railway workers (who traveled throughout the country and could spread the word). The Indian WCTU also undertook traditional temperance work, including visits to “grogshops” to get them to close, flower deliveries to hospitals, and large public meetings that were “gospel temperance” in style.²⁶

Hauser made two key adaptations, which were designed to meet the needs of India specifically. She formed the “All-India” union for women who were scattered throughout the country (mostly in missionary appointments) in places where there were not enough Europeans to form a local union. She also created and began recruiting for the Indian Women’s Temperance Union, which was for indigenous, non-Christian women. Hauser also expanded the WCTU’s work in the larger cities of Calcutta and Bombay. In Calcutta, she met with women connected with Brahma Samaj, an Indian reform group, and expanded the work of the Social Purity Department, called forth by the research and reports of Bushnell and Andrews. Under her leadership the Calcutta WCTU also began fundraising for a school for girls who were victims of the sex trade.

During her year as president, Hauser placed a great deal of emphasis on local unions, collecting signatures for the Polyglot Petition. Willard and the WWCTU had initiated this project to gather signatures from around the globe to convince world leaders to end the global traffic in alcohol and opium. The Polyglot Petition eventually garnered more than six million signatures, and Willard and the WWCTU leadership hoped that the simple act of signing the petition would accomplish several things at once: it would spur membership and support for the WWCTU, capture media attention for the cause, and truly influence world leaders to make change. Most importantly, in a time and in places where voting rights and other means of expressing one’s opinion were not available, petition-signing was often the only way political opinions and demands could be aired. Hauser urged the members of the WCTU of India to make a good showing among the other WWCTU’s by collecting as many signatures as they could. Hauser’s reports revealed some of her struggles: communication was difficult and slow; not everyone, including the missionaries, was fully on board with total abstinence; and there were simply not enough interested Europeans or Americans to form local unions, so the sense of joint work so important to the WCTU was lacking.²⁷

26 Hauser’s reports to *The Union Signal* were not as regular as Leavitt’s, but *The White Ribbon* newsletter is an important source for this time period and the years that followed. *The White Ribbon*, August 1, 1893; September 21, 1893; October 30, 1893; December 1, 1893; January 1, 1894; February 1, 1894; April 1, 1894. Also important were the India Reports Hauser wrote to the WWCTU Conventions; this quote is from *World WCTU Convention Minutes*, 1893. “Grog shops” were places where alcohol could be purchased. “Gospel temperance” meetings were like church services and included prayers, singing of hymns and temperance songs, and speeches/sermons.

27 *The Union Signal*, October 5, 1893, p. 10; February 8, 1894, p. 10; February 22, 1894, p. 11.

Hauser returned to the U.S. in the summer of 1894, and Mary Phillips took over the presidency of the Indian WCTU. Phillips was the wife of James Phillips, the head of the India Sunday School Union, one of the key missionary organizations in the country. Phillips continued Hauser's work in advancing the literature and publication wing of the organization and in having translations made of key documents. Phillips enlarged *The White Ribbon* to a full-size newsletter and hired a secretary to manage the publications. She also moved the headquarters back to Calcutta to be closer to her home base and to that of the government. Under her leadership, the publication department started working regularly with outside publications like the *Bombay Guardian* and *Indian Witness*. Phillips, like her predecessors, traveled widely and met with unions all over the country. She completed the shift to a divisional structure for the organization with national, local and state unions, and actively promoted the formation of issue-based departments. This mimicked the structure found in the U.S. and was meant to bring a sense of camaraderie to the work while maintaining the unity of the organization.²⁸

28 *The Union Signal*, October 15, 1894, p. 4-5; January 23, 1896, p. 10; October 20, 1896, p. 10; November 5, 1896, p. 10.

29 Isabella Thoburn was an American Christian missionary whose work in India focused on providing education to women. The school she founded in Lucknow, which was later named for her, was and is one of the top schools for women in India. The connection between Thoburn and the WCTU is unexplored, though Martha Nalini provides some background about Thoburn and the school: Martha Nalini, "Gender Dynamics of Missionary Work in India and Its Impact on Women's Education: Isabella Thoburn (1840-1901), A Case Study," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 7, no. 4 (2006): 266-89.

30 India Report, *World WCTU Convention Minutes*, 1895.

31 *The Union Signal*, April 1, 1897, p. 11.

32 *The Union Signal*, June 4, 1896, p. 10.

During these years, the organization began active fundraising for an indigenous girls' school in Lucknow (what became the Isabella Thoburn school)²⁹ and also continued to support Pandita Ramabai's school, which had moved from Bombay to Poona (Pune). It also began forming Loyal Temperance Legion groups, which were the youth program of the WCTU. The first official convention of the Indian WCTU was held in December 1895 in Calcutta. Mary Phillips noted in her annual report to the WWCTU that work with indigenous women remained a top priority: "Native ladies are taking their places in the great reforms." Three Indian women were mentioned in particular: a Dr. Kgramaka in Bombay; Pandita Ramabai in Poona; and Kandambini Ganguli in Calcutta.³⁰ The second WCTU of India convention was held in Bangalore in 1895 and the third in Poona (with Pandita Ramabai as host and featured speaker) in 1896. At the Poona Convention, Ramabai was formally appointed National Superintendent of Native Work.³¹ The number of unions was reported to be thirty English-speaking and nine indigenous, for a total of thirty-nine. In 1896, Phillips reported progress in work with indigenous women, remarking that "native women are advancing and taking a higher stand" and that "distinctions of race and color are lessened in many places where the white ribbon work is advancing."³²

By 1897, the number of local unions had almost doubled to sixty-one (thirty-six European and twenty-five indigenous ones), with the

growth in the indigenous community being particularly dramatic. At the 1897 convention in Allahabad, Phillips noted the increased presence of indigenous Christian women.³³ That year also saw the organization dealing with the twin catastrophes of plague and famine in the south and attempting to respond to these humanitarian crises as best as they could. These early efforts of the WCTU to offer humanitarian support to indigenous communities were influential in creating a shift in the American government's policy abroad.³⁴

In 1898, Florence Mansell became president of the WCTU of India and began to grapple with how to manage the work of such a sprawling organization. While maintaining the divisional and department format, she created an executive committee to manage the day-to-day work of the organization. "Rescue work," they called it, with widows and prostitutes expanded, with Pandita Ramabai in charge of this department. Other departments included the Evangelistic, Press, Finance, Juvenile, Sunday Schools, Mother's Meetings, Flower Mission, Scientific Temperance Instruction, and Prevention of Cruelty to Children departments – once again modeling the work and priorities of the American WCTU. The WCTU of India began fundraising for a temperance hospital in Bombay and discussed establishing a "coffee house and exchange for women" and a "temperance restaurant and hotel" in Calcutta while still supporting the Home for Inebriates there.³⁵ All of this activity made the WCTU of India reports to the world organization very positive, and the growth in India was very encouraging compared to other countries. By 1899, when total membership numbers were first reported, there were 1,125 members with slightly more indigenous (611) than European (514). The national convention was held in Madras in 1898, and the WCTU of India sought and received funding for paid organizers in each of the six divisions in the country from the world organization. The Home for Inebriates in Calcutta was renamed in memory of Willard, who had died in February of 1898.³⁶

Conclusion

Several important conclusions can be drawn from this in-depth look at the work of the WCTU of India. First, the World WCTU and the WCTU of India were actually forming at the same time — and in many ways, they were both experimenting with how to organize a worldwide organization in India. This meant that they had to be flexible and learn as they went along. Second, the leaders of the organization started out following a well-known pattern that worked

33 *The Union Signal*, June 3, 1897, p. 9; and June 10, 1897. India Report, *World WCTU Convention Minutes*, 1897.

34 The shift by the American government and citizens working abroad to a kind of imperialism that emphasized humanitarian relief and moral choices in international work is described by Ian Tyrell in *Reforming the World*.

35 *The Union Signal*, April 14, 1898; May 19, 1898; November 3, 1898; India Report, *World WCTU Convention Minutes*, 1899.

36 *World WCTU Convention Minutes*, 1899.

in the United States: they tapped into the Christian missionary network, they used their influence and contacts to meet with “leading” people, they began work with experienced organizers and tightly linked members, they got women who knew the country involved — women who were also connected to prominent men and networks, they did research to discover the extent of the problem and to define what the problem was, and they started with things they knew how to do — that is, holding meetings and creating literature. Third, the activists adapted their work to the conditions they found: they formed national as well as local unions (something they did not do in the U.S. where membership was tied to one’s local and state union — not the national one); and they connected to indigenous women and worked to involve the indigenous population, including men (this also was very different from the U.S. operations, where men were only allowed to be auxiliary members). Finally, they used temperance as they did in the U.S., to open the door for their broader activism for women’s empowerment; however, in India this was not just about their own empowerment but also about the empowerment of Indian women, with whom they began to identify and sympathize across wide cultural differences.

One of my earliest research questions has been whether or not the “American-ness” of the WCTU activists in India mattered to them, and I think the answer is yes. Their criticism of the British administration in India, which had encouraged the rampant use of alcohol and relied on revenue from licenses and sales, came early, persisted, and was expanded to include censure of the opium trade. And, later, as the Social Purity movement grew, the double standard (different moral standards for men and women) of the sex trade came to the forefront.³⁷ This criticism of colonial power on the part of these American women harked back to their cultural memories of having been members of a British colony themselves. They began to sympathize with the indigenous people in India, wishing the same freedom of self-governance for them that they cherished at home. Though it may seem hypocritical, or at a minimum blinded by national pride within the contemporary context of growing American colonial aspirations, this attitude of the WCTU’s activists in India still presented an influential critical stance toward the British Empire.

Finally, I believe that the time these American women spent in India helped them to see how their own gender role was constructed as they reflected on how this role was constructed in an entirely different

37 The link between drug and alcohol use, on the one hand, and sexual promiscuity and abuse, on the other, has been an underlying issue for the WCTU throughout its history. It is not then surprising that they discovered this link in a new way in India.

culture.³⁸ To some extent, they could see all that they were fighting for in stark relief there — India had “separate spheres” to an extreme. And, there were things in India that the activists admired. For example, even an early worker like Mary Clement Leavitt saw some good things in the East: “The more I see of the light, graceful, beautiful Eastern dress, when it is modest (and it generally is) and the more I compare it, on the spot, with the Western dress, the more I wish for some change in the latter...”³⁹ Some years later, Kate Bushnell also stressed the great benefit of women’s collaboration across borders when she described a “great world-wide sisterhood of women, that is teaching us better things than in the old days of narrowness and prejudice.”⁴⁰

Though American WCTU members started out as Christian temperance workers with a well-defined agenda, they ended up losing these identifying markers in their connection to indigenous women and men. Temperance work allowed them to enter this new world and connect with indigenous women of different religious beliefs — in fact, it required it. And this contact forced them to see the world from another point of view. I would not say that the leaders and members of the WCTU of India developed a thorough critique of imperialism, nor did they completely break through barriers of race and class. They were women of their time and place. But they did try to act in the interests of indigenous women, and they did protest the sexism inherent in colonial society and Indian culture. All this, I believe, made the women of the WCTU more than just the “maternal imperialists” or “colonial busy-bodies” that they have often been made out to be.⁴¹

If the WCTU of India was not the earliest women’s organization to operate in India, it was a very early one. The WWCTU’s work provided an important bridge between Christian missionaries and the Indian reform world; it involved both indigenous men and women early on and worked to maintain its own organizational culture while respecting (however successfully) indigenous culture and religion; it articulated one of the key arguments of Indian nationalists in its criticism of the British for their reliance on revenue from the alcohol and opium trade; and it brought American views, values, and organizational procedures to India, encouraging the development of indigenous ideas of reform and democracy. Finally, in India, the

38 Jeffery Paine in *Father India* develops this idea of how the construction of your identity can be seen

once you've viewed it from another culture. Jeffery Paine, *Father India: How Encounters*

with an *Ancient Culture Transformed the Modern West* (New York, 1998).

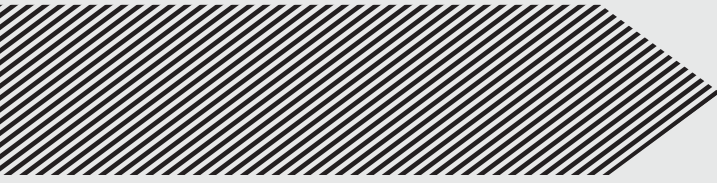
39 *The Union Signal*, February 16, 1888, p. 4.

40 *The Union Signal*, November 2, 1893, p. 4.

41 The discussion around this topic has grown in recent years. Earlier works tended to be more critical; more recent works take a more nuanced view of the work of European women in the global arena. Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: Indian Women, British Feminists and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill, 1994); Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, eds., *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington, 1992); Kumari Jayawardena, *The White Woman's Other Burden: Western Women and South Asia During British Colonial Rule* (New York, 1995); Margaret McFadden, *Golden Cables of Sympathy: The Transatlantic Sources of Nineteenth-Century Feminism* (Lexington, KY, 1999); Clare Midgley, ed., *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester, 1998); Clare Midgley, Alison Twells, and Julie Carlier, eds., *Women in Transnational History: Connecting the Local and the Global* (New York, 2016); Barbara Ramusack and Sharon L. Sievers, *Women in Asia: Restoring Women to History* (Bloomington, IN, 1999); Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, NJ, 1997); Marie Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism: Identity and Sisterhood between the World Wars* (London, 2015); Margaret Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire* (Bloomington, IN, 1991); Tyrell, *Reforming the World*.

WWCTU took what it learned from its expansive growth in the U.S. and successfully adapted it to new circumstances abroad, providing a model for both the indigenous and transnational women's organizations that followed. The mostly untold story of the work of the WWCTU in India thus deserves further exploration, not just because the recovery of a lost story is important in itself, but also since it reveals how the exchange of ideas across what may appear to be impenetrable borders of race, class, and gender can happen and can initiate lasting change.

