

French Feminists at the International Council of Women, 1888–1914

Jean Elisabeth Pedersen

This article grows out of my interest in the histories of the women in a large group portrait that American suffrage activist Susan B. Anthony kept hanging on the wall over the desk in her study in Rochester, New York. An engraved version of the same group portrait, entitled “The Woman’s International Council: A Group of Representative Delegates,” appeared as part of a double-page spread in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* on April 7, 1888.¹ The editors of the newspaper included this version as an illustration for a separate article on the following page entitled “A Group of Notable Women,” and the twenty-seven women in the portrait all participated in the founding meeting of the International Council of Women (ICW) by attending the founding international women’s congress that Anthony and the other leaders of the National Woman Suffrage Association sponsored in Washington, D.C., in 1888.² The central portion of a similar portrait, perhaps taken from one of the same set of original photographs that served as the source

Jean Elisabeth Pedersen is Associate Professor of History in the Humanities Department of the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester. She is the author of *Legislating the French Family: Feminism, Theater, and Republican Politics, 1870–1920* (Rutgers, 2003), and the editor of “Representations of Women in the French Imaginary: Historicizing the Gallic Singularity,” special issue of *French Politics, Culture & Society* 38, no. 1 (2020). Her work on feminism, French history, and the history of the social sciences has also appeared in *French Historical Studies*, *Gender and History*, *The Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, and *SIGNS: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*.

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¹ For one photographic view of Susan B. Anthony seated at her desk with the group portrait on the wall above, see *Susan B. Anthony, seated at desk*, ca. 1905, photograph by Frances B. Johnston, LOT 11735, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., www.loc.gov/item/2016651849/. Accessed May 31, 2021. For the portrait as it appeared in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, see “The Woman’s International Council: A Group of Representative Delegates,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, April 7, 1888, 120–21, digitized and available to view through HathiTrust, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=pst.000020243890&view=2up&seq=222>.

² “A Group of Notable Women,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, April 7, 1888, 123. For the proceedings of the congress itself, see [n.a.], *Report of the International Council of Women*.

of the newspaper illustration, still appears at the top of the “About ICW: History” section on the website of the International Council of Women today.³

The anonymous author of the article in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, who described the newspaper's illustration as representing “some of the most conspicuous figures at the Women's International Council,” started by naming Anthony as the chair of the congress and Anthony's long-time fellow activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton as the author of the opening address. After listing the names of the thirty-nine American and European organizations that had sent delegates to the event, the author also identified nine of the women who attended as “amongst the most interesting delegates”: American activists Frances Willard, Julia Ward Howe, Louise Thomas, and Lucy Stone; British activists Laura Ormiston Chant, Alice Scatcherd, and Margaret Dilke; Norwegian activist Sophia Magelsson Groth; and Finnish activist Alexandra, Baroness Gripenberg.⁴ One of the most interesting aspects of the group portrait that Susan B. Anthony hung on her wall, the illustration that the editors of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* included as part of their coverage of Anthony's congress, and the associated group portrait that the ICW features on its website, however, is that all three of these images also feature another woman seated in between Anthony and Stanton in the center of the front row: the French Protestant philanthropist and suffrage activist Isabelle Bogelot.

Bogelot volunteered her time with the Œuvre des libérées de Saint-Lazare, an organization that worked to support poor women who had been released from the women's prison in Paris that her colleague Ghénia Avril de Sainte-Croix later characterized as a form of women's Bastille.⁵ Bogelot also became one of the most important French participants in the ICW. Not only did she attend the founding meeting in 1888, but she also attended the follow-up meeting at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, and the next meeting after that in London in 1899. She helped organize the Conseil national des femmes françaises in Paris in 1901, and she attended the fourth International Congress of Women as the honorary president of the new French council when the International Council of Women met in Berlin in 1904.⁶

Focusing on Isabelle Bogelot's presence in the front row of this early ICW photograph with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton raises new questions about how a French feminist came to be in the United States, how many French feminists participated in international women's congresses, and how French feminists might have influenced the International Council

³ This photograph, which appears over the caption “Founding Members of the International Council of Women (ICW), Washington-New York, 1888,” features thirteen women instead of twenty-seven. The six women in the front row of this photograph, however, are still the same as the six women in the center of the front row in the engraving in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Magazine*. These six key women are also seated in the same order, and wearing the same clothes, in both portraits, which makes it likely that they were taken at the same time. See International Council of Women, “About ICW: History,” www.icw-cif.com/01/03.php. Accessed September 25, 2020.

⁴ “A Group of Notable Women,” *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, April 7, 1888, 123.

⁵ Ghénia Avril de Sainte Croix wrote, spoke, and appeared in print under several different versions of her name over the course of her life: Savioz, Mlle de Ste Croix, Mme Savioz de Sainte-Croix, Mme Avril de Sainte-Croix. When I cite her work in the notes and bibliography that follow, I use whatever version of her name appeared in the original source. Cataloguers, bibliographers, and indexers have differed over whether to alphabetize her work under “A” or “S”. In the bibliography for this article, I have chosen to keep her work together by alphabetizing it all under “S”. For one example of Avril de Sainte-Croix's criticisms of “the regulation of prostitution, with its bastilles, its hospital-prisons, [and] its placement outside the law of the poorest and most miserable among us,” see Sainte-Croix, “Rapport présenté au Congrès international de la condition et des droits des femmes,” 97. On the life and work of Isabelle Bogelot, see note 6 below.

