Introduction: Suffrage Outside Suffragism

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'Suffragism' was a political field where non-party structures were set up to gain women's suffrage. The suffragist field outside 'suffragism' offered party and non-party structures that were not specifically suffragist although suffragists belonged to them. If 'the study of anti-suffragism is particularly important as an aid towards understanding suffragism',[1] then 'suffrage outside suffragism' should be seen as a valid object of study that can offer meaningful perspectives for understanding 'suffragism'.

'Suffragism' has been studied through its organisations, whereas 'suffrage outside suffragism' has never been researched as a synchronic whole where various structures had to compromise with their suffragist activists. The aim of this book is to address how suffragists[2] outside 'suffragism' (hereafter 'outside suffragists') related to their original structures, what they targeted and how they fared, in a context where 'suffragism' as a separate field offered support and inclusion on an *ad hoc* basis. Such activists were thus suffragists with another (party or non-party) affiliation. The interaction between the two positions (suffragist and non-suffragist) must have been difficult to experience. The fact that most outside suffragist activists were women also emphasized the gendered reading of affiliations. For each individual, being a suffragist mostly co-existed with being a female activist, and both positions needed some acknowledgement. At the height of the suffrage campaign, in the Edwardian era, organised structures outside 'suffragism' found it difficult to integrate one or both of these issues, suffrage and female activism, and one or both types of activists, suffragists and females. The existence of 'suffragism' could hardly be ignored, especially as many outside suffragists also belonged to suffragist societies: double-affiliations were common even if they were not always formalised through membership. How double affiliations were born but also how they affected the non-suffragist structures *[page1]* to which activists belonged, is discussed in this book. The fluidity and transfer of activists' affiliations – even if activists experienced contradictions – must have enriched both 'suffragism' and 'suffrage outside 'suffragism'' (hereafter 'suffrage outside'): activists could compare political practices and structures, methods, back-up support and better assess how realistic their activists' expectancies were. Conversely, the structures outside 'suffragism' had to adapt to the pressure coming from their suffragist activists and gauge how realistic their expectancies (defined by the party or the group line) were in order to keep their suffragist members, that is, broadly speaking, their women members.

This book's focus on suffrage outside 'suffragism' should help us to understand both fields, 'suffragism' and 'suffrage outside', their interaction and how they related to the Edwardian social and political fabric. 'Suffragism' and 'suffrage' were an integral part of Edwardian politics. Studying 'suffrage outside suffragism' offers another reminder of the impossibility of disconnecting suffrage from mainstream politics; an understanding of their shared history is the aim of this book. This book's novelty lies in its broad scope: it looks at the importance of suffrage for a variety of groups at the same time. Research up to now has mostly focused on political parties and has tended to disregard other groups that were involved in pursuing reform. The party and non-party structures selected[3] for this book offer a reading

of female activism from various perspectives, political and non political, local and national, voluntary and union-wise, and from the avant-garde. Most women activists from these groups read their experiences as gendered but did not always perceive them as 'political'. They tended to restrict the definition of politics to formal party affiliations, whether they belonged to political parties or not. In the nine contributions to this book, the varied nature of the groups studied suggests that female activists shared characteristics and encountered common obstacles outside 'suffragism'. Examining (some of) the decor of suffrage outside 'suffragism' provides further insights into groups inside 'suffragism', what Andrew Chadwick has called the 'Suffragist Alliance'.[4]

In this introductory chapter, selected aspects of historiography are highlighted; the main concern is about categories of analysis when writing the history of suffrage taken as a whole, not the suffrage organisations which activists belonged to; in other words, neither militants' nor constitutionalists' history[5] are within the scope of this book. Drawing the outlines of 'suffragism' suggests that it worked as a norm, a focal reference for contemporaries. Finding out about its nature, its architecture and its dynamics brings about the existence of a multi-layered milieu, both self-centred and outreaching. Once the picture of 'suffragism' *[page2]* as a milieu is clearer, it can be contrasted with suffrage outside 'suffragism'. Interestingly, despite all the variations shown in the contributions, convergence emerges. This must show that suffrage outside is also a field which takes its existence and definition through analogy and contrast. The nine contributions altogether outline an interpretative model of suffrage outside 'suffragism' with and beyond the particularities of these selected groups. All contributions are fully discussed in the last section of this introductory chapter.

The first part of this book is devoted to national parties and how they dealt with women's suffrage in the years preceding 1914. Pat Thane for the Labour party, Linda Walker for the Liberal party and Lori Maguire for the Conservative party discuss the status and roles of women in them. They show the resistance of parties to women's agendas while integrating females to political work; they also depict how party women lobbied their executives and fought for political existence within their parties as well as outside them. National policies and executives represent parties more than they embody them. Indeed, a different image is projected when looking at activists' local involvement. Julia Bush and Gillian Scott describe women-only voluntary organisations, the National Union of Women Workers and the Women's Cooperative Guild. Both groups developed from their members' concerns and devised claims tailored to women recipients. One was mostly middle-class in outlook and approaches while the other was mainly working-class. In this case, class cannot be neutralised although both structures display a salutary concern for internal democracy. Class is also at the core of June Hannam's contribution on Bristol socialists and Philippe Vervaecke's chapter on the Primrose League. They also show how the relations between local and national levels could clash. However, both chapters suggest that the suffrage issue and more generally sexual politics proved more divisive than expected in political organisations, however hard they denied its relevance. The last section of the book is intended to discuss how female members viewed structure and tailored it to their needs as females beyond the suffrage issue. Although this section is a mere snapshot, Susan Trouvé-Finding explains how women teachers gradually controlled their union before 1914 but never managed to set equal pay, for instance, at the top of their agenda. Women teachers achieved control of their union but reluctantly listened to sexual politics and usually discarded such issues as outside the scope of their organisation. In the last chapter, Lucy Delap discusses the connection between 'suffragism' and feminism for avant-garde women who shared the ethos of the informal group participating in *The Freewoman*. Some of them came *[page3]* to despise suffragists and discard all formal structuring as obstacles against female emancipation.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The Edwardian suffrage movement has received a great deal of attention from historians but, as Sandra Holton notes, there is still a great deal to be said about it. She signals new stories re-emerging which 'challenge existing frameworks or render uncertain the categories and concepts we apply, or suggest new lines of inquiry'.[6] The ambition of this book is to emphasize suffrage outside 'suffragism' as a meaningful choice made by individuals and executives of structures.

In the 1920s, the Suffragette Fellowship[7] created 'a master narrative of the militant suffrage movement'.[8] Dominated by former participants, this is a fascinating instance of what the French call '*le devoir de mémoire*'. The Fellowship created its own archives and preserved valuable collections, but in the process emphasised only certain characteristics as representing the 'true suffragette spirit' and consequently seemed to deny the variety of suffragists inside and outside 'suffragism'. In the interwar years, such an endeavour simplified and obscured some of the interpreting options of pre-war 'suffragism'[9], which obviously cannot be reduced to a campaign by one organisation nor be disconnected from the wider world outside 'suffragism'. 'This narrative has implications both for how historians have interpreted the suffrage movement, as well as for how former suffragettes constructed their political identities as feminists in the 1920s and after'.[10] To this should be added how (female) contemporaries perceived such a narrative; the post-war narrative also dwelt on women's share in the war effort, echoing wartime propaganda. Though these two instances of heroic posturing verge on edification, they have constituted powerful emotional narratives that recreate a façade of unity and exemplify efficient propaganda if they are not qualified and contextualised.[11] Such history-making borrowed heavily from a narrative of heroics that creates automatic distancing, and conveyed to the rank and file the idea that they could not participate because they were 'ordinary': creating heroines can be understood as an implicit dismissal of activism. Besides they were rooted in exceptional or extreme circumstances, which must have had little to do with day-to-day divided loyalties experienced by 'ordinary' women, then and now. Later in the decade, Ray Strachey's 1928 publication of *The Cause* and Sylvia Pankhurst's 1931 book, *The Suffragette Movement*, seemed to confirm that the campaign for women's emancipation had ended with their gaining of the vote *[page4]* on equal terms with men.[12] In any case the women's movement seemed to be over as the heroines of the war effort and of suffrage were no longer needed: these two facts alone may explain why younger women may have felt alienated from feminist politics after 1918.

'Reflecting on Suffrage History',[13] Sandra Holton suggests that from the 1970s to the late 1990s, the development of different research chronologies and the finding of new sources led 'to a significant shift in the interpretative frameworks shaping suffrage history in Britain, a shift that extended our understanding of the range and complexity of the internal politics of the suffrage movement'.[14] Suffrage history has gone through various stages, each time setting the canon and then revisiting it. New perspectives have reclaimed ideological layers of meanings and recast 'suffragism' as a consistent whole.[15] This has led to the development of a comprehensive approach rather than a segmented historiography that focuses on individual organisations. The purpose of this book is similar: suffrage outside 'suffragism' becomes a consistent object of study when a comprehensive approach is developed.