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The Transatlantic Exchange Of Knowledge

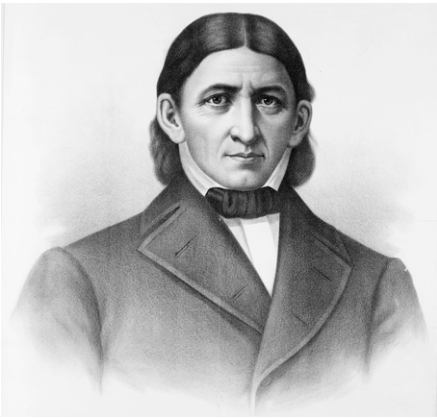
A TRANSATLANTIC NETWORK: AMERICAN AND GERMAN WOMEN IN THE KINDERGARTEN MOVEMENT

Ann Taylor Allen

In 1903, the German teacher and educational reformer Eleonore Heerwart praised the movement that had popularized the kindergarten, a progressive form of early childhood education, in Germany, the United States, and around the world. “The wide ocean, the distance, the foreign language has proved no obstacle,” she wrote to her colleagues in the United States. “Books have been exchanged and translated, periodicals published, institutions founded, meetings held — and all on a scale so large that it puts the Mother-country to shame.”¹ By the early twentieth century, the very small-scale educational experiment that the German educator Friedrich Fröbel had launched in the late 1830s had become the center of a global movement that extended not only to North America and Western Europe but also to China, Japan, India, Mexico, and many other countries. Within the dense network of communications that bound this movement together, the most fruitful exchange was between Germany, where the kindergarten had its roots, and the United States, where it gained its greatest success.

The movement that supported the founding of kindergartens, the training of teachers (or kindergartners, as they were called), and the study of child development was one of the earliest and longest-lasting of women’s transnational organizing efforts. As Margaret McFadden points out, most such initiatives — for example, those focused on the abolition of slavery, “moral reform” (that is, the rehabilitation of prostitutes and the abolition of state-regulated prostitution), temperance, and pacifism — developed at first as loose and informal networks; some later developed more formal organizational structures. In some ways, the kindergarten movement, which began with transatlantic ties formed through correspondence, personal contacts, and migration and later joined together in international organizations, followed this pattern. The evolution of this movement, however, illustrates not only the achievements but also the pitfalls of women’s international organizing. Most studies of these networks focus on the solidarity — in the words of one author, the “golden cables of sympathy” — that united women across national boundaries.² The story to be told here, however, is not only about sisterhood and sympathy but also about disagreement, rivalry, and rupture.

- 1 Eleonore Heerwart-Ladies of the Committee for the Friedrich Froebel House Building Fund, January 18, 1903, in Box 1, Folder 2, Archives of the Association for Childhood Education International, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries (Hereafter ACEI).
- 2 Margaret McFadden, *Golden Cables of Sympathy: The Transatlantic Sources of Nineteenth-Century Feminism* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1999).



Frederick Wilhelm August Froebel, head-and-shoulders portrait, facing front. Syracuse, NY: C.W. Bardeen, Publisher, c1897. Courtesy of the Library of Congress PGA — Bardeen—Froebel (D size) [P&P]. LC-USZ62-104386.

From its beginnings in the fragmented central Europe of the 1840s, the kindergarten was both a distinctively German and an international project. The philosopher and educator Friedrich Fröbel was a German patriot, who designed his new institution to prepare children between three and six years of age to become citizens of some future German state. In 1840, however, such a state was purely aspirational. Fröbel was also a cosmopolitan who assumed that all children, regardless of class, nationality, or gender, had the same basic abilities and needs. Comparing children

to flowers that required only a favorable environment to flourish, he called the new institution a “garden of children” (“kindergarten”) and designed it for children aged about four to six years.³ He replaced the era’s conventional pedagogies, which were based on rote memorization and harsh discipline, with a classroom routine that engaged children in educational play with toys that were designed to teach both manual and cognitive skills. As these pursuits — for example, building with blocks, arranging tiles and sticks, folding paper — taught abstract mathematical concepts, they were easily transferable across barriers of language and culture. The toys also conveyed complex philosophical concepts: the ball represented the unity of creation, and blocks showed how parts fit together to form a whole. Fröbel believed that children were able to grasp these complex ideas intuitively. Group games taught cooperation; gardening cultivated love of nature; and an ecumenical religious atmosphere encouraged tolerance.⁴

The early history of the kindergarten calls into question Karin Hausen’s picture of the early nineteenth century as an era of gender polarization. In fact, in some areas, gender roles and ascriptions were shifting and contested.⁵ “Kindergartening” did not become a female profession because of any stereotype — old or new — of women as nurturers. In the German-speaking world the role of teacher, even at early levels, was male. Only when his male colleagues rejected his pedagogy as sentimental and unscientific did Fröbel turn to women. When he insisted that women possessed a special gift for teaching small children — a gift that his disciples termed “spiritual motherhood” — many educated young German women responded with enthusiasm. What attracted them was the elevation of early childhood education from

3 Helmut Heiland, *Friedrich Wilhelm August Fröbel (1782-1852)* (Hohengehren: Schneider-Verlag, 2001). This is still the best short biography of Fröbel.

4 *Ibid.*, 54-70.

5 Karin Hausen, *Geschlechtergeschichte als Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Rupprecht, 2012), 19-49.

a menial task for servants to a profession that required training. Fröbel presented the new pedagogy as a science, to be acquired in a two-year course that, by the standards of the day, was quite demanding. The first trainees came from a variety of social backgrounds, but most (for instance, Fröbel's niece, Henriette Breyman, who was a pastor's daughter) from the middle class and a few from the aristocracy. Some of these early kindergartners (as the teachers, not the pupils, were called) sought volunteer work, but many needed a paying job that was suitable to their class and educational background — that is, a profession.⁶

These aspirations were political as well as professional. In the revolutionary years 1848-1851, German kindergartners supported the aims of liberal and socialist factions, although they were barred from most political activities because they were women. They therefore created their own agenda, which focused on issues that they believed were of particular concern to women. Among these was early childhood education, which up to that time had existed mostly in the form of church-sponsored day nurseries for the children of the poor. The kindergarten provided a place to put these political commitments, which included religious tolerance, economic justice, and education for children of all classes, into practice. Many kindergartens founded during this era admitted children of all religions (Catholics, Protestants, and Jews), provided free tuition to families who could not pay, offered a curriculum that encouraged active participation rather than passive obedience, and put women in positions of authority. The tiny world of the kindergarten thus became a model for the larger society that activist women hoped to create.⁷



**Fröbel toy showing the-
sis (cube), antithesis (the
sphere), and synthesis
(the cone). Fröbelian toys
were designed to teach
philosophical as well as
geometrical concepts.
Photograph by Hannah
O'Daniel, courtesy of the
private collection of Ann
Taylor Allen.**

6 On the backgrounds of some early kindergartners, see Ann Taylor Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten: Education and Women's Movements in the United States and Germany* (Oxford, New York, 2017),

36-38; on the educational aspirations of German women, see James C. Albisetti, "Could Separate Be Equal? Helene Lange and Women's Education in Imperial Germany," *History of Education*

Quarterly 22, no. 3 (1982): 301-17.

7 Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten*, 39; for an example, see the account of Alwine Middendorff's kindergartens in Wilhelm

Middendorff, *Die Kindergärten: Bedürfnis der Zeit, Grundlage einigender Volkserziehung* (Blankenburg: Verlagsbuchhandlung der Kindheit- und Jugendbeschäftigungsanstalt, 1848), 8.

- 8 Louise Otto-Peters, "Mein Programm als Mitarbeiterin einer Frauen-Zeitung," excerpted in *Frauenemanzipation im deutschen Vormärz*, ed. Renate Mohrmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Rupprecht, 1978), 198.
- 9 Katja Münchow, "The Relationship between the Kindergarten Movement, the Movement for Democracy and the Early Women's Movement in the Historical Context of the Revolution of 1848-49, as reflected in *Die Frauen-Zeitung*," *History of Education* 35, no. 2 (2006): 283-92.
- 10 Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten*, 44-45; Meike Baader, "Alle wahren Demokraten tun es: Die Fröbelschen Kindergärten und der Zusammenhang von Erziehung, Religion, und Revolution," in *Die Revolution von 1848/49: Erfahrung, Verarbeitung, Deutung*, ed. Christian Jansen and Thomas Mergel, 206-24 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 1998).
- 11 Qtd. in Baader, "Alle wahren Demokraten tun es," 206.
- 12 Katja Münchow, "Marie Zürn. Eine Kindergärtlerin in Schwierigkeiten," in *Der authentische Fröbel*, ed. Margitta Rockstein and Jerry Slocum, 71-87 (Rudolstadt: Thüringer Landesmuseum, 2004).
- 13 Elke Kleinau, *Bildung und Geschlecht: eine Sozialgeschichte des höheren Mädchenschulwesens in Deutschland vom Vormärz bis zum Dritten Reich* (Weinheim, 1997), 62-94.
- 14 Luise Levin quoted in "Potpourri," *Kindergarten-Primary Magazine* 1, no. 1 (May 1888): 29.

Many such women fit well into the era's movements for women's rights — movements that protested the powerless position to which religion, law, and custom consigned married women. Authors and activists vindicated the right of women to refuse loveless marriages of convenience and to dissolve unhappy unions. For most women, however, this kind of personal autonomy required economic self-sufficiency. A young woman who was not able to earn her bread, argued the prominent women's rights crusader Louise Otto, must inevitably resort to prostitution, on the streets or "in the secret shame of a marriage made for economic reasons, without love."⁸ Otto, who edited an influential women's periodical entitled *Die Frauen-Zeitung*, often praised the kindergarten movement specifically for providing educational and economic opportunities to unmarried young women.⁹

The era's most radical feminist venture was the Hamburg College for the Female Sex (*Hochschule für das weibliche Geschlecht*), which became the first post-secondary institution to admit women in the German-speaking world. The fact that the college was run by the notorious socialist Carl Fröbel (a nephew of Friedrich Fröbel) and offered kindergarten training along with academic studies caused the kindergarten to be associated with radicalism. Friedrich Fröbel protested that he shared neither Carl's socialist ideology nor his ambitious vision of female higher education.¹⁰ After the failure of the revolution, the Prussian authorities nonetheless banned the kindergarten as a "part of the Froebelian socialist system, which is intended to convert our young people to atheism."¹¹ Some other German states, including Saxony, imposed strict restrictions on kindergarten education and arrested educators whom authorities considered subversive.¹² In order to avoid the penalties imposed on those considered subversive, some German kindergartners were forced to take refuge abroad.¹³ According to his widow Luise Levin, Fröbel believed the kindergarten had a great future in North America, but he never lived to see it as he died shortly after the kindergarten ban in 1852.¹⁴

The kindergarten survived its defeat in Germany only because its promoters were able to forge effective international connections. Baroness Bertha von Marenholtz-Bülow, a friend and disciple of Fröbel's, started in 1853 on a series of voyages to several countries — for example, Britain, France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, and Italy — where she helped native educators to found kindergartens. Born as Bertha von Bülow into a family that was prominent in politics, the military, and the arts, the baroness belonged to that most prestigious of all

international networks, the European aristocracy. Her class and family name opened doors in all the European countries she visited. Other Germans relied on professional connections to find refuge from oppression. The friendly reception accorded to German kindergartners in exile — for example, to Fanny Wohlwill Guillaume and her sister Anna Wohlwill in Belgium and to Bertha Ronge in Britain, and to Margarethe Meyer Schurz in the United States — enabled them to survive and to continue their work.¹⁵ In 1859, when Prussian Crown Prince Wilhelm (who ascended the throne as Wilhelm I in 1861) took over as regent from his incapacitated brother Friedrich Wilhelm IV, he repealed many measures enacted in the counter-revolutionary era. In response to a request from the well-connected Baroness von Marenholtz-Bülow, he lifted the kindergarten ban in 1860. The baroness returned to Germany and set up training programs in Berlin and Dresden, which attracted students from all over Europe and from North America.¹⁶ She continued to travel and cultivate her international contacts until her death in 1893.

The network of German kindergartens had extended to the United States in the 1830s. Caroline Frankenberg, a student at Fröbel's teacher-training institute in Keilhau, was one of a group of German educators who migrated to the United States in the 1830s. In 1836, she set up a "School for the Active Instincts of Childhood and Youth" in Columbus, Ohio, where she probably used some of the kindergarten methods that Fröbel and his students had developed. Frankenberg soon returned to Keilhau for further study and then taught in Germany before returning to Columbus to found another kindergarten in 1852.¹⁷

The exiles of 1848 (called Forty-Eighters) laid the basis for the American kindergarten movement. In 1856, Carl and Margarethe Meyer Schurz joined the large German immigrant community in the town of Watertown, Wisconsin. Margarethe Meyer belonged to a rich and progressive Hamburg family and had received her training as a kindergartner at the notorious College for Women in Hamburg. After the kindergarten ban she took refuge in Britain with her sister Bertha Ronge, also an exiled kindergartner, who had scandalized all Hamburg in 1851 by divorcing her husband and marrying Johannes Ronge, the leader of a dissenting religious group known as the German Catholics, or the *Lichtfreunde*. In London, Margarethe taught kindergarten and married Carl Schurz, a former revolutionary and refugee from Prussia. In 1857, shortly

15 Mauritz de Vroede, "Der Kindergarten in Belgien: Eine liberale Erneuerung," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift* 32, nos. 4/5 (1983): 511-14.

16 Bertha von Bülow-Wendhausen, *The Life of the Baroness von Marenholtz-Bülow*, 2 vols. (New York: W. B. Harrison, 1901), 2:475-544.

17 Regina Weilbacher Rosier, "Caroline Louisa Frankenberg: A Froebelian Kindergartner Who Must Be Remembered," Froebel Foundation USA (Grand Rapids, Michigan 2003), www.froebelfoundation.org/Frankenberg.html (last accessed June 27, 2017).



Elizabeth Palmer Peabody (1804-1984), three-quarter length portrait, seated, c1894. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, BIOG FILE [item] [P&P], LC-USZ62-36684, 2005690053.

after the couple arrived in their new country and settled in Watertown, Margarethe opened a small kindergarten for her own daughter and children of acquaintances in 1857.¹⁸

Although this and other early kindergartens were taught in German and served the children of German immigrants, the new pedagogy won support among English-speaking Americans, at first among native-born white Protestants. While the United States had experienced no revolution in 1848, many American progressives felt great sympathy for the ideals that European revolutionaries, some of whom lived in exile in the United States, still championed. Elizabeth Peabody, a Boston teacher and social reformer, had already heard about the kindergarten from the American educator Henry

Barnard, who had observed it in Britain, when in 1859 she met Margarethe and Carl Schurz and their daughter Agathe (who seemed to her a model kindergarten alumna).¹⁹ Peabody immediately began the task that she would pursue for the rest of her life: to promote kindergarten education in the United States.²⁰

Like many American social reformers of her era, Peabody looked to Europe for guidance. She founded her first kindergarten in Boston in 1861. Although she felt guilty about taking time away from the antislavery cause, to which she was also committed, she continued teaching throughout the Civil War.²¹ By the time the war ended, however, she had decided that her knowledge of Froebelian methods was inadequate and that she needed further instruction.²² In 1867 she traveled to Germany to consult with colleagues; on another trip, in 1871, she was able to meet with Marenholtz-Bülöw in Florence.²³ On these trips, Peabody made contact with several German kindergartners, whom she invited to teach children and train students in the United States. Emma Marwedel came to the United States around

18 Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten*, 49; Carl Schurz-Margarethe Schurz, August 8, 1854, in *Intimate Letters of Carl Schurz, 1841-1869*, ed. Carl Schurz and Joseph Schafer (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1928), 146-47.

