

CONTRIBUTOR BIO



NICOLA WILLIAMS is in her second year at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, where she is pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in History. She is a member of the History Honor Society, Phi Alpha Theta and a member of the Cal Poly University Ambassador group. She enjoys English Tudor history as well as the history of the French Revolution particularly. She is originally from England but attained her U.S. citizenship this past quarter. In the future she plans to return to England to attend graduate school, where she will continue the study of History.

FASHION AND FEMINISM: THE MASS MOCKERY OF TWENTIETH CENTURY SUFFRAGETTES

Nicola Williams

“The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man,
neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so
are abomination unto the Lord thy God.”

– *Deuteronomy 22:5.*¹

In the book *The Ladies of Seneca Falls*, author Miriam Gurko refers to this quote to help show the forms of continuous mockery that early feminists bravely faced in response to their revolutionary ideas and clothing – specifically in this case, bloomers.² Women of the early suffragette movement such as Susan B. Anthony and Lucretia Mott were known to adorn these pantaloons, which were far more practical than the fashionable dresses of the day, some of which could weigh up to twelve pounds. The stories of these women are common across the historical record. They helped to lead the political propagation of the suffragette cause despite harsh opposition. State by state they achieved the right for women to vote. Near the turn of the century, however, the suffragettes decided to fight for the vote on a national level. To do this, they rallied other

¹ Miriam Gurko, *The Ladies of Seneca Falls: The Birth of the Woman’s Rights Movement* (New York: Macmillan Publishers), 141-142.

² *Ibid.*, 141-142.

women and became increasingly commercialized, advertising fashion trends and women's clubs to aid their cause.³

It is easy to assume, and consequently many historians do, that due to the greater number of women involved in the later wave of the movement and the immense foundation built for them by earlier feminists, these women faced very little opposition. Indeed, a book such as Gurko's, which focuses solely on the struggle of the early suffragettes, cannot be found for the later suffragettes. This assumption is a teleological mistake: assuming through the use of hindsight that as 1920 and women's suffrage approached, the women's fight became increasingly easier. There are admittedly, exceptions to this inaccuracy. While many historians barely mention the opposition to the suffragette movement, several books refer to the public's anxiety towards the later wave of suffragettes, but even these do not account for the scope of ridicule the women faced.⁴

At the end of the nineteenth century, to the delight of some and the scorn of others, the suffragette movement became increasingly visible in North America and above all, in New York City through increased commercialization, and the organization of suffrage parades. As the women's potential to generate change became evident, traditionalists attempted to rally opposition. I will argue however that rather than attempting to unite the public behind

³ One of several books that explain the commercialization of the suffragette movement: Margaret Finnegan, *Selling Suffrage: Consumer Culture and Votes for Women* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

⁴ Examples of books that discuss the suffragette movement but do not focus much, if any attention on the opposition to the second wave suffragettes include: Susan Glenn, *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).; Francois Baudot, *Fashion The Twentieth Century* (New York: Universe Publishing, 1999).; Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?: Domesticity and desire in the woman's magazine, 1800-1914* (New York: Routledge, 1996).; Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995).; Lisa Justine Hernandez, Comp., *Reading Women's Lives* (Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing, 2008).; Edited by Marjorie Spruill Wheeler. *One Woman, One Vote.* (Troutdale: NewSage Press, 1995).; Aileen S. Kraditor. *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York: W.W Norton and Company, 1981).

Examples of books that do mention the opposition to the second wave in more detail, though not to a satisfactory degree include: Margaret Finnegan, *Selling Suffrage: Consumer Culture and Votes for Women* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).; Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender Space, and Power in Boston 1870-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).; Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996).; Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-14* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

political argumentation against suffragettes, traditionalists utilized the mockery of women's fashion as a tangible, highly relatable way to express their growing fear of the new woman generally and the suffragette as an extreme expression of this new phenomenon.

