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WORDS AS DEEDS: GENDER AND FEMINIST DISCOURSE IN BRITISH SUFFRAGE PERIODICALS (1907-1914)

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INTRODUCTION

When choosing a research project that focuses on feminist discourse, it is inevitable to start by considering the very definition of its core concept, that is to say, gender. Although we now generally accept the idea that gender categories are not natural or biological, but they are social constructs imposed by society to "institutionalise cultural and social statuses" and to "make male dominance over women appear natural" (Wodak 1997: 4), scholars have been discussing and renegotiating the meaning of gender for a long time. Among the many theories put forward, and which cannot be further discussed in detail here, this dissertation endorses Scott's views, which rest on an integral connection between two main propositions: "gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (1986: 1067). Gender involves four interrelated elements: culturally available symbols that may evoke multiple and often contradictory representations (for example, Eve and Mary as symbols of womanhood in the Western Christian tradition); normative concepts that give way to interpretations of these symbols, generally expressed in religious, educational, scientific, legal, and political doctrines and typically taking the form of a fixed binary opposition; the limited view of gender as only belonging to the kinship system (household and family as the basis for social organisation); and, lastly, the aspect of subjective identities, which are constructed and linked to a range of social activities, organisations, and historically specific cultural representations.

Moreover, the choice of focusing on a historical analysis emphasises the fact that gender is a rational and dynamic category, since ideas about men and women are constantly developing through time. In particular, and more significantly for this study, according to Steinbach (2004: 4), "gender history lends equal weight to the power of language as to the importance of experience", and "it relies on the close reading of documents to tease out their varied and often conflicting meanings". What appears to be even more important is the fact that gender history highlights how fractured the category of 'woman' really is, "since women of different nationalities, social backgrounds and sexual orientation differed significantly from each other and were often working at cross-purposes" (*ibid*.) Thus, it would be more coherent to talk of gender as "the understanding of what it means to be a woman" and how this "changes from one generation to the next and how this perception varies between different racialised, ethnic, and religious groups, as well as for members of different social classes" (Wodak 1997: 4). The need for historical reconstructions of women's lives and contributions to society was already stated by Virginia Woolf in her famous treatise entrenched with feminist undertones *A Room of One's Own* (1929):

> What one wants, I thought – and why does not some brilliant student at Newnham or Girton supply it? – is a mass of information; at what age did she marry; how many children had she as a rule; what was her house like; had she a room to herself; did she do the cooking; would she be likely to have a servant? All these facts lie somewhere, presumably, in parish registers and account books; the life of an average Elizabethan woman must be scattered about somewhere, could one collect it and make a book of it. It would be ambitious beyond my daring, I thought, looking about the shelves for books that were not there, to suggest to the students of those famous colleges that they should rewrite history, though I own that it often seems a little queer as it is, unreal, lopsided; but why should they not add a supplement to history? Calling it, of course, by some inconspicuous name so that women might figure them without impropriety?

Scholars dealing with women's history have so far documented the lives of average women in various historical periods, but they have charted their economic, educational, and political positions as well (Scott 1988: 15). However, they have also had to face both extraordinary internal tensions (between practical politics and academic scholarship; between received disciplinary standards and interdisciplinary influences) and the powerful resistance of history as a disciplined body of knowledge and as a professional institution. In particular, *feminist* studies have tended to be downplayed in some areas of academic research (Mills and Mullany 2011: 2). This may be due to the fact that feminists have used the word *gender* in a more literal and serious vein as a way to refer to the social organisation of the relationship between the sexes (Scott 1986: 1053), and that the feminist movement has always been perceived to be too fractured to be taken seriously, despite the fact that nowadays scholars generally accept the idea that feminism has never been unified, but that it is best to speak of *feminisms* in the plural form.

To feminists, using the word *gender* has always meant insisting on the fundamentally social quality of distinctions based on sex, as well as denoting a rejection of the biological determinism implicit in such terms as *sexual difference* and transforming disciplinary paradigms (Scott 1986: 1054). The latter implies forcing a critical re-examination of existing scholarly work: "the writing of women into history necessarily involves redefining and enlarging traditional notions of historical significance, to encompass personal, subjective experiences as well as public and political activities"[1].

Most importantly, the implications of the linguistic turn for women's history have called into question fundamental assumptions about how to approach the past and what we may say about it: for example, as also suggested in this dissertation, a central debate revolves around the very use of the term *women* as a fixed category for analysis. The linguistic turn, whose purpose is specifically political, as it has been used to investigate the role that language plays in creating, sustaining and/or

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[1] Ann D. Gordon, Mari Jo Buhle, and Nancy Shrom Dye, "The problem of women's history", cited in Scott 1986: 1054.

perpetuating unequal gender relations and discrimination against women (but also gay, lesbian, and transgender people; Mills and Mullany 2011: 3), has been seen as a positive development for gender historians interested in destabilising such traditional categories (DiCenzo *et al.* 2011: 9). However, when doing historical research, some challenges for linguistic studies appear to be evident, such as the location of primary documents (as in the case of forms of alternative media which have rarely been preserved in collections and archives), but also the necessity to argue about the legitimacy of these 'unconventional' forms of evidence. Thus, historical feminist studies also reveal much about the limits, but also the advantages, "of occupying a position that involves filling gaps – recovery, revision, redefinition, re-mediation" (*ibid.*), while at the same time having an undoubtable impact on historical practice.

In the specific case of analyses of periodicals, "feminist media histories invariably begin by noting the absences, silences, gaps they set out to address" (*ibid.*, 7) and generally share an interest in the relationship between gender and power. As Beetham asserts (2006: 232), innovations in print culture and in newspapers and pamphlets opened up a space for new groups (notably, women) to take part in political debate and to demand access to knowledge and power, with the act of reading becoming both a source of pleasure and a tool for systematic thought. Moreover, the focus on suffrage periodicals, which are investigated in this dissertation, along with new theories of gender, power, and politics, may help raise other provocative questions about women's place in the public sphere, while at the same time offering subtle analyses of the suffrage movement's role in the construction of modern (gender) identities and roles (deVries 2013: 177).

The decision to work with suffrage publications was justified by the fact that, recently, and due to the centenary of British women's first (partial) enfranchisement in 2018, historians have been re-evaluating the suffrage struggle and its intellectual origins by rethinking the traditional divide between militant and constitutional suffragists and by considering the much greater context and historical range of their political strategies (Delap 2004: 377). Though media studies have devoted inadequate, or at least superficial, attention to historical accounts of the female press (Hampton 2001: 213), it is fundamental to point out the nature of the periodical press as a provocative and reactive medium which is able to initiate dialogues and demand a response, especially for debates around gender (Fraser *et al.* 2003: 1). Indeed, the periodical may be seen as a text that interacts with the culture which produced it and which it produces, a place where meanings are contested and made (Beetham 1996:5): specifically, we should remember that the so-called Woman Question of the late Victorian and Edwardian eras played an important role in giving women a voice in public debate (Caine 2001: 99).

So far, attention to the history of the feminist periodical press and the analysis of gender representation in it has been mainly limited within the field of media studies. This has included investigations into the relationship between gender and the periodical press at the levels of production and reception: for instance, Chambers et al. (2004) have researched the history of women in journalism; Beetham and Boardman (2001) have provided a description of the different subgenres within the periodical press; and Demoor (2000) has dealt with the specific case of women reviewers. Among the most important studies which focus on the specific case of suffrage newspapers, we may certainly remember that by Fraser, Green, and Johnston (2003), who provided a comprehensive account of how gender was portrayed in the Victorian periodical by taking into consideration issues of production and reception, such as the writing subject, the gendered reader, the matter of editorship, as well as the gendered contents of such periodicals, ranging from domestic matters, to cultural imperialism, to consumerism, and to the birth of the feminist periodical press. Furthermore, a 2011 study by DiCenzo, Delap, and Ryan specifically addressed suffrage periodicals and their relationship with the so-called public sphere by both providing generalisations that could lay the foundation to the field and by analysing titles such as *The Englishwoman* and *The Freewoman*. Lastly, Green (2017) considered the correlation between feminist periodicals and daily life, such as, for example, the circulation of emotion in *Votes for Women*, the everyday complaints in the correspondence columns of *The Woman Worker*, *Women Folk*, and *The Freewoman*, but also the theme of thrift during the Great War.

However, studies that take into consideration the linguistic turn in gender studies and apply it to the representation of the suffrage movement in the press (be it mainstream or feminist) have been scant. The most remarkable contribution in this sense is certainly Gupta's *Representation of the Suffrage Movement* (2013), which, despite the promising title, only used the mainstream newspaper *The Times* to present, through corpus linguistic tools and techniques, the ways in which these Edwardian feminists were perceived and portrayed in the press. Though this work certainly gives us fundamental data about the language used to frame this social movement, it still presents a limited and biased view of such an important historical movement. Only recently, Bös (2021) has investigated the contextualisation of London Suffrage newspapers, but still linguistic research in this field is far from exhausted.

To this point, the rich and extensive body of documents related to suffrage periodicals has remained in relative obscurity and hidden in archives, and the publications have been of interest primarily to scholars directly engaged either with early twentieth-century women's history or with the study of women's magazines. Still, even within these fields, these periodicals are frequently cited,

but generally overlooked for their role in the movement or the elaborate efforts made to produce and circulate them. Indeed, there is often no attempt to foreground the suffrage press and consider what this represented in terms of vehicles for competing groups and ideas. Moreover, even when they are approached as objects of research in their own right, suffrage periodicals tend to be considered in generic terms or as examples of differing ideological tendencies within a larger movement, but they are rarely analysed in relational terms (that is, read in relation to one another and other mainstream publications). Their importance and relevance can be identified at least in three broad areas: the impact of women's movements in the Edwardian era (both because they serve as public records, and for their verbal and textual production), their role as important sources of news in historical terms and as mediators of culture from a feminist point of view, and the part they play in reconstructing a comprehensive history of the British press (DiCenzo et al. 2011: 69).

Recently, though, there has been a renewed and increasing interest "in the multiple and often contradictory voices, performances, and political and textual strategies of Victorian and Edwardian activists" (Heilmann 2002: 565). This revisionist emphasis and upsurge in critical writing and reassessment of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century feminist movement sheds light on a series of questions that continue to spark debates within the academic community, and which include the personal cost of militancy, the almost religious iconography of suffrage narratives, the politics of class, policy disagreements, and the clash of temperaments between individual factions.

It is in light of this revived interest that this dissertation aims to analyse three suffrage newspapers (namely, *Votes for Women*, *The Vote*, and *Common Cause*) which were published between 1907 and 1914, that is to say, at the apex of suffrage militancy. Contrary to the studies conducted so far, though, this analysis specifically considers the language and writing of these publications as a form of political activism: indeed, despite the Women's Social and Political Union's rallying cry may have been "Deeds, not words", it is essential not to underestimate the power of "Words *as* Deeds" (hence the title of this thesis), a motto which perhaps better encapsulates "the amalgam of activism and advocacy that lay at the movement's heart" (Murray 2000: 199). These periodicals are "evidence of the complex and often conflicting terms in which women reformers and activists engaged with one another and with the wider public" (thus dispelling generalisations about the suffrage movement and feminism), and they provide indication about "the crucial role print media played in the formation of so-called new social movements and in a redefinition of 'politics' originating outside the formal institutional sphere" (DiCenzo et al. 2011: 3). Thus, we should not take for granted the "strategic and political efficacy of the suffragist war of words" which can be read in two ways: the explosive uses to which words were put in the feminist press and which specifically opposed biased views in the

mainstream one, and words and deeds deployed interchangeably and in mutually consolidating ways (Heilmann 2002: 566).

The study does not treat suffrage periodicals as mere repositories of facts, but rather as "vehicles through which constituencies within the movement framed their grievances, mobilised support, challenged one another *within* the movement, and engaged externally with the larger 'Public' they were trying to convince" (DiCenzo et al. 2011: 36). Furthermore, it considers the ways in which different groups or societies came to define and communicate the issues at the core of the feminist movement, and how they shared the belief in reasoned argument to influence potential readers in a time when print media were the primary means through which ideas circulated.

Given the very nature of these publications, the analysis is focused on how issues of gender were reported, re- or de-constructed in the feminist press as opposed to its mainstream counterpart and expressed or represented through language and discourse. Based on these preliminary considerations, this dissertation is therefore divided into three parts. Part I ("Context, theory, and methodology") focuses on the background that contextualises the analysis. Chapter 1 ("The Socio-historical background") provides an overview of the gender ideologies that permeated British society between the Victorian and Edwardian eras, with a specific focus on the development of the Woman Question, the Women's Suffrage Movement, and its campaign for female enfranchisement. While presenting a socio-historical description of the context, it also takes into consideration novelties in print culture which directly had to do with women both as readers and as writers, along with the birth of the feminist press as an alternative public sphere in which to discuss and circulate ideas and information. Chapter 2 ("Theoretical framework, methodology, and materials") details the main concepts of language and gender studies which are taken into account throughout the analysis (specifically, the discoursal construction of gender roles and identities), as well as describing the tenets of feminist historiography which inform the study. It also thoroughly discusses the methodologies used for the investigation (quantitative-based corpus linguistic techniques mixed with the more qualitative approach of discourse analysis), and it provides a description of the materials used for the corpus-building process.

Part II ("Exploring wordlists") presents the results of the preliminary study of word frequency and keywords. In particular, Chapter 3 ("Word frequency") compares frequency lists of the three different periodicals (corresponding to three sub-corpora) and discusses, among its main findings, the frequent use of words relating to gender, political terminology, and militancy, while also demonstrating the limitations of using a quantitative-only approach. Chapter 4 ("The renegotiation of gender and language") takes into consideration those keywords related to gender which, for obvious

reasons, prove to be the most numerous and salient ones. By considering collocations and their expanded concordances, and by triangulating the results with normative definitions found in the first edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (compiled and published in parallel to the Woman Question), and with their use in a general reference corpus (BLOB 1931), this chapter argues that a central feature of the feminist discourse of these periodicals was the creation of a feminist counter-language which aimed at expanding the meanings and uses of certain specific terms through which gender was performed and constructed.

Part III ("Feminist discourses and counter-discourses") adopts an even more qualitative approach and considers longer stretches of language and discourse. Chapter 5 ("Gendering the language of militancy") focuses on the use of language as a form of feminist activism and considers the specific case of keywords related to militancy. While the first part focuses on issues of gender and authority and presents findings from the whole corpus, the second part studies and confronts militancy keywords in each periodicals, in order to uncover mainstream and resistant discourses within the same social movement, and, at the same time, to demonstrate how language, along with actions, played a key role in carving out women's role in the political debates of the time by also subverting the linguistic stereotypes linked to gender. Finally, Chapter 6 ("Countering medical misogyny") concentrates more on the relationship between feminist and mainstream newspapers and, particularly, on questions concerning misinformation and misrepresentation, along with medical and scientific prejudice against women. The chapter presents the specific case of hysteria and describes both mainstream discourses (found in conservative papers, but also in language reference works like the *Oxford English Dictionary*, that promoted and reflected gender ideologies and patriarchal views) and counter-discourses found in suffrage periodicals in response to them. The aim of this last part of the analysis is thus to ascertain how a key function of feminist publications was the debunking of male-created myths accepted as natural and normalised, and circulated among the population also thanks to the ideological work conducted by traditional newspapers.

Thus, by choosing to focus on the subtopics presented above, this dissertation aims to chart the way in which gender was performed, represented, and discussed within the Edwardian feminist (or suffrage) press. In particular, by putting a specific stress on how issues of gender were debated both within the Movement and with the mainstream publications, this analysis wants to shed light on the complex, conflicting, and sometimes even contradictory voices that characterised the suffrage campaign, thus dispelling generalisations and oversimplifications that were used to belittle it. At the same time, this also means applying contemporary ideas of language and gender studies to historical

research, too, thus showing how such analyses may be conducted also with archival documents and may be helpful in promoting more diachronic investigations on feminist language and discourse.

PART I

CONTEXT, THEORY, AND METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER ONE

THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 The Woman Question

This dissertation begins with a thorough overview of the historical context behind the publication of feminist (suffrage) periodicals in Britain which can better explain the linguistic choices in this type of news discourse. Though the newspapers analysed here were published between 1907 and 1914, the following sections will consider a time span often defined by scholar as 'the long nineteenth century', which, as Steinbach reminds us, includes the period between 1760 and 1914, with a particular focus on the Victorian era[2]. This is because many of the most important features of the 1800s (e.g. industrialisation, urbanisation, the growth of the middle class, and the popularisation of the monarchy) had a long-lasting effect well into the twentieth century, at least until such a decisive event as the start of World War I (2005: 5). Thus, considering the social and historical background of the first years of the 1900s only would mean providing only a partial report that would not include important information about the culture and ideologies of the time, which were fully rooted in the nineteenth century.

This is especially true when we contemplate issues of gender, which were of particular importance during the Victorian era and became even more delicate matters at the turn of the century, a period commonly referred to as *fin de siècle* and which became synonymous with change and insecurities. As Showalter explains, it is precisely in such circumstances, when there are fears of regression and degeneration, that "the longing for strict border controls around the definition of gender, as well as race, class, and nationality, becomes especially intense" (1992: 4). Indeed, issues linked to the Empire and to social classes had to be kept in their places, just as men and women had to be fixed in their separate spheres in order to prevent social 'apocalypse' and thus preserve some kind of comforting sense of identity despite the spectre of millennial change. Gender, however, was by no means the only troublesome category during this period. The 1880s, in particular, were incredibly challenging for Britain, which saw the increasing importance of industry balanced with the

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[2] As Hamlett and Wiggins report, "the adjective 'Victorian' continues to evoke a distinct social world, characterised by vast social and economic change, the arrival of the mass market, the rise and gradual ebb of evangelicalism, and the transformation of print and visual culture" (2009: 707).

rising of trade unions and the founding of the Labour party, the ever-recurring problem of poverty and homelessness in England, and the intensifying acts of anarchists and Irish political terrorists, which threatened the peace of the Empire.

As we will see, the social construction of gender during these decades created a series of gendered dualisms and dichotomies that regulated virtually every aspect of women's (as well as men's) lives, and these included, for example, the private and the public, the personal and the political, nature and culture, biology and intellect, work and leisure, rationality and emotionality, morality and power (Digby 1992: 195-96). Gender roles were publicly encoded, and the long nineteenth century became structured around heavily polarised understandings of it (Karusseit 2007: 39). Though the tenets of this ideology applied both to women and men, the former were much more influenced and constricted by it, as explained later. Indeed, tensions concerning gender were so great that historians have referred to a true battle *between* the sexes, though Showalter indicates that men's resentment towards women's emancipation can also be considered a battle *within* the sexes themselves (1992: 9). However, it is also worth to point out that "women were not merely passive recipients of traditionalist values but creatively shaped their destiny" (Digby 1992: 214), as this project tries to demonstrate by considering how the language of Edwardian suffrage periodicals helped (feminist) women create counter-discourses and speak their minds.

The first of these dichotomies is represented by the so-called ideology of the separate spheres, which Davidoff labels as representing a case of "great divide" typical of Western cultures (2003: 12). As explained by Karusseit (2007: 42), "[t]he paradigm of separate spheres denotes the separation of male from female, work from the home, and public from private", and, though it especially referred to middle-class women, who were refrained from paid work and thus confined themselves to their home, it was applicable to working-class women as well (Steinbach 2005: 12), and it practically informed every aspect of life in the (long) nineteenth century, having previously been "forged within and consolidated by the vicissitudes of eighteenth-century economic, social, and political life" (Kingsley Kent 1999: 167). Ideas such as the 'culture of true womanhood' and the image of the 'perfect lady' were prominent, and these justified arguments claiming that "women were situated in a domestic sphere that promoted the feminine virtues of morality and motherhood" which found their roots in "industrial capitalist forces in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries coupled with literary and religious writings that defined the home as female, and public institutions as male" (Hamlett and Wiggins 2009: 707). Actually, though, women felt *restricted* "by the prevailing ideal that the proper sphere of women is not politics or publicity, but private and domestic life" (Hannam 195: 194).

The Victorian ideological divide of the separate spheres was certainly not new, since the political dimension of the masculine person and the private one of females dated back at least to Aristotle (see Digby 1992: 195). However, such paradigms need to be placed in their socio-historical context. Such formulations, according to Davidoff, inevitably create a series of hierarchies, where one condition is evaluated as more positive than the other: "bounded categories tend to become metaphors and are imbedded in language and as images. They are layered onto other, related, dualistic categories such as culture/nature, outside/inside, masculine/feminine, or man/woman" (2003: 12). Moreover, such binary concepts shift according to contexts and new generations of users; for example, the ideology of the separate spheres was much more prominent in urban areas, where there seemed to exist some sort of gender alignment with the cityscape: "the larger, public, built environment undoubtedly has been associated with the masculine, the residential areas with children and the feminine" (Davidoff 2003: 15). Such dualisms are then further reinforced by the establishment of (or transformation in) a variety of institutions, such as nationally based scientific societies, business concerns, voluntary associations, and changes in the legal system too: "the gendered overtones here are unmistakable and are echoed in the rise of the male-breadwinner/woman-homemaker ideal" (Davidoff 2003: 15).

Furthermore, D'Cruze (1995: 62-3) explains how the separate sphere paradigm was reinforced by (pseudo)scientific and philosophical beliefs of the time. For example, social Darwinists argued that women's individual development stopped earlier in the life cycle than that of men in order to converge all their energies for reproduction: "[i]t was therefore widely argued that women's personal choices had to be subordinated to the scientifically and morally 'higher' goal of racial advancement". Eugenicists, on the other hand, focused on the decline of fertility of the middle class and frequently blamed working-class mothers for their failure in their (imperial) duties to nurture the new generations, while the popularisation of Freudian theories strengthened the idea of the non-maternal mother as deviant. Thus, any type of contemporary thought highlighted the necessity of women to confine themselves within the boundaries of their own house and family, as any breach of this social etiquette was seen as problematic for the whole nation, not just for themselves.

Today the ideology of the separate sphere, as expressed in the long nineteenth century, has been criticised and second-guessed by historians who have shown an actually broader picture of women's experiences outside of the home (with a special reference to work and politics), which demonstrates how the demands of society were constantly challenging the necessity of feminine passivity (Hamlett and Wiggins 2009: 708-11). Still, it is important to acknowledge that, "however insubstantial the barriers between these spheres may seem to us now, in certain historical phases and

among certain groups their power was defining and tangible" (Davidoff 2003: 22), and that, perhaps, it would be best to talk of gender identities, rather than ideals, as suggested by Hamlett and Wiggins (2009: 711).

Related to the ideology of the separate spheres were two other main concepts: that of respectability, and that of domesticity. The former, as explained by Karusseit (2007: 38) was a set of complex moral, religious, economic, and cultural systems and beliefs that dictated specific gender definitions and organised practices and representations that covered practically every aspect of an individual's life. It could be defined as an imperative moral code, or "an overarching system of conventions defining 'the World', or 'Society', culminating in access to that most important house of all, the Royal Court" (Davidoff 2003: 20). Though the tenets of respectability applied for both sexes, the criteria for female respectability were continuously narrowed down, thus further highlighting how, at least in practice, there did exist two separate spheres, two ways of viewing society and learning to behave properly in it. An example of how respectability was actually applied in different ways to men and women was the Contagious Diseases Act, a law that enforced medical inspection of female prostitutes (the only ones deemed guilty of spreading sexual diseases) in garrison and naval towns between the late 1860s and the early 1880s: this was clearly a reinforcement of respectability and of the separate spheres ideology which "stressed women's purity, moral supremacy, and domestic virtue" (Digby 1992: 200)[3]. Respectability was thus imbued with values that were evidently depicted as basically masculinist and bourgeois (Digby 1992: 210), and that, throughout the whole long nineteenth century, saw women as being "more moral, more emotional, less sexual than men, and less capable of genius or even of rational thought" (Steinbach 2005: 5). It was also quite difficult to maintain it, for both middle and working classes alike, and it could be judged in many ways:

> […] how conscientious a woman was about returning borrowed items; whether a family needed its female head to earn wages year-round, seasonally, or not at all; whether a couple was legally married; whether a family had a parlour in which to entertain company; whether husband or wife drank and how often; whether a family could afford Sunday clothes, sent the children to Sunday school, attended church services, or enjoyed a proper Sunday dinner; whether the children ran around the neighbourhood unsupervised or used coarse language; whether a family could afford a proper funeral […]. (Steinbach 2005: 14)

In short, respectability offered women a series of moral duties towards their families (especially their husbands), but also towards society as a whole (Abrams 2014).

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[3] Victorian feminists created a movement against the unequal enforcement of this Act which can now be considered one of the first instances of women's active role in politics that shared some common ground among later suffragists and suffragettes (Digby 1992: 200).

The other important concept, the cult of domesticity, held a dominant place in Victorian and Edwardian public discourse, as the values of domestic life where highly appreciated, especially for women, and irrespective of class differences (Karusseit 2007: 40). The growing rhetoric of domesticity aimed at keeping women in the home and out of formal employment (Steinbach 2005: 15), though the labelling of the home as women's only competent sphere actually did not take into account the fact that domestic life, too, was determined by the needs of men (Karusseit 2007: 40). The house began to be seen as a true refuge from the outside world. Indeed, this ideal can be traced at the very heart of the English language: the word *house* derives from the Old English *hus*, coming from *huden*, which means "hidden". At the same time, the idealised image of the home as a thatched cottage surrounded by roses and honeysuckle and linked to all that was caring, comfortable, and warm lies at the roots of English identity itself (Davidoff 2003: 18).

The reference to women's "nurturant domestic capabilities" (Showalter 1992: 8) contributed to the promulgation of an image of female domesticity that influenced the adherence to the separate sphere model (Hamlett and Wiggins 2009: 711); the idea was further reinforced by the stereotype of the "angel of the house" promoted by Coventry Patmore's 1854 poem especially dedicated to the middle-class woman, but which could be equally associated to working-class women as well (D'Cruze 1995: 45). Domesticity thus created the notion of the perfect wife and mother whose main role was to maintain morality and purity in the family, with her virtues of gentleness, sympathy, and piety: "[i]n the competitive, unsettling, and sometimes brutal world of nineteenth-century industrial society, it fell to women to provide a haven of peace and security, a repository of moral values" (Kingsley Kent 1999: 154). However, this also implied excluding all other types of functions and roles that a woman could potentially fulfil: the very concept of women's work had indeed become a true ideological anomaly, so much so that, by the time of the 1851 census, the authorities regarded motherhood as the only main occupation of women (Kingsley Kent 1999: 180).

Moreover, the ideological seclusion of women within the boundaries of the home actually had side effects that hindered women's health too: the "frail and healthy physiology" commonly attributed to women was indeed considered to be ideally suited to nurturance, emotionality, and sensitivity (the basis of domesticity), but, as will we see, it was also directly connected to the social restrictions imposed on them at the time (Harrison 1995: 134). Women's confinement inside the house was practically inevitable: indeed, while men did have a variety of legitimate places where private activities of sociability could be carried on (for example, the Public House, but also clubs, brothels, and the street itself), the same could not be said for women, whose communal life was much more problematic and could only flourish between and within private houses (Davidoff 2003: 19). Indeed,

"notions of respectability and sexual protection surrounded middle- and upper-class women with a net of prohibition and psychological barriers to venturing alone over the threshold of the private home" (Davidoff 2003: 19), and, though working-class women gathered in the streets, markets, and municipal washhouses, this did not mean that their doing so was considered genteel and respectable. In §1.4, we will see how the issue of standing alone in the streets was particularly felt by all those women who volunteered to sell the suffrage newspapers, particularly the one published by the Women's Social and Political Union.

Domesticity was evidently part of those dominant discourses and ideologies that "associated women with the family and prescribed their life course within the domestic sphere" (D'Cruze 1995: 45), which were so powerful between the Victorian and Edwardian eras that the majority of them could only accept their (imposed) fate with stoic resignation. The family had become a social institution that was perceived to be both a refuge from the harsh, industrialising world, and the opportunity to maintain class status through the mores of gentility, which were usually perpetrated by wives and mothers. Domestic ideology rested upon the assumption that every woman would eventually marry and have children, and indeed this was true for most women during this period, when "marriage signified a woman's entry into adulthood and so was a key status marker" (Steinbach 2005: 46). However, there was still a significant number of women for whom marriage remained undesirable: feminist journalist Harriet Martineau first referred to them as "redundant women" in 1859, and they were perceived to be both a moral and an economic evil which needed to be tackled in order to maintain the moral and social order (Kingsley Kent 1999: 184). Though dominant ideologies saw the "surplus" of unmarried women as a social issue, feminists interpreted the statistics to prove that women's traditional domestic roles were by now outdated and that the social politics that still denied them higher education, alternative roles, professional opportunities, and the vote were "self-defeating and cruel", as asserted by Showalter (1992: 20). Indeed, even though marriage and family were firmly based on ideas of romantic love, companionship, and spiritual equality between the sexes (at least according to domestic ideology), there were still important issues concerning the legal, economic, and social position of women which remained unsolved: "rather than protecting women in the domestic sphere of home and family, these legal disabilities exposed them to the brutalities of the world at large"[4] (Kingsley Kent 1999: 191), and these contradictions later opened

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[4] For example, under the law of "coverture" married women had no legal rights to their property, their earnings, their freedom of movement, their conscience, their bodies, or their children: all of this resided in their husbands (see Kingsley Kent 1999: 191).

up spaces within which women could contest their position of powerlessness, often by using the very same language and the same special qualities attributed to them for so long.

A special focus was put on motherhood, rather than marriage: the former was no longer considered as being a mere reproductive function but rather started to be imbued with symbolic meaning. Though marriage signified a woman's maturity and respectability, confirmation that she had entered the world of womanly virtue and female fulfilment only arrived through childbearing; childless women were labelled as inadequate, a failure, an abnormality to be pitied, and very often they were encouraged to seek work caring for children (as governesses or nursery maids), in order to compensate for their 'loss' (see Abrams 2014). Once again, these ideas were linked to the belief that women's energies had to be channelled towards motherhood and care: their genius was to be found in social work and in love, and it was merely complementary to that of men (Delap 2004b: 105).

Quite predictably, this had repercussions on the theme of education too, which was heavily influenced by expectations of gender and class and, in the case of women, was felt to be necessarily geared towards motherhood: it was even thought that too much education could lead to women's infertility through an overstraining of their already delicate constitution (McDermid 1995: 92). Before World War I, most girls in Britain received their (limited amount of) education at home[5]; educational reform only began around the 1840s and was triggered by a series of factors, as reported by McDermid (1995: 92):

> […] the rising wealth and expectations of the middle-class; the belief that the mother, as first educator of her children, needed a sound education; an effective increase in the number of unmarried middle-class women by 1850, when the census revealed that adult women outnumbered men in the population; the need for better education and training if such women were to get respectable employment; and the stress on equal educational opportunity in the developing feminist movement.

However, there were still social and cultural obstacles to be faced on the way to opening up higher education for women too: a consistent number of groups of people considered them to be a disruptive force at university, while doctors insisted that female students would eventually suffer from too much studying, and parents feared their daughters would be dramatically transformed and believed that a woman's only university was the home (McDermid 1995: 95). By the end of the nineteenth century, still, women were indeed granted admission to university education, but this by no means meant they

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[5] This was mainly true for middle-class girls; schools aimed at the working classes included dame schools (small private ventures run by working-class women), Sunday schools, and Higher Grade schools, whose curriculum was more geared towards future employment in the expanding commercial sector, though domestic subjects remained an important part of girl's studying and the scientific topics covered differed greatly from those studied by boys (McDermid 1995: 98-101).

had consequent access to all professions, as the institutions they were studying in remained largely conservative and patriarchal in nature.

Women were generally barred from the world of work again because of the ideology of domesticity, which "disapproved of working women and which located feminine virtue in a familial and domestic setting" (McDermid 1995: 91); the so-called "domestic code" cited by Hamlett and Wiggins (2009: 708) encouraged women to focus on their homes and families, rather than on paid work. Their labour always came second, in several senses: they were excluded from the highest-paying and most respected jobs; they often spent their lives performing tasks that could also be done by children, thus their job was categorised as unskilled (even when it took them a lot of training, knowledge, or dexterity) and their status further declined; most importantly, they were considered secondary labourers because they already had jobs waiting for them at home: housekeeping, children, and the maintenance of respectability, and such time-consuming tasks often led them to confine themselves to unpaid family labour (Steinbach 2005: 11-14). Thus, according to Digby, women's work was doubly gendered: first because it was confined to 'feminine' tasks (paid or unpaid), and second because it was subordinated to men's work both in the home and in the workplace (1992: 205).

Still, this did not mean that women's contribution to family business was non-existent: first and foremost, whether they earned it or not, they were in charge of money and of making it last from one end of the week to the other. Though their domestic work was largely unpaid and labelled as typically feminine, they often used the ideology of domesticity to justify any activities they did outside of the home, such as their participation in religious or philanthropic organisations, which gradually became professionalised. According to Steinbach, women maintained that, in leaving their domestic duties, they were not leaving the private sphere for the public one, but, rather, they were widening the domestic sphere "through bringing its softening influence to others in need – or feminising the public one" (2005: 45).

Moreover, from the middle of the nineteenth century, there was actually a shift in opportunities and attitudes towards working women, with more and more professions being opened up to them, whether paid (clerk, shop assistant, teacher, nurse, hospital dispenser, hairdresser) or unpaid (librarian, social worker, Poor Law Guardian, School Board official). The growing number of working women was also linked to the many risks involved in depending on their husbands' income: men's work could be seasonal; they could decide that wage-earning gave them right to domestic violence, or they could desert the family (Steinbach 2005: 14). The professions women undertook both confirmed and challenged gender roles of the time: most of these were similar to philanthropic

activities that women had already engaged in before the long nineteenth century, and their being feminine, moral, domestic-oriented, and often religiously inspired (such as caring for other women, children, and the poor) quelled fears of the dangers that women's entering public life might bring, especially among the evangelical middle class. Thus, employers gradually came to accept the notion of working women, who started to be hired because female employment began to be seen as acceptable and respectable (Steinbach 2005: 64-5); as Hamlett and Higgins argue, this redefinition of roles in the working sphere aimed at emphasising fluidity and the fact that social and gender boundaries were not static, but continually negotiated, crossed, and often not very visible (2009: 709).

Another challenging area for women (and the one with which this project is more directly concerned) was that of affairs of the state, as the long nineteenth century was a true turning point for their direct participation in politics, whose definition, according to Hannam (1995: 184), needs to encompass "the politics of everyday life" and include personal choices and relationships too. This period was characterised by a problem which many contemporaries found perplexing: the presence of a female monarch (Victoria), who answered to no man, in an age when women had no political rights, were socially subordinated to men, and legally subordinated to their husbands. Indeed, as a woman, Victoria was not supposed to be too political, though of course as queen she had to take interest in the affairs of Britain and its Empire. Appearances, gender roles, and respectability were saved by depicting the royal family as a typical middle class English family, where Victoria was, first and foremost, wife and mother: the emphasis of the press on these aspects of the Queen's life thus tended to be projected as unthreatening, typical, and domestic. Her role was to entertain her people, to advise her ministers, and to refrain from direct action; thus, the monarch's position began to be seen simply as an application of the separate sphere paradigm and, rather than being a problematic figure, Victoria's roles as mother, wife, and later widow were seen as belonging to the ideal sovereign and, at the same time, the ideal woman. However, Victoria presided over a surprising transformation of her country, and she adapted to the changes in England's political culture: her representation as domestic spoke to the lives of more typical English women and, it was implied, she remained virtuous insofar as she obeyed the same standards of respectability (Steinbach 2005: 103-7).

Though it certainly was during the long nineteenth century that women increasingly started to actively participate in Britain's political life, they had already been employed in social politics for the whole of the modern period, with their skills and interests being utilised more and more on the margins of mainstream political activities (Digby 1992: 199). Their pursuits included balls, dinners, visits for the promotion of their family's political interests, homely teas, raising funds, and petitioning; then, their participation gradually extended with the institution of the secret ballot and

reform municipal government in the 1870s and 1880s: the adoption of the figure of the Ladies Auxiliaries was a common way of using women's contribution without allowing them decision-making powers (Davidoff 2003: 17). Their role in public life encompassed taking part in a range of political and reform movements, such as franchise reform unions, the Anti-Corn Law League, anti-slavery societies, the Owenite socialist movement, industrial disputes, and protests over food prices and the imposition of the New Poor Law. Quite predictably, though, this was true for middle-class women only, as those belonging to the working class were much less visible in the public arena (Hannam 1995: 185-86).

Throughout the nineteenth century, women's political activities hugely revolved around charity and philanthropic societies, whose numbers grew so much that this expanded opportunities for them to engage in commitments outside of the home[6] (as we will see in §1.2, these forms of political activism were at the base of the British feminist movement). Moreover, middle-class women could use public canvassing, letter writing, socialising, and visiting the female relatives of political candidates to support their interests; their participation in Society and their use of the London Season (which coincided with parliamentary session, from January to July) actually had political purposes too (Steinbach 2005: 93).

So far, we have seen how gender ideologies shaped women's everyday domestic life, education, work, and participation in the public sphere, and, at the same time, how women actually tried to break down gender barriers by stepping into what Digby defines as a "social borderland", "a highly problematic area into which women ventured at their peril" (1992: 198). As demonstrated, there was a clear-cut ideological separation of the sexes in every aspect of life: for women, crossing such borders could be considered acceptable only insofar as they used their familiar feminine skills in an extended, not separated area from their domestic territory, but this could still easily lead to social stigma if it happened too obviously or too prematurely (Digby 1992: 210-14). A key figure that evidently crossed these borders at the turn of the century was the so-called New Woman, who proclaimed herself independent and for this very reason was seen as an anarchist who threatened to "turn the world upside down and to be on top in a wild carnival of social and sexual misrule", a danger to society that could starve her uterus with her obsession with developing her brain (Showalter 1992: 38-9). Obviously, the press of the time was filled with outraged laments over the rising of this new figure. For example, the satirical magazine *Punch* published a cartoon or parody of the New Woman in almost every issue, but there were attacks coming from antifeminist women too. In her *The Rebel*

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[6] These included visiting the sick, pioneering new methods of dealing with social problems, collecting money for neighbours in need, and giving the gift of a Sunday dinner (see Hannam 1995: 187 and Steinbach 2005: 15).

of the Family (1880), anti-feminist novelist Eliza Lynn Linton scornfully described the emancipating woman as "the lady from America" who "did her business in a workmanlike manner, with no more agitation, shyness or embarrassment than if she had been a man"; the well-dressed and polished "specimen of a female public orator" whose "case-hardened self-sufficiency was as ugly as a physical deformity"; and the mannish woman with "close-cropped hair, a Tyrolese hat ... a waistcoat and a short jacket" (cited in Showalter 1992: 24).

Apart from the ideologies of domesticity, respectability, and that of the separate spheres, there were also popular medical theories which highlighted and confirmed women's weaknesses and inferiority, both in body and mind: during the long nineteenth century, there seemed to be few illnesses that did not have a gender-based explanation. For example, Harrison (1995: 135-143) recalls such ailments as chlorosis (which was similar to anaemia, began with puberty, was marked by asexuality, and thus reinforced ideas of innocence and sexual respectability); the apparent sickening and weakening potential of menstruation (doctors believed that this rendered women vulnerable and unstable, and thus unsuitable for higher education and the public sphere); and anorexia nervosa (viewed as a psychosomatic response to female dilemmas, an expression of powerlessness and anger). Actually, it was precisely the passive social role attributed to women (which resulted in an idle and confined lifestyle) that led to these so-called female maladies, though there were obvious class differences too. Middle-class women suffered from the social constrictions they had to put up with, and there was evidence that the few opportunities they had and the lack of power to alter things eventually led to madness as an expression of anger, hostility, and discontent. On the other hand, though, working-class women's sickness was seen as more problematic and as a danger to others which encompassed ideas of contagion and pollution[7] (see Harrison 1995: 135-44).

This section has aimed to offer a brief general overview of ways in which gender ideologies permeated women's lives during the long nineteenth century. It is a fundamental issue to consider in order to provide contextual background for this study. As Steinbach asserts, it is obvious that, during this period, there were tensions between the restrictions society imposed on women and, on the other hand, the impressive range of activities they engaged in and the many roles women had: daughter, sister, spinster, mother, wife, neighbour, employer, worker, professional, philanthropist, recipient of charity, churchgoer, consumer, reader, imperialist, political activist, public servant, and even monarch, among the others. However, as shown, women did not enjoy infinite possibilities: "the political, legal, economic, and cultural limitations they experienced were severe" (2005: 2). As the

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[7] This was particularly true at the beginning of the twentieth century, when concerns over the falling birthrate were associated with a threat to the "health of the race" and specifically linked to working-class women's inability as mothers (Harrison 1995: 135).

focus of this project is women's political participation and the development and use of feminist language and discourse in journalism, the next section will be devoted to an account of the birth of the British feminist movement between the 1850s and the early twentieth century.

1.2 The campaign for women's rights

Writing in 1911, Ethel Snowden (human rights activist, socialist, and feminist politician) referred to Britain as "the present stormcentre of the world's feminist movement" (cited in Levine 2018: 156). Indeed, although the apex of British first-wave feminism certainly coincided with the struggle for the vote (which became increasingly important in the first decades of the twentieth century), feminist ideas had been circulating in the United Kingdom at least from the 1780s onwards through periodicals and other types of publications (Caine 2001a: 767). The term *feminism* itself is debatable, as Caine reminds us that it actually entered English-language discussions only from the 1890s and it was not widely used until the advent of World War I[8]; still, it will be used here as an umbrella term covering a variety of phases, beliefs, and practices, also in order to avoid the clumsiness of using such phrases as 'women's rights woman'[9]. The following paragraphs will try to present a brief overview of the development of British feminism between the Victorian and Edwardian eras, with a focus on the campaign for women's rights (namely, for women's suffrage), which was not the only issue tackled in this period, but certainly among the most prominent ones.

First, it is essential to point out that much of the feminist campaigns of this period took place in London: though a significant number of organizations and discussion groups developed in other cities like Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh, and Bristol, the capital city came to play an ever more important role in feminist activities and in the feminist imaginary, as "feminists shared the widespread nineteenth century idea of London as offering an encyclopaedic range of urban experiences and

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[8] A linguistic analysis of the lemma in question and the difference between norm, ideology, and usage will be fully developed in § 4.4.

[9] Although British first-wave feminism was centred on the common theme of gendered inequalities, it was also characterised by a series of internal tensions, contradictions, paradoxes, and competing ideologies: there were, for example, socialist feminists who worked on a number of campaigns like the first International Women's Day on March 8th; feminist pacifists that argued that women had a special role in preventing war given their positions as mothers; 'equality' feminists who called for full equality with men in all aspects of life; and 'new' or 'welfare' feminists who questioned the achievability of equality feminism's aims given the context of women's reproductive role (Cowman 2016: 4-5).

features" (Caine 2001a: 766). Indeed, in London women had many opportunities to engage and have access to the public sphere as social investigators, philanthropists, or activists in local government: the city offered women many opportunities, and "it was in London streets that the most dramatic battles of the suffrage campaign were waged and in which the militants were able most clearly to play out their particular sense of women's vulnerability to sexual exploitation and violence" (Caine 2001a: 766). The image and the idea of London played an important role even for those feminists who were not based there: the very same periodicals analysed in this project were written and published there, but they circulated in other parts of the country as well, and this was pivotal in the spreading of feminist ideas and, as it will be shown, in the creation of a counter-discourse surrounding the image of suffrage campaigners and suffragettes in particular. Therefore, unless differently specified, the following paragraphs will report about feminism as it developed in the capital city.

As mentioned, we may place the true beginning of feminism in Britain only at the end of the eighteenth century: indeed, though there certainly were female voices that tried to contrast the inequalities of their gender before this date, it is also true that the period 1500-1700 saw little to no (legislated) improvement in the position of women, who were still barred from receiving a university education and who could secure their future only through marriage. It was only in the late sixteenth century that women actually entered the debate with their own voices and with their own publications: "[i]n an age when the ideal of female behaviour was 'chaste, silent and obedient', the very act of a woman publishing, or publicly pronouncing her own polemic, constituted a challenge to patriarchal authority and can therefore be identified as 'feminist'" (Hodgson-Wright 2006: 5). Among the most popular examples, we may cite Jane Anger, who wrote the first piece of feminist polemic in English (*Her Protection for Women*, 1589); Rachel Speght, who, in *A Muzzle for Melastomus* (1617) argued that, if women are the weaker sex, then Eve cannot take full responsibility for her and Adam's fall from Paradise; Bathsua Makin, who cited women from the past as historical exemplars in her *Essay to Revive the Ancient Education of Gentlewomen* (1673); and Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694), in which she argues that women are intellectually inferior to men only if led to think so and where she advocates for a religious retreat for women where they can be spiritually and intellectually nourished. The increasing number of literary voices making feminist statements meant that, in this period, feminist battles were only confined to cultural arenas. However, this helped change attitudes and paved the way for more radical actions in the centuries to come. As Hodgson-Wright states, "[i]t is hard to imagine how the suffragettes could have argued that women should have the vote, because of their naturally moralistic, civilising influence, without the precedents set by the women writers dealt with here" (2006: 13-14).

The late eighteenth century indeed saw the consolidation of feminist ideals, first with the so-called Bluestockings, a group of women who met in Elizabeth Montagu's homes in London and Bath to discuss not only literature, but also other intellectual and social matters (Cowman 2016: 1), and then with the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), which is now commonly acknowledged as marking the 'official' birth of British feminism. Wollstonecraft's work emerged from the turmoil of the French Revolution and it was the first to address middle-class women (especially mothers) as major influences on society: she advocated, among other things, for more opportunities for women in education and she wanted to raise women's moral and intellectual stature to make them into more rational citizens. However, the treatise did not offer a programme of sweeping practical reforms, but it referred more to a "revolution in manners" (Sanders 2006: 16), which can nevertheless be considered as laying the foundations of the burgeoning first wave of feminism.

It was then the nineteenth century which experienced a rapid and significant growth in feminism as a gradually more and more organised movement: in this century, being feminist signalled the adoption of an alternative set of values (Levine 2018: 23) in the search of responses to specific difficulties of the time and equality in a number of areas, such as education, the law and personal property, the double standard, domestic violence, but also vivisection and animal rights (see Cowman 2016: 2). Women began to participate in political campaigns that always had feminist visions: to cite a few, the anti-slavery movement (with the constitution of the Ladies' Society for the Relief of Negro Slave set up in 1825); the campaigns to repeal the Corn Laws between the 1830s and 1840s (the Anti-Corn Law League accepted women as members); and the Chartist movement, though in this case women were still relegated to separate associations that focused on activities deemed to be more feminine, such as designing and stitching the movement's banners (see Cowman 2016: 1-2). All of these examples, however, refer to campaigns that were not specifically aimed at achieving some sort of improvement for women alone: such struggles coincided with the fight for the vote around the middle of the century.

In 1832, the Great Reform Act granted the right to vote to 'male persons' over the age of twenty-one who lived in the counties, as well as to small landowners, tenant farmers, shopkeepers, and householders living in the boroughs who paid a yearly rent of at least £10: this extension of the franchise included 300,000 new voters but, as the word *male* stressed, still no woman was included. Mary Smith (a Yorkshire 'lady of rank and fortune') noticed this and was dismayed by the terms of the act: such was her disappointment that she signed a petition to Parliament, thus marking the first

official request of female enfranchisement (Atkinson 2018: 3). The petition was naturally rejected, but this was the starting point of a movement that then rapidly expanded over the next decades.

The pressure groups that were created in the mid-1800s still had no acknowledged leader, no powerful organisation, and no official propaganda (Levine 2018: 20): the feminism of these women was more of a lifestyle than a true form of organised political activism. Feminist ideas (concerning mainly the vote, but not only) were discussed in debating societies and social clubs exclusively for women which provided a physical place of their own. The most important ones where the Langham Place Circle, made up of a group of middle-class activist women who discussed and published their views about gendered inequalities[10] (see Sanders 2006: 32 and Levine 2018: 15), and the Kensington Debating Society, which emerged in 1865 and was a more radical society that tackled controversial issues such as, first and foremost, women's suffrage (Cowman 2016: 2).

Moreover, the 1850s saw a major resurgence of feminist activism (Sanders 2006: 32), so much so that in 1870 the women asking for the vote were dubbed by Eliza Lynn Linton as "the shrieking sisterhood" (cited in Atkinson 2018: 7). However, the true turning point of the campaign for women's suffrage were the 1880s and 1890s, when the pressure intensified and the discussion intersected with an overall urgent debate concerning the role of women and the birth of the New Woman, as reported in § 1.1 (Sanders 2006: 35 and Hamlett and Wiggins 2009: 707). By this time, women had obtained small victories concerning the matter of suffrage, as they could now vote for and stand for election for the School Boards and the Boards of Guardians (the bodies that administered the Poor Law at a local level; see Cowman 2016: 3). Still, enfranchisement at a national level was denied to them, and, though the feminist movement began to be more and more organised, there were also increasing protests against the cause of women's franchise, which culminated, for example, with the petition organised by Mrs Humphry Ward in 1889 signed by the "great and the good" women of Victorian society against female suffrage (Atkinson 2018: 8).

The campaign for the vote thus first emerged during the 1860s, when feminists were drawn together from a number of different causes and united behind the single issue of the Parliamentary vote (Cowman 2016: 3). However, it was during the Edwardian period that several decisive shifts in the women's movement took place, since the franchise issue climaxed in the early years of the twentieth century. As Levine argues, this is because the Edwardian era signalled different conditions and different priorities than those which had characterised the early instances of British feminism in

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[10] The most famous members of this group included Barbara Leigh Bodichon, author of *Women and Work* (1856) and Bessie Rayner Parkes, author of *Remarks on the Education of Girls* (1854). Together they set up and began publishing *The Englishwoman's Journal*, one of the first instances of feminist periodical, which will be further discussed in § 1.4.

the latter part of the nineteenth century: the movement had, by now, "articulated a new and positive consciousness of commonality among women, strengthened by the networks which offered not simply a guaranteed core of committed workers for the cause but, crucially, a sense of human contact at all levels" (2018: 158). In the context of early twentieth-century Britain, the struggle for female franchise "carried a psychological, ideological and cultural significance that went well beyond its formal political meaning, or practical utility" (Stanley Holton 1992: 13). Women began to identify the series of oppressions that had led to discontent in their personal lives as an impetus to feminist politics and (militant) organisation, and political activity started to be seen as an integral part of being a woman, so much so that we could say that first-wave feminists were seeking to give a new meaning to their identity as women: "suffragists sought to challenge both prevailing understanding of what it meant to be a woman, and the ideology that asserted the separateness of domestic and public life by arguing the significance of values associated with domestic roles for a reordering of society in general" (Stanley Holton 1992: 158). As we will see, language and discourse played a key part in this reshaping of women's identity.

Feminists used a variety of arguments to justify their claim to the vote, and these usually differed between equality-based arguments (which arose from Wollstonecraft's ideas and stated that women were essentially equal to men, thus it was intrinsically unjust to deny them the same rights) and difference-based arguments (which grew out of nineteenth-century ideas about gender roles and stated that women were different from men, but in no way inferior to them). All in all, the reasons behind the vote did not differ greatly among the various societies, but we will see that what really proved to be a cause for divisions and tensions were the means and tactics promoted in order to obtain the vote (see Steinbach 2005: 291-92 and Levine 2018: 63).

Throughout the decades, women fighting for female suffrage were never truly supported by any political party: indeed, their disillusion with the lukewarm support received even by the Liberals led them to publicly state their political autonomy and to maintain their distance from adherence to mainstream politics, "criticising Liberal and Conservative governments alike for their entrenched attitudes to women" (Levine 2018: 59). It was certainly true that British politics refrained from tackling the delicate subject of women's enfranchisement and still held biased opinions about female participation in the public sphere: indeed, Conservatives firmly believed in maintaining the status quo, also because they feared that, if enfranchised, women might vote for the Liberals or the newly-formed Labour party, while on the other hand some Liberals had the same fears about their opponents (Atkinson 2018: 17). Resistance against women's vote was obviously not confined to British MPs voting against it: anti-suffragists (a group that included women too), saw the campaign for female

suffrage as a threat to the ideas of social propriety already discussed in § 1.1, with women seen as moving out of an 'acceptable borderland' in an attempt to breach the seemingly impermeable gender barriers (see Digby 1992: 211-13).

However, the suffrage movement did evolve rapidly in the early years of the twentieth century against all these odds: on 10th October 1903, Emmeline Pankhurst, along with her eldest daughter Christabel, decided to form the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), "a women-only, politically active organisation, free from class allegiances and free from affiliation to any of the male-dominated and male-centred political parties" (Purvis 1995: 91). This date was to be remembered as the official birth of the suffrage movement, and it was recounted in Pankhurst's words in this way:

> It was in October, 1903, that I invited a number of women to my house in Nelson Street for purposes of organisation. We voted to call our new society the Women's Social and Political Union, partly to emphasise its democracy, and partly to define its object as political rather than propagandist. We resolved to limit our membership exclusively to women, to keep ourselves absolutely free from any party affiliation, and to be satisfied with nothing but action on our question. Deeds, not words, was to be our motto.

As we shall see, the period from 1905 to August 1914 (when Britain entered World War I) saw a true climax of the women's suffrage movement, which included the creation of more and more societies (and, sometimes, the publication of their own periodicals), but also the gradual diversification of the strategies used to win the cause for the vote, which led to internal struggles, tensions, and divisions too. The campaign was never monolithic, and different women approached and experienced it in different ways marked by level of commitment, marital status, geographical location, religion, employment, and class (Steinbach 2005: 287), thus revealing a relative fluid identity of British first-wave feminism on a wide range of cultural and political sources which in turn influenced many areas of political argument (Delap 2004a: 378) and which was reflected in language and discourse too.

At first, militancy was not on the agenda of the women's movement (not even of the WSPU, which is now best remembered for the use of violent tactics: Emmeline Pankhurst herself was initially a moderate leader; Atkinson 2018: 7). The 'peaceful' work of the early days of the campaign included legal demonstrations, drafting of petitions, lobbying MPs, travelling the country to speak at meetings, participating in marches and deputations to Parliament, as well as the 'unladylike' strategy of interrupting male political discourse by questioning and heckling male politicians (see Purvis 1995: 92 and Högagard 2017: 7). The dramatization of women's exclusion from the public sphere also encompassed tax resistance and petitions to the king himself (Nym Mayhall 2000: 351); however, at first the movement did not think about spending money on ways to advertise its activities, and forms of publicity were limited to chalking notices of meetings and slogans on pavements or on posters the suffragists produced themselves, while Christabel Pankhurst soon hired a stall in the marketplace

where she sold 'Votes for Women' pamphlets (Atkinson 2018: 49-50). Gradually, though, these protests became more and more aggressive and aimed at insisting upon the prerogative of women to enter the public (male) sphere and to participate as equal citizens, whilst earlier feminists had confined themselves to "carving out a separate sphere for women or pressing for legal reforms that specifically affected women and children" (Purvis 1995: 92). Slowly, suffragists (especially those belonging to the WSPU) realized that creating forms of "crisis" or "riots" could be much more proficient than simply marching with banners and shouting slogans, especially because "militancy was news" and, indeed, mainstream newspapers like the *Manchester Guardian* and *The Times* started writing about the Pankhursts and the almost belligerent turn of the women's movement. The (mostly) negative publicity was actually quite positive for the WSPU, as it resulted in large audiences for their speakers and an increase in membership (Högagard 2017: 7).

Militancy was the cause for an ultimate division in the women's movement: in 1907, some feminists became increasingly discontent with the Pankhurst's autocratic rule of the WSPU and their insistence on using more and more violent militant tactics. Thus, Charlotte Despard and Theresa Billington-Greig decided to form a separate society, which they called the "Women's Freedom League" (WFL), that was specifically not as militant as the WSPU (it adhered to methods of passive resistance, though these were later seen only as a weak imitation of the WSPU's more spectacular methods of protest; Nym Mayhall 2000: 345) and more democratically run (Atkinson 2018: 75). The WFL was later joined by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS): at this point, there were three main suffrage organisations in Britain, united by their tradition of popular radicalism that emphasised universalised, liberal political ideals as a means of advancing women's claim to citizenship. However, these societies greatly differed in one fundamental aspect. While the NUWSS was still confined to what they defined as 'constitutional' methods in order to assert women's right to be enfranchised, the WSPU adopted increasingly extreme tactics, aimed at highlighting the intrinsic unjust exclusion of women from public life (see Nym Mayhall 2000: 346 and Steinbach 2005: 305).

This is also when a linguistic division entered the suffrage debate: the use of militancy led to the separation of *suffragists* or *constitutionalists* (belonging to the NUWSS and the WFL), who asserted women's right to citizenship through passive resistance, from *suffragettes* (belonging to the WSPU), who were more and more interested in asserting women's right to resist the government and its laws until they were recognised as citizens (and this, for them, justified the use of militant tactics; Nym Mayhall 2000: 246). The language surrounding these two terms will be further investigated in § 4.3, as it generated interesting discourses and debates both within and without the women's suffrage movement.

Still, the passage to a more and more forceful form of militancy was gradual. Initially, these forms of protests included feminists padlocking themselves to the railings of Number 10, Downing Street and shouting 'Votes for women!' loud enough to be heard by cabinet ministers inside, or the probably more famous episode of the 'Grille protest', when, in October 1908, two members of the WFL chained themselves to the metal screen in the Ladies' Gallery above the House of Commons crying out, once again, 'Votes for women!', while another woman showered the floor with leaflets advocating women's suffrage (Nym Mayhall 2000: 357). Another important public demonstration of women's fight for the vote was the organisation (this time, by the WSPU), of a 'Women's Sunday', held on 21 June 1908, an impressive march of the women who gathered at Hyde Park. On this occasion, the famous tricolour combination which later characterised the movement was devised: purple (the royal colour which stood for royal blood flooding in the veins of every suffragette); white (which stood for purity both in private and in public life) and green, the colour of hope and the emblem of spring (Atkinson 2018: 95).

In 1909, the campaigners (especially those from the WSPU) became increasingly impatient with the lack of progress and support by politicians, and they slowly began to turn to aggressive methods, hailed by Christabel Pankhurst as the only viable way to obtain attention and meaningful results. The suffragettes started pestering politicians in the streets, a strategy which proved to be effective and useful in attracting useful publicity. Indeed, the mainstream press was shocked into writing about these women's unladylike behaviour and inappropriate forms of protest: "even though the press was unsympathetic to the women's demands it was hard to resist reporting some of the almost slapstick scenes which erupted whenever ministers were going about their business or were off duty at the weekends and on holiday" (Atkinson 2018: 144).[11] Militant action then became ever more intense and it included property damage like arson, window-smashing, painting-slashing, placing bombs in empty buildings, vandalising art treasures, pouring acid on golf courses, and destroying mail in letter boxes (see Nym Mayhall 1995: 322 and Purvis 1996: 261). At the same time, discontent towards how these women behaved increased in the entire population. For example, apart from the negative representation in the mainstream press, a popular music-hall song was bawled whenever suffragettes held open-air meetings (Atkinson 2018: 110):

Put me upon an island where the girls are few;

Put me amongst the most ferocious lions in the zoo;

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[11] For example, Prime Minister Asquith was photographed being nobbled by two suffragettes as he was leaving a meeting in Whitehall, and the scene was later duly reported in the *Daily Mirror* (Atkinson 2018: 144).

You can put me upon a treadmill and I'll never, never fret,

But for pity's sake don't put me near a Suf-fra-gette.

Soon enough, suffragettes started to be arrested for these deliberate acts of physical force: while, on the one hand, outrage among the population could only intensify at seeing 'respectable' middle-class women being sent off to Holloway Prison in London, on the other, this fostered the sense of community (the so-called "Suffragette Spirit" defined by Nym Mayhall, 1995: 320) within the WSPU itself, so much so that a new level of mass militancy and a new stage in the suffragette campaign was initiated when more and more women were willing to volunteer to break the law and thus risk arrest and imprisonment (Atkinson 2018: 270). The incarceration of the suffragettes later paved the way for a new debate which this time concerned their treatment as Second or Third Division prisoners. Basically, the women who ended up in Holloway were treated as common criminals rather than political prisoners, who were usually placed in the First Division, which allowed them some 'privileges' denied to other categories (for example, First Division prisoners were not searched on admission, they could order their own food, they were allowed visits, and could engage in the writing of books and articles; Purvis 1995: 97). Being placed in the Second Division meant not only that the suffragettes were still considered as 'inferior' to other prisoners, but also that they were stripped of their own clothes and forced to wear prison clothing, to scrub the floors, and to serve their time in solitary confinement, and this generated a dispute over their political status in jail (Atkinson 2018: 52). While they were secluded, their comrades marched around Holloway and serenaded their 'sisters' by singing the *Marseillaise*; when they were then released, there were welcoming parties, and the prisoners were awarded the 'Holloway Medals' to honour their sacrifice (Atkinson 2018: 123).

Unfortunately, though, the treatment of the suffragettes in prison worsened when, in July 1909, Marion Wallace-Dunlop was the first to turn to hunger striking in order to place pressure on the government. This soon realised that it could not afford to have a series of 'suffragette martyrs' dying in Holloway for the cause of women's suffrage, and thus it was decreed to resort to the torturous practice of forcible feeding in order to avoid this. As Purvis reports, the most common method used to forcibly feed the suffragettes was by a tube through the nostrils, although other more painful methods (such as the tube into the stomach) were used as well, accompanied by considerable force and violence on the women (1995: 97). In their periodicals, suffrage societies publicly declared their outrage at the use of this barbaric practice, which received little to no attention in mainstream newspapers. The WSPU aimed at neutralising this negligence by reporting detailed accounts in *Votes for Women*, and they were successful in obtaining sympathy even from some men. For example, Keir Hardie, leader of the British Labour Party, wrote to *The Times* on 27 September 1909:

That there is a difference of opinion concerning the tactics of the militant suffragettes goes without saying, but surely there can be no two opinions concerning the brutality of these proceedings? […] worn and weak by hunger strike they are seized upon, held down by brute force, gagged and a tube inserted down the throat and food poured into the stomach. Let British men think over this spectacle!

Nevertheless, the prospect of being tortured in prison did not quell women's protests, and violent actions simply escalated in the following years. At the same time, violent reactions towards the suffragettes became common: the most notorious one was the so-called 'Black Friday', which took place on 18 November 1910, when the women who had gathered in Parliament Square for yet another demonstration were flung by the police to the ground, kicked, dragged down the streets and even, in some cases, (sexually) abused. The next day, *The Times* decided to focus on the suffragettes' bad behaviour rather than on the police's brutal attack on the women, but again all periodicals (and especially *Votes for Women*) responded by building a counter-narrative of facts, and 'Black Friday' later remained a date to be remembered for the indescribable violence suffered by the women who were actively canvassing for female suffrage (see Atkinson 2018: 222-25).

The episode had an immediate impact on militancy: while some women now refrained from taking part in public meetings for fear of other acts of violence against them, others were now even more prepared to engage in militant strategies. While deputations to Parliament were almost completely abandoned, window-smashing became the order of the day: on the evening of 1 March 1911, 150 suffragettes broke the windows of the shops in the Haymarket, Piccadilly, Regent Street, the Strand, Oxford Street, and Bond Street. Such was the outrage among British citizens that, afterwards, "any unaccompanied woman in sight 'especially if she carried a handbag, became an object of menacing suspicion'" (Atkinson 2018: 293). Emmeline Pankhurst used the so-called 'argument of the broken pane' to justify these episodes, saying that the suffragettes had decided to turn to these methods because they were the most readily understood.

Militancy escalated and the suffragettes also started to burn letters in pillar boxes in London, Croydon, and York. Sometimes, these acts were aimed at protesting against forcible feeding, which was still happening in prison. The government thus decided to pass the so-called 'Cat and Mouse Act', which aimed at eliminating the problem of hunger striking in this way: the suffragettes in prison were now 'allowed' to starve themselves without being forcibly fed, but they were released as soon as they proved to be dangerously weak. They were authorised to remain at home in order to recover, but if it was found that they had re-gained some weight and energy they would be sent to prison again to finish serving their sentence. Though the Act was intended to undermine the militants' resolve, it actually proved to be a failure: as Atkinson reports, women recovered at home and later started

travelling around the country to commit further 'criminal' acts, and very few 'mice' were returned to Holloway. The Act backfired, and forcible feeding was once again reinstituted in the autumn of 1913 (2018: 384-85).

In June of the same year, another violent attack led to the only 'martyr' that died for the suffrage cause: the militant suffragette Emily Wilding Davison was present at the horse races of the Epsom Derby in the presence of the King and Queen. She threw herself under one of the horses during the race and, inevitably, died a few days later. The newspapers referred to Mrs Davison as 'the malignant suffragette' and King George V wrote in his diary about a "most disappointing day", not due to the death of a woman, but to the fact that this event ruined the races (see Atkinson 2018: 412). On the other hand, the WSPU hailed Emily Wilding Davison as a heroine, the new Joan of Arc who had sacrificed herself as a noble warrior: the *Suffragette* (this was the new name given to *Votes for Women*; see § 1.4 for more about it) portrayed her on its cover as an angel with large wings, and her halo included the words "Love that Overcometh" and the caption "In Honour and Loving, Reverent Memory of Emily Wilding Davison. She Died for Women".

The escalation of militancy lasted until 1914, because the suffragettes used force as a frustrated response "to the entrenched political position, the force-feeding of women, the reluctance of the church to condemn the way the government was treating suffragette prisoners and the government's strategy to shut down the Union" (Atkinson 2018: 495). However, the outbreak of World War I severely curtailed the most active phase of the suffrage movement, and on 13th August Emmeline Pankhurst officially called an end to militant actions by writing to the members of the WSPU:

> It has been possible to consider what should be the course adopted by the WSPU in view of the war crisis. It is obvious that the most vigorous militancy is for the time being rendered less effective by contrast with the infinitely greater violence done in the present war not to mere property and economic property alone, but to human life.

Thus, she announced the temporary suspension of militancy and, for those who feared the loss of momentum, Mrs Pankhurst assured that the WSPU would resume with its usual militant strategies once the conflict ended (Atkinson 2018: 508). Most women at the time actually supported the government in the war effort, volunteering for war work (such as working in factories producing munitions, building ships, aeroplanes, driving fire engines, trams, and as nurses, among other things) in order to show their aptitude to become legitimate citizens, while others preferred to become strong pacifists and condemn Britain's role in the conflict (Cowman 2016: 3).

British women finally obtained a partial right to the franchise with the 1918 Representation of the People Act, which gave the vote to all women who were above the age of thirty, met the property qualifications required of local government voters or who were graduates of British universities (see Steinbach 2005: 315 and Cowman 2016: 4). Obstacles still remained (such as the age limit), however, and women achieved full enfranchisement in 1928, only because feminists continued their strong campaign for equal votes, albeit with no use of aggressive methods. Historians still debate on the factors that finally convinced the British government to grant women the right to vote. Steinbach affirms that, though the work done by women during the war was surely an important contribution, it is essential to remember that they won the vote after years and years of campaigning and through their own political efforts (2005: 316).

1.3 Developments in print culture

After describing the historical context concerning gender ideologies and the social position of women between the Victorian and Edwardian era, it is now necessary to talk about the overall developments in print culture that, during this same span of time, contributed to greater changes in British society and to the creation of the feminist periodical press of the early twentieth century, whose nature will be further explored in §1.4. Indeed, as Conboy affirms (2017: 119), "British popular newspapers achieved a trajectory of increasing commercial success over a period of two hundred years", and their popularity was based on an appeal to broader audiences and to the tastes and interests of ordinary people (rather than a political elite). Their greatest accomplishment was, as we will see, the development of a blend of content and display, the use of a variety of textual strategies and, last but not least, the drawing upon of a genuinely radical policy that characterised part of the British press in the early years of the nineteenth century.

The following section will concentrate specifically on developments in news discourse and journalism, a term that needs to be further defined before delving into an explanation of why it was so important during the period considered here. Conboy reports that the word *journalism* entered the English language via an article in the *Westminster Review* of 1833 (2010: 79), and that the inclusion of this neologism signalled "an attempt to delineate a style of writing which narrowed down previously existing divisions between high culture and popular culture" and which accounted for "the characteristic tensions which newspapers brought into the public arena, as they located their appeal

between elite and popular knowledge". Moreover, Brake (1994: 83) highlights how journalism, as a cultural form, "may be seen as the commercial and ideological exploitation of the transient and the topical, a ceaseless generating or production of 'news' and novelty, involving a plurality of discourses, including literary and political". By the 1880s (the apex of the British press), the term had been usually associated with news reporting, still considered as being firmly masculine, but writing journalism actually encompassed more diverse subgenres which were often labelled as typically feminine (and, consequently, lowbrow), such as magazine writing (very often linked to fashion and frippery), reviewing (perceived as closer to literature), essay writing, but also specialist kinds of columnizing, like pious scriptural reflections and domestic advice columns (Gray 2012: 6). Though, at least apparently, the division between the public (masculine) and private (feminine) sphere seemed to be reflected in newspaper writing, we will actually see how feminist periodicals (especially those strictly connected to the suffrage movement) aimed at extirpating this stereotype and ideology, too, by mainly structuring their columns around news reporting and commentaries on the political situation and by developing a specific feminine language around these seemingly unfeminine discourses.

Although it is true that the British press began its gradual process of expansion, democratisation, and diversification throughout the nineteenth century, we should also remember that it had actually been changing in the eighteenth century, too. Matheson recounts a series of pivotal changes during this period, such as the fact that the press had won the right to report Parliament and the courts, and that newspapers slowly started to grow in respectability and status as the Fourth Estate of government. This process allowed the media to be free and independent of government control and, as Curran argues, "free media empowered the people" and contributed to the extension of the political community, whose boundaries were thus expanded "both horizontally to incorporate peripheral areas distant from London, and also vertically to include people lower down the social scale" (2002: 136). The press became independent not only from government, but also from party and social interest, and it was enabled to become the voice of the people, to hold government into account, and to expose it to public scrutiny. Newspapers style and news discourse also started changing during the eighteenth century, although we could not yet define it as a form of coherent discourse with regular and specific features (see Matheson 2000: 560-61).

The nineteenth century then saw an incredible explosion in the newspaper market, and the press truly moved into the centre of British life (see Hampton 2001: 214 and Bös 2015: 91). This happened despite the fact that the developments in print culture were at this time still highly influenced by the Stamp Acts, that is to say, by the taxes to be paid when acquiring a newspaper. As

Bös recounts, taxes reached their peak of four pence per copy in 1815, but these rising prices did not stop people from reading newspapers, since "[s]haring copies or hiring them for a small fee from shops, and reading in coffeehouses, at inns and taverns was a common practice" (2015: 93). Hampton argues that, by the beginning of the Victorian era, the press had at least three major functions in society: providing news, serving as an organ of opinion, and serving as an introducer of business from one trader to another (2001: 218).

At the turn of the century, the British newspaper landscape mainly consisted of the London morning dailies[12], the evening papers published twice or thrice a week, and the provincial dailies. Later, two new types of papers quickly gained importance: the radical papers and the Sunday papers. The former, such as the *Political Register*, the *Black Dwarf*, or the *Poor Man's Guardian*, embodied the voice of the working class and were a source of influence for the feminist periodicals of the early twentieth century (see § 1.4), while the latter became particularly popular because of their responses to letters from the public asking advice about politics, class action, and voting, and because they led campaigns that they knew would have resonance among their audience, "an astute strategic manoeuvre which would become incorporated as a staple of all popular newspapers" (Conboy 2017: 122). Consequently, this ensured that the content of these Sunday papers matched the readers' wants and needs, which, according to the publishers, would maximise both circulation and profit. These newspapers became widespread because of their "heteroglossic mixture" (Conboy 2002: 81) which was more attractive to the mass readership than the instructive approach of the other journals (Hampton 2001: 215) and the focus on working-class issues of the radical press (Bös 2015: 97).

When the taxes began to be reduced in 1836 and later completely abolished in 1855, more and more newspapers started to compete in what became an increasingly commercialised market. For example, the *Daily Telegraph (and Courier)* was the first penny paper which was sold at half the price of the competing morning dailies. On the other hand, other already-existing newspapers, such as the *Standard*, chose to adapt their prices. Obviously, there was a whole range of factors responsible for the overall developments in print culture of the nineteenth century: according to Bös (2015: 93-94), there were massive technological innovations (such as a new, mechanised paper-making process that cut costs, or the fact that news gathering was facilitated by the invention of the telegraph in 1844); the changing living conditions linked to the Industrial Revolution also had an impact on the reading

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[12] *The Times*, founded in 1785, remained unchallengingly the most popular morning daily at least until the 1850s, as it was characterised by unmatched authority and it was directed at a limited number of (privileged) individuals (Bös 2015: 93).

habits of people; last, but not least, the Education Acts of the 1870s played a key role in the growing literacy rates of the time.

The last half of the nineteenth century has been dubbed by Hampton as the "Augustan Age" of the press, a "golden period" in which the (penny) press gave British journalism the highest levels of dignity and power, and where the mid-Victorian educational ideal had a pivotal role in the repealing of the Stamps, which were also defined as "taxes on knowledge" and were "an attempt to impose censorship by commercial rather than political means" (2001: 215-18). The greatest improvement of this period was the popularisation of British newspapers, which entailed developing two different kinds of relationships: that between the press and Parliament, and that between the press and the people. Indeed, as Bös suggests (2015: 104), popular journalism was both "for the people" and "by the people": the first phrase implies a strong emphasis on readership composition, a notion of what is relevant for the people as a mass audience (this oscillates between radical political orientation and a focus on entertainment), and different modes of addressing readers, with concepts and strategies such as personalisation and conversationalisation; the second phrase refers to the fact that editors shared a (social) background with their readership and instituted various means of reader involvement, such as the typical letters to the editor columns, which ensured participation of the people.

This process of popularisation reached its apex during the 1880s and 1890s, when the layout of the press became more accessible, and more space was allocated to human interest stories, crime, and sport, thus involving an acceptance of the notion of multiple publics that were not equal participants in political power relations (see Hampton 2001: 227 and Curran 2002: 141). However, this focus on the popular was met by some with new concerns regarding the lowering of the standards of journalism (Curran 2002: 137), and it is also true that the press came under increased intellectual, commercial, and social challenges, as journalism started to be seen exclusively as a commodity and as a merely representative medium. Indeed, after the 1880s, rather than 'educating' the people (as it did in the first half of the century), the press would rather 'represent' them (Hampton 2001: 215).

News discourse and layout also developed throughout the nineteenth century. In the early decades, newspapers were markedly sober in appearance and featured unbroken columns of print and very few pictures; moreover, headlines as we know them today did not exist (Wiener 2015: 206). They contained leading articles which only offered verbatim transcriptions of important speeches, letters from correspondents or letters between public officials with little to no framing text, thus we could say that they certainly did not have their own voice (Matheson 2000: 562 and Hampton 2001: 217). The press also had difficulty moving between public and private language, and this suggests that journalism still did not have enough authority or the necessary tools to redefine the context of

words. Only in the latter part of the century was there an increasing emphasis on presenting 'news' and 'facts', and thus journalism became a self-sufficient form of knowledge that moved away from the stenographic methods of the previous decades that left interpretation up to the reader alone. Thus, the news story was re-organised as a self-contained language event, and the journalist's role changed from gatherer and recorder of news to storyteller (Matheson 2000: 570).

Another crucial change, according to Matheson, refers to the fact that newspapers gradually abandoned their "dignified, gentlemanly style", which had been appropriate for public discourse, for a "plain speaking, almost sociably unaccountable style" (2000: 568). By the 1870s, the look of newspapers had begun to change too, since they started to contain more illustrations and to pay more attention to sports, gossip, and to sensationalism on the whole, with the occasional reports on murders or rapes (Wiener 2015: 206). All in all, we could say that three major developments concerning style and news discourse happened throughout the nineteenth century: the creation of a single news style and a distinct discourse of the news; the epistemological status of the news story, which changed from a collection of raw information to a form of knowledge in itself; and the development of an independent social status of news, which drifted away from the conventions of public discourse (Matheson 2000: 559).

All these changes in news discourse can be gathered under the label of 'New Journalism', a term coined by British poet and cultural critic Matthew Arnold, who first used it in an article on the *Nineteenth Century* in 1887. New Journalism represented a major discursive shift that was created as a response to the vast expansion of the reading public and a reflection of the commercial and democratising impulses of print culture in the nineteenth century (Gray 2012: 8). What mainly differentiated this New Journalism from the Old one were a series of American-inspired devices that were introduced to reflect the undergoing popularisation of the press, such as, for example, an increase in the personal and in human interest (through the use of interviews, among other things); the introduction of signature, that came as a disruption of the monolithic authority of the periodical; and substantial stylistic changes which involved the discarding of the typical medley of various types of discourses (e.g. parliamentary and court proceedings, public speeches, materials from other newspapers, etc.), that was replaced by the practice of interweaving information from different sources into a unique and recognizable style (see Brake 1994: 86-7, Gray 2012: 8, and Bös 2015: 99). This emphasis on the personal and on sensationalism was reflected in the publication of articles about sport, crime, gossip, interviews: anything that, according to Wiener (2015: 209), was able to attract a large readership. Gradually, less attention was paid to parliamentary reports, and leading articles diminished in length and influence: they were replaced by the so-called 'leaderettes', written in the

popular, condensed style sometimes referred to as 'journalese' (Wiener 2015: 209). Examples of newspapers that first adopted New Journalism include the *Pall Mall Gazette* (a penny evening London paper that published hundreds of interviews); the *Star* (which reported copiously on sports and crime, and in 1888 offered a detailed description of the exploits of Jack the Ripper, accompanied by ghoulish headlines); *Tit-Bits* (which favoured 'snippets' journalism, that comprised excerpts from other publications, miscellanies of useful information, and well-publicised prize competitions); the *Daily Mail* (which covered sports and crime and was characterised by a strident imperialism); and the *Daily Express*, the first British newspaper to adopt the American-style method of printing news on the front page instead of advertisements (see Wiener 2015: 209-10).

Naturally, the changes observable in New Journalism generated discussions among contemporaries: though some thought them to be 'refreshing' for language itself (Bös 2015: 100), the general tenor tended to be more critical, and some intellectuals feared that the new style might eventually lead to a deterioration of the standards of language use and of the quality of journalism on the whole, since the new emphasis on sensationalism was labelled as "feather-brained" (Brake 1994: 95). What is certain is that, at the *fin de siècle*, the British press was reconstructing and questioning itself. As Gray suggests, "[t]he periodical press was at the crux of tensions between categories of aesthetic and economic, art and commerce; it constantly asked itself what it was, what its value was, and what its status was", and "journalism was changing, the marketplace was changing, and ideas of authorship, fame and influence were conceptualized in entirely new ways" (2012: 9).

The changes in print culture described above had also to do with gender constructions, and, as Gray argues, with the challenging and reshaping of these constructions, especially as the century drew to a close (2012: 6). Gender ideologies concerned both writing and reading: indeed, before actually being able to write and publish articles on newspapers, women were regarded as primarily consumers of print, though research has already outlined how the 'public' in the press largely excluded them (Curran 2002: 137) and that access to print was not at all easy for them. Specifically, Beetham (2001: 55) considers print as property (its circulation in the form of a commodity), a relation to physical and psychological space, a source of pleasure for women and a way of making sense of themselves and the world around them, alongside its potential power and the anxieties connected to it produced by those in authority, especially concerning the reading of young women. In the case of journalism, beliefs surrounding the ideal reader of newspapers saw it as essentially male, while the magazine was viewed as a more feminine medium[13] (Hampton 2004: 4). This interpretation was

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[13] Magazines, unlike newspapers, presented 'commonplace' language and content, and the commonplace was often strictly defined in feminine terms. The association underscored the presumption that the female sphere was not that of politics, and not everyone was ready to welcome the inclusion of female readers in newspapers (Hampton 2001: 227).

linked to the assumption that women would not be interested in news, that is, in political affairs (Beetham 2001: 64) and that the 'real' work of hard news was still the near-exclusive domain of male journalists. However, as explained by Gray (2012: 2), evidence shows that women journalists tackled important issues of the Woman Question (namely and most importantly, suffrage, childcare, and marriage laws), so that we could see them as "women writing within and helping change an industry and a society that was increasingly being read, challenged, and changed by other women". As readers, women were thus caught in a double blind: scolded on the one hand for their frivolous delight in novels, but barred on the other hand from serious reading, or even from studying subjects deemed to be beyond their powers of intellect or judgement, as evidence for this kind of knowledge was seen as intrinsically unfeminine (Beetham 2001: 67). Indeed, much of this discussion revolved around what women and girls *ought* to read. For example, in *Sesame and Lilies* (1865), John Ruskin argued for girls to be allowed to read the same books as boys, though he also drew a line at theology. Specifically, in 'Of Queens' Gardens', the section of the book focused on girls' reading, he stated that men and women have very different but complementary powers, and that, even when they do read the same book, women must do it for a different purpose: they must not read for personal knowledge or self-development, but to improve as mothers and wives, thus "the woman reader was the queen in the walled garden which represented both her body and her domestic space of Home" (Beetham 2001: 68).

