



The image of a generation

(Gender) images of heroin addicts and their parents in The Netherlands, 1980-1985

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Erfahrung ist ein empirisches Erkenntniß , d. i. ein Erkenntniß, das durch Wahrnehmungen ein Object bestimmt. Sie ist also eine Synthesis der Wahrnehmungen, die selbst nicht in der Wahrnehmung enthalten ist, sondern die synthetische Einheit des Mannigfaltigen derselben in einem Bewußtsein enthält, welche das Wesentliche einer Erkenntniß der Objecte der Sinne,
d. i. der Erfahrung (nicht bloß der Anschauung oder Empfindung der Sinne), ausmacht.
Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Riga 1781) 218.

Life law #6: There is no reality, only perception.

Dr. Phil McGraw, *10 Life laws*, www.drphilstore.com/lifestrategies.html (consulted 8 June 2017).

I hereby declare that this dissertation is an original piece of work, written by myself alone.
Any information and ideas from other sources are acknowledged fully in the text and notes.

(place, date)

(signature)

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INTRODUCTION

THE DUTCH HEROIN EPIDEMIC

In the early 1970s, heroin was unknown in the Netherlands – while the use of drugs like marihuana and LSD thrived and attracted many tourists to magical centre Amsterdam every year, the opiate was simply not available. In the summer of 1972, however, 15% of those tourists (most of them Americans) turned out to be addicted to it. Chinese dealers, having just discovered The Netherlands as an excellent springboard to the European market, served the foreign clientele and simultaneously pushed heroin among the local population by selling it cheap or even giving it away.¹ A successful strategy: by 1974, the number of addicts was estimated at 5,000, and two years later it had doubled to 10,000.²

Heroin was now actively sought out by adventurous young people looking for the newest thing. They got their inspiration from their friends and from music idols like The Doors, Janis Joplin, Frank Zappa, David Bowie and Iggy Pop.³ They thought they would be able to handle heroin like they had been able to handle everything else. (And for many that must have been the case: nowadays, experts estimate that 23% of those who try heroin get addicted.⁴) Using heroin stood for being in the forefront of the avant-garde.⁵

But to those who became addicted, it turned into a nightmare. The price of heroin went up: from 25 guilders per gram in 1973 to 100 in 1974 and 350 in 1979, and in times of acute shortages 800 or even 1,500 guilders.⁶ So addicts found that not only did they need an

1 Gemma Blok, ‘“We the avant-garde”’. A history from below of Dutch heroin use in the 1970s, *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 132:1 (2017) 104-125, at 108; Gemma Blok, *Ziek of zwak. Geschiedenis van de verslavingszorg in Nederland* (Amsterdam 2011) 168.

2 Blok, *Ziek of zwak*, 181-183; Blok, ‘“We the avant-garde”’, 108. All numbers are estimates, usually based on police or social work statistics.

3 Blok, ‘“We the avant-garde”’, 115; Blok, *Ziek of zwak*, 184.

4 Blok, *Ziek of zwak*, 184.

5 Blok, ‘“We the avant-garde”’.

6 Gemma Blok, *Achter de voordeur. Openbare geestelijke gezondheidszorg vanuit de GGD Amsterdam in de twintigste eeuw* (Amsterdam 2014) 71; Blok, *Ziek of zwak*, 185; *Heroïne in Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1979) 6-9.

increasing supply to prevent withdrawal symptoms, the rising prices on top of that meant that they could no longer support their habit from their benefits or wages. Many saw no other solution than to go out stealing, robbing or prostituting themselves in the streets. This affected inhabitants and visitors of inner cities where drug trade and drug use thrived, and through the media caused anger and fear in broad layers of the population.⁷ Soon it became clear that heroin was the most dangerous drug Dutch society had ever seen. Amsterdam counted 18 registered heroin casualties in 1978, rising to 73 in 1984.⁸ Meanwhile, the number of addicts had risen to 10,000 in 1977 and then tripled to 30,000 in 1983. One in three were estimated to be women.⁹ The exponential rise made experts speak of an epidemic, and in hindsight its peak can be pinpointed in the first half of the 1980s.

DESPERATELY DISCUSSING SOLUTIONS

By then, Dutch society was desperately looking for remedies. But those were extremely difficult to agree on. International scientific research results were contradictory and there were no data available on the Dutch situation, resulting in years of hot debates. In a country that was at the same time going through a severe economic crisis, dealing with immigrants and struggling with demands such as those from the women's movement, many suspected a link with these tensions – tensions that made some young people look for an escape in drugs.¹⁰ The heroin debate split all the parties involved: law enforcement, addiction care institutions and policy makers. Conservative experts pleaded for a tough approach to drug dealers and forced treatment for users, while progressive professionals insisted that heroin should be put in the same category as alcohol and tranquilizers, and some even advocated free heroin distribution to addicts. Meanwhile, under the Opiumwet (Opium Law) of

7 Blok, *Ziek of zwak*, 185-187.

8 Nico Brinkman, *Over dood en dosis, Een literatuuronderzoek naar sterfte onder heroïnegebruikers* (Utrecht 1985) 64.

9 Blok, *Ziek of zwak*, 152.

10 Blok, *Ziek of zwak*, 181-182; Marcel de Kort, *Tussen patiënt en delinquent. Geschiedenis van het Nederlandse drugsbeleid* (Hilversum 1995) 259-268, 287.

1976, soft drug users were decriminalised, but as a consequence of this new distinction between soft and hard drugs, heroin users were forced into crime even further.¹¹

The city of Amsterdam, dealing with the biggest problems, led the way out of the deadlock. Starting from 1979 methadone programmes were opened for all problematic heroin users, while public order was reinstigated with force. Other cities departed on a similar course sooner or later.¹² That same year the national government decided that, as addiction care was failing in getting heroin users clean, limiting the damage of heroin abuse became its goal instead of abstinence. Critics of this approach fell silent when, soon after, it was discovered that sharing needles was a vital element in spreading the AIDS virus. With the strategy of harm reduction, as it would be dubbed later, over the course of the 1980s and 1990s the heroin problem would slowly disappear from the streets.¹³

Looking back, the early 1980s were the nadir of the Dutch heroin epidemic: not only in numbers of addicts and fatalities, but also in regard to the nuisance caused by the addicts, the impotence of law enforcement and addiction care professionals, the protests of citizens and the stigma marking heroin users and their families. What the Dutch public saw – through the media if not with their own eyes – were pale, skinny, filthy youngsters hurrying nervously down the street, stealing handbags from unsuspecting ladies or leather jackets from department stores, prostituting themselves to passing car drivers, injecting themselves and nodding off in public. This quickly became the image of the drug user, that of the junkie.

THREE LIFE STORIES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE EPIDEMIC

In this atmosphere three life stories about teenage heroin addicts were published: *De moeder van David S.* ('The mother of David S.', 1980) by the Dutch novelist Yvonne Keuls, *Christiane*

11 Blok, *Ziek of zwak*, 215-216; De Kort, *Tussen patiënt en delinquent*, 287.

12 Blok, *Ziek of zwak*, 219-225; De Kort, *Tussen patiënt en delinquent*, 259-268.

13 Ibidem.

F., verslag van een junkie ('Christiane F., report of a junkie', 1980) by the German journalists Kai Hermann and Horst Rieck, and *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* ('The rotten life of Floortje Bloem', 1982), again written by Yvonne Keuls.¹⁴ They were perfect examples of the 'doom and gloom' books that were all the rage for teenagers in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁵ But adults devoured the books too, and they became best-sellers.¹⁶ 'Books about children addicted to heroin sell like chips and mayonnaise,' a critic wrote¹⁷ – though other life stories of heroin addicts from the same period did not get reprinted once.¹⁸

The enormous success of the three books led to film adaptations of two of them very quickly: *Christiane F.* was turned into the international movie picture *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* in 1981, *De moeder van David S.* was adapted for the Dutch television screen and broadcast a year later. Through the films and the theatre plays that followed, the stories reached even bigger audiences. Some said they were so popular because they were easy to digest: '[...] few difficult words, easy to read, trend novels.'¹⁹ And part of the interest surely came from the sensation of drugs, prostitution and crime.²⁰ But there was more to it: many believed that these stories would scare kids away from heroin – not realizing, however, that they could also be inspirational.²¹

- 14 Yvonne Keuls, *De moeder van David S., geb. 3 juli 1959* (Baarn 1980); Kai Hermann and Horst Rieck, *Christiane F. Verslag van een junkie*, transl. Hans van Straalen (Amsterdam 1980); Yvonne Keuls, *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* (Baarn 1982).
- 15 Jan Van Coillie, *Leesbeesten en boekenfeesten. Hoe werken (met) kinder- en jeugdboeken?* (Revised edition, Leuven – Leidschendam 2007) 364; Vanessa Joosen and Katrien Vloeberghs, *Uitgelezen jeugdliteratuur. Ontmoetingen tussen traditie en vernieuwing* (Leuven – Leidschendam 2008) 105-127.
- 16 Erica van Boven, *Bestsellers in Nederland 1900-2015* (Antwerpen 2015) 131, 145-146.
- 17 Inge van den Blink, 'Boeken over verslaafde kinderen: vaak zwelgen in andermans ellende', *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (9 April 1984).
- 18 *Brinkman's cumulatieve catalogus* (a reference work that includes all books printed in The Netherlands and Flanders) over the years 1979-1985 (Alphen aan den Rijn 1980-1986) shows that no other drug related life story was printed more than once. Examples include: Maria Meynen, *De cirkel. Brief aan mijn verslaafde zoon* (Amsterdam 1979); Maria Meynen, *De gebroken cirkel. Laatste brief aan mijn zoon* (Amsterdam 1982); Maria Meynen, *Als de dag van gisteren* (Amsterdam 1983); Peter de Bie, Wim van Dijk and Bart Molenaar, *Bouke. Leven en dood met heroïne* (Amsterdam 1981).
- 19 Tannie Briek-Van Eck, untitled letter to the editor of *Vrij Nederland* (15 September 1985).
- 20 Van den Blink, 'Boeken over verslaafde kinderen'.
- 21 Van den Blink, 'Boeken over verslaafde kinderen'; Marjoleine de Vos, 'Yvonne Keuls. Opvang per boek', *Diepzee* 2:3 (1984) 14-17, at 17; R. van Amerongen, 'Bij de Nederlandse uitgave' in: Hermann et al., *Christiane F.*, 9.

PROBLEM DEFINITION

As drug historian David Courtwright has pointed out, how we think about opiate addicts and opiate addiction is largely defined by who the addicts are.²² Or, put differently: the extent to which society sees drug use as a problem, depends on what kind of people we think the users are. The image of an addict, then, is vital to the debate on causes and solutions to the drug problem. Although it is impossible to measure the exact impact of the three stories or to distinguish their influence from that of other media, by the extent of their impact alone it is clear that they contributed to how the Dutch general audience saw the heroin user in the first half of the 1980s: not only did the stories reach large numbers of people, they also became part of the public debate in newspapers, articles and news reports.

In this thesis I want to trace the image of heroin addicts in the three stories and in the way these stories were received. In addition, inspired by *De moeder van David S.*, I want to do the same for the image of their parents. In all this, I pay special attention to the gender aspects of these images. In the first place because, as Robert Stephens writes, gender studies of addiction generally focus on the relationship between discourses of addiction and women, instead of on the construction of gender that includes both femininity and masculinity.²³ But, even more importantly, the gender approach is beckoning because the three stories appeared towards the end of the Second Wave of Feminism in The Netherlands.²⁴ As mentioned before, the Dutch heroin epidemic happened against a background of economic crisis, immigration tensions and emancipation struggles. All three of these aspects deserve the attention of drug historians, but in this context the latter seems the most relevant. Why for example is the spotlight in these stories put on female addicts much more than on males, when only an estimated third of all addicts were female? Why is the focus much more on their mothers than on their fathers, when we might expect parents of

22 Courtwright, David, *Dark paradise. Opiate addiction in America before 1940* (Cambridge 1982) 3.

23 Robert Stephens, *Germans on drugs. The complications of modernization in Hamburg* (Ann Arbor 2007) 221.

24 Vilan van de Loo, *De vrouw beslist. De tweede feministische golf in Nederland* (Wormer 2005); Linda Duits, *Dolle mythes. Een frisse factcheck van feminisme toen en nu* (Amsterdam 2017).

both sexes to be equally touched by the stigma? And what does it mean that the stories unmistakably carry messages of female empowerment while men are largely neglected or even put down?

These considerations combined lead to the following problem definition and sub-questions:

Which general and gender specific images of heroin addicts and their parents emerge from three popular life stories of heroin addicts and the reactions to those stories in the Netherlands between 1980 and 1985?

> *What was the width and depth of the impact of the three life stories in the Netherlands between 1980 and 1985?* This is the subject of chapters 1 and 2.

> *Which general and gender specific images of heroin addicts emerge from the stories? How can they be interpreted with the help of historiography?* This is the subject of chapter 3.

> *Which general and gender specific images of the parents of heroin addicts emerge from the stories? How can they be interpreted with the help of historiography?* This is the subject of chapter 4.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The historiography on the heroin epidemic of the 1970s and 1980s is limited, both where The Netherlands are concerned and with regard to other Western countries who went through the same experience. Most of the studies available focus on drug policies and addiction care²⁵ – cultural histories are especially rare. In the latter category *Germans on drugs* by Robert Stephens stands out: this book discusses the first years of the epidemic as they emanated from the 1960s.²⁶ For The Netherlands, Gemma Blok has recently published the promising first findings from her research project on the perspective of the heroin users of the 1970s and 1980s.²⁷

25 For the Netherlands: Blok, *Ziek of zwak* and Blok, *Achter de voordeur*; for the UK and Germany: Klaus Weinbauer, 'Drug consumption in London and Western Berlin. Local and transnational perspectives', *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* 20 (Spring 2006) 187-224; for the UK: Alex Mold, *Heroin. The treatment of addiction in twentieth century Britain* (DeKalb 2009) and Virginia Berridge and Alex Mold, *Voluntary action and illegal drugs. Health and society in Britain since the 1960s* (Basingstoke 2010).

26 Stephens, *Germans on drugs*.

27 Blok, '“We the avant-garde”'; see also www.heroineepidemie.nl.

Images of heroin users and their families, or more precisely the stigma they encounter, is a recurring theme in the literature, but one that usually remains at the sidelines.²⁸ Systematic research into those images is scarce and isolated or, where parents are concerned, even non-existent, and thus it is impossible to sketch a coherent scientific field on this subject. Therefore I broaden the scope of the literature used in this thesis to include images of opiate users in Western countries from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, and, when discussing the historiography on the parents, to the history of the images of parents of children with mental illness. It is remarkable how many of these publications include gender analyses, and I will discuss them gratefully and extensively.

IMAGES OF OPIATE USERS IN HISTORICAL LITERATURE

In his article on the American visual culture of narcotic addiction (2002), Timothy Hickman offers a theoretical framework for images of opiate users in which he identifies four strategies of envisioning addiction: the strategy of definition (what is an opiate user?), the strategy of demonization (opiate users are dangerous), the strategy of counter-discourse (opiate users are cultural heroes) and the strategy of commercialisation (opiate users are commercially interesting role models). These strategies came into existence one after the other since the late nineteenth century, but since then co-exist. Although Hickman focusses on visual images, the strategies are applicable to written sources as well.²⁹

Gemma Blok in her analysis of the image of the Dutch junkie over the last quarter of the twentieth century (2017) in fact adds a fifth category to Hickman's strategies: that of the loser. She shows how the image of the Dutch heroin user started out as that of the cultural hero, but quickly turned into that of the problematic patient or criminal, only to end up as that of a

28 In addition to the titles mentioned in the notes to the previous paragraph, see for instance: (for the US) David Courtwright, Herman Joseph and Don Des Jarlais, *Addicts who survived. An oral history of narcotics use in America 1923-1965* (Knoxville 1989); (for the UK) Paul Manning ed., *Drugs and popular culture. Drugs, media and identity in contemporary society* (Cullumpton – Portland 2007); Theodore Dalrymple, *Drugs, de mythes en de leugens*, transl. Jabik Veenbaas (Amsterdam 2006).

29 Timothy A. Hickman, 'Heroin chic. The visual culture of narcotic addiction', *Third Text* 16:2 (2002) 119-136.

harmless loser when heroin went out of fashion and its remaining addicts were absorbed into methadone treatment programmes.³⁰ Similar elements are offered in the portrait of a morphine addicted American family in the 1910s painted by Caroline Jean Acker (2004), who illustrates sharply the consequences of the change in legal status of morphine in the 1910s for its users and their public image.³¹

Gender images of opiate users have been studied by Jos ten Berge (2007) and Robert Stephens (2007).³² Ten Berge uses texts, drawings and paintings from French medical, literary and journalistic sources to paint a picture of late nineteenth and early twentieth century *morphinistes*, while Stephens focusses on West-German medical and popular texts and drawings of heroin addicts found in scientific literature and popular and alternative magazines around 1970. Both present examples of demonizing and counter-cultural strategies, but what makes their work most interesting is how they connect the images of female users to the First and Second Waves of Feminism respectively. While Ten Berge's *morphinistes* were demonized by male writers and painters in order to discredit the early feminists, Stephens finds misogynistic images from both conservative and progressive male authors each confronting the women's movement of the 1970s in their own way.

IMAGES OF PARENTS OF OPIATE USERS IN HISTORICAL LITERATURE

On the images of parents of opiate users I have not been able to find any historical research. But when broadening the scope to parents of mentally ill children, useful historical studies come into view. They show how stigmatising parents for the mental health of their children, particularly the 'schizophrenogenic mother', became a regular practice in psychiatry from after the Second World War to well into the 1980s. John Neill (1990) has traced this development

30 Blok, '“We the avant-garde”', 105-106.

31 Caroline Jean Acker, 'Portrait of an addicted family. Dynamics of opiate addiction in the early twentieth century' in: Sarah W. Tracy and Caroline Jean Acker, *Altering American consciousness. The history of alcohol and drug use in the United States, 1800-2000* (Amherst – Boston 2004).

32 Jos ten Berge, "In een zacht suizende extaze." Morfinisme en morfinomanie in decadent Parijs, een iconografie, *De negentiende eeuw* 31:2 (2007) 98-118; Stephens, *Germans on drugs*.

for the US³³ and Gemma Blok (2004) has discussed it for The Netherlands.³⁴ Mary Seeman (2009) followed the tragic image of the mothers of addicts into the twenty-first century and shows how it has changed into that of a hero.³⁵ For an analysis of the changing images of parents, the theoretical framework offered by Hickman is useful as well.

METHODOLOGY

The starting points for my analysis were the three stories themselves. In each of them, I have analysed the images that they portray of heroin users and their parents. To understand how these images came about and what impact they had, I reconstructed their respective 'making-of' histories from literature and news sources on their authors and main characters. And to get an idea of how these images were received (for example, which aspects were picked up or ignored) I collected reactions in general newspapers, magazines and television programmes.

In order to keep the archival part of the research feasible, I have mainly used clippings archives from the Literatuurmuseum in The Hague and Atria in Amsterdam, and combined them with the digital newspaper archive Delpher and the digital archive of Dutch public television at Beeld en Geluid in Hilversum. The records of Ambo, Yvonne Keuls's publishing house, were lost in a fire years ago and the author, now 85, declined my requests for access to her private archive or the opportunity to interview her. Because a lot has been written, by her and by others, about her life and work, this disadvantage has not turned out to be vital, even though it is still regretted. By contrast Becht, the publisher of *Christiane F.*, had the wisdom of donating its archives to the Special Collections Department of the University of Amsterdam on occasion of its centenary in 1992. All these sources have contributed to the reconstruction of the history of the three stories and their impact.

33 John Neill, 'Whatever became of the schizophrenogenic mother?' *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 44:4 (1990) 499-505.

34 Gemma Blok, *Baas in eigen brein. 'Antipsychiatrie' in Nederland 1965-1985* (Amsterdam 2004).

35 Mary V. Seeman., 'The changing role of mother of the mentally ill. From schizophrenogenic mother to multigenerational caregiver', *Psychiatry – Interpersonal and biological processes* 72:3 (2009) 284-294.

Scientific sources on Dutch heroin users and their parents from the early 1980s are scarce. In 1979 the government commissioned a large sociological research project, with spin-offs that would continue into the next decade.³⁶ In the same period, the city of Amsterdam also had the situation of its heroin users mapped out.³⁷ Two of the national reports turned out to be extremely relevant for this study: *Heroïnegebruikers in Nederland* by Otto Janssen and Koert Swierstra (1982) and *Heroïneprostitutie* by Ton van de Berg and Maria Blom (1986). They serve as a reference point to the images from the stories to how heroin addicts at the time were perceived by scientists and authorities. Unfortunately, there is no equivalent for the parents, so their analysis could only be contrasted with the historiography.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS THESIS

The history of the three life stories, their contents and the extent of their impact is unfolded in chapter 1. This impact is zoomed in on in detail in chapter 2, that discusses the reactions to the stories that I have found in the general media. Chapter 3 goes back to the contents of the stories and, against the background of growing up in an era marked by individualism and feminism, analyses the image of the heroin user both in general as where gender is concerned, and relates all this to the historiography on the subject. Chapter 4 follows the same pattern for the parents of the heroin users. This thesis comes with a soundtrack: each chapter refers to one or two songs that illustrate an aspect of the images of heroin addicts and their parents. Readers of the print version find a DVD in the back cover, readers of the digital version can use the hyperlinks to the music clips on YouTube.

- 36 Otto Janssen and Koert Swierstra, *Heroïnegebruikers in Nederland. Een typologie van levensstijlen* (Groningen 1982); Ton van de Berg and Maria Blom, *Heroïneprostitutie. Een typologie van werk- en leefstijlen. Onderzoeksverslag* (Amsterdam 1986); Ton van de Berg and Maria Blom, *Tippelen voor dope. Levensverhalen van vrouwen in de heroïneprostitutie* (Amsterdam 1987); Maria Blom, *Molukse heroïnegebruikers in Nederland. Een typologie van levensstijlen van Molukse heroïnegebruik(st)ers* (Groningen 1987).
- 37 D.J. Korf and P.W.J. van Poppel, *Heroïne-toerisme. Veldonderzoek naar het gebruik van harddrugs onder buitenlanders in Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1986); Dirk J. Korf, *Heroïne-toerisme II. Resultaten van een veldonderzoek onder 382 buitenlandse dagelijkse opiaatgebruikers in Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1987); Dirk Korf and Helen Hoogenhout, *Zoden aan de dijk. Heroïnegebruikers en hun ervaringen met en waardering van de Amsterdamse drugshulpverlening* (Amsterdam 1990).

CHAPTER 1

THE THREE LIFE STORIES AND THEIR MAKING-OF

The history of the three stories starts in 1980, when the first one appears, and basically continues into the present day: the books are still in print and continuously have been for the last four decades, while *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* is for sale on DVD through regular channels. In this thesis, however, I focus on the first half of the 1980s. This chapter provides the background necessary to assess to what extent the three stories reached the public. How did these stories come into existence? What were they about? What were the most important messages or images they sent out? And how broad was their impact in those years?

DE MOEDER VAN DAVID S., GEB. 3 JULI 1959

De moeder van David S., geb. 3 juli 1959 ('The mother of David S., born July 3rd, 1959') by Yvonne Keuls was published in March of 1980 by the Ambo publishing house in Baarn.³⁸ Yvonne Keuls was already a famous writer at that time. She had written acclaimed television screenplays of literary classics in the 1960s and 1970s,³⁹ but she had not grown into a true celebrity until her novel *Jan Rap en z'n maat* ('Anybody and his brother'), that had appeared in 1977, became hugely successful. In this book she had written about the misfortunes of a group of adolescent boys and girls living in a shelter and, by doing so, had put the spotlights on the abuse and injustices these children were suffering. That some of them were struggling with drug addiction was an element in the story, but not a prominent one.⁴⁰

Jan Rap en z'n maat was based on the diary that Keuls had kept during the year that she, together with other idealists, had run a shelter for troubled kids in The Hague. Every young

38 Keuls, *De moeder van David S.*

39 Patty Knippenberg, 'Gesprek met Yvonne Keuls', *Bulkboek* 11:126 (1982) 38-41, at 39.

40 Yvonne Keuls, *Jan Rap en z'n maat* (Baarn 1977).

person who needed help was welcome, without waiting list or paper work, and was ideally helped back on their feet quickly. While problem kids kept flowing in, moving them on turned out to be much more difficult than expected, as was dealing with them on the spot. After a year the doors had to be closed, due to insurmountable financial and organisational problems. When Keuls tried to offer her experiences, written up in her diary, to an alderman who was working on a proposal for a municipal shelter, he declined. That was when the writer decided to turn her diary into a book. The many kids she had met, she amalgamated into a colourful cast of characters who experienced the actual events that had happened in the shelter.⁴¹

De moeder van David S. was again an intensely realistic ‘documentary’.⁴² Following from her involvement with the problem kids, Keuls had seen the drug problem rise. Initially, she had felt the parents were to blame, but when she actually met them and talked to them, she realized they were victims as well.⁴³ Between 1975 and 1978 she came into contact with 140 families who were dealing with the heroin abuse of their kid(s) and listened to their stories. Like she had done in *Jan Rap*, Keuls created characters from the people she had talked to and wrote a story from their combined – and very real – experiences.⁴⁴

Keuls based her ‘design’ of the S. family on the ‘statistics’ that she derived from the conversations she had with the 140 families – people who had generally come to her with their stories, not a representative or even random sample. About half of them were single parent families, in the other half there were two parents, which meant to her that children from broken homes did not have a higher risk of becoming addicted. Likewise, there was an equal amount of families where the mother was working outside the home and of families where the mother was a housewife – so that was also not a factor, she supposed. And she spoke to families from all social classes, so the problem touched every layer of society. By creating the S. family in the way that she did,

41 Keuls, *Madame K.*, 192-209.

42 Marjoleine de Vos, ‘Yvonne Keuls. Opvang per boek’, *Diepzee* 2:3 (1984) 14-17, at 17.

43 Michiel Berkel, ‘Ik moet godverdomme mijn boodschap kwijt’, *Haagse Post* 69:25 (1982) 74-78, at 77.

44 Yvonne Keuls and Tony van Verre, *De arrogantie van de macht* (Baarn 1986) 7; Eva Roskam, *Lezen over Yvonne Keuls* (Den Haag 1987) 11; Keuls, *Madame K.*, 224.