"The new woman" was a term used to define women who broke away from traditional expectations, but finding exactly what this meant to people in the early twentieth century is hard to describe and consequently, historians have done so in a variety of ways. Elsie Clews Parsons, a feminist anthropologist from 1916 said that "the new woman means the woman not yet classified, perhaps not classifiable, the woman new not only to men, but to herself."⁵ In short, the new women were about breaking away from the more traditional limitations set upon them. Historians describe their fight to "express their sexuality," demonstrate independence, expand their geographical limitations and to overcome previously accepted restrictions.⁶ In the book *New Woman* by June Sochen, the new woman is described as someone who "left the home for the factory, a career and the marketplace."⁷ This is a description of the geographical alterations described above, and focuses on middle class new women who went to work, as opposed to upper class new women who indulged in women's clubs and shopping instead. While not every new woman could be labeled a suffragette, the most extreme demonstration of these principles could be found in the suffragettes, who fought to politically alter their world based on these ideals.

Traditionalists, on the other hand, valued conventional expectations regarding gender stratification and consequently opposed the new women and the suffragettes especially. In the historical record thus far, traditionalists have not been clearly defined except as a group who strongly disagreed with the new women. Traditionalists, for the purpose of this paper, shall be defined as the men and women who maintained the conventional opinion that women should be men's "weaker, better half".⁸ Consequently, many of these individuals found themselves adamantly involved in anti-suffragette organizations and clubs. The

⁵ Susan Glenn, *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 5.

⁶ The geographic changes caused by the suffragette movement are elaborated upon in Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space and Power in Boston, 1870 -1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁷ June Sochen, *The New Woman* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1972), 3.

⁸ Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?: Domesticity and desire in the womans magazine, 1800-1914* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 64.

general sentiment behind their actions can be most succinctly put into the words of one anti-suffragette editorialist who claimed: "Womanhood can not have its cake and eat it. If women want the kind of consideration to which they have been accustomed they must live by the conventional standards."⁹ Overall, the traditionalists found any women striving to break their social boundaries highly unrespectable.

The fear that traditionalists felt for the new women was mainly due to the juxtaposition of female action in the early twentieth century to the strict dogma of the nineteenth century, created under the assumption that women were sedate and innocent. Even towards the end of the nineteenth century, women were projected as passionless, demure beings, whose sole task was to take care of their husbands and children. The world of knowledge and argumentation was considered to be a strictly male domain. Both men's and women's insistence upon this divide is revealed through many different primary sources. Jane Austin herself resolutely stated that, "A woman, especially if she have the misfortune of knowing anything, should conceal it as well as she can."¹⁰ Coming from a woman, and an intelligent one at that, this quote helps to suggest the level to which such an ideal was ingrained into society. In *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930*, Lewis Erenberg succinctly describes the nineteenth century as one of "gentility, combining a moral fastidiousness and cultural refinement to discipline the will."¹¹ Considering that these strict expectations had been in place for the better part of the century, it seems logical that the women to challenge these societal tenets would have been met with stiff opposition.

The new women faced serious ridicule due to the extreme diversion from their traditional role, which they demonstrated by leaving their homes for the first time, dressing in more practical clothing, and altering the previously accepted political ideology as it pertained to their sex. Unfortunately for them, the more conventional members of society refused to accept these adjustments. In 1895, in a competition to define the new woman, one competitor wrote: "Who cuts her back hair off quite short and puts on clothes she didn't ought,

⁹ Finnegan, 53.

¹⁰ Gurko, 5.

¹¹ Lewis Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 5.

and apes a man in word and thought? New Woman. Who rides a cycle round the town, in costume making all men frown, and otherwise acts like a clown? New Woman.”¹² This ridiculing poem clearly shows a feeling of dismay towards the new woman. The very fact that a competition to define this new kind of woman existed, proves that she was viewed as an entirely new phenomenon. It also illustrated that this problem vexed society as a whole, rather than just a few fastidious individuals. In fact, Mary Wollstonecraft herself sadly conceded that when a woman showed any sign of ambition, she was “hunted out of society.”¹³ This does not paint an image of manageable mockery, but harsh and persistent ridicule, coming through an array of different media.

