

-Research Article-

The Suffragette Movement: Through Anguish and Resolution Emancipation Was Achieved

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Abstract

Women have always struggled to have an equal life for ages. It was in the eighteenth century when big steps started to be taken towards women's emancipation. Several women expressed their demands through their writings, and some others took action to ameliorate their standards. Among such determined as well as strong women, it was the suffragettes who attempted to do more than expressing their desires through writing. The Suffragette Movement was a women-only movement that was initiated in England at the very beginning of the twentieth century. *Suffragette* (Diren!, Gavoron, 2015)– a historical drama film directed by Sarah Gavoron and released in 2015 – is about the suffragettes and the Suffragette Movement. Within this scope, this paper aims to focus on the Suffragette Movement in the UK. The focus of the first part of the paper will be on what triggered the initiation of this movement. The second part will dwell on the Suffragette Movement itself and how it is presented in the film.

Keywords: The Suffragette Movement, Suffragettes, Suffragette, Sarah Gavoron, Gender Studies, Emancipation of women, Women-only movement

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-Araştırma Makalesi-

Süfrajyet Hareketi: Özgürlüğün Acı ve Azimle Kazanımı

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Özet

Kadınlar uzun bir süredir eşit bir hayat yaşamak için çaba sarfetmiştir ve kadınların özgürleşmeye başlamasının ilk adımları on sekizinci yüzyılda atılmaya başlanmıştır. Bu süreçte, birçok kadın yazılarıyla taleplerini ve isteklerini dile getirirken, bir kısmı ise yaşam standartlarını iyileştirmek için harekete geçmiştir. Bu kararlı ve güçlü kadınların arasında, süfrajyetler talepleri ve istekleri için yazı yazmaktan daha fazlasını yapmaya karar veren grup olmuştur. Süfrajyet Hareketi yirminci yüzyılın başlarında İngiltere’de başlatılan yalnızca kadınların dahil olmasının beklendiği bir harekettir. Kökleri on dokuzuncu yüzyılın son çeyreğine dayansa da bilinçli bir oluşum olarak yirminci yüzyılda tanınmışlardır. Sarah Gavron tarafından yönetilen ve 2015 yılında çıkan bir tarihi drama olan *Diren!* (Suffragette, Gavron, 2015) filmi de hem Süfrajyet Hareketi hem de süfrajyetler hakkındadır. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma genel anlamıyla İngiltere’deki Süfrajyet Hareketini incelemeyi amaçlar. Çalışmanın ilk kısmında bu harekete sebep olan olaylar ve kadın yazarlar incelenecektir. Çalışmanın ikinci bölümünün odak noktasını ise Süfrajyet Hareketi’nin filmde nasıl ele alındığı oluşturmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Süfrajyet Hareketi, Süfrajyetler, *Diren!*, Sarah Gavron, Cinsiyet Çalışmaları, Kadınların özgürleşmesi

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Suffragette (Direniş!) is a historical drama film directed by Sarah Gavron and released in 2015. It is about the Suffragette Movement in the United Kingdom. Owing to the fact that the film dwells on the factual incidents in history regarding women's suffrage, it is categorised as a historical drama. Considering its focus and its closeness to reality, it can be maintained that through the film, how the suppressed sex struggled to gain their rights to vote can be analysed or reanimated. Thus, this paper aims to focus on the Suffragette Movement in the UK. The focus of the first part of the paper will be on what triggered the initiation of this movement. The second part will dwell on the Suffragette Movement itself and how it is presented in the film.

It was in the first quarter of the twentieth century when the Suffragette Movement was initiated. However, it did not start suddenly. There were a series of incidents that caused it. Considering the series of incidents, it can be argued that the changes taking place in the nineteenth century paved the way for this movement. Actually, it is palpable to argue that women's struggle for their freedom had its roots in the eighteenth century. Step by step, they attempted to free themselves from the bondage of patriarchy. Regarding these steps, the Suffragette Movement can be thought of as the last step to be equal to men in terms of having basic human rights.