In an editorial of the *Women's History Review* in 2000, 'Borders and Frontiers in Women's History', Lynn Abrams and Karen Hunt state there is more often than not an ontological link between women's history, 'part of the mainstream but at the same time peripheral', and borders and frontiers as an object of study, where the frontier is not 'merely a place but also a process and an idea'.[16] 'Suffragism' can be defined in the same way. Women

defined their own political space as 'suffragism' and thus challenged mainstream politics: such a process could not be neutral. While 'making and remaking borders'[17] to serve the suffrage cause, women explored undiscovered territories which were finally mapped by the 1930s.[18] In a subsequent editorial of the *Women's History Review* in 2002, June Hannam and Katherine Holden apply the 'Heartland and Periphery' concepts to women's history itself and stress the fluidity and interdependence of the inner geography of the field, by re-enacting 'the metaphor of heartland and periphery' which had been used by feminist historians 'to reclaim a place for women in history, and in so doing, challenged the view that women and their concerns were peripheral to mainstream historical inquiry'.[19] Such an ontological pattern has also been at the centre of *Suffrage Outside Suffragism*.

'Suffrage' inspired late nineteenth century and Edwardian propaganda-makers who made 'suffragism': not a political party yet a party of some sort; a political space where party politics was not the structuring force; a political platform from where (mostly) women activists published their views about women as one group or from various groups; a parallel public space *[page5]* where all the propaganda and debates were about 'women'; a modified echo of mainstream traditional public space but from the female perspective[20]. It was an excellent location from which producers and consumers of suffragist propaganda could test and echo that propaganda, staging it *as if it were* mainstream.

'SUFFRAGISM'

Outside suffragists played a part in 'the suffrage campaign' even if they were based outside 'suffragism'. They chose to remain in political parties or reforming groups whose concerns were not especially about 'suffrage'. This did not preclude these groups from opposing, supporting or caring for suffrage. Indeed, the three standpoints could be displayed within the same organisation. That is why 'suffrage outside' can be considered only by contrast with 'suffragism', it cannot be researched on its own. This book focuses on relations between suffragists and suffrage groups, on 'the relations between the sexes but also the relations within the sexes, not only those of women to men, and men to women, but also relations among women'[21].

Suffragists have traditionally been defined according to the type of suffrage they favoured or prioritised. The traditional division of 'suffragism' into militant and non-militant organisations is not relevant to this study either, nor does it remain the consensual approach to 'suffragism' it used to be, even though differences in approach between organisations matter.[22] In this book, however, the real issue remains the difference between supporters of suffrage inside and outside 'suffragism'. If suffragists are on both sides of the boundary, what is relevant is the making of the boundary. The type of suffrage advocated (adult or women's) certainly contributed to its making. However, this choice often involved differences of priority rather than excluding one or the other type. It also took on different meanings according to the political or party platform from which it was voiced: women's suffrage could be read as the ultimate concession for Conservatives at an early point,[23] whereas it was only a first step for most inside 'suffragism' and a wrong step for the proponents of adult suffrage. Besides, individuals changed their views over time and events; political alliances fluctuated. For instance the 1912 Election Fighting Fund formalised an alliance between the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and the Labour party; it fundamentally changed the landscape of inside 'suffragism' and outside. Thus, the type of suffrage advocated (and even more so the reasons for its support) was not an absolute factor to determine the boundaries of 'suffragism'. *[page6]*

Proponents of Adult and Women's Suffrage did not exclude each other but devised different political strategies; in any case, all of them were suffragists of one type or the other,

or of both types but with differing priorities at different times. ‘Adult Suffrage’, although it integrated women in the claim, seemed to be geared towards ‘dependent men’, males still deprived of formal citizenship, whereas ‘suffragism’ elaborated a discourse on females as an entirely disenfranchised group. The women’s suffrage issue was a catalyst for other tensions (class, work and sex) and obviously informed mainstream politics. There were heated debates among Edwardian suffragists about the basis on which to make their demands — and historians have reflected these differences in their own debates about which factions had most influence on winning the vote. The collection of essays in this book, however, is more concerned with exploring the impact of women’s suffrage on groups and their members outside ‘suffragism’.

‘Suffragism’ implied a dividing line established by contemporary activists who knew on which side they stood. Boundaries were crossed in both directions, generating a dynamic exchange under various modes: partnership, confrontation, contrast or competition, between inside and outside suffragists. Suffragists’ experiences stressed the political complexity of suffrage as an issue, a cause and a creed. Outside suffragists contributed to ‘suffragism’ through their conviction, their ‘*suffragism*’. And many outside suffragists were insiders as well.[24]

‘Suffragism’ can be defined through suffragist political groupings that made up a political field with its own characteristics. That is why it deserves the –ism that is given to other political concepts: conservatism, socialism, labourism, liberalism, and radicalism — not all of them represented by political parties. As a network producing and distributing information and propaganda, ‘suffragism’ also gained the physical materiality of a space devoted to suffragist propaganda. Such propaganda fed inside and outside suffragist demands and proselytised outside to rally the indifferent and to silence (vocal) anti-suffragists. It is the outward dynamic that is perhaps more sophisticated than has been recognised as this outward drive addressed at the same time outside suffragists, those who were indifferent and anti-suffragists. The ins and outs of ‘suffragism’ have been examined for individuals and for one structure at a time, but it has been somewhat neglected as a pattern where a range of structures are involved.[25]

‘Suffragism’ covers three superimposed layers of meaning which do not fit perfectly; the boundaries of each layer fluctuated independently from the others, or at least their limits may not have been as clear-cut as is commonly acknowledged. The first defining layer is structuring: *[page7]* groups involved inside and outside were clearly different. Inside groups were set up to forward suffragist claims. In terms of organisations, there was hardly any doubt about which participated and which did not. These societies had affiliated members and supporters; they produced policies and propaganda, all geared towards establishing women’s suffrage. The second layer involved their production of propaganda, a key activity for any political group. Arguments serving the suffrage cause were devised and deployed in all sorts of ways; supporters and members were their first targets and they in turn redeployed them for a wider public. As a mass movement in the Edwardian period, ‘suffragism’ could boast high numbers of activists and supporters and did draw contemporaries’ attention through debates, meetings, press articles and traditional means of propaganda. Suffragist tours of the country and pageantry asserted the existence of the suffragist claim to everyone, whether supporters or not, and visually validated their petitioning to enter mainstream politics.[26] Outside suffragists associated themselves with or joined into propaganda making. The borderlines between outside and inside groups and outside and inside propaganda were neither similar nor static; they autonomously varied according to what was addressed. That is why outside suffragists must have experienced their activism as flexible, since they fluctuated between their ‘suffragism’ and their other affiliation (s). Tensions born out of ‘divided loyalties’ must have been stronger outside ‘suffragism’ than inside and must have affected the political texture of inside and outside ‘suffragism’.

Thirdly, 'suffragism' connotes both a concept and a conception: it embodied a political reality in search of acknowledgement. As a concept, it encapsulated the comprehensive notion of a group made up of people and ideas. As a conception, it conceived its own processing and so asserted its objectives in dynamic terms. Such a process cannot be neutralised into a descriptive word: 'suffragism' was more than the reality of groups structured around the claim of suffrage; it was both the assertion of political existence and its self–validation. Such a multi-layered process saturated the issue (suffrage), globalized its virtues and colonized the outskirts of 'suffragism', targeting the far ends of the Edwardian political world. What is striking is its dynamics and ultimately its expansionist aims.

'Suffragism' does not equate to 'suffragists'. They can be defined through their group-belonging, the type of suffrage they supported, or the methods they advocated. 'Suffragism', on the other hand, was a category created by suffragists for whom suffrage was the priority and inclusion the strategy. 'Suffragism' meant to include one way or another all that was supportive of its claim. It would encompass all suffragists, and paradoxically *[page8]* even those outside, once they were artificially suspended from their main affiliation (parties, unions or other types of grouping). More than a narrowly defined locus of specific groups, which forms its usual definition, 'suffragism' embodied 'the suffragist norm' (the canon), stimulated debates outside and boosted the notion of suffrage throughout the Edwardian period. 'Suffragism' shaped 'a parallel public space'[27] where the claim for women's suffrage could be staged. Even if it was separate, its objective was to invade mainstream politics and to make mainstream public space suffragist. Such an inclusive dynamics fed inside as well as outside links, prospered from any endeavour and contribution that was serving the cause, through advocacy or through alienation. From this perspective, 'suffragism' has conquered and its disappearance is nothing but a triumph; far from being 'narrow-based', it has engulfed everything that is axiomatic to mainstream politics up to the present. 'Suffragism' is first the history of a conquest, not simply women's conquest of the vote, but more pervasively their right to be part of what used to be 'other', mainstream politics.