Keuls intended to counter three assumptions that were often heard about the causes of drug addiction: broken homes, mothers working outside the home, and a lower class background. Even though the writer recognised the limitations to her query – her numbers of course did not correspond to the actual percentages of broken homes, working mothers or various social classes in Dutch society – it gave her the confidence to conclude that heroin addiction could touch every family: ‘[...] the S. family is a family that is put together according to reality.’⁴⁵



COVER, BLURB AND FOREWORD

From the cover of *De moeder van David S.* a woman's face, drawn in pencil, looked the reader straight in the eye.

Inside, the book had the sober make up of a traditional novel, but, unusual in the literary genre, there were pencil drawn portraits of the main characters throughout like the one on the front. This must have made *De moeder van David S.* even more accessible to readers who were used to books with pictures, but it would have irritated the literary critics even more.

How the book was a mixture of fact and fiction was both explained in the blurb and in the foreword that Keuls wrote herself: 'Almost all events in my book are based on the truth, but my book has not become a truthful report. Because I am a writer and I dress the truth in my own colour and my own form.' Two main characters, mother Len and her friend Gerrie, appeared under the actual names of the women they were based on, she pointed out, because they had recognized their own stories. All the others had been given random names and their stories had been mixed.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Yvonne Keuls, 'Signaleren en informeren', *Bulkboek* 11:126 (1982) 32-37, at 33-34.

⁴⁶ Keuls, *De moeder van David S.*, 5.

In her conversations with parents, the writer had been struck with the shame, the stigma, the isolation and the total lack of help they had to deal with. This, according to the blurb, was what she wanted to highlight in *De moeder van David S.* In her foreword Keuls underlined that the purpose of her book was explicitly activist: ‘I have written my book for all parents of drug addicts, in hopes that it can help them pick up their lives again and come to a “new” relationship with their child. But I have also written it for all those who are dealing with young people and are tolerant towards drugs. Because with Tom I would want to shout at them: “There has never died anyone of heroin who has not started with smoking hashish!”’⁴⁷

It is interesting that Yvonne Keuls refers here to the so-called stepping stone theory: the idea that experimenting with soft drugs automatically leads to addiction to heroin. This hypothesis was first – in a somewhat different form – formulated in the US early in the twentieth century when using cannabis was something ethnic minorities did, but, according to De Kort, it fell into disuse when in the 1960s white middle class youth started doing the same. When the Dutch psychologist Herman Cohen in the late 1960s subjected the theory to scientific research, he concluded that it was not true in the pharmacological sense that it was always formulated in: not every cannabis smoker moved on to hard drugs, and not every hard drug user had started with soft drugs. However, it was true in a ‘drug cultural’ sense: the more someone got involved in a drug scene, the bigger the chance that he would get involved with hard drugs as well. It was not the soft drugs themselves, but their illegality and repression, and the marginalisation and stigmatisation that followed from that, that stimulated young people to move on to hard drugs. This conclusion would eventually lead to the distinction between soft and drugs in the Opium Law of 1976, but between 1968 and 1973 conservative policy makers kept putting the theory back on the map until the arrival of a new and progressive Minister of Health, Irene Vorrink, definitely swung the pendulum away from it. By the early 1980s authorities and experts agreed that the stepping stone theory was false, and Keuls was swimming against the current of the time.⁴⁸

47 Ibidem.

48 De Kort, *Tussen patiënt en delinquent*, 166-171, 185, 190, 204, 208, 224-228.

THE STORY

De moeder van David S. follows the life of drug addict David through the eyes of his mother Len. The book starts when he is born and ends when he is nineteen. Len tells us about how David is very unhappy as a baby and grows up to be a child with an unpredictable, violent temper. By the time he is fifteen, David is doing badly in school and eventually drops out. He isolates himself, behaves badly both inside and outside the home, and is not bothered by anything the adults around him say or do. It takes months for Len and Simon to realize that David has started doing drugs. By then, it is an everyday reality that David steals from them, his younger siblings and his grandmother, and that he lies, intimidates and manipulates to squeeze even more money out of them.

The parents find out that David and his eighteen year old friend Bernard (Bennie) are part of a group of youngsters who steal bicycles and do drugs. All of them come from good families. After David has a bad trip and none of the doctors the parents consult know what to do, the young psychiatrist Kees enters the scene. He advises the parents strongly to detach themselves from their son, to the offence of Len, who cannot imagine alienating her baby. Both David and his parents are threatened by dark characters who claim David owes them large amounts of money. The tensions cause the parents to fight constantly and neglect their three younger children. Simon becomes so stressed out that he admits himself to a clinic and leaves Len alone to deal with all the problems at home for months. He returns shortly after a police doctor has put David into a psychiatric hospital. The boy has an LSD-psychosis.

David manipulates his parents into transferring him to the Emiliehoeve, a rehab facility where he can escape more easily than at the clinic, and so he does. A pattern develops in which both David's and Bennie's parents rent living spaces for their boys, fix the places up and pay the rent, only to find the rooms outrageously filthy, shared with other junkies, and damaged beyond recognition in no time. Len keeps visiting David with food and clothes, even secretly after Simon has decided they should not, while she neglects her own household. By now, David has started using heroin.

Meanwhile, Bennie has spent some time in jail after setting fire to a factory and now has ended up in a clinic with a very severe depression triggered by his drug use. His parents and David's have an intense love-hate relationship: both couples are ostracized by the community because they are blamed for the behaviour of their sons, so they try to support each other – but they also get into painful conflicts because Bennie's father Tom blames David for dragging his son down. Eventually Bennie commits suicide.

The stress makes Len physically ill and she ends up in hospital with an acute appendicitis. She is at home recovering from the operation when David comes to visit. When he sees his mum in her weak state and she blames him for it, he explodes and kicks her in the belly. The anger Len then feels towards him finally gives her the strength to follow psychiatrist Kees's advice and detach. She spends four months in the United States, learning about support circles for parents of addicted children. When she comes back, she finds out things with David have continued even worse than before because grandma has been enabling him while taking care of the children. Now Simon and Len are able to unite and force their son to leave permanently until he cleans up his act. They organize a local support circle and successfully help parents to help each other.

Months later David comes to the house with his girlfriend Marleen. She is a former heroin prostitute, but she is recovered and wants to help David to do the same. They ask to stay in the family caravan, and turn it into the usual mess within a week. Len and Simon resolutely kick them out. Some time after that Marleen comes to the house alone. She has quit her job and, influenced by David, is smoking pot again. Now she is pregnant by him, but she does not want her child to have an addicted father. When she goes home and tells David this, he goes berserk and smashes windows and cars all along the street where they live. Marleen has to flee the neighbourhood that has turned hostile towards her as a result of David's behaviour.

Chased by angry neighbours who want their damages compensated, David has come to the house of his parents, sick and asking for money to ward off his persecutors. At that moment, Bennie's dad Tom arrives. He is drunk and beats David up, for he is still convinced the boy is to

be blamed for Bennie's faith. When David flees inside, Tom jumps onto a car and starts ranting to an audience of neighbours about the causes of young people dying of drugs and what politicians should do about it. It sounds like a political programme.

Meanwhile David is sweet talking his mum into letting him stay again. Len calmly explains to him that she is willing to nurse him back to health for a week or so, but on her terms. She makes it very clear that he is no longer controlling her. David makes an excuse and runs off. To another shot of heroin.

FLYING OFF THE SHELVES

On March 28, 1980, the first copy of *De moeder van David S.* was offered to State Secretary of Health Els Veder-Smit by the newly founded Landelijke Stichting Ouders van Drugsverslaafden (National Foundation Parents of Drug Addicts), in the presence of Yvonne Keuls. The book was accompanied by a manifesto full of demands and recommendations.⁴⁹ Among the parents' most important goals was putting an end to the taboo on addiction and to the prejudice that parents were to blame for the addiction of their children.⁵⁰ By this association, Yvonne Keuls presented herself as a figurehead of the budding movement of parents of addicted children.

De moeder van David S. hit the bookshops the same day. Ambo sold 100,000 copies in the first two years, in August of 1987 successive print runs would number 160,000, in 1992 195,000.⁵¹ Lending statistics of public libraries from those years are non-existent, but there were 'enormous' waiting lists for members who wanted to read the book.⁵² Soon *De moeder van David S.* was in the top ten of most popular books in secondary school reading lists.⁵³ And television

49 'Ouders komen in actie tegen "falend drugbeleid" overheid', *Nederlands Dagblad* (29 March 1980).

50 *TROS Aktua* (15 March 1980).

51 Berkel, 'Ik moet godverdomme mijn boodschap kwijt', 76; Ria Veijgen, *Yvonne Keuls. Vier romans*, 34; Karin Kuijpers, 'Meneer en mevrouw zijn gek', *Algemeen Dagblad* (17 October 1992).

52 'Lezen en laten lezen', *De Waarheid* (17 maart 1987); Veijgen, *Yvonne Keuls*, 34.

53 Veijgen, *Yvonne Keuls*, 36.

and theatre producers were courting Yvonne Keuls for her cooperation to adapt the story into a screenplay and a theatre script.⁵⁴

Meanwhile Becht, another Dutch publishing firm, had picked up the rights to publish the Dutch translation of a successful German life story: *Christiane F., Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo*. Becht had been steadily selling the Dutch edition of *Go ask Alice*, an anonymously published American book about a girl with an addiction to soft drugs that was translated as *Het onkruid en de bloem* since 1972.⁵⁵ This new German story fit their list of publications very well.

CHRISTIANE F., VERSLAG VAN EEN JUNKIE

In 1978 West-German journalist Horst Rieck had been reporting on a trial in Berlin of a man who paid young prostitutes for their services with heroin, when he was struck by the appearance of one of the witnesses: fifteen year old former heroin addict and street prostitute Christiane: ‘What she recounted was almost fit to print. I had the feeling that she had absorbed everything like a sponge.’⁵⁶ He asked her for an interview, but afterwards realized that she had much more to say. With his colleague Kai Hermann he spoke with Christiane at length over a period of three months. The idea was to turn the interviews into a book, a plan supported by Christiane’s friends and family. Some of them were also interviewed, as were professionals who dealt with Christiane such as social workers or police officers.⁵⁷

The journalists had a hard time finding a publishing firm, however. ‘A large publisher declined with the remark that it would be an impossible book to sell,’ Kai Hermann remembers.⁵⁸

54 Jeanne Roos, ‘“Ik had het gevoel dat ik dit doen móest.” Yvonne Keuls schreef het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem’, *Margriet* 13 (1982) 9-12, at 10.

55 *Het onkruid en de bloem*, transl. Remco Campert (Amsterdam 1972).

56 Christiane V. Felscherinow and Sonja Vukovic, *Christiane F., mijn tweede leven. De cultfiguur en antiheldin van een generatie is terug*, transl. Jan Steemers (Amsterdam 2014) 13.

57 Ibidem 12-13; Hermann et al., *Christiane F.*, back cover.

58 Felscherinow et al., *Christiane F., mijn tweede leven*, 21.

That changed when parts of the book were published in *stern* magazine in the fall of 1978: they struck a nerve that resonated through the media. The magazine decided to act as book publisher and in 1979 launched *Christiane F., Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo*. It was such an unexpected success that the book was sold out time and again because the publisher had a hard time keeping up with the print runs. When Christiane turned eighteen in 1980, a bank account with 400,000 Deutschmarks was waiting for her – and this was only her first year of royalties.⁵⁹

Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo would not only be a bestseller in West-Germany (number one on the list both in 1980 and 1981), it was also translated into many other languages, including Dutch.⁶⁰ The Dutch edition was published by Becht in Amsterdam in September 1980, six months after *De moeder van David S.*, under the title *Christiane F., verslag van een junkie* ('Christiane F., report from a junkie').⁶¹



COVER, BLURB AND FOREWORD

On the cover of the Dutch edition only the title was printed, but in such a way that Christiane F. seemed to be the author and *Verslag van een junkie* the title. On the back, there was a small black and white photo of Christiane, again as if she was the sole author of the book. The same photo was all over the front: a rather neutral portrait in which Christiane looked like a normal teenage girl, and not like a stereotypical junkie.

The blurb summarized Christiane's story and then gave the floor to the journalists, whose names were not mentioned here, however – only on the title page there was the statement 'recorded by Kai Hermann and Horst Rieck', in a typeface even smaller

59 Ibidem 12-13, 42.

60 Ibidem 11.

61 Hermann et al., *Christiane F., verslag van een junkie*.

than the one used for the author of the Dutch foreword. In the blurb Hermann and Rieck explained how they met Christiane, and how they wrote the book based on their conversations with her and those around her. To guard the privacy of the addicts and their families, they explained, they had abbreviated the family names of the heroin addicts to a single initial.

To help the Dutch reader understand the 'report', Becht included an extensive foreword by Bob van Amerongen, the director of the Federatie van Instellingen voor Alcohol en Drugs (Federation Institutions Alcohol and Drugs, FZA). He wrote that he welcomed this story because, in contrast with many other books about heroin, in his opinion this one was realistic. He underlined this statement by downplaying the role of the journalists and calling Christiane the author. To him, the book was so strong because it was educational without explicitly warning or moralizing. That was why he trusted that it would not have the effect of inspiring young people to try drugs: the few romantic elements that could be attractive were overruled by the harshness, the misery and the loneliness of the heroin life Christiane described.⁶²

Van Amerongen seized the opportunity to discuss some common misconceptions about heroin. He wanted to contradict the idea that a difficult youth leads to heroin addiction, because this was the impression that this story gave, and emphasized Christiane's remark that she alone was responsible for her choices: 'She gives an accurate representation of the combination of causes: social factors, environmental factors, disorders in personal development and the rejection of one's own responsibility.'⁶³ He also tried to correct the idea that experimenting with soft drugs automatically leads to addiction to hard drugs – the stepping stone theory that had fallen into disuse, as we saw in the paragraph on *De moeder van David S.* Like Yvonne Keuls, but then the other way around, the educator tried to prove his point with an analogy: 'All alcoholics have drunk milk, but the use of milk does not lead directly to alcohol addiction.'⁶⁴

62 R. van Amerongen, 'Bij de Nederlandse uitgave' in: Kai Hermann and Horst Rieck, *Christiane F. Verslag van een junkie*, transl. Hans van Straalen (Amsterdam 1980) 5-11, at 8.

63 Van Amerongen, 'Bij de Nederlandse uitgave', 8.

64 Ibidem, 8.

Van Amerongen expected *Christiane F., verslag van een junkie* to contribute to the solution to the drug problem in that it would give teenagers and parents information and would facilitate a dialogue between them. That would help children to make conscious choices. He stressed that the risk that a young person would become addicted to heroin was very small, for example when compared to the risk of a tobacco addiction. All in all, Van Amerongen in this foreword promoted Christiane's story as something to take seriously, but at the same time urged the reader to look at the Dutch heroin problem without exaggeration.⁶⁵

THE STORY

Christiane's story starts when she is six years old and her family have just moved from the country to a gloomy housing project in Berlin. Christiane and her younger sister are threatened and beaten by their father every day. When the parents finally divorce, he leaves. Soon the mother's new boyfriend moves in. Between her job and her lover she has very little time left to spend with the children. Christiane's little sister goes to live with her father. Christiane is left to her own devices.

Although she is intelligent, Christiane does not settle in well in her chaotic school. There is also a negative, aggressive atmosphere among the neighbourhood children. By the age of eight, Christiane is smoking tobacco from stubs they find in the street, and by the age of ten she is working as well as stealing because she gets no pocket money. When she is twelve she starts secondary school, again a chaotic and confusing environment for her which she responds to with aggression and indifference. There she meets Kessi, soon to be her best friend.

Kessi takes Christiane to the Haus der Mitte, a youth centre run by the church. The parents trust that their children will be safe there, but this is where Christiane gets introduced to marihuana, alcohol, LSD and various kinds of pills by somewhat older teenagers. They seem so cool to Christiane: the way they dress, the music they appreciate (David Bowie, Led Zeppelin,

65 Ibidem, 10-11.

Ten Years After, Deep Purple, The Woodstock Album), the relaxed way they behave – she does all she can to belong to their group and fakes their attitude till she makes it. Soon these friends become her world. Her mother has no idea.

At thirteen, Christiane goes for the next step: the drug scene at the Sound discotheque. Like in the Haus der Mitte, at first it is quite intimidating to her, but she keeps going there. When Christiane confesses to her mother that she goes to Sound (without mentioning the drugs), she is lectured, but mum is so distracted by other things that she does not pay a lot of attention. After Kessi's mother spots the girls in a subway station when they are supposed to be at home, Kessi is no longer allowed to be friends with Christiane and disappears from her life. Gone also is Kessi's money: her allowance always provided for their drug use. Christiane becomes a master in hustling for money: with her youth and looks, people in the street do not hesitate to give her 'bus fare'.

Now Christiane goes to Sound alone, and soon she is taken up in a new circle of friends a few years older than her. She discovers more drugs, but steers clear from heroin at first, just like the rest of the group: they have seen several acquaintances killed by it. But when heroin quickly becomes more and more popular, some of them start doing it anyway, among them Christiane's sixteen year old boyfriend Detlef. She sees the group falling apart because the heroin users belong to another crowd right away. Soon, Christiane snorts heroin for the first time too, even though she is only thirteen and mortified. She will always remember the date: April 18th, 1976.

When Christiane wants to start shooting up instead of snorting, Detlef protests and sabotages the needle, but she just asks another junkie at the scene to help her. The experience nearly knocks her out, but it reconnects her with Detlef and together they sink deeper into the heroin world. They try their hand at dealing, but they use half of the stash for themselves and give the other half away to friends in need. Christiane steals from department stores and sells her wares at Sound to finance her heroin. As they are not yet physically dependent, they do not need much.

After a month vacation at her grandmother's, Christiane goes on a school trip out of town. There she gets sick with jaundice and has to stay in a local hospital. Back home, clean, she is startled by how Detlef looks: very skinny and sad. He does not go to Sound anymore but is prostituting himself at the notorious Zoo subway station, as are his friends Axel and Bernd – the three also live together in Axel's house. As Christiane is still sexually inexperienced, she cannot imagine what prostitution means exactly and does not want to know. She starts hanging with the boys at the station, but Detlef is the one bringing in the money. She is aware that her situation is unique: her man prostitutes himself for her instead of the other way around.

Christiane and Detlef have sex for the first time, he makes it a beautiful experience for her. Now she understands what sex is about and starts to feel uncomfortable at the station. She meets more and more junkies, teenagers who have been addicted longer and are in very bad shape. She realizes that this is the true face of the world of heroin shooters, and that she is right in the middle of it. Every day is the same: in the morning she goes to school, she hangs at the station from two to eight, then she goes with Detlef to the sleazy Treibhaus discotheque and finally takes the last bus home. On Saturdays she sleeps with Detlef, which is the only thing she looks forward to, if they have not used too much. She gets her first cold turkey and realizes she is now physically addicted.

When money gets tight, Christiane starts prostituting herself too – to the horror of Detlef, but he is incapable to stop her. She is highly sought after at the station because she is new, young and attractive. She can pick and choose her clients and dictate her conditions: she only does hand jobs and refuses to go with immigrants. In the long run, she will have to let go of all these restrictions one by one.

At the station, Christiane runs into Babsi and Stella, friends from Sound who are even younger than her. Both are also heroin prostitutes now. The two girls join Christiane and Detlef's little group of friends. But their friendship is based on heroin and gets more and more aggressive and competitive. They hardly eat and are looking worse and worse.

One day Christiane shoots up at home and is too high to clean the bathroom of blood spatters. This is when her mother finally realizes Christiane is on drugs. Christiane lies about how she supports her habit. They decide Christiane is going to get clean at home, together with Detlef. They 'detox' with tranquillizers, wine and methadone and still it is a horrible week. As soon as the pain is over, they go back to the station and within four weeks everything is back to the way it was.

The atmosphere on the scene worsens: an old friend of the group dies from an overdose, and all of them are so addicted now that it is everyone for themselves. Christiane gets arrested for the first time and starts stealing money from her mother. When her mother recognizes that her daughter is using again, she gives her a beating and sends her to her grandmother in the country to get clean. When Christiane returns to Berlin sobered up, she finds out that Axel has died too. Axel's mother has ended the rental of the house and Detlef now lives with a client. The same day Christiane takes a shot.

Christiane has to prostitute herself again too, but she cannot pick and choose like she could before. She avoids Detlef's boyfriend's place and hangs out with Babsi and Stella, but they are all so hooked that everyone of them are only interested in themselves and they fight over stupid things. Christiane gets arrested time and again while her mother is desperately seeking help, but to no avail: there simply are no treatment options for children. Then Christiane's mother finds out that her daughter is prostituting herself. This is a bigger shock to her than the drug abuse.

At great cost to her mother, Christiane goes to the Narkonon rehab centre, a branch of the Scientology Church. Her parents take her away from the place after her father has seen what a mess the clinic is and Christiane is told to go live with him. Her father's method is keeping her busy with chores inside and outside the house. *Quickly* she finds ways to do her chores *and* visit the drug scene *and* prostitute herself without him knowing.

Then Babsi dies. Christiane is devastated. She loses the strength to hide everything from her father and gets caught with heroin. Her father brings Stella home so that she and Christiane

can get clean together, but the plan fails as usual. Christiane thinks her only option is a psychiatric clinic, but she is locked up there without treatment. She escapes and life goes on as before: an endless circle of trying to get clean, failing and going back to heroin and prostitution.

After Christiane in her desperation tries to end her life with an overdose, her mother takes her to her family in the Hamburg region. When she recovers, she goes back to school, but she suffers from the prejudice of school leaders and teachers who have read her file. She realizes her past will always haunt her. But even though Christiane has no hope for the future, it seems like a happy end: at least she has been able to get away from the life of a heroin prostitute.

SALES SOARING, JOURNALISTS DISAPPEARING

Christiane F., verslag van een junkie sold well from the start. Becht saw the initial print run of almost 13,000 copies that was delivered to the bookshops in September 1980 shrink quickly enough to justify another order of 5,000 copies before the end of the year – not bad in the Dutch book market.⁶⁶ Van Boven claims that 82,000 copies were sold at that point, but the Becht sales records show that not even that many books were printed at that moment in time: publisher Max de Metz noted in his handwritten sales book that 17,679 copies found buyers during the five months in 1980 that it was on the market.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, in Germany the book had become mandatory reading in schools,⁶⁸ but teachers were not always able to guide their pupils well in the experience, a guideline for teachers published by *stern* made clear: 'Particularly, it seems to be too self evident for adults that Christiane's experiences are always deterring.'⁶⁹ The guideline was mentioned to drug education pro-

66 University of Amsterdam Special Collections, Archief Becht, 3.2 Verkoopboeken, inv. no. 620, Verkoopboek VII.

67 Van Boven, *Bestsellers*, 145; UvA Spec. Coll., Archief Becht, 3.2 Verkoopboeken, inv. no. 620, Verkoopboek VII.

68 Felscherinow et al., *Christiane F., mijn tweede leven*, 11.

69 UvA Spec. Coll., Archief Becht, 2.2 Correspondentie, Ingekomen brieven, inv. no. 494 1980 S-T.

professionals in the quarterly of the Dutch FZA, where Van Amerongen, the writer of the Dutch foreword, was director. However, his organisation was not very worried about the didactic qualities of Dutch educators, it seemed, as it recommended the booklet only ‘to the enthusiast’.⁷⁰ But we will see this was an underestimation of the effect of *Christiane F.*

The real success of the book in The Netherlands would follow the next year: by the end of 1981 an impressive total of 105,599 copies was sold. And each of the following years tens of thousands of *Christiane F.* books would go over the counter, resulting in a total of just under 200,000 copies by the end of 1985.⁷¹ When pupils of a secondary school in Lelystad were given a book of their own choice, the title most of them chose was *Christiane F.*; a survey among them again pointed at *Christiane F.* as the most popular book.⁷² And schools were not the only places where this title was the most sought after: every inmate who visited the library of the juvenile detention centre in Haarlem wanted to read it.⁷³

It is interesting to note that the journalists who wrote Christiane’s story vanished further and further into the background of the Dutch edition until they almost completely disappeared. The sales brochures Becht sent to bookshops are telling: in the first years *Christiane F., verslag van een junkie* has no author in these lists, while by 1987 under ‘author’ we find Christiane F. and under title *Verslag van een junkie*.⁷⁴ A press release by the Dutch publisher also unscrupulously referred to Christiane as ‘the writer’.⁷⁵ Frank Bovenkerk noted already in 1980 how problematic this was: the journalists had not just ‘typed out the recordings’, as was written time and again, it was the journalists who had selected, organised and edited what Christiane had

70 ‘Boekbespreking van “De moeder van David S.”; *Kwartaalberichten FZA* (February 1981) (UvA Spec. Coll., Archief Becht, 11.2 Recensies, Verzamelde recensies van uitgegeven titels met een lijst recensie-exemplaren, inv. no. 764, Christiane F., verslag van een junkie).

71 UvA Spec. Coll., Archief Becht, 3.2 Verkoopboeken, inv. no. 620, Verkoopboek VII.

72 Ivan Sitniakowsky, ‘Doe uw ogen dicht en lees’, *De Telegraaf* (9 March 1982); ‘Aandacht voor problemen van het boek’, *NRC Handelsblad* (26 March 1982).

73 Aemilia de Koningh, ‘Was maar alleen het eten slecht...’, *De Waarheid* (1 November 1984).

74 UvA Spec. Coll., Archief Becht, 7.2 Verkoopbevordering, Prospectussen, inv. no. 721.

75 UvA Spec. Coll., Archief Becht, 7.2 Verkoopbevordering, Prospectussen, inv. no. 715.

told them. Also important is the fact that when Christiane told her story, it was in the past – she was no longer part of the West-Berlin heroin scene. ‘A junkie learns how to present these things to the outside world. It always makes a good impression when she takes responsibility for everything.’⁷⁶



WIR KINDER VOM BAHNHOF ZOO, THE MOVIE

There is no doubt that the book sales got an enormous push when the international feature film *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* came out in the Netherlands in August of 1981.⁷⁷ ‘The image of a generation’, the film distributors rejoiced. That generation was not only attracted by a story they could relate to, but also by their musical hero David Bowie. He provided large parts of the soundtrack and played himself at the concert where Christiane and her friends watch him in admiration. Historically the film was incor-

rect – Bowie performed songs that he wrote after the concert that the real Christiane attended in 1976. But Bowie as a role model was interesting: halfway the 1970s he had been notorious for his cocaine addiction, which had made him so crazy and paranoid that from 1976 onwards he had been reigning in his use. By 1981, he had changed his image from that of an artistically, spiritually and sexually deviant drug user definitely into that of a clean, mainstream mega star.⁷⁸ But for his fans, through this double image his performance in the film may have contributed to its warning message as well as to its inspirational influence.

