

The message of matrimony.

Marriage and religion in the work of Cécile De Jong van Beek en Donk (1866-1944), Dutch feminist and French Catholic.



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Introduction

From the First Feminist Wave (roughly 1870-1920) only some remnants are left in the Dutch collective memory: some names of frontrunners such as Aletta Jacobs or Wilhelmina Drucker, something about women labor and fierce anti-male polemics. When thinking about the fin-de-siècle, probably other features come to mind: socialism and the industrial revolution, the famous Dutch naturalist novel *Eline Vere* and the 'Great War' that was forthcoming.

Jonkvrouw Cécile de Jong van Beek en Donk (1866-1944) was one of the key figures of the First Feminist Wave. She wrote the best-seller *Hilda van Suylenburg* (1897), a purpose novel that was called 'The Dutch *Uncle Tom's Cabin*'¹ or the 'Bible of Feminism'. *Hilda* was the best-selling book around the turn of the century, selling more copies than *Eline Vere*, but the novel does not have a place in Dutch literary history.² It did not make the 'literary cut' because it was a purpose novel: primarily written to spread a message through its contents – religious, nationalist, socialist, or, as in this case, feminist; it had to be free of any influence from the outside-world. The purpose or didactic novel went against contemporary esthetic concepts that art should be free of purpose, or "*l'art pour l'art*" as the literary motto had it that resounded in fin-de-siècle Europe.

Hilda and De Jong were rediscovered in the 1970's during the Second Dutch Feminist Wave. The book was re-issued, and later in 1997 '100 years of *Hilda van Suylenburg*' was celebrated as if it had never been forgotten.³ In the years following, the legacy of the First Feminist Wave, *Hilda* and De Jong received more attention, with one 'blind spot': the role of religion in the First Feminist Wave is often neglected. This is an exponent of the notion that feminism and religion are opposed to each other, as it has entered the writing about the history of the first feminist wave.⁴ Consequently, this is the same in the research to the individual frontrunners: their religious affiliation during or after feminist activities is left outside the scope of research, as if their lives have become less interesting after a conversion, or religious beliefs could not have been a motivation.⁵

Shortly after *Hilda* was published, De Jong divorced her husband Adriaan Goekoop (1859-1914) and moved to France for good in 1900. In 1904 she married Polish scientist Michél Frenkel (1860-1934). She became a member of the Catholic right-wing political movement *Action Française* and converted to Catholicism in 1916, struck by 'German Barbarism' during the First World War. In 1930, the Dutch translation of her third novel *Le Marchande de Cierges*, '*At the Wax Candles*', was published – originally written in French. This again was a purpose novel, now spreading her Catholic ideas.⁶ Whereas it is very interesting to examine *Hilda* for the study of the First Dutch Feminist Wave, *At the Wax Candles* [further: *Wax Candles*] provides us with a rich source of information about De Jong's French Catholic environment, To the study of religion in general, focusing on popular culture

¹ *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) by Harriet Beecher-Stowe (1811-1896) was a famous abolitionist novel from the United States.

² For example Greshoff, J., *Nederlandse Letterkunde*; (1925), Anbeek, T., *Literatuur 1885-1995*. (1999).

³ Very recently the award-winning biography of De Jong and her sister Elsa by Elisabeth Leijnse, *Strijdbare Freules*. Around 1997 these were for example Bosch, M., *Honderd jaar Hilda*; Braun, M., *De prijs van de liefde*; Dieteren, F., *Twee Geloven*; Dröes, F., *Alsof ik in de Spiegel kijk*. Some articles also describe De Jong's conversion.

⁴ Jansz, U., *Denken over sekse*, 27.

⁵ There are various examples of the different roles religion played in the lives of First-Wave Feminists. Marianne Klerck – van Hogendorp (1834-1909) was an orthodox-Protestant Feminist. Nellie van Kol (1851-1930) became active in the Salvation Army, Spiritism and Theosophy after her Feminist activities. Anna de Savornin-Lohman (1868-1930) was feminist and agnostic, but later revoked some of her revolutionary opinions. Kloek, E., *1001 vrouwen*.

⁶ De Jong's second novel *Lilia* was published in 1907. With this, De Jong wanted to improve the position of unmarried mothers by proving that keeping the child was the morally right thing to do and society was treating these mothers too harshly. All three novels are purpose novels and in some way, *Lilia* is about marriage and hypocrisy in society as well. However, to discuss *Lilia* here too would be beyond the scope of this thesis because the practice of marriage itself is not as important as in *Hilda* or *Wax Candles*.

such as novels can be most significant, for such fictional expressions probably reached and influenced a much larger audience than any formal statements or theological treatises with their dogmas.

In *Hilda* as well as *Wax Candles*, religion is an important subject. In *Hilda*, we especially see biblical guidelines and motives play a remarkable role in the lives of important characters, combined with a fierce attack on the immorality and injustice of institutionalized religion. In *Wax Candles*, the church as institution is always a source of wisdom and righteousness, but suffers from immorality and injustice which come from the outside-world, the realm of the godless.

Institutionalized religion, biblical principles and other religious reasoning and motives are also employed in discussions on 'marriage'. Marriage, and with it such topics as family, divorce, gender differences, adulthood and children, is perhaps the most important topic in both novels. Around the time *Hilda* was published, marriage was considered a source as well as an indicator for the poor position of women at the time. First wave-feminists compared married life to a 'cage' and the position of women 'a modern form of slavery' – and the modern institution of marriage was heavily debated in fin de siècle-society, as a lot of parties felt this had to change. *Wax Candles*, on the other hand, defended traditional Catholic family values, as we see advocated in papal encyclicals and decrees published around the time of De Jong's conversion and her third purpose novel was written.

In this thesis, I will examine De Jong's ideas about marriage and religion as advanced both in *Hilda* and *Wax Candles*. To analyze these two novels, I should like to employ the literary theory designed by the Russian thinker Mikhail Bakhtin (1875-1975). He did not agree with the motto "*l'art pour l'art*", not necessarily because he felt art should have a purpose, but because he thought it was impossible to see the novel as a confined work of art. Naturally, the writers' milieu and ideas were present in what he called the 'heteroglossic novel'. I will compare both novels to the socio-historical context they were written in, with particular attention to important topics in the novel or society.

From the turbulent fin-de-siècle in which *Hilda van Suylenburg* was published, I will devote special attention to the literary current and societal debates about marriage. The literary esthetic measures then established still influence the way novels are judged and are an object of study. 'Marriage' as such, but also related issues such as divorce, the position of unmarried women and the double morality were discussed in a broad societal debate, as I emphasized earlier, hence I will also analyze the debate about marriage in the First Feminist Wave.

The second period is France in 1929 when *At the Wax Candles* came out, with De Jong now for many years being a devout ultra-orthodox Roman Catholic. Here, I will focus more on the influence of the Catholic church in De Jong's life and work, especially on the views the Vatican held about marriage and family. Hence, I will compare these to answer the questions which are central to this thesis: What is the concept of 'marriage' as such in De Jong's work and how did religion play a part in this? What are the similarities and differences between De Jong's 'feminist' and 'Catholic' period? What is the general role of religion in her work?

Chapter 1: “*Hilda had just arrived.*”⁷ Fin-de-siècle Realism and *Hilda van Suylenburg*.

When examining De Jong’s ideas on marriage and divorce based on her works *Hilda* and *Wax candles*, we are first confronted with the problem of how to extract these ideas from the novels. Both books are works of fiction, containing autobiographical elements. In order to discover what De Jong intended to convey through these stories, situations and characters, a theoretical approach to literature is required that regards the novel as entwined with the outside world as well as the author’s reality, as opposed to ‘a self-contained work of art’.

The latter statement reflects the position of the literary current dominant at the time De Jong wrote *Hilda*: to approach and study the novel as self-contained and free of any purpose, revolutionary content or morality, *l’art pour l’art*, or ‘art for art’s sake’. As *Hilda* was a didactic novel, it did not fit into this current, explaining why the novel did not receive much appreciation in contemporary literary circles. *Hilda* was by no means the only didactic novel to be published at the time; amongst readers, purpose novels were still quite popular.⁸ We will start by taking a closer look at the position of the novel in the Netherlands at the fin-de-siècle. Next, we will establish which literary theory might be appropriate for analyzing the topics of marriage and divorce in De Jong’s work.

1.1 “*L’art pour L’art*”: literary current in 1897

Around 1897 the literary milieu in the Netherlands, and the whole of Europe, had been subjected to great changes. When De Jong’s first novel came out in 1897, the literary world had recently been shaken up by the so-called ‘Beweging van 80’. This ‘80s Movement’ sought to redefine literature, literary authors and the position of literature in society.

As from 1880 the young writers and poets involved in this movement lived by their motto that art should only be about art, in other words, that literature should not propagate any morals or ideologies. Art was understood to be solely about esthetics and skills, about constructing novels that focused on the description of certain situations, without auctorial spokespersons or clear meanings. The 80s Movement broke away from prevailing literary practices and convictions thus far, in which literature was supposed to be educational or instructive, for example by teaching its readership decent morals or good citizenship. The new movement caricatured authors for whom literature was the vehicle of arranging societal matters as Reverend-poets, “Dominee-dichters”.⁹ Its motto – ‘art for art’s sake’ – can be related to the current called “Naturalism”, in which from a literary perspective it was customary to write ‘scientific’ accounts, or accurate descriptions of natural phenomena. It became fashionable to write about human characters, degeneration and the decay of families and nobility.¹⁰

The first Dutch author to call himself ‘Naturalist’ is Marcellus Emants (1848-1923).¹¹ Although initially his work was not well-received, today Emants is considered one of the most important writers of the era. His début *A Bequeathed confession* (1894) is by general acclaim regarded as one of the most important literary works of the fin-de-siècle.

⁷ De Jong, C., *Hilda*, 1.

⁸ Other popular novels at the time where for example the anti-colonial *Max Havelaar* (1860) by Multatuli (1820-1887), socialist novel *Barthold Meryan* (1897) by Cornelië Huygens (1848-1902), and the anarchic *De droomers* (1900) by Maurits Wagenvoort (1859-1944). This selection shows the multitude of subjects. An international work – which were popular in the Netherlands as well – is *Robert Elsmere* (1888) by Mrs. Humphry Ward (1851-1920) which was about Christianity and higher criticism, and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as mentioned in the preface.

⁹ Anbeek, T., *Literatuur 1885-1995*, 21-34.

¹⁰ Greshoff, J., *Nederlandse Letterkunde*, 237.

¹¹ Anbeek, T., *De Naturalistische roman*, 19.

Prior to his literary *début*, Emants had started writing about the new naturalistic style, publishing essays on the new literary constellation and his hero Emile Zola (1840-1902), a famous French realist writer. Emants, seeing science very much progressing in his time, felt that literature should follow this example and evolve to a new form. If not, Emants thought, literature would become a “mocked and despised nonentity”.¹² He quoted Zola in his definition of a ‘Naturalist’ as someone who returns to the study of nature.¹³ Book characters, just like real people, are more the product of their surroundings and personal history than of anything else: “upbringing for a very little, genes for the larger vast part, define human character”, as Emants later wrote.¹⁴ Novels should portray people as natural and real as possible, without the novelist – or the narrator, if present – steering the readers’ sympathy to any of the characters.¹⁵ Zola’s work and literary concepts many thought of as a danger to society: it was not uplifting and providing readers with a good example, but was feared to teach people wrong morals.¹⁶

Historically, Naturalism has presented itself in various shapes and many different nuances; Emants, for example, represented the ‘scientific’ branch of subject and language.¹⁷ The work of another famous Dutch author, Louis Couperus (1863-1923), was thought of as very poetic and in a way, too realistic: contemporary critics noted that the main character of his great novel *Eline Vere* seemed very unsympathetic.¹⁸ Hence, genuine neutrality in the novel was absent – something that was rare in naturalist novels.¹⁹

1.2 Bright sparkling eyes. Literary praxis and the old-fashioned literature.

The unsympathetic character was a no-go in the new literature, but so was the sympathetic or noble one.²⁰ New generations of reviewers would take this directive very strict. The literary praxis before 1880 was full of idealistic and noble personas, as well as typically wicked, antagonistic characters. The hero or heroine – the story’s protagonist – had to overcome problems and challenge oppositions. Usually, the outcome was a happy ending of good winning and evil losing. Many of the characters’ features are described so that the reader knows who is good and who is evil. Stereotypically, good characters will have a ‘high forehead’ or ‘bright sparkling eyes’, whereas bad characters tend to possess ‘pale skin’ or ‘a hunchback’. But not only outward looks, also the description of someone’s interior may serve this purpose of distinguishing good from evil. By having an auctorial – and authoritative – narrator judging the characters and their actions as good or bad the readers are persuaded to adapt their opinions accordingly.²¹

With the rise of the 80s Movement this type of storyline was deemed ‘old-fashioned’ and ‘foolish’ – such a worldview was too romantic. Art was no longer deemed to focus on illustrating the good in man, raise mankind or show the perspective of a better world.²²

Through its magazine – titled *The New Guide (De Nieuwe Gids)* as a parody on *The Guide (De Gids)* that represented the ‘old’ literature – the 80ies-movement was gaining popularity fast, and so were its ideas on literature and writers. However, the typical reader would occasionally pick up a naturalistic

¹² Anbeek, T., *De Naturalistische roman*, 20.

¹³ *Ibidem.*, 23.

¹⁴ Emants, M., *Pro Domo*, 42.

¹⁵ Anbeek, T., *De Naturalistische roman*, 22.

¹⁶ *Ibidem.*, 23.

¹⁷ *Ibidem.*, 21.

¹⁸ Couperus, L., *Eline Vere*.

¹⁹ Bel, J., *Nederlandse literatuur*, 56-58.

²⁰ Anbeek, T., *De Naturalistische roman*, 11.

²¹ *Ibidem.*, 12-4.

²² *Ibidem.*, 12.

novel because of the “photograph it showed of the world and the talented descriptions” but also wanted to read “novels that moved him, for example about an imaginary better world”.²³

1.3 Engagement: the ‘purpose’ or ‘didactic’ novel.

Instead of offering an objective and distant perspective as prevailing in the currents of naturalism and realism, the authors of purpose novels clearly show their engagement with societal backgrounds and ideas in their work.²⁴ The writer did not solely intend to create a work of art, but also to spread ideas in an attractive manner for a large reading public. The well-known literary critic Frans Netscher (1864-1923) even wrote in an article about the socialist novel *Barthold Meryan* by Cornelia Huygens,²⁵ stating that “the times of ‘l’art pour l’art’ are gone, for in this time the sense of community is awakening.”²⁶

While some literary critics welcomed the revolutionary content of purpose novels, others felt reluctant to accept the use of the novel as a vehicle for that very content. Obviously, there were critics who did not appreciate any of the novels that aimed at having an impact on society nor they did pay much attention to the literary qualities of such works. In general, however, most critics shared the opinion that a purpose novel could never be a work of art at the same time.²⁷ Some reviewers did not engage in black-and-white thinking. They did not assess the purpose novel by its cover only, but also paid fair attention to the use of language and to the representation of its characters. Also, those literary critics that did take up these books to discuss them, were sometimes discussing the social trends or impact of the novel – something rather rare for literary critics to do.²⁸

These were the different kind of critiques De Jong received on *Hilda*. Some critics thought of the book as an asset in accomplishing a more equal society for men and women and did not focus on the language and literary style, others who did focus on the latter wrote about the poor literary qualities of the book. Netscher, in spite of his sympathy for the purpose novel, wrote a rather critical review of *Hilda*, saying that De Jong was “a terrible artist but a good person”.²⁹ He commented that when De Jong wanted to make a point or explain a theory, “she would perform a kind of puppet-show with the characters in the novel discussing matters in the same old way and with the same metaphors all the characters use”.³⁰

As final remark of the position of *Hilda* and De Jong’s debut as a writer, I would like to quote from a review by Margaretha Meyboom (1856-1927), who argues that the concepts of ‘purpose’ and ‘novel’ reinforce each other. She thought that precisely because of the personal touch, *Hilda* became so popular amongst women, who, as she emphasized, had to be thankful for this work. The fact that the novel did not appeal much to literary critics or other authorities in the art-world was because as ‘scholars’ they were not in touch with the outside world and therefore could not understand the value of the book, but the representation of the ‘outside world’ in the book made it so popular.³¹

²³ Anbeek, T., *De Naturalistische roman*, 14.