Specific examples of the fears that invoked this ridicule could have been found throughout New York City in the twentieth century and especially in publications such as the *New York Times*. It was highly concerning to people at the turn of the century that women seemed to be forgetting their roles as traditional, stay-at-home mothers, and consequently, were tearing apart the ideal American family.¹⁴ Traditionalists also feared that in the women’s attempt to change they were not so much becoming new women, as slowly changing into something more masculine. To analyze this mockery effectively, I shall draw sources solely from New York City. It may appear that New York City, as the birthplace of the women’s rights movement, presented one of the most accepting locations for women’s suffrage to flourish. But in fact, New York City became a center for controversy in this time, with passionate fighters on both sides of the debate attempting to rally men and women. The *New York Times*, as a widespread newspaper that printed letters from people who argued all along the spectrum of women’s rights, presents a good limiting lens through which to analyze this political trend.

The multiple publications of H.Y. Mayer’s cartoons, each based around the mockery of women’s fashion, clearly show the fear created by the changes in women’s role. Between 1909 and 1913, Mayer was the author of five, full-page cartoons in the *New York Times* that related to new women. On each page Mayer depicted ten to twelve different, smaller cartoons, each telling a different

¹² Home Chat, Competition to Define the New Woman, *Home Chat*, September 21, 1895. As seen in: Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?: Domesticity and desire in the woman’s magazine, 1800-1914* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 115.

¹³ Hernandez, 90.

¹⁴ Irene Frieze et al., *Women and Sex Roles* (New York: W.W Norton and Company, 1978), 336.

joke relating to new women. Together these images reveal the prevalent fear of the changing sex roles.

Mayer drew a specifically detailed image in March 1912 in response to the traditionalists fear that new women may forget their motherly instincts. In the bottom left corner of his page, a single woman is portrayed with a look of extreme pride on her face. She is young, youthful and seems to be enjoying the new fashionable garment she is wearing as she reaches out her hand to meet someone, engrossed in this apparently glamorous world. Her dress is unnecessarily layered: folds of material draped around her body increase her size by at least half, but this is not the focus of humor in the piece. The quote below the reading suggests: "Now that the fashion of the panier permits it, why not bring the papooses along."¹⁵ Only after reading this does the reader notice two babies, camouflaged by the elaborate folds of their mother's dress, sitting in two of the drapes as if they were cradles. The humorous nature of the cartoon and the impracticality of the suggestion instantly cast aside the notion that this is a serious suggestion. Even when the children are with her, engulfed in her very dress, the woman does not notice them. Distracted by her new world this mother is far from the traditional cradling, stay-at-home woman that the Victorian era propagated. H.Y. Mayer seems to be insinuating that the new fashions have distracted her from her role as a good mother – perhaps he is even proposing that these two worlds simply should not mix. The literal picture is, of course, an exaggeration, but it portrays the very real fear, cradled by traditional New Yorkers, that women would forget their most basic human role as mothers. The fear seemed to be that turning away from motherhood would naturally lead to a more masculine persona.

Mayer played with the fear of a transition towards a masculine image in several of his cartoons, but two of the most obvious depictions of this fear were drawn into his April 1911 collection.¹⁶ In the bottom left hand corner of the page, a man is shown sitting in his chair, shaking a paper. The caption below reads, "Durn those fashion papers!"¹⁷ The reason for the man's frustration is quite obviously due to the woman standing next to him who presumably, is his wife. It is hard to tell who she is at first for she is dressed as a man, in pants that

¹⁵ H.Y. Mayer, Foolish Fashions, *New York Times*, March 6, 1912.

¹⁶ Mayer, Foolish Fashions, *New York Times*, April 2, 1911.

¹⁷ Ibid.

leave only a few inches of her ankles showing, a striped, button-up shirt, and a cone-shaped hat. The only telling signs of her sex are a ribbon on the hat, her long tied hair in a bun, and her earrings. Her face is strangely distorted, suggesting that she is not attractive, though, judging by the man's furious reaction, this was probably not always the case. The reader is given the impression that the prevailing fashion trends of the day transformed a once feminine, perhaps even beautiful woman, into an unattractive, almost male figure.