Throughout centuries, women were always seen as inferior to men. While the latter group was regarded as the embodiment of logic, mind, or reasoning, the former was the representation of emotions and heart, which led them to be perceived as secondary in this binary. Being confined in the descriptions or labelling of the patriarchal world, women lived their lives as shadows. However, the Enlightenment during which reasoning, logic, and scepticism flourished to a great extent not only caused significant changes in society since it enabled man to question dogmas and authorities, but it also triggered some alterations in women's status. Before the eighteenth century, few people attempted to write pamphlets for the second sex and their positions. These figures were Christina de Pisan (1364-c.1430), Jane Anger (1560-1600), Marie de Gournay (1565-1645), Bathsua Makin (1600-1675), Anna van Schurman (1607-1678), Mary Astell (1616-1731), and Poulain de la Barre (1647-1723) (Donovan, 2015, pp. 21-22). They wrote their pamphlets from different parts of the world and their professions were completely different. In this regard, it can be maintained that women's status and their perception were a universal issue, and the number of people trying to alter it was quite low. Since these pamphlets were unable to cause serious alterations, Mary Wollstonecraft's (1759-1797) *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) is considered the first proto-feminist work.

Within this scope, it can be safely argued that the first solid steps towards the emancipation of women were taken in the eighteenth century and actually the notions and their outcomes that were foregrounded in the Age of Reason prompted them to take action. With the Enlightenment, the emphasis on basic human rights increased dramatically. American Independence Declaration (1776) and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789) were the outcomes of such an emphasis. These drastic changes made women hope for themselves because they thought that their lives would be better; yet, soon they realised that the word "man" in the title only included males, which made these rights only peculiar to men (Donovan, 2015, pp. 21-23). Thus, they started to write and take action for their own emancipation. In this century, Mary Wollstonecraft, Sarah Moore Grimké (1792-1873), and Frances Wright (1795-1852) were the pioneers of liberal feminism and in their works, they made commentary on the inequalities and demanded an equal life grounding their arguments on different points.

When these three noteworthy female writers' points are taken into consideration, Mary

Wollstonecraft insistently dwelled on the need of her fellows' receiving education. That is why, she aimed to "persuade women to endeavour to acquire strength, both of mind and body" (*A Vindication*, 1988, p. 42). Regarding her assertion, it is apparent that through education, one can strengthen their mind, which unfortunately is denied from women. Concerning this problem, she propounds that "the neglected education of my fellow-creatures is the grand source of the misery I deplore; and that women, in particular, are rendered weak" (1988, p. 40). In this regard, for Wollstonecraft, women's being weak was definitely related to their being unable to receive education and if they could gain their long-denied right to school themselves, not only the inequality between the sexes would decrease to a considerable extent but also her sex could ameliorate their lives. In the same vein, Sarah Moore Grimké focused on the superiority of males in her work but what distinguishes her from Wollstonecraft is the fact that she grounded her arguments on religion and the misinterpretation of the Bible as she posited that the grand narrative was intentionally misinterpreted by the hegemonic patriarchy to make her fellows feel inferior and excluded in society. In *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women* (1838), Grimké deconstructed the Bible through reinterpretation. In the story of creation, it is stated that "God created man in his own image" (2013, Gen. 1-27). Reinterpreting this line, Grimké acknowledged that man and woman "were both made in the image of God; dominion was given to both over every other creature, but not over each other. Created in perfect equality, they were expected to exercise the vicegerence intrusted to them by their Maker, in harmony and love" (1838, pp. 4-5). In this regard, since she propounded that the subjection of woman was not implied in the Bible but it was speculated by the male dominant ideology. She blatantly furthered that it was *men* not man (mankind) who misinterpreted it: "Men and women were CREATED EQUAL; they are both moral and accountable beings, and whatever is *right* for man to do, is *right* for woman . . . MAN has laboured to teach her" to be dependent or feel inferior (1838, pp. 16-17 emphasis in original). Pertaining to her focus, her arguments, though utterly on the inequality, were more radical and challenging when compared with her former fellow. As for Frances Wright, just like Wollstonecraft, she dwelled mostly on education in her work – *Of Free Enquiry* (1828). She propounded that through equal education, freedom could be obtained and quoted the emphasis of freedom from "American Declaration of Independence" (1776) and wittily deconstructed it: "[W]ithout knowledge, can your fathers have conquered liberty? Equality! where is it, if not in education? Equal rights! they cannot exist without equality of instruction. 'All men are born free and equal!' they are indeed so *born*, but do they so *live*? Are they educated as equals? and, if not, can they *be* equal? (1988, p. 110 emphasis in original). Of course, aware of the fact that the word 'men' targeted merely males, she demanded freedom as well as right of receiving education for her sex and expressed her wishes grounding on the statements in "American Declaration of Independence", which is certainly quite subtle. Also, Wright made commentaries on the inequality concerning the quality or type of education each sex received. To make it clear, she claimed that while sons were thoroughly educated and given a chance of exercising political rights, for daughters, "little trouble or expense is necessary. They can never *be any thing*; in fact, they *are nothing*. We . . . fit them out for the market of marriage" (1988, p. 113 emphasis in original). Considering these liberal feminists, their main focus was definitely on gaining the basic human rights or eliminating inequality in their lives even though they articulated their arguments grounding on distinct points.