'Suffragism' was set as the centre, denying that it was peripheral to mainstream politics. As it was perforce self-centred, it projected inside and outside centrality and ambitions, and this was both politically and conceptually effective. It was the construction of a community inclusive of all that was marginalized about 'women', whether taken as female aggregated individuals or as a group sharing the same experience. This inclusive dynamic sprang from a clear sense of sex differences. Although born out of fragmentation,[28] 'suffragism' functioned on the inclusion principle: 'the other' was accepted and included into a flexible community whose borders were ever ready to fluctuate, open to anyone who shared the suffragist position. In the official exclusive (male) public space, citizenship had evolved from a pact of domination into a social contract where domination had to be consented to, where each and every member was equal to the other and so was guaranteed participation and expression.[29] Women set up their parallel public space, 'suffragism', in which they staged what they were denied: their political integration through formal citizenship. Citizenship was enacted at two levels. First, inside suffragists claimed suffrage as the result of their political practice, mostly inside 'suffragism', and as the accomplishment of their future political integration outside 'suffragism'. Secondly, as a sex group, they displayed common characteristics and identity, because they were already socially integrated (as wives, mothers, single women or even social activists). Excluded from the main public sphere, women had hijacked the margin and constructed the representation of their citizenship there. *[page9]* With 'suffragism', they targeted integration into mainstream politics while paradoxically organising separately; they aimed for individual aggregation (one day, each of them would be an individual citizen, in the

liberal tradition) to the mainstream public space while as a sex group they claimed collectively for their rights.

Jürgen Habermas's theory of competing public spheres[30] applied to 'suffragism' offers a stimulating reading of its setting up and development as a parallel public space, structured by suffragist periodicals and discourse. The original (male-dominated) public sphere had suspended emancipation whenever women were concerned: as a sex, women could never deserve the franchise whereas 'dependent men' (or voteless males) could. Inside suffragists made up a new public who consented to and self-validated their separate group: they organised separately and produced their own culture (including officialdom) that countered the mainstream public sphere where power and consent could only be male.[31] In the latter, women could be able to gain equality as individuals but never as 'women', the impossible 'other'. However, unlike this traditional (liberal mainstream) public sphere, 'suffragism' meant to include 'otherness', as long as it was suffragist.

Because their legitimacy as 'women' was not to be gained from mainstream society, legitimatization became suffragists' means and end instead. Hence, the all-inclusive and multifarious arguments that emphasized the injustice of women's exclusion from the liberal public sphere and served the cause of suffrage. Arguments were borrowed from all avenues and then developed consistently and co-extensively: the liberal version, women as competent individuals deserved the suffrage; the natural rights version, women like all individuals were endowed with rights. Excluded from the traditional liberal public sphere as political citizens, women were praised as social actors for their work among the poor.[32] Since the 1860s, women had gradually seen how impossible it was for them to achieve political integration while the number of 'dependent men' declined. After 1867 and 1884, the increasing numbers of men who gained political integration pointed towards the introduction of manhood suffrage rather than a franchise based on 'competence' (the liberal tradition). In this renewed model, the origin of legitimacy came no longer from the competence of some individuals but from 'a public will' which resulted from information and debates, in fact the emerging pattern was mass democracy. If mass legitimization was to replace validated exclusion (the liberal tradition), there would be less to gain from a public sphere where liberal influence and principles were declining, but more to gain from mass legitimization: 'suffragism' was the place where womanhood *[page10]* in its diversity and future women-citizenry was already enacted and praised as a mass phenomenon, where debates, publications and demonstrations informed suffragists' awareness.

'Suffragism' was a parallel public sphere that was both identical and different. It both responded to and subverted the declining liberal model. Even before some women were enfranchised, mass democracy was characteristic of 'suffragism': pluralism, double affiliations, majority and difference had superseded the mainstream model of 'democratic universalism', based on one theoretical type of citizens that shared the same concerns and needs. By seceding from the mainstream public space, women signalled their disagreement and difference. They deployed 'general particularism'[33] as the foundation of 'suffragism'. Women were aware of their irreconcilable difference from the mainstream model (hence 'particularism') while they acknowledged their collective existence as a sex group (hence 'general'). Inside 'suffragism', women activists were heard and consulted as equals; debate was at the same time an instrument of propaganda and the validation of a shared ethic.[34] Emancipation, *raison d'être* of 'suffragism', generated an identical suffragist version of the public sphere along the traditional universal model. Emancipation of a sex group, the particular of 'suffragism', modified the parallel public sphere of 'suffragism' along the new lines of mass democracy. The example of education illustrates this well: if in the liberal public sphere, women could not be taught because they did not belong, in the traditional liberal version of 'suffragism', women should be educated

so as to prove that they had the potential to serve and that they deserved the franchise. In the mass democratic version of 'suffragism', women should be taught to show that they could and did participate, a founding citizen's act.

The existence of 'suffragism' as a separate body of opinion and an alternative structuring strengthened activists and supporters' sense of identity, inside and outside. The dual mission of 'suffragism', the vote and female activism, enhanced the majority identity of the group as being female, the cause of their lack of franchise.[35] Suffragists built their community, 'suffragism', which could be easily apprehended through symbols and rituals.[36] The latter 'enable marginal communities to maintain solidarity, while also sending a message to the mainstream'.[37] Suffragist pageantry both assimilated and dissented from mainstream rituals.[38] Suffragists, notably the militant groups,[39] also developed ritualised opposition to mainstream force. Ritualising was a characteristic way of shaping their own environment and of showing their potential power for the sake of inside cohesion and outside press reports, locally and nationally. *[page11]*

'Suffragism', as the basis of political alignment, implies the existence of a sex class, a category of analysis which subsumes others present in the field. There is this ontological link: 'about-women' questions interested mostly women. In addition, effective propaganda, it was believed, should stage females. Although 'women' —a topic and a 'spectacle'[40]— saturated the field, 'suffragism' still relied on the variety and heterogeneity that the sex class, women, could offer: common sex implied common claims but then all the rest could differ. And yet, 'suffragism' was more inclusive in discourse and propaganda than standard political parties or reforming groups. The latter generally insisted on preserving 'homogeneity', on rejecting 'divisive' issues, which allowed them to dismiss to some extent women's issues (or female otherness) or alternatively the 'suffrage' issue: exclusion became their ideological protection. Inclusion was the strength of 'suffragism' and because it was a deliberate process it was ideological. That such a space has been repeatedly presented as 'narrow-based' or 'single-issue' is denied by the fact that it constituted a parallel public sphere (in the sense devised by Habermas) where women's issues were validated. As a debating space for and about women, 'suffragism' was invaluable to their confidence-building and political practice, their acknowledgement of differences and democratic aspirations. Its inclusive dynamics and self-chosen fragmentation allowed for the voicing of new ideas; although it was a competing political space, it operated on the basis of collaboration. Propaganda-making and innovative posturing consequently provided a forum for creation and originality — which could horrify 'ordinary' activists.

Such a space modelled political practices for inside activists, outside suffragists and probably outside women. Because 'suffragism' had become their political norm, its operating modes became references. Outside women and suffragists set up platforms for women, women-only projects, or women's sections within their affiliated groups: an unparalleled self-structuring backed up by the knowledge of the existing practices of 'suffragism'. As many women (and some men) were both inside and outside suffragists', they were familiar with such approaches and effectively lobbied the executive and the members of their other affiliation.

As 'suffragism' was essentially political, it evolved and adapted to political and electoral changes, just as any traditional party would. None of the key suffragist organisations was ideologically committed to parties, although individual Liberal women activists must have been the most numerous. Double affiliations were common but remain difficult to investigate beyond biographies and group monographs. An activist was not likely to forget her (outside) affiliation once she put on her suffragist coat, *[page12]* just as a suffragist standpoint must have been difficult to muffle in a party or union branch meeting. 'Suffragism' did not support parties but

was a political space; it answered and formulated political ideas which were vehicles of communication, within and without. Political ideas were also necessarily imported from outside with or without modifications. Political parties and other groups produced ideas that suffragists were keen to exploit for their own propaganda; outside suffragists who were also insiders brought in knowledge and mastered transfers of ideas and propaganda in and out.