⁶ For introductions to the life and work of Isabelle Bogelot, see Avrane, with Bard, “Isabelle Bogelot”; Cohen, “Féministes et républicaines”; and Rochefort, “Féminisme et protestantisme au XIXe siècle.”

of Women. Most histories of French feminism have focused more on French women's activities in France than on their participation in transnational women's networks or international women's organizations outside of France.⁷ There is, however, a growing body of work that explores the history of transnational relationships between women from different countries, including a growing body of work that explores these relationships with a special focus on the interests, experiences, and contributions of women from France.⁸

My article here contributes to this emerging transnational history of French feminism by focusing on French activists' participation in the International Council of Women in the period before the First World War.⁹ The body of the article focuses on the national and international work of four French women who played an especially important role in the early decades of the organization: Hubertine Auclert, Isabelle Bogelot, Marie d'Abbadie d'Arrast, and Ghénia Avril de Sainte-Croix. The conclusion offers new evidence of the importance of French women's activist work in the world beyond French borders by demonstrating the ways in which Bogelot, d'Abbadie d'Arrast, and Avril de Sainte-Croix influenced the shape of the International Council of Women itself.

French Women at the Foundation of the International Council of Women, 1883–88

French women played an important role in the organization of the International Council of Women from the very beginning. When American activists Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Rachel Foster met with members of the English and Scottish women's movements in Liverpool in 1883, for example, their plans for the new "International Woman Suffrage Association" that would eventually become the International Council of Women included not only an American center; three urban English centers in London, Manchester, and Bristol; a center for Scotland; and a center for Ireland; but also a center for France.¹⁰

⁷ For some important histories of French feminism, see Bard, *Les filles de Marianne*; Hause, with Kenney, *Women's Suffrage and Social Politics*; Klejman and Rochefort, *L'égalité en marche*; Mansker, *Sex, Honor, and Citizenship*; Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*; and Offen, *Debating the Woman Question*. For a fuller discussion of the history and historiography of French feminisms in their national, imperial, and international contexts, see Pedersen, "French Feminisms."

⁸ For monographs and essay collections on the history of transnational feminism that include important sections on France, see Allen, Cova, and Purvis, "International Feminisms"; Boussahba-Bravard and Rogers, *Women in International and Universal Exhibitions*; Daley and Nolan, *Suffrage and Beyond*; De Haan, Allan, Purvis, and Draskalova, *Women's Activism*; Janz and Schönplüg, *Gender History in a Transnational Perspective*; Kimble and Röwekamp, *New Perspectives on European Women's Legal History*; Machiels, *Les féminismes et la prostitution*; Offen, *European Feminisms*; Siegel, *Peace on Our Terms*; Summers, "Gender, Religion, and Politics"; and Waldschmidt-Nelson and Schüler, *Forging Bonds Across Borders*. On the history of women's transnational networks and international institutions more generally, see Anderson, *Joyous Greetings*; McFadden, *Golden Cables of Sympathy*; and Rupp, *Worlds of Women*.

⁹ On the International Council of Women more generally, see Gubin, van Molle, and Beyers, *Des femmes qui changent le monde*; and Rupp, *Worlds of Women*. For an important group of articles that explores the history of the Franco-American relationship in the ICW from the American side, see Offen, "Overcoming Hierarchies through Internationalism"; Offen, "Rendezvous at the Expo"; and Offen, "Understanding International Feminism as 'Transnational'."

¹⁰ [n.a.], *Report of the International Council of Women*, 10. On the importance of earlier transatlantic connections between the American, British, and European movements, see Hewitt, "Re-Tooling American Women's Activism"; and McFadden, *Golden Cables of Sympathy*. On ICW co-founder Elizabeth Cady Stanton's special connections to British feminists, see also Holton, "From Anti-Slavery to Suffrage Militancy"; and Holton, "'To Educate Women into Rebellion'."

The French suffrage activist Hubertine Auclert, whose name stands at the head of the list of participants in the proposed Center for France, had already met with Anthony when Anthony visited Paris as part of the same European trip earlier in the year. Auclert had been active in the French women's movement since 1874, when she started work with French women's rights activist Léon Richer as the secretary of his journal, *L'avenir des femmes*. As Richer chose to prioritize women's civil rights over women's suffrage, however, Auclert soon left his organization to focus on women's suffrage at the head of a new women's rights organization that she founded herself.¹¹

Anthony expressed her own opinion of Auclert's and Richer's different positions on the significance of women's suffrage when she wrote home from Paris to her fellow American women's rights activist Jane Spofford, who would eventually help host the first meeting of the International Council of Women in Washington, D.C.:

Paris, May 20 [1883]

My dear Mrs. Spofford:

I have just come from a call on Mademoiselle Hubertine Auclert, editor of *La Citoyenne*. I cannot tell you how I constantly long to be able to speak and understand French. I lose nearly all the pleasure of meeting distinguished people because they are as powerless with my language as I with theirs. We called also on Léon Richer, editor of *La Femme* [*sic*].¹² He thinks it is inopportune to demand suffrage for women in France now, when they are yet without their civil rights. I wanted so much to tell him that political power was the greater right which included the less.¹³

¹¹ For biographies of Hubertine Auclert, see Hause, *Hubertine Auclert*; and Taïeb, "Hubertine Auclert." On the split between Auclert and Richer, see also Klejman and Rochefort, *L'égalité en marche*, 50–54; and Offen, *Debating the Woman Question*, 41–52.