In the succeeding century, their ideas blossomed forth and there were significant changes regarding their status in society. Within this scope, the 'woman question' emerged and through this phenomenon, women gained an opportunity to demand equal roles as men in society, which brought forth serious changes in society specifically their lives. One of the alterations was to redefine womanhood. In order to trespass the limitations, the attributions

given by the male dominant society, and their confinement owing to the patriarchy, Sarah Grand (1873-1922) came up with a new term in 1894, which was the New Woman concept. So as to justify herself and her points of view, in her article entitled "The New Aspect of the Woman Question," Grand redefined womanhood as well as the attributions such as 'piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity' (Welter, 1966, p. 152) that were embedded on women by society that had a patriarchal mindset. While justifying her claims, she deliberately put the blame on the patriarchs: "Man deprived us of all proper education, and then jeered at us because we had no knowledge. . . . He cramped our minds so that there was no room for reason in them, and then made merry at our want of logic. . . . [H]e set himself up as a sort of a god and required us to worship him, and, to our eternal shame be it said, we did so" (Grand 1894, p. 272). The accusatory discourse she employed explicitly indicates that it was time for drastic changes because the second sex eventually gained their awareness regarding their position in society.

In addition to the New Woman concept, women gained certain rights through acts in the nineteenth century. The utilitarian John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) had an important role in the introduction of them. In "The Subjection of Women" (1869), he claimed that females should have equal rights and roles as men in society so that the nation would benefit from it and his ideas regarding the gains can be summarised as such:

Among these benefits are: (1). . . women . . . are no longer legally subject to the will of a cruel husband but are, instead, equal partners . . . ; (2) the removal of the 'self-worship' instilled in men who believe they are better than women merely because of their gender . . . ; (3) the creation of family as a model of the "virtues freedom"; (4) most importantly, the promotion of human progress . . . which will result from improved and equal education and opportunities for women. (Smith, 2001, pp. 181-182)