Since the early eighteenth century, the subordination of women had been supported by popular print culture itself: Curran (2002: 138) reports that traditional gender norms were upheld in contemporary conduct books which provided social and moral guidance, and they were reproduced in the new cultural form of the novel too. However, there were initial forms of veiled protest in this patriarchal culture, such as ballads in which women disguised themselves as men, thus reproducing the inevitable arbitrary and mutable nature of gender, or the heroines of late eighteenth-century novels that transformed deficient men through their love and sweet nature or bested them through their feminine wiles. Later, in the nineteenth century, magazines specifically addressed to women began to be published: unlike the weighty literary reviews, they included not only fiction and poetry, but also book reviews and advice on reading, as well as advice on dress or household management. There was indeed a growing number of publications which gave recipes, advice on housework, on nursing the sick and on childcare, as well as on education, including reading (Beetham 2001: 57-62). Though feminist scholars have long emphasised the ideological work of these (Victorian) magazines in projecting a domestic image of femininity and attacking whoever transgressed it, Beetham argues that, despite its apparent conservative message, these periodicals actually responded to genuine desires and interests by women readers, and part of their radical potential laid precisely in including

these women in the conversation. For example, while the mainstream press harshly attacked the New Woman in the 1890s, deriding her as mannish and a threat to civilisation, these magazines (that later evolved in the feminist press, as we will see in § 1.4) contested this image and presented the New Woman as properly womanish and as employing respectable feminine qualities in the service of the community (see Beetham 1996 and Hampton 2004).

By the *fin de siècle*, the rise of women's media corresponded to the increasingly prominent role of women in British journalism and, consequently, to a slow process of de-subordination in print culture. These changes were certainly linked to higher literacy levels, as in the last decade of the nineteenth century the majority of women in Britain could read and had some kind of access (however still limited) to print. However, Beetham notices how this development was still patchy, as, for example, women in rural areas were less likely to be able to read than their city sisters or rural men, and women in the south were generally more literate than those in the north of the country. At the same time, access to print was also a matter of social class: in 1892, romantic novelist Annie S. Swan commented that it was the middle-class woman who was the reader of those times among her sex, thus contrasting her not just with the working-class woman, but also with aristocratic ladies who, according to her, were too taken up in society life to be interested in reading or writing (see Beetham 2001: 58-9).

The gradual inclusion of women in journalism (both as readers and as writers) also implied irrevocable changes in the conception of womanhood and an opportunity to challenge ideological constraints surrounding gender: this demonstrates how the periodical press of the time permitted expressions of resistance to these existing ideologies also by allowing women to animate discussions on the Woman Question in a variety of ways (see Gray 2012: 9-12). Indeed, the portrayal of women as simply angels in the home finally backfired because it also implicitly conferred them increasing moral authority, thus legitimating their entrance into the public sphere (Curran 2002: 139). The figure of the New Woman was only the last in a series of representations of the rebellious woman in the nineteenth-century press. Her arrival was seen as extremely significant in journalism because it produced at least three key changes for women: their increase presence in print culture as authors; the solidification of 'women' as a subject matter for journalism; and the treatment of specific political issues, including women's suffrage, which was supplied by sensationalism and a focus on human interest stories (Gray 2012: 38).

These key changes were also linked to the innovations brought about by New Journalism, which is seen by Hampton as a blurring of the distinction between public (masculine) and private (feminine) spheres, since topics that had previously been regarded as 'private' or 'domestic' became

the subject of news and comment (2001: 227). In terms of language and style, the greatest novelty probably involved the gradual abandonment of anonymity: though this convention had at first been seen as extremely important for women in the central decades of the nineteenth century, as it allowed them to enter the debates of the day with some sort of sense of protection, at the same time it also meant that (anonymous) women contributors to periodicals did not receive any credit for their work, both in terms of money and cultural capital (Gray 2012: 8). Since the assumption of male narration and male readership was almost universal in the Victorian press, women had had to write 'in drag', referring to themselves and to their readers with masculine gender markers. However, by alternating their anonymous (masculine) and socially constructed feminine voices in the periodicals press, women writers gained increased access in journalism, until the practice of anonymity was ultimately discarded in order to move to identification (Easly 2000: 154).

Obviously, the increased production of articles by feminine voices produced a series of endemic anxieties concerning the trivialisation of culture and the spread of sensational writing, since they carried with them connotations of femininity (Beetham 2001: 65). These anxieties arose both by men who perceived their privilege and position in established professions under threat, and also by a number of women: for example, in 1897, Janet Hogarth referred to the ranks of women journalists as "the monstruous regiment of women" (cited in Gray 2012: 5). Moreover, many Victorians were unsure whether women *should* or even *could* write (good) journalism, given the physical, temporal, and moral pressures of the industry, so much so that there was talk of a 'feminisation' of New Journalism, which offered women journalists access, opportunity, scope, and valorisation, but for these very reasons was deplored for its diminished qualities inherently attached to the increased role of women in it (Gray 2012: 9).

While this section has centred around several significant changes in print culture which occurred in Britain mainly from the nineteenth century, the next one will focus on the emergence of the feminist press and its gradual growth which led to the publication of the suffrage periodicals investigated in this dissertation.

1.4 The birth of feminist periodicals

The previous paragraphs have shown how, at the turn of the twentieth century, women were largely still excluded from political and economic power, denied the vote, and subject to a double sexual standard. As far as print culture is concerned, the situation gradually changed with the emergence of a separate women's press, which represented "an important break for feminist politics from the traditions and restrictions of Victorian culture" (Levine 1990: 304): its inception, growth, and success witnessed women's own attitudes towards their status in journalism and raised questions about the nature of this medium within political culture. However, as we will see, the development of feminist ideas through the periodical press was neither a consistent nor a coherent process (Fraser et al. 2003: 146):

> Made up of a plethora of roughly generic forms, the press provided the key medium for popular and corporatized public debate in this period. There were no official limitations on who could produce a magazine or constraints on what kind of magazines could be produced. Views expressed within the pages of a magazine were clearly limited: by standard legal constraints, by the economic pressure of securing an interested readership and by prevailing ideological formations. For many special interest groups, however, from health reform associations to women's social clubs, the monthly or quarterly magazine offered a useful means of linking and gathering members, encapsulating ideas, reaching a wider potential audience and even questioning mainstream values.

It is thus true that the periodicals analysed here represented contentious voices in more than one way, as the heated debates found their public expression precisely in the pages of newspapers, but, on the other hand, what seems to be even more important is that their creation gave birth to a feminist public sphere which developed between the nineteenth and twentieth century (see DiCenzo et al. 2011: 2-26). This, in turn, sheds light on how the women's movement in Britain used print media in order to organise, mobilise, disseminate ideas and engage with social and political groups and structures around them: indeed, women reformers saw the ideas of 'public opinion' and 'British Public' as something that needed to be changed if they were to have a say in matters concerning the state, the law, and other public institutions, and the 'Public Press' (challenged by the birth of feminist newspapers) was "the chief means through which public opinion was measured, influenced, and communicated" (DiCenzo et al. 2011: 29). As Onslow suggests, women carried out their political fight in the byways of the press, as they were still denied access to Parliament: this process is fundamental in understanding the public and

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political marginalisation of women and the role of print media in their struggle for attention and legitimisation (2000: 170).[14]

Before delving into a close examination of feminist periodicals and in order to better comprehend why they were a harbinger of social change, it is necessary to look at the types of women's magazines published before this advent. Although journalists began to address women as a new readership in the seventeenth century, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw what we may refer to as a differentiation of the female reader[15], with different magazines addressing different groups of women who, despite status, wealth, class and race distinctions, still shared similar experiences (Ballaster et al. 1991: 2-9). Indeed, unlike newspapers, these women's magazines were not published in provincial centres outside of London, and this meant that the periodicals that came to be read across the whole of the Empire by the end of the nineteenth century projected an exclusively metropolitan version of femininity, a female identity which bound readers firmly into the culture of the capital (Beetham 1996: 7).

Specifically, femininity was at first exclusively defined in terms of the domestic (see § 1.1), and the image of women's magazines was strengthened as that of conduct manuals, or guides to feminine existence well before the advent of the Victorian era, with its inherent coded social values and gender ideologies. Nineteenth-century domestic magazines defined women in terms of a series of demanding activities grouped under the general category of 'homemaking', conceived as practical (the running of the household), economic (the managing of domestic finances) and moral (biological reproduction redeemed through spiritual and emotional regeneration and sustenance; see Ballaster et al. 1991: 87-8). Among the domestic periodicals popular by the mid-Victorian period, we may remember *The Christian Lady's Friend and Family Repository* and *The Mother's Friend*, which put a specific focus on domestic duties; *The Lady's Magazine*, which lost the religious zeal, but still survived as a domestic publication; Samuel and Isabella Beeton's *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, whose success mainly resided in locating true femininity in women from the middle classes (not ladies from the upper classes), defined again in terms of the private and the domestic; and more general

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[14] The significant change of women's role in print culture is best exemplified by the following quotation taken from the 1893 novel *The Heavenly Twins* by Sarah Grand (1854-93): "You see, in the old days, women were so ignorant and subdued, they couldn't retaliate or fight for themselves in any way; they never thought of such a thing. But, now, if you hit a woman, she'll give you one back promptly. […] She'll put you in *Punch*, or revile you in the Dailies; Magazine you; write you down an ass in a novel; blackguard you in choice language from a public platform; or paint a picture of you which will make you wish you had never been born" (cited in Easley 2018: 39).

[15] Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century, there was a well-established sector of the periodical press explicitly targeted at women readers, and in the period between the 1880s and the First World War this became an important part of mass publishing (Ballaster et al. 1991: 75-7).

family literary journals, like *Household Words*, *All the Year Around*, and *Belgravia Magazine* (see Ballaster et al. 1991: 87-8 and Easley 2018: 41-3).

As explained in §1.2, the 1860s proved to be vital for organised feminism, and part of this organisation involved the creation of the British feminist press, which, according to its own definition, "established a unique position in the public sphere by distinguishing itself from the women's press on the one hand and the daily press on the other" (Green 2017: 3). Feminist periodicals (also labelled as pressure-group periodicals, publications of special interest groups, special periodicals, campaign journals, and, later, suffrage newspapers; see DiCenzo et al. 2011: 78) were broadly divided into two categories, identified by Levine as those that were linked to a specific organisation and those which were unaffiliated (1990: 301), and they included different types of publications, such as movement and advocacy papers, avant-garde periodicals, literary reviews aimed at feminist readers and so on (Green 2009: 191). These journals are considered by Mercer as "physical propaganda objects intended to communicate with campaigners and the public" (2005: 471)[16]; they fulfilled three main functions: namely, they were inspirational, informative, and integrating (DiCenzo 2003: 17), and they served two main purposes, that is, they expressed opposition vertically (from subordinate quarters directly at the power structure) and they built support, solidarity, and networking laterally against policies (DiCenzo et al. 2011: 68). Because of this, they can be included in a longer tradition of radical publications which comprises the Chartist, socialist, and labour presses of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so much so that it could be argued that the feminist press is derivative: "rather than inventing new forms, organizations drew on an established tradition of using print media to articulate and circulate ideas, in the form of weekly or monthly periodicals, as well as pamphlets and books" (DiCenzo et al. 2011: 79).

From the beginning, the feminist periodical press was aware of itself as occupying a specific niche, "a position different from and often marginal to the mainstream press on the one hand and the offerings of the 'women's press', on the other" (Green 2009: 196). Quite soon, feminist publications became a central means of expression, providing women with an outlet for promoting causes, debating contemporary issues, passing on information to the public, attracting organisational membership and a forum for establishing and developing new ideas (Fraser et al. 2003: 169), a crucial point of reference for reform groups struggling to gain visibility and credibility in the public arena. As DiCenzo reports, for the politically and socially

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[16] It should be stressed that the term *propaganda* did not have today's widespread negative associations of manipulation and untruthfulness before the advent of First World War; indeed, the suffrage organisations openly talked of their promotional literature, artwork, and merchandise as 'propaganda work' (Mercer 2005: 471).

marginalised or disenfranchised, it was fundamental to have an organ through which to articulate common ideas, while at the same time it was imperative to engage with what was often referred to in monolithic terms as 'the Press' or 'the Public' (2010: 2).

Feminist media thus constituted an essential part of the women's movement's strategy, and they became a forum for debates mainly (but not only) concerning gender, though this did not happen without internal conflicts too (see DiCenzo et al. 2011: 17). By giving voice to the growing women's movement, these periodicals were creating an "alternate sphere or space for the promotion of feminist ideas outside of the movement and the circulation of important information, the fostering of debate, and the cultivation of feminist ideas within the movement" (Green 2009: 196). Additionally, it could be argued that the feminist press was giving birth to a true "counterpublic sphere" (as labelled by Green 2009: 197), which worked both to provide a space for alternative discourses and identity formations (see Chapters 4 and 5), and to engage in and broaden the field of larger debate.

The very choice of the periodical as the preferred form of communication needs to be further contextualised. Indeed, while daily newspapers were the medium for social and political discourse, the periodical press offered women a means of engaging with the public sphere, and by promoting a range of moral and social causes through a diverse range of publications, women were thus enabled to investigate major social, political, and legal changes concerning themselves (Fraser et al. 2003: 150). As a genre, the periodical presented a series of features which proved fundamental for the promotion of feminist ideas: its ephemeral form, with its claims to truth and importance contingent to the issue date prominently displayed on every page; its relationship to time, since each number is both of its moment and part of a series (thus implying the need to be consistent enough to maintain a readership and a certain own rhythm); its radical heterogeneity, which entails both the refusal of a single authorial voice (and thus its polyvocal nature) and the mixing of media and subgenres, with a juxtaposition of materials which included literary reviews as well as economic and political writings, notes on meetings and political strategies, investigative journalism, interviews, histories, polemical writings, essays on fashion, cartoons, advertisements and so forth (see Beetham 1996: 8-12, Green 2009: 192 and 2017: 7-8). Of course, feminist periodicals were sources of news as well, just like the regular dailies: they mediated current events and information and necessarily contributed to a wide range of political struggles from a variety of ideological perspectives (DiCenzo et al. 2011: 65). Moreover, they also included a range of opinions and topics, such as international

feminism, race and empire, domestic issues, the vote, socialism, literary and cultural matters, the changing nature of femininity and more (Green 2009: 195).

Even though these periodicals primarily addressed women, the oversimplification of them as a unified category should be dispelled. It is, moreover, necessary to underline that these publications were actually directed at a wider public, since the issues reported concerned both women and men equally, and because "access to participation in public life—citizenship rights—depended entirely on convincing men to change their minds about extending the franchise" and on a whole series of other issues, too (DiCenzo 2000: 119). Therefore, periodicals empowered women in at least two ways: as consumers who could decide whether to continue buying the periodical or not (based on their ability to maintain their readership), and as readers, because they could construct their own text from the printed version and to participate in the debates as well, for example through the introduction of letter columns, which were given such titles as 'Conversazione' or 'Over the Teacups' (see Beetham 1996: 12 and 2006: 235). Indeed, even though the periodical remained, first and foremost, a 'domestic' item to be consumed, momentarily interesting or entertaining, easily put down, it also travelled into Britain's homes and minds, carrying with it opinions and ideas that helped the development of the feminist movement (Fraser et al. 2003: 148). Moreover, circulation was assured by a complex network of communication in which cultural values and social norms (that mainly had to do with conceptions of gender and sexuality) were worked through, and by a close-knit and energetic feminist community that consisted principally of convinced feminists, but also aimed at inspiring converts to active participation (Levine 1990: 296 and Beetham 2006: 235).

Apart from building a sense of community and identity among feminists by creating journals that helped the circulation of feminist ideas across Britain, the feminist press also needs to be considered and contextualised in relation to the established or mainstream media available at that time. Indeed, it is fundamental to point out that, despite a recognition of the growing constituency of female readership, feminist issues were certainly not among the priorities of mainstream journals: as Levine reports, "women's interests were generally either passed over or subjected to ridicule in their pages" (1990: 294), even though a number of feminist writers regularly filled their columns[17]. According to Murray (2000: 206-13), we can actually talk of a

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[17] Among the feminist writers (or journalists) who regularly contributed to newspapers, especially during the Victorian era, we might remember Harriet Martineau, who wrote authoritatively on political economy and society in the *Monthly Repository*, the *Westminster Review*, Dickens' *Household Words*, and the *Daily News*; Frances Power Cobbe, who explored issues of faith and doubt in such publications as *Echo* and the daily evening *Standard*; Millicent Garrett Fawcett (best known as a suffrage leader), who wrote extensively on political economy, on Irish Home Rule and on the Boer War;

"viciously hostile coverage in the mainstream media", which regarded the feminist movement on the whole, but which intensified particularly with the emergence of the suffragettes and their militant tactics in the early years of the twentieth century: in this case, the antagonistic coverage by the established pressed mainly focused on their representation as unattractive, badly-dressed, sexually-frustrated hysterics and spinsters. The outraged insults delivered from the pages of *The Times* or *Punch*, however, still attested to the feminist movement's existence on the political landscape, and its impingement on the collective consciousness. For example, *Punch* can be considered "one of the most potent and long-lasting barometers of masculine antagonism towards women" (Fraser et al. 2003: 168), and it can provide a useful means of tracing some of the transformations and resistances in attitudes towards feminism.

Given this antagonistic context, the relationship between feminist periodicals and the mainstream press developed in at least two ways: as a monitor of what the press was (and was not) saying, and *how* news concerning them was reported[18], and as a response to the distortions and omissions in press coverage and practices, in order to encourage a critical perspective on current sources of news and information and as a means of circumventing reliance on male-run papers (see Levine 1990: 299 and DiCenzo 2010: 2). Therefore, the feminist periodical functioned as a conscious campaigning tool of counterinformation designed to influence public opinion and shift its attitudes towards women's roles in political life (DiCenzo 2000: 117 and DiCenzo et al. 2011: 67). Its aim was to counter the "nugatory acknowledgment of women", not only by providing a forum for serious discussion of specific instances of gendered injustice, but also by having women as principal audience: in doing so, feminist journals were counteracting the distortions of the mainstream and male-dominated press, but also of the mass press which concentrated on more customary women's interests (Levine 1990: 295). By creating an alternative and separate (female) voice, feminist periodicals were also giving life to a language of their own and to "discourses of interruption" (Murray 2000: 198), which will be investigated in the following chapters of this dissertation. Their ultimate goal was to challenge the silence, euphemism, and circumlocution that had been keeping women uninformed, thus rendering their very existence a powerful statement of political intent (see Levine 1990: 305 and Murray 2000: 214).

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and Josephine Butler, who wrote a great deal on her own campaign against the Contagious Diseases Act, but she also explored issues of liberalism, religion, and the woman question (see Caine 2001b: 100 and Beetham 2015: 227-28).

[18] The strategy of monitoring the press for comments about the feminists themselves was a tendency which could be found across the whole spectrum of publications, though it particularly became fundamental during the Edwardian years of the campaign, "when the expanded and diverse movement monitored and analysed the daily press and its practices through the 'press work' and 'press departments' of various leagues" (DiCenzo 2010: 7).

However, the fact that this was the general aim of the Victorian and Edwardian feminist press did not mean that there were not tensions and intense contestations within the movement (and the periodicals) itself, which was prone to factions, splinter groups and swift changes of allegiance (Murray 2000: 202). Indeed, as Green reports (2009: 195), the feminist periodical press was extremely diverse in terms not only of aims, but also feminist stance (militant or constitutional, radical or traditionalist), market (literary reviews for the upper-class readers or penny papers aimed at a broader readership), financing and circulation.

Between the 1850s and the 1930s, nearly 150 feminist periodicals[19] were published in Britain (Green 2009: 192), and they were only one of the channels used by nineteenth-century feminists to reach their (wide) audience; the following paragraphs will report on some of the best-known examples. As far as the Victorian age is concerned, we may remember early titles such as *The Shield*, which appeared in 1870 and concerned itself with diffusing information related to the Contagious Diseases Act (including news about the arrests of girls and women affected and opinion pieces or articles about the legislation); the *Women's Penny Paper*, best remembered for its column "What Some of Our Contemporaries Say of Us", which exemplifies the monitoring of the press constantly made by these journals; the *Women's Suffrage Journal*, based in Manchester; and the *Women's Industrial News*, a more specialised paper which lasted well into the twentieth century (see DiCenzo 2010: 7 and Beetham 2015: 229). Other significant periodicals were the *Women's Tribune*, which announced that "[…] surely there is a need among those women who desire the broadening and deepening of life…for a paper more adequate to the fulfilment of these ideals that any exist at present[…]" (cited in DiCenzo 2010: 7); *Women & Progress*, which criticised the lack of representation of women in the press; the *Woman's Gazette* (an example of how, sometimes, women "dug deep into their own pockets" to keep the journal alive; Levine 1990: 297); the *Women's Union Journal*, which printed poetry and championed causes such as rational dress, wages, and working conditions; and *Kettledrum*, which explained its chosen title by stating "the rule woman bears over the tea-kettle": according to Levine, this paper was of paramount importance for the feminist movement precisely because it sought to empower women within their 'separate sphere' and through a significant redefinition and re-evaluation of the political community, "a wonderful pricking of the bubble of pompous male authority" (1990: 306).

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[19] The periodicals published between the 1850s and 1860s may be defined as "protofeminist" (Easley 2018: 43), and their development corresponded to the rise of the organised women's movement in Britain (see § 1.2).

Undoubtedly, the most important example of Victorian feminist periodical was the *English Woman's Journal*, first published in 1858 by Bessie Rayner Parkes and her Langham Place Circle (see § 1.2), thanks to their strategy of campaigning journalism which brought together writers and readers concerned with women's social, political, economic, and cultural progress (Beetham 2006: 235). The first issue promised to represent a new voice in British journalism (Levine 1990: 296), and indeed the periodical proved to be "a crucial foundation for the working out of feminist programmes and ideas" (Fraser et al. 2003: 152). Its primary role was to enable and ensure public discussion concerning the conditions in which women lived and worked, and to provide a space for women to legitimately explore and re-imagine their role in society in relation to principles of social justice. Its contents ranged from articles on notable women in history, news items relating to women's legal status, letters from distressed gentlewomen in the provinces, a variety of articles outlining alternatives for providing women with work, and its famous 'Open Council' pages, where debate among readers was greatly encouraged (see Herstein 1993: 24 and Fraser et al. 2003: 153). The *English Woman's Journal* did offer something new to readers of the 1860s: "a serious, informed and intellectually engaged publication that discussed the social position of women in Britain in relation to other major reform issues of the day, but without promoting a total inversion of gender roles" (Fraser et al. 2003: 155). The journal ceased to be published in 1864, and it was followed by the *Alexandra Magazine*, which sought an audience in women who actually worked for a living; the *Victoria Magazine*, which gained support by Queen Victoria herself and included articles on women's employment, education, and legal rights (though it was more conservative than the *English Woman's Journal*); and the *Englishwoman's Review of Societal and Industrial Questions*, which did not include fiction and emphasised the need for a record of events and a detailed history of the progress of the feminist movement (see Herstein 1993: 25-27).

A final, important example from the Victorian era is the *Woman's Signal* (formerly known as the *Woman's Herald*), which appeared for the first time in 1894 and announced itself as "A Weekly Record and Review of Woman's Work in Philanthropy and Reform", as well as being an official organ of the British Women's Temperance Association, an organisation that sought to educate the public about the consumption of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, and gambling too. The editors and contributors to this journal had to negotiate the complexities of both new and traditional forms of femininity, with articles advising the single, professional woman which often conflicted with appeals to mothers and housewives. It provided broad coverage to temperance and suffrage concerns, while at the same time publicising, analysing, and reinforcing women's new public and political roles. As Liggins explains (2014: 616), what

differentiated the *Woman's Signal* from the other feminist periodicals mentioned above was its combination of temperance and feminist subject matter, though it was precisely its insistence on the temperance cause that ultimately led to its demise in 1899.

As already explained, though, this project takes into consideration feminist periodicals directly linked to the women's suffrage movement which were published between 1907 and 1914; therefore, the following paragraphs will specifically address and describe the three journals analysed in this dissertation, that is to say, *Votes for Women*, *The Vote*, and *Common Cause*. The proliferation of organisations and splinter groups (together with their own publications)[20] reflects the diversity, competing claims, and internal struggles of the movement, and sometimes of the single societies themselves – a multiplicity of voices and attitudes which, as we will see, was reflected in language use as well. The selection of newspapers considered here sheds further light on the internal dynamics of the movement, and on feminist readership as a whole. As suggested by DiCenzo et al. (2011: 27-28), we might wonder whether suffragists, militant suffragettes, avant-garde feminists, and anti-suffragist women constituted different publics or were part of a unique feminist public sphere, as "[d]istinctions are not only useful in terms of accuracy, they are crucial to preventing the homogenizing and ghettoizing effects that umbrella terms tend to have" (see Chapter 4).

Considered to be the "fourth milestone in the WSPU's campaign" (after the creation of the organisation, its adoption of militancy, and the establishment of its London headquarters; Mercer 2005: 473) and the organisation's "publishing arm" (Murray 2000: 203), *Votes for Women* (from now on *VFW*) was the first publication which arose from the need for independent weekly papers which could correct the suppressions, distortions, exaggerations, and inventions of the mainstream press, and it arose in a period in which there was "a certain prejudice against propaganda or 'causy' papers" (Christabel Pankhurst, *The Suffragette*, 17 April 1914). Although it can certainly be considered a descendant of the nineteenth-century feminist periodicals referred to above, *VFW* evolved into a new style of campaigning newspaper (Mercer 2004: 187): its very existence was justified by the need to break the press silence on votes for women (Josephine Butler specifically talked of a true "conspiracy of silence surrounding feminist campaigns"; cited in Caine 2001a: 102). The paper distinguished itself also for its belief in its power to influence the wider public and convince any reasonable reader of the

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[20] Though 'votes for women' served as a generic label for the campaign, the single organisations and publications proliferated because of the different ways in which the same question was framed, and the different solutions offered to the same problems: "[i]t is by looking closely at what they wrote and circulated that the sometimes subtle and sometimes striking differences become most apparent" (DiCenzo et al. 2011: 47).

validity and urgency of the cause (DiCenzo 2000: 115). The stress on its presentation of reliable news is epitomised by the following quote, taken from the article "How to Help the Paper 'Votes for Women'" (28 May 1909): "No one who is not a reader of VOTES FOR WOMEN, therefore, has the faintest notion of all the work, militant and educational, that is proceeding every day throughout the country". The influential suffragette Constance Lytton, in her *Prison and Prisoners* (1914), recounts this exemplifying anecdote: "For two months I 'read up' the subject as I had never read in my life before; I took in the weekly paper *Votes for Women*, the only publication which gave events as they happened, not as they were supposed to happen … Above all, I watched current politics from a different point of view" (cited in DiCenzo 2000: 115).

The first issue was published in October 1907 and it outlined the papers' priorities as follows:

> The demand which *Votes for Women* has to meet is twofold. In the first place, there is the growing desire for knowledge on the part of the outside public to learn what it is that women are really striving for and how far the agitation is progressing. The magnitude of this demand may be gauged by the fact that already during 1907 the W.S.P.U. has effected a sale, exclusive of leaflets, of 80,000 books, pamphlets, and other publications. In the second place, it has to supply to all those women who are at work within the ranks a bulletin of the doings of the Union which shall keep them in touch with all the ramifications of the movement and enable them to devote their work in the most profitable manner to the furtherance of the agitation.

The same issue reported a dedication to the paper's audience, which was then reported on every new weekly publication:

> To the brave women who to-day are fighting for freedom: to the noble women who all down the ages kept the flag flying and looked forward to this day without seeing it: to all women all over the world, of whatever race, or creed, or calling, whether they be with us or against us in this fight […].

In terms of content, *VFW* presented cover political cartoons, bold headlines, photos, correspondence columns, extracts from the press, book and theatre reviews, announcements, and classifieds[21] (DiCenzo 2000: 120). The focus was, naturally, on domestic news, very often preceded by shocking headlines and photographs which echoed the style of the popular press, making it a sensational and

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[21] Advertisements often reinforced the ornamental, leisured image of women with pressure to buy fashionable clothes, beauty aids and other female paraphernalia – something which the newly-born feminist of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was beginning to subvert. Although this might be read as a potential contradiction, we must remember that we should not see this through the lens of post-war feminism, as the suffragettes were constantly finding ways to assert their femininity despite stereotypes and caricatures of them as manly and harridans (DiCenzo 2000: 122).

captivating publication (Mercer 2005: 474). Specifically, the selection of news focused on militancy and its effects, and the articles dutifully reported on the disruption of politicians' speeches, the militant deputations to parliament, the window-smashing campaigns, the arson and the bombing of unoccupied buildings, as well as the consequent trials, imprisonments, hunger-striking and forcible feeding (Mercer 2004: 189-93). Particularly after the beginning of militant activities in 1908, the drama of these events became even more embellished with the rhetorical and visual styles typical of the popular press, with articles bearing such titles as "The release of the prisoners", "The charges of stone-throwing" and "The dangers of forcible feeding" offering detailed chronicles of the militant campaign, while from 1909 the paper made use of cross-heads, shorter paragraphs, larger and more informative headlines which conveyed even more dramatic effects to news reporting (Mercer 2004: 193-94).

Though, quite predictably, the paper highlighted WSPU activities (mainly regarding the importance of the vote and the defence of militant actions), it also reported on developments of the movement at a national level, on by-elections, and it offered more general pieces concerning labour practices and legal issues affecting working and/or married women. At the same time, *VFW* continued the tendency of monitoring the press already typical of nineteenth-century feminist periodicals: with such features as "The Press on the Movement", the editors put together extracts from daily or regional newspapers and monthly reviews which indicated support for the cause or criticism towards government measures.

Circulation was a key element for *VFW*, so much so that, in an issue of the paper published on 4 February 1909, Emmeline Pankhurst urged readers "not to rest content until the paper finds its way into every home where there is a woman who is waiting, consciously or unconsciously, for the message we have to give". The papers were stamped "WHEN READ, PLEASE PASS IT ON" to encourage its passage from reader to reader and the journal's ability to "attract a geographically dispersed and socially diverse cross-section of the community" (Murray 2000: 213), but the WSPU could also count on what DiCenzo labels as "an army of dedicated women" (2000: 120) willing to distribute the periodical nationally and beyond. The figure of the "woman newsie" (i.e., those women selling the paper in the streets) was crucial for the distribution of the paper, but also on other symbolic and political levels, as she embodied the respectable woman's venture into the public sphere and she contributed in significant ways to the construction and visibility of the politically active modern woman (DiCenzo 2003: 16). It was exceptionally bold of women to accept to stand on a sidewalk and sell a newspaper: given the ideology of respectability described in § 1.1, this can be regarded as an

act of true moral bravado that signalled a genuine commitment to the cause[22]. Considered real foot soldiers by the WSPU, these newsies were inevitably associated with women of the 'lower orders' (flower-sellers, costermongers, and prostitutes), and made themselves vulnerable to treatment and hostility they were not used to, with the most common phrases of abuse hurled at them which instructed them to *get* or *look after* husbands and to tend to their babies (DiCenzo 2003: 22-3), though episodes of physical violence occurred, too. On the other hand, though, the leaders of the WSPU praised the newsies for their boldness and acknowledged them for their fundamental role in the campaign. The *VFW* issue of 14 October 1910 stressed the value of the paper-seller as a kind of beacon for people in distress:

> If you are sick or sad or sorry turn to the Suffragette; if you have lost your way, in London or in life, turn to the Suffragette; if you are a stranger in a strange land, if the baby's teeth do make 'im fret somethink orfle [*sic*]…turn to a Suffragette…Make straight for the woman that you see standing at the same corner day after day selling *Votes for Women*.

After an internal split which involved the Pankhursts on the one hand, and the Pethick-Lawrences on the other, the paper had its name changed in 1912, and it continued its life as the periodical of the WSPU under the name *The Suffragette*. Later, the beginning of the war reduced significantly both the activities of the movement, and the interest in its publications: though the newspaper was still published regularly, it was no longer printed and circulated from February 1918, after the Representation of the People Act received the royal assent (DiCenzo 2000: 124).

The already-mentioned schisms and rivalries within the movement also led to the proliferation of new journals: indeed, suffrage periodicals came to play an increasingly strategic role in how rival organisations communicated and managed their differences (in terms of both membership and wider readership; DiCenzo et al. 2011: 77). Specifically, the first periodical that was created after an acrimonious split within the WSPU was *The Vote* (from now on *TV*), launched by Charlotte Despard as the official organ of the Women's Freedom League in October 1909. Just as in the case of *VFW*, the first issue of the journal reported the following statement regarding its aims and functions:

> We call our organ THE VOTE because we hope and believe that through its pages the public (those millions whom Mr. Winston Churchill, desiring to evade his responsibility in the matter, says we have yet to convert) will come to understand what the Parliamentary Franchise means to women … This to the public! Now, to our own members. My beloved colleagues and friends all over the British Isles! You have been asking for

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[22] A popular jingle of the time recited: "VOTES FOR WOMEN, price one penny! / Articles by Annie Kenney, / Mrs Lawrence, Christabel, / Other Suffragettes as well. / Men and women, come and buy - / As you pass and hear the cry - / VOTES FOR WOMEN! Here we sell / Articles by Christabel, / Mrs Lawrence, Annie Kenney - / VOTES FOR WOMEN, price one penny!" (cited in DiCenzo 2000: 119).

an organ. You have it. Not without much work and anxiety, given freely by devoted women, has our VOTE come to the birth.

The paper referred to the WSPU only as its "sister militant society", and it concentrated on promoting its own policies and strategies (namely, as we will see, its own use of militancy) without engaging directly with other suffrage organisations. Indeed, while the WFL aligned itself with the WSPU in being identified as a militant society, it also tried to create an image of its own by offering rational and political justification for militancy, but without using the popular spiritual dimension which characterised the style of *VFW*, where suffragettes were often compared to martyrs, crusaders, or "Maidens of the Dawn" fighting for a good and just cause. In terms of political coverage, *TV* chose to oppose members from the retiring cabinet, rather than Liberal candidates, as they had already proved to be enemies of the women's cause by rejecting the feminists' plea for the vote multiple times. All in all, the response to election results was far more muted in *TV* than in *VFW*[23], and the paper declared its intention towards the women of the country with more concern and much less bravado about what the future might hold. Still, *TV* was also characterised by the use of humorous elements to support the cause, such as a regular feature entitled "Gossip" (which reported anecdotes from a number of sources), cartoons labelled "Types of Anti-Suffragists", articles such as "Suffragitis: the New Disease", and a regular tongue-in-cheek editorial written by Cicely Hamilton named "History of the Votes for Women Movement" (see DiCenzo et al. 2011: 105-9).

In 1909, another suffrage periodical was launched: the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies was in a way forced to enter the media fray, mainly because its leaders had to assert their own platform and keep from being conflated with the (militant) WSPU by the public eye, whose strategy was to stick the militant label to all suffragists, irrespective of differences in ideals and beliefs. The new paper was called *Common Cause* (*CC*), and from the very first issue it aimed at defining itself in stark contrast to *VFW*; though the former certainly recognised the latter's popular appeal, it categorically refused to go down the same path with militancy and it steered itself towards more conservative strategies, as reported in its first issue (Mercer 2004: 195): "*Votes for Women* might be the popular paper. We should try for something else. I was constantly having it suggested that we should adopt certain features which they had. But why? If it was being done well by them, why duplicate it?". Although the militants from the WSPU were never openly condemned[24] (while

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[23] The paper did not confine itself to suffrage coverage, as, according to the editors, the feminist movement had a wider scope than that (DiCenzo et al. 2011: 105).

[24] Sometimes, writers in *CC* actually sympathised with those suffragettes that were arrested and spent some time in prison, though the paper also chose not to devote too much space to the question of forcible feeding and of the violence suffered by women in jail, thus implicitly condemning the reasons behind their arrests, which had led them to these experiences (DiCenzo et al. 2011: 113).

the anti-suffragists were treated with mild contempt), *CC* was always openly critical of the ways in which disorderly tactics could only breed further violence and distortions. The WFL pursued a policy of 'peaceful persuasion' by advocating the advantages of constitutional methods, such as supporting all political candidates (regardless of party) who showed interest in the suffrage cause and embarking on the collection of signatures for a massive petition (DiCenzo et al. 2011: 113).

Naturally, the main focus of the paper was women's suffrage, a topic which had always been boycotted by the mainstream press according to the report "Suffrage Week in the Papers", which appeared on the issue of 17 November 1910:

> Londoners who take their news from their papers would hardly be aware of what was going on under their noses. Again the papers have decided that the things they do not like shall not happen, and the two great meetings in the Albert Hall, to say nothing of the countless demonstrations all over the country in support of the Conciliation Bill, were passed over with the briefest notice or in total silence ... we know of letters, pithy and signed by women of worth, which have been declined this week because they were in support of the Conciliation Bill.

As for other types of content, *CC* provided coverage of everything from teachers' and nurses' conferences to the co-education of children, factors affecting infant mortality, anti-sweating and shop assistants' bills before parliament, etc. Moreover, debate was greatly encouraged (even more so than *VFW* and *TV*) through its letters to the editor, which nevertheless provided a source of constant struggle and internal tension too (DiCenzo et al. 2011: 111).

Table 1 below summarises the main features of the periodicals described above:

	Votes for Women	*The Vote*	*Common Cause*
Image on the front page	✓ (Usually satirical cartoon)	✓ (Not regular feature; usually portrait of leading activists)	✓ (Not regular feature; usually portrait of leading activists)
Latest bits of news and summary of contents	✓ ("The Outlook")	✓ ("What we think")	✓ ("Notes and comments")
Information on the principles of the suffrage movement	X	X	✓ ("The ABC of women's suffrage")

Information on how to help the suffrage societies	X	✓ ("How to help *The Vote*")	X
Information from other parts of the country/world concerning women's conditions	✓ ("The world we live in")	✓ ("Scottish Notes"; "Reports from the provinces")	✓ ("Foreign News")
Reports from suffrage societies and developments in the campaign	✓ ("The campaign in the country")	✓ ("London activities")	✓ ("In Parliament")
Letters to the editor	✓ ("Our Post Box")	✓ ("Our Open Column")	✓ ("Letters to the Editor")

Table 1. Features of the suffrage periodicals (1907-1914)

A quick glance at the table immediately reveals that *VFW*, *TV*, and *CC* shared most of the features: the regular presence of such features as latest news from the movement, reports from suffrage societies, developments in Parliament, information from other parts of the country and/or the world, and letters to the editor clearly exemplifies how these feminist periodicals did not differ in terms of broader scope (i.e. spreading as much information as possible concerning the movement across the country, irrespective of class differences among their readers). We will see in Chapter 5 how discrepancies in terms of article content and language mainly revolved around the topic of militancy[25]. The only significant difference to be found in this table lies in the fact that *CC* presented a regular feature called "The ABC of women's suffrage", a column indicating the basic reasons lying behind women's request for the vote which the other papers did not include: this editorial choice might be related to the more conservative and traditional nature of the periodical in question, which thus decided to adopt a didactic stance that the others did not have.

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[25] For example, *VFW* regularly ran features defending the use of militant methods over constitutional ones, and usually tried to justify these by explaining why the latter had always failed thus far. On the other hand, *CC*, which featured the labels "Non-Party" and "Non-Militant" on its front pages, outlined the principles and values of their constitutional policy (DiCenzo et al. 2011: 98).

As already reported, a number of suffrage organisations developed in the years right before and after World War I, though not all of them had their own periodical. The three papers described here and used for this study represent not only the most important sources of information for women interested in suffrage news at the time, but also, and probably even more importantly, the fact that the proliferation of these publications reflected the growing diversity of opinions about goals and tactics, and the need to make organizational mandates visible. Though of course it is fundamental to focus on differences and discrepancies, which are characteristic of any social movement and encourage a more complex understanding of this one in particular, it is also necessary to underline the fact that all these papers were united against their opponents (i.e. the mainstream media), and that they were created as vehicles for mobilising existing members and recruiting new ones, they were crucial to communicating and justifying policy and tactical divergences, and they provided an interpretation of events for all women interested in the topic of suffrage on a weekly basis (DiCenzo et al. 2011: 87-100).

This chapter has focused on providing a social, cultural, and historical context which proves to be fundamental for the linguistic study proposed here. Chapter 2 will concentrate on outlining the theoretical frameworks and methodologies behind the analysis, as well as a detailed description of the materials used and the construction of the corpus.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, METHODOLOGY, AND MATERIALS

2.1 Language, gender, and feminist linguistics

Language, gender, and feminism have always been in dialogue with one another, ever since anthropologists first started showing interests in sound patterns, words, and structures which could explain linguistic sex differentiation between men and women (Talbot 2020: 4). Thissection will provide an overview of the evolution of the field of language and gender studies; as Sunderland indicates, the use of *gender* here will include both particular grammatical properties and, even more importantly for this study, a concern with humanity which entails "any differences between women and men being socially or culturally *learned*, *mediated* or *constructed*" (2004: 14). The ultimate question which this strand of linguistics asks is "is there a women's language?", just as feminist Simone de Beauvoir asked "are there women, really?"; as we shall see, throughout the years the terms in which this question has been formulated have changed, though the basic concern about how the characteristics of women's language may be linked to gender relations of a given society (in a given historical period) has remained of paramount importance (Wodak 1997: 25).

Scholars acknowledge the 1970s as the time when linguists began exploring the relationship between language and gender in a systematic way and, simultaneously, with a feminist perspective: this new interest corresponded to a period in which the linguistic disciplines where gender is a primary focus even today (i.e. sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, sociopragmatics, and linguistic anthropology) were being established as legitimate sub-disciplinary areas in their own right. At the same time, other disciplines from the social sciences were experiencing what was later defined as the "linguistic turn": researchers understood that there existed a link between language and ideology and that "by studying language use, one could discover a great deal about the ways in which societies function and the way that individuals and groups construct identities and cultures" (Mills and Mullany 2011: 1-2).

The first studies mainly focused on two domains of language behaviour: speech behaviour of men and women on the phonological level, and interactions (conversation studies) between men and women. As a result, generalisations about women's and men's language were postulated; for

example, women's language was seen as "reflecting their conservatism, prestige consciousness, upward mobility, insecurity, deference, nurturance, emotional expressivity, connectedness, sensitivity to others, solidarity", while men's language was defined as "evincing their toughness, lack of affect, competitiveness, independence, competence, hierarchy, control" (Eckert and McGonnell-Ginet 1992: 470). However, as Wodak states, these empirical studies too often neglected context and only analysed gender merely by looking at a speaker's biological sex; instead, a context-sensitive approach which regarded gender as a social construct would have provided fewer oversimplifications and more fruitful results (1997: 1-2).

Indeed, in the 1970s and 80s, concern with language and gender fell broadly into investigation of the so-called *parole* (gender and language use) and *langue*, that is, gender bias in language *as an abstract system* (Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002: 3). Talbot (2020) identifies three frameworks which characterised the early concerns of language and gender studies: *deficit*, *dominance*, and *difference*. These can be summarised as follows:

• Deficit framework: women are disadvantaged as language users, they appear uncertain and as lacking authority, and their language seems inferior and deficient. By implication, men's language represents the norm that women cannot match up to. The best example is Robin Lakoff's "Language and woman's place" (1973), which will be described in more detail later.

• Dominance framework: language is seen as the manifestation of patriarchal social order, and asymmetries are interpreted as enactments of male privilege (e.g., interruptions are seen as a way of 'doing' power in face-to-face interactions). Here, the best-remembered example is Dale Spender's *Man Made Language* (1980), which presented a monolithic view of men's power over women, later deemed an oversimplification (Talbot 2020: 97).

• Difference framework: as they grow up, children spend their time in gender-specific cultures, and therefore their use of different patterns of language is explained by "a two-cultures account of male and female socialisation" (Talbot 2020: 97). This type of work had its origins in John Gumperz's *Language and Social Identity* (1982).

Though criticised on several theoretical, political, and methodological grounds, Lakoff's "Language and woman's place" is still undeniably considered as having had a crucial role in establishing the study of language and gender as a linguistic subfield. She drew attention to the ways women were *expected* to use language by also implying that man's language was usually considered as the norm to be followed: Lakoff argued that women had a subordinate position in patriarchal society and one way to demonstrate it was to study what role language played in this subordination.

For example, she found that women were more prone to usinge tag questions, intensifiers, hedges such as *you know* and *sort of,* and euphemisms, and this indicated, among other things, qualities such as hesitancy, uncertainty, and weakness (Talbot 2006: 112 and Jones 2016: 212). Though critics targeted her work for her apparently privileging view of male linguistic norms and consequent devaluing of women's linguistic practices, Bucholtz also recognised that Lakoff was not *endorsing*, but simply *describing* "a culture-wide ideology that scorns and trivializes both women and women's ways of speaking" (2014: 26). Indeed, as Lakoff herself stated, "women are systematically denied access to power, on the grounds that they are not capable of holding it as demonstrated by their linguistic behaviour" (1974: 42).

Later practitioners were more interested in exposing male dominance in all linguistic forms and uncover gender bias. As explained by Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002: 4), this usually took three related forms: grammatical uses that rendered women 'invisible' (e.g. the use of masculine generic terms, such as *he*, *man*, and *chairman*); stereotypical and trivial representations of women in the lexicon, with words such as *manageress*; degrading words that referred again to women (e.g. *bitch*, *tart* etc.). In the meantime, linguists were trying to create and campaign for the use of inclusive, alternative, non-sexist language items; as Dunant described (1994), many checklists and guidelines for writers and institutions were created, though today they are often seen as exaggerated forms of 'political correctness'.

In the 1990s, the idea of gender differences in language came under attack for several reasons: for example, researchers highlighted how this view underplayed the importance of context and variation (see Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1999: 93), and how the focus on differences, which did not acknowledge any possibility of similarities, inherently represented gender in binary opposition (masculinity vs femininity). Litosseliti and Sunderland argue that "the idea of 'differences' seemed sometimes to be put forward as a form of cultural determinism, the implication being that the way women and men spoke was shaped by whether they were female or male" (2002: 4), which implicitly also suggested a one-way "gender then language" process. The prong of language and gender studies that focused on the dominance and difference approach (or, to put it in other words, on the 'language as sexism' approach) has tended to fade in the last decades, when the role of context or situatedness in a given utterance reshaped the way sexist usages of language had been usually seen so far.[26]

Specifically, the rejection of the polarisation of gender categories led to the development of an innovative approach and, for the last couple of decades at least, researchers have turned to a

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[26] For example, Litosseliti and Sunderland explain that the identification of sexist words and expressions did not take into consideration the fact that these could be used in ironical or non-literal ways (2002: 13).

poststructuralist view of language and gender study to address this issue. If the early attempts at studying gender and language presented so far focused on the abstract system, now these two areas have dovetailed "in a new acknowledgement of the importance of discourse, and of how 'language *effects* gender'" (Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002: 6). Thus, this perspective sees language as the site of the cultural production of gender identity; "rather than dealing with a notion of static, fixed gender identities, it presents identities as an effect of discourse, constantly in production and therefore changeable" (Talbot 2006: 115). Gender is seen as a process that takes place in verbal interactions, which can be both spoken and written, and individuals take up positions as gendered subjects in their discourses: this marks an important shift away "from commonsensical categorisations and points towards the study of how people gender themselves and others" (Talbot 2006: 116).

In other words, researchers are now more interested in a new concept: "doing gender". Wodak (1997: 13) best explains this idea as follows:

> […] 'doing gender' regards membership of a gender not as a pool of attributes 'possessed' by a person, but as something a person 'does'. In this sense, membership of a gender constitutes a performative act and not a fact. Gender is continually realized in interactional form. Gender is created not only in the everyday activities which characterize 'doing gender', but also in the asymmetry of the relationship between the sexes, the dominance of the 'male' and its normativeness. Patriarchal inequality is produced and reproduced in every interaction […] This concept of 'doing gender' stresses the creative potential and the embedding of gender-typical behaviour in a social context.

Thus, postmodern approaches to language and gender have challenged the concept of binary gender and aimed to deconstruct seemingly fixed ideological categories; in order to do so, linguists have started considering how (gender) identities are represented in texts, whether these be spoken, written, or multimodal forms of language (Jones 2016: 213-19). The move towards the use of discourse analysis has allowed for the empirical documentation of gender identities and ideologies and can reveal in detail how these are ordered and grounded in discourse (Philips 2014: 313); seeing language and gender under the common lens of discourse has also seemingly united the first approaches of this area described before (see Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002).

Adopting a discourse-oriented approach aims to accommodate ideas of individual agency and, most importantly for this study, sees gender identity as "multiple, fluctuating, and shaped in part by language" (Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002: 6); thus, gender is a variable, both social and individual. As Wodak states, gender is seen by the analyst as the understanding of "how what it means to be a woman or to be a man changes from one generation to the next", but also shows how this varies too with language users, for example "between different racialised, ethnic, and religious groups, as well

as for members of different social classes" (1997: 4). Indeed, one key aspect of this methodology lies in acknowledging that there could be different gender ideologies and identities in different discourse genres *within* the same society (Philips 2014: 303); it is fundamental to remember that gender is a continuum, and so it is correct to talk about different degrees of femininity and masculinity, both within an individual, a single society, and between different societies or moments in time.[27]

The transition from a focus of research which tended to pose questions such as "what needs to be done?" (e.g. when studying sexist language), has led to the generation of a new, post-modern issue: "who am I?", which can therefore signal the "identity turn" in language and gender studies (Mills and Mullany 2011: 4); as we have seen, (gender) identity is socially constructed and can present different degrees along one single continuum. Therefore we can also safely state that, by recognising the breaking down of gender polarity, which is especially highlighted through the use of a discoursal approach to language and gender studies, it is very difficult to make global statements regarding women's and men's language, as any postulation needs to be contextualised according to different variables. However, as Litosseliti and Sunderland argue, this 'difficulty' needs to be seen as a productive effect of analytical sensitivity (2002: 31).

To be even more precise, Sunderland illustrates the ways in which discourse analysis of spoken or written texts can reveal something more about gender, which can be *constructed*, *performed*, *represented*, and *indexed* (2004: 22). Gender is constructed by discourse (i.e. speakers and writers construct their gender in their spoken or written interactions); this construction occurs both *in the words* used and in the *identity* of the speaker or writer.[28] Performativity is another way of looking at how gender is constitutive of discourse: this refers to having *agency*, through which language users perform who they publicly (and sometimes temporarily) are. Representation can be seen in the form of discoursal traces, as language itself is a representational system (signs and symbols show concepts, ideas, and feelings); however, gender representation may or may not be volitional, so it is hard to establish *intent* in this case, particularly because representations are usually pre-formed or based on stereotypes. Finally, indexing occurs when one particular social meaning is signalled (linguistically) over another: these signals are then interpreted by the members of the community. In terms of linguistic elements, we may talk of referential indexes of gender (e.g., *Mr* or *madam*), and of the much more frequent non-referential indexes: morphological, syntactic and phonological

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[27] To exemplify this case, Talbot refers to industrialised societies, where binary distinctions between male and female are medically (or biologically) enforced, and exceptions tend to be corrected, rather than accepted (2020: 13).

[28] The idea of gender as a *construct* entails that the paradigmatic research questions popular today are variations of "how is gender constructed in the talk and written texts of woman and men, boys and girls, and institutions?", which, according to Sunderland, signal a further shift away from the importance of "sexed, language-using individuals" to a post-structuralist view of language and gender (2004: 170).

devices which are culturally variable. Among these, the so-called "non-inclusive" indexes are of particular relevance here: they are the "many linguistic forms associated with gender associated as well with the marking of other social information, such as the marking of stance and social action" (see Ochs 1992: 340). Usually, indexing is involved with gender performance and construction; this project will revolve around how gender is *constructed* (through words and writers' identities), *performed* (by looking at agency and at writers' public performance of their gender), and *indexed* (using referential and non-referential gender indexes and what they signalled in the community).

Lastly, it is necessary to devote the final paragraphs of this section to the description of feminist linguistics, a branch of language and gender studies: indeed, most contemporary research on this matter can be said to have feminist orientations (and, therefore, to be explicitly partisan, as Wodak suggests, 1997: 21). To highlight the important connections between feminism and linguistic studies, Talbot advocates that feminism itself can be viewed *as* language, while present-day approaches to gender studies can be seen as feminism *on* language, which is a developing disciplinary field within research on language and gender (2006: 111).

Moreover, the women's liberation movement, which started in the 1960s and 70s in the United States and then spread across Europe and other parts of the world, can be said to have generated an important stimulus for research on language and gender through a feminist lens (Philips 2014: 298-99): Bucholtz even suggests that the field of language and gender studies is both unified and divided "in precisely the same way as is feminism itself: more or less unified in its general political goals, divided in the perspectives it takes toward achieving those goals" (2014: 23). The different approaches to this discipline can be further said to correspond to the three waves of the feminist movement mentioned in the introduction: usually, second-wave feminist approaches are classified according to the taxonomy of deficit, difference, and dominance, where, as we have seen, gender difference was the starting point. Although this point of view was later criticised for being *essentialist* in nature, Bucholtz acknowledges its importance in the early days of feminist linguistics, as it was necessary in order to establish gender as a relevant topic for the academy and to bring women into focus (2014: 31). Third-wave feminism, on the other hand, is usually associated to post-structuralist gender studies which, as explained, focus more on discourse analysis and scrutinise and challenge binary models of sex, gender, and sexuality, in order to reveal more about the social organisations and the complex identities behind them (Bucholtz 2014: 37).[29] It should be noted that, typically,

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[29] Baxter has coined the term *feminist post-structuralist discourse analysis*, which, according to her, prefers "to promote an understanding of the complex and often ambiguous ways in which girls/ women are simultaneously positioned as relatively powerless within certain discourses, but as relatively powerful within alternative and competing discourses" (2006: 162).

feminist language studies mainly refer to the period between the 1960s and the 2000s: usually, first-wave feminism seems not to be taken into consideration, possibly because of the difficulty in recuperating and working with historical texts; however, this project seeks to demonstrate how post-structuralist approaches of language and gender studies (typically associated to and concerning third-wave feminism) can be used when researching the past, through the methodologies explained later.

Basically, there are three aspects which mainly differentiate feminist linguistics from other types of language and gender studies, as reported by Hellinger (1990:12):

• Feminist linguistics places women's and men's linguistic behaviour and the phenomena linked to the designation of women and men at the core of its studies;

• Feminist linguistics interprets asymmetries in language use as expressions of the linguistic discrimination of women and links them directly to social discrimination;

• Feminist linguistics does not simply accept these phenomena as a given, but it tries to seek alternatives by criticising ruling linguistic norms and pursuing, at the same time, explicit political goals.

To be even more precise, feminist linguistics asks two basic questions: (a) "how are women represented in the language system?" and (b) "how does the linguistic behaviour of women differ from that of men?" (Wodak 1997: 8).

In terms of the methodologies used by feminist linguistics, Mills and Mullany explain that the quantitative approach employed by the first "dominance and difference" prong could not produce refined, context-sensitive results; this is why more and more researchers are now promoting a move towards mixed-methodological analyses that combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches, with the advantages of improving research validity and reaching wider audiences (2011: 93-94). For example, studies combining corpus linguistics (quantitative approach) and discourse analysis (qualitative approach) are becoming more and more visible in this field, and the same methodology is applied here: a popular misconception concerning corpus linguistics states that it is solely a quantitative method, but, as we will see, overall language patterns are counted and then further researched in light of language in context and co-text (see Mills and Mullany 2011: 95). Indeed, we should remember that feminist linguistics has actually never been confined to the language department alone: as Wodak reminds us, it is a "multidisciplinary enterprise to which anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, cultural/semiotic theorists and philosophers have all contributed along with linguists (mainly sociolinguists and discourse analysts)" (1997: 21). Moreover, like its objects

of study, research on gender, identity, and discourse is never still (Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002: 33).

To conclude with the overview of language and gender studies, it is worth summarising the key differences of the approaches described so far, as reported by Mills and Mullany (2011: 41):

• Gender has shifted from being seen as something an individual *has* to something that individuals *do* or actively *perform*;

• The pre-existence of gender in interactions and the assumption that it influences how these developed has been replaced by the view that speakers or writers create their gender identity, so gendering is seen as a process which is never actually complete;

• The stress on differences between women's and men's language has been substituted with a focus on the diversity and pluralisation of gender identities, while at the same time similarities are seen as equally important;

• We have shifted from studying the 'big picture' and offering generalisations on male and female language behaviour to more 'local' explanations which refer to a specific community of practice;

• The notion of patriarchy (i.e., women as a homogeneous group are oppressed by men as a homogeneous group) has been supplanted by a focus on power as fluid and enacted through discourse and a simultaneous emphasis on the plurality of femininities and masculinities, on female agency and on discourses of resistance;

• Gender is a social construct: language is produced within an ideological system that regulates gendered behaviour; the discursive turn undertaken by recent language and gender studies focuses exactly on analysing texts and interactions in their broader social and societal context.

It is also worth mentioning the common research questions at the core of every approach to gender studies in linguistics (Mills and Mullany 2011: 67):

• How salient is gender?

• When should gender be analysed?

• When is gender significant?

• How does the language used signal something about gender relations?

• When is feminism significant?

These theoretical issues obviously have an impact on the methodological choices researchers make, which, in the case of this project, will be discussed in § 2.3.

2.2 Feminist historiography

This section will briefly illustrate another framework, parallel to language and gender studies, that completes the theoretical background of this project: feminist historiography, which, as we will see, unlike 'traditional historiography', does not treat women as having only "a tangential connection to the events and relations of power that produced 'History', with a few notable exceptions like Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart" (Hendricks 2002: 361).

Like studies on language and gender, feminist historiography started paving its way into the academy in the 1970s, though the challenges these historians had to face were multiple. On the one hand, these regarded the necessary methodologies to be used in this new subfield; on the other, "because the majority of historians in the academy were male, any woman seeking to write women's history was likely to face criticism for wanting to deal with such supposedly trivial issues" (Hendricks 2002: 362). Since the early days, feminist historiographers have then been trying to recover women of the past and, at the same time, "to understand past patterns of subjective identity, symbolic representation, social norms, and power dynamics that constitute gender" (Scott 1986: 1067-68). Thus, they have helped redraw the boundaries of 'traditional' historiography, also by exposing deficiencies in history-making that, as reported by Rakow (2008: 114-15), hide gender, valorise history "made from the top" and "made by great men", and activate unequal binary logics "that honour men, masculinity, science, rationality, objectivity, popularity, universality, and truth by way of denigrating women, femininity, practical knowledge, irrationality, subjectivity, diversity, specificity, and personality" (Russell 2018: 11).

The main aim of feminist historiography has always been to recover women as both subjects and agents in the making of history, and to simultaneously decentre the male subject: this, according to Morgan, has prompted widespread re-examinations of the most fundamental historical presumptions by democratising the vision of who and what constitutes historical discourse (2006: 1). Indeed, it has always been commonly assumed that, throughout time, women's participation in public life has been circumscribed and unevenly remembered; still, as Russell indicates, women have been

able to make contributions in spite of sexist regimes and a variety of historical prohibitions which have particularly undermined the work of women authors, such as, for example, denied education, no materials or time to devote to writing, and the exclusion from publishing (2018: 7). It has already been widely demonstrated how women's lives have actually been "solidly woven into the narrative fabric of history – economic, political, social/cultural, intellectual and artistic" (Hendricks 2002: 363), and how the inclusion of the category of women in historical discourses has addressed silences, challenged absences, and, at the same time, exposed relations of exploitations, domination, censorship, and erasure (Glenn 2000: 389).

Though the category of women seems to be the fundamental subject of feminist historiography, it is worth remembering the heterogeneity that characterises this field: as explained by Morgan (2006: 4), there are methodological distinctions that need to be made between women's, feminist, and gender history. For instance, although women's and feminist history do share important links, they are by no means interchangeable: "whereas women's history is defined by its subject matter and need not evoke a feminist perspective at all, feminist history is defined by the very specificity of its theoretical agenda". On the other hand, gender history is the most recent approach undertaken by feminist scholars, and its aim is not only focused on women, but on an examination of the interdependence and relational nature of female and male identities. The inclusion of the term *gender* itself has "provided a more immediate and productive theoretical approach to recovering women's pasts and for analysing the relations between women and men" (2006: 11).

Studies in feminist historiography have centred on understanding how women (as a category) are produced and restrained in discourse: this has implied ascertaining how the term *woman* has been inscribed and re-inscribed, who is included or excluded in this group as the legitimate subject of research, and how this complicates how we see "women", "men", and "gender" (Butler 1990: 5 and Russell 2018: 9). In short, feminist historians have tried to answer the question: "does the term *woman* denote a common identity?". As we will see, this enquiry has become, in Butler's words, "a troublesome term, a site of contest, a cause for anxiety" (1990: 6). Responses show that the category itself fails to be exhaustive on its own, because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional characteristics, too, so that it is impossible to separate it from the political and cultural situations in which is it produced.[30]

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[30] Sometimes, this heterogeneity has been overlooked even in feminist historiography, where the elision of these fundamental differences has resulted in the marginalisation and oversimplification of what "being a woman" means. This project seeks to go beyond this limited view by taking into consideration the plurality of voices that contributed to women's suffrage propaganda and by delving deeper into the different shades of womanhood or femininity (linked, for example, to social class) that emerge from the pages of the periodicals.

As far as methodology is concerned, Russell explains how feminist historiography has been able to pair more traditional methods with new modes of knowledge-making (2018: 13):

> […] analytical reflexivity to identify the emphases and absences of accepted histories; intentional flexibility toward spare and spotty documentation in the interest of admitting a wide variety of people, practices, and texts into consideration; and critical imagination that both challenges silences in scholarship and capitalises on chance evidence by searching methodically, not so much for immutable truth, but instead for what is likely or possible, given the facts in hand.

Recently, feminist historiographers have started relying on the expanding field of digital humanities[31] to conduct their research and explore new ways of uncovering the past: indeed, though Enoch and Bessette complain that still too few feminist scholars have actually engaged in digital humanist conversations, they also acknowledge that the use of these innovative digital tools might be a true "game-changer", as they "enable scholars to ask new questions, seek new answers, and produce new kinds of scholarship" (2013: 635-36).

In particular, Enoch and Bessette underline the importance of *critical imagination* when combining feminist and digital approaches: this is a tenet of feminist research "that prompts historiographers to think beyond traditional figures, sites, and subject matters and to reflect upon how conventional ways of doing history might blind us from identifying women rhetors who deployed different but still significant forms of rhetorical intervention" (2013: 646). It is a form of imagination that usually requires a rethinking of traditional modes of analysis, as further explained by Kirsch and Royster (2010: 72):

> We look at people at who we have not looked before […], in places at which we have not looked seriously or methodically before […], at practices and conditions at which we have not looked closely enough […], and at genres that we have not considered carefully enough […], and we think again about what women's patterns of action seem to suggest about rhetoric, writing, leadership, activism, and rhetorical expertise.

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[31] The term *digital humanities* might be interpreted here as an "umbrella term" that includes diverse scholarly practices, from digital tool developments and visualisation to open access digital preservation projects and archives, to corpus linguistics, data mining tools, and so forth.

The use of interactive online history projects[32] might prove to be particularly fruitful for new ways of doing (digital) feminist historiography, as they display digitised collections of archival texts, images, and audio; they frame a rhetorical situation, and they provide users opportunities to interact and identify alternative persuasive tactics and their effects. The increasingly extensive use of digital tools in feminist studies has been seen as an opportunity to explore new possibilities for movement and meaningful engagements (see Enoch and Bessette 2013: 651-54)). The interactive online history project used for this study is the British Newspaper Archive, and a description of what it is, how it works, and how it was used for the analysis will be provided in § 2.4.

This study can be said to endorse feminist historiography as it seeks to recover the feminist point of view in investigating historical news discourse: indeed, while works on women's increasingly important role in journalism or on the importance of feminist periodicals between the late Victorian and Edwardian eras abound[33], linguistic analyses into the language of newspapers in diachronic perspective have often failed to take into consideration issues of gender and, namely, works written and published by women (see Introduction). As Russell states, "the standard of human value simply is not set by the male gender, and any full account of human endeavour cannot be told in the absence of women" (2018: 9). Therefore, including feminist periodicals in the reconstruction of the evolution of news discourse throughout time may be seen as an attempt to explicate "what other histories have omitted" (Russell 2018: 13) and, at the same time, a way to foster the political visibility of women also by "considering the pervasive cultural condition in which women's lives were either misrepresented or not represented at all", a tenet of feminist theory (Butler 1990: 4).

2.3 Mixing methods: corpus linguistics, discourse analysis, and sociolinguistics

After taking into consideration the theoretical frameworks behind the project, this part of the thesis will illustrate the methodologies adopted for the analysis. A brief description of corpus linguistics (henceforth CL) and discourse analysis (henceforth DA) will be followed by an explanation of the

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[32] Enoch and Bessette cite projects such as the Victorian Women Writers Project, the Orlando project, the Women and Social Movement database, and Women Working, 1800-1903, among examples of databases and archives used in feminist digital humanities (2013: 638).
[33] On women in journalism, see, for example, Brake 1994, Tusan 2005, and Gray 2012; for studies on feminist periodicals, see Levine 1990, Fraser 2003, Green 2009 and 2017, and DiCenzo et al. 2011, just to cite a few significant examples.

strengths deriving from the combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and by a focus on the so-called Discourse Historical Approach, which was the starting point of the investigation.

Researchers using CL techniques work with a set of machine-readable texts (a *corpus*) which is usually of such a size to defy analysis by hand and eye alone (within a reasonable timeframe). The innovation in CL lies precisely in taking into account a large scale of data through the use of technology: indeed, working with big datasets would not be possible unless the analyst used a computer to read, search, and manipulate the data. Moreover, technological advances have lately made the compilation and processing of such copious amounts of data more feasible and less time consuming, thus allowing researchers to be able to think about different (and more interesting) ways of using the results they obtain (Fuster Márquez and Almela 2017: 9).

The real revolution of CL, however, could be said to be its focus on "widespread patterns of naturally occurring language" (Baker 2004: 346): while much of the linguistic studies undertaken during the first part of the twentieth century concentrated on the side of the Saussurean concept of *langue*, the introduction of this new approach allowed scholars to veer their priority towards analysing manifestations of *parole*, that is, how language is actually used by speakers in their communities. The framework thus relies on the examination of *real* data that have its origin in language use; only in this way can assumptions and convincing arguments on linguistic matters then be postulated.

The main focus of CL is lexis, as the very first thing the analysis of a corpus does is reveal which words are used in their constituent texts and how frequent they are. Moon (2010: 202-07) explains that a corpus can tell us several important things about lexis: (a) the relationship between context and meaning, since, by considering words in context, corpus queries "make us aware of how far the meanings of words are derived from context"; (b) polysemy, that is, how many senses or uses a word might have, and how these are distinguished in context (we can indeed refer to internal variation within a single corpus); (c) ideologically significant items, such as those relating to gender issues or ethnicity; (d) lexical sets, since words fit into semantic fields and, if a corpus is limited to a particular genre/area, we can learn something more about the topic-specific lexis which that area uses most often; (e) synonyms and antonyms, in particular to establish whether these share ranges of reference and phraseological patterns. All these elements, as we will see, are considered in the analysis that follows, especially in Chapters 4 and 5.

Although the main tools of CL are frequency lists, concordances, collocations, and keywords (better referred to in the following paragraphs), scholars agree on stating that we cannot talk of monolithic and consensually agreed sets of methods and procedures for the exploration of language through this approach: rather, as discussed by Baker et al. (2008: 274), we could say that CL "utilizes

a collection of different methods which are related by the fact that they are performed on large collections of electronically stored, naturally occurring texts". We can, on the other hand, outline the different approaches used when dealing with a corpus: as first introduced by Tognini-Bonelli (2001), studies in CL can be either *corpus-based* or *corpus-driven*. While corpus-based examinations use corpus data in order to explore a *theory* or *hypothesis* to validate it, refute it, or refine it, corpus-driven analyses claim that the corpus *itself* should be the sole source of the researcher's hypotheses and enquiries, as the queries can reveal hitherto unknown aspects of language (Flowerdew 2012: 174).

It is precisely this heterogenic and dynamic nature that enables CL to be combined with other different methodologies and approaches to language studies. For example, Baker (2010) has already underlined how sociolinguistic traits such as demographic variation, variation across registers, and interpersonal communication can be studied through CL techniques; in the case of this project, however, the most important sociolinguistic aspect examined is variation *in time*: that is, diachronic variation. Usually, historical corpus linguists mainly deal with language variation either over long stretches of time (*long diachrony*; Rissanen 2000: 9) or within a short time span of 10-30 years (*brachychrony*; Mair 1997); this project only considers texts within a span of 7 years (1907-1914): though it is true that this limited time frame cannot justify changes in the language as a whole system, it is still worth analysing how language changes also according to socio and extralinguistic elements, as reference to context has been fundamental in carrying out the analysis and understanding important differences in language use, both among the individual periodicals and across time. Renouf (2022: 29-30) describes the areas of language change identifiable through CL: (a) coinage of new words: neologisms (e.g. *suffragette*), new compounds or derivations of existing words, but also revivals and examples of long-neglected lexis or usage; (b) the changing fortune of a lexical item: in the corpus, it is possible to record the chronological path of each word, which may disappear completely or reappear later; (c) the meaning and use of existing words, for example by establishing their "collocational profiles"; (d) sense relations: since circumstances may change, a word may develop a new sense or reference. These aspects are taken into account in the analysis for this project, and they are fundamental in understanding important variations (but also similarities) within the corpus.

Apart from adopting this sociolinguistic approach, however, this project relies on the combination of CL and discourse analysis (henceforth DA), that is, on the blending of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. First of all, though, it is essential to clarify the meaning of *discourse* as used in this study, since, as Baker asserts, this can be a problematic term, as it is used differently and in inter-related ways in social and linguistic research (2006: 3). Throughout time, several definitions of *discourse* have been proposed in language studies: Baker recalls, for example, Stubbs'

classification as "language above the sentence or above the clause", or, more simply, Brown and Yule's "language in use" (as cited in Baker 2006: 3); sometimes, the term *discourse* can be applied to different types of language use or topics, so that we may have political discourse, colonial discourse, media discourse, environmental discourse, and so on. Nevertheless, Baker chooses to adopt Foucault's vision of discourse as "practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak", and its expansion into a "system of statements which constructs an object" or "language in action", as further postulated by Parker and Blommaert (cited in Baker 2006: 4); this meaning of *discourse* is the one implemented for this study, too. To put it in even easier terms, discourse can be said to represent "ways of constructing reality": it is also essential to remember that discourses are not valid descriptions of people's beliefs and opinions, but, rather, they are connected to "practices and structures that are lived out in society from day to day" (Baker 2006: 4). The study of discourse (DA) is grouped by Biber into three broad categories: (a) the study of language use; (b) the study of linguistic structures beyond the sentence; (c) the study of social practices and ideological assumptions associated with language use (2007: 14).

Combining CL and DA may at first seem dubious, as the two approaches appear to be at the extremes of a single continuum: while DA emphasises the integrity of a text, CL tends to work only with representative samples[34]; while DA is primarily qualitative, CL is essentially quantitative; while DA is interested in the contents expressed by language, CL is more focused on language *itself* (Flowerdew 2012: 175). However, this cultural divide has been diminishing recently; for example, a frequent criticism of CL is that it completely disregards context, but this is rather just a restricted conception of the discipline that might be applied only to those studies that are limited to the automatic analysis of corpora and are of a descriptive, rather than interpretative nature (Baker et al. 2008: 279). Indeed, by merging CL techniques with DA, it appears quite evident that the work the analyst does after initially being informed by the quantitative aspects is really relevant: for instance, the researcher determines which texts go into the corpus, which processes to apply, what 'cut-off' points to use for statistical significance; they also analyse (sometimes hundreds of) concordance lines by hand in order to identify significant patterns to be studied more carefully and, last but not least, they need to make sense of these linguistic patterns and interpret them also according to context (Baker et al. 2008: 277). In short, "discourse phenomena, with their frequent dependence on and sensitivity to context, co-text, and interpretation, require rather complex solutions and often a great deal of intervention on the part of the researcher" (Ädel and Reppen 2008: 8).Thus, qualitative and quantitative methods should not be seen as mutually exclusive, also because researchers have already

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[34] This was true mainly in the early examples of CL studies, which only used fragments of texts rather than whole texts, which are actually fundamental tools for the discourse analyst (Partington 2004: 9).

demonstrated the fuzziness of the boundaries between these approaches, as qualitative findings can be quantified, while quantitative findings often "need to be interpreted in the light of existing theories, and lead to their adaptation, or the formulation of new ones" (Baker et al. 2008: 296).

As Conrad states (2002: 75-86), corpus studies "provide complex information about social and textual factors that influence language choices, and therefore can contribute greatly to our understanding of discourse". She refers to four main approaches of CL that are applicable to DA too:

• investigating the characteristics of a language feature (a word, phrase or grammatical structure): this type of study provides insights into the factors that influence the choices language users make in different discourse conditions;

• examining the realizations of functions of language (for example, stance or interactive discourse function, such as turn-taking);

• characterising a variety of a language: this might refer to a particular register (or subregister), to personal characteristics of the speaker/writer, to variation between national dialects, to change over time and so forth;

• mapping the occurrence of language features in a text: this is done in order to determine how the specific features contribute to some aspect of the discourse development (rhetorical organisation, topic progression, author's construction of authority, etc.).

We could then add to these the approaches suggested by Flowerdew (2012: 175), which can be:

• textual, when the researcher focuses on language choices, meanings, and patterns in a text;

• critical, such as that employed by Critical Discourse Analysis;

• contextual, which adopts a more sociolinguist approach to corpus data and where situational and extralinguistic factors are also taken into account. This is the approach which has been used for this project.

In this way, corpus-based and corpus-driven approaches are now accompanied by a third methodology, defined by Partington as *corpus-assisted* (2004: 17) and by Flowerdew as *corpus-informed* (2012: 180); this approach, as further explained later, considers a wide variety of background information on the social, political, historical, and cultural context of the corpus data in order to proceed with their interpretation. One of the first examples of this methodology was the project conducted at Lancaster University with the title "Discourse of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK press 1996-2006"; the research was based on the analysis of a 140-million-word corpus of

British news articles about refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and migrants, collectively referred to as RASIM. Their study relied heavily also on 'external' data, such as the conceptualisation of key terms like *refugee* by official sources (e.g., dictionaries) and organisations involved with these groups, and on the use of official statistical information on the number of asylum applications (for more on this project, see Baker et al. 2008).

The corpus-assisted method is used in the so-called Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) conceptualised by Reisigl and Wodak (2017), a branch of Critical Discourse Studies that backgrounds this project. This methodology, which puts a great deal of stress on the historical interest of research[35], considers the concept of *discourse* as follows: it is (a) a cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices within specific fields of social action; (b) it is socially constituted and socially constitutive; and (c) it is related to a macro-topic (Reisigl and Wodak 2017: 89)[36]. It also emphasises the role of the social, political, historical, and cognitive context, which can be broken down into four dimensions:

• The immediate language internal co-text and co-discourse, which revolves around coherence, lexical solidarity, collocation, connotations, implications, presuppositions and local interactive processes;

• The intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses;

• The social factors of a specific context of situation: degree of formality, place, time, occasion, addressees, interactive and political roles, political and ideological orientations, gender, age, profession, level of education, ethnic, regional, national, religious identities and so forth;

• The broader socio-political and historical context, which is fundamental for the analysis.

The DHA is three-dimensional: it first identifies the specific topics of the discourse to be analysed, then it investigates its main discursive strategies, and lastly it looks at its linguistic means or context-dependent realizations. To do so, DHA is orientated by five questions (as reported by Reisigl and Wodak 2017: 93-94):

1) How are persons, objects, phenomena, processes, and actions named and referred to linguistically?

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[35] It should be also remembered that analysing the historical dimension of discourse usually involves two challenges: understanding the perspectives of the historical discourse participants and assessing the discrepancies between asserted and lived continuities and discontinuities (e.g., in national rhetorics, which usually focus only on positive national self-representations).

[36] The types of discourse studied by the DHA may be: discourse and discrimination (e.g. racism, nationalism, sexism); language barriers in social institutions; discourse and politics (e.g. nation-building, European Union, migration, language policy, populism); discourse and identity (national identity, linguistic identity); discourse and history (e.g. fascism or, as in the case of this study, feminism); discourse and the media; organised communication (e.g. institutions in the European Union); discourse and ecology (e.g. climate change).

2) What characteristics or features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena and processes?

3) What arguments are employed in the analysed discourse?

4) From what perspectives are these nominations, attributions, and arguments presented?

5) Are the utterances articulated overtly, are they intensified, or mitigated?

Moreover, the DHA is characterised by seven principles (Reisigl and Wodak 2017: 94-95):

1) It is an interdisciplinary approach;

2) It is problem-oriented;

3) It combines various theories and methods in order to arrive to an adequate understanding and explanation of the research object;

4) It incorporates fieldwork and ethnography (study from 'inside') where required for a thorough analysis of the object under investigation;

5) It necessarily moves between theoretical and empirical data;

6) It studies numerous genres and public spaces;

7) It takes into account the historical context in order to interpret texts and discourses.

As Reisigl and Wodak report (2017: 96), a thorough discourse-historical analysis should follow an eight-step programme that develops as follows:

1) Activation and cultivation of preceding knowledge (i.e., review of scientific literature on the matter);

2) Systematic collection of data and context information (i.e., the construction of a corpus, with specific attention of processes of production and reception of the texts included);

3) Selection and preparation of data for specific analyses (according to relevant criteria);

4) Specification of the research question and formulation of assumptions (on the basis of the literature review and the first look at the corpus and data collected);

5) Pilot analysis (i.e., testing categories and first assumptions; familiarising with the corpus);

6) Detailed case studies (in part quantitative, but then primarily qualitative in nature, for example through the use of CL techniques);

7) Interpretation of results (always taking into account the relevant context knowledge);

8) Application of the detailed analytical results.

In particular, the step concerning the systematic collection of data and context information is of key importance in carrying out this type of research (as further explained in § 2.4). Depending on the research question, several types of empirical data may be collected for DHA, and these include: specific political units or language communities; specific periods of time related to important discursive events (e.g. the linguistic realisation of the Woman Question); specific social, political, and scientific actors (individual and collective actors or organisations, e.g. the Women's Social and Political Union, protagonists such as Emmeline Pankhurst, or politicians such as Asquith or Lloyd George); specific discourses (e.g. discourse and debates around gender); specific fields of political action (e.g. the formation of public attitudes and opinions, for example towards the theme of women's suffrage or militancy, but also political control, advertising, etc.); specific semiotic media and genres (in this case, the feminist press of the early 1900s).

Corpus design is thus an essential feature of this type of study: "the size of the corpus, the types of texts included, the number of texts, the sampling procedure, and the size of each sample are all important considerations" (Conrad 2002: 77). As Partington explains (2004: 11), the introduction of the corpus-assisted approach led to the creation of more and more *specialised* (or *monogeneric*) corpora, representing special purposes or a specific sub-variety of a language: these corpora make discourse studies even more feasible, since in such a collection the interactional processes and the contexts they occur in remain constant, or they alter in predictable ways. Sometimes, specialised corpora are quite small (compared to large monitor corpora such as, for example, the BNC): this may be due to concerns that a large corpus might shed important features of the context of production, while, on the other hand, a natural consequence might be that the corpus contains too small frequencies to result reliable (Baker et al. 2008: 275). However, as Ooi suggests (2001: 179), "the optimal size [of a corpus] can be reached only when the collection of more texts does not shed any more light on its lexicogrammatical or discourse patterning": this means that corpus size ultimately depends on the research question and on individual choices made by considering more broadly the type of study that the researcher wants to embark on.

As already specified, the DHA is interdisciplinary and one of its main strengths is precisely the fact that it relies on the principle of triangulation, "which implies taking a whole range of empirical observations, theories and methods as well as background information into account" (Reisigl and Wodak 2017: 89): in this way, the DHA facilitates a more detailed analysis, "taking into account larger amounts of textual context as well as the structure and characteristics of the employed genres"

(Baker et al. 2008: 296). The implementation of triangulation allows the analyst to "step outside the corpus" in order to consult other types of information (for example, dictionaries, policy documents, correspondence to newspapers etc.): a fuller understanding of the key terms of a specific discourse may be possible only if we consider sources outside the corpus, too.

Ultimately, as Baker asserts (2006 and 2008), combining CL and DA presents a series of advantages for researchers interested in conducting these type of projects: first of all, using CL techniques offers scholars a "reasonably high degree of objectivity"[37] (2008: 277), as the analysis starts from a position whereby the data has not been selected in order to confirm existing more or less conscious biases; secondly, CL tools are useful to uncover ways that discourses are circulated and strengthened in society via language use (sometimes in quite subtle ways): "an association between two words, occurring repetitively in naturally occurring language, is much better evidence for an underlying hegemonic discourse which is made explicit through the word pairing than a single case" (Baker 2006: 13); moreover, corpus data can reveal instances of resistant and changing discourses, which might be less likely to be uncovered via smaller-scale studies (this aspect may be uncovered by considering, for example, changing frequencies or contexts of use over time periods; cfr. Baker 2006: 14-15); lastly, the blending of CL and DA methodologies favours a more eclectic approach to research that rejects the logic of binary oppositions and, most importantly, does not see the corpus as the only source to be consulted for the analysis: indeed, through the use of *triangulation* (i.e. the use of multiple methods), it is possible to facilitate validity checks on hypotheses, to anchor findings in more robust interpretations, while at the same time allowing scholars to respond in a flexible way to unforeseen problems and aspects of their research (Baker 2006: 15-16).