¹² Anthony was wrong about the name of Richer's journal, which actually appeared under his direction under the successive names *Le droit des femmes* (1869–70), *L'avenir des femmes* (1871–79), and *Le droit des femmes* (1879–91). *La femme* was the name of a separate journal that Protestant philanthropist Sarah Monod founded in 1879 to focus attention on women's philanthropic activities. See Jacquemart, "Léon Richer"; and Poujol, *Un féminisme sous tutelle*, 237–38.

¹³ Susan B. Anthony to Jane Spofford, Paris, May 20, 1883, reprinted in Harper, *Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony*, vol. II, 562. Since Anthony did not speak French herself, it is not clear who served as her translator. Perhaps her traveling companion, Rachel Foster, was fluent, or perhaps Theodore or Marguerite Stanton went with Anthony, as they apparently both knew Auclert already as a result of their own participation in the French movement for women's rights.

Theodore Stanton, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's son, had been living and working as a journalist in Paris for several years already when Anthony met Auclert in 1883. In 1878, he served as one of three American delegates to the international women's rights convention that Maria Deraismes and Léon Richer organized in Paris. See Stanton, *The Woman Question in Europe*; and Bosch, "'The Woman Question in Europe' in European History."

Marguerite Berry Stanton, Theodore Stanton's French wife, grew up with the family of French philanthropist Emilie de Barrau and served with Hubertine Auclert as one of two corresponding secretaries from France to the United States in the National Woman Suffrage Association that Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton founded in 1869. See Gordon, *Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, vol. IV, 62–63; Stanton, *The Woman Question in Europe*, iv; Stanton and Anthony, *Report of the Sixteenth Annual Washington Convention*, 142.

The minutes of the Liverpool meeting list Theodore and Marguerite Stanton after Auclert as two of the three other participants in the Center for France. See [n.a.], *Report of the International Council of Women*, 10.

This letter gives some insight into both the linguistic challenges of and the political obstacles to international organizing, and it also makes it very clear why it was the radical suffrage activist Auclert and not the moderate civil rights activist Richer who would become one of the first French participants in the creation of the International Council of Women.

Although Auclert did not come to Washington, D.C. for the founding meeting herself, she did send a letter about the importance of parliaments of women that Susan B. Anthony read from the podium as follows:

When we shall have under our eyes assemblies of women discussing wisely, working a great deal and well, we shall no longer be prevented from sending women into the parliaments of men. * * * The Congress at Washington, in which so much intelligence and nobility will be united, will complete, perfect and launch this idea of which I have given but an outline. * * * The United States of America will establish the united rights of the human race by causing to triumph, for the two sexes, equality before the law.¹⁴

French Women at the Foundation of the International Council of Women, 1888–99

While Hubertine Auclert sent her best wishes to the assembled participants at the International Congress of Women in Washington, D.C. by mail, Isabelle Bogelot traveled from France to the United States to attend the congress in person. The text of Auclert's letter makes it sound as if America was the leader and France was the follower in the new international women's movement, but shifting the discussion to the case of Bogelot offers a more complicated view of the relationship between these two countries at the International Council of Women.

Isabelle Bogelot had grown up with another important French feminist activist, Maria Deraismes, and she had just become the new director of the Œuvre des libérées de Saint-Lazare when she attended the meetings in Washington, D.C., not only as a representative of the Œuvre, but also as a representative of the French Woman's Union for the Care of the Wounded and as a representative of the Woman Suffrage Society.¹⁵ When she gave her talk about the Œuvre to the congress's section on "Philanthropies," she expressed her own hopes for international organizing in a way that stressed the mutual exchange of ideas and examples: "Conferences, congresses bring together and unite; they stimulate the desire to do better; they instruct by exchange of ideas; they throw light on points hitherto obscure and ignored. The success of the cause of woman will be the recompense of these reunions, composed of those who are sincere in their convictions."¹⁶

Susan B. Anthony chose Bogelot to serve as one of the special committee of fifteen women from across the United States and Europe who worked together to transform the congress from an isolated international women's event into the first meeting of an ongoing international women's organization.¹⁷ Once this committee had finished its work, Bogelot took up a prominent new

¹⁴ Susan B. Anthony quoting a letter from Hubertine Auclert, in [n.a.], *Report of the International Council of Women*, 49.

¹⁵ Bogelot apparently found out about the Œuvre from her husband, lawyer and philanthropist Gustave Bogelot, who brought her a pamphlet about its charitable work in 1876. She went to her first meeting in 1876, joined the board as deputy to Caroline de Barrau in 1878, and became executive director herself in 1887. See biographical materials in note 6 above.

¹⁶ Bogelot, "Prison Reform Work of St. Lazare," 49.

¹⁷ The fifteen members that Anthony chose from the larger group that she described as "a galaxy of fifty splendid women" included the following: Frances E. Willard, Victoria M. Richardson, the Rev. Ada C. Bowles, M. Louise Thomas, Clara Barton, Rachel G. Foster, Mary F. Eastman, May Wright Sewall, Martha R. Field, Bessie Starr Keefer,

position on the Executive Council of the new International Council of Women by serving as its treasurer for the first five years of its existence, from 1888 to 1893.