Indeed, a series of acts was introduced to ameliorate women's status in British society. Among these acts, The Custody of Infants Act 1839 was about the guardianship of children and was extended twice in the nineteenth century; Custody of Infants Act was introduced in 1873 and Guardianship of Infants Act was passed in 1886. Through such statutes, mothers were given access to see their children under certain circumstances. Although amelioration was made through the extensions, [u]ntil 1886, a mother could be excluded altogether from guardianship of her children, in favour of someone of her husband's appointment" (Perkin, 1989, p. 28). That is to say, throughout the century, after two extensions, a mother was eventually permitted to be the sole guardian of her children. Another amelioration was made in 1857 when the Matrimonial Causes Act was passed through which divorce for a married couple became possible. Before this decree, divorce had been possible through the ecclesiastical courts (Bozer, 2018, p. 4). With this amendment, couples started to get divorced in a secular court. Another statute that helped the position of the suppressed sex in society get better is the Education Act. As a matter of fact, it was not just for females; rather, it was an act about compulsory education for all children. Yet, as stated by Bozer in the "Introduction" of *On Dokuzuncu Yüzyılda İngiliz Kadın Yazarlar*, women gained new opportunities with this decree and could participate in classes at some universities. The University of London was the first university to enable them to graduate with degrees (2018, pp. 3-4). Furthermore, In 1882, the Married Women's Property Act was introduced, which was totally in favour of women. Before this amendment, they had no rights on property neither in their father's house nor their husband's house. With the introduction of the Married Women's Property Act, their defined role as *feme covert*, which means a married woman and shows her subordination to her husband, changed as a *feme sole*. This means that women could have property as if they were single ("Married Women's Property Act," n. d., n. p.).

These enactments indicate that amelioration in women's lives was achieved to a certain extent. Yet, their right to vote in elections was a bit complicated and traumatic. The subordinated sex, unfortunately, could not gain the right to vote in the nineteenth century; yet, this century prepared the necessary conditions with some developments. As Steven King claims in his chapter "Fighting an Election" that

[l]ate Victorian and Early Edwardian women were involved in local political and electoral processes at three levels: as voters, election workers and candidates. . . . The 1892/93 Local Government Act extended local voting rights to married women . . . Further reform in 1894 gave women the vote in parish and district councils and revised the structure of voting in municipal elections, so that by 1900 . . . there were more than one million women voters at local level. (2010, pp. 88-89)

With regard to this, the number of women participating in the electoral process was quite high. In around seven years, approximately one million of them voted, which indicated that they really wanted to be a part of this process. However, their enfranchisement was given fully in the twentieth century, which unfortunately did not happen at a time. Many women underwent serious difficulties and overcame several obstacles in this process.

Through the very end of the nineteenth century, women in New Zealand and Finland were given their enfranchisement in 1893 and 1903 respectively. These developments around the world and the significant amelioration in women's lives in the UK triggered the initiation of the Suffragette Movement. The very beginning of the twentieth century was called the Edwardian period because in 1901 upon the death of Queen Victoria, King Edward VII started to reign. As Simon Webb articulates in his book, "[i]t was impossible to understand the suffragettes and see where they fitted in during the early part of the twentieth century without knowing what Britain was really like at that time" (2014, n. p.). It can be claimed that the period was rather chaotic and there was unrest in the country because the government faced serious problems and "[t]hese included the greatest constitutional crisis for centuries, some of the worst rioting and disorder ever seen on the British mainland, the threat of revolution and the very real possibility of the United Kingdom being engulfed by the civil war" (Webb, 2014, n. p.). In addition to such problems, there was also political unrest as well because the working class raised its political awareness and demanded to have better conditions through the Labour Party. In such upheaval, women also, through apprehension, decided to fight for their rights. However, the men who were the powerholders as well as supporters of patriarchy did not accept to pay attention to them. One of such figures was Henry Asquith (1852-1928) who was appointed as premier after Campbell-Bannerman (1836-1908). Unlike Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith "was staunchly opposed to giving women parliamentary vote" (Webb, 2014, n. p.). Apart from Asquith, the next premier of the UK, David Lloyd George (1863-1945), had similar perspectives and just like Asquith he "revealed [himself] to be no friends of women's suffragette" (Atkinson, 2018, n. p.). In this regard, it can be maintained that powerholders as the representation of patriarchy opposed to women's suffragette in the Edwardian era.