Both Christiane and the two journalists had been involved in the making, which may explain why the story of the film is quite consistent with that in the book, although it was summarized. After a short introduction the story starts when Christiane is going out with Kessi, then takes big steps through the adventures of her and her friends, and ends with the same spark of hope

76 Frank Bovenkerk, ‘Het verborgen leven van een junkie’, *de Volkskrant* (9 December 1980).

77 *Christiane F., Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* (1981). Feature film directed by Ulrich Edel. Consulted on DVD A-film Quality Film Collection no. DS92235.

78 Paul Trynka, *Starman. David Bowie. The definitive biography* (London 2011) 204-249.

SOUNDTRACK NO. 1

DAVID BOWIE – HEROES (1977)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2HAHXxeNNE



Heroes is about two lovers separated by the Berlin Wall, but in the soundtrack to *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* the song takes on another meaning: the tragedy of two cultural heroes whose glory days on heroin will be short lived.

I, I will be King

And you, you will be Queen

Though nothing will drive them away

We can be heroes just for one day

We can be us just for one day

that Christiane will be able to live a clean life. There is a big difference, however, in the way the spotlight was put on its sensational aspects: the kids shooting up in rancid public toilets, the boys living in their extremely filthy apartment, Christiane puking all over the bed and over Detlef when detoxing in her mother's bedroom, Christiane walking through crowds of spaced out junkies at the station. In the way the characters and the situations were portrayed, the image of the filthy, skinny junkie became even more penetrating than in the book, but the romantic attraction of their rebellious lives was also accentuated and watched over by the ultimate hero, David Bowie. There was no counterweight like in the book the background interviews with Christiane's mother and the professionals and the foreword were.

Nevertheless, or probably precisely because it was so sensational, the movie became a box office hit, both in West-Germany and in other countries, including the Netherlands. Initially, the Dutch film censure board allowed it for an audience of sixteen and up, but distributor Concorde appealed and with a plea based on the educational value of the film, managed to lower the minimum age to twelve.⁷⁹ Official statistics are not available, but Becht's sales brochure of the spring season of 1982 claimed that 600,000 people in the Netherlands had already seen the movie,⁸⁰ and until it was shown on Dutch television on January 10th, 1985, it was in cinemas non stop.⁸¹ News show *Brandpunt* in 2014 claimed that fifteen million people all over the world had seen the film.⁸²

The movie and the international promotion tour that followed made Christiane a worldwide celebrity – the floor was all hers, as fourteen year old Natja Brunckhorst, who played Christiane in the film, was not allowed by her parents to go. It gave Christiane opportunities she otherwise would have never had – hanging out with rock stars, trying the music business

79 'Heroïnefilm nu toch ook voor 12-jarigen', *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (18 August 1981); Ward op den Brouw, '16 jaar en ouder' (*NRC Handelsblad* 8 May 1991).

80 UvA Spec. Coll., Archief Becht, 7.2 Verkoopbevordering, Prospectussen, inv. no.721.

81 This is shown by film programmes of cinema's in the newspapers 1980-1985 in the Delpher digital newspaper archive.

82 *Brandpunt* (16 November 2014).

as a career for herself – but it would also define her for the rest of her life. Despite the hopeful end of book and film, Christiane has not only struggled with drug addiction and its consequences all her life, but also with the way the public has kept identifying her as a star junkie.⁸³

On the Dutch stage, the story of *Christiane F.* put the spotlight on Bob van Amerongen. When it came to educating the public on the facts about heroin, he was *the* expert whom the media consulted until his retirement from the FZA in 1984 – even though there were other prominent drug educators, such as Frank van Ree and Ivan Wolffers who had written informational books on the subject that sold rather well,⁸⁴ I have not found media appearances of them or other experts to the extent that Van Amerongen was doing them. In 1989, after retiring, the educator in a television interview explained his drive: he had lost his foster son Chris, whom he had brought up since the boy was two, to heroin in the early 1970s. It is interesting that he admits that as a father, he had felt an enormous guilt because he had failed to save his son – even though as a professional he was telling kids that Christiane alone was responsible for her choice for heroin, and parents not to blame themselves for the addiction of their children, as a parent he was only human. The experience had made him decide to change his career: he left his position as principal of a secondary school to become director of the FZA and dedicated the rest of his life to the prevention of drug addiction through education.⁸⁵ It was not until very late in his life – he passed away in 2014 at the age of ninety – that it became clear that this man's life had been special in more ways. Not only was he portrayed in Gerard Reve's novel *De Avonden* as the character Victor Poort, he had also been part of a resistance group in the Second World War as one of the few half-Jews who did so.⁸⁶

83 Felscherinow et al., *Christiane F., mijn tweede leven; Hier en nu* (29 May 1995), *Brandpunt* (16 November 2014).

84 Frank van Ree, *Drugs. Verslag in de breedte* (4th edition, Utrecht 1977); Ivan Wolffers, *Verslaving* (Baarn 1979).

85 *Het moment* (4 June 1989); Peter de Waard, 'Bob van Amerongen 1924-2014' (*de Volkskrant* 10 June 2014).

86 De Waard, 'Bob van Amerongen'.

HET VERROTTE LEVEN VAN FLOORTJE BLOEM

While *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* six months after premiering in The Netherlands was still a huge hit on the big screen, and both *De moeder van David S.* and *Christiane F.* were continuing to be strong sellers in bookstores, in February 1982 a new book by Yvonne Keuls was published: *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem*. The writer had not just been enjoying the success that *De moeder van David S.* had brought her, she had become a national beacon for parents of children with drug problems.

In the wake of the success of *De moeder van David S.*, Keuls had been approached by many parents of addicted children. One of them had asked her to help her find her thirteen year old daughter. The girl had run away the year before and rumour had it she was now a heroin prostitute in Rotterdam. Keuls offered to use her contacts with the Rotterdam police. Through them she met a group of young heroin prostitutes. In the first half of 1981, she visited them regularly with food, clothes and medication, and the girls told her their stories. Many of them had run away from children's homes at thirteen or fourteen, only to fall into the trap of prostitution and heroin.⁸⁷

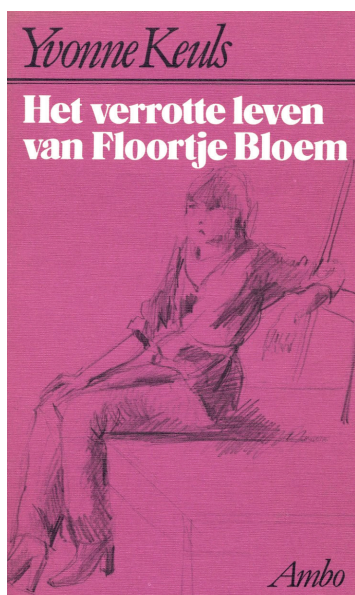
After her conversations with the girls, Keuls distinguished two 'routes to heroin prostitution'. One route concerned girls who escaped from children's homes and started prostituting themselves to be independent, but because they were not able to cope with the work, they started doing heroin. The other route concerned girls who started using heroin and then went into prostitution to support their habit.⁸⁸ She decided to model her main characters according to these two types: Floortje Bloem would represent the first, her sister Beppie the second. Sociological research would prove the writer's analysis of the two routes right a few years later.⁸⁹

87 Keuls, *Madame K.*, 227-228.

88 Ton van Helden, 'Schrijfster Yvonne Keuls in de ban van hogere machten', *VARAgids* (25 September 1982) 11.

89 Van de Berg et al., *Heroïneprostitutie*.

While talking to the young heroin prostitutes about kicking their heroin habit, Keuls discovered that there were no rehab facilities for these underage girls, just like the mother of Christiane F. had found that to be true in Germany. The problems of these girls were considered to be so specific that they should be treated apart from other heroin addicts, but there was no clinic specializing in this group. Psychiatrisch Centrum Bloemendaal (Psychiatric Centre Bloemendaal) had a pavilion prepared and ready to open in The Hague, but director Dr. Schipper was still waiting for the necessary permission of the Ministry of Justice. Keuls decided to support his case by writing another ‘documentary’, based on the eyewitness accounts of the 58 girls she had talked to.⁹⁰ Ambo published this new book two years after *De moeder van David S.*, in February of 1982.



COVER, BLURB AND FOREWORD

Not surprisingly, the design of *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* followed that of *De moeder van David S.*, so the fans could not miss it. On the cover was a pencil drawing of a young girl, looking normal and well dressed in early 1980s teenage fashion, done by the same artist who did the drawings for *De moeder van David S.*, Keuls's daughter Claudette. Inside there were again pencil drawings, this time of a bunny rabbit that would turn out to play an important part in the story. On the back of the book was a photo of a smiling Yvonne Keuls – now a familiar face to magazine readers and television viewers.

The blurb consisted almost completely of a quote that was attributed to the main character Floortje. Apparently, this was considered the essence of the book:

<i>'Ik doe steeds dingen, omdat een ander het wil. Ik ben pillen gaan slikken door een ander, met kerels</i>	<i>'Time and again I do things because someone else wants me to. I started doing pills because of</i>
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90 Keuls, *Madame K.*, 229; Berkel, 'Ik moet godverdomme mijn boodschap kwijt', 76.

<p><i>begonnen door een ander, naar een dealer gesleept door een ander. Maar toch kan ik niemand de schuld geven, want ik had toch nee kunnen zeggen, ik kies er toch zelf voor om mee te doen. Want de angst die ik dán heb, is altijd nog kleiner dan de angst om alleen te blijven als ik nee zeg. Ik zou best willen afkicken, ik ben nou vijftien jaar en ik wil best kappen met dit verrotte leven. Maar ik ben als de dood dat ze mij dan met een KZ-verklaring in een gekkenhuis gaan stoppen. Want ze kunnen toch niet anders? Heroïnehoertjes passen nergens bij en er is toch niks voor zulke meiden als ik? Kan jij niet proberen of er wél iets komt, want ik leef toch nog... ik ben toch nog steeds niet verloren?</i>⁹¹</p>	<p><i>someone else, I started with guys through someone else, I was dragged to a dealer by someone else. Yet I cannot blame anyone, because I could have said no. I choose to join in myself, right. Because the fear that I have then, is still smaller than the fear of being alone when I say no. I would like to become clean, I am fifteen years old now and I would like to quit this rotten life. But I am scared to death that they will declare me insane and put me in an asylum. What other choice do they have? Heroin hookers don't fit in anywhere and there is nothing for girls like me. Can't you try to let them arrange something, because I am still alive... I am not lost, am I?</i></p>
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Floortje was appealing directly to the reader in this quote on the back of the book. The exact same text was repeated in the foreword, but here the appeal turned out to have come from one of the girls on whom Keuls had based her story, Klaartje, and directed to the writer. This showed how Keuls created book characters out of actual people and combined their stories into one. Instead of explaining her method in the foreword, like she did in *De moeder van David S.*, this time she only implicated how she worked, perhaps expecting that her readers would know by now. There was a formal disclaimer in the colophon, however: 'All the events in this book really happened, but the names, traits and circumstances of the characters have been changed to the extent that they bear no resemblance to the actual people they were based on anymore.'

Klaartje's monologue in the foreword was directly followed by a declaration of support to the rehab facility for underage girls in Psychiatric Centre Bloemendaal. Keuls pointed out

91 'Keuls, *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem*, back cover.

exactly how long Dr. Schipper had been waiting for government approval: since September 30th, 1980 – a year and a half at the moment when *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* appeared. How well connected the writer was by now, also became clear from her dedication of the book to two police officers of the Rotterdam Prostitute Support Team.

THE STORY

The book starts when Floortje is an unborn baby in her mother's belly. With four year old Beppie, the mother escapes a violent husband and a sexually abusive landlord in Rotterdam. Aunt Gerda in Leiden is willing to take in mother and Beppie, but the baby is too much for her and Floortje is put in a home right after her birth. At three, she is placed in a loving foster family, but that ends when the father dies and the mother is unable to care for the children any longer. A stay in a second foster family quickly ends in disaster. By then, Floortje is considered too difficult, aggressive and promiscuous to be placed in foster care again and she is sent from children's home to children's home. She is eight years old.

At age eleven, she is allowed to spend her weekends with a host family where she does very well. She cuts this relationship off abruptly when an adult son sexually abuses her and she has no idea who to tell or how. Meanwhile, Floortje's mother has married again and wants her daughter back. Floortje starts spending her weekends and holidays with the family. She is appalled by her mother, an old-looking, nervous, hysterical woman. But she likes her stepfather Adri and in particular her sister Beppie. Beppie takes Floortje out to a youth centre on Saturday nights and as the parents pay little attention to the children, they have no idea that the young teenagers smoke, drink and do pot. Floortje tries everything that is offered to her in order to fit in. Beppie is the one who finances her and her sister's drug use: at sixteen she is earning a small wage working as a dietary assistant in a hospital, and she also gets money from her boyfriend in exchange for sex.

Floortje goes to secondary school, but the first thing she learns is how to cut classes. With her friend Karin she spends her school days at the home of Gerben, a grown man. They cuddle, play house, and the girls initiate sexual acts with him. Floortje tries to get the same kind of attention at home from Adri, and is taken straight back to the children's home when her

mother catches them. After Karin's mother reports Gerben to the police, he is convicted for paedophilia. He sends Floortje a white stuffed bunny as a birthday gift.

Beppie leaves home due to the conflicts there and ends up in the house of Patriek, a friend of her boyfriend. Floortje runs away from the children's home and convinces her friend Sjon, an intern she and Beppie know from the youth centre, to take her to her sister. Patriek provides the girls with shelter, food and a stash of drugs to use freely. Beppie wants to try everything, but it scares Floortje. When Floortje has a panic attack, Beppie forces her to take downers and uppers. A few days later they trip together for the first time. Sjon, worried, comes back and returns Floortje to the children's home. Beppie stays behind and takes her first snort of heroin. Now that she owes him so much, Beppie becomes a prostitute for Patriek.

With the help of Sjon, Floortje runs away to Beppie, who by now is completely hooked on heroin – she needs it to be able to have sex with all those men, she says. Floortje takes her sister to aunt Gerda to recover, and the elderly lady agrees to take the girls in. Beppie gets so sick while detoxing that she ends up in the hospital, where she finds back her strength. After treatment in a rehab run by the Pentecostal Church turns out to be a set up for conversion, she escapes and goes back to Rotterdam. Floortje runs away from aunt Gerda's to go find Beppie.

While looking for Beppie on the streets where dealers and prostitutes hustle, Floortje is seduced by a handsome Turkish young man, Onim, who turns out to be the son of a brothel keeper. Floortje is held by the family and forced to perform sexual services. She demands to be cut in in the profits and saves the money. Most of what she does are hand jobs, usually for immigrants; when pressured to go all the way, she vomits. After months, Floortje manages to escape with her earnings.

The sisters run into each other and Floortje goes to live with Beppie in a squat. They support Beppie's habit with Floortje's money until they are robbed by their neighbour, heroin addict Martien. Then there is an acute need for income and Beppie forces Floortje to go back to prostitution with her. In order to suppress Floortje's nausea when men ask too much of her, Beppie forces her sister to use heroin. It helps instantly.

Floortje meets a man who arranges for her to be admitted somewhere. While waiting for placement at aunt Gerda's, she gets so nervous that she steals money and cheques and takes off again. With Floortje's help, Martien cashes the cheques and robs the house of the man who tried to help her. When she later reads in the newspaper that the man and his wife have just lost their new-born baby, she feels devastated with guilt and uses heroin again.

Beppie comes back to the squat in search of money or drugs. Floortje does not want to give her anything, which results in a physical fight. Beppie picks up Floortje's bunny rabbit and throws it out of the window. The book ends with Floortje running out into the dark, overgrown, junk-filled garden to look for the only thing she had left to love in this world.

AN INSTANT SUCCESS

On February 23rd, 1982 *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* was presented to minister of Justice Job de Ruiter, who was responsible for the permission and funding for the clinic for underage addicted girls, and to the two Rotterdam policemen Keuls had dedicated her book to. A long conversation with De Ruiter followed, that resulted in the promise to look into the matter soon.⁹²

Meanwhile, the book was an instant success. Yvonne Keuls later attributed that largely to her appearance in the popular talk show *Sonja op maandag* ('Sonja on Monday') on March 1st where she talked about her book at length. She also spoke of the clinic for girls and of her plan to install a bus in the working area of the heroin prostitutes where basic health care would be provided. Television viewers sent her letters of support and money to spend on the bus or some other project that would benefit the girls.⁹³ 'People want to give money to Floortje Bloem,' Keuls said in another interview. 'It becomes their child. She has come alive.'⁹⁴

92 'Keuls geeft beeld van heroïnehoertje', *NRC Handelsblad* (24 February 1982); Keuls, *Madame K.*, 228, 233-234.

93 Keuls, *Madame K.*, 229-232.

94 Berkel, 'Ik moet godverdomme mijn boodschap kwijt', 77.

Keuls's book campaign was also an activist campaign. She promoted a better 'family life' in children's homes: those should be organized in smaller units.⁹⁵ But her most prominent political point was the lack of help for young addicted girls of thirteen, fourteen years old. She saw only one solution: arrest them and force them to get clean. 'They should not be allowed to choose [...] these children are so young and so sick! In such cases you should not ask if they agree. If they had a brain tumour, we wouldn't ask if we might admit them, would we?'⁹⁶ Apparently, there was a limit to the responsibility of the addict herself in Keuls's mind: when they were too young to decide what was best for them.

Unfortunately, a few months later De Ruiter became minister of Defence, and government funding for the clinic would never be decided upon.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, Keuls's bus idea would be realized, although in a different form: the Rotterdam municipal health service GG & GD opened a bus in Rotterdam, and a 'living room project' opened in the Waldorpstraat in The Hague under the auspices of the writer.⁹⁸

Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem would be Yvonne Keuls's biggest seller. In 1982 alone, it was reprinted fourteen times and 150,000 copies were sold – which made it the number one best selling book in the Netherlands that year; in August of 1987, this figure had risen to 200,000, and in October 1992 it was up to 235,000.⁹⁹ Again, lending statistics of public libraries are unavailable, but Yvonne Keuls was very proud that she became the libraries' 'most stolen author'.¹⁰⁰

PROFILING THE FILM FAMILY S.

As successful as *Floortje Bloem* was, she did not erase the memory of David S. While working on her new book, Keuls had also decided on who was allowed to turn *De moeder van David S.* into a television film – a process that she had controlled vigorously, she told an interviewer:

95 Roos, 'Ik had het gevoel dat ik dit doen móest', 12.

96 Ibidem.

97 'Keuls geeft beeld van heroïnehoertje'; Cor van de Poel, 'Zo mag ik 't zien', *Leeuwarder Courant* (2 March 1982); Keuls et al., *De arrogantie van de macht*, 233-234.

98 Keuls, *Madame K.*, 233; Veijgen, *Yvonne Keuls*, 26.

99 Van Boven, *Bestsellers*, 48, 145; Veijgen, *Yvonne Keuls*, 34; Kuijpers, 'Meneer en mevrouw zijn gek'.

100 Van Boven, *Bestsellers*, 48, 145; Veijgen, *Yvonne Keuls*, 34.

‘Counter to all commercial interests and offers I *chose* for television. Because, what do I want? I want to carry the responsibility *to the final word*. I want to write the screenplay *myself*. I have set that as a condition. No word goes in it that I do not want! I make that television version for all the tens of thousands of parents who have difficulty letting go of their child. People who have that kind of trouble do not go to the cinema just for fun. I want to reach them at home. I hope to reach five million people in the living rooms that evening.’¹⁰¹ It would be six million, she claimed later.¹⁰²

Almost needless to say, Keuls had also been the one to decide on the cast for *De moeder van David S.* In order to make up her mind about who should play David, she wrote a profile: he is intelligent, sensitive, adventurous, artistic, lonely. By doing so, she realized this was the image she wanted to show the world: ‘Suddenly I knew: those factors combined [...] That is addiction.’¹⁰³ Parts of her screenplay were published in an issue of the well-read literary school series *Bulkboek* that included extensive profiles of all the main characters. The description of David as a junkie Keuls included ‘tantrums, apathy, some kind of “feverish” urge to make promises.’ Mother Len was summarized as rebellious in her youth, overwhelmed as a young mother, dominant and a difficult partner to her husband; during the film she would develop into a woman who knows that she must stop deciding for her son. Father Simon was characterized as spoiled by his parents, impressionable, weak, unfit to deal with setbacks, but he comes out stronger. Sister Juliët was labelled the down-to-earth one, the strong one, despite how she suffers from the situation at home. Grandmother, by contrast, was characterized as ‘always complaining and playing the victim, although she means well.’¹⁰⁴

101 Berkel, ‘Ik moet godverdomme mijn boodschap kwijt’, 75.

102 *Vrijdagavond met Van Willigenburg* (23 December 1988).

103 Berkel, ‘Ik moet godverdomme mijn boodschap kwijt’, 74.

104 Keuls, ‘Het televisiescenario van De moeder van David S.’, 4-5.

The television adaptation premiered on the Dutch television screen on September 30th, 1982.¹⁰⁵ The story begins at the point where David is in the hospital after his LSD-psychosis and begs his parents to arrange for him to go to the Emiliehoeve – his childhood and everything leading up to his addiction is left out. This takes away any understanding for David, and makes him look even more evil by nature than the book does. From that point on, the film follows the book closely and many dialogues even sound very much like the ones in the book. There are a few important differences: for example, the film shows a penetrating image that is not in the book – of a toilet in which a cat's box has been emptied all over, clogging the drain and left like that until David's place is left inhabitable; and a scene in which Bennie begs his mother to help him die. These changes create an even bigger drama: the filth and the desperation hit the spectator harder not only because they are now visualised, but also because they are enlarged in comparison to the book. By contrast, the scene in which Tom is delivering a speech from the rooftop of a car, is left out. Was his political programme just unsuitable for the screen, or would it distract from the focus on the S. family too much?

It is interesting that in the film mother Len has no name. In the end credits it becomes clear that this is no accident, but a conscious decision: while all other characters are described in full ('Simon, David's father'), she is referred to only as 'the mother of David S.'. It seems like the film makers have wanted to make a point that this mother figure is universal.

RONDON TIEN AND THEATRES

Immediately after the film, a special of the new talk show *Rondon Tien* aired. Several parents of heroin addicted children – a few with their now recovered son or daughter – had been convinced to come to the studio and tell their stories to host Hans Sleuvenhoek. In their midst were also three experts: Bob van Amerongen, the educator who also wrote the foreword to *Christiane F.*, reverend Hans Visser of a day shelter for heroin addicts in Rotterdam – and

105 *De moeder van David S.* (1982). Television film directed by Ruud Keers. Consulted on DVD supplied by Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid, Hilversum.

Yvonne Keuls.¹⁰⁶ This scenario was repeated three years later, when the film was shown on television again. *Rondom Tien* checked back in with the parents from before and discussed how their situation had changed, this time only with Van Amerongen, again in the role of educator, but without Keuls and Visser.¹⁰⁷ I will come back to some of the things that were discussed in the next chapter.

In the meantime, David S. had also found his way into the theatres. In 1984 a Belgian company toured the Low Countries, and in 1986/1987 a Dutch production did the same. Lead actress Marijke Merckens explained how Keuls controlled the theatre version as much as she did the film adaptation: not only had Merckens been asked to play the part of Len by the writer herself, Keuls had been present at every rehearsal and not a word in the script was changed without her approval. The story of David S. and his mother would be consistent and stay that way.¹⁰⁸

Like *De moeder van David S.*, Keuls turned *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* into a theatre play. It premiered in early December of 1988, under the direction of Willem van de Sande Bakhuyzen.¹⁰⁹ It was also Keuls's ambition from the start that again a movie would follow: 'Floortje Bloem I will turn into a feature film. I can use the revenues for my bus.'¹¹⁰ Again, there would be conditions: she would collaborate only if there was enough money, if she got enough of a say in it, and if the story would not be turned into a cheap sensation film.¹¹¹ Apparently, film makers stood in line, but up to the present day 'Floortje The Movie' still has not come out. In an interview in 2011 the determination of Keuls, at eighty years old, to control an adaptation seemed undiminished, however, and writing the screenplay for it may be one of the last things she does as a writer.¹¹²

106 *Rondom Tien* (30 September 1982).

107 *Rondom Tien* (14 March 1982).

108 Jacques J. d'Ancona, 'Marijke Merckens spottend: "Hollywood moet nog bellen"', *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (9 May 1987).

109 Harry Huizing, 'Karikaturen pletten hol docudrama', *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (22 December 1988).

110 Berkel, 'Ik moet godverdomme mijn boodschap kwijt', 75.

111 Carlos Alleene, 'Yvonne Keuls. Kiezen tussen leven en dood', *Spectator* (23 October 1982).

112 Joost van Velzen, 'Een Haagse dame van de straat', *Trouw* (17 December 2011).

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 1

From this publication history of the three stories, the messages or images that their authors (in the broadest sense: Yvonne Keuls, Kai Hermann and Horst Rieck, but also Christiane F. and Bob van Amerongen) wanted to spread come to the fore. The parallels between the three are striking. First, the 'truth' of the stories is stressed time and again, by Yvonne Keuls when she is repeatedly explaining her method, and by Bob van Amerongen as well as publishing firm Becht when they are erasing the German journalists and attributing sole authorship to Christiane. Second, the books combined (more than the films) give the reader the impression that heroin addiction can touch young people and families from various social classes. But the strongest message is the third one: that of individual responsibility. Both Yvonne Keuls and Bob van Amerongen stress that using heroin is a choice that no-one is to blame for except the addicts themselves. Not even the addicts' parents are allowed to share this responsibility by feeling guilty – even though Yvonne Keuls undermines her own statements to this regard with her campaign for forced treatment for young girl heroin prostitutes. Parents – especially the mothers – are strongly advised to accept their own form of individual responsibility by distancing themselves from their addicted child and saving the rest of the family, including themselves. In these stories, individual responsibility is key.

Not explicitly, but in their choice of protagonists and other characters the authors suggest gender specific implications for the images of addicts and parents. Christiane, Beppie and Floortje outweigh the only male protagonist, David, not only by numbers, but also in the nuanced images that are painted of them. These make it much easier to identify with the girls than with the boy. Turning to the parents, Len and Gerrie stand in the forefront of the representation of the parents; their husbands are remarkably marginal in their stories. Through their choice of protagonists, the authors seem to put an image forward of female heroin addicts and their mothers threatened much more than their male counterparts, but also deserving more understanding. A more detailed analysis of the images the characters present follows in chapters 3 and 4.