On the other hand, it is also worth reporting on some concerns that researchers should bear in mind when approaching a linguistic analysis through the combination of these methodologies. First, we should remember that corpus data is usually only language data, but discourses are not confined to verbal communication alone, so again the need to be supported by extralinguistic resources is essential. Indeed, it is fundamental to consider also issues concerning the social conditions and production and interpretation of the texts (for instance, who authored them, under what circumstances, for what reasons, for whom, etc.; but also who bought, read, and had access to them, what were their responses and so forth). In addition, CL techniques usually place greater emphasis

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[37] As we have seen, though, this type of study also requires a great deal of the researcher's intervention: it is worth remembering that complete objectivity is impossible to achieve, and researchers need to acknowledge their own involvement in the project they are working on. Baker suggests adopting the point of view of *critical realism* (as postulated by Bhaskar 1989; cited in Baker 2006: 11): this outlines "an approach to social research which accepts that we perceive the world from a particular viewpoint, but the world acts back on us to constrain the ways that we can perceive it".

on the most frequent patterns of language, but, as Baker suggests (2006: 19), it is also important to focus of what is *not* said or written: "a hegemonic discourse can be at its most powerful when it does not even have to be invoked, because it is just taken for granted". Finally, it is essential to be aware that people process information differently to computers: though a computer-based analysis uncovers hidden patterns of language, we might be unconsciously influenced when interpreting them; at the same time, words and patterns might change over time and have different meanings or triggers for different people. It is, therefore, essential to take these matters into consideration, too, when adopting this mixed-methodology approach.

Thus, after having examined the principles and the main pros and cons of this methodological cross-pollination, it is possible to affirm that the combination of such approaches seem to benefit both CL and DA, and that quantitative and qualitative analyses are not mutually exclusive: at the same time, we can support the view that neither CL nor DA need be subservient to the other, "but that each contributes equally and distinctly to a methodological synergy" (Baker et al. 2008: 274).

Finally, we should look more closely at the CL techniques as they are used for the (qualitative) analysis of discourse. The starting point of such analyses is usually a focus on *frequency*, which involves generating a *word list* of the most frequent words and the percentage contribution that each word makes towards the corpus that is being investigated. Though, quite obviously, the most frequent words in any corpus will be grammatical (or function) words, such as pronouns, determiners, conjunctions, and prepositions, the attention is rather focused on *lexical words* (nouns, adjectives, verbs, and lexical adverbs), as these allow us to get a better idea of the various discourses within a single corpus (that is to say, of what the corpus is *about*; cfr. Baker 2006: 47-69). This is the only part of the analysis that mainly relies on quantitative methodologies, but it is still a first (and necessary) step of the investigation. The initial word list can then be further studied at least with two different aims in mind: (a) to have a first insight into the contexts in which these most frequent words appear and to determine differences or similarities between the different texts of the corpus[38]; (b) to trace the diachronic evolution of the words in a corpus (if the corpus covers a specific time span), in order to determine their 'fortune' over time or to ascertain any changes in meanings or contexts of use.

The most important tool that allows the researcher to uncover (hidden) discourses is the analysis of a *keyword list*; Scott (1999) defines the concept of keyness as the statistically significantly higher frequency of words or clusters in the corpus in comparison with another corpus (the *reference*

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[38] In the case of a newspaper corpus, such as the one used for this study, this is particularly relevant, as the selected articles come from different periodicals that had different point of views: therefore, a first (quantitative) analysis of where the most frequent words occurred can reveal interesting insights into, for example, ideology and stance.

corpus, that may be a general monitor one or a specialised one), which can reveal information concerning the 'aboutness' (or the topic and the central elements) of the corpus itself. More specifically, Baker (2004: 346) explains that "a word is key if it occurs in a text at least as many times as a user has specified as a minimum frequency"; usually, we can find three types of keywords: those that everyone would recognise as key and are indicators of the 'aboutness' of a particular text or corpus; high-frequency words such as, for example, *because, already,* or *shall*; and, finally, proper nouns. The keyword list is generated by comparing the frequency word list of a corpus with that of the reference corpus: Baker clarifies that when two texts (or corpora) of equal size are compared, then the word lists produced will be of a similar length; however, when a smaller text (or corpus) is compared to a much bigger one, only the words that are key in the small corpus appear. The words are usually presented in order of keyness, "the most statistically significant or 'strongest' keywords appearing first" (2004: 347).

Keywords can thus be helpful in guiding the linguist in revealing traces of discourses within language: by shedding light on elements that are unusually frequent (or infrequent), they will direct the researcher to important concepts in a corpus, and these might help highlight the existence of (embedded) discourses, counter-discourses, or ideologies: obviously, as Baker points out, keywords will only provide the language patterns to be analysed, but these must then be interpreted by the researcher in order to answer specific questions (2004: 348). When doing this, it is important to take into consideration three key issues that may arise: first, a keyword analysis will usually focus on lexical differences, but this might mean that the researcher does not take into account similarities, which can be of equal interest, too. Secondly, a word may appear in the keyword list but, on closer inspection, it will be evident that it is key only in a very small number of texts: to counter this problem, Scott (1999) proposes to focus on the so-called "key keywords", that is, only on words which are key in more texts. However, Baker underlines the fact that, by revealing the strongest words, a key keyword list may expose only the most obvious differences that we could have made a good guess about well in advance (2004: 350): one way to respond to this possible issue would be to ascertain how many files these key keywords appear in and to present and take into consideration this essential information in addition to the frequency count. Finally, another possible concern might be that relatively low frequency words can be revealed as being key: their importance in the analysis will be then judged by the researcher, depending on what they are looking for; again, as Baker suggests, they should not be discarded just because their frequency appears to be statistically insignificant (2004: 352). In the end, the best way to overcome these possible problems is to use "a variety of techniques when eliciting keywords, combined with a thorough analysis of how the keyword occurs in *all* the

data (not just the texts where it appears key but also the comparison corpus)" (Baker 2004: 357): this will most likely lead to more interesting and detailed research findings.

After generating the keyword list, a first step in the analysis is usually looking at the most frequent *collocations* of the words the researcher intends to focus on: we refer to collocates when talking about those words that regularly appear near other words and their relationship is statistically significant in some way: Baker states that collocation is "a way of understanding meanings and associations between words which are otherwise difficult to ascertain from a small-scale analysis of a single text" (2006: 96), and that "the meaning attributes of a node's collocates can provide a helpful sketch of the meaning/function of the node within the particular discourse" (2008: 278). An investigation into the collocational profile of a keyword can then reveal more information concerning its semantic preference and semantic/discourse prosody: according to Stubbs (2001: 65), semantic preference is the relation "between a lemma or word form and a set of semantically related words" (thus, it does not have to do with evaluative aspects); on the other hand, semantic or discourse prosody actually is evaluative in nature, since it reveals the speaker's or writer's stance and "it extends over more than one unit in a linear string", being it an element of discourse analysis. Moreover, as Baker indicates, the notion of discourse analysis also supports the idea that collocated "need not be adjacent to the node for their meaning to influence that of the node" (2008: 278).

A collocational analysis is thus useful in investigating discourses for at least two reasons. First, it provides an initial starting point that proves to be of particular importance when we are approaching words that occur in very large numbers in a corpus, as this allows the researcher to sort the lines and to focus on the most statistically significant elements to be analysed. Secondly, the results show the most salient and obvious lexical patterns surrounding a subject, and this signals that the discourses around it may be particularly powerful: "the strength of the collocation implies that these are two concepts which have been linked in the minds of people and have been used again and again" (Baker 2006: 114). Thus, collocates can act as triggers and suggest more or less conscious associations through which discourses can be maintained; however, corpus data can also provide responses which are atypical and that can, therefore, uncover *resistant* discourses around a subject, for example when stereotypes are referred to or even challenged (Baker 2006: 114).

Lastly, the research should be completed with an analysis of *concordances*, that is, of the occurrences of a particular search term in a corpus presented within the co-text (and context) they occur in; while usually the investigation might be limited to a few words left and right of the key word in context (or KWIC), in the case of discourse analysis concordance lines can be expanded up to the whole text (Baker et al. 2008: 279). The object of looking at concordances is to look for patterns

of language use (based on repetitions): identifying such patterns may be useful in finding and interpreting discourses. Concordances can also be sorted in various ways, and this type of analysis afford the examination of language features in co-text: thus, we can say that this type of CL tool is no stranger to qualitative analysis and it is still a matter of interpretation, as the patterns of language which are found or overlooked may depend also on the researcher's own ideological stance or subject position (Baker 2006: 92).

Thus, after having clarified the methodological frameworks that background the study, the next paragraph will focus on explicating the corpus-building process, describing the materials used for the research, and specifying how the above-mentioned tools have been used for the analysis.

2.4 Materials and corpus building

This section provides a detailed description of the materials used for the analysis (i.e., the texts for the corpus, but also other external sources), the corpus-building process, the software used for the linguistic queries, and the various steps of the investigation.

The thorough overview of the context and of the previous studies conducted on the same topic (see Introduction) revealed that, at least at the time of writing, no specialised corpora that focused on the British feminist press of the early 1900s had been created yet. Indeed, though we do find historical news-related corpora, such as, for instance, the Zurich English Newspaper corpus (ZEN; it covers English newspapers between 1661 and 1791 and it includes titles ranging from the *London Gazette* to the first issues of *The Times*), the Rostock Newspaper Corpus (RNC-1; it comprises news reports from 1700 to 2000 and it focuses on the development on popular journalism), and the Corpus of Nineteenth-Century Newspaper English (CNNE; an ongoing project at Uppsala University that aims to provide a source to study such language phenomena as colloquialisation in nineteenth-century English newspapers), feminist periodicals seem to have always been excluded from these projects. A collection of texts taken from the Edwardian feminist press had already been provided in 2005 in a volume edited by Delap, DiCenzo, and Ryan (*Feminism and the Periodical Press, 1900-1918*); however, though it includes an impressive selection of articles from key feminist periodicals of the time, this is more an anthology that can be used by scholars working on historical media with rather different aims and methodologies than linguists. It can, therefore, be referred to more as a database

than a corpus: for example, there are no references to the sampling processes or to the criteria used for the selection of the articles, and it only includes editorials, thus ignoring other important genres such as news reports and letters to the editor. For these reasons, this compendium of articles was not deemed suitable to be used for this project.

Consequently, the corpus for this analysis was purpose-built. A significant collection of suffrage periodicals was digitised and made available online by the British Newspaper Archive[39] in 2018, to celebrate the centenary of the Representation of the People Act of 1918, which, for the first time, gave propertied women over the age of thirty (and all men over the age of twenty-one) the right to vote. The newspapers related to the British suffrage movement included in the archive are: *Church League for Women's Suffrage* (1912-1928); *Common Cause* (1909-1933); *Conservative and Unionist Women's Suffrage Review* (1910-1916); *Free Church Suffrage Times* (1913-1920); *The International Woman Suffrage News* (1913-1945); *The Irish Citizen* (1912-1919); *The Suffragist* (1909); *The Vote* (1909-1933); *Votes for Women/The Suffragette* (1907-1918); *Woman's Dreadnought* (1914-1924); *Women's Gazette and Weekly News* (1888-1889); *Woman's Signal* (1894-1899); *Women's Franchise* (1907-1911); *Women's Suffrage* (1907); *Women's Suffrage Record* (1903-1906). However, a closer inspection of the single periodicals revealed some important concerns that had to be borne in mind for the creation of the corpus: first and foremost, as it can be seen from the dates reported above, not all of them covered the same span of time and, though the archive registered the available years as fully-covered periods, it was very often found to present some "holes" in this coverage, with several issues (sometimes, whole months or years) actually missing. Since the original aim of this project was to build a corpus that could reveal important information, among other things, about the diachronic evolution of language in suffrage periodicals, it was ultimately decided to limit the choice of the newspapers to be analysed to the single period 1907-1914, which, as already explained in §1.2, corresponded to the most fervent moment of the campaign for women's enfranchisement, before the advent of World War I actually put a stop to militancy and consequently changed the nature of the movement's papers themselves. Therefore, it was finally determined to focus the analysis on the only three periodicals that covered almost equally this span of time: *Votes for Women*, *The Vote*, and *Common Cause*; this choice was further supported by the fact that these newspapers, as already described in §1.4, were the most popular ones (also in terms of national circulation), they were related to the most prominent societies linked to the movement (respectively, the WSPU, the Women's

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[39] The texts included in the corpus were written and published more than a century ago, therefore there were no copyright issues in collecting and using them for the analysis. However, permission to use them was indeed required and granted by © 2023 Findmypast Newspaper Archive Limited - Proudly presented by Findmypast in partnership with the British Library.

Freedom League, and the NUWSS), and they reflected the three different policies and threads put forward by these societies (respectively, active and violent militancy, non-violent militancy, and constitutionalism). Both *The Vote* and *Common Cause* began to be published after (or as a consequence to) *Votes for Women*; therefore, even if they do not cover the years 1907-1908, they can be said to be interesting for the analysis as they were created both as a continuation and a response to the discourses presented by the periodical published by the WSPU.

After having identified the materials to be taken into consideration, it was necessary to decide on the linguistic criteria of the articles that would be included in the corpus. Given that the ultimate aim of the project is to investigate instances of first-wave feminist discourses in these periodicals, it was concluded to restrain the choice of texts only to those articles containing the lemmas SUFFRAGE and FEMINISM (this operation was repeated for each single newspaper). Moreover, a further criterion was used for the ultimate selection of the articles: to be included in the corpus, they had to belong to the three genres which could equally be found in all the periodicals considered for the analysis, which is to say, editorials, feature stories, and letters to the editors (see §1.4). These conditions allowed for an objective recollection of the data to be inserted in the corpus; however, during the first skimming of the results provided by these queries, it was essential to pay attention to those elements that caused the so-called *noise*, that is to say, all those articles that, though containing the above-mentioned lemmas, were not suitable as they did not meet the standards already decided for the corpus-building process. Among other things, noise included those articles taken from other (mainstream) newspapers (such as *The Times*, *The Guardian*, or *The Daily Mail*) that were reprinted in suffrage periodicals[40], texts that did not concern the campaign for women's rights (for example, literary reviews and pieces of fiction were excluded), and advertisements.

The interactive nature of the digital archive proved to be the perfect tool for the creation of the corpus: indeed, it does not simply include digital reproductions of the pages of the periodicals, but these can also be either downloaded as .pdf files, or they can be accessed through direct intervention in the text in which we are interested. This means that it was possible to highlight only the articles chosen for inclusion in the corpus, which were then retrieved in machine-readable form using Optical Character Recognition (OCR); this was a time-saving operation that allowed for the immediate recuperation of the texts without recurring to a first download in .pdf format, to be followed by manual underlying, copying, or typing in of the articles. Nonetheless, some type of

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[40] As we have seen in § 1.4, this was a recurrent practice in the feminist press; however, these articles necessarily needed to be excluded, as their inclusion could lead to results that reflected anti-feminist discourses, thus threatening the very aim of this project.

manual intervention was still needed. Indeed, OCR reliability did not always reach 100%, and therefore the texts always had to be first copied in a .doc file: this procedure was essential to correct unrecognised or strange characters and spelling errors, though of course particular attention needed to be paid when potential typos referred to personal names, diatopic variation, or instances of non-standard spellings willingly used by the writers. Only after having 'cleaned' the texts in this way were they then transferred in .txt files, the most convenient format to be read by a text analysis software.

The process of text collection resulted in the construction of a corpus named "Corpus of British Suffrage Periodicals (1907-1914)"; following the criteria described above, the final version of the corpus contains 715 articles (278 from *Votes for Women/The Suffragette*; 155 from *The Vote*; 282 from *Common Cause*); editorials make up the most part of the corpus (544), corresponding to 76% of the total articles, while feature stories and letters to the editor are represented in smaller percentages, respectively 19% (135 articles) and 5% (36 articles). Table 2 shows how these genres are spread throughout the corpus, according to the periodical they were taken from:

	Editorials	Feature Stories	Letters to the Editor
Votes for Women/The Suffragette	199	65	14
The Vote	121	30	4
Common Cause	229	38	15

Table 2: genres contained in the *Corpus of British Suffrage Periodicals (1907-1914).*

As it can be easily seen, editorials (or leading articles) are the most prominent types of articles included in all the periodicals, and this confirms that one of the main aims of the feminist press in the Edwardian era was to spread ideas concerning the burgeoning feminist movement and, more specifically, the campaign for women's suffrage, in order to raise awareness and to foster debate within and without the movement itself. Feature stories are more represented in *Votes for Women/The Suffragette*: this does not mean that *The Vote* and *Common Cause* were less interested in reporting news about women suffragists, but it does validate the idea that the periodical published by the WSPU had a stronger editorial policy concerning the publication of news reports as part of the construction of counter-discourses and counter-narratives aimed at debunking ideologies about the suffragettes

purported in the mainstream press[41]. On the other hand, the small number of letters to the editor contained in the corpus may be accounted for the fact that the publication of correspondence was never a regular feature of these periodicals throughout the time span taken into consideration here: indeed, as a thorough analysis of the contents of the newspapers revealed, not every issue contained this section and, sometimes, only a couple of very short letters were published. However, this element is still worthy of investigation, as letters to the editor provide different voices and points of view not necessarily related to the core of the societies behind these periodicals. Sometimes, as we will see, they report ideas and visions that actually further complicate the discourses and ideologies presented in those pages.

The corpus contains 873,695 words: though it can be certainly considered a rather small corpus, there are a number of advantages in purposefully choosing to limit the analysis to a restricted selection of texts. As we have previously said, corpus design is an essential element to be taken into consideration for these type of projects and, indeed, as Baker and McEnery observe, a large corpus might actually not prove to be useful as "it may be difficult, from such a general corpus, to make sense of cohesive positions or understand which discourses are understood as hegemonic/mainstream and which are resistant or in the minority" (2005: 200). Koester (2010: 66-67) identifies, on the other hand, the advantages of working with small, specialised corpora: for example, the volume of data contained in a large corpus may be unmanageable, while with a small corpus, (almost) *all* occurrences can be analysed, thus providing a fuller picture and a more detailed investigation. Moreover, very large corpora often contain texts from many different sources, and so it is almost impossible to consider the context(s) of the utterances which, as previously stated, is what actually makes projects that follow the Discourse Historical Approach (and are thus based on smaller corpora) stronger. It is true that one of the disadvantages of small, specialised corpora is that they can be non-representative or too small for patterns to be identified; however, Williams points out that we seem "doomed to build larger and larger corpora at the risk of losing the wood for the trees" (2002: 44), that is to say, of getting overwhelmed by the sheer amount of data to be analysed. Ultimately, "largeness should be proportionate to the actual empirical necessity for the corpus to be sufficiently representative of the linguistic variety that is being studied", given that "true representativeness itself seems illusory" in any case (Facchinetti 2015: 172). The size should depend on the number of texts that meet the criteria set by the researcher and on the ability of the corpus to answer a specific research question. Therefore, with these considerations borne in mind, the size of the *Corpus of British Suffrage Periodicals (1907-1914)* (from now on CBSP) was deemed sufficient for allowing a detailed, context-specific analysis

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[41] For obvious reasons, the stories that were considered to be more newsworthy were those that reported on the militant actions led by a throng of the WSPU.

of first-wave feminist news discourse that focused on issues of gender representation and construction in particular. As Gupta states, designing small, specialised corpora always involves a difficult balancing act between keeping the corpus focused enough to answer the research question and addressing concerns over whether the corpus can be able to show infrequent occurrences (2013: 34). In the end, CL techniques are always judged to be useful in battling researcher bias, investigating incremental changes in discourse, and showing unusual or infrequent discourse, all the more so when they are combined with other (qualitative) methodologies.

The software used for the investigation is SketchEngine: this was ultimately chosen because of the possibility to create a personal corpus and, most of all, to compare it with a wide variety of pre-loaded corpora, as indicated later. Moreover, the different tools available on this software allowed for results to be analysed, checked and counter-checked following diverse approaches: for example, apart from more 'classical' CL techniques, such as the creation of a wordlist, of keywords, and the investigation of concordances, the tool "Word Sketch Difference" enabled the comparison of two words according to their collocational profiles, while "Thesaurus" helped in uncovering words linked by the same semantic category that could say more about the discourse taken into account.

Multiple CL techniques were used for the analysis.[42] The first step consisted of a purely quantitative study based on the lists of the most frequently used nouns, verbs, and adjectives; moreover, a more detailed investigation looked at how the use of these words evolved during the seven-year period accounted for in the project, also according to the extra-linguistic context and to the different ideologies and policies advocated by the various periodicals and societies (Chapter 3). The second step involved elaborating a list of keywords, in order to have a look at the most prominent topics and discourses of the periodicals. Before obtaining a keyword list, though, the reference corpus (used for the comparison of word lists) had to be chosen: after careful consideration, the general corpus used for the analysis was BLOB 1931 (previously called Lancaster-1931 or B-LOB Corpus), a branch of the Brown family that covers about 1 million words from the years 1928-1934. The corpus is designed just like its 'brothers' (i.e. BROWN, LOB, F-LOB, FROWN, and BE06), that is to say, it contains samples of 2000 words each and it comprises a conspicuous selection of texts under the category "Press", which includes "Reportage", "Editorials", and "Reviews", therefore we could say that newspaper language is particularly well-represented. Though this was the main reason why BLOB 1931 was ultimately chosen for this study, another important factor that influenced the decision was the span of time it covers: indeed, as Baker suggests, when deciding on the reference

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[42] The following paragraphs only refer to the general methodologies and techniques used for the analysis; further details about each step are then provided in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

corpus, it is important to select one that contains texts published around the same time of our own corpus and that comprehends mainly the same variety of language (in this case, British English). It would of course still be possible to use a completely different reference corpus, but we must be aware that any interesting aspects coming out of the comparison would be due to differences in language variety only, rather than telling us something valuable about our own corpus, "so care should be taken when comparing texts with reference corpora, to ensure that findings are not due to diachronic or synchronic differences between the two" (Baker 2006: 44). Researchers at Lancaster University are in the process of creating yet another branch of the Brown family, that is, BLOB 1901, that will include texts from the years 1898-1904; however, though the period covered may seem to be more suitable for this project than BLOB 1931, this reference corpus was discarded for two main reasons: first and foremost, corpus construction still has not finished, and only a portion of the whole corpus would be available and, secondly, the results obtained by using it would be misleading, since BLOB 1901 would not include such key words as, for example, *suffragette* (which, as we will see, was first coined by the *Daily Mail* in 1906), and therefore a comparison with the language and the discourses of the suffrage periodicals would not be possible.

The keyword list will show that discourses that are centred around the construction and representation of gender identities and roles (Chapter 4) and that political strategies are prominent in all the periodicals considered (Chapter 6). A more qualitative methodology was used to further analyse these features: the keywords were first grouped according to the semantic category they belonged to; secondly, their most frequent collocations and their expanded concordances were studied to provide a more detailed and context-sensitive discourse analysis. In the case of political discourse, the choice of keywords to be examined was limited to those referring to debates around militancy and the violent methods used by the suffrage movement. The analysis was further completed by considering a sub-corpus of 85 texts that deal with these issues and by taking into consideration how people (i.e. social actors) are referred to linguistically (nomination strategies), what characteristics they are attributed (predication strategies), and how issues of gender interplayed with militancy discourses, thus following DHA praxis.

A further step of the analysis consisted in a more corpus-based-oriented approach. As we have mentioned, it is important for researchers to familiarise themselves with their corpus before actually starting with the linguistic enquires, and especially so if they are building an entire corpus from scratch. As stated by Baker, "the process of finding and selecting texts, obtaining permissions, transferring to electronic format, checking and annotating files will result in the researcher gaining a much better 'feel' for the data and the idiosyncrasies" (2006: 25). Familiarising with the corpus also

means delving deeper into the context and into processes of production and reception that can help uncover hidden discourses (as suggested by Baker, it is also important to consider what seems *not* to be in the corpus and ascertain why it is so). In the case of the CBSP, the keywords extracted did not include words referring to the (pseudo)-scientific and medical beliefs concerning 'odd' women and suffragettes in particular which, as we have seen in § 1.1, were so popular at the time (for example, *hysterical*, *weak*, or *ignorant* were not among keywords). However, a closer inspection revealed that, though they do not appear in the keyword list, these words are indeed present in the corpus, and therefore their analysis provided invaluable information about how these periodicals constructed counter-narratives and counter-discourses concerning medical and scientific bias (linked, again, to gender ideologies of the time) towards women that seemingly 'derailed' from the 'right' path (Chapter 5).

As stressed several times when discussing the DHA, other resources, apart from the corpus itself, were consulted to provide a fuller picture and to further test the hypotheses and results obtained from corpus queries. As far as language resources are concerned, the *Oxford English Dictionary* was constantly used both as linguistic reference and as container of the (gender) ideologies of Victorian and Edwardian British society. The first edition of the dictionary, published precisely in the same years interested by the so-called Woman Question, was consulted in order to ascertain any differences or similarities between the linguistic norm (i.e. how certain specific words were defined in the dictionary, and what this could say about the cultural climate of the time concerning such a touchy matter) and the actual usage of language (i.e. how the same words were used in suffrage periodicals; see Chapter 4 for more details about this comparison). A research visit at the Archive of the Oxford University Press, where historical materials concerning the production of the first edition of the dictionary can be found and studied, was fundamental in completing this part of the analysis by also looking at the slips for the headwords selected (including the so-called "superfluous material" that was not included in the final version of the dictionary), as well as the working papers, correspondence files, and proof pages that revealed important information not only about the dictionary-building process and how the Woman Question was treated in it, but also about the larger ideologies behind this, which are not to be attributed to the lexicographers alone, but to contemporary British society as a whole.

Other non-linguistic archival materials consulted in order to place the discourses analysed in context include resources that can be found online on the National Archives website (www.nationalarchive.gov.uk) and that comprise, for example, records of disturbances, arrests, and the treatment of women in prison, and the "Times Digital Archive" (accessible through the Gale

Digital Scholar Lab), in which key terms can be searched for in order to find articles on specific matters and events linked to the women's suffrage movement and therefore completing the analysis by comparing how the same issues were reported in the mainstream press and in suffrage periodicals. Another archive that was consulted, this time on site, is the Women's Suffrage Movement Archives (1892-1923) found at the John Rylands Research Institute and Library in Manchester. This archive includes thirty volumes belonging to the NUWSS that contain news cuttings from the period 1910-1914, a chronological record of different aspects of the women's movement and of the Woman Question on the whole.

After presenting the methods and materials, the following chapter will focus on the results of the purely quantitative analysis of frequency lists, and it will also describe the diachronic evolution of the language of suffrage periodicals between 1907 and 1914.

PART II

EXPLORING WORDLISTS

CHAPTER THREE

WORD FREQUENCY

3.1 Quantitative analysis

This chapter presents an initial quantitative analysis, and it starts by examining the most frequent lexical items that appear in the corpus. The first wordlist (Table 3) reports the one hundred most frequent lemmas in the whole corpus; secondly, subcorpora representing each periodical have been created, and their frequency wordlists have been reported below (see Tables 4-6). The choice to divide the corpus into subcorpora representing each periodical instead of the single text genres (i.e. editorials, features, and letters to the editors) is supported by the fact that a key element for the whole analysis is the comparison of the words (or discourses) shared by the three publications, since, as we have already seen in §2.4, this enables us to see differences in ideologies and viewpoints within the same social movement more clearly. As already explained in Chapter 2, the analysis of the frequency wordlist allows for a first insight into the topics covered by the articles in the corpus and, more specifically, the contexts in which the most frequent words occur. Although though, naturally, grammatical words appear among the most frequent ones, it was necessary to discard them in favour of content words only in order to study the *discourses* within the corpus (see Baker 2006: 54). The second step in the analysis consisted in a more detailed examination of a selection of words, which was conducted by looking at their strongest collocates and, additionally, at their concordances. The -3 + 3 span, considered for the collocation analysis, compounded by the Mutual Information (MI) statistical test provided the most valuable output.[43]

Tables 4-6 show a hundred of the most frequent items in the whole corpus and in each subcorpus (content and function words alike), in their lemmatised form; some of these words have

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[43] This choice is justified by the fact that a greater span (corresponding, for example, to -5 to + 5) would have been too large to ascertain true collocations, while other spans would have been too small (-1 to +1) or too limited (for example, a span of -5 to + 1 or -1 to +5 would only concentrate on words to the left or right of the node word and therefore would disregard a potentially interesting part of context). The -3 to + 3 span, on the other hand, proves to be an efficient one as it is most likely to include words that are part of noun phrases as well (Baker 2006: 103). Moreover, the statistical test,Mutual Information (MI), chosen to evaluate the strength of the collocation which is calculated by examining all the places where two (potential) collocates occur in a corpus: an algorithm then computes what the expected probability of these two words co-occurring together would be based on their relative frequencies and the overall size of the corpus. Then, this figure is compared to the observed figure: the difference between the two is then converted into a number which indicates the strength of the collocation – the higher the number, the strongest the collocation. Although it is true that MI usually gives high scores of relatively low frequency words, it is still a useful method of calculating collocations as it gives a good idea of the aboutness of the corpus (Baker 2006: 101-2).

been highlighted and colour-coded as they belong to the same semantic category and their comparison and confrontation yields interesting results. The colour code is the following:

• Yellow for lemmas related to gender.

• Green for political terminology.

• Red for lemmas referring to the use of militant strategies.

• Light blue for the lemmas child and country, that represent women's double role in taking care of their family and, consequently, their nation.

Corpus of British Suffrage Periodicals (991,612 tokens)

Lemma	Raw frequency	Normalised frequency	Lemma	Raw frequency	Normalised frequency
the	63535	64.07	no	2739	2.76
be	39723	40.05	them	2713	2.73
of	37629	37.94	would	2645	2.66
to	28286	28.52	he	2542	2.65
and	26185	26.40	so	2540	2.56
a	18239	18.39	there	2493	2.51
in	16890	17.03	she	2460	2.48
that	14125	14.24	make	2350	2.36
have	12807	12.91	vote	2349	2.36
woman	12373	12.47	work	2179	2.19
it	10364	10.45	government	2160	2.17
for	9402	9.48	his	2136	2.15
not	7937	8.00	more	2128	2.14
as	6794	6.85	when	2078	2.09

man	5175	5.21	only	2064	2.08
which	5064	5.10	say	2047	2.06
with	4866	4.90	what	1950	1.96
but	4433	4.47	these	1918	1.93
on	4346	4.38	great	1917	1.93
do	4273	4.30	you	1838	1.85
who	4223	4.25	other	1817	1.83
will	4152	4.18	than	1804	1.81
at	3615	3.64	may	1785	1.80
all	3605	3.63	those	1775	1.79
or	3478	3.50	us	1750	1.76
her	3350	3.37	give	1740	1.75
our	3228	3.25	should	1654	1.66
from	2982	3.00	its	1645	1.65
one	2925	2.94	upon	1630	1.64
I	2819	2.84	any	1623	1.63
Suffrage	1529	1.54	mr.	1225	1.23
must	1511	1.52	many	1220	1.23
out	1479	1.49	every	1186	1.19
political	1465	1.47	very	1181	1.19
now	1442	1.45	child	1160	1.16
take	1435	1.44	because	1159	1.16
law	1400	1.41	question	1156	1.16
life	1344	1.35	even	1106	1.11

go	1325	1.33	see	1090	1.09
good	1323	1.33	own	1078	1.08
time	1321	1.33	country	1078	1.08
some	1312	1.32	against	1071	1.08
such	1286	1.29	year	1028	1.03
know	1281	1.29	women	1016	1.02
right	1263	1.27	up	1007	1.01
into	1252	1.26	people	1002	1.01
come	1238	1.24	most	1001	1.01
bill	1227	1.23	find	988	0.99
if	1226	1.23	think	987	9.99
can	1225	1.23	then	962	0.97

Table 3: 100 most frequent lexical words in the CBSP.

Common Cause (370,595 tokens)

Lemma	Raw frequency	Normalised frequency	Lemma	Raw frequency	Normalised frequency
the	22775	61.45	would	1190	3.21
be	14932	40.29	one	1148	3.09
of	13510	36.45	if	1147	3.09
to	10867	29.32	work	1100	2.96
and	9783	26.39	no	1085	2.92
a	7292	19.67	can	1071	2.88
in	6129	16.53	he	1064	2.87
that	5339	14.40	from	1063	2.86
woman	4738	12.78	them	1059	2.85
have	4581	12.36	our	1052	2.83
it	4299	11.60	her	1049	2.83
for	3584	9.67	so	1042	2.81
not	3389	9.14	vote	1001	2.70
as	2617	7.06	make	968	2.61
they	2482	6.69	there	944	2.54
we	2478	6.68	more	916	2.47
man	2310	6.23	she	906	2.44
by	2232	6.02	I	901	2.43
this	1987	5.36	only	836	2.25
which	1976	5.33	suffrage	819	2.20
do	1895	5.11	should	806	2.17

but	1825	4.92	say	766	2.06
on	1806	4.87	his	764	2.06
their	1759	4.74	what	740	1.99
with	1739	4.69	than	739	1.99
who	1550	4.18	these	728	1.96
all	1520	4.10	may	690	1.86
at	1444	3.89	when	687	1.85
or	1415	3.81	other	683	1.84
will	1414	3.81	give	657	1.77
Bill	648	1.74	know	484	1.30
good	628	1.69	government	482	1.30
us	623	1.68	suffragist	475	1.28
any	618	1.66	law	474	1.27
those	614	1.65	now	474	1.27
great	612	1.65	question	463	1.24
such	561	1.51	child	461	1.24
must	557	1.50	cause	454	1.22
some	552	1.48	think	452	1.21
you	547	1.47	upon	444	1.19
its	538	1.45	even	435	1.17
many	533	1.43	party	415	1.11
take	531	1.43	see	414	1.11
mr.	528	1.42	year	407	1.09
out	528	1.42	member	403	1.08

very	527	1.42	into	403	1.08
women	520	1.40	every	401	1.08
time	506	1.36	get	396	1.06
because	503	1.35	much	390	1.05
most	488	1.31	right	389	1.03

Table 4: 100 most frequent lexical words in the *Common Cause* subcorpus.

The Vote (211,023 tokens)

Lemma	Raw frequency	Normalised frequency	Lemma	Raw frequency	Normalised frequency
the	13455	63.76	do	688	3.26
be	8784	41.62	or	673	3.18
of	7969	37.77	from	671	3.17
and	5715	27.08	one	660	3.12
to	5464	25.89	no	599	2.83
a	3674	17.41	can	597	2.82
in	3646	17.27	she	576	2.72
that	2978	14.11	there	573	2.71
have	2838	13.44	so	549	2.60
it	2176	10.31	if	524	2.48
woman	2119	10.04	them	516	2.44
for	1,78	8.89	its	508	2.40
we	1716	8.31	would	504	2.55
not	1504	7.12	his	482	2.28
as	1409	6.67	these	478	2.26
by	1162	5.50	us	477	2.26
their	1123	5.32	may	475	2.25
with	1113	5.27	he	474	2.24
they	1111	5.26	when	471	2.23
which	1086	5.14	I	457	2.16
our	1032	4.89	what	440	2.08

This	987	4.67	make	430	2.03
man	980	4.64	great	419	1.98
will	947	4.48	those	416	1.97
but	892	4.22	must	412	1.95
who	874	4.14	more	391	1.85
on	845	4.00	work	390	1.84
her	817	3.87	life	386	1.82
all	705	3.34	only	380	1.80
at	697	3.30	upon	362	1.71
than	355	1.68	go	264	1.25
give	349	1.65	right	264	1.25
out	344	1.63	world	263	1.24
upon	344	1.63	child	259	1.22
law	335	1.58	see	258	1.22
any	333	1.57	you	250	1.18
into	330	1.56	up	250	1.18
other	329	1.55	even	244	1.15
some	329	1.55	good	240	1.13
now	318	1.50	movement	238	1.12
take	315	1.49	force	235	1.11
Government	301	1.42	every	234	1.10
should	295	1.39	find	233	1.10
such	287	1.36	political	230	1.08
own	286	1.35	against	226	1.07

Many	282	1.33	power	226	1.07
time	282	1.33	new	224	1.06
come	277	1.31	day	217	1.02
know	273	1.29	country	214	1.01
vote	270	1.27	before	214	1.01

Table 5: 100 most frequent lexical words in the *The Vote* subcorpus.

Votes for Women / The Suffragette **(409,744 tokens)**

Lemma	Raw frequency	Normalised frequency	Lemma	Raw frequency	Normalised frequency
the	27305	66.62	or	1,390	3.39
of	16150	39.41	all	1,380	3.36
be	16007	39.06	government	1,377	3.36
to	11955	29.17	from	1,248	3.04
and	10687	26.08	our	1,144	2.79
a	7273	17.75	them	1,138	2.77
in	7115	17.36	if	1,126	2.74
that	5,808	14.16	one	1,117	2.72
woman	5,516	13.46	can	1,095	2.67
have	5388	13.14	vote	1,078	2.63
for	3940	9.61	no	1,055	2.57
it	3889	9.49	you	1,041	2.54
not	3044	7.42	he	1,004	2.45
they	2778	6.77	she	978	2.38
as	2768	6.75	there	976	2.38
by	2692	6.56	make	952	2.32
their	2478	6.04	would	951	2.32
this	2407	5.87	so	949	2.31
we	2398	5.85	when	920	2.24
with	2014	4.91	say	919	2.24
which	2002	4.88	his	890	2.17

man	1885	4.46	political	889	2.16
who	1,799	4.39	great	886	2.16
will	1791	4.37	only	848	2.06
but	1716	4.18	upon	842	2.05
on	1695	4.13	more	821	2.00
do	1690	4.12	other	805	1.95
her	1484	3.62	what	770	1.87
at	1474	3.59	those	745	1.81
I	1461	3.56	give	734	1.79
these	712	1.73	day	529	1.29
than	710	1.73	know	524	1.27
work	689	1.68	into	519	1.26
go	688	1.67	country	512	1.24
any	672	1.64	against	507	1.23
us	650	1.58	question	505	1.23
now	650	1.58	very	495	1.20
may	620	1.51	mr.	491	1.19
come	612	1.49	militant	488	1.19
right	610	1.48	because	485	1.12
out	607	1.48	then	460	1.12
its	599	1.46	good	455	1.11
life	595	1.45	child	440	1.07
law	591	1.44	such	438	1.06
take	589	1.43	people	437	1.06

should	553	1.30	own	437	1.06
every	551	1.34	fight	435	1.06
must	542	1.32	some	431	1.05
suffrage	536	1.30	force	430	1.04
time	533	1.30	year	429	1.04

Table 6: 100 most frequent lexical words in the *Votes for Women/The Suffragette* subcorpus.

A first general glance at all the wordlists reveals that the same lemmas appear as the most frequent ones in all subcorpora, albeit with some significant differences. Quite predictably (given the feminist nature of the periodicals in the corpus), lemmas such as WOMAN and MAN are among the most frequent ones, with the occurrences of WOMAN being considerably higher than those of MAN (respectively, 12373 and 5175, while *women* occurs 1016 times in the whole corpus). This confirms that the topic of gender is predominant in the corpus; surprisingly, though, no other examples of gender-related words appear in the wordlists. However, as we will see, they *will* appear among the keywords, thus demonstrating the saliency of this theme. While it is only natural to see WOMAN appearing more frequently than MAN, it can be interesting to see *how* these words were used and what this can tell us about how men and women were represented in these texts (§ 3.2.1).

As expected, political terms recur quite frequently in the wordlists, and this is only natural, given that the main aim of the periodicals included in CBSP was to support the cause of women's enfranchisement. What first catches the attention is the use of the synonyms *vote* (with 2349 hits in the whole corpus) and *suffrage* (1529 occurrences), which will be further explored in the next sections in order to see if there are any possible differences in their connotational meanings. Other words that will be considered belong to the semantic category of militancy: not surprisingly, these lemmas appear only in *The Vote* (FORCE) and *Votes for Women/The Suffragette* (MILITANT, FIGHT, FORCE), which, as we have seen, were the only newspapers openly supporting and justifying (with varying degrees) the use of violence as a political strategy to obtain the vote, or at least attention. Again, the study of the collocations and their comparison can begin to shed light on the topic of militancy and femininity, which will be further analysed in Chapter 5.

Two other words have been highlighted and chosen for their role in revealing potentially interesting discourses, *child* and *country*. CHILD (that occurs 1160 times in the whole corpus) suggests

that the topic of childcare was of particular importance in these periodicals, and the analysis of its collocations will reveal *how* this word is used and how it blends into the feminist discourse of the time. Furthermore, if we compare and contrast this lemma with COUNTRY (which occurs 1078 times in the CBSP), we can get a first glimpse of discourses relating to the difficult balance between women's private and public sphere, and of women's maternal role, which they had to cover both for their children and for their nation.

The following sections provide a further and more detailed examinations of the colour-coded terms.

3.2 Gender

As already explained, the only lemmas related to the semantic category of gender to be found in the whole corpus and, consequently, in the subcorpora are WOMAN and MAN. In the following sections, we will see how each word is used and, most importantly, what their strongest collocates can tell us about the treatment of the Woman Question, the depiction of women according to each newspaper's stance and ideology, and the representation of men. This is only an initial step in the analysis of gender in suffrage periodicals, which will be further expanded in Chapter 4 with the (qualitative) analysis of keywords.

3.2.1 Women

The lemma WOMAN is undoubtedly (and unsurprisingly) the most important lexical word in the corpus, since it appears in each Table as the first most frequent content word. Before elaborating a list of its strongest collocates, and given the gender ideologies of the time outlined in Chapter 1, it is essential to start the examination by looking at how *woman* was defined in the first edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*)[44]. This operation, which is consistently repeated throughout the whole of the analysis, should allow us to 'step outside' of the corpus for a moment in order to check on those words which presented a different (sometimes more ideologically-coloured) meaning, which

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[44] Unless otherwise specified, every entry reported in this dissertation refers to the first edition of the *OED*, which was compiled and published precisely when the Woman Question entered public debates in Britain (1884-1928).

may have undergone more or less important changes over time. The use of the latest edition of the *OED*, with its updated definitions, would have provided limited results that would have failed to tell us what a specific word meant in the period considered in this dissertation. Indeed, given the authoritative status of dictionaries (and of the *OED* in particular), and their role as repositories and archives not simply of language, but of culture as well, this first stage of the study revealed valuable information about the ideologies and social values surrounding specific words and concepts.

The headword for *woman* was first introduced in the *OED* in 1928 and the editors provided a lengthy entry for it. In short, *woman* was defined as: (a) "an adult female human being"; (b) "With allusion to qualities generally attributed to the female sex, as mutability, capriciousness, proneness to tears; also to their position of inferiority or subjection (phr. *To make a woman of*, to bring into submission)"; (c) "In contrast, explicit or implicit, with lady"; (d) "A female servant, a lady's maid or personal attendant"; (e) "A lady-love, mistress"; (f) "A wife"; (g) "The female mate of an animal". A proper investigation of the gendered bias lying behind this entry would need to take into consideration the whole of the many definitions and citations used for this headword, but this would go beyond the scope of this dissertation[45]. However, these examples already make quite clear that there were indeed significant gender ideologies which supported the lexicographers' choices and reflected the general misogyny of the time already discussed in §1.1. Therefore, we could say that the picture of woman painted by such an authoritative (linguistic) source basically saw her as intrinsically socially inferior to man (example (b)); internally divided within different social classes (examples (c) and (d)); an object of sexual desire (example (e)); ultimately destined to marriage (example (f)); and, last but not least, compared to an animal (example (g)).

Having ascertained how women were officially described, the following findings will feature the strongest collocations of woman in the CBSP in order to compare and contrast this description with their representation in the periodicals.

Table 7 reports a selection of the strongest collocations of *woman* (in their word form) in the three different subcorpora.

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[45] For example, the entry reports definitions for two interesting new collocations created during the Victorian era: *fallen woman* is defined as "In a moral sense: that has lost purity of innocence, ruined. One who has surrendered her chastity", with a clear reference to the ideology of respectability (the term was associated with sexual promiscuity and, later, with prostitution); *new woman* is defined as "a woman of 'advanced' views, advocating the independence of her sex and denying convention", where the element of defiance is set in contradistinction to what was thought to be 'natural' and 'acceptable' and "a perceptual discourse of opposition and rebellion is plain" (Mugglestone 2013: 52).

Common Cause	The Vote	Votes for Women/The Suffragette
MARRIED	sensible	SIR
enfranchising	movement	VOTES
nonconformist	apathetic	FOR
opposing	certainly	inclusion
think	Chinese	pit-brow
married	**married**	DEAR
enfranchisement	claiming	enfranchise
SHOULD	voteless	owning
SOCIETIES	emancipation	impasse
BECAUSE	womanly	**married**
inclusion	sphere	AND
pit-brow	**marry**	suffrage
assumes	heavily	favouritism
preponderance	degrading	taxpayers
BEFORE	artist	enfranchisement
public-spirited	awake	votes
sorting	votes	suffrage
wage-earners	enfranchised	waging
propertied	deputations	self-respecting
minded	prevail	comradeship

Table 7: a selection of the strongest collocates of *woman* in the three subcorpora.

As can be seen, the only collocate which appears in all the three subcorpora is *married*, which is used more frequently as an adjective than as a verb in the past form (in *Common Cause*, the presence of the word in capital letters refers to it being used frequently in headlines, such as, for example, "MARRIED WOMEN TEACHERS", which always appears as a title in the correspondence column of the paper, or "MARRIED WOMEN AND INCOME TAX", again to be found in the correspondence column of 13 October 1910). The presence of this collocate among the strongest ones of *woman* might initially suggest that family status was considered in the periodicals (just like in the dictionary) as the foremost way to define and address a woman. A close examination of the

concordances, however, shows that each periodical used the collocation *married woman/women* to refer to the general state of social inferiority deriving precisely from this status. For example, a recurrent discourse seems to concern the exclusion of married women from a number of situations:

(1) Only that all married women are excluded (outside London and Scotland) both from voting and sitting, and all women living at home with their parents. (*CC*, "In Greater or Less Degree", 7 November 1913).

(2) The Insurance Scheme was indeed a step in the right direction, but, as usual, married women had been left out of the count. (*TV*, "Our Pioneers", 27 May 1911).

(3) Such a policy takes no notice of married women, who, by the management of the home, play as great and important a part in the support of the household as the man, while the latter is regarded legally as the householder. (*VFW*, "Our Post Box", 11 February 1909).

Another key theme surrounding the collocation *married woman/women* is the (largely unpaid) amount of exploited labour they had to do within and, sometimes, without the house walls; this discourse is particularly prominent in *TV* and *VFW*:

(4) The hard, unremitting toil in which thousands of married women are constantly engaged is not recognised by the State as having any economic value. (*TV*, "The Driving Force Behind the Woman's Movement, 24 March 1914).

(5) The evil result of this is that, in many cases, married women are doing work that should be their husbands' at starvation wages, while the men are unemployed. (*VFW*, "A Fair Wage for Women", 13 May 1910).

There is a specific collocation that refers to the topic of work and that occurs in each subcorpus, that is, the noun phrase *married working woman*, whose social and legal status was constantly debated in the press, as there had been some initial talks (eventually rejected) concerning the single enfranchisement of these women as a first step in obtaining universal suffrage:

(6) as Mr. Lloyd George opposed the inclusion of married working women in his Insurance Bill, and for precisely the same reason. (*CC* "Adapting Ourselves", 12 October 1911).

(7) The ordinary citizen, she says, is afraid of the ultimate enfranchisement of the married working woman, believing her to be a creature of limited intelligence and capacity. (*TV*, "The Married Working Woman, 24 December 1910).

(8) As a result of appointing a woman doctor, Dr. Jessie Duncan, and two women health visitors to deal with this subject, the Birmingham Corporation has provided an interesting answer to this view of the married working woman. (*VFW*, "Woman on a Pedestal", 26 June 1912).

While exclusion and exploited work are common discourses in all three periodicals, *VFW* frequently deals with concerns regarding married women's health. This attention began when the paper's name was changed to *The Suffragette* after the schism between the Pankhursts and the Pethick-Lawrences, and it might be linked to a growing interest in denouncing women's health problems that originated from their treatment in prison (see Chapter 6). These examples report *The Suffragette*'s worries about married women's ill health:

(9) Overwork and above all unremitting work is a great foe to the health of married women. ("Married Women's Health", 5 December 1913).

(10) A very large number of married women are infected by their husband with gonorrhoea. (The Woman's Question, 8 August 1913).

Therefore, we can safely say that suffrage periodicals presented the married woman as suffering from the many limitations and further burdens acquired with this (often imposed) status. This theory is confirmed by the only occurrence of the collocational noun phrase *happy married women*, to be found in *TV* ("Why I Became a Suffragist", 11 February 1911): "The happily married woman –especially the woman of the upper middle class–snuggles herself into the security of her own four walls". Here, the married woman who thinks she is happy in her marriage (and, consequently, in her subordinated status) is implicitly chided for preferring the safety of her secluded role to the fight and empowerment supported by suffrage organisations. Though marriage was indeed seen as a prison, the risk of being considered 'redundant' women or seen as 'hysterical spinsters' (as most suffragettes were labelled; see §1.1) was still too great for many women.

Looking at other collocates, we can see from Table 7 how each periodical represented women. Quite interestingly, *CC* saw women as being *public-spirited*, that is, as motivated by a desire to promote the public good (a reason often used to justify women's interest in the suffrage), and as *wage-earners*, thus endorsing the need to substitute unpaid labour with a regular wage for women too. While *CC* seemed to focus on the public side of being a woman, both *TV* and *VFW* feature, through the strongest collocates of the lemma WOMAN, a series of adjectives that refer to innate (or ideologically naturalised) qualities: for example, in *TV* women are *sensible*, and precisely for their sensibility they should be included in the political life of the country ("For if the selective process of a suitable moral and intellectual environment can turn a sensible woman into an admirable queen it can also turn a sensible woman into a totally suitable person to sit in Parliament", "Women as

Legislators", 13 August 1910), but they are also presented as *apathetic* and *womanly*. Just as in the case of *married woman/women*, these collocates remind us of the OED's definition, which surely included apathy and womanliness among the "qualities generally attributed to the female sex". Indeed, once again, a look at the concordances confirms that the collocation *apathetic women* presents a rather negative discourse prosody ("it is these apathetic women who are not only the most difficult to arouse to interest, but also form an even greater handicap to the Cause than men themselves", "Why I Became a Suffragist", 11 February 1911), just as *womanly woman* does, given that it is used to talk about anti-suffragist women in a contemptuous manner ("One is compelled to conclude that this "womanly" woman is what the male Anti-suffragist wishes woman to be", "The Victors of Tomorrow", 18 July 1913). On the other hand, *VFW* represents women mostly as *self-respecting*, as they were fighting to obtain the vote: "Now, if ever, self-respecting women are stirred to rebellion" ("The Policy of the WSPU", 18 October 1912).

This rapid glance at the strongest collocates of woman provides some preliminary insight into how gender was constructed and represented in the CBSP and, most of all, how this representation starkly differed from the ideologies of the time. While the definition found in the *OED* paints a patriarchal picture of women as intrinsically subjected to the tenets of respectability and domesticity, in this corpus they are represented as passively suffering the institution of marriage, as unrecognised workers, and, most importantly, as women who reject the gendered roles and attributes given to them by men. The only negative image refers to those women who still adhered to above-mentioned ideals (cf. *womanly woman*). Since this section is more concerned with the quantitative analysis of frequency wordlists, though, this topic will be further expanded in Chapter 4.

3.2.2 Men

As already stated, the lemma MAN appears less frequently than woman: this generally means that men are less marked than women. Men belong to what is considered ordinary; women belong to what is extra ordinary: this proportion is repeated in each subcorpus, where *man* occurs 2310 times in *CC* (normalised frequency 6.23), 980 times in *TV* (normalised frequency 4.64), and 1885 times in *VFW* (normalised frequency 4.46). Here, the most striking difference in terms of frequency is the comparison between *CC* and *VFW*: though the latter subcorpus has more tokens, we can see that *man*'s hits are not only less frequent, but the word's normalised frequency is significantly lower than what we found in *CC* (4.46 vs 6.23). This may suggest that *VFW* was much more devoted to the

woman's cause and maybe less interested in taking into consideration men's share in the Woman Question. However, this kind of hypothesis can only be tested by looking at the strongest collocates of the lemma in each subcorpus, to see what types of discourses are built around this word.

Table 8 thus shows a selection of the strongest collocates for *man* in each subcorpus in their word form:

Common Cause	The Vote	Votes for Women/The Suffragette
passions	**Composed**	decadence
THAN	equally	folk
undercut	teach	controlled
sentenced	superior	**composed**
chivalrous	average	reserved
composed	relations	spheres
marries	white	unemployed
firms	boast	supports
jealousy	honest	unequal
irresponsible	only	angry
fostered	voters	exclusively
street	began	dragged
temptations	privileges	named
folk	built	consciences
coloured	reform	organisations
cared	brave	acted
jealous	among	average
rich	largely	relations
ONLY	primitive	physically
decent	whatever	wage-earning

Table 8: a selection of the strongest collocates of *man* in each subcorpus.

Surprisingly, there are no significant collocates that all three subcorpora share, except for the word *composed*; a more detailed analysis of the single concordances has shown that this word often recurs in such expressions as *composed entirely of men* (*CC* and *TV*) and *composed mostly/largely of men* (*TV*), with reference to institutions like education committees, parties, the electorate, tribunals or courts, and, last but not least, the Anti-Suffrage League. On the other hand, in *VFW* the recurrent phrases are *composed both of men and women* and *composed of unmarried men*: the first refers to an audience (thus an informal gathering of people, not an organised institution), while the latter is used to refer to the ecclesiastical court (made up of monks), which was responsible for deciding on divorce matters in Russia, so there is no reference to the British context here. In general, the frequent recurrence of expressions that specify who is part of groups and institutions (and in which proportion) may suggest an insistence on pinpointing gender disparity in the constitution of such organisations.

Once again, analysing the list of collocations for each periodical proves to be interesting in revealing how each publication talked about men. In *CC*, men are presented as *jealous* and *irresponsible*, but also, at the same time, as *chivalrous* and *decent*; specifically, this newspaper often refers to men's jealousy towards those women that were gradually entering the world of work and perceived as a threat to men's employment, as these examples report:

(11)   My object in writing is, however, to ask Mrs. Purdie whether it is not true that women accountants suffer great disadvantage from the jealousy of men in not allowing thorn to be "Chartered," and whether the same difficulty would not arise with regard to the career of a woman lawyer, since she could not "eat her dinners" nor become a member of the "Incorporated Law Society." ("Correspondence", 31 March 1910)

(12)   The quarrel arose from the jealousy of men as to the employment of women in the printing trade, and the men have definitely stated that their object is the "ultimate total elimination of women compositors from the trade." ("Modern Chivalry", 29 September 1910)

The adjective *irresponsible*, on the other hand, focuses again on the suffrage question: "I believe that a good many Conservative MPs, alarmed at the influx into the electorate of a crowd of irresponsible young men, will welcome the married woman householder as a mature and moderating influence" ("The Enfranchisement of Married Women", 14 December 1911).

Moreover, while the use of *decent* does seem to provide an apparent defence of men (e.g. "So you are in the majority, you kindly, decent, well-intentioned men!", from "Motherhood", 8 September 1910), the modifier *chivalrous* is a first instance into the use of irony, a common feature of feminist

discourse in these types of periodicals. With this strategy, the editors were possibly *questioning* some of the traits typically attributed to men at the time:

(13)   If any man says "men are chivalrous" and the "natural protectors of women," and yet has not taken the trouble to ascertain why some women are so keen to obtain for others –or themselves–the protection of the vote which men already have, he is himself illustrating the humbug of his saying. ("The ABC of Women's Suffrage", 1 June 1911)

(14)   If men were really chivalrous, would they have waited until 1912 to decide that the traffic in women's bodies is a criminal offence, and not a mere "misdemeanour"? ("The ABC of Women's Suffrage", 26 September 1913)

The periodical *The Vote* decides to pay homage to those (very few) men that did indeed support the cause of women's suffrage; thus the adjective *brave* is used to praise them: "The Women's Freedom League owes much to the brave and valiant men who have helped us by their sympathy and active support on many public occasions" ("Evolution and the Women's Freedom League", 4 November 1911). At the same time, this newspaper highlights the (social) gender inequalities by associating man with words like *superior* and *privileges*. While the latter is a direct accusation ("For men's privileges, men's plans, men's ambitions, women pay; and there is neither justice nor mercy in shutting them out from joint authority and responsibility", from "Who Pays?", 25 May 1912), the former is a further example of the ironical use of certain specific words in feminist discourse. In this case, men's (supposed) superiority (which, as we have seen in § 3.2.1, was also stressed in the *OED*), is challenged and ridiculed, as shown in the following examples:

(15)   The struggle has been long and severe; we are ready to concede that, on the whole, it has been valiantly conducted; but is it not over? Has not man, the superior man, the master, made it abundantly evident that he intends to hold his own? ("Are We Downhearted? No!", 7 December 1912)

(16)   […] above all, the women who ought to have no intelligence outside the limits of their own home duties, with a few insignificant tasks beyond, which they are allowed to perform for very small pay, must have confidence in the superior men, who with wisdom, chivalry, and ceaseless industry are safeguarding their interests! ("The Great Conspiracy", 29 June 1912)

(17)   Young men consider themselves superior to young women, though the latter now frequently surpass them, not only mentally and morally, but even physically, where the male creature might be supposed to maintain the advantage which centuries of better training have given him. ("The Political Status of Women Teachers", 8 April 1914)

Finally, *VFW* considers men primarily for the role they play in economically supporting the family, given the recurrent use of the collocations *unemployed men* and *wage-earning men*. The detailed

analysis of concordances shows how these terms are once again used to foreground a series of injustices at the heart of the animated debates of the time:

(18)   Mr. Macnamara supports Mr. John Burns in the suggestion that an easy way to find work for unemployed men is to turn married women out of employment by Act of Parliament. ("The Faith that Is in Us", 15 October 1908)

(19)   The wage-earning man works a limited number of hours, and receives a cash return from his employer for his labour. The wife of the wage-earning man works an unlimited number of hours, and receives no cash return from anybody. ("Does a Man Support his Wife?", 21 July 1911)

Thus, we can say that, in the CBSP, such discourses have mainly to do with deconstructing the image men projected of themselves in society, which was typically in stark contrast with that of women: the use of irony for words like *chivalrous* and *superior* is just one method the editors used to build counter-discourses and counter-narratives[46], while the occurrence of terms like *jealousy* and *irresponsible* seems to suggest that those irrational traits commonly associated with women might be linked to men as well. The entry for *man* in the *OED* was checked to ascertain any differences in use or meanings, but the definitions did not report any specific gendered idea concerning identity or ideology, apart from the fact that *man* was widely used to refer to "a human being, irrespective of sex or age" (its association with non-inclusive language began to be discussed only with second-wave feminism and the "dominance and difference" approach to language and gender studies discussed in Chapter 2). While the different uses of *woman* in feminist discourse did detach from the view offered by the dictionary (which mirrored that of society, too), in this case the comparison can only be made between how the word *man* is used in suffrage periodicals and the gender ideologies typical of such a patriarchal society as Victorian and Edwardian Britain.

3.3 Political terminology

Just as *woman* and *man* are among the most frequent words in the corpus because of the feminist stance of the periodicals and their focus on gender issues, lemmas referring to politics prove to be conspicuous and often recurring because, as explained in § 1.4, the foremost aim behind these

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[46] This topic will be further analysed in Chapter 6 when discussing gendered (mis)conceptions related to health.

publications was the fostering of debates around the theme of women's suffrage and active participation in the political life of the country.

As shown in tables 4-6, *CC* presents much more variation with the words *vote*, *suffrage*, *bill*, *government, suffragist*, *law*, *party* related to politics in its frequency list, as opposed to *TV* that has only four words (*law*, *government*, *vote*, *political*), and *VFW* only five (*government*, *vote*, *political*, *law*, *suffrage*). Though the same political words recur as the most frequently used in all three subcorpora, there are interesting differences to be taken into consideration: for example, *CC* is the only periodical whose frequency list comprises the lemma PARTY (that occurs 415 times in the subcorpus). This is noteworthy because all suffrage societies ultimately decided not to be affiliated with any political party after having been disillusioned by the scant support offered by the Liberals and the Labours and having been constantly rejected by the Conservatives. The recurrent use of this word in *CC* may be linked to the fact that the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (which sponsored the newspaper) proclaimed itself as law-abiding and constitutional and always sought some kind of collaboration with members of Parliament. Moreover, the same subcorpus is the only one that includes the noun denoting the people supporting women's suffrage: the lemma in question is SUFFRAGIST, which, used in contrast with SUFFRAGETTE, gave rise to heated debates within and without the movement. Given its intrinsic relation to gender and ideas of femininity and womanhood, it will be further analysed in Chapter 4.

What seems to be potentially more interesting is, however, the recurrence of the lemmas VOTE and SUFFRAGE. First of all, we should notice that VOTE appears more frequently than SUFFRAGE in each subcorpus (respectively 1001 times in *CC*, 270 times in *TV*, and 1078 times in *VFW*), apart from *TV*, where the latter does not occur at all in the frequency wordlist. Just by looking at their collocations some interesting differences have been seen to emerge.

Common Cause	The Vote	Votes for Women/The Suffragette
casting	THE	FOR
adverse	winning	WOMEN
PARLIAMENTARY	want	editors
wages	granting	censure
parliamentary	readers	**women**

deserve	cast	grant
WILL	parliamentary	parliamentary
THEY	get	winning
HAVE	possession	give
Norway	condition	key
wanting	**women**	winning
possession	issue	granting
municipal	Labour	wanting
WANT	fight	week's
cast	Liberal	withhold
exercise	demand	obtain
THEM	no	got
WOMAN	need	choice
men	believe	wanted
granted	when	favour

Table 9: a selection of the strongest collocates of *vote* in the three subcorpora.

As can be seen in Table 9 that reports the collocates of *vote* in the three subcorpora, *vote* is frequently associated with *woman*. Indeed, in the *OED*, *vote* is not only defined as "A formal expression of opinion by a member of a deliberative assembly on a matter under discussion; a decision or verdict" and as "An indication, by some approved method, of one's opinion or choice on a matter under discussion; an intimation that one approves or disapproves, accepts or rejects, a proposal, a motion, candidate for office, or the like", but, more importantly for the purposes of this analysis, as "The right or privilege of exercising the suffrage". By looking at the illustrative quotations reported in the dictionary, it is clear that this privilege was only understood to be related to men: for example, the quotation taken from Sir Edward Coke's *Elements of Power and Subjection* (1660), says that "If every man of England has not a like vote and power in electing Members for the House of Commons, then cannot the House of Commons be the Representative of the Nation", while the citation from Macaulay's *Mill on Government* (published in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1829), asserts that "On these grounds, Mr Mill recommends that all males of mature age, rich and poor, educated and ignorant, shall have votes". That in the CBSP the word *vote* is frequently associated with *woman* reinforces the cause for which members of the suffrage societies were fighting, as exemplified here:

(20)　　　A MARRIED WOMAN COULD VOTE if the house were taken in her name, so long as her husband was not qualified for the same property. ("The ABC of Women's Suffrage, 4 May 1911)

(21)　　　Women want the vote because they are women, intelligent human beings; because, that is, they have minds which see and understand. ("The Vital Point", 25 April 1913)

(22)　　　Women demand the vote because they have the right to earn their daily bread. ("What Makes a Revolution", 14 October 1910)

The collocation analysis also offers interesting insights into the verbs that recur with *vote* too which highlight *how* women might eventually get it (*granted* in *CC*; *winning, granting, get* in *TV*; *grant, winning, give, granting, obtain, got* in *VFW*); would *use* it to gain empowerment (*casting, cast, exercise* in *CC*; *cast* in *TV*; no examples in *VFW*); and *reclaim* it (*deserve, wanting, want* in *CC*; *want* in *TV*; *wanting, wanted* in *VFW*). It is curious to notice how the term *grant*, an ideologically-coloured verb which implies a form of concession ultimately given to women by those in authority, is used along with *win*, which rather puts the emphasis on women's agency and struggle towards enfranchisement.

To see if there were any significant differences between discourses around *vote* and *suffrage*, it was necessary to look at the strongest collocations concerning the latter. As already reported, though, *suffrage* does not appear in the frequency list of *TV*, so Table 10 only reports collocates for the other subcorpora in their word form:

Common Cause	*Votes for Women/The Suffragette*
adult	Manhood
opposing	woman
Manhood	societies
women's	adult
woman	societies
SOCIETIES	inclusion
WOMEN'S	clause
societies	woman's
alliance	association
people's	amendment
Manhood	favour

UNION	news
adult	older
opposed	movement
opposing	introduce
amendments	Sunday
friends	carrying
amendment	women's
granting	hostile
movement	Bill

Table 10: a selection of the strongest collocates of *suffrage* in *CC* and *VFW*.

A first look at the findings reported in the table clearly shows that *suffrage* is not used here as in the first and second definitions reported by *OED*, namely "prayers for the souls of the departed" or "help, support, assistance", but it is exclusively used in the political sense, as referring to "a vote given by any member of a body, state, or society, in assent to a proposition or in favour of the election of a person; in extended sense, a vote for or against any controverted question or nomination". Unlike *vote*, this word does not have any gendered connotation in the dictionary[47], but it does offer more references to gender when it is used in the CBSP: indeed, the collocation *Manhood suffrage* recurs as frequently as *woman's/women's suffrage*. To be even more precise, we can see that the former appears top in the *VFW* frequency list. While the expression *woman's/women's suffrage* was obviously repeatedly used by both periodicals, as this was the main topic which revolved around their editorial policies, *Manhood suffrage* specifically refers to an act of Parliament (the Manhood Suffrage Bill), whose introduction was announced by the Government in 1911 and which was to include the small percentage of men who were still unenfranchised – but alas no women yet. The Bill was perceived by all suffrage societies as a mockery, since all the work already done to campaign for women's rights was apparently considered as being useless. The only reaction the Government obtained was for the suffrage militants to resume their militant anti-government policy after months of patient truce. As Millicent Garret Fawcett reported, "if it had been Mr Asquith's object to engage every Woman Suffragette to the point of frenzy, he could not have acted with greater perspicacity" (cited in Atkinson

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[47] Another entry, namely *suffragism*, was actually more gendered, as its definition read "The advocacy of an extension of the suffrage, e.g., to women (*women's suffragism*)", though the term does not occur in the CBSP.

2018: 262). In the feminist press, Manhood suffrage was described as "intolerable", "not fair", and "a strange abortion" by *CC*, and as an "indignation" and an "insult" by *VFW*.

The frequent occurrence of terms like *opposed/opposing* and *hostile* suggests that suffrage was something which was regularly seen as undesirable (unlike *vote*, which, as previously shown, was something that women could eventually *win*): unsurprisingly, though, this happened when talking about other people's (generally men's) view of women's suffrage, as reported in the examples below:

(23)   He may be steadfastly opposed to Women's Suffrage not because he denies sex-equality, but because he sees in the removal of the sex-disability a doubling of the evils of such democracy as we " enjoy " to-day. (*Common Cause*, "Democracy and Women's Suffrage", 29 August 1913)

(24)   To support a Government hostile to Woman Suffrage is to invite a continuance of that unsatisfactory policy. (*Votes for Women*, "Why We Use Militant Tactics", 23 July 1908)

Lastly, we can also discern from Table 10 that the term *suffrage* was used to refer to the names of groups and associations (e.g., National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, the Equal Suffrage Association, and the International Women's Suffrage Alliance), and it frequently collocates with specialised political terms like *amendment*, *clause*, and *bill*. Therefore, we can say that the main differences in the use of vote and suffrage are not linked to any specific ideological views or stances put forward by the different periodicals. Rather, these differences seem to be due to issues of register, as the former appears in more informal contexts (the very phrase "Votes for Women" was not only the title of the WSPU's periodical, but also a catchy motto which was adopted and shouted by the campaigners at every meeting and irrespective of the society they belonged to), while the latter recurs in more formal circumstances, since it is frequently reported in the official names of groups and alliances and in parliamentary discourse, when using specific political terminology.

3.4 References to militancy

Among the most frequent word items in the CBSP, we also find terms that refer to militancy: indeed, discussions around the appropriateness of the use of forceful methods as a strategy to obtain the vote were abundant in all suffrage societies, where the link between femininity and militancy was especially debated. However, the frequency wordlists show that such terminology was particularly frequent only in *TV* and *VFW*. This is easily justified by the fact that the WFL and the WSPU (which

sponsored these periodicals) were the only associations that openly admitted militant methods in their policy, while the NUWSS (which published *CC*) was openly against the use of violence. This does not mean, however, that the editors of *CC* were not interested in this topic: since words related to militancy prove to be significantly more important among the keywords, this issue will be further investigated in Chapter 5.

It is still worth making some observations about the words referring to militancy that we can find in Tables 5 and 6 in section 3.1. Here, we can see only the lemma FORCE in *TV*, while in *VFW* we find the lemmas MILITANT, FIGHT, AND FORCE: again, this might be explained by the fact that the WSPU advocated extreme use of militancy, thus disregarding any concept of respectability, while the WFL accepted it only up to a certain point. The word *force* is among the most frequent ones in both subcorpora, and it proves to be more frequent in *VFW* (430 hits) than in *TV* (235). However, when the frequency of these terms is normalised, the one in *TV* proves to be higher than the one in *VFW* (1.11 vs 1.04). It is thus worth exploring differences in the use of these words in each subcorpora further[48].

The Vote	*Votes for Women/The Suffragette*
contending	brute
driving	**physical**
physical	mighty
spiritual	sheer
mighty	plane
behind	**spiritual**
into	domination
money	fed
against	armed
put	moral
Labour	challenge
moment	material
great	evolution

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[48] The lemma MILITANT, which occurs 488 times in *VFW*, is certainly fundamental in revealing discourses concerning militancy, and it will be analysed in Chapter 5 as it occurs among the keywords, too.

social	mental
that	police
been	use
way	argument
same	revolution
upon	weapon
being	resistance

Table 11: a selection of the strongest collocates of *force* in *TV* and *VFW*.

Table 11 that reports the strongest collocates of *force* in *TV* and *VFW* in their word form seems to confirm that *VFW* made more references to the use of forceful strategies, either by or against the suffragettes, and that it probably tried to justify this policy by writing conspicuously about it and trying to convince its readers of the righteousness of these methods. It is interesting to notice how the two subcorpora share the collocates *physical* and *spiritual*, thus validating the idea that there were heated debates concerning this topic, which is presented as polarised in the periodicals.

However, a closer analysis of concordances enables us to uncover discourses which may not appear as evident at first. Indeed, the examination reveals that both *TV* and *VFW* use the collocation *physical force* more to refer to violence perpetrated by institutions (the Government or the police) upon those women who publicly protested, as the examples below demonstrate:

(25)   The Government's favourite weapon of physical force was used again on Monday last when Lord Morley visited the Manchester University. (*VFW*, "Methods of Violence", 8 October 1909)

(26)   Women and their demands–their protests, their resistance of taxation–are becoming inconvenient to the Government, and physical force has been used against them. (*TV*, "Fettered or free", 6 February 1914)

Moreover, *VFW* often tackles discourses concerning an imbalanced view of the sexes by challenging the idea that physical force cannot supposedly be used by women because of their inherent physical inferiority: "It is impossible to say that physical force is woman's weakest side, because it is not possible to compare things which exist on different planes" ("Women and physical force", 19 November 1909). The same periodical, then, uses different words that refer to the use of force, which collocates also with *brute*, *sheer*, *armed*, and *weapon*, though once again they are used to refer to the treatment reserved to suffragettes by the police:

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(27)   Women had challenged the Liberal Government, and Liberals took up the challenge and chose to have it fought out with the weapon of physical force. ("Women and Physical Force", 19 November 1909)

(28)   It is sheer brute force hurled at unprotected women! ("Black Friday", 6 January 1911)

(29)   The Government are trying to crush the Militants by brute force, but the Government will fail. (*TS*, "Human Life in Danger", 25 April 1913)

What the two periodicals seem to disagree on the most is, however, the use of spiritual force: while *VFW* reports this collocation in almost contemptuous tones to refer to constitutionalists (i.e. those campaigners who were against any form of violent methods) and chides them for being too apathetic in their fight, *TV* proves to stand yet again in between the polarised discourses (no militancy vs any type of militancy) by highlighting that, first and foremost, the women's suffrage movement needs to be led by a spiritual force:

(30)   Thus we have "constitutional " Suffragists arguing that spiritual force will avail to gain the Vote for women, and that any resort to physical force is immoral. (*VFW*, "Militancy", 31 March 1912)

(31)   And we know that our rebellion, quickened by the spiritual forces that are alive and active everywhere throughout the world, will be effective. (*TV*, "The Manifesto of the Warrior Woman", 26 October 1912)

To gain further insights into the uses of these collocations, it is also worth examining how their use has spread over time in the two periodicals. Thus, Figure 1 shows the diachronic spread of *physical force* and *spiritual force* in *The Vote*, while Figure 2 shows the evolution of the same collocations in *Votes for Women*:
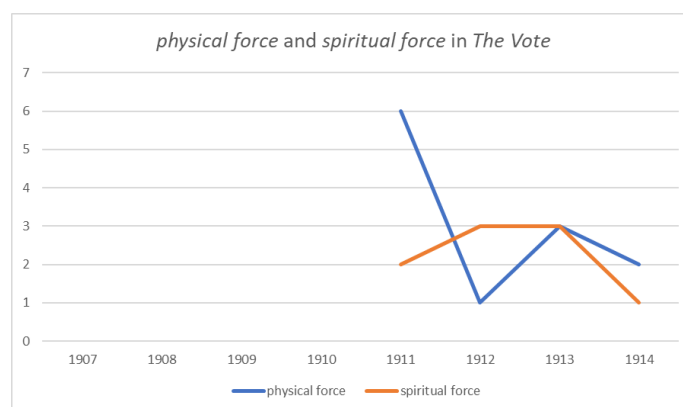
Figure 1: diachronic evolution of *physical force* and *spiritual force* in *The Vote*.
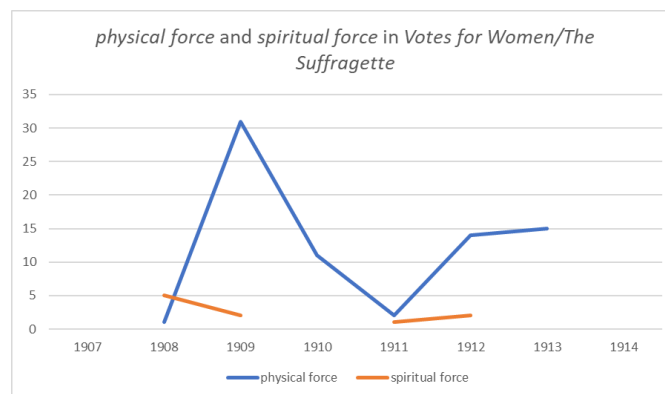
Figure 2: diachronic evolution of *physical force* and *spiritual force* in *Votes for Women/The Suffragette*

The figures consider the whole span of time covered in the CBSP (1907-1914). However, the first noticeable aspect is that the collocation *physical force* can be found in *TV* only from 1911 onwards, and it also reaches its frequency peak in the same year, that is to say, after the event known as "Black Friday", which occurred on 18 November 1910 and which earned its name from the extreme violence used against the protesting suffragettes. The resonance of the event justifies the frequent use of *physical force* in the year that followed, though we can also notice that its frequency then rapidly diminishes and reaches its lowest in 1912 (just 1 occurrence). On the other hand, *VFW* starts using the collocation well before 1911: to be more precise, the first occurrence of this expression is in 1908, that is to say, it is present almost from the starting date of this publication. This is because the first forceful protests by the suffragettes (consisting at this stage mainly of window-smashing campaigns) started in this year, along with the equally violent response by the police. What seems to be more striking, however, is that it reaches its lowest frequency precisely in 1911: this may suggest that *VFW* did not refer to the episode of "Black Friday" simply with the collocation *physical force*, but that it probably made use of other expressions too. The peak of this collocation is, instead, in 1909: this is the year in which those suffragettes that were arrested and taken to Holloway Prison started their hunger strikes, and therefore the use of *physical force* here is linked to the fact that the Government resorted to forcible feeding to tackle the matter (see Chapter 5).

Differences in the diachronic spread of *spiritual force* are equally significant. In *TV*, the collocation is used in the same time span as *physical force* (so from 1911 to 1914), and its use becomes much more balanced in 1912, thus suggesting that this periodical did not hold a specific, categorical stance on the matter or, more simply, that debates about militant methods were much more encouraged in its pages. In contrast, in *VFW* the collocation is almost non-existent, since it occurs

very rarely between 1908 and 1909, and then again between 1911 and 1912: this may support the idea that spiritual force was dismissed here as a weak way to show support for the cause, and that this periodical concentrated much more on discussing the use of physical force as something that was suffered by the suffragettes as well as used by them.

This analysis offers only a first glimpse into discourses surrounding the topic of militancy. In Chapter 5 this matter will be further explored, especially with its link to concepts of gender, femininity, appropriateness, and respectability.

3.5 CHILD and COUNTRY

Finally, a last look at Tables 3-6 highlights two more lemmas whose frequent repetition throughout the subcorpora reveals other types of potentially interesting discourses: indeed, the frequent occurrence of CHILD and COUNTRY seems to suggest that feminist discourse in suffrage periodicals also focused on the themes of motherhood and national identity. To be sure, between the Victorian and Edwardian eras motherhood was perceived to be both a personal phase in a woman's life and as a metaphor, given that women were seen as mothers of the country and of the whole Empire. Thus, finding such lemmas among the more frequent ones indicates that suffrage periodicals tried to negotiate this double role, which perfectly exemplifies the blurring of the private and public spheres, while at the same time it still focuses on a topic traditionally thought as typically feminine, i.e. childrearing.

Specifically, we can see that CHILD is most frequent in *CC* (with 461 hits; normalised frequency 1.24), while COUNTRY does not appear at all among the most frequent lemmas. The most striking difference is seen, however, in the occurrences of CHILD and COUNTRY in *TV* and *VFW*: in the first sucorpus, CHILD occurs 259 times (normalised frequency 1.22), so it appears to be much more frequent than COUNTRY (214 hits, normalised frequency 1.01). On the other hand, we have the exact opposite in *VFW*, where COUNTRY occurs much more frequently (512 hits, normalised frequency 1.24), while CHILD occurs 440 times (normalised frequncy 1.07). Such a purely quantitative analysis would therefore suggest that *CC* is more conservative and thus focuses more on issues linked to motherhood and childcare, while references to the country as a whole and to women's active role in it appear to be non-existent. In *TV* and *VFW*, the different positions that these lemmas occupy in the wordlists may imply that the periodical connected to the WFL still considered the private role of mothers as the most important one, while the publication of the WSPU put more emphasis on

discourses concerning womanhood and national identity: this did not mean that *VFW* did not tackle issues concerning childcare, but the insistence on references to women's (new) role in the public life of the country is certainly much more in line with the journal's editorial policy. Again, the analysis of collocations and concordances for the lemmas in each subcorpus provided a fuller picture of the uses of these words.

Common Cause	*The Vote*	*Votes for Women/The Suffragette*
illegitimate	**illegitimate**	**illegitimate**
guardianship	born	guardianship
rearing	feeding	destitute
custody	school	custody
death-rate	healthy	guardian
born	schools	starving
parent	father	widows
healthy	training	conception
widows	mother	care
welfare	homes	wives
wirth	bring	welfare
bear	here	birth
leaving	herself	exclusion
her	both	father
charge	young	maintenance
young	home	young
five	your	marriage
school	education	born
food	he	mother
FOR	whose	education

Table 12: strongest collocates of *child* in the three subcorpora.

Table 12 reports the strongest collocates of *child* in the three subcorpora in their word form. Surprisingly, the three subcorpora all share the same collocate as the strongest one, that is, *illegitimate*. This might be an initial indication of the fact that suffrage periodicals dealt more with the (social and legal) problems concerning children's upbringing, rather than simply offering tips on childcare. Here, the legal status of those children born out of wedlock seemed to be particularly felt as troublesome at the time, and indeed this view is confirmed by an analysis of concordances in each sucorpus:

(32)   To amend the Bastardy Laws, and to bring in a law to legitimatise illegitimate children on the marriage of their parents. (*CC*, "Mother Protection", 24 October 1913)

(33)   […] the laws relating to parental responsibilities, which give the father alone the guardianship of all children born in wedlock, but which make the mother of an illegitimate child solely responsible for its care and upbringing; (*TV*, "Be ready!".13 August 1910)

(34)   Similarly, a Bill framed to amend the Act of 1897, dealing with the adoption of illegitimate children, is brought in year after year, but never gets any further, because not enough male voters are interested in it. (*VFW*, "Woman's Suffrage and the Child", 1 November 1907)

Thus, the topic of illegitimate children is presented as problematic, both because they were obviously not accepted by society due to their parents' non-marital status, and because British laws made a striking (gendered) distinction concerning which parent was supposed to take care of them: while children born from husband and wife were legally cared for by fathers only (mothers did not have any legal right over their children, though in practice they were almost alone in tending for them), those who were born out of wedlock were inexplicably consigned to the mother's guardianship alone, while fathers were spared the legal responsibility. Therefore, suffrage periodicals repeatedly tackled this matter in order to highlight yet another double standard concerning parenthood, and to denounce a lack of interest in the status of illegitimate children.