In *Suffragette*, the same upheaval can be observed explicitly. Both the situation of the working class and how the powerholders ignored females' demands are elaborately portrayed. The film starts in a laundry and the poor conditions of the laundry workers are highlighted (Gavron, 2015, 00.02.41-00.03.09). Additionally, one of the laundry workers Maud Watts (acted by Carey Mulligan) explains their working conditions to the Parliament committee and she tells that "[l]aundry work's a short life if you're a woman" (00.21.18) because her mother died while working because of a barrel that scalded her. Also, in the film, the stance of political power is completely clear. At the very beginning of the film, while showing the unfair

conditions that working class women have to endure, the narrator as the embodiment of the patriarchal mindset claims that they should remain as the shadows of the men:

Women do not have the calmness of temperament or the balance of mind to exercise judgment in political affairs. If we allow women to vote, it will mean the loss of social structure. Women are well represented by their fathers, bothers, husbands. . . . Once the vote was given, it would be impossible to stop at this. Women would then demand the right of becoming MPs, cabinet ministers, judges. (00.01.35-00.02.03)

In this scene, Mr. Taylor, the owner of the laundry, surveils the female workers with a pipe in his hand, and the place he locates himself¹ and his surveillance of them are quite similar to Foucault's panopticon theory. Michel Foucault (1926-1984) theorises Jeremy Bentham's concept of panopticon and applies it into power relations through which powerholders can keep the rest under their control since he posits that "[i]nspection functions ceaselessly" (195). Within the scope of his theory, Joan Copjec (1946-) accordingly associates the Panopticon gaze with the hegemony of men: "The Panoptic gaze defines perfectly the situation of the woman under patriarchy: that is, it is the very image of the structure that obliges the woman to monitor herself with a patriarchal eye" (17). In line with her points, in Gavron's movie, the social class and the gender of workers are taken into consideration, it is obvious that the factory owner feels himself superior both gender-wise and class-wise and thus thinks that he has the right to surveil women workers without being seen. Regarding herself as a feminist (Puchko "'Suffragette' Director Sarah Gavron" n. p.), Gavron reanimates the condition of women in the first quarter of the twentieth century by applying Foucault's theory into her film. In this way, she vividly portrays the supremacy of men and the secondary position of women in the society. In addition to this, the powerholders in the government, too, have similar stance concerning women and their status. To make it more precise, when the women testify to the Parliament committee full of men, they are informed that their demand is rejected upon "careful debate with [the prime minister Lloyd George and] a number of MP's very sympathetic to the women's cause" (00.28.30-00.28.38). Though the MPs are 'sympathetic' to their miseries and demands, they are not willing to ameliorate their status. At this point, apart from the indifference and hesitancy of statesmen towards women's demands, the superiority as well as the authority of men are also highlighted through the camera angle. When Maud presents her testimony, she is completely surrounded by the statesmen who constantly look at, to put it more precisely watch, her, which denotes that she is again under the male gaze² (00.19.30-00.23.00). Through the camera angle, the hierarchal position of each gender is underlined.

In the Suffragette Movement, the most significant point that kept suffragettes together and helped them strengthen their solidarity in such an androcentric system was organisations or unions. The British political activist Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928) was regarded as the key figure in the Suffragette Movement as she was the founder of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) on 10 October 1903. Before founding the union, Emmeline Pankhurst and her eldest daughter Christabel "were members of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and had campaigns for many years for the ILP to adopt a women's suffrage policy" (Purvis, 1994, p. 320). Upon her realisation that it was impossible to succeed with men, she decided to form a 'women-only' group. This union employed radical tactics to discourage and pressure the government and their motto 'Deeds, not words' was enough to explain their stance. Just like their motto, "they engaged in forms of civil disobedience - as well as illegal tactics, especially from 1912, such as attacking property, secret arson attacks, vandalising post boxes

¹ In the appendix, the visual of Mr. Taylor is in the figure 1.