In addition to serving as the first treasurer, Isabelle Bogelot also contributed to the international work of the International Council of Women in many other ways, both in France and abroad. When the French government celebrated the centennial of the French Revolution by sponsoring an international exposition in Paris in 1889, for example, Bogelot obtained government support for the international women's congress that she organized in conjunction with this event. The Congrès des œuvres et institutions féminines that Bogelot organized brought together women from twenty-one different countries to discuss the topics of philanthropy and morals, pedagogy, arts, sciences, and letters, and civil legislation, and it closed by affirming American delegate May Wright Sewall's resolution that "the Congress approves the foundation of a permanent international Council of women."¹⁸ When the French government marked the year 1900 with another international exposition in Paris, Bogelot's contributions to the closing discussion at the associated Deuxième Congrès international des œuvres et institutions féminines, in which she had again taken a key organizing role, became the final catalyst for the creation of the Conseil national des femmes françaises with Bogelot as honorary president in 1901.¹⁹

At the same time that Bogelot was continuing her work with women's philanthropic and activist organizations and international women's congresses in France, she also continued to represent France at the meetings that the International Council of Women sponsored abroad. In addition to serving as a liaison between French women and the Executive Committee of the ICW, furthermore, she also delivered two especially significant addresses to the assembled members of the organization during their meetings at the World's Congress of Representative Women in Chicago in 1893 and the fourth International Congress of Women in Berlin in 1904. Bogelot's presentation in Chicago, which featured as the opening speech for the plenary session on "the Solidarity of Human Interests," focused on the topic that Acting ICW President May Wright Sewall identified as "one of the most important subjects on the week's programme."²⁰ Bogelot's presentation in Berlin, which appeared as the second in a series of three invited speeches on the international evening panel on "Advocacy for Peace and Arbitration," focused on the topic of "Peace."²¹

Bogelot's Chicago and Berlin speeches appeared in prominent locations on their respective council programs, and they addressed topics that were especially important for council members. The fact that council organizers specifically invited Bogelot to speak at these important times and in these high-profile places indicates just how important they considered her and her position as a representative of French women to be.²² In 1914, the members of the ICW executive council

Alice Scatcherd, Laura Ormiston Chant, Isabelle Bogelot, Sophia Magelsson Groth, and Alexandra Gripenberg. See [n.a.], *Report of the International Council of Women*, 50.

¹⁸ See [n.a.], *Actes du Congrès international des œuvres et institutions féminines*, lxvi.

¹⁹ American delegate May Wright Sewall and French Congress president Sarah Monod presented the resolution itself, but it was Isabelle Bogelot who introduced Sewall, explained the details of the ICW and its organization, answered many of the questions about the ICW from the other conference participants, and was the first to speak in celebration once the majority of the meeting voted to support it. See Pégard, *Deuxième Congrès international des œuvres et institutions féminines*, vol. I, 298–307.

²⁰ Bogelot, "The Solidarity of Human Interests."

²¹ Bogelot, "La Paix."

²² Karen Offen describes the American interest in French participation this way: "No doubt, the notion of sister republics, a starry-eyed devotion to the revolutionary principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, the enormous importance of Paris as a cultural, culinary and artistic center of excellence and taste; a fashion mecca; a theatrical, musical, and literary paradise; and a touristic destination for Americans in search of high culture and old world charm

invited Bogelot to step into yet another significant role in the International Council of Women when they named her to the special committee of five members that they charged with the task of producing a definitive history of the ICW's early years.²³

Women's Participation on the Standing Committees of the ICW, 1899–1914

Perhaps one of the most dramatic ways in which French women made a difference in the International Council of Women was at the head of some of the council's most important standing committees. For the nine years from 1904 to 1913, for example, Marie d'Abbadie d'Arrast served as the convener of the Committee on Laws Concerning the Legal Position of Women, and Ghénia Avril de Sainte-Croix served as the convener of the committee that started out as the Committee on White Slave Traffic and Equal Moral Standard and then renamed itself under her leadership to take a more racially inclusive approach as the Committee on Equal Moral Standard and Traffic in Women. From 1904 to 1913, French women chaired as many standing committees as American women, and French and American women together chaired more standing committees than anyone else.²⁴

Marie d'Abbadie d'Arrast took an especially prominent role in the work of the International Council of Women by editing and co-funding one of its most successful publications, *Women's Position in the Laws of the Nations*.²⁵ D'Abbadie d'Arrast had served as secretary general of the Patronage des détenues libérées since 1899, chaired the section on "Legislation and Morality" at the Deuxième Congrès des œuvres et institutions féminines in 1900, participated in the foundation of the Congrès national des femmes françaises in 1901, and chaired its section on "Legislation."²⁶ When she introduced *Women's Position in the Laws of the Nations*, which documented the inequalities that women suffered under the laws of many different countries, she framed her analysis of the issues with opening and closing paragraphs that conveyed a strong suffragist stance:

Only when woman possesses the political vote, electorate, and eligibility will she be able to take up the defense of her own interests, collaborate in the work of legislators, watch to be sure that the laws are made for her and not against her, and efface from the codes of nations the causes of public immorality, the inequalities, and the denials of justice from which she is the first to suffer in her household, in her family, in the municipality, and in the State, to the great detriment of the public good.²⁷

D'Abbadie d'Arrast and the leaders of the German Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine, who had initially lobbied the leadership of the ICW to focus an international campaign on the redress of

all powered these American women's eagerness to bring their French sisters on board." See Offen, "Rendezvous at the Expo," 218.