Further up the page in Mayer's 1911 collection of cartoons is another depiction of this fear, propagated through the mockery of fashion, that suggests women's new habits caused them to be almost indistinguishable from men. In this image, a priest is standing in front of what appears to be two men. The quote underneath it, however, states, "The Justice: Ahem – er – and which is the blushing bride?"¹⁸ Only then does it become clear that one of the figures is supposed to be female. This is hard to tell because the figures are standing with their backs to the reader. Both are dressed in identical, slightly baggy trousers, long coats, and large hats reminiscent of Napoleon Bonaparte. The suggestion Mayer hoped to make here is obvious – women, specifically through fashion, have decided to become so similar to men that soon enough there will hardly be a noticeable difference between the two. Once again, the literal depiction is imaginary; Mayer most likely did not believe that men and women would begin to dress in an identical manner. The suggested fear, however, that women were growing slowly more masculine, was all too real to traditional New Yorkers. It is no coincidence these last two cartoons have utilized women's fashion as a tangible way to express the deeper fear society held about the evolving women.

Traditionalists found fashion was a highly effective rallying tool against the 'shocking' new women because New Yorkers were already in an uproar about the new trends. In one New York Times article a writer, who identified himself only as "an artist," begged women to refrain from following the new fashions, specifically the new hairstyles, because he found them unattractive.¹⁹ Another New York Times article tells the story of a young woman who walked down Wall Street in an incredibly tight gown. After receiving an array of shouted ridicule, the woman tried to take refuge in a bank. But, she had attracted such

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ An Artist, "Artist's Appeal For Women," *New York Times*, February 20, 1901. (No further name is offered for the author).

a crowd of followers that the bank became full, and the mob of people flowed out onto the street, all the while catcalling and jeering at her. Eventually the woman took refuge in a telephone box until police could come and defuse the situation.²⁰ Such an aggressive reaction suggests that the crowd was not simply letting the woman know she had made a fashion faux pas, but also that they felt the dress was representative of something bigger, a problem worth shouting about. The crowd clearly felt that the way this woman dressed represented a change in the way she perceived her role in society. In other words, the anecdote helps to prove the already prevalent association that the public held between fashion and the overall change in women.

If the general changes to women were worthy of such an uproar, it was nothing to the fear instigated by the suffragettes. Traditionalists worried about the ideologies that new women embraced because they were privileges traditionally attributed to men, including: leaving the home more often, expressing their sexuality, and generally defining the limitations for their own sex. The suffragettes took these philosophies to a new level because they declared themselves not only smart enough to help make decisions for society, but strong enough to be considered as eligible to do so as men. In other words, while the new women were seen to engage in offensive new habits, the suffragettes were attempting to create permanent change – a far more terrifying notion.

It was far easier for the traditionalists to prove that the new women (and by default, the suffragettes) lacked common sense because of their ridiculous clothing, than to address the various ideologies that constituted the suffragette debate. The dogmas of the suffragettes and the anti-suffragettes was complicated by the fact that people varied greatly in their motivation for joining each respective group. As Irene Frieze acknowledges in her book *Women and Sex Roles*, the opponents of suffragettes argued their points based on a list of topics including: religion, the fear of defeminization and loss of motherhood.²¹ For big businesses, especially the liquor companies, the suffragettes posed other threats. There was already a fear that women's suffrage may lead to prohibition, and big businesses were concerned that women were "reform-minded," a trait which would alter the entire game of politics.²² Similarly, the supporters of suffrage

²⁰ *New York Times*, "Tight Gown Stirs Wall Street," *New York Times*, March 17, 1909.

²¹ Frieze et al., 336. This point was also reiterated in Aileen Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York: W.W Norton and Company, 1965), 75.

varied in their reasoning.²³ Some women argued simply that the vote was just, and others, that it would increase white, native supremacy. Abolitionists also supported women's suffrage as a step towards their own cause. Populists felt that women could be made into "party loyalists," and people who concerned themselves mostly with the Labor Party supported suffrage in correlation to equal pay for women, which would reduce the competition of cheap female labor.²⁴

Several New York Times articles also help to suggest that the suffragette was seen as the epitome of the new woman, and that mocking the fashion of both was considered a justifiable and inarguable way to undermine them. One article in particular, a letter written in June of 1913, expressly shows this trend. One man named A. Meerman wrote in to the New York Times on June 12 of that year, to complain about recent trends in fashion for the new women.²⁵ He referred to a trend from Paris that called for women to wear wider brimmed hats and larger skirts, so big that it was hard for the wearer to sit. To conclude he exclaimed "And yet women want the right to vote! It's the joke of the century!"²⁶ In other words, the fashions that Meerman, like so many others, depicted as impractical, became a prevalent source of opposition to the notion that women were sensible enough to vote. Mrs. Dodge, the leader of an anti-suffragette organization, took this connection even further when she reportedly blamed suffragettes for the indecent new fashions.²⁷ The suffragettes faced similar ridicule through the early twentieth century, much of which was difficult to directly argue with because it was presented in an indirect manner.