² In the appendix, in the figure 2, Maud is under the male gaze.

and mass window smashing of shops in London's West End" (Purvis, 2013, p. 577). In the film, at the very beginning, while Maud is delivering a parcel, she witnesses suffragettes smashing windows shouting "votes for women" (Gavron, 2015, 00.04.22) and throughout the movie their rebellion ceaselessly continues. Just like Emmeline Pankhurst (acted by Meryl Streep) who encourages the suffragettes with her motivational sentence "I would rather be a rebel than a slave" (00.46.14), the women are quite eager to obtain their vote no matter what happens. Emmeline Pankhurst's determination and enthusiasm are so strong and sincere that she can rise up her fellows.

Although she was the key figure for her sex's emancipation, in the movie, she is seen only once (Gavron, 2015, 00.44.00-00.47.00). Although she is indeed the initiator of the movement in the film, her absence is of crucial importance because this fortifies the solidarity of other female characters. To make it more precise, rather than Pankhurst, Maud, the working class woman, and her suffragette friends are in the foreground. Considering these women and their social classes, it can be safely argued that in order to obtain their rights, solidarity is indispensable and to be stronger, women from all classes should be together. When the suffragettes in the film are regarded, Maud belongs to the working class, Edith Ellyn (acted by Helena Bonham Carter) is a middle class woman since she is a pharmacist, and Alice Haughton (acted by Romola Garai) is an upper class woman because of the fact that her husband is an MP. What is emphasised by bringing them from different classes together is that regardless of the social classes, all women should be together to emancipate their own sex. Hence, it can be asserted that the director Sarah Gavron makes Pankhurst appear once throughout the film for this reason. Actually, in one of her interviews, the director claims that "Emmeline Pankhurst should have a film made about her" (Puchko "'Suffragette' Director Sarah Gavron" n. p.) and despite her such opinion, her intentional exclusion of Pankhurst is of essence because this indicates that she specifically aim to touch upon the solidarity of women regardless of their social classes and their achievement resulting from their harmony.

The solidarity among them was of utmost importance because patriarchy and its mindset prevailed both in society regardless of social classes. In Edwardian Britain, not only the political figures such as Henry Asquith and David Lloyd George but also the state's official organisation, police forces, were against the suffragettes as they considered the movement as a rebellion against their authority. That is why, when the suffragettes decided to march on the streets to make people hear their voices, they were exposed to police brutality (Smith, 1978, p. 275). In the same vein, in the movie, *Suffragette*, how Lloyd George and the state's police force treat women and their movement is dwelt on. In addition to the police brutality, anti-suffrage people's perception - regardless of their social classes - of the suffragettes is highlighted. Upon the women's learning that they are not given their rights, they start to shout "liar" (Gavron, 2015, 00.29.01) and immediately the police brutally attack them, one of whom is even kicked and punched on the stomach³ (00.29.25-00.30.45). Apart from the police, these suffragettes are othered and stigmatised by their neighbours along with their husbands. As an illustration, Violet Miller (acted by Anne-Marie Duff), another working class woman like Maud, is severely beaten⁴ by her husband prior to her testimony to the Parliament committee. Just like Violet, Maud is thrown out of the house by her husband after she is given custody twice and in this scene, Sonny's - Maud's husband - stressing the roles of Maud as a wife as well as mother indicates his patriarchal mindset. Adopting the conventional gender roles, Sonny at first tries to "straighten [her] out" and upon noticing that Maud does not want to be moulded into an idealised woman, he further reminds her of her duty in life: "You're a mother

³ The image in figure 3 is about police brutality.

⁴ The image in figure 4 is about how Violet is beaten by her husband.