²³ See Aberdeen, *International Council of Women: Report on the Quinquennial Meetings, Rome 1914*, 154–57, 236–39.

²⁴ Other important French contributors to the International Council of Women included Maria Martin, who served as Recording Secretary from 1894 to 1899, and Marya Chéliga, who made a prominent appearance as a speaker at the international peace conference that accompanied the London meetings in 1899. On Martin, see further Avrane, "Maria Martin." On Chéliga, see further Pedersen, "Marya Chéliga"; and Pedersen, "Marya Chéliga-Loewy."

²⁵ D'Abbadie d'Arrast, *Women's Position in the Laws of the Nations*. On the publication of *Women's Position in the Laws of the Nations*, see further Kimble, "Transatlantic Networks for Legal Feminism," 69–70; and Röwekamp, "Reform Claims in Family Law," 89–91.

²⁶ See Poujol, *Un féminisme sous tutelle*, 187.

²⁷ D'Abbadie d'Arrast, *Women's Position in the Laws of the Nations*, ix.

women's legal problems in member countries, funded the publication of the book themselves so that they could campaign for legal reform by sending free copies with suffragist cover letters to the governments of countries where women suffered from legal inequality.²⁸ When ICW Corresponding Secretary Alice Salomon presented the quinquennial report for the period 1909–1914 at the ICW meeting in Rome in 1914, she reported that d'Abbadie d'Arrast's work had become so popular that it had “perhaps met with the greatest interest of all the publications ever brought out by the International Council.”²⁹ The book had already sold 1,532 copies in its first year of publication alone, it had continued to sell new copies in subsequent years, and she recommended that every ICW delegate at the congress should buy her own copy as well.³⁰

The work of Ghénia Avril de Sainte-Croix is also especially relevant to the study of French women's participation in international women's movements because her work on the international campaign against regulated prostitution eventually earned her not only a prominent position in the International Council of Women but also a prominent position on several committees at the League of Nations as well. She started her career as a journalist in 1893, developed an interest in the difficult situations of prisoners and prostitutes when she took a group of foreign delegates to visit the women's prison at Saint-Lazare during the meetings of the Congrès international féministe in Paris in 1896, started traveling to the meetings of the International Abolitionist Federation in 1898, co-founded the Conseil national des femmes françaises with Isabelle Bogelot and Marie d'Abbadie d'Arrast in 1901, and in that same year started the Œuvre libératrice to provide poor women with economic alternatives to prostitution.³¹

Avril de Sainte-Croix participated in the International Council for Women for the first time when she attended the International Congress of Women in London in 1899. While most participants delivered only one paper, she delivered two: one on “The Economic Position of Women in Journalism” for the section on “Women in Professions,” and one on “The Social Necessity for an Equal Moral Standard for Men and Women” for the section on “Women in Social Life.”³² By the time she set out to attend the International Congress of Women in Berlin in 1904, she had already co-founded the Conseil national des femmes françaises, started serving as its secretary general, and founded the Œuvre libératrice in Paris in 1901. She distinguished herself in Berlin not only by serving as one of the two official delegates from the new French chapter that she had helped to found, but also by presenting talks on two different panels: one on “Abolitionism in France” for the panel on “Efforts to Enhance Morality,” and one on “Women's Unions in France” for the panel on “Professional Organizations and Cooperative Movements.”³³

When Avril de Sainte-Croix attended the Berlin business meetings of the International Council of Women as a delegate for France, she expanded the Council's existing commitment to combatting the traffic in women by convincing it to make an additional commitment to the fight

²⁸ See Kimble, “Transatlantic Networks for Legal Feminism,” 69–70; and Röwekamp, “Reform Claims in Family Law,” 89–90.

²⁹ Salomon, “Quinquennial Report for the Period 1909–1914,” 63.

³⁰ Salomon, “Quinquennial Report for the Period 1909–1914,” 64.

³¹ On the life and work of Ghénia Avril de Sainte-Croix, see Mansker, *Sex, Honor, and Citizenship*, Chapter 6; Offen, “France's Foremost Feminist”; Offen, “G. Avril de Sainte-Croix”; Offen, “Intrepid Crusader”; Offen, “Madame Ghénia Avril de Sainte-Croix”; and Offen, “‘La plus grande féministe de France’.”

³² See Fenwick, “Introduction,” 5; Ste Croix, “La situation économique de la femme dans le journalisme”; Aberdeen, *The International Congress of Women*, vol. VII, 130; Ste Croix, “Social Necessity for an Equal Moral Standard.”

³³ See Sainte-Croix, “Rapport premier sur le Conseil national des femmes françaises”; Ste Croix, “Abolitionismus in Frankreich”; Ste Croix, “Die Syndicats ouvrières de Paris,” 379.

against state-recognized and state-regulated prostitution.³⁴ Her words and ideas echo in the Council's resolution "that, considering that it is impossible to combat the White Slave Traffic as long as the state regulation of vice continues, all women unite to obtain the suppression of this odious system which is an insult to all women, and [which] strengthens the idea of a double moral standard for men and women."³⁵ The members of the Council not only accepted her recommendation, but also elected her as the first convener of the new Standing Committee on White Slave Traffic and Equal Moral Standard.