²⁴ Bel, J., *Nederlandse literatuur*, 148.

²⁵ Huygens, C., *Barthold Meryan*.

²⁶ Bel, J., *Nederlandse literatuur*, 151.

²⁷ *Ibidem.*, 150.

²⁸ *Ibidem.*, 151.

²⁹ *Ibidem.*, 149.

³⁰ *Ibidem.*, 149.

³¹ Meyboom, M., *De Vrouwenbeweging*, 477-8.

Chapter 2. *De Jong's Marionettes do the talking*. Intertextuality and heteroglossia in the orchestrated novel.

Meyboom's notion of the dichotomy between 'art-world scholars' and 'the outside world' is I think a key element in the examination and interpretation of purpose novels. Without judgement about the quality, which is not at stake, it needs focusing on the extent to which these are a blueprint of society.

2.1 Analyzing the purpose novel and the 'world outside the writer's study'.

A purpose novel written to challenge generally accepted norms and values and change society will try to raise and contribute to the public debate. So, instead of seeing the novel as an autonomous work of art, as "art for art's sake" demanded, it is necessary to employ a theory in which the 'outside world' and the novel are intertwined.

As we saw earlier, *Hilda* is a novel about a young girl, but from a more abstract perspective the novel is about feminism. Protagonist Hilda goes to live with her family in The Hague after both her parents have died. She was raised as a 'new woman' but her new milieu does not approve of her feminist ideals.³² She conquers her position in the end, after having met difficulties and misunderstanding characters. The conversations in which Hilda and other characters engage are in fact reproductions of contemporary public debates, as well as De Jong's visions, solutions and answers to them. However, to understand De Jong's issues, the reader must relate the characters and debates in the novel to the outside world. In other words, the 'social discourse' of De Jong's time was incorporated in her work.

Social discourse is a term widely used in linguistics and philosophy alike. The concept is linked first and foremost to the prominent French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984), whose ideas about language, literature and power have become quite influential. In particular I should like to mention two ideas briefly: first, the notion that social or societal institutions – that have a certain field of influence or power – use a specific type and choice of language, to distinguish themselves as well as to maintain that power.³³ Secondly, the important idea that the novel is not something in itself, but as just a point in a network of other texts, novels and quotes.³⁴

The latter is the definition of a concept generally called 'intertextuality': the corresponding features of a text with other texts, which always plays a role in meaning and interpretation.³⁵ These referrals are made in different ways; like one of the characters directly mentioning or reading a book or in a more abstract way using a quote the reader will most likely be familiar with.

Literary theories by Mikhail Bakhtin (1875-1975) and Julia Kristeva (1941)

The literary theorist whose definition of the novel and how to study this I would like to employ in this thesis is Mikhail Bakhtin (1875-1975), an important 20th-century Russian thinker, who wrote his most famous works – on language but also on philosophy and politics - while in exile in Kazakhstan.³⁶ Although Bakhtin's work was widely known in the Eastern Block, his writings only came to Europe in 1965 with Julia Kristeva, (1941) a Bulgarian scholar who then traveled to Paris to resume her studies. She translated Bakhtin's work about the 'polyphone novel', but also used part of her ideas in the essay 'Le mot, le dialogue et le roman' in 1966, which became an instant-classic, and along with that

³² The background and content of these 'feminist ideals' I will elaborate on in a later chapter.

³³ Foucault, M., *Sexuality*, 100-1.

³⁴ Foucault, M., *L'ordre*. 25-6.

³⁵ Dijk, Y. van., *Draden in het donker*, 17.

³⁶ Bakhtin, M., *Dialogic Imagination*, xxi-x.

Bakhtin's literary theories.³⁷ Bakhtin was familiar with the realist and naturalist literary currents and the ideas on how to judge and study novels at the time *Hilda* came out. However, he did not agree with the motto "art for art's sake". He saw novels as a kind of camera obscura of the world through the writer. Naturally, society, the use of language or people the writer knew were reflected in the characters, surroundings and dialogues in the writer's books. Hence, Bakhtin's views are very suitable for an in depth analysis of *Hilda* and *Wax candles*. His approach will reveal De Jong's intentions, both in designing the main characters as well as encounters or discussions in the novel as a reflection of the debates.

In his essay *Discourse in the Novel*, (1934-35) generally considered to be one of the most important writings in his oeuvre, Bakhtin combines the outside social world with the novel. He describes the approach to literature by the 80s Movement as "individual and period-bound overtones of a style [that] are the privileged subjects of study, while its basic social tone is ignored".³⁸ This approach leads to a wrong kind of interpretation: these criteria tend to overlook the (social) life and discourse of the writer 'outside the study' which are always present in a novel, according to Bakhtin.³⁹ These voices and discursive realities are alive in the mind of the author, and hence, come alive in the novel as well.⁴⁰

The novel is a 'phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice'.⁴¹ This is what Bakhtin defines as 'heteroglossia': the multitude of styles and use of language in the novel, for example by different characters, through passages in the novel in which a book or letter is read, or by the narrator's speech.⁴² Different types of the use of language Bakhtin defines as 'social heteroglossia'.⁴³ These different discourses correspond with the different social discourses presented in the novel.⁴⁴ Together, groups of 'social languages' form one 'national language', that can be compared to and converse with other national languages in the same culture, or 'socio-ideological conceptual horizon'.⁴⁵ And even so, for the reader and writer alike, what is said by the different voices in the heteroglossia of the novel refers to and is associated with the different discourses and social groups outside the novel, the 'common opinion', 'already uttered' or 'already known', as argued by Bakhtin.⁴⁶

Bakhtin also distinguishes five different types of 'compositional-style' that novels are usually built from. Quoting the descriptions directly from *Discourse in the Novel*:

- (1) *Direct authorial literary-artistic narration (in all its diverse variants);*
- (2) *Stylization of the various forms of oral everyday narration (skaz);*
- (3) *Stylization of the various forms of semiliterary (written) everyday narration (the letter, the diary, ect.);*
- (4) *Various forms of literary but extra-artistic authorial speech (moral, philosophical or scientific statements, oratory, ethnographic descriptions, memoranda and so forth);*
- (5) *The stylistically individualized speech of characters.*⁴⁷

³⁷ Dijk, Y. van., *Draden in het donker*, 15.

³⁸ Bakhtin, M., *Dialogic Imagination*, 259.

³⁹ *Ibidem.*, 260.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem.*, 292.

⁴¹ *Ibidem.*, 261.

⁴² *Ibidem.*, 263.

⁴³ *Ibidem.*, 264.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem.*, 272.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem.*, 275.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem.*, 279.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem.*, 262.

These types of compositional style along with the notion of ‘social heteroglossia’, the different social discourses displayed by language, are key-elements to Bakhtin’s leading metaphor of seeing the novel as ‘polyphonic’ or ‘orchestrated’.⁴⁸ The novel is built from different characters and social discourses, conducted by the author, who knows how the novel should sound and be, but does need the individual voices to paint a clear picture for the reader. Some characters are designed as ‘mouthpiece’ of the author; they are always positively portrayed and make wise comments. Also important is how the author links the voices in the novel; do two characters that both stand for another aspect of reality or society have a good relationship, do they agree or disagree? These interrelationships in the novel the writer will have meant to display from the outside world as well.⁴⁹

If we take a broad definition of intertextuality, we can not only see the function of literature used in the novel, but also political ideas, ideologies or discussions between characters. These ideas and ideologies stand for politicians; discussions stand for societal debates. Even families with specific characteristics – rich, poor, where they live, their politics and views on society – represent milieus outside the novel. This combination of Bakhtin and intertextuality, made by Kristeva in her 1966 essay, is an interpretation and expansion of what Bakhtin called ‘dialogism’: the idea that every word is in a constant dialogue in all the ways the word was used prior to that time.⁵⁰

2.2 The marriage law is immoral. Marriage in *Hilda van Suylenburg*.

If we apply this theoretical method to the novels, firstly *Hilda van Suylenburg*, we get an insight into De Jong’s opinions on marital matters, but also which outside social groups and institutions are represented in the novel and how these are interacting with each other. If families or persons in the novel entertain friendly and agreeable relations, this would mean that De Jong meant to illustrate a connection between the milieu that is represented by the family and conservative politics. From the use of the characters’ language we can place them in the same or different social strata. The books they read and discuss also tell us something about the characters’ political and social ideas.

We learn the writer’s opinions on characters and situations from the comments made by the authorial narrator and by the manner in which the characters designed as De Jong’s mouthpiece respond – if this is an overall positive or negative verdict. The verdict can also come from De Jong herself, as authorial narrator describing persons and situations with extra-artistic authorial speech.

In *Hilda van Suylenburg* we encounter various characters and situations which can be regarded as exemplary for different forms of marriage. The novel abounds with discussions on marriage, passages from books being read about the subject, and naturally the (moral, philosophical, and so forth) authorial speech coming directly from De Jong. In order to learn about the author’s purpose, meaning and views on the matter, I will discuss the most important different types of marriage, aiming to uncover what De Jong wanted to address outside of the novel. I will distinguish two groups of marriage: the negative (group A) and the positive (group B).

In group A, the characters, choices and situations are associated with negative features like insincerity, deceit, injustice and superficiality. Main character Hilda is always disapproving of the marriages in group A, and so is the authorial narrator. I have distinguished seven different manifestations of this type of marriage in the book I will discuss. Of positive manifestations, group B, there are two forms; always associated with sincerity, justice, real love and happiness. In reference to these marriages, the

⁴⁸ *Ibidem.*, 430-1.

⁴⁹ Bakhtin, M., *Dialogic Imagination*, 263.

⁵⁰ Dijk, Y. van. (2013) *Draden in het donker*, 25.

authorial narrator and Hilda express themselves always in positive terms, one of them being Hilda's own engagement towards the end of the novel.

In the next section I will discuss all nine manifestations, and subsequently analyze to what extent the characters and situations correspond. In a later chapter I will connect this structure of persons and exemplary situations to society in times of De Jong and analyze what she meant by this.

2.2.1 The Van der Starren-family as a typical example of the old-fashioned aristocracy

In the beginning of the book, Hilda comes to live with her uncle, aunt, nephew Edward and two nieces Eugénie and Corry van der Starren at the Nassauplein of The Hague. The family is rich, but presented as 'lacking in taste' and 'vulgar and meaningless'.⁵¹ Hilda had been brought up by her deceased father with notions of personal development and education being important for girls and boys alike, as well as the ideal of a love-marriage.⁵² This, the Van der Starren-family clearly opposes. On one of Hilda's first nights in the house, the family discusses 'those strange ideas of the old Van Suylenburg' and how Hilda will adapt to the family-life and ideas: freedom for girls is mentioned explicitly as a bad thing and reference is made to Hilda's seemingly good qualities for appealing to a suitor such as 'having a pretty face' and being 'kind and thankful'.⁵³

The marriage of uncle and aunt Van der Starren is introduced by a description of Mr. van der Starren's life before his marriage. He had had a 'long and wild youth', after which he settled down with a much younger wife. He appears to be more concerned with passing on the family-name and weapon than with having children as a joy in itself. He also has his own credo on women, described by De Jong's authorial narrator as cynical: women are all the same, untrustworthy and a necessary evil.⁵⁴ Mrs. Van der Starren is described as superficial, and only cares about keeping up appearances and what people think of the family.⁵⁵

Furthermore, she takes great interest in her daughters' marriage to a suitable party, with 'suitable' referring to social status and money.⁵⁶ Her daughter Corry has two suitors: the rich German diplomat Van Görtzen and Rooselaar. The latter is no man of position or money, but described as a fair, interesting and noble. Corry is in love with Rooselaar, but chooses Van Görtzen because he is rich and successful – which Hilda disapproves of.⁵⁷

Though the family does its best to maintain the status quo, there are some cracks in their habitat. Eugénie is 28, without the foresight of a marriage soon. She cannot stand the pressure and suffers a nervous breakdown for which she has to be treated abroad. Sometimes, they do understand Hilda's ideas or the speeches of socialist Maarten van Hervoren.⁵⁸ De Jong describes these situations as the family members trying to 'laugh it off' but at the same time noting that the atmosphere was 'not so unconstrained anymore'. At the end of the book, Eugénie is back in The Hague but still 'nervous' and 'full of melancholy'. She also has gained more understanding and respect for Hilda's ideas on woman labor and marriage.⁵⁹

⁵¹ De Jong, C., *Hilda*, 17.

⁵² *Ibidem.*, 11.

⁵³ *Ibidem.*, 14-5.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem.*, 13-5.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem.*, 4-5, 7, 14.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem.*, 21.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem.*, 22-3, 32.

⁵⁸ Of the character Maarten van Hervoren I will come to speak more later.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem.*, 439-41.

2.2.2 Baroness Cranz and Baron Bernard Cranz van Rozenhagen as the eligible party

Upon arrival in The Hague, Hilda receives a note from the old baroness Cranz van Rozenhagen who knew Hilda's mother and sends her a bible that once belonged to her. In the package is a note wishing Hilda luck and stating how she hopes the bible will guide her with wisdom. Hilda's nieces think of this as weird and remark they did not know the baroness "was so pious".⁶⁰ Hilda and baroness Cranz grow quite close in the novel, and the baroness is portrayed as a wise and kind character. The baroness is helping those in poverty and taking a special interest in girls, paying for their education and so helping emancipation along without taking a leading role.⁶¹

She has a son, Bernard, who works in London. Eugénie and Corry accuse Hilda of trying to make a good impression on Bernard by befriending his mother, as he is a good party: a rich baron.⁶² But this makes no impression on Hilda, she does not like Bernard because he is superficial, does not care for social issues or inequality in society and emancipation.⁶³

Although there has been no former advances Bernard proposes to Hilda in a letter, which she did not expect. When this letter arrives, the authorial narrator speaks of an 'important moment and the letter of her life'.⁶⁴ The letter appears to be very passionate, which makes Hilda think about love and being loved. She feels flattered but also slightly resentful, because Bernard asked her without him knowing what she feels about him – not her ideal of mutual consent.⁶⁵ Next, Hilda thinks about the old baroness she loves, about how the baroness and Bernard would react to her refusal, even suffer from it. And she thinks about how her love for Bernard could develop and grow when married. She could get to know him better, and he may turn out not to be as superficial as she thought at first.⁶⁶ Still, Hilda thinks about turning him down, because she does not love him. The possible alternative of this action comes to her mind: to spend the remainder of her life in the grey meaninglessness she has known so far. For a while, it seems to her that her only choices are to continue living like this or marry Bernard. So, eventually she decides to accept him and writes him a letter.⁶⁷

However, when she gets on her way to send it, she hears her nephew Edward, Mrs. and Mr. van der Starren talking about the proposal: they saw the letter with the Cranz van Rozenhagen-family weapon coming in and directly knew what it was about. They are discussing what Hilda will do: they know she does not love him and they are aware of her principles of a love-marriage. Still, they wonder if she will abandon her principles for the eligible party the baron is. Mrs. Van der Starren is clearly in favor of this marriage, but the male discussants wonder what Hilda will do. Hearing this, Hilda goes back to her room and, ashamed she almost accepted, decides not to marry Cranz.⁶⁸

In the meantime, Bernard is sitting in a café, thinking about Hilda and his proposal when he meets his old friend, the socialist Maarten van Hervoren. They have a chat about marriage. Maarten is surprised Bernard took the step to propose to Hilda: wild stories go around about Bernard, from his time as a student and now in London.⁶⁹ Also Bernard's view on marriage and women is made clear: women will not know what a man has been up to before marriage, and even if they were, the man is simply to ask

⁶⁰ *Ibidem.*, 9.

⁶¹ De Jong, C., *Hilda*, 8-9, 33-4.