CHAPTER 2

REACTIONS

The three life stories washed over the Netherlands in a consistent wave that gained momentum with each addition. After the previous chapter showed how broad their impact was and which messages they carried, this chapter will show how deep it went and which messages were picked up. It gives us a sense of what aspects of the images of heroin addicts and their parents mattered to people and thus gives further direction to the analysis of the images in the following chapters. Reactions to the stories, for example in reviews, articles and letters to editors, often considered more than one medium, usually book and film or book and play. That is why, in the following analysis of the reactions, I also do not distinguish sharply between the books and their respective films and plays. As the audience was varied, I divide it into specific groups that each had their own perception: heroin users themselves, teenagers, parents, professionals and critics.

HEROIN USERS

CRITICIZING THE NEGATIVE STEREOTYPE

Reactions from heroin users themselves are hard to find. For example, in *Spuut 11*, the magazine of the MDHG (Medische Dienst Heroïne Gebruikers, an association of heroin users) there is no reference to any of the stories.¹¹³ The only direct reaction I have found refers to *De moeder van David S.* Frontman Nico Adriaans of the Rotterdam Junkiebond (Junkie League) made it clear that he was not left untouched: ‘That is what I find so regrettable about the film *De Moeder Van David S.* [sic]. ... everyone thinks that I, like David S., have kicked my mother. The people do not see the story as the story of David S. only.’¹¹⁴

113 Medische Dienst Heroïne Gebruikers (Amsterdam), *Spuut 11. MDHG Bulletin* (Amsterdam 1980-1985).

114 ‘Nico Adriaans van Junkiebond: “Hulpverleners denken alleen maar aan liters methadon”’, *Het Vrije Volk* (13 December 1985).

Christiane F. has described a few times how young people reacted to her story. But it seems like these reactions mainly came from young readers who were not (yet) using heroin – I will get back to them in the next paragraph. What Christiane does remember from junkie colleagues specifically, was jealousy: ‘Some said: you have no idea what a junkie is, I have a much better story to tell.’¹¹⁵ And some were critical. When she visited the Kreuzberg scene in 1995 with a Dutch television crew, someone asked Christiane: ‘That film was exaggerated, right?’, to which she agreed.¹¹⁶ It is difficult to weigh these reactions. They are clouded by the envy that Christiane’s cult status and the money she made from book and film must have provoked. But the last quote may suggest that some junkies felt that this story too confirmed a negative stereotype.

The reactions I have found to *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* are indirect as well and not very independent. Yvonne Keuls mentioned that she got loads of letters from (former) heroin prostitutes thanking her for writing the story the way she did.¹¹⁷ In response to the book, television news show *Televizier Magazine* portrayed sixteen year old Yvonne (not to be confused with Keuls), who ran away from home and started doing heroin at fourteen. Her life story only added to the victim image of young heroin prostitutes that Keuls had painted: she described how her boyfriend violently forced her into prostitution when he did not want to risk going to jail anymore for the robbing and stealing that he did to provide for their daily heroin needs. And her story underlined the stigma that these girls suffered: it was obviously very difficult for her to talk about her experience as a prostitute, as the interviewer had to pull the answers to his questions out of her while she was blushing and looking down. When asked if she would have gone to rehab if there had been a clinic for her – like the one Keuls was advocating with her book – Yvonne softly said she would have.¹¹⁸

115 *Brandpunt* (16 November 2014).

116 *Hier en nu* (29 May 1995).

117 André Peeters, “‘Ik ben van nature een aanklager en daar ontsnap ik niet aan’”, *De Standaard* (19 April 1982).

118 *Televizier Magazine* (16 October 1982).

DISCUSSING KEULS'S AGENDA

Next, the same show interviewed Trijnie Baas, a woman in her late twenties who had gotten addicted at seventeen but was now clean. 'I would not have gone to a clinic,' she said. 'You don't have the motivation, it is no use at that moment. You have to drag these girls from the street and just put them there.' Baas obviously supported Keuls's campaign, which also becomes clear from an article about a meeting of the Plattelandsvrouwen (Country Women) where she appeared together with the writer.¹¹⁹

But not everybody agreed with Keuls's agenda. The writer mentioned in an interview how the Junkiebond (Junkie League) had responded sceptically to her plan. 'The Junkiebond says: you are in favour of forced treatment. But that is exactly what I am not in favour of. If you are addicted, man, you can do that. You choose it yourself. But I still find that these young children do not choose it. They slide into it. They don't know what it is. They are in a forced position now. So I turn it around. I say: This is forced! And the clinic in Bloemendaal can be a chance for them.'¹²⁰ This discussion reflects the debate on addiction care that was raging at the time (see introduction). The Junkie League was a fervent advocate of the accepting, supportive view on addiction care, while Keuls firmly stood in the corner of those who promoted abstinence as the only goal.

CRITICIZING THE GENDER IMAGE

Another point of criticism Yvonne Keuls was called out on was that *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* made it look like only girls were prostituting themselves for heroin. The writer indeed thought that that was the case, until she was approached by boy prostitutes who had read her book. They had grown up in children's homes where they had been taught how to perform sexual services by their male group leaders. Some were now in a complicated sexual relationship with a magistrate in a juvenile court, which was known by the authorities, but the man was not prosecuted.¹²¹

119 *Televisier Magazine* (16 October 1982); 'Yvonne Keuls bij Plattelandsvrouwen: "Ouder moet verslaafd kind volledig loslaten"', *Leeuwarder Courant* (25 March 1982).

120 Van Helden, 'Schrijfster Yvonne Keuls in de ban van hogere machten.'

121 Keuls, *De arrogantie van de macht*, 84; Keuls, *Madame K.*, 242.

This would become the subject of Keuls's next 'documentary', *Annie Berber en het verdriet van een tedere crimineel*, appearing in 1985.¹²² With 105,000 copies sold by 1988 it was a little less of a success than its predecessors, but still a bestseller.¹²³ As in this book heroin addiction plays a very minor part, however, and the reactions to this story focussed on the issue of the abusive magistrate alone – Keuls would be vehemently attacked for accusing the man – this story does not belong in my analysis of the most popular life stories on heroin addicts of the early 1980s. What I want to point out here, is that in *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* young male addicts did not prostitute themselves: it was only girls. The reader of *Christiane F.*, however, knew better.

TEENAGERS

Teenagers who had read several heroin stories, like *Het onkruid en de bloem*, *De moeder van David S.* en *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem*, were most impressed by *Christiane F.*, a reviewer wrote.¹²⁴ That may be why it is easiest to find reactions of teenagers to Christiane's story. But Floortje was also popular in this age group. The only story I have not found reactions to by teenagers is *De moeder van David S.*, even though it was a popular read for them. Exam makers must have offered it as inspiration for a writing assignment in the 1984 Dutch language final exam because they thought the kids would relate to it.¹²⁵ And in 1986 *De moeder van David S.* in fact turned out to be number 8 in the top ten of books most often read for 'the list', the list of books pupils in secondary school have to compile and read for their final Dutch language exam.¹²⁶

122 Yvonne Keuls, *Annie Berber of het verdriet van een tedere crimineel* (Baarn 1985).

123 Veijgen, *Yvonne Keuls*, 34.

124 Tonne, 'Leestips. Boeken over drugs', *Eindhovens Dagblad* (25 June 1983).

125 'Verschil C- en D-niveau mavo moeilijk', *Leeuwarder Courant* (8 May 1984).

126 Wilma Cornelissen, 'Hermans en Mulisch oogsten meeste waardering bij middelbare scholieren', *NRC Handelsblad* (8 July 1986).

This does not necessarily mean that the story was popular for its touching content. Secondary school pupils who were obliged to watch the play as a school activity, for example, were often disrupting the performance. Marijke Merckens, who played the mother, recalls the ordeal the actors went through regularly: ‘You should see the mess after a matinee. Recently, we were bombarded with liquorice sweets and during intermission they had poured a bag full of acorns all over the stage.’¹²⁷ The popularity of *De moeder van David S.* among pupils can probably for a large part be explained by the popularity of the other Yvonne Keuls books and their easy-to-read quality. That I have not found one reaction of a teenager to *De moeder van David S.* specifically, suggests that this book did not resonate with this age group as much as the other two. Who could blame them: it was aimed at their parents.

TAKING THE WARNING

As mentioned before, Christiane F. got many personal reactions from young people who had read or watched her story. In a Dutch television report in 1995 she read a letter from a German fan, who wrote to her that she saw her own life reflected in Christiane’s story, but that thanks to the book, she was spared from heroin.¹²⁸ Two Dutch teenagers wrote to *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* in 1981 to inspire others to go and see the movie for the same reason: ‘This film is a good warning for our peers, who often use drugs, booze and other shit, not because it feels so good, but to join in and act cool. [...] this film is for us and not for all those adults who think they know everything.’¹²⁹

Other reactions to *Christiane F.* show how oblivious many Dutch teenagers were of the heroin life, even at the summit of the epidemic. In reactions that made it into the Dutch general media when the book and the film were launched, bewilderment and disbelief stood out. Two thirteen year old girls recommended that others read the book too, because they had no idea:

127 D’Ancona, ‘Marijke Merckens spottend’.

128 *Hier en nu* (29 May 1995).

129 Ellen and Meino de Vries, ‘Heroïnefilm voor de jeugd (2)’, *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (17 August 1981, letter to the editor).

'I was perplexed when I read it all, it is almost unbelievable but it all really happened.'¹³⁰ The same atmosphere was detectable in the *Pubertijd* television talk show special that host Ivo de Wijs presented to a live audience of teenagers. Most of them had not even tried a cigarette or a glass of beer yet. When De Wijs interviewed musician and notorious drug addict Herman Brood, the artist, apparently aware of the innocence of the spectators, refused to answer his questions about heroin: 'I am not going to promote it here.'¹³¹

The same atmosphere colours the reactions to *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem*. '[...] a book that many young people have to read, we think,' ten fifteen year old pupils, most of them girls, at College Blaucapel in Utrecht wrote in their review in *Het Vrije Volk*. 'Not because the story is "beautiful". But because you know so little about these things while they are happening around you.' It is far from their daily reality, they admit, and some of them had a hard time believing that it was a 'true' story. 'But you have to: Yvonne Keuls knows these girls intimately.'¹³² Seventeen year old Tania, interviewed elsewhere, was equally shocked: 'The book is heart-breaking and it ends awfully. It is really stupid and sad to be so addicted at thirteen.' In her, the story awoke a helping spirit: ' [...] the drug problem appeals to me. You hear so much about it. And then you really want to know. I also wanted to go and help Floortje or other junkies.'¹³³

Teenager Menno, who was in the audience of *Pubertijd*, wanted to check if the film *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* gave a correct impression of the heroin problem. Bob van Amerongen, the writer of the foreword to *Christiane F.*, was there again to present the scientific standpoint. Van Amerongen encouraged everyone to read the book, because in his opinion the picture the movie painted was truthful, but too summarized.¹³⁴ And apparently, like Van Amerongen trusted, the reality indeed worked as a warning, at least for

130 DB, 'Verslag van een Junkie 3', *Sextant* (February 1981).

131 *Pubertijd* (28 October 1981).

132 Liesbeth van der Jagt, 'Jeugdboekenhoek', *Het Vrije Volk* (28 June 1983).

133 Patty Knippenberg, 'Gesprek met Yvonne Keuls', 38.

134 *Pubertijd* (28 October 1981).

some. In another educational programme, a girl said: 'I was curious, but after seeing the film I think that it gives a lot of problems.'¹³⁵ According to Yvonne Keuls, many children told her that they particularly remembered Floortje's quote: I could have said no. 'That in the end she places the responsibility in her own hands. I think that is fantastic.'¹³⁶

GETTING INSPIRED

But not every teenager saw it the same way. Christiane F. herself reported that there were people who went too far in their enthusiasm about her story: 'I have visited fans who had their walls hung full with pictures of me. [...] I told them to take the pictures down. It must be a warning. You should not want to be like me. I don't want to be like I was back then, in the book.'¹³⁷ This didn't stop young people in the early 1980s from going on pilgrimages to West-Berlin and visiting all the places Christiane had described with the book in their hands.¹³⁸ And it didn't stop the publisher of Christiane's autobiography to promote her new story in 2015 with: 'The hero of a generation is back!'¹³⁹

In the Netherlands also not everyone was scared away: 'I have seen the movie, good movie,' said a girl in an educational tv programme. 'It was explained well and you could see perfectly how it happened.' The fact that she had a cousin who was addicted to heroin may put her remark in perspective, but it still gives an understanding of how Christiane's story could work as an inspiration.¹⁴⁰

And that it did, was confirmed by news stories soon. *De Telegraaf* reported that a fifteen year old girl from The Hague started doing heroin within a month after she had read *Christiane F.* when a friend offered her some to try.¹⁴¹ *De Volkskrant* quoted a mother of three young heroin

135 *Heroïne laat je niet gaan* (31 December 1981).

136 'Floortje Bloem Prijs', *Nuts-Aegon Nieuws* 1 (1992).

137 *Hier en nu* (29 May 1995).

138 Aly Knol, 'Junkie-kijken wint het van "Muur"', *Het Vrije Volk* (24 April 1981).

139 Felscherinow et al., *Christiane F., mijn tweede leven*, front cover.

140 *Heroïne laat je niet gaan* (31 December 1981).

141 Cees Koning, 'Karin wist waar heroïne toe leidt, Toch raakte zij verslaafd...', *De Telegraaf* (30 January 1982).

addicts talking about a girl she knew ‘from a good family’: ‘She had read the book *Christiane F.* six times even, that’s how much she liked it. Then she went out to look for it, because she wanted to live the experiences that are described in the book herself. So she consciously sought it out. And now she is hooked. [...] Now she says: what have I done...’¹⁴² And criminologists Otto Janssen and Koert Swierstra, while researching the lives of heroin addicts, met a girl who even justified her choice for heroin with *Christiane F.*: ‘“It is a way to live,” she said.’¹⁴³

PARENTS

GETTING SCARED

Perhaps understandably, parents who did not have an addicted child did not feel the need to express themselves directly in the media. But from news stories and interviews it becomes clear that they were far from left untouched. Parents were often reminded of the stories in the media, especially with the vivid images from *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* that were used time and again to powerfully illustrate the extent of the heroin epidemic in the Netherlands on television.¹⁴⁴

Some people were so impressed by *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* that they even called Yvonne Keuls to tell her. ‘All day long the telephone rings,’ the writer told a journalist. ‘Perfect strangers say: “I was unable to put it down. I have read the whole night through and I am devastated.” Of course they are. Because I was devastated by writing it. That is contagious.’ It was all about fear, was her analysis. ‘[...] while you are reading you live it as if it happens to you. The heroin floozies of the Rotterdam Binnenweg in your living room.’¹⁴⁵

142 ‘Ik wil ze graag wegsturen, wist ik maar waarheen,’ *de Volkskrant* (30 January 1984).

143 ‘Groninger wetenschappers in sociologische studie: Heroïne wordt steeds gewoner voor jongeren die geen toekomst zien,’ *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (17 September 1982).

144 E.g. in *TROS Aktua* (10 August 1981, 23 October 1981, 26 January 1988); *Hier en nu* (6 February 1982).

145 Berkel, ‘Ik moet godverdomme mijn boodschap kwijt,’ 77.

And so the stories installed a fear in parents that their adolescent children would fall victim to the same fate. An interview in *NRC* with the mother of a rebellious young runaway serves to illustrate that. ‘The sad books about the fate of Floortje Bloem, *Christiane F.* and *David S.* are next to each other on a shelf beside the fireplace. “When Hester started coming home so late,” says her mother, “I panicked because of those books. In my mind’s eye I saw my daughter hooking on the streets, addicted to heroin.”’¹⁴⁶

This fear could have resulted in parents keeping their children away from the books and the films. But apparently the idea that they were important warnings resonated and many parents gave their children the books to read or watched the movies with them. Writer Marcia Luyten remembered that her father bought *Christiane F.* for her: ‘When as a teenager, in the mid 1980s, I went out to bars and discotheques in Heerlen, the city was going down. Sometimes I literally had to step over junkies and syringes, because back then it was a junkie hole, really. It was so bad that in hindsight I realize that my dad was always scared that he would have to pick me out of the gutter. For instance, he gave me *Christiane F.* to read. As a warning? Yes. I think it was meant to be prevention.’¹⁴⁷

Not everyone was so enlightened, though. That was shown by a news story about the Stichting Christelijke Drugs Bestrijding (Foundation Christian Drug Control) in the small village of Balkbrug, Overijssel. Worried locals had forced them to close their welfare centre Tabitha after complaints that were not necessarily rooted in reality: ‘The complaints were caused by fear after the showing of the film *De moeder van David S.* on television.’¹⁴⁸

GETTING INFORMED

But these adults also used the stories to get informed themselves about a phenomenon most of them knew nothing about. For some, the starting point for advice was Yvonne Keuls herself,

146 Rudie Kagie, ‘Hoe moet ik mij gedragen als iemand van mijn eigen leeftijd’, *NRC Handelsblad* (5 January 1985).

147 *Boeken* (18 October 2015).

148 ‘Crisis CDB leidt tot herstructurering’, *Nederlands Dagblad* (8 April 1986).

whose success as an author also gave her the aura of an expert. While she did point out repeatedly that she wasn't, it was also a role that she seemed to embrace. Journalist Michiel Berkel followed Keuls during one of her meetings with readers and noted: 'When after the break I see her answer questions from the audience like a patient mother who warns her children to be careful in the street, I get the feeling that this person has annexed and exploited a problem area to become significant and to transcend anonymity. Masterfully she capitalizes on the fears of her audience ('They are our Dutch children!') and is tempted to unprofessional statements such as: 'I don't differentiate between soft and hard drugs. You can use hashish all the time, then you are using hashish the hard way. Likewise, you can use hard drugs the soft way.'¹⁴⁹

DISCUSSING THE STEREOTYPE OF THE JUNKIE

One of the goals of The National Foundation Parents of Drug Addicts – the parents group that had presented *De moeder van David S.* to State Secretary Veder-Smit – was changing the stereotypical image of their children: 'What we want is that addicts in our society are seen as human beings again. Now an addicted child is treated differently, not by his closest relatives but by his grandparents, aunts and uncles. Nobody knows how to deal with someone like that. People act like the addict is something scary. [...] That results in weird tensions. The addict is the one who suffers most from that.'¹⁵⁰ It is remarkable, in this light, that they did not challenge the stereotypical image of heroin users that Yvonne Keuls painted in her book and that Nico Adriaans of the Rotterdam Junkie League protested so strongly against.

If anything, the parents confirmed the stereotype, or they even made it worse. The real life stories that were offered in the *Rondom Tien* talk shows sketched the heroin using children in familiar terms: skinny as a skeleton, unhealthy, filthy, focussed only on getting heroin and on getting the money for it, stealing and prostituting, without hope and often suicidal. The three recovered children who were in the studio, looking normal and healthy, by their appearance

149 Berkel, 'Ik moet godverdomme mijn boodschap kwijt', 75.

150 *TROS Aktua* (15 March 1980).

countered the idea of hopelessness,¹⁵¹ but a parent group that wrote to the *Leeuwarder Courant* again confirmed the negative image: 'Let those who are interested in the drug problem read the book *De moeder van David S.* by Yvonne Keuls, because this shows the true life of an addict and his or her parents.'¹⁵²

COMBATTING THE STIGMA OF THE PARENTS

In the *Rondom Tien* shows the focus was on what parents can or cannot do to prevent their child from getting addicted and on what to do when that happens anyway. Both programmes led to the conclusion that addiction hit all kinds of families and that parents could not be blamed for it. The only thing parents of addicted children could do was go through the process, look for support with fellow sufferers, learn to establish limits and let go – just like the mother of David S. The recognition was so strong that a mother in the second *Rondom Tien* episode in 1985 even exclaimed, while seeing the film: 'It is like I am watching myself.'¹⁵³

In the same *Rondom Tien* parents said that things had changed for them since *De moeder van David S.* was broadcast and discussed for the first time, three years earlier. Parent groups had sprung up all over the country, lifting isolation, desperation and shame, and there was a feeling that the stigma was lessening.¹⁵⁴ Empowered parents now even engaged in the political debate. Not only had they offered their manifesto to the State Secretary, they also sent letters to editors offering their insights on measures that the authorities were considering. 'It is hardly ever possible to motivate the addict,' the Leeuwarden parent group wrote, 'and he will most certainly not benefit when this pernicious substance [heroin] is distributed for free.'¹⁵⁵

151 *Rondom Tien* (30 September 1982 and 14 March 1982).

152 Contactgroep Ouders van Drugsverslaafden, 'Heroïne-verstreking', *Leeuwarder Courant* (22 February 1984).

153 *Rondom Tien* (14 March 1985).

154 *Rondom Tien* (14 March 1985); see also Veijgen, *Yvonne Keuls*, 25.

155 Contactgroep Ouders van Drugsverslaafden, 'Heroïne-verstreking'.

SOUNDTRACK NO. 2

DOE MAAR – HEROÏNE GODVERDOMME (1983)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=xX9I9kiaPRI



Although none of them were ill-disposed towards the use of drugs, drummer René van Collem's heroin addiction went too far to his colleagues of Doe Maar, to the extent that the outrageously popular Dutch band – without him – made this anti-heroin song a hit single in 1983. Even among pop stars the image of the heroin user was on the decline.¹⁵⁶

Je zegt je zit in de zorgen

You say you are in trouble

Je bent een zielepiet

You are a poor soul

En elke dag zeg jij weer

And each day again you say

Morgen stop ik met die rotzooi

Tomorrow, I am quitting that shit

Nou het is je eigen leven

Well it is your own life

Je moet het zelf maar zien

You should see for yourself

Maar ik zou er wat voor geven

But it would mean so much to me

Als ik je weer eens lachen zag

To see you smile again

¹⁵⁶ René van Collem, *Heroïne godverdomme. Zijn biografie* (Utrecht 2014); *Doe Maar. Dit is alles* (2013). Documentary directed by Martijn Nijboer. Available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGR_oTZE534.

PROFESSIONALS

In the general media, I have found very few health care workers, police officials, teachers or other professionals refer to the three life stories – they may have in their professional literature, but systematic research in that genre goes beyond the scope of this thesis. In the Becht archive I have found a few clippings from professional newsletters in which the stories are summarized and readers were given advice on how to use them in education. For example, in the FZA quarterly for professionals in the drug education and rehab sector, the book *De moeder van David S.* was written about.¹⁵⁷ The main focus in this chapter, however, is on reactions by professionals who spoke out in the general media.

ANALYSING THE HEROIN USER AND THE FAMILY

An interesting starting point is the analysis of the S. family by family therapist Louk van der Post in *De Groene Amsterdammer*. According to him, the theme of the book is parents and children wrestling with the necessary process of letting go that they have to go through in adolescence – ‘there is nothing special in his family history that makes it understandable that David would go on heroin.’ The stereotypical gender roles of the parents, but more importantly the parents of the parents, in his view lie at the root of the problem. The way Len, Simon and David react to each other and how the other children suffer was described very realistically by Keuls, he judged, and so was the fact that traditional mental health and addiction care have nothing to offer. Even though Van der Post objected to the way educational information about drug use was included in the novel, he agreed with the basic concept that the worn-out parent of a heroin user was presented with: ‘As long as you keep helping your child, it will never get help, it is not until you help yourself to get a better life, that a chance arises that the life of your child will be better too.’¹⁵⁸

Like Van der Post does for *De moeder van David S.*, Frank Bovenkerk discards heroin as the root of the problems in *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem*. Central to her story, the

157 ‘Boekbespreking’, *Kwartaalberichten FZA*.

158 Louk van der Post, ‘Sinaasappelsap kontra heroine’, *De Groene Amsterdammer* (21 May 1980).

criminologist writes, is the downfall of a young woman in society that makes clear how the system that is supposed to take care of her is responsible for her sad fate. Keuls's campaign for a specialized clinic for girls like Floortje is incomprehensible to him, as this is exactly the kind of institution that has ruined Floortje's life. The only viewpoint Bovenkerk considers new is that Floortje starts prostituting herself before she regularly starts using heroin. He wonders how common that is – a question that his colleagues Ton van de Berg and Maria Blom would provide the affirmative answer to a few years later in their report *Heroïneprostitutie*.¹⁵⁹

DEBATING EDUCATION VERSUS INSPIRATION

In the clippings that the Becht review archive on *Christiane F.* holds of professional newsletters, there is agreement that this story was educational for young people, parents (with or without addicted children) and experts more than other books about drugs because it was not lecturing, but simply describing what happens. One reviewer noted that it might make some curious,¹⁶⁰ but in these clippings I have not found reference to a discussion of the risks involved.

But as shown in chapter 1, the archive also holds information on the ongoing debate in Germany about the risk that children would get inspired by Christiane's story and how to prevent that.¹⁶¹ Even before *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* came out in the Netherlands, *Het Vrije Volk* reported on this. Some German experts thought that the story in the film ended too hopeful. Instable young people could conclude that it wasn't so difficult to become clean once you had had enough. The fact that the film ended with the names and (short) lifetimes of three of Christiane's friends, did not seem to make a difference. Other experts stressed the positive effect of the story: it lifted the taboo on everything that had to do with heroin, and demystified the junkie world. Meanwhile, German parents were advised to accompany their children to the cinema and talk about the film afterwards.¹⁶²

159 Frank Bovenkerk, 'Kansloze Floortjes', *de Volkskrant* (23 March 1982).

160 G.E. Schaap, 'Christiane F', *Tijdschrift Alcohol en Drugs* (December 1981).

161 UvA Spec. Coll., Archief Becht, 11.2 Recensies, Verzamelde recensies van uitgegeven titels met een lijst recensie-exemplaren, inv. no. 764, Christiane F, verslag van een junkie.

162 Knol, 'Junkie-kijken wint het van "Muur" '.

But as we also saw, like Germany The Netherlands were not spared from this phenomenon. The school of the fifteen year old girl who got addicted after reading *Christiane F.* – mentioned in the paragraph on teenagers – was wrecking their brains about what to do with drug education in the future: ‘Now that we are going through this, we would like to do more, but we have to be careful. Not make them curious.’¹⁶³ And researchers confirmed too that this was something that should be considered seriously. Otto Janssen and Koert Swierstra, authors of the report *Heroïnegebruikers in Nederland*, said to *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*: ‘Urgently warning, it has to be done regularly, but it not always helps. For some people that makes the substance attractive.’¹⁶⁴

CONFRONTING THE NEGATIVE STEREOTYPE

I found no reactions from professionals to the image of the drug user or his parents in the general media. Except for one: during the talk show *Rondom Tien* on occasion of the first airing of *De moeder van David S.*, reverend Visser from the church shelter for heroin addicts in Rotterdam, spoke out to Yvonne Keuls directly. He felt that the picture that Keuls painted was too black, too hopeless: ‘I have a hard time dealing with the book and the film. They are a confirmation of the junkie syndrome: the junkie lies and cheats. I feel we have to keep appealing to his responsibility, that is an essential characteristic of the human being. To me, in your book an ill fate is inescapable. [...] I keep hoping for a breakthrough. [...] That is my belief in man.’ Keuls replied wittily by saying that her book was hopeful in the end because it is not about the son, it is about the mother: ‘The mother saves herself with her family.’¹⁶⁵

NEGLECTING THE STEPPING STONE THEORY

It is striking that I have not found professionals speaking out about the fact that Yvonne Keuls revived the stepping stone theory in *De moeder van David S.* As became clear in the introduction, this hypothesis had been dominant in The Netherlands until 1973 even some time

163 Koning, ‘Karin wist waar heroïne toe leidt’.

164 ‘Groninger wetenschappers in sociologische studie’.