The same discourses around childcare, guardianship, and parental roles are repeated in the frequent uses of the collocates *guardian*/*guardianship*, *custody*, *parent*, *widows*, *father*, *mother*, and *wives*. First of all, stress is once again placed on the marital status of women, with such collocational phrases as *widows with children* and *wives and children* reported both in *VFW* and in *CC*. Specifically, widows and wives, together with their children, are represented as particularly weak and needy in society, as reported in the following examples:

(35)　　　[…] make better Housing Acts, better provision for widows with children, better homes for women to live in, and a better chance for them to Make the Home Their Sphere. (*CC, "*The ABC of Women's Suffrage", 12 October 1911)

(36)　　　Many working women are widows with children, or wives whose husbands, for one reason or another, fail to maintain their families, while an enormous number of spinsters support parents or brothers and sisters. (*VFW*, "A Fair Wage for Women", 13 May 1910)

(37)　　　They need enlightenment as to the dangers of not leading a clean life, and also of the risks which their wives and children have to take unless they, as husbands and fathers, obey the laws of Nature. (*TS*, "Our duty", 27 February 1914)

The reference to women's role as mothers is used again to underline the many problems connected to motherhood, both at a social and legal level:

(38)　　　 Five children and their mother we find in a room where it is scarcely possible to turn. (*TV*, "And Still it Moves", 31 August 1912)

(39)　　　The children's mother has no legal right to a voice in deciding how they shall be nursed, how or where educated, what trade or profession they shall adopt, what form of religion they shall be instructed in. (*TS*, "Our duty", 27 February 1914)

In contrast, the use of *father* and *parent* here still refers to the unequal treatment of mothers (especially unmarried ones) under British laws concerning children:

(40)　　　And that it is the condemnation of society–for whose unwritten laws women are supposed to be responsible–that makes the barrier between the unmarried mother and the mother who is legally wedded to the father of her child. (*TV,* "The Unmarried Mother, 7 October 1911)

(41)　　　If a father wants his child vaccinated, the mother cannot prevent its being done. If the father does not want it vaccinated, the mother cannot legally have it done. (*VFW,* "Why? Part 3", 17 December 1909)

(42)　　　To-day she constitutes herself the wholehearted defender of the English law as it stands, and sneers at "the great Suffragist myth that woman must get the vote in order to become the legal parent of her child." (*VFW*, "Why Women Need the Vote XIII", 14 July 1910)

The terms *guardianship* and *custody* are key technical terms in constructing legal discourses connected to the same theme. In particular, *CC* emphasises women's problems with the legal acknowledgement of the custody of their children, while *VFW* refers to it as yet another of men's privileges:

(43)   But by "Talfourd's Act", passed in 1839, the court was empowered to grant the mother access to any child in the control of the father and even to give her the custody of any child up to the age of seven. (*CC*, "The Legal Rights of Mothers", 23 February 1911)

(44)   To confer upon her the rights of equal guardianship of her children with the father, and to alter the laws of inheritance and intestacy in so far as they are unfair to mothers. (*CC,* "Mother Protection", 24 October 1913)

(45)   It does not pay him cash, but it secures to him a firm legal status, accords him rights and privileges in regard to the guardianship of his children, and admits, as the present Insurance Bill proves, its direct responsibility to him as a wage-earner in sickness. (*VFW,* "Who Supports the Children?", 4 August 1911)

Therefore, we could say that the theme of childcare (and, implicitly, motherhood) is portrayed in suffrage periodicals more as another display of the social inequalities concerning men and women: the emphasis on problems of illegitimacy and custody serve to blend discourses which had always been considered as typically (and exclusively) feminine and as belonging to the private sphere alone with their less visible (but not less obvious) effects in the public sphere, which still needed to be acknowledged.

Table 13 below reports the strongest collocates for *country* in their word form: this further analysis can be useful in recognising discourses that validate a new active link between womanhood and the nation. As the lemma appears in the wordlists only for *The Vote* and *Votes for Women*, the table shows results from these subcorpora alone:

The Vote	*Votes for Women/The Suffragette*
foreign	this
throughout	people
defend	over
over	in
laws	parts
face	throughout
history	**women**
own	civilised
this	our
our	**womanhood**

where	own
part	of
in	all
come	other
women	whole
government	where
people	they
if	to-day
because	my
in	have

Table 13: strongest collocates of *country* in *TV* and *VFW*.

The fact that both subcorpora share collocates referring to women confirms that national discourses were deeply embedded in gender in suffrage periodicals: specifically, we can see how there is no reference to men among the strongest collocates, but only to women. This might suggest that these periodicals explicitly chose to focus on women as having a potential key role in society, if only they were granted the vote. Women were thus considered as a single, unified category for whose interests the suffrage societies were working, irrespective of regional origin, class, ideological stance, or views on militancy: indeed, the most frequent gendered collocates are *women* and *womanhood*, but there is no reference to social status or to the debated division between suffragists and suffragettes. The theme of womanhood and nationhood were thus meant to be tackled as a unified force and against a common 'enemy', while internal divisions needed to be (at least temporarily) discarded.

The phrases which recur most frequently are *women of the country* or *women of this country*, thus referring solely to Britain. In both periodicals stress is put on the need to free women through enfranchisement and to call upon them to respond in a united way to the work done by suffrage societies, as reported in the following examples:

(46)   You can decide whether the women of the country are to be free and content or enslaved and rebellious. (*TV,* "An Appeal to the Voters", 30 December 1909)

(47)   They seek that their work may be accomplished and the women of the country freed. (*VFW,* "The Lesson of History", 5 March 1908)

(48)   To rouse the women of the country to action, to open the eyes of the general public to the injustice done in their name, and to keep our agitation continuously and persistently in the public mind. (*VFW,* "The Tactics of the Suffragettes", 5 March 1908)

The same pattern is repeated with *womanhood of the/this country*, though this collocational phrase is to be found in *VFW* alone:

(49)   Save your party, and save the womanhood of the country . ("An Open Letter to Liberal Women", 2 April 1908)[49]

(50)   If the womanhood of the country wants to be free, it must stand united. ("To the Married Women Textile Workers", 21 May 1908)

(51)   They see that unless the womanhood of the country is given a fair chance of developing, unless artificial fetters on women are thrown off, the vitality of the nation is cramped, and there is an incalculable waste of energy in the world. ("Prisoners of war", 26 April 1912)

To conclude, it is possible to state that choosing to entrench the lemma COUNTRY with specific gendered qualities and veering discourses towards women represents a significant component of the feminist stance of suffrage periodicals. Moreover, by comparing this lemma with CHILD, we have seen how the balance between the public and private sphere was also represented by juxtaposing a traditionally feminine and private topic (childcare) imbued with social concerns with the public notion of nation and country, which is stripped of its typical masculine quality and rendered more feminine.

4. The limits of quantitative analysis

In conclusion, this chapter has looked at word frequency in the whole corpus and, more specifically, in each subcorpus. This initial analysis has allowed us to have a first general idea of the contents of suffrage periodicals and, at the same time, to discern significant differences and/or similarities between the different publications. On the whole, we have seen how all the newspapers analysed present similar wordlists and how they share the general themes regarding gender issues, political

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[49] The open letter was written by Emmeline Pethick Lawrence and addressed to women Liberals. At least in the first years after the birth of the WSPU, some attempts at seeking support and collaboration from the Liberal Party were made, though the suffragettes were soon left disillusioned by the many unkept promises and lack of real interests by the politicians.

terminology, references to the use of militant methods and, last but not least, childcare and nationhood.

The primary differences are to be noted, in some cases, in the frequency of those lemmas which appear in the wordlist of each periodical (cf. FORCE, CHILD, AND COUNTRY, for example). While this element is certainly worthy of attention and significant also in revealing potentially hidden discourses or important different stances and ideologies purported by the suffrage societies, this type of analysis needs to be further completed in order to gain a fuller and more precise picture. Indeed, we have seen how, in most cases, the examination of frequency had to be complemented with an analysis of collocations and concordances in order to fully ascertain how the lemmas in question were used (sometimes ironically) to subvert existing ideologies and create a counter-narrative of the suffrage movement. For example, *married women* were not praised for their adherence to their 'natural' gendered role of wives, but rather the periodicals highlighted the inequalities (at a legal and social level) these women had to suffer. On the other hand, men were scolded, ridiculed or condemned for their sense of privilege and superiority (cf. *jealous men, chivalrous men, superior men*). In the same way, the frequent use of *child* was not limited to a reference to motherly feelings and aspirations, but it was rather focused on uncovering unacknowledged issues concerning childcare and, specifically, the guardianship of illegitimate children, while the continuous references to the (mother) country (such as in *women of the/this country*) were masterly used to appeal to women as a unified category that could genuinely have an active role in public life.

The more detailed analysis of collocations and concordances was also useful in revealing differences in register (cf. *vote* and *suffrage*) and the diachronic spread of some collocations (cf. *physical/spiritual force*): all the above-mentioned aspects could certainly not have been revealed by adopting a purely quantitative analysis, which, in the case of 'alternative' publications such as the ones analysed here, could actually prove to be misleading. Indeed, by relying on quantitative methods alone, it would not have been possible to uncover the true nature of these periodicals, which were primarily created in order to respond to misinformation and misrepresentation of the women's suffrage movement in the mainstream press. The analysis of frequency wordlists has clearly demonstrated that a typical linguistic feature of suffrage periodical was the use of (common) words which were imbued with significantly different meanings, usually unrecognised or deliberately neglected in dominant discourses and official language resources like dictionaries (cf. the definition of *woman* in the *OED* and the use of the same word in the periodicals). Therefore, it appears evident that this tendency should be further analysed and discussed, but quantitative methods alone are no longer sufficient to do so: the following sections will adopt a more qualitative approach which will

focus more on discourse analysis and on a greater consideration of context and expanded concordances, starting with the examinations of keywords, which will be explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RENEGOTIATION OF GENDER AND LANGUAGE

4.1 Writing the Woman Question

As already reported, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were characterised by a great deal of emphasis placed upon feminine expectations and identities which produced the typically Victorian image of the woman as the 'perfect lady' and member of the so-called 'Cult of True Womanhood', that stressed the concepts of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (Hamlett and Wiggins 2009: 711). The insistence on these tracts of femininity was also reported in magazines and periodicals which reproduced both economic and ideological imperatives by presenting the female body as materially shaped by corsets, medicines, and hairstyles recommended in their advertising pages. In targeting prevalently middle-class women, these tenets of femininity offered explicitly bourgeois models of womanhood described by Beetham (1996: 6) as "hidden in the privacy of the home and in the female heart, analogous sites for the exercise of virtuous self-control".

While these ideologies were undoubtedly presented by male journalists and editors, it is also true that women readers played a key part in accepting or rejecting them: Beetham (1996: 11) states that the positioning of readers can be just as ideological given they are inserted or interpellated into social identities that already exist and that allow them to make sense of the world. Thus, if readers accepted the profile that was offered of 'the woman' in magazines, this is the 'womanly' profile that readers would naturally take on: resistance to such a profile necessarily depended on the social and political contexts in which readers found themselves. The option of creating counter-narratives, counter-discourses, and counter-readings concerning gender (and, more specifically, the Edwardian suffrage movement) was offered precisely by those feminist periodicals which, as already explained in §1.4, "wished to affirm their own newness and boldness and to present themselves as harbingers of change through their representation of women" (Stetz 1994: 273).

As we will see, negotiations of gender mainly revolved around the concepts of domestic and radical femininities: this appeal was maximised in feminist periodicals because they exploited the conventions of New Journalism, by printing conversations about cookery alongside reports of suffrage demonstrations and meetings, and because they were able to contribute to the formation of new ideals of womanhood and to foster women's interests in both the home and the wider world

(Liggins 2014: 626). A good deal of feminist debate during the Edwardian era was focused on the (re)definitions of terms like *modern* and *woman*, thus exploring the idea that "a new century made possible the articulation of a new revolutionary kind of femininity, and that the revolutions of modernity were typified by the revolution of womanhood" (Green 2009: 200). For example, discussions about the concepts of 'True Womanhood' or 'New Womanhood' emerged in the 1890s both in Britain and in North America: while the former celebrated woman as a moral authority who remained 'uncontaminated' by the dealings of the public (and quintessentially male) sphere, the latter represented "a middle-class woman of principle, with increased opportunities in education, work, career, and feminist activism" (Alexiou 2019: 4).

Considering the importance of class in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, it is only natural to find that relationships between class and gender were specifically spelt out in magazines and periodicals, and that 'true' femininity was identified with Englishness, whiteness, and Christianity (Beetham 1996: 7). However, suffrage newspapers adopted a radical agenda which increasingly involved the redefinition of such gendered class roles as that of the 'lady' and, consequently, a subversion of the conventions of the so-called 'ladies' papers'. Such a reconceptualization took form, among other things, in the various uses of the labels *woman* and *lady* in the titles of periodicals and in editorials, features, adverts, and correspondence pages. For instance, periodicals targeting women such as the *Ladies' Gazette of Fashion* (1834-94), the *Ladies' Monthly Magazine* (1852-79), and the *Lady's Realm* (1896-1915) used to market the idea of the 'lady' throughout the Victorian period and endorsed the view exemplified by journalist Evelyn March-Philips, who anatomised this social role in 1892 with the following words: "Lady is a term of wide meaning in these days", signifying "any woman whose birth or breeding has been such as to make a certain standard of comfort and refinement a necessity of life". On the other hand, from the 1870s a growing number of new journals used the word *woman* or *women* to indicate the broader class constituency of readers and suffrage supporters: among other titles, we may remember penny weeklies such as *Women and Work* (1874-76), *Woman's Life* (1895-1934), and *Woman* (1890-1912). The marketing decision to replace *ladies'* with *woman's* was justified by the notion that *woman* was a word with which the middle-class readership could identify more easily (Liggins 2014: 614-21).

However, it is also true that clear distinctions between the lady, the woman, and the girl were still often maintained in order to protect the class status of ladies, "who ran the risk of sacrificing their 'gentility' by entering the public sphere" (Liggins 2014: 622). This very gentility seems to become uncertain precisely because these ladies were more frequently addressed as *women*, sometimes modified as "women of taste" or "gentlewomen of to-day": the implicit ideology behind these words

has already been stressed when considering the entry for *woman* in the first edition of the *OED*, which included in its definition the use of the word "In contrast, explicit or implicit, with lady" (see § 3.2.1). At the same time, *lady* was defined in 1903 as "a woman of superior position in society, or to whom such a position is conventionally or by courtesy attributed": therefore, while suffrage periodicals tried to promote new ideas of womanhood and femininity, they still found themselves at the heart of heated debates concerning gender, where "[c]onservative opponents declaimed against radical women as 'the most degraded of their sex,' condemning them for their 'disgusting and abominable' attempts to 'ruin society'" (Kingsley Kent 1999: 158).

In order to examine such discourses in the periodicals considered here, a keyword list was elaborated by comparing the frequency list of the CBSP with that of BLOB 1931 (see § 2.4). Table 14 shows those keywords that can be grouped under the umbrella term "gender":

Womanhood and femininity	*Woman/women/Englishwoman, womanhood, womanly/unwomanly, sex/unsex, Madam, womanliness, laywoman*
Identity and militancy	*Suffragist, suffragette, anti-suffragist/anti/antis/anti-suffragists/antisuffragist,*
Family and feminism	*Spinster, motherhood, married/unmarried, consort, sisterhood, feminist*
Women and work	*Sweated, earnings, housekeeping, pit-brow, wage-earning, midwife, householder, wardress, woman-worker*

Table 14: keywords related to gender in the CBSP.

The keywords were further divided into subcategories, which refer to the main discourses and debates concerning gender at the turn of the century: first and foremost, discussions and negotiations around the definition(s) of womanhood were abundant in the British press of the time (mainstream and feminist alike; see Green 2009: 200), and they are represented here by the category "Womanhood and femininity", which includes such keywords as *woman/women/Englishwoman, womanhood, womanly/unwomanly, sex/unsex, Madam, womanliness, laywoman*; secondly, we can notice references to collective identity with terms such as the more specific (and, as we will see, much more ideologically-coloured) *suffragette* and *suffragist*, which stand in stark contrast with *antisuffragist* (this word is written with various spellings in different contexts); thirdly, the subcategory "Family and feminism" will provide more details concerning a series of terms (*spinster, motherhood, married/unmarried, consort, sisterhood, feminist*) which acquired significantly different connotations

when used in feminist discourse and in contrast with the (gender) ideologies of the time; last but not least, suffrage periodicals presented discourses around the theme of "Women and work" (and the consequent debate surrounding the separate sphere ideology and respectability; see § 1.1), with keywords such as *sweated, earnings, housekeeping, pit-brow, wage-earning, midwife, householder, wardress, woman-worker*.

The qualitative analysis of these keywords was conducted by examining their collocations and expanded concordances. Like the examples analysed in Chapter 3, collocates were extracted with statistical methods (i.e. Mutual Intelligence), sometimes used to make comparisons of contrasting words (which do indeed appear frequently in the keywords), since this allows us to gain insights into differences in use and meaning. In some cases, when the number of concordances proved to be manageable, all occurrences were examined to uncover discourses, either dominant, hidden, or resistant.

Since, as already noted with the initial quantitative analysis, Edwardian suffrage periodicals very often built their discourses around common words whose meanings were subverted, a fundamental step in this part of the analysis consisted in cross-checking the use of these keywords in other linguistic resources, that is, in the BLOB 1931 corpus (which acts as a reference for the 'standard' language of the time), and the first edition of the *OED*. The dictionary is of particular relevance here because it offers a lexicographical representation of the Woman Question as well as a (not merely linguistic) view of gender at the turn of the century and a historical counterpart to the changing image of women in this period: "a valuable resource for exploring processes of socio-cultural change and attendant attitudes, it documents a time of transition in which language – and issues of legitimate meaning in gender terms – were often profoundly embedded in debates on women and identity" (Mugglestone 2013: 43-4). The gender bias in the first edition of the dictionary has already been the object of many studies[50], and Mugglestone herself has already commented upon the limited representations of femininity which continued to inform dominant cultural scripts in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, including the *OED*, with its play of naturalised gender ideologies which seemed to be inescapable (2013: 49-62). Since, as she has highlighted, the "wealth of evidence" potentially provided by suffrage periodicals was not taken into consideration for defining words strictly related to the Woman Question (which were thus elaborated in strictly male, often misogynist and anti-feminist views), this part of the analysis uses the lexicographical resource as yet another tool in uncovering those counter-discourses that we have already started to pinpoint in Chapter 3:

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[50] See, for example, Fournier and Russel (1992) for gender stereotypes in labels and quotations; Baigent et al. (2005) for the treatment of words taken from female sources; and Russell (2018) for the failed acknowledgement of female participation in the projects for the first edition.

"[w]ords which, in the anti-suffrage press, reveal markedly negative discourse prosodies […] can keep very different company in texts of this kind, as writers from a very different political stance celebrate suffrage activity, bravery, and agitation" (Mugglestone 2013: 62). To do so, the analysis also took into consideration the so-called Superfluous slips contained in the Archive of the *OED* in Oxford: these are proof slips that include additional information (like rough copies of possible definitions or sources for citations) for specific words that were discarded and not used for the final edition of the dictionary. The very act of selecting information and choosing what went into the dictionary and what did not can be considered an act of prescriptiveness and ideological censorship, all the more so because many of these 'superfluous' slips dealt with such a delicate issue as gender. Using this information has proved to be fundamental in reconstructing the new meanings attached to specific words related to feminism and in highlighting how these were deliberately hidden and unacknowledged in an official language reference work that represented the British Establishment.

The aim of this focus is to highlight the (primary) role of gender in feminist discourse of the time by suggesting that Edwardian debates around it went further than "a liberal feminist claim to political rights countered by an anti-feminist evocation of 'separate sphere'" (Delap 2004a: 398), since the analysis has also revealed how discussions about such a sensitive subject were diversified *within* the suffrage movement and among the different periodicals as well. This confirms the tendency already noted by Fraser et al. (2003: 150) in the first feminist Victorian periodicals which had begun to question the naturalness of gender formations and the fluid characteristic of such a social construct:

> The notion that women could be educated professionals with independent opinions and individual voting rights appeared alien to mainstream values of domesticity and the assumed naturalness of gendered difference, yet it was partly the ideology of domesticity, and middle-class woman's presumed natural capacity for civility and common sense, that enabled feminist activists to further the political emancipation of women.

The following sections will therefore consider each subcategory of Table 14 to reflect on how these keywords can help us better understand how gender was constructed, performed, and indexed in early twentieth-century suffrage periodicals (see § 2.1).

4.2 Defining womanhood and femininity

The investigation of the (social) construction and representation of gender in suffrage periodicals must necessarily start from an attempt to define such core concepts as womanhood and femininity,

and therefore this part of the analysis is devoted to the first subcategory of keywords shown in Table 14. Since the use of the lemma WOMAN has been already discussed in § 3.2.1, this examination will consider the keywords *Englishwoman*, *womanhood/womanliness*, *womanly/unwomanly* and *unsex*.

The delineation of femininity was a central concern for feminist and anti-feminist Victorian and Edwardian writings alike, since each side laid claim "to an 'authentic' as opposed to the other camp's 'artificial', flawed, corrupted or unsexed femininity" (Heilmann and Sanders 2006: 290). The very term has always proved to be unstable and mediated through a wide range of social values and discourses, from periodical articles to advertisements, and it refers not simply to women's looks, fashions, and behaviour, but also to their values, roles, and duties in society[51]. In particular, Victorian and Edwardian periodical writers presented femininity as something to be admired and cultivated, although the debates of the time revolved around whether this came naturally to women, or whether it needed to be constantly constructed and performed. While traditionalists (both men and women) claimed that 'Nature' designed women to marry, have children, and take care of their families and homes, "the gap between what was supposed to come naturally, and the artificiality of the construct was one that Victorian and Edwardian feminists and anti-feminists increasingly acknowledged" (Heilmann and Sanders 2006: 290), thus highlighting the "diversity of emerging womanhoods [*sic*]" (Alexiou 2019: 3) that existed since at least the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

4.2.1 Englishwomen

In Chapter 3, we saw how the lemma WOMAN, as expected, is among the most frequent ones in the CBSP (and in all subcorpora), and how it is used to represent a new kind of womanhood, namely one that rejects the (patriarchal) ideologies of the time and the gendered roles attributed to women by men. The very term "New Woman" represented contested terrains of competing ideologies (Tusan 1998: 178): the label "new" (just like other labels invented at the time to refer to 'deviant' women, such as 'redundant', 'odd', 'wild', and 'revolting'), was perceived as an attempt to pin down women and the meaning of sex and gender relations (Beetham 1996: 111), while at the same time embodying a figure who was 'startling' "only in her call for independence, not in her manners, appearance, tastes, or notions of how to redistribute power between the sexes" (Stetz 1994: 275). Here, we find among

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[51] The *OED* defined the adjective *feminine* as "In depreciative sense. Womanish, effeminate, unmanly", thus in deeply misogynist terms that compared femininity to feebleness. The draft slips of the definition also contained the phrase "Lacking in manliness, effeminate, cowardly, unmanly, weak", which was later crossed out and not included in the final version of the dictionary.

the keywords the term *Englishwoman*, which suggests a specificity of the type of womanhood the periodicals were referring to, namely one that is strongly associated with nationhood. Though the occurrence of this word should come as no surprise as the periodicals analysed here were all printed in London and represented the specific case of women's suffrage in this context, it is still significant to note the choice to address *English*, not *British* women in particular, thus seemingly either alienating women from other parts of the British Isles, or deliberately choosing to adopt the adjective *English* as an umbrella term to refer to *all* women in the United Kingdom. This second option would support imperialistic views of the time which saw England (and, specifically, London) as the centre of the British Empire and as implicitly superior to other regions and countries of the Commonwealth. However, since suffrage periodicals reached all parts of Britain[52], we might wonder how women there reacted to such an all-inclusive (and perhaps too general) word choice, which subtly seemed to relate femininity to English values and social norms alone.

The term *Englishwoman* occurs 50 times in the CBSP, and therefore, since the number of concordances to analyse was manageable, there was no need to recur to collocation analysis to try to reveal the discourses around this word. First of all, it should be noted that it is very often used to refer to the titles of other feminist periodicals of the Victorian era, such as *The Englishwoman's Journal* and the *Englishwoman Review*, which were often used by suffrage editors as reference points in order to find inspiration and to provide continuity with the discourses already put forward by the previous generation of feminists. Therefore, the concordances in which *Englishwoman* occurs in this way were discarded, as they were not useful for the purpose of this study.

By analysing the other examples, we can see that Englishwomen were presented as both *law-breaking* and *self-respecting*. The latter adjective recurred as a frequent collocation of the term *woman* too (see § 3.2.1), and also in this case it indicates those women who could be considered as dignified because they wanted to break from the status quo as far as their position in society was concerned, as the following example from *The Vote* reports:

(52)   Fortunately, self-respecting Englishwomen and–one may gratefully add–many Englishmen are no longer content with the "ivy-round-the-oak" definition of "womanly." They no longer believe

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[52] No suffrage journals were published in Wales or Scotland, so Welsh and Scottish women interested in the suffrage question could only rely on the suffrage periodicals printed in London in order to keep up to date with the latest news (these periodicals did offer some information about the situation in these parts of Britain in secondary columns of their pages). An Irish suffrage periodical (the *Irish Citizen*) started to be published only in 1912, well before Ireland's independence from Britain, but the matters tackled here were naturally influenced by the so-called "Irish Home Rule" question, which had been a matter of concern for the British government since the 1870s at least.

that women must continue to persuade and wheedle and hoodwink, and humbly receive as favours what are theirs by divine right. ("The Womanly Woman", 8 October 1910)

This use of the expression *self-respecting Englishwomen* also contrasts with anti-feminist novelist Eliza Lynn Linton's concepts expressed in the article titled "The Girl of the Period", published in 1868 in the *Saturday Review*, which basically deplored contemporary women for doing as they liked and for going against 'traditional femininity', by definition weak and helpless (Heilmann and Sanders 2006: 291), and which advocated a return to a time where Englishwomen were indeed 'self-respecting': "When women become again what they were once, they will gather round them the love and homage and chivalrous devotion which were then an Englishwoman's natural inheritance".

On the other hand, the adjective *law-breaking* is immediately associated with negative connotations: the *OED* indeed defined a *law-breaker* as "one who violates the law" and it presents among the citations for this entry an example taken from the *Oxford Bible-Helps* of 1876 that said "It was on Mount Ebal that the cursing of the law-breakers took place", thus highlighting the inherent social negative undertones of this expression. A woman who breaks the law should be seen as even more negatively, according to the ideologies of the time; however, *The Vote* uses the term *law-breaking Englishwomen* to defend the militants who had been put in prison by the English Government:

(53)   This seems clear, however, that in the end nothing counts against the individual, neither governments nor tortures nor death; and when spirit spurns material preservation of life in the final desperate attempt to obtain that which means more than life, the struggle and fine disdain compel involuntary sympathy and admiration. . . . . What really embarrassed the English Government was its own classification of these law-breaking Englishwomen as criminals, and in addition to that blunder, it attempted to feed forcibly intelligent women who chose not to eat. ("Militant Women and Women", 28 November 1913)

This extract is taken from a response to an article, written by writer and literary critic Edna Kenton, which was published on an American journal, and which tackled the brutal treatment of the British suffragettes in prison. The editors of *TV* agreed with Kenton's vision and condemnation of forcible feeding and saw *law-breaking Englishwomen* not as criminals, but as victims of the government's policies. The expression is also of particular importance as it contrasts with its antonym, *law-abiding*, a term deliberately used by feminists belonging to the NUWSS, that is to say, to the more peaceful component of the British suffrage movement, precisely because they wanted to distance themselves from the suffragettes and their fierce militancy (see § 4.3).

The discourse of nationhood recurs quite often, as *Englishwoman* is used several times to compare the British situation with that of other countries where women appear to be in a seemingly better condition, such as in the example taken from *Votes for Women*: "Whenever we are inclined to believe that absence may make us idealise our own country, we have only to meet a newcomer and listen to his or her indignant comments on the degraded position of Englishwomen" ("Sons of Women Voters", 9 July 1912). Therefore, there does not seem to be a patriotic discourse concerning Englishwomen, but rather yet a further condemnation of the civil and political rights they are still lacking.

(54) I should say, from what I saw and heard while I was in their country, that the Danish women will not have to suffer as Englishwomen have done, and are doing, for the sake of their political freedom; but Governments are very much the same in all countries, and I saw nothing to show that in Denmark the Government will offer the women anything for which they have not very persistently agitated. (*Votes for Women*, "The Country Where Queen Means Woman", 4 February 1909)

(55) This not only puts Frenchwomen in a better position as wives and mothers than any Englishwomen, except in the rare case of an only daughter of a rich man; but it also gives them an interest in agriculture and business which is hardly to be found among Englishwomen. (*Votes for Women*, "Why? Part 2", 10 December 1909)[53]

As the examples cited above show, comparisons are mainly done with other European countries, and especially France and Denmark.

4.2.2 Womanhood and womanliness

The analysis of the keywords *womanhood* and *womanliness* helps us uncover hidden or resistant discourses concerning gender and how these were spelt out in suffrage periodicals. To do so, it is necessary once again to use other linguistic resources to ascertain how the discourses in the publications considered here actually differed from what was considered to be the norm, both in terms of language and of society. The term *womanhood* (which appears 200 times in the CBSP), was defined in the *OED* as: (a) the state or condition of being a woman; (b) the state of being a grown woman; the period of life after girlhood; and (c) the disposition, character, or qualities natural of a woman or womankind; womanliness. The last definition in particular proves to be problematic from a gender

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[53] This is a reference to the laud, which was equally shared among sons and daughters in France, irrespective of sex difference.

perspective: first of all, the qualities are defined as 'natural', but we have already stressed how gender, being a social construct, is above all performed, and how feminist debates of the time interrogated themselves on how natural certain gendered roles and attributes could actually be. Secondly, the definition does not tell us concretely *which* characteristics define womanhood; this information is retained from the citation taken from Charles Dicken's *Old Curiosity Shop* (1840): "Miss Brass's maiden modesty and gentle womanhood". Thus, we can say that the dictionary, as an important linguistic authority, supported a view of womanhood and femininity as entailing "being good wives and mothers at home, using their [women's] 'influence' in public life to do good to others, rather than to satisfy their own personal ambitions" and of women as being 'ladylike', "in the sense of being modest, gentle, tasteful and unselfish" (Heilmann and Sanders 2006: 291). The same can be said for *womanliness*, defined as "the quality of being a woman; womanly character". The quotation from George Meredith's *The Tragic Comedians* (1881) supports the same above-mentioned ideas: "the choicest women are those who yield not a feather of their womanliness for some amount of manlike strength".

To see if the discourses around womanhood in suffrage periodicals matched the views purported by the dictionary, we can take a look at collocations. Table 15 reports the twenty strongest collocations of *womanhood* in the CBSP:

Womanhood
manhood
awakened
salvation
insult
released
traffic
dignity
honour
emancipation
status
respect
nation
English
suffrage
common
country
your
itself
whole
free

Table 15: strongest collocates of *womanhood* in the CBSP.

From this list, we can see that there are some new and some recurring discourses concerning the social construction of womanhood. What first strikes our attention is that womanhood is considered something that is *awakened* and *released*, a true force that implies discarding the idea of women as subdued and modest, as exemplified by the *OED* and as often stressed in Victorian writings that targeted women. All periodicals seem to agree on this view of womanhood as a revolutionary concept at the base of the suffrage movement, as exemplified in the following examples:

(56) Every one of these three great ideas is to be found in the woman's agitation for the vote. Every one of these ideas has taken hold of the conscience of awakened womanhood, and set in motion the law of evolution. (*Votes for Women*, "What Makes a Revolution", 14 October 1910)

(57) That men and women, all the children of women (and a woman's children are bound to her by CORDS FORGED BY NATURE, stronger than anything man has ever made), should fear the actions of an awakened womanhood and motherhood is a startling commentary on the misconception which blinds the outlook of those who are prejudiced by age-long traditions. (*Common Cause*, "The ABC of Women's Suffrage", 22 August 1912)

(58) And women, long deprived of education and development, had not been found in any great numbers to denounce the fallacy until quite recently; so that men, knowing their aversion to and incapacity for bloodshed, fail to recognise the serious consequences that may accrue from the revolt of a womanhood awakened to indignant dissatisfaction. (*The Vote*, "Rebel Women", 6 June 1913)

The same discourse is to be found with the word *released*, used in this case only by *TV* and *VFW*, which both refer to womanhood as an ideal that can motivate the fight for the vote. The collocation is part of the metaphorical language of war which is very often used especially by the more militant groups[54]:

(59) Then we must take up the sword that is never to rest in sheath again till the soul of womanhood is released. So armoured and weaponed, we shall go forth glad and gay of spirit, with the battle-song upon our lips and the battle laughter in our heart, and everyone who sees us shall say: "There goes the happy warrior." (*Votes for Women*, "The Crusade", 11 June 1908)

(60) It is good in any case to realise that we have strong and wise women in our ranks who, feeling to their hearts' core the public calamity, are willing to give themselves–to suffer loss, obloquy, pain–so that the energies of womanhood may be released, so that the new Order, existing as a Vision in the souls of those who love, may be revealed. (*The Vote*, "How to Break it", 14 December 1912)

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[54] In particular, the fight for suffrage was often compared to a crusade (thus a religious war); moreover, the figure of Joan of Arc was often invoked as an example to be followed.

These examples perfectly exemplify how the language of war was a constant feature of periodicals like *VFW* and *TV*, which, as we have repeatedly stressed, were published by the WSPU and the WFL groups that supported militancy, albeit with different visions of it. The extract taken from *VFW*, in particular, proves to be rich in nouns that refer to a type of Medieval war (the very title of the article is "The Crusade"): *sword*, *sheath*, *armoured*, *weaponed*, *battle-song*, *battle laughter*, *warrior* are all words that belong to the semantic category of military language, and they are necessary tools to use until "the soul of womanhood is released". The excerpt from *TV*, written by leading editor and activist Charlotte Despard, on the other hand, focuses more on the "energies of womanhood" which "may be released" if women are willing to be part of the movement's *ranks*, thus implicitly comparing the suffragettes to soldiers.

We may also identify two types of discourses which were pointed out earlier: the relationship between womanhood and self-dignity, and that between gender and nationhood. Indeed, the collocates *dignity*, *honour*, and *respect* continue to be used to refer to both the love and respect women should, first and foremost, have for themselves (and this implies rejecting the status quo and taking active part in the movement) and to the very same respect men should have towards women. It is worth focussing here on how the specific collocation *honour of (your) womanhood* is used most frequently in *VFW*. Though, as we have said, (Victorian) writings saw traditional femininity as something which needed to be revered, the editors of this feminist periodical strongly asserted that 'true' womanhood (that, in their opinion, went plainly against Victorian and Edwardian ideologies) needed to be respected, as the following examples show:

(61) It remains for women now to pay down their life that the honour of womanhood may be vindicated–that freedom may be won for the human race. ("Equal Political Rights for Men and Women", 2 July 1908)

(62) But the heart of women is awake – watching throughout the night. What does the morrow hold for those who have taken up the sword to defend their honour and the honour of womanhood? ("Equal Political Rights for Men and Women, 2 July 1908)

(63) They are counting upon an abandonment of the militant campaign. It will never be abandoned till the honour of womanhood has been vindicated and the political liberties of women have been won by the granting of the vote. ("Cleave Thou Thy Way", 18 June 1909)

Thus, the *honour of womanhood* must be vindicated and defended with the *sword* and with a *militant campaign*, that is to say, with warlike methods that were certainly not considered appropriate for

women. Interestingly, the same periodical uses the collocation *honour of your womanhood* in a text which can be read as a true call to arms directly addressed to women: the article "What Women are Worth" was published on 9 July 1908, after the first window-smashing campaigns and the organisation of the first "Women's Sunday" in Hyde Park on 21 June[55]. The author, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, calls on women ("Woman, whoever you are; woman, wherever you are; woman, sad or poor, deserted or lonely! Do you know what you are worth?") and reminds them of those suffragettes who had been arrested while they were trying precisely to defend women's rights:

(64) Do you know that for you hundreds of women have flung away human joy, social dignity, honourable reputation? Have you heard that for you to-day more than five-and-twenty women sit in the twilight and silence of their prison cell, and, that the hearts of many more are wrung and torn with grief? Yet no one grudges the price. So dear to them is the honour of your womanhood, so precious to them that which has hitherto been counted of so little value in this world.

(65) Ah! and you who are going down and down in life's vortex; you women who are counted as outcasts; you who are classed as criminals, lift up your heads. For honour of your womanhood, women have gone down into the lowest depths that they may stand by you.

We can also notice how the honour of womanhood is almost opposed to "social dignity" and "honourable reputation": it is indeed important to bear in mind that the leaders of the movement were well aware of the 'risks' for respectability and a family's reputation connected with a woman's active enrolment in the suffrage movement, and especially in one of the militant groups. These risks are what concerned most women, and it was precisely one of the aims of these periodicals to convince them to discard these fears and join the organisations to fight for what was thought to be a natural right for women. Pethick-Lawrence continues by urging women to "take new heart and new courage", to go to London, "at 4, Clements Inn" to write down their names and join the WSPU, while those who cannot (for various reasons) physically join them should use their "substance, money, time, and labour in another form".

Lastly, we find the collocates *nation*, *English*, and *country* that make up the discourse concerning gender and nationhood. We have already previously commented on the use of the keyword *Englishwoman*, and we find the collocation *English womanhood*, too, mainly used by *CC* and *TV* to make general claims that are valid for all women, irrespective of regional and social origins:

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[55] This was a suffragette march organised by Emmeline Pankhurst and the WSPU to persuade the Liberals to support the cause of votes for women.

(66) It must come with something of a shock to an earnest woman, battling for the Vote as the first step towards the social emancipation of English womanhood and her participation to every field of human effort and desire, to find that not only are the King's Ministers hostile, but even the King's English takes sides against her, and that the very language with which she pleads her cause presents women with a real grievance. (*The Vote*, "The Sex War in Language", 18 February 1911)[56]

(67) The one intolerable thing is that a Manhood Suffrage Bill should become an Act. The present disabilities of women would be doubled, the insult to English womanhood, now alert and conscious, would be unendurable. (*Common Cause*, "Citizenship", 16 November 1911)

The collocations *womanhood of a/the/this nation* and *womanhood of the/this country* appear to be mainly used in *VFW* to refer to the specific case of Britain, the condition of women, and to womanhood as a collective identity that needs to be defended, saved, or heard by the Government:

(68) The meeting in Hyde Park is nothing less than a triumph for the whole womanhood of this country. ("Go forward!", 25 June 1908)

(69) "You working women are being exploited on behalf of the propertied women, who, when they are free, will use their power to keep you down". "Oh, no," cry the working women in this movement, we are taking our due share in working out the salvation of the womanhood of this country. ("The Solidarity of Women", 3 September 1908)

(70) It is also true that if you want the vote you are bound to have it, for none can refuse that which the womanhood of a nation asks. ("A Question of Humanity", 23 June 1911)

The term *womanliness* appears definitely less frequently than *womanhood* (only 20 times), but it is still considered a keyword because of its saliency. By analysing its concordances, it is possible to say that we may find two broad discourses concerning womanliness: either a rejection or an acceptance of it. The fact that we find such polarised views of a single theme stresses once again how debate was fostered and encouraged inside the movement, and even within the singular organisations. For example, *CC*, not unexpectedly, chooses to support that faction of the suffrage movement that believed that women could be empowered in society precisely because of those womanly qualities

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[56] Quite interestingly, this article is an early reflection on issues of language and gender which began to be officially studied in Academia and denounced by feminists only sixty years later. The writer laments that "a woman, equally with a man, may be an imbecile, convict, a liar, a thief, or a fool, without any terminological inexactitude. But when we come to the other Side of the shield, she may not be a hero, a benefactor, an administrator, a prophet or a poet, because these things are masculine prerogatives, and the courage and ability of women must be otherwise expressed" and that "'Master' must not mean 'mistress', nor 'manager' include 'manageress'. There is a world of difference between 'governor' and 'governess', and between 'adventurer' and 'adventuress'".

which distinguish them. The following example is taken from an article that celebrated the advancement of women in the field of medicine:

(71) Mrs. Fawcett spoke very eloquently of the splendid courage, the indomitable will, the perseverance, and, above all, the perfect womanliness which characterised the women who had made this splendid fight to reach her goal. ("Women in the Field of Medicine", 7 October 1909)

The periodical *VFW*, on the other hand, shows internal contrasting ideologies and beliefs concerning the theme of womanliness:

(72) Come and join us, whatever your age, whatever your class, whatever your political inclination. Do not leave any of your womanliness behind when you come into this movement. It is womanliness that we look for in those that fight in our ranks. ("The Battle Cry", 4 October 1907)

(73) And so, shut up in their narrow view of "womanliness", they pass the opportunity by, too much accustomed to regard man's brain in civic matters as the complete and practical instrument, and their own as the unreliable and subsidiary, to realise that what the world suffers from to-day is the loss of one-half of its equipment of human heart and brain for the remedying of those social and moral problems which are now bringing civilisation to grief. "Womanliness" forbids them to believe that the commonwealth has need of their aid to correct the mistakes and the over-hardening influence brought about by the unbalanced jurisdiction of men, and that the best help they can give is of a kind which many of our law-makers are too blindly prejudiced to desire. ("What is Womanly", 31 December 1908)

Though the two extracts might be read as an incoherence within the feminist discourse put forward by the suffrage movement in its periodicals, having a look at the extralinguistic details of these texts can help us identify a diachronic evolution of such discourse which better supports the idea of internal debate, not division. Example (72) is taken from the very first issue of *VFW* and the title of the article is self-explanatory: it is a call to arms, an invitation to all women to join the (almost newly) organised movement that will focus on obtaining female enfranchisement. By appealing to womanliness, the editors of *VFW* and members of the WSPU were trying to deconstruct the discourse put forward by anti-feminists that saw new women and suffragettes as masculine or even 'unsexed' (more about this term will be said later), and thus womanliness is here used as a strategy to convince women themselves that, by joining this movement, they would *not* lose their 'feminine' qualities, but they would use them to foster the cause. On the other hand, we can see how the view of womanliness dramatically changes a year later: example (73) sounds more like a condemnation of the traditional picture of femininity, which is now seen as outdated and as an obstacle to women's empowerment. We should remember that this article appeared at the end of 1908, that was such a key year for the

suffrage movement, which had seen an escalation of militancy with the first window-smashing raids, the arrests and imprisonment of suffragettes, and the 'rushing' of the House of Commons: all elements and events that started to question such key concepts as womanhood, femininity, respectability, and womanliness that had seemed to be stable and reassuring ideas of the Victorian era.

To sum up, we can clearly see how words like *womanhood* and *womanliness* are used in suffrage periodicals to build new discourses that distanced themselves from the ideologies of that period: while the *OED* defined these expressions in misogynist and anti-feminist terms that reflected the broader ideas of the time which saw womanhood as implying modesty and gentility, suffrage journals presented femininity as a force that was being awakened, that needed to be dignified and respected, and that had an important role in British society. To have further confirmation of the contrasting way these words were used in suffrage periodicals, we can have a look at the reference corpus used to generate the final keyword list: in BLOB 1931, *womanliness* does not appear at all, thus suggesting that its saliency regarded feminist discourse alone, while *womanhood* appears only 5 times in press editorials and fiction, and always with the (supposedly) outdated connotations that suffrage publications were trying to discard, as exemplified by the following extract: "Oh, you city girls! You city girls. It's a sin - forcing the sweet flower of girlhood to fade in the dark offices. Distorting the natural function of womanhood". It is certainly surprising to see that no excerpt in BLOB 1931 matches the feminist view of femininity, though the texts contained in this corpus were written and published at the apex of the Woman Question, that is to say, from 1928, when British women finally obtained the enfranchisement without any further limitations.

4.2.3 Womanly and unwomanly qualities

In terms of gender, it is clear that language can be "rendered a site of potentially irreconcilable meanings" which display identities that are either merely cultural and open to productive change and revision or natural, "embedded in a range of essentialist readings from which departures were incontrovertibly transgressive" (Mugglestone 2013: 49). Other keywords which exemplify such oppositional discourses are *womanly* and *unwomanly*: indeed, while mid-Victorian anti-feminist writers had projected their uncertainties "into flawed, frail, and failing feminine characters" by pitting the 'womanly' against the 'unsexed' or 'masculine' woman, Edwardian feminists "embraced the concept of femininity for their own strategic purposes" (Heilmann and Sanders 2006: 294), thus generating interesting internal and external debates around this matter.

Once again, it is useful to start from the first definition of *womanly* found in the *OED* (1928): (a) "Possessing the attributes proper to a woman; having the qualities (as of gentleness, devotion, fearfulness, etc.) characteristic of women"; and (b) "In derogatory use, with reference to the bad qualities attributed to women". The anti-feminist and misogynist feeling of these definitions is further reinforced by the quotations chosen to provide examples for this entry, which try to narrow down the "bad" qualities attributed to women. For instance, Edward Hall wrote "For very womanly malice, she set in the highest authoritie aboute the kyng her husband" in his *Chronicle* of 1548; John Knox penned the words "Lest that again she slide and fall by womanlie facilitie" in his *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558), while, quite surprisingly, we also find an example by a woman writer, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who talked of "the womanly spirit of contradiction" in her *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1716). Thus, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the dictionary reported what being *womanly* meant by articulating dominant discourses of femininity:

> Just as in contemporary anti-suffrage tracts such as those by the "Womanly Woman", women who might seek representation and identity in rather different ways are effectively marginalized, negatively positioned in terms of qualities which are, at least in this sense, placed outside "proper" and hegemonic gender identities. As in the models of centre and periphery, tacit assumptions about norms (and normalcy) and how these are constructed are revealing. (Mugglestone 2013: 50).

The term *unwomanly*, on the other hand, is simply defined as "In a manner unbecoming a woman". This "manner" is made explicit in the citations, as the one taken from Rudyard Kipling's *The Light that Failed* (1891): "To justify herself, she began, unwomanly, to weigh the evidence". Therefore, while womanly qualities are celebrated only if they adhere to conservative views (i.e., gentleness, devotion, and fearfulness), and are stigmatised when they refer to women's infamous reputation (i.e., malice, facility, contradiction), the unwomanly ones are related to women's empowerment (i.e., weighing evidence, thinking thoroughly about something), and thus deplored because they represent a break with tradition.

If the dictionary presented a rather polarised vision of womanly and unwomanly qualities, suffrage periodicals epitomised it. This can be seen by comparing and contrasting the collocates of *womanly* and *unwomanly*, as reported in Table 16:

Womanly	*Unwomanly*
qualities	Unsexed
sense	Vote
woman	Were

most	not
what	it
should	is
her	as
the	they
all	and
not	women
are	for
women	to
by	a
be	the
A	of

Table 16: a selection of collocates of *womanly* and *unwomanly* in the CBSP.

First of all, we notice how *woman/women* collocates both with *womanly* and *unwomanly*, thus highlighting the saliency of the debate in question, which is analysed by considering the concordances for each collocation. *Womanly woman* appears in the *OED* as well and is defined as "a woman who behaves in a manner traditionally regarded as appropriate for her sex; a feminine woman; (also in later use) a woman having a full figure and large breasts": in this way, being womanly is not only linked with following traditional and 'appropriate' characteristics, but also with bodily features, thus making a connection between gender and (biological) sex.

The analysis of concordances, however, shows that there is a marked negative discourse prosody concerning the use of the collocation *womanly woman*: thus, rather than reinforcing the ideology supported in the dictionary, the *womanly woman* was rejected because she was seen by the new generation of feminists as weak and, at the same time, as a threat for women's empowerment. However, this view is presented differently in each periodical. For example, the direct accusations towards the womanly woman of the early Victorian era are much more frequent in *The Vote* and *Votes for Women*:

(74)   The scene is an ordinary court of law. The attention of the jury and of the reporters is concentrated upon two figures in the foreground. One is the typical "womanly woman", gently born, gently bred, elegantly attired, who, overwhelmed by the publicity and strain of the trial, droops half fainting at the very moment of crisis. (*Votes for Women*, "The Call", 15 April 1910)

(75)   The womanly woman, whom they have trained to answer to their call with all her pretty blandishments, is returning. Woman, the rebel, has fallen, never to rise again. (*The Vote*, "And Still it Moves", 31 August 1912)

These feminist papers thus positioned themselves strongly against those publications that, being specifically targeted at a middle-class readership, presented the explicitly bourgeois model of feminine behaviour (which implicitly adhered to the definition on *OED*) as the only acceptable way of expressing womanhood (Beetham 1996: 6). The ideological stances suggested by *The Vote* and *Votes for Women* are unsurprising, since these periodicals represented the part of the suffrage movement which had the most avant-garde views on gender. Indeed, while women journalists at the end of the nineteenth century still tried to combat the negative images of the New Woman in the mainstream press by emphasising the 'womanly' characteristics that all women should still cling to (Tusan 1998: 176), the editors of suffrage periodicals decided to break away with this traditional portrait of womanhood by finally discarding it and considering it as anachronistic.

However, a further analysis of concordances shows that there were important internal debates around the acceptance or rejection of the womanly woman. Indeed, *Common Cause* proved to be more cautionary on this matter. While there still was some sort of condemnation of what being 'womanly' generally meant for society, we can also neatly discern a strong refusal of the suffragette as the new role model that may supplant it:

(76)   Can it be that chivalry is dead already, and women, nice womanly women, are really being abandoned to the tender mercies of the Suffragettes? (*Common Cause*, "Saving Women from Suffragettes", 3 November 1910)

(77)   The oligarchy of the womanly woman with her "influence" is a thing we are fleeing from; the oligarchy of a pseudo-military organization of women is just as repugnant to a true democrat. (*Common Cause*, "A Militant on Militants", 6 April 1911)

Again, these divisive views on the same matter might be linked to the nature of this periodical, as it was notably anti-militant and constitutional in its political and editorial strategy: in its endeavour to promote traditional values, it used less harsh tones to refer to the 'womanly woman' of the past, which was still considered to be better than the modern suffragettes. This is clearly exemplified by the excerpt taken from the issue of 3 November 1910, which was published after clashes between the suffragettes and the police, caused when the Conciliation Bill[57] was finally rejected.

At the same time, the *unwomanly woman* is presented in a way that clearly clashes with its definition in the *OED*: the collocation is to be found only in *VFW*, which denounces the unwomanly woman not as the one who wants to be empowered, but as its exact opposite. The redefinition of *unwomanly woman* is best exemplified in the following extracts:

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[57] This was a proposed legislation which would extend the vote to wealthy, right-propertied women in the UK.

(78)   The women we do pity, the women we think unwomanly, the women for whom we have almost contempt, if our hearts could let us have that feeling, are the women who can stand aside, who take no part in this battle–and perhaps even more, the women who know what the right path is and will not tread it, who are selling the liberty of other women in order to win the smiles and favour of the dominant sex. ("The Militant Campaign", 2 April 1908)

(79)   Mrs. McLeod battled bravely as ever. I saw her straight opposite me on the other side of the hall, gesticulating to the ladies. around her after one protest. I felt sure she was explaining to them that they were the unwomanly women, "the worms who wouldn't turn". ("How We Protested at Queen's Hall", 6 August 1908)

(80)   How often have we been told that the limit of man's endurance is reached when women become so unwomanly as to ask for their rights? ("To the Impartial Observer", 5 November 1908)

The renegotiation of gender values and roles clearly had its roots in the redefinition of words too, and of the ideas put forward by such an authoritative (linguistic) source as the *OED*. For example, by looking at the list of collocates of *womanly*, we also notice that suffrage periodicals, just like the dictionary, talked of *womanly qualities*, and therefore it is interesting to ascertain whether these feminist publications represented them in the same (prevalently negative) ways.

An examination of concordances shows us that each periodical had slightly different views on the matter. Quite unexpectedly, *CC* presents the most innovative ideas concerning womanly qualities: in an answer to Professor Albert Dicey (a famous jurist of the time), who, being a member of the Anti-Suffrage League, had written about arguments against women's suffrage, the editors of this periodical try to denounce and deconstruct the old-fashioned ideas concerning women by asserting that 'true' womanly qualities can be stimulated only by enfranchising women:

(81)   Laws, Governments, Kings, and Cabinets have been made by men, and a fine mess they have often made! But the State? The nation? This rests and must always rest at least as much on the women as the men, and "womanly qualities" should be just as much encouraged. But you don't encourage, nor can you even discover what are womanly qualities until you give women liberty. Prof. Dicey cannot altogether refrain from repeating men's foolish generalizations about women, which, even if they were more true than they are, would only be true of women in subjection. For instance, he says, describing Mill's view, that, in philanthropy, women chiefly cultivate religious proselytism and charity (he seems here to use the last word in the vulgar sense of indiscriminate almsgiving): but what else has been left to women to do down all the ages? They have been kept so narrow and so poor and so ignorant. It isn't even universally true, of course, for Joan of Arc and Elizabeth Fry and Florence Nightingale, being women of rare power, broke through the chains that bound them, and educated women are now abandoning both these courses. ("That the Women's Vote Would Not Improve Morals", 2 September 1909)

Another journal, *VFW*, proves to be more pragmatic: (traditional) womanly qualities are not altogether rejected, and their 'celebration' (or, quite simply, tacit acceptance) in the periodical serves as a useful strategy not to scare possible new 'recruits' away. Indeed, as we have said, a lot of women still had doubts about actively joining suffrage organisations because of the perceived threat to their respectability. Therefore, by suggesting that enlisting in the movement actually did not make women 'less womanly', *VFW* was supporting the idea that women could use their 'womanly qualities' in order to serve the cause, and that precisely these qualities were what would set them apart and what could lead them to victory:

(82)   On the brilliant path of activity that opens before the woman of to-morrow, those who dread innovations see a shadow. When she enters the lists, will she not lose her womanly qualities? This dread of any change is found in every age. The Eternal Feminine is in process of change, and the woman of political and social activity will be different from the domestic woman, no doubt, just as palaeolithic man differs from his neolithic brother, but she will not be any the less Woman. The unknown that we fear is surely hero already among us. Ceasing to be a slave, woman is losing the stigma of slavery–cowardice and deceit; she is becoming sincere and independent, and claiming her rights. ("The Passing of the Eternal Feminine", 10 February 1911)

Thus, according to *VFW*, a change in the perception of womanly qualities was indeed taking place: women were "losing the stigma of slavery, cowardice, and deceit", that is to say, those attributes of "devotion and fearfulness" described in the *OED*. The concept of "Eternal Feminine" was being questioned: this was first introduced by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in his play *Faust* of 1832 and referred to a transcendental ideal of the feminine (or womanly) as abstracted from the vast majority of 'common' women and as proper only of historical, mythological, or fictional female characters, or even female personification of abstract concepts, like wisdom.

Finally, *TV*, which usually positioned its ideologies halfway between *CC* and *VFW*, actually has the most conservative views on the matter of womanly qualities, as, according to its editors, every woman possesses them from her birth. The only true innovation lies in the fact that these womanly qualities were considered as being universal and classless:

(83)   For women serenity and purity! In the name of all that is holy and sensible, what women? The women of property, as comfortably married to men with good incomes who live in sheltered homes? But what is their number in comparison with that of those who are unsheltered and unprotected, who lead lives of unrelieved monotony, who toil early and late for life's barest necessities, who drop, by their thousands, into the awful under-world, which must not be so much as mentioned by polite

persons? Yet these, also, by right and inheritance, have womanly tastes and qualities. The real truth–that which drives some to strenuous action and others to indignant revolt–is that women of imagination, love and intellect cannot return to the dearly-bought shelter or the blind serenity of the days that have been, for they have awoke to a new perception. ("On Guard!", 16 March 1912)

By looking more closely at the list of collocates of *unwomanly*, then, we find *vote* among its most frequent ones. Though the reference to an *unwomanly vote* in suffrage periodicals might strike us as surprising at first, a close look at the concordances shows us that, once again, such an unusual collocation is used to refer to arguments commonly put forward by the Anti-Suffragists, but which are here deconstructed, ridiculed, and changed by promoting new counter-discourses. This view is found in all three periodicals alike, which make a specific reference to those anti-suffrage *women* who opposed the vote because they deemed it unwomanly:

(84)   There is still a vast amount of ignorance concerning the aims and claims of the Woman Suffrage societies. It prevails chiefly amongst those who have no political perception; men who have votes and do not use them; women who do not understand the meaning of civic rights. Such women regard the demand for the vote as unwomanly and undignified, never dreaming that the real surrender of dignity lies with those who plead that their sex is unfit to exercise the franchise–unfit to deal with laws affecting social reform, the invasion of individual liberty, the care and education of children, the problems of country and urban life, the welfare of the race, and the future of the Empire. They are the true shrieking sisterhood. (*VFW*, "The Coming of Woman's Suffrage", 17 September 1909)

(85)   At first we were all struck by the intrinsic absurdity of ladies agitating on a political matter and lecturing on public platforms, to prove themselves, and their whole sex, unfit to take part in public affairs. They had no case, because if they did not want the vote, and if they felt themselves too illogical, hysterical, unpatriotic, devoid of originality, and at the same time too angelically superior to the coarse male voter, all they needed to do was to leave the vote alone–the unseemly, degrading, unwomanly vote, which yet was something too awe-inspiring, too intellectual, too essentially virile a mystery ever to pass into woman's possession. For you will notice that Anti-Suffragists always contradict either themselves or each other in the course of their arguments. (*TV*, "Dealing with the Antis", 6 May 1911)

(86)   The truth is the anti-Suffragists can't argue; they can only feel. Some of them don't like militant methods; some of them don't want adult suffrage. These are not really anti-Suffragists, and when you have left them out of your calculations, you come to the rest, some of whom always oppose all change, and others who have no better reasoning than this: "Men vote; therefore it is manly to vote; therefore it is unwomanly to vote. DO YOU WANT TO BE AN UNWOMANLY WOMAN? Very well then!" (*CC*, "The ABC of Women's Suffrage", 21 March 1912)

Above all, it is interesting to notice how, in this case, a strategy for building counter-discourses consists in appropriating one of the many derogatory labels attached to suffragettes ("the shrieking sisterhood") and to attach it to the very people who invented and used this against them. More (linguistic) strategies for the construction of counter-discourses will be further analysed in Chapter 6, when talking about suffrage and (mental) health.

4.2.4 "Unsexed" women

Similarly, the discourse concerning the 'mannish' vote is recovered in the use of the verb *unsex*, too: the concept of 'unsexed women' was often stressed and repeated by anti-feminists and anti-suffragists, who saw in women's exercise of the vote the biggest threat to what was considered 'womanly'. Therefore, once again all three periodicals try to deconstruct this vision by highlighting in various ways the unsoundness of such an argumentation:

> (87)   It was said that women might actually want to become members of Parliament; that the instincts of nine men out of ten, even of nine women out of ten, were opposed to it. It was said that it would unsex women: one eloquent opponent travelled, like Keats, into the "realms of gold," and wanted to know who could imagine the Juliets, Ophelias, and Desdemonas interesting themselves in, and voting at, elections. (*CC*, "Nature's Reasons Against Women's Enfranchisement", 20 April 1909)[58]

> (88)   They called these fellow-women of ours fighting for truth and justice hateful, hateful things– "notoriety hunters," "unsexed creatures." (*VFW*, "Our Post Box", 13 August 1909)[59]

> (89)   It has always struck me as curious, by the way, that the mere fact of putting a slip of paper into a ballot is supposed to completely unsex a woman, though where the logic of this reasoning comes in I have never been able to discover. (*TV*, "Why I Became a Suffragist", 11 February 1911)

The analysis of the concordances of *unsex* shows that this word was often also used to refer specifically to the suffragette, a figure that seems to be at the crossroads of the renegotiation of gendered identities and roles at the beginning of the twentieth century: she is presented, at the same time, both as spinsterish and mannish by the anti-suffrage movement, and as quintessentially feminine by the suffrage societies, thus signalling the relevance that this issue had in British Edwardian society. The defence of the suffragettes' womanly qualities is once again put forward mainly by *TV* and *VFW*, since, as we will see in the next section, *CC* generally looked at this figure with doubt and concern. Therefore, in the more militant periodicals, the suffragette is presented as no longer *unsexed*, in stark contrast with her representation in anti-suffrage propaganda:

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[58] This excerpt refers to a debate that took place in the House of Commons on 20 May 1867, which ha commented in this way on John Stuart Mill's amendment to the Reform Bill of that year.

[59] This sentence is taken from one of the letters to the editor published in the issue of 13 August 1909; interestingly, the letter is signed by "One who has always believed in her fellow-women". Though, as we have said, the practice of anonymity in newspaper articles was slowly disappearing, sometimes women writing letters to these journals chose to remain anonymous by adopting such signatures; obviously, this mostly happened when these women wrote letters in favour of the suffrage movement, and, more specifically, supporting militancy: the 'taint' of dishonouring themselves and their families could still be deeply felt, especially at the beginning of the campaign, when this letter was published.

(90)   For the typical suffragette is, even in the popular imagination, no longer the unsexed virago, the unhusbanded surplus, the spectacled bluestocking. Manliness does not go even with militancy. (*TV*, "Actress vs Suffragette", 18 November 1909)

(91)   Similarly, a correspondent, writing to the *Freeman's Journal* (anonymously, of course!), defines a Suffragette as a woman "who, through some mysterious dispensation of Providence, got the idea into her head that she ought to have been a man . . . until at length she stood forth in all her unsexed and unblushing brazenness a Militant Suffragette." (*VFW*, "Man, Woman, and the Virtues", 9 August 1912)

From these extracts, we can see two features which are typical of feminist discourse in these periodicals: first of all, the recurrence of seemingly derogatory labels, as *virago* and *bluestocking*, which both referred to the first generation of feminists with negative connotations. The former was defined in the *OED* as "a bold, impudent (or wicked) woman; a termagant; a scold"[60] (all qualities which, as we have previously seen, were judged as 'unwomanly'), while the latter was defined, among other things, as "one who frequented Mrs. Montague's 'Blue Stocking' assemblies[61]; thence transferred sneeringly to any woman showing a taste, a literary lady". It is true that the dictionary also reported that this term, with such derogatory overtones, was "much used by reviewers of the first quarter of the 19th c.; but now, from the general change of opinion on the education of women, nearly abandoned". However, it was still used by anti-feminists to refer to those women who were at that time agitating for their right to be enfranchised. Such labels were reused in suffrage periodicals only to refer to what the anti-suffragists were saying about the women who belonged to the suffrage movement: in the case of example (90), *TV* is suggesting that the British population no longer saw the suffragette as a virago and as a bluestocking, but this article, which compared actresses and suffragettes, was published in 1909, that is to say, when the apex of suffrage militancy (which was obviously parallel to the apex of British people's animosity towards the movement) still had not been reached. Secondly, example (91) illustrates the typical strategy of reprinting quotations taken from notably anti-feminist newspapers (in this case, the *Freeman's Journal*, a leading nationalist paper in Ireland) and of commenting with subtle irony on them: in this instance, the writer of *VFW* introduces

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[60] As a matter of fact, the *OED* also reports that *virago* could be defined as "a man-like, vigorous, and heroic woman; a female warrior; an amazon", but the entry also labels this meaning as "now rare", which means that, by 1917 (the year this word first entered the dictionary), it had already fallen out of use, while the more ideologically-coloured and negatively-connoted one had been retained.

[61] This refers to the meetings held around the 1750s at the houses of ladies such as Mrs. Montague, Mrs. Vesey, and Mrs. Ord, who preferred to entertain their (male and female) guests with conversation on literary matters, instead of playing cards. The name *bluestocking* is linked to the fact that these ladies and their guests often wore blue instead of black or silk stockings; by extension, it later came to refer ladies with an interest in the education of women, which made them one of the first examples of British feminism.

an "editor's note" in brackets to deride those who wrote derogatory comments on the suffragettes, but chose to do so by remaining anonymous, and therefore without truly committing themselves.

Analysing such discourses in the British feminist press of the early twentieth century allows us to ascertain that there were competing and often conflicting definitions of womanliness within the movement itself, though in general these views were mainly opposed to those presented by the mainstream newspapers: for example, the more conservative paper *Common Cause* was still not ready to acknowledge the 'death' of Victorian womanliness, while the debates arising in *Votes for Women* and *The Vote* are to be considered as examples of the negotiation of gender (and, consequently, of the ideologies connected to it), which began to be seen less as a natural and innate quality, and more as a social construct. The presence of these internal debates allowed the papers to "successfully communicate a feminist message that combined conventional and progressive elements of womanhood, while projecting a diversity of emerging womanhoods", and this also demonstrated to readers "who may have been anxious about disrupting the status quo in an abrupt manner that may result in hostility, that New Women honoured and respected their feminine qualities. In this way, if anything, any attempt for change would have incorporated such attributes rather than completely abandon them" (Alexiou 2019: 28).

Such a representation of womanhood(s) contrasts with the three constants of anti-feminist discourse, identified by Beetham as (a) the fact that women were always positioned "as other to and deviant from" a norm assumed to be male or masculine; (b) that this involved not just difference, but also power; and (c), last but not least, that the meaning of these categories was also worked out with particular (material) histories (1996: 4). For example, the type of femininity and womanhood that emerges from suffrage periodicals differs greatly from Eliza Lynn Linton's 'Girl of the Period', a term she invented in 1868 to describe in a satirical way the new generation of British girls, who no longer followed traditional femininity, which for Linton was by definition "weak and hopeless" (Heilmann and Sanders 2006: 291).

While focusing on such keywords as *womanhood*, *womanliness*, *womanly* and *unwomanly* certainly is a first step in analysing the renegotiation of gender(ed) identities and roles in suffrage discourse, it is also interesting to see how the same concepts are perpetrated with other keywords which intertwine gender with other types of discourse. Thus, the following section will consider womanhood and instances of collective identity and militancy.

4.3 Identity and militancy

The renegotiation of gender in suffrage periodicals was also performed through the use of another category of keywords that had to do with identity (both personal and collective) and, more specifically, with the topic of militancy. Indeed, ideas of womanliness often clashed with the forceful methods used by members of the suffrage movement (mostly belonging to the WSPU): this includes both traditional views and ideologies concerning femininity and the new womanhood(s) which, as we have seen in the previous section, were being put forward by feminist publications. Whilst suffrage newspapers certainly agreed on the importance of highlighting womanliness as an engendered (and not innate) quality and on discarding anachronistic views of womanhood presented by the mainstream and anti-feminist press (though this admittedly generated internal divisions), it is also true that the discussion concerning gender and militancy created even greater rifts within the movement and the single societies themselves.

In conservative periodicals of the time, suffrage advocates were invariably depicted as "mannish and unconventional and were questioned as fit wives and mothers" (Tusan 1998: 179), whilst suffrage publications tended to emphasise their dedication to the family (see § 4.4) as well as their 'true' womanliness, thus continuing in the battle over woman's identity which had already begun with the first feminist periodicals of the 1850s (see § 1.4). More precisely, both within and without the movement, this battle regarded femininity and militancy: the various methods employed by suffrage societies to defend their claim to enfranchisement (which ranged from sitting quietly outside Parliament, to placing bombs in post boxes and throwing stones to break shop windows) produced a sharp contrast related to how women should seek political rights and, at the same time, challenged the idea that women would be less womanly if enfranchised (Nym Mayhall 2000: 362). For example, the image of nurses or widows with their small children was put in contrast with sieges organised by the WFL and 'rushes' on the House of Commons promoted by the WSPU: "the WFL's picket at Westminster in 1909 thus linked prevailing assumptions about womanliness to women's political participation and challenged the WSPU's representation of militancy as forcefulness and violence" (Nym Mayhall 2000: 362-63).

In terms of language, this contrast was best expressed through the use of three keywords that came to be significant labels in feminist and anti-feminist discourse alike: *suffragist*, which represented those constitutional or law-abiding campaigners who did not want to be involved with militancy; *suffragette*, an initially derogatory word that was invented to talk about those advocates of women's rights that used militant methods; and *anti-suffragist* (which in the CBSP occurs with various spellings, including *antisuffragist* or even the clipped form *anti*), used with scorn and

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contempt by the suffrage movement to refer to anti-feminists who staunchly refused to accept women's empowerment and, most of all, complained about the suffragettes' *unwomanly* behaviour. Indeed, as we will see, these terms were deeply imbued with gendered connotations and ideologies: as usual, it is necessary to start from their official definition in the *OED*, which proves to be fundamental in analysing the contrasting ways these words were used in the CBSP and the different discourses they generated. For these keywords in particular, significant information was recovered during a research visit to the Archive of the Oxford University Press: apart from the official slips containing the draft copies of the definitions for the first edition of the dictionary, it was indispensable to check the letters which reached the Scriptorium on Banbury Road and which contained important comments about the words in question, as well as those slips which were ultimately not considered for the final version of the dictionary and which are now commonly referred to as "Superfluous". These proved to be immensely useful for this project, as they include those words which were problematic for a series of reasons (mainly ideological ones): naturally, those concerning gender and the Woman Question were among the most numerous ones, therefore they help us uncover yet even more nuanced meanings behind these terms.

It is necessary to start with the word *suffragist*, first recorded in 1822 and which entered the dictionary in 1915, so at the apex of the Woman Question: indeed, the dictionary explicitly tells us that the term had specific gendered connotations, since, though being applicable to both men and women, the entry is defined as "An advocate of the extension of the political franchise, *esp.* (after about 1855) to women".[62] The reference to women's suffrage confirms the saliency of the matter in those years. Moreover, as it is clear, the definition presents neutral tones, thus implying that the term was not perceived as particularly 'threatening' for the status quo. Also, there are no allusions to the constitutional or anti-militant methods which characterised the campaign of this part of the suffrage movement. However, we do find mentions in the "Superfluous" slips that suggest that *suffragist* was indeed used to highlight such an important difference. These slips include a quotation from the *Daily Telegraph* of 21 May 1896, "The feminine suffragists contented themselves by organising a system of picketing in the precincts of the House of Commons", and another one from the *Daily Chronicle* of 6 October 1907, "They can use the organising powers of which lady-suffragists so often speak to grab advantage by forming local committees in each town and district […]". By referring to such anti-militant and peaceful means of protest as picketing or forming committees, the link between suffragists and non-militant methods is made clearer. However, what is not clear is why these

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[62] Among the quotations for this entry, we find an almost contemporary one taken from the *Daily Mail* (1914): "I am a woman and a suffragist".

quotations were ultimately discarded from the final version of the dictionary, and why such a specification was not included in the entry.

While this word had already been in use for a long time, *suffragette* was a more recent coinage which became incredibly significant for the Women's Movement, and therefore it is worth and essential to spend some words on its etymology and its richly ideological definition in the *OED*. As Mugglestone reports, though it might appear at first as simply another agent noun, "it was nevertheless markedly doubled-edged" (2013: 58), and it recorded a new departure in the campaign for women's rights, initially in intentionally negative ways. Indeed, the term was first coined not by suffrage supporters, but by the notably misogynist and anti-feminist *Daily Mail* in 1906 ("It was not surprising that Mr Balfour should receive a deputation of the Suffragettes")[63], and it was intended to be a deliberately negative coinage which aimed at dividing the *suffragists* (and their peaceful campaign) from those who, encouraged by the Pankhursts, were urged to adopt more militant methods. The suffix *-ette* was attached to the word *suffrage* with an intentionally non-complimentary purpose: this diminutive was often seen as trivialising in intent, as well as distinctly patronising. For example, the word *poetette* referred to "A young or minor poet; (sometimes esp.) a young female poet", whilst *casmerette* or *linenette* signalled imitation, rather than actuality. "Lexical recognition thereby co-existed with intended delegitimization; *suffragettes* were aberrant *suffragists*, their campaign rendered additionally unacceptable because of its commitment to violent action" (Mugglestone 2013: 58). This trend was stressed by anti-suffrage writers too, who regularly claimed that 'true' women would never engage in these militant activities: for instance, writer Marie Corelli posed the question "Woman – or suffragette?" in 1907, as one could not be both, at least in anti-suffrage rhetoric. On the other hand, the use of the suffix *-ette* was seen my many as characterising the new coinage in fitting gendered tones which justly highlighted its feminine qualities, as reported in the following extract from the *Observer* of 1 July 1906, which was posted in a letter to the editors of the *OED*:

> Like all neologisms, it is subject to objection. Lexicographers may place it on, though not in the text; philological purists may spurn it, and the authors of "The King's English" may cite it in the next edition of their work as barbaric journalese: it may even be a terminological inexactitude. Yet we would insist upon its retention and propriety. The word is, notwithstanding, we maintain, sufficient. Sufferance being, we are told, the badge of womanhood, the suffrage is very naturally the panacea wrought for. Now the gist of the women's movement is women's rights, but a "gist" as an affix cannot be applied to women desirous above all things to be *affichées* as such. A suffragist, meaning a woman voter, is clearly a misnomer, an epicene generality, but "gette" is feminine enough: it has the jet of spontaneity. Moreover, it is a fine flowing word: euphemistic, euphonic, forcible, intelligible, descriptive, picturesque, suggestive and combative. It caps the

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[63] The word was traced back to the *Daily Mail* by Robert Bell, editor of the *Observer*, as reported in a couple of letters sent in June 1915 to the Scriptorium.

women's movement with the bonnet of femininity, differentiating, designating, defining, designing. Suffragette must stand. It is a strange word to fit a rather peculiar thing. Put up the besom of purism; the suffragette wants new brooms.

These gendered and mainly derogatory visions were immediately officialised in the *OED*, whose definition of *suffragette* clearly links these feminists with militant (and implicitly non-respectable and unwomanly) strategies: "A female supporter of the cause of women's political enfranchisement, *esp.* one of a violent or 'militant' type". The use of scare quotes suggests the dictionary-makers' view of the dubious legitimacy and appropriateness of these methods by (supposedly) respectable ladies of British society, although this definition is also clearly factual: as we have stressed, a commitment to militant activism, under the already-mentioned slogan of "Deeds, not Words", was indeed the defining aspect of the WSPU. Apart from the quotation from the *Daily Mail* cited above, the entry also includes a citation from the *Athenaeum* of 1907 that demonstrates how the term *suffragette* was soon adopted in mainstream journalistic discourse with the same negative connotations: "[Aristophanes] who represented Cleon as noisy, Euripides as sentimental, Socrates as pedantic, and women as 'suffragettes'".

Therefore, according to the *OED*, the suffragettes immediately and implicitly "assumed identities as letter-burners, window-breakers, and hunger-strikers" (Mugglestone 2013: 59). The examination of the "Superfluous" slips reveals other potentially useful quotations which were ultimately discarded: for example, a citation taken from *Blackwood Magazine* of April 1906 ("I feel your views are wrong, and yet I sympathise, O Suffragette") demonstrates that there certainly were mixed feelings about the suffragettes among the British population (the writer of these sentence is anonymous, so we cannot comment on their origins or sex), although the editors finally decided not to include such visions, thus choosing to present only hostility towards this part of the suffrage movement. Moreover, a whole series of other terms related to *suffragette* was included among the "Superfluous" slips, but not in the first edition of the dictionary: these are words that confirm the initial derogatory aims linked with the creation of the word *suffragette*, but they were probably left out of the *OED* simply because they were not that frequent in use. For instance, we find such terms as *suffragetting*, reported in a letter to the editors of the *Daily Chronicle* of 6 December 1906 ("Since a certain number of women – who perhaps would be lost in the crowd if the home-loving wives and mothers who do not share their view were compelled to go suffragetting – are raising a demand for the Parliamentary vote, why not grant it by instalments, beginning with the married women whose husbands are voters, and with whom they contrive to live?"), and *suffragettism*, used in a satirical article published on the *Westminster Gazette* of 21 January 1909 with the title "SUFFRAGETTE WEDDING. GREAT DEMONSTRATION OF FEMININE INDEPENDENCE. BRIDEGROOM

UNFORTUNATELY A MAN": "We are a slow people. Rapidity comes from America. They are far ahead of us there already, even in the matter of Suffragettism". Such new coinages thus support the belittling views of the suffragettes endorsed by the mainstream press right from the invention of the word itself.

Lastly, the term *anti-suffragist* was surprisingly not included the *OED*, and it has no proper entry of its own even in the latest edition of the dictionary, which only includes some quotations that help us understand the context in which the word is used, such as a citation from the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* of March 1885 ("Her position as an anti-suffragist advocate of the cause of women"), and another one taken from Emmeline Pankhurst's autobiography, *My Own Story*, published in 1914 ("Mr. Asquith was questioned in the House of Commons by a slightly alarmed anti-suffragist member"). The inclusion of Pankhurst's quotation should be read carefully, as we have to remember that this is reported in the third (and latest) revision of the dictionary, which is currently under way, and therefore it does not represent the dictionary-maker's views or choices (and, consequently, the general ideologies) at the beginning of the twentieth century: since we lack an official definition of *anti-suffragist*, we can only rely on the use of this word in the CBSP and/or in BLOB 1931.

At the same time, we should notice how the definitions of *suffragist* and *suffragette* did not include any quotations taken from suffrage periodicals, but only from the mainstream press: such valuable sources as *The Vote*, *Common Cause*, and *Votes for Women/The Suffragette* were not taken into consideration for the dictionary-making process and were only included in the revisions which began in the latter part of the twentieth century[64]. Thus, in the following sections, we will take a look at how the same terms were used in the CBSP, both to ascertain any ideological differences and to examine the correlation of gender and militancy in the discourses linked to them.

First of all, it is necessary to register a significant discrepancy in terms of frequency: indeed, the term *suffragist* is the most frequent one in the entire CBSP (with 929 hits), while *suffragette* has notably fewer occurrences (330): this might initially suggest a certain reticence concerning the use of the latter, possibly linked to the negative ideologies lying behind the creation of this word, but only a qualitative analysis of collocations and concordances can reveal any further and more precise information about the use and discourses built around this word. The label *anti-suffragist* occurs 251

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[64] For example, the word *suffragette* underwent a significant makeover in 2019, when the editors first changed its definition into "A woman who advocates or campaigns for women's right to vote in political elections, esp. through direct action or civil disobedience", thus eliminating any reference to violence, and then chose to include a citation from Emmeline Pankhurst: "The women had received a direct rebuff, and they felt that they must now act in such a way as to prove that the Suffragettes would no longer quietly submit to this perpetual ignoring of their claims" (see Guzzetti, forthcoming).

times in the CBSP: this might suggest that discourses concerning those who were against women's suffrage were not of particular relevance in these periodicals. Still, it is interesting to understand *how* anti-suffragists (or antis) were represented. To better highlight differences and/or similarities, the strongest collocates of *suffragette*, *suffragist*, and *anti-suffragist* are compared in Table 17:

suffragette	*suffragist*	*antisuffragist*
satiable	**non-militant**	contention
oolitely	anti	driven
through	excesses	candidate
dealing	**militant**	tell
then	**constitutional**	suffragists
English	**anti-militant**	say
militant	professed	suffragists
said	probably	Liberal
am	anti	always
militancy	**militant**	no
what	imprisoned	an
fighting	sections	between
rights	adult	Mrs
prison	**law-abiding**	get
for	keen	few
most	striving	want
yet	typical	the
when	charged	even
violence	adult	make
themselves	ardent	to

Table 17: strongest collocates of *suffragette*, *suffragist*, and *antisuffragist* in the CBSP.

Unsurprisingly, we notice that collocates that belong to the semantic category of militancy are shared both by *suffragette* and *suffragist*: while the former frequently collocates with *militant* and *militancy* (thus reinforcing the idea of suffragettes as the more 'violent' group of the Movement), the latter co-occurs with *non-militant* or *anti-militant*, but also with *constitutional* and *law-abiding*, which were simply other ways to refer to their rather peaceful methods of campaigning. Interestingly, we can see that, among the collocates of *suffragist*, we also find the adjective *militant*: this might suggest that, sometimes, the term *militant suffragist* was preferred to *suffragette*, possibly because it did not carry with it the same (derogatory and threatening) ideological meanings, though once again such a hypothesis can be tested only by running a concordance analysis. As far as *anti-suffragist* is concerned, we can see that it does not share collocates with the other words, and no specific reference to militancy is made. What strikes as more peculiar is the collocation *Liberal anti-suffragist*, which may indicate that the editors of suffrage periodicals often saw politicians as inherently anti-suffrage,

and the specific reference to the Liberals may signal the disillusionment and delusion felt by feminists towards these members of Parliament, who had broken their promises multiple times already.

4.3.1 Suffragettes

The concordance analysis shows, first and foremost, that the collocation *militant suffragette* occurs only in *TV* and *VFW/TS*, and not at all in *CC*, which evidently chose to refer to their 'militant sisters' in other (perhaps more indirect) ways that excluded the use of a term that would echo like a stain on women's reputation. The fact that the collocate *militant* appears among the most frequent ones might suggest an adherence to the definition found in the *OED*, although what remains to be checked is whether the periodicals in the corpus retained the same negative discourse prosody, too. Since the word mainly referred to members of the WSPU, a closer look at the collocation *militant suffragette* in *Votes for Women* alone can shed light on its diachronic evolution and on how this periodical tried to challenge mainstream discourses around this figure:

(92)   It was not until June 3 that the public peace was really threatened by the action of the so-called militant Suffragettes, and even then the public were enjoined to make an entirely orderly demonstration at Westminster. ("Votes for Women in 1908", 16 July 1908)

(93)   To me, who till lately led an ordinary commonplace existence, there has come through my enrolment as a militant Suffragette the most wonderful broadening out and enriching of life. ("Our Post Box", 11 June 1909)

(94)   That is why I am a militant suffragette. I am not a suffragette who thinks that woman's place is not the home. I intend to do everything constitutional and unconstitutional to get the woman the power of keeping the home together […]. ("Why I Am a Militant", 22 December 1911)

Example (92), from 1908, refers to the first episodes of window-smashing raids which had shocked the British population, mostly because these were instances of violence perpetrated by 'respectable' women of the upper-middle class who were protesting because they wanted the franchise, which was perceived as inherently unwomanly. As we can see from this excerpt, the use of the attribute *so-called* in front of *militant suffragette* might suggest that the newly-coined term (with its baggage of negative connotations) was still regarded with some doubts by the women of the WSPU themselves: indeed, while leaders like Emmeline Pankhurst were inciting women to rebellion, we have to remember that a lot of sympathisers of the cause were still too worried about the social implications their active

engagement in the movement might have, both for them and for their families. However, we can definitely discern a shift in 1909: examples (93) and (94) are both taken from personal testimonies that not only recount their adherence to militancy as an enriching experience but also as bold statement of belonging to the movement: thus, while the term was coined with anti-feminist and belittling intentions, we can see how by "infus[ing] the public image of the suffragette with a halo of righteous struggle rather than the brand of hysterical spinsterhood" (Murray 2000: 209), the WSPU later managed to eliminate the stigma and turn the term's initial negative overtones into positive ones.