⁶² *Ibidem.*, 34.

⁶³ *Ibidem.*, 42.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem.*, 226.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem.*, 227.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem.*, 227-8.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem.*, 229-31.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem.*, 231-4.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem.*, 221-2.

forgiveness and women will always 'show grace': the same holds true for adultery, which always will be forgiven and is therefore not an 'immoral' thing to do.⁷⁰ As for love, a man could never be certain anyway, because women can and will fool any man pretending to love him while they do not – or the other way around – as they are so eager to get married. Love can grow in a marriage. And, Bernard tells Maarten, he's such an eligible candidate that no woman will refuse him.⁷¹

2.2.3 Bertha Wendelings and marriage as prostitution

Bertha Wendelings is the daughter of a poor widow, who is supporting herself and her mother by doing sewing-work. However, this does not provide enough income nor does Bertha like it. Baroness Cranz helped the girl with money, and discovered Bertha was clever and wanted to do something other than handicrafts. The baroness let Bertha take courses to become a junior-notary; meanwhile she arranged for Bertha to have a job as an assistant.⁷² Bertha is secretly in love with the young orthodox Reverend Moissette, the only clergyman in the book, of whom I will come to speak in the next paragraph.

Moissette convinced Bertha it was unsuitable for her to hold a 'man-job', suggesting that she would not be feminine anymore, losing attraction to men and forsaking her natural place in society.⁷³ This conversation caused Bertha to stop her studies and her job as an assistant. Hilda tries to make her change her mind in a long discussion about the qualities of men and women, characteristics and emancipation.⁷⁴ But convincing her fails, and the story of Bertha Wendelings ends as follows: she is forced into a marriage to an elderly man who had always been after her but whom she refused before. He is a 69-year-old retired civil-servant from the Dutch colonies, whom she only accepts because she needs someone who could support Bertha and her mother.⁷⁵

De Jong uses another spokesperson in the book, Hilda's mentor Corona van Oven: a young doctor especially concerned with women emancipation and helping people in poor conditions. She confronts Moissette with his encouragement to the situation, describing it as "moral suicide" for Wendelings and calling a marriage of this type "prostitution".⁷⁶ On this discussion I will elaborate in the next paragraph. But Bertha Wendelings it not saved: Moissette marries the couple and her window of opportunity to work as a notary is gone because of the Reverend's advice.

2.2.4 Reverend Moissette and old-fashioned conservatives

Reverend Moissette is introduced as a young, orthodox and idealistic clergyman who helps baroness Cranz von Rozenhagen with her work amongst the poor. Baroness Cranz likes him for this, but is later furious for his intervening in the case of Bertha Wendelings.⁷⁷ Moissette is in love with Hilda. Hilda knows this, but she does not like his 'monk-like' and conservative spirit, although she approves of him more than of Cranz for his idealism and honest work amongst the poor.⁷⁸ But her opinion of him changes when she discovers Moissette is actively discouraging girls to do work that he deems 'unfeminine', denying them the possibility of taking care of themselves, and hence, forcing them into a position of dependency on men.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem.*, 223.

⁷¹ *Ibidem.*, 223-4.

⁷² De Jong, C., *Hilda*, 177.

⁷³ *Ibidem.*, 177-8.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem.*, 176-200.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem.*, 422-4.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem.*, 425.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem.*, 38.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem.*, 39.

Moisette thinks emancipation will encourage girls to refrain from marrying,⁷⁹ that marriage is the only destination for women,⁸⁰ and that emancipation will make girls disdain the work of the housewife.⁸¹ This is discussed in the argument over Bertha Wendelings between Moisette and Corona van Oven. But Moisette's arguments are easily refuted by De Jong's spokesperson: Corona argues that emancipation will benefit marriage because of the better and more true motives, which will also result in more appreciation for the position of housewives.⁸²

Although Moisette knows that Hilda does not love him because of their very different ideas about emancipation, he always kept hoping that Hilda would change her mind. That would be 'for the reason many girls capitulated': boredom and dissatisfaction with their lives. In the same conversation about Bertha Wendelings, Corona van Oven confronts Moisette with his secret and makes him admit that it was wrong and selfish.⁸³ The authorial narrator sketches this as an important moment for the Reverend: he realizes that his principles about women's destiny to marry are untenable. Furthermore, and maybe even more important, Moisette is facing the fact that he himself is not even acting on his ideals when it comes to Hilda.

Moisette finds himself wrong both in his personal and his ideological ideas on women and society. The authorial narrator portrays him not as 'wicked', but as 'hopelessly old-fashioned'. He is unfit for accepting the major changes society would face when disclosing the truth, expelling the double moral and the real motivations for marriage as well as the need for the position of women to change. He knows this, but chooses the easy way by ignoring the facts as they are and maintaining the 'big lie'.⁸⁴

2.2.5 Mrs. Zwolve, abuse of husbands in poor families

Mrs. Zwolve is a mother of four who lives on her own in very poor conditions. She is pregnant and working to earn a living for the family, but her husband is a drunkard and from time to time invades her household to steal money and valuables which he then pawns. She cannot divorce him nor change anything about the situation, because by law the husband owns everything in the household and women and children are his subordinates. If now and then Mr. Zwolve comes to claim whatever he wants, there's no way of stopping him, even though his wife and children are clearly worse off with him than without him.⁸⁵ Hilda concludes marriage law must be immoral. Mrs. Zwolve is a victim of society, as she cannot change anything herself. This portrait is enforced in the novel by a special form of *Skaz*: in the household is spoken in dialect.

2.2.6 Gladys van Praege and gambling away a fortune

Gladys came from America to marry Frederik van Praege. She holds very progressive socialist ideas and is interested in the women vote and emancipation affairs.⁸⁶ In a moment of thought recorded for the reader Gladys thinks about 'marriage' and that she would never wish that for her children. That is, the 'ordinary marriage like there are millions' that is 'a union with some man or some woman for

⁷⁹ *Ibidem.*, 427.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem.*, 423.

⁸¹ *Ibidem.*, 428.

⁸² De Jong, C., *Hilda*, 428.

⁸³ *Ibidem.*, 430.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem.*, 430.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem.*, 264-9.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem.*, 332-3.

some favorable circumstances'.⁸⁷ Gladys considers this immoral, and contemplates that a real marriage should be a partnership based on love.⁸⁸

It appears that Frederik only married her for her family fortune; Gladys loved him, but now thinks this love was 'superficial' and she did not think the marriage through enough. Frederik is a gambler and is spending Gladys' fortune, but she cannot stop him because by law what is hers is his to spend at will.⁸⁹

Her father insisted on a prenuptial agreement, but Gladys did not want this because she thought it would be distrusting Frederik. Her father did leave one country house in her name, but Frederik forces her to sell this and give the money to him, because otherwise he will send their children to boarding school.⁹⁰ Later, Gladys falls ill and her sister Maud Arlington advises her to appoint her as legal guardian for her children. Gladys explains that unfortunately, in the Netherlands this is impossible because women are legally incapacitated. They, like most in the United States, are used to a better position for women and are surprised about the poor situation for women in Europe.⁹¹ The difference between the American characters is of course telling: in the Netherlands, Gladys is a housewife, and in America, Maud is a physician.

Frederik has an accident and dies, shortly after this Gladys passes away too. The children are left with Frederik's brother Henk, whom Gladys thought to be even more conservative and feared for her children's upbringing. Henk gives the children to Maud when he discovers they are not rich anymore because Frederik had spent their fortune. Maud takes them to America where they are raised 'free' and the girl to become a 'new woman'.⁹²

2.2.7 Frank van Soeterwolde and exploiting the spouse

Frank is a great artist and a good friend of Corona van Oven.⁹³ Frank is the leader of his own group of actors and has very noble ideas on how theater can raise morals and will make the world better.⁹⁴ Years before, he fell into a 'superficial' love with a girl and his grandmother pressed him to marry her, because it was not suitable for a man to stay alone.⁹⁵ Although there is no love between them and his wife is adulterous, which he cannot prove, he cannot divorce because she wants to 'exploit the artist in him'.

Furthermore, Frank is very worried about his daughter whose upbringing is left to his vicious wife. Corona and Frank are in love, both agree that the marriage-law that binds Frank to his wife is immoral and dream of a future together as a married couple. Hence, Frank wants to elope with Corona, but she does not, because she is afraid she will lose her credibility as a role model when living in a concubinage.⁹⁶ Frank sends his daughter Rosa to live with Corona and finds proof of his wife's adultery. But then he falls ill and dies, after which Frank's wife gives full custody of Rosa to Corona.⁹⁷

⁸⁷ *Ibidem.*, 334.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem.*, 333.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem.*, 344-7.

⁹⁰ De Jong, C., *Hilda*, 347-53.

⁹¹ *Ibidem.*, 440-2.

⁹² *Ibidem.*, 417-20.

⁹³ *Ibidem.*, 129.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem.*, 129-31.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem.*, 140.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem.*, 141-52.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem.*, 435-8.

2.3 The marriage of equals. Feminist Hilda and socialist Maarten.

Maarten van Hervoren is a devout socialist and, although an old friend of Bernard Cranz van Rozenhagen, the direct opposite. In the conversation they have after Bernard just sent Hilda his proposal, as already discussed briefly in the prior paragraph about Bernard, Maarten is surprised to hear of Bernard's wedding plans because of his excessive behavior and his opinion on women.⁹⁸

Hilda and Maarten fall in love and get secretly engaged towards the end of the book. Hilda is at the time studying and living in Amsterdam. When she is on a visit at the Van der Starren-house, her aunt confronts her with a letter she received from a friend who saw Hilda "walking around with men" in Amsterdam. Hilda confirms that she is spending her Sundays walking with Maarten and that she is secretly engaged; she wants to finish her studies first as there is little time to spend with "visitations and so forth" and she declares that they are "working on the heart".⁹⁹ Her aunt and uncle find this inappropriate. Aunt Van der Starren says she would have expected Hilda to drop her studies when finally engaged; she also mocks the life of a working wife and mother and wonders whether Maarten would approve.¹⁰⁰ But Hilda explains that Maarten shares her opinion, that their marriage will be between two equals, and that her goal of helping female victims of marital law will be better served by a woman with a "happy marriage in whose heart is no bitterness".¹⁰¹

Van Hervoren's socialist views about equality in society and the protection of laborers he is actively pursuing by bringing socialist structures to factories. He thinks a better position for women and their active participation in society are necessary. Van Hervoren is described as an intelligent and honest freethinker, which is emphasized by the writer by letting him side with the American ladies and other enlightened characters in the book.

Maarten's character is also shaped by showing the contrast between himself and his old friend Cranz when they meet after Cranz' proposal. After this conversation, the authorial narrator shows Cranz thinking that Van Hervoren "has become a weird character these days" in his socialist endeavors and opinions that the world should change. Cranz thinks someone of their social class should not bother about and certainly should not be welcoming this change with enthusiasm.¹⁰²

Van Hervoren is the only socialist in the conservative milieu that Hilda and the Van der Starren's belong to. Occasionally, the writer highlights this fact, for example when during a group discussion at the house of Henk and Gladys van Praege Van Hervoren's old friends joke about his "silly ideas". This is an important moment as everyone is laughing. However, the authorial narrator describes that after the discussion, the "chatter was not so casual anymore because in their hearts everyone knew he was right".¹⁰³

2.3.2 The discussion on marriage and divorce in Corona's salon

One afternoon, when Hilda is at Corona's house and meets Frank there, they talk of marriage and divorce. Frank, in this dialogue clearly De Jong's mouthpiece, defends divorce but also propagates a different idea of marriage. The religious perspective is important here, because the ten commandments and Jesus are referred to, and 'bad' marriages for the wrong motives are referred to as a sin.

⁹⁸ De Jong, C., *Hilda*, 221-2.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem.*, 442-4.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem.*, 444.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem.*, 445.

¹⁰² *Ibidem.*, 223-4.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem.*, 348.

Four points of debate are touched here: 1) what constitutes a legitimate base for marriage, 2) what does this imply for those marriages based on illegitimate reasons, 3) the problem of illegitimate children, and 4) the current practice of divorce and what would happen if indeed divorce became a realistic option.

The disquisition on marriage starts with a discussion on one of the ten commandments that forbids divorce 'what God put together man shall not separate' [Mk. 10:9]. That, Frank explains, was clarified by Jesus further: to not live together without love. A marriage without love is already nullified from the start, and even a sin in itself. "A marriage without love is adultery".¹⁰⁴ A situation that is often at hand, the list of motives other than love summed up in this paragraph long: money, social status, relations, protection, the fear of never getting married, convenience, ignorance, being tedious of salon-life, holding a grudge, to help family members, "etc. etc."¹⁰⁵ Marriage for this reasons is even called "just a disguised form of prostitution".¹⁰⁶ He thinks it is a sin and to these marriages the biblical saying does not apply, because they were never abided by the divine law. Laws then, that protect the 'satanic' bond are immoral.

When people call themselves Christians but let these opportunistic reasons prevail, they are in fact serving the idols of society. Only a union bound by love is sacred – the rest is a marriage from Satan. For the divine love-marriage, no rules are necessary, for when a man and a woman are united in true love, they will not ever want to part. The bond they have in sharing and striving together, sharing responsibilities and taking care of their children will only grow stronger.¹⁰⁷

Frank is not a proponent of 'free love', or concubinage. Marriage is necessary to maintain the order in society, for a couple will now go through life together. In countries where no such arrangements are made, this is a 'wretched tangle'. Nature follows strict laws, and so rules and rites are necessary for mankind and will therefore always exist. To be joined and taking on the same name – though unclear to Frank why that is always the name of the man – is a good thing. But that this administrative rule becomes a chain by which people are held in bondage, is no good.¹⁰⁸ And, the increased immorality and debauchery in the cities shows that the pure marriage cannot be protected by laws.¹⁰⁹ The illegitimate child is another problem. A couple can defy the common worldly opinion that free love is wicked; their children, however, will bear the brunt, as they are not accepted by society, and the world is 'cruel' to them.¹¹⁰

Finally, the current limited practice of divorce is discussed. It is possible to separate, but only as the outcome of a public scandal, in the case of proven fornication, abuse or when one of the spouses disappears for a long time with the intent of leaving the other. When both spouses want to divorce but none of the above events occurred, a 'scandal-comedy' is performed. One, or both, admits to adultery they did not necessarily commit to 'create' proper grounds for the divorce.¹¹¹

That divorce could be made easier, or possible under normal circumstances, would not mean that society would turn into a chaotic tangle of married, divorced and remarried couples. It would rather improve matters as they are now. One would not have to put up with all their spouse's wrongdoings;

¹⁰⁴ De Jong, C., *Hilda*, 133.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem.*, 134.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem.*, 135.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem.*, 133-4.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem.*, 135-6.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem.*, 436.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem.*, 136.

¹¹¹ *Ibidem.*, 136-7.

bad behavior, gambling away a fortune, drinking, etcetera. Adultery will also decrease, for people will put more effort in their marriage when they know it can be jeopardized.¹¹²

On the whole, this situation would be better for the children to. Everything – from living with one parent to total strangers – is better than to “take in the strong imprints of youth in *a hell* of mutual misunderstanding and intolerance.”¹¹³

To establish with what social institutions, societal debates and movements in the outside world the characters, relationships and discussions correspond, I would like to go into more detail of the society and changes in 1897 as well as marriage and divorce.

¹¹² De Jong, C., *Hilda*, 138-9.

¹¹³ *Ibidem.*, 139. Italics by De Jong.

Chapter 3. 'The world outside the study'. Society in 1897.

In this chapter, I will elaborate further on how society & family, marriage & divorce and religion played a role in the society De Jong knew and was raised in, to come to the part of combining the manifestations of these three points in *Hilda* with what was going on in, with Bakhtin's words, 'the world outside the writer's study.'