Avril de Sainte-Croix was unable to attend the International Congress of Women in Toronto in 1909 in person, but the written report that she submitted for Danish delegate Emma Gad to present on her behalf played a key role in convincing the ICW to change the name of its standing committee from the "Standing Committee on White Slave Traffic and Equal Moral Standard" to the more racially inclusive "Standing Committee on Equal Moral Standard and Traffic in Women."³⁶ Avril de Sainte-Croix, who reported that the initial request for the name change had come from American and Australian women, agreed with their contention that the phrase "white slave trade ... seemed to imply that our preoccupations do not extend to women of color who are victims of an odious commerce."³⁷ Stressing that "it is certain that the question of color never intervened in our thoughts or in those of the founders of the Abolitionist Federation or the Vigilance Association," and that "everyone, male and female, had always reproved this shameful fact [the trafficking of women] equally whether it addressed itself to white women or women of color," she concluded on behalf of herself and the members of her standing committee that "we support the name change with all our might."³⁸

By the time Avril de Sainte-Croix appeared in person again at the meetings of the International Council of Women in Rome in 1914, she had also taken up a new position as the head of the Section pour l'unité de la morale et la lutte contre le trafic des femmes at the Conseil national des femmes françaises in 1901, represented the International Council of Women itself at anti-trafficking congresses in Madrid in 1910 and Brussels in 1912, taken a lead position in organizing the independent Dixième Congrès international des femmes that the Conseil national des femmes françaises sponsored in Paris in 1913, and been elected to serve as the provisional representative to the International Council of Women from the new Portuguese national council of women in 1914.³⁹

Her war and post-war activities are beyond the scope of this article, but it is important to note that she continued to achieve new distinction at both the national and the international level when she was elected Vice President of the International Council of Women at the meeting in Norway in 1920, took up an additional position as the new President of the Conseil national des

³⁴ Sewall, *International Council of Women*, vol. I, 173–74.

³⁵ See Sewall, *International Council of Women*, vol. I, 174.

³⁶ See [n.a.], "Report of the White Slave Traffic Committee," 109–10; [n.a.], "White Slave Traffic and Equal Moral Standard Committee Report," 113; Sainte-Croix, "Rapport de la Section pour l'Unité de la Morale," 296–98.

³⁷ See Sainte-Croix, "Rapport de la Section pour l'Unité de la Morale," 297.

³⁸ *Ibid.* For Avril de Sainte-Croix's continued commitment to this more racially inclusive approach at the ICW and elsewhere, see also Offen, "Madame Ghénia Avril de Sainte-Croix," 240, 244, 250n3.

³⁹ See the biographical sources in note 31 above, and also Avril de Sainte-Croix's own report of her work on behalf of the ICW in Sainte-Croix, "Commission pour l'Unité de la Morale et contre la Traite des Femmes," 438. For the proceedings of the Dixième Congrès international des femmes, see Sainte-Croix, *Dixième Congrès international des femmes*. On the work of Ghénia Avril de Sainte-Croix and the special relationship between the Conseil national des femmes françaises and the Conselho nacional das mulheres portuguesas, see Cova, "Feminisms and Associativism"; and Cova, "International Feminisms in Historical Comparative Perspective."

femmes françaises in 1922, and started in an influential position on the Permanent Advisory Committee on Traffic in Women and Children at the new League of Nations in the same year.⁴⁰

Conclusion

The International Council of Women describes itself as “the first truly global NGO” and “the first women’s organization to work in the international scene at the beginning of the 20th century.”⁴¹ Penny A. Weiss, who has recently published a collection of women’s manifestos from around the world, describes it as “the oldest existing transnational feminist organization.”⁴² The current triennial theme for the period 1919–2021 combines historical and contemporary elements with its focus on “social protection for women and girls: sustainable development for the world.”⁴³

The distinctive ICW logo that the International Council of Women features in the upper right-hand corner of its webpage is still based on the design of a pin that the members of the ICW gave Susan B. Anthony in honor of her service at the founding congress in Washington, D.C., in 1888.⁴⁴ The history of the ICW that appears under the cropped version of the founders’ group photograph in the “About: History” section of the ICW webpage focuses on the American side of the story, but Isabelle Bogelot still sits in the center of the front row to remind anyone who knows enough to notice that there is an important French aspect to their founding story as well.⁴⁵ What can we learn by looking at the International Council of Women through French historical eyes in this way?

Hubertine Auclert does not seem to have continued her engagement with the work of the International Council of Women after its inaugural meeting in Washington, D.C., but the contributions of Isabelle Bogelot, Marie d’Abbadie d’Arrast, and Ghénia Avril de Sainte-Croix form a group that it is interesting to analyze further as whole. Bogelot, d’Abbadie d’Arrast, and Avril de Sainte-Croix all combined their work in the world of women’s organizing with work in the world of women’s philanthropy, they all shared a concern about poor women and prisons, and they all connected their interests in that central concern to a number of other feminist concerns as well. They all took up lead positions both in the Conseil national des femmes françaises and the International Council of Women, and they all also influenced the ICW itself.

Bogelot, d’Abbadie d’Arrast, and Avril de Sainte-Croix were the three most important and influential French members of the International Council of Women in the period before the First World War. They also all developed their interest in women’s civil and political rights at least

⁴⁰ See the biographical sources in note 31 above, plus Pliley, “Claims to Protection,” 90–113.