It is also worth mentioning how these periodicals responded to distortions and omissions of the mainstream press as a strategy to build feminist discourses: sometimes, this happened by reprinting whole articles (taken, for example, from *The Times* or the *Daily Express*) and then writing responses to them. Other examples, on the other hand, focus on what the anti-feminist counterpart usually said about the suffragettes, and these statements were then usually deconstructed by the feminist press by presenting its own counter-arguments in favour of women's suffrage:

> (95)   "Dreadful! Terrible! Disgusting! Unsexing!" shrieked the anti-feminists, in the same manner as they shriek over every innovation in social or business life which has a woman for its basis, from driving in a hansom cab, riding a bicycle and smoking a cigarette, to asking for equal rights of citizenship, equal facilities for economic independence, equal laws with men. Yet every one of these things in their turn has been shrieked over in almost identically the same terms, and the women pioneers who have inaugurated each and every one of them have had to endure contumely, disrespect and abuse. I am not sure whether the women who first dared to ride bicycles and smoke cigarettes did not get more violent adjectives applied to them than do even the most militant of suffragettes to-day. (*TV*, "Woman's Sphere – Past, Present, and Future", 10 February 1912)
> (96)   "What are we to do with our militant Suffragettes?" the Press asks, tearfully, and the brain-fearing incorrigibly sentimental Britons: Shave their heads. Revive the stocks. Give them a taste of the "cat". Try the ducking stool. Send them to some faraway place like Siberia. Birch them soundly. Shut them up in a lunatic asylum. (*TS*, "A Short Way With the Suffragettes", 7 March 1913)

We can see how these examples were published in 1912 and 1913, that is to say, when suffrage militancy had already degenerated in episodes of extreme militancy in all parts of the country (but mainly in London). The periodical *TV*, which notably preferred a less radical type of militancy, still defends the "most militant of suffragettes" against the labels hurled at them by the anti-feminists (*dreadful*, *disgusting*, *terrible*, and the ever-present *unsexing*) by comparing their actions to other 'innovations' for women, such as riding a bicycle or smoking a cigarette, which, though much more marginal, had still been the subject of abuse by traditionalists. The article taken from *TS* reports on widespread views concerning the suffragettes which were validated in the mainstream press too. Specifically, the text appeared after the British Government passed the so-called "Cat and Mouse

Act" in the same year[65]. This example shows how feminist periodicals tried to fight external ideologies and to deconstruct the misinformation and misrepresentation of the mainstream press by using obviously ironical tones: here, the possible 'solutions' to the social problem represented by suffragettes are listed in an ascending climax, going from Medieval tortures (like the ducking stool) to the (Victorian) lunatic asylum, where very often those women who were considered as erratic, deviant, and hysterical were abandoned by their own families.

The noun *militancy* also occurs frequently as a collocate of *suffragette*, and it only appears in *VFW* and *TS*. The analysis of concordances shows that there is a clearly positively-marked discourse prosody around this collocation, as the main discourses to be found in these suffrage periodicals have to do with a *defence* of militancy, rather than the condemnation which was usually put forward in the mainstream press. For instance, *TS* boldly celebrated the success of militancy by listing the many positive consequences it had brought about:

> (97)   Militancy is, in the second place, the policy that succeeds: Already there stand many triumphs to the credit of Suffragette militancy. Since militancy began, everybody thinks and talks of Votes for Women. Suffrage Societies have grown and multiplied. The grin has been struck from the face of the low-minded among the politicians, and the ribald jest has been thrust down their throat. ("Shall Women Fight?", 1 November 1912)

Another type of argument which frequently appeared as a defence and justification of the use of violence by the suffragettes is a reference and comparison with the Irish Question, which had represented a serious issue for the British Government for several decades already. The editors of *TS* often chose to refer to Irish militancy because politicians sometimes compared it with the actions of the suffragettes and stressed the similarities and the dangers these posed for the status quo and for peace within Britain. The arguments supported by *TS* actually dismantled this view by highlighting how militancy in Ireland actually proved to be much more dangerous, as it involved harming people as well, while the suffragettes notoriously limited their use of violence to buildings and inanimate objects:

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[65] With this act, the Government tried to put a stop to the practice of forcible feeding, which had already attracted considerable criticism: when a suffragette prisoner went on hunger strike, she was released as soon as she proved to be too weak and allowed to recover at home, only to be chased like a mouse and re-arrested once she had recovered. Obviously, the act backfired, as most suffragettes were able to flee and not be found again by the police.

(98)   Houses were sacked and men and women killed. "Houses were sacked" means property destroyed. "Men and women were killed" -- that means the destruction of human life. Thus does Ulster fight. It is unfortunate for Lord Robert Cecil that his leaders and colleagues in the Unionist Party have completely given away his case against the Suffragettes. While he is trying persuade us that the Ulster rebellion will be milk-and-water and gentleness itself compared to the militancy of the Suffragettes, Mr. Bonar Law and others are telling a very different story. Mr. Bonar Law said a little while ago: Ulster will resist and Ulster will be right to resist, and their resistance will be successful. When once those in England realise that Home Rule means shedding the blood of innocent men in Ulster, there will be a revulsion of feeling which will blow the Government out of office. ("Standards of Morality", 4 April 1913)

(99)   Many who like to be on both sides of the fence and support Mr. Larkin[66] because they have formed the idea that he is a potent person are striving to draw a moral distinction between his militancy and the militancy of the Suffragettes. If there is any distinction, it is to Mr. Larkin's disadvantage. His strike policy involves more human suffering and a greater property loss than has been involved so far in the methods of the Suffragettes. ("Militancy Wins", 21 November 1913)

Thus, we can safely say that, at least in the more militant periodicals, discourses revolving around the words *suffragette* and *militancy/militant* presented a rather positive prosody which markedly contrasted with the one in the mainstream press: the label, which had initially been coined as a term of derision, was later swiftly appropriated by the suffragettes themselves, with a certain degree of pride too. As Mugglestone reports, sometimes even the pronunciation could be hijacked for positive ends: for example, Lady Hugh Bell wrote in the *Observer* of 1906 that "the dismissive *-ette* could […] be converted into *-gette*, conveying not powerlessness but the 'jet of enthusiasm' which united action for the vote across the land", while the Pankhursts also suggested a version in which *-gette* was to be pronounced as *get*, indicating the suffragettes' "determination to 'get the vote' on equal terms with men" (2013: 58). The suffix surely highlighted the feminine qualities of the word, both in a strictly linguistic manner and in a more ideological one. The term was undoubtedly imbued with gender ideologies, which were overturned in suffrage periodicals by focusing on the appropriacy and the legitimacy of militancy for women. It is the same kind of militancy and violence which was placed in scare quotes and questioned by the *OED* and, as we have seen, from mainstream newspapers as well.

4.3.2 Suffragists

Table 17 shows that the frequent collocation *militant suffragist* was used as an alternative to *militant suffragette*, and that the discourses which developed from it led to internal clashes and debates which

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[66] James Larkin was an Irish republican and socialist who founded the Irish Labour Party as well as the Irish Citizen Army, a group that played a strategic role in the Easter Rising of 1916.

mainly had to do with the appropriateness of the use of militancy by (chiefly middle-class) women. What strikes as most surprising is that such a debate occurred principally within the pages of *CC*, that is to say, of the most traditional and constitutional of the periodicals presented here. Indeed, it is not unexpected to find here statements that aim at clearly positioning the members of the NUWSS as opponents to the suffragettes and to their radical methods. In particular, anti-militants seem to want to defend themselves from the accusations of 'cowardice' put forward by the militants, as reported in the following examples:

(100)   They have not realized that there is a time for Conciliation as well as for revolt. It is characteristic of Mrs. Greig[67] that, like most of the militants we have met, she seems to divide the world into Militant Suffragists on the one hand and Anti-Suffragists on the other and she seems to think that the above are discoveries made by her alone. This is probably due to the delusion which some of the leaders assiduously endeavour to spread, that the "constitutional" suffragists only abstain from joining the "militants" because they are too cowardly. ("A Militant on Militants", 6 April 1911)

(101)   Militant Suffragists can hardly fail to draw from such silence the conclusion that our refusal to join them is based, not on principle, but on cowardice. And believing this of us, they will naturally feel bitter against us; and we, deeply resenting the imputation, against them again. It is always wiser to face the facts. Our difference is one of principle–not of method only, or of persons, or societies, but of principle ("Why Are We Not Militant?", 17 October 1913)

This is an example of the internal discussions that often threatened to hijack the result of the campaign, since the division between militants and non-militants (often encouraged by the mainstream press as well) was perceived to represent a crossroads in the future of women's rights and in the renegotiation of gender. Choosing militancy meant a further step in changing the status quo and the perception that British society had of women, while preferring to stick to constitutional methods (which had admittedly already proven to be fruitless) signified a willingness to adhere to the gender ideologies and stereotypes exposed in § 1.1, the "principle" which is referred to in the article "Why Are We Not Militant?". The campaigners themselves were aware of the damages that such internal arguments might have on the (shared) final goal, as reported in "A Militant on Militants" of 1911: "That those who should be fighting side by side should instead be divided by so profound a cleavage of opinion as that which divides the constitutional from the militant Suffragist, is one of those tragedies which have too often attended great movements for reform".

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[67] Theresa Billington-Greig was one of the leaders of the Women's Freedom League, which she helped funding in 1907 after leaving the WSPU because of a rift with the Pankhursts, who had been judged to be too autocratic. Though the WFL did not support the use of violence for the cause, it was nevertheless openly in favour of militancy, unlike the NUWSS.

However, what proves to be really worthy of interest is the fact that the same debate occurred not just among the different papers and societies, but more especially within *CC* itself. More precisely, we can find traces of ideas for and against militant suffragists in the correspondence pages, thus demonstrating that dialogue was certainly encouraged and indeed welcome in the feminist press of the early 1900s. Accessing letters to the editor is undoubtedly useful in uncovering further examples of discourses which may support or deviate from the editorial policy and ideology of the single newspapers: the mere fact of choosing to publish letters which contradicted or sometimes criticised what had been said in previous issues testifies to an inclination to highlight the collaborative and non-assertive nature of feminist periodicals, which at the same time stressed yet another feature which seemed to be absent in the mainstream press, at least in terms of the treatment of the Woman Question, that is to say, dialogue.

Thus, the concordance analysis shows that the collocation *militant suffragist* is to be found in five letters to the editor, and only one of them proves to be *against* militancy:

(102)   Is your conscience sufficiently elastic to enable you, in the teeth of statistics showing that women are incomparably the more law-abiding sex, to affirm that the recent actions of the Militant Suffragists proves conclusively the moral unfitness of women generally, to exercise the vote? C. E. HOUGHTON. 188, Hagley Road, Birmingham, December 20, 1909. ("Correspondence", 30 December 1909)

As we can see, this letter once again emphasises the link between militancy and gender (or, to be more precise, womanliness), as the writer clearly states their belief in women's inherent "moral unfitness" to exercise the vote, which is further proven by the first acts of militancy which had already taken place, though in 1909 these were 'limited' to window-smashing and to the 'rushing' of Parliament. That these letters were not signed in full, but just with initials, was common at the time, and implies that it is not possible to know whether the person writing this letter was a man or a woman. If it was a man (and an anti-suffragist too), the claims would not be too surprising; if it was a woman, we might hypothesise that she was not only anti-militant, but anti-suffrage as well, since she plainly did not support the idea of votes for women.

The other four letters in which the collocation *militant suffragist* occurs are even more interesting, as they represent discourses in favour of militancy, and they represent the complexity of voices which was displayed in feminist periodicals:

(103)   Madam, – After witnessing the sights on the streets of Newcastle-on-Tyne on Saturday, occasioned not so much by the presence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer as by that of the Militant Suffragists, I have been nearly forced to believe that the latter are justified in their methods. At least it is impossible to deny that they have instituted a reign of terror among the Liberals. Policemen on foot, on horseback, in plain clothes, were everywhere, surrounding the Liberal Club, the halls in which Mr. Lloyd-George was speaking, the house where he was staying. And the enemy against whom so much force was being called out was a mere handful of zealous women, who, small in number, were made great by the magnitude of their righteous cause. ("Correspondence", 14 October 1909)

(104)   Madam, - I share with your correspondent a feeling of regret that the Cardiff Council meeting, in condemning the "violence" of the militant Suffragists, did not also clearly and emphatically protest against the unfair and unequal treatment dealt out to women political offenders, in contrast to that accorded to men. Yours, E. Vaughan. ("Correspondence", 11 November 1909)

(105)   To the Right Hon. Winston L. S. Churchill, M.P., Home Office, London. Sir,–Though strongly condemning the tactics of the Militant Women Suffragists, I do most earnestly hope that you will be able to see your way to issue instant instructions that all women arrested or detained in gaol for conduct in connection with their agitation for political enfranchisement shall be treated as political prisoners, in the same way as men have been under similar circumstances. Should this right or concession be granted in future, I believe that the forcible feeding scenes, with their degrading effects and unhappy friction for all concerned, would instantly cease, and the controversy would be lifted to a higher level, and be more speedily and peaceably settled in consequence. If you approve of this suggestion I shall be happy for you to make any use of it that you think will be most conducive to the desired end. – Yours, FREDERICK H. WOKEHILL. Leamington, February 21, 1910. ("Correspondence", 24 February 1910)

(106)   Madam, – I see in your paper frequent denunciations of the "violence" of militant Suffragists, side by side with accounts of forcible feeding, upon which you make no comment. By your silence with regard to the violence of the Government which you must admit is out of all proportion to the misdeeds of the victims, you support the common Press-led view that "the hooligans deserve all they get." This does not help the cause. You know, if the general public does not, that the women in prison are not hooligans, but refined and self-sacrificing women. If their fellow workers acquiesce in their torture, there is little hope for fair-play. – Yours ELEANOR JACOBS. ("Correspondence", 25 November 1911)

There are several aspects of gender we might point out by analysing these extracts. First of all, we can see how in *CC* all the letters begin with the appellative "Madam", a specifically gendered figure to whom all correspondence is addressed (the letter to Winston Churchill was still delivered to the offices of *CC* and it is to be read as an open letter). Other journals preferred such expressions as "To the editors of *Votes for Women*", thus downplaying the importance of gender in this respect. Secondly, we can see how gender plays a significant role in the signatures: while example (103) is anonymous and (104) is signed by one E. Vaughan (thus, again, it is not possible to reconstruct the gender identity of the authors here), example (105) is signed by a man (Frederick H. Wokehill), showing how these periodicals, though meant for women, reached other types of readerships as well. Extract (106) is, incidentally, the only one in which the author's signature (Eleanor Jacobs) can be clearly read. Though this might seem trivial, we have to remember that, as explained in § 1.3, the practice of abandoning anonymity in periodicals was a recent one (especially for women). Moreover, endorsing such a divisive question by publicly putting your name on a newspaper was by no means a light-

hearted decision for women who knew they could be risking their and their families' reputation by doing so.

The examples also show how the support of militant suffragists in the correspondence pages of *CC* developed over time (from 1909 to 1911, thus following the escalation of militancy), and how this evolution also corresponded to bolder endorsements and signatures. Indeed, we can see how the anonymous author of example (103) from October 1909 refers to the arrests of suffragettes at Prime Minister Lloyd George's Budget Meeting in Newcastle: though examples of extreme militancy included window-smashing and attacking barricades with axes (Atkinson 2018: 171), the writer is astonished at the police's reaction against a mere "handful of zealous women", and praises the militants because they were "made great by the magnitude of their righteous cause". In example (104), the author E. Vaughan quite simply expresses their regret at the open condemnation of suffragette militancy (this time in Cardiff), while not a single word was spent for the unjust treatment of the militants in prison (this had to do not just with forcible feeding, but also with their being considered as Second Division Prisoners, and thus as being less important than those men who, in the past, had been arrested for similar reasons; see § 1.2). Extract (105) is a first open condemnation of such treatment and, quite surprisingly, it is signed by a man (Frederick H. Wokehill), who writes to Winston Churchill stating that, though he still condemns the militant suffragists' actions, he deems it right for them to be treated as political prisoners, just like their male counterparts. Finally, the boldest criticism comes from Eleanor Jacobs, who pens example (106) and chooses to put her full name on it: this time, the disapproval concerns the newspaper itself, which is to blame for condemning militancy, but not forcible feeding, thus reinforcing the "Press-led view" of the suffragettes as "hooligans" and not as "refined and self-sacrificing women".

The collocation *militant suffragist* is used by the other periodicals in the corpus as well and, not unexpectedly, it usually has a positive discourse prosody, as it is included in discourses put forward by militant societies. What might strike as unusual is the preference of the word *suffragist* to *suffragette*, which, as we have seen, became a badge of identity especially for the members of the WSPU. We might simply hypothesise that the editors of *VFW* were certainly aware of the (often negative) resonances of the word, and therefore sometimes chose its alternative with suffix *-ist*, which not only removed the feminine connotations of the word but also its association to violence and militancy, making it a generally more tolerated and accepted term, especially outside the Movement. In particular, the noun phrase *we militant suffragists* is often used to reinforce a sense of (internal) identity and belonging, while at the same time constructing a "them vs us" discourse which is typical of discourses of minority revolutionary movements:

(107) We militant Suffragists believe that human beings, whether Men or women, can attain to their highest only if they live in the atmosphere of political liberty. ("Lords, Commons, and Suffragettes", 12 November 1909)

(108) We militant Suffragists have condemned this alliance or understanding between the antimilitant Suffragists and the official Labour Party. (*TS*, "Independence", 14 November" 1913)

(109) How often is women's trust misplaced, and yet how whole-hearted and how touching that trust must be when a woman, in order to get love and companionship will run such terrible risks in entering into marriage. Yet women have done it and as we get to know more of life we militant Suffragists have nerved ourselves and forced ourselves to learn something of how other people live. ("Why We Are Militant", 14 November 13)

The use of the first person plural pronoun *we* thus highlights the idea that militant suffragists (or suffragettes) formed a group whose ideals were different (or rather, more radical) than the rest of the Women's Movement: indeed, *we* is positioned both against men (and, in particular, politicians), and against the non-militants, who, according to example (109), seem not to experience and understand life in the same way as the militants do. Thus, it is in this way that being a suffragette (i.e. militant) or a suffragist (not necessarily militant, mostly constitutional) intertwined with notions of gender and womanliness: depending on the point of view of the different societies and newspapers, militancy could be either an enhancement of (new) womanhood, or its exact opposite.

As Table 17 shows, other frequent collocates of *suffragist* are the adjectives *non-militant*, *anti-militant*, *constitutional*, and *law-abiding*, which provide a further neat division between suffragettes and suffragists. Once again, this debate is reported within the pages of feminist periodicals, mainly *CC* and *TS*, with the former praising those women who chose to adopt 'legal' and peaceful methods to fight for women's rights:

(110) The task of the Constitutional Suffragists is more than ever to strengthen the constitutional agitation, and to point out that justice long deferred has always led to revolutionary outbursts, and that the business of those who believe in representative institutions is to prove their sincerity by admitting to their benefits the only section of the population now excluded from them. ("In Praise of Constitutionalism", 22 August 1912)

(111) Mrs. Pethick Lawrence, in last week's "Votes for Women", writes an impassioned appeal to the "law-abiding suffragist " to join in "militancy"– an appeal which shows so total a misunderstanding of the "law-abiding" position as to be almost ludicrous, and at the same time almost pathetic. ("Why We Are Not Militant", 31 October 1912)

(112) During last week, when the bomb outrage at Walton Heath, the damage to the orchid house at Kew, and the destruction by fire of the refreshment pavilion in the gardens, followed one another in rapid succession, the National Union office was perpetually rung up by newspapers asking our opinion of these performances. One eminent journal published a letter expressing wonder and regret that the law-abiding suffragists had never protested against these and similar outrages. ("Militancy and the Government's Responsibility", 28 February 1913)

Noteworthy is the existence of a dialogue between newspapers: in example (111) the author responds to Emmeline Pethick Lawrences' "pathetic" appeal to join militancy in *VFW*, while in extract (112) the writer comments on an article found in a mainstream journal (the title is not made explicit) which claimed to be shocked by the NUWSS's lack of protest against the suffragettes' so-called "outrages"[68] – this comment also proves to be unfounded, as we have seen how *CC* was often openly against militancy. Though of course constitutional and law-abiding suffragists are portrayed in a positive way in *CC*, we do not find any hint at a sense of common identity, as found in *VFW/TS* with the noun phrase *we militant suffragists*.

On the other hand, *TS* offers far harsher tones towards *non-militant suffragists*, who, unlike in *CC*, are not celebrated. Rather, the journal scolds those women who willingly chose not to adopt militancy, while at the same it tries to justify such methods:

(113)　　That there are still so many non-militant Suffragists is a proof either of a national decadence affecting men and women alike, or of the deadening and soul-destroying effect produced by sex-subjection upon women. ("Shall Women Fight?", 10 November 1912)

(114)　　Militancy is right for the many and wrong for the few. Such seems to be the conviction of non-militant Suffragists. If all women were militant, or if the majority of women were militant, then militancy would be justified they seem to think. That is not true. If it is right for a million to be militant, it is right for one to be militant. ("War – Why we are Militant", 15 November 1912)

(115)　　Yes, militancy is morally right and a thousand times morally right! This is, whether consciously or not, admitted even by non-militant Suffragists. So right and so glorious do they think it that they are for ever using the language of militancy. Every time they use militant metaphors they are, we would remind them, affirming that militancy has an ethical basis. ("Militancy: A Virtue", 13 January 1913)

First and foremost, it is interesting to notice how such discourses are prominent in *TS*, that is to say, in the even more radical newspaper of the WSPU that supplanted *VFW* after the schism between the Pankhursts and the Pethick-Lawrences, and that these discourses are abundant in the period which corresponded to the climax of suffragette militancy, that is to say, right before the outburst of World War I (the recurrence of the theme is also certified by the titles of the articles). As we can see from the examples above, *TS* creates an even tighter link between militancy (or the lack of it), gender, and being a suffragist: to the editors of this paper, being a non-militant suffragist is equal to offering yet

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[68] This is how the bombing and arson campaigns of the WSPU were quickly dubbed by conservative newspapers. Apart from the meaning of "An act of excessive violence, a gross and wanton violation of law, order or decency; infamous and injurious treatment", to be found in the *OED*, it is obvious that, when talking about the violent tactics of the suffragettes, the mainstream press chose to highlight how these women's outrageous behaviours went against the ideologies of domesticity and respectability which we have already commented upon.

another reason for women's (social) subjection to men (example 113), and thus they are implicitly stating that the new type of womanhood or womanliness they are trying to propose is more attached to being a suffragette, that is to say, to adopting militant methods to reach the movement's goals. As for the arguments put forward to justify militancy, it is interesting to note how *TS* accuses the NUWSS of hypocrisy: in example (115), the journalist states that even such a conservative and constitutional paper as *CC* frequently makes use of metaphors of militancy, which is at the same time strongly rejected. This example also proves to be of interest as it testifies to the fact that the different societies read each other's papers and responded to each other's articles. This was a practice that consequently did not regard the mainstream press alone.

4.3.3 Anti-suffragists

The last keyword to be taken into consideration in this section is *antisuffragist*, that is to say, the category of men and women alike who were openly against women's suffrage. By looking at Table 17, we can see that *suffragette* and *antisuffragist* do not have any collocates in common and, specifically (for obvious reasons), no references to militancy are made. What might strike as peculiar is the collocation *Liberal antisuffragist*: as already reported, all suffrage societies did not have any open tie with political parties, as women campaigners had long lost any trust in politicians. However, there was indeed some political debate within the various societies themselves, and this further reinforced a discourse of collective identity and of "them vs us": (militant) suffragettes vs (constitutional) suffragists, who were more willing to seek the support of politicians, and, naturally, suffragettes vs antisuffragists, with their belonging to the Liberal Party seen as even more incomprehensible and unnatural. Thus, while *CC* seemed to particularly resent Liberal suffragists, *TS* actually reproached the NUWSS once again for its (even if mild) backing of the Liberal Party during elections:

(116)   Is this, perhaps, why, by many women, the Liberal anti-suffragist is so much more bitterly resented than the Conservative? The Liberals themselves note this, and make it a grievance against Women Suffragists; and Women Suffragists sometimes wonder how to explain or justify an attitude which they cannot disavow. (*CC*, "Democracy and Women's Suffrage", 29 August 1913)

(117)   How often we have seen at by-elections at which the W.S.P.U. was opposing the candidate of the anti-Suffragist Liberal Government, this poster issued on behalf of Mrs. Fawcett's party, "We do not oppose the Liberal candidate." (*TS*, "Hand in Hand", 22 May 1914)

Occasionally, the word *antisuffragist* is replaced by the clipped (and much more informal, even ironical) form *anti*, which seems to be used in a scornful way to refer to those who were against women's suffrage, and which reinforces the idea of a collective identity and of an in-group that clearly wanted to stand out even through the use of language. The analysis of concordances indeed shows that, whenever this word is used, the discourses created around it generate an idea of contempt and ridicule. Surprisingly, these discourses are to be found only in *CC* and *TV*, while *VFW/TS* does not seem to adopt the same strategy to refer to antisuffragists. In terms of gender, the word *anti* refers both to men and women, though obviously it acquires a much more negative connotation when it concerns fellow women who should not be against their own empowerment:

(118)   Hopes were raised that the Antis would really "take the field," and have a lively propaganda throughout the country. They sent some unemployed men to stand sheepishly in Trafalgar Square with sandwich boards stating "Women do not want the vote": and they created much hilarity in the Square a week later by holding what turned out to be Suffrage meetings: but it rather looks as if their success in these ventures would not tempt them to extend on these lines. (*CC*, "Two Campaigns", 11 August 1910)

(119)   "Women," they are always telling us, "ought to be women," and almost in the same breath, "Women are deficient in reasoning power." Some of them undoubtedly are; but then there are so many men as well as women who are Antis. From the same cause–the absence of even a desire to think logically–you never can convince a real Anti. (*TV*, "Dealing with the Antis", 6 May 1911)

In example (118), the antis are mocked for their unsuccessful attempts at organising campaigns and demonstrations which ought to mimic the ones for which suffragettes and suffragists became famous: the use of nouns such as *sheepishly* and *hilarity* clearly demarcates how the editors of *CC* looked down on how antisuffragists tried to convince the British population that even women themselves did not actually want the vote. Example (119) shows how, when it came to tackling the antis, the journalists of suffrage periodicals sometimes used the same arguments created against them: just in the same way as feminists were thought to be "deficient in reasoning power"[69], in this case the antis (both men and women) were thought to have no logical thinking, given they could not be persuaded to support women's suffrage, for which the campaigners were able to provide logical arguments.

To conclude this section, we have seen how gender representation in suffrage periodicals is tied to collective identity, which mainly revolves around militancy: the neologism *suffragette* followed a path that led it from overt stigmatisation to positive badge of identity, with the suffix *-ette* putting a stress on feminine qualities, this time in altogether different terms. The noun denotes an

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[69] See Chapter 6 for the analysis of counter-discourses concerning medical misogyny.

adherence to militancy which creates a further division (and, therefore, a sense of identity *within* the suffrage movement itself) that distinguishes suffragettes from suffragists, especially the law-abiding ones: the latter did not have any evident feminine connotation either, thus 'unsexing' the constitutional campaigners. The use of a gender-neutral term might be interpreted here as a reinforcement to the idea that the emerging womanhood of the early 1900s identified itself with enfranchisement, empowerment, and militancy. Whilst militancy certainly created much heated debates and divisions within the suffrage movement (see Chapter 5), collective identity was surely reinforced against the antisuffragists (or antis): in particular, as we have seen, both men and women antisuffragists were made the object of scold and ridicule, but women 'antis' were much more resented precisely because of their 'unnatural' refusal to support the suffrage cause.

The following section will focus on how much more traditional discourses of family (particularly motherhood) and feminism blended in suffrage periodicals, and how issues of gender representation and identity were related to them.

4.4 Family and feminism

The analysis of keywords related to the semantic category of gender also shows that discourses around the family were of particular importance in suffrage periodicals: indeed, when investigating frequency in Chapter 3, we have already seen how the lemma CHILD occurs quite often in the CBSP, albeit with some specific differences among the single newspapers. Table 14 (see § 4.1) shows that other nouns that contributed to the construction of discourses concerning the family included *motherhood*, *sisterhood*, *married/unmarried*, *consort*, and *spinster*. This section thus proposes an analysis of these discourses that aims at shedding light on the treatment of such a gendered topic in suffrage periodicals, on how this had an impact on the renegotiation of gender roles and identities, and how it evolved and acquired new meanings in feminist discourse. The choice to include also the adjective *feminist* in this category is related to the fact that "women's positive identification with one another in a context of political struggle" in which "there were so very many areas of injustice" (Levine 2018: 14) justifies the comparison of the feminist movement to a great family that, although fraught with internal divisions, still aimed at uniting activists under one single goal (i.e. their empowerment) and against one single 'enemy' (i.e. antisuffragists). Moreover, as we have already seen, when analysing feminist discourse it is necessary to "consider the possible range of meaning that words such as feminism might take on in specific historical contexts" (Levine 2019: 11): in the case of terms related

to family, we will see how this meant that some traditional words gained an extended meaning which was specific of the British first-wave feminist movement, but which later became a key part of feminist discourse of the late twentieth century as well.

4.4.1 Feminism and feminists

In the case of *feminism/feminist*, in particular, it is important to remember that "we must be wary of determining it by our contemporary evaluations and thus deny its particular context" (Levine 2018: 14). Therefore, as usual, it is fundamental to start with checking how these words were defined in the *OED*. Indeed, the word *feminism* was first described in the dictionary in 1895, but the entry presented a definition which might surprise us, as it was, quite simply, "The qualities of females". This may suggest that the term as we know it today (and as has been used so far in this dissertation), that is, "Advocacy of equality of the sexes and the establishment of the political, social, and economic rights of the female sex; the movement associated with this" (as defined in the latest updated version of the entry in the online version of the dictionary, which dates to March 2022), still did not have great circulation in Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century, despite the origins of the movement in the 1850s (see § 1.2). This idea may be even further supported by the fact that we do not find any entry for the adjective *feminist* in the first edition of the dictionary. However, we do find it in the "Superfluous" slips which were not considered for the ultimate publication. Specifically, the slip in question reports an extract taken from the *Pall Mall Gazette* of 14 May 1892 in which *feminist* can be found in context:

THE "FEMINIST" CONGRESS IN PARIS

The "feminist" Congress held its first sitting yesterday. The gathering is international in the sense that it includes delegates from the Universal Union of Women those from England being Dr. Kate Mitchell is also present. The programme embraces professional and mixed education and the legal position of the woman. The rights of fathers and husbands are discussed, while the French law of affiliation cannot fail to be a fruitful theme. The other important items are the share of women in social reforms and in international questions, freedom of thought, prostitution, the admission of women to the liberal professions, equality of salaries, methods of propaganda, and the starting of a special "woman's pence" fund.

Quite interestingly, the adjective is included in scare quotes. Unfortunately, since there are no letters or notes concerning the doubts that the inclusion of this word evidently posed to *OED* editors as it was last consigned to the "Superfluous" slips, we cannot know whether this referred to some kind of

extralinguistic ideology about the burgeoning feminist movement (i.e. the placement of scare quotes might have indicated the journalist's hesitation to validate the term and, implicitly, the campaigners), or simply to the fact that *feminist* was still more used to refer to "feminine qualities" (just like reported in the *OED*), while the new politically-imbued meaning still had to be acknowledged and accepted. Still, we may hypothesise that gender ideology did play some part in the ultimate exclusion of the word from the dictionary, as the deliberate omission of certain words can be identified as a covert form of prescriptivism (Brewer 2018: 25-7 and Ogilvie 2020: 175).

The fact that there was indeed some kind of extralinguistic ideology connected to the term is also testified by the only one occurrence of *feminist* in the reference corpus, where it appears in the section labelled as "Skills and Hobbies": "It is the carved front of a house that once belonged to Diana of Poitiers, Grande Sénéchale of Normandy, whose memory is recalled by a recent biography. A feminist of a type less idealistic – and, one fears, more modern – than the peasant maid of Domrémy, she too swayed the destiny of France". We have to remember that the reference corpus covers the period from 1928 to 1934, that is to say, well after the many struggles of suffrage societies reported in the newspapers considered for this study. It is thus significant to ascertain that, apart from its extremely low frequency, the term *feminist* was still filled with negative connotations, as the figure of Diana of Poitiers is fearfully compared to a "modern feminist", with the "peasant maid of Domrémy" being Joan of Arc, who was very often hailed and celebrated in suffrage periodicals as a harbinger of feminist campaigners.

Obviously, these ideologies are discarded in the CBSP, where *feminist* occurs among the keywords and in collocations such as *advanced/convinced/great feminist*, and, more interestingly for our purpose, in the recurrent expression *feminist movement*, which thus supports the idea of a collective identity and union, of a great national (and even international) family, and also creates a sense of group solidarity which is reinforced by other linguistic elements too, as we will see. The expression is to be found in *CC* and *TV*, where the feminist movement as a whole is celebrated:

(120)   We do not intend to confine ourselves solely to news of suffrage activities. The feminist movement has a wider scope than that, and we hope in time, as the paper grows in size and circulation, to deal with different phases of it. (*TV*, "What We Think", 28 October 1909)

(121)   The feminist movement, to our minds, is fundamentally bound up with the whole complex problem of progress. (*CC*, "Eugenics and the Feminist Movement", 28 December 1911)

(122)   To-day our thoughts are so much occupied with questions of policy and method in connection with the winning of the Vote for British women, that sometimes forget the great Feminist Movement, and its influence on the progress of the world. (*TV*, "The Feminist Movement", 31 July 1914)

Example (120) is taken from an article published on the first issue of *TV*, a statement of the newspaper's editorial policy, and it reminds the readership that the feminist movement was not concerned only with suffrage matters: there were, indeed, other educational, sexual, or employment battles to be fought and which had to be reported within the pages of the periodical. However, "they were not entirely separate campaigns; they drew on the same core of women whose political analysis saw each individual campaign as one facet of a broader aim and purpose" (Levine 2018: 14). What we may notice from these concordances is that reference to the *(great) feminist movement* (rather than to the suffrage movement) was probably preferred because it avoided any hint at those internal rivalries and debates that often proved to be the cause of fractions, such as the topic of militancy which we have already started to comment upon and which will be further analysed in Chapter 5. This is exemplified in extract (122), taken again from *TV*, which precisely refers to the internal discussions concerning militant strategies which sometimes obscured the ultimate goal of the feminist movement: this article was interestingly published in July 1914, after years of extreme tactics perpetrated mainly by the suffragettes (but also by the police against them), and just days before Britain entered World War I, a fact that changed the nature of feminist discourse and suffrage periodicals as well.

4.4.2 Motherhood

Edwardian feminist discourse concerning the family started with the word *motherhood*, which appears 91 times in the CBSP: indeed, the language of motherhood then became "central to the way modern feminism has understood its own history", with second-wave feminists of the 1970s and 1980s locating themselves within traditions inaugurated by their *foremothers*, "while relations between one feminist generation and the next have often been represented as those of mothers and daughters" (Ford 2009: 189). Therefore, we could say that the rhetoric of motherhood "has been a central target in the feminist project of exposing and repudiating the cultural logics that perpetuate the oppression of women" *(ibid.)*: in feminist discourse, the traditional (i.e., patriarchal) idea of motherhood has been at the same time celebrated and rejected, it being on the one hand the essential representation of womanhood, and on the other a source of yet other inequalities.

Appeals to motherhood and to maternal instinct had already been a key component of the Temperance Movement, which in a way anticipated the suffrage activities of the beginning of the twentieth century, as this was seen as "a link between efforts to eradicate alcoholism and promote

middle-class women's entry into the professions" (Liggins 2014: 617). Moreover, both suffragists and antisuffragists "agreed upon the existence of maternal powers which were beneficial to British society as well as to individual families", though the supporters of the anti-suffrage cause "extended this maternalistic position into a strong argument for defending mothers against the polluting influence of national politics" (Bush 2002: 432). For example, in an article with the emblematic title "The New Womanhood" published on *The Woman Literary Supplement* in 1894, Richard le Galienne wrote: "Let women become senior wranglers, lawyers, doctors, anything they please as long as they remain mothers", thus reinforcing the idea that, though some occupations and opportunities may be gradually opened up to women, motherhood had to remain their first prerogative.

The *OED* entry for *motherhood* tells us that it was defined as "the condition or fact of being a mother" and as "the spirit of a mother; the feeling or love of a mother". Interestingly, the quotations that most insist on motherhood as a natural outcome of women's lives were written by women themselves who seemed to passively accept this view and ideology. Mrs Mary Margaret Heaton wrote in her *History of The Life of Albrecht Dürer of Nürnberg* (1869) that "some women need the warm sun of motherhood to ripen their true nature", while Miss Dinah Maria Craik Mulock wrote in *Sermons Out of Church* (1875) that "the mere fact of bringing eight or ten children into the world does not in the least imply true motherhood". We will see how the meaning of this term is partially reconstructed and challenged in suffrage periodicals.

Table 18 reports the strongest collocates of *motherhood* in the CBSP:

motherhood
wifehood
sacredness
sacred
yet
country
great
should
which
had
of
and
is
but
their
was
for
they

be	
the	
that	
in	

Table 18: strongest collocates of *motherhood* in the CBSP.

The analysis of collocates seems to suggest that such discourses were reported in suffrage periodicals as well. Indeed, the collocational noun phrase *wifehood and motherhood* recurs often, thus hinting at a consolidation of the typical gendered roles attributed to women. However, as often the case, this type of discourse is actually renegotiated, rather than confirmed and stereotyped: being both a wife and a mother is certainly seen as intrinsically feminine and womanly, that is to say, as a key part of a woman's life, but, according to feminist periodicals, it is precisely these characteristics of women's existence that make them worthy of being empowered and enfranchised. Therefore, very often the rhetoric of motherhood is used to provide arguments against those who claim that women would be less womanly if enfranchised, as exemplified in this excerpt taken from *CC*:

(123) Secondly, it is feared that the vote will "unsex" women; that they will lose their womanliness, and neglect their children and their homes. This record proves that, on the contrary, they have used the vote to protect their homes. They have protected the lives and the interests of children, they have insisted on the respect due to wifehood and motherhood, they have demanded better conditions of housing, labour, and food, especially the food of little children–milk. ("Simple Facts", 12 December 1913)

More examples like this are to be found in *VFW*, which seems to confirm the pattern already noticed with discourses around the lemma CHILD, where public matters were blended into public ones by denouncing the difficulties and inequalities associated with childrearing. In this case, wifehood and motherhood are presented as unacknowledged burdens (especially for working women), and cases of "wronged motherhood" (i.e. single mothers left with no help) are denounced in the pages of the newspaper:

(124) The unpaid services of wifehood and motherhood destroy bodily and mental vigour more than any brain or manual work; these last, indeed, mostly develop and improve the worker. ("The Wage of the Married Woman, 2 June 1908)

(125) The married woman who works for her wage outside her home cannot escape the worst woes of wifehood and motherhood. ("The Wage of the Married Woman, 2 June 1908)

(126) It is but one drop in the ocean of women's misery and despair. Sweated womanhood, outraged wifehood, wronged motherhood, assaulted childhood, and youth bought and sold in the hideous white slave traffic are

crying out to us against laws that are the logical outcome of the legal and political subjection of one half the human race. ("Women and the Census", 24 February 1911)

The recurrent use of the phrase *the sacredness of motherhood*, then, proves to be ironical: even though it is true that sometimes feminists themselves considered motherhood as being fundamental for women, suffrage periodicals actually used this expression to refer ironically to patriarchal views of motherhood that saw it as sacred, but still did nothing to tackle the inequalities already denounced. The following examples, taken from *TV* and *VFW*, show the range of opinions concerning this 'sacredness':

(127)   The working-class mother, who has given all her energy and all her time to her home and to her children, what is her fate when the wage-earner of the family dies? If the widow with her baby and other children to keep asks for assistance from the State in the form of maintenance, what is she told? The baby can go into the workhouse. She must go out and work to support herself and family. So the "sacredness of motherhood" goes to the wall. (*VFW*, "The Modern Woman and Motherhood", 23 September 1910)

(128)   It was not due to chance that these women injured nobody. They waited till evening, so that they might select those windows that were dark, a proof that the rooms behind them were not tenanted. Why did they choose this form of protest? Mrs. Massy, in the police-court, speaking for herself and for Mrs. Lowy, a mother of eight children, gave the reason: "As mothers we consider it better to make our protest by breaking a pane of glass worth but a few shillings than to give our own bodies to be broken again as they were on Friday." Let those words sink down in the minds of men who talk sentiment about the sacredness of motherhood, as well as into the hearts of those who really honour women. (*VFW*, "We are not Hottentots", 2 December 1910)

(129)   Let us see! What will happen? Suffragists have been put down as sentimental by a recent writer in one of the daily papers for speaking of the "sacredness motherhood." We answer that with the growing of this new spirit of solidarity, women everywhere feel that motherhood is too sacred and far too momentous to be played with and then there may be a drop marriages and a fall in the birth-rate which will stagger the world. (*TV*, "Can Women Combine?", 9 September 1911).

In example (129), *sacredness of motherhood* is acknowledged as an expression used by the campaigners themselves and for which they have been chided in "one of the daily papers". However, in examples (127) and (128) the same noun phrase is attributed to men and used ironically: though feminists still do not deny the importance motherhood has for a woman, the collocation is used here to highlight that, despite the recognised inviolability of this (patriarchal) institution, which is proclaimed by men themselves, there was still a lot to be done to overcome (social) inequalities. In example (127), the specific reference concerns the case of working-class mothers, who had even fewer protections than those belonging to the middle-classes: for instance, *VFW* here denounces that,

should the husband die, the mother would not receive any support from the State and her children would probably be consigned to the workhouses.[70]

Example (128) provides an interesting contribution that perfectly blends the theme of motherhood in feminist discourse. The article was published in *VFW* right after the extreme violence exerted on the suffragettes during Black Friday (18 November 1910), which was followed by an episode of window-smashing. The suffragettes who were arrested then used the so-called "argument of the broken pane" to justify their actions: window-smashing campaigns were frequently used by the suffrage movement as a form of political statement, and their intensity increased right after Black Friday in 1910. The suffragettes sought to prove that the outrage these episodes caused among the population and in the mainstream press meant that the Government cared more about broken windows than women's lives. In Emmeline Pankhurst's words, "the argument of the broken pane of glass is the most valuable argument in modern politics": if property was the Government's responsibility, then property became the suffragettes' target. The prisoners thus used this claim by also appealing to their maternal instincts and by referring to those men who "talked sentiment about the sacredness of motherhood", but then failed to concretely support it. It is furthermore interesting to spend some words on the title of this article, "We are not Hottentots": word choice is obviously noteworthy, since a Hottentot, as defined in the *OED*, was not only "A member of a South African race of low stature and dark yellowish-brown complexion, who formerly occupied the region near the Cape of Good Hope", but, more significantly in terms of ideology, also "A person of inferior intellect or culture; one degraded in the scale of civilisation, or ignorant in the usages of civilised society". The term acquired racist and derogatory aims, and the editors of *VFW* used it in this title to claim that their employment of militancy did not make them *Hottentots*, that is to say, inferior citizens.

The term *motherhood* appears only seven times in the reference corpus, thus confirming its saliency in the feminist discourse of suffrage periodicals. Moreover, in BLOB 1931 it appears more often in the category "Fiction", and only once in "Press":

> One does not wish to appear a prig, but if a claim be made to a monopoly of reverence on behalf of those who approve a certain estimate of values in respect of a particular work of art, I think one may be permitted to confess to being inspired by an equally deep reverence for "the theme", if that be motherhood and the mystery of man's emergence from the unknown; but my reverence for these can not cause me to rejoice in their expression in the form and spirit of this particular image.

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[70] These were Victorian institutions that were meant to provide work and shelter for poor people, but which actually ended up being true prison systems detaining the most vulnerable in society.

Suggestively, we also notice that the topic of motherhood in this excerpt does not have anything to do with the political and social overtones it acquired in the feminist periodicals considered here, thus confirming once again that some words and, sometimes, whole discourses were renegotiated in feminist discourse.

4.4.3 Sisterhood

While *motherhood* represents continuity in an already long-established feminine discourse which acquires an extended (public) meaning in suffrage periodicals, the keyword *sisterhood* seems to enter feminist language by positioning itself in stark contrast to the common definitions and ideologies concerning this word, thus becoming a key feature of this type of discourse, also in the decades that followed. In the *OED*, *sisterhood* was defined as: (a) "The state or condition of being a sister; sisterly status or relationship" (which signalled the simple familial bond of kinship); (b) "A society of sisters; *esp.* a society of women who have taken certain vows and live together under conventional rule, or who are otherwise devoted to religious life, or to charitable work as a vocation; and, finally, most importantly for our analysis, as (c) "Used loosely to define a number of females having some common aim, characteristic, or calling. Often in a bad sense". While definition (b) clearly does not find any realisation in the CBSP, we should concentrate on definition (c), which displays "a strongly negative orientation towards political activity" (Mugglestone 2013: 54) and elaborates the negative coding revealed by such attitude: the inclusion of the comment "in a bad sense" engaged with the "kind of semantic prosody which characterised dominant – and anti-feminist – discourses on this subject" (Mugglestone 2013: 54). Such ideology is again confirmed in the choice of quotations, which, as we have already seen, were sometimes potentially informed by ideological subjectivities. For example, a citation taken from G. C. Davies' *Mountain, Meadow & Mere* (1873) recites: "Those members of the female sex…who agitate questions they know nothing about. The *Saturday Review* calls the latter the 'Shrieking Sisterhood'".

Obviously, as we might imagine, the use of *sisterhood* in feminist and pro-suffrage discourse is instead markedly positive, "signalling allegiance and cohesion, shared aims and ambitions" (Mugglestone 2013: 55). The very label "Shrieking Sisterhood" is overturned in suffrage periodicals, as the following example from *VFW* reports. Here, the "shrieking sisters" become the so-called "antis":

(130) Such women regard the demand for the vote as unwomanly and undignified, never dreaming that the real surrender of dignity lies with those who plead that their sex is unfit to exercise the franchise–unfit to deal with laws affecting social reform, the invasion of individual liberty, the care and education of children, the problems of country and urban life, the welfare of the race, and the future of the Empire. They are the true shrieking sisterhood. ("The Coming of Woman Suffrage", 17 October 1909)

Thus, *sisterhood* becomes a keyword in the rhetoric of the suffrage movement, and of the WSPU especially, whose cornerstone of politics was precisely the common bond of womanhood, as expressed in the first issue of *VFW* of October 1907: "To women far and wide the trumpet call goes forth, Come fight with us in our battle for freedom…Come and join us, whatever your age, whatever your class, whatever your political inclination". Indeed, despite the internal differentiations we have already pointed out, the members of the suffrage movement reiterated time and time again their feeling of comradeship (and, precisely, sisterhood) which was the backbone and strength of Edwardian feminism. Their emphasis on common bonds and commonalities that all women share, irrespective of any social or political differences, still holds a relevant message for feminist today (see Purvis 1995: 95-9).

Indeed, though we do find instances of *sisterhood* with the common meaning represented in definition (a) of the *OED*, we can easily see how the same term was applied more often to the fellow-women who participated in the movement, shared the same experiences, and had the same political and social goal:

(131)   Do not leave your daughterhood, or sisterhood, or wifehood behind you when you come into this movement. This is no anti-man crusade; the women who take part in it are fighting for their fathers, and husbands, and brothers, as well as for themselves, because it will be a good thing for men and women alike when their combined point of view is recognised in the counsels of the State. (*VFW*, "The Battle Cry", 4 October 1907)

(132)   June 18 will be something more than a political demonstration; it will be a festival at which we shall celebrate the sisterhood of women. According to the old tale of men's making, it is not in women to unite and to work with one another. Women have only now discovered the falsity of this, and they are rejoicing in their new-found sisterhood. (*VFW*, "The Sisterhood of Women", 20 May 1910)

(133)   Thus in this land, so recently torn and shaken by internal strife, the sisterhood of woman is becoming an overwhelming force, which is going to sweep away race hatred, the legacy of a long and terrible war. (*CC*, "Women's Vote and the Empire", 17 April 1914)

In example (131), *sisterhood* refers to familial bonds, which, according to the editors of *VFW*, should not be abandoned when joining the movement: this can be read as yet another appeal especially to those women who still refrained from taking active part in the cause due to the arguments put forward

by the Establishment and by the mainstream press, which claimed that the enfranchisement would 'unsex' women and strip them of their 'feminine' roles of daughters, wives, sisters, and mothers. According to the WSPU, these roles and qualities should not be abandoned, as women deserve the vote *precisely* because of their special positions, which benefit both individual families and society as a whole. Example (132) refers to one of the first great mass demonstrations organised by the suffrage movement, where at least 15000 women marched from the Embankment to the Royal Albert Hall in London to demonstrate that they had been imprisoned for their militant acts, while example (133) is a reference to the Anglo-Dutch wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth century which had concerned the overseas colonies: the rhetoric of motherhood and sisterhood was often blended with that of the British Empire too.

4.4.4 Marriage

Finally, feminist discourses concerning the family also included keywords related to marriage, as we have already seen in § 3.2.1, with the attribute *married* being among the strongest collocates of the recurring lemma WOMAN: such was the prominence of this topic in relation to the social construction of gender that, already in 1894, the English writer Sarah Grand had declared that "The Woman Question is the Marriage Question" in an article ("The New Aspect of the Woman Question") which was published on the *North American Review*. The analysis of keywords shows that the adjectives *married* and *unmarried* had a particular saliency in suffrage periodicals. In terms of frequency, it is interesting to see, first of all, that *married* occurs 313 times, while *unmarried* only 62 times: this might lead us to hypothesise that discourses that favoured the traditional institution of marriage were more prominent, but, as usual, only collocation and concordance analysis can help us clarify this. Thus, Table 19 reports the strongest collocates of *married* and *unmarried* in the CBSP in their word form:

married	*unmarried*
property	daughter
TEACHERS	mother
teachers	mothers
single	between
widows	woman
teacher	man
income	than

status	an
Act	who
sisters	were
acts	the
woman	women
gave	her
working	was
WOMEN	has
health	and
WOMAN'S	are
land	the
especially	of
Labour	is

Table 19: strongest collocates of *married* and *unmarried* in the CBSP.

The comparison of the collocates shows us that both adjectives frequently occurred along such kinship terms as *widows* and *sisters* (in the case of *married*), and *daughters* and *mothers* (in the case of *unmarried*), thus signalling that the (legal and social) status of marriage was particularly important for the female members of a family. As we have already seen, however, marriage discourses acquire a strong social and political connotation in suffrage newspapers. In particular, the noun phrase *married women and widows* recurs often in *VFW* to highlight the inequalities and social injustice which befell this category of society:

(134) Then I saw the women who put hooks and eyes on cards. It is mostly married women and widows who do this work. They have to fetch the work or pay 3d for it to be sent. They work an average of fourteen hours a day, and I saw a mother and daughter who together could only earn 3s. 4d. a week when work was plentiful; and if all the children help they can earn 6s. a week. ("To the Married Women Textile Workers", 28 May 1908)

(135) We shall realise that the very first charge upon a National Invalidity Insurance Bill by every law of justice should be the married women and widows of the nation. ("Does a Man Support his Wife?", 21 July 1911)

The collocation *married sisters* seems to recall discourses of sisterhood we have already discussed, although in this case the emphasis is put on differences between married and single women with a hint of irony too:

(136) A woman, speaking at a recent anti-suffrage meeting, said that it was not for the unmarried women to "break up the homes" of their more fortunate married sisters by demanding political equality. (*CC*, "The Hope and the Meaning", 15 April 1909)

(137) Perhaps someone tells her that, though the usefulness and nobleness of many single women is indisputable, their happiness is questionable when compared with that of their married sisters. (*TV*, "Modern Dianas", 17 March 1913)

Example (136) is taken from *CC*, which reports what had been said by a woman at an anti-suffrage meeting about militancy: here, the "more fortunate married sisters" are obviously the antis, whose houses were damaged by the suffragettes' stone-throwing, which was all the more outrageous if done by unmarried women, who were implicitly less fortunate. Though it is true that *CC* held more traditional views about womanhood and women's role in society and was explicitly against militancy, it is possible to surmise that, here, the expression "more fortunate married sisters" is ironical, as one of the many forms of injustice denounced by the suffrage movement concerned precisely married women, whose destiny is often not portrayed as exactly fortunate. The same happens in example (137), taken from *TV*, which compares single women to married ones: the "married sisters" are not necessarily as happy as the Establishment pictures them to be.

On the other hand, *unmarried* frequently co-occurs with *daughter*. Quite surprisingly, the collocations is present only in *CC*, and the concordances show two opposite views about this topic: the unmarried daughter is seen as a huge social problem by the editors of *CC*, who consider her to be "a grievance", a "failure", an "annoyance and discomfort", and, most notably, "an interesting animal" (examples 138-141), while the exploitation of her "unselfishness" and "devoted self-sacrifice" is denounced by Claire E. Houghton, from Birmingham, in a letter to the editor published in the issue of 19 May 1910 (example 142):

(138)   There is always a lot to be said about grievances and the unmarried daughter is still a grievance. ("The Unmarried Daughter", 28 April 1910)

(139)   "Unmarried daughter"–the very phrase is stamped with the stigma of failure, bears about it the aroma of undesirability, suggests that somebody's daughter would, and if she only could, be somebody else's wife. ("The Unmarried Daughter", 28 April 1910)

(140)   Hence, to a great extent, the problem of the unmarried daughter, hence the annoyance and discomfort which her increasing attempts at self-assertion are bringing into placid and respectable homes. ("The Unmarried Daughter", 28 April 1910)

(141)   Marriage being not for her, she dares to demand something else–and if she only demand long enough and loud enough she will most certainly get it. There is one thing to be said for the unmarried daughter–that sociologically she is an interesting animal. Our name for the female human being bears witness to the fact that

to them of old time woman unmarried was a contradiction in terms; and the record of facts and happenings, which is history, and the record of dreams, aspirations, and desires, which is literature, alike point to the conclusion that for man the woman who existed apart from him had practically no existence at all. ("The Unmarried Daughter", 28 April 1910)

(142)   "Men have always honoured the unmarried daughter"? They well know her splendid unselfishness, her devoted self-sacrifice. It is, of course, precisely these qualities that men admire most in women, whether married or single; but can they be said to honour the unmarried daughter so long as they deny her the rights and dues of a normal human being, and exploit her unselfishness in every possible way? ("Correspondence", 19 May 1910)

We can see how the topic of the unmarried daughter was so salient that *CC* decided to devote an entire editorial to it ("The Unmarried Daughter", 28 April 1910), from which the majority of the collocations are taken. The editors of the newspaper put forward a campaign of true denigration towards this figure by presenting her as a burden for her family: the harsh tones used in this article appear surprising even for such a feminist but conservative paper. This issue is linked to the hostile tag "Revolting Daughters", which proved to be a catchphrase for (mainstream) journalists following the publication of Mrs Blanche Alethea Crackenthorpe's article in the *Nineteenth Century* in 1894 under the title "The Revolt of the Daughters". While Mrs Crackenthorpe was sympathetic towards young women's "revolt" and demands for self-development, which had to occur mainly through access to education, the mainstream press adopted the pun "Revolting Daughters" (with *revolting* referring not just to someone who wants to revolt, but also to something or someone who is disgusting) to denote those girls who were "perceived as a threat to women's role as self-denying wives and mothers" (Beetham 1996: 132). In the nineteenth century, middle and upper-class periodicals devoted to women had frequently stressed their education as good wives and mothers, "which was harnessed to different ideas of family and the home" (Beetham 1996: 131): *CC* seems to support this view and describes the unmarried daughter as a social anathema and justifies marriage by referring to history and literature (example 141). However, the correspondence section offers once again an example of how dialogues and exchanges of ideas (even if they went against the paper's policy) were encouraged in the feminist press. Letters to the editor really prove to be a forum for the circulation of multiple voices and beliefs. In this case, excerpt (142) is a response to the article "The Unmarried Daughter", and the author of the letter (who decided to sign with her name and not to remain anonymous) commented on men's hypocritical (and undenounced) treatment of the unmarried daughter, who was both celebrated and exploited for her unselfish behaviour.

Another topic which is repeatedly connected to women's marriage status is that of work: this also helps debunk the common belief that the Edwardian suffrage movement was mainly concerned

with middle and upper-class women and thus did not deal with the problems of the working class. In particular, the collocational noun phrases *married working woman/women* and *married woman's/women's labour* are often repeated in the CBSP, especially in *CC* and *VFW*, both of which decry the double injustice suffered by women who are married and must find work too:

(143)   The men of the industrial classes have realised their enormous power; the competitors of women in the labour market have a strong organised representation in Parliament, and laws curtailing women's labour are definitely threatened; laws also affecting specially married women's labour are suggested, the direct result of which would be to thrust the wives and mothers of the country into a position of entire sex subjection, while the indirect result would be to increase all the moral and physical evils which result from the helplessness of women, and from the economic dependence and subjection of the mothers of the people, and to add to the burden of human misery already borne by women and children. (*VFW*, "What the Vote Means for Those Who are Fighting the Battle", 2 January 1908)

(144)   If anyone in the world needs helping in sickness it is the married working woman. (*CC*, "True Democracy", 18 May 1911)

4.4.5 Spinsters

Finally, discourses and debates concerning marriage reach their apex in the uses of the keyword *spinster*, which deserves to be analysed given the ideology that has always surrounded it. The *OED* defined it as "appended to names of women, originally in order to denote their occupation, but subsequently (from the 17th century) as the proper legal designation of one still unmarried" and as "a woman still unmarried; *esp.* one beyond the usual age of marriage, an old maid". While these definitions appear to be objective, we can trace instances of ideology and negative prosody in the citations chosen to exemplify them, especially those concerning the word that derive from *spinster*, that is, **spinsterdom/ism/ship* and **spinsterial/ian* and **spinterish* ("having the characteristics of a spinster; old-maidish"). For example, a quotation taken from the *Saturday Review* of 21 July 1892 reads "A single…thunder shower may…doom maidens by the dozen to the sorrows of spinsterdom"; Albert Smith, in his novel *The Pottleton Legacy. A Story of Town and Country Life* (1849) wrote "His sisters…annoyed him with their *spinsterial propensities", while the unknown author of an article published in *La Belle Assemblée* (a British women's magazine which ran from 1806 to 1837) in 1818 stated "The full terrors of *spinsterism took hold of all her faculties". All these occurrences thus suggest the negative ideology attached to the word and, consequently, the concept of an unmarried woman. Though we do not find *spinster* in the reference corpus, and therefore we cannot verify this hypothesis by testing examples of language use in context, another citation that was not included in the dictionary and is to be found among the "Superfluous slips" reads: "In those poetic days all ladies,

in a much better sense than the appellation is received at St. George's, were spinsters" (*Fraser's Magazine*, 1835), thus supporting the idea that the term was initially used only to refer to women who spun as a profession, and the negative social connotations linked to unwed women were only reported later. The same concept is reinforced again with the entry for *spinsterhood*, defined as "the condition of being an unmarried woman or an old maid", though in this case it is the most ideological citation which is ultimately left out and consigned to the Superfluous slips, notwithstanding its importance in revealing the ideologies behind this word: an article published in the *London Review* of 23 December 1863 stated that "Honourable matrons and well-born maidens are so eager to escape the disgrace of spinsterhood, so anxious to secure the position of a wealthy marriage, so averse to contemplate the possibility of wearing out life on an unmarried daughter's pittance of a portion, that they will endure the presence of any man worth marrying, however vicious and low his habits and tastes are known to be". Thus, the idea of remaining unwed (especially for the same "unmarried daughter" we have already talked about) is considered as a "disgrace", and the condition of spinsterhood is said to be so despised as to force women to find a husband, even if they are repelled by the very prospect of marriage.

In the CBSP, discourses around the noun *spinster* are present in every periodical, albeit with some significant differences. Indeed, *CC* continues with its negative presentation of the unmarried daughter by referring to spinsters as a troublesome burden for their "respectable and well-meaning heads of families" who need to find a solution to this 'problem' (example 145). On the other hand, both *VFW* and *TV* defend the figure of the spinster from the attacks and the mockery she constantly received (examples 146 and 147):

(145)   For it is particularly in the upper and middle classes that the question of what to do with the spinster has become pressing and urgent, entering into the calculations and troubling the repose of respectable and well-meaning heads of families who are unable to find openings for their daughters in the honourable pursuit and profession of marriage. (*CC*, "The Unmarried Daughter", 28 April 1910)

(146)   Many working women are widows with children, or wives whose husbands, for one reason or another, fail to maintain their families, while an enormous number of spinsters support parents or brothers and sisters. (*VFW*, "A Fair Wage for Women", 13 May 1910)

(147)   I heard another man speaker inveighing against this Act raise a laugh by declaring that it was unnecessary for him to be compulsorily insured, because he had "insured his life when he got married!" Other jibes at women have been made in references to "country spinsters" and "parsons' wives," who would get elected to the local committees to " un the poor." Men never seem to remember that "Paul Pry," type for all time, is a man and not a woman. In the restricted circle of one individual life I have met several Paul Prys. Many men are talking largely about the "mass of the people" controlling their paid Government servants, without fully appreciating that "mass of the people" means women equally with men, and that the payments to these same servants come from women as well as from men. (*TV*, "Femininity, Masculinity, and the Insurance Act", 16 March 1912)

The last example proves to be particularly interesting, as it introduces the figure of Paul Pry, a comical and mischievous character of the 1825 farce written by playwright John Poole with the same name as a title: Paul Pry is an interfering busybody who always leaves behind him an umbrella in order to have an excuse to return and eavesdrop. In the case of the example taken from *TV*, men, and not women, are compared to "Paul Prys", in an attempt to counter the malign views attached to women and, more specifically, "country spinsters" that saw them as inadequate for political life, both as voters and as representatives of the British people in Parliament.

Keywords relating to family offer insights into the perhaps most uncertain domain of feminist discourse in suffrage periodicals, as we have seen how these discourses appear to be still undergoing complex processes of change and renegotiation of gendered social roles such as those of mother, wife, and sister. The next section will provide a more specific view of the topic of work, which has already proven to be quite salient in the CBSP.

4.5 Beyond the private sphere: women and work

This last section will provide an analysis of the keywords related to work and, in particular, to those collocational expressions that offer an insight into gendered aspects linked to it. Indeed, "the absolute correlation between gender and sexuality meant that the powerful binary oppositions which linked masculinity with activity/production and femininity with passivity/consumption worked across the categories of the economic and the sexual" (Beetham 1996: 128). The working woman represented a challenge to the system of the separate spheres, though the outcome of her gradual inclusion in the world of work was a gendered labour market, with working-class women relegated to low-paid, seasonal, and part-time work. Moreover, women's wages were conditioned by values that placed their responsibilities primarily in the home, thus making women's work doubly gendered, since it was first restricted to 'feminine' tasks (paid or unpaid), and at the same time subordinate to men's work both in the home and in the workplace (Digby 1992: 204-5).

If the demand for women's work was born from the belief that it could be a confirmation or even a creation of the self, then their exclusion from it deprived women of a potential for self-realisation (Beetham 1996: 127). This implicitly had to do with the construction and representation of gender identity: in seeking self-development and independence, women were trying to capture the moral high ground on which ideas of femininity had been stranded and to renegotiate the gendering of different moral qualities: "If work and selfdevelopment [*sic*] were good for men, they must also be

good for women and, by the same token, chastity and unselfishness were qualities to which men should aspire" (Beetham 1996: 131).

Women's working conditions were naturally at the centre of suffrage discourse because politics and (paid) work were inextricably linked. The attention was particularly put on the representatives of the working women of Britain, that is, widows with children dependent on their earnings, breadwinners and rent-payers, women prominent in social reforms, and nurses (Nym Mayhall 2000: 362). The difficulties these women encountered in the world of work had been first addressed in the feminist discourse of such Victorian radical magazines as *The English Woman's Journal* and *Victoria Magazine*, where "lack of economic rights was central to women's inequality and therefore access to paid work was crucial to any agenda of reform" (Beetham 1996: 135). However, it is essential to remember that the term *work*, when applied to women, was slippery. In 1861, the *Queen* (a conservative paper aimed at women of the aristocracy) argued that "Women do work (at home and in many cases at home and for a wage) but they must learn to transact business": "The difficulties of that bracketed aside continued to disrupt the syntax of the women's magazines as they moved into the twentieth century" (Beetham 1996: 135). At the same time, the mainstream press was worried about the anxieties generated by women's entrance into the public sphere of work, and the most powerful strategy adopted to deal with the seemingly failure of the domestic ideal was to deny that this was a problem that concerned adult women. As Beetham reports (1996: 136):

> The denial of adult femininity to working-class women by naming them as 'mill-girls' or 'servantgirls' [*sic*] was a familiar rhetorical device for defending a purely domestic femininity. The adoption of the term 'girls' in discussion of middle-class women's work marked a significant shift. The demand for paid work was increasingly identified as coming from 'girls', which meant that, like Higher Education, paid work was a temporary solution to a problem marriage would resolve.

The following paragraphs are devoted to the analysis of those keywords and collocations that refer to specifically gendered concepts, from the link between women and the private sphere (*housekeeping* and *householder*), to more general ideas of work (*woman-worker* and *sweated*), to more specifically gendered job-related roles as *pit-brow*, *midwife*, and *wardress*.

4.5.1 Housekeeping and householders

The term *housekeeping* naturally exhibited gendered connotations as it was considered women's primary occupation, but in suffrage periodicals this was presented as a burden that was sometimes added to other types of work they did outside the home. All the newspapers included in the CBSP seemed to have similar views on this, with *TS* also introducing for the first time the term *co-operative housekeeping* to advocate an equal division of house chores between men and women, a debate which will then continue with second-wave feminism too:

(148)   Though we believed theoretically in Woman Suffrage some years ago, we clung to the tenet that woman's sphere is the home, so far as the drudgery of house-work is concerned. We believed, of course, that a woman might work outside, either from necessity or because she had a great talent to develop, but we never dared to suggest that she should therefore be free of home cares. It seems hard that if she worked long hours in the day she should have to do housekeeping and shopping and sewing in her scanty leisure moments, while the men of the family had a pipe and a book; but, then, women are women and men are men –yes, I am afraid that clinching "anti" argument was in our minds (*VFW*, "The Burden of Housework", 7 April 1911)

(149)   The burdens of housekeeping, though lightened to some extent by the changed system of production, still rest upon women workers, who thus carry on two trades, one of which is unpaid, while the other is apt to be very ill-paid. (*CC*, "The ABC of Women's Suffrage", 14 November 1912)

(150)   Co-operative housekeeping is the only solution of the problem of how to give wives a life really worth living, of how to employ without waste that most priceless thing–the energy of women; and of how to enable wives to reconcile their duty to the family and their duty to themselves. (*TS*, "Married Women's Health", 5 December 1913)

As we may notice from the dates of the articles, it seems that discourses around housekeeping were prominent in the last years of the time span considered in this dissertation: though these coincided with the apex of militancy, suffrage periodicals evidently did not discard other feminist battles concerning women's empowerment. Thus, housekeeping is denounced as a further inequality between the sexes (it being solely women's duty), as a burden which is unpaid, compared to other occupations women have, which are equally low-paid, and, last but not least, as something which should be shared with husbands in order for women to recover their energy and health.

The noun *householder* acquires a specifically gendered implication when it collocates with *women* and this collocation is used to provide arguments that further supported the campaigners' demand for enfranchisement. Indeed, the *OED* itself defined it as "The person who holds and occupies a house as his own dwelling and that of his household; esp. in the law on parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom, one qualified to exercise the franchise by the occupancy, as legally defined, of

a house or tenement"[71]. The Reform Bill of 1867 had extended the franchise to all resident householders that could prove to have paid at least a year's rates. However, women were obviously not included, though this did not mean that there were no women householders in Britain. Thus, with the collocation *women householder(s)*, the editors of suffrage periodicals were trying to provide additional logical reasons for granting women the vote, as reported in the following examples taken from *CC* and *TV:*

(151)   The terms at present are Household Suffrage, and we therefore claim the vote for every woman Householder; but whatever alterations may be made in the future, our demand that they should apply equally to men and women will continue unchanged. (*CC*, "Why Women Need the Vote", 24 May 1910)

(152)   Municipal meetings of men and women, attended by their representatives, should be much more frequent, and organised visits to women householders or municipal voters, not only at election contests, but at other times, should be set on foot, when the visitor, instructed herself in municipal law and in the special needs of the district, would pass on her knowledge to those who, bound to home and business, have no means of gaining such knowledge by themselves. (*TV*, "The Vote and After", 24 June 1911)

The use of the compound nouns *housekeeping* and *householder*, with the first noun clearly denoting women's supposed belonging to the private sphere of the home, enters feminist discourse by acquiring social and political overtones, thus confirming the peculiarity of feminist counter-language and counter-discourse which we have already pointed out before. This tendency aims at deconstructing contemporary ideologies and at the same time building new (gendered) discourses with which Edwardian feminists could identify.

4.5.2 Women-workers

To turn now to those terms that related to work and, therefore, to the public sphere, we may start by analysing the keyword *woman-worker*, which does not have an entry in the *OED*.[72] On the other hand, we do find the noun *working-woman*, but only as subsumed under the entry for *working-man*: "it appears in final position as an entirely subordinate form" and it evidently did not merit an

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[71] We should notice how, in this case, the definition is ungendered, since the lexicographers opted for the neutral noun *person*, which would (at least in theory) include women, too. No gender ideology is to be found in the citations as well.

[72] Interestingly, though, *woman-servant* does have a definition ("A female servant"): this might be interpreted as a reinforcement of the ideology that saw women as unable to obtain paid work outside of the house and thus being confined to the role of housekeepers or, in this case, servants. Obviously, the term could only have negative and belittling connotations, as exemplified also by the quotation taken from *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle* (1855): "A dirty woman-servant opened the door".

entry of its own; "[h]ere too, patterns of silence conspicuously come into play", as well as "the crosscurrents of practice and principle, history and on-going change", which remained an issue (Mugglestone 2013: 47).

These gendered dichotomies and disparities are recovered in the feminist discourse of suffrage periodicals too, where the woman-worker is represented as living in poor conditions and, at the same time, as a figure that could play a pivotal role in the campaign for the suffrage cause, as the enfranchisement could be a benefit for her especially. These views are put forward only by *TV* and *VFW*, which appear to be more sympathetic towards working-class women:

(153)   But what frightened them, I think, was her showing how, for all that men could do, the woman-worker was forcing her way into one industry after another. (*VFW*, "Why? Part 6", 6 January 1910)

(154)   We could easily prove that the average pay of a woman-worker does not constitute a living wage; and it requires only a little experience to realise how sad and disastrous the consequences of such a state of things must be, not to women only, but to the whole of the community. (*TV*, "Why We Want the Vote – The Woman Worker", 29 April 1911)

Another keyword that refers to the general condition of working women is the adjective *sweated*, which was defined in the *OED*, among other things, as "employed in very hard or excessive work at very low wages; oppressively overworked and underpaid; also said of the labour so imposed or exacted". Though sweated labour was certainly an issue common to both sexes between the Victorian and Edwardian periods, we are naturally more concerned here with the collocation *sweated woman (worker)*: this is to be found equally in all three newspapers, and mostly during the year 1913, which evidently means that this was a period in which discourses around women's work outside of the home were of particular prominence in the press:

(156)   I know a young artist whose whole heart is in her studio and her various intellectual interests, and yet who loves her sex even better than her art; whose heart burns with a passion of indignant sympathy for the white slave, the sweated woman worker-- every woman victimised by existing social laws or prejudices. (*TV*, "Modern Dianas", 17 January 1913)

(157)   Suffragist violence is committed with intent to put an end to the violence done to sweated women, to white slaves, to outraged children. (*TS*, "What Militancy Means", 2 May 1913)

(158)   Well, when the time comes, as it soon will, that they have to ask women to vote for them, they will have, for the first time, to consider: "What do the women want? What do the women need? Would any man dare to ask for the votes of a great body of sweated women without offering to try and improve the conditions under which those women worked?" At present, the needs of the women are not considered as are those of the men. (*CC*, "Who Are These Women?", 25 July 1913)

It is noteworthy that the more militant periodicals (*TV* and *VFW)* present more direct views on the matter of women-workers, as they are compared to "white slaves" (example 156) and used to justify militant actions once again (example 157). On the other hand, *CC* uses less harsh tones and simply comments on the fact that women's (and, especially in this case, working women's) needs should be accounted for by those running for elections, just in the same way as men's needs are.

4.5.3 Pit-brow women, midwives, and wardresses

Table 14 (see § 4.1) also shows that, among the keywords related to gender and work, we can also find *pit-brow*, *midwife*, and *wardress*, which are both examples of specific gendered jobs and a reference to some key questions that were debated at the beginning of the twentieth century. First of all, pit-brow women were female source labourers that worked at British collieries (i.e. coal mines) until the Mines and Collieries Act of 1842 prohibited the employment of children under ten years of age and of all women from working in underground mines. However, this act was easily sidestepped by connivant employers and women who were desperate to find work, even if lowly paid. Indeed, the 1842 Act had caused great discomfort and unhappiness among women, and especially so in such regions as Lancashire, which based its economy largely on coal mining: thus, many women accepted to continue working in collieries by dressing up as men (penalties for employing women were also very small, and inspectors few, so this practice continued well into the twentieth century). Clothes were precisely what actually caught the attention of British society: pit-brow women's unconventional but practical uniform consisted in clogs, trousers covered with a skirt or an apron, old flannel jackets or shawls, and headscarves to protect them from coal dust. This was considered the epitome of unfemininity, as wearing trousers was deemed outrageous and degenerate.

In terms of language, this expression held specific gendered connotations. A letter by Edith Thompson[73] retrieved from the Archive of the Oxford University Press commented on the use of *pit-brow lasses* or *pit-brow girls* to refer to those women who had already married, too, with *lass* being a dialectal form of *girl* from the northern and north-midland regions of Britain. Thompson reported a quotation taken from an unknown source that recited: "The pit-brow lasses or girls…were, in fact, the daughters and wives of the colliers, were indignant, the more so, as though admittedly rough, they prided themselves on their respectability". In the CBSP, we find the term coined as *pit-brow lasses*,

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[73] She was a historian (author of a popular *History of England*) who hugely contributed to the drafting of the first edition of the dictionary with her consultancy on historical terms.

pit-brow girls, and *pit-brow women*, thus showing a good deal of linguistic variation. What really matters, however, is that discourses built around these collocations usually have a positive prosody which disassociates the views on pit-brow workers from the ideas maintained by the mainstream press. Since we cannot know whether the interests of the suffrage societies in the issues concerning pit-brow women were genuine, we might read this also as a populist strategy to back up those women who were particularly criticised at that moment to obtain their favour in the campaign as well:

(159)   Those who speak with horror of the physical exertion required of pit-brow women and the opposed danger of strain seem to forget that the woman who turns a mangle (deemed a thoroughly feminine occupation) may strain herself too. (*VFW*, Women's Right to Live", 11 August 1911)

(160)   But where work is being actually done, we may legitimately ask for proof of degradation if we are to believe it "degrading". Are these pit-brow lasses degraded, as a matter of hard fact? (*CC*, "The Right to Work", 14 December 1911)

(161)   No suffragist imagines that the vote will bring perfect comfort and happiness immediately, but it will (1) Help to raise the status of women; (2) Make them of value in the political world. (3) Ensure that no more attempts will be made to deprive them of work, as in the case of Pit-Brow girls […]. (*CC*, "The ABC of Women's Suffrage", 1 February 1912)

We may notice how discourses of work are blended with notions of femininity and respectability. As we have seen from Edith Thompson's letter, pit-brow women prided themselves on their own form of respectability and womanliness, though they were also harshly criticised by society for this: *VFW* reminds those who fear that physical exertion may not be suitable for women that washing clothes with a mangle was equally tiresome, but still considered womanly because of the 'feminine' and domestic nature of the task, while *CC* wonders whether pit-brow lasses may really be considered as "degraded" and ensures them that part of the reasons why they are demanding the franchise is to guarantee *all* women the right to work.

The keyword *midwife* alludes to a quintessentially gendered occupation, given the fact that this profession was mainly undertaken *by* women[74] *for* women. However, though we may nowadays take the role and importance of the midwife for granted, it was not so during the period considered here. Indeed, suffrage periodicals devoted entire articles in defence of the midwife both because her treatment was a further cause of gender inequalities (mainly in the payment she received), and because there was still some mistrust towards this figure, especially among the working classes, who often

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[74] But not only; for example, until at the least the eighteenth century, the new figure of the 'man-midwife' arose and was the cause of many gendered debates, with women midwives shunned and men often preferred to assist patients in delivering their babies.

preferred to assist the mother-to-be on their own. In particular, *CC* seems to be the periodical mostly concerned with discourses around midwives:

(162)   I fear in many cases the midwife would not get paid--though the doctor is sure of his fee–and that is how the matter works out in many cases. ("Midwives and the Vote", 6 April 1911)

(163)   It is sometimes forgotten that parturition ought not to be and among working-women often is not, a morbid function. Even those who could afford a doctor frequently prefer to employ a midwife instead. Among a certain rough class it is still too often the practice, in spite of the efforts of Parliament, for neighbours and friends to manage the birth, and no doubt, both mother and child sometimes suffer in consequence. ("The Maternity Benefit", 29 June 1911)

Lastly, the keyword *wardress* represents a peculiar case in feminist discourses concerning women and work. Naturally, the word is gendered by the suffix *-ress*, but questions of gender here become even more important given the particular role *wardresses* (not wardens) had in handling suffragette prisoners in jail and, more specifically, during the so-called forcible feeding, which occurred with validation from the State when the suffragettes went on hunger strike as a form of protest. Once again, discourses concerning wardresses are to be found mainly in *CC*, which denounces not only the outrageous practice of forcible feeding, but also, and probably even more importantly, the fact that women themselves took active part in carrying out such a form of violence towards their "fellow creatures", thus behaving unnaturally and against the feeling of sisterhood which, as we have seen, was at the core of Edwardian feminism. The following excerpts are taken from an article, "The State and Forcible Feeding", published on the *CC* issue of 29 August 1912, and they clearly depict the mixed feelings towards this controversial figure:

(164) Under the orders of these men wardresses have been employed, sometimes unwillingly, sometimes, it is to be feared, willingly, in performing or assisting in acts of brutality, flinging women down, holding or tying them down, pulling their heads backwards by the hair over the edge of a chair, and all the other odious deeds of compulsion, large or small, that accompanied the main violence.

(165)   It is a shocking thought that probably every wardress in the three prisons (Holloway, Maidstone, and Winson Green, Birmingham) where forcible feeding has been carried on must, by compulsory participation in cruel and improper violence, have had her sympathies so blunted and her sense of the dignity of humanity so entirely destroyed, as to have been rendered unfit for the possession of any degree of power whatever over her fellow creatures.

(166)   At first, some wardresses used to shed tears and to turn sick. Under the guidance of the trained healers who are placed in prisons to help and care for prisoners, these women have been taught to be stolidly callous while other women writhed and struggled, half suffocated, or uttered uncontrollable shrieks of pain.

We have thus seen how issues of gender intermingle in discourses around work, too. In particular, the keywords we have analysed here are useful in shedding more light in the controversy about the so-called ideology of the separate spheres: on the one hand, terms such as *housekeeping* and *householder* are used to underline other forms of injustice and inequalities suffered by those women who still adhered to their domestic duties while also having occupations outside the home. On the other, nouns such as *pit-brow (women)*, *midwife*, and *wardress* represent cases of specifically gendered professions which were under the radar of British society at the beginning of the twentieth century. Their explicit connections to women and to 'feminine' qualities proved to be a cause for social dissent for various reasons: while pit-brow women and midwives were defended by suffrage publications, wardresses were decried because of their failure to refuse to help doctors in the forcible feeding of suffragettes, often proving to show no sympathy at all towards the victims of such violence. In any case, we could safely say that all discourses around women and work support the idea of a growing number of women that were entering different professions despite the current ideologies of respectability, separate spheres, and domesticity (see § 1.1). It is also interesting to notice that, while midwives and wardresses were 'conventional' jobs that women had already been doing for a long time given the tasks (i.e., tending for women in labour and for the sick or bereaved) that held intrinsically 'feminine' qualities, the phenomenon of pit-brow girls represented a significant example of gender renegotiation in the field of work too, since this was definitely an 'unfeminine' profession that also required women to dress up as men. Suffrage periodicals used the same ideas of womanhood and womanliness both to defend those women who were under attack because of their jobs, and to accuse those who seemed to be going against their own sex by supporting (male) doctors and politicians in their treatment of hunger-striking suffragettes in prison.

4.6 Feminist counter-language: performing and renegotiating gender

This section of the analysis has confirmed that a key part of feminist discourse in Edwardian suffrage periodicals focused on gender issues. The comparison between normative definitions of gender-related terms in the *OED* and their actual use in the CBSP has shown that a fundamental element of discoursal practices in these newspapers involved the linguistic and ideological renegotiation of keywords linked to womanhood and femininity: we might tentatively label this feature as the creation of a feminist counter-language, which aimed at distancing itself from the patriarchal ideas displayed and acknowledged in the dictionary too.