3.1 Degeneration and decay: the social milieu portrayed in *Hilda*.

The time *Hilda* was published in and De Jong did her work for women emancipation, these decades considered 'fin-de-siècle' were not so much about the actual end of the century but were distinguished by a spiritual climate and attitude.¹¹⁴ Society felt they were standing on the edge of an era in many ways; the cultural and biological way perhaps the most influential. Remarkable is that already then, people would refer to their own time as the Fin the Siècle. Self-definition in an epoch is very rare, this was further only The Enlightenment that self-defined; this shows people were aware of sentiments and perceived implication of their period.¹¹⁵ A great problem of the time was degeneration, that made sprouts of old and remarkable families suffered from nerve illness and mental breakdowns – like Eugénie van der Starren.¹¹⁶

For the social and cultural elite, times were changing rapidly, embodied in characters like Maarten van Hervoren or Corona van Oven: people from their own social strata and the bourgeoisie working for better circumstances and equality in society. The Van Hervoren-type strived for this in politics, the Van Oven's worked for better circumstances in hygiene and health-care so people could 'help themselves' out of poverty. In previous times, the old aristocratic families held a firm grip on their monopolies in ruling the country. But as well as politicians like the character of Maarten entering the administration, that did not feel for prolonging the old status quo any longer. In the end of the 19th century, the aristocracy was overrepresented with 20% of the electorate holding 70% of the seats in parliament. That started changing rapidly: in only ten years, that had increased with a third to 50% and dropping even further.¹¹⁷

And not only was this downfall in position statistically. The bourgeoisie, the power-gaining class, was undergoing a mentality-change: before, they would be focused on the aristocracy, imitating and acting like them, striving to an ennoblement for their merit in for example the army or trade. Now, they became self-aware and world-leaders, making citizenship the highest rank. The new outlook was the industrial revolution and social changes transferring more power to the working-class.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Bork, G. J. van et al., 'Fin de siècle'.

¹¹⁵ Romein, J., *Breukvlak*, 42-3.

¹¹⁶ Fontijn, J., 'De Familie 2', *Extase*, 129-32.

¹¹⁷ Bank, J., *Burgerlijke cultuur*, 37.

¹¹⁸ Romein, J., *Breukvlak*, 43-56.

3.2 Citizenship and social engagement. De Jong's social milieu and childhood.

These shifts and changes were reflected in politics of that day, in which De Jong's father Jan was actively participating. As a social-liberal he strived for equal treatment for different layers in society and the women-vote. The end of the century was marked by several developments that showed a change of attitude towards society and changing role patterns. The right to vote, till then only for men from the upper classes of society, was expanded so men from different social stratosphere could vote and thus be presented. But new measures to provide change were coming from ideological aristocrat and bourgeois politicians. Child labor was exchanged for compulsory school attendance in 1901. Another example of moving towards a more equal society was the abolition of the possibility to hire someone else to do your obligatory military service: from 1898 onwards, every male citizen had to serve.¹¹⁹ These changes were seen by social-liberals not only as just, but as a means to improve mental and physical health of society as a whole which would also "feed patriotism and good citizenship".¹²⁰ Furthermore, by improving poor living-conditions, people would raise themselves from poverty, that was directly linked to poor morals. Diligence, rationality and morality was the escape-route from the proletariat and so society would move towards a mode in where all different groups and classes were included.¹²¹

Family and upbringing of De Jong.

These convictions resounded in the upbringing of De Jong and her siblings. Jan de Jong van Beek en Donk and Anna Nahuys, her parents and both nobility, were critical on society and followed their own path. Based on Leijnse's biography I would like to highlight some important features in De Jong's upbringing. In spite of society and the wishes of their family, De Jong's parents closed a love-marriage. They raised their children in a 'new' way: focused on the development of characters and learning in their own way and speed.¹²² This new approach to upbringing we also see described in *Hilda*.¹²³

The Nahuys-family had little financial means, but Anna's father forbade Anna and her mother to generate income by selling art or working as a teacher. He felt this was no business for a noblewoman, although Anna strongly opposed this vision.¹²⁴ Later, in 1870 and already a mother of three, Anna joined the new association 'Arbeid Adelt' which raised money for women living in poverty by selling their work anonymously.¹²⁵ Anna Nahuys' social activities we see represented in baroness Cranz, while Maarten van Hervoren shows similarities with father Jan de Jong.

The family did not belong to a congregation, but were raised liberal protestant. Jan and Anna took care of their religious education themselves.¹²⁶ De Jong was interested in religious liberal ideas, as also her admiration of the novel *Robert Elsmere* about liberalism shows.¹²⁷

¹¹⁹ Bank, J., *Burgerlijke cultuur*, 30-1.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem.*, 39.

¹²¹ Bank, J., *Burgerlijke cultuur*, 33-6

¹²² Leijnse, E., *Strijdbare Freules*, 25-9.

¹²³ De Jong, C., *Hilda*, 317.

¹²⁴ Dieteren, F., *De Jong van Beek en Donk*.

¹²⁵ Leijnse, E., *Strijdbare Freules*, 35-7.

¹²⁶ *Ibidem.*, 40-3.

¹²⁷ *Ibidem.*, 125. *Robert Elsmere* (1888) by Mrs. Humphry Ward, the purpose novel about historical criticism and Christianity. For further reading: Wall, E.G.E. van der, *Het oude en het nieuwe geloof*, pp. 5-14.

3.3 “If only I could agree with myself! For gladly I would wish the life of women on this earth could be like a wonderful poem...”¹²⁸ The societal debate around marriage.

If we zoom in on the practice of marriage, divorce, and the debates around this, we also see this ambiguous change in views and practice for the aristocracy. With more emphasis lying on the ‘Kleinfamilie’ and the individual, choices of one’s own did grow more important. In the ‘Grossfamilie’, the attitude of the Van der Starrens, love was no real factor of importance when it came to matrimony; social and financial standards and certainty were.¹²⁹ But this increased liberty and free choice still meant that a lot of parameters such as social class were still to be weighted, and only in the progressive social elite, changes broke through. And apart from old societal remnants and conservative powers trying to maintain these standards, the practice of marriage in the fin-de-siècle encountered its own problems. Already in the 18th century, some aspects and expectations of marriage were changing – of course, those changes occurred from the day ‘marriage’ as such existed, but here I will only refer to some these changes when important to and connected with the debate in *Hilda* and the first feminist wave in general.

Feminism in 1800 and mentality-changes

A century before, around 1800, voices roared to improve the position of women by striving to equality, by, for example, take the sentence that ‘women ought to be obedient to their husbands’ out of marriage law as it was. A famous name is that of Etta Palm, (1743-1799) a ‘proto-feminist’ that lead an extraordinary and controversial life in Holland and France and was known as the first woman to speak up in a political society, the *Amis de la Vérité* in 1790.¹³⁰ In that same French society, two months later an epistle by her hand was read aloud: also women should have a part in the new liberty and justice of the revolution – for the law, men and women are unequal, even though they could be ‘comrades’ as well. In her own society formed in 1791, the *Société Patriotique et de Bienfaisance des Amies de la Vérité* Palm was striving for a change in inheritance law and monitoring marital fidelity – both to improve the poor position of women in, during and after marriage.¹³¹

At that time, no real breakthrough was realized nor the beginning of a movement that others in later times would elaborate on. That was in the Netherlands at least – from Etta Palm’s ideas and influences, we see that the case in France was different, and it was around that time that in 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in the UK.¹³²

Free love in marriage

Over the nineteenth century that expectations of family and marriage were changing into the standards the first wave-feminists were fighting against. Practically, the family situation was that women the ‘housekeeper’. In 1838, the last change in the corpus of family law, this position was very clear. A man was the head of the family, and a woman had to simply obey him in everything. Business transactions or other expenses could never be done by the housewife: she was legally incapacitated and had only ‘sleutelmacht’, literally ‘key-power’, to deal with (little) household-expenses.¹³³ Even when having a family fortune, after the marriage it was the husband’s right to spend it at will, be it

¹²⁸ Tellegen, B., *De toekomst*, 9.

¹²⁹ Fontijn, J. (1983), ‘De Familie 1’, *Extase*, 113-5.

¹³⁰ Kloek, E. (red), *1001 vrouwen*, 734-7.

¹³¹ *Ibidem*.

¹³² Wollstonecraft, M., *A Vindication*.

¹³³ Kloek, E., *Vrouw des Huizes*, 140-1.

with financial mismanagement or even gambling: married woman had virtually no rights, work or property of their own.

Beginnings of the First Feminist Wave and ‘sociale quaeesties’.

These were, as the modern reader would perhaps think naturally, practices and laws the feminists challenged, in the Netherlands from 1890 as the movement became more visible and outspoken.¹³⁴ The activists fought for the acknowledgment of ‘woman labor’, which was not only access to the same work and equal payments men did and received, but also about acknowledgment for unpaid and invisible work like managing the household. The feminist movement was not against the household or the establishment of special schools to teach skills needed for governing a home. They fought the straitjacket woman were forced in by these bourgeois morals and ideals.¹³⁵

Handicrafts

It was not only the role a woman had to take up when married, but also the kind of life before marriage, when appealing to an eligible partner. There were certain suitable activities to undertake such as volunteering for charity- or church work, handicrafts or reading novels which were suitable for a woman to read. These were mostly novels that propagated that very way of life. There were strict ideas of what was ‘unfeminine’ for women to do, and this was something a girl’s whole social milieu was monitoring: if she would not behave like a proper future wife and mother, a solid marriage and social position would lie far out of reach for no men would ‘want to take’ her.¹³⁶ And remaining unmarried was in other aspects no life to envy: the girl, and later woman, was destined to live with parents, the families of (un)married brothers or other relatives and lead a life based on their (financial) goodwill.

Be it that the latter was no inviting foresight, in the decades before 1900 more and more women chose to remain unmarried. Or at least, that is what we make of the debate about marriage and unmarried girls, and with it the rights and demands of wives and daughters that was raging. Statistics show that numerically no spectacular changes were going on, with only minor fluctuations of increased or decreased numbers of (un)married men or women with only one or two percent.¹³⁷ However, it was perceived to be a big problem and widely debated throughout society. The questions of why and how the group of single women increased were linked to debate of the rights and position of married women and eligible girls.

“We speak of unfeminine qualities with girls, but nothing is ever ‘unmanly’.”¹³⁸

Well-known for insight and authority in this matter was H el ene Mercier (1839-1910), publicist and apart from feminist also generally considered as the founder of social work in the Netherlands.¹³⁹ Mercier was one of the most important figures in the first feminist wave, but did not connect to one of the action-committee’s such as the one organizing the 1897 woman’s exhibition De Jong was working on. Her notoriety lies in the many articles she wrote about marriage, particularly what makes a ‘true’ marriage and how unfair and harmful the current expectations of girls were to them, and with that, to the family and society. In *Verbonden Schakels*, ‘*Linked Chains*’, which was published in 1899 many of her essays about marriage and society were collected.

¹³⁴ Kloek, E., *Vrouw des Huizes*, 143.

¹³⁵ *Ibidem.*, 143-4.

¹³⁶ Mercier, H. *Verbonden schakels*, 52-4.

¹³⁷ Woude, A., van: ‘Bevolking en gezin in Nederland’, 19-70.

¹³⁸ Mercier, H., *Verbonden schakels*, 54-5.

¹³⁹ Kloek, E. (red), *1001 vrouwen*, 1059-60.

One of Mercier's articles entitled 'Karaktervorming der Vrouw', 'Building the character of women', which was published for the first time in 1888, when the matter was heavily discussed. In the essay, other important contributors both from the Netherlands and from other countries in Europe were mentioned. Mercier took part in the broader discussion on marriage and the position of women, with two clear points: the actual ideal of marriage, and deriving from that, a different paradigm for the life of young girls and women. This was because, "the life-threads of husband and wife form the fabric, also the latter makes the quality".¹⁴⁰ This is not only about the bond between husband and wife: the task of mother would be better fulfilled with additional education for girls.

Through a higher education, a character is formed, and if mothers were to raise sensible sons – how could they do so without knowing anything about the world?¹⁴¹ Especially in the higher social classes, there is plenty of opportunity for an education for girls.¹⁴² However, those girls are held very ignorant, Mercier wrote: even their peers working as servants are more mature – not by intellect, but by knowing about life and work.¹⁴³ The argument against schooling for women was that this would make 'unfeminine' girls which would scare away future husbands. But should girls be raised as princesses in order not deter boys? Be raised as if it were certain they would land a fortune without the need to do anything? And if that did not happen, count on the mercy and pity of family to live somewhere as a spinster for the rest of their lives?¹⁴⁴

These questions, Mercier posed openly, as well as the dissatisfaction with the current situation. "We speak of unfeminine qualities with girls, but nothing is ever 'unmanly'".¹⁴⁵ Men can do as they please, and women have to behave as men please to secure a marriage. No wonder she cannot develop a personality of her own.¹⁴⁶ The status of the unmarried woman and the practice of marriage had to change, for it was better to be married to a 'scoundrel' than to remain alone.¹⁴⁷

Another contributor whom I'll briefly discuss here is professor of constitutional law B.D.H. Tellegen (1823-1885), who participated in the brochure-discussion and was discussed by Mercier in her article. Tellegen applies the same kind of metaphor to marriage as it being a kind of 'higher unity' between husband and wife. And though initially he was against feminism, he later changed his mind.¹⁴⁸

As Tellegen sees, in reality, the ideal of the marriage of equals seems to be far off, he openly wonders: "with so many single women: is the situation really as it should be?"¹⁴⁹ Clearly not, as the author discovers. "Women are shrouded in a cloud of poetry," he states, "but men should not only want to see that what attracts and appeals them, but face reality."¹⁵⁰ Another reality Tellegen wants to point out is that of the current practice of marriage. By law, men can act like 'tyrants'.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, marriages are sealed because of the necessity of marriage. A woman's destiny and a man's choice: the man's reputation and previous life is something the bride and parents look away from. Turning down a proposal does not happen out of fear of the bride and her family that she would never marry. To Tellegen, refusing a proposal should be a normal thing to do. The current situation that men can do

¹⁴⁰ Mercier, H., *Verbonden schakels*, 40.

¹⁴¹ *Ibidem.*, 37.

¹⁴² *Ibidem.*, 14.

¹⁴³ *Ibidem.*, 50.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibidem.*, 15.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibidem.*, 54-5.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibidem.*, 52-4.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibidem.*, 230.

¹⁴⁸ Tellegen, B., *De toekomst*, 34-5.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibidem.*, 19-21.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibidem.*, 10.

¹⁵¹ *Ibidem.*, 25.

whatever they want should change. “Why not turn it around and ask ourselves: what did this man do to earn this girl’s hand in marriage?”¹⁵²

Double moral

It is this double morality Tellegen, and many others, seek to change. With the example of the ‘groom’s precedent’, Tellegen refers to a situation that was quite common. Men could allow themselves all the freedom they wanted; by law, the married woman was no longer an autonomous human being but the subject of her husband.¹⁵³ But for women, an extra-marital affair meant a big disgrace, not just for herself but also for the whole family, and this often resulted in social exile.

Men could visit brothels, have affairs and do that pretty much out in the open. Prostitution was deemed as ‘necessary evil’, both that (married) men visited brothels and that some girls would have to become prostitutes. These ideas formed the core of the system of ‘tolerated prostitution’, and the sense of ‘necessary evil’ the justification – it was seen simply as the consequence of the different nature of men.¹⁵⁴

Dowager Marianne Klerck – van Hogendorp (1834-1909), an orthodox-protestant feminist and member of the Réveil, wrote: “if prostitution was a necessary evil, who will sacrifice his mother, sister or daughter on that altar?”¹⁵⁵ Nobody, as she knew, but prostitutes were a group of women who were forced to do this by the circumstances they grew up and lived in. With this, Klerck wanted to expose the double moral that man could have affairs and visit prostitutes but at the same time despise them and women that had an affair – women had to take the fall for what men called ‘necessary evil’. “There is one moral code for mankind, man or woman.” Klerck wrote: “They will be judged by their Creator according to the same law, and so in society, no other law should be applied.”¹⁵⁶

Different nature, different positions?