SUFFRAGE OUTSIDE 'SUFFRAGISM'

The operating mode between 'suffragism' and 'suffrage outside' was based on complex interactive connections, which allowed for divergence and convergence. The study of 'suffragism' (as a field) has been relatively neglected and has been distorted by an emphasis on specific structures or binary oppositions. For example, a binary opposition such as 'suffragists versus anti-suffragists' offers too simplistic a reading. Although pro and anti suffragist women had an obvious antithetical political positioning on suffrage, their operational modes and ideological positions were not systematically opposed so that the ways they processed ideas and advocated policies could be remarkably similar. On the other hand, male and female anti-suffragists may have had much less in common than is usually expected: neglecting the characteristics of female anti-suffragism — or making it inconsistent — cannot make anti-suffragism a coherent whole.[41] As Edwardian politics witnessed the rise of class-based politics,[42] it is worth asking where anti-suffragists stood in relation to 'suffragism'. Julia Bush suggests that anti-suffragists were divided into two groups, the positive and the negative ones, or the women's and the men's groups, and that 'it was also clear to many imperialist suffragists that only a fine line divided Violet [Markham]'s view from their own so far as gender difference and patriotic service were concerned'.[43] Female anti-suffragists could well have been near relations of some suffragist activists, inside and outside 'suffragism', while other antis had political relevance only outside 'suffragism'. Obviously, 'suffrage' has to remain the conspicuous definition of the field; yet, because both female activism and politics participated in the making of the field ('suffragism'), because anti-suffragist women activists shared the characteristics involved in female activism, paradoxically and indirectly, they could have contributed to 'suffragism', the Edwardian norm for suffrage activism and female activism. *[page13]*

Protecting the centre: national parties and the control of women

From the Edwardian years onwards the political spectrum was modified through the rise of Labour politics, nationally and locally. Even though class increasingly competed with religion as the basis of political alignment, radical continuities and local diversity could still be seen.[44] That party workers should be deployed all over the political territory was an obvious necessity for the two main parties and their smaller competitor, Labour.[45] In this book, party women and suffrage are discussed by Pat Thane for Labour, Lori Maguire for the Conservative party and Linda Walker for the Liberal party. The Liberals and the Conservatives had enrolled female activists into support since the 1880s. Set up in 1883, the Conservative Primrose League admitted women the following year; the Women Liberal Federation formalised Liberal women's activism at a national level in 1887 while the local Women's Liberal Associations had sprung up from the early 1880s.[46] Female activism had been encouraged on the basis of service to party, and to male members, while women were still excluded from membership. This was in keeping with a liberal public sphere where consent and participation could only be male. Thus, female activists were refused integration into parties[47]; they belonged to affiliated organisations or over time made up women's sections of parties. They were *separate* and the motivations and aspirations they had were not heard while they were expected to serve. Service

and virtuous devotion recall the practice of female religious orders, except that women activists had not vowed to be silent.

The Women's Labour League (WLL) was established well into the Edwardian period, 'an all-female organization, it was formed in 1906 as an autonomous 'organization of women to work for independent Labour representation of women in Parliament and in all local bodies' — implying a clear commitment to women's suffrage'. Affiliated to the Labour party in 1908 it got the right to attend and vote at party conferences despite coldness from the male leadership.[48] The WLL was almost the only gateway for women to access Labour party officialdom; it dutifully adopted adult suffrage in 1911 to forward the aims of the party. Conservative women formed their suffragist group in 1908, the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association. 'Their goal, as their first President, Lady Knightley of Fawsley described it to *The Times* was 'to have a large and representative body of Conservatives and Unionists pledged to assist their leaders and to influence the Conservative party to extend the franchise to duly-qualified women''.[49] Here service was foremost and, deserved its reward, the vote. The Women's Liberal Federation used the experience of its longer existence to defy the party and challenge *[page14]* its perception of female activism: 'their ideological and tactical mission to wrest control of party policy' ultimately failed. 'The suffrage issue helped to shape the identity and purpose of the Federation, and led to serious divisions between members'.[50]

Socialist party orthodoxy negated the specificity of women as a sex, and, following Engels and Bebel, socialists extolled the sex/class analogy. Despite debates within the Social Democratic Federation, the woman question was not integrated in socialism itself as it was argued it could divide the working class. This probably explained why the Women's Socialist Circles, the branches' separate women's organisations, were set up to encourage 'social aspects of branch life'.[51] That women should serve their party (itself serving the working class) was also axiomatic for the socialist women from the Independent Labour Party; claiming the vote was reduced to a first step on the path to 'the overthrow of oppression'. In *Socialist Women,* June Hannam and Karen Hunt explore 'the diverse ways in which socialist women struggled to translate the tension between socialism and feminism into a creative political practice in the period from the mid-1880s to the 1920s'.[52] Socialist women from the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party were full members of their parties; they expected a future society where 'sexual equality' — whatever it meant — was promised.[53]

All these parties integrated women as party workers but denied sex was a political issue or neutralised it into 'class'. Such a consistent approach whipped Edwardian suffragist societies into action away from traditional and new parties. The idea of party neutrality had been inherited from the first suffrage societies of the 1870s, which had then thought that it was more effective to be 'cross-party', especially as none of the main parties wished to take women's suffrage onboard. This issue, whether to remain outside formal politics or not, damaged and split the suffrage campaign in 1888.[54]

The common social experience of women did not mean uniform political responses. Class was one variable; ideas and social conditions strongly determined commitment but opinion was also mobilised by 'sentiments, interests and beliefs'.[55] As political parties allowed for some degree of divergence, intra-class differences could well be more significant than class-belonging[56] with sex being a major variable here. Sex difference, or a 'sex class' did provide common experiences and grievances within the same class or concurrently to class experience. If in the late nineteenth century, class-belonging became politically meaningful, sex-belonging could become so, too. Women as a sex-class did exist and were concentrated in separate

organisations or in women's sections *[page15]* of parties with little or no representation at the level of party executives; if they were insignificant as a political group within their own party, they could try to become significant and could look at what 'suffragism' offered.[57] Shifting their party loyalty to their sex group, they could easily swap to 'suffragism'; being non-party, it accommodated what was division and divergence elsewhere (for example the type of suffrage) while being consistent with sex loyalty. 'Suffragism' adopted sex as the basis of alignment. Its political agenda was about women's suffrage whether its activists and supporters were men or women. From the start, 'suffragism' did not replace party affiliations. It offered a parallel space where sex issues were taken for granted; party affiliations and sympathies then determined the suffragist course of action. Hence, the double affiliations that were more often than not the rule with female activists. 'Suffragism' was one possibility; other contemporary campaigns offered women potential involvement: temperance, free school meals, working-class housing, maternity benefit and child welfare are examples of campaigns in which female activists were involved.[58]

In 'suffragism', sexualised political agendas allowed male activists to participate even if female activists always prevailed numerically.[59] Women-only structures coexisted with all-male or mixed ones; if political and intellectual production had female and male authors, it was nonetheless entirely devoted to women's rights; it was all-female oriented even if activists were both men and women, if not couples.[60]

Adopting 'sex-class' as one's first loyalty does not mean being without class-consciousness but it spelt out that women's issues had as much validity as class or party ones. Divided loyalties did not prevent prioritising. How suffragists established the validity of their perceptions, how they related to alternate choices, usually remains impossible to find out. What researchers can do though is grant suffragists, females and males, the consistency of their choice, inside or outside 'suffragism', and then try to account for it.

'Cross-party' was the Conservative Balfour's and the Liberal Gladstone's pretext to avoid the sex and suffrage issue; in both cases they thought women deserved the vote but wished 'to protect' their parties from further crises, fearing that suffrage would be damagingly 'divisive'. The new Labour party claimed to represent the still disenfranchised males and the poorer disenfranchised females, and just like the two main parties was aware of party advantage and the constraints of representation.[61] That suffrage was 'cross-party', as claimed by contemporaries, illustrates what they saw as a fact; this cannot clarify much the object of study of this book. By contrast, 'suffragism' became the *other* space, the space *[page16]* where suffrage was essential and binding and structuring, generating loyalties about this issue. The 'cross-party' contention could mean delaying tactics against women's vote or classing suffrage low on the political agenda. Indeed, 'cross party' seems to have stigmatised the issue as not very important. Mainstream politics refused to take it onboard, whereas women activists had already taken great pain to show its importance for them and society as a whole. Because women were not political subjects, their issues and enfranchisement were euphemistically connoted as 'sectional' and 'cross-party',[62] which manhood suffrage did not seem to have been. When in 1912, the Labour party did commit itself on women's suffrage,[63] it rallied suffragists from inside and outside 'suffragism', inflamed the feeling of divided loyalties for all except Labour women.[64] Over time, parties and activists changed or maintained the balance of their priorities between party affiliation and a suffragist stand while local involvement enabled many to experience both fully: 'Locally women retained a far greater commitment to party politics'.[65] Besides, according to regions, party politics could be stronger or particular just as inter-party cooperation and/or 'suffragism' were likely to unite all local female activists into action.