165 *Rondom Tien* (30 September 1982).

after it had been refuted by research, but among professionals by the early 1980s it had fallen firmly into disuse. It is particularly remarkable that this was no subject in the *Rondom Tien* talk shows, where Bob van Amerongen spoke in the capacity of an objective, scientific expert. Yvonne Keuls had made the stepping stone theory the point of her foreword of *De moeder van David S.*, while Bob van Amerongen in his foreword to *Christiane F.* had pointed out the contemporary scientific point of view that it only lived on as a misunderstanding. Apparently, they had agreed not to touch this subject on *Rondom Tien*. But journalists were not too lazy to point out: 'The stepping stone theory has been obsolete for years, and Yvonne Keuls should know that there are thousands of good citizens in the Netherlands who smoke a reefer on the weekend like another person drinks his glass of wine. Likewise, that every alcoholic has started with one glass of beer or wine doesn't lead to the complete prohibition of alcohol in our country.'¹⁶⁶

CRITICS

Professional critics reacted to the stories from two very different points of view. Those who stressed the educational value of books, films and plays were promoting them enthusiastically. Those who focussed on their artistic qualities, rejected them strongly.

PROMOTING THE STORIES

The first type of critics admitted without hesitation that they were moved and shocked by the stories. Jeanne Roos in *Margriet* called *De moeder van David S.* '[...] an extremely penetrating book about a boy addicted to heroin and the wrecking, devastating influence he has on his environment'.¹⁶⁷ And Pieter Groenewold of the *Limburgsch Dagblad* thought it gave 'a very realistic picture of a family that almost perishes under the addiction of the oldest son', 'very readable because the information is put into a catchy novel'.¹⁶⁸ It is of course not surprising that Klaas

166 Van den Blink, 'Boeken over verslaafde kinderen'.

167 Roos, '“Ik had het gevoel dat ik dit doen móest”', 9.

168 Pieter Groenewold, 'Aangrijpend boek over drugs van Yvonne Keuls. “Paniekreacties zijn funest”', *Limburgsch Dagblad* (7 June 1980).

Koopman of the *NCRV-gids*, the tv guide that was published by the network that broadcast the film, wrote: 'A horrible book. A horrible television film. It amazes you. It makes you mad. It brings tears to your eyes. But no-one can afford to not read it, not see it.'¹⁶⁹ But prominent television critic Nico Scheepmaker agreed: 'It was not fun to watch, but it was good to watch, if only because in the talk show *Rondom Tien* that followed, it became clear that drug addicts appear in every social environment, in all kind of families (big and small), in all forms of religion...'¹⁷⁰

In a country that longed for clear information on drug addiction and did not get it for many years, Helga Ruebsamen wrote about *De moeder van David S.* in *Het Vaderland*, it was 'as if someone finally [...] turned on the light.'¹⁷¹ The educational value was also appreciated in the reviews of *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem*. Many critics saw it as an educational book that was a meaningful part of the activism of Yvonne Keuls. Froukje Hoekstra looked at Keuls as a writer of books 'that describe the lives of criminal or addicted young people in a way that must enable a large audience to discuss these problems'.¹⁷² And television critic Cor van de Poel called her someone who does not stop at pointing out things that are wrong, but also tries to change things.¹⁷³

The reactions to *Christiane F., verslag van een junkie* were even more positive. Authentic, revealing, intelligent, not moralizing, without putting the blame on others – drug education at his best, many book critics agreed. 'Nine times out of ten, these stories bring tears to the eyes and then allow the reader to sink in that wonderful feeling of I – am – so – glad – I – do – not – have – to – experience – this. *Christiane F.* does not deserve to be thrown into this bunch, because it steers clear from solutions.'¹⁷⁴ And their was unanimous praise for

169 Klaas Koopman, 'Het huilen van Yvonne Keuls', *NCRV-gids* (25 September 1982).

170 Nico Scheepmaker, 'T.V.-Trijfel', *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (2 October 1982).

171 Helga Ruebsamen, 'De waarheid transparant verpakt', *Het Vaderland* (26 April 1980).

172 Froukje Hoekstra, 'Büch presenteert schrijversfestival Winsum. "Droefheid doet het altijd weer best" ', *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (4 March 1985).

173 Van de Poel, 'Zo mag ik 't zien'.

174 Harm Harkema, 'Het verhaal van Christiane', *Leeuwarder Courant* (10 January 1981).

Van Amerongen: with his foreword he put things in perspective for the Dutch readership.¹⁷⁵ The power of Christiane was so strong that the heroin problem now even got through to the newspapers of the most conservative, isolated population groups: 'Articles in newspapers tell us that this is also a horrific, growing phenomenon in the Netherlands,' the orthodox protestant weekly *De Schakel* reported. 'The book in all its repulsive toughness is a clear warning.'¹⁷⁶

DISCUSSING THE STEREOTYPE

The film *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* was received with more reservations. Of course, the story had been summarized to fit the format, but all the background information nuancing the book had also vanished and it seemed like there was nothing else in West-Berlin but a dark heroin world anymore.¹⁷⁷ Some felt that director Ulrich Edel was successful in recreating the realistic, documentary character of the book,¹⁷⁸ but others disagreed strongly and accused him of painting an exaggerated, cliché picture of the heroin street life and filming scenes of shooting up out of a dubious straining for effect.¹⁷⁹ One film critic was so repulsed that he could not imagine that anyone would think this movie lead into temptation: 'The film is full of horrible images. Look, dying, mainlining and cold turkey young people. Anyone who thinks this movie inspires heroin use, should go and take a good look again.'¹⁸⁰ And the sensational way the film was promoted also was not appreciated by everyone.¹⁸¹ Many critics recommended reading the book over watching the movie – like Bob van Amerongen did.

175 Jeanne Roos, 'Het verhaal van Christiane, een 14-jarige junkie', *Het Parool* (16 September 1980); 'ISBN', *de Volkskrant* (24 September 1980); 'Nieuwe uitgaven', *Troskompas* (22 November 1980); Louk van der Post, 'De lange mars van Christiane F. Een geschiedenis van een heroïnehoertje', *De Groene Amsterdammer* (3 December 1980); Marjo van Soest, 'De blauw geruite kiel. Verslag van een junkie', *Vrij Nederland* (3 January 1981); 'Uitstekend relaas van Christiane F.', *Eindhovens Dagblad* (7 May 1981).

176 'Verslag van een junkie, Christiane F.', *De Schakel, reformatorisch weekblad* (27 March 1981).

177 Milo, 'Hoe Christiane F. op haar veertiende aan drugs verslaafd raakte', *Het Binnenhof* (7 August 1981), Froukje Hoekstra, 'Christiane F.: gedramatiseerd verslag van jonge verslaafde toont alleen verval', *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (7 August 1981).

178 P.V.B., 'Verslaafd meisje', *de Volkskrant* (7 August 1981).

179 Hoekstra, 'Christiane F.'

180 'Helder verslag over verslaafde. Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo', *Het Vrije Volk* (7 August 1981).

181 Inge van den Blink, 'Christiane F. verslag van een junkie: verplichte lectuur', *Utrechts Nieuwsblad* (8 October 1981).

Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem and *De moeder van David S.* were also attacked for the negative images of heroin addicts they put forward. Anneke Juffer in 1982 concluded that books about drug use like those written by Yvonne Keuls, to her taste, painted nothing more than a cliché picture of the junkie. Stories like these confirmed the negative stereotype instead of making room for a more nuanced image of the heroin user, she commented.¹⁸² According to Renée Douwes, *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* suggested falsely that heroin addicts were always problem children from lower class families with bad mothers, just like *Christiane F.* did. That Douwes apparently was unfamiliar with *De moeder van David S.* is not the point here: her remark reminds us that the three life stories should not only be considered together, but also individually, for the images they portray.¹⁸³ A different kind of criticism comes from Jan Verstappen, who points out that the ‘ethnic minorities’ in the book, the Turks and the Surinamese, are portrayed in a very negative stereotypical way. ‘[They] seem to strengthen a growing prejudice in society more than to discuss it. That is scary in a book that claims to want to open people’s eyes for a world outside of themselves.’¹⁸⁴

Several critics suspected that combining dozens of real life stories into one of fiction in *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* resulted in an improbable image of the life of a heroin addict or their family. ‘This cannot all be true within one family,’ sighed Han Steendijk.¹⁸⁵ But an unusually nuanced reaction by Bouke Jagt underlined that reality can be worse than fiction. Apparently Jagt had first hand experience with heroin addicts when he wrote: ‘Those who have dealt with these problems, realize that Yvonne Keuls does not want sensation. She softens or keeps silent.’ Jagt pointed out that the addicts of Yvonne Keuls are not victims, nor incomprehensible criminals, but young people who bear their own responsibility. ‘Yvonne Keuls lets us live and feel with Floortje Bloem.’¹⁸⁶

182 Anneke Juffer, ‘De junk als afschrikbeeld’, *De Waarheid* (25 November 1982).

183 Renée Douwes, ‘Het leven van Floortje Bloem’, *Hervormd Nederland* (27 March 1982).

184 Jan Verstappen, ‘Yvonne Keuls grijpt alweer uit het leven. “Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem”’, *Het Binnenhof* (17 April 1982).

185 Han Steendijk, ‘Yvonne Keuls, spraakmaakster voor jongeren aan de zelfkant van de maatschappij’, *Brabants Nieuwsblad* (18 March 1982).

186 Bouke Jagt, ‘Het leven van heroïnehoertje Floortje Bloem’, *Leids Dagblad* (26 March 1982).

CRITICIZING THE ARTISTIC VALUE

Like we saw before, the Yvonne Keuls stories received a lot of negative criticism targeting her literary qualities. This usually came from the more elitist newspapers. 'A novel such as *Floortje Bloem* is a concoction of the most horrible clichés [...]; J. Dautzenberg wrote in *de Volkskrant*. 'Recounting pure reality never leads to art, but always to clichés.'¹⁸⁷ When the adaptations hit the theatres, the slashing was similar: '*De moeder van David S.* is [...] a course for parents of drug addicts. [...] Yvonne Keuls's theatre is social work. The template language and the simplistic dramatic elaboration serve no artistic goal, but are legitimized only by the educational effect that it no doubt has.'¹⁸⁸

In reaction to this unrelenting criticism, Keuls stressed time and again that she did not claim to write literature, but sometimes she also suggested the opposite. In an interview with Rudie Kage of *Vrij Nederland*: 'This morning I received a letter from my British publisher, who wrote that Liv Ullman called *De moeder van David S., geb. 3 juli 1959* a "moving and important" book. *The Sunday Telegraph* immediately wrote a laudatory review, and all British magazines who have written about it so far were enthusiastic. I am being compared to Truman Capote.'¹⁸⁹ With the literary critics that shut the door on any rapprochement: 'Unstinting self-congratulation,' Dautzenberg of *de Volkskrant* called it.¹⁹⁰

Today the definition of what constitutes literature in the Netherlands most certainly includes the genre that Yvonne Keuls defined. 'Over the last ten, fifteen years,' *NRC Handelsblad* critic Janet Luis wrote in a review of Keuls's work in 2011, 'it has become much more customary in Dutch literature to mix genres. [...] Nowadays a lot is possible with the genre of the novel, just like today it is not considered strange anymore that a writer is promoting a non-literary

187 Cited in Veijgen, *Yvonne Keuls*, 35.

188 Henk van Gelder, 'Drugproblematiek gevat in stenciltaal', *NRC Handelsblad* (24 September 1986).

189 Cited in Veijgen, *Yvonne Keuls*, 35.

190 Ibidem.

cause.¹⁹¹ But in the early 1980s, her colleague Ab Visser stood out when he declared *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* literature.¹⁹² Keuls was so proud she could not help underlining that this was the last review Visser wrote before his death, only three weeks later.¹⁹³

The attention for heroin life stories seemed everywhere in the early 1980s. To some, enough was enough. In the fall of 1982, when *De moeder van David S.* had just been shown on television and the three stories were highlighted relentlessly in many media, comedian Wim de Bie sighed: '[...] interviews with ex junkies, plays about junkies, films about junkies, books by and about junkies, junkie poetry, junkie ballet, ahhhhh... isn't it a bit much? [...] that junkie parading should be over by now.'¹⁹⁴

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 2

Through the reception history of the three stories it becomes clear which aspects of the images of heroin users and their parents were picked up on by the audience. Many who were or knew heroin users felt that the stories painted a picture of them that was too negative, too stereotypical – with the notable exception of some of their parents. But to most people it was all new and the education on the heroin problem and the images of addicts and parents that they received through the stories was absorbed gratefully and passed on to their children – the artistic qualities of the stories did not really matter.

Most kids picked up on the warning that came with the negative image of the filthy, unhealthy, unhappy, criminal addict, but some of them saw a cultural hero and as a result were put on the

191 Janet Luis, 'Pionier van het betere straatverhaal' in Monica Soeting, *Yvonne Keuls. Gedragen op de wind* (Amsterdam 2011).

192 Ab Visser, 'Aan de zelfkant. Proza van Yvonne Keuls en Bert Hiddema', *Leeuwarder Courant* (17 April 1982).

193 Berkel, 'Ik moet godverdomme mijn boodschap kwijt', 77.

194 *Simplisties Verbond* (20 October 1982).

path to heroin. This effect was strongest through the film *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo*. The individual responsibility message thus turned out to be two-faced: it could be used to reject drugs, but also to seek them out purposefully. It is remarkable that I have only found examples of girls following the example. Did the female protagonists appeal to them more than to boys?

In articles and television shows that were closely connected to the stories and their authors, it was stressed again and again that parents were not to blame for the addiction of their child and they should save themselves by detaching. Hardly anyone contradicted these principles: only experts like Van der Post and Bovenkerk pointed the finger at the parents or those replacing them, but these opinions were drowned out by the much larger attention for the opposite position. The image of individual responsibility that was promoted by the alliance between Yvonne Keuls and the parents' movement was strengthened continually by other parents who could know.

CHAPTER 3

IMAGES OF THE HEROIN USERS

Chapters 1 and 2 have shown the width and depth of the impact that the three life stories had in The Netherlands in the early 1980s. In this chapter, I analyse what the audience was impacted with, exactly: the images of the heroin user as they are painted by the three life stories. Set against the background of growing up in the 1970s and being an addict in the early 1980s, I take the stories apart in elements that characterize the junkies, in general as well as gender specifically. With all this in mind, I turn to historiography to help put the images into a historical perspective, with a leading role for the strategies of visual representation of the heroin addicted by Hickman that I presented in the introduction.

BACKGROUND: YOUNG IN THE NETHERLANDS IN THE EARLY 1980S

In his book *Nederland en de jaren zeventig* Duco Hellema lets the ‘long’ 1970s in The Netherlands reach way into the next decade. That was when the economic crisis that had started in the years before came to the boil, resulting in severe austerity measures and mass unemployment. That was when the largest protest movement of the previous decade, the Second Wave of Feminism, organised their last big campaigns and consolidated important successes. And that was when public policy, increasingly criticised for its tolerant leftist approach, definitely swung in the direction of a right-wing law and order attitude.¹⁹⁵ In the context of the history of the Dutch heroin epidemic, the early 1980s are also an extension of the decade that preceded it.

INDIVIDUALISM AND EMANCIPATION

Looking back from the early 1980s, the 1970s were already called the ‘Me Decade’: a period in which the affluence built up over the 1950s and 1960s resulted in widespread individualism.

195 Duco Hellema, *Nederland en de jaren zeventig* (Amsterdam 2012) 17, 21, 284-289, 291, 297; John Jansen van Galen, *Het Ik-tijdperk* (Amsterdam 1980) 25-43; Van de Loo, *De vrouw beslist*, 78.

Hellema argues that the women's movement had shown that individualism and activism for the good of society did not necessarily exclude each other. On the wings of the Me Decade, however, John Jansen van Galen has pointed out, that same women's movement had changed its course from outward bound activism to inward looking soul searching.

Originally, the goal of the Second Wave of Feminism had been the change of the dynamics between men and women in society. Gender roles should become interchangeable, opportunities equal and both sexes should be allowed to live their lives the way they wanted to. Instead of naively accepting the traditional role of a wife and a mother, women should stand up for themselves, get an education and a career, be independent. Men were also stimulated to look critically into what society expected of them and discover who they really were, but did not embrace this challenge as enthusiastically as women did. Over the course of the 1970s parts of the women's movement radicalized towards man hate instead of equality, but the 'inward turn' that Jansen van Galen described was more influential in the long run. Halfway the 1980s, as Ribberink and Duits conclude, the women's movement could look with satisfaction onto the acceptance of the idea that women should be (economically) independent, but important goals to make this happen in practice had not been realized.¹⁹⁶ Thus, while the movement was petering out, emancipation became an individual concern and responsibility instead of something to storm the barricades for collectively.

INDIVIDUALISM AND DRUG USE

The affluence at the root of the Me Decade had not only led to an individualism that showed itself in the unsettling of gender roles, but also to a culture of mass consumerism in which individualism was at play in a different way. Robert Stephens has connected this development to the advent of post-war drug use in West Germany, but his analysis is relevant to the Dutch case as well. When the youngsters of the 1970s and 1980s tried to enter the job and housing markets,

196 Hellema, *Nederland en de jaren zeventig*, 296; Jansen van Galen, *Het Ik-tijdperk*, 25-54, 75; Van de Loo, *De vrouw beslist*, 43-44, 54-55, 62, 89, 98-100; Anneke Ribberink, *Leidsvrouwen en zaakwaarneemsters. Een geschiedenis van de Aktiegroep Man Vrouw Maatschappij (MVM) 1968-1973* (Hilversum 1998) 31-32, 59, 72, 238, 261-262; Duits, *Dolle mythes*, 32-46, 82-87.

they soon found out that the promise of affluence for everybody had become false due to the economic crisis. Like the hippie generation before them, they rejected the idea that consumption was something to strive for. Some of them chose using drugs as a way of protest, a way of transforming themselves and society. That resulted in the paradox, however, that they were consuming against consumption. And society struggled with a related dilemma: how could it promote and prohibit consumption at the same time? To Stephens, drug use and the problems that come with it thus represent the dark side of the consumerist ideal.¹⁹⁷ An ideal that in its essence revolves around greed and selfishness, and thus leads back to the trend of individualism once again.

IMAGES OF THE HEROIN USERS FROM THE LIFE STORIES

This background of individualism, emancipation and consumerism is important to keep in mind when we move on to the further analysis of the heroin users in the life stories. When thinking about the image of heroin users, what comes to mind first is the literal image: their outward appearance and behaviour. In the context of the three life stories, the life history of the heroin users is also relevant: how did they grow up, how did they get to where they are, and what expectations do they have of the future? To conclude, it is interesting to discuss their outlook on life and society: to what extent are they products of their individualistic and gender sensitive time?

OUTWARD APPEARANCE AND BEHAVIOUR

BODILY APPEARANCE

The most penetrating images of heroin users are the ones that show them when they have become full-blown, problematic addicts. David already is one when the film *De moeder van David S.* starts, and in the book, we jump from his early childhood almost straight to this point

197 Stephens, *Germans on drugs*, 5-6, 47-49, 65-66, 80-87.

too – it is the point where the parents start noticing there is something wrong. In the places where David lives and where Len follows him, we see him and his friends as stereotypical junkies. They look skinny, pale and unhealthy and dress in filthy, torn clothes. At one of his lowest points, David is found by his mother shivering under a blanket, naked. In another scene he eats a rice dish she brought cold out of the container with nothing but a knife he picked up from the floor.

The other two stories also show the very beginnings of the heroin life of the protagonists, the honeymoon period when the drug and the lifestyle do not have negative consequences for the user yet. I will come back to that period later. We don't read much about the physical appearances of Floortje and Beppie once they are addicted other than that they become very skinny because they hardly eat. When Floortje and her friend Martien want to go cash the cheques the girl has stolen from aunt Gerda, in their quest for soap and the trouble they have cleaning up Martien we get a glimpse of how filthy they must be. In Christiane's story, by contrast, the fading away of her health, beauty and cleanliness is a more prominent theme. From a teenager to whom looks and dress are the most important thing, in a matter of months she turns into a typical addict: too thin, with bad skin and dirty hair, wearing the same clothes every day. And she knows it.

HOUSING

The living conditions are also telling. The room that Beppie and Floortje occupy in their squat is barren, has just two mattresses and some piles of clothes on the floor, some of them not even theirs. Floortje is jumped by flees on her first night and solves this problem by wearing cat's flees bands around her ankles. There is no heating, the garden is a dump, nobody ever cleans up. In the communal kitchen nothing seems to happen but junkies putting their dirty laundry in washtubs filled with water – and then leaving them there. The occupants have no money to make their quarters more comfortable, but they also do not seem to care to make the most of what they have.

The apartments where David and his friends live are not only messy and dirty, their occupants seem to actively make things worse, for instance by spraying graffiti on the walls and smashing

windows and furniture. The ‘decorating’ that David does with plaster results in a terrible mess. To Christiane’s boyfriend Detlef and his mates taking care of their quarters – if they have them – is also not important. In Axel’s apartment there is rubbish all over the place and the boys clean their syringes by filling them with water and emptying them on the carpets with blood and all. The fact that Axel makes a crispy clean bed for Detlef and Christiane every Saturday night only sharpens the contrast.

Despite getting kicked out of places again and again, none of the addicts in *De moeder van David S.* are ever homeless. If the boys are not in a house arranged and payed for by their fathers, they find shelter in a squat or with friends, and when they have a place, their friends stay with them. In *Christiane F.*, housing is not a certainty: although Christiane still lives with her mother, none of her friends live with their parents anymore. If they are lucky they can move in with a friend in a rundown apartment, and if not, their only option seems moving in with people who abuse them, if they don’t want to end up homeless. In Floortje’s life, this is also a continuous threat. Apparently, it is not very difficult to find a very basic sort of roof over your head like a squat. At some point the girls even have a chance to rent a decent room, but their lives are too chaotic to follow up on that. And losing any kind of lodging is something to avoid: a young girl is picked up and exploited by predators very easily, as Floortje experiences first-hand.

DAILY ROUTINE

All three life stories show how the life of a problematic heroin user revolves only around heroin. They spend their days ‘scoring’ – making money to buy heroin or finding other ways to get it – and using. Even though it is a busy life, the days of the addicts feel empty. Boys like David, who still have some basis in the home life with their parents, drop out of school to do nothing but sleep in and use drugs. Christiane keeps going to school, but the treadmill of heroin is always the same: after school, she meets Detlef at the scene where they score and use, then they visit the same sleazy discotheque every day, and Christiane catches the last bus back. Floortje and Beppie’s days as addicts are filled with hooking and using drugs, but the emptiness shows when there is no need to earn money. They have no idea how to spend their days in any

meaningful way: they just sit in a bar and drink. The only thing that fills them with joy is the feeling they get when they use drugs, although the kick is long gone.

Anything will do to make sure that an addict has enough heroin for the next shot. In *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem*, for example, the thing to do is to collect unemployment benefits if you are old enough and hustle for additional income by stealing, dealing drugs and having sex for money. The latter, however, only if you are a girl – the one boy mentioned in this story who is prostituting himself is so rare that he is easily missed. As Floortje and Beppie are underage and unentitled to benefits, they have to resort to these illegal strategies straight away. All these shadowy activities turn out to be gliding scales: from stealing from anonymous stores the girls slide into stealing from their beloved aunt Gerda and each other, from having sex for money once a week with a steady boyfriend they slide into having sex with loads of men that repulse them on a daily basis. Christiane's experience is very similar. In her story, though, girls and boys prostitute themselves to the same extent.

David's parents for a long time provide him with the rent of an apartment and all the groceries Len can think of. His most important income strategy seems to be stealing from and manipulating his family members out of money, but he is also involved in theft and dealing drugs. Nevertheless, he runs up debts with dealers, who intimidate his parents when he does not pay. His friends likewise finance their lifestyle by anything but working: from receiving unemployment benefits to robbing their families and dealing drugs. Everything their parents buy for them gets sold for the same purpose.

When the addicts are not successfully scoring, withdrawal symptoms strike. In *De moeder van David S.* it remains unclear what is happening to David when that happens. Len for a long time seems to mistake the symptoms of cold turkey for those of the flu and combats them with fresh orange juice. In *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* the illness that comes with withdrawal is described when Beppie tries to become clean – and it is so severe that it puts her in hospital. In *Christiane F.*, withdrawal symptoms are shown very explicitly as unbearably heavy and disgusting: it is nothing but sweating, shivering, convulsing and puking all over.

CHARACTER AND BEHAVIOUR

Even though we see David through the loving eyes of his mother, she paints a picture of him that is very harsh. David is the epitome of the ruthless heroin addict. There is nothing in his life that is important to him but his freedom to use drugs. He is aggressive to the point that he even kicks his mother in the belly when she has just had an operation, and has had that kind of temper since he was born. He is a master of manipulation and lying, and has no problem stealing from his little sister or writing a tear-jerking letter to his grandmother in order to cheat her out of a huge amount of money. He does not seem to have a conscience at all. The only positive thing about him is that he likes to draw, a passion that he shares with his mother.

In the other stories there are only more marginal characters who are attributed the same kind of characteristics. Floortje and Beppie's friend Martien first seems very passive, but soon enough turns out to be a ruthless criminal. He has no scruples over robbing and manipulating even his closest friends or innocent bystanders. In *Christiane F.*, we see some of these types in passing. They are generally older, more experienced heroin addicts.

On the other side of the spectrum is Floortje. Even though Yvonne Keuls lets this character stress how she considers herself responsible for her own choices, the extensive descriptions of how she is left to her own devices from her earliest days make it difficult to see her as a hard core heroin addict, even when she behaves like a stereotypical junkie. In many ways, she can be considered the ultimate victim: of her neglecting mother, of the children's home system, of her pushing sister, of all kinds of evil men.