19 Bruce A. Ronda, *Elizabeth Palmer Peabody: A Reformer on Her Own Terms* (Cambridge, MA, 1999), 112-268; Ruth M. Baylor, *Elizabeth Palmer Peabody: Kindergarten Pioneer* (Philadelphia, 1965), 90-91.

20 Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten*, 50-57.

21 Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, *Letters of Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, American Renaissance Woman*, ed. Bruce A. Ronda (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1984), 38-39.

22 Barbara Beatty, *Preschool Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 18-20; Bülöw-Wendhausen, *The Life of the Baroness von Marenholtz-Bülöw*, 2:450-51.

23 Bülöw-Wendhausen, *The Life of the Baroness von Marenholtz-Bülöw*, 2:450-51; James C. Albisetti, "Froebel Crosses the Alps: Introducing the Kindergarten in Italy," *History of Education Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (2009): 159-69.

1870, taught first on the East Coast, and later moved to California. Matilde Kriege, a former student of Marenholtz-Bülów, migrated to Boston along with her daughter Susan in 1868, and together they took over the Boston kindergarten that Peabody had founded. Maria Boelte (later Kraus-Boelte), emigrated to New York, married another German immigrant, the educator John Kraus, and together with her new husband opened a kindergarten and training school in New York in 1872.²⁴ These German Americans stayed in touch with colleagues at home and often traveled back and forth across the Atlantic.

As a basis for transatlantic cooperation, Peabody and Marenholtz-Bülów developed a gendered professional culture that was based on a conception of female abilities as well as duties. They claimed that it was universal and therefore valid across national borders. Both women extolled the virtues cultivated in the home — compassion, empathy, nurture — as the basis for the broadened sphere of female opportunity that included professional teaching. Marenholtz-Bülów, for example, exhorted woman to practice “spiritual motherhood” through service in “the great social household ... as the educator of the human family.”²⁵ This ideal appealed to middle-class women in all Western countries because at mid-century they often found themselves in very similar situations. They could not vote, often lost control of their property when they married, were barred from most kinds of higher education as well as from occupations labeled male, and were consigned by social and cultural norms to domesticity. In search of opportunities outside the home, women of many nations devised specifically female professions — for example, kindergarten teaching — which they claimed were within acceptable norms of female behavior.²⁶

Although its chief goal was to educate young children according to Froebelian methods, the kindergarten movement also advocated the advancement of women, particularly through the educational and professional opportunities that the kindergarten provided. The movement’s leaders might not have called themselves “feminist” — a term that did not come into general use until the twentieth century — but they certainly belonged to what both Germans and Americans of the nineteenth century called the “women’s” (or “woman”) movement. This was a broad and diverse coalition of organizations that included some that were devoted to the rights of women, as well as many others that focused on various civic issues — education, temperance, social reform in many areas — that women activists

24 On Marwedel, see Fletcher Harper Swift, *Emma Marwedel, 1818-1893: Pioneer of the Kindergarten in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1931). On Kriege, see Caroline D. Ahorn, “Matilda H. Kriege,” in *Pioneers of the Kindergarten in America*, ed. Committee of Nineteen, 91-97 (New York: The Century Company, 1924).

25 Bertha von Marenholtz-Bülów, *Women’s Educational Mission: Being an Explanation of Froebel’s System of Infant Gardens* (London, 1855), 3.

26 Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1900-1914* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 79-110.

believed were within the female sphere of responsibility.²⁷ All such initiatives, these women contended, applied the distinctive virtues and talents that women originally developed in the home to a public sphere that seemed desperately in need of compassionate female energies.

In both Germany and the United States, the first kindergartens were not part of public school systems but were usually supported by tuition payments or charitable organizations. Some private kindergartens were sponsored by male educators — for example, by the German teachers who headed the German Fröbel Union (Deutscher Fröbel Verband, founded in 1874), or by Felix Adler, who was born in Hesse as the son of a rabbi, moved to New York with his family as a child, and founded his first kindergarten there as part of the secular humanist Ethical Culture Society in 1877.²⁸ Others, however, were owned by women, and all were staffed by women. Woman-headed private institutions included both kindergartens and training colleges. Though their economic basis was often precarious, these institutions offered work environments where women could use their talents not only as teachers, but sometimes as administrators, scholars, and theorists.

Kindergartners of all nations were also bound together by a shared admiration of German learning, particularly in the field of pedagogy. William Torrey Harris, a Hegelian philosopher, who was also the superintendent of schools in St. Louis, founded America's first public-school kindergartens in 1873 and entrusted them to a fellow philosopher and Germanophile, Susan Blow.²⁹ Blow headed to Dresden to study with Marenholtz-Bülou and later continued her training with the German American Maria Kraus-Boelte.³⁰ In subsequent years, a substantial number of American kindergartners followed her example by studying in Germany.

From the 1850s until the outbreak of the First World War, the kindergarten movement pursued the goal it shared with other transnational women's organizations — to create bonds of sisterhood across national boundaries — with unusual success. Unlike the diverse membership of the International Council of Women, which when founded in 1888 linked women chiefly on the basis of rather general ideological and ethical principles, kindergartners were bound together by a common professional culture and common economic and social aspirations.³¹ During the years between the 1850s and 1900, this professional sisterhood afforded not only moral but also practical support in many

27 Cf. Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 11-50.

28 On the Deutscher Fröbel Verband, see Monika Galdikaitė, *Die innere und äußere Entwicklung des Kindergartens in Deutschland* (Kaunas: Spaistuve, 1928). Felix Adler, "The Kindergarten and Working Man's School," in *Papers on Froebel's Kindergarten, with Suggestions on Principles and Methods of Child Culture in Different Countries*, ed. Henry Barnard, 687-91 (Hartford: Office of Barnard's American Journal of Education, 1881).

29 On St. Louis kindergartens, see Selwyn J. Troen, *The Public and the Schools: Shaping the St. Louis System, 1838-1920* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1975), 99-113.

30 Margaret Hilliker, "Life and Work of Susan Blow," unpub. typescript 1953, 1-26, Missouri History Museum: Library and Reference Center, St. Louis, Missouri.

31 Leila J. Rupp, "Constructing Internationalism: The Case of Transnational Women's Organizations, 1888-1945," *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (1994): 1571-600.

forms. German kindergartners found economic opportunities in the United States, where they often opened their own kindergartens and training colleges. These women, whom a recent article identifies as early “social entrepreneurs,” found a much more hospitable environment in the New World than in Germany, where even after it became legal the kindergarten grew slowly and still faced opposition from conservative clergy, educators, and moralists who still associated it with socialism, atheism, and revolution.³²

American kindergartners found opportunities of another kind in Germany, where they studied and gained valuable professional credentials. When they returned to found and staff their own kindergartens and training colleges, they promoted their German mentors by translating the works of Fröbel, Pestalozzi, Marenholtz-Bülow, and other German-speaking educators into English and filling professional periodicals with pictures of romantic Thuringia, where Fröbel had once walked the earth. American visitors brought valuable prestige to German training colleges. “How many very interesting ladies came across the wide ocean, to see my aunt and to learn from her!” recalled the niece and biographer of the Baroness Marenholtz-Bülow. “Young American girls came and wished to see my aunt just once, even from a distance.... Sometimes ladies came with red Baedekers in their hands ... as if on no account would they miss the celebrated propagator of the Fröbel method.”³³ While Americans depended on Germans for knowledge and credentials, Germans in their turn relied on Americans and other foreigners for the financial support and prestige that they often lacked at home.³⁴

In the 1880s, the kindergarten became part of another international reform movement, this one focused on the many social problems caused by the rapid growth of cities.³⁵ Fröbel’s niece and former student, Henriette Breymann (who, after her marriage to Karl Schrader, a liberal politician, called herself Henriette Schrader or Schrader-Breymann) played a leading role in creating a new mission for the kindergartner as an agent of urban reform. In 1872, she and her husband moved to Schöneberg (then a separate community adjoining Berlin), where in 1874 she joined other liberal civic activists to found an organization, the Verein für Familien- und Volkserziehung (Society for Family and Popular Education). The society sponsored various programs, including a kindergarten, teacher-training course, and after-school center for older children, which Schrader-Breymann combined in an institution that she called the Pestalozzi-Fröbel Haus (PFH) in 1879.³⁶

32 Stephanie Richards-Wilson, “German Social Entrepreneurs and the First Kindergartens in Nineteenth Century America,” *Immigrant Entrepreneurship*, <http://www.immigrantentrepreneurship.org/entry/php?rec=277>, accessed August 8, 2016.

33 Bülow-Wendhausen, *The Life of the Baroness von Marenholtz-Bülow*, 2:663-64.

34 Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten*, 59-86.

35 A general account of this movement is given in Andrew Lees, *Cities, Sin, and Social Reform in Imperial Germany* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press), 191-320.

36 The story of the PFH is told in Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany*, 111-34; Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten*, 59-88 and *passim*; and Erika Sommer, ed., *Festschrift: 125 Jahre Pestalozzi-Fröbel-Haus* (Berlin: Pestalozzi-Fröbel-Haus, 1999).



An African-American kindergarten (note the portrait of Froebel). Haines Normal and Industrial Institute, Augusta, Georgia, c 1836. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-115956.

The mission of the new institution was to train young women to educate the children of the urban poor. Henriette Schrader's views of this targeted population resembled those held by social reformers in many nations that had experienced rapid urbanization, including the United States. She was convinced that working-class mothers, who often had to work

for a living, were not in a position to provide a materially or emotionally secure environment for their children. Her kindergarten, therefore, aimed to provide the home that these children lacked — a home that replicated the rural household that adults of this era, many of whom had moved to cities from rural or small-town environments, still considered ideal.³⁷ She abandoned many of Fröbel's original games, which she claimed had become too formal and regimented. In the classrooms at the PFH, pupils engaged in activities such as cooking, gardening, and other household tasks under the guidance of a teacher who acted as a "spiritual mother." Along with these overtones of conservative nostalgia, however, Schrader-Breymann's pedagogy also promoted more progressive ideas. Her institute, which by 1896 was housed in an impressive new building, won international fame for its modern hygienic services, kitchens, classrooms, and playgrounds. She created an updated version of women's social mission by extending the responsibility of her trainees outside the classroom, requiring them to get to know the children's parents and the conditions of the neighborhood in which they worked.³⁸ This was among the earliest steps in the formation of another female profession: social work.³⁹

International connections provided essential support for this ambitious enterprise. As the spouse of a liberal politician, Schrader-Breymann often faced opposition in conservative circles because of her political associations. She compensated for her weak domestic

37 Henriette Schrader-Breymann and Mary Lyschinska, *Henriette Schrader-Breymann: Ihr Leben aus Briefen und Tagebüchern zusammengestellt*, 2 vols. (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1922), 2:183.

38 Henriette Schrader, *Der Volkskindergarten im Pestalozzi-Fröbel Haus, Berlin* (Berlin, 1890); Henriette Schrader, *Kleine pädagogische Texte* (Weinheim, 1930), 114.

39 On the origins of the social worker in Germany, see Iris Schröder, *Arbeiten für eine bessere Welt: Frauenbewegung und Sozialreform 1890-1914* (Frankfurt; New York: Campus, 2001), 277-377.

position by cultivating influential foreign patrons. The most important of these was certainly Crown Princess Victoria, a daughter of a daughter of the British Queen Victoria, who was married to Crown Prince Friedrich, the heir to the imperial throne. Victoria became a patron of the Pestalozzi-Fröbel Haus and mediated important contacts with educators, policy-makers, and women's social-reform movements in Britain. She encouraged connections with the United States, which she admired for its active women's movement.⁴⁰ Many Americans, not only students but also more experienced educators, visited the Berlin institution and publicized its methods at home.⁴¹ Schrader-Breymann joined her allies, one of whom was Helene Lange, who would soon become the leader of the German feminist movement, in hoping that when Victoria became empress she would throw her support behind educational reforms of many kinds, including both kindergartens and women's vocational training. "I think I am ready to take power into my hands," reflected Schrader-Breymann confidently in 1883, "and to win influence over women's education."⁴²

When Victoria finally did ascend the throne as empress in 1888, however, the death of her husband Friedrich III in the same year cut short her reign.⁴³ Victoria continued to support the PFH, but of course her political influence was greatly diminished. Schrader-Breymann compensated for this loss by working harder than ever to cultivate foreign alliances. She reached out to her American and international colleagues in 1893 by sending her friend and coworker, Annette Hamminck-Schepel, to the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago to mount an exhibition of the Berlin work and attend a meeting of a new organization, the International Kindergarten Union (IKU).⁴⁴

The founding of the IKU was part of a general trend toward women's international organizing at the turn of the twentieth century — a trend that had begun in 1888 with the founding of the International Council of Women. Founded in 1892 and introduced at the World Columbian Exposition of 1893, the IKU provided the first international organizational structure for a movement that until that time had grown through a host of informal contacts. The IKU proclaimed its commitment to internationalism by promising to "to gather and disseminate knowledge of the kindergarten throughout the world."⁴⁵ Despite these declarations of international solidarity, the IKU was a very North American organization; its officers were American or Canadian, and it held its annual meetings in the United States or Canada. Perhaps in response to this American initiative, the German

40 James C. Albisetti, "The Empress Frederick and Female Education in the Late Nineteenth Century: Germany, England, and Italy," *Pedagogical Historica* 48, no. 3 (2012): 345-55; Schrader-Breymann and Lyschinska, *Henriette Schrader-Breymann*, 2:204.

41 Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten*, 87-117.

42 Schrader-Breymann and Lyschinska, *Henriette Schrader-Breymann*, 2:231.

43 *Ibid.*, 2:422-30; Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten*, chapter 7; Annette Hamminck-Schepel, "Mitteilungen aus Chicago an Frau Henriette Schrader," *Vereins-Zeitung des Pestalozzi-Fröbel Hauses* 8, no. 26 (July 1893): 1-15.

44 Hamminck-Schepel, "Mitteilungen aus Chicago an Frau Henriette Schrader," 1-15.

45 *Constitution of the International Kindergarten Union*, ACEI, Box 1, Folder 2.