For Klerck, the different ‘nature’ of men and women, as said earlier a popular discourse at the time, were both destined for marriage, what was the best and most fulfilling way to live.¹⁵⁷ Tellegen also referred to the different nature of men and women, but in this case, it was not a justification for the current situation but a reason to change it. It was necessary the true nature of women were better understood, and based on that a better understanding and reform of marriage and society would take place. This would be beneficial to society, for women’s talents would be used in a constructive matter.

That society would benefit from this new entrance of woman labor and brainpower something many participants in the debate stressed. That was not only because of a better position for women based on fair rights, but also on a foresight of less financial family problems. Women would be able to complement the family-income to a decent level when married to men living on minimum wages or even without a job, and if women were to remain unmarried, they could earn their own income and not have to live with/from other family members who maybe were not rich enough to support them.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² Tellegen, B., *De toekomst*, 34-5.

¹⁵³ Jansz, U. *Denken over sekse*, 59.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibidem.*, 64-65.

¹⁵⁵ Kloek, E. (red), *1001 vrouwen*, 1044-5.

¹⁵⁶ Jansz, U. *Denken over sekse*, 59.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibidem.*, 64.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibidem.*, 72-5.

The 'free' women in America

In the United States, the position of women was freer – something important contributors to the public discussion emphasized on. Mercier wrote in her essay '*Character building*', just discussed, about the difference. She wrote that European woman "lack character in love", because they try to please men too much instead of being their own personality. This is not the case for American women, as Mercier quoted Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896).¹⁵⁹

A similar position is represented by Welmoet Wijnaendts (1876-1956), a journalist and well-known feminist who was active in several committees to improve the position of women and to reduce the class-differences between rich and poor.¹⁶⁰ In a brochure about love and marriage, Wijnaendts wrote about women in the USA: calling them 'interested and educated', which was a result of their freer position and resulted in a more amicable atmosphere in general, but especially in marriage as women were taken seriously.¹⁶¹ In *Hilda*, America entered the novel through characters Maud and Gladys, Maarten's sympathy for the USA and Gladys' daughter's upbringing as a 'new woman' overseas.

3.4 Mercy-bread and scandal-comedy. Spinsters and divorcees.

Divorce was a rare occasion but the number of legal separations increased with the change of the century. Divorcing was forbidden by law, based on the biblical principle of 'what God brings together, no man shall separate'. In the civil code of 1838, the law still in practice by the time *Hilda* came out, there were four grounds for a dissolving a marriage legally. This was 1) adultery; 2) desertion with the clear purpose of leaving the partner; 3) conviction of a crime that was sentenced for at least four years in prison and 4) life-endangering maltreatment.¹⁶²

These charges also had to be proven by a witness present – a confession of the 'guilty' spouse was not enough to prove adultery. This changed in 1883 after a verdict of the High Council. From then on, a testimony was treated as evidence too; if one of the spouses admitted to having committed adultery, the divorce could be sealed.¹⁶³ This meant that although not theoretically, practically a couple could decide to have a legal separation together. If only one of the spouses admitted to adultery – committed or not – the marriage was dissolved. This was done much, as this type of divorce even had its own name: a 'Schandaalcomedietje', or scandal comedy.

When *Hilda* was published in 1897, divorce rates had been very low: 3,5 per 1000 marriages in 1880-'89, 5,7 in 1890-'99. In 1900 there were 551 divorces in total, followed by 881 in 1910, more than doubled in 1920 with 1962 couples separating in this way.¹⁶⁴ Compared to 1900, in 1950 the rates had increased a 100-fold and a 1000-fold by the year 2000.¹⁶⁵ The possibilities for a divorce and improving position for women as a divorcee improved, and so the rate increased.

In the public debate about marriage, as discussed above, the emphasis lay on equality in marriage and the motives of a the rather commercial sort. A marriage out of love was not so common, but that it was discussed like this in the public debate showed that interest was growing.

¹⁵⁹ Mercier, H., *Verbonden schakels*, 52-3. Beecher Stowe is the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as already referred to in the preface.

¹⁶⁰ Kloek, E. (red), *1001 vrouwen*. 1215-6.

¹⁶¹ Weynaendts, W., *Gabrielle Reuter. Het Huwelijksvraagstuk*, 28.

¹⁶² Brood, P. *Scheiden*, 18.

¹⁶³ *Ibidem.*, 19.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibidem.*, 62.

¹⁶⁵ CBS (1958), *Echtscheidingen*.

There was also the possibility to 'separate from bed and board', meaning that the marriage did not end but the 'duty' of living together was annulled. This could be done based on the same grounds of the legal divorce, yet also the lighter ground of 'excess, abuse or a grave insult'. But a statement on what grounds this procedure was started was not necessary: a request made by both spouses without any reason why was enough. After five years of separation from bed and board, a divorce could be granted if both the man and woman agreed upon this.¹⁶⁶ If not, the couple was officially still married and both spouses could not remarry, leaving inheritance and property in common ownership. Consequently, another relationship was necessarily a concubinage, leaving the second partner with no rights.

This was the problem with all kind of separations: if only one of the partners did not want to separate, the only possibility was to charge the spouse with one of the four official grounds and prove that in court. That was difficult and costly, and made a lot of people stuck in their marriage that were clearly abused: Frank, as a rich artist exploited by his wife; Gladys van Praege who saw her husband lose her fortune on gambling; and Mrs. Zwolve with her abusive husband. In all three cases, they wanted a divorce, which De Jong describes morally as the right option but what is made impossible by the law as the other spouse would not agree.

Position of unmarried woman

It was not even only that the law and regulations made getting a divorce hard, but it was also the position of unmarried and divorced women which influenced the choices regarding marriage. An unmarried woman could never be self-supporting, not only because of a poor education and no financial means, but also because that was not deemed suitable for women. The life-path was to live in the household of a male relative and be fully supported, 'eating the bread of mercy', 'genadebrood', as that situation was specified in those days. In *Hilda*, the almost-accepted proposal Hilda gets from baron Craz is an example of how harsh that situation was and how the possibility of never marrying rushed some women into accepting any offer. Hilda, who is clearly noble, sincere and clever, is tempted to accept only when thinking of the life that lies ahead of her, were she to reject the proposal.

For divorce, the mechanism was the same. If, in a way, 'lucky' that both partners agreed on the dissolution of marriage, the foresight of being a divorced woman was far from alluring. Children were mostly assigned to the men, and for receiving alimony, women were dependent on their ex-husbands' goodwill or on a prenuptial agreement, which was very scarce. Being a divorced woman rather than remaining in an unhappy marriage seemed not an attractive situation for most women.

¹⁶⁶ Brood, P. *Scheiden*, 19.

Chapter 4. *Hilda's* heteroglossia: the voices about society & family, religion and marriage & divorce in real life.

If we apply Bakhtin's theory about the 'heteroglossic' novel, we can establish the internal coherence of *Hilda*; the character's features, actions and moral behavior, how the characters relate to and sympathize with each other, how De Jong as authorial narrator wants the reader to think about these features in the novel, and which characters she uses as her own mouthpiece. I just described the different situations around marriage and characters' participation. Now, I will summarize this around three important themes: 1) society and family, 2) marriage and divorce, and 3) religion.

Analyzing the information from the novel with Bakhtin's theories about orchestration, the links between characters or dialogues and the outside world as discussed in this chapter, and our understanding of how the world De Jong wrote *Hilda* in was, we can identify what the 'good and new' and the old marriage were and what social and political groups were involved in which way. This I will do centered around three important aspects: society & family, marriage & divorce and religion.

4.1 Society and Family

The milieu *Hilda* arrives in, the Van der Starren's household, stands for the old aristocracy; the manners De Jong describes and her letting them live on the Nassauplein in The Hague, where also protagonist Eline Vere from Couperus' famous novel lived – Couperus too used that image.¹⁶⁷ De Jong lets them represent the conservative upper-class milieu that had certain old-fashioned ideas and principles about marriage; the main reasons are money and social status. The people from this milieu De Jong generally thinks of as superficial, vulgar and meaningless. They hold on to the way of life they know, and one daughter succeeds in continuing this, but the other one is the victim of this way of life.

Eugénie van der Starren suffers from degeneration. De Jong associates degeneration with not fitting in the role society gives one, and not being free. Eugénie's life is described as a straitjacket, and when 28 and still no marriage, she becomes sick because of the meaninglessness of her life. More female characters in the book suffer from nerve-illness, though not in the extreme form *Hilda's* niece is. *Hilda* herself is not, something the other girls she meets think of as weird. But *Hilda* states that she has "a goal in life" and so De Jong saw that as the solution to the cause of degeneration: a meaningful life.¹⁶⁸

There are some tractions in this, as De Jong describes it, rather rigid milieu. There is the careful involvement from the old baroness Cranz, who helps women develop in a subtle way, like the association De Jong's mother participated in *Arbeid Adelt*. Then there are the more passionate types who strive for a whole set of social changes, like the socialist Maarten van Hervoren. Socialism is associated with progress in society, and the women question is part of that. That Van Hervoren is from the very milieu that is counteracting any social changes, and looks down upon those from their own ranks who do, is telling. In the book, the presence of Van Hervoren does make the majority uncomfortable, and De Jong does let them realize he is the future. That points to the visible loss of the monopoly, acknowledged by the nobility as well.

In the United States, the position of women was freer: their status for the law as well as in social environments. Mercier commented that "American ladies take an interest in politics and such, which is good for them" – here we see a similarity with De Jong's opinions about degeneration: that a meaning and real occupation in life cures women from their nerve illnesses. And then there are the two female characters from America in *Hilda*: they represent the progressive position of women

¹⁶⁷ Couperus, L., *Eline Vere*.

¹⁶⁸ De Jong, C., *Hilda*, 61.

across the ocean. De Jong also refers to America as 'The land of Emerson'.¹⁶⁹ In the decades before *Hilda* was published, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) was regarded as America's most important intellectual both in Europe and the United States.¹⁷⁰ Some key-elements of his ideology that are important in this thesis about De Jong's works are his emphasis on individualism, religious liberalism and appreciation for his fellow women intellectuals at the time.

Gladys and Maud are often discussing the poor legal status of women in Europe: that they cannot be appointed legal guardian to the children of their next of kin, and are a kind of slaves to their husband when married.

Then, there is the part of society living in poverty, where the women are clearly the victim of laws and the upper class' resistance to change it. This I will discuss in the later paragraph about marriage and divorce.

4.2 Religion

Institutional religion maintained the status quo – if only it was by not protesting to closing marriages that were so clearly wrong, like they took place in society and like the example of Bertha Wendelings show. Moissette, the only clergyman active in *Hilda*, stands for institutionalized religion and the influence from the church. That was no good, concluding from De Jong's book, and the clergy in the form of Moissette is portrayed very badly. This was already commented on after *Hilda* was published with a little surprise by clergy and Christian politicians: they thought this portrayal was too harsh and one-sided, because they did fight for more equality and stopping the erroneous wedding-practices.

Religion and religious ideas in personal motivation, individual thinkers not attached to a church or tradition, De Jong gives only positive roles in *Hilda*. With the emphasis on biblical motives about the institution of marriage and divorce, we can place her in this group of liberal religious freethinkers. Only institutionalized religion, but not religious motives as such, are portrayed badly, because it sticks to power and maintaining the (wrong) status quo.

4.3 Marriage and divorce

The Van der Starren-way of sealing the marriage represents the old way and old milieu, as I explained earlier. Herein, the destination for girls is marriage, and the straitjacket tight. Main-character Hilda stated that both she and her niece were "demoralized from the meaningless life with nothing other than a marriage to expect".¹⁷¹

This becomes clear in what Mrs. Van der Starren asks of her daughters and of Hilda: to always be working on a handicraft, only because doing nothing is unsuitable for girls. Music lessons are not given to experience the 'salutary and enriching' – in De Jong's words – side of art, but just to appeal to a possible marriage candidate, and everything the Van der Starren-girls do is because of the proposal. De Jong emphasized the education and upbringing of girls is wrong; and not only in the household, but in society. She also writes about young girls reading "poisonous French novels" that "pollute senses and weaken the nerves"¹⁷² The argument about upbringing we see with the different contributors to the discussion around marriage and divorce as well.

¹⁶⁹ De Jong, C., *Hilda*, 238.

¹⁷⁰ Koch, D. *Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 1.

¹⁷¹ De Jong, C. *Hilda*, 246.

¹⁷² *Ibidem.*, 225-6. De Jong writes how these novels are 'even more dangerous than "Zola's roughest realism". In the chapter about literary currents, I discussed the realist writer Zola and how some people feared that his work spread the

For men, on the other hand, there was no such thing as preparing for marriage, as we have read in this chapter and from the book. This is the same for the older generation like Mr. Van der Starren, and the young one, as baron Cranz. These two men are, like most men in society those days, known for their wild youth. But that is no problem when marrying, nor is it a problem to still have a wild life while married – for men, not women. This double moral we see very clearly in society, and is something De Jong finds absurd, but also associates this with the normal – or accepted – way society used to be.

But for a girl, it was hard not to accept a proposal, for different reasons: we saw that Hilda nearly accepted Cranz and Bertha Wendelings was forced to accept the elderly civil-servant. Both motives we see discussed in the public debate: there was not much else to do, and girls needed husbands to depend on if there were no other male relatives that could look after them. Social status and financial means were important, not only to the higher classes who wanted a good position, but also to the poor, who wanted any financial and social position. As such, marriage was called a form of prostitution; by some in the public debate, as we just read about, and by De Jong herself in *Hilda*.

Lastly, there are the persons in a marriage who are victims of the old family-law that was still in practice. In the book, we already saw De Jong's emphasis on this: three victims of different gender and in different social strata. They are stuck to an exploitative spouse; an alcoholic, gambler and adulterer. But none have the possibility to divorce, except for the adultery, when proven in a courtroom. It's the law, but emphasized that from a moral point of view, that law is wrong.

The practice of divorce at the time also shows this: furthermore, just mutual consent was no grounds, but a 'scandal comedy' in which case one of the partners would confess to having committed adultery. But, as we have seen, the position of being an unmarried woman was so harsh that even if these hindrances could be taken, many women chose not to divorce anyways. However, still a lot of women chose to remain unmarried; maybe not numerically, but perceived as a problem, and as an indication for a wrong situation, seemingly a cause for people like Tellegen to mingle in the debate.

The ideas such as equality in marriage, the household-kingdom or marriage as 'special union between husband and wife' were basically empty notions trying to hide the real motives like necessity and supported the status quo, that De Jong called adultery, a marriage without love. There were more contributors that spoke of a love-marriage as the ideal situation, like Tellegen and Mercier. But calling any other situation adultery, even when a marriage was closed out of love and the love was gone, was something only De Jong argued.

wrong morals. This passage in *Hilda* shows De Jong was aware of the controversy around Zola's work, but clearly saw greater dangers coming from other types of novels.

Chapter 5. ““Just a Frenchwomen who learned to pray in a French way.” Catholicism and French nationalism.

De Jong's life had changed between publishing *Hilda* and *At the Wax candles*; she divorced Goekoop in 1899 and moved to France in 1900. Four years later she married her second husband Michél Frenkel, (1860-1934) a Polish chemist and widower. They had a son Pierre-Michel (1905-1972) and Frenkel a daughter from his first marriage, Claire (1897-1982), who was living with De Jong and Frenkel.¹⁷³ In 1916, De Jong had converted to Catholicism and was baptized in Paris.¹⁷⁴ In 1929,¹⁷⁵ *At the Wax Candles* was published, originally written in French. De Jong's niece helped her with translating the manuscript, and the Dutch version was published in 1930.¹⁷⁶ The novel was no success; nor in literary, nor in Catholic circles.¹⁷⁷

5.1 *En Route*. Catholic conversions at the turn of the century.

In the fin-de-siècle there was a conversion-wave to Catholicism; writers, politicians and social activists – some former critics of church politics – alike. The Catholic Church offered an alternative for the realism in worldly matters, Neo-mysticism and estheticism became popular.¹⁷⁸ Amongst these converts were many artist, poets and writers.¹⁷⁹ Some of the literary figures published poems or complete novels, labeled as ‘conversion literature’, a broad collection of various genres consisting of fiction, autobiographies as apologetic stories.