David's friend Bennie also comes across as a victim more than as a bad person. Sure, he has done all the things that David does, and has even gotten himself arrested for arson. But most of this is in the past when the story starts, especially in the film. In the forefront are the desperate times Bennie spends in a psychiatric hospital, where he writes his parents a long, loving and apologetic letter, and where he ultimately kills himself. Bennie is presented to us as a victim of addiction most of all, while it is very difficult to see David that way, who is purposefully victimizing so many innocent bystanders.

Christiane is less easy to label. During the experimental stage of her drug use – a period that lasts only a couple of months – she is the cool girl, always busy to keep up with older, more experienced drug enthusiasts. Quickly she picks up on what to wear, what music to listen to and how to behave in order to become accepted with the crowd that she wants to belong to. Had she been able to stop herself before becoming a problematic heroin addict, or had her story stopped before she turned into one, she might have been the uncontested epitome of the cool heroin user. But beyond that point, she goes from hero to a mixture of criminal and victim. She displays the typical junkie behaviour of lying and stealing, of competing and fighting with friends, of crossing every moral limit in order to maintain her heroin addiction. From a more empathetic point of view she can also be seen as a victim, though: of her addiction and of the circumstances (like the neglect by her parents) that led up to that.

Beppie's character development is similar. She knows what is cool and where to find it, and tries every drug in the book when she gets a chance. Again, the honeymoon phase in which this is only fun is a very short one, and Beppie also resorts to criminal behaviour, taking Floortje down the road with her. Another example is Detlef. The most important role model to Christiane keeps saying he wants to protect her, but at the same time he leads the way in her becoming a heroin prostitute. He comes across as weak, but at the same time he is a criminal, although a small and not very skilled one.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE HEROIN USERS

ETHNICITY

All stories exclusively portray heroin addicts of white (Dutch/German) origin. This is a striking contrast with the large percentage of heroin users in the Netherlands who were Surinamese or Moluccan (descendants of) migrants, or tourists from other Western countries. Only some extremely marginal characters show migrant users. Floortje sees Surinamese addicts and dealers on the streets of Rotterdam and gets acquainted briefly with a Surinamese heroin prostitute. Other migrants are discernible in characters such as dealers, pimps and clients, especially in *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* and *Christiane F*. But other than that,

Christiane only meets addicts from her own ethnicity, and families of colour were also not represented in Yvonne Keuls's stories. Keuls may have made a conscious choice to show that this was not a problem of 'foreigners', this was a problem that threatened every average family in The Netherlands, but it may also have been a blind spot, as in interviews she also never spoke about addicts from other ethnicities.

WAY TO HEROIN AND PROSTITUTION

For all main characters in the three stories, heroin is the last and heaviest in a long series of drug experiments. Christiane, Beppie and David choose it on their own initiative. And the stories underline that their addiction is their own choice and their own responsibility:

*Ik zei tegen mezelf: 'Goed, Christiane, nu heb je dus alles bereikt wat je eigenlijk altijd wilde. Had je je dat zo voorgesteld? Nee. Maar je wilde het toch. Ergens heb je ze toch altijd bewonderd, die doorgewinterde spuiters. Nu ben je er zelf een.'*¹⁹⁸

I said to myself: 'Well, Christiane, now you have reached everything you ever wanted. Did you imagine it would be like this? No. But you wanted it anyway. Somehow you have always admired them, those seasoned users. Now you are one yourself.'

The only exception is Floortje. Time and again she is forced by her sister Beppie to use drugs, and eventually to prostitute herself to finance their use. This stands in stark contrast to how Yvonne Keuls in the blurb, the foreword and interviews kept accentuating the girl's own responsibility:

Godallemachtig, help me ... ik kan het niet [prostitutie], ik kan het niet, ik moet er van kotsen, hélp me... Ik begon nog harder te huilen en op dat moment kwam Beppie binnen. [...]
'Is het nou uit met die kapsones!' riep ze me toe.

God Almighty, help me ... I can't do it [prostitution], I can't do it, it makes me puke, hélp me... I started to cry even harder and then Beppie came in. [...]
'Will you stop with those airs!' she yelled at me

198 Hermann et al., *Christiane F.*, 89.

[...] 'Ik zal je leren hoe je moet chinezen.'
'Néé!' schreeuwde ik weer. 'Ik wil die rotzooi
niet.'

'Nee, jij wil die rotzooi niet. Jij wil als een grote
madam verzorgd worden door je zus. [...]
Vooruit, mee jij en gauw. Ik zal je laten zien
waar je dealer staat, ga van je eerste centen
maar wat kopen.'¹⁹⁹

[...] 'I will teach you how to chase the
dragon.'

'Nó!' I cried again. 'I don't want that shit.'
'No, you don't want that shit. You want to be
taken care of by your sister like a madam.[...]
Come on, and quick. I will show you where
your dealer is, go buy some of your first
earnings.'

We are not told how David gets introduced to the various drugs that he takes, but it is suggested that he discovers hashish and LSD through his friend Bennie, so the heroin may also have come from friends or acquaintances. In *Christiane F.* we get a good look at this process. When home and school have nothing left to offer her, she turns to peers she looks up to: young people like Kessi and Detlef who teach her what is cool. Later Christiane herself becomes a role model for Babsi and Stella, who seek her out like she sought out Kessi. In *Christiane F.*, every heroin user consistently protests when a friend wants to start using the drug, but no one ever stops that from happening. The words of Christiane make clear that this has nothing to do with looking out for one another, but everything with guarding the exclusivity of the heroin in-crowd.

Toen ik [Babsi en Stella] door Sound zag lopen,
had ik meteen door dat ze contact zochten. Ze
wilden bij een groep. En de grootste kick was
natuurlijk een groep waarin gespoten werd...
Een kwam naar me toe. [...] Ze [...] vroeg of ik
een trip voor haar had. Ik zei: 'Wat krijgen we
nou? Dat is hartstikke link. Wat wil je eigenlijk
met een trip?' Ik vond het heerlijk zo mijlenver

When I saw [Babsi and Stella] walking
through Sound, I immediately understood that
they were looking for contact. They wanted to
join a group. And the biggest kick of course was
a group that was shooting up [...] One of them
came to me. She [...] asked me if I had a trip for
her. I said: 'What is this? That is so dangerous.
What do you want with a trip?' I loved being

199 Keuls, *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem*, 214-215.

<i>boven haar te staan. Ze moest maar eens leren dat je iemand met ervaring met horse niet zo- maar voor een trip aanspreekt.²⁰⁰</i>	<i>so far above her. She should learn that you don't just ask a person who has experience with horse for a trip.</i>
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To Christiane, doing what the coolest kids do to belong to their group – or less sarcastically described: friendship – is the most important thing. It is remarkable that she is in no hurry to lose her virginity, but when it comes to trying drugs, peer pressure gets to her. For Floortje, Beppie is a similar gateway to the world of drugs and prostitution, at for Beppie, her first boyfriend is. Through him she meets Patriek, who skilfully and quickly manipulates her into using heroin and selling her body. Beppie chooses this world much more consciously than Floortje does: she is fascinated by it and wants to be part of it.

As Beppie feels it is normal to get paid for sex anyway, she has no scruples about prostitution to support her heroin needs. She prefers this work to her low paying job at the hospital and thinks this is all there is for her. She takes these ideas basically from the example her parents gave her at home, and passes them on to Floortje. Christiane also comes to prostitution through her role models, in her case the kids at Bahnhof Zoo, although like Floortje she is repulsed by it.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

Planning for tomorrow is something the heroin addicts do not do. At most, during a rare quiet moment, they dream, and those dreams are surprisingly bourgeois: once they are deep inside the heroin life, all Christiane and Floortje want is the safety of a home together with the man they love. Floortje pictures hers under the protective leaves of a palm tree with a baby in her lap. Beppie's dreams are a lot more modest: her ideal is to work as an expensive prostitute in a club and get rich. What David wants we never get to know. He just promises to better his life to get his parents of his back.

200 Hermann et al., *Christiane F.*, 77.

No matter what the heroin addicts' dreams, the perspective that the stories hold up is bleak at best. The end of Christiane's story is hopeful, but the way she is describing her new life with its disappointments and temptations make her future insecure, and in the mean time many of her Berlin friends have died. The stories of David S. and Floortje Bloem end in total darkness for both addicts. Floortje loses the love of her sister and even her bunny rabbit: there is no hope in her life anymore. The reader of David S. is left with the feeling that addiction ends in death: that is not only shown by Bennie's example, but also in many of the stories that Len hears from American parents, and the open ending suggests a similar faith for David. Getting clean permanently seems no serious option in any of the stories. The only example of a recovered heroin addict is David's girlfriend Marleen, who has started a new life but cannot break away from the social circle of addicts and is haunted with the stigma of the heroin prostitute. Once addicted, there seems no way back.

OUTLOOK ON LIFE AND SOCIETY

SEX AND GENDER RELATIONS

The stories reflect modern ideas about men and women that by the late 1970s and the early 1980s had been internalised by many, especially the younger generation. Girls like Christiane and Marleen are independent, standing up for themselves, taking care of themselves – even Beppie has internalized some ideas of female independence, in her own peculiar way, and is pushing them on Floortje. The boys' attitudes may likewise be seen as a reflection of their time: Detlef and his friends are modern in their equal relationships with their female friends, and are appreciated for this, as opposed to David, the old-fashioned type of a man, unwilling to develop as a person, putting down girls and even violent to his pregnant lover.

In *De moeder van David S.* sex and prostitution are no issue, but in *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* and *Christiane F.* they are prominent themes. Floortje's sexual development and her relationships with men are marked by abuse from early on. Her bad experiences keep haunting her as a prostitute. Beppie's attitude towards sex and men is another kind of extreme: the example she got from her parents has led her to the conviction that it is normal that the woman get paid for her sexual services, because it is only the man who enjoys. In contrast with

her mother, Beppie does not look for a man to provide for her needs, however, it is no question that she takes care of herself:

*'[De prostitutie] is toch meer je eigen baas dan wanneer ik in dat rottige ziekenhuis boterhammen sta te smeren en bij mijn moeder en Adri moet wonen. Of dat je getrouwd bent met een vent die om zes uur zijn eten op tafel wil hebben en om zeven uur de televisie aanzet waar jij ook naar moet kijken en dan 's nachts ben je nog niet van hem af. Ik ken prostituées, dat zijn hele meiden, die hebben een eigen auto, die gaan op vakantie, die kunnen zat kleren kopen, die hebben zo'n leven ...'*²⁰¹

'[Prostitution] is more like being your own boss than when I am making sandwiches in that bloody hospital and living with my mum and Adri. Or when you are married to a guy who wants his dinner on the table at six and at seven turns on the television that you have to watch too and then at night he still doesn't leave you alone. I know prostitutes, those are grand girls, they have their own car, they go on holiday, they can buy all the clothes they want, they have a fantastic life...'

Christiane has much more nuanced ideas on this subject. While she cannot wait to experience what drugs have to offer her, she is reluctant to try sex and very confidently controls her sexual development – until she gets addicted to heroin. When she feels forced to start prostituting herself, her sex life becomes a constant struggle: how can she negotiate with her clients so that she minimizes having to do things she does not want to do, and how can she keep sex with Detlef special when they are both prostitutes?

In Christiane's small circle of heroin using friends, the relationship between the boys and the girls seems pretty equal: both boys and girls are mainlining and heavily addicted, and both boys and girls work as prostitutes to support their habit, adding to that income sometimes by hustling or stealing. The gender equality is literally reflected in the composition of the group of three boys and three girls.

201 Keuls, *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem*, 145.

Ik hield van [Detlef], natuurlijk, en zou altijd van hem blijven houden. Aan de andere kant was ik nu onafhankelijk van hem. Ik had zijn dope niet meer nodig en hij hoefde me ook niet meer voortdurend te beschermen. Eigenlijk hadden we nu een soort modern huwelijk, waar veel jongeren van dromen. We waren totaal niet afhankelijk van elkaar.²⁰²

I loved [Detlef], of course I did, and I always would. On the other hand I was now independent of him. I did not need his dope anymore and he also didn't need his protection all the time anymore. In fact, we now had the kind of modern marriage many young people dream of. We were totally independent from each other.

By contrast, in the heroin scene of David S. girls appear to be marginal, like they are in *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem*. Through the eyes of his mother Len it looks like this:

De jongen die te stoned was om op z'n benen te staan – de Schim, zoals ik hem ging noemen – werd de tweede vaste bewoner van [Davids] huisje. De derde werd een meisje dat door David Jet werd genoemd en door de Schim Silvia. En toen ik haar op een dag vroeg hoe ze nou werkelijk heette, zei ze doodleuk: 'Dat gaat je niet aan. Maar ik ben aan de heroïne, misschien dat je daar wat aan hebt.'²⁰³

The boy who was too stoned to stand on his feet – the Shadow, as I would call him – became the second occupant of [David's] house. The third was a girl who was called Jet by David and Silvia by the Shadow. When one day I asked her what her name really was, she replied bluntly: 'That is none of your business, but I am hooked on heroin, may be that is of some use to you.'

In Yvonne Keuls's books gender relations between heroin addicts are quite traditional (or even caricatures of that): boys and men are aggressive and exploitative towards girls and women, who are suffering but accepting of the situation or even calling it their own conscious choice. But the message that this is not the way it should be, is also clear.

202 Hermann et al., *Christiane F.*, 112.

203 Keuls, *De moeder van David S.*, 137.

CONSUMER SOCIETY IN CRISIS

In all three life stories there is a feeling of antipathy against mainstream society, that is rejected as 'bourgeois'. An important part of this is the disappointment that has come with the economic crisis and unemployment of the period. Nowhere is that feeling voiced more strongly than in this quote from Floortje's friend Martien:

Waarom maken ze eigenlijk reclame voor alles en nog wat, dat is toch misdadig! Reizen naar India en Nepal, Bali en Afrika, dat is ophitserij, een gewoon mens kan dat nooit betalen. Zo kweek je toch ontevredenheid? Leuke kleren, een grammofoonplaat, een keertje uit naar een discotheek, al zou je je rot werken, je zal het nooit kunnen betalen, je móet er wel op een andere manier aan komen. En dan zit je ook nog met een heel groot hekwerk om je heen: Wat moet je met je vrije tijd? Alles kost geld. Je wilt je losmaken van thuis, maar dan moet je werk en een kamer vinden. Waar vind je werk? Waar vind je een kamer? Wat moet je met seks? Wat is dat eigenlijk, liefde, heeft dat ook met seks te maken? Allemaal vragen, je kan beter drugs nemen, of alcohol, dan hoef je ze niet te beantwoorden.²⁰⁴

Why do they advertise for all kinds of things, that is a crime, really! Trips to India and Nepal, Bali and Africa, that is agitation, a normal person can never afford that. That is how you breed disgruntlement. Nice clothes, a gramophone record, going out to a discotheque, even if you kill yourself working, you will never be able to afford it, you have no choice but to get your money some other way. And then there is this fence around you: What to do with your spare time? Everything costs money. You want to get away from home, but then you have to find a job and a room. Where do you find a job? Where do you find a room? What to do with sex? What is love, and does it have to do with sex? All these questions, you'd better take drugs, or alcohol, then you don't have to answer them.

If this society is not going to keep its promises, these young people do not feel obliged to play the part they are expected to. What is more, they expect to be taken care of, which is most apparent

204 Keuls, *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem*, 216-217.

in the way they take their entitlement to benefits for granted. The tensions this position comes with are smothered in drugs. Cynically, their rejection of consumer society thus leads to the most extreme consumption of all: that of their own bodies through heroin addiction.

STIGMA

Not only are the heroin addicts judging society, society is also judging them, and they suffer from it. While descending the ladder of heroin addiction, the users become skinnier, unhealthier and scruffier to the point that they are sometimes referred to as living dead – like Christiane’s friend Frank whose nickname is *lijk*, dead body. This does not stop when an addict has recovered, especially not in the case of a woman, as the examples of Christiane and David’s girlfriend Marleen show. Christiane’s teachers at her new school ostracize her once they have read her Berlin file. And Marleen is also haunted by her heroin prostitute past. The fact that this is referred to very indirectly accentuates even stronger the enormous stigma that she – who has straightened herself out to the point that she has an education, a job and an income that she uses to pay the rent – has to deal with even years later.

The stigma is also reflected in the choice of referring to David as David S. and to Christiane as Christiane F. (apparently, Floortje Bloem was beyond all dignity). Their family names are abbreviated to a single initial to suggest anonymity. As David’s character is fictitious, this must be intended to make the story even more lifelike: drug addiction is something so shameful that anonymity is key. But when referring to David as David S. is combined with the description of his violent and illegal activities, the connotation can also turn into that of a criminal. The same goes for Christiane, whose anonymity was short-lived anyway because of the fame her story brought her.

THE GENERAL AND GENDER IMAGES FROM THE LIFE STORIES

At first glance, the similarities between the images the stories create of heroin addicts stand out. All problematic drug users end up with the same grim appearances, circumstances, daily routines and attitudes towards society, and matching perspectives for the future. Once full-blown addicted, it does not seem to matter anymore where you came from: all addicts end up in the same place.

There are nuances, however, when it comes to their personalities. In this regard, the characters in *Christiane F.* stand out when compared to the characters Yvonne Keuls created, especially in *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem*. Floortje is a victim, David a perpetrator, but Christiane has many shades: a cultural forerunner initially who later gains the features of both a criminal and a victim. This can be considered an illustration of the variety in the people who are using heroin, of the stages the heroin user and the heroin epidemic went through, and of the difference between a true life story and a story based on real lives. Variety is also in the family backgrounds of the characters: almost all layers of society, from the most marginal to the upper middle class, are represented in these three stories combined.

GENDER OF ADDICTION

Heroin addiction in *De moeder van David S.* seems to be something that almost exclusively boys get involved in, while in *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* most of them are girls. Yvonne Keuls seems to have almost divided the worlds of male and female heroin users. By contrast, in *Christiane F.* it is one world in which both sexes are represented evenly.

Male heroin addicts in the two stories by Yvonne Keuls are portrayed with negative characteristics that are extremely masculine as well as effeminate. David's ruthlessness and aggression can be put in the first category, but his lack of responsibility and his cunning nature belong in the second. In a way, this combination can be attributed to all addicted boys in his story, and to Martien in *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem*. They are not effeminate to the extent that they are prostitutes, though. That is different for Christiane F.'s male friends. They are not masculine enough to be successful criminals, and that they are having sex with men accentuates that, as does their sweet attitude towards their female friends.

The girls in *Christiane F.*, by contrast, are just as tough as the boys: when it comes to using drugs, they want to do it all and they go for the highest goal, injecting heroin, no matter what anyone says. They use their femininity to score, but seem smarter and more assertive in their role as prostitutes than the boys. The same attitude is reflected in Beppie. These girls seem to have adopted more masculine behaviour, and the boys more feminine behaviour.

GENDER OF PROSTITUTION

Prostitution is the way in which female addicts support their habit – that is what we see at least in these three stories. In *Christiane F.* boys share the same fate, but in *De moeder van David S.* and *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* the males have their own income strategies: they rip off, they steal, they break in, they deal drugs.

On the prostitution market, the girls in *Christiane F.* need to be feminine, but those who are most ‘successful’, like Babsi, make sure they look like innocent little girls rather than femmes fatales – that is what sells best on the streets. Beppie and Floortje do not seem to care much for their appearance, but the point for these girls is also to look as young and innocent as they can. As long as they have their childlike beauty, they can even set the rules, but as their looks fade due to their addiction, they literally lose their value.

The boys in *Christiane F.* as prostitutes also cater to men. They especially seem to attract people with unusual sexual needs. The power relations with these clients vary. Some clients ask to be dominated and are sometimes even exploited by the junkies, but the tables can also be turned, like when Detlef lives with his client and is told to have sex with this man even when he is in bed with Christiane. The boys thus have to be extremely flexible: as prostitutes, they must be able to be overpowering and masculine one time, and submissive and effeminate the next.

IMAGES OF THE HEROIN USERS IN CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH

Part of assessing the impact of the images of heroin users presented in the three stories must be an attempt to relate them to what was known about junkies at the time. Were these images spot on, like the parents of (former) heroin addicts claimed, or were they merely oversimplified repetitions of the negative stereotype, as some users, professionals and critics objected? An interesting source for comparison are two qualitative sociological studies that were commissioned by the Dutch government in 1979: *Heroïnegebruikers in Nederland*

(published in 1982) and *Heroïneprostitutie* (published in 1986).²⁰⁵ As we saw, society was in dire need of (scientific) information at the time, and the authorities needed insights into the problem as a basis for their policy decisions. These studies were expected to provide just that.

Though valuable, these studies must be approached with some caution. First, the projects focussed on problematic heroin users: that was the group the authorities were struggling with, so that was their assignment. As a consequence, however, they suggest that every heroin addict was a problematic user. Second, they were biased in other ways as well: for *Heroïnegebruikers in Nederland* male users of Dutch origin were the starting point, which made them the point of reference for all, even if the model did not fit men from other ethnic groups or women very well; and *Heroïneprostitutie* by its focus suggested that all women who used heroin were prostitutes. Third, they were qualitative and stayed away from identifying causality: these were conscious choices, but they had as a consequence that the findings could not be quantified or linked to causes of heroin addiction. Still, these reports offer typologies of heroin users based on extensive life story interviews that are very useful as a mirror to *De moeder van David S.*, *Christiane F.* and *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem*.

IMAGE OF THE HEROIN USERS IN GENERAL

Heroïnegebruikers in Nederland describes that heroin users were kids who broke away from their home life during adolescence. Part of them turned to peers (usually boys) in deviant subcultures where using drugs was considered cool; some entered the heroin world before having used any other drug, for example as a dealer or a prostitute, and then got hooked.²⁰⁶ None of the respondents was forced to become a heroin user, but they felt ‘pushed’ to this escape because the promise of equal opportunities for everyone had turned out false for them in a time of economic crisis and unemployment.²⁰⁷ When these kids realized they had become physically dependent, coolness turned into desperation. They learned the necessary skills to support their

205 Janssen and Swierstra, *Heroïnegebruikers in Nederland*; Van de Berg and Blom, *Heroïneprostitutie*.

206 Janssen and Swierstra, *Heroïnegebruikers in Nederland*, 12-17.

207 Ibidem, 69-72.

habit and tried in vain to quit. Their ties to the 'normal' life shrank until there was (almost) nothing left for them outside the heroin world. Their value system changed accordingly, and when feelings of shame or guilt popped up, they were again solved by heroin.²⁰⁸

IMAGES OF THE VARIATIONS IN USERS

Heroïnegebruikers in Nederland divided users into a typology that for the users of a Dutch ethnic background was based on the social class of their families of origin. We meet the cultural rebels, heirs to the glory days of the hippies from respectable middle or higher class homes where they generally had happy childhoods²⁰⁹ – David S. and his friends can be seen as this type. There are the weekend partygoers, working class youngsters from an often not very harmonious family background²¹⁰ – Detlef and his mates fit this profile well, as does Martien, Floortje's friend. And then there is the type of the marginals, kids from the lower, often criminal classes or from children's homes for whom using heroin was a continuance of their background instead of a break with it²¹¹ – the category that Floortje Bloem fits in best.

In *Heroïneprostitutie* similar class distinctions were used, but with an additional dimension: did a woman become a prostitute when she needed money for her heroin addiction, or was she a prostitute already when she got hooked? That led to a matrix of four types. Those who were prostitutes to begin with thought of prostitution as a normal career and went professionally about it. Beppie fits the profile of the lower class type of prostitute: a girl from a family where school and work were considered irrelevant.²¹² Those who started with heroin before prostitution were secondary school drop-outs from unhappy homes. The lower class girls of this type saw prostitution as a necessary step when their man could not provide.²¹³ This type screams Christiane F.! The middle class girls, by contrast, were so abhorred by the sex work that they

208 Ibidem, 12-17, 36.

209 Ibidem, 120-171, 295-345.

210 Ibidem, 173-222, 295-345.

211 Ibidem, 223-277, 347-383.

212 Van de Berg and Blom, *Heroïneprostitutie*, 96-147.

213 Ibidem, 180-239.

needed heroin to be able to do it.²¹⁴ Marleen, David's girlfriend, can be recognized best here, even though Floortje and Christiane share the feeling of repulsion.

Even though the three life stories and the sociological studies were compiled independently – the stories were written before the research was published, the research had started before the stories were published – the fact that the characters from the stories are so easy to fit into the typologies, shows that they generally echo the same images of heroin addicts. Both the authorities and the public were educated on the subject along the same lines: while in fact confirming much of the negative stereotype, the depth in the three stories and the qualitative interviews makes for a more nuanced understanding of how young people become addicted to heroin. As these were the images that influenced both policy and public opinion, the images from the three stories in their enormous reach may thus have contributed to the public support for the government measures that would follow.

THE IMAGES OF THE OPIATE USER IN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Now that we have captured the images of heroin addicts as they were spread by the three life stories, and seen how they echoed the images from contemporary sociological research, let's see how that relates to what historiography has to say about such images. Because the literature on drugs, image and gender is fragmented and rare, the perspective in this segment is widened to include opiate users from all over the Western world from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth. In the introduction, I combined Timothy Hickman's four strategies of envisioning addiction with a fifth one identified by Gemma Blok into a theoretical framework consisting of the strategy of definition, the strategy of demonization, the strategy of counter-discourse, the strategy of commercialization and the strategy of the loser. The following will show how these strategies came into existence one after the other, but since then co-exist in ever changing proportions.