H.Y. Mayer propagated this connection in a light yet distinct way in his cartoons, when he focused on the lack of sense that he felt was displayed in women's fashion as an attempt to prove the impracticality of women voters. In 1913, Mayer drew a picture of two women, each with a fashionable hat pulled over one eye with the caption "to restore perfect vision exponents of the 'Hat-over-one-eye' idea should travel in teams."²⁸ In short, he suggested that the two women traveled together so that the girl with only her left eye

²³ Frieze et al., 337.

²⁴ Ibid., 337.

²⁵ A. Meerman, "Foolish Fashion and Suffrage," *New York Times*, June 12, 1913.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ E. N. Hepburn, "A Question Not of Sex Appeal; But of Prevailing Mode," *New York Times*, May 15, 1913.

²⁸ Mayer, Foolish Fashions, *New York Times*, March 9, 1913.

revealed could combine with the other, who had only her right eye revealed, and together they could have the vision of one person without a hat. The comedic nature of the page proves this was not a serious suggestion. Mayer instead, was arguing that the women were dressing in such an impractical way that they could not function individually, that they lacked skill and vision. This could easily be extrapolated to suggest that women lacked the vision needed to vote. Similarly, an image in 1911 showed a woman crawling along the floor because this was the only way to get her incredibly large hat through a doorway.²⁹ The fact that Mayer saw women as utterly nonsensical is clearly shown through these depictions and many others like them, including those that focus on masculinity and a digression from motherhood, as discussed above.³⁰ It can be expected that New Yorkers would have understood these depictions of mild stupidity as, at least in part, an argument against the suffragettes due to the political prevalence of the suffragette debate at the time. Whether they did or not, the continual propagation of the asinine nature of the new women was a bitter struggle for the suffragettes. To help ensure that this connection was made, however, Mayer also drew several cartoons that connected to the suffragette movement far more directly.

Mayer's many images of ridiculous women frame several drawings that directly relate to women's suffrage, making it is all too clear that he intended to propagate a lack of respect for the new women, and the suffragettes especially. The first also appeared in 1911. Near the top of the page an elegantly dressed woman, an elderly gentleman and a young boy are all individually chasing their hats that were blown off in the wind. The caption above it reads "No More Hatpins. Equal Rights For Women."³¹ The suggestion here is that the woman, sure that she deserves all the rights and restrictions that men receive, decided to disregard the hatpins that most women used at this time to keep their less-than-form-fitting hats on their heads. Consequently the woman has gained the right to chase her hat, which fell off just like those of the men. This trivial attempt at equality suggests that this is indeed what Mayer believes of all issues in women's rights: they are trivial. In other words, the right to vote for women would be about as useful as the disregard of hatpins.

Many of the Mayer's images commented on women's rationality and

²⁹ Mayer, Foolish Fashions, *New York Times*, October 29, 1911.

³⁰ Such as: Mayer, Foolish Fashions, *New York Times*, October 3, 1909.

³¹ Mayer, Foolish Fashions, *New York Times*, October 29, 1911.