One of those conversion novels is *En Route*, by French-Dutch Author J. K. Huysmans (1848-1907) which came out in 1895. *En Route* is part of a four-novel chronicle about Durtal, the partly autobiographical protagonist. In Huysmans' fourfold work, there is a lot of attention for history and tradition, which made France the rich (cultural) unity and superior power it had become. In fin-de-siècle France there was a great interest in medieval times, culture and the role of the Catholic church, in which interests the novel fit.¹⁸⁰

I want to shortly discuss Huysmans' novel here because it was very popular throughout Europe, and so De Jong read it in 1896 on holiday in Rome. Her opinions about *En Route* are well-preserved because she corresponded about it with her sister Elsa, in Holland. She told her sister that she was “glad to have read it” and that the book was “remarkable”.¹⁸¹ In her long letter we read that De Jong had much appreciation for and interest in the cultural aspects of the church and of hymns as well as how France is portrayed – it was apart from apologetic very patriotic as well. The overall conclusion she agreed with heartily: that the faith of the heart is superior to that of the mind. But about the author and his conversion, she was less positive. She thought ideas about being the chosen one, heaven and hell

¹⁷³ Leijnse, E., *Strijdbare Freules*, 279, 316, 631.

¹⁷⁴ Luykx, P., *Daar is nog licht*, 191-7.

¹⁷⁵ De Jong, C., *Bij de Waskaarsen*. Sometimes, 1922 is mentioned as the year *Wax Candles* was published. (Bel, J., *Schrijvende vrouwen*, 42.) That appears to be wrong, however: on pg. 234 De Jong refers to the book *Le Scandale de Jesus* by E. B. Allo (1873-1945) which was published in 1927.

¹⁷⁶ Leijnse, E., *Strijdbare Freules*, 448-9.

¹⁷⁷ The novel was discussed in various Catholic magazines, but the comments were not so positive. To quote a selection: “too romantic and unlikely” or “too superficial”. Luykx, P., *Daar is nog licht*, 195.

¹⁷⁸ Luykx, P., *Daar is nog licht*, 13-9.

¹⁷⁹ Probably the most famous literary convert from the Netherlands is Frederik van Eeden, whose conversion was the definitive end of his active period in the 80'ies movement I just discussed. Other famous Dutch conversions were those of writer Herman de Man (1898-1946), art-historian and old acquaintance of De Jong Etha Fles (1857-1946) and socialist poet Henriette Roland Holst-van der Schalk (1869-1952) (Luykx, P. (2007), *Daar is nog licht*, 38-49, 99-106, 139-53, 299-316).

¹⁸⁰ Luykx, P., *Daar is nog licht*, 194.

¹⁸¹ Letter Cécile to Elsa, August 1896.

“dangerous and immoral” and called the author a “filthy, fat, hypocritical Parisian” who was “nagging about his confession for hours”.¹⁸² This normativity, De Jong disapproved of.

5.2 “Obviously, the ‘new’ Catholicism is equally dogmatic as the old. What else? It’s still Catholicism.”¹⁸³ De Jong’s analysis of the French women-movement and Catholicism.

Almost twenty years after De Jong read *En Route*, she visited Holland in 1913 to give a lecture at the exhibition ‘The Woman 1813-1913’ which was held at Amsterdam. This exhibition was the result of a closer collaboration between various women associations which had cooperated for the exhibition in 1898 De Jong worked on. The lecture was called ‘The women movement in France’ and was about feminism in De Jong’s new home country.

The French emancipation movement was far behind in comparison to other European countries, De Jong stated in this lecture.¹⁸⁴ The largest association for women’s suffrage had only nine thousand members. De Jong gave several reasons for this, the two most important being that women in France always have had more rights and freedom of movement in working and trade.¹⁸⁵ Also, the men in France are more courteous and have more respect for the position of their wives in the family. The French situation for women, De Jong emphasizes, stands in contrast to the ‘servant-position’ women have in Germany – in France, this does not exist.¹⁸⁶ De Jong even gives an example of male involvement in the household: she sees fathers playing with their children in the parks she visits. In other countries, she explains, that would be inappropriate.¹⁸⁷

Neo-Catholicism and feminism

De Jong describes three ‘allies of feminism’, one of which is a ‘renaissance of Catholicism’, called neo-Catholicism by De Jong. In the great social and political questions of the time, she finds this movement very admirable; it requires women to take a greater interest, responsibility and role in societal problems. But it is not in total accord with De Jong’s own feminist views. It is anti-divorce and very pro-family, which De Jong finds a logical point of view for Catholics.¹⁸⁸ This is also the case for other, more orthodox positions this Neo-catholic movement holds. “Obviously, the ‘new’ Catholicism is equally dogmatic as the old. What else? It’s still Catholicism.”¹⁸⁹

Apparently, in the 1913 exhibition the Dutch Catholic female unions did not want to participate. De Jong emphasizes that she finds this unfortunate: “what faith can ever prevent one from cooperating in creating better circumstances in life for our sisters?” She mentions the Catholic book *Pour la Femme* by l’abbé Naudet and how she hopes it will be disseminated among the Dutch Catholic women; as it is ‘wise and sympathetic’. The book is not entirely feminist, De Jong emphasizes, for the same reasons the mentioned earlier in her lecture. Naudet emphasizes the duty of women to claim a better place in society, De Jong explains: “the times have passed, in which it was enough for women to do their duties in church and for their own salvation. It is her duty, as a Christian, to engage in the big societal questions and to work in every field”.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸² *Ibidem*.

¹⁸³ *Ibidem*., 49.

¹⁸⁴ De Jong, C., ‘De Vrouwenbeweging’, 29.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibidem*., 30-1.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibidem*., 34-5.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibidem*., 37-8.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibidem*., 50.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibidem*., 49.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibidem*., 50.

De Jong briefly mentions Charles Maurras in her lecture, “the apostle of the monarchy that had to be restored.”¹⁹¹ This could however be sarcastic; though she approves of the new possibilities this neo-Catholic movement provides women with, she thinks some who are engaged in the *Action Française* are rather ignorant. She comments on women she met in a meeting of monarchists who were active in the movement. They were planning a coup, but said that once the monarchy would be restored, they would refrain from further engagement in politics. In their minds, feminism was a bad thing and it was inappropriate for women to mingle in state-affairs. De Jong found this ‘ironic’ but thought that in this way, women would be learning about governing the country anyway, and that feminism would prove its value to them later.¹⁹²

5.3 ‘German Barbarism’: De Jong’s conversion to Catholicism and membership of *Action Française*.

How De Jong felt about *Action Française* or Maurras does not become clear from her 1913 lecture. It seems that she was surprised, or a little annoyed, by the women who thought of politics as business for men only. But in the neo-Catholicism she described, improving the position of women was an important aspect. The *Action Française* was a movement in which monarchism, patriotism and neo-Catholicism went hand in hand. It would be beyond the scope of this thesis to go into detail about this turbulent time in French history, but I would like to single out some elements of the movement out.

The *Action Française* developed around the time the Dreyfus affair was playing a dividing role in French society. Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935) was a Jewish army official, who was wrongly convicted as a spy in 1894 and was sentenced with life in prison. When government officials found out he was innocent, shortly after his conviction, false evidence was created to prove Dreyfus’ guilt to save the reputation of the army. The famous French writer Émile Zola, whom I discussed earlier, generated a lot of attention in the public domain asserting that Dreyfus was innocent. He wrote *J’Accuse...!*, an open letter to the government about the Dreyfus-affair in the newspaper *L’Aurore* in 1898. France was divided in two camps: the Dreyfusard and anti-Dreyfusard camp. The former was pushing for Dreyfus’ release because he was innocent. In the latter, there were Frenchmen who refused to accept the possibility of Dreyfus’ innocence, such as the young journalist and literary critic Charles Maurras, the later leader of the *Action Française*. For Maurras, it did not matter whether Dreyfus was guilty or not: the position and credibility of the army needed to be maintained, and so Dreyfus’ life in prison would have been just.¹⁹³

Apart from ‘ideological’ division in France – should the honor of the army be protected at the expense of the life of an innocent man? – the Dreyfus-affaire generated an upswing in anti-Semitism in France and the colonies overseas. Hardcore members of the anti-Dreyfusard camp rioted Jewish shops and property and were proclaiming a boycott. Especially after Zola’s article, the situation in Paris got very tense.¹⁹⁴ As the *Action Française* came from this anti-Dreyfusard camp and Maurras, who was against Dreyfus’ release, became one of its leaders, the movement was quickly associated with antirepublicans and anti-Semitic groups. However, Maurras and other movement-intellectuals emphasized the *Action Française* was only patriotic and Catholic.¹⁹⁵ Especially Jews, but also Calvinists and Freemasons were accused of being corrupt and having a hidden agenda. They were also accused

¹⁹¹ *Ibidem.*, 52.

¹⁹² De Jong, C., ‘De Vrouwenbeweging’, 52.

¹⁹³ Tannenbaum, E., *Action Française*, 25-33.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibidem.*, 26.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibidem.*, 31.

of being capitalists who had caused the inequality of contemporary society. The movement wanted the influence of the medieval Catholic church restored, and eliminate ‘the rascals’ from society.¹⁹⁶

From 1890 onwards, the ideas of the movement started to gain more followers by a program of lectures throughout the country, papers and institutes that were set up.¹⁹⁷ De Jong and her husband became members of the *Action Française* and a few years later De Jong converted to Catholicism. This was in 1916, in the beginning of World War I, as she witnessed the German bombings on French cultural (Catholic) heritage, especially the cathedral in Reims.¹⁹⁸ In 1914, the city of Reims was a battlefield where German and French troops were surging back- and forward.¹⁹⁹ The German troops initially promised that, if the inhabitants remained calm and did not hinder the movement of the troops, the city would be spared.²⁰⁰ In a later surge however, the German army bombed the cathedral and bishop’s palace, which were destroyed beyond repair.

To the French side, this action was considered as ‘revenge’ for the German defeat in other battlefields and was considered an act of malice rather than a military necessity.²⁰¹ De Jong was gripped by the depiction of such event and the entire war Maurras was spreading: France as a cultural and Catholic nation against ‘German Barbarism’.²⁰² She and her husband admired Maurras and his ideas very much, she wrote to her sister about how ‘Maurras will save the world’.²⁰³

Sarcastic as De Jong’s admiration for Maurras at her 1913-lecture might have been, three years later De Jong was fully into the ideas of the *Action Française*. With that, De Jong was now a follower of the ‘dogmatic neo-Catholicism’ as she described the religious aspect of the movement three years earlier. She had written about her conversion to her sister, and asked her to keep this silent in Holland. She expected this delicate news to cause rumors, as she wrote that she herself “would have thought of this as strange”. But De Jong also emphasized she did not see herself as Roman-Catholic, just as “a Frenchwoman who learned how to pray in a French way”.²⁰⁴ This shows that it is likely De Jong initially joined the *Action Française* and let herself be baptized for patriotic reasons. However, she became passionate about faith matters as well. I would like to go into more detail about the relationship of this neo-Catholicism and the Vatican here, to establish what Catholic ideas certainly were part of De Jong’s religious experience.

5.4 Of no business of the church. Vatican ties to *Action Française*.

Though Catholicism was an outspoken feature of the *Action Française*, close ties and permission for their political positions from the Vatican were still important. When Pius X, a conservative figure, became pope in 1903, Charles Maurras asked permission for his monarchist and thus anti-republican ideas. Pius X stated that it was no concern of the papacy to be in favour of the republican regime, and Catholics were permitted to actively pursue the return of the monarchy.²⁰⁵ The ties between Pius X and the *Action Française* remained quite close for some time, as Pius X considered Maurras and the leaders an ally in the battle against ‘modernism’ which in his opinion threatened the Catholic church.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibidem.*, 37-9.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibidem.*, 88-95.

¹⁹⁸ Leijnse, E., *Strijdbare Freules*, 383.

¹⁹⁹ Butler, J., *A Journey*, XXV, ‘A city in an army’s path’.

²⁰⁰ *Ibidem.*, XX, ‘Where war has raged’.

²⁰¹ *Ibidem.*

²⁰² Tannenbaum, E., *Action Française*, 147.

²⁰³ Letter Cécile to Elsa, undated.

²⁰⁴ Leijnse, E., *Strijdbare Freules*, 384.

²⁰⁵ Tannenbaum, E., *Action Française*, 157-8.

Another unifying factor was the 'laïcité', or separation of church and state, that was implemented in France in 1905. Pius X published the encyclical *Vehementer Nos* in the beginning of 1906, condemning this step and citing his predecessors' arguments that nations cannot thrive without the incorporation of religion, stressing the ties of France and Roman Catholicism were too close and old to be broken.²⁰⁶ Four years later, Pius X published the encyclical *Notre Charge Apostolique*, condemning one of the *Action Française's* greatest political enemies: Catholic-liberal socialist group *Le Sillon*. Maurras or his movement are not mentioned, but *Le Sillon*, its leaders and ideals are deemed un-Catholic and un-French.²⁰⁷ This of course fortified Maurras' ideals and influential French clergyman, in France and the Vatican, openly sided with the *Action Française*.²⁰⁸

However, papal favoritism for the *Action Française* and Maurras especially, was waning in the second decade of the twentieth century. In 1914, the Congregation of the Index had condemned Maurras' works. This ban was never published for political reasons – Pius X wanted to keep the *Action Française* as an ally in his war against modernism. The ban was installed by Pius X shortly before his death in late 1914, but his successor Benedict XV also delayed the publication, for the same reason as Pius X.²⁰⁹ The papal ban on the movement was finally installed in 1926 by Pius XI, the pope who cared for unity and pacifism instead of the anti-government sentiments expressed by Maurras. The ban resulted in a battle within the *Action Française*, France and the Vatican. Eminent French clerics working in Rome were sent to serve in insignificant monasteries, Maurras' books were forbidden at last. The ban on the movement's newspaper was the Vatican's final move in distancing itself from the *Action Française*.²¹⁰

For the movement's devout Catholic followers this was baffling: Pius XI did not acknowledge them as Catholics anymore and denied them the sacraments. Sometimes even deathbeds were not visited and burials unattended. There were clergymen who remained with the *Action Française*, or administered the members anyway, but they were reprimanded by their superiors and ultimately by Rome itself. Eventually, most members broke with the movement and cancelled their subscriptions to the newspaper and other publications.²¹¹

The ban was lifted in 1939 by Pius XII, yet not all books of Maurras were taken off the Index.²¹² As most members, De Jong was shocked by the argument between the *Action Française* and the Vatican, followed by the ban. Maurras had advised his followers to remain with the Catholic church, but not to take clerical advice in worldly matters. De Jong thought the ban on Maurras was coming from the devil, influencing the pope and his counselors.²¹³

5.5 No earthly law can interfere with the sacred. Vatican documents on marriage.

If we want to establish what Catholic concepts about marriage and divorce resounded in De Jong's work, we ought to take a closer look at the encyclicals and decrees published by the Vatican that were probably influential in her milieu. From Pius X's accession to the Holy See in 1903, the ties to the *Action Française* and Maurras himself were quite tight. In 1907, the decree *Ne Temere* was published that regarded church laws around marriage and divorce.²¹⁴ Under the reign of Pius X no encyclical about marriage and family was published; this was done by his successor Pius XI who published *Casti*

²⁰⁶ *Vehementer Nos*.

²⁰⁷ *Notre Charge Apostolique*.

²⁰⁸ Tannenbaum, E., *Action Française*, 160-1.

²⁰⁹ Tannenbaum, E., *Action Française*, 167-8.

²¹⁰ *Ibidem.*, 168-72.

²¹¹ *Ibidem.*, 172-3

²¹² *Ibidem.*, 174

²¹³ Leijnse, E., *Strijdbare Freules*, 446-7.

²¹⁴ *Ne Temere*.