214 Ibidem, 240-345.

THE STRATEGY OF DEFINITION: LINKING OPIATE USE TO SPECIFIC GROUPS

Opiate addiction became a popular concern from the 1870s onwards when morphine use became widespread throughout the Western world. The substance was derived from opium for the first time in the early nineteenth century, but its use was boosted when it was given to soldiers on a large scale during the American Civil War (1861-1865) and the French-German War (1870). Not only was it an excellent painkiller, it also helped tired and demotivated soldiers back on their feet. Doctors prescribed it so enthusiastically that journalists wrote about the spread of its use as an 'epidemic' nearly instantly. And just like an epidemic, it spread beyond military and medical personnel. Soon recreational use became all the rage in intellectual and aristocratic elites – not in the least because of the sophisticated way it was administered with this new invention, the syringe, first developed in 1853. From the elites, it soon spread to fashionable classes below, for instance into artistic circles.²¹⁵

Most drug historians stress that in the nineteenth century opiates were not illegal and a common ingredient in popular remedies that were freely available. Most users were women from the higher and middle classes to whom such remedies initially had been prescribed by their doctors and who had gotten into a habit. These women did not bother the general public or threaten the public order: they were not roaming the streets committing crimes and scaring other people with their appearance. The drug use of these women had a romantic image more than anything else. At worst, it was seen as a bad habit. The word addiction was not yet used.²¹⁶

But by the turn of the century the morphine euphoria was definitely over as the problems that came with it were acknowledged. Doctors started calling a habit an addiction and began looking for the causes. At first they explained opiate addiction in terms of an illness with a physical cause: an intestinal dysfunction, asthma, rheumatism, migraine etcetera. Soon psychological explanations were added and addiction was linked to depression, hypochondria or neurasthenia. From here, the step to sociological explanations was a small one, as neurasthenia could also be explain-

215 Hickman, 'Heroin chic', 123; Ten Berge, '“In een zacht suizende extaze”', 98; Blok, *Ziek of zwak*, 14.

216 Blok, *Ziek of zwak*, 10-30; Marcel de Kort, *Tussen patiënt en delinquent*, 23-38.

ed by changes in society, like the stressful city life that was speeded up so much by tram, train and telegraph. Some underlined how modern man was at the same time losing his religion, and thus looked for an explanation of addiction in the spiritual or transcendent side of life.²¹⁷

These explanations of the causes of addiction sowed the seeds for a new definition of the opiate user: that of the victim, the patient, instead of the forerunner of the latest fashion. But when the United States outlawed non-medical opiate use with the Harrison Act of 1914 and convinced other western countries to follow in their footsteps, including The Netherlands in 1919,²¹⁸ the identity of the opiate addict also changed in a very different direction: that of the criminal. Caroline Jean Acker has shown this transition using the life stories of American morphine users who lived through this change in policy. The Zaubers, a respected working-class couple of morphinists, were using a legal substance when the Harrison Act suddenly turned their habit into an illegal activity. When it was no longer possible to buy opiates in pharmacies and doctors were increasingly forced by law to stop prescribing them, these people saw no other option then to start buying heroin from a criminal they had met in rehab, and from then on were increasingly forced to move in criminal circles.²¹⁹

In addition, it was something that they had to keep hidden from their community more than ever before, but at the same time this was more difficult because it now necessitated criminal conduct. Meanwhile, the medical profession came to the conclusion that drug addicts had a psychopathic personality and should be locked up in jail, and thus enlarged the criminal image even more. As a result, many opiate users became increasingly isolated from the 'normal' world and ended up in a life in which their addiction stood central. In contrast to the century before, it had become almost impossible to have an addiction and be a respected member of a community, have good family relationships and work in a legitimate profession. The opiate addict had definitely become an outlaw.²²⁰

217 Ibidem.

218 De Kort, *Tussen patiënt en delinquent*, 66-67.

219 Acker, 'Portrait of an addicted family'.

220 Ibidem, 167, 178, 180.

The criminal image was not equally strong for every addict, though, Hickman shows for the United States. The patient image was reserved for the white middle and upper class, the criminal image for those considered inferior, socially, racially or on account of their gender, to white male middle-class America. Whereas the latter group had a reason to use drugs, as they were vulnerable to the commercial and cultural pressures of modern life, the others were supposed to be free from all that and thus bore more responsibility for their addiction. In them, addiction showed an inner degradation, a lack of self mastery.²²¹

The strategy of definition, Hickman concludes, served to link the public perception of opiate use to marginalized or oppressed groups in society. From Ten Berge's analysis, we learn that the same thing happened in France very quickly after morphine use found its way from the elites to the social classes below. That also served as a warning to the white middle and higher classes: if they did not avoid the temptation of opiates, they would acquire the same negative traits as those groups. This was how the images that were created made an elusive problem tangible.²²²

In our three life stories from the early 1980s, the same elements are recognizable, but they are completely rearranged. From the reactions to the stories it is clear that they served as important sources of definition to a public that was still largely ignorant or misinformed on heroin addiction. References to the addict as a patient (or a victim) as well as a criminal (or a perpetrator) are found throughout the stories and the reactions to them. But in an age of emancipation, the warning the stories – and the media coverage that followed – held, was no longer focussed on marginal groups: it was explicitly widened to include all social classes and both genders equally.

THE STRATEGY OF DEMONIZATION: TERRIFYING THE PUBLIC

During the first decades of the Harrison Act, Hickman notes a widespread production and dissemination of images intended to terrify the public, especially young people, so that they would not even try drugs. His examples of these demonization images include both men and women, but according

221 Hickman, 'Heroin chic', 125.

222 Hickman, 'Heroin chic', 127; Ten Berge, '“In een zacht suizende extaze”'.

to contemporary experts, he writes, the drug habit most threatened white women. This threat was considered double: not only would a woman herself fall victim to her addiction, but through her neglect of the household also her son, husband, brother and father would be affected.²²³

I have not found research on similar public campaigns in The Netherlands or in Western-Europe in the historiography of images of opiate users in the period after drugs were outlawed in the 1910s. But there are examples from decades *earlier*. Art historian Jos ten Berge studied popular French nineteenth-century medical, literary, artistic and journalistic sources on this subject and describes how the social status of morphine use, and more importantly its users, started going downhill halfway the 1880s already. Ten Berge's evidence shows that demonization in France was right at the heels of the initial wave of popularity of morphine use. As soon as the habit was picked up by social classes below the Paris elite, doctors started to distinguish between 'morphinism', use out of medical necessity and thus acceptable, and 'morphinomania', use for hedonistic purposes only and thus a vice.²²⁴

Most of all, this caused worry that dangerous ideas would be put in the heads of naive, bored women from the middle and higher classes. By the end of the nineteenth century, the common idea here was that the majority of men were perfectly able to withstand the temptation of morphine, but women were not because they were in desperate need of relief for their nerves and moods. There was no scientific evidence to support this, but it was consistently repeated by medical professionals, journalists, writers and visual artists alike.²²⁵

The gendering of morphinism did not stop there, however. In popular stories and literature, the syringe – many ladies were said to possess gold and silver ones and to give them to each other as presents – was considered to replace the lover. And in paintings the morphine using woman reflected opinions on contemporary notions of a good woman. For some time, she was

223 Hickman, 'Heroin chic', 126-131.

224 Ten Berge, "In een zacht suizende extaze", 100.

225 Ibidem, 110.

portrayed wandering in poppy fields with a dreamy look on her face, symbolizing virtue and spirituality in her fragile, withering body, pale face, apathetic glance and passive demeanour. But soon the meaning of the trance-like look changed: it became an expression of dangerous, hedonistic surrender to lower instincts that could turn evolution around. Artists now pictured women purposefully using syringes inside the house, personifying the danger of female wilfulness and self-awareness. Invariably, they were middle and higher class women in their twenties.²²⁶

Ten Berge connects this development to another important phenomenon of the time: the First Wave of Feminism. The empty life of middle and higher class women, even when put in the idealizing poppy field context, was exactly the kind of unfulfilling existence that feminism was opposing. But the more women were protesting and claiming their rights, the more conservative forces in society started using images of morphinistes as a spectre of the undermining decadence that granting women equal rights would result in. Not only was the image of female drug users tarnished and used to incriminate feminists and vice versa, its negative connotations were blown even more out of proportion when these women were associated with ‘unnatural’ (lesbian) sex and bestialized by turning them into perverted animals like sphinxes and vampires, ‘playing on the edge of death and pleasure.’²²⁷

Like Ten Berge, Stephens has connected opiate use with feminism, but in his case it is the Second Wave of Feminism. Stephens studied accounts in the scientific and general press in Germany in the 1970s and shows how in these publications heroin addiction was put forward as an almost exclusively masculine vice. Young male users were portrayed as either dangerously masculine – usually when writing about dealers, especially when they were of foreign origin – or pathologically effeminate: as victims of their anatomy or deviant psychology. Some of these users responded to that representation through the alternative press. One writer embraced the effeminate image: the world would be a better a place if men were more like women and let go

226 Ibidem, 112-117.

227 Ibidem, 116.

of their will to oppress and gain power. Another chose to counter it with the opposite: the superior masculine image of the drug user as a master of his fate who stood for his fundamental freedom from government constraint, from morality, and ultimately from the body.²²⁸

In the rare instances that he found female opiate users in his sources, Stephens notes, the dangers of addiction were enlarged beyond their gender. Like Ten Berge, he found references to the idea that addiction not only threatened women themselves, but through them the very basis of society: heroin use damaged women's 'normal' sexuality (i.e. within a monogamous, love relationship), reproductivity and ability to take care of her family. The focus was often on sex, as heroin using women were usually linked to prostitution. Again, the suspicion was that drug use, and particularly injecting, was a substitute for having sex and getting an orgasm – just like that was suggested about morphinists a century before. Women were not seen as perpetrators though, but always as victims. They were lured into using heroin by men, thus bearing no responsibility for their addiction.²²⁹

These ideas reinforced traditional gender notions, Stephens observes, not only in conservative or mainstream parts of society where the ideal of motherhood was accentuated, but even in the most progressive circles where drug use was part of. There, instead of focussing on the ideal of motherhood, the focus was on the ideal of sexual freedom – but that freedom was considered only from the male point of view and often openly misogynistic. Even progressive forces saw the demands of the women's movement as something that was to be 'stymied by a misogynistic culture that saw gender as sex and sex as power'.²³⁰

The three life stories from the 1980s again hold similar elements but they are put on their head completely when it comes to gender. Negative stereotypes about heroin users were upheld by the stories and sometimes even enlarged, especially in David, the epigone of the perpetrator,

228 Stephens, *Germans on drugs*, 242-247.

229 Ibidem, 229-234.

230 Ibidem, 222-223, 236.

and in Floortje, the model of the victim. As the aim of the stories was to scare people away from trying heroin, this comes as no surprise. Even if the negative stereotypes in the Yvonne Keuls books were still somewhat gendered the old-fashioned way, this had the effect of supporting more progressive ideas. In *Christiane F.*, such ideas are already lived by: boys and girls already are equals, even to the extent that female users had acquired masculine traits and male users feminine traits. For this generation, the equality of man and woman was natural. Instead of feminist ideas being used to demonize women, these stories promoted such ideas as a way out, as only strong, independent women like Marleen and Christiane seemed able to overcome heroin addiction. And although Marleen is shown as taking responsibility for her unborn child, the idea of the female users bearing all the burden of addiction for all of society was no longer there. The Me Decade had narrowed the responsibility down to the individual, no matter what their gender or background.

THE STRATEGY OF THE COUNTER-DISCOURSE: OPIATES INTO THE AVANT-GARDE

Demonizing images of opiate addicts could also make heroin attractive, Hickman observed. This is how after the Second World War a new visual discourse of opiate addiction arose: that of the counter-discourse of young people rebelling against the repression and the values of white, middle-class, Harrison Act America by openly experimenting with drugs. Cultural role models like artists and musicians led the way.²³¹

Klaus Weinbauer has shown how these role models spread positive images of drug use through the international and very mobile underground youth culture, including that in Western-Europe. Like Stephens, he sees heroin consumption as typical for the consumer society of the 1970s, with its cult of the self and its focus on youthfulness, individuality and risky behaviour.²³² The positive image of opiate users was further enforced by photographers and film makers like Robert Mapplethorpe, Larry Clark and Nan Goldin, Hick-

231 Hickman, 'Heroin chic', 130-134; Blok, '“We the avant-garde”', 117.

232 Klaus Weinbauer, 'Drug consumption in London and Western Berlin. Local and transnational perspectives', *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* 20 (Spring 2006) 196-198, 200.

man points out. They showed heroin addicts as young, attractive, hip youngsters whose habit was something modern, not decadent but associated with vulnerability, melancholy, artistic innovation, youthful innocence and physical discovery.²³³

Comparing the heroin epidemics of the 1970s and 1980s in Berlin and London, Weinbauer concludes that especially in Berlin the late 1970s were the time of the ‘ragged, emaciated and aggressive junkie’ with a ‘masculine sweet short life ideology’ that was symbolized by *Christiane F.*²³⁴ Indeed, when heroin was first introduced in Western-Europe in the early 1970s, it was considered an especially manly thing to do. Gemma Blok relates how singer Lou Reed, performing in Rotterdam in 1974, made it seem like he injected himself with heroin on stage while singing his popular song *Heroin*: ‘It makes me feel like I’m a man, when I put a spike into my vein.’ The audience considered this the highlight of the evening. Having the guts and the know-how to use the needle and inject heroin was important subcultural capital for proving one’s masculinity.²³⁵

How the three life stories, especially *Christiane F.*, despite all their warnings could also have an inspirational effect on their readers and viewers, becomes clear when considering them through the lens of this strategy. *Christiane* is seen doing all the things every teenager dreams of: dressing according to the latest fashion, going out to the coolest places and the most fantastic concerts, making her ‘own’ decisions to use the same the drugs her heroes used. And like her, those who decided to follow her example will have thought they could keep heroin under control. In those cases, the information in the stories functioned as a manual for heroin use. And in an age of women’s lib, it should not come as a surprise that girls too want to do the utter masculine thing of shooting themselves up with heroin.

233 Hickman, ‘Heroin chic’, 132-134.

234 Weinbauer, ‘Drug consumption in London and Western Berlin. Local and transnational perspectives’, 200-201, 206.

235 Blok, ‘“We the avant-garde”’, 113-114.

SOUNDTRACK NO. 3

LOU REED – HEROIN (1974)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AruOtFkUU-w>



In this bootleg recording of a Lou Reed concert in Houston in 1974 the singer is seen doing his 'injecting' performance while singing *Heroin*. The audience is cheering him on enthusiastically.

*I don't know just where I'm going
But I'm gonna try for the kingdom, if I can
'Cause it makes me feel like I'm a man
When I put a spike into my vein
And I tell you things aren't quite the same*

THE STRATEGY OF COMMERCIALIZATION:

THE HEROIN USER AS A BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

As counter-cultural behaviour becomes more popular, it is not difficult to see how it can evolve into something commercially interesting. Hickman describes how in the 1990s the work of the avant-garde photographers portraying heroin users evolved into the 'heroin chic' look that was shown in fashion magazines. Models who looked like they could be heroin users, Kate Moss most notably, were sought out to sell clothes to the young generation. Most commentators, according to Hickman, missed that one of the most influential of these images, a photo by Davide Sorrenti, was actually meant to be a critique of the destructiveness of the hip consumer culture of the young, echoing the idea of consumption as a wasting away of the self. When the photographer himself died of a heroin overdose in 1997, the fashion industry changed course to a more healthy-looking image.²³⁶

Although Hickman places the onset of this trend with the heroin chic of the 1990s, it may be argued that Christiane was a forerunner in this respect. As we saw in Chapter 2, Christiane F. found that kids after reading or watching her story wanted to copy her in as many ways as possible. Her claim that David Bowie gained a lot of popularity thanks to her book and film²³⁷ may be exaggerated, but not without truth completely, and some may also have copied her style in (hair) dressing for a while, even though that was out of style by the time the movie came out. It is remarkable that I have only found girls referring to Christiane F. as the role model for their heroin use: perhaps the somewhat effeminate image of the boys in her story did not appeal to young men to actively follow her example as much as her tough example did to young women. But the strategy of commercialization is even more significant to these three stories in the general sense that their enormous success in themselves meant commercial success for all involved. Despite the continuous hammering out of their activist and educational aims, there was a commercial interest in promoting the stories that should not be overlooked.

236 Hickman, 'Heroin chic', 134-135.

237 Felscherinow et al., *Christiane F., mijn tweede leven*, 57.

THE STRATEGY OF THE LOSER: RENDERING THE USER HARMLESS

While users themselves still felt that they were part of an avant-garde, the atmosphere around them in The Netherlands was quickly changing. As we saw in the introduction, from the mid-1970s those outside the heroin world were getting fed up with the public nuisance and criminal damage heroin addicts were causing. Examples Blok gives show that heroin users experienced getting compared to beasts or ignored completely in public even when in obvious distress.

But when junkies were admitted to methadone distribution programmes in increasing numbers, this pragmatic approach not only removed the heroin addicts from the streets, it also changed their image. Now that they were given their drugs by the state, there was no cultural rebellion to speak of anymore and also less of a need to feel for them as victims of their circumstances. At the same time, the image of the deteriorated user roaming the streets or waiting for the methadone bus was far from attractive to new generations of drug users.

From a high subcultural status in the early 1970s, over the course of the 1980s and 1990s the image of the heroin user would come down to that of a loser.²³⁸ Set in the late 1970s and published in 1980 and 1982, this image is obviously not in sight yet in the three stories. The suffering, the nuisance and the panic were still too great at that time, and the messages and motivations behind the telling of the stories too closely connected to those feelings in society.

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 3

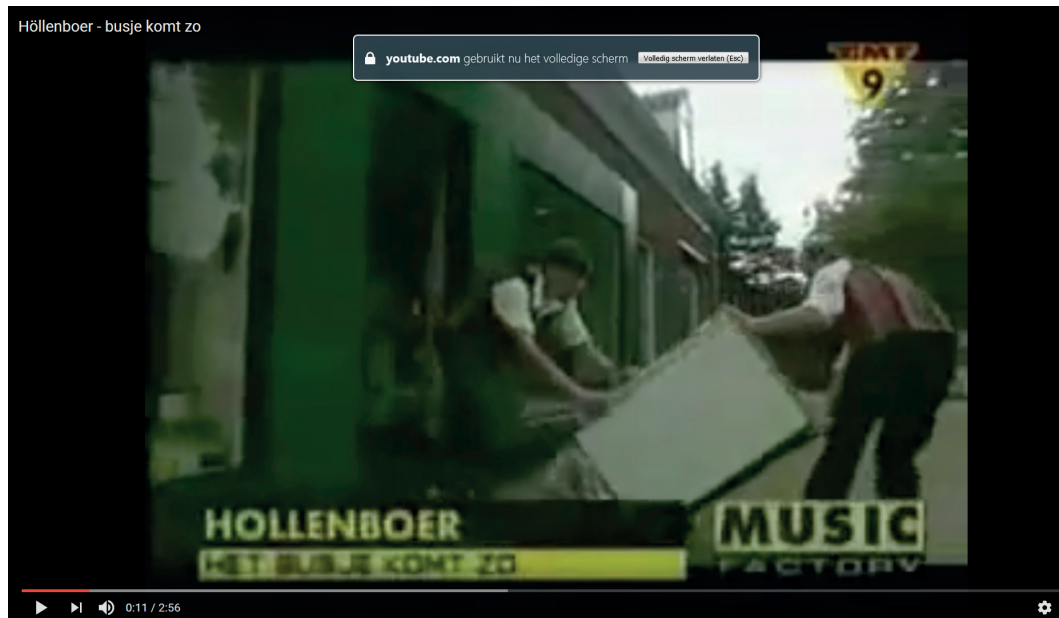
The images of heroin users as they were presented by the three life stories concur in many ways with the images found in the sociological studies of the early 1980s. Addicts look unhealthy and unkempt, their lives revolve only around getting and using heroin, at any price, and their future prospects are grim. Although this image refers to problematic junkies only, that was how

238 Blok, ‘“We the avant-garde”’, 105-106, 118-120.

SOUNDTRACK NO. 4

HÖLLENBOER – HET BUSJE KOMT ZO (1995)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhgfF2YY_zY



The loser image of the heroin addict in The Netherlands was final when this song about the methadone bus reached number 1 in the charts in 1995.²³⁹

*Er dachten twee verslaafden
alleen maar aan de spuit
En bij het oversteken
keken zij dus niet goed uit
Daar kwam de methadonbus
die hen beiden overreed
De andere junks maar wachten
want hun busje kwam too late*

*Two addicts thought
only of the syringe
And when they crossed the street
they did not watch out
There came the methadone bus
that hit them both
The other junks waited because
their bus came too late*

²³⁹ Blok, *Achter de voordeur*, 98.

the Dutch reader of the three life stories was made to see the heroin user that made the life of respectable citizens so difficult.

But these aspects of the image are all on the surface. More important is which meanings were attached to them. The sociological studies are exemplary in their lack of judgement, but the stories give plenty of ammunition to the reader to label the addicts with the stickers that historiography has provided, especially with that of the fashionable forerunner, the pitiful victim and the aggressive criminal. The interesting thing is that almost every heroin addict in the stories can be stuck with more than one of these labels. Just like Hickman's strategies co-exist in history, they co-exist in the images of the heroin addicts of the early 1980s themselves.

Historiography reveals that female opiate users of various times and places were considered even more worrisome than their male counterparts. That all the principal protagonists in the stories are female, may point to the same phenomenon. But where the literature shows that images of female opiate users were used to demonize women, especially in times when they demanded rights for themselves, the three stories paint a different picture. They show changing gender roles: girls assuming a more masculine role, in a positive way, and boys assuming either a more feminine or an even more masculine one, both in a negative way. Like the demonizing of women that Ten Berge and Stephens observed in their sources of the First and Second Wave of Feminism, this countering of the negative stereotype of the women and demonizing of the men may also be an effect of the Second Wave – but this time turned upside down.

CHAPTER 4

IMAGES OF THE PARENTS OF HEROIN USERS

From the three life stories it is clear that the image of the heroin user – or the stigma – extended to his or her family members and background. In this chapter, I analyse the images that the Dutch audience was confronted with by the three life stories: of parents in general as well as those of the mother and father figures separately. The method follows that of the previous chapter. Set against the background of raising children in the 1970s and early 1980s, I take the stories apart in elements that characterize the parents of addicts. With all this in mind, I turn to historiography to help put the images into a historical perspective.

BACKGROUND: PARENT IN THE NETHERLANDS IN THE EARLY 1980S

The background to the previous chapter sketched the early 1980s as an era of individualism built on the inheritance of the Me Decade, the Second Wave of Feminism and the consumerism from the 1960s and 1970s. In this paragraph I explore this background more in depth on the subject of parenting. What was expected of mothers and fathers in this period is key to understanding the images of the parents that the three life stories offer.

NEW WAYS OF PARENTING

After the Second World War, scientific knowledge of children's development grew and as a result ideas about parenting changed. These new ideas reached parents in many parts of the Western world through the famous books of the American paediatrician Benjamin Spock and the British psychologist John Bowlby, and through educational leaflets based on their work. At the centre of attention was the psychological well-being and happiness of the child, and the one bearing the responsibility for that was first and foremost the mother. In order for the personality of the child to develop in a healthy way, it was necessary for her to be with her baby always, at least during the first years. The new scientific insights thus led to an aggravating of the responsibilities that came with raising children, but at the same time modern parents were undercut in their ability to fulfil these responsibilities

by another change in ideas: they were supposed to give their children freedom and a say in family matters instead of ruling over them the authoritarian way. It was unclear, though, where the boundaries of this new negotiating parenting lay exactly, which made it difficult for parents to find their way. And while the number of mothers working outside the home slowly started rising, the bottom line remained clear: they could only do so as long as the children were not affected in any way.²⁴⁰

PARENTING AS EQUAL INDIVIDUALS

Meanwhile, the relationship between the father and the mother was also changing. While the traditional ideal of the patriarchal family was fading in favour of more egalitarian relationships between parents and children, the same idea was applied to the relationship between the marriage partners. Gender roles, however, at first remained to be seen as complementary: a husband and father was tough, business-like and rational, while a wife and mother was gentle, caring and intuitive. This idea was challenged when in the 1960s the Second Wave of Feminism started to rise. Women now demanded what they saw as true equality: equal opportunities for self-realization and equal sharing of tasks and responsibilities in raising children. Initially, most men were reluctant to renegotiate their positions, which led to conflicts and an increasing divorce rate. But by the early 1980s, these ideas had landed in large parts of society: in the words of Van de Loo, it was now accepted that a man could push a pram, and a woman could work in a top job.²⁴¹ With such room for personal life choices, individualism had definitely settled within married life. But that did not necessarily mean that what was expected of parents, and especially mothers, was made to fit in every way.

IMAGES OF THE PARENTS FROM THE LIFE STORIES

With this background on the uneasy relation between individualism and parenting in mind, we move on to the general and gender analysis of the images of parents in the three life stories.

240 Ribberink, *Leidsvrouwen en zaakwaarneemsters*, 35-36.

241 Ribberink, *Leidsvrouwen en zaakwaarneemsters*, 33, 59; Van de Loo, *De vrouw beslist*, 43-44, 78, 110-111; Duits, *Dolle mythes*, 32.

PARENTS IN GENERAL

Striking in all three stories is the initial ignorance of the parents of drugs and the possibility that their child could be using them. But once they are past that and desperately looking for help, it becomes painfully clear that professionals in that business also have no idea what to do, as is shown in this quote of the mother of Christiane:

*Het was steeds hetzelfde. Wie ik er ook over sprak – de mensen waren even hulpeloos als ik, of ze hadden iemand als Christiane totaal afgeschreven. Dat moest ik later nog vaak genoeg meemaken.*²⁴²

It was the same thing again and again. No matter whom I talked to – those people were as helpless as I was, or they had completely written off Christiane. I would go through that numerous times again later.

Like the parents in Chapter 2, the parents in the stories are constantly struggling with self-reproach, even after having been told that they were not to blame. Like Len says to Bennie's mother Gerrie in *De moeder van David S.*:

*Ik dacht dat jij toch wel wist, dat niemand de schuld draagt van het drugsgebruik van een ander. Wij als ouders ook niet, dat heb jij me zo vaak gezegd als ik krom lag van de schuldgevoelens. Jij hebt nooit gezegd: hier heb je drugs, ga ze gebruiken.*²⁴³

I thought you knew by now that no-one bears the guilt for the drug use of another. Neither do we as parents, you have told me that so many times when I was racked with feelings of guilt. You have never said: here you have drugs, go use them.

No matter how hard Yvonne Keuls and Bob van Amerongen tried to underline this point of view, it is difficult for the reader of the three life stories as well to remain neutral to the upbringing of Christiane, full of violence and neglect, or to David's youth, with an absent father and an overprotective mother, let alone to ignore the total lack of a stable family life in Floortje's case.

²⁴² Hermann et al., *Christiane F.*, 176.

²⁴³ Keuls, *De moeder van David S.*, 148.

The contents of the stories are thus conflicting with the explicit message their authors wanted to promote.

MOTHER FIGURES

The mother figure that comes to the fore most in the three life stories is obviously *De moeder van David S.* Because the perspective in *Christiane F.* is that of the heroin user herself, the mother is less prominent, but the interviews with Christiane's mother included in the book give a good impression of her position. In *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* it is the absence of the mother that puts the mother figure centre stage in a diapositive way.