Table 20 summarises the main differences between *OED* entries and the CBSP which have already been discussed in this chapter. While the column referring to the dictionary provides again the definitions of the various headwords, the one that refers to the corpus provides an outline of the main discourses built around the same terms, which might prove to be useful in the construction of a glossary of the British Suffrage Movement:

Noun	*Oxford English Dictionary*	Corpus of British Suffrage Periodicals
womanhood	(a) the state or condition of being a woman; (b) the state of being a grown woman; the period of life after girlhood; and (c) the disposition, character, or qualities **natural** of a woman or womankind; womanliness.	(a) a revolutionary force which is **awakened** and **released**; (b) an ideal that should be **respected** and **honoured**; (c) a **collective national identity** that needs to be **defended and saved**.
womanliness	the quality of being a woman; womanly character.	an **outdated and patriarchal** idea that should be **either rejected or accepted** and exploited for the suffrage cause.
womanly woman	a woman who behaves in a manner **traditionally** regarded as **appropriate** for her sex; a **feminine** woman; (also in later use) a woman having a full figure and large breasts.	(a) a **threat** for women's empowerment; (b) a figure that is still considered to be a **better alternative** to modern-day suffragettes.
womanly (qualities)	(a) possessing the attributes **proper** to a woman; having the qualities (as of **gentleness, devotion, fearfulness,** etc.) characteristic of women; and (b) in **derogatory** use, with reference to the **bad qualities** attributed to women.	feminine characteristics that should **not be abandoned**, but rather **exploited** to reach a significant step in women's empowerment: this involves losing the **stigma** of slavery and fearfulness commonly attached to women.
unwomanly (woman)	in a manner **unbecoming** a woman.	a woman who **does not want to be empowered**.
suffragist	an **advocate** of the extension of the political franchise, *esp.* (after about 1855) to women.	(a) an advocate of women's enfranchisement who **may use militant methods** in her activism; (b) a campaigner for women's suffrage who only uses **law-abiding or constitutional** methods and

		who may be **scolded** by militants for this.
suffragette	a female supporter of the cause of women's political enfranchisement, *esp.* one of a **violent or 'militant'** type.	(a) a supporter of women's enfranchisement who uses **militancy** to back her cause; (b) a **badge of identity** and **pride**, especially for activists belonging to the **WSPU**.
motherhood	(a) the **condition or fact** of being a mother; (b) the **spirit** of a mother; the **feeling or love** of a mother.	(a) a feminine condition that **justifies** women's enfranchisement; (b) an **unacknowledged burden** for women; (c) a **sacred patriarchal institution** which is not defended by the State.
sisterhood	(a) the state or condition of being a sister; **sisterly status or relationship**; (b) a **society of sisters**; *esp.* a society of women who have taken certain vows and live together under conventional rule, or who are otherwise devoted to religious life, or to charitable work as a vocation; (c) used loosely to define a number of females having some **common aim, characteristic, or calling**. Often in a **bad sense**.	a **cornerstone** and **common bond** that unites feminists, irrespective of beliefs, strategies, class, and regional provenance.
spinster	(a) appended to names of women, originally in order to denote their **occupation**, but subsequently (from the 17th century) as the **proper legal designation of one still unmarried;** (b) a woman **still unmarried**; *esp.* one beyond the usual age of marriage, an **old maid**.	(a) a **troublesome burden** for families; (b) a figure who is **unjustly mocked and derided**.

Table 20: comparison of gender-related keywords between the *OED* and the CBSP.

The adoption of this feminist counter-language mainly concerning the redefinition of gender identities and roles in the pages of suffrage newspapers thus testifies to a revolution in linguistic terms, too, which accompanied the *deeds*, that is to say, the practical actions encouraged by leaders such as Emmeline Pankhurst to prove that women were 'worthy' of being enfranchised. The fact that the actual use of the above-mentioned terms in the CBSP tended to differ starkly from their official and

standardised record in the *OED* mirrored a broader renegotiation of gender which was ongoing at the time, and which found its climax with the Woman Question and the Suffrage Movement.

As Table 20 shows, suffrage periodicals tended to redefine nouns related to gender issues by extending their meanings and definitions and including notions which were (sometimes willingly) neglected in the dictionary and by Victorian and Edwardian British society. This renegotiation could at times be stark, such as in the cases of *womanhood*, *womanliness*, *unwomanly (woman)*, and *motherhood*: in the CBSP, these words acquire meanings and connotations which discarded the patriarchal and often idealised views of what being a woman in this period actually was like and the supposed 'naturalness' of gender roles and identities, and they were frequently accompanied by a general denunciation of social and gender inequalities. At other times, this renegotiation proves to be milder, that is to say, it is presented more as a compromise between traditional and avant-garde views of femininity. For example, the *womanly woman*, though generally condemned as anachronistic, is sometimes still regarded as a better alternative to (militant) suffragettes, while *womanly qualities* are not to be completely abandoned, but rather exploited for a different aim, and *spinsters* are still seen both as a problem and as unjustly mocked and shunned by society at the same time.

Lastly, the redefinition of certain specific terms in the CBSP offers more insights into the language of British first-wave feminist movement. In the case of *suffragist* and *suffragette*, we have seen how suffrage newspapers and societies actually had a less polarised view of these figures and, most importantly, how the noun *suffragette* became an important emblem of identity despite its misogynistic and derogatory origin, while the term *sisterhood* attained a specific feminist connotation which stuck with later generations as well.

While the creation of a feminist counter-language can thus certainly be considered as a key element of feminist discourse in suffrage periodicals, the adoption of a post-structuralist and discoursal approach to language and gender has also allowed us to ascertain how the latter is not a naturalised, but, rather, a cultural production, which is never static or fixed, but always fluctuating. The empirical documentation presented in this chapter has shown that gender identities and roles are presented as both social and individual variable and they are to be placed along an imaginary continuum, rather than being polarised at the extremes. In the CBSP, gender is both constructed and performed through the use of language and the writers' identity and agency. As we have previously said, both writers and, implicitly, readers are interpellated in social (gender) identities that already exist: their response to gender ideologies of the time produces a mixture of domestic and radical femininities which constantly challenges the status quo and the supposed naturalness of gender roles. The analysis of feminist discourse has demonstrated that the construction and performance of gender

occurs through the redefinition of some specific key terms, through debates on womanliness, and the renegotiations of emerging womanhood(s), which evidently had to do with enfranchisement, empowerment, and militancy. The productive change and revision of language and discourses brought forward by feminist ideas discerns not a clear-cut division between two binary poles (as put forward by the gender ideologies of the separate spheres, of respectability, and of domesticity), but rather the presence of fluid identities which are positioned along the above-mentioned continuum and which are linked to collective and individual agency and to the different editorial policies and strategies of the newspapers included in the corpus and, consequently, of the suffrage societies that published them.

The following chapter will focus on specific discourses around militancy (already anticipated in § 4.3) and the investigation of social actors in specific case studies, thus continuing in more detail the analysis of how these blended with issues of gender, womanliness, and respectability.

PART III

FEMINIST DISCOURSES AND COUNTER-DISCOURSES

CHAPTER 5

GENDERING DISCOURSES OF MILITANCY

5.1 Feminist activism through language

In the previous chapters, we pointed out how the concept of 'ladylike' and 'unladylike' behaviour had a strong influence on notions of propriety and correctness, despite it being simultaneously questioned and renegotiated in the British feminist press of the time. As Kingsley Kent (1999: 179) asserts, this created gendered dichotomies according to which "women were aligned with morality and religion, whereas men represented corruption and materialism. Women were construed as occupying the ethical centre of industrial society, invested with the guardianship of social values, whereas men functioned in a world of shady dealings, greed, and vice, values generally subversive of a civilized order". This ideal was also present in early Victorian instances of feminism, and it might be regarded as "an acknowledgement of the power of the dominant ideology rather than a demonstration of belief in it" (Billington 1988: 122). As the writer Sarah Stickney Ellis stated in her *The Women of England* (1838), the pressure on ideas of respectability and femininity was such that

> the dread of being censured or condemned, exercise(d), I am inclined to think, a far more extensive influence over [woman's] habits and her feeling […] any deviation from the fashionable mode of dress, or from the established usages of polite life, present(ed) an appalling difficulty to a woman of ordinary mind brought up under the tutelage of what is called the world. […] She cannot – positively cannot – dare not – will not do anything that the world has pronounced unlady-like.

Indeed, women were regularly constructed as guardians of morals and manners: following the axiom put forward by Florence B. Jack in *The Woman's Book* (1911), "Manners makyth Man and woman too, for if good manners are so essential to man, are they not then indispensable to woman, whose great object in life is to please?"[75]. This maxim applied to linguistic behaviour as well, therefore censuring "the indecorous and the impolite, the 'vulgar' and the 'improper'. The marked consonance of ideologies of both gender and linguistic correctness was clearly of utility in this context"

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[75] This is just an example of a conduct book for women, a genre which was extremely popular already during the Victorian era; other noteworthy titles of the time include *Woman's Worth*, *Girls and Their Ways. By One Who Knows Them*, *The Lady's Reader*, and *The Young Lady's Book*.

(Mugglestone 2007: 139-40). Thus, women were subjected to heightened sensitivities towards issues of 'right' and 'wrong', 'good' and 'bad', 'purity', 'refinement', and 'propriety'.

In a conduct book of 1834 that bore the title *Etiquette, Social Ethics and the Courtesies of Society*, notions of refinement and the associated feminine identity and behaviour combined both cultural and linguistic pressures, asserting that women were never to "approve a mean action, nor speak an unrefined word": thus, ideas of propriety could play a key role within many normative descriptions and prescriptions of idealised femininity which often infringed on discussions on language too (*ibidem*: 140). The audience was explicitly constructed as 'female', with this term obviously referring to the mainstream definition to be found in reference works such as the *OED*, as we have seen in Chapter 4. Such cultural and linguistic pressures had already been commonly exerted on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women from their earliest years: "[w]idely prevalent in magazines, in manuals of housekeeping, in contemporary literature, and even in education, as much as in those works expressly directed towards prescriptions of 'ladylike' conduct, such attitudes and ideals secured wide dissemination" (*ibidem*: 145). Theories that linked linguistic behaviour and femininity mainly had to do with accents (the so-called 'talking proper') and managing speech correctly: indeed, "for the woman, the use of a loud voice, standing as it does outside the stated canons of acceptability, was often regarded as manifesting obvious deficiencies in status as well as sensibility. It was […] 'utterly plebeian'" (*ibidem*: 146). Though the New Woman of the latter part of the nineteenth century attempted to escape the shackles that ideologically bound her (see § 1.1), common attitudes to language and behaviour still popularly depicted her conduct as deviating from the norms of 'true' womanhood. This is emblematised by the label *shrieking sisterhood* applied to militant suffragettes discussed in § 4.4, which put an emphasis on the campaigners' irksome loud voices raised during protests outside the Houses of Parliament, or by the references found in the mainstream press which talked of "*screaming* women" who "belabour constables with umbrellas" (*Daily Mirror*, 14 February 1907; italics mine)[76], or by the epithets "*loose-lipped* youths, silly, *giggling* girls" who were compared to "*ill-educated*, unbalanced animals" for whom "the instinct and passion of life itself is thwarted, and turns to *filth on their lips* and disease in their blood" (*Daily Herald*, "Suffragism and the Vulgar Crowd", 11 February 1913; italics mine).

In this chapter, we will argue that such ideologies and thought styles were challenged in suffrage periodicals. This was done by examining to some depth the discourses concerning militancy that were anticipated in Chapter 3 (when analysing the frequency of words related to this topic) and

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[76] Unless otherwise specified, the excerpts taken from mainstream newspapers cited from now on (both in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6) were retrieved by consulting the collection of newspaper cuttings of the Women's Suffrage Movement Archives held at John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.

in Chapter 4 (when considering the gendered debates concerning the lemmas SUFFRAGETTE and SUFFRAGIST). Firstly, the analysis will show how the writers' identities and stances towards gender, authorship, and militancy emerges through the language used and the strategies used to sign their articles (e.g., the creation of 'personae', the choice of anonymity, the use of a full name, etc). Secondly, by analysing the keywords grouped under the semantic category of "militancy" in the whole of the CBSP and then within each periodical (and sub-corpus), we will show the different points of view presented by the three suffrage publications and how they intertwined with the notions of gender already explored in the previous chapter, and how they interlaced with the representation of the social actors.

This part of the investigation means to clarify how feminist campaigners violated ladylike norms of behaviour both by the use of militant strategies and the construction of discourses that went against standard conceptions of what was acceptable and 'feminine'. Emmeline Pankhurst herself, when referring to the militant evolution of the suffrage campaign in her biography *My Own Story* (1914), declared that "we threw away all our conventional notions of what 'ladylike' and 'good form' was", thus challenging the power distribution of Edwardian patriarchal society (Digby 1992: 212). The relevance of militant language in suffrage newspapers as another element that threatened to break the (gendered) status quo was such that an anonymous letter to the editor of the *Manchester Guardian* of April 1912 stated: "Sir, may you allow me to protest in your columns against the arguments of Miss Evelyn Sharp?[77] It is a great pity that a woman of such unquestioned honour and uprightness of character should employ such *grossly immoral language*" (italics mine), thus clearly highlighting the link between language, gender, and, in this case, social status. By analysing how militancy discourses became specifically gendered in suffrage periodicals, and how 'unladylike' language was used to report and comment on militancy, it is thus possible to investigate on yet another aspect of gender renegotiation, to claim that the language of militancy was a key part of feminist discourse, and, last but not least, to argue that women began to consider themselves guardians of morals, manners, and civil rights, too, since militancy proved to be fundamental in the fight for the vote.

5.2 Linguistic militancy

The resort to militancy in political campaigns was by no means a novelty of Edwardian Britain. It was already part of the political culture of the Victorian era, which was "steeped in the

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[77] She was a key figure within the WSPU and editor of *VFW*, and she was among the most militant members of the campaign for women's suffrage.

constitutionalist idiom and infused […] with a popular consciousness of the right of resistance to political tyranny" (Nym Mayhall 1995: 343). Of course, the true innovation regarded the fact that, this time, militancy was being used by *women*, and the very idea of it caused a great shock in contemporary society. Suffrage militancy was not simply a set of practices initiated by the WSPU, but it was deeply connected with the wider political and cultural currents of the time. The campaigners adopted older forms of protests borrowed from traditions of male popular radicalism and these practices became specifically gendered when feminist activists adopted them to highlight "what they saw as the arbitrary and historically anomalous exclusion of women from the constitution" (Nym Mayhall 1995: 344). As we have already anticipated, the use of militancy gave rise to vital debates about its scope, meaning, and utility, which also questioned the existence of the simple dichotomy between militant suffragettes and constitutional suffragists, already highlighted when discussing such terms in the CBSP and the representation of gender(ed) identities. At the same time, this also naturally kindled further heated debates *against* women's enfranchisement, such as demonstrated, for example, by the letter directed by one Wilfred Ashley to *The Morning Post* of 6 March 1912:

> […] personal attacks on Ministers, assaults on the police, destruction of public property, culminating during the last few days, at a time of grave public peril, in senseless damage to the premises of innocent tradesmen, have been the means employed to convince the House of Commons and the country of women's fitness to exercise the Parliamentary franchise. I therefore, for one, shall feel compelled to vote against the extension of the franchise to women till those who demand a share in the government of this country show by their conduct that they mean to carry on their propaganda in a constitutional manner.

Even though reality was much more complex than this simple dichotomous relationship[78], it is certainly true that the codification of the constitutional versus militant dualism forced women who wanted to play a key role in the movement to choose between the two poles in characterisations of themselves and in finding a sense of collective identity (Nym Mayhall 2000: 323). Militancy could be seen as either a desperate measure on the part of the politically irrational or as a means of enabling collective (female) political activism, a crucial point over which the different societies eventually diverged and which revealed a problematic relationship between the personal and the political, as women were constantly torn between the desire to be empowered and the tenets of respectability and domesticity (Heilmann 2002: 572). As the constitutional activist Edith Ellis wrote in the *Daily Mail*

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[78] An article by one Lady Grove on the wrongness of militant suffragism which appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* of 1 March 1912 epitomises the complexity of this debate: "[…] one does not necessarily admire people because they unfortunately oblige one to recognise their existence. These foggy animadversions are a par with the accusations made by those imbeciles, both men and women, who call one a traitor to a cause when one expresses indignation at actions that one honestly believes to be inimical to that cause […]".

of 25 February 1913 in an appeal to fellow campaigners, "Break hearts – not windows". Ultimately, as Evelyn Sharp wrote in her autobiography *Unfinished Adventure* (1933), the main difference between the constitutionalists and the militants was that "either you saw the vote as a political influence, or you saw it as a symbol of freedom" and, in the latter case, militancy became an "imperative need" (cited in Heilmann 2002: 571).

A key element of militancy was represented by language and discourses in suffrage periodicals. Once again, topics that concerned politics or women's civil rights were not newly found in writings by women, as the proto-feminist battles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had already been fought in cultural and social arenas that later paved the way to more radical changes (Hodgson-Wright 2006: 13-4). In this period, writing was the very first way to make women's voices heard also in areas usually thought to be outside of their sphere of competence: "the very act of a woman publishing, or publicly pronouncing her own polemic, constituted a challenge to patriarchal authority" (*ibidem*: 5). Indeed, a new genre was specifically created in response to anti-woman invectives of the times, and this is what Teague and de Haas (2004: 50) refer to as "defences of women", which included both literary catalogues that praised exemplary women and the more formal polemical defences that characterised the so-called *querelle des femmes*.

Language was also fundamental in creating discourses that were specifically aimed at deconstructing misrepresentation and misinformation about the suffrage movement found in the mainstream press. In Chapter 4, we saw how keywords concerning gender created a true counter-language that characterised feminist discourse in suffrage periodicals, and how words like *suffragette* became a badge of pride and identity even though they were coined with deliberate misogynist and patronising intentions. Indeed, conservative newspapers representing the British Establishment often used other neologisms and creative language to refer to women campaigners in belittling tones, and thus suffragists and suffragettes alike had to defend themselves from offensive terms that were once again created to ridicule the Woman Question and its supporters. For instance, the *Standard* of 30 January 1913 labelled militants as *female Bashi-bazuks*:

> […] I hope, however, his society will protest most forcibly against the female *Bashi-bazuks* who disgrace the regular army of women who are working to raise the status of humanity. Out there one feels the difference between the fanatic who avenges himself on his foe by gouging off his nose is a difference in degree only, and not in principle, from the letter destroying and window-smashing tactics that have lately disgraced the womanhood of England. Speaking for myself, I can say that it was the actions of these *Bashi-bazukesses* that caused me to join the Anti-Suffrage League after over twenty years' support of the Suffrage cause.

The word *Bashi-bazuk* (cited here with a spelling variation, as the normative entry in the dictionary is reported as *Bashi-bazouk*, and with the purposely-created female form *Bashi-bazukesses* too) refers to "a mercenary soldier belonging to the skirmishing or irregular troops of the Turkish army; notorious for their lawlessness, plundering, and savage brutality" and, in a figurative sense, to "an 'irregular', a skirmisher", as reported in the *OED*. Thus, the militant suffragettes were compared to brutal savages who had no respect either for other people's lives or for propriety.

In the same way, these campaigners were also labelled as *bombazines* by the *Daily Express* of 20 February 1913 following the outrage on Walton-on-the-Hill, when a bomb exploded at the new house of Lloyd George (Chancellor of the Exchequer), and the suffragettes were identified as culprits after "hairpins were found among the debris". Curiously enough, the meaning of this word seems to have been changed for the purpose of this article alone, as the commonly-accepted one reported in the *OED* is "silk-worm, silk" or "raw cotton": the pun is thus intended on the noun *bomb* followed by the suffix *-ine*, which like *-ette* in *suffragette* (§ 4.3), signalled something with feminine qualities, small in size and figuratively importance (in a figurative sense). The author of this editorial laments that "[t]he appetite of these criminal lunatics who are wrecking their cause grows by what it feeds on. First stones, then arson, then a hatchet, and now bombs. […] It is, of course, vain to argue with these women. […] Is the female bombardier to escape the consequences, however grave, of her action by the expedient of the hunger strike? If so, it is folly to talk of law and order".

Another word used by the *Standard* of 21 February of the same year is *pétroleuses*, that is to say, female supporters of the Paris Commune who were accused of burning down much of the city in May 1871 by using bottles full of petroleum or paraffin (thus similar to a modern-day Molotov) which they threw into cellar windows in a deliberate act of spite against the Government. The article, published after the outrages at Kew Gardens, where the suffragettes had set the Orchid Houses aflame, explicitly states that "[t]hese female Anarchists are working themselves into the condition of the *pétroleuses* of the Paris Commune" and that "the language used just now by Mrs Drummond and Mrs Pankhurst bears all the stamp of *la grande folie*. If these ladies know what they are saying they are certainly unfit to be at large." It is certainly worth noticing how, when inventing neologisms or simply looking for new ways to belittle feminist campaigners, the mainstream press usually turned to borrowings from foreign languages. The choice to use foreignisms may indeed not have been chance: the sense of "moral superiority" towards anybody considered as foreign had certainly been accentuated with the expansion of the British Empire during the Victorian era. As a result, suffragettes, already deemed to be 'undesirable' for Edwardian society, were alienated further with foreign terms strategically used to misrepresent them in the press.

While women's political writings and debates concerning civil rights had been circulating in Britain for at least a couple of centuries, the suffrage periodicals were restricted mainly to the use of militant language and militancy discourses, which were defined as 'unfeminine' or 'unladylike', that is to say, not in accordance or supposedly appropriate to the feminine character. We will see in the following sections how debates on militancy concerned the use of language, with each periodical adopting different linguistic strategies to convey their own messages in covering news about the Woman Question and, specifically, about important events linked to militancy.

5.3 Gender, authorship, and militancy discourses

As we saw in § 1.4, the birth of feminist periodicals offered women professional opportunities (in journalism) which had hitherto proved to be unavailable for them. More specifically, it was precisely their expanding interest in matters concerning the so-called public sphere that represented a true novelty in terms of authorship and the acknowledgment of their authority over such issues. Indeed, as Fraser et al. have observed (2003: 30), Victorian periodicals intended for a female audience had mainly recognised women's authority in the domestic (or private) sphere through their "mentoring advice in their own person or over a female signature". Furthermore, women had been mainly characterised as consumers and commodities, while being also ideologically excluded from participation in economy or, indeed, politics: "the niche audience of most women's magazines remained the woman with domestic responsibilities such as servants and babies to manage" (*ibid*., 42).

The gradual move from anonymity to identification (described in § 1.3) was all the more significant for suffrage periodicals, since, by deciding to sign an article on militancy with their own true names, feminists were publicly and unashamedly endorsing not only the cause for women's enfranchisement, but, even more importantly, the use of more or less extreme militant methods to pursue their ideals. Given the gender ideologies referred to in § 1.1, this move was certainly not an easy one, though it undoubtedly helped the renegotiation of the concepts of womanhood and femininity, as well as identities and roles for women, who gradually shifted from being seen as 'passive' consumers to 'active' campaigners.

Within the Victorian press, such female authors as Caroline Norton, Mary Howitt, Harriet Martineau, and Margaret Oliphant had already established themselves as professional writers through signing several important contributions for periodicals (Fraser et al. 2003: 38). In the case of suffrage

journals, such opportunities were available not only for prominent literary figures such as these, but also for those women who had no writerly ambition beyond a desire to contribute to the feminist campaign. Most of the editorials contained in the CBSP were indeed signed by the leaders of the movement and of the different societies: for *VFW/TS*, Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, Emmeline Pankhurst, her daughter Christabel, and Evelyn Sharp; for *TV*, Charlotte Despard and Theresa Billington Greig; for *CC*, Millicent Garret Fawcett and Lady Isabella Somerset. In all such cases, the identity projected in their articles was more or less the same, that is to say, that of an upper-middle class British woman who supported the cause for women's vote. As easily imaginable, however, their identities mainly clashed around the topic of militancy, so that we could identify them clearly as either suffragettes (Pethick Lawrence, the Pankhursts, and Sharp) or suffragists (Despard, Billington Greig, Garret Fawcett and Lady Somerset).

Issues of authorship and militancy discourses become much more interesting if we take a look at letters to the editor. Here we might distinguish a number of (gendered) identities and intertwined attitudes towards militancy which are shown both through the way authors decided to sign their letters and the specific language they used. As reported in § 2.4, letters to the editor only make up 5% of the CBSP, with just 36 articles out of 715. However, the files in the corpus contain the whole correspondence columns, so that, if we consider the single letters for each file, we can actually identify 125 sub-texts to be analysed separately. By taking into account the different ways women signed their missives and the words they used to express stance towards militancy, we may further shed a light on issues of authorship, gender, and respectability vs. 'unladylike' language. Table 21 shows the different strategies used to sign letters and represent gendered and militant identity in suffrage newspapers:

Strategies	*Frequency*
Anonymity	8
Acronyms	10
Pseudonyms	11
Surnames	36
Full names	60
Additional information	66

Table 21: strategies to signal authorship and identity in letters to the editor of the CBSP.

The various techniques included in the Table correspond, in an ascending climax order, to the writers' willingness to express their identity and, consequently, take credit (or run risks) for their words. As can be seen, cases of anonymity occur only 8 times, meaning that such a practice was being gradually abandoned and that women no longer had to hide behind it to express views on matters which were judged to be 'uncomfortable' or 'unwomanly'. Indeed, the most popular device was to sign their names in full, as the 60 occurrences clearly underline.

This did not mean that alternative strategies were not used to sign letters. Other more subtle and possibly less face-threatening ways in which women chose to negotiate their gendered identities along with their adherence to militancy are evident from the table. By proceeding along the continuum that ranges between anonymity and the use of full names, we find that some women preferred to employ acronyms (10 occurrences). While this strategy was certainly deemed to be 'safer', as it did not reveal anything about the author's identity, it is still significant to recognise its importance in gradually discarding anonymity in favour of some sort of identification. One case in particular, taken from *VFW* (15 March 1912), exemplifies how women occasionally decided to state their ideological position by signing with an acronym ("F.M.G." in this case):

> No, the success of militancy lies far deeper. It is due to the magnificent demonstration which has been given of self-sacrifice and devotion. The old, old truth is being illustrated once more that no victory worth winning can be won apart from suffering. Writing from my comfortable fireside, I cannot bring myself to wish for anything but the lightest sentences and most considerate treatment for the women who have greatly dared in the cause of freedom: yet I know that the sorer their punishment the nearer the triumph of your cause. No suffering for righteousness' sake has ever been endured in vain.

Again, even though this type of signature does not allow us to gain much knowledge about the writers' identity, because she is "writing from my comfortable fireside", we might presume she belongs to the upper-middle class. Although she is convinced about the usefulness of militancy, she is not, apparently, an active member of the WSPU, as she only wishes for fair treatment of those suffragettes who had been led to prison and had already undergone the cruelty of forcible feeding.

Letter writers sometimes used pseudonyms or created personae (11 occurrences) to avoid signing with their true names: see, for instance, *a Labourer*, *a signer of your petition*, *a Westmoorland Suffragist*, *Chairman of a militant suffrage union*, *one dissentient*, *Waverer*, *a Patriot*, *Glasgow Women Teachers*, *One who has always believed in her fellow-women*, *Oxford Graduate*, *The Chauffeur*. These writers' attitude towards militancy is occasionally further expressed in the contents

and language used in their letters. For example, "a Labourer", in *CC* (11 November 1909), expresses her firm belief *against* the use of militant methods in this way:

> It cannot be too widely known that this society is in no way connected with any militant society in England; this fact should be made known all over England; if not, the people will class other societies with this. I spoke to one man and told him we had no connection with any militant society. Pointing to our banner, he said "Look. National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies!' there you are! Societies! You are one of them!" I at last convinced him that we were not. On Saturday I tried to sell some copies of "The Common Cause" in Peckham where I am known very largely. The first copy I asked a publican to buy, but he did not believe women ought to have the franchise. After a long talk he bought it, but so great is the working-man's indignation at the outrage, that to mention Women's Franchise is like showing a red flag to a bull.

The pseudonym chosen by this author is significant, as the word *labourer* is defined in the *OED* as "one who labours", and, more specifically, as "one who performs physical labour as a service or for a livelihood; *spec.* one who does work requiring chiefly bodily strength or aptitude and little skill or training, as distinguished, e.g., from an artisan […]". This term can surely give us further insight into the writer's identity: we understand she is a maidservant or a member of the working class (thus in contrast with the upper-class women who signed the editorials), or more simply one who 'laboured' for the cause of women's franchise. Her views on militancy are quite clear given her contribution to the campaign by selling *Common Cause* and her description of the negative atmosphere surrounding the Women's Suffrage Movement, created, in her opinion, precisely by those societies who used more radical methods.

Examples taken from *VFW/TS* present opposite views on militancy. A "Patriot" states "In this time of trials and unjust treatment of the W.S.P.U. leaders, Thackeray's advice should be good for your cause: 'Dare, and the world always yields. If it beat you sometimes, dare it again, and it will succumb!'" (15 March 1912). "Patriot" chooses to indicate her own ideas in favour of militancy by quoting William Makepeace Thackeray's sentence taken from the novel *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* (1844): in this way, we are not given any more details about her identity, but we may discern that she is a woman from the upper-middle class who spends her leisure time reading, given her familiarity with nineteenth-century literature. In another instance, "One who has always believed in her fellow-women" writes "Is not this an unanswerable proof of the wisdom of the methods of the militant leaders of the Woman's Movement? But for them, another generation or two, I verily believe, would have gone by before this silent suffering of the great seemingly acquiescent mass would have found out a way to freedom" (13 August 1909). In this case, the author of the letter professes her devotion

to the cause both through the use of the pseudonym "Patriot" and by explicitly exposing herself as a supporter of militant methods, which she deems necessary for women's empowerment.

In a bolder move towards identification, many letter writers chose to sign with their surname only (36 occurrences): this meant that their identity could (more or less easily) be traced back to their families, just as their own views could have put their own reputation at risk. Again, the strategical policies of the periodicals are reflected in these women's letters to the editor. For example, "A. H. Wand" writes in *CC* (13 October 1910): "In the meantime we must adopt a tactical position that brings out our full strength and hides our weakness, if weakness exists. We must not put ourselves instead in a position where we appear as a body of screaming women, out of touch with the right thinking of our own sex, and out of touch with the voting strength of the country at large". While there is no direct reference to militancy here, we can still see the implication behind the phrase "body of screaming women", which also referred to medical prejudice against feminist campaigners (see Chapter 6).

In *VFW/TS*, there are also examples of women writing to the editor to tell her about how their vision of women's suffrage has changed in time, as in the case of "E. Spouncer" (13 August 1908):

> DEAR SIR, - I arrived in London a couple of months ago with a very poor opinion of the "disgraceful conduct of the Suffragettes", which naturally all people have who do not take the trouble to find out why these "disgraceful " things are done. […] I am proud to say I am wearing the badge of the Women's Social and Political Union, and am now a keen Suffragette. I cannot help adding that if every one knew the value of a vote I am sure they would unite their efforts with those of the members of the W.S.P.U. to further the cause.[79]

Here, the writer mentions the "disgraceful conduct of the Suffragettes", of which she has probably learnt through their representation in the mainstream press, conditioning her own ideas about them before her arrival in London. The specific reference to "members of the W.S.P.U" and to the "badge of the Women's Social and Political Union" she is wearing implies her change of attitude towards militancy. In another similar example, "F.W. Mussaus", from Nova Scotia (Canada) writes on 21 October 1910: "For I believe it is fundamental! I assure you you have my deepest sympathy in the way you have all nobly worked and bravely suffered. The light must shine soon! —Yours, with true admiration, working in the same cause […]". Not only do these words testify to how the theme of women's suffrage was widespread throughout the (Anglophone) world, and to the periodical's

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[79] It is interesting to see how, despite these periodicals were written *for* women *by* women, the traditional convention of addressing the editor as "Dear Sir" is retained here.

popularity outside Britain, but they also ensure the writer's views on the women who had used militancy and gone to prison for it are clearly communicated.

Whilst the authenticity of letters with such a sympathetic stance is questionable, because they may have been created by the editors of the newspaper itself (as was often the case with letters to the editor), there are just as many letters that do not show such a favourable attitude towards militant methods. The presence of correspondence that, at the same time, both praised and condemned the most extreme forms of militancy shows how internal dialogue was actually encouraged within the pages of feminist periodicals. In the following passage, taken from a lengthy letter sent by "W. Dove-Willcox" on 3 September 1909, the writer presents herself as both a sympathiser of the WSPU and as being contrary to the use of militancy:

> Of course, you are well aware that, whilst there is a small section of our people who undoubtedly approve and loudly applaud the tactics of the W.S.P.U., the carrying out of which have brought all this personal discomfort and danger to life on my daughter-in law, there is a much greater number who reprobate unsparingly the adoption of such extraordinary methods in the attempt to secure something to which the agitators conceive themselves to be entitled. […] Having said this, and having, I trust, made it clear that your Union has my full sympathy in the movement for the enfranchisement of women, may I venture to lodge my strongest possible protest against the course of action mapped out for the members of the W.S.P.U. […] Before closing I think I should say a word about my daughter-in-law. Of her pluck, energy, and determination I had no need for any demonstration such as has been recently forthcoming. For eighteen months she fought with a spirit rarely equalled the dread disease which had attacked my only son; she always wore a smile in the sick chamber, and had a cheery word for the sufferer. Her efforts were unavailing; but the memory of them remains with my loving appreciation, though in the course she is now taking in this movement she is in my judgment utterly misguided, and has my entire disapproval.

In this extremely personal letter, which mixes domestic life with the public campaign for women's enfranchisement, the author refers to her daughter-in-law, whose name is not given, who has been sent to prison because of her militant actions. Interestingly, the editors chose to print the entire text without eliminating her negative comments, thus offering their readers an alternative view of militancy and, at the same time, the chance to answer back and create an internal debate on the matter.

As seen in the table above, in most cases (60 occurrences), women writers decided to use their full names to sign their letters. This represented the most forward way for them to express their opinions on such a delicate and controversial subject as militancy without fearing the consequences this might have on their and their family's reputation. Examples from *CC* show how these women both aligned themselves and their thoughts with the paper's political and ideological stance towards militancy and, at the same time, how they sought to encourage dialogue between societies and find a

compromise that would unite them towards a shared goal. For instance, "Alice M. Wackrill" writes on 6 January 1910:

> Is it possible that these men do not see how they have put themselves into the hands of the militants? To begin with, they have surrendered to them the use of their judgment. So long as the militant party chooses to continue its present tactics they will give no help to the women of whose tactics they approve; if those of whom they disapprove will be pleased to change their tactics, then these intelligent men will give their help to the other party.

While an inherent condemnation of militancy as the cause of yet greater problems for the women's movement is self-evident here, there is another letter, written by "Muriel Petty" just some months later (19 May 1910) that tries to find a reconciliation between the two polarised views of militant methods:

> Madam, — I read in the "C.C." yesterday, "We heartily wish that a great demonstration could be arranged in which there should be no question of militancy but only of the vote". Then why is not the N.U.W.S.S. joining the procession inaugurated by the W.S.P.U., thus making it into a question of the vote only? I know the W.S.P.U. would give us a very hearty welcome, and it seems to me churlish to stand aside and then say this procession is a question of militancy.

Both authors' decision to use their full names is of key importance despite their claims that – in line with ideologies of the time – openly condemned the use of violence by women. Indeed, it shows how these women were not afraid to run risks for what they were saying and for taking part in conversations which they had been barred from up until then.

In *VFW*, we may find an interesting and lengthy letter written by "Violet Hunt" that recounts a specific episode (15 March 1912):

> To the Editors of VOTES OR WOMEN. Dear Editors,—On the night of Monday, March 4, we were coming through Trafalgar Square, when we noticed a member of the W.S.P.U. with a few *Votes for Women* in her hand surrounded by a hostile and even threatening crowd. We walked to her side, thinking that three people would stand a better chance in such a crowd than one. Though we had neither colours nor badges on, and as far as I can remember we did not speak, yet immediately the crowd collected round us, and with cries of "Trample them down!" and "Push them under a taxi!" pushed us to Whitehall with unnecessary violence. The lady who had previously been selling papers had them snatched from her hand, and suddenly a man, who would have appeared respectable to the ordinary view, lifted his clenched fist and struck her a heavy blow on her chest. There were cries of "Shame!" even from the men pursuing us, though they made no effort to punish the assailant. A policeman was standing near watching the scene calmly, and though he was asked to arrest the man for assault, he ignored the request, and told us we were

> causing an obstruction, the man in the meanwhile having run away, crying, "She assaulted me first!" It seemed to me that the attitude of the public towards personal and wilful violence should be known when women are suffering such penalties for reparable injury to property.

The letter addressed the public's reaction towards the suffragettes just days after their window-smashing raids in the West End of London and recounts a specific episode in which a paper-seller was beaten just because of her connection with the WSPU. Although there are no direct references to window-smashing or to the use of militancy and the author's support of it, the fact that the writer uses her full name when recounting the event underscores her courage: from this testimony anyone could have linked her with the suffrage movement and, more importantly, with its militant branch.

As a final point, it is important to highlight how sometimes (in 66 cases out of 125) women letter-writers added significant details to their signatures, whether they were mere acronyms or full names. Thanks to these it was possible to gain better insight into their identity and the ideas they supported. In 4 cases women chose to add honorifics which disclosed their marital status. There is a "Mrs Bessie F. Barret" (*CC*, 14 October 1909), a "(Mrs) K. H. Armistead" (*CC*, 1 December 1910), a "(Mrs) Madeline Grubb" (*CC*, 13 October 1910), and a "Miss Hunt" (*VFW*, 15 March 1912). Interestingly, the honorifics from *CC* all correspond to married women (though in 2 cases out of 3, this is put into brackets, so as not to give too much importance to it). The only example from *VFW* refers instead to an unmarried young woman or to a spinster.

More often (in 14 cases), women added extra information that was useful for understanding their ideological stance towards militancy. The majority of these examples come from *CC*, where we mainly find letters signed by women who had some kind of role within suffrage societies, for example, Elsie Mali (Vice-president of the Edinburgh National Society for Women's Suffrage), Margaret G. Bondfield (from the People's Suffrage Federation), Margaret Llewellyn Davies (Joint Honorary Secretary of the P.F.S. League), Margaret Sion (Honorary Treasurer of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies), and Annie M. A. P. Rogers (Secretary of the Association for the Education of Women in Oxford). In particular, Edith Tattersall (President of the Liberal Women's Suffrage League) writes on 7 December 1909 about the problem of militancy and of the campaigners' lack of support of the Liberal government in this way: "If you had quoted the whole of my letter, your readers would have seen that I described the present serious development of militant tactics as something worse than mere rowdyism. […] May I add that the constant bitterness shown towards the Liberal Government by many of the constitutionals is doing almost as much harm to our cause as the actions of the militants".

Very often (48 times), women also decided to include direct references to where they lived or were writing from, either by indicating the city or their full address. When paired up with a full name, this constituted the most direct and complete way for a woman to be identified and thus to display her public identity along with her views on militancy. Curiously enough, in *CC* we seem to find much more variety concerning the regional and social origin of letter writers, many of whom were from London neighbourhoods (Annie Chater from Fulham, Dorothea Sanger from Chelsea, Marian E. Mackenzie from London, and Rose Mahany from Streatham, for example), from Southern England (B. Candler from Sussex, E. Vaughan from Essex, Evelyn A. Withinton from Haywards Heath in West Sussex), from the Nort-West of England (E. Chaplin Macclesfield from Cheshire and Eleanor F. Rathbone from Liverpool), from the Midlands (C. E. Houghton from Birmingham), from the North-East (E. B. Smith from Newcastle, Marian S. Wilkinson from York), from Ireland (Edith Sanderson from Dublin and Isabella Rowlette from Ireland), and from Scotland (Nellie M. Hunter from Glasgow). In comparison, the authors of letters to the editor of *VFW/TS* seemed to be mainly coming from London: apart from Adeline M. Chapman from Scotland, A. B. Larney from Gloucestershire, Ines McLiton from Kent, Jessie Smite from Bristol, and P. Wilkinson from Nottinghamshire, these women were chiefly writing from such neighbourhoods as Bloomsbury, Hampstead, Clapham, Willesden, and Marble Arch. Whilst this certainly does not mean that the periodical of the WSPU did not have any influence beyond the English capital, it might be indicative of the fact that women remained wary of the militant actions of this society, and only those living in London (and, therefore, directly experiencing the suffrage 'outrages') were prepared to be linked with them.

After having analysed issues of authorship, gender, and identity concerning militancy discourses, we will now have a more detailed look at the 'unladylike' language of militancy used in suffrage periodicals to support or condemn these methods.

5.4 Militancy keywords in the CBSP

As anticipated, the keywords extracted from the CBSP following the method already explained in § 2.4 included words that specifically referred to militancy. Table 22 reports them divided into subcategories:

Militant methods	*militancy/militant, violence, unconstitutional, hooligan, rebellion, law-breaker/law-breaking, heckle, revolt, tactic, incitement*

Forms of oppression and punishment	*subjection, coercion, Holloway, prison, oppress, imprisonment, gaol*
Constitutional methods	*non-militant/anti-militant, law-abiding, constitutional*

Table 22: keywords referring to militancy in the CBSP.

At a first glance, it is possible to make some preliminary observations. To begin with, the dichotomy "militant vs constitutional" was clearly an issue in the pages of suffrage newspapers. That said, the keywords pertaining to the subcategory "Militant methods" are more numerous than the ones belonging to "Constitutional methods". This might suggest that conversations around several aspects of militancy, such as its appropriateness and its questionable 'unfeminine' character, were more popular than defences of non-militant or constitutional strategies. Indeed, we saw how many of the militant collocates refer to gender (*militant suffragette/suffragist* and *constitutional/non-militant/anti-militant/law-abiding suffragist*), which reinforces the idea that discourses around militancy were deeply intertwined with those concerning gender, and that they were crucial in the renegotiation of gender roles and identities at the turn of the century.

Furthermore, we can see how the second subcategory in Table 21, "Forms of oppression and punishment", may also be related to discourses around militancy if considered as being the direct consequences of the strategies adopted by suffrage campaigners. Indeed, the newspapers in the CBSP constantly addressed issues of *subjection*, *coercion*, and *imprisonment* in relation to women who decided to actively support the fight for the vote. More interestingly still, they devoted their attention to women's treatment in prison, as the recurrence of such keywords as *prison*, *Holloway*[80]*, and *gaol* demonstrates. Discussions, in fact, mainly revolved around suffragettes as Second Division Prisoners (i.e. less important than political offenders) and around their hunger-strikes and consequent forcible feeding. These discourses will be further considered in the second part of this chapter.

The initial step of the analysis concerning discourses around militancy takes into consideration keywords, collocates and expanded concordances. However, since a significant number of keywords related to militancy have already been discussed in Chapter 4, when dealing with issues of gender, the following section will take into account only *militancy* and *violence*, to ascertain any differences

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[80] Although there were several prisons were suffragettes were confined (such as Maidstone and Winson Green), Holloway Gaol in London became instantly associated with the suffrage campaign. Indeed, the most important leaders of the movement (Emmeline Pankhurst, Charlotte Despard, and Emily Davison, among others) were imprisoned here. Moreover, the WSPU conferred a special badge (known as the "Holloway Brooch") to those women who had spent some time here. The badge, designed by Sylvia Pankhurst, represented a portcullis (symbol of Parliament) and a broad arrow, associated with prison uniforms, and it was carried by former prisoners with extreme pride.

and/or similarities in the use and meaning of these words across the three periodicals included in the CBSP.

5.2.1 MILITANCY and VIOLENCE

Given the ideologies illustrated in § 1.1, and the general view of women as "guardians of morals and manners" described at the beginning of this chapter, it is certainly of note to find *militancy* and *violence* among the most salient words in the CBSP. Indeed, though the presence of these nouns should not surprise us, given the aims and general contents of the periodicals included in the corpus, it is still important to remember that the use of such 'unladylike' language by middle-class women was certainly condemned by Edwardian society, along with the violent strategies and outrages put forward by the campaigners.

As usual, the first step of the analysis looks at how these words were defined in the *OED*. The headword for *militancy* stated that it was "the condition of being militant" or, "in Herbert Spencer's use: The condition of being a 'militant' community; social organisation framed with a view to a state of war"[81]. On the other hand, *violence* reports many different meanings: the first and most general one being "the exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on, or cause damage to, persons or property; action or conduct characterised by this; treatment or usage tending to cause bodily injury or forcibly interfering with personal freedom". Therefore, although no specific indication of ideological belief seems to be connected with either term, it appears obvious that the choice of words in the feminist press (and elsewhere) when talking about the suffrage movement could be strategical in conveying a precise message to its readership, as *militancy* clearly does not have any reference to any harm being done to people, while *violence* does. Given that both words (and the actions they represent) can be considered as 'unfeminine' and 'unladylike' (according to Edwardian standards of gender), it is interesting to examine how they are used in the CBSP.

Table 23 reports the strongest collocates of *militancy* and *violence.* Because they were sometimes considered as interchangeable and invariably associated with the suffragettes by the mainstream press, it is worth comparing the two in the dedicated newspapers:

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[81] Herbert Spencer was a British philosopher and psychologist; the quotation included in the dictionary is taken from his *Principles of Sociology* of 1877 and it stated: "Where…the chiefly power is small, the militancy is not great".

Militancy	violence
terrified	incitements
Balkans	acts
renewal	hate
threats	bloodshed
Balkan	mob
resort	mild
vigorous	incitement
justification	**resort**
stop	unnecessary
suffragist	disorder
justified	using
Ulster	strife
since	Governments
began	physical
only	use
militancy	Government's
militants	cruelty
W.S.P.U.	suffered
why	committed
evil	methods

Table 23: strongest collocates of *militancy* and *violence* in the CBSP.

First of all, we can see how the only collocate that both words have in common is *resort*, which is used both as a noun and a verb. The choice of this word is significant, as it is employed with the meaning defined in the *OED* as "To have recourse *to* something for assistance or furtherance of an object" and exemplified with the quotation taken from Benjamin Jowett's *The Dialogues of Plato* (1875), which states "The Persian kings… resorted to mercenaries as their only salvation". Therefore, both *militancy* and *violence* are seen as extreme acts that the suffragettes were *forced* to undertake to reach their final goal. Unsurprisingly, these collocates appear only in *TV* and *VFW/TS*:

(167)   For three years our battle for the vote was fought without resort to physical violence on the part of women, in spite of immense provocation. (*VFW*, "Is it Right? Is it Wrong?", 24 September 1909)

(168)   By depending upon unofficial amendments and worthless pledges, instead of fighting for a Government measure, by trusting to the official Labour Party, instead of relying upon themselves, the non-militants are achieving no useful purpose. They are simply delaying the inevitable resort to militancy until dangerously late, and they are leaving the whole price to be given, all the risks to be run, every sacrifice to be made, by the members of the W.S.P.U. (*TS*, "Methods Wise and Unwise", 13 December 1912)

(169)   The vote, therefore, is a powerful weapon. People armed with it do not need to resort to militancy, except in extreme cases. (*TV*, "Covenanters, Militants, and Hooligans", 29 May 1914)

It is, moreover, noteworthy that each periodical used this collocation by associating different subjects (or social actors) with it. In *VFW*, *women* had to resort to violence after years of enduring "immense provocation"; in *TS*, the recourse to militancy is attributed (along with its risks and negative connotations) only to the WSPU, while *non-militants* (again, women) refrain from using such methods and thus obtain no significant result with their campaign. Lastly, *TV* refers to the neutral term *people*, who do not need militancy if they are enfranchised. This is particularly significant when analysing interconnecting discourses about gender and militancy.

The similarities between the two words seem to end here: indeed, the analysis of the other collocates and their concordances shows that *militancy* and *violence* were actually used in different contexts and, once again, with different social actors. The presence of the collocate *W.S.P.U.* reinforces the idea that militant methods were particularly associated with this society. Obviously, this collocation presents a positive discourse prosody, as militancy is celebrated by *TS*, which also highlights yet another gender inequality that lies in the fact that militant men would be more respected for their actions, while the suffragettes were harshly condemned:

(170)   Some of the greatest evils in the world come from having one standard of morality and conduct for men and another standard for women. The attacks upon the militancy of the W.S.P.U. are founded on this double standard. If the Suffragettes were men fighting for their political liberty they would be honoured and admired by the very people who to-day denounce them. ("The Policy of the WSPU", 18 October 1912)

(171)   We have waited in vain for a manifesto signed by those Cabinet Ministers and others who recently denounced the methods of the W.S.P.U. If W.S.P.U. militancy were as devastating and as deadly as Balkan militancy, these pinchbeck moralists would, we have no doubt, respect it as much. ("Shall Women Fight?", 1 November 1912)

The society's paper (*VFW*, later *TS*) tries to provide a defence of suffragette militancy with the recurrent collocates *justification* and *justified*. The rhetorical strategies employed to justify militancy include intertextuality and political knowledge. Indeed, the editors of the newspapers refer to examples of great statesmen from the past who had supported the use of militancy to fight social injustice and to a sort of 'higher moral law' that, in their opinion, would explain and validate the reasons why suffrage campaigners had to use militant methods. These concepts are best exemplified in the following excerpts:

(172)   In the vast extension of our democracy women stand far more powerless politically then they did then, when, by manufacturing votes, they could influence elections; and the justification of militancy, which Cobden pronounced for others who had not that power, applies now equally to them. (*VFW*, "The Woman's Cause and Party Politics", 14 January 1910)

(173)   A renewal of militancy is further justified by the teaching of great Statesmen. Gladstone and Bright are among those who have held it wrong to submit to unjust authority. (*VFW*, "The Only Way", 4 November 1910)

(174)   And again, militancy is justified by the inward consciousness of mankind that it is right to destroy the false things that conceal the truth, that a law laid down by purely human authority must not restrain us from obedience to a law whose foundation is in justice. (*VFW*, "The Only Way", 4 November 1910)

(175)   Everybody admits that there are cases where law may be broken to vindicate a higher law and where violence may be done to prevent a greater violence. We have there the justification of Suffragist militancy . (*TS*, "What Militancy Means", 2 May 1913)

Allusions to previous politicians who had validated militancy seem to be the preferred rhetorical move in the first years of WSPU's activity (i.e., until 1910). In the excerpts above important people like Richard Cobden, John Bright, and William Gladstone are mentioned because of their political opinions. Indeed, Cobden was a Radical and Liberal politician, a campaigner for free trade and peace who played a key role in the repelling of the Corn Laws[82]; Bright had a strong influence on the nineteenth-century working-class movement and on non-conformist political dissent, while Gladstone was a Liberal and, most importantly, one of Britain's most important Prime Ministers, who became known affectionately by his supporters as "The People's William" or "G.O.M.", that is to say, "Grand Old Man". During the first stages of suffrage militancy, therefore, it seems that the only way to justify militant strategies was to compare them to those which had already been used and supported by other political movements of the past, which naturally had been made up entirely of men. Then, with the climax of militancy, the editors of suffrage periodicals adopted another rhetorical move: militancy was justified by "the inward consciousness of mankind" and by a "higher law", that is to say, it was to be adopted without any remorse by those women who wanted to fight for some sort of 'greater good' that could be helpful to them, but also to society as a whole.

While *militancy* is thus associated with the suffrage movement and, specifically, with the WSPU, *violence* is linked to the British Government or to the Police and it is seen as something that is *suffered*, not *perpetrated* by women. The only occurrence of this word in relation to suffrage campaigners as subjects is with the collocation *mild violence*, as reported in the following examples taken from *VFW* and *TS*:

(176)   It would be a pity to build too much upon so slight a foundation; but perhaps we may live to see the men who mob and physically injure women Suffragists and break their shop windows, not only arrested, but punished at least as severely as the women Suffragists who have been impelled to the reluctant use of a mild

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[82] These were taxes on imported grain which were designed to keep prices high for cereal producers in Great Britain. They had the effect of raising food prices and therefore they were staunchly opposed, particularly in urban areas. Ultimately, they were repelled in 1846.

form of violence by centuries of oppression, and later, by years of trickery and injustice at the hands of the Government now in power. (*VFW*, "Woman on a Pedestal", 26 July 1912)

(177)   At Wood Green Police Court, a man who had violently struck his young step-daughter because she resisted his attempts to assault her, and who was said to have previously ruined her sister, was given two months' hard labour. Compare these sentences with those passed on Suffragists for mild acts of violence committed with a pure motive at the back of them, and it will be seen what kind of forces are arrayed against those who are fighting to raise the status of women. (*VFW*, "Woman on a Pedestal", 26 July 1912)

(178)   Strange, indeed, does it seem to single out the Suffragettes for condemnation. Their violence is comparatively mild, and they respect human life, but the policy of male warmakers is first and foremost to destroy human life. (*TS*, "The Martyr Spirit", 28 May 1913)

Though militant methods were amply defended especially by the WSPU, we can see from these examples how the editors of *VFW* and *TS* preferred to foreground the acts of violence committed by *men*, which were considered as being much harsher than the "mild acts of violence" carried out by the suffragettes. Obviously, the choice of expressions such as *mild form of violence*, endorsed as being "a pure motive", is strategical in trying to find justifications for law-breaking actions that mainly included arson and stone-throwing. Indeed, militant campaigners often labelled themselves as *martyrs* and prided themselves in never putting human life in danger, unlike the warlike actions often supported by men in power.[83]

From Table 22 we can see that other potentially interesting collocates of *violence* are *suffered* and *bloodshed*, both of which are associated with other social actors. In the CBSP, violence is suffered *by* women at the hands of patriarchal institutions like the Government or the Police, and it is often compared to a true bloodshed, as reported in the following examples:

(179)   That your tactics are sound is convincingly proved not only by their being identically those to which men have invariably been obliged to resort to on every past occasion before any extension of liberty or right has been effected, but by the extraordinary success of these same tactics, and this in spite of the so-called weaker sex having suffered violence instead of inflicting it, as in past campaigns the men have sometimes done. (*VFW*, "Messages of Encouragement to Women", 2 January 1908)

(180)   Let it be noticed in passing that Lord Randolph Churchill, who was so largely responsible for this violence and bloodshed, was not brought before a court of law, nor even censured in Parliament. (*VFW*, "Powder and Shot for the Campaign", 14 January 1910)

(181)   Women have chosen revolt. And men, too. Seventy women are in prison to-day. What for? Because having suffered violence without retaliation last Friday, they were not prepared to act wholly on the defensive on the following Tuesday. (*VFW*, "We are not Hottentots", 2 December 1910)

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[83] Suffrage militancy was indeed aimed at inanimate objects, like post boxes or shop windows, with the only human victim of violent manifestations being a suffragette, Emily Wilding Davison, who threw herself under a horse during the Epsom Derby (see §1.2)

(182)   In spite of the violence we have suffered, in spite of hospital and prison, there is joy and gladness in this movement to-day as there never has been before. (*VFW*, "We are not Hottentots", 2 December 1910)

Quite interestingly, example (179) makes use of one of the many accusations directed at women (the fact of being considered as "the weaker sex") to highlight how, ironically, these women were able to use successful (militant) tactics to try and reach the goals of the suffrage movement, while at the same time *suffering* (rather than inflicting) violence. Example (180) refers to Lord Randolph Churchill, who was one of the fiercest 'enemies' of women's enfranchisement, despite being a Conservative radical (Winston Churchill's father and ideator of the term "Tory Democracy",) in favour of popular reform. Extracts (181) and (182), on the other hand, both refer to 'Black Friday', an episode of "violence without retaliation" which has already been discussed.

Lastly, we can see how the recurrence of collocational expressions like *the government's policy of/campaign of/violence* clearly marks violence as something mainly committed by British institutions, rather than by the suffrage movement:

(183)   The Government's campaign of violence again women continues, until it seems that there is no indignity, no suffering which Mr. Asquith and his colleagues will hesitate to inflict upon their political opponents in order to serve the ignoble purpose of delaying the political enfranchisement of women. (*VFW*, "Methods of Violence", 8 October 1909)

(184)   Miss Garnett has made her choice, and has gone to prison, there to suffer punishment for her act. It is easy for her critics to express disapproval of what she has done, but it is not so easy for them to say what other means she ought to have taken to express her protest against disfranchisement, and her resentment of the Government's violence towards her comrades. (*VFW*, "The Policy of Revolt", 19 November 1909)

(185)   One of the gravest manifestations of the Government's policy of violence occurred in November, 1910, and more particularly on Black Friday, when a peaceful and unarmed deputation of women went to Parliament Square to seek an interview with the Prime Minister, and were cruelly attacked. (*TS*, "Serious Violence", 16 May 1913)

The analysis of the collocates and concordances of *militancy* and *violence* shows, therefore, how the two terms in suffrage newspapers were not used interchangeably. Unlike general usage, the term *militancy* for the suffragettes pointed to something that created a sense of bonding, identity, and pride, and had nothing to do with *violence*, which was used to refer to the Government's persecution of campaigners' actions and expectations. This analysis therefore highlights the contrast between the three types of newspapers and how different the views in the mainstream press were. Indeed, when discussing the practice of forcible feeding in prison, *The Times* of 4 October 1909 described the suffragettes as "violent and hell-bent on martyrdom", which supports Gupta's (2013) findings that "*The Times* did not frame different suffrage campaigners' support or condemnation of violence as

reflective of different tactical, strategic and political approaches", thus "diminish[ing] the complexity of the movement, making it appear that the disagreements over tactics were individual decisions and that the movement itself was disorganised and inconsistent, with the overall effect of undermining the suffrage campaign" (93).

When analysing militancy discourses, the study of keywords alone can show us only a portion of the full picture. The next sections of this work will therefore take on a more qualitative examination of the corpora, following a Discourse Historical Approach. It will shed light on the features of militant news discourse and, more specifically, on how social actors involved in militancy debates were represented within the pages of these newspapers.

5.5 Militancy keywords and discourses in each sub-corpus

The examination of each sub-corpus and its keywords related to the topic of militancy will allows us to understand better the discourses and to ascertain the main differences and/or similarities that generated debates within the suffrage movement. As usual, the discussion of results will take into account issues of gender too, considering the extent to which the two areas were deeply intertwined in Edwardian feminist discourse.

	Common Cause	*The Vote*	*Votes for Women/The Suffragette*
Unladylike behaviour	*window-smashing; smashing; hunger-strike; agitation*	*revolt; rebellion; incitement; agitation*	*agitation; heckle; revolt; incitement*
Unladylike social actors	X	*law-breaker; hooligan; warrior-woman*	*hooligan; law-breaker; stone-thrower; martyr; prisoner*
Forms of oppression	*coercion; coercive; coerce*	*coercion*	*coercion; Holloway; prison; imprisonment; bondage; coercive; forcible; Cat-and-*

			Mouse; imprison; torture

Table 24: keywords related to militancy in each periodical of the CBSP.

The keywords related to militancy for each periodical reported in Table 24 have been divided into categories that reflect the 'unladylike' nature (at least according to the normative and prescriptive gender ideologies already discussed in § 1.1) of such discourses. Before dealing with every single term, the overall impression is that militancy discourse in suffrage periodicals is definitely prominent – albeit used in a different manner in each newspaper. For example, *CC* includes *window-smashing* and *hunger-strike* (which were among the most notorious techniques used by the militant suffragettes) while *TV* and *VFW/TS* does not. These papers preferred to use terms that referred to more general (but still ideologically 'unfeminine') strategies such as *revolt*, *rebellion*, *incitement*, *agitation*, and *heckle*. Given the constitutional and anti-militant nature of *CC*, it is possible that the discourse prosody around these terms would be rather negative (unlike what happened in *VFW* and *TV*, where they were identified with feminist pride): this theory will be tested with a more detailed analysis in the sections below.

As for social actors, categorised as 'unladylike' because they represent deviations from the normative assumptions of womanhood, we can see how *CC* does not mention any, possibly because the editors chose to keep their focus on constitutional methods and more conservative social roles for women. On the other hand, mentions of 'unladylike' social actors abound in both *TV* and *VFW*, with examples of *law-breaker* and *hooligan* as well as with fiercer terms *warrior-woman* in *TV*, and *stone-thrower*, *martyr*, and *prisoner* in *VFW/TS*, in accordance with the more war-like tones of these latter periodicals.

Lastly, Table 23 also shows terms that refer to forms of oppression directly linked to the consequences of behaving in an 'unladylike' manner or being 'unladylike'. The most commonly used terms are *coercion/coercive/coerce*, indicating how the violation of gender norms was met by the British Establishment. The keywords in *VFW/TS* show more variation in this sense, as we also find terms like *imprisonment/imprison*, *bondage*, *forcible*, and *torture* that point to more forms of oppression against (militant) suffragettes, along with *Holloway* and *Cat-and-Mouse*, which refer to more specific instances of oppression, be they places (Holloway Gaol) or an amendment promoted by the Government (the Cat-and-Mouse Act). In the next sections, focus will be placed upon the keywords related to 'unladylike' behaviours and social actors or gender roles.

5.5.1 Unladylike behaviour

In Chapter 4, we saw how the keywords *womanly/unwomanly* played a key role in debates around concepts of gender and womanhood, and how the renegotiation of the meaning(s) of these words tried to redefine what was considered as womanly or unwomanly in Victorian and Edwardian society. Here the analysis will take into account behaviours that seemingly went against the gender ideologies previously portrayed, in order to provide insights into the linguistic elements that were not deemed to be suitable for ladies (both as writers and as readers) and representative of a novel view in the development of feminist discourse.

As anticipated, *CC* frequently uses the expressions *window-smashing* and *hunger-strike*, which, along with arson and placing bombs, were the militant strategies mostly preferred by the suffragettes. For this reason, it may seem surprising to find them in a periodical that publicly condemned any form of militancy and judged it to be characteristically unfeminine. In actual fact, though, the discourse prosody around these terms is negative, since the discourses do not praise the perpetrators of these actions, but rather denounce them as potentially dangerous for the cause, as shown in the following extracts:

(186)   There has been an undoubted crisis in the Suffrage movement since last Friday, caused by the *intense indignation* naturally aroused by the *window-smashing raids* of *a small group of so-called Suffragettes* on that day and subsequently. ("Broken Windows and After", 14 March 1912)

(187)   Six years of militancy, culminating in the *window smashing raids* of March 1st and 4th, had their large share in bringing about this defeat; and yet the only lesson Miss Evelyn Sharp can draw from the facts is that what is required is "more militancy, and still more and more again," of what defeated us on March 28th. ("In Praise of Constitutionalism", 22 August 1912)

These examples report the collocation *window-smashing raids* and are both taken from the year 1912. As extract (187) reminds us, in March of that year, the WSPU had launched an unprecedented window-smashing campaign which was aimed at the shops of London's West End and was designed to create as much damage as possible in order to raise the pressure on the Government. Specifically, in the weeks before March 1st, Emmeline Pankhurst had sent out invitations to take part in a public protest on March 4: "MEN AND WOMEN I INVITE YOU TO COME TO PARLIAMENT SQUARE ON MONDAY, MARCH 4TH 1912 at 8 o'clock to take part in a GREAT PROTEST MEETING against the government's refusal to include women in their reform Bill. SPEECHES will be delivered by well-known Suffragettes, who want to enlist your sympathy and help in the great battle they are fighting for human liberty". However, this demonstration was a decoy, since responses to the

invitations were actually used to recruit women to make up a "Great Militant Protest" and arm them with hammers, stones, and clubs to simultaneously smash the shops and offices of London's West End at 6 pm sharp. While Mrs Pankhurst, along with Mabel Tuke and Kitty Marshall, broke the windows of No. 10 Downing Street, other suffragettes dealt with the leading firms of the Strand, Haymarket, Piccadilly, Bond Street, Oxford Street, Regent Street, Kensington, Knightsbridge, and Chelsea, as well as post offices and Government departments. Quite obviously, most of these women were later arrested and sent to prison.

The use of the noun *raid* in these extracts is an interesting choice. According to the *OED*, it means "a military expedition on horseback; a hostile and predatory incursion, properly of mounted man; a foray", which may suggest that *CC* compared window-smashing attacks to a military or savage invasion. This newspaper's disapproval towards such 'unladylike' behaviour seems to be confirmed by the use of the words *intense indignation* to describe the actions and *a small group of so-called Suffragettes* to describe the belittled and scorned upon perpetrators. The constitutional suffragists in fact looked down upon their more militant 'sisters', an attitude that was not unlike the one found in the mainstream press. Indeed, the escalation of militancy, incited by Evelyn Sharp, reported in extract (187), underlines *CC*'s aversion to this conduct, which was thought to have led to the further defeats of the suffrage movement in Parliament in 1912.

The other militant keyword, *hunger-strike*, does not present the same negative discourse prosody: on the contrary, the strategy is almost endorsed by the NUWSS in *CC*, probably because it was perceived as a self-sacrifice which did not endanger other people's lives or properties and was therefore considered as being more in line with the nature of women. The direct consequences of hunger-striking (i.e., the forcible feeding of prisoners) were actually condemned by them and the brutal methods used to prevent women from starving to death compared to torture. At the same time, the campaigners' will to put their own lives at risk was acknowledged as an attachment to the cause that demonstrated women's desire to be emancipated, as shown in the following extract:

(188)   The prisoners retorted by concerted abstention from food–a "*hunger-strike*"–and the prison authorities of the country, from the Home Secretary downward, were faced by the certainty that *the women would sooner die than yield*. (*CC*, "The State and Forcible Feeding", 29 August 1912)

We will now turn our attention to those keywords that refer to militant strategies more generally, namely, *agitation*, *revolt*, *rebellion*, *incitement*, and *heckle*. That these terms point to 'unladylike' behaviour is firstly testified to by their definitions and the illustrative quotations in the *OED*. Indeed,

agitation is defined as, among other things, "the keeping of a political or other object constantly before public attention, by appeals, discussion, etc.; public excitement", which implicitly excluded women, as they were excluded from the public sphere and from political discussions (see § 1.1); *revolt* is described as "an instance, on the part of subjects or subordinates, of casting off allegiance or obedience to their rulers or superiors; an insurrection, rising, or rebellion" (when used as a noun) and as "to fall away *from* a ruler, obedience, etc.; to rise *against* a person or authority" (when used as a verb), but no citation considers women as possible agents of such a movement[84]; *rebellion* is defined as "organised armed resistance to the ruler or government of one's country; insurrection, revolt" and as "open or determined defiance of, or resistance to, any authority or controlling power" (again with no illustrative quotations about women); *incitement* is "the action of inciting or rousing to action; an urging, spurring, or setting on; instigation, stimulation", and, by examining the examples provided, only men are reported (with proper names) to be capable of such actions"; lastly, *heckle*, as a verb, is defined as "to catechize severely, with a view to discover the weak points of the person interrogated. Long applied in Scotland to the public questioning of parliamentary candidates", thus referring once again to a practice and place from which women were ideologically and physically barred. As the definitions denote, these terms had gendered connotations that were not considered 'suitable' for women, both because of matters of respectability and because of other gender ideologies which saw them as physically and mentally unfit to use such strategies to take part in the political debate of the time.

The use of these terms in the CBSP shows, therefore, a marked new tendency in feminist discourse to employ language that was both thought of as 'unusual', to say the least, for women, and that reflected an uncharacteristically militant attitude which was all the more to be condemned given the writers' gender. This will be ascertained by secondly examining the frequency and relevance of these keywords in each periodical:

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[84] We have seen in § 4.4 how the catchphrase *revolting daughters* had deeply negative connotations in mainstream newspaper discourses of the time.
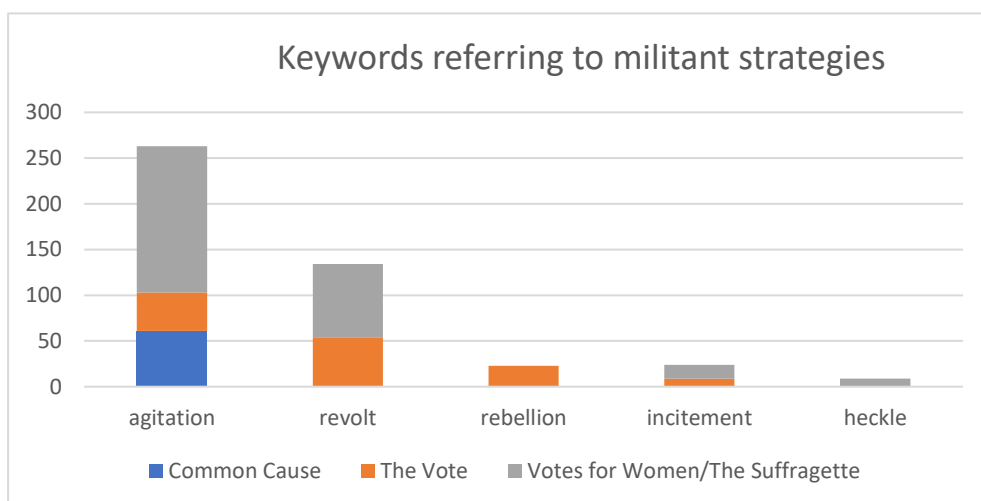
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Figure 3: keywords referring to general militant strategies in each periodical of the CBSP.

As figure 3 shows, the word *agitation* is both the most frequent one and the only one used by all three periodicals, even though *VFW/TS* uses it more frequently with 160 occurrences compared to *CC* that has 61 and *TV* 42. As for the other words, we can see that *revolt* is used only in *TV* (54 hits) and in *VFW/TS* (80 hits). The fact that *CC* does not have it among its most salient keywords could further validate the newspaper's non-militant stance. *Rebellion* is used in *TV* alone (23 hits) and unexpectedly not used in *VFW/TS* despite its staunchly militant nature. *Incitement* appears in both militant periodicals (9 hits in *TV* and 15 hits in *VFW/TS*), while *heckle* is reported in *VFW/TS* alone, with just 9 hits: as we will see, the practice of heckling Cabinet ministers was typical of the very first years of militancy of the WSPU.

Since, as already anticipated, *agitation* appears in all periodicals, it is interesting to analyse its yearly distribution in each publication from 1907 to 1914:
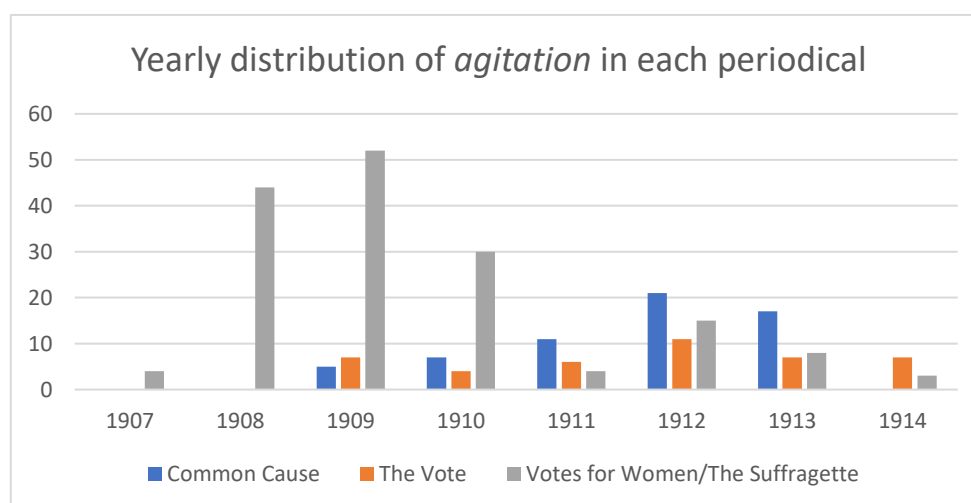

Figure 4: Annual distribution of *agitation* from 1907 to 1914 in each periodical of the CBSP.

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As we can see in figure 4, there are several neat differences in the use of the word *agitation* in each suffrage periodical, at least in terms of frequency and distribution. Indeed, it is evident, first of all, that the noun was most frequently used right after the creation of the WSPU, that is to say, at the beginning of the militant campaign. In particular, the year 1909 records the highest number of hits in *VFW*: this may be due to the many 'suffrage outrages' reported in the press, which included the so-called "incident at Lympne", when three of the most popular suffragettes (namely Elsie Howey, Vera Wentworth, and Annie Kenney) assaulted Prime Minister Asquith and Home Secretary Herbert Gladstone while they were playing golf, and the outrage at Bingley Hall, in Birmingham, where Mr Asquith was again attacked as he left a meeting by a group of militants who had climbed on a nearby roof and hurled slates at him. These episodes shocked Britons especially because they were direct attacks on an individual and, specifically, upon the Prime Minister, and so went far beyond the simple heckling of politicians, which had characterised the first manifestations and protests of the suffragettes. In the same year, the paper started to comment on the unfair treatment of suffrage prisoners in various jails across the country: for example, *VFW* recounts the horrors suffered by the suffragettes in Walton Gaol in Liverpool, particularly by women belonging to the working classes, who were treated worse than their middle-class sisters. For instance, Lady Constance Lytton (one of the most influential leaders of the WSPU), disguised as a seamstress called Jane Warton, was treated much worse in Walton Gaol than when she had been imprisoned under her real name and status. The frequent use of the word *agitation* seems therefore to coincide with the progressive escalation of militancy and its direct consequences that were being reported in the newspapers, both feminist and mainstream alike.

As far as the frequency of the same word across the seven-year period is concerned, it is interesting to see that it changes according to the newspaper. In *TV* it remains fairly equal every year (1907 and 1908 are not included, as the paper had not been launched yet), while both in *CC* and in *VFW/TS* it varies significantly: here, *agitation* reaches the peak of its hits in *VFW* in 1909, only to progressively diminish from 1910 to 1914, while the exact opposite happens in *CC*, where the noun is less frequent in 1909 and gradually becomes more and more popular through to 1912, although admittedly it never reaches the same heights as in the more militant periodical. To try and explain these different tendencies, we will now focus upon the concordances and collocations surrounding this word.

First of all, all three newspapers manifest the same set of collocations: *constitutional/peaceful*, *political*, or *militant agitation* all put emphasis on *how* militancy should be used, with either peaceful or more extreme methods. Indeed, *CC* tends to opt for constitutional methods, since they are believed

to be the only way to gain women's enfranchisement[85]: "The task of the Constitutional Suffragists is more than ever to strengthen the constitutional agitation, and to point out that justice long deferred has always led to revolutionary outbursts" ("In Praise of Constitutionalism", 22 August 1912). Interestingly enough, the same collocation is reported in *VFW* too. Unlike in *CC*, in this newspaper "constitutional agitation" is condemned and not praised:

(189)   And now we have done everything that *constitutional agitation* can do, and constitutional agitation has *failed*. (*VFW*, "Equal Political Rights for Men and Women", 2 July 1908)

(190)   The *politicians' game* is to urge women to put out their strength in so-called *constitutional agitation* to the very *uttermost limit* of their capacity, so that *exhaustion* shall supervene when *disappointment* comes at the end of the *prolonged effort and strain*. (*VFW*, "Self-Reliance", 18 November 1910)

(191)   Mr. Hobhouse, who besides being a Cabinet Minister, is one of the leaders of the Anti- Suffrage movement, has deliberately and publicly expressed his *contempt* for all *peaceful and constitutional agitation* for women's enfranchisement , and has denied that a demand for this reform exists, because, as he expresses it, there has been no popular sentimental uprising such as accounted for the burning of Nottingham Castle and the destruction of Hyde Park railings. (*VFW*, "Incitement", 29 March 1912)

The extracts above, taken from *VFW*, show how the negative discourse prosody against constitutional methods was consistent throughout all the years taken into consideration: in 1908, constitutional agitation was reported as having utterly *failed* (thus justifying the move to more extreme methods of protest); in 1909, it was described as being another way for politicians to fool women and exhaust their forces and their spirit, in the hope they would lose interest in the cause for enfranchisement; and in 1912, Cabinet Minister Hobhouse was said to have expressed his contempt for women's peaceful agitation, and denied the very existence of the Women's Suffrage Movement precisely because of the ineffective ways the protest had been carried out up until then.

It is indeed in *VFW/TS* that *agitation* acquires a new gendered connotation owing to its frequent occurrence with the collocates *woman*/*women*, in the expression *Woman Suffrage agitation* especially that often substitutes *Women Suffrage movement*:

(192)   In the present Session, the Liberal Party, menaced as no party ever was before by the *Woman Suffrage agitation*, have adopted the old familiar pretext for inaction by saying that to carry a Woman Suffrage

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[85] The word *constitutional* was also celebrated in the mainstream press: for example, the *Daily Herald* published an article with the title "THE BLESSED WORD CONSTITUTIONAL" on 25 February 1913 in which the journalist stated: "To multitudes of Britons "Constitutional" is the most wonderful and magical word in the language. It reminds us of sacred and mystic terms of the Orient. Anything constitutional is next door to the divine; anything not constitutional is un-British or diabolical". The view was certainly accepted by the NUWSS within the pages of *CC*, too.

measure this year would be utterly impossible, if only for the reason that the business of finance will absorb an exceptionally large part of Parliamentary time. (*VFW*, "A Coercion Bill for Suffragettes", 23 April 1909)

(193)   The progress of the last three and a half years of the *Woman Suffrage agitation* has been *so remarkable* and *so extraordinary* that no one with sound political instinct can doubt that the woman's parliamentary vote in this country cannot much longer be withheld. (*VFW*, "Elements Of the Woman Suffrage Demand", 21 May 1909)

The use of the term *agitation* instead of *movement* next to *woman* reported in the extracts above provides an official record of this word's newly-acquired gendered connotation. It served to connect women to the political discussions they were usually excluded from, both in practice (as they could neither vote nor be voted as Members of Parliament), and in theory (see the definition and illustrative quotations in the *OED* that for this word do not contemplate the female gender at all).

In *TV*, the often-recurring collocation *our agitation* symbolises again the sense of common identity and sisterhood already discussed in § 4.3 and § 4.4. In the expanded concordances we can see how discourses of gender are regularly intertwined with this:

(194)   If *women* are not enfranchised *our agitation* must go steadily on. (*TV*, "An Appeal to The Voters", 30 December 1909)

(195)   The *militant* form of *our agitation* might never have begun had not *two young girls* been imprisoned for creating a disturbance outside a political meeting. (*TV*, "Who Are the Law-Breakers?", 7 March 1913)

(196)   It is a little curious that the *male wiseacre*, who appears to be opening his eyes at last to the fact that *our agitation* is serious, did not discover this long ago; had he done so he might have understood a little better the form, to him so strange, that the agitation is taking. (*TV*, "Quality or Quantity?", 10 October 1913)

In the first example, *agitation* will be the answer to the lack of women's enfranchisement; in the second, *agitation* is the answer to the imprisonment of *two young girls* who created a disturbance outside a political meeting. In the third example, men, who are identified with the ironical label *the male wiseacre*, are reported as being surprised by the militant phase of the Women's Suffrage Movement, of which feminists were evidently not thought capable. All three examples show how the word *agitation* becomes recurrent in discourses about women and in the language used by women campaigners.

Two other keywords related to militancy (*revolt* and *rebellion*) are equally present in *TV* and *VFW/TS*. The noun *revolt* frequently appears with the adverbial collocate *against*, to highlight the idea of opposition also recorded in the *OED* definition, and it is entrenched in discourses concerning womanhood and femininity in both periodicals:

(197)   Apart from and above any question of its success in obtaining a change in the law, we have the conviction that this outward and visible sign of *inward and spiritual revolt against* subjection *frees, strengthens, and purifies the women* who give this sign, and through them, *womanhood* as a whole. (*VFW*, "The Policy of Action", 30 September 1910)

(198)   It is as if the air and elements in which at least *old Mother Nature* has given us equality have joined issue with us and borne the whisperings of *revolt against* the *scandals* of the old order to the women of every country. (*TV*, "Our Work", 23 April 1910)

(199)   Our woman's movement which is, in its essence, a *revolt against* the *primitive savagery* of the modern world, cannot pass into the higher levels where peace reigns, until it has gone through its *militant stage*. (*TV*, Primitive Savagery – Who Are the Savages?", 14 November 1913)

We can see how, in *VFW*, the *revolt against* (male) *subjection*, through the use of militancy, is seen as having a purifying and freeing effect on the whole of womanhood, while in *TV* the recourse to a personified *old Mother Nature* is responsible for the seeds of revolt against the status quo and against the *primitive savagery*, of which men are deemed to be guilty.

The analysis of the expanded concordances of *rebellion* which collocate with *men* and *women* also shows clear-cut gendered discourses. The men are remembered (often as heroes and patriots) for their political upheavals, while the women are only now being stirred to rebel against the Establishment and seek validation for their actions precisely in men's militant movements. Indeed, comparing women's militancy to men's is often used as a rhetorical strategy in suffrage newspapers, but with two contrasting results. On the one hand, arguing that women were using the same methods previously used by men could have been seen as a more effective strategy in gaining support, on the other, it had the effect of underlining another aspect of gender inequality, and that men were stalwart nationalists and devotees of civil and political rights, while women were unladylike criminals (at least in the mainstream press).

WOMEN	MEN
There can be no doubt that, amongst women, *a spirit of rebellion* against the *false and unnatural conventions* that has governed their relations with men is not only *alive*, but growing *stronger* year by year. ("The Great Divorce", 16 November 1912)	Men, such as the *Chartists* of last century, or *Irish Nationalists* later, who deliberately *stirred up oppressed peoples to rebellion*, have been and are *true lovers of humanity*. ("On Guard!", 16 March 1912)
Every woman who suffers fans *the flame of rebellion* and sends other women *armed into the field of revolt*. ("Drastic Measures", 21 December 1912)	A general election, resorted to as the only means of inducing the Unionist party not to support an *armed rebellion* in *Ulster*, would in all probability, result in a return of the Liberal-cum-Nationalist coalition, but with a decreased majority. ("Clamour", 23 January 1914)

Table 25: a comparison of discourses around women's and men's rebellion in *TV*.