In the hub of things: local activism and sexual politics

June Hannam has convincingly argued that 'local suffrage politics was not just about building support for a national movement – at particular times the local branches *were* the movement'. She reaches the conclusion that 'local studies transform our view of the nature and meaning of 'suffragism' *for the participants'* (my italics).[66] Local 'suffragism' had 'a life of its own'. If local and national perspectives had a complex relationship, the neat labelling and differentiation between suffragist groups could lose meaning locally.[67] When competing for members, labelling was vital, less so when groups were collaborating; when organisations, and not activists, are the focus of propaganda or research, labelling remains useful. However, the history of structures[68] does not always mirror the affiliating choices and loyalties of people involved. Ideology, inner organisation, decision-making do play an important role but community loyalties, family history and perception of arguments can supersede or qualify ideology, class or sex interests. Local studies seem to offer a better perspective to examine individual activists and their rationale;[69] formal recruitment and informal companionship are aspects which could also be better assessed at the local level. With 'suffragism' as a linguistic and political space loosely federating the local branches of groups, non-affiliated women as well found an informative and debating space for their suffragist conviction. 'Suffragism' could also merge with the scene of local party politics *[page17]* if party activists were suffragists or if their networks were identical. The reception of national propaganda by the rank and file activists, their local knowledge and propaganda-making, 'the political loafers' waiting to be included, are elements that can enrich or qualify the national pattern. The relation between regions and the capital allowed for singularity and fluctuation. The national perspective was structure-centred; it liaised with Parliament, Government or Executives of political parties, emphasizing its own importance. The local perspective relied on activists, their numbers, personal constraints and local interaction. Because local networks and pressure groups differed in scope and manner from national ones does not mean that they were in a subservient relation; local and national levels can show convergence and divergence if not contradiction.[70]

In this book, Julia Bush, for the middle-class National Union of Women Workers (NUWW), and Gillian Scott, for the working-class Women's Cooperative Guild (WCG) write about two non-party organisations and the suffrage issue. The NUWW was 'an 'umbrella' organisation [which] depended upon mutual respect among women of varying beliefs and varied social, political and religious background. The desired ethos of gender solidarity in support of gendered social service' of the NUWW paralleled 'the self-styled 'trade union of married women'', the WCG, that brought to light 'this previously un-represented constituency in public life, broadcasting their needs and views on a range of social and political questions which were by no means limited to suffrage'.[71] Both were national women's organisations with affiliated local groups. Both expected members to voice social needs and produce social answers: these bottom-up structures ensured that democratic procedures and aspirations took place. From the local scene, both groups claimed social legislation should serve women's needs as mothers and wives, even if the WCG women were more likely to be recipients. While they expected political reform from Parliament, they could not ignore the value of the parliamentary vote. They did not differ from party-women: the WLL women claimed social reform and action in a partnership with the State; in a more traditional liberal tradition, the Conservative and Liberal women stressed the need for moral reform as instrumental to social reform. Non-party and party women defended the same, or a similar, agenda of social action. Locally they collaborated with each other or were identical groups of women activists. What was locally true of party and non-party women matched the reality of the way women were involved outside and inside 'suffragism'. Their various hats ensure that local female activism was identified with women whose affiliations represented a cross section of the female Edwardian political fabric, suffrage included. *[page18]*

Local activism tells the story of groups and individuals but also of shared means of propaganda: all party and non-party women groups emphasized political teaching and individual empowerment,[72] altruistic interests and denunciation of sexual injustice. They participated whenever they could in local government and encouraged their members to contribute to local social action, stressing their apolitical or party view, depending from which platform they talked. Their local involvement was founded on the idea they had of female representation and delegation; it gradually became synonymous with electioneering, and this could only lead to suffrage being acknowledged as a vital tool in the process. Besides, local activists, even when they wished their organisations to remain non-committal on the issue, were often suffragists themselves: they simply thought it would be a mistake to have their group officially endorse women's suffrage. Just as formal parties claimed that suffrage was 'divisive', many groups outside 'suffragism' thought that adopting suffrage would foster division; they feared that they would experience antagonism in the same way as party politics did (although the latter did not since suffrage was deemed to be 'cross-party'): a remarkably contradictory version of 'cross-party'. This non-party official stand seems to have been stronger among middle-class groups such as the NUWW where party affiliations, mostly Conservatives or Liberal, may have been more contentious. The non-party NUWW however showed how the integration of political language contradicted the (self-staged) isolation fantasy that women were above politics, lobbying for new social legislation while accepting their political exclusion from mainstream politics.[73]

By contrast the active female citizenship of the more (politically) homogeneous WCG activists developed on pragmatic lines; they were working-class suffragists and women whose urgent priorities and lack of free time did not accommodate infighting well, compared with such contests as Fawcett vs. Ward in the NUWW. WCG members testified in favour of the divorce law reform (1909), argued for provision for women in the national insurance scheme as mothers and home workers, and supported municipal schemes of maternal care. They served their sex interests but these could hardly be divorced from their class or social experience: as married women at home, they had been formerly cut off from any form of group support, parties, unions or social organisations.[74] Acknowledging their sex and class identity, they 'naturally' claimed suffrage as another empowering tool.

Women of the NUWW had been assertive about social issues, exerting their class privilege. Yet as a sex group, they had to be content with 'advisory if need be', a secondary status that clashed with their middle-class identity. *[page19]* Through the NUWW, they discovered their numbers and variety. Repeatedly class was empowering, sex was disabling. The suffrage contest between Fawcett and Ward within the NUWW can be read as the sex versus class debate: how the defining priority made a movement avowedly suffragist (women should unite because of their sex) or socially homogeneous (women from the same class should unite). In a way, the NUWW was a site where two different public spheres competed for supremacy and although 'suffragism' won, reluctance to discard the class strategy, which granted middle class women a fair sample of class advantages, still informed the NUWW shared vision of sex reformism.

The same tensions were experienced in local Socialism and Conservatism where the top-down approach of national structures made local activists rebel in a number of instances. In this book, June Hannam shows how Bristol socialist women, Philippe Vervaecke how Primrose League women, contested national policies for the sake of their consistency as local activists. Women's suffrage could become the test question to assess how far their national organisation cared for their women supporters. 'Many socialist women, and some men, became involved in the suffrage campaign itself as well as using the issue to raise questions about the

commitment of socialist groups to working for women's emancipation as a key part of the project of constructing a new society.'[75] The answer for Primrose League women was even clearer as 'the lesson they were taught constituted a caveat against the male complacency and female subservience which characterised the League's gender-integrative approach that was gradually repudiated by female activists within the party'.[76] In both cases, the WSPU was the suffrage organisation which could compete with the original affiliation, probably because the National Union of Women's Suffrage Society (NUWSS) may have looked even more Liberal locally than nationally, a sure reminder that party politics mattered within 'suffragism' as well as without. The description of the Bristol NUWSS as the 'Liberal Primrose Leaguers' by a WSPU supporter[77] connotes not only the monolithic perception of Liberal influence in local 'suffragism' but also how political rivalry within 'suffragism' took to the standard phrasing of party politics. When Kensington Primrose Leaguers suggested alliance with the WSPU to obtain women's suffrage (against the official neutrality policy of the League), they showed how acceptable the WSPU could be while Grand Council sternly repulsed the more dangerous NUWSS attempts to contact Primrose League female local activists. A number of local rebels had already made the Primrose League second to their suffragist commitment, risking expulsion, when in 1910 Betty Balfour, President of Ladies' Grand Council, informed *[page20] The Times*' readers why she could not support her local anti-suffragist Conservative MP.[78] Conversely, the establishment of the national WSPU (1903) was analysed as potential poaching of socialist women and encouraged socialist organizations to set up their own women's groups. Locally, socialist women could be employed as NUWSS organisers to deflate class hostility and approach working-class potential supporters of 'suffragism'. Class could also be powerfully divisive within 'suffragism'. The example of socialist women from the East Bristol WSS showed how precarious a suffragist affiliation could be versus class loyalty at the time of a parliamentary election.[79]

At times of local elections, female activism was both promoted and circumscribed by political organisations and parties. Female activism according to the Primrose league could be channelled into 'temperance, public morality, charity and religion', 'women's traditional public duties,' while women's suffrage was deemed irrelevant. [80] Liberal women had a similar definition of women's citizenship except that a majority of them made women's suffrage a decisive commitment via the Women's Liberal Federation. In any case, Primrose League women were effective canvassers and political instructors in the localities and provided they remembered that 'women's suffrage was a question of opinion and not of principle', Grand Council could hope to save them from politics and safeguard their moral principles.[81] Such a definition of the political and of the proper involvement of women did not prevent them from participating in local government where the ideal of service and womanly public duties prevailed. Socialist women were involved in the same local duties: like their Conservative and Liberal counterparts, they were actors and targets of political education; they were both political workers and candidates for local elected positions. As social event organisers, these women were usually responsible for catering and recreational facilities. Such activities can be seen as politically inferior, many contemporaries must have thought so, but they were geared to consolidate local activism. Sharing activities and celebrating events kept local groups together and helped recruit new members, especially women. At the local level, women's groups outside 'suffragism' involved women in 'women's tasks' whose political importance became increasingly difficult to deny: the expansionist labour and suffrage movements competed for women members while the Primrose League tried to shut them out from suffrage and sex issues.