⁴¹ See “About ICW: Objectives,” <http://www.icw-cif.com/01/02.php>; and “About ICW: History,” <http://www.icw-cif.com/01/03.php>. Accessed May 31, 2021. Leila Rupp, who has written one of the most comprehensive scholarly accounts of the International Council of Women, stresses the dynamic “processes of inclusion and exclusion” that created a situation in which the original membership of international organizations such as the International Council of Women consisted of “primarily elite, Christian, older, European-origin women.” See Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 10.

⁴² Weiss, introduction to “Official Statement of the First International Council of Women,” 108.

⁴³ ICW-CIF Leaflet: Social Protection for All Women and Girls: Sustainable Development for the World (2018–2021), International Council of Women, www.icw-cif.com/admin/bbs/board.php?bo_table=05_01&wr_id=55. Accessed May 31, 2021.

⁴⁴ The pin was described as “A gold monogram pin, I.C.W., which had been presented to Miss Anthony at the time of the formation of the Council in 1888 [and] had been sent to Lady Aberdeen by Miss Mary S. Anthony [after Anthony’s death] with the request that she should wear it as president and should afterwards hand it to her successor, the brooch passing ‘from one president to another as long as the International Council shall exist’.” See [n.a.], “The International Council of Women,” in *The Englishwoman’s Review of Social and Industrial Questions*, 16 July 1906, 200–201.

⁴⁵ See “About ICW: History,” www.icw-cif.com/01/03.php. Accessed May 31, 2021.

partially as the result of their shared commitment to improving the difficult situation of poor women who might otherwise have to turn to prostitution for simple survival. Isabelle Bogelot directed the Œuvre des libérées de Saint-Lazare as a way of providing better alternatives for women who had been released from prison.⁴⁶ Marie d'Abbadie d'Arrast, who was the younger sister of the previous director of the Œuvre des libérées de Saint-Lazare, served as the secretary general of the Patronage des détenues libérées, which also served female ex-offenders.⁴⁷ Ghénia Avril de Sainte-Croix, who used some of her first articles in the French feminist press to call attention to the difficult situation of female prisoners in Saint-Lazare, founded the Œuvre libératrice in order to provide poor women with the material support they would need in order to avoid turning to registered prostitution as a way of making a living.⁴⁸

Other French feminists came to the movement from different directions. Maria Deraismes, who chaired the first international women's rights convention in the world when she co-organized the Congrès international du droit des femmes with Léon Richer in 1878, combined her feminist activism with the expression of anticlerical republican political positions that dated back to her participation in the liberal opposition to the Second Empire in the 1860s.⁴⁹ In the same year that Isabelle Bogelot and Emilie de Morsier organized their Congrès international des œuvres et institutions féminines in 1889, Deraismes and Richer sponsored a separate Congrès français et international du droit des femmes.⁵⁰ In the same year that Bogelot and Sarah Monod organized their Deuxième Congrès international des œuvres et institutions féminines in 1900, a group of four additional feminist activists organized a new Congrès international de la condition et des droits des femmes as well.⁵¹

The founding committee of the Conseil international des femmes françaises that met under Isabelle Bogelot's leadership from 1900 to 1901 included women from both of the two major feminist congresses that had taken place in 1900. Julie Siegfried, Sarah Monod, and Ghénia Avril de Sainte-Croix represented the Deuxième Congrès international des œuvres et institutions féminines; Maria Pognon, Madame Wiggishoff, and Marie Bonneval represented the Congrès international de la condition et des droits des femmes.⁵² While it would require further research to determine the backgrounds and affiliations of all the French women who went on to participate both in the new Conseil national des femmes françaises and in the International Council of Women as a result of this meeting, it is nevertheless striking that the French women who took the most visible roles in the ICW in the period before the First World War all seem to have been associated

⁴⁶ See biographical sources in note 6 above, plus Cohen, "De parias à victimes"; and Cohen, "Féministes et républicaines."

⁴⁷ See Poujol, *Un féminisme sous tutelle*, 187.

⁴⁸ See biographical sources in note 31 above.

⁴⁹ See [n.a.], *Congrès international du droit des femmes*. On the work of Maria Deraismes and Léon Richer, see Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, 179–89, 210–11, 216–21; Rochefort, "Maria Deraismes"; and Jacquemart, "Léon Richer." On the significance of Deraismes's and Richer's 1878 congress, see Klejman and Rochefort, *L'égalité en marche*, 54–56; and Offen, *Debating the Woman Question*, 32–36.

⁵⁰ See [n.a.], *Actes du Congrès international des œuvres et institutions féminines*; and [n.a.], *Congrès français et international du droit des femmes*. For the comparison and contrast between the two congresses, see Klejman and Rochefort, *L'égalité en marche*, 82–85; and Offen, *Debating the Woman Question*, 133–53.

⁵¹ See Pégard, *Deuxième Congrès international des œuvres et institutions féminines*; and [n.a.], *Congrès international de la condition et des droits des femmes*. For the comparison and contrast between the two congresses, see Klejman and Rochefort, *L'égalité en marche*, 137–47; and Offen, *Debating the Woman Question*, 280–98.

⁵² On the creation of the Conseil national des femmes françaises, see Klejman and Rochefort, *L'égalité en marche*, 149–60; and Offen, *Debating the Woman Question*, 305–38.

with the part of the new group that had originally been affiliated with one or both of Bogelot's two Congrès internationaux des œuvres et institutions féminines.