Table 25 above compares two extracts concerning women and two concerning men in *TV*. Though *TV* held a milder view of militancy (compared to *VFW/TS*), it still urged women to do something to change their current social condition: the examples in Table 25 validate the ideas of change and renegotiation of gender ideologies discussed in Chapter 1 and already partly demonstrated in Chapter 4, when analysing feminist counter-language. Thus, the word *rebellion* described as being *alive, stronger* and as a *flame* fanned by women's suffering has a positive connotation in relation to women. Men's rebellion, in this case, is used as a form of justification for the suffragettes' militancy and therefore presents a rather positive discourse prosody, as it is taken as an example to be followed. Comparisons are often made with nineteenth-century Chartists[86] and Irish Nationalists of Ulster, thus also aligning the Woman Question with the Irish Question, two equally important matters that needed to be dealt with by the British Government of the early twentieth century.

The keyword *incitement* was of crucial importance within feminist discourse in suffrage periodicals, and it was directly linked to accusations of conspiracy, for which many suffragettes[87] had to attend trials. Indeed, propaganda around conspiracy and incitement was maximised within the pages of suffrage periodicals: for example, in May 1912 the WSPU incensed public opinion about the "Torture in English Prisons" by publishing a poster with the caption "Forcible Feeding through the Nose of Women Suffragist Prisoners". The image showed a girl being held down as a doctor pushes a rubber tube up her nose and a harsh-looking wardress pours liquid into a funnel atop the other end of the rubber tube, while other nurses hold the hunger striker down (Atkinson 2018: 321-22). In the same year, Emmeline Pankhurst and the Pethick-Lawrences were tried at the Central Criminal Court for "conspiracy to conspire together to unlawfully and maliciously damage and inciting other to unlawfully and maliciously damage certain property, to wit, glass, windows, the property of our Lord the King". The examples below report how discourses around *incitement* are built in the CBSP:

(200)   The *awakened women* who are seeking their due share in an adjusted political and economic life are not so much in need of *incitement* as the *men* who profess sympathy, yet withhold help. (*VFW*, "Messages of Encouragement to Women", 6 February 1908)

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[86] Chartism was a working-class movement for political reform that erupted between 1838 and 1857 which used petitions and mass meetings to put pressure on politicians to concede manhood suffrage.
[87] Emmeline Pankhurst first and foremost; the famous quotation "I incite these women to rebellion", which has now become a catchphrase of the feminist movement, is attributed to her.

(201) The *women* who are now in the *clutches of the law, charged with conspiracy and incitement*, could never convert other women to believe in and practise militancy; only Mr. Asquith and the rest of the politicians can finally do that. (*VFW*, "How Militancy Could Be Cured", 9 May 1913)

(202) This is what passes for law and order in the leading country of the world in the twentieth century; it is for setting these *men* at defiance and refusing to conform to their standards that *women* are being rebuked! *Incitement* is being freely practised, indeed. (*TV,* "The Crackling of Thorns", 5 June 1914)

As can be seen, forms of incitement were already perceived to be problematic in 1908, well before the so-called Conspiracy Trials, and evident are the repeated dichotomous discourses of 'women vs men' already seen in earlier instances. Indeed, according to *VFW*, incitement is something that men need much more than women, given the politicians' tendency to withhold support after promising it. Later, in 1913, specific mentions to charges of conspiracy and incitement are blamed on politicians, as, once again, militancy is deemed to be only a consequence of men's mistreatment of women's rights. The same discourse is continued in *TV*, which still presents militancy and incitement as a product of women's revolt against men's standards and gender ideologies.

Finally, the term *heckle* is worthy of attention as it represents the initial form of militancy used by the suffragettes, which consisted in pestering Cabinet Ministers with questions about women's enfranchisement at political meetings or outside the Houses of Parliament. Though the method is certainly much more constitutional and less extreme than arson or window-smashing, it is still significant if we consider its typically 'unladylike' nature, as women standing in the street and hurling questions at politicians about their civil rights was definitely thought of as 'unfeminine', given it reminded everyone of the much-hated shrill and loud voices of the 'shrieking sisterhood'. The word recurs in the keyword list of *VFW* alone, as indeed this habit was initiated by the WSPU at the very beginning of the militant campaign:

(203)   The leaders of this Union have been asked to use their influence to restrain women from *heckling* Mr. Lloyd George at the Albert Hall next Saturday. We answer that we cannot do that unless Mr. Lloyd George comes with a promise from the Government to deal with this question immediately. (*VFW*, "Is It Peace?", 3 December 1908)

(204) Cabinet Ministers, when *heckled* by Suffragettes, would have done well to act upon the principle recently laid down by Sir Edward Henry in his letter to the Men's League for Woman Suffrage. What Sir Edward Henry says is this: "It is for speakers to get on such good terms with their audience that they can secure a hearing for themselves." Cabinet Ministers have never even tried to get upon good terms with the Suffragettes in their audience. (*VFW*, "Serious Violence", 16 May 1913)

These examples show uses of the lemma HECKLE at the beginning and end of the time-span considered in the CBSP: extract (203), from 1908, refers to the specific case of the heckling of Lloyd George,

thus in a time when this practice was consistently employed by the WSPU, while extract (204), from 1913, remembers heckling as a mild militant practice no longer used by the suffragettes, but which the politicians should have taken more seriously, as this could have prevented the more extreme acts which characterised the years before the outbreak of World War I.

We have seen how terms that specifically referred to militant strategies were frequently employed in suffrage periodicals, creating new discourses in which gender ideas were once again constantly challenged and renegotiated. If *agitation*, *revolt*, and *rebellion* had to do with 'unladylike' activities, *incitement* and *heckle* pointed to specific linguistic usages of these terms linked to gender, thus both supporting the idea of words being used as deeds, and reconnecting to gendered attitudes about language (portrayed at the beginning of this chapter) being overturned. The next section will focus on gendered roles, or, to put it in other terms, on how the campaigners were represented as (militant) social actors.

5.5.2 Unladylike social actors

The analysis of keywords related to gender in Chapter 4 has already shown how part of the renegotiation of this theme in Edwardian feminist periodicals had to do with (gendered) social actors: we saw how *suffragette* or *spinster* either introduced new social roles for women (i.e., the politically-engaged suffragette) or presented a re-evaluation of stereotyped roles (i.e., the figure of the spinster, not necessarily perceived as inherently negative for society). In this section, we will focus on other keywords related to women's roles (see Table 24 above). From a linguistic point of view, we will take a look at how these keywords function as nomination strategies to represent militant women in suffrage discourse.

As already anticipated, keywords related to militant social actors appear only in *TV* and *VFW/TS*: in particular, *law-breaker* and *hooligan* are the only ones shared by both periodicals. However, though their presence in the keyword lists might suggest that suffragettes were identified with these labels, thus somehow confirming the negative view purported by the mainstream press (given the negative connotations of the words in question), the analysis shows that these periodicals actually questioned these ideologically-attributed gender roles. To begin with, *law-breaker* was obviously imbued with negative undertones, all the more so when the word was associated with women (see § 4.2). Since the conservative newspapers portrayed militant campaigners as such, both *TV* and *VFW/TS* tried to differentiate the 'real' law-breakers from the suffragettes:

(205) If it were the custom to treat *political offenders* as *ordinary offenders* against the well-being of society arc treated, we would not complain if we were treated like that; but it is not the international custom to do it, and so, for the *dignity* of the women of the country, and for the sake of the *consciences* of the men of the country, and for the sake of our nation amongst the nations of the earth, we are not going to allow the Liberal Government to treat us like *ordinary law-breakers* in future. (*VFW*, "March On!", 31 December 1908)

(206) *The Times* further declared that the common sense of the public at large drew a broad distinction between the offence of Dr. Jameson and that of "the *vulgar law-breaker* who seeks his own enrichment and the satisfaction of his private vices." This broad distinction certainly exists as between the offences of *vulgar law-breakers* on the one hand, and of Suffragettes on the other. (*VFW*, "Political Prisoners", 17 May 1912)

(207) But we have other and more deadly indictments to bring against our rulers and their supporters. Even as regards the civil law, who are the *real law-breakers*? The Home Office knows. We, as ordinary persons, might find it difficult to unearth them, for they shelter under a variety of disguises. (*TV*, "Who are the Law-Breakers?", 7 March 1913)

In the examples above, we can see how discourses mainly revolved around the suffragettes' refusal to be considered as *ordinary/vulgar law-breakers*, and, at the same time, their desire to be acknowledged as *political offenders*. This is how they expected to be treated in prison and referred to in the pages of mainstream newspapers. The use of this more 'appropriate' label, they believed, would help to legitimate their behaviour and validate their stance for women's enfranchisement within the political debate. Concurrently, while expressing their wish not to be considered as ordinary offenders, they were also querying the very nature of the label itself, and wondering whether they were truly the ones to be called as such.

The use of the word *hooligan* offers even more interesting insights into the intersection of language, gender, and militancy discourses. First of all, it is necessary to recur once again to the *OED* to ascertain its meaning: the term was not defined and included in the dictionary until 1933, and thus it only appeared in the Supplement by Craigie and Onions. However, a letter by one W.D. Anderson found in the Archive of the first edition proves that the word had already been in use well before this date and gives a first attempt at defining, or at least contextualising it:

> *Hooligan* has now become the English equivalent of *apache* […] About a year ago in the Police Court, a female witness was asked whether it was the defendant who had struck her? She replied, "I don't know, but it was one of Hooley's gang". Thinking that my memory might be at fault, the other day, I obtained this witness' address from the police records and called her. She told me that Hooley was a well-known leader of a gang of young ruffians, who had terrorised the neighbourhood, and that she had certainly said "one of Hooley's gang".

When the word did enter the dictionary, it was defined as: "A young street rough, a member of a street gang" and accompanied by illustrative quotations mainly taken from newspapers, such as the *Daily News* ("It is no wonder…that Hooligan gangs are bred in these vile, miasmatic byways", 26 July 1898), the *Daily Graphic* ("Mr. White…stated that every Saturday and Sunday nights gangs like the 'Hooligan gang' came to his house, broke the windows, glass, &c., and made disturbances", 30 August 1898), and the *Pall Mall Gazette* ("Nobody will claim honesty as a Hooligan virtue", February 1901).

In the mainstream press, *hooligan* was often associated with *suffragette* (the quotations in the dictionary also seemed to support this view, given the hooligans' link with window-smashing and disturbances, of which militant women were continually accused): thus, this connection was definitely a strong one, but at the same time imbued with gender ideologies of respectability, womanliness, and appropriateness that the militants lacked, at least in the eyes of their (male) opponents. In suffrage newspapers, discourses built around this word become doubly gendered. On the one hand, *TV* explicitly talks of hooligans only when referring to men, or gangs of youths, thus refusing to identify militant women in this way:

(208)   The Society for Maintaining the True Type of Woman, under the aegis of those lofty twin souls, Mr. Maconochie and Mr. Samuels, was very busy supporting Mr. Blair with the admonishment, "Women do Not WANT Votes!". Spread over the windows of a bright little Committee-room and plastered over the bonnets of two elegant parcels vans, and illustrated by a presentment of the brawniest, most repulsive looking virago who pictured the True Womanly, this strangely untruthful statement has greatly impressed us as one of the ways how not to do a thing; and the gallant gentlemen whose aim it is to keep women defenceless at the mercy of *hooligan politicians* found it hard to hold crowds against the superior attractions of women's meetings. ("The Antics of the Antis", 30 November 1912)

(209)   The *filthy hooligans* of Ipswich, who committed nameless indecencies to daunt unarmed women, have votes. ("Covenanters, Militants, and Hooligans", 29 May 1914)

While example (209) identifies a mob of *filthy hooligans* as responsible for "nameless atrocities" committed against women (therefore adhering to the meaning presented in the *OED,* example (208) shows a completely different use of the word. Here *hooligan* collocates with *politicians* and therefore not with "a gang of roughs", but with the supposed "gentlemen" who represent the British authorities. This could be interpreted as an attempt to overturn the derogatory label *hooligan suffragettes* often found in conservative newspapers.

On the other hand, *VFW/TS* does mention *hooligans* with a link to women campaigners. However, this does not mean that the periodical of the WSPU accepts this tag. Unlike what happened

with *suffragette*, which became a badge of identity and honour (see § 4.3), the various expressions that associate hooligans with militant women are here reported merely to be questioned and criticised:

(210)   Was then *Joan of Arc* also an "*unsexed hooligan*" in her devotion to her country? ("The Ethics of the Militant Movement", 8 April 1910)

(211)   To the Editors of VOTES for Women Dear Editors. – l should like to draw your Traders' attention to a sermon which was delivered by the Rev. S. Stuart Starritt, of the Presbyterian Church, Muswell Hill, on Sunday, the 10th inst., in which lie referred to "*the hooligans in petticoats*." [...] On Sunday afternoon I met a little boy, the son of a friend of mine, in the street, who asked me whether I was "*one of those hooligans in petticoats*." I told him not to use that *nasty expression*, and he promptly replied: "But Starritt used it this morning in sermon, so it must be all right." ("Our Post Box", 15 March 1912)

(212)   Those who go forward to meet the repression which obstructs their path--are they not, labelled "*hooligans*", "*lowling Dervishes*", "unsexed and unnatural" *women*? Are they not *restrained, "secluded," imprisoned*, and considered *outcast*, as much as any pioneers of an earlier day, or of more primitive civilisations? ("Dare We Wait?", 2 September 1912)

The extracts above perfectly exemplify debates revolving around gender and militancy, along with some of the rhetorical strategies and instances of linguistic creativity used to refer to the suffragettes. In example (210), Joan of Arc is mentioned again[88] as a worthy figure from the past who had to suffer the same gender discriminations when she chose to enter men's public sphere, and the newspaper wonders whether her "devotion to her country" had been considered as "unsexed", just as the suffragettes' militancy was (see § 4.2 for an analysis of collocations of *unsex*).

Example (211) is an anonymous letter to the editor of *VFW* that recounts how the Church was openly against women's suffrage too: the anecdote refers to a sermon delivered by one Reverend Starritt, who referred to suffragettes as *hooligans in petticoats*, and of the influence of this man's words on the church-goers, who absorbed the concept and accepted it just because of the supposed authority of the mouth that had uttered it. The reference to petticoats (an undergarment worn under a skirt or a dress) is not new when it comes to using it to generate derogatory and misogynist expressions aimed at 'unconventional' women. For example, the Whig politician Horace Walpole had defined Mary Wollstonecraft (often considered as the foremother of British feminism) as *a hyena in petticoat* after the publication of her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792, while *Petticoat Parliament: An Extravaganza, In One Act* was the title of an 1867 farce by playwright Mark Lemon which mocked the first attempts of the feminist movement to enter politics. Such displays of language that ironically downplayed women's achievements were common enough, as already demonstrated with the word *suffragette*: in the case of *hooligans in petticoats*, not only were militant women

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[88] We have already seen an example of this strategy in § 4.2 when talking about the renegotiation of the word *motherhood*.

compared to street thugs, but they were all the more ridiculed for it because they were seen as badly imitating some men's typical behaviours. In the extract from *VFW*, this label is deplored and considered as a "nasty expression".

The same linguistic creativity which shows male dominance is reported in example (212) and equally rejected: here, the militants are said to be called *hooligans*, *unsexed and unnatural*, and also *lowling Dervishes*. The Dervishes were Muslim friars who took vows of poverty and austere life, also known for their practices as *dancing* or *whirling*, but the suffragettes were labelled as *lowling*, i.e., of low-birth or commoners, to weaken the importance they wanted to acquire in British society. While this was the view reported by the mainstream press, *VFW* highlights how these female 'hooligans' were secluded, imprisoned, and treated as outcasts, just like non-conformists usually were, and especially so in the case of 'deviant' women within the Victorian and Edwardian eras.

Thus, so far we have seen examples of nomination strategies for social actors that were used, but *not* accepted by suffrage periodicals. Unlike with the keywords related to gender, seen in Chapter 4, their use did not have to do with a renegotiation of normative and ideological meanings found in authoritative language reference works, but, rather, with the revelation of even more gender-biased language employed in referring to militant women in the conservative press. Other keywords in this category provide further insights into how these social actors were seen in *TV* and *VFW/TS*: militants were nominated as *the warrior-woman* in the former, and as *stone-throwers*, *martyrs*, and *prisoners* in the latter.

In *TV*, nomination strategies that identify the campaigners highlight above all their warlike nature. The noun *warrior-woman* epitomises this view: though it is not present as a separate headword in the *OED*, we may find it among the appositive senses of *warrior* and illustrated by the quotation from William Henry Giles Kingston's *On the Banks of the River Amazon* (1876), "The early voyagers…declared that they met a nation of *warrior-women on the banks of this river")[89]. This implies that the dictionary acknowledged the use of this word mainly to refer to women belonging to tribal groups in other countries, but *TV* writes an entire editorial, "The Manifesto of the Warrior-Woman" (26 October 1912), in which the warrior-woman is continuously associated with the Edwardian (and British) suffragettes:

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[89] The dictionary also contains the headword *warrioress*, defined simply as "a female warrior", and used, among others, by Edmund Spenser's in his famous epic poem *The Fairie Queene* (1596), "Eftsoones that warrioresse with haughty crest Did forth issue, all ready for the fight". This, word, however, is not present in the CBSP.

(213)   Now the rebellion has begun, and through a clearer vision it is gathering force. The *warrior-woman* it with us.

(214)   We are convinced that these men and the few misguided women who are still satisfied with man's interpretation of the laws of the universe, have discovered the truth. They recognise the *warrior-woman*. They know that she is out with fixed intent to change their little world. Consequently they fear her.

The use of a term that strongly underlines the war tones with which militancy discourses were imbued thus confirms the newspaper's stance, which openly supported militancy and considered feminist campaigners as soldiers fighting in a battle against the Government.

On the other hand, *VFW/TS* uses warlike terms that refer even more specifically to the suffragettes' militant nature, while the fight is perceived to be almost a religious and sanctified one. To begin with, the militants are identified with one of the activities they were indeed best known for, that is to say, as *stone-throwers*. While the word naturally carries negative connotations and a clear negative discourse prosody in mainstream newspapers, it acquires positive undertones when used in *VFW/TS*, just as had been the case for *suffragette*:

(215)   These critics should remember that the **violence** done by the *stone-throwers* was purely *technical*, the *damage* caused being quite *nominal*, and the **stones** having been thrown when *no injury to persons* was possible. ("Coercion Defeated", 23 July 1909)

(216)   He was placed in the first division and treated as a political offender, notwithstanding the fact that his offence was far more serious than that with which *our stone-throwers* are charged, and notwithstanding the fact also that his action involved, not damage to a few panes of glass, but the shedding of *human blood*. ("Coercion Defeated", 23 July 1909)

Both extracts refer to the episode of the so-called Jameson Raid, a botched attack against the South African Republic carried out by British colonial administrator Leander Starr Jameson, which was intended to trigger an uprising by the primarily British expatriate workers, but failed to do so, with the consequent embarrassment of the British Government and the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) that followed. Jameson was processed in Britain, but, as extract (216) shows, he was placed in first division and treated as a political offender, notwithstanding the fact that his orders had given way to bloodshed and damage to people, not just things. The suffragette *stone-throwers* are here seen as justified in their use of militancy precisely because their methods did not involve any damage to people, but only to windowpanes, while the expression *our stone-throwers*, with the first-person plural possessive adjective, clearly indicates the inclusion, and not repudiation, of the more militant women in the Suffrage Movement.

The conflict is then elevated to a religious war with the repeated use of the word *martyr*, which acquires a new specific gendered connotation that is not present in the normative definition provided by the *OED*. Indeed, the headword is defined as "the specific designation of honour (connoting the highest degree of saintship) for: One who voluntarily undergoes the penalty of death for refusing to renounce the Christian faith or any article of it, for perseverance in any Christian virtue, or for obedience to any law or command of the Church", but also as "One who undergoes death (more loosely, one who undergoes great suffering) on behalf of any religious or other belief or cause, or as a consequence of his devotion to some object", and as "*hyperbolically*. One who suffers tortures comparable to those described in the legends of martyrs; a constant sufferer". Though in these definitions the subject pronoun *one* seemingly signals a gender-neutral meaning, we can see from the numerous illustrative citations how only men used to be seen as martyrs. For instance, we are reminded of Abel in the Old Testament (from William Caxton's *The Game and Playe of Chesse*, 1470), of Socrates, called "that heathen martyr" by Joseph Hall in his *The Invisible World Discovered to Spirituall Eyes and Reduced to Usefull Meditation*, and of St. Edward (from Anna Jameson's *Legends of the Monastic Order*, 1850), but no women are mentioned as martyrs. However, they do become *martyrs* in the pages of *VFW/TS*:

(217)   Here these women remained day after day, **starving** the while, until, if not for very shame, at least in fear lest some injury should come to the prisoners which would shock and outrage the community, the Home Secretary ordered their release. *Martyrs*! This is the name–never yet claimed by Suffragettes themselves–which *opponents* have given to them in *would-be derision*. ("Coercion Defeated", 23 July 1909)

(218)   After many years the *martyr-spirit* that seemed dead in our country shines out again in a blaze of glory. Their very enemies are paying tribute to *our present-day martyrs*, the Suffragists in prison. ("The Martyr Spirit", 28 March 1913)

(219)   Everybody understands now that *forcible feeding* is *torture*, and the Government themselves admit that those who suffer it are *martyrs*. ("The Martyr Spirit", 28 March 1913).

From these examples it is possible to trace the curious diachronic evolution of the use of *martyr* in *VFW/TS*: in extract (217), from 1909, we are told that *martyr* is a label given to suffragettes in prison by their opponents as a form of mockery, thus in the hyperbolical (and, in this case, ironical) meaning described by *OED* above. Though the author of the article states that such a name was never claimed by the suffragettes themselves, we can see how, in example (218), taken from 1913 (that is to say, well after the escalation of militancy had begun), the same women are indeed identified as *our present-day martyrs*, thus implicitly comparing them to those Christian saints who had sacrificed their lives for their beliefs: in the same way, the suffragettes were now sacrificing themselves by being imprisoned and being ready to starve themselves for the franchise cause. Lastly, in extract (219), the

word *martyr* is supposedly accepted by politicians as well, who no longer use it in mock derision, but with some sort of respect – though this statement would need to be further investigated, as we have repeatedly seen how the media controlled by the Establishment had a rather different view of militant women in prison.

Finally, *VFW/TS* identify militant women as *prisoners* as a direct consequence of their militant actions: in particular, the collocation *suffragist prisoner(s)* is the most recurring one, thus creating a new figure within militancy discourses of the time. Indeed, not only were women trying to enter the public sphere by asking to be more and more politically engaged (mainly through enfranchisement) with their new role as suffragettes, but they were also using militant methods for their protests which varied in their extremity. In the case of the most audacious actions, this led to their imprisonment and therefore to the creation of the figure of the suffragist prisoner, who was specifically gendered precisely because of her nature. The following extracts exemplify the references to this social actor in *VFW/TS*:

(220)   Therefore, if and when it seems to us good, we shall refuse to submit to imprisonment, whether as political offenders or otherwise, and by means of the "hunger strike" we shall compel the Government to choose one of three alternatives: Either they must release *Suffragist prisoners* at the end of a few days, thus enabling them to take with impunity whatever militant measures they like, at Westminster or elsewhere; or they must let them die in prison–a course which would be, from their own point of view, politically dangerous; or they must give women the Vote, a solution of the difficulty which would meet with universal approval, and would best suit the convenience of the Government, of the Suffragists, and of the people as a whole. Prison is played out–from the Government's point of view. ("Coercion Defeated", 29 July 1909)

(221)   They nailed *Christ* to the Cross, they burnt *Joan of Arc*, they are bent now upon killing *Suffragist prisoners* by inches. ("Facing Death", 20 June 1913)

The suffragist prisoner was thus both a specific key part of the movement's strategy and a figure to be worshipped, much like the martyrs described above. Indeed, in example (220) we can see how the WSPU's militant strategy was clearly spelt out, and the suffragist prisoner held a fundamental role in it, since militant women were clearly instructed and almost encouraged to undergo hunger striking (and the consequent torturous practice of forcible feeding) to put further pressure on the Government. Example (221), on the other hand, recovers the religious or crusade-like portrait of the movement's battle for enfranchisement we have already seen with the use of the keyword *martyr*: in this case, suffragist prisoners are even compared to Jesus Christ, as well as with the already-mentioned Joan of Arc. What all these figures had in common was their sufferance, caused in all instances by *men*, who had nailed Christ to the Cross, burnt Joan of Arc, and were now trying to kill suffragist prisoners mainly by forcible feeding. Thus, along with *martyr*, the use of the collocation *suffragist prisoner*

almost creates a new (religious) cult in which militant women who willingly 'sacrificed' themselves were to be hailed as heroines and saints.

From this analysis, we have seen how militant women were both represented and *not* represented in suffrage periodicals: indeed, the first terms we have accounted for (*law-breaker* and *hooligan*) were only retrieved from the misogynist discourse of the mainstream press only to be rejected in feminist newspapers. On the other hand, we could say that *TV* mainly represented the militants through the almost mythological figure of the *warrior-woman*, and *VFW/TS* recognised them both for their actions (*stone-thrower*), which were justified and almost celebrated, and for their roles as victims of social inequalities created by men (*martyr*, *prisoner*). All in all, by following DHA praxis, we may say that militant social actors were mainly represented in all newspapers through the use of ideological anthroponyms as a main nomination strategy, since all the keywords analysed here were highly connoted in terms of ideology. While in the case of *law-breaker* and *hooligan* this negative ideology is accepted (and, therefore, equally rejected) by suffrage periodicals, *warrior-woman* and *stone-thrower* acquire positive connotations which are specifically attached to militant women, just as *martyr* and *prisoner* gain a new, unambiguous gendered quality which helps in the creation of a cult of militancy which had to motivate women in their struggle towards enfranchisement. Concluding remarks on the use of 'unladylike' language to refer to women's roles and behaviour follow in the next section.

5.6 Gender and the language of militancy

The analysis of militancy discourses and the 'unladylike' keywords that characterised them has shown how women manipulated the language of the separate spheres, which could conveniently be used radically to claim the unacknowledged public space they were looking for. In the period covered in the CBSP, which corresponded to a sort of transition that culminated with women's enfranchisement, we could say that militant women occupied a sort of semi-detached sphere of their own, halfway between the secluded 'Angel of the House' of Victorian times and the newly-enfranchised Edwardian woman (Digby 1992: 204).

In particular, results have demonstrated how, far from being an exclusive practice of the WSPU, militancy was rather a contested concept existing at points along a continuum of practice: from the absolute rejection of any militant practice of *CC*, to the partial support of it, which excluded the resort to extreme acts such as arson and window-smashing, typical of *TV*, to its complete

endorsement, which gave rise to a sort of religious cult of the militant woman, of *VFW/TS*. Suffrage societies both resisted and relied upon Edwardian conceptions of womanhood in complex and contradictory ways: while the WSPU built suffragette identity around a feminine heroic and rhetoric of female rebellion undermined by men, the WFL gradually distinguished its own militant practices by appropriating milder tones infused with the qualities of traditional womanliness (Nym Mayhall 2000: 370). This was reflected in the sociolinguistic use of the terms related to militancy, which, as we have seen, sometimes differed greatly from one periodical to the other. Indeed, we could say that gender *ideologies*, and not gender itself (the authors of the articles in the CBSP were all women) played a key role in issues of language use, with the most avant-garde visions of militant behaviours and social actors being naturally linked to the newspaper with the most extreme ideas of militancy.

If we consider the results of the analysis about renegotiations of language and gender in Chapter 4, we can see how the ideological and linguistic revolution was primarily linked to the new figure of the suffragette and, more generally, to the ideas of different womanhood(s) purported in suffrage periodicals. Indeed, we may remember how such keywords as *womanhood* and *suffragette* were almost completely overturned in the CBSP, compared to their normative definitions in the *OED*: the main novelty was the introduction of the concept of womanhood as an awakened and revolutionary force and of the figure of the suffragette as not being entirely negative, but undoubtedly characterised by her seemingly 'unfeminine' behaviour concerning the use of militant methods. The analysis carried out in this chapter can only complement these visions, as it appears evident that the introduction of the suffragette as also editor of feminist journals led to the development of new discourses about women's militancy and to a more widespread use of words belonging to those semantic domains with which women were commonly not associated, such as *agitation*, *hunger-strike*, *revolt*, *rebellion*, *incitement*, and *heckle*. At the same time, this novelty and extended use in language also concerned new nomination strategies through which women were recognised as social actors, such as *warrior-woman*, *stone-throwers*, which emphasised a newly-found type of agency, or as *martyrs* and *prisoners*, which elevated the typical discourse of "women as victims" to that of "women as victims for a greater good".

While Nym Mayhall talks of a "constitutional idiom" (2000: 362), we may argue that it was the *militant* idiom that served to gender militancy in complex ways. The WFL and the NUWSS "consciously manipulated the image of women waiting patiently for the granting of their political rights, emphasising the political maturity of those desiring enfranchisement", while the WSPU justified the use of extreme militant methods by resting it upon "the higher principles justifying the

use of violence", through "an appeal to historical precedent" which served as "grounds for challenging current laws prohibiting women from voting" (2000: 355-62).

Thus, the important differences (and, occasionally, similarities) highlighted in this part of the analysis show how "understanding militancy primarily as a feminine assault upon public space, without acknowledging its connections to radical political culture, has privileged *one* [italics mine] understanding of women's political activism and led to conflations and misreadings of the practice overall" (Nym Mayhall 2000: 371). We now speak of feminisms in the plural, and thus we should speak of **militancies* in the plural as well. While the suffragettes' use of militancy originated in a political impulse to persuade Parliament and male voters that women should be enfranchised, the range of militant tactics used has to be paired with the use of militant language, and the implicit and indirect consequences this had in sociolinguistic debates of the time which centred around notions of gender and linguistic propriety. The radical narrative put forward by suffrage periodicals in various degrees cast militant women as resisting tyranny at many levels, and language undoubtedly held a key role in it. In the final chapter of this thesis, we will look at yet another way in which language could be used as a form of resistance, that is, to construct counter-discourses that aimed at deconstructing man-made gendered myths.

CHAPTER 6

COUNTERING MEDICAL MISOGYNY

6.1 Medical and scientific prejudice against women

Medicine has always absorbed and enforced socially constructed gender divisions, just as medical knowledge about female anatomy has always been imbued with patriarchal notions of womanhood and femininity (Cleghorn 2021: 1-2). In the historical period considered in this dissertation, men held all the knowledge about women's bodies, which was withheld from them both personally, as patients, and professionally, as they could not have access to the medical professions: naturally, this further reinforced Victorian and Edwardian social ideals about womanhood. When women defied the conventions portrayed and discussed in Chapter 1, 4, and 5, they were represented as medically fitting the category of a debased and degenerate femininity, as it appeared in contemporary psychiatric literature (Digby 1992: 212): such "[d]isordered women provided a rationale for the maintenance of existing gender relations and male power over women's lives" (Harrison 2006: 154). When they sought opportunities for self-development outside of marriage, medicine and science warned that such ambitions could lead to "sickness, freakishness, sterility, and racial degeneration" (Showalter 1992: 39).

In 1905, the Senior Physician at Bethlem Royal Hospital (London) stated that

> The removal of woman from her natural sphere of domesticity to that of mental labour not only renders her less fit to maintain the virility of the race, but it renders her prone to degenerate, and initiate a downward tendency which gathers impetus in her progeny…The departure of woman from her natural sphere to an artificial one involves a brain struggle which is deleterious to the virility of the race…it has very direct bearings upon the increase of nervous instability. In fact, the higher women strive to hold the torch of intellect, to dimmer the rays of light for the vision of their progeny.

Such a representation and treatment of women's (supposed) insanity certainly suggests a deep-rooted misogyny: the diagnosis of 'moral insanity', which included, among other things, "eccentricity of conduct, singular and absurd habits, a propensity to perform the common actions of life in a different

way from that usually practised"[90], often entailed a sort of 'reprogramming', "so that women could overcome their weakness, conform to 'proper' feminine behaviour, manifest ladylike values and virtue, and accept their gender role" (Harrison 2006: 141). This created what Digby labels as "a borderland between sanity and insanity" (1991: 196) which was peopled by a series of 'doubtful' cases whose peculiarities of thought and/or of behaviour made them object of remark among their fellows.

First of all, misogynist medical ideas had to do with biological concerns and men's purported physical and mental supremacy, supported by the likes of the influential neurologist, psychologist, and asylum physician James Crichton-Browne, who stated in his "Annual Oration on Sex in Education" (1892, cited in Cleghorn 2021: 167) that "the bodily differences between men and women which underline the intellectual disparities are universal and intimate, and involve every organ and tissue". To him, the female body reflected the most idealised feminine traits: "woman is more receptive, tranquil, affectionate…patient, trustful, compassionate, and timid", whereas men are katabolic (i.e., active and energetic), so that they are biologically trained for bravery, passion, independence, intellect, and originality. Women, on the other hand, are anabolic, and thus 'protected' by their "tranquil and sheltered lives". This also means that women are unsuitable for the rigours of education, as the "excitement and strain" of their brains could lead to increased pathological conditions: "[s]uch arguments increased towards the end of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth, feeding into theories about the innate inferiority of different people in terms of gender, class and race" (Harrison 2006: 137).

More specifically, it was women's reproductive organs and the periodicity of reproductive biology (as exhibited in the menstrual cycle), that supposedly caused women's weakness, nervous debility, sickness, and disease: according to Cleghorn (2021: 57), the uterus has always embodied a paradox for womanhood and femininity, since on the one hand it used to define women's "divine purpose as hosts to the organ of creation", while on the other it was considered as "an unruly cauldron, constantly brewing up disorders that disturbed ideal feminine states of body and mind". The biologically determined phases of a woman's life, from puberty to menopause, also became part of her self-identity. Harrison (2006: 133-34) argues that sexuality, reproduction, and sickness became as one: "women would by nature have a potential for sickness", and the disordered nature of their bodies "thus became a powerful metaphor in the social and cultural construction of gender roles. Medical arguments mediated gender relations by confirming the threat of feminine disorder on the social and

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[90] T. B. Hyslop, (1905), "A Discussion of Occupation and Environment as Causative Factors of Insanity", *British Medical Journal*, 2, p. 942 (cited in Digby 1992: 197).

moral order". The central features of female physiology were depicted as pathological, so that "woman's reproductive functions were held to disqualify her from sustained political or mental effort" (Digby 1992: 213). At the same time, this pathological weakness required women to be 'protected' or 'sheltered' from the stresses linked to participation in the public sphere: this was a double blind, as "women were restricted to a sedentary and often socially isolated existence and then pilloried for the failure of their wills, the neglect of household and children duties, and their idleness" (Harrison 2006: 134).

Moreover, emotions like sadness, fear, grief, and anger had a deep impact on women and their pathologies: universally believed to be at the mercy of their own feelings, women were thought to be predisposed to illnesses and diseases which were incited by emotional liability. Since they were supposedly weak, sensitive, and impressionable, they simply did not possess the 'male' qualities of reason, rationality, and strength needed to protect their bodies and minds from life's experiences (Cleghorn 2021: 81). Mental illness, often associated to emotional struggles, could also be included within reproductive explanations because there was a perceived link between the uterus and the brain, which was mediated by the nervous system: as reported by Harrison (2006: 140), "if the uterus and the bodily system were subjected to interruptions and cyclical 'shocks' or 'strains' this would render women highly susceptible to disorders that were emotional, nervous or mental in kind". In this chapter, we will see how mental disorders were often associated with the Women's Suffrage Movement, and how these had a class and gender dimension which exemplified a biomedical condition that also represented a social conception of womanhood. By focusing on the specific case study of hysteria, we will try to uncover the strategies used in suffrage periodicals to construct counter-discourses that aimed at debunking medical misogyny and male-created myths about women's health.

6.2 Suffrage and health

Above anything else, women's desire of a life outside the separate sphere paradigm was considered by many contemporaries to be a true aberration which aroused psychic anxieties and antagonisms towards them (Digby 1992: 213 and Cleghorn 2021: 125). Any behaviour that suggested a movement from the private to the public sphere was regarded as indicative of mental illness, a concept which actually reinforced the suffragettes' political opponents in their perception of militant women as "not

only inhabiting a social borderland but a psychiatric one as well" (Digby 1992: 213). As Cleghorn argues (2021: 127),

> [w]ith the 'woman question' now on the table, physicians were more insistent than ever that women were physically, intellectually and temperamentally unsuited to life outside their separate sphere. Not only were they vulnerable to myriad illnesses and diseases thanks to the whims of their reproductive organs, but the very nature of female biology meant that they were, by default, unwell – at least for a week of every month. There was no more obvious impediment to women's progress, according to may Victorian medical men, than menstruation.

Indeed, suffrage was exactly the kind of 'alteration' (as expressed by Cricthon-Browne) that could cause incalculable injuries to women's bodies and 'diminished' minds, as they were already 'vulnerable' to nervous disorders which could only worsen if they so much as entertained thoughts of a life beyond their private (or 'narrow') sphere. While women were struggling to overturn the disempowering limitations imposed on their bodies and minds for centuries, anti-feminist medical men were using their knowledge as weapons to reinforce such limitations (Cleghorn 2021: 166). At the apex of suffrage militancy, the British Government started sending psychiatrists to Holloway Gaol to see whether the hunger-striking suffragette prisoners might be certified as lunatics or hysterical: indeed, until 1908, the Anti-suffragists' connection between suffrage and women's health had remained vague and abstracted, but from September 1909 this changed. Mary Leigh, a working-class teacher and WSPU member from Manchester, was sentenced to two weeks in Birmingham's Winson Green Prison after protesting her exclusion from a meeting at Bingley Hall, where Prime Minister Lord Asquith was speaking. Leigh and two other suffragettes had climbed on a roof and thrown tiles at policemen and at Asquith himself: in prison, she went on hunger strike, like others before her, but since the Government feared that starving suffragettes would be considered as martyrs, Home Secretary Herbert Gladstone authorised prison doctors to forcibly feed any woman refusing food. Cleghorn (2021: 176) recounts Mary Leigh's experience in this way:

> One afternoon, two wardresses and doctors entered Leigh's cell. The wardresses held her down while one doctor inserted a rubber tube up her nose and down her throat. The other poured milk down the tube through a funnel. 'The sensation is most painful', she told her solicitor, 'the drums of the ears seem to be bursting and there is a horrible pain in the throat and the breast. The tube is pushed down 20 inches'. When it was over, Leigh was sprinkled with cologne and locked in a punishment cell. She was subjected to this ordeal many times.

The whole of the community (not just suffrage supporters) was admittedly shocked that such procedures were being inflicted on the prisoners, and the outrage was (quite surprisingly) sometimes supported by sympathetic doctors as well. For example, *VFW* published statements from doctors about the dangers of forcible feeding, especially for those with pre-existing health problems like lung weakness, heart disease, digestive disorders and bronchial complaints. Responding to letters about fasting prisoners in the *British Medical Journal*, the pioneering physician, surgeon, and suffragist Louisa Garrett Anderson decried forced feeding as an experiment being performed on already unwell women "for the purpose of political posturing", while one Dr Roberts "feared suffragists would be driven insane by such 'revolting torture' and 'official cruelty'" (Cleghorn 2021: 176). However, outside of the suffrage community, support generally remained scarce, and the mainstream press continued contrasting the suffragettes (the militant and hunger-striking ones most especially) by highlighting their supposed mental deficiencies and lack of womanliness within its pages and through anti-suffrage cartoons as well.

Among other things, Edwardian militant feminism was identified with the specific case of hysteria, as these were perceived to share similar features like anger, the refusal of food, and the revolt against the norms of prescribed 'ladylike' behaviour (Digby 1992: 212). According to many physicians, women's suffrage was already a destructive illness and a dangerous pathology: "by virtue of their intent to upset male supremacy, these women were displaying all the traits of mental breakdown, insane possession and hysteria", which "had evolved from a clinical speculation into a gendered slur" (Cleghorn 2021: 178). Thus, in the following sections, we will see how hysteria was represented in suffrage newspapers and how, specifically, it was overturned and deconstructed as a medical myth created by patriarchal and misogynist beliefs and coded social values.

6.3 Case study: hysteria in the CBSP

The first step in this part of the analysis consisted in verifying whether the suffrage periodicals included in the corpus under investigation actually did tackle the theme of medical misogyny and, more specifically, hysteria. A look at both frequency wordlists (see Chapter 3) and keyword lists (see Chapter 4 and 5) initially shows no references to such a topic, thus possibly suggesting that discourses around medical prejudice against women were not included in suffrage newspapers. When checking the headlines of the articles included in the CBSP, only a handful of them could be directly linked to medical discourse, namely "Women in the field of medicine" (*CC*, 7 October 1909), "Suffragitis, the

new disease" (*TV*, 23 December 1909), "The woman's handicap" (*CC*, 2 November 1911), "The State and forcible feeding" (*CC*, 29 August 1912), "How militancy could be cured" (*TS*, 9 May 1913), "Sanity" (*CC*, 20 June 1913), and "Married women's health" (*TS*, 5 December 1913).

However, by querying the corpus for the lemma HYSTERIA, results show that it appears 47 times in the CBSP: though the figure might not be statistically significant, it does show that medical misogyny was yet another topic these periodicals dealt with. Word forms of this lemma include the nouns *hysteria* and *hysterics* and the adjective *hysterical*. To investigate the presence of this kind of discourse further, two other lemmas were searched for: LUNACY (since this indicated a type of mental illness often associated with hysteria and with women's already 'fragile' health) and SUFFRAGITIS, yet another neologism used in the mainstream press to refer to the specific case of suffragettes and their unhealthy desires and behaviours. Whilst the latter only occurs 7 times (and only in one article), the former occurs 22 times, as a noun (*lunacy*, *lunatics*) and as an adjective (*lunatic*), though some of the concordances had to be discarded as in certain instances the discourse did not revolve around women and medical prejudice.

After checking the presence of possible counter-discourses concerning hysteria and its related illnesses, a sub-corpus containing the relevant articles was purposedly created: the "Medical Misogyny Sub-corpus" (hereafter MMS) includes 33 articles (10 from *CC*, 14 from *TV*, 5 from *VFW*, and 4 from *TS*). The analysis that follows has used triangulation (see § 2.3) to cross-check the results obtained: this has started from the verification of mainstream discourses about hysteria both in official linguistic reference works (*OED*) and in the anti-suffrage press. Then, in order to investigate counter-discourses in the specific case of the MMS, both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were taken into consideration: first of all, frequency wordlists of verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and multiword expressions were checked to look for words that specifically indicate the presence of discourses resistant to the mainstream ones. Secondly, more qualitative approaches were adopted in the analysis of the expanded concordances, which have revealed, among the mostly used strategies, the use of irony (through scare quotes and recurring phrases or multi-word expressions), the debunking and deconstruction of medical myths and the overturning of ideas about feminine hysteria, but also the use of technical (i.e., medical) terminology to dismantle medical misogyny. Thus, by triangulating mainstream discourses, counter-discourses, and notions from the historical and social background, it was possible to investigate yet another feature of feminist discourse in the suffrage press: the response to patriarchal beliefs about women's health. The results of this examination are illustrated in the following sections.

6.3.1 Mainstream discourses

Whether physical or mental, most symptoms described by women patients were thought to be caused by an unwell or unused womb, and therefore termed as *hysteric*: these might involve, for example, convulsions, delirium, extreme melancholy, unexplained ovarian pains, palpitations, choking, violent manias, and even inexplicable fits of leaping (Cleghorn 2021: 78). Over hundreds of years, however, the label of hysteria had already become a tag for aberrations of idealised femininity, deranged feminine behaviours, and emotions: "'Hysteric' women defied their maternal destiny; they had designs on a life outside the separate sphere; they desired sex, courted attention and feigned illnesses for sympathy. They were erratic, deviant, deceptive, and devious" (*ibid.*, 156). Thus, by the early 1900s, hysteria had become a mental illness invented by psychiatrists "asking to master and control the forces of femininity" (*ibid.*, 158), as hysterical women were thought to have lost control, to be hyper-sexual, possessed, mad: "hysteria had become a cultural leitmotif for feminine temperament unbound, untamed, unbidden" (*ibid.*, 158).

In particular, towards the end of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth, the link between women's social and gender roles and mental illness was reinforced through psychiatrists' interest in nerves, and nervous disorders like hysteria or neurasthenia became middle-class complaints that were thought to be part of women's constant need to draw attention to themselves. Indeed, many doctors thought that women describing such symptoms were just pretending to be sick or that they were behaving as 'petty tyrants', which might explain the vindictive and often physically abusive treatments offered, including that of forcible feeding which we have already mentioned (Harrison 2006: 142). What these doctors failed to understand was that women's mental distress arose precisely from the restraints of Victorian and Edwardian life and social conventions: instead, those whose behaviour and demeanour flouted gender standards might find themselves as occupying a social as well as psychiatric borderland (Digby 1992: 198). Thus, the New Woman of the Edwardian era was also the "nervous woman" (Showalter 1992: 40), and doctors linked what they termed as an 'epidemic' of nervous diseases (including anorexia, neurasthenia, and hysteria) with the changes in woman's aspirations.

As we have already said, hysteria was particularly associated with Edwardian feminism and militant suffragism, and its condemnation was not confined to men alone: indeed, women 'antis' agreed with men about their 'essentially' different (i.e., inferior) nature (Steinbach 2005: 294). The most famous anti-suffrage woman of the time was novelist Mrs Humphry Ward, who published an essay with the title "An Appeal Against Female Suffrage" in the periodical *The Nineteenth Century* (1889), which was later signed by other prominent women too. Afterwards, in July 1908, when the

suffrage campaign was gaining momentum, the British Women's National Anti-Suffrage League launched the periodical *The Anti-Suffrage Review*: in its first issue, they announced that women "of sound mind" did not want the duty of voting. "Have not the spectacles of the last few weeks shown conclusively that women are not fit for the ordinary struggles of politics, and are degraded by it? Their nerves are of a different tension from men's" (cited in Cleghorn 2021: 171): in this way, anti-suffrage women were publicly acknowledging and validating the same medical misogyny which was applied to them too, and not just to their militant sisters.

To further ascertain ideologies and beliefs attached to such terms as *hysteria/hysterical*, *lunacy/lunatic*, and *suffragitis*, it is once again necessary to start by considering their lexicographical representation in the *OED* and take it as a point of departure for our analysis of mainstream and counter-discourses. The headword for *hysteria* was first included in the dictionary in 1899, and its definition clearly shows a marked bias that identifies it as a gendered illness: "A functional disturbance of the nervous system, characterised by such disorders as anaesthesia, hyperaesthesia, convulsions, etc. and usually attended with emotional disturbances and enfeeblement or perversion of the moral and intellectual faculties. […] Women being much more liable than men to this disorder, it was originally thought to be due to a disturbance of the uterus and its functions". It is also defined as "a morbidly excited condition; unhealthy emotion of excitement", to which women were thought to be particularly prone. The proof slips found in the Archive also tell us that former names for the disease were "vapours" or "hysterical passion", and that it was described as a "chronic disease" in the *Account of Diseases in an Eastern District of London, from the 20th of October to the 20th of November, 1800*. The same proofs also contain a slip for the verb *hystericise*, defined as "to go into hysterics", which includes a single illustrative quotation taken from a cartoon printed in *The Westminster Gazette* of 5 December 1894: "The Newest Woman queens it here / In all her last uncomely guises: / A screaming Sisterhood severe / Hystericises". This citation alone contains all the gender ideologies accounted for so far: the New (or, ironically here, "Newest") Woman, comparable to the suffragette, is described as hystericizing, i.e., falling prey to bouts of hysteria, thus joining the Screaming (or Shrieking) Sisterhood we have already commented upon. A look at the Superfluous Slips reveals a quotation from the *Saturday Review* of 9 February 1899: "A brave man suffers in silence, an [*sic*] hysterical coward uses his hysteria as a means to procure himself immunity from suffering". The fact that this quotation was ultimately excluded from the official edition of the dictionary might by symptomatic of yet other gender ideologies having a key role in building mainstream discourses about hysteria: the quote refers to man as a "hysterical coward", thus implicitly accepting the illness as affecting males too, but by omitting it the editors probably wanted to reject the very idea of men being just as (mentally) fragile as women. Thus, *hysteria* became "a convenient

term which bore both a flexible everyday meaning as well as more specialist clinical connotations" (Digby 1992: 212).

The adjective *hysterical* obviously continued the perpetration of gender ideologies and medical misogyny. It was defined in the *OED* as "of, pertaining to, or characteristic of hysteria; affected with or suffering from hysteria", and its illustrative citations only refer to *hysterical women* or *girls*. Helkiah Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man* (1615) talked of "hysterical women, that is, such as are in fits of the mother"; Walter Scott's novel *Heart of Midlothian* (1818) described an "unfortunate young woman" who "finally fell into a hysterical fit"; lastly, Lionel Smith Beale's treatise *On Slight Ailments* (1880) stated that "hysterical girls are very apt to lose their appetite for a while". The adjective was also defined in the dictionary as "characterised by convulsive emotion or excitement such as marks hysteria; morbidly emotional or excited (said freq. of convulsive fits of laughter or weeping). Interestingly, in this case we find a citation that *does* mention hysterical men: "The men (of the Brazils), in their exterior appearance, are a squalid, hysterical, grim-looking tribe". Taken from John MacLeod's *Voyage of His Majesty's Ship Alceste* (1818), the quotation refers to men coming from Brazil as being hysterical: thus, British men implicitly could not be described as such, since hysteria seemed to be characteristic either of women or of men coming from outlandish regions of the world.

The definitions and illustrative quotations of *lunacy/lunatic* not only show similar gendered ideas of medical misogyny, but also deeper ideologies and coded social values that saw mental illness as a social stigma between the Victorian and Edwardian eras. Indeed, the noun *lunacy* is defined as "the condition of being a lunatic; intermittent insanity such as was formerly supposed to be brought about by changes of the moon; now applied *gen.* to any form of insanity (idiocy usually excepted). In legal use, such mental unsoundness interferes with civil rights or transactions", but also as "mad folly. Often in weakened sense". The adjective *lunatic*, on the other hand, is defined as "originally, afflicted with the kind of insanity that was supposed to have recurring periods dependent on the changes of the moon. In mod. use, synonymous with INSANE", as "madly, foolish, frantic, idiotic, 'mad'", and as "a lunatic person; a person of unsound mind; a madman". Among the quotations for this word, we find one taken from *The Spectator* of 21 December 1889, which stated "The House of Castile, which, after fighting and reigning for nearly eight hundred years, terminated in a lunatic girl". The syllogism is readily made: if women are hysterical and lunatic, and people suffering from lunacy are not fit, according to this definition, for engagements in civil rights or transactions, then women are automatically to be excluded from these fields, as their mental instability could prove to be troublesome, to say the least.

Finally, the term *suffragitis* was not included in the *OED*, possibly because its context of use was too limited and, as a neologism, it did not live for long after the rift between militant suffragettes and the anti-suffragists. However, it was widely used in the mainstream press and it was also recovered in suffrage newspapers, and therefore discourses and counter-discourses built around it will be nevertheless taken into consideration.

The lexicographic representation of women's frail mental health was further endorsed in the conservative, notably misogynist and anti-suffrage newspapers of the time, which also employed doctors and psychiatrists to further the idea that feminist militancy was inevitably provoked by lunacy and hysteria in women. The most vehement attack came by Sir Almroth Wright, best known for his work at Saint Mary's Hospital (Paddington, London) on anti-typhoid vaccine. In 1912, he became notorious for his extreme views about women's suffrage, and he penned a shrill letter which was published in *The Times* on 28 March. In this missive, which bore the already self-explanatory title "Suffrage and Fallacies: Militant Hysteria", he insisted that women were physically, intellectually, and morally inferior to men, and to give them the vote would automatically damage not only the country, but the whole of the Empire. He explained that the rise of the suffragettes was due to the sexual frustration of all the unmarried females in the population: "that half million which had better long ago have gone out to mate with its complement of men overseas", the "class of women who have all their life-long been strangers to joy, women in whom instincts long suppressed have in the end broken into flame. These are the sexually embittered women in whom everything has turned to gall and bitterness of heart and hatred of men". According to him, a doctor contemplating the militant suffragettes could not shut his eyes "to the fact that there is mixed up with the woman's movement much mental disorder; and he cannot conceal from himself the physiological emergencies which lie behind" (cited in Digby 1992: 212 and Atkinson 2018: 319). This apparent madness was further demonstrated by their own demands, that is, enfranchisement, equal pay, and equal work, notions that were to him preposterous and impossible.

That such a clearly misogynist view of women's health written by a doctor who claimed to have scientific evidence to support his ideas was published in the authoritative *Times* is indicative of the extent to which such medical beliefs circulated and were supported by the British Establishment. However, this was not the first and only case in which these discourses appeared in the mainstream press. Again, the *Times* had already thundered in the article "Hysterical Enthusiasm" of 11 December 1908 that "one does not need to be against woman suffrage to see that some of the more violent partisans of the cause are suffering from hysteria", thus providing a 'diagnosis' of "hysteric morbidity" which concerned the militant feminists, who were "obviously emotionally stressed and

had taken leave of their faculties. Their herd mentality proved they were weak-minded and imitative".[91] Moreover, in the issue of 19 November 1910 (the aftermath of Black Friday), the same journal reported that "the rioters appeared to have lost all control of themselves. Some shrieked and some laughed hysterically, and all fought with a dogged but aimless pertinacity", and that the suffragette mob had been made up of very young women "who must have been the victims of hysteria rather that of deep conviction".

Insistence on the link between medical misogyny and women's suffrage was mainly focused in the years 1912-1914, right before the outbreak of World War I, which, as we have seen, corresponded to the apex of suffrage militancy. This leitmotif was reclaimed by almost all the main newspapers of the time, irrespective of their political stance (Conservative, Liberal, or Radical), thus showing that biased (and unscientific) views about women's health deficiencies proved to reconcile men with usually incompatible political ideas. First of all, general references to women's supposed biological inferiority were supported by the *Daily Mail*, which, in the article "Biology or Nonsense?" of 12 July 1913, wrote:

> One of the misfortunes the little knot of "militant" outrage-mongers have brought upon their sex is that they have helped to revivify the dwindling prejudice against feminine intellectualism. It is assumed, quite wrongly, that the wretched creatures who break windows and lay bombs are highly educated women, and the reactionary sees his opportunity for a sermon against the whole tendency of modern progress.

Quite interestingly, here the militant suffragettes (labelled as *outrage-mongers* and as *wretched creatures*) are considered the ones to be blamed for the medical prejudice which exists against their own sex: according to this newspaper, it is precisely their use of militancy that justifies medical misogyny. The *Daily Express* (1 March 1913) even printed a poem, "The Little Suffragette", that mocked the suffragettes and highlighted once again their supposed pathological conditions:

There was a little Suffragette,

Her ways were mild and guileless;

She used an axe, so telegrams

Must now be sent by wireless.

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[91] Interestingly, the *New York Times* reprinted the article and thought it was "the most interesting contribution to the current literature of the question" (cited in Cleghorn 2021: 175).

Although her temper as a rule

Was rather calm and placid,

She couldn't pass a pillar-box

Without inserting acid.

She couldn't light the kitchen fire,

Of cooking had no notion;

But with a can of paraffin

She caused a great commotion.

Because she has a grudge against

The M.P.s who evade her,

She damages the windows of

An inoffensive trader.

Such idiotic actions make

Her saner sisters pensive;

Her antics would be silly if

They were not so offensive.

She doesn't need imprisonment

Or shooting with artillery,

Just give her up on Ludgate-hill

Two hours in the pillory.

The satirical and derogatory tones are evident: the "little Suffragette" is first said to have been *mild*, *guileless*, *calm*, and *placid* (that is, the qualities traditionally associated with womanhood and femininity), but her use of militant methods (axes, acid inserted in pillar boxes, cans of paraffin) is judged to be *idiotic*, while her actions are defined as *antics* which are implicitly indicative of mental instability. Lastly, the poem closes with suggestions on how to deal with her: not by imprisoning or shooting her, but by confining her to the pillory on Ludgate Hill (London).

General accusations of madness or (at least momentary) insanity are often reported in the mainstream press. For example, the *Times* of 2 March 1912 published a leading article ("Suffragist Outrages") about the recent window-smashing raids and labelled them as an act of "temporary insanity" wrought by "demented and maniacal creatures"; the *Globe* of 29 January 1913 described the suffragettes as "wild and frantic creatures who have been roused to indignation by the offer of the Prime Minister"; and the *Daily Graphic* of 5 June 1914 wrote in the article "MILITANT MADNESS": "Doubtless some of these women are so mentally unbalanced that they would prefer to die rather than cease from their way upon society, but they may be quite sure that the country would equally prefer their death to the continuance of their campaign". In each case, terms like *demented* and *maniacal*, or *mentally unbalanced* were not simply derogatory ways to refer to militant women but were used as a technical terminology which was backed by so-called scientific and medical evidence offered by doctors like Sir Almroth Wright.

Naturally, we also find specific references to hysteria. Again, the *Times* of 16 March 1912 published the article "Insurgent Hysteria", which proposed to be a lengthy scientific explanation of the suffragettes' mental unbalance. Below are reported some of the main extracts from it (italics mine):

• They (physicians) are familiar with a kind of patient, not devoid of intelligence, who must be in evidence and *saturated with excitement*, to whom *strife* is congenial, to whom life would not be worth living but for grievances and wrongs, and who must have *a daily dose of rousing sensations*.

• Women who have *not married*, who have *no domestic duties*, whom such duties are uncongenial; those who have *no talents or aptitudes* for any professions; the large, and, it is to be feared, increasing number of women who find themselves with abundance of leisure and a somewhat *vacuous existence* - among these are to be found *ready recruits* for *bands of window-smashers* and *similar would-be hooligans*.

• The *hysterical*, the *neurotic*, the *idle*, the *habitual imbibers of excitement* are always at the service of those who offer them an opportunity of gratifying the ruling passions. Some of them are out with their hammers and bags full of stones because of dreary, empty lives and *high-strung*, *over-excitable natures*: they are *regrettable by-products of our civilisation.*

• All that one can say about them is, to quote a well-known writer on insanity, that they are "possessed with a *Puck-like spirit of mischief*"

• The militant movement is only partly understood if it is not seen that it attracts many aspiring *incapables* and a mass of persons who prefer notoriety to obscurity.

The medical misogyny in this article is self-evident, and it recollects all the gender ideologies we have already discussed so far. Thus, the campaigners are labelled as *hysterical*, *neurotic*, *idle*, *imbibers of excitement*, as notoriety hunters who are *saturated with excitement*, wanting their *daily*

dose of rousing sensations, possessed by *a Puck-like spirit of mischief*[92], and, finally, as *would-be hooligans* (see § 5.3.2) and as *regrettable by-products of our civilisation*. The same line of thought was recovered a year later also by the *Standard*, which, on 21 February 1913, while talking about the outrages at Kew Gardens, reported the following: "It is all of a place with the sheer frenzy which has attacked this section of hysterical women. They are cases rather for the alienist than the criminal lawyer, persons suffering from the mania for destruction which is familiar enough in our lunatic asylums". The notion of the lunatic asylum is not to be taken for granted, as images of mental illness had a strong hold on Victorians and Edwardians alike, who felt both repudiated and fascinated by them. When families had to deal with a female component suffering from mental illness, this was perceived as a shame and a social stigma on the family itself, and thus women were either confined to the attic, being it the most absconded part of the house (the idea of the "madwoman in the attic" is popular in the British literature of the time), or consigned to the asylums, which were little more than true prisons.

Finally, we can also find references to **suffragitis*, the supposedly new disease, much similar to hysteria and lunacy, that specifically concerned militant suffragettes. On 31 March 1912, the *Observer* published an article with the title "SUFFRAGITIS AND ITS CURE", in which the writer stated:

> The militant feminists, in a word, want to "jump" the whole process of evolution. They copy the violence sometimes used by male agitation in the past without really understanding what they imitate. Yet they will never have a chance to make real progress until they have abandoned the spasmodic futilities of petty violence altogether, and reconciled themselves to methods less sensational, if not more original.

Thus, **suffragitis*, also backed by the *Pall Mall Gazette* with its article "Science and Suffragitis" of 2 April 1912, was perceived to be women's leap in the process of evolution, an illness whose main symptoms were militant actions (defined as "spasmodic futilities of petty violence"), and whose only possible cure was the immediate cessation of militancy.

Such discourses were also recovered and further reinforced in satirical magazines like *Punch*, which often published cartoons about the suffragettes, and some of them included references to their hypothetical (mental) illness. By searching the online archive of the magazine, it is possible to find sardonic sketches about women's diseases and medical misogyny already from 1906, that is to say, much before the word *suffragette* became widespread and, more importantly, well before the advent

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[92] From Puck, the mischievous fairy character of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* based on Celtic mythology.

of suffrage militancy. For instance, Figure 5 is a cartoon from 17 January 1906 which depicts two women outside a hall where a Liberal meeting is taking place:

Figure 5: "The Shrieking Sister", *Punch*, 17 January 1906.

As it can be seen, one of the women is calm and placid, while the other one is evidently distressed and agitates her arms wildly in the air, as if protesting against the Liberals. The title of the cartoon is "THE SHRIEKING SISTER", and it thus recuperates the popular expression "Shrieking Sisterhood", which we have already encountered in Chapter 4, and which was often used to refer to feminist campaigners (although, at this time, the suffrage movement still had not gained pace). The caption under the title reads as follows: "The sensible woman. "*YOU* HELP OUR CAUSE? WHY, YOU'RE ITS WORST ENEMY!"". The adjective *sensible* plays a significant role here, as it is juxtaposed with *shrieking* and it reflects the meanings presented in the *OED*: "Conscious, free from physical insensibility or delirium" and "endowed with good sense; intelligent, reasonable, judicious". Thus, this contrast shows how the link between mental insanity and feminism was made and reproduced in

the press before the creation of suffrage societies and the 'official' diagnosis that related suffrage and hysteria made by Sir Almroth Wright, as explained before.

Moreover, an issue of 2 May of the same year shows a constable carrying a suffragette who appears to be screaming and thrashing in his arms (Figure 6):

SAFEST AND CHEAPEST TRAVELLING IN LONDON.
New method of transit invented by our hysterical friends the Suffragettes ; cheaper, quicker and more reliable than tubes or motor-buses.

Figure 6: "Safest and Cheapest Travelling in London", *Punch*, 2 May 1906.

The title is "SAFEST AND CHEAPEST TRAVELLING IN LONDON" and the caption reads "New method of transit invented by our hysterical friends the Suffragettes; cheaper, quicker and more reliable than tubes or motor-buses." Linguistically, this is interesting for at least two reasons: first of all, we can see how the word *suffragette* was evidently already quite popular in the mainstream press, despite it being invented by the *Daily Mail* only some months before. Secondly, we may notice the term *hysterical friends* which directly collocates with it, thus reinforcing once again the idea that suffragettes suffered from some kind of specifically gendered (mental) disease.

Other cartoons from the following years were certainly not less derogatory or misogynist in this respect. Figure 7 shows a sketch from 6 January 1909 representing a little girl in her room, surrounded by toys, evidently having a tantrum, with her mother trying to calm her:

HEREDITARY INSTINCT.

Suffragette Mother (snatching a spare moment from really important things to visit the nursery). "BUT, MY DEAR CHILD, WHAT ARE YOU CRYING FOR, WITH ALL THESE NICE TOYS? WHAT CAN YOU WANT?" *Infant.* "BOO-HOO! I WANT A VOTE!"

Figure 7: "Hereditary Instinct", *Punch*, 6 January 1909.

 The title is "HEREDITARY INSTINCT", and the caption presents the imaginary dialogue that goes on between the woman and her child: "*Suffragette mother (snatching a spare moment from really important things to visit the nursery).* 'BUT, MY DEAR CHILD, WHAT ARE YOU CRYING FOR, WITH ALL THESE NICE TOYS? WHAT CAN YOU WANT?'", to which the girl replies "BOO-HOO! I WANT A VOTE!". The title itself shows how biological beliefs about women's inferiority, lack of control of emotions, and hereditary links were pervasive. Furthermore, the caption contains a good deal of ideological linguistic choices, starting from the label applied to the woman (*suffragette mother*; see § 4.3), who is said to be *snatching* a moment from things which are ironically deemed to be *really important* (i.e., women's enfranchisement) to visit her own daughter. The toys that surround the little girl (mainly dolls and a dollhouse) clearly represent women's pertaining sphere, that is, the domestic one, and their 'natural' destiny, but the daughter, evidently dissatisfied, cries out that she wants "the vote", and thus the caption makes it look as just another whim of the moment, which will soon pass.

The relationship between mother and daughter is also recovered in a cartoon from 23 October 1912, shown in Figure 8:

Figure 8: Mother and 'suffragette' daughter, *Punch*, 23 October 1912.

In this scene, the adult woman, who is pictured with a copy of *Votes for Women* in her hands, stands before a nursemaid and her own daughter, who is sitting in a grumpy-looking manner at the dinner table. Here, there are no catchy titles, but the caption is a dialogue between the woman and the nursemaid: "*Mamma.* 'DEAR, DEAR! HAVE I COME HOME TO A NAUGHTY LITTLE GIRL?'. *Nurse.* "REALLY, MADAM, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH MISS MABEL. SHE'S BEEN VERY TROUBLESOME ALL THE AFTERNOON, AND NOW SHE SAYS IF SHE CAN'T HAVE CAKE BEFORE HER BREAD-AND-BUTTER SHE'LL GO ON HUNGER-STRIKE!". Though there are no direct references to hysteria or medical misogyny here, the mocking tones with which the reference to suffragette prisoners is made is self-evident: indeed, according to *Punch*, it is their hysterical behaviour that leads them to act as spoilt children and use hunger-striking as a form of blackmail against the Government.

Finally, Figure 9 shows a cartoon from 13 August 1913 which refers to suffrage militancy without including women in it:
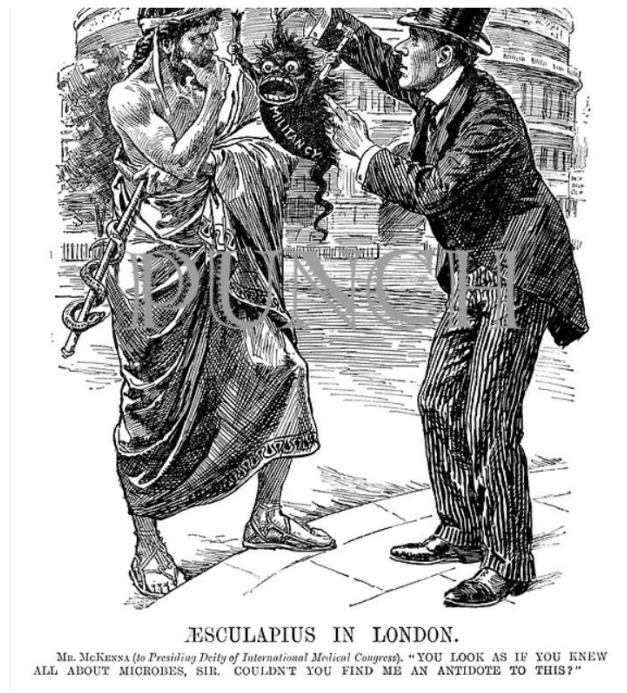
Figure 9: "Aesculapius in London", *Punch*, 13 August 1913.

It is possible to see a British gentleman holding a little monster with the tip of his fingers, because he is evidently horrified by it, and showing it to another man wearing a long robe and sandals. The little monster-like creature bears the word "MILITANCY" on its chest; the British man is said to be Mr McKenna, while the other man is Aesculapius, the hero and god of medicine in ancient Greek mythology. The title of the cartoon is "AESCULAPIUS IN LONDON", and in the caption, McKenna says to him: "YOU LOOK AS IF YOU KNEW ALL ABOUT MICROBES, SIR. COULDN'T YOU FIND ME AN ANTIDOTE TO THIS?". Thus, in this case, militancy, and not hysteria, is said to be the true disease affecting the Women's Suffrage Movement, and McKenna himself is mocked because he seems incapable of finding a 'cure' for it.

In this first part of the analysis, we have seen how mainstream discourses around hysteria, lunacy, and the suffragettes' mental illness were constructed and validated both through their normative meanings as reported in the *OED*, and through the numerous articles that supported medical and pseudo-scientific evidence and ideas about medical misogyny. In the second part of the investigation, we will focus on linguistic and discoursal strategies used in suffrage newspapers to counter and overturn these discourses.

6.3.2 Counter-discourses

The presence of counter-discourses concerning women's health in suffrage periodicals confirms how these kept a close eye on the mainstream press and looked for every discourse that might prove to be dangerous for women. As already explained in § 1.4, feminist newspapers aimed, among other things, at deconstructing misogynist misrepresentation and misinformation which, disguised under the authoritative voices of the most conservative newspapers, was widely accepted and acknowledged as true.

As far as medical misogyny is concerned, the case of hysteria and, more generally, mental health was not the first example of feminist agitation against pseudo-scientific prejudice: indeed, between the 1860s and the 1880s, the British feminist movement had waged a campaign against the Contagious Disease Acts, which were passed in 1866 because of widespread venereal diseases in the armed forces. These Acts empowered the police in ports and garrison towns to stop women they simply *suspected* to be prostitutes on the street and to subject them then and there to a physical examination, to bring them before a magistrate, and to hospitalise them, should they find evidence of a venereal disease. Feminists aimed at repelling these Acts, as they were seen as a "government-sanctioned vice that made clear the connections between women's sexual and political subordination" (Steinbach 2005: 274): instead, they insisted on the vulnerability of all women and on the pervasiveness and oppressiveness of the so-called 'double standard', that is to say, the separate expectations about men's and women's sexual behaviour that rendered the very same actions regrettable for men, but wholly unacceptable for women. Though the feminist periodicals of those years did tackle these issues, this was not done systematically or with the clear willingness to build counter-discourses as in the case of hysteria which we are investigating here.

As already anticipated, the presence of such counter-discourses in the MMS was checked by using both quantitative and qualitative methods: the former allowed the investigation of the of use of verbs, adjectives, and adverbs that signal argumentation or disagreement, along with the multiword expressions mostly used to do so. The latter, through an analysis of expanded concordances of the words *hysteria/hysterics/hysterical*, *lunacy/lunatic*, and **suffragitis,* and of the whole articles in which these were found, revealed that the main discoursal strategies used to counteract medical misogyny were: the use of irony, the deconstruction of male-created medical myths and the consequent creation of female-created ones, and the use of scientific terminology to explain and comment on the specific case of hysteria. Results and discussions of these data are provided in the remaining sections of this Chapter.

6.3.3 Wordlists: verbs, adjectives, and adverbs

The discussion of wordlists starts with considering those lexical verbs that indicate the presence of counter-arguments or resistant discourses, along with their frequency in the MMS, as reported in Table 26 (only verbs that occur more than once in the subcorpus have been considered here):

Verb	Frequency	Verb	Frequency
fight	14	resist	3
refuse	13	exclude	3
condemn	10	doubt	3
decline	9	object	3
deny	8	protest	3
attack	7	defy	3
accuse	7	dismiss	2
oppose	6	undo	2
stop	5	reject	2
blame	4	denounce	2
suppress	4	dislike	2
criticise	4	disregard	2

Table 26: most frequent verbs indicating counter-discourses in the MMS.

In terms of frequency, it is interesting, though not altogether surprising, to see that the three mostly-used lexical verbs (which occur more than 10 times in the sub-corpus) are *fight*, *refuse*, and *condemn*: while the latter two clearly mark the presence of ideas which are not accepted by the Women's Suffrage Movement, the former both recalls discourses around militancy and the use of force which we have already seen in the previous chapters, and, at the same time, a more figurative battle which was fought also within the pages of mainstream and feminist periodicals alike.

Furthermore, some of the verbs in Table 26 may be grouped into categories according to their meaning and/or function in the construction of counter-discourses: thus, we can find verbs that refer to the semantic domain of war (*fight* and *attack*); verbs that indicate the rejection of conservative (and patriarchal) ideas both about womanhood and, in particular, women's health (*refuse*, *decline*, *deny*, *oppose*, *resist*, *defy*, *reject*, *dislike*, and *disregard*); verbs taken from legal terminology that refer to

the suffragettes' reaction towards accusations of hysteria (*condemn*, *accuse*, *blame*, *criticise*, and *denounce*); and, finally, verbs that plainly question the validity and authority of those uttering such accusations (*doubt*, *object*, and *protest*). Therefore, it is worth noting that the much more direct language of war and militancy, which we analysed in Chapter 5, presents here fewer examples, and it is counterbalanced by terms referring to rhetorical and argumentative strategies used to reply to medical misogyny and, at the same time, by verbs that are taken from the law jargon: in this way, the case of medical and scientific prejudice against women becomes another type of battle, one which should be fought through wit and words, rather than through the use of force.

Further analysis of concordances shows the various contexts and instances in which these verbs were used to build discourses that aimed at countering medical misogyny in general. Such discourses had to do, for example, with discrediting the idea of women's supposed biological inferiority and with the difficulty of eradicating gendered prejudice:

(222)   It will prove that, in *fighting* against evil, the few are stronger than the many, women stronger than men, and one stronger than all. (*TS*, "The Martyr Spirit", 28 March 1913)

(223)   Legislation to promote moral reform is so difficult and delicate a question that without sanity and knowledge legislators may easily do mischief that will take generations, perhaps centuries, to *undo*. (*CC*, "Sanity", 20 June 1913)

In particular, extract (222) perfectly exemplifies one of the strategies used in suffrage periodicals to respond to medical misogyny, that is, the debunking of male-created medical myths, which are also overturned (in this case, the writer argues that *women* are stronger than men, and not vice versa). More examples and discussion about this strategy are reported later, with the qualitative part of the analysis.

Table 27 reports the most frequent adjectives that signal the presence of counter-discourses in the MMS (again, only those that appear more than once in the sub-corpus have been considered):

Adjective	Frequency	Adjective	Frequency
futile	5	distressing	2
false	5	awful	2
ignorant	4	ridiculous	2
fanatical	4	bigoted	2

unreasonable	4	arguable	2
so-called	4	absurd	2
dangerous	4	insignificant	2
deplorable	4	frantic	2
hideous	3	loathsome	2
appalling	3	indignant	2
vicious	3	inconsiderable	2
intolerable	3	brutal	2
horrible	3	shameful	2
pitiful	3	odious	2
illogical	2	ill-advised	2
idiotic	2	unjust	2
mischievous	2	useless	2
cruel	2		

Table 27: most frequent adjectives indicating counter-discourses in the MMS.

All the adjectives reported in the table refer to how suffragists and suffragettes perceived medical misogyny to be, and therefore show their stance towards what was being said about it in the mainstream newspapers. Again, these adjectives can be grouped into categories in order to look at their meanings and functions in more detail. It is interesting to notice that the sub-group that presents more occurrences is the one with the most extreme adjectives, which label scientific prejudice against women in an ascending climax that goes from simply *unjust*, *intolerable*, *absurd*, *deplorable*, indignant, and *inconsiderable*, to *appalling*, *horrible*, *cruel*, *distressing*, *awful*, *ridiculous*, *bigoted*, *brutal*, *shameful*, and *odious*, to expressions that offer women's stance in a more radical way, like *fanatical*, *hideous*, *vicious*, *pitiful*, *mischievous*, *frantic*, and *loathsome*. Among these last examples, we should notice how *fanatical* and *frantic*, in particular, are the very same adjectives that were used by the mainstream press to refer to hysterical suffragettes: their presence here might indicate that these terms were used *against* men, who were probably considered just as hysterical as feminists were thought to be. Other smaller categories include adjectives that comment on the degree of truth of misogynist accusations (*false*, *so-called*, *arguable*, and *ill-advised*), those that provide judgement on the utility of such ideas (*futile*, *insignificant*, and *useless*), and, lastly, those that clearly define such allegations as unsounded (*ignorant*, *unreasonable*, *illogical*, and *idiotic*).

A more detailed analysis of concordances shows again that these adjectives are used in building counter-discourses that tackle medical misogyny on the whole, and not just the single case of hysteria. For instance, we do find references to militancy as a disease that, according to the antis, needed to be extirpated:

(224)   Militancy is not a disease; it is a symptom. If its opponents could stamp it out –and they cannot–they would be doing a foolish and a *futile* thing. (*TV*, "Militant Women and Women", 28 November 1913)

Here, not only is militancy not considered as an illness at all, as suggested many times by doctors and journalists, but it is also, once again, defended, as it could not be stopped unless the Government gave women the vote. Other remarks refer to more general scientific and biological prejudice against women, as reported in the following examples:

(225)   The women who say they are not all so *ignorant* as they give themselves out to be. Many of them, rather than present inconvenient fade, rather than break through some small social convention, will act as still as the little princess and see the caterpillar go down with the salad. (*VFW*, "Why Pt.1", 3 December 1909)

(226)   A little learning may be a *dangerous* thing. But armed with much ignorance we are in a more parlous plight. (*CC,* "Should We Speak Out?", 16 February 1911)

(227)   For you will notice that Anti-Suffragists always contradict either themselves or each other in the course of their arguments. So it was only natural to laugh at their odd mixture of abuse and sentimentality with regard to their own sex, and at their utterly *illogical* attitude in saying that because they themselves don't want the vote, the women who do want it shall not have it. (*TV*, "Dealing With The Antis", 6 May 1911)

These extracts refer to accusations of ignorance and immorality which were often meted out to women, and to the militants more specifically. However, it is curious to notice how, while extract (226), from *CC*, clearly refers to male's views of women's ignorance (and education, in this case), examples (225) and (227), taken from the more militant and avant-garde *VFW* and *TV*, accuse other *women* (namely, anti-suffragists), and not doctors or conservative newspapers. Indeed, example (225) ironically reproaches those women who prefer to live in their 'gilded cage', rather than try to change the status quo, which saw them as 'naturally' subject to their husbands, fathers, or brothers, while extract (227) defines the Antis' arguments as illogical. Such attitudes are not new, as we have already talked about them when analysing the word *woman* in Chapter 3 and when discussing different ideas of womanhood and femininity in Chapter 4, but, still, it is interesting to notice how the gendered rivalry between feminists and 'womanly women' continues with discourses around women's health, too.

Finally, we should notice how such adjectives as *idiotic* and *loathsome* are used in the MMS to comment and dismiss mainstream arguments against women:

(228)   What is fanaticism? What is a fanatic? Used against us, surely the word means that we have come to desire the vote for its own sake as a supremely desirable thing; or else that we believe it to be an instrument by which all desirable things may be obtained. No suffragist thinks these *idiotic* things; but it is convenient for the enemy to suppose that we do, as our demands may then very easily be disposed of. (*CC*, "A Long Journey", 2 February 1911)

(229)   He beseeches them firmly to refuse to leave "that serener and purer atmosphere which is theirs by right and inheritance, in order to join in the turmoils of political life." We give this as a sample. There is much more of the same kind. Could there, we ask, be more **loathsome** hypocrisy? The writer himself, if he has the scantiest knowledge of life, must know this. (*TV*, "On Guard!", 16 March 1912)

Example (228) focuses on the meaning of the word *fanatic*, which was often paired with *hysteria* when it was associated with the suffragettes: the writer of *CC* considers the definition specifically used against feminist campaigners as *idiotic*, that is, in the contemporary sense reported in the *OED*, "[c]haracteristic of or having the nature of an idiot or idiots; devoid of intellect; utterly stupid, senseless, or foolish". Just as women were often chided for their supposed lack of intellect, and, therefore, idiocy, so is medical misogyny considered in the same way. Example (229) comments a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* of 9 March, in which the author, an unknown man, encouraged women to remain in the private sphere, judged to be more serene and secure, rather than adventuring in the public one, much more dangerous: this statement is labelled by *TV* as *loathsome hypocrisy*, since, as we have previously said, it was precisely this type of confinement that resulted in women's mental illnesses.

The last part of this preliminary quantitative analysis looks at adverbs that are used to build counter-discourses, which are reported in Table 28 below:

Adverb	Frequency
not	387
yet	33
perhaps	16
however	15
merely	13
scarcely	3

utterly	3
otherwise	3
hardly	3
actually	2
disdainfully	2

Table 28: most frequent adverbs indicating counter-discourses in the MMS.

Interestingly, we can see how, apart from the negative conjunction *not*, the most frequent adverb that can be used to identify the presence of counter-discourses is *yet*: though this sometimes functions as a time adverb, it is most often used with a conjunctive function in expressing a comment or viewpoint when introducing counter-arguments, as reported in the examples below:

(230)   They had no case, because if they did not want the vote, and if they felt themselves too illogical, hysterical, unpatriotic, devoid of originality, and at the same time too angelically superior to the coarse male voter, all they needed to do was to leave the vote alone–the unseemly, degrading, unwomanly vote, which *yet* was something too awe-inspiring, too intellectual, too essentially virile a mystery ever to pass into woman's possession. (*TV*, "Dealing With The Antis", 6 May 1911)

(231)   They are things so utterly foreign to the nature of the McKennas of the world that they seem to them products of mental and physical disease. *Yet* the so-called fanatics and hysterics are the glory of the human race (*TS*, "The Martyr Spirit", 28 March 1913)

These examples offer specific insight into metalinguistic issues concerning the construction of counter-discourses. In both cases the mainstream (or anti-suffrage and misogynist) idea is first presented almost as a given, and then, with the introduction of *yet*, this vision is debunked by presenting a counterargument, which is occasionally tinged with irony. In extract (230), the writer is referring to the women 'antis', who see the vote as "unseemly, degrading, unwomanly", but also, probably unconsciously, as "too awe-inspiring, too intellectual, too essentially virile a mystery": with an ironical tone, the hypocrisy of the antis, who prefer to acknowledge the patriarchal ideas that see women as "hysterical, unpatriotic, devoid of originality" is deconstructed by highlighting its unsoundness. Extract (231), on the other hand, refers directly to the "McKennas of the world" (i.e., men who shared the same ideas as Home Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer Reginald McKenna, a notable anti-suffragist), who compare the Woman Question to "products of mental and physical disease". Though in this case there is no specific reference to hysteria, we can see how discourses around women's supposed frail health occurred quite often as a form of explanation for their unwomanly qualities and behaviours (especially militancy). The presence of *yet* in initial

position in the second sentence introduces the counterargument, which presents "the so-called fanatics and hysterics" as "the glory of the human race", and therefore people (more specifically in this case, women) who should be admired for their courage.