Domestic ideology was inherent to socialist discourse, denying women's individual claims except as wives and mothers of socialist men. Unsurprisingly it was also part of the Primrose League which called women's suffrage 'a subsidiary question' (1910) and had always

denied *[page21]* female representation at the head of the movement. Parallel to this, the League painstakingly (and in a somewhat suicidal manner) emphasized the men's share in popular conservatism and encouraged male-only bodies within the League while losing women to other women-only Conservative bodies.[82] Domestic ideology was dominant within 'suffragism' as well. But as a forum 'about women', 'suffragism' allowed for a variety of discourses: a discourse which strengthened female occupational and paid work issues; an avant-garde discourse which could be trying to female 'modesty' because of its explicit discussion of sexuality. In suffrage outside 'suffragism', the unionized female teachers and the avant-garde women echoed or initiated these discourses.

Beyond the structure: mastering and discarding organisations

In the Edwardian years, 'suffrage' became one vested point to define the political. If suffrage was the priority, 'suffragism' was the answer. Outside 'suffragism', political parties defined suffrage as 'cross-party', that is as 'non-party', and conveniently discarded it along with women's issues. Women's groups pursuing social reform were more or less reluctant to adopt it for fear of entering the political field. Yet their 'social' participation in local government, supposedly divorced from any political standpoint, could not make the fiction last, especially as they saw how political parties carved out local responsibilities among their successful candidates. Activists experienced the political differently from their structures, differently locally and nationally; they had to struggle to have their viewpoints considered. In this book, Susan Trouvé-Finding examines the National Union of Teachers (NUT) which claimed they could not adopt 'suffrage' as it was 'too political' and that as a professional union, occupational issues were their main concern. Conversely, Lucy Delap shows how avant-garde women disclaimed 'suffrage' as 'just political' and too narrow a basis for feminists who discussed the personal. In both cases, individual activism, with men and women involved, was compatible with occupation alignment (teaching) and individualistic concerns (creative activities). What is striking is the feeling of triumph that women as a sex group could not but feel when they became executives of their teaching associations (1910s),[83] a triumph that avant-garde women could safely deride now that some of them had left the teaching profession.

Even though they did not manage to turn the NUT into a suffragist organisation, the unionized women teachers (as well as their non-unionized colleagues) represented independent working women whose dignified professional roles pervaded schools and neighbourhoods as well as their unions: 'By 1899 three quarters of the 82,000 elementary teachers *[page22]* were women. […] By 1904 57.7% of certificated women teachers (97.5% of their male colleagues) were members of the union'.[84] As unionised labour, their subscriptions were used to return male MPs who did not even need to be suffragist while women were 'specifically excluded from the benevolent fund's top category'.[85] Equal pay and career promotion were standing claims across the period. Suffrage was added to the list of demands from the 1911 annual conference onwards but to no avail. Despite the NUT Executive becoming favourable to women's suffrage, the rank and file never gave it a majority. In fact, equal pay, though 'a domestic issue', proved more 'divisive' a topic than suffrage. Inside the NUT the National Federation of Women Teachers (NFWT) welcomed all women teachers (even if unqualified) and promoted both equal pay and suffrage, two issues which showed women teachers how sex played against their interests, even though they had then reached the decision-making levels of their union. Despite moderate female leaders and a majority of female members, their union remained deaf to women teachers' concerns. This led to the setting up of the (moderate) National Union of Women teachers (1920): it opposed the marriage bar and promoted equal pay, two objectives that the NUT still refused to support. Whatever their qualifications and their professional competence, women would still be paid less in the 1920s, just as on the basis of sex, they had been excluded from the parliamentary franchise before the First World War. Whatever their record, work

achievements and ethics, it was as a sex group that they were victimised in their career prospects and pay; although women were more numerous in their union, suffrage (up to the 1910s) as well as equal pay remained officially 'sectional' and 'divisive' issues. As educated self-confident women, female teachers knew this was an effective lesson in sexual politics; unsurprisingly quite a number of them joined suffragist groups and political parties before 1914.

As an increasingly numerous work group whose expertise was acknowledged, as educated lower middle-class women, teachers represented a valuable input to 'suffragism' and politics as a whole. Assertive and financially independent, these women probably brought their own devised vision of ordinary 'new women', neither the exploited working-class worker and mother nor the leisured philanthropic middle-class woman. They competed with the young educated middle-class girls for jobs in journalism and 'suffragism'. Aware of their social origins and subsequent social promotion, they had little to lose. Mary Gawthorpe, Dora Marsden and Teresa Billington-Greig[86] claimed equal pay within the NUT, went through suffragist (Militant) politics before entering the new stage of *The Freewoman*. 'Many of the 'advanced' or 'vanguard' women who came to describe themselves *[page23]* as feminists were motivated by their former experience as suffragists'.[87] They claimed that true emancipation was undermined by suffragist discipline and competition for power. Having abandoned the official male public space where women were denied as a category at work and lacked influence on the union scene, these vanguard women invested in 'suffragism' as organisers or prominent activists. Some then abandoned this 'corrupt and inept'[88] parallel public sphere in order to set up a new space centred on the periodical *The Freewoman*. There men and women produced and spread ideas for the 'uncommitted, progressive, and younger group' who were not shocked by sexual explicitness and permanent polemics[89] and above all who saw 'suffragism' for what it was — whatever that was. Away from inclusive 'suffragism', they generated the elite profile of the vanguard feminists for whom 'feminism was not understood in these early stages as a democratic and egalitarian movement […] Elitism spanned Fabian, new liberal and avant-garde feminist political discourses'.[90] Avant-garde women could be seen as an end-product of 'suffragism': they had experienced participation in a mass movement, even if, as they said, it was 'narrow-based' because geared only towards one cause. They next ventured into individual assertiveness and voiced arguments with no cause but the (female) individuality they knew they had, a long way from suffrage inside and outside 'suffragism'.

Thus, even though 'suffragism' did eventually disappear as a cause, its political teaching may have had a more lasting influence than the Edwardian period on both women and structures. Women had already proved themselves valuable members —even if they needed to be controlled to be instrumental to the party — and once enfranchised they would also provide votes. For female activists, 'suffragism' must have sustained their political apprenticeship outside, offering not only traditional back-up but also showing the efficiency of political separatism: above all it displayed what women could do when they were not ostracized. To political parties and reforming groups, 'suffragism' could be seen as a threat, competing with them for female activists and defining loyalty in terms of neither party-politics nor common social action. That women flocked into social and political structures at that period showed that women were ready to invest the public sphere whilst political parties still found it difficult to accept and integrate women as 'women'. On the other hand, middle-class women's reforming groups could still be tempted by 'genteel womanly' influence as a proven method instead of straightforward political lobbying.

Political parties had a stake in women as party workers and potential voters despite the fact that in the Edwardian period, most of them did what they could not to enfranchise them. Non-political structures *[page24]* such as the National Union of Women workers or the Women's Cooperative Guild, managed by and for women's interest, had sprung from the 1880s

onward to voice women's views on women's issues as if neither of them was political; they lost the monopoly of women's issues (basically social reforms affecting children and the family), once party-women developed their social agenda inside parties. Reforming groups continued to be relevant but they had to build alliances and accept the idea that the social was also political. Such a transition was not as brutal as it sounds because most Edwardian women activists possessed a culture of double affiliations and of collaboration on the basis of sex. Their chameleon-like political positioning can be said to reflect what they were used to experiencing in ordinary life as well. As wives, mothers and daughters, they invested roles they were expected to play. Practically, in 'ordinary' life as well as in political life, being females still meant subordination so that sex solidarity as exemplified in 'suffragism' remained a powerful attraction and an incentive to reform structures and objectives. Outside suffragists fought against the acknowledgement of female political and social subordination as 'natural' and made a breakthrough on the battle-field. It meant forcing on political parties social agendas geared towards women's needs; in reforming groups it meant acknowledging that political emancipation should be at the origin of social action and not a side-issue.