Eleonore Heerwart founded an international organization centered in Germany, the Internationale Kindergärtnerinnen-Verein, in 1893.⁴⁶

These organizations were divided by disagreements among their members. In both countries, a new generation of kindergartners had greatly modified the original Froebelian pedagogy by substituting activities based on practical tasks — cooking, building, sewing — for Froebel’s occupations, which had used abstract toys to teach theoretical concepts. Henriette Schrader-Breyman was the leader of this revisionist generation in Germany, and she exercised considerable international influence. The resistance of orthodox Froebelians such as Heerwart to this trend gave rise to bitter controversy. Schrader-Breyman initially refused to join the Internationale Kindergärtnerinnen-Verein, brusquely informing Heerwart that the students and alumnae of the PFH had already formed an association.⁴⁷ American kindergartners of both orthodox and revisionist factions joined the IKU and filled annual meetings with discussions of their differences.⁴⁸ Despite these internal divisions, the American organization gained much greater international visibility than its German counterpart. While the IKU held well-organized annual conventions to which it invited foreign delegates, the Internationale Kindergärtnerinnen-Verein held meetings only “from time to time” and left few records.⁴⁹

The growing international prestige of the American kindergarten arose from its domestic success. Often influenced by their German colleague Henriette Schrader-Breyman, American kindergartners had broadened their mission to include urban social reform. Such initiatives won wide support in the United States, where cities were overwhelmed with immigrants from many areas of the world.⁵⁰ American kindergarten educators and their supporters formed charitable associations that supported kindergartens designed specifically for the children of immigrants. They successfully promoted this form of early childhood education as a way of assimilating these children at the age when they were best able to adapt to a new language and a new culture. Educators forged alliances with women’s civic organizations across a broad spectrum that included the huge and influential Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the many women’s clubs that devoted themselves to civic work, and the women’s societies of churches and synagogues.⁵¹

The activities of these urban kindergartens were designed to teach English and to introduce children to their new country. Children celebrated the Fourth of July, sang patriotic songs, and learned

46 Eleonore Luise Heerwart, “Kindergärtnerinnen-Verein e.V.,” in *Enzyklopädisches Handbuch der Pädagogik*, ed. Wilhelm Rein, 45-46 (Langensalza, 1903-1910).

47 Eleonore Luise Heerwart, *Fünfzig Jahre im Dienste Friedrich Fröbels: Erinnerungen* (Eisenach: Hofbuchdruckerei, 1895), 337.

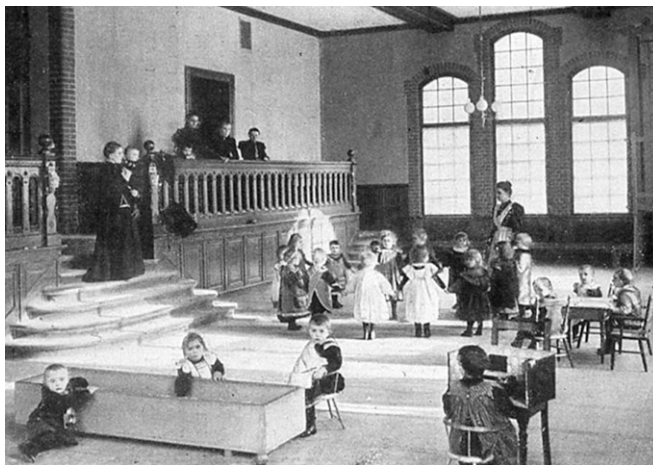
48 For more on this split, see Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten*, 87-107; and Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 72-92.

49 Eleonore Luise Heerwart, “Satzungen des allgemeinen Kindergärtnerinnenvereins,” in *Einführung in die Theorie und Praxis des Kindergartens*, 175-177 (Leipzig: J.J. Weber, 1895), quotation: 175.

50 Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 72-100.

51 Nina Vandewalker, *The Kindergarten in American Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1908), 76-102.

about American history. Kindergartners, most of whom were white and native born, sometimes disparaged their pupils' native cultures. For example, the most popular literary picture of an urban free kindergarten was Kate Douglas Wiggin's *The Story of Patsy*, in which a kindergartner saved



an Irish boy from a drunken and abusive father.⁵² Other educators, however, encouraged children to appreciate both their ancestral and their new countries. For example, the German American Olga Huncke, who in 1907 began teaching in a Chicago kindergarten that served chiefly the children of Chinese immigrants, organized a children's band that played both American and Chinese music. The scrapbooks that she left behind suggest that she was very popular in the Chinese American community.⁵³

As the kindergarten became more popular, it also became more diverse. African American women's clubs, which joined together in 1895 to create the National Association of Colored Women, created kindergartens for African American children and training programs for kindergartners.⁵⁴ Catholic and Jewish communities also established kindergartens, sometimes as part of religious schools.⁵⁵ By 1897 the U.S. Commissioner of Education reported that about 400 kindergarten associations throughout the country had responded to his request for information.⁵⁶

American kindergartens were also incorporated into a new form of social outreach, the settlement houses. These were communities of educated young people who lived, worked, and provided social services in immigrant communities. Many were founded, led, and staffed by young, unmarried women who sought both personal independence and useful work. A kindergarten was among the

The kindergarten at the Pestalozzi-Froebel House. From Clara Richter, *Bilder aus dem Kinderleben des Pestalozzi-Froebel-Hauses in Berlin* (Hamburg: Guten-Verlag, 1904), 10.

52 Kate Douglass Wiggin, *The Story of Patsy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1889).

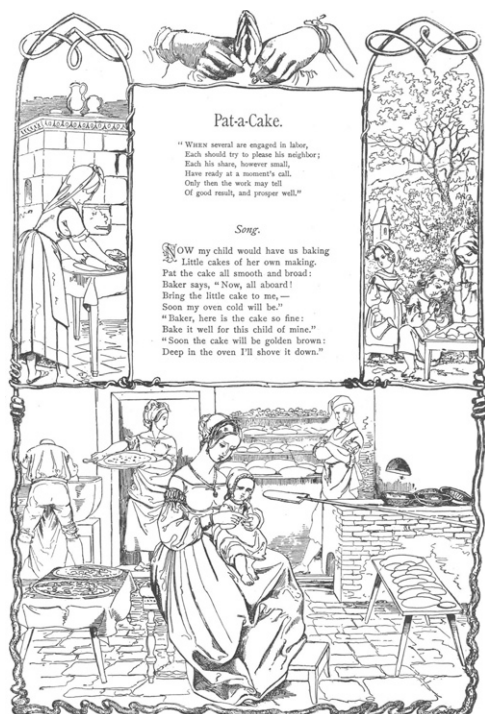
53 Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten*, 112-14; Olga Huncke, "Scrapbook,"

in Olga Huncke Papers, Chicago History Museum Research Center.

56 Vandewalker, *The Kindergarten in American Education*, 58.

54 Jean Marie Robbins, "Black Club Women's Purposes for Establishing Kindergartens in the Progressive Era, 1896-1906" (PhD diss., Loyola University, Chicago, 2011), 100; Jacqueline Anne Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope, Black Southern Reformer* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 15-16.

55 Ellen Laurene Berg, "Citizens in the Republic of Childhood: Immigrants and the American Kindergarten" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2001), 117-40.



A page from an English translation of Froebel's Mutter- und Koselieder showing the game "pat-a-cake." Friedrich Froebel, "Mother-Play and Nursery Songs," translated by Fannie E. Dwight and Josephine Jarvis (Boston: Lee and Shepherd, 1893), 49.

first services provided by Hull House — a settlement founded by Jane Addams in 1889 that later won international fame.⁵⁷ This original kindergarten was the first of a wide range of child-welfare services, which by 1896 were housed in an impressive Children's Building. The training school of the Chicago Froebel Association, headed by Alice Putnam, moved its headquarters to the fourth floor of this building. At Hull House and other settlements, trainees visited their pupils' homes in order both to meet parents and to gain an understanding of the problems of the neighborhood.⁵⁸ Like the German women trained at Henriette Schrader-Breymann's Pestalozzi-Fröbel House, the kindergartners of the American settlement houses pioneered the methods that the professional social worker later developed.⁵⁹

By the 1890s, many American female activists had rejected the genteel traditions that

had confined women to charitable activity.⁶⁰ Even though most of them were not allowed to vote, they worked effectively to influence government at all levels and to change public policy.⁶¹ Contending that private charities could no longer fill the demand for kindergarten services, they put pressure on urban public school systems to incorporate kindergarten classes into public schools. An aspect of American culture that worked in their favor was the gender composition of the American teaching profession. Although male school superintendents and politicians still made educational policy, the vast majority of American elementary-school teachers were women, who hoped that public-school kindergartens would provide opportunities for them and their colleagues.⁶² Organizations such as the National Education Association, which had a largely female

57 Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten*, 73-80.

58 Bertha Johnston, "Social Settlement Life in Chicago: Some Phases of the Daily Work at Hull House, Chicago Commons, University Settlement," *Kindergarten Magazine* 13, no. 7 (March 1901): 384-92.

59 On the origins of professional social work, see Anja Schüller, *Frauenbewegung und soziale Reform: Jane Addams und Alice Salomon im transatlantischen*

Dialog, 1889-1933 (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 2004).

60 Cf. Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 171-235.

61 After 1870, a growing number of states permitted women to vote, but all American women did not win that right until the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. In some states, women were permitted to

vote in municipal but not in state or national elections. Through municipal school-board elections, they influenced educational policy.

62 Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten*, 118-36.

membership, mobilized public opinion to win over male policy-makers. By 1900 most American urban school systems offered kindergartens on a non-compulsory basis, sometimes including segregated classes for African American children.⁶³ These were school classes that met four hours a day — they were not day-care centers, which most educators of this era (even feminists) considered appropriate only for the very poor.⁶⁴

Domestic success brought international prestige to the American kindergarten. In its early years, the kindergarten had spread outward from Germany to many European countries and the United States. Although many kindergartners still studied in Germany, by the 1890s most looked to the United States for training, advice, and role models. In Canada, early-childhood educators in the 1890s followed the American example.⁶⁵ Rosaura Zapata, the leader of Mexico's kindergarten movement, had studied in both the United States and Europe.⁶⁶ In Russia, too, the educators Alexander Zelenko, Luiza Karlovna Schleger, and Valentina Shatskaya modeled their first kindergarten, opened in 1905, on those that Zelenko had observed in the United States.⁶⁷ In 1885, American missionaries founded a kindergarten in Izmir and went on to open others in the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁸

Japanese pedagogues modeled their first kindergartens on an exhibit some of them had seen at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876, and by 1887 the American missionary Annie Lyon Howe became the leading advocate of Christian kindergartens in Japan.⁶⁹ Kindergarten pedagogy spread from Japan to China, where it was also promoted by American missionaries.⁷⁰ By 1917, the IKU included both Japanese and Chinese branches.⁷¹ In India and other territories of the British Empire, kindergartens were a favorite project of both British and American missions. Under the conditions of the time, few educators from such distant countries could travel to IKU annual meetings, but at each meeting the head of the Committee on Foreign

63 Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 101-31.

64 Sonya Michel, *Children's Interests, Mothers' Rights: The Shaping of America's Child Care Policy* (New Haven: Yale

University Press, 1999), 87-90.

65 Larry Prochner, *A History of Early Childhood Education in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand*

(Toronto, Vancouver, 2009), 172-99.

66 Ivan Gaxiola, "Rosaura Zapata, precursora de la educación preescolar en el país," *Peninsular Digital*, January 10, 2017.

67 Yordanka Valkanova, "The Passion for Educating the 'New Man': Debates about Preschooling in Soviet Russia, 1917-1925," *History of Education Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (2009): 211-21.

68 Benjamin C. Fortna, "The Kindergarten in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic," in *Kindergartens and Cultures: The Global Diffusion of an Idea*, ed. Roberta Lyn Wollons, 251-73 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

69 Roberta Wollons, "The Missionary Kindergarten in Japan," in *Kindergartens and Cultures*, ed. Wollons, 113-36.

70 Liman Bai, "The Chinese Kindergarten Movement, 1903-1927," in *Kindergartens and Cultures*, ed. Wollons, 137-65.

71 Wollons, "The Missionary Kindergarten in Japan," 128; "A Few Facts about the IKU," unpub. typescript 1924, in Series I, Box 1, ACEI.

Correspondence read aloud letters from kindergarten societies all over the world.⁷²

While the international prestige of the American kindergarten movement increased, that of its German counterpart declined. This disparity was chiefly due to the slow growth of the kindergarten in Germany in comparison to its popularity in the United States. One obstacle to the growth of the German kindergarten was the gender composition of the German elementary-school teaching profession. In the United States and many other countries this occupation attracted large numbers of women, for whom it provided an accessible job opportunity. In Germany it remained predominantly male, for German teachers stubbornly resisted the feminization of their profession.⁷³ Whereas American teachers usually supported the integration of kindergarten classes into public school systems, a majority of German teachers rejected kindergarten methods as unscientific and early childhood education as unnecessary and even harmful. Behind these arguments lay their fear of giving women a foothold in the schools.⁷⁴ Another obstacle was the continued opposition of conservative Protestant and Catholic clergy. American churches often sponsored kindergartens in order to attract new members, particularly immigrants. By contrast many German churches continued to look back to 1851, when the kindergarten had carried the taint of revolutionary movements such as socialism and feminism.⁷⁵

German women's civic groups, though often vocal and well organized, could not overcome this conservative opposition. In 1898, Henriette Goldschmidt, who was not only a kindergarten educator but the co-chair of Germany's major feminist organization, the Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine, petitioned Germany's state education ministries to add kindergartens to public school systems, but the petition failed.⁷⁶

The different trajectories of the kindergarten movement in the United States and Germany were due to broader social, political, and demographic differences. German cities faced few of the social crises for which Americans offered the kindergarten as a remedy. German cities were culturally homogeneous, and their well-organized governments were admired throughout the world.⁷⁷

German kindergartners adapted their professional strategies to this environment. Some gave up the goal of public-school adoption, for

72 For example, see "Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence," *Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the International Kindergarten Union, St. Louis, 1908*, 32-34.

73 Carl Louis A. Pretzel and Robert Rissmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Lehrervereins in den ersten fünfzig Jahren* (Leipzig, 1921), 264. See also Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten*, 118-35; and James C. Albigetti, *Schooling German Girls and Women: Secondary and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 141-49.

74 H. Elm, "Vorschläge zur Verallgemeinerung der Fröbelidee," *Kindergarten- und Elementarklasse*, no. 12 (1865): 177-81; B. Baehring, "Der Kindergarten auf der allgemeinen deutschen Lehrerversammlung zu Augsburg," *Kindergarten- und Elementarklasse* 30 (1889): 161-69.