Isabelle Bogelot, Marie d'Abbadie d'Arrast, and Ghénia Avril de Sainte-Croix all shaped the development of the International Council of Women in different ways. Bogelot, who served as the primary French representative to the International Council of Women in the years from 1888 to 1900, contributed to the ICW's expansion by leading the creation of the Conseil national des femmes françaises and connecting it to the ICW in 1901. D'Abbadie d'Arrast wrote the ICW's most popular pre-war publication, *Women's Position in the Laws of the Nations*, and thus helped the ICW make its case for the importance of women's suffrage around the world by highlighting what women were and were not yet legally allowed to do in the council's member nations and beyond. Avril de Sainte-Croix expanded the scope of the ICW's concerns in two especially important ways: first by convincing it to add the fight against regulated prostitution to the fight against sex trafficking, and then by participating in the movement to reach out more effectively to more women by replacing the racially exclusive term "white slave trade" with the more racially inclusive term "traffic in women."⁵³

Isabelle Bogelot became so well-known for her work with poor women as the director of the Œuvre des libérées de Saint-Lazare that she earned accolades both in the elite realm as a Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor in 1894 and in the popular realm as the subject of a collector's card from Chocolat Guérin-Boutron sometime after that. The Guérin-Boutron card, which is one of a series of eighty-four cards celebrating a range of philosophers, inventors, and charitable benefactors that runs all the way from Confucius and Pythagoras to peace activist Frédéric Passy and republican politician Jules Simon, shows Bogelot wearing the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor, gives a brief description of her work with the Œuvre des libérées de Saint-Lazare, praises her for "never ceasing in her quest for new ways to improve women's condition," and hails her as one of the "benefactors of humanity."⁵⁴

Marie d'Abbadie d'Arrast never earned similar honors as a member of the Legion of Honor,⁵⁵ but her prison work with women and her interest in improving women's legal situation propelled her to a similar leadership position in the International Council of Women.⁵⁶ After she died unexpectedly in 1913, her ICW colleagues remembered her especially for her "two qualities [of competence and sagacity] joined to a heart overflowing with enthusiasm and a tireless activity put in the service of our cause."⁵⁷ The members of the ICW Executive Committee stood for a moment of silence in her memory at their Rome meeting in 1914, and Marguerite Pichon-Landry summed up the importance of her *Women's Position in the Laws of the Nations* to the members of

⁵³ When Avril de Sainte-Croix summed up the work of the ICW's Standing Committee on Equal Moral Standard and Traffic in Women in 1914, she further reported that this committee had launched an investigation into "the situation created in the colonies for women of color from the point of view of morality." See Sainte-Croix, "Commission pour l'Unité de la Morale," 436.

⁵⁴ "Les bienfaiteurs de l'humanité: Mme Bogelot," advertising card, Chocolat Guérin-Boutron. Personal collection of the author.

⁵⁵ Her name does not appear in the Base Léonore, the database at the Archives nationales de France that holds the records of individual members of the Legion of Honor. For access to the Base Léonore, see the index of names here: <http://www2.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/leonore/recherche.htm>. Accessed May 31, 2021.

⁵⁶ On the importance of Marie d'Abbadie d'Arrast's work at the head of the Section on the Legal Position of Women, see Aberdeen, "Foreword," in d'Abbadie d'Arrast, *Women's Position in the Laws of the Nations*, v–viii; [n.a.], "Commission pour la situation légale de la femme," in Aberdeen, *International Council of Women*, 416; and Pichon-Landry, "Mme d'Abbadie d'Arrast."

⁵⁷ See the anonymous preface to "Commission pour la situation légale de la femme," in Aberdeen, *International Council of Women*, 416.

the Conseil national des femmes françaises as a book that “is and will remain for a long time the most interesting document of comparative legislation for all family questions.”⁵⁸

Ghénia Avril de Sainte-Croix achieved official recognition from the French government as a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor in 1920, and further recognition when the government promoted her to Officer of the Legion of Honor in 1932.⁵⁹ This same period in the 1920s is also when French newspapers started describing her as “the most important feminist in France.”⁶⁰ Her work at the head of the Conseil national des femmes françaises, the International Council of Women, and the Permanent Advisory Committee on Traffic in Women and Children at the League of Nations after World War I helped ensure that the International Council of Women would take up a new leadership position through a special relationship with the United Nations after World War II, a relationship that endures to this day.⁶¹

I hope this article demonstrates the important role that French women played in the International Council of Women, I hope it prompts us to think more extensively not only about how French feminists fought for women’s rights at home but also about how they fought for women’s rights abroad, and I also hope it gives us a new way of seeing French women’s feminist philanthropy as one of the key sources for an especially enduring and influential form of international feminist activism.

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⁵⁸ Pichon-Landry, “Mme d’Abbadie d’Arrast,” 522.

⁵⁹ To consult Avril de Sainte-Croix’s Legion of Honor dossier at the Archives nationales de France, see Base Léonore, http://www2.culture.gouv.fr/public/mistral/leonore_fr?ACTION=CHERCHER&FIELD_98=REF&VALUE_98=c-210584. Accessed May 31, 2021.

⁶⁰ See Offen, “La plus grande féministe de France’.”

⁶¹ See the bilingual English/French cover of the most recent ICW pamphlet, “Social Protection for All Women and Girls, Sustainable Development for the World (2018–2021),” http://www.icw-cif.com/admin/bbs/board.php?bo_table=05_01&wr_id=55. Accessed May 31, 2021.

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