implicitly discussed politics, one image however, plainly showed the disrespect Mayer felt for the suffragette movement. Published in 1912 one drawing, significantly placed on the top, center portion of the page would have attracted the viewer's instant attention. The title: "Suffrage and Fashion – The Parade" is placed so closely to the title for the entire comic that it could almost be considered a subtitle.³² Below the text is a row of four women, drawn from a side angle, each following the one in front, holding signs with "vote for women" printed upon them.³³ Through this description so far, the image seems like a credible depiction of women's rights parades, there are however, a few major differences. Firstly, the women are all entirely blacked out. This artistic choice suggests several subsidiary arguments. Firstly, it implies less of a human presence in each character, as though the women are not parading due to their own intelligent, political analysis, but for some other reason, perhaps merely to 'follow the pack'. This idea is exacerbated further by the portrayal of a poodle at the end of the line, following along obediently, much like the women themselves. To increase the association between the women and the poodle, each of them, rather than standing straight, is bent in a kind of hop. Their feet are a few inches from the floor in mid-jump, prancing like the dog along the pavement. The women's outlines, conveniently enhanced from being blacked out, are also distorted by strange curling lines and bulges caused by the strange clothing they are wearing. If anything these distortions make the women more similar to the poodle, which is stereotypically shaved to accentuate the balls of fur along his body.³⁴ The artist suggests that the women and the poodle share a lot in common. Neither is particularly graceful or intelligent and both are simply on the street to parade their odd new styles and get attention. While Mayer clearly mocks women and, implicitly, suffragettes in many of his drawings, this depiction represents the pinnacle of his distaste. Sadly, Mayer's desire to advertise his distaste was not a rare sentiment at this time.

Mayer was only one of many traditionalists who mocked the suffragettes, a fact that is made evident by the reappearance of Mayer's work over four years and the other articles in the *New York Times* that have already been discussed. The continuous mockery of the early suffragettes that Gurko adamantly describes,

³² Mayer, Foolish Fashions, *New York Times*, October 6, 1912.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

did not significantly fade as 1920 drew closer.³⁵ On the contrary, the ridicule spread throughout the beginning of the twentieth century from the occasional harsh comment and political opposition to this more widespread ridicule, propagated by the mockery of fashion, which became slowly more desperate as the suffragettes power to effect change became evident. Analyzing the work of H.Y Mayer, it seems that the mockery of fashion was lighthearted. His work was in fact, simply a lighthearted twist on the otherwise heated ridicule of suffragettes through the use of fashion, a fact made clear through further analysis of the *New York Times*.

Several articles in the *New York Times* reveal the prevalence of fashion as a way to mock the suffragettes, in a more serious manner than cartoons may suggest. One example of this came from a *New York Times* reporter after his visit to a fashion show that was displaying the work of a prestigious fashion designer by the name of Mrs. White.³⁶ Despite the non-political nature of the show, Mrs. White was asked in a question and answer section what she felt suffragettes should wear. In response, White began by asking why on earth women would want to vote. She then continued to suggest that if women wanted to vote they should wear cassocks (long, single colored gowns, most commonly related to ecclesiastical dress). Knowing that White did not support women's suffrage, it seems unlikely that she suggested such a thing so as to depict the women as holy. More likely she was suggesting that they try to move away from the 'scandalous' gowns that new women were so often mocked for wearing. The very fact that the issue of suffrage would be brought up at a fashion show reveals the prevalence of a correlation between the two. On top of that, the fact that White responded so adamantly that she was in opposition of the suffragette cause suggests that she felt this a prevalent topic, so in need of discussion that she could waiver from her own clothing collection for a minute or two. It surely would be beneficial for White to stay away from highly charged political topics due to a desire not to offend any potential clients. White's reaction then suggests that either she was uniquely passionate about the topic — which seems unlikely in comparison to other articles — or that being vehemently against women's suffrage was so common that she was not concerned about offending a great number of people. This latter option is given credence by the other *New York Times* articles that suggest the commonality of such brash opposition.

³⁵ Hernandez, 90.

³⁶ "Suggests Cassocks for Suffragettes," *New York Times*, March 17, 1909.

Further articles, from several different New Yorkers, varying in importance from a bishop to an average citizen, reinforce the commonality of this ridicule. So prevalent was the suffragette debate that the *New York Times* covered one incident in which a bishop spoke at an all-girls' school graduation. In his short speech to the young ladies he apparently felt that one of the most important messages to communicate to them was that the new women were freaks, each one a "horrible, misshapen monster."³⁷ In another article, covering an anti-women's rights lecture, one Mrs. Maud Ernest described the suffragettes as conceited and egotistical. She even went as far as to say that they were disgusting.³⁸ These are only two examples of many that flooded the pages of the *New York Times*, varying in both length and severity.³⁹