75 Otto Beetz, *Kindergartenzwang! Eine Mahnung an Deutschlands Eltern und Lehrer* (Wiesbaden, 1900), 31; Paul Sydow, "Wider den Kindergarten," *Hamburgische Schulzeitung* 8, no. 50 (December 12, 1900): 405-407; Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten*, 118-36.

76 Henriette Goldschmidt, *Ist der Kindergarten eine Erziehungs- oder Zwangsanstalt?* (Leipzig, 1902).

77 Lees, *Cities, Sin, and Social Reform*, 49-74.

how could the kindergarten survive in such a hostile atmosphere?⁷⁸ They found better opportunities in municipal welfare systems, which were far more extensive than their American counterparts. An increasing number of German cities granted partial subsidies to private kindergartens, which were required to stay open all day to care for the children of working mothers. Such institutions, however, never became part of school systems but remained social-welfare agencies that offered services to children who suffered from poverty, physical or mental handicaps, or parental neglect.⁷⁹ An interesting exception was Munich, where the school superintendent Georg Kerschensteiner — an admirer of the American John Dewey — created a public-school kindergarten system in 1911.⁸⁰

The differences between American and German developments were symptomatic of a much broader trend. As the kindergarten won acceptance, kindergartners of all nationalities adapted their goals and strategies to their diverse political and cultural environments. These variations did much to undermine the movement's original spirit of solidarity, which had been based on the assumption that women throughout the world shared the gender-specific set of abilities, characteristics, and ethical commitments summed up in the phrase "spiritual motherhood." By 1900 kindergartners typically aspired to the professional credentials that were required by their respective educational systems more than to any shared ideal of womanly virtue — an ideal that some now considered old-fashioned and sentimental. In the United States kindergarten pedagogy was incorporated into college, normal-school, and university degree programs; in Prussia and in some other German states the government introduced a qualifying examination for kindergartners as well as other social workers, who were trained in expanding vocational institutions.⁸¹

Within the kindergarten movement as outside it, the once friendly German-American relationship deteriorated after 1900. Some kindergartners kept up their transatlantic contacts: in 1911, for example, a large group of American kindergartners undertook what they called a "Froebel Pilgrimage" to visit German colleagues and the sites where the first kindergartens had developed. Even such friendly encounters, however, gave rise to national rivalry and invidious comparisons. Americans claimed that the absence of kindergartens from German public-school systems showed that Germans had failed where Americans had succeeded. Germans accepted the criticism but rightly argued that American successes depended on conditions that could

78 Schrader-Breyman and Lyschinska, *Henriette Schrader-Breymann*, 2:200; "Vom 6. bis 10. Dezember," *Vereins-Zeitung des Pestalozzi-Fröbel Hauses* 11, no. 37 (1896): 1-10.

79 Erning, Neumann, Reyer, *Geschichte des Kindergartens*, 1:46-67.

80 Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten*, 128; Georg Kerschensteiner, *The Schools and the Nation* (London: Macmillan, 1914), 299-300.

81 Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten*, 137-60.

not be replicated in Germany.⁸² In 1911, Martha Back, the head of the largest organization of German kindergarten teachers, congratulated her American guests on coming from an exciting new country where “everything...is created and planned on a very broad basis, with a great deal of money,” and added that Germans, who lacked such resources, must “attain at a snail’s pace what you Americans have succeeded in executing in a much shorter time.”⁸³

Not only American kindergartners but also educators at all levels lost their original respect for German pedagogy and expressed an assertive confidence in American superiority.⁸⁴ Amid the international tensions that led up to the First World War, moreover, American academic as well as popular culture promoted an increasingly negative image of this once admired nation. John Dewey, the era’s best-known educational theorist, not only criticized the German educational system but blamed it for encouraging political passivity and thus upholding a state that he considered authoritarian and tyrannical. Dewey insisted that the failure of the kindergarten to flourish in Germany was one of many symptoms of German backwardness. He urged progressive kindergartners to throw off their Teutonic baggage and devote themselves to the democratic values that he defined as uniquely American.⁸⁵ Patty Smith Hill, a leader of the American kindergarten profession, supported Dewey by declaring that the Froebelian pedagogy that had provided the original basis for the kindergarten was outmoded, appropriate only to German village children, and irrelevant to American ideals of democracy.⁸⁶ German educators responded to Dewey in different ways: although some admired him, others rejected his theories along with all recent American philosophy and pedagogy as typical products of a superficial and materialistic culture.⁸⁷

German American kindergartners, however, maintained their ties to their ancestral culture, and some worked to discredit anti-German propaganda by encouraging international understanding. Among the most prominent women of the German-speaking world was the Austrian baroness Bertha von Suttner, the first woman ever to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (in 1905), whose book *Lay Down Your Weapons* (*Die Waffen Nieder*) called on women to mobilize for world peace. In 1912, the Chicago Women’s Club invited von Suttner to lecture to women’s clubs and organizations throughout the United States. Two German Americans who were prominent in the kindergarten movement, the sisters Amalie and Mari Ruef Hofer, took the lead in raising money and making arrangements for a lecture tour

82 For example, see Alice Fitts, “A Froebel Birthday Celebration — New York, Brooklyn,” *Kindergarten-Primary Magazine* 8, no. 10 (June 1896): 734.

83 *The Froebel Pilgrimage* (Springfield, MA: Milton Bradley, 1911), 565.

84 Jurgen Herbst, *The German Historical School in American Scholarship: A Study in the Transfer of Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965), 124-28.

85 John Dewey, “Froebel’s Educational Principles,” in *The Child and the Curriculum and The School and Society*, 116-31 (Chicago, 1966), quotation: 117.

86 Patty Smith Hill, Lecture, “Mother Play,” unpublished typescript, n.d., Folder 67, Patty Smith Hill: Papers, 1878-1942, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

87 R. A. Wegner, “Dewey’s Ideas in Germany: The Intellectual Response, 1901-1933” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1978); Wiggin, *Story of Patsy*.

that took von Suttner to 120 educational, civic, and church societies across the country.⁸⁸

When war broke out in Europe in 1914, the United States was still a neutral nation where public opinion was deeply divided: some Americans favored the Allies, some supported Germany, while others, such as the members of the Women's Peace Party (later the American section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) called for an end to violence and a negotiated settlement. The IKU initially aligned itself with the Women's Peace Party and its first president, Jane Addams, who had supported the kindergarten movement. Pointing out that "women and children bear the great burdens of war," the IKU leadership urged members to assist in the work of the Red Cross and to join local peace movements.⁸⁹ In *Kindergarten-Primary Magazine*, American kindergartners' professional journal, the kindergartner Bertha Johnson urged teachers everywhere to "offset the glamor of war" by highlighting the suffering of children all over the world.⁹⁰

In 1915, however, the sinking of the British ship *Lusitania* by a German submarine swung American public opinion decisively against Germany. By 1916 the IKU had abandoned its ties to the peace movement, cut off communications with Germany, and forged new bonds with such allies of the United States as France, where American kindergartners worked to provide emergency assistance to child victims of war. American chauvinists brought wartime hostilities home by virulently attacking all aspects of German culture, including language, literature, philosophy, and music. German Americans, once praised as model immigrants, were now demonized as potential spies and traitors.⁹¹ All over the country, German names of streets, institutions, organizations, even food were changed to more English-sounding substitutes. The kindergarten seemed destined for the same fate in 1916 when advised by William Heard Kilpatrick, a prominent professor at Columbia Teachers College, to assimilate to its American homeland by giving up "even its distinctive name."⁹²

In the war's bitter aftermath, kindergartners debated the name change at the IKU's annual meeting of 1919. Alice Temple condemned the name as a sign of continued "aloofness" from the rest of the American educational system, and added that Fröbel himself, if he had lived to see this day, would have welcomed a new name such as "play school" or "junior primary" as a sign that the kindergarten had found a new home. Other kindergartners pointed out, however, that the

88 Charles E. Beals, "The Baroness von Suttner's Tour," *Advocate of Peace* 75, no. 1 (January 1913): 9-10 (quotation: 10).

89 Ellen Laurene Berg, "Linked with the Welfare of All Peoples: The American Kindergarten, Americanization, and Internationalism in the First World War," in *Raising Citizens in the Century of the Child: The United States and Europe in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Dirk Schumann, 85-102 (New York, 2010). On the American kindergarten movement in wartime, see Allen, *The Transatlantic Kindergarten*, 176-80.

90 Bertha Johnston, "The Committee of the Whole," *Kindergarten-Primary Magazine* 27 (October 1914): 59.

91 Frank Trommler, "The Lusitania Effect: America's Mobilization against Germany in World War I," *German Studies Review* 32, no. 2 (2009): 241-66.

92 William Heard Kilpatrick, *Fröbel's Kindergarten Principles Critically Examined* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 206.

kindergarten's gentle founder represented the best traditions of Germany and would have been the first to oppose the Kaiser's militaristic regime.⁹³ The kindergarten kept its name but abandoned most other aspects of its German identity: the name of Fröbel fell into oblivion, and the German pedagogy that earlier generations so respected disappeared from American kindergarten classrooms and training courses.

The international kindergarten movement, here exemplified by the exchange between Germany and the United States, sheds a revealing light on the more general history of women's transnational and international organizing during the years between 1840 and 1914. The German-American relationship was deeper than those formed within most transnational organizations, for it arose from shared economic and professional goals as well as more general ideological principles. It was, moreover, an "entangled" relationship that operated in both directions, in many venues, and over a long period of time.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, historical conditions favored the evolution of this and other forms of transnational organizing. Like many of the era's progressive initiatives, the kindergarten movement emerged from the 1848 revolutions and affirmed revolutionaries' aspirations to democracy, economic and gender justice, and international brotherhood. The failure of these revolutions and the ensuing repression did not destroy this democratic movement but, on the contrary, won it adherents in the many places, including the United States, where revolutionaries in exile found a sympathetic reception. Progressive women everywhere were drawn to transnational associations partly because they were excluded from national political life and thus lacked a forum in which to express their aspirations to equal citizenship and social reform. To these women and their fledgling endeavors, transnational networks could provide many forms of support — intellectual, practical, personal — that were not available locally. Kindergartners cooperated across national boundaries, first to provide refuge from oppression to exiled colleagues, and later to facilitate access to professional credentials, economic opportunities, publications that transmitted information and ideals, and institutional affiliations and exchanges. Above all, international recognition provided prestige and validation to women who often faced opposition within their local or national communities.

By 1900, however, women's initiatives such as the kindergarten had gained increasing recognition within nations. Along with acceptance

93 Alice Temple, "Is It Advisable to Change the Name 'Kindergarten?': Affirmative," and Katherine B. Watson, "Is It Advisable to Change the Name 'Kindergarten,'" both in *Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the International Kindergarten Union*, Baltimore, May 19-23, 1919, 148 and 154-58.

went the need to adapt to very different national environments — a process that weakened international solidarity. Though still excluded from electoral politics and subject to many disadvantages, women now increasingly identified themselves as citizens and often as patriots who extolled the superiority of their own nation over others. Certainly the trend toward transnational organizing continued — in fact, the period from 1888-1915 saw the formation of several major international organizations, including the International Kindergarten Union and two groups with which it was affiliated: the International Council of Women and the Women's Peace Party. In these associations, however, transnational friendship was likewise disrupted by national differences and rivalries. The kindergarten movement, in which a long period of German-American friendship ended bitterly with the First World War, provides a classic example of the ways in which nationalist passions and international tensions could fracture ties of sisterhood.

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ALETTA JACOBS AND THE DUTCH CAP: THE TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE MAKING OF A REPUTATION IN THE CHANGING NETWORKS OF BIRTH CONTROL ACTIVISTS

Mineke Bosch

In March 1879, an extraordinary career of transnational knowledge exchange and activism took off when 25-year-old Aletta Jacobs went from the Netherlands to Great Britain to enhance her medical skills in a foreign environment.¹ This can be seen as her first step into a life dedicated to “forging bonds across borders.” But just how extraordinary was it to go abroad for an upwardly mobile, Jewish, middle-class girl, who was to become the first Dutch woman to be university-educated and a feminist in the last quarter of the nineteenth century? How extraordinary was it for a young woman like her to transcend national borders in order to exchange knowledge and ideas, and, at the same time, enhance her reputation?

Recently, Icelandic historian Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir argued in the *Women's Historical Review* that even a life wholly lived in the countryside of Iceland in the nineteenth century could be considered an international life due to the constant flux of information and goods going in and out of Iceland.² That clearly relativizes the exceptionality of Jacobs as an international feminist.³ Indeed, what do we mean by nation and internationalism in an era when many images of the nation — including the idea of nation itself — were invented?⁴



Aletta Jacobs. Photograph by Julius Oppenheim, The Hague, Netherlands, 1924. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

1 This article is based on my biography of Aletta Jacobs: *Een onwrikbaar geloof in rechtvaardigheid* (A staunch belief in justice). *Aletta Jacobs, 1854-1929* (Amsterdam, 2005).

2 Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir, “Beyond the Centre: Women in Nineteenth Century Iceland and the

Grand Narratives of European Women’s and Gender History,” *Women’s History Review* 27, no. 1 (2017): 1-22. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2017.1303888>.

3 See, for instance, the (remarkable) invented subtitle for the American translation of her

autobiography: *My Life as an International Leader in Health, Suffrage and Peace*.

4 See Joep Leerssen, *National thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam, 2006), and many others who published on nations and nationalisms in the last thirty years.

What distinguishes internationalism from transnationalism in this context, except for the fact that internationalism deals with a system of (nation/state) representation while transnationalism is more about exchange across borders, regardless of how the nations might be represented, as a form of entangled history or *histoire croisée*? Will the focus on the “feminist inter/national” — as Susan Zimmermann called it — enable historians to transcend the national boundaries that are still so firmly in place?⁵

This essay will address these questions by focusing on a special area of Jacobs’s medical, social, and political intervention on behalf of women — her focus on “voluntary motherhood” through the use of contraceptives. I also want to draw attention to the various ways the exchange and transfer or transmission of knowledge took place, often so that it is hardly possible to see what was actually transferred by whom, when, and how. When we follow the transmission of ideas and practices, it becomes clear that there was not just one-way movement from the Anglo-Saxon world to continental Europe, as is often implicitly suggested in knowledge about progress and “civilization.”⁶ Certainly, Jacobs transferred Anglo-American ideas on feminism to the Netherlands, for instance, in the form of her Dutch translations of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Women and Economics* (1899) and Olive Schreiner’s *Woman and Labour* (1910). But when we look at Malthusian ideas and practices, it is evident that the transmission and transfer were even much more blurred, proceeding repeatedly in both directions in a circular process. In fact, it is not clear how the process of transfer took place exactly, who played an active role in it and was later remembered as a pioneer or inventor, or rather a follower, in a chain of historical encounters and in the stories about the events. In the end, it seems as important to understand how activities and developments elsewhere are perceived and narrated across borders, and how they are used “at home” as it is to know “what actually happened.” This seems to also be true for the development and transmission of historical knowledge, or, at least, historical knowledge is often entangled with the pasts it aims to analyze. For us, the enduring task is to disentangle the many stories of and about the past, in this case about Aletta Jacobs’s role and reputation as an “international leader” in birth control.