David's mother Len seems to be a typical higher middle-class mother of her generation and circumstances. Even though in her younger years she studied at an arts academy and aspired to a career, she is a stay at home mum. She often feels trapped in her marriage and regrets marrying Simon when they were both too young because she got pregnant with David. Her bond with David is very strong and she wants to do everything to make life better for him by pampering him, even when that means neglecting her other three children. For a long time that means enabling him in every way possible, even against the wishes of her husband. But in the end she realizes he is responsible for himself, and her responsibility is to save herself and the rest of the family:

<i>We deden alles wat hij zelf had moeten doen, zodat hij lekker verzorgd verder kon gaan met gebruiken. We hadden het tegengestelde bereikt van wat we wilden. We hadden het gebruik voor hem alleen maar makkelijker gemaakt, en daarbij vergaten we ook nog eens, dat we zélf ook nog een leven hadden. Ik kon mezelf wel voor mijn kop slaan.²⁴⁴</i>	<i>We did everything he should have done himself, so that he could be well taken care of and continue using. We had reached the opposite of what we wanted. We had made his use only easier, and on top of that we had forgotten that we had a life of our own. I could simply hit myself in the head.</i>
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²⁴⁴ Ibidem, 160.

Christiane's mother tells us how she came from a constrictive working class background and jumped into an abusive marriage with Christiane's father when they were both too young. She is a hardworking woman who just manages as the sole provider even though she is in a simple administrative job, both when she is married and after. After her divorce, her work and her boyfriend take up all her attention and she pays little attention to Christiane – this is where her individualism shows. Once confronted with Christiane's addiction, however, she starts fighting for her girl. Like the mother of David S., she asks herself how she is to blame:

<p><i>Ik wilde dat Christiane bespaard zou blijven wat ik had meegemaakt. [...] Ze zou zich vrij moeten kunnen ontwikkelen, zoals dat bij een moderne opvoeding hoort en niet in een bepaalde richting geduwd moeten worden, en ze zou, in tegenstelling tot mij, haar vrijheid moeten hebben. Daardoor heb ik later misschien te veel door de vingers gezien. [...] Ik had, zolang de kinderen mij nodig hadden, beter de WW in kunnen gaan. Maar dat was voor mij het laatste wat ik zou doen. Al bij mijn ouders thuis was me ingeprint dat je je niet door de staat mocht laten onderhouden. [...] Ik kan het allemaal draaien zo ik wil, tenslotte maak ik me steeds hetzelfde verwijt. Ik heb de kinderen veel te vaak aan zichzelf overgelaten.²⁴⁵</i></p>	<p><i>I wanted to spare Christiane from what I had gone through myself. [...] She should be able to develop freely, like a modern upbringing should be and not pushed in a certain direction, and she should, by contrast with me, have her freedom. Because of that, I may have been too lenient. [...] As long as the children needed me, I should have gone on welfare. But that was the last thing I would have done. My parents had imprinted on me that you were not supposed to have the State support you. [...] I can twist it anyway I like, but in the end I reproach myself in the same way. I left the children to their own devices way too often.</i></p>
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Note that this woman is blaming herself for neglecting her children, while Len's problem was smothering her son. So no matter what a mother does, she will find fault in herself. Except

245 Hermann et al., *Christiane F.*, 50-51.

for Floortje's mother, probably – we only hear about her opinions through others. But no matter how indirect her image comes to us, it is clearly suggested that she is incapable to play an appropriate part in her daughter's life. Coming from a background of violence in her first marriage, she is an emotionally unstable, self-centred woman who is only interested in getting Floortje to live with her to take back what she feels is hers, and she kicks the girl out as soon as things get difficult. Even though she was apparently able to give Beppie a reasonably stable upbringing, she was only able to do that with the help of aunt Gerda and later husband Adri, and in a material sense more than in an emotional sense. The mother of Floortje and Beppie comes across as a caricature of the modern individualistic, yet still unemancipated mother.

Both David's and Christiane's mother have no intention of leaving their child alone in its most difficult times, but that means they have to adopt a very different style of parenting: instead of the ever-caring mother, Len takes a step back and takes a more matter-of-fact, perhaps more fatherly position in dealing with her son, just like psychiatrist Kees had advised her all along:

Loslaten dus, geen geregel, geen gedenk voor hem en vooral niet proberen om hem te beïnvloeden. Er is maar één leven dat je beïnvloeden kunt en dat is het jouwe. En als je dat eenmaal goed doorhebt, en je bent dus nu op weg, bestaat de kans dat David het voor zichzelf ook zo gaat zien.²⁴⁶

Detach, do not arrange things, do not think for him and especially do not try to influence him. There is only one life that you can influence and that is your own. And once you fully understand that, and you are on the right track now, there is a chance that David will see it the same way for himself.

REPLACEMENT MOTHER FIGURES

In *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem*, there is an endless row of replacement mother figures. From the start, the most important ones are the group leaders in the many consecutive children's homes. They have good intentions, but because they are constantly replaced the

246 Keuls, *De moeder van David S.*, 160.

system leaves Floortje utterly alone. A foster mum and a host mum and her eldest daughter give Floortje a glimpse of what a mother-daughter relationship could be, as does aunt Gerda. The way this woman simply takes Beppie and Floortje in and cares for them, suggests that motherly love does not have to be complicated – it is just something a mother has to do, unselfishly. Aunt Gerda's attitude stands in sharp contrast to the harsh individualism marked by the way Floortje is left alone by the anonymous system that is responsible for her.

David's grandmother stands for what happens when a heroin using child is 'loved' too much. She suffers from David's intimidation from an early stage, but does not mention it to her daughter until she is caught hiding from him. She allows David to manipulate her with elaborate, tear-jerking stories, and to the very end she keeps enabling him, even against the will of his parents. An old-fashioned woman, she will not be convinced of another way of mothering than cherishing a child without limits.

Sisters in a way also play the role of replacement mothers in these stories. David's sister Juliët, who is about two years younger than him (the other two siblings are much younger and remain invisible), appears as the only clearheaded character in *De moeder van David S.* She understands the consequences of David's drug habit for the family very early – not only because she and her younger brother and sister are neglected and she is bullied at school over her drug abusing brother, but also because she can see and analyse the suffering of her parents. In fact, she is a mother figure to David as well as to her parents. Christiane's sister is a much more marginal character, but with a similar function. She leads by example: she stays on the right track and in so doing shows that growing up under the same bad circumstances as Christiane does not necessarily result in heroin addiction. Floortje's sister Beppie also takes the lead, but her guidance over her little sister is destructive and leads straight into the abyss of heroin prostitution. Her character represents the heroin user more than the substitute mother after all.

Finally, David's girlfriend Marleen is a character to put in the replacement mother as well as the mother category. At first, she tries to take David under her wing to help him get clean. Later, when she is pregnant by him, she gives priority to her true mother role and protects her un-

born child by leaving its addicted, unreliable and violent father. In doing that, she follows the sensible way of Len and Juliët. David may be lost, but other children may still be saved from the miserable faith of heroin addiction.

FATHER FIGURES

Fathers in the three life stories seem a lot less important than mothers. Christiane's father is in and out of her life as he chooses, and David's father Simon, even though he does not divorce his wife, essentially does the same thing. Floortje gets so messed up by the children's home life that the few chances she gets at having a relationship with a father figure, for example with stepfather Adri and paedophile Gerben, are pathological and sexualized from the start. The only true father figure to her is her first foster father – who dies early in the story.

David's father Simon comes across as a weak man, mentally and physically. He loses a fist fight from his skinny, drug abusing teenage son to the point that the neighbour has to set him free. And he leaves his wife to deal with difficult circumstances at home on her own for months, both when David is a baby and later when the boy is a drug addict. Although his wife is as desperate and exhausted as he is, he pleads:

<i>Begrijp me alsjeblieft, ik kan er niet meer tegen.</i>	<i>Please understand me, I can stand it no longer.</i>
<i>Ik ben bereid al je leugens te geloven, maar laat</i>	<i>I am willing to believe all your lies, but let me</i>
<i>me er even buiten, laat me op krachten komen,</i>	<i>out of it for a while, let me regain my strength,</i>
<i>want Jezus, zó ga ik kapot...²⁴⁷</i>	<i>because Jesus, I am destroyed this way...</i>

Simon's role as a provider for the family is traditional. He is the sole breadwinner and has the final say in all financial decisions, from buying a boat for his son to getting yet another mortgage to pay off David's debts. He also uses business and other relations with men in order to arrange things. He is able to detach from his son earlier than his wife is, but as he has been

²⁴⁷ Ibidem, 66.

a passive, absent father for most of his married life, this looks like a reinforcing of his course as a parent more than as a change.

Christiane's father is invisible in large parts of the book. When he leaves his young family, it feels like a relief to the other family members: at least the tension and the abuse now stop. But when things continue to go wrong with Christiane, he joins forces with his ex-wife, at least for a while. Unfortunately, his way of dealing with Christiane fails as much as her mother's efforts. Floortje's biological father was abusive too, both physically and sexually: we know that was the reason her mother left him while pregnant with her. Her second husband Adri is not abusive (although he does not stop Floortje when she seduces him) – he is a lazy man who succumbs to the hysteria of his wife to the extreme. Like his wife, he does not really pay attention to how and what the girls are doing, and does not see the danger that freedom is getting them into. He is another example of a weak, absent father.

THE GENERAL AND GENDER IMAGES FROM THE LIFE STORIES

From every story, the reader gets the impression that there are important causes of the heroin addiction of the children to be found in their upbringing. And that is how the parents in the stories see it too, at least the mother characters: they all address their feelings of guilt, while none of the father characters do. The mother thus seems at the root of the problems of the children, no matter if she is loving and protective like Len, busy surviving and neglecting her kid like Christiane's mother, or downright rejecting their child like Floortje's. There is far less attention for the role of the fathers: in fact, when they leave the picture (temporarily), there is often a sense of relief – from their violence or from the attention they demanded for themselves while the kids were suffering. What many father figures also have in common, is that they are portrayed as not only absent, but also spineless men.

Those parents who stay involved in their addicted child's life have to learn hard lessons. First, they have to face reality and accept the fact that their child is addicted. Even though they are from a generation that does not want to be tough and authoritarian in bringing up their children like their own parents were, they are forced by their addicted child to rethink that

position. Christiane's mother takes back the controls by sending her daughter away to recover, and that story ends in the hope that that plan will succeed. David's mother takes back the controls by redefining the relationship with her son on her own terms, and finds hope in that. She and her husband are able to find middle-ground: they leave their original positions as an overbearing mother and an absent father in a family based on negotiation, and adopt a new style of parenting that is more individualistic towards the child in that both parents and teenage children take responsibility for themselves. Even though Simon and Len reconnect in this development, it is the change in the mother that is crucial – even a relatively involved father like him is seen as of secondary importance in his son's life.

THE IMAGE OF THE PARENTS IN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Although the sociological studies that provided insight in how experts and policy makers perceived heroin addicts in the early 1980s also give a scant idea of the families they were brought up in, this information is not enough to shed a coherent light on the images of their parents. In this chapter then, I take the images of parents of heroin addicts straight from the three life stories to the historiography. As literature on these images is scarce, in this paragraph I widen the net to include images of parents of children with mental illness in the broadest sense of the word. As addiction was and is considered a mental illness too, it is likely that the images of parents of addicted children was influenced by the same opinions. I will discuss the development of these images in the same framework that I used for that of the opiate user: Hickman's strategies of visualising addiction.

THE STRATEGY OF DEFINITION:

LINKING THE CAUSE OF MENTAL ILLNESS TO THE PARENTS

In the 1920s, psychoanalyst Harry Stack Sullivan was the first to link schizophrenia to feelings of unsafety during childhood. The first research into his theory was published in 1934 by Jacob Kasanin, who reported that in the patients that he studied he had found two cases who

SOUNDTRACK NO. 5

DE ZANGERES ZONDER NAAM – DOOD DOOR DRUGS (1977)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Re4lJvh36oM>



At a time when heroin was still mostly celebrated in popular music, the beloved Dutch Zangeres zonder Naam (Singer without a name) in 1977 already had an eye for the suffering of the parents in this tearjerker warning young people against heroin pushers.

<i>Haar vader en moeder die werden gezocht</i>	<i>Her father and mother were searched</i>
<i>Hun dochtertje had hen verlaten</i>	<i>Their little girl had left them</i>
<i>Toen zij haar ziel aan de dealer verkocht</i>	<i>When she sold her soul to the dealer</i>
<i>Toen werd zij een prooi van de straten</i>	<i>Then she became a prey of the streets</i>
<i>Zij gaf zich voor geld om te spuiten</i>	<i>She gave herself for money for shooting up</i>
<i>Verkommerde langzaam totaal</i>	<i>Slowly withering away completely</i>
<i>De drugs daar kon zij niet meer buiten</i>	<i>She could not do without drugs anymore</i>
<i>En het laatste shot was fataal</i>	<i>And the last shot was fatal</i>

had been rejected by their mothers and 33 cases who had been overprotected by them.²⁴⁸ The blame was definitely fixed to the mother when in 1949 Frieda Fromm-Reichmann introduced the term 'schizophrenogenic mother': the woman who, by overprotecting but at the same time remaining cold, drove her child to schizophrenia. Many studies would follow, each elaborating on the concept in their own way. These ideas would influence psychotherapy in its many shapes and forms for the next decades.²⁴⁹

When family systems theory (the idea that an individual is by definition connected to its relations, or its system) started developing in the 1960s, this only gave extra momentum to the preoccupation with the schizophrenogenic mother.²⁵⁰ And so did the arrival of 'anti-psychiatry', the movement that tried to modernize clinical psychiatry radically in the 1970s. In the writings of the psychiatrists who inspired this movement in the Netherlands most, the Brits Ronald David Laing and David Cooper and their Dutch colleague Jan Foudraïne, parents were blamed for causing mental illness in their children too, now in general instead of limited to schizophrenia only. Parents in their view suppressed the personalities of their children, they did not allow them any say in family decisions, and did not give them room to talk about personal feelings. Other authors focussed on the role of the father. In the typical pathological family, they argued, the father was never home. He had a passive-aggressive attitude and avoided every conflict with his wife, who in turn nipped every confrontation in the bud by threatening with burn-out or running away. These psychiatrists denied, however, that the parents did anything wrong on purpose: rather, they wrestled with internal conflicts that they unconsciously tried to solve through the children. Still, their emphasis on the role of the parents resulted only in a strengthening of the idea of the parents' guilt. This was reinforced through popular films about troubled families and discussions in the media.²⁵¹

248 Neill, 'Whatever became of the schizophrenogenic mother?', 499-500.

249 Blok, *Baas in eigen brein*, 49.

250 Neill, 'Whatever became of the schizophrenogenic mother?', 500.

251 Blok, *Baas in eigen brein*, 48-50.

The three life stories show parents in all the shades that schizophrenogenic parents come in. Len is a typical overprotecting, smothering mother, while Floortje's mum is the epigone of the hard, rejecting mother. Christiane's mother is neither: she is characterized more by her absence, which in fact puts her in the category of the fathers.

THE STRATEGY OF DEMONIZATION: ATTACKING THE MOTHER

Even though gender roles were slowly starting to change in The Netherlands from the 1960s onwards, like we saw in the background sketch to this chapter, traditional ideas about the mother and the father were particularly persistent. Blok considers the extreme stereotyping of the parents of mentally ill children, and especially the mother, by psychiatrists in the 1970s as a radical reaction to or even a 'settling of the score' with traditional role patterns. But the demonization of the mother was not lessened by this, at best it was changed, as the idea that the well-being of the child depended on the mother alone was also busted.²⁵² In the institution that Blok studied, this was translated as: there are no sick individuals, only sick family systems.²⁵³

John Neill has described how in the United States the schizophrenogenic mother became tangled up in an even more outspoken misogynistic discourse. With the emphasis that was put on the traditional family at that side of the Atlantic after the war too, anxieties about the qualities of mothers rose with the numbers of divorce, adolescent pregnancies and working women leaving their babies with surrogates. 'In every history of a troubled child,' Betty Friedan wrote, 'could be found a mother. A frustrated, repressed, disturbed, martyred, never satisfied, unhappy woman. A demanding nagging, shrewish wife. A rejecting, overprotecting, dominating mother.'²⁵⁴

It was a symptom of how American men felt increasingly threatened by women. Popular literature expressed worries about the decline of the male through the increasing bureaucratization of work, the rise of the corporate man in a suit, and the demise of individualism while at home

252 Ibidem, 51-52.

253 Ibidem, 132.

254 Cited in Neill, 'Whatever became of the schizophrenogenic mother?', 503.

a 'castrating woman' waited – all developments seen as emasculating. Neill suggests that thinking of women as creatures able to cause schizophrenia only contributed to this fear in men.²⁵⁵ The American image cannot be projected on The Netherlands without further research, but similar ideas are likely to lie under the reasoning that Blok discerned, although they did not play up in a country where traditional patterns were persistent.

International scientists rejected the theory of the schizophrenogenic mother when halfway the 1970s they realized that the more precise they were researching the concept, the less evidence remained. Overprotective and cold mothers were found in many families, not just in those with a schizophrenic child, they concluded.²⁵⁶ In the Netherlands, however, blaming the mother remained *en vogue*. By the end of the 1970s, Dutch parents started to revolt against their stigmatisation. They did not accept anymore that they were demonized by the same people who did not succeed in curing their children. During the 1980s parents published their painful experiences and organised themselves. Slowly, psychiatrists started to come over to their side and to promote the idea that mental illness was caused by individual factors instead of by dominant, cold mothers.

Instead of being scolded or denied contact, parents were now informed about the illness of their child through psycho-education.²⁵⁷ There they were told that mental illness was the result of a vulnerability in the individual that could be influenced by the way that relatives dealt with the person. As a result, parents were no longer accused of causing mental illness, but they still took the blame for their children relapsing. People with schizophrenia, for instance, were very susceptible to stress and negative emotions, but also to positive attention and worry. To be left alone, then, was the best solution.²⁵⁸ Even though parents were not stigmatized as they were before, they were still shoved to the side.

255 Ibidem.

256 Ibidem, 501-502.

257 Blok, *Baas in eigen brein*, 190; Neill, 'Whatever became of the schizophrenogenic mother?', 504.

258 Blok, *Baas in eigen brein*, 189-90; Seeman, 'The changing role of mother', 285.

Historiography highlights how in The Netherlands Yvonne Keuls and Bob van Amerongen were forerunners in the early 1980s in their relentless promoting of the new idea that parents of heroin users were not responsible for the choices and behaviour of their children. The prejudice that they were fighting makes it understandable why they felt the need to come back to this point time and again. Unfortunately, as we saw, the three life stories by their genre undermined their message: by telling the whole story from the heroin user's birth or early years, it is very difficult not to connect the upbringing of the children with their addiction, especially in a country that had connected such things already for forty years.

THE STRATEGY OF COUNTER-DISOURSE: FROM ZERO TO HERO

It was not until this century that psychiatrists started reevaluating the mother. Nowadays, Mary Seeman wrote in 2009, they are seen as victims of the mental illness of their offspring as well, since they usually carry the burden of caring for their children and often their grandchildren too. 'This image of the troubled, burdened victim of circumstance, brave in the face of adversity, competent and capable,' Seeman writes, 'has replaced that of the domineering, overprotective, rejecting schizophrenogenic mother.' It is a powerful illustration of how the balance between nature and nurture based explanations for mental illness swings constantly.

A mother of a mentally ill child is now seen as successfully carrying the heavy load of the care and deserving of every kind of help professionals have to offer – not in the least because the burden is so great she is at risk of (mental) illness herself – even to the extent that psychiatrist Seeman thinks she is developing into 'an auxiliary therapist and a valued colleague'.²⁵⁹ And that is certainly not something exclusively American: in The Netherlands, the whole mental health care system is now shifting to one in which the patient and their loved ones are taking care of themselves as much as they can.²⁶⁰

259 Seeman, 'The changing role of mother', 291.

260 Matthias Pauw, 'De participatiesamenleving: Rutte is de nieuwe Drees', *HP De Tijd* (18 September 2013).

Even though the development Seeman describes did not come about until the 21st century, the stories do hold elements of heroism on the parts of the parents: Len, Simon and Gerrie are applauded for how they save themselves and their other children by detaching from David, Christiane's mother shines in the suggestion that her actions in the end lead to Christiane living a clean life. The big difference is that at the time, Keuls and Van Amerongen still had to accentuate these elements in that light, rowing against the stream of ignorance and prejudice.

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 4

The three stories reflect many elements of the images of the parents that are found in the literature with only minor differences. Decades of promoting the responsibility of parents, and mothers in particular, for a child's well-being, and decades of demonizing parents, again mothers in particular, for the mental illness or addiction of their children, had stuck. The stories – like the reactions in Chapter 2 – show that as a result not only was the stigma on these parents enormous, they had also internalised the idea that they must be guilty. At the same time, however, the stories mark the beginning of the development towards empowerment of the parents. The message of individualism is in there: addicted children should be held accountable for their own choices, and parents should also focus on their own well-being and that of the rest of the family. As far as solutions are possible, the key to them lies in an individualistic approach of the problem.

Mothers were the point of focus in every way. They shouldered the burden of making sure the children were happy, and they were blamed when things went wrong. By staging the mothers in the forefront and the fathers in the back, and making a change for the better dependent on the mother, the stories silently confirm that it all comes down to her. But although all mothers in the stories may be considered 'heroinophrenic' to begin with, most of them manage to come out strong, emancipated and outspoken and as such are held up as examples to the audience. The absent mother in *Het verrotte leven van Floortje Bloem* is the exception that serves as proof that for that travesty of a traditional woman there is no place in the modern Netherlands. In

this regard, the stories find themselves firmly in the corner of the feminists who were all in favour of the self-realization of women.

I have not found references to Dutch mothers getting outright demonized out of a fear for strong women resulting from the post-war focus on motherhood, like Neill described for the United States, though anti-feminist sentiments were certainly at play in Dutch society during the heroin epidemic years as well. But it was not the perspective of these authors, and these stories therefore show no traces of misogyny. The fathers, however, are not treated so kindly. The three life stories reflect the image of the weak and absent father found in the literature and as such may even find themselves close to the anti-man corner of the women's movement. Written and set in the late 1970s, the stories reflect the state of the Second Wave of Feminism accurately, though these gender images were getting a bit outdated by the early 1980s, when the movement was getting less confronting and more consolidating.

CONCLUSION

THE IMAGE OF A GENERATION

From their very first appearance in the first half of the 1980s, the life stories of David S., Christiane F. and Floortje Bloem and their parents reached millions of people in the Netherlands. Each of the books sold over 100,000 to 200,000 copies during this period and we can only imagine how many people read each copy. *De moeder van David S.* reached five to six million television viewers the first time it aired alone and it is likely that the numbers for *Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* reached into the millions by the mid-1980s as well.

Through their popularity and claim to truth the stories became part of the contemporary heroin debate. This can be seen in the response to them: the stories are referred to in many articles and letters to newspapers and magazines, and they are used as a starting point for drug education and discussions on drugs policy in the media. In a country that hungered for insights into the heroin problem, the public embraced the stories as sources of information and as sources of images that could deter young people who were interested in experimenting with drugs. Unfortunately, the fact that the stories could also lure children towards heroin was largely ignored.

The picture that the three stories painted of heroin users was largely in line with the results from contemporary sociological research that informed policy makers. Both the stories and the research reports confirmed the stereotypes of the ragged, nervous, self-centred junkie. On the one hand, by focusing on problematic addicts alone, they also extended the negative stereotype to all heroin users. As they both did so in the context of life stories, on the other hand they managed to give junkies back some individuality and humanity. In addition, the stories were instrumental in getting into the heads of the Dutch public the fact that heroin addiction could happen to young people from all kinds of family backgrounds. The reactions to the stories make clear that through them this insight reached broad layers of the population.

But as noted, the image of a heroin addict is more than his or her outward appearance: it is also the meanings that we attach to it. In the three stories, defining, demonizing, counter-

cultural, commercial and loser elements in the image of the heroin user go hand in hand. This explains how the same story could be taken by some members of its audience as a warning and by others as an inspiration at the same time. But the most striking characteristic in the three stories – and the most significant one for the character of the era – is the explicit conclusion in all three that becoming addicted to heroin is someone's own choice and therefore their own responsibility. This is a direct reflection of the individualism that had permeated society since the 1970s. This attitude had sprung from the consumer society that had blossomed since the 1960s, but as by this time it was not able to fulfil its promises to young people anymore, some of them rejected that consumer society through the most cynical form of consumption: an addiction that in the end consumed them.

The individualism also had consequences for the parents of heroin addicts. These parents were urged to look at the heroin addiction of their sons and daughters along the same lines: not the parents were to blame, but the children. After decades of blaming the mother, in particular, that was a complete turnaround. From having been demonized for decades the responsibility would be slowly lifted from her shoulders, until 25 years later she would be appreciated by professionals as a pillar of support to her addicted child. But the individualistic point of view also meant that parents were not supposed to feel guilty anymore. The example of Bob van Amerongen, the drug educator who lost his son to heroin and out of the overwhelming feeling of guilt dedicated his life to telling other parents they were not to blame, illustrates the mental split this way of thinking must have created for many parents.

It could be argued that the detachment approach that was promoted for parents of heroin addicts was reflected in how authorities in the early 1980s decided to tackle the heroin problem: they accepted that there were heroin addicts in society whom they could not force or persuade into sobriety, so their only option was to protect the rest of society from the consequences of the drug problem. Of course, the big difference was that the responsibility for the addiction was not left with the individual, but by contrast taken over from him or her in the methadone maintenance programmes that have been in existence ever since.

It is remarkable that the spotlight, both in society and in the three life stories, was on female heroin addicts more than on their male fellows, on their mothers more than on their fathers. Throughout history, fears of opiate addiction have always centred on women as users and as wives and mothers. The early 1980s were no exception in this regard. But whereas historians have found a tendency to portray female addicts and their mothers in an extremely misogynistic way both during the First and the Second Wave of Feminism, the three life stories reflect feminism in a radically different way. By promoting the idea of individual responsibility combined with a focus on their female protagonists, they express how an emancipated woman should live: independently, making her own choices and accepting the consequences. This time it is the men who are demonized: in the portrayal of the male addicts as either ruthless and aggressive or weak and effeminate, and of their fathers as absent, spineless and of less importance than their wives. Of course, this contrast has a lot to do with who the authors were: whereas the misogynistic images came from conservative or crypto-conservative men, the progressive images are portrayed by modern female and male authors. But the fact that they were able to make their voices heard as loudly and clearly as they did, only adds to the fact that the mother of David S., Christiane F. and Floortje Bloem truly represent the image of a generation.

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