Empowerment came from the practices and the model that 'suffragism' advocated inside and exported outside, the more diligently so as a number of suffragists were also outside political or social activists. Ideas and individuals left 'suffragism' and mushroomed outside, sometimes against the original model. The flux in and out demonstrated that subordination out there was not final: political emancipation would open the gates of elected office and decision-making, adding up to what women had already painstakingly achieved. To insiders and outsiders, 'Suffragism' not only denounced the characteristic wrongs women suffered from but also publicized women's potential outside their traditional roles.

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[1] B. Harrison, *Separate Spheres: the Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain*, (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 17.

[2] Such suffragists could be members of suffragist organisations or not. In this introduction 'suffragists' means individuals who were committed to women's suffrage whatever their affiliations. Whether suffragists belonged to militant or constitutionalist organisations is outside the scope of this book; the differences between suffrage organisations and their methods have already been abundantly researched. *[page25]*

[3] There is no attempt to be exhaustive in this book. For women's suffrage and temperance groups, see M. Barlow, 'Teetotal Feminists: Temperance Leadership and the Campaign for Women's Suffrage', in C. Eustance, J. Ryan and L. Ugolini, *A suffrage Reader, Charting Directions in British Suffrage History,* (London, Leicester University Press, 2000), pp. 69-89; M. Smitley, ''Inebriates', 'Heathens', Templars and Suffragists: Scotland and imperial Feminism c. 1870-1914', *Women's History Review*, 11.3 (2002) 455-480. For the Social Democratic Federation, see K. Hunt *Equivocal Feminists, the Social Democratic Federation and the Woman Question 1884-1911*, (Cambridge University Press, 1996). For local women's organisations, see K. Cowman, *Mrs Brown Is a Man and a Brother: Women in Merseyside's Political Organisations 1890-1920*, (Liverpool University Press, 2004).

[4] A. Chadwick, *Augmenting Democracy, Political movements and constitutional reform during the rise of Labour 1900-1924*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), especially 'Constructing a Suffragist Alliance', pp. 104-41.

[5] The constitutionalists advocated legal methods and were represented by the powerful National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. The Militant societies, the Women's Social and Political Union and the Women's Freedom League, adopted illegal means to forward their cause.

[6] S. S. Holton, *Suffrage Days, Stories from the Women's Suffrage Movement*, (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 244.

[7] E. Crawford, 'The Suffragette Fellowship', *The Women's Suffrage Movement, A reference Guide 1866-1928,* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 663-4. The "Votes for Women" fellowship set up by the Pethick-Lawrences in 1912 published as one of its objects: 'To tell the true story of the Movement, both in its constitutional and militant development, and also to show the causes that have produced and are still fomenting the present revolt.', an insert in E. Pethick-Lawrence, *In Women's Shoes*, (Letchworth: Garden City Press, 1913). However, the Pethick-Lawrences were announcing a somewhat larger scope than what was basically financial support for their suffragist paper: 'As may be surmised from the name of the organization, it was built around the weekly suffrage paper, *Votes for Women*', E. Crawford 'Votes for Women Fellowship', *The Women's Suffrage Movement*, p. 698.

[8] L. N. Mayhall, 'Creating the Suffragette Spirit', *Women's History Review*, 4.3 (1995) 319-44, pp. 332-3.

[9] Laura Mayhall's analysis could be applied to most suffrage organisations even though the Suffragette Fellowship only gathered former Militant activists' testimonies from the Women Social and Political Union and the Women's Freedom League. Pre-war suffragist contemporaries published books in the 1910s to position their suffrage societies either in historic continuity or in rupture. What was at stake was the justification or criticism of methods towards gaining women's vote which they thought was imminent. For continuity, B. Mason, *The Story of the Women's Suffrage Movement*, (London: Sherrat & Hughes, 1912); M. G. Fawcett, *Women's Suffrage, A Short History of a Great Movement*, (London: T.C & E.C Jack, 1912). For rupture, T. Billington-Greig, *The Militant Suffrage Movement: Emancipation in a Hurry*, (London: Franck Palmer, 1911); E. S. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette, The History of the Women's Militant Suffrage Movement 1905-1910*, (London: Sturgis & Walton, 1911). *[page26]*

[10] L. N. Mayhall, 'Creating the Suffragette Spirit', pp. 332-3. The year equal suffrage was won, Ray Strachey (a 'constitutionalist') published "*The Cause", A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain*, (London: Bell, 1928). It was not only a contribution to history–making but also a tribute to M. G. Fawcett (1847-1929) whose biography she published in 1931, R. Strachey, *Millicent Garrett Fawcett*, (London: Murray, 1931).

[11] Mayhall, 'Creating the Suffragette Spirit', pp. 334-5.

[12] R. Strachey, "*The Cause", A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain*, (London: Bell, 1928); E. S. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement: An Intimate Account of Persons and Ideals*, (London: Longmans, 1931).

[13] Holton, 'Reflecting on Suffrage History', in C. Eustance, J. Ryan and L. Ugolini, *A Suffrage Reader,* pp. 23-36; Holton, *Suffrage Days*, p. 244, 249.

[14] Holton, 'Reflecting on Suffrage History', p. 25.

[15] 'There is equally a contradiction in the way masculinist history criticises the suffrage movement for being one-dimensional in its pursuit of a single issue, while dismissing concerns with the sexual exploitation of women as pathological. The suffrage movement can be interpreted as narrow or disordered in approach only by an almost wanton blindness to the sexual politics intrinsic to the suffrage campaign. Masculinist histories also consistently underrate the symbolic and cultural force, both of the winning of the vote, and of women's militancy. Similarly, it is difficult to understand why the political achievements of the suffrage movement are either denied or diminished in masculinist accounts', S. Holton, 'The Making of Suffrage History', in J. Purvis and S. Holton (eds.), *Votes for Women,* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 28.

[16] Lynn Abrams and Karen Hunt, 'Borders and Frontiers in Women's History' (editorial), *Women's History Review*, 9.2 (2000) 191-200, p. 191.

[17] Ibid, p 197.

[18] C. Beaumont, 'Citizens, not Feminists: the boundary negotiated between citizenship and feminism by mainstream women's organisations in England 1928-1939', *Women's History Review*, 9.2 (2000) 411-429.

[19] J. Hannam and K. Holden, 'Heartland and Periphery: local, national and global perspectives on women's history' (editorial), *Women's History Review,* 11.3 (2002) 341-348, pp. 341-2.

[20] This similarity to and contrast with the mainstream political field recalls, through analogy, what Gisela Bock wrote about the relation between women's history and the history of men, 'Women's History and Gender History: Aspects of an International Debate', *Gender & History*, Vol. 1, 1, Spring 1989, pp. 8-9.

[21] Ibid, pp. 15-16.