Aletta Jacobs’s Stay in London, March — September 1879

Days after the completion of her Ph.D. in medicine at the University of Groningen, which rendered her the first female doctor of medicine

5 For interesting reflections based on research into feminist inter/trans/nationalism, see Julie Carlier, “Forgotten Transnational Connections and National Contexts: An ‘Entangled History’ of the Political Transfers That Shaped Belgian Feminism, 1890–1914,” *Women’s History Review* 19, no. 4 (2010): 503–23; and Susan Zimmermann, “The Challenge of Multinational Empire for the International Women’s Movement: The Habsburg Monarchy and the Development of Feminist Inter/National Politics,” *Journal of Women’s History* 17, no. 2 (2005): 87–117.

6 Among others, see Mineke Bosch, “‘The Woman Question in Europe,’ in European History,” contribution to the web-feature “European History — Gender History,” in *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte* (2009), <http://www.europa.clio-online.de/2009/Article=418>.

in the Netherlands, Jacobs went to London. Before she left, a politically progressive young man, Carel Victor Gerritsen, without having met her, provided Jacobs with letters of introduction into circles of freethinkers and Malthusians, suffragists, women doctors, and female students. Gerritsen had been following her career and admiring her from a distance ever since she had applied for admission to the University of Groningen.

The very first morning in London, Jacobs was welcomed by “two young ladies” who were both students at the London School of Medicine for Women on Henrietta Street.⁷ They had been informed of her stay by Gerritsen. One of them must have been Ann Vickery, who invited Jacobs to meet her “common law spouse,” Charles Drysdale, a feminist and medical doctor.⁸ Gerritsen must have known Drysdale very well. Drysdale was a promotor of women’s medical education, an opponent of the regulation of prostitution, and a “Malthusian,” a proponent of facultative sterility and voluntary motherhood, or family limitation. The term “birth control” came into use much later.⁹ Drysdale also served as the chair of the revitalized Malthusian League in 1877. Other new acquaintances of Jacobs were the secularists and Malthusianists Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh, who in 1877 had provoked a media storm when they were convicted for their publication of the well-known Malthusian treatise *Fruits of Philosophy* by the American doctor Charles Knowlton.¹⁰

Important for her professional career as a doctor was Jacobs’s introduction to the network of (aspiring) women doctors of the London Medical School for Women associated with Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and the Women’s Hospital in Marylebone Street.¹¹ Last but not least, she became acquainted with the British suffrage movement and with suffragists such as Garrett Anderson’s sister Millicent Garrett

7 Aletta H. Jacobs, *Memoirs: My Life as an International Leader in Health, Suffrage and Peace* (Orig. 1924; Herinneringen), ed. Harriet Feinberg, translation Annie Wright (New York, 1996), 33.

8 Miriam J. Benn, *The Predicaments of Love* (London, 1992).

9 Birth control is term that was invented only later

by Margaret Sanger, according to British historian Lucy Bland in her *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism & Sexual Morality, 1885-1914* (Harmondsworth, 1995), 190-91. Other terms that were used for contraceptives include preventive checks, artificial checks, and Malthusian appliances. For artificial sterilization, Jacobs herself used the term “willekeurig moederschap” in her *Me-*

mories, which now would be translated literally as “arbitrary motherhood,” but which then meant “voluntary motherhood.” See “willekeurig” in *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal (Dictionary of Dutch Language)*, ed. M. de Vries and L.A. te Winkel, *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal (s’-Gravenhage and Leiden, 1864-1998)*. <http://gtb.inl.nl/?owner=WNT>.

10 For the birth control movement in the UK, see Bland, *Banishing*; Angus McLaren, *Birth Control in Nineteenth-century England: A Social and Intellectual History* (London, 1978); Richard Allen Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England, 1877-1930* (Chapel Hill/London, 1982). For the Netherlands, see Gé Nabrink, *Seksuele hervorming in Nederland. Achtergronden en geschiedenis van de Nieuw-Malthusiaansche Bond (NMB) en de Nederlandse Vereniging voor Seksuele Hervorming (NVSH), 1881-1971* (Nijmegen, 1978); for the US: James Reed, *From Private to Public Virtue: The Birth Control Movement and American Society since 1830* (New York, 1978).

11 Catriona Blake, *The Charge of the Parasols: Women’s Entry in the Medical Profession* (London, 1990).

Fawcett, who would become the long-time leader of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, and Lydia Becker, the founder and editor of *The Women's Suffrage Journal*.

Besides being important for Jacobs's medical career, this inspiring period in London laid the foundation for many actions and activities she would later be involved in: the practice of birth control, the abolition of prostitution, thinking about the women's question or feminist philosophy, the suffrage movement, and women in higher education and in the medical profession. Moreover, the Vickery-Drysdale couple she encountered there seems to have provided an example for her personal life, as well. After Jacobs returned to Amsterdam and had set up practice, Gerritsen called upon her to meet in person, and they fell in love in 1884. At first, they joined in a free love marriage but later formally married on behalf of the children they wanted and the public careers they were pursuing. Like Ann Vickery, Aletta Jacobs always kept her own name as a married woman instead of taking on Gerritsen's.

Aletta Jacobs's Involvement in Promoting "Voluntary Motherhood"

Aletta Jacobs ended her stay in London earlier than she had originally planned in order to attend the 6th International Congress of the Medical Sciences in Amsterdam, 7 — 13 September 1879. It is not entirely clear why she did so, but evidence suggests that Frances Hoggan, the only woman to play an active role at the congress, or Charles Drysdale, may have given her the impetus. Hoggan (1843-1927) is not mentioned in Jacobs's *Memories*, nor does Jacobs mention her exceptional participation at the congress, but Jacobs may have met her when frequenting the New Hospital for Women during her stay in London. Hoggan was the first British woman to earn a medical doctorate at a European university, and the second to do so in Zürich, in front of the entire medical faculty and an audience of 400 people. She set up practice in London as a qualified, though unregistered, doctor, together with her husband. She had closely cooperated with Elizabeth Garrett Anderson at St. Mary's Dispensary, and later at the New Hospital for Women where she might have met Jacobs. However, Hoggan eventually resigned her position as an assistant physician to protest the major abdominal surgery that Anderson was increasingly practicing. Charles Drysdale, for his part, played a rather prominent role at the congress with contributions on

prostitution and the mortality rates among the rich and the poor that, as he stressed, could all be decreased by restricting family size.¹² Nonetheless, what Jacobs focused on in her *Memories* from the congress was the *tableau vivant* entitled “The Future” that was set up during one of the conference festivities; it depicted Rembrandt’s “The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp” with only women in the role of the anatomists. The main figure in the painting, the Amsterdam-based Dr. Tulp, was impersonated by a woman who looked like Aletta Jacobs.¹³ Another participant was H.A. Albutt, a medical doctor from Leeds who in 1887 would be struck off the General Medical Register for including the chapter “How to Prevent Conception When Advised by the Doctor” in his book *The Wife’s Handbook*. I will return to this below.¹⁴

Though it is not clear whether Albutt knew Carel Gerritsen or Aletta Jacobs, it is certain that both Gerritsen and Jacobs had been in touch with Charles Drysdale before.¹⁵ Following the congress, Drysdale held a speech on “facultative or voluntary sterility” in a public meeting of the General Dutch Working Men’s Association (ANWV), which was founded in 1874 and chaired by the cabinet maker B. H. Heldt. Heldt’s association and its publication, *The Working Men’s Messenger*, became a mouthpiece for New Malthusianism, which was growing in popularity.¹⁶ When the Dutch New-Malthusian League (NMB) was founded in November 1881, Gerritsen and Heldt took seats on the board, and Drysdale became an honorary member. This underlines the close connections between Gerritsen and Drysdale as well as with Jacobs, as she probably also attended this founding meeting of the NMB.¹⁷

After London, Jacobs was drawn further into neo-Malthusian circles by her growing friendship with Gerritsen. Two months after the NMB was founded, in January 1882, Jacobs opened a free clinic for women in the poorest quarters of Amsterdam, in the building of the Amsterdam Workers’ League that also housed Heldt’s ANWV. Heldt was in charge of the building and offered her an office free of rent, with only a small charge for fuel.¹⁸ While this free clinic is often mentioned in

17 Aletta Jacobs wrote a letter to the other honorary member of the new NMB, Dr. Samuel van Houten, who was a longtime MP in the Netherlands, exactly one day after the foundation meeting, to ask him whether, in his opinion, women could claim the right to vote on the basis of the existing text on suffrage in the constitution. It suggests that she had already brought up the issue one day before, or that, after she had spoken to him at the meeting, she had the courage to write him. He assured her that she should give it a try, which she did. In the elections for the city council in Amsterdam, in 1883, she tried to register as a voter on the basis of having Dutch nationality, living in Amsterdam and paying enough taxes to have the right of suffrage. See Bosch, *Een omwrikbaar geloof in rechtvaardigheid*, 169-77.

12 A.A.G. Guye, A.E. de Perrot, B.J. Stokvis, J. Zeeman, eds., *Compte-Rendu: Congrès Périodique International des Sciences Médicales*. 6^e session. Amsterdam, September 1879. etc. (Amsterdam, 1880-1881).

13 Jacobs, *Memories*, 35-37.

14 Ibid. On Albutt, see also Bland, *Banishing*, 194-95, 203-204.

15 In the famous Gerritsen Collection, there is a treatise by Charles Drysdale on the importance of a medical education for women from 1872, which

may have set Gerritsen on Jacobs’s trail.

16 In Dutch, Nieuw-Malthusiaansche Bond means New-Malthusian League; in Britain it was referred to as the Malthusian and later Neo-Malthusian League.

18 International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, Papers Amsterdamse Werkmansbond (Amsterdam Workman’s League), inv. nr. 4: Notulen AWB (Minutes), 12 June 1881-21 February 1883.

one and the same breath as Jacobs's efforts to campaign for "voluntary motherhood," it should certainly also be seen as in line with Garrett Anderson's women's dispensary on Marylebone Street, which later became the Women's Hospital, as well as with many general medical women's efforts to include women's issues in discussions of the "social question" — that is, debates relating to social legislation. The minutes of the Amsterdam Workers' League stated that the free clinic was for women and children, who were, in fact, the usual patients for women doctors at that time. The term birth control clinic is therefore not precise, given the fact that Jacobs offered a much more diverse spectrum of services there. Every Tuesday and Friday morning from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m., Jacobs treated patients and offered advice, for instance, on matters regarding personal hygiene, child care, and motherhood. Jacobs also wrote small contributions on these subjects in several periodicals, such as the ANVV yearbook, *Jaarboekje van het ANVV*, in the beginning of the 1880s, and in *De Vrouw*, a socialist monthly journal about women's issues, in the 1890s.¹⁹ In line with these activities, Jacobs then also began to experiment with advice on "voluntary motherhood" by means of the prescription of a pessary, called the "pessarium occlusivum."

Underlying this practice was another act of transfer and translation from the German doctor W.P.J. Mensinga (1836-1910), who practiced in Flensburg. He had his roots in the Netherlands, more precisely in Mensingeweer, a small village in the province of Groningen, not far from where Jacobs grew up.²⁰ According to Jacobs's autobiography, she read a treatise by Mensinga in 1882. This must have been the monograph that he wrote under the pseudonym C. Hasse, *Über die facultative Sterilität vom prophylaktischen und hygienischen Standpunkt*,²¹ which would be reprinted several times by 1906. The book was a truly medical treatise with a long list of cases from his practice as a gynecologist, categorized as "Sorrow Experiences," "Happy Results," and "Calamities," from which he drew indications for medical doctors concerning when or in what circumstances to assist women in preventing conception. The supplement to the treatise explained the medical device: *Das Pessarium occlusivum und dessen Application. Supplement zu "Über fakultative Sterilität etc."* In 1885, he revealed his true identity in the preface of a revised and expanded edition.

According to Jacobs, she entered into a long correspondence with Mensinga (nothing of which has been preserved) and started to experiment with the pessary in her own practice,

19 "Voor moeders," *Jaarboekje van het ANVV 1883*. Uitgave ANVV (Amsterdam: B.H. Heldt), 34-36; "Huidverpleging," *Jaarboekje van het ANVV 1884*. Uitgave ANVV, 36-38; "Beroepsziekten, I: A. Winkelbedienden," *Sociaal Weekblad* 8, no. 13 (31 March 1894): 101-103; "Brieven over de gezondheidsleer," I, *De Vrouw* 1, no. 15 (1 April 1894): 2-3; "Beroepsziekten, II: B. Naaisers," *SW* 8, no. 14 (7 April 1894): 109-111; "Brieven over de gezondheidsleer," II, *De Vrouw* 1, no. 18 (13 May 1894): 2; "Brieven over de gezondheidsleer," III, *De Vrouw* 2, no. 1 (22 July 1894): 3-4; "Brieven over de gezondheidsleer," IV, *De Vrouw* 2, no. 5 (16 September 1894), 33-34; "Brieven over de gezondheidsleer," V, *De Vrouw* 2, no. 10 (25 November 1894): 74-75.

20 Christa Kolhorst, "Dr. Wilhelm Mensinga," *Kleine Reih der Gesellschaft für Flensburger Stadtgeschichte*, Vol. 12 (Flensburg, 1985).