Other adverbs that question the validity of mainstream discourses are *perhaps*, *however*, *otherwise*, and *actually*. For instance, *however* occurs when talking about the theme of women's education, or lack of it, which used to be a further obstacle in their empowerment and, at the same time, another acknowledgement of gender ideologies that saw them as inherently inferior to men. Indeed, in the article "A Long Journey" of 2 February 1911, *CC* states: "Until women had a better education than used to be given them, they could seldom realize the nature of their difficulties, and it was impossible they should remove them. This position however, has been won". Here, the adverb *however* is thus used to present a new condition, and, therefore, the overcoming of a difficulty.

Lastly, we can see from Table 27 how, among the most frequent adverbs that indicate counter-discourses, we also find some interesting adverbs of manner, that simply tell us how something happens or how it is perceived by the writer (i.e., their stance or attitude towards what is being said). In terms of counter-discourses concerning medical misogyny, we should report here the specific cases of *utterly* and *disdainfully*:

(232) They are things so *utterly* foreign to the nature of the McKennas of the world that they seem to them products of mental and physical disease. (*TS*, "The Martyr Spirit", 28 March 1913)

(233) There is no "inherent nature" that forbids us to look for new capacities in an organism. These things were not known 2,000 years ago, but with a robust and impatient common sense, Plato sweeps aside all talk of woman's natural inferiority as *disdainfully* as a modern biologist ought to do. (*TV*, "Anti-Government Or Anti-Liberal?", 23 December 1909)

Extract (232), already reported when analysing *yet* above, refers to the suffragettes' militant methods and requests of enfranchisement, which are considered as "utterly foreign" to them. Extract (233), on the other hand, is quite interesting, as the strategy used to present counterarguments that aimed at dismantling medical and scientific myths about women consists in recuperating ancient philosophy and showing it as more up-to-date and less gender-biased than modern-day science. In this case, the author writes about Plato's refusal to admit "women's natural inferiority", which, in her opinion, should be discarded "disdainfully" as modern biologists should do, too. Thus, this counter-discourse is to be read as an exhortation for scientists to reconsider and finally abandon medical misogyny on the basis of more concrete scientific proofs.

6.3.4 Clusters and multi-word terms

In order to further find out how counter-discourses about medical misogyny are constructed, it is also useful to consider clusters of words, as labelled by Baker (2006: 56), or multi-word terms, as reported in SketchEngine: these are obtained by comparing their frequency list with a reference corpus, that is, just as keywords were obtained, as explained at the beginning of Chapter 4. Thus, Table 29 reports the most salient multi-word terms or clusters of words that refer to discourses around medical misogyny and the specific case of hysteria:

Multi-word term	Multi-word term
double standard	deliberate ignorance
human nature	diseased beastliness
medical woman	cure for militancy
sex prejudice	chosen cure for militancy
natural inferiority	forced feeding
hysterical woman	barbarity of forced feeding
hysterical shriek	forcible measure
certificate of insanity	epidemic of militancy
charge of hysteria	administration of drugs
danger of hysteria	compulsory feeding
desperate exertion	bilious pallor
absolute bunkum	

Table 29: multi-word terms referring to medical misogyny in the MMS.

The four multi-word terms that specifically refer to hysteria will not be considered here, as a more detailed analysis of this case study will be offered in the qualitative sections that follow. However, for the time being, it is enough to notice how, apart from the more obvious *hysterical woman* and *hysterical shriek*, the other salient clusters are *charge of hysteria* and *danger of hysteria*: this shows how this gendered illness was represented not just simply as a pathological condition, but also in legal terms as something women could be accused of and which could be a threat to public order, not just to themselves.

Furthermore, we may notice at least three types of (counter-)discourses which appear evident from this list. First of all, the reference to biological beliefs that saw women as 'naturally' inferior to me, which are deconstructed here through the use of multi-word terms like *double standard*, *human nature*, *sex prejudice*, and *natural inferiority*. In particular, *TV* often questions the validity of such beliefs precisely by mentioning prejudice and a double standard applied to men and women:

(234)   In many suburbs and districts you will find that the Antis have been going from door to door distributing leaflets and appealing to *sex prejudice*, and a good many unthinking people have been led away by them. (*TV*, "Dealing With The Antis", 6 May 1911)

(235)   There can be no doubt that much of the confusion about spheres and atmospheres has arisen from the tacit acceptance by women, as well as by men, of a *double standard* in morals, and the whole of our legislation is tainted with the error of this conception. (*TV*, "On Guard!", 16 March 1912)

Double standard and sex prejudice (not just in morals, but concerning women's bodies and supposed illnesses as well) are thus seen as being promulgated both by Antis (men and women alike) and, even worse, by those women who have passively accepted these views. The construction of counter-discourses, therefore, also mainly occurs through mentioning the ideological beliefs which have created these ideas, and the people who have supported them.

Secondly, militancy is considered an illness which, in the conservative papers, is compared to hysteria, too, as we can see from the clusters *(chosen) cure for militancy* and *epidemic of militancy*:

(236) Deportation. That is *The Saturday Review*'s *chosen cure for militancy*. (*TS*, "How to Deal with The Suffragettes", 7 March 1913)

(237) These are the questions that must inevitably spring to one's mind on reading last Sunday's and Monday's press caterings for the public benefit. For a perfect *epidemic of militancy* is therein detailed, militancy *in esse* and *in posse*, at home and abroad […] (*TV*, "The Militants", 31 July 1914)

Interestingly, both extracts refer to articles from the mainstream press which have considered militancy as a disease: extract (236) reports how *The Saturday Review* had proposed a series of 'cures' for militancy, among which we may find the deportation of the suffragettes to faraway and lonely islands, where they could freely express their anger without causing further trouble, while extract (237) simply mentions the Sunday and Monday papers which have described a true "epidemic of militancy". The evident ironical tones of these comments clearly suggest that comparing militancy to a pathology is yet another absurd invention of the patriarchal and anti-suffrage press which needs to be discarded and debunked.

We may also observe how discourses around the case of forcible feeding occur frequently, namely through the clusters *forced feeding*, *barbarity of forcible feeding*, *forcible measures*, *administration of drugs*, and *compulsory feeding*. Indeed, militant women's resort to hunger striking in prison was seen by doctors as having a direct link with yet another nervous disorder, that is, anorexia nervosa, since "medical and cultural constructions of the 'fading away' of women and girls has been viewed as a psychosomatic response to female dilemmas, and as an expression of powerlessness and anger" (Harrison 2006: 143). As we have already mentioned, the proposed solution (publicly supported by the Government) to this behaviour was the use of forcible feeding. In the MMS, this strategy is condemned for its brutality:

(238) *Compulsory feeding*, compulsory marriage, branding, flogging, deportation, head-shaving, burning at Smithfield, breaking on tho wheel; even the gentle methods of Llanystumdwy are, however picturesque and antique, decidedly expensive and slow. (*TS*, "A Short Way with the Suffragettes", 7 March 1913)

(239) The *barbarity of forcible feeding* has been condemned, by all the civilised world. (*TV*, "The Deadlock and After", 12 December 1913)

(240) If the women now in prison, whose reason is threatened by the Government's *administration of drugs*, whose body is three times daily put to the torture of forcible feeding–if these women were asked, "Will you have bodily torture and mental ruin, or will you starve to death?", they would answer "Let us starve to death". (TS, "Victory with or Without Death", 12 June 1914)

Presenting forced feeding and the administration of certain drugs to women prisoners as a form of torture thus contributed to the construction of counter-discourses concerning medical misogyny: the supposed illnesses that led the militants to adopt hunger striking are not only put aside as nonsensical, but they are, most importantly, overshadowed by focusing on the barbarous practice of forcible feeding.

Last of all, it is necessary to focus on the only multi-word term in Table 29 that actually refers to men, not to women. In the article "The Demoralisation of the Antis", published by *TV* on 19 June 1914, the cluster *diseased beastliness* refers to anti-suffrage men and policemen and to their brutal behaviour towards the suffragettes, adopted, for example, during the infamous Black Friday: "On the various savage outbursts of unmanly and **diseased beastliness** we can look with greater calm; it is long since we have plumbed these foul depths, and we know to what evil conditions and traditions their foulness is due". Thus, for the first time, suffrage newspapers overturn accusations of insanity to those men who had first pronounced them against women, and just as hysteria is seen as a pathological condition that leads to deranged behaviour, then the "beastliness" used by these men against women is seen as another form of gendered illness, one which pertains males only this time.

So far, we have adopted mainly quantitative methods to find and comment on counter-discourses in the MMS: the next sections will adopt a more qualitative approach, starting with the analysis of keywords related to health, medical misogyny, and the explicit case of hysteria.

6.4 Keywords

Table 30 reports the keywords related to medical misogyny, which have been grouped into subcategories:

Subcategory	Keywords
Hysteria	*hysterical, hysteria, fanaticism, hysteric, fanatic, sedative, tantrum, maniac, hysterics, insomnia, convulsions, asylum, fanatical*
(Mental) sanity	*calm-nerved, serenity, sanity*
Other illnesses	**suffragitis, neuropathy, neurasthenic, neurasthenia, anaemic, affliction*

Table 30: keywords related to medical misogyny in the MMS.

As can be seen, the subcategories identified help further understand, at least at a first glance, the more specific topics related to medical misogyny that are tackled in this sub-corpus. Naturally, given the very nature of the MMS, the category labelled as "Hysteria" contains the most numerous lexical occurrences: apart from the keywords directly linked to hysteria (*hysterical*, *hysteria*, *hysteric*, *hysterics*), we may also find *fanaticism*, *fanatic*, *fanatical*, and *maniac*, which acquired a pathological meaning when coupled with *hysteria*, as well as other keywords that referred to symptoms (*tantrum*, *insomnia*, *convulsions*), cures (*sedative*), or places where such cases could be treated (*asylum*). The category "(Mental) sanity" has been identified because it contains keywords that prove to be antonyms to the ones in the "Hysteria" sub-group (*calm-nerved*, *serenity*, *sanity*): thus, by comparing them to the ones in the category above, it is possible to ascertain their use and function in the construction of counter-discourses concerning medical misogyny, as well as checking whether such keywords (and their related discourses) either confirmed or debunked the gendered medical ideologies of the time. Lastly, the final group "Other illnesses" reports keywords that refer to other types of diseases commonly attributed to women, and, specifically, to feminists: from the peculiar case of **suffragitis*, to terms like *neuropathy*, *neurasthenic*, *neurasthenia*, *anaemic*, and *affliction*, which prove that hysteria was not the only example of gendered and misogynist ailments that often became further powerful labels to belittle women's desire to be empowered. In the next sections, we

will have a closer look at concordances and collocations of the word forms of the lemma HYSTERIA to try and reconstruct how counter-discourses aimed at discrediting gendered medical myths.

6.4.1 HYSTERIA: discourses and counter-discourses

The lemma HYSTERIA occurs 47 times in the MMS, and it can be found in the noun form (*hysteria*, *hysterics*) and in its adjectival form (*hysteric*, *hysterical*). Though the number of occurrences is certainly statistically unimportant, it is still interesting to investigate them to further analyse the theme of medical misogyny and its counter-discourses in suffrage periodicals. Even though, for the same reason, it was not possible to draw a list of frequent collocates that could reveal potentially significant discourses and counter-discourses (as when commenting on gender issues and militancy in chapters 4 and 5), the manual analysis of each concordance line revealed some patterns which are still worthy of attention.

For instance, it is interesting to notice how the lemma HYSTERIA often occurs between scare quotes: this strategy is mainly used when reporting statements from the mainstream press or comments from the anti-suffragists, and though, in purely linguistic terms, it may simply signal the presence of reported speech, we might also understand it as a detachment from the very concept of hysteria. Indeed, by using inverted commas to enclose the word, writers in suffrage newspapers were not merely reporting someone else's views and words, but they were also implicitly refusing to acknowledge the existence of this gendered sickness and its inherent misogynist traits: writing the word between scare quotes and attributing it to other sources can certainly be accounted for as a strategical way to build counter-discourses about it, as it demonstrated women suffragists' doubts about its scientifical nature.

References to mainstream journals or to anti-suffragists are reported in the following examples:

(241) WHAT SORT OF WOMEN are they, then, who want the vote? "A lot of *hysterical,* notoriety-hunting females", the Anti-Suffragists will tell you. (*CC*, "The ABC of Women's Suffrage", 2 February 1911)

(242) THE VOTE is not concerned to defend or denounce violence. But it cannot refrain from wondering what has become of the immeasurable superiority of *The Times*, and *The Morning Post* and *The Sunday Chronicle* in the face of this orgy of male violence. Where are the articles on "maniacs," and **hysteria**", and the "unsexed" and "disgrace to manhood"? Has *The Freeman's Journal* no message for us? Does *The Saturday Review* remember its offensive article under the signature of Filson Young? Or is it true that, as Sir George Kemp

trenchantly remarked, "if you want to see the lower side of life, go into politics and into the House of Commons"? (*TV*, "Men's Militancy", 10 August 1912)

In example (241), a whole sentence by the anti-suffragists is reported in inverted commas: though the lack of specific details about those who might have uttered it may be indicative of an entirely made-up quote, we may also read it as a typical sentence which summarises the antis' views on women's suffrage and its campaigners. Indeed, in § 6.3.1 we commented upon the article "Insurgent Hysteria" published by *The Times* on 16 March 1912 which reported, among other things, that "the militant movement is only partly understood if it is not seen that it attracts many aspiring incapables and a mass of persons who prefer notoriety to obscurity". Thus, hysteria was often paired with a desire for attention and for disrepute: since women (apparently) suffering from it were often chided for being overdramatic about their symptoms and for only being a source of embarrassment for their family, then the suffragettes were clearly showing signs of a similar mental derangement which was best expressed through their more militant and extreme acts. In *CC*, this accusation is rejected by showing its inherent bias and presenting such a statement as only natural for the opponents of women's suffrage.

Example (242) is even more remarkable, as it demonstrates the extent to which the feminist press kept a close and constant eye on the mainstream newspapers as a way of checking for misinformation and misrepresentation. The extract from *TV* specifically names the journals where misogynist and anti-feminist comments (especially concerning hysteria) could be found: *The Times*, *The Morning Post*, and *The Sunday Chronicle* (which are ironically labelled as having an "immeasurable superiority"), as well as *The Freeman's Journal* and *The Saturday Review*. Quite interestingly, though not entirely surprisingly, these were either Conservative dailies or weeklies (*The Times*, *The Morning Post*, and *The Saturday Review*), Sunday papers (*The Sunday Chronicle*), and an Irish Nationalist newspaper (*The Freeman's Journal*): here, it was possible to encounter frequent references to the suffragettes as "maniacs" and as "unsexed", to "hysteria", and to the "disgrace to womanhood", which in *TV* is turned into "disgrace to manhood" as the journals wonders why similar accusations are not made against men when commenting about their own militancy. By naming the journals that directly accused them of being hysterical, and by adding an ironical quote by British politician, soldier, and businessman George Kemp, First Baron Rochdale, concerning the supposed 'lowness' which can be found in the House of Commons, suffrage newspapers were thus further identifying medical misogyny as yet another way to discredit the work being done by their societies towards women's (political) emancipation.

Much more frequent are the examples where HYSTERIA occurs between inverted commas and acquires highly ironical tones that juxtapose what appears to be the case on the surface (i.e., the existence of hysteria as a gendered illness that may partly justify the Women's Suffrage Movement and its militant methods), and what is actually the case (medical misogyny as a further gender slur and another way to belittle women's efforts in the public sphere). Suffrage periodicals often tackle the theme of hysteria and femininity by questioning once again (as we have also demonstrated in Chapter 4) normative ideas of womanhood and womanliness which consider hysterical traits as 'natural' in women. Indeed, we may remember the definition in the *OED*, which expressly marked hysteria as a typical feminine disease by stating that women were much more liable to it than men.

(243) Mrs. Sanders and I afterwards suddenly espied Lloyd George sneaking away by a back door, with three men. We ran after him, and said, "Mr. Lloyd George, we want to speak to you a minute." One man seized Mrs. Sanders, and another got hold of my dress, and I could not release myself, but we called "Coward" to the Minister of the Crown, who was slinking away. He understands our tactics well enough now. There were no "*hysterical* shrieks" or "shrill feminine voices." No, every woman spoke up clearly and well, and the two who were reported as saying faintly, "Votes for women", spoke from the back of the hall, and as the reporters all heard at their table by the platform, the voices could not have been very faint. (*VFW*, "How we Protested at Queen's Hall", 6 August 1908)

(244) The admission of duly qualified women to the Parliamentary register will sweep away for ever the political discrimination of sex, and it will be the turn of the newly enfranchised to approach their representatives, including the framers of such legislative proposals as the present Insurance Bill, with the vital and significant question, What about married women?". Away in the country, especially in the narrow life of small provincial towns, one finds no argument weighing so heavily against the movement for woman's enfranchisement, and more particularly against the "militant" methods, as the assertion that they are "unwomanly"; and by "unwomanly" one soon finds that the objectors mean "unladylike", for they immediately go on to apply such adjectives as "screaming", "*hysterical*", "unreasonable" – attributes which we know very well are, in this particular school of thought, regarded as essentially and almost exclusively feminine. (*VFW*, "What is Womanly?", 31 December 1908)

Both these lengthy extracts appeared in *VFW* issues of 1908: example (243) refers to one of the first (peaceful) manifestations organised by the WSPU at Queen's Hall, a concert hall near Langham Place in London which was used by suffrage societies for council meetings. It is a first-person account that was meant to provide a view of the events of the day which differed from what had been reported in conservative newspapers: the author of the article recounts that, unlike what appeared in the mainstream press, the campaigners did not use "hysterical shrieks" or "shrill feminine voices" to stage their protest, but quite simply told Prime Minister Lloyd George they wanted to speak to him a minute and called him "coward" when he left without listening to them. The accusations concerning hysterical shrieks and shrill feminine voices, which were typically attributed to the suffragettes (see comments on the expression "Shrieking Sisterhood" in § 4.4), are countered by stating that "every woman spoke up clearly and well", thus referencing again to the intertwined concepts of gender,

femininity, and linguistic appropriateness we have mentioned in Chapter 5 and subverting the idea that women used high-pitched voices and penetrating screams (directly linked to hysteria) to address and heckle politicians at this stage of the campaign.

Example (244), taken from an article which was published only four months later, deals with questions of gender and womanliness even more directly, thus further showing how such matters were of prominent importance at the time: as we saw in Chapter 4, issues of womanhood and femininity were either questioned, reinforced, or defended by both the mainstream and the feminist press when considering the Women's Suffrage Movement. The extract reports a series of words which are embedded within inverted commas and which were probably retrieved and reported from the more conservative newspapers of the time: according to the author of the article, the "objectors" of women's suffrage often label feminists as "unwomanly" and "unladylike", and, even more importantly in this part of our analysis, as "screaming", "hysterical", and "unreasonable". Then, in highly ironical and accusatory tones, the author proceeds to state that such attributes are usually considered as "essentially and almost exclusively feminine", as seen in the *OED* definition of *hysteria*, which considered it as a "perversion of the moral and intellectual faculties", but also in the many references to "demented and maniacal creatures" put forward by *The Times* and its mainstream companions that we have seen in § 6.3.1. Of course, this does not mean that *VFW* suddenly decided to endorse medical misogyny: this strategy aimed at questioning the arguments usually presented against suffrage campaigners, as they were seen as "hysterical" and "unreasonable" and, for this very reason, as "unwomanly" and "unladylike", but, at the same time, the normative meanings associated with these concepts reinforced precisely these characteristics and considered them to be typically feminine. Thus, one way to deconstruct discourses around hysteria was by highlighting their inherent inconsistencies, which automatically mistrusted the supposed scientific and medical bases on which they were founded.

Other instances of ironical tones are reported in the following examples:

(245)   Naturally, the question of enfranchisement was one of the first to confront them, and we have the conclusions of a score of great moralists, ancient and modern, on the just base and limitations of the franchise. As our philosophic and calm-nerved opponents have singularly neglected to bring those conclusions to bear on the issue, it is left to us of the "*hysterical*" school to search the political writings of these great and impartial thinkers in search of a principle by which the issue may be decided in the dry light of philosophy. (*TV*, "Anti-Government or Anti-Liberal?", 23 December 1909)

(246)   In yet another gathering, I found women singing, in unison, as if in church. The song was scarcely poetry, but it somehow expressed what they felt and could only utter in the way of singing. There was a look on their faces of quiet confidence and repose, such as you see on the painted pictures of saints. These were the "*hysterical* women". The speeches were of sweated workers, of wretched housing, of prisons. Some of them

had been in prison. These were the most "*hysterical*" of all. They looked the happiest. (*TV,* "Suffrage Soldiers", 13 April 1912)

It is worth noticing how both these examples are taken from *TV*, which indeed proves to be the periodical containing the highest number of references to hysteria and medical misogyny. The irony is self-evident: in example (245), the "philosophical and calm-nerved opponents" (i.e., anti-suffragists, mainly males) are contrasted with "us of the hysterical school" (that is, suffrage campaigners), who, despite the many misogynist labels attributed to them, are judged to be the only ones who could debate on the unfair limitations of the suffrage. Example (246), on the other hand, presents a description of another suffrage meeting which was far from being disruptive, and it reports on women singing "as if in church", with "quiet confidence and repose", about "sweated workers, wretched housing, and prisons": the expression "hysterical women" is here reported within scare quotes as the behaviour of these women clearly contrasts the "morbidly excited condition" and "hysterical enthusiasm" purported by the *OED* and by *The Times*.

By scanning the concordances, we may also note several phrases and multi-word expressions that help us further uncover counter-discourses about hysteria. For instance, the expression *mere hysteria/hysterical contagion* is used to debunk the derisive view of the women's suffrage movement as a simple bout of an ill-defined disease which will inevitably pass sooner or later:

(247) Everyone knows how the flame spread – how it is spreading. It is only the unseeing who can compare this movement to a mere infection, *a mere hysterical contagion* which will die down. (*CC*, "Is or May Be", 21 October 1909)

(248) It is for them that we are mainly concerned, rather than for the comfortable minority so ready to be soothed by the anti-Suffragist assurance that nought is amiss except with Suffragettes, and that behind the stone-throwing, behind the thousands of orderly meetings, behind the £50,000 subscription is *mere hysteria* or hooliganism. (*VFW*, "Why? Part 1", 3 December 1909)

Both extracts are taken from articles published at the end of 1909, and the fact that the same vision appears in such different periodicals that, as we have seen, often had polarised ideas about womanhood and militancy, shows how the theme of medical misogyny undoubtedly provided a common point of resistance against the same 'enemy', irrespective of other attitudes and stances these newspapers might have had. In particular, *CC* talks of a "mere hysterical contagion" and an "infection" which is thought to be momentary by the anti-suffragists, as the charges of "temporary insanity" put forward by *The Times* demonstrate: the suffrage periodical, on the other hand, relegates this view to the "unseeing", that is, to those that still want to deny the spreading influence of the

British Women's Suffrage Movement. Example (248), from *VFW*, compares hysteria to hooliganism (see § 5.3) and addresses the "comfortable minority" that is "soothed" by the anti-suffragist claim that the suffragettes' militant methods (such as stone-throwing), meetings, and the many subscriptions to the journal are mere instances of a gendered disease and of violent tactics of protest, both of which might be quite easily quelled by 'treating' hysteria or by imprisoning the militants. Again, this view is almost ridiculed as it is presented as typical of those who prefer to remain blind in front of the evident changes which were being slowly brought about by the feminist movement.

The expressions *the danger of hysteria* and *the charge of hysteria* further exemplify how, behind medical misogyny, there lied the fear of imminent changes to the status quo, and therefore hysteria was seen as either something to be afraid of (also in medical terms, as it was compared to a virus that could infect more layers of the British population), or something that could be used to incriminate (militant) women:

(249) *The danger of hysteria* is a real one, for those must be more or less than human who could hear what we have heard during the last two years and not be conscious of the temptation to let emotion overbalance judgment. (*CC*, "Sanity", 20 June 1913)

(250) With regard to *the charge of hysteria*, Edna Kenton writes: But to dismiss the English militants, or women-actionists anywhere, as hysterics and pathological specimens, as the notable physicians called in to the aid of the English Government have named and dismissed them, is to beg the question." (*TV*, "Militant Women and Women", 28 November 1913).

Thus, "the danger of hysteria" is mockingly considered as real by *CC*, which seems to justify women's supposed overexcitement and inability to handle emotions (the "unhealthy emotion of excitement" reported in the *OED* under the heading for *hysteria*) as only natural after years of neglect, misrepresentation, and mistreatment. On the other hand, "the charge of hysteria" is deemed to be questionable by writer Edna Kenton, who expresses doubts about the "notable physicians called in to the aid of the English Government" to give a name to the suffragettes' unnatural and 'pathological' behaviour.

A further analysis of expanded concordances reveals frequent references to hysteria, and fanaticism. In the *OED*, the latter is defined as "the condition of being, or supposing oneself, of being possessed", but also as "the tendency to indulge in wild and extravagant notions, *esp.* in religious matters; excessive enthusiasm, frenzy; an instance, a particular form of this", while a *fanatic* was defined as "a mad person": thus, the combination of hysteria and fanaticism, with their inherent links to mental illness, created the perfect picture of the suffragette, at least according to the discourses we

have analysed in § 6.3.1. Suffrage periodicals reported on anti-suffragists' views of the militant campaigners as fanatical and emotional notoriety-hunters and commented on them in this way:

(251)   Suffragists, like all reformers, should be hardened to abuse; but the charge of *fanaticism* brought against us not only by opponents but by our own supporters, at our own Council meetings, is one to which women are peculiarly sensitive. There is a suggestion in it of *emotionalism, hysteria*, and all the abusive expressions by which feminine heroism may be explained away or converted into a reproach. All but the most determined of suffragists wince under it. (*CC*, "A Long Journey", 2 February 1911)

(252)   It forms the one and only explanation of many of the strange things which have lately happened, the things which some men–and, alas! some women–in their pitiful blindness, are putting down to *hysteria*, love of *notoriety*, sex-frustration, or some undefined disease which has not yet been completely diagnosed. (*TV*, "Woman's Liberty", 13 April 1912)

(253)   "It has been said that there are not many who would die", says Mr. McKenna, "but I think that you would find that thirty or forty or fifty would come up one after the other to die. They are *hysterical, fanatical* women who have no fear of death in what they believe to be the cause of women." *Hysterical! Fanatical!* So were called the saints and martyrs of the past. It would greatly have astonished us if Mr. McKenna had not thus expressed himself. Disinterestedness, devotion to an ideal, a passion for liberty, pity for others, selflessness, heroism–these always appear to men of the McKenna type as *hysteria* and *fanaticism*. (*TS*, "The Martyr Spirit", 28 March 1913)

The examples above show that discourses that intertwined hysteria and fanaticism were retrieved by all suffrage newspapers, thus showing how such refrain was an already widespread accusation that aimed at marring the campaigners' credibility: by highlighting their (mental) sickness and outrageous (or 'unfeminine') behaviour, the anti-suffragists were both belittling the suffragettes' intentions and actions, and further discrediting them in the eyes of the British population. In suffrage periodicals, hysteria, fanaticism, and emotionalism are said to be mere labels that were used to obscure "feminine heroism" (as stated in *CC*), and "disinterestedness, devotion to an ideal, a passion for liberty, pity for other, selflessness" (as reported in *TS*). In this way, discourses about hysteria were countered by providing a feminist point of view of militancy: what was considered as 'unladylike' and as characteristic of 'unstable' minds, was here perceived as only a means to an end – that is, women's enfranchisement and empowerment.

Though naturally most of these references tried to deconstruct medical misogyny and show hysteria as a gendered offense, and not a real disease based on scientific facts, it is curious to find one single example that presents a mainstream (or patriarchal) view of this theme:

(254)   Rather slow business you will say, but such I can assure you is the case; but I fully believe that in the event of a general election, Peckham will be won as completely as Bermondsey is to-day, not by *hysterical*,

lawbreaking women, not by force will this be accomplished, but by orderly, non-militant, and common sense methods. – Yours, A LABOURER. (*CC*, "Correspondence", 11 November 1909)

The passage is taken from *CC*, that is, the most constitutional and peaceful of the three periodicals considered in the CBSP, so the implicit rejection of militant methods in favour of the more "orderly, non-militant, and common sense" ones should come as no surprise (we have already widely commented on the papers' different views on militancy in Chapter 5). What is more striking and can be considered as an example of resistant discourse that seems to support the mainstream ideas about hysteria is its association to law-breaking (i.e., militant) women: this apparently reinforces the notion that militancy (especially the most extreme type) was so unnatural for women to be even considered as an illness, and a dangerous one, too. The example is retrieved from a letter to the editor and it is simply signed by "A LABOURER": therefore, it is not possible to know whether the author was a man or a woman, but we could imply from the passage that they were not altogether against women's suffrage – just against women's use of militancy.

If we consider concordances in an even broader context, we can identify a precise type of counter-discoursal pattern that appears consistently throughout the three periodicals, that is to say, what we may label as cases of overturned medical misogyny, which now becomes medical misandry. Indeed, the accusations of hysteria we have found while analysing mainstream discourses on this matter are reversed, and the editors of suffrage newspapers chose to use the same arguments of emotional and mental instability when referring generally to men, or, more specifically, to politicians, to anti-suffragists, and to the conservative press. In this way, their aim was to show the implicitly illogical and biased ideas that were lying at the very heart of the concept of hysteria and the use of this supposed disease to further belittle the campaign for women's rights.

The mainstream press is naturally targeted because it was the first and foremost medium through which ideas concerning (feminist and militant) hysteria were propagated, as we have seen in § 6.3.1.:

(255)   A section of the Liberal Press, realising the plight of the Government, makes frantic attempts to come to their help, and becomes *hysterical* in its outcries against us. (*VFW*, "Do Women Understand Politics?", 5 November 1908)

(256)   In THE VOTE will always be found a full and true report of the doings of the League, which we trust will serve as an antidote to the **hysteria** that invariably breaks out in the ordinary Press when it has been more than commonly active. (*TV*, "What We Think", 28 October 1909)

(257) That to which we wish to draw attention is the nature of the chorus of condemnation that has been pouring from the Press, and especially from Anti-Suffragists, some of whom profess to be triumphant while others are hysterical. (*TV*, "On Guard!", 16 March 1912)

(258) The dismay with which any fresh evidence of the determination of women to secure civil and political rights strikes the great interests which are arranged against us, is plainly shown by the orgy of *hysterical* and slanderous abuse in which the Press, and that portion of the public concerned in its base profits, is now indulging. The undisguised terror is purely comic; the hypocrisy, the untruthfulness, the meanness are more than a trifle loathsome and make one's gorge rise in disgust. (*TV*, "The Demoralisation Of The Antis", 19 June 1914)

From the extracts above we can certainly discern a neat evolution of this (counter)discourse concerning hysterical *newspapers*, and this mainly involves the periodical *TV*, from which most of these examples are retrieved. Indeed, example (255), published in *VFW* in 1908, is the first case in which the (Liberal) press is directly accused of being hysterical, though such an accusation is more of a rather mild comment on its "frantic attempts" and "outcries" against the suffragettes. By examining extracts (256) – (258), all taken from *TV*, we can discern the evolution of this counter-discourse in a better way: example (256) is recovered from the editorial "What We Think" that appeared in the very first issue of this newspaper and outlined the policy of the journal and of the society which published it. Here, the "ordinary" (i.e., mainstream) press is described as falling prey to hysteria, to which suffrage newspapers can be an *antidote*: for the first time, the feminist movement and its actions are presented as a *cure* to hysteria, rather than a direct connection to it. While extract (257), from 1912, still presents rather mild tones (again, the anti-suffragist press is simply labelled as "hysterical"), example (258), from one of the last issues published before the advent of WWI in 1914, employs much bitterer vocabulary to overturn medical misogyny. Indeed, here the mainstream press is not simply labelled as "hysterical", but it is blamed for showing an "*orgy* of *hysterical* and *slanderous* abuse" (italics mine) towards the Women's Suffrage Movement. These words, whose angry tone appears surprising for *TV* and could be deemed to be more typical of *VFW/TS*, are also accompanied by direct accusations of "untruthfulness", "meanness", and especially "hypocrisy": the conservative press, which had printed and reprinted pseudo-scientific articles about women's hysteria, is judged to be hypocritical, as it can be considered equally hysterical giving its frantic attempts aimed at destroying the reputation of the feminist movement.

Politicians are also labelled as hysterical, though we can never find direct names, only general references to the British Government. A look at concordances shows us that all instances of this counter-discourse are to be found mainly in articles printed between 1912 and 1914: though the association between hysteria and the Women's Suffrage Movement was made well before these dates, the higher frequency of such occurrences in the latter part of the period covered in the CBSP may be

explained by the fact that the culmination of suffrage militancy of these years also corresponded to a harsher clash with the political institutions. Though there were no examples of speeches made by MPs specifically addressing the theme of female hysteria, this biased sickness was implicitly supported by the Government itself when it officially allowed the use of forcible feeding to deal with hunger-striking suffragettes[93]. Thus, overturning medical myths about women and directing them towards (male) politicians was useful in underlying their inherent gender bias:

(259)   Meanwhile, in the House of Commons, to which the nation should look for example and leadership, threats, jeers, accusations of corruption are flung from bench to bench, and many of those who have publicly scoffed at *hysterical* women are themselves a prey to such fierce and uncontrolled emotions that one of their own leading representative journals can only describe them as hysterical. (*TV*, "Determination and Hope", 20 April 1912)

(260)   The Government suffer from no lack of counsellors. The newspapers teem with suggestions, the outcome of *male hysteria*, for trampling out militancy. (*TS*, "How to Deal with the Suffragettes", 7 March 1913)

(261)   What is far worse, it is misrepresented and distorted, and while every rational being in the land is of opinion that the Government ought to put an end to the trouble by giving votes to women, the newspapers still continue their *hysterical shrieks* for more coercion, more violence, more torture. (*TS*, "Victory with or Without Death", 12 June 1914)

In example (259), we can see how the hypocrisy of hysteria is clearly outlined in *TV*, which states that, while women are usually rebuked (by men) for their presumed lack of control of their emotions, the same "fierce and uncontrolled" feelings can be found precisely in the House of Commons, where one could easily hear "threats, jeers", "accusations of corruption", and see all sorts of illogical behaviours which are usually attributed to women. In extracts (260) and (261), we can see how the Government, as a social actor, is often paired up with mainstream newspapers, which of course were nothing but the medium through which political ideas were expressed. Therefore, in these instances, politicians and newspapers are both grouped under the general overturned accusation of hysteria: we should notice the expression *male hysteria* in example (260) which, although occurring only once, is perhaps the nominal phrase that can best identify this type of counter-discourse. In example (260), we find again reference to *hysterical shrieks*, typically attributed to women campaigners, which are here referred to the Government and its newspapers, which continue in their cries for "more coercion, more violence, more torture" to deal with the suffragettes.

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[93] The very act of going on hunger strike was connected to anorexia nervosa, one of the supposed 'symptoms' of hysteria and mental instability in women, and, according to patriarchal ideology and medical misogyny, just another way for women to seek attention.

To conclude our analysis of counter-discourses built around the keyword *hysteria*, it is worth mentioning a single case in which this illness is not rejected or attributed also to men, but it is in fact almost praised:

(262)   Yet the so-called fanatics and *hysterics* are the glory of the human race. It is through them that all good things come into being. It is they who have led and are leading humanity out of mere animalism. (*TS*, "The Martyr Spirit", 28 March 1913)

Just as it happened with the word *suffragette*, which, as we have seen in § 4.3, went from being a derogatory label to a true badge of honour and identity for (at least part of) the feminist movement, so hysteria seems to be accepted here and almost recognised as a positive quality to be attached to militant women. In this extract, we find again the connection between fanaticism and female hysteria which we have encountered several times already both in mainstream and counter-discourses: here, fanatics and hysterics are thought to be "the glory of the human race", the only ones who may lead humanity "out of mere animalism". However, unlike the word *suffragette*, we cannot discern a true and neat evolution of this discourse and concept: the praising of hysteria occurs only once in an article whose title, "The Martyr Spirit", already anticipates the tone of the ideas presented there, but its lack of similar occurrences in the same or other periodicals testifies to the fact that hysteria was mostly unacknowledged and utterly refused by the feminist movement, rather than accepted and being made into a positive characteristic of militant women.

6.5 Medical discourse as counter-discourse

Given the small size of the sub-corpus considered in this chapter, it was possible to extend the study to a more qualitative analysis based on close reading of all the articles included. The main aim was to ascertain any further examples of strategies used to counter the mainstream discourses about hysteria and medical misogyny that could not be detected through corpus queries. Indeed, careful consideration of all the texts comprised in the MMS revealed a consistent use of medical or scientific language and discourses which, used through a feminist perspective, were essential in responding to and systematically deconstruct popular beliefs about women's health that, as we have seen, were supported and spread via the conservative and anti-suffragist newspapers.

Of course, suffrage periodicals were not scientific journals devoted to the dissemination of medical and scientific knowledge: although we do find articles tackling, for example, married women's or working-class women's health, we certainly cannot say that this was one of the main topics covered within the pages of the Edwardian feminist press. The authors and editors of these papers were mainly middle-class women that did not have the necessary educational background needed to write scientific articles and, at the same time, the (intended) readership was made up of women from all social classes who were primarily interested in news about the suffrage movement and improvements in the campaign towards female enfranchisement[94]: thus, these newspapers were not created to provide women with the (official) medical knowledge they were alienated from. The case of hysteria we have analysed so far is certainly to be considered an exception, but the special attention devoted to it in suffrage periodicals was chiefly due to its connection to more general gender bias and medical myths that were used to further promote anti-suffragist ideas. Though the scientific pillars of this supposed disease were questioned in the feminist press, they were not countered with further scientific evidence or discourse, but, rather, with rhetorical and argumentative strategies aimed at debunking these ideologies and demonstrating their pointlessness.

However, in the MMS, we do find additional examples of scientific language or discourse used recurrently to provide an alternative and feminist view on women's health and on the connection between (mental) instability and suffrage. For instance, the American (feminist and suffragist) writer Edna Kenton wrote a whole article for *TV* ("Militant Women and Women", 28 November 1913), in which she tackled the theme of female militancy and its perception and treatment in the United Kingdom. Here, she explicitly stated that "militancy is not a *disease*; it is a *symptom*" (italics mine): the language pertaining to the semantic field of medicine is used to construct the metaphor of militancy as a warning sign of women's discontent with the status quo. She further comments on the diagnosis of hysteria in this way:

> But to dismiss the English militants, or women-actionists anywhere, as *hysterics* and *pathological specimens*, as the *notable physicians* called in to the aid of the English Government have named and dismissed them, is to beg the question. Any *doctor* who shows the door to a *patient* he has *diagnosed* as hysteria, without seeking the cause of her *hysteria* to remove it, does not earn his fee, and, if he recommends merely *sedatives* and *close confinement*, his license should be withdrawn. This is not the way to deal with *hysteria*, granted the *diagnosis* be correct.

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[94] We have seen in Chapter 3 how other topics, such as, for example, the legal status of unmarried women and mothers, were only complementary to the main theme of women's suffrage.

Kenton's article directly states doubts on the very existence of hysteria as a gendered illness and, especially, to the cures usually recommended by the ironically-nominated "notable physicians called in to the aid of the English Government". The author cleverly uses words related to the semantic domain of medicine (*hysterics, pathological specimens*, *patient*, *diagnosed/diagnosis*, *sedatives*, *confinement*) also to elevate the tone of the text and to transform it into a scientific commentary on the topic of women's health. The recommendations usually prescribed (sedatives and close confinement, which included imprisonment in the case of the suffragettes) are discarded as ineffective cures for hysteria: women's symptoms, which today might be read as indicators of mental illnesses such as depression, rather than the totally unscientific hysteria, could certainly not be solved by shutting them up. Unfortunately, though, this was often the case, as such diseases were socially stigmatised, and women who were diagnosed with hysteria often ended up either secluded in their own homes or in asylums were their health problems could only worsen[95].

In another article ("A Short Way with the Suffragettes", *TS*, 7 March 1913), the irony which we have already encountered multiple times recurs again to comment on the various remedies promoted by doctors and politicians to deal with the issue of militant and unwell women: this fiery debate had sparked within the pages of the mainstream press, and the sharp and ironical tones used by *TS* remark on the absurdity not just of the pseudo-scientific diagnosis, but also of the 'cures' recommended. The article first presents "one of the boldest and most arresting suggestions for dealing with our lawless sisters" put forward by "a medical man, whose name is hidden from fame under a modest garment of anonymity". This "good doctor" (as sardonically labelled by *TS*) advised "compulsory marriage" as a cure for the disease of hysteria and militancy, thus seemingly confirming Sir Almroth Wright's suggestion that the suffragettes were no more than "sexually frustrated spinsters" whose ailments could be cured through the patriarchal institution of marriage. But the mocking tones heighten when commenting on another letter, printed in the mainstream press, written by "a Persian gentleman" who "regretted that our effete civilisation prevented us from dealing effectually with refractory women". The 'gentleman' suggested that "feminine tantrums of all kinds […] could be cured with one wink of the sword". The author of the article in *TS* then responds by imagining another letter which could be written by an anti-suffragist man and by indicating an

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[95] The exemplary short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" by American feminist writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman, published in 1892 in *The New England Magazine*, perfectly illustrated the attitudes towards the mental and physical health of nineteenth-century women. In the story, a woman, whose physician husband has diagnosed as suffering from "temporary nervous depression" and "slight hysterical tendency", is confined to the nursery in her house as part of the prescribed cure. Naturally, this only helps her further descent into madness, as the only thing she is allowed to do is staring at the yellow wallpaper of the room.

ascending climax of extreme remedies that could extirpate the infectious diseases of hysterical militancy that was sweeping the nation:

> Compulsory feeding, compulsory marriage, branding, flogging, deportation, head-shaving, burning at Smithfield, breaking on the wheel; even the gentle methods of Llanystumdwy are, however picturesque and antique, decidedly expensive and slow. The guillotine is efficacious, quick, and cheap. Decapitation has another great advantage: by cutting off the heads of our Suffragettes we should reduce them at one blow to an intellectual equality with the male electorate, to whom we owe the most feeble, cowardly, and disingenuous Government that ever misruled this ridiculous nation. Cut off the women's heads, my countrymen; cut off their heads while there is yet time […] Cut off their heads and get rid of their rebellious brains and silence their exasperatingly logical tongues. Cut off their heads and show them that if we cannot reason we at least are men. Cut off their naughty heads; it will buck up the Dean of St. Paul's no end. Besides: while they have heads on their shoulders they will read the daily papers, and they will find out what we really are. This discussion is now closed.

By adopting the views of an invented male persona, the writer presents a series of cures to feminist hysteria and militancy that end up with "decapitation", as though the disease were actually incurable. The satirical tones of this extract are self-evident, and the attack to British politicians is subtle but efficacious: by cutting off the suffragettes' heads (or, better, their "rebellious brains" and "exasperatingly logical tongues"), they would be reduced to "intellectual equality" with men but, even most importantly, they would no longer be able to "read the daily papers" and thus see the Englishmen and their biased and gendered views for what they really are.

The most interesting example of medical and scientific discourse used as counter-discourse is, however, the case of *suffragitis, the disease to which *TV* devotes an entire article called "Suffragitis, the New Disease" on 23 December 1909. Whilst the mainstream discourses presented in § 6.3.1 suggested that this was yet another invention of the conservative dailies like *The Observer* and *The Pall Mall Gazette*, which linked it again to hysteria and feminist fanaticism, the close analysis of the article in *TV* reveals that this illness was actually created by the suffrage press as a gendered medical label corresponding to the accusations of female hysteria which could be attached this time to men. Indeed, if hysteria was linked to women's campaigning for enfranchisement, *suffragitis was said to be a disease that especially infected male politicians who were openly anti-suffragists. The article, penned by British suffragist and cartoonist Louisa Thomson-Price, is interestingly structured as a medical treatise thar reconstructs the characteristics of *suffragitis, which is described at the beginning as having "so far baffled the ingenuity of the best minds in the medical profession". The

text is full of technical terminology, of which we can see some examples, highlighted in italics, in the extracts that follow:

• The *diagnosis* of this distressing *affection* is comparatively easy, nor can it be said that its *histology* is obscure. Some authorities think that it may be closely allied to *neurasthenia*, as some of the *symptoms* observed in this *disease* are also common to *Suffragitis*, notably *fits of depression* alternated by moments of intense excitement, *insomnia*, *shallowness of respiration*, a peculiar *bilious pallor*, and *attacks of violent trembling*. The disease seems to be *infectious*, and to attack persons holding prominent positions.

 • Just as some persons faint or exhibit other signs of distress at the sight of blood, at the sight of *Suffragitis* he *turns pale* and is *seized with attack of tremor* at the mere appearance or even veil suggestion of a riding-whip. This strange *symptom* is frequently followed by *high fever*, and is accompanied by what the laity, who are naturally uninformed, might falsely and unsympathetically describe as an exhibition of cowardice, since the *trembling invalid* shows an almost ungovernable desire for protection.

• These *nervous* avoidances of the public eye are mere *neurasthenic symptoms* which invariably accompany *bad attacks of Suffragitis*, and should be treated with sympathy instead of condemnation. The *treatment* for this *disease* has, so far, been unsuccessful.

• *Suffragitis*, being so nearly allied in its symptoms and effects to *neurasthenia*, a modified *Weir-Mitchell treatment* is advised. Everyone knows, the *Weir-Mitchell treatment* demands isolation of the *patient,* an indispensable condition to success. The *patient* must be taken away from his home, and deprived of all communication, personal or written, from his family. *Forced feeding* is not a *therapeutic measure* which gives good results, and has been suggested that *stomach-tube* would be a valuable aid to the *dietary treatment*. Shower-baths also advisable, and they may be administered fire-hose or otherwise, as decided by the attend charge. *Suffragitis* is *spreading* so rapidly through the Cabinet ranks at the present time that unless *dealt with promptly and efficiently* we may have to deplore the loss to public service of some of our most able politicians.

Thus, the invention of the diseases is presented as a direct response to those medical treatises that proposed pseudo-scientific arguments that could explain the surge of the Women's Suffrage Movement and of the suffragettes' 'unsexed' or 'unnatural' militant behaviour. A series of invented symptoms similar to those said to be typical of hysteria or neurasthenia are listed: they seemed to attack "persons holding prominent positions" at the mere mention of women's suffrage. The author goes so far as to also suggest a possible remedy consisting in a modified version of the Weir-Mitchell treatment: Dr Silas Weir Mitchell was an American physician who had discovered causalgia (or complex regional pain syndrome) and erythromelalgia, and, most of all, pioneered the 'rest cure'. His typical treatment for neurological patients consisted in isolation, confinement to bed, dieting, electrotherapy, and massage (it was popularly called "Dr Diet and Dr Quiet"). As this was often the type of remedy recommended for 'hysterical' women, who were taken away from their homes (to prison) and deprived of all personal or written communication, the author here advises the same treatment for those politicians suffering from *suffragitis.

This last example shows how medical discourse was occasionally used in suffrage periodicals not to disseminate or popularise medical knowledge, as this was not among the aims of these feminist

newspapers, but, rather, as yet another form of counter-discourse constructed to respond to the medical misogyny which, as we have seen, was so often promulgated in the mainstream press against the women's suffrage movement. The use of particularly difficult and specialised medical terminology (e.g., *histology*, *neurasthenia*, etc.) would not have been a real problem for the readership, as the aim of this passage was clearly not to present scientific information, but to offer a parody of the treatises on hysteria written by prominent doctors who were also advisors to the British Government. The ultimate aim was thus to respond to medical misogyny by mocking the authoritative voices who saw women's militancy as a symptom and proof of their mental and physical instability and by inventing a new gendered disease which obviously did not have any scientific foundation at all.

6.6 Building feminist counter-discourses

Throughout this chapter, we have seen how the Edwardian feminist press responded to medical misogyny (mainly purported in the conventional news, but also validated by physicians and scientists) by building counter-discourses. These, along with the counter-language we have analysed in Chapter 4, which also expanded into the use of vocabulary pertaining to semantic domains typically deemed to be 'unladylike' and 'unfeminine', contribute to support the idea that First-wave feminist linguistic and discoursal features chiefly revolved around the creation of counter-arguments and were always linked to a need to reply to the misinformation and misrepresentation to be found in the mainstream press. In Table 31, we can see a summary of the various types of discourses built around the specific case of hysteria and the counter-discourses promoted in suffrage periodicals:

Discourse/Topic	Mainstream	*Common Cause*	*The Vote*	*Votes for Women/The Suffragette*
medical misogyny	"[…] Women being much more liable than men to this disorder, it was originally thought to be due to a disturbance of the uterus and its functions" (*OED*)	X	X	"[…] for they immediately go on to apply such adjectives as "screaming", "hysterical", "unreasonable" – attributes which we know very well are, in this particular school of thought,

				regarded as essentially and almost exclusively feminine"
temporary insanity	"acts of temporary insanity […] wrought by demented and maniacal creatures" (*The Times*)	"It is only the unseeing who can compare this movement to a mere infection, **a** mere hysterical contagion which will die down"	X	the comfortable minority so ready to be soothed by the anti-Suffragist assurance that […] behind the stone-throwing, behind the thousands of orderly meetings, behind the £50,000 subscription is mere hysteria or hooliganism"
Lack of emotional control	"a morbidly excited condition; unhealthy emotion of excitement" (*OED*); "Hysterical Enthusiasm" (*The Times*)	"[…] for those must be more or less than human who could hear what we have heard during the last two years and not be conscious of the temptation to let emotion overbalance judgment"	X	X
fanaticism	"The militant movement is only partly understood if it is not seen that it attracts many aspiring incapables and a mass of persons who prefer notoriety to obscurity" (*The Times*)	"[…] but the charge of fanaticism brought against us not only by opponents but by our own supporters, at our own Council meetings, is one to which women are peculiarly sensitive"	"[…] the things which some men– and, alas! some women–in their pitiful blindness, are putting down to hysteria, love of notoriety, sex-frustration, or some undefined disease which has not yet been completely diagnosed"	"Disinterestedness, devotion to an ideal, a passion for liberty, pity for others, selflessness, heroism–these always appear to men of the McKenna type as hysteria and fanaticism"
medical misandry	X	X	"[…] which we trust will serve as an antidote to the hysteria that invariably breaks out in the ordinary Press when it has been more than commonly active"; "The Government suffer from no lack of counsellors […] the outcome of	"A section of the Liberal Press […] becomes hysterical in its outcries against us"; "the Government ought to put an end to the trouble by giving votes to women, the newspapers still continue their hysterical shrieks for more coercion,

			male hysteria, for trampling out militancy"	more violence, more torture"
Hysteria and feminist identity	X	X	X	"Yet the so-called fanatics and hysterics are the glory of the human race"
Medical discourse	"SUFFRAGITIS AND ITS CURE" (*The Observer*); "Science and Suffragitis" (*Pall Mall Gazette*)	X	Some authorities think that it may be closely allied to neurasthenia, as some of the symptoms observed in this disease are also common to Suffragitis […] and to attack persons holding prominent positions"	X

Table 31: discourses and counter-discourses concerning hysteria in the MMS.

From this summary, it is interesting to notice how reactions to medical misogyny were primarily devised in two ways: on the one hand, we can see the creation of counter-arguments and counter-discourses in direct response to accusations or pseudo-scientific explanations in the mainstream press, while on the other, we may also identify the presence of a more active kind of reply, which consisted in using the same tools and ideas and overturn them to create discourses that mirrored the anti-suffragist and misogynist ones. The counter-discourses we have identified include a gendered view of hysteria, charges of temporary insanity and mental instability, the inability to control emotions, medical misandry, and a celebration of hysteria as an honorary insignia. Apart from these, two discourses are worthy of particular attention: the one about fanaticism, as it is the only instance to be addressed in each suffrage periodical, and the peculiar case of *Suffragitis. Contrary to the initial data recovered from the analysis of articles about the Women Suffrage Movement by the mainstream press in the Archive at the University of Manchester, we have seen how this disease was actually first invented by the suffrage periodical *TV* as a direct answer to the equally-invented and patriarchal illness diagnosed as hysteria. Only later was it recuperated and reversed by the conservative newspapers: this is a single and special case in which a counter-discourse created by the feminist press is further countered in its anti-suffragist counterpart.

A more detailed summary of the linguistic features used to create counter-discourses is reported in Table 32:

Linguistic strategy	Examples
Verbs	*fight, refuse, condemn, decline, deny, attack, oppose, resist, doubt, object, protest, reject* (…)
Adjectives	*false, ignorant, unreasonable, deplorable, hideous, appalling, intolerable, illogical* (…)
Adverbs	*yet, perhaps, however, scarcely, utterly, disdainfully* (…)
Multi-word expressions	*double standard, sex prejudice, charge/danger of hysteria, cure for militancy, forced feeding* (…)
Keywords	*hysteria/hysterical/hysterics, fanatical/fanatics, *suffragitis, neuropathy, neurasthenia* (…)
Technical (scientific) vocabulary	*diagnosis, histology, symptoms, bilious pallor, Weir-Mitchell treatment, high fever, neurasthenic, therapeutic measure* (…)
Reported speech	"A lot of hysterical, notoriety-hunting females", the Anti-Suffragists will tell you
Irony	He understands our tactics well enough now. There were no "hysterical shrieks" or "shrill feminine voices.

Table 32: examples of linguistic strategies used to build counter-discourses in the MMS.

The table summarises the results of the analysis already discussed in the previous sections: apart from the use of verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and multi-word expressions that specifically indicate the presence of ideas that went *against* what was commonly thought and reported in the conservative newspapers, we should direct our attention once again towards the use of irony, which was widespread in suffrage periodicals, as we have encountered it on a number of occasions, and, most of all, the employment of scientific language. What is really noteworthy is its function, as it does not indicate the occurrence of medical discourse to offer information on issues related to health, but rather its importance in providing yet another way to react and reply to medical misogyny in the mainstream press.

By considering hysteria as a case study, we have delved deeper into the relationship between the feminist and the conservative newspapers, and into the former's desire to challenge the authoritative voices of that part of the British press closely linked to the Establishment and to the Government. Though fighting misinformation and misrepresentation was essential, at the same time the creation of counter-discourses also aimed at further empowering women: the development of the feminist press as a public arena in which to discuss women's interests and issues was meant to

gradually provide them with alternative views on important matters that were not biased by patriarchal ideologies. The specific case of hysteria was of particular importance, as mainstream views and their reverberation in conservative journalism had until then had serious repercussions on the Woman Question of that time.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the twentieth century, attention to gender in the British press (be it feminist or mainstream) was undeniable: in the specific case of the suffrage periodicals analysed in this dissertation, this could be seen as both an engagement with a long-standing tradition and, more importantly, as a touchstone for late Victorian and Edwardian wider anxieties concerning social transformation. In this way, the feminist periodical press proved to be, along with (or, better, as opposed to) the daily newspapers, "a central medium for ideological exchange" (Fraser et al. 2003: 198). Unlike its Victorian counterpart, however, the Edwardian feminist press tried to go beyond the gendered binary which saw the 'masculine' dailies as being engaged in public issues, high culture, or social satire, and the 'feminine' magazines as being primarily concerned with household matters, popular culture, and fashion. Indeed, this separation began to break down precisely in this period, and it was "a process which is reflected in the myriad elements of the press as multiple but connected sites of discourse" (*ibid*., 198).

Even more specifically, Edwardian feminism and militancy was able to stimulate a range of new organisations, new strategies, and new methods (Caine 1997: 159), in which the use of language and discourse in its corresponding papers certainly held a fundamental role. The strategies adopted by the various societies to campaign for women's enfranchisement included fusing together different kinds of performance, femininity, and militancy (from simple posters and postcards to propaganda in the suffrage press, to window-smashing, arson, and other types of 'outrages'): these were also fundamental in attracting new recruits and converts, even amid the erstwhile 'antis' (Heilmann and Sanders 2006: 298).

Through the suffrage periodical press of the early twentieth century, the key tropes of gender representation through which the idea of the feminine had been so far uttered were further gradually unsettled, countered, and broken down into numerous forms, thus including a narrative which comprised multiple and competing discourses about the construction and/or dismantling of gender ideals (Fraser et al. 2003: 199). The negotiation between domestic and radical femininities helped cater to a heterogeneous readership which was chiefly made up of suffrage supporters, but also of housewives, mothers, and working women, and at the same time foster women's interests in both the home and the wider world (Liggins 2014: 626). In particular, the feminist vision of the New Woman "was not the mannish and overly sexualised New Woman popularised in novels and mainstream periodicals of the 1890s but a symbol of a new female political identity that promised to improve and reform English society" (Tusan 1998: 169). However, while between 1893 and 1897 there had been

an attempt to create a respectable image for political women, the feminist periodicals of the early decades of the twentieth century rather promoted a vision of the New Woman that aimed at challenging popular perceptions of independent women and at carving out a political role for themselves as citizens (*ibid.*). Indeed, there was no longer the need to conform to the canons of respectability and the ideas of womanhood and femininity promoted by the gender ideologies of the previous generations.

Though direct actions were certainly crucial in rethinking identities and roles for women, and especially so in the specific case of the cause for their enfranchisement, which had remained latent for more than fifty years, this analysis has tried to show how language had a key role as well, and how Emmeline Pankhurst's motto "Deeds, not words" could easily be turned in "Words *as* deeds". The role of feminist language and discourse within the pages of suffrage newspapers, which were at the time the principal medium of communication and circulation of ideas, cannot be undervalued and ignored when studying the history of the feminist movement and the evolution of gender ideas. As Scott asserts (1986: 1063), "through language, gender identity is constructed": though the imposition of the rules of social (but also linguistic) interaction is inherently gendered, subjective identities, just like words, are "processes of differentiation and distinction, requiring the suppression of ambiguities and opposite elements in order to assure (and to create the illusion of) coherence and common understanding".

In this dissertation, we have tried to chart the different ways in which gender entered feminist (or suffrage) discourse and how language channelled wider social transformations and responded to anxieties concerning the changing of the status quo. The analysis has shown, first and foremost, how the meaning(s) of keywords strictly related to gender issues were linguistically and ideologically renegotiated, thus creating what has been tentatively labelled here as "feminist counter-language", which inevitably clashed with normative meanings recognised in such an important language reference work as the *Oxford English Dictionary*, but also with mainstream gender ideologies of the time. The study of this feminist lexicon has provided insights into the multiple femininities and concepts of womanhood (from lady-like elegance to upper-middle class lobbying power, to militant identities) that showed how gender binaries already were outdated notions. Secondly, we have focused on notions of linguistic propriety associated with ideas of femininity, and how the language of militancy became gendered in suffrage periodicals, as women ventured (more or less boldly, considering the strategies used to claim authorship and the internal debates about the necessity and appropriateness of militancy) into topics and semantic domains where they usually had no authority. Thirdly, we have analysed the diverse opinions, contrasts, overlappings, ruptures and reattachments

which could be perceived within the British Edwardian press, and especially between the mainstream newspapers and their feminist counterpart: in the specific case of medical misogyny and ideas about female hysteria, we have seen how the periodical press allowed the formation of a network of communities and enabled the creation of counter-discourses that permitted women to enter, even if marginally, mainstream discourses of the time. Indeed, though the different strategies used by suffrage writers to counter misogynist ideas concerning women's health and (physical and mental) unfitness for the participation in the public sphere certainly did not help to completely eradicate the notion of 'hysterical women', we could still identify the importance of their contributions in building resistant and anti-patriarchal narratives. Despite this, only a couple of decades later Virginia Woolf still had to find it necessary to "kill the Angel in the House", as she wrote in her essay "Professions for Women", while, in the famous *A Room of One's Own* she still felt oppressed by the "shadow shaped something like the letter 'I'" that was usually suggestive of a "unitary gendered writing subject that bore no resemblance to her own sense of identity as a constellation of subject positions, defined by plurality and fragmentation" (Fraser et al. 2003: 202).

While much of contemporary research about the post-structuralist or discursive construction of gender through language mainly revolves around synchronic studies, which are also aided by the wealth of materials offered by the new media, this study has also tried to demonstrate how this type of investigation can be possible by considering historical resources too. Of course, such analyses can only be feasible thanks to digitisation projects that allow for the collection of numerous data which can be processed through a software for linguistic studies and with corpus linguistics techniques. For obvious reasons, this dissertation has taken into consideration only a small part of the feminist press of the Edwardian era, but the results offer ideas for further research too, which could first of all consider other feminist newspapers of the time or venture backwards as well, into the Victorian press. Indeed, we certainly cannot say that feminist counter-language was born with suffrage periodicals, and therefore it would be potentially extremely interesting to trace back its origins by considering the feminist press of the 1850s, while it may also be worthy to focus upon the newspapers that came *after* the Woman Question concerning the vote and that stretched into new phases of the feminist movement. Historical studies of feminist language prove to be scarce, but its importance is undeniable: if at the beginning of the twentieth century this mainly involved the renegotiation of (extended) meanings of certain key words about gender, we also know that today's linguistic creativity of the third-wave feminist movement has generated a lot of neologisms to express twenty-first century feminist concerns, like *bropropriate*, *mansplain*, *manspreading*, or *misogynoir*. This is further proof that the "words as deeds" motto and approach can be associated with all phases of

feminist history, and, therefore, a historical reconstruction of its language (and not only through the analysis of newspapers) should be worthy of academic attention.

Such studies may also take into consideration issues of lexicographical representation: as we have seen throughout the whole of this dissertation, the comparison between normative meanings in the *OED* and actual language use in the CBSP has revealed how gender ideologies permeated this language reference work, which neglected to include important aspects of women's experiences or points of view and offered a limited representation of words related to gender. While a consideration of feminist works may be useful in revising and redefining tricky headwords in the *OED* and stripping them of ideological demarcations (an operation which is already undergoing with the third edition), the study of feminist language in historical perspective may also include the construction of a specific (historical) glossary of this movement which could show the evolution of feminist discourse and lexicon through time. At the same time, this might be useful for the compilation of feminist dictionaries, or "contradictionaries" (as they were labelled by Kate Musgrave in her *Womb with Views* of 1989): these are women's reference books of words that show the semantic inconsistencies or discrepancies between male and female realities and which include information missing from mainstream dictionaries and included in the form of new (sometimes made-up) headwords, alternative spellings, supplementary meanings, and contextual details. Therefore, further historical studies concerning both discoursal and terminological aspects of feminist language may help fill a niche in language and gender studies, which are proving to be focused mainly on synchronic analyses.

RIASSUNTO

Il progetto di ricerca descritto in questa tesi, dal titolo "Words as Deeds: Gender and Feminist Discourse in British Suffrage Periodicals (1907-1914)", ha avuto come principale oggetto di studio i periodici di lingua inglese legati al movimento per il suffragio femminile pubblicati tra il 1907 e il 1914. Il seguente riassunto si propone di fornire una breve descrizione dell'ambito di ricerca in cui questo progetto si posiziona e dei dati di base da cui l'indagine è partita; inoltre, nelle prossime sezioni si evidenzieranno le principali tappe della ricerca e, soprattutto, gli esiti più rilevanti, insieme alle metodologie utilizzate, per poi riportare le conclusioni, i risultati raggiunti e le possibili ulteriori ramificazioni e i percorsi d'indagine intraprendibili.

Innanzitutto, la scelta dei periodici femministi inglesi di inizio Novecento come oggetto di studio è legata al fatto che recentemente (in corrispondenza del centenario del suffragio femminile britannico nel 2018) storici e storiche hanno intrapreso un percorso di rivalutazione di questo movimento sociale, occupandosi prevalentemente di ripensare la tradizionale divisione binaria tra attiviste costituzionali e militanti e di prendere in considerazione con maggior attenzione il contesto socio-politico delle loro strategie e organizzazioni. All'interno di questo ambito di ricerca, gli studi sui periodici pubblicati dalle società appartenenti al *Women's Suffrage Movement* scarseggiano ancora oggi, e questo nonostante sia necessario sottolineare la natura provocatoria e reazionaria della stessa stampa periodica, che fin dall'inizio si è rilevata un mezzo fondamentale per l'incoraggiamento al dialogo e al dibattito. Infatti, il periodico può essere letto come un testo che interagisce con la cultura nella quale viene prodotto e che a sua volta produce, un luogo dove valenze e concetti sono continuamente generati e contestati: dunque, la sua funzione e importanza non può essere sottovalutata.

In particolare, questo studio offre un'analisi (socio)linguistica che si è concentrata soprattutto sulla costruzione e rappresentazione dei discorsi legati alle questioni di genere che, per ovvie ragioni connesse alla natura femminista di questi periodici, risultano essere le più dibattute. Nello specifico, si è cercato di esaminare il materiale storico attraverso una lente post-strutturalista degli studi di genere che, tramite il loro *linguistic turn*, adottano le metodologie d'indagine linguistica e di analisi del discorso per rivelare il ruolo che la lingua ricopre nel creare, sostenere, combattere e/o perpetrare discriminazioni e disuguaglianze di genere. La prospettiva storica sottolinea come la categoria "donne" sia in verità sempre stata più fratturata e complicata di quanto una semplice etichetta possa dimostrare: è infatti meglio parlare di genere come il tentativo di capire cosa signifchi essere una donna (o, in altri tipi di studi, un uomo, una persona omosessuale, un/a transgender) e come questo

cambi da una generazione all'altra e a seconda dei vari gruppi etnici o religiosi o delle diverse classi sociali. In ottica femminista, poi, l'utilizzo della parola *gender* ha da sempre insistito sulla qualità prettamente sociale di ogni distinzione basata sul sesso e denota un rifiuto del determinismo biologico che risulta essere implicito in termini come *sexual difference*: questo sottintende anche un riesame critico della letteratura scientifica prodotta fino ad ora, dato che ogni analisi storica dei ruoli femminili all'interno della società implica anche una ridefinizione di alcune nozioni tradizionali che devono necessariamente includere anche esperienze personali e soggettive insieme ad attività pubbliche e politiche.

Naturalmente, la prima fase del progetto di ricerca ha riguardato uno studio del contesto politico, sociale e culturale delle età Vittoriana (1837-1901) ed Edoardiana (1901-1910), con un'attenzione specifica allo sviluppo delle questioni di genere e, in particolare, della così detta *Woman Question*: infatti, il dettaglio extralinguistico non può essere ignorato in quanto risulta essere di fondamentale importanza nel tentare di spiegare e giustificare i risultati dell'analisi e delle scelte linguistiche che caratterizzavano, come si evidenzierà più avanti, ogni pubblicazione. L'indagine ha rivelato un contesto storico nel quale concetti come quello di femminilità (*womanhood* o *womanliness*) stavano subendo un profondo cambiamento: difatti, il periodo oggetto di questo studio si divideva tra ideologie di genere dominanti (rispettabilità e domesticità), che vedevano la donna rilegata alla sfera privata, e nuove figure emergenti che minacciavano di rompere lo status quo, come la così detta *New Woman*, le *Revolting Daughters* e, infine, le Suffragette, che desideravano affermarsi nella sfera pubblica. In modo particolare, questo desiderio di affermazione sociale riguardava la sfera politica e il dibattito si concentrava sull'esclusione delle donne dal diritto di voto, visto come espressione per eccellenza della partecipazione alla vita pubblica del Paese.

È in questo contesto che si sviluppò gradualmente il movimento femminista inglese, che divenne sempre più organizzato, fino ad arrivare alla creazione di società indipendenti come la Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), la National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) e la Women's Freedom League (WFL). Strumento fondamentale di ogni campagna erano i periodici pubblicati da ciascuna società: attraverso editoriali, *news features*, e lettere al direttore (o, meglio, alla direttrice), il messaggio femminista poteva arrivare in ogni angolo della nazione, con il principale obiettivo non solo di far avere le ultime notizie che riguardavano la campagna per il voto, ma anche di combattere la rappresentazione ingannevole e la disinformazione sul movimento per il suffragio femminile che veniva generalmente portata avanti dai quotidiani legati all'*Establishment* britannico (per esempio, il *Times*, il *Daily Mail*, o l'*Observer*). Sebbene il motto della WSPU fosse "Deeds, not Words", il linguaggio stesso di questi periodici ebbe un ruolo innegabile nel portare avanti

l'attivismo, sia per informare chi simpatizzava per le propagandiste, sia per giustificare e argomentare le proprie scelte strategiche.

La seconda fase ha riguardato la costruzione del corpus che doveva essere poi materia d'indagine: nonostante la presenza di alcuni corpora con esempi di giornalismo storico (per citarne alcuni: il Zurich English Newspaper Corpus, il Rostock Newspaper Corpus, o il Corpus of Nineteenth-Century Newspaper English), nessuno di questi include la stampa femminile e/o femminista. Pertanto, il corpus per il presente studio doveva necessariamente essere costruito partendo da zero e prendendo delle decisioni fondamentali per la sua realizzazione. Innanzitutto, si è deciso di prendere in considerazione solo i tre periodici pubblicati dalle società citate sopra (*Votes for Women/The Suffragette*, della WSPU; *Common Cause*, della NUWSS; *The Vote*, della WFL), in quanto questi erano i più popolari e i più longevi. Poi, si è stabilito di adottare come periodo di riferimento gli anni tra il 1907 e il 1914, dato che questi corrisposero al culmine dello sviluppo del movimento per il suffragio femminile e della sua copertura sui giornali nazionali, che si fermarono poi bruscamente con l'avvio della Prima Guerra Mondiale. Il materiale è stato recuperato tramite il British Newspaper Archive, che lo ha solo recentemente digitalizzato, permettendo dunque una più facile indagine di tipo linguistico. Gli articoli da analizzare sono stati scelti solo tra quelli che riportavano i lemmi SUFFRAGE e FEMINISM, proprio perché l'obiettivo era quello di creare un repertorio di testi che comprendesse gli stessi tipi di discorsi (questioni di genere e di militanza politica). Una volta selezionati attraverso l'OCR (Optical Character Recognition), gli articoli sono stati dapprima 'puliti' manualmente dagli errori nel riconoscimento ottico e poi salvati come file .txt, ovvero il formato ideale per la lettura e l'analisi attraverso un software di indagine linguistica (SketchEngine, in questo caso).

Il risultato finale è la creazione del Corpus of British Suffrage Periodicals (CBSP), composto da 715 articoli (278 da *Votes for Women/The Suffragette*; 155 da *The Vote*; 282 da *Common Cause*) e 873,695 parole: un corpus sicuramente piccolo, ma contenente comunque un numero sufficiente di esempi da essere analizzati per rispondere alla domanda di ricerca in questione. Sebbene il corpus rappresenti senza dubbio lo strumento di indagine primario, la ricerca si è avvalsa anche di ulteriori materiali, sia linguistici sia extralinguistici: la loro inclusione è stata di fondamentale importanza nel processo di triangolazione, ovvero nella verifica e nel controllo incrociato dei dati ottenuti dall'analisi del corpus. Per quanto riguarda gli strumenti linguistici, sono stati consultati sia il BLOB 1931 (un corpus di lingua inglese generale contenente esempi di linguaggio giornalistico pubblicati tra il 1928 e il 1934 – questo era il corpus esistente che più si avvicinava, in termini di periodo storico, a quello coperto dal CBSP) e la prima edizione dell'*Oxford English Dictionary*, compilata e pubblicata tra il

1884 e il 1928. Il dizionario, in modo particolare, si è rivelato di particolare interesse in quanto offre una rappresentazione lessicografica della *Woman Question* e una visione (extra)linguistica delle questioni di genere tra la fine dell'Ottocento e l'inizio del Novecento; oltre alla prima edizione, è stato anche possibile consultare il materiale d'archivio presso la Oxford University Press (luglio 2022), che ha permesso di considerare ulteriori elementi fondamentali che hanno arricchito la ricerca e ampliato l'analisi del corpus. Infine, come strumento extralinguistico, si è utilizzato anche il Women's Suffrage Movement Archive presso la John Rylands Library, University of Manchester (marzo 2023): questo archivio contiene trenta volumi appartenenti alla NUWSS che includono ritagli di giornale per il periodo 1910-1914, e si è rivelato utile nel recuperare articoli pubblicati sui principali quotidiani dell'epoca, per poi confrontarli con quelli delle società femministe.

L'analisi vera e propria è cominciata col prendere in considerazione le così dette *frequency lists*, ovvero gli elenchi delle parole più frequenti per ogni periodico: questa prima indagine puramente quantitativa ha permesso di avere una prima idea generale dei contenuti di ogni pubblicazione e, allo stesso tempo, di discernere le prime differenze e somiglianze. Il confronto ha mostrato come le liste dei diversi periodici siano molto simili e come riportino, tra i termini più frequenti, parole legate a questioni di genere, alla militanza politica, ma anche a tematiche di rilevanza sociale come l'assistenza all'infanzia e l'identità nazionale. Tuttavia, si è anche dimostrato come una mera metodologia quantitativa basata esclusivamente su statistiche possa dimostrarsi limitante e addirittura fuorviante per questo tipo di analisi: infatti, in più casi si è visto come l'alta frequenza di alcuni lemmi o collocazioni potesse suggerire risultati che poi venivano puntualmente discreditati con un'analisi qualitativa delle concordanze. Per esempio, la presenza della collocazione *married women* non indica un discorso positivo sull'istituzione del matrimonio, ma, al contrario, una denuncia contro il ruolo di genere della moglie subordinata al marito, e della sua naturalizzazione all'interno delle ideologie dominanti. Il fatto di utilizzare parole piuttosto comuni che acquisivano significati profondamente diversi è una caratteristica principale del linguaggio giornalistico femminista di inizio Novecento, e questa tendenza è stata analizzata più nel dettaglio anche nelle fasi seguenti della ricerca.

Per poter fare ciò, si è passati all'analisi delle *keywords*, cioè le parole più salienti che caratterizzano il discorso giornalistico femminista inglese dell'inizio del Novecento. Il confronto con BLOB 1931 ha evidenziato che le categorie di *keywords* che presentano più esempi sono quelle relative al genere e al discorso politico-militante, e perciò si è deciso di dedicare due capitoli alla loro disamina. Per quanto riguarda la categoria *gender*, le parole sono state suddivise in quattro campi semantici: "femminilità", "identità e militanza", "femminismo e famiglia", e "lavoro". In tutti i casi,

si è confermata la tendenza alla rinegoziazione linguistica e ideologica dei termini presi in considerazione, confermata anche dal confronto con la norma (ovvero, il dizionario): si è potuto dunque notare come questa caratteristica abbia portato alla creazione di un vero e proprio contro-linguaggio femminista che andava a ridefinire i significati di molte parole legate alle questioni di genere che erano ancora espressione di una società patriarcale nella quale le donne non potevano auto-definirsi. L'esempio più emblematico è proprio quello della parola *suffragette*, un neologismo coniato nel 1906 dal *Daily Mail* con evidente carattere misogino e accondiscendente (sottolineato dal suffisso *-ette*, che indica qualcosa di piccolo, anche per importanza, e di triviale) e che andava a etichettare quelle attiviste che sceglievano di esprimere il proprio dissenso con i metodi più militanti, come il lancio di pietre, la distruzione di finestre e vetrine, o l'accensione di piccoli incendi. Poco dopo la sua diffusione, il termine venne in realtà accettato dalle femministe stesse, che lo trasformarono in simbolo di unità e identità collettiva, cambiandone dunque profondamente il significato. Allo stesso tempo, l'approccio post-strutturalista ha permesso di mettere in luce come il genere non sia un concetto naturale, ma, piuttosto, un prodotto sociale e culturale che va oltre il binarismo, come dimostrato dalle categorie di *keywords* citate sopra, che facevano oscillare il discorso femminista tra la sfera pubblica e quella privata.

Un'ulteriore connessione tra lingua e genere è rappresentata dall'utilizzo della terminologia politico-militante, sicuramente percepita come 'poco femminile' per le ideologie dell'epoca. Partendo da una riflessione sul concetto stesso di femminilità, si è analizzato innanzitutto il legame tra genere, autorialità, e discorsi sulla militanza attiva e/o passiva, e si è visto come il graduale passaggio dall'anonimato all'identificazione (attraverso le iniziali o la firma vera e propria messa a conclusione degli articoli che apparivano su questi periodici) delle autrici possa considerarsi esso stesso un atto di militanza che sfidava le regole della rispettabilità che permeavano la società tardo-Vittoriana ed Edoardiana. In secondo luogo, si sono analizzate le *keywords* legate alla militanza e suddivise in categorie ("metodi militanti", "metodi costituzionali", "forme di oppressione"): si sono qui notate delle importanti differenze tra i vari periodici, che avevano un atteggiamento diverso nei confronti della militanza attiva (dal rifiuto totale di *Common Cause*, alla tolleranza di *The Vote*, alla celebrazione dei metodi più estremi in *Votes for Women/The Suffragette*). Un'analisi più dettagliata ha poi rilevato delle importanti differenze in quei termini che riguardano i comportamenti 'poco femminili' (*window-smashing*; *hunger-strike*; *rebellion*, ecc.) e gli attori sociali 'poco signorili' (*law-breaker*; *hooligan*; *martyr*, ecc.). Sebbene queste differenze possano indicare delle importanti fratture all'interno del movimento femminista inglese (come più volte indicato dalla stampa *mainstream* dell'epoca), l'attento esame delle *keywords* e dei discorsi sviluppatisi attorno a queste dimostra come

la realtà fosse molto più complicata e meno nettamente definita, e come queste discrepanze fossero in verità prese come spunto per favorire il dialogo tra le società stesse.

Infine, l'ultima fase della ricerca ha preso in considerazione la costruzione di contro-discorsi che miravano a ribaltare la disinformazione riportata nei media tradizionali inglesi dell'epoca. In modo particolare, si è deciso di concentrare l'analisi sulla misoginia medica e sul caso studio della rappresentazione dell'isteria come malattia associata al movimento femminista: nonostante la terminologia medica in questione non risulti essere tra le parole più salienti nei periodici analizzati, una ricerca manuale del corpus (condotta inserendo come *query* il lemma HYSTERIA) ne ha rivelato l'effettiva presenza, dimostrando dunque che la tematica era frequentemente trattata nella stampa femminista. All'inizio si è partiti in questo caso dalla disamina dei discorsi tradizionali sul concetto di isterismo come tratto tipico patologico e femminile, prendendo quindi in considerazione sia la definizione ufficiale nell'*Oxford English Dictionary*, sia i numerosi articoli dei quotidiani legati al sistema politico conservatore britannico che rafforzavano le false credenze mediche prive di qualsivoglia base scientifica (per esempio, l'articolo "Suffrage Fallacies: Militant Hysteria" di Sir Almroth Wright che venne pubblicato sul *Times* del 28 marzo 1912 si proponeva di dimostrare scientificamente come le donne, e in particolare le suffragette, fossero fisicamente, intellettualmente e moralmente inferiori agli uomini). L'analisi delle occorrenze del termine nel CBSP ha invece dimostrato come, da un lato, i periodici femministi rispondessero direttamente a questo tipo di accuse o con la creazione di contro-discorsi e contro-narrative (che riguardavano la misoginia medica, l'infermità temporanea provocata da episodi di isterismo, la mancanza di controllo sulle proprie emozioni, o il fanatismo), o con il ribaltamento delle stesse accuse, che venivano ora indirizzate agli anti-suffragisti (misandria medica, celebrazione dell'isteria femminista, creazione di una nuova malattia che colpiva tipicamente gli uomini che si opponevano al suffragio femminile, la così detta **suffragitis*).

I risultati complessivi ottenuti mirano a dimostrare come, a parte l'azione diretta, anche la pubblicazione di periodici femministi e la creazione di un contro-linguaggio e contro-discorso femminista abbiano ricoperto un ruolo fondamentale nella campagna per il suffragio femminile britannico dell'epoca. Nello specifico, si è potuto vedere come le questioni di genere fossero al centro del discorso giornalistico femminista, e come il linguaggio specifico di questi periodici incanalasse trasformazioni sociali più grandi che stavano prendendo piede in epoca Edoardiana. La digitalizzazione dei materiali storici ha naturalmente facilitato questo tipo di studio, che infatti viene prevalentemente condotto su testi sincronici, che risultano essere più facili da reperire. La limitata grandezza del corpus, tuttavia, non permette di considerare i risultati ottenuti come generalizzazioni

che possano riguardare tutta la stampa femminista dell'epoca, per i quali bisognerebbe prendere in considerazione anche altri periodici non necessariamente legati al movimento per il suffragio femminile. Si può comunque certamente affermare che questo progetto si possa inserire bene all'interno della ricostruzione di una storia del linguaggio femminile e femminista, la cui ricerca potrebbe essere portata avanti analizzando altri tipi di testi e andando a ritroso, almeno fino agli anni Cinquanta dell'Ottocento, periodo in cui convenzionalmente si posiziona la nascita di un movimento femminista inglese organizzato. Allo stesso modo, visto il ruolo importante della lessicografia in questo progetto, lo stesso tipo di linea di ricerca può essere condotto analizzando lo sviluppo diacronico delle definizioni riguardanti le donne, le questioni di genere più in generale, e la terminologia femminista in particolare, partendo, per esempio, proprio dalla prima edizione dell'*Oxford English Dictionary* e confrontandola con le successive pubblicazioni, ma anche con la lessicografia femminista inglese sviluppatasi a partire dagli anni Ottanta del Novecento.

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