[22] 'By the second half of the 1980s, then, there had been a significant shift in the interpretative frameworks shaping suffrage history in Britain, a shift that had extended our understanding of the range and complexity of the internal politics of the suffrage movement, that challenged absolute distinction between militants and constitutionalists, and that increasingly recognised the importance of local movements and provincial suffrage societies', Holton, 'Reflecting on Suffrage History', p. 25.
[23] Lori Maguire, chapter 3 below, p. 81: In the Conservative party, women's suffrage was seen as a protection against manhood suffrage (John Buchan's argument); for the suffragist Conservative Betty Balfour, women's suffrage should not lead to womanhood suffrage either. *[page27]*
[24] Suffragists who were both insiders and outsiders would select one or the other identity according to situations. In this introduction they will be artificially considered as one or the other.
[25] The chapters below offer a number of examples of this.
[26] L. Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women : Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-1914*, (London : Chatto & Windus, 1987) ; M. Boussahba-Bravard, 'Vision et visibilité: la rhétorique visuelle des suffragistes et suffragettes 1907-1914', LISA e-journal, 1.1 (2003) 42-54.
[27] S. Herbst, *Politics at the Margin, Historical studies of public expression outside the mainstream,* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 4: 'What I call parallel public space – the arenas that marginal groups develop in order to voice their opinions'.
[28] J. Habermas, *L'intégration républicaine, essais de théorie politique*, (Paris: Fayard 1998), pp. 5-6.
[29] Ibid, p. 73, 76.
[30] J. Habermas, *L'espace Public*, 'New Introduction' (Paris: Payot, 1992).
[31] Carol Pateman demonstrates that the modernisation of the social contract is limited to the 'fraternal' type and excludes the 'female' type, Carol Pateman, 'The fraternal social contract' in J. Keane (ed.), *Civil society and the State*, (London: University of Westminster Press, 1988), p. 105, quoted in Habermas, *L'espace Public*, '1992 introduction', p. 9.
[32] P. Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government, 1865-1914*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987); J. Lewis, *Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England*, (Aldershot: Edward Edgar, 1991); P. Thane, 'Labour and local politics: radicalism, democracy and social reform, 1880-1914', in E. Biagini and A. Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain 1850-1914,* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 244-70, pp. 259-61.
[33] Habermas, '1992 introduction', p. 21.
[34] Ibid, p. 24, 26.
[35] S. Holton, 'Manliness and militancy, the political protests of male suffragists and the gendering of the 'suffragette' identity', in A. John and C. Eustance, *The Men's Share? Masculinities, Male support and Women's Suffrage in Britain 1890-1920*, (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 110-34.
[36] E. and S. Yeo, 'On the Uses of 'Community': from Owenism to the Present', in Stephen Yeo (ed.), *New Views of Co-operation*, (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 229-41; Eustance, Ryan and Ugolini, 'Introduction: writing suffrage histories – the 'British' experience', *A suffrage Reader*, p. 10.
[37] Herbst, *Politics at the Margin,* p. 24.
[38] 'A nation-wide production, *A pageant of Great Women* which she [Edith Craig] devised with Cecily Hamilton, made front page news in the *Daily Mirror* [12 November 1909]', Katharine Cockin, *Edith Craig (1869-1947) : Dramatic Lives,* (London : Cassell, 1998), p. 83, 95. Edith Craig also organised women's suffrage processions ; she was the general Director of the procession set up by the Women's Freedom League on 18 June 1910, 'Women's suffrage Procession', *The Vote*, 28 May 1910, p. 56. I am grateful to Katharine Cockin to have drawn my attention to Edith Craig' role. *[page28]*
[39] The Women's Social and Political Union and the Women's Freedom League.
[40] For instance, the discussions about 'the woman question' adopt the perspective of 'women as a topic. For 'women as a spectacle', see Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*; Boussahba-Bravard, 'Vision et visibilité: la rhétorique visuelle des suffragistes'.
[41] Julia Bush, 'British women's anti-suffragism and the Forward Policy, 1908-1914', in *Women's History Review,* 11, 3 (2002) 431-54, p. 440.
[42] For instance, Duncan Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party 1900-1918,* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 1.
[43] Julia Bush, *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power*, (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), p. 173.

[44] L. Barrow and I. Bullock (eds.), *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement*, (Cambridge University Press, 1996); E. F. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment, and Reform: popular liberalism in the age of Gladstone, 1860-1880*, (Cambridge University Press, 1992); E. Biagini and A. Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain 1850-1914*, (Cambridge University Press, 1991); A. J. A. Morris (ed.), *Edwardian Radicalism 1900-1914, Some aspects of British Radicalism*, (London: Routledge, 1974); D. Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party 1900-1918*, (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[45] P. Thane, 'Labour and Local Politics: Radicalism, Democracy and Social Reform, 1880-1914', in E. Biagini and A. Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism*; K. Young, *Local Politics and the Rise of Party, the London Municipal Society and the Conservative intervention in local elections 1894-1963*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1975).

[46] L. Walker, 'Party Political Women: a comparative study of Liberal women and the Primrose League 1890-1914', in J. Rendall (ed.), *Equal or Different: women's Politics 1800-1914*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

[47] Socialist women were full members of the Independent Labour Party and the Social Democratic Federation, J. Hannam and K. Hunt, *Socialist Women, Britain 1880s to 1920s*, (London: Routledge, 2002).

[48] Pat Thane, chapter 2 below, p. 44, 51.

[49] Lori Maguire, chapter 3 below, p. 72.

[50] Linda Walker, chapter 4 below, p. 102.

[51] K. Hunt, *Equivocal Feminists, the Social Democratic Federation and the Woman Question 1884-1911*, (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 24-5, 53, 55, 16; J. Hannam and K. Hunt, *Socialist Women*, p. 91, pp. 79-104.

[52] Hannam and Hunt, *Socialist Women*, p. 2.

[53] 'There would be sexual equality, although there was less certainty as to what exactly that would mean in everyday life and how such aspirations ought to influence the political practice of socialists in the meantime', Ibid, p. 2.

[54] Walker, chapter 4 below, p. 103.

[55] Tanner, *Political Change*, p. 12.

[56] Ibid, pp. 11-15.

[57] Chapters 2, 3, 4 below.

[58] Chapters 2, 3, 4 below for women involved in party politics. See Julia Bush, chapter 5 below and Gillian Scott, chapter 6 below for voluntary action and moral reform combined.

[59] John and Eustance (eds.), *The Men's Share?* In the main the selected case studies deal with male suffragists inside 'suffragism' with the exception of Carolyn Spring's contribution, 'The Political Platform and the Language of Support for Women's Suffrage 1890-1920', pp. 158-81; S. Strauss, *"Traitors to the Masculine Cause", the Men's Campaigns for Women's Rights*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982). *[page29]*

[60] J. Baldshaw, 'Sharing the Burden: the Pethick-Lawrences and Women's Suffrage' in John and Eustance (eds.), *The Men's Share?*, pp. 135-57. Other famous suffragist couples abound, the Fawcetts, the Pankursts. 'Ordinary' and famous suffragist couples become invasive when looking at certain episodes of suffrage history, such as the Edwardian wives' fiscal rebellion: the Wilks, the Housmans (brother and sister), the Sprosons, see Myriam Boussahba-Bravard, 'Résistance passive et citoyenneté: la rébellion fiscale des suffragistes édouardiennes', (Paris, Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, forthcoming, 2007).

[61] Walker, chapter 4 below, p. 117, 127; Maguire, chapter 3 below, p. 83; Thane, chapter 2 below, p. 44.

[62] Walker, chapter 4 below, p. 116.

[63] It was already committed to Adult Suffrage.

[64] Maguire, chapter 3 below, pp. 92-3: 'In what is there much point in a Conservative Suffrage Society which is afraid to avow its Conservatism?'; Walker, chapter 4 below, pp. 128-9; Thane, chapter 2 below, p. 54.

[65] J. Hannam, "I had not been to London', Women's Suffrage - a View from the Regions', in J. Purvis, S. Holton (eds.), *Votes for Women*, p. 233.

[66] Hannam, 'A View from the Regions', p. 242.

[67] June Hannam has stressed that local and national profiles did not always match and that 'local studies do reveal continuing connections between suffrage groups which are often seen as separate in standard accounts', Hannam, ibid., p. 238. In 1912, M. G. Fawcett had already underlined that 'however acute were the differences between the heads of the different societies, the general mass of suffragists throughout the country were loyal to the cause by whomsoever it was represented', Fawcett, *Women's Suffrage*, pp. 61-2.
[68] For example, Duncan Tanner, 'Ideological debate in Edwardian labour politics: radicalism, Revisionism and socialism' in E. F. Biagini, A. J. Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism, Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914*, (Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 283.
[69] Hannam, 'A View from the Regions', p. 228.
[70] Ibid, p. 231, 238.
[71] Julia Bush, chapter 5 below p. 139; Gillian Scott chapter 6, below, p. 176.
[72] For party women, chapters 2, 3 and 4 below. For non-party women, chapters 4 and 5 below.
[73] Bush, chapter 5 below, p. 140: 'the Parliament of Women'. This name adopted by the NUWW shows that before the WSPU version of 'the Women's Parliament', the NUWW accepted to see itself as a public space parallel to the parliamentary politics they so prudishly refused. Imitation forcefully demonstrates how women could only be self-contradictory in a mainstream public sphere which excluded them but whose values they had integrated.
[74] Scott, chapter 6 below, p. 182, 189.
[75] June Hannam, chapter 7 below, p. 216.
[76] Philippe Vervaecke, chapter 8 below, p. 253.
[77] Hannam, chapter 7 below, p. 222.
[78] Vervaecke, chapter 8 below p. 263.
[79] Hannam, chapter 7 below, p. 221, 226. *[page30]*
[80] Vervaecke, chapter 7 below, p. 255. On suffrage and temperance, see M. Barlow, 'Teetotal Feminists'; M. Smitley, ''Inebriates', 'Heathens', Templars and Suffragists'.
[81] Vervaecke, chapter 8 below, p. 263.
[82] Ibid, pp. 264-5.
[83] Susan Trouvé-Finding, chapter 9 below, p. 283.
[84] Trouvé-Finding, chapter 9 below, p. 287, 289.
[85] Ibid, p. 292.
[86] Ibid, p. 284.
[87] Lucy Delap, chapter 10 below, p. 318.
[88] L. Delap, '"Philosophical Vacuity and Political Ineptitude": the Freewoman's critique of the suffrage movement', *Women's History Review* 11.4 (2002) 613-30.
[89] Delap, chapter 10 below, p. 322.
[90] Ibid, p. 332. *[page31]*