Connubii in 1930.²¹⁵ This was shortly after *Wax Candles* was published, but is still relevant to mention some key elements from it. Pius XI referred to the previous encyclical about marriage and family, *Arcanum divinae sapientiae* by Leo XIII in 1880.²¹⁶ It reasserted the Catholic values in marriage of the 1880-encyclical and reacted to trends in society, like emancipation and the changing family values in a fierce and judgmental manner. Therefore, I shall briefly mention some points from *Casti Connubii* before I will analyze *Wax Candles*.

***Ne Temere* 1907.**

In this decree, strict marriage laws are reaffirmed that apparently were somewhat loosened over the past years. A local priest had to close and register the marriage, witnessed by two persons. If this demand was not met, the marriage was illicit. Mixed-faith marriages were also bound by this regulation, but from then on, Catholic clergy could also refuse to marry such a couple. This meant that priests could demand that for example when children were born, they had to be baptized in the Catholic church rather than in the congregation of the other spouse. Divorce was impossible for Catholics, even if they separated under worldly law and their ex-partner remarried they were still bound to that marriage by the Catholic church. This meant that the ‘scandal comedy’ as the only possibility for a divorce as we have seen in a previous chapter, and on which grounds De Jong herself divorced Goekoop, was not possible for Roman Catholics.²¹⁷

***Casti Connubii* 1930 reasserting *Arcanum divinae sapientiae* 1880.**

A central notion is the ‘separation’ of worldly law and marriage as a holy institution: no law made on earth could have any influence over marriage. The biblical saying “what God brought together, no man shall separate” [Mt. 19:6] we saw earlier in *Hilda* is referred to as the basis for this. In this encyclical, it is stated that the ‘wrongs’ of worldly law and practices are being transferred to the realm of the religious and this should stop. Important aspects of marriage are as saint Augustine described them: monogamy, having children and the marriage as holy sacrament that naturally prohibits the dissolvment. A union with someone else is strictly forbidden: “Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.” [Lc. 16:18] Worldly visions on marriage, divorce and adultery are propagated by novels²¹⁸, movies, radio shows et cetera, and thus find their way into the minds of people.

Women emancipation is wrong: social, economic and physiological emancipation. The point is that women are above all wife and mother, and cannot be released of their at-home duties. This is an attack on the nature and dignity of the woman as a mother, and the ruin of the order of the family. If women hold an equal position to men, they will fall back to being a ‘mere instrument’ of men as it was the situation with ‘the heathens’.²¹⁹

In the encyclical ‘real, solid love’ is mentioned as the foundation of happiness in marriage and cordial intimacy. ‘Modern enemies’ of marriage are said to put “spontaneous accordance of character and unity in the way of thinking, what they call sympathy.” If that sympathy ceases to exist, the bond is

²¹⁵ *Casti Connubii*.

²¹⁶ *Arcanum divinae sapientiae*.

²¹⁷ *Ne Temere*.

²¹⁸ Such as the novels of Zola: I already discussed they were deemed dangerous, and that De Jong was aware of these acquisitions and mentioned “Zola’s poison Realism” in *Hilda*.

²¹⁹ *Ne Temere*.

broken. But that is no foundation for a marriage: that is only “mutual love between the spouses” and “steadfast fusion of the soul”.

“An incomplete separation is allowed in extreme cases.” It is not specified what these conditions are and how this is to be arranged, but it is referred to as ‘separation of bed, board and cohabitation’, the term and practice we already came across in a previous chapter. The encyclical is not clear in how this should be arranged: by church regulations and civil laws, taking into account the consequences for the wife, children and society.²²⁰

²²⁰ *Ibidem*.

Chapter 6. “I have seen the size of my fallacy and I hereby openly say my ‘Mea Culpa’.”²²¹ *At the Wax Candles.*

At the Wax Candles is conversion literature and a purpose novel like *Hilda*, meant to disseminate Catholicism and Catholic views further. The larger part of the book is about Catholic dogmas and practices, but marriage is often discussed as well.

In *Wax candles*, the main character is Anne van Maerlicht, a young Dutch girl studying French literature at the Sorbonne in Paris. Raised a liberal protestant, she does not think highly of Catholics or the Catholic Church. She resides in a pension with a lot of different guests whom she speaks with regularly, on all kinds of matters; amongst other things religious modernism and the modernist Renan, the folly of the Catholic church, and ‘worldly pleasures’ freely enjoyed in Paris.

When Anne meets French lawyer François de Semainville, they spent a lot of time together and it seems an engagement is on the way. But, François is deeply disappointed when he finds out Anne’s not a Catholic, for a non-Catholic girl he could never marry. François leaves on a business trip and leaves Anne broken-hearted. When a fellow pension guest leaves because of an emergency, she asks Anne to fill in for her in the Cathedral for a couple of days, selling wax candles at the statue of Mary. There, she meets sister Eustachia who teaches her everything about Catholicism, and Anne converts. In the end of the novel, François is back and they get engaged.²²²

6.1 Heteroglossia in *Wax Candles*: made up from fewer voices.

The theory of Bakhtin we used to analyze *Hilda* also fits for analyzing *Wax Candles*: it is also a purpose novel De Jong wrote to spread her Catholic faith. Like *Hilda* was an apologia for feminism, *Wax Candles* is one for Catholicism.

There are some differences with De Jong’s prior novel. In *Wax Candles*, we see the same characteristics of the heteroglossic novel as Bakhtin described, but the orchestration is made up from fewer voices. In *Hilda*, we saw the representation of different social classes in society; the families Van der Starren or Cranz as the nobility, Mrs. Zwolve or Bertha Wendelings as the lower classes living in poverty. We saw different political parties and ideologies represented, freethinkers, artists and the clergy.

In *Wax Candles*, apart from main character Anne van Maerlicht there is one other mouthpiece. Sister Eustachia, the nun who explains Anne everything about the Catholic faith and church. In this novel, it is not about religion, clergy, politics, society, morals and equality, but only about faith and doctrine that is tested by the other stories and figurants in the book.

6.2 *Into ruins. Marriage outside the Catholic world.*

Large sections of the book are about marriage and divorce: what is right by the church and why, and how the worldly customs and ideas are about the subject. There is the story of Anne and François, an example and plea for the Catholic marriage by sister Eustachia and different examples of Anne’s fellow pension guests. As in *Hilda*, the marriage (in this case, engagement) of the main character is the ideal and true form of matrimony, and there is a big ideological discussion with a spokesperson of De Jong. The other cases – here, they are three - show what current practices in marriage are wrong. These are not only marriages, but also affairs because the characters think of marriage as “old fashioned” or

²²¹ De Jong, C., *Waskaarsen*, 245.

²²² In the French original, the sister is named *Soeur Marie-Elisabeth*. ‘Sister Eustachia’ was a nun present at the baptism of De Jong’s sister Elsa. (Leijnse, E., *Strijdbare Freules*, 597.) That change of name was probably suggested by De Jong’s niece, Elsa’s daughter, with the translation.

“not necessary when there is love”. I include these too, because with the dismissal of marriage, a statement about it is obviously made as well. Again, I will discuss ‘Group A’ with three bad marriages/affairs and ‘Group B’ as the good marriages. Like in *Hilda*, ‘Group B’ consists of an ideological discussion involving a mouthpiece and the main character’s own marriage.

6.2.1 The Femme Fatale: princes Jarisloff and the seduces priest

In Paris’ foreign circles Anne is active in, a princess Jarisloff makes her entry. She appears to be very pretty and often ‘seduces men’ to let them support her financially, whom she later ‘brings to ruin’. Now, she is in Paris with an old and rich senator who left his wife, children and grandchildren. His fortune is now spent on the princess, and not on his family. Some of Anne’s fellow pension guests think this is disgraceful, others say this is “just the way life is”.²²³ Anne later sees the princes in the church where she sells the wax candles, and discovers she has an affair with a priest. Anne thinks that for a priest, an affair is a heavier sin than for the senator, because it hurts the credibility of the church.

The novels’ spokesperson, sister Eustachia, thinks otherwise. The nun meets the criteria *Hilda*’s characters such as Corona van Oven or Baroness Cranz also have. She is always wise, sympathetic and has an answer to every question. Upon the introduction of her character, she is described as pretty and intelligent.²²⁴ Sister Eustachia thinks princes Jarisloff can “seduce anyone” and that everyone has weaknesses, including the priest: this has nothing to do with the church, rather with bad morals in society.²²⁵

6.2.2 Mrs. Portaneau and her disabled husband versus Mrs. Elleson

The Portaneau’s are guests in Anne’s pension, visiting a doctor in Paris for Mr. Portaneau who has been ill for years. His wife is having different affairs, known by everyone in the pension and to Mr. Portaneau himself. She tells Anne how she always thinks that “this time, the great happiness will come” but that no relationship she has had lasts. De Jong as authorial narrator describes that in her eyes lie ‘bitterness and disillusion’ and her husband always looks at her with a sense of ‘alarm and pain’.²²⁶ Apparently, they want to divorce, but cannot do so. They both come from Catholic families, and though they themselves are not religious, a divorce is because of the family ties no possibility. The pension guests refer to them as ‘poor wretches’ because of the impossibility to part.²²⁷

There is another case of a married couple of whom the husband is ill. There is the owner of the pension, Mrs. Elleson, a devout Catholic. She had always kept silent that her husband has been paralyzed for twelve years, he is also secretly living in the pension. When he dies, she only tells Anne, who thinks the situation of Mrs. Elleson and her bedbound spouse was terrible. But Mrs. Elleson explains that she had accepted her fate and was satisfied with the situation, and that it made her “happy in its own way”.²²⁸ She is “thankful for what God’s goodness has given them”.²²⁹

6.2.3 Ingrid Loften as the victim of the modern affair

The sad story of Swedish Ingrid Loften, also living in Anne’s pension, is one of the most important elements in the book. She meets the Romanian poet Carol Bucesco, with whom she has an affair with

²²³ De Jong, C., *Waskaarsen*, 34-5.

²²⁴ *Ibidem.*, 21.

²²⁵ *Ibidem.*, 72.

²²⁶ *Ibidem.*, 78-80.

²²⁷ *Ibidem.*, 240.

²²⁸ *Ibidem.*, 84-5.

²²⁹ *Ibidem.*, 97.

that quickly becomes known to all guests in the pension.²³⁰ Anne thinks Ingrid looks unhealthy because of the tension and she is worried about her.²³¹ Later, Anne receives a warning Bucesco is having other mistresses too and he cannot be trusted.²³² She tries to tell Ingrid, who is planning to elope with the poet. Anne asks if Ingrid should not get married first and if Ingrid is sure she will not regret this action later. Ingrid says that she does not care for 'those formalities' and does not want to commit herself: she and Bucesco just want to "love and enjoy each other's company". Anne suggests that Bucesco's love might just be a game and Ingrid should be careful. But Ingrid becomes angry about this and ensures Anne Bucesco's love is genuine.²³³

Anne talks to sister Eustachia about this, who asks her if Ingrid is religious. Anne answers she is not, or that in any case she never noticed anything about religion in Ingrid's life. Sister Eustachia explains that people without religion have no boundaries and "never defy temptation, because for them, this would be illogical".²³⁴ Without the moral laws of God, sister Eustachia explains, society will fall into ruin because of temptation.²³⁵

It is soon discovered in the pension that Ingrid eloped with Carol Bucesco, which is received with mixed feelings. An old lady – not otherwise specified - thinks Ingrid is 'a devil' for behaving in this manner.²³⁶ This starts a discussion on Ingrid's behavior and freedom. For some guests, Ingrid is 'free' to do as she pleases. Mr. Portaneau, whose wife is unfaithful, argues that Ingrid is not 'free' but "a slave to her feelings and thus the slave of her lover".²³⁷

The discussion about Ingrid makes Mrs. Portaneau wonder: why is it that men can have such adventures and when women elope, it is wrong? This is answered indirectly by François de Semainville, as Mrs. Ellesson recalls a conversation they once had about this subject. François had said that both men and women are equally wrong in the case of an affair. But men "only take their senses and imagination when descending in the mud". Women "also take their hearts and souls" and "carry a heavier burden so they sink deeper and have a hard time to raise themselves again".²³⁸ Later, Anne thinks of how it is unfair that when a woman makes a mistake, "the whole dumb world is generalizing and pretends like all of us are the same breed".²³⁹

Ingrid's story ends sad; but the authorial narrator already made the reader understand no good can come from this. Ingrid sends Anne a note in which she admitted Anne was right and Ingrid had been stupid: the love is not genuine and Bucesco disappeared. She had wanted to be "an ultra-modern girl who plays with men and feelings" but could not – and wonders if those girls even exist. She furthermore wrote that she thought she was free, but was not: like a piece of metal drawn to a magnet. Out of shame Ingrid does not dare to come back and writes to Anne she will jump of a bridge that evening. Anne thinks about the sentence "to put between the metal and the magnet", a metaphor sister Eustachia used. For the non-religious, there are no boundaries and they are driven by their passions.²⁴⁰

²³⁰ De Jong, C., *Waskaarsen*, 31-2, 46-9.

²³¹ *Ibidem.*, 60.

²³² *Ibidem.*, 67-8.

²³³ *Ibidem.*, 113-6.

²³⁴ *Ibidem.*, 117.

²³⁵ *Ibidem.*, 120.

²³⁶ *Ibidem.*, 136.

²³⁷ *Ibidem.*, 138.

²³⁸ *Ibidem.*, 137.

²³⁹ *Ibidem.*, 122.

²⁴⁰ *Ibidem.*, 172-5.

Ingrid is generally described as not very pretty, eloquent or smart – obviously in contrast to Anne. In her goodbye-letter, Ingrid writes how her parents will not miss her much. “My mother has her household, recipes and chicken and my father his business and mistresses. To them, I never existed.”²⁴¹

6.3.1 Marriage of equals: on the same fundament. Ideal Catholic marriage.

The book starts with François leaving for business with his father, and ends with his return. Anne and François are in love and want to get engaged, until François finds out Anne’s not Catholic. They had been visiting churches and sites together; for Anne, a mere cultural interest that François as a devout Catholic mistook for an act of faith. She is even surprised that François, clever and well-educated as he is, is religious.²⁴² For Anne, this would be no problem but François “could never marry a non-Catholic girl” because he thinks of marriage as a companionship in which both partners should share the same fundament: faith.²⁴³ François leaves the day after this discovery and promises to write but Anne hears nothing from him and cannot reach him. In the end of the book, when he returns, it appears he has been ill and could not contact her.²⁴⁴

By then, Anne had already converted to Catholicism. The difference in faith matters was no problem anymore, but François did not change his mind about this. He expressed that he prayed for Anne, and she would come to understand and learn to pray in the same manner.²⁴⁵ Also sister Eustachia thinks François’ intention was to convert Anne so he could marry her.²⁴⁶

6.3.2 The plea of sister Eustachia for the irrevocable marriage

Marriage and divorce is discussed amongst Anne and sister Eustachia, and apart from using the nun as a spokesperson, De Jong also addresses the reader directly in a footnote.²⁴⁷ In the footnote, De Jong apologizes for her opinions in *Hilda*. She had advocated divorce and thereby misjudged the truth: that marriage should be indissoluble. She was pro-divorce, arguing from the “individualistic point of view” of granting everyone the right to secure their own happiness. The prohibition on divorce of the Catholic church “rests on an indisputable psychological truth”.²⁴⁸ If marriage does not become irrevocable, marriage will cease to exist but in Catholic circles.²⁴⁹ The occasion for the discussion between Anne and Sister Eustachia is a woman the nun knows who is on the verge on getting her seventh divorce and has children from various marriages, bringing her in a predicament because she cannot keep them all.²⁵⁰

That the Catholic church forbids divorce, is based on the psychological truth that when marriage is not forever, the family is destroyed. For in that situation, the family is continuously exposed to ‘every wave of infidelity’ of one of the spouses. According to De Jong, in the secular world, that is already happening: matrimony is often no more than a temporary association.²⁵¹ Sister Eustachia

²⁴¹ De Jong, C., *Waskaarsen*, 172.

²⁴² *Ibidem.*, 9-11.

²⁴³ *Ibidem.*, 8.