21 *Über die facultative Sterilität vom prophylaktischen und hygienischen Standpunkt* (Pseudonym C. Hasse), (Neuwied/Berlin, 1882).

presumably with her private patients and with the women who visited her in her free clinic. It is also likely that she was involved in the making of the *Middelenboekje* (Book of Means), which would be reprinted repeatedly and had sold 300,000 copies by 1935.²² In a review of this booklet in the Dutch journal of medicine (*Nederlandsch Tijdschrift voor de Geneeskunde*) in 1886, Jacobs was mentioned as someone prepared to give advice on means of contraception at specific hours.²³ In 1886, Jacobs also participated in a semi-public discussion among Amsterdam doctors to which Gerritsen as the chair of the NMB had also been invited. In 1893, Jacobs was listed as one of the advisers women could go to right alongside the Amsterdam-based professor of gynecology, Hector Treub.²⁴ But not all doctors were in favor of her campaign. Among her opponents, for example, was the second woman doctor in the Netherlands, Catharine van Tussenbroek (1852-1925), who was one of the founders of an anti-neo-Malthusian league. Unlike Jacobs, she was convinced that contraception could be used to force women into sexual acts even more than was already the case in light of unjust marriage legislation.²⁵ In 1898, Jacobs was involved in a polemical exchange on the subject in the Dutch journal of medicine, and in 1899 she published her first and last systematic defense of family limitation as a means to liberate women to be able to participate in the work force.²⁶

Around this time, Jacobs's open support of "voluntary motherhood" began perhaps to collide with her ever more prominent role in the women's suffrage movement. In 1894, she had already closed down the free clinic, and she never played a leading role in the Nieuw-Malthusiaansche Bond (NMB). In her 1924 autobiography, she would declare that the league had never had her full sympathy. Perhaps she also felt torn between the different sides in a fight that would divide the movement in all countries: a fight between the doctors, who claimed full authority in matters of contraception, and the activists, who wanted contraception to be a private issue. In the Netherlands, a compromise was reached around 1900, when the NMB started to train "lay women" and midwives to give advice to women all over the country under the supervision of Dr. Jan Rutgers. Jacobs never backed these policies; however, as we shall see later in her contact with Margaret Sanger, it is not clear whether this stance was a matter of professional principle or a strategic choice on behalf of suffrage.

22 A first print edition has not been found.

23 *Nederlandsche Tijdschrift voor de Geneeskunde*, 1886, II, 256.

24 University Library Amsterdam, Papers Geneeskundige Kring (Medical Society): inv. nr. 2: Verslagen der Vergaderingen, 1848-1918: 27 September 1886.

25 For an analysis of the different physiological views on the differences between men and women that were held by Aletta Jacobs and Catharine van Tussenbroek and the consequences for their feminist theories and practices, see Mineke Bosch, "Vrouwelijke vruchtbaarheid en mannelijke melkproductie (Female fertility and male lactation)," in *Het lichaam (m/v)*, ed. Kaat Wils, 141-64 (Leuven, 2001).

26 Among others in *Nederlandsche Tijdschrift voor de Geneeskunde* (NTvG): H. Pinkhof, "De geneeskunst en de willekeurige onvruchtbaarheid," *NTvG (Dutch Journal of Medicine)* 1 (1898): 523-31; Aletta Jacobs, "De strijd tegen de facultatieve steriliteit," *NTvG* 1 (1898): 656-63; Hector Treub, "De geneesheer tegenover de facultatieve steriliteit," *NTvG* 1 (1898): 745-55. Jacobs presented the state of the art on the subject in Aletta H. Jacobs, "Willekeurige beperking van het kindertal," in *Vrouwenbelangen* (Amsterdam, 1899), 63-81.

Regardless of the reasons for her withdrawal from the public sphere on contraceptive issues, in 1904, after Jacobs had celebrated her twenty-fifth anniversary as a doctor, and one year after she became president of the Dutch Women's Suffrage Association, she stopped practicing as a doctor completely. From then until suffrage was won in the Netherlands in 1919, there are only scarce indications in the sources that she gave advice on contraception to women doctors in private meetings, often in relation to an international tour or congress. For example, in preparation for a propaganda tour of the Habsburg Empire with the American president of the IWSA, Carrie Chapman Catt, Jacobs asked her Hungarian friend Rosika Schwimmer in 1906 what women there would want to know about population control:

Can you tell me exactly what the women doctors want to know about Malthusianism? Surely, they don't want a lecture? If they do, it will have to be in private without the press or any propaganda. It's not that I fear the publicity, but it certainly would harm our cause. People are so stupid, they get the wrong end of the stick, and nothing concerning sex may be mentioned; it may only be done. I do not know Catt's views on the subject. Oddly enough, I never discussed this with her.²⁷

Jacobs's focus on the damage publicity could do certainly suggests that her outward silence on contraception was prompted by her concern for the cause of women's suffrage.

27 Mineke Bosch, with Annemarie Kloosterman, *Politics and Friendship: Letters from the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, 1902-1943* (Columbus, 1990), 69. (This letter is from the Schwimmer-Lloyd Collection, NYPL, and was translated by a Dutch woman into German. The English translation is by the author.)

28 In chronological order: Marie Stopes, *Contraception* (London, 1923), 297-98, 378; Margaret Sanger, *My Life for Birth Control* (New York, 1931), 112-14; Norman E. Himes, *Medical History of Contraception* (Baltimore, 1936), 309; Richard Allen Soloway, *Birth Control and the Population Question in England, 1877-1930* (Chapel Hill, 1982), 189; Angus McLaren, *A History of Contraception: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Oxford, 1990), 182. Part of this list is based on a personal communication from Cathy Moran Hajo (Margaret Sanger Papers Project), May 9, 1995.

The Making of a Reputation: Aletta Jacobs as a Pioneer in Birth Control

This evidence on Jacobs's historical role in birth control activities between roughly 1882 and 1900 begs the question of whether many contemporary and later histories of "birth control" have not exaggerated her involvement. Many texts suggest that she opened the first birth control or contraceptive clinic in the world, which would make her a true pioneer.²⁸ Moreover, the designation "Dutch cap" for (Mensinga's) pessary is sometimes unreflectively connected to her activities. For example, Lucy Bland, in her discussion of H.A. Albutt's *A Wife's Handbook* with its chapter on preventing conception, claims that he was the first in the British realm to recommend the diaphragm, "or Dutch cap,

so named because of its promotion in Holland by feminist Dr. Aletta Jacobs,” though she provides no reference.²⁹ Closer inspection of Albutt’s book, however, reveals that he does not refer to the device as a “Dutch cap” but as the “pessarium

occlusivum of Mensinga.”³⁰ For a balanced assessment of Jacobs’s role, it is necessary to know when, where, by whom, and for what reason the adjective Dutch was used for the first time, and, generally, how various actors assessed Jacobs’s contribution.

An early retrospective assessment came in the Midwinter issue of the American *Pictorial Review* of 1919, in which American journalist Eleanor Kinsella McDonnell published an extensive article on Dutch birth control under the title *Keeping the Stork in His Place*. She presented Jacobs as the common sense heroine who had braved wide and irrational opposition to practice what she held to be right: helping women limit their family size. Jacobs’s “crusade” had started when she entered university in 1871. After she had won the confidence of poor women in Amsterdam, she had understood that the call for population growth had nationalist undertones and was therefore problematic. That was when she had started “the first public birth-control clinic the world has ever known,” which as a result of the gossip among Dutch domestic women grew into a “very big one indeed,” although McDonnell got the date wrong and gave its founding as 1884 instead of 1882.³¹ A lengthy quotation gives a sense of McDonnell’s hagiographic tone:

Mevrouw van Vliet, in her stiff lace cap and eight or nine petticoats, passed the good word along to Mevrouw de Wit as they sat together knitting the interminable grey woollen socks which to this day seem inseparable from the Dutch housewife’s leisure hours. The young doctor knew a thing or two! Of that they were convinced. Moreover, by that time the young doctor had a husband of her own and she had a baby, too, so that she was in an even better position than



Picture of the pessary by Mensinga from Anna Fischer-Dückelmann, *Die Frau als Hausärztin*. Süd-deutsches Verlagsinstitut, Stuttgart 1911. Internet Archive identifier: diefraualshaus00fiscuoft.

29 Bland, *Banishing*, 194.

30 Interestingly, Albutt’s book was translated into German, as can be deduced from many advertisements on covers of the *Frauen Reich: Deutsche Hausfrauenzeitung*, as *Handbuch für Frauen (Belehrung über Geburt und Säuglingspflege)* (see Gerritsen Collection, search H.A. Albutt).

31 Eleanor Kinsella McDonnell, “Keeping the Stork in His Place,” *Pictorial Review* (December 1919): 49-55. Among the Aletta Jacobs Papers are about seventy letters from American women and a few men who wrote in reaction to this article to ask for information on contraception: Atria, Amsterdam, Aletta H. Jacobs Papers, inv. nr. 451. Both quotes are from McDonnell, “Keeping the Stork in His Place,” 21 and 49, respectively.

before to obtain the trust and confidence of the vrouws of Holland.³²

McDonnell also used many of the positive stereotypes of Dutchness that were circulating at that time, framing the article with pictures of windmills and tulips, a woman in traditional (Volendamish) costume, a portrait of Aletta Jacobs, and old-fashioned “shadow cuttings” suggestive of gossiping women. The main impression of the Netherlands was that it was a small but solid and traditional agrarian nation that had to be smart to exist at all as it had no natural resources. The country was inhabited by a people who had reclaimed land to form their nation by stubborn perseverance, creating a fine network of dikes and developing artificial fertilizing techniques to the benefit of all. McDonnell’s characterization of Holland as a peaceful country that did not need to stimulate population growth to wage war is also interesting. The Netherlands had earned this reputation from the role it played in the international Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907, and also from the Peace Palace, funded by American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, which was opened in The Hague in 1913. Jacobs had profited from this reputation when she had convened the International Women’s Congress in The Hague in 1915, which was chaired by Jane Addams.³³

In this peaceful country, then, in McDonnell’s idyllic perspective, the stork came to drop its bundles in a regulated way so as to ensure that babies were welcome. The results were glorious: the birth rate had dropped, but most of the children stayed alive, and the maternal mortality rate dropped even more, which “in a nutshell is the alpha and omega of Holland’s birth politics.”³⁴ Or, as a caption said: “In Holland Practically Every Child Born Is Wanted, Planned for Ahead of Its Coming, and Tenderly Cared for after Its Advent.”³⁵

In her 1924 autobiography, Jacobs did mention this article in reference to her international standing in the field of contraception, but she did not name the two women who should have been given credit for the transfer of knowledge about Dutch birth control practices to the U.S. The first of these was Margaret Sanger. Perhaps Jacobs, when writing her autobiography, still felt awkward towards Margaret Sanger, who had tried to visit her in 1914. Sanger had been sent to the Netherlands by her long-time friends in the Drysdale family, Alice Vickery and her son, Charles Vickery Drysdale, when she was staying in London to escape prosecution. At that time, Jacobs had “bluntly” turned away

32 McDonnell, “Keeping the Stork in His Place,” 49.

33 In 1931, Jane Addams won the Nobel Peace Prize, not least for her role in this congress. Aletta Jacobs was mentioned in her award ceremony speech.

34 McDonnell, “Keeping the Stork in His Place,” 21.

35 *Ibid.*

the American visitor because she deemed birth control an issue for doctors and not for unprofessional nurses (as Sanger was). Jacobs could not know that Sanger would refer to that painful event in both editions of her autobiography, not hiding her feelings: "I was also hurt as much as I could be hurt during that period when I seemed to be one mass of aches, physically and mentally."³⁶

Nevertheless, shortly after her visit to the Netherlands, Sanger was willing to overlook this slight and credited Jacobs in a brochure titled *Dutch Methods of Birth Control* for her pioneering role in the successful birth control practices in the Netherlands. She also highlighted that Dr. Jan Rutgers and his multifaceted feminist wife Marie Rutgers-Hoitsema were behind this success, having ensured that a network of "nurses" was generated, all of whom worked under his supervision in fifty "centers" or "clinics."³⁷ This can also be seen as a somewhat exaggerated and rather flattering picture of the Dutch practice as a purely medical one — an image Sanger propagated for a reason. After her return to the U.S., Sanger changed her mass-oriented political activist strategies of informing women about methods of family limitation into a more "genteel" focus on the opening of birth control clinics under the direction of academically trained doctors.³⁸

This shift brought Sanger into conflict with her former ally in the birth control movement and the other woman responsible for transferring Jacobs's Dutch knowledge of birth control to the U.S., Mary Ware Dennett. Dennett was a suffrage feminist, long-time secretary of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, Greenwich Village radical, and member of the feminist debating club Heterodoxy, which was a platform for issues that could not be discussed within the suffrage movement. Dennett kept campaigning for birth control as a "free speech" issue, which meant that she sought the abolition of all laws preventing the spread of knowledge and means to practice birth control.³⁹ As part of this campaign, she founded the National Birth Control League in 1915, which was changed into the Voluntary Parenthood League (VPL) in 1919.

36 Margaret Sanger, *An Autobiography* (New York, 1938), 148. Cf. Margaret Sanger, *My Fight for Birth Control* (New York, 1931), 113.

37 The chronology may have been different as Sanger had published information on

the Netherlands already in May 1914 in her recently founded monthly journal *The Woman Rebel* on the basis of a book by Charles Vickery Drysdale, the son of Charles Drysdale: *The Small Family System: Is It Injurious or Immoral?* (New York, 1914) <https://archive.org/>

[stream/01610155R.nlm.nih.gov/01610155R_djvu.txt](https://www.nlm.nih.gov/01610155R.nlm.stream/01610155R_djvu.txt). In this book, he reported the opinions of many medical authorities, among them Prof. Dr. Hector Treub and Dr. Johannes Rutgers and Dr. Aletta H. Jacobs from the Netherlands:»

»"Dr. Aletta H. Jacobs, the first lady doctor in Holland, has for more than twelve years given a gratuitous gynaecological and neo-Malthusian consultation twice a week for poor women. Between 1880 and 1898 she instructed more than 2,200 women in the use of mechanical preventives, and testifies that she never observed any injury to health arising from it." For information on the Rutgers-Hoitsema couple's involvement in neo-Malthusianism, see H.Q. Röling, "*De tragedie van het geslachtsleven*": *Dr. Johannes Rutgers (1850-1924) en de Nieuw-Malthusiaansche Bond* (Amsterdam, 1987).

38 The Comstock Law, especially, held the postal services responsible when obscene objects or texts were transported.

39 Judith Schwarz, *Radical Feminists of Heterodoxy: Greenwich Village, 1912-1940*, rev. ed. (Lebanon, NH, 1986), 81-82. For Mary Ware Dennett, see the introduction by Marilyn Dunn to her papers: Mary Ware Dennett Papers, 1874-1947, MV 392, Arthur and Elisabeth Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University (MWDP): <https://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/schlesinger-library/inside-the-collections/mary-ware-dennett>.