The few historians who refer to the mockery of later suffragettes, tend to focus on specific, overt instances of mockery, such as those found in the book *Selling Suffrage* by Margaret Finnegan.⁴⁰ Specifically, Finnegan refers to demonstrations of violence at suffrage parades. The most pertinent of these in proving the opposition to the suffragettes involved a parade in 1913, during which several men jumped onto the suffragette floats where they accosted and fondled the women. Ultimately the riotous crowd injured three hundred people. Finnegan however, transitions from these tales to noting the positive effect of parades for the suffragettes due to the emotional effect they created. She then claims that suffragettes were able to fight off this kind of harassment most of the time by using simple logic. Such a refusal to demonstrate the significance of this overt ridicule is shocking, though the very fact that she acknowledged it at all means she did more than many other historians in investigating the real struggle of the suffragettes.

³⁷ "New Woman a Freak Says Bishop Doane," *New York Times*, June 9, 1909.

³⁸ "Anti-Woman's Right's Lecture—The Views of Mrs Maud Ernest," *New York Times*, March 31, 1870.

³⁹ "Spoiling the Women of Kansas," *New York Times*, August 13, 1893.; "Woman Suffrage," *New York Times*, April 7, 1889.; Margaine Lacroix, "Do Women Like Eccentric Clothes," *New York Times*, March 24, 1912.; Gilbert E. Jones "Anti-Suffrage 'Deception,'" *New York Times*, December 31, 1909.; "Suffrage and Women's Ideals," *New York Times*, May 13, 1913.; Arthur Dodge, "Anti-Suffragists Active," *New York Times*, February 10, 1913.; Gabrielle Stewart Mulliner, "Woman's Suffrage as a By-Product," *New York Times*, January 5, 1908.; G.O Shields, "The Slaughter of Birds," *New York Times*, April 27, 1900.; Richard M. Bent, "The Question Not One of Sex But of Brains," *New York Times*, March 29, 1908.

⁴⁰ Finnegan, 52-53.

This 'real struggle' can be seen through the distinction between the mockery discussed by Finnegan and the mockery discussed in this paper. Evidently, opposition to the suffragette cause would have occurred at suffragette events such as parades. By only focusing on this type of mockery, however, it is implied that suffragettes and their supporters could avoid mockery most of the time. The mockery presented in this paper, however, was all detailed in the *New York Times*, a general publication that would have been found throughout the homes and streets of New York City. This proves that the mockery was not only present for the women who threw themselves into the thick of suffragette controversy, or only on certain days when events were held. I have shown that this ridicule was pervasive around New York City, on a daily basis. Not only that, but while one failed parade may be forgotten, the indirect propagation of ideas through daily ridicule - that women were stupid and incompetent - lingered on. The mockery I have discussed was less obviously hostile than the examples presented by Finnegan. However, it was constant and subtle enough to ensure that the suffragettes had a difficult time directly addressing the stereotypes it propagated. This is evident due to the fact that instead of supporting this mockery with extensive argumentation, traditionalists, such as Bryant Lazelle, who wrote a letter to the *New York Times* in 1910, explained that he felt that no argument was necessary to prove that the suffragette 'movement' was nothing more than a "species of modern hysteria."⁴¹

While the mockery varied in seriousness from cartoons to political speeches, and in credibility from average citizens to bishops, it is evident that new women, and suffragettes especially, faced mockery on all sides. Rather than delving solely into political argumentation, traditionalists found that larger crowds of opponents could be rallied behind the mockery of women's fashions, due to the fact that these trends already outraged New Yorkers and were visible to even the most politically uneducated. The array of mockery proves that, despite their increased numbers, maybe even because of their increased numbers, the women of the later suffragette cause faced incredibly prevalent ridicule and opposition. While this in no way undermines the brave efforts made by the earlier suffragettes, it does imply that the second wave of suffragettes deserve further acknowledgement for the mockery they endured. While more subtle, the ridicule was no less persistent. No doubt, these ideas carried on past 1920 and the achievement of women's suffrage, less overt but ever-present.

⁴¹ Lazelle Bryant. "Woman Suffrage," *New York Times*. February 27, 1900.

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