²⁴⁴ *Ibidem.*, 251.

²⁴⁵ *Ibidem.*, 251.

²⁴⁶ *Ibidem.*, 156.

²⁴⁷ *Ibidem.*, 245. Other footnotes are only employed for translations of foreign quotes or explanations of legal articles. The footnote is absent in the French original. (Leijnse, E., *Strijdbare freules*, 449).

²⁴⁸ *Ibidem.*, 245.

²⁴⁹ *Ibidem.*, 246.

²⁵⁰ *Ibidem.*, 241.

²⁵¹ *Ibidem.*, 245-6.

explains Anne that, when divorce is possible, both her and François will “leap over to another partner when a more eligible party comes around” – because that could happen in any marriage.²⁵²

Every divorce is poison for society, De Jong writes, because it is a suggestion and bad example to other couples. When facing minor problems, this makes divorce the easy option because it is widely accepted.²⁵³ How often people divorce will get a divorce in total depends on one’s strength of character, the need for change, and how charming the woman is.²⁵⁴ Couples will always have to deal with competition from the outside, when divorce is accepted by society. “Beautiful women and rich men” are tempted by others that try to steal them away from their spouses. All this makes marriage volatile, while it is necessary for society that some things in life are fixated. This fixation of marriage protects the world from total chaos.²⁵⁵

Possibilities for separation

If a marriage does not work, there are other things in life to focus – if people just work hard enough and do not separate when minor issues occur. In the end, that only makes people more miserable.²⁵⁶ Also, that the church forbids divorce, does not mean that people, who are in a state of making each other’s life miserable, must live together. They can live in separate places, even in different countries. But all and all, the family is the cornerstone of society and not the individual. That makes for this rigid, but true, position of the church.²⁵⁷

6.4 The earthly snake shall never rest. References to books in *Wax Candles*.

Like in *Hilda*, some books are mentioned. Anne is reading *Christ in the Church* by Robert Hugh Benson (1871-1914) that sister Eustachia gave her.²⁵⁸ Benson was an English Anglican priest but converted to Catholicism in 1903 and was ordained a Catholic priest a year later.²⁵⁹ He left an extensive oeuvre of different genres, including *Christ in the Church* which is a bundle of essays earlier conducted as sermons.²⁶⁰ *Christ in the Church* is an apologia for Catholicism with remarkable viewpoints of which I will briefly mention two. It agitates against Protestant individuality and emphasizes the importance of the church as a body – something De Jong would have probably agreed with.²⁶¹ But Benson is also ‘anti-dogmatic’ and writes that there are “no absolute truths or final revelation”: “we must believe in progress even though we are not sure in what direction progress lies”.²⁶² Probably De Jong admired Benson: she lets her mouthpiece advise Anne to read his work.

De Jong wrote about irrevocable Catholic truths and dogma’s. Furthermore, sister Eustachia is at one occasion referring to “Straus [sic] and Renan who were overturned” and calls this ‘attacks’, because “never shall the snake from the earthly paradise rest”.²⁶³ De Jong is referring to David Strauss and Ernest Renan who wrote controversial works about historical criticism and the bible.²⁶⁴ Summarily speaking, in both works it is suggested that Jesus’ life and the bible should be subject to the research methods any historical book, event or person is examined with. De Jong mentioned *Le Scandale de*

²⁵² De Jong, C., *Waskaarsen*, 247.

²⁵³ *Ibidem.*, 243.

²⁵⁴ *Ibidem.*, 241-2.

²⁵⁵ *Ibidem.*, 245.

²⁵⁶ *Ibidem.*, 245.

²⁵⁷ *Ibidem.*, 244.

²⁵⁸ *Ibidem.*, 186-7.

²⁵⁹ Benson, A. C., *Memoirs* 115.

²⁶⁰ Benson, R. H., *Christ*, Preface.

²⁶¹ *Ibidem.*, PT 1 thesis 2.

²⁶² *Ibidem.*, Pt 1 thesis 1.

²⁶³ De Jong, C., *Waskaarsen*, 234.

²⁶⁴ Strauss, D. R., *Das Leben Jesu.*; Renan, E., *Vie de Jésus*.

Jesus by Bernard Allo as a reaction on the work of Renan which overturned modernist views as expressed by Renan.²⁶⁵ This implies that De Jong adopted the vehement anti-modernist discourse of the Vatican from the time Rome still had close ties to the *Action Française*.

6.5 Fixation and stability. What society needs and the family demands.

6.5.1 Society & family

The cornerstone of society is the family, and the possibility of divorce undermines the unity of the family and therefore stability in society itself. This is portrayed in the book in multiple ways. Ingrid Loftén's tragic faith is associated with a poor family life, as she confides to Hilda in her suicide note. De Jong predicts the total chaos in the world when divorce should become normal, calling divorce 'poison' and stating that only the fixation of marriage will protect the world from total chaos. That chaos is already present in the world of non-believers. The story of the senator seduced by princess Jarisloff is another example: the princess pursued the senator for his money and now his family is ruined. Outside the Catholic world, people only act on their desires and passions, because they are not thought to act otherwise.

6.5.2 Religion

In the beginning of the book, main character Anne is surprised with François' religiousness, as she first thought his interest for Catholic matters was merely cultural. She wonders how such a smart and eloquent man could be religious. In *Wax candles*, we see the Catholic church represented by sister Eustachia who serves as a mouthpiece for De Jong. The dogmas of the church are not (only) based on the Bible but 'psychological truths' as well, known through the church's long tradition.

The Catholic church suffers from the instabilities in the realm of non-believers as well, such as the 'attacks' of modernism from the inside. Princess Jarisloff has also seduced a priest. Anne wonders if the affair does not debunk the credibility of Catholicism. But sister Eustachia explains the priest and the senator have equally 'sinned' by being seduced by the princess. The message of Catholicism is still true, and those who work for it are also subject to human flaws.

6.5.3 Marriage and divorce

De Jong emphasized how in the "realm of non-believers" people are driven only by their desires, which destabilizes families and therewith society. The influence of religion in marriage/family-matters is in this regard described as 'something to put between the piece of iron and the magnet' by sister Eustachia. Living by the wisdoms of the church makes people 'free'. Girls like Ingrid might think they are free, because they can do whatever they want, but they are in fact a slave of their passions.

There are some other points about marriage De Jong makes here. Mixed-faith marriage is impossible because the spouses should share the same fundament (faith) in life – something we also saw described in the decree *Ne Temere*. In marriage, staying together and accepting what comes is not only better for society, but also for the persons involved. We saw this in De Jong's examples of the couples Ellesson and Portaneau, where acquiescence is eventually the best thing to do in every way.

If, in the words of sister Eustachia, a couple only makes each other's lives miserable, they can live separately – though not officially divorce and not able to start other relationships. If marriage is not everlasting anymore, it will cease to exist, leaving society to chaos and decay.

²⁶⁵ Allo, B., *Le Scandale*.

Conclusion & discussion

In this thesis, I have examined 'religion' and 'marriage' in *Hilda van Suylenburg* and *At the Wax Candles*, for which I used a literary theory which emphasized the socio-historical context of the author. The guiding questions in this research were: What is the concept of 'marriage' as such in De Jong's work and how did religion play a part in this? What are the similarities and differences between De Jong's 'feminist' and 'catholic' period? What is the general role of religion in her work? Now, I will shortly discuss religion and marriage separately, then add some general notes and end with suggestions for further research on the First Feminist Wave and the study of religion.

Religion and marriage in *Hilda* and *Wax Candles*

In *Hilda*, institutionalized religion by the character of Reverend Moissette is portrayed as misinterpreting the Ten Commandments and maintaining the immoral status quo in society. Moissette is insincere, but above all not able to readjust to major changes in society. Religion with individual characters, such as Baroness Cranz or the artist Frank van Soeterwolde, is always positive: it provides the courage and guidance needed to fight inequality in society. It is telling that these 'enlightened' characters are to be found amongst the nobility (the Baroness), whereas Frank is an artist. In the important discussion where Frank convinces Hilda of the 'new truths' concerning marriage and love through the right interpretation of Biblical truths, his ideals of higher morals in society and art that raises mankind are combined with his liberal viewpoints on religion. *Wax Candles* provides quite another image of religion: instead of the rigid Reverend Moissette, the church is now represented by the wise Sister Eustachia. She also refers to Biblical truths, but the foundation of the church and dogmas are "irrefutable psychological truths". Here, institutionalized religion holds the only truth – threatened by the non-Catholic world.

It is remarkable how deeply the anti-Modernist position of the Vatican at the time of close ties with the *Action Française* resound in *Wax Candles*. De Jong came from a liberal-Protestant position, and as far as the first stage of her life is concerned I would label her a religious freethinker. In the years prior to publishing *Hilda*, De Jong read *Robert Elsmere* which is about religious liberalism and Biblical criticism in the spirit of Strauss' *Das Leben Jesu*, which she admired. About the type of Catholic religion described in *En Route*, De Jong is rather negative and even thinks the narrow definitions of the 'chosen people' and 'hell' are dangerous – though in the book the emphasis on "personal faith of the heart" she agrees with heartily.

In *Wax Candles*, however, she writes how Strauss and Renan are attacks of the "earthly snake". Her liberal worldview and rejection of dogmatic religion changed into an exclusive belief in "the truths" of the Roman Catholic Church.

With marriage, we see a similar 'sanctity' of matrimony in *Hilda* and *Wax Candles*, but in *Hilda* the emphasis lies on a sincere union of spouses, whereas in *Wax Candles* the importance of the indissolubility of marriage is emphasized. In *Hilda*, not to divorce when the love has gone is as immoral as to marry for reasons other than love, and love alone. This is against God's commandments, and the many problems as were discussed in the First Feminist Wave, would be solved if marriages with insincere motives were to be banished. The sincere love marriage is the (very briefly discussed) ideal in *Wax Candles* as well, but there is not the same emphasis on the insincere motives to wed. The erroneous marriage here is the practice outside the Catholic world, in contrast to the true form of matrimony by the rules of the Catholic church. If marriage is not indissoluble, there will be total chaos in the world as already demonstrated in the realm of non-believers. That is because divorce destroys the pillar of society: family.

Herein lies the basic difference between viewpoints in both novels: in *Hilda*, De Jong thinks of divorce as means to reduce 'chaos' in society; it will make people more careful and honest, and worse than a divorce is staying married without love. It is even better for the family: children should not grow up in "a hell of mutual misunderstanding". In *Wax Candles*, it is the opposite case. The most important feature marriage contributes to family and society is stability: in the end, to not have the option of a divorce is best for all persons involved. Again, De Jong emphasizes how this is better for the children: they should not grow up with "the uncertainty concerning the fundament of the family: marriage".

The stability of the family and therewith society is a key-element in *Wax Candles*: stability leads to happiness; divorce, extra-marital affairs and the like, which are happening outside the Catholic world, do not. This may look gratifying in the personal pursuit of happiness, but that is only because non-Catholics cannot see the truth. Acquiescence is always the gratifying option, as we have seen in the cases of Mrs. Portaneau with her affairs and expectations of "great happiness to come" and Mrs. Ellesson's gratefulness for the life with her disabled husband. We also see this in the concern De Jong voiced in her footnote, how she fears marriage as such will cease to exist if it is not indissoluble anymore; then it would become just a "temporary association" as it already is in the non-Catholic realm.

Another interesting remark De Jong made in *Wax Candles* is the reference in her footnote to her own former "individualist viewpoint" from *Hilda* where she emphasized that "every person should break free from the ties which oppress them". In *Hilda* however, it is not about the 'ties' or 'breaking free' when it comes to divorce, but divorce is necessary to create a more equal, less chaotic society and a safer and more stable environment for the family. That is hardly 'individualistic' – but here too, this is probably the influence of Catholic viewpoints. In *Wax Candles*, De Jong mentioned *Christ in the Church* by Benson, where the dichotomy between 'Protestant individualism' and 'Catholic community' is described – something she probably incorporated in her own views, like the anti-Modernism.

The method of analyzing purpose/didactic novels and the value to the study of religion

In this thesis, I employed the literary theory by Mikhail Bakhtin, combined with notions on social discourse by Michael Foucault and intertextuality by Julia Kristeva. With this, I devoted special attention to the socio-historical context of the writer – an approach which fits both novels, and I think is very suitable for analyzing the purpose novel in general. In this thesis, I analyzed two types of purpose novels, should we speak of different sub-types with different content: the feminist *Hilda* and the religious *Wax Candles*. This is not because religion is less important in *Hilda* than in *Wax Candles*, as I think this research showed, but because the intention of the writer with the latter novel was to disseminate Catholic ideas. And though "*l'art pour l'art*" would dismiss 'intention' as irrelevant and even define it as a characteristic of an untalented author, for the analysis of purpose novels, it is a helpful tool. "*Art for Art's sake*" I think still left us the heritage of distinguishing 'high culture' and 'low culture' and with the notion that with studying novels, we have to assess them only in a literary fashion. Even Leijnse in her outstanding biography writes how *At the Wax Candles* was "De Jong's last and worst novel" – though such a comment would not be necessary when merely examining the cultural value of this work. Furthermore, in this thesis I have demonstrated how the purpose novel as a genre flourished in the fin-de-siècle, but is left out of the literary history – retroactively, the literary motto is rewriting literary history.

Should we speak of a branch of 'religious purpose novels', consisting of conversion literature like *Wax Candles*, but also *En Route* I discussed, and of religious fiction like *Robert Elsmere*, I think to study this corpus with the methods used in this thesis will prove a rich source of information and would be an asset to the study of religion. From *Wax Candles*, a clear picture rose of De Jong's Catholicism, Catholic

concepts and popular (Catholic) culture which she encountered and lived by, providing us with perhaps more insight than studying official dogmas or influential thinkers in the Vatican.

There might be one limitation in the use of Bakhtin for a research as conducted here: it is rather 'concrete'. In *Hilda*, for example, this could be the case with marriage. Though the societal discussion in the fin-de-siècle and *Hilda* were about marriage as such – marriage law, divorce, etcetera – it could also be interpreted as a metaphor for gender equality or emancipation for minorities in society. Such an abstract explanation falls outside the scope.

The study of feminism & religion, religious conversion & deconversion

As this thesis proved, religion was very much present in the First Feminist Wave. This we see in the liberal-Protestantism from *Hilda*, but also with some contributors I mentioned in the societal discussion about marriage, like dowager Klerck – a member of the Protestant Réveil. To study the link between feminism and religion more elaborately instead of still seeing this as a dichotomy would give an interesting insight into the motivations and lives of feminist frontrunners, as I think here my research has done concerning the life of De Jong. For this, the concept of 'deconversion' as used in religious studies could prove to be useful: to hold strong religious convictions after a conversion, but gradually 'deconvert' to a more liberal or moderate position. If we apply this to First Wave-Feminism, we can explain how some frontrunners took up more moderate or orthodox positions later, like also De Jong had done.

For De Jong's religious conversion, we can establish some reasons, but will probably never fully understand. There is her 'cultural' love for France, which aroused her interest in the *Action Française*, the Catholic package-deal, though initially De Jong was not so keen on Maurras or dogmatic views in general. An important factor was her war-time experience in Reims, after which she wrote her sister she did not feel "a Roman Catholic" but "just a Française who learned to pray in a French way". This too is especially interesting from the perspective of the study of religion as a contribution to the research of nationalism and war-time combined with religion.

As a final remark, I hope that whoever reads this thesis is left an insight into the importance of the purpose novel and the awareness that religion and feminism are not contradictory. Furthermore, I hope the reader will have gained more appreciation of De Jong's life after her position in the First Feminist Wave, as I myself have in conducting this research.

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<i>Vehementer Nos</i>	1906	Pius X	Laicité in France
<i>Ne Temere</i>	1907	Pius X	Matrimonial law
<i>Notre Charge apostolique</i>	1910	Pius X	Social doctrines of <i>Le Sillon</i>
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Coverillustration

Cécile de Jong van Beek en Donk (ca. 1930), collection Artria, Kennisinstituut voor emancipatie en vrouwengeschiedenis.