It is not clear which of the two women, Margaret Sanger or Mary Ware Dennett, was actually responsible for Jacobs's fame as a birth control pioneer in the U.S.; probably both, as they could both profit from her story in their good cause. Jacobs must have known about the Sanger and Dennett's differences of opinion and strategy in the birth control campaign. To a certain extent, their divisions paralleled those in the British suffrage movement between "militant suffragettes" and "law-abiding or parliamentary suffragists." Jacobs did not let herself be provoked into making a choice for or against one of the standpoints, though the course Sanger took after and due to her European experiences, namely, to found birth control clinics operated under medical supervision, was perhaps closest to her own position. Dennett, however, had always been active in the suffrage movement, and her strategy to fight for legal change certainly would have been inspired by that experience. She would have met or at least heard of Jacobs in the international suffrage network.

In any case, both Sanger and Dennett were well aware of Jacobs's birth control activities, and either one of them might have brought her work to the attention of the New York-based radical journalist and Heterodoxy member Crystal Eastman because Sanger, too, was certainly well known among the Greenwich Village radicals. Eastman interviewed Jacobs on the women and peace campaign in 1915 for *The Survey*, when Jacobs was in the U.S. to offer President Wilson the resolutions of the Women's Congress in The Hague.⁴⁰ It is probably not a coincidence that, in addition to her interview in *The Survey*, Jacobs herself published an article on "Voluntary Maternity" in that same journal.⁴¹

40 Crystal Eastman Benedict, "Now I Dare to Do It": An interview with Dr. Aletta Jacobs, Who Called the Woman's Peace Congress at The Hague," *The Survey*, October 9, 1915. Also in Blanche Wiesen Cook, ed., *Crystal Eastman on Women and Revolution* (Oxford/ London/ New York, 1978).

41 Aletta Jacobs, "Voluntary Maternity," *The Survey* 35, no. 6 (1915): 142.

42 Eleanor Kinsella McDonnell, *Keeping the Stork in His Place* (New York, 1920), 8. In MWDP, no. 275.

The 1919 article in the *Pictorial Review* may also have come about as a result of either woman's actions. Mary Ware Dennett may have set the *Pictorial Review* on Jacobs's trail. In any case, it was her VPL that reprinted the article as a brochure for the league; on the last page, the names of the board members and the VPL's address are printed, followed by the following remark and suggestion: "We are working to make the United States as wholesome as Holland. Shall we send you information about our bill in Congress?"⁴²

An invitation Jacobs received from, as she called it, "The society of health and social morality" to attend the six-week International Conference of Women Physicians in New York in 1919 may also have

been generated by either Sanger or Dennett.⁴³ However, Jacobs was unable to attend because, even though her costs were paid for by her American hosts and a reservation for the boat had already been made, she could not get a visa “because during the war [she] had sent letters from Americans to their parents in Germany. That was a deed of enmity to the American Government,” she wrote to her American friend Lucy Anthony.⁴⁴

Regardless of whether Sanger or Dennett was most responsible for propagating Jacobs’s reputation as a birth control pioneer in the United States, it was certainly easier for Jacobs to speak out on the subject again once she had stepped down as the president of the Dutch Women’s Suffrage Association after women won suffrage in the Netherlands in 1919. She was ready to reap the benefits of her hard work but also to become more of the “all round feminist” that she had been before she fully embraced the single issue movement of women’s suffrage. She also continued to work with both Sanger and Dennett on the issue in the following years. In 1922/23, Dennett invited her to take a seat in the international advisory council of the VPL. Among the other members was the British birth control activist and psychologist Marie Stopes, who published the best-seller *Married Love* in 1918 and in 1922 opened the first birth control clinic in Great Britain. As she did not have a medical degree, her authority in this matter was severely contested by doctors such as Norman Haire, who claimed that the first *real* birth control clinic — that is, one run by medical doctors — in Great Britain was opened some time later that same year. Having accepted the invitation, Jacobs was then invited as a guest of honor in 1924 to the VPL annual conference in New York. While one paper reported Jacobs’s performance as having been somewhat disappointing due to a bout of flu, it nonetheless touted her as “Dr. Aletta Jacobs, who started the First Birth Control Clinic in the World, in Holland over Forty Years Ago,”⁴⁵ thus reinforcing her pioneering reputation in the United States.

In 1925, Jacobs’s connections to Sanger were on display when Sanger invited Jacobs to return to New York again to attend the 6th International Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference.⁴⁶ Jacobs was not a newcomer in this crowd either, as she had attended many of the organization’s earlier conferences. It was therefore a reunion with old friends. Charles Vickery Drysdale acted as chair while his mother Alice Vickery was honorary president. Another old acquaintance was Helene Stöcker, the German sexual reformer and feminist. They were

43 Letter from Aletta Jacobs to Lucy E. Anthony, Sept. 26, 1919, in Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, Anna Howard Shaw, 1847-1919, M-133, reel A18, 546. Aletta Jacobs does not mention the International Conference of Women’s Physicians in her letter, and she probably means the Committee on Social Morality of the YWCA.

44 Ibid.

45 Clipping from *The Birth Control Herald* 11, no. 2 (1924), in MWDP, no. 258.

46 Birth Control was later added to the old name “International Neo-Malthusian Conference.”

all honored with a pioneers' dinner at the opening of the congress. In her autobiography, Sanger wrote with unconcealed satisfaction that Jacobs felt the urge to explain to her once more why she had refused to receive her in 1914 and remarked: "Here, she said, with kindling eyes, was the system she had envisioned in the Netherlands but had never been able to make come true."⁴⁷ It was a wonderful way to pay respect to the pioneer and at the same time claim to have fulfilled her goals. That year, Jacobs wrote two articles on birth control in the Netherlands, one for a volume edited by Sanger with contributions to the conference on International Aspects of Birth Control.⁴⁸

After 1925, Jacobs remained in touch with the international movement, interacting with many of the individuals she had encountered before, including Dennett and Sanger, right up to the end of her life in 1929. In 1927, she received Dennett's book on *Birth Control Laws* with a dedication from the author that reads: "To Dr. Aletta H. Jacobs, whose courage and wisdom have helped others immeasurably, from Mary Ware Dennett." A letter from Jacobs in the Mary Ware Dennett Papers testifies to Jacobs's appreciation of her "most charming" dedication.⁴⁹ At about that time, the British doctor Norman Haire, who, as we saw, had claimed to have opened the first real birth control clinic in Great Britain, invited Jacobs to contribute to his edited volume *More Medical Views on Birth Control*. Jacobs wrote an interesting reflection on her early work in Amsterdam, stating that she had always kept elaborate records of her interventions.⁵⁰ Moreover, she attended the World Conference on Population at Geneva, organized by Sanger in 1928. At the conference, the Danish doctor J.H. Leunbach approached her, later asking her to lend her name to the foundation of a Welt-Liga für Sexualreform (World League for Sexual Reform), in which the Vienna-based physician Magnus Hirschfeld also played a prominent role.⁵¹ In some of the last letters she ever wrote, in July 1929, Jacobs was still corresponding with Sanger. She discussed the the pros and cons of a birth control conference to be held in Berlin in the following year and also indicated that she was a loyal subscriber to Sanger's *Birth Control Review*, having just sent off for her yearly subscription.⁵² Jacobs died on August 9, 1929.

Conclusion

Having reviewed Aletta Jacobs's actions in the international birth control movement, we can confirm that they certainly have been exaggerated in some of the historiographical representations. Her

47 Margaret Sanger, *Margaret Sanger: An Autobiography* (New York, 1971 [1938]), 374.

48 Aletta H. Jacobs, "Birth Control in Holland," *The Nation*, April 8, 1925; Aletta H. Jacobs, "A Generation of Birth Control in the Netherlands," in *International Aspects of Birth Control*, ed. Margaret Sanger (New York, 1925), 85-94.

49 Schlesinger Library, Mary Ware Dennett Papers, MC 629: AHJ aan MWD, October 4, 1927. CF. Atria, IAV-Collection, IIAV papers: Letter from Mathilde Cohen Tervaert-Israels to Ch. Matthes, 20 April 1941, in which she states that the book is from Aletta Jacobs's legacy and at the advice of Rosa Manus gives the book in her care now that the IAV is closed by the Nazis. It is now in the library collection of Atria in Amsterdam.

50 Aletta H. Jacobs, "Aletta Jacobs," VIII, in *Some More Medical Views on Birth Control*, ed. Norman Haire (London, 1928).

51 Atria, IAV Collection, AHJ Papers, inv. nr. 207: J.H. Leunbach to AHJ, September 17-October 10, 1927.

52 Margaret Sanger Papers at the Library of Congress, Microfilm, reel 17, frame 36: AHJ aan MS, 14 July 1929. A copy of this letter was sent to me by Cathy Moran Hajo, September 2004.

supposed role as the uncontested world pioneer in birth control has been overemphasized in the context of American birth control practices after World War I. Ironically, this international transfer hinges on Jacobs's reputation as an international leader in suffrage and peace, but also on stereotypical images of Dutch domesticity and common sense.

But what about the term "Dutch cap" that Lucy Bland unambiguously relates to Jacobs's pioneering role in birth control, which many sources confidently affirm? A transfer through H.A. Albutt does not seem likely, given the fact that he did not write about a "Dutch cap," but a "Mensinga pessary," as we saw. To my knowledge, the adjective "Dutch" was first connected to the pessary only much later, when the London-based sexologist Norman Haire referred to the "Dutch Mensinga pessary" in *The Lancet* of August 19, 1922. He did so in a reaction to an objection made by Marie Stopes to his earlier statement in his presidential address at the 5th International Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference in London that "the best contraceptive available was that which had been in use in Holland for 40 years and had recently been reintroduced by him into his country." Stopes had disagreed and opted for a differently shaped cap, upon which Haire had replied that "the Dutch Mensinga pessary" was almost universally applicable and therefore to be preferred. The author of the book *Safe Marriage*, Ettie A. Rout, supported his viewpoint, though she likewise observed that "doctors (and often nurses) fit too large sizes of the 'Dutch' pessary," causing them to be dislodged during intercourse. Stopes could not let that pass, and in a second rebuttal she systematically argued for the use of the small occlusive cap rather than "the Dutch cap," a designation she used five times in half a column. It seems likely that Stopes used the adjective "Dutch" for the first time in this exchange. Some time later, she began to mention Jacobs's pioneering role, probably via her membership in the advisory council of the American VPL.⁵³

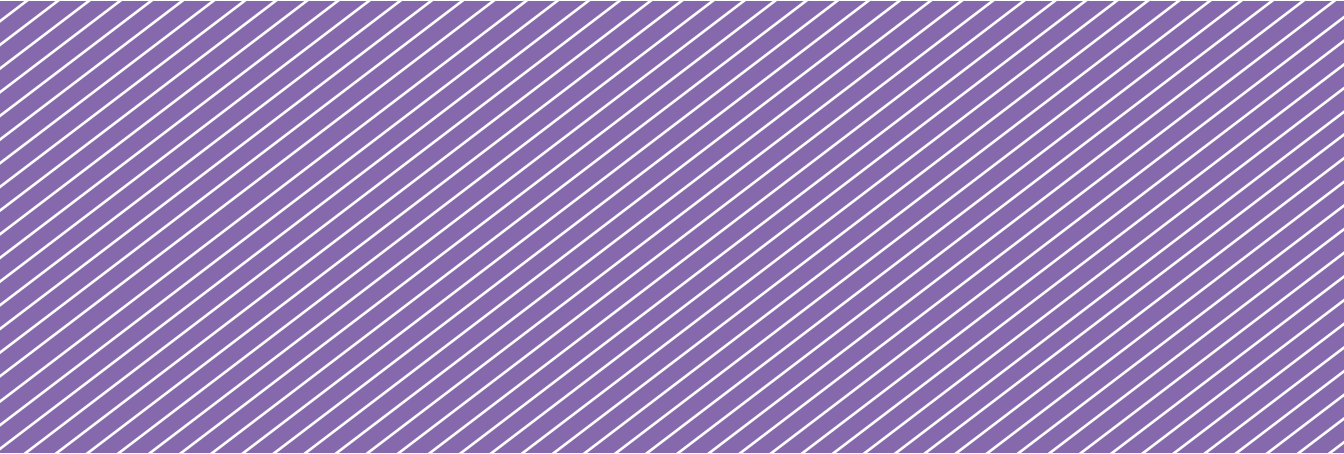
American birth control campaigners in the 1920s did not celebrate the German and Dutch doctors Wilhelm Mensinga or Jan Rutgers but rather Dr. Aletta Jacobs as the birth control pioneer. This can be seen partly as the happy outcome of a common memory strategy by the rivaling American feminist activists Sanger and Dennett. They seem to have been united in their wish to trace the origin of the international birth control movement to a prominent woman doctor and leading international feminist rather than to some obscure German

53 While Stopes referred only once and only in a very superficial way to "Holland" in her best-seller *Married Love* of 1919, in her 1923 book *Contraception* she wrote: "In Holland, the first birth control clinic in the world was founded and carried on by Dr. Aletta Jacobs and arising out of this grew a widely-extended service of clinics, staffed with specially trained nurses" (378).

or Dutch male doctors. Jacobs was definitely an asset when Sanger wanted to define birth control as a clinical practice aimed to help women limit their families. It also helped that Jacobs was known as a leader in the suffrage and peace movements and came from a “peace-loving” country with a solid and respectable but rather conservative image — the Netherlands — that nevertheless had a strong democratic tradition. For a German man to have played this role, even if it was true, would have been less acceptable or advantageous during or just after World War I; moreover, Mensinga had never been really connected to Malthusian practices and organizations that were important means of transfer in this case. Jan Rutgers, in addition, was too modest a man to claim recognition for his and his wife’s efforts in generating this success in Dutch Malthusianism.

Of course, Aletta Jacobs’s life was full of transnational and international connections and intersections, like many other prominent activists at that time, or perhaps like any other contemporary, as historian Erla Haldórsdóttir argues. According to her, the international and the national are always related and never unambiguous. For historians, the challenge is to assess what those transnational interactions consisted of in specific historical developments, what meaning they were given, often on the basis of arbitrary national reputations, and what this means for historical memory. Often, internationalism, which in progressive circles is valued highly, and nationalism, which is often seen as the more restricted perspective, went hand in hand and were used differently in different situations. Feminist history does not need one-dimensional heroines anymore, not least because such heroines cast long shadows over too many contemporaries. Putting Jacobs firmly into a historical perspective or relativizing her pioneering role in the international birth control movement, or relativizing her role as an international leader more generally, does not diminish her but makes for a more collective and more interesting history. This history should also have room for those that did not make it into the records because of their nationality or their (in this case: masculine) gender. It may be time to include the crucial roles of the Dutch/German doctor Wilhelm Mensinga, the inventor of the Dutch cap who likely also gave it this name, and Jan Rutgers, the long-time champion and organizer of Dutch birth control practices, in the transnational history of birth control.

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