... You're a wife. My wife. That's what you're meant to be" (00.48.36-00.48.41). Actually, not only Sonny but also the neighbours or common people have an anti-suffrage stance in the film. When Sonny slams the door and leaves Maud alone at night, all her neighbours look at her accusingly⁵ (00-48.00-00.49.15). Even an MP has similar ideas concerning the suffragettes. Alice Haughton – the wife of the MP – marches and protests to obtain her vote and she is taken into custody as well. When her husband comes to pay her bail and refuses to pay other her comrades' bails even though the sum is rather low, it is revealed that Alice's signature is invalid in spite of the fact that the money is hers (00.30.50-00.31.30). Alice's begging him saying "please sign it" (00.31.14) and his response saying "you'll act like a wife" (00.31.22) explicitly display women's status and the typical mindset of a man. In this regard, it can be safely argued that the majority of men and society are unanimously against their movement.

The reason why the government, its organisations, and society opposed the suffragettes is the fact that they perceived them as militants. At this point, it is significant to note that before Pankhurst founded the WSPU in 1903, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) was founded by Millicent Fawcett (1847-1929) in 1897. Unlike the WSPU, the former organisation had a milder and more reconciliatory stance. When Pankhurst founded the WSPU with the motto 'deeds, not words' and the union engaged in politics and protests more than the former one, "[t]he NUWSS was openly critical of the new departure and viewed WSPU militants as criminals rather than as martyrs" (Davis, 1999, p. 33). Likewise, Edwardian society regarded WSPU as militants and its members as suffragettes. Since they employed more violent tactics, these women were thought of as 'unsexed' or 'unwomanly.' In *Suffragette*, the suffragettes' clothing can be considered 'unwomanly' because at the very beginning of the movie, one of them is wearing a tie and a jacket⁶ (Gavron, 2015, 00.03.55) and when compared with other women's clothing, hers is rather masculine. Additionally, Maud also becomes 'unwomanly' when she decides that she is indeed a suffragette. Her husband's ignorance of her demands and his acknowledgment of his superior position passionately trigger Maud's transformation. To make it clearer, when Maud's husband does not allow his wife to see their son claiming that the law gives the custody of their son to him (01.01.03) and when he believes that his wife is no longer sane and is "not well in the head" (01.00.00), it becomes apparent that it is impossible to have his support during their fight, which causes her to turn herself into a suffragette. With her tie and jacket (01.04.01), Maud, as well, wishes to get rid of the restrictions of her sex. In this regard, it can be maintained that they not only aimed to obtain their enfranchisement but also to strip off the attributions embedded on them. That is why, people having a male-dominant perspective were doubly against them.

Considering such a chaotic atmosphere and the deeds done by the suffragettes, they were also imprisoned due to their violent tactics, marches, and protests. Unfortunately, in prison, they were exposed to severe brutality as well. In order to continue their protests, they decided to go on hunger strikes and at those times they were forcibly fed and it was like torture because "[w]hether force fed by a cup, tube through the nostril (the most common method) or tube down the throat into the stomach (the most painful), the individual suffragette struggled on her own and often feared damage to the mind or body" (Purvis, 1995, p. 113). Almost all the suffragettes underwent such a painful experience and Pankhurst, the initiator of the movement, was among these women. In her biography *Suffragette: My Own Story*, she elaborately describes how excruciating the forcible feeding was: "I was released because, had I remained there much longer, I should have been a dead woman" (2015, n. p.). Indeed,

⁵ The image in figure 5 is about how neighbours accuse Maud of her actions.

⁶ The image in figure 6 is about one of the suffragettes' 'unwomanly' clothing.

the English journalist Robert Fulford resembles forcible feeding to “a form of treatment in lunatic asylums” (qtd. in Purvis, 1995, p. 105). Since *Suffragette* elaborately pictures all phases of women in the movement, it also dwells on their experiences in prison. At this point, it is rather significant to highlight that one of the statesmen specifically orders to punish the women (Gavron, 2015, 01.15.06). In line with his order, when Althusser’s repressive state apparatuses are taken into consideration, Gavron’s intentional inclusion of this character is of utmost importance. According to Althusser, through the police or the army, states punish their subjects when they reject to adopt any desired ideologies. In this respect, in the film, the statesman’s stressing the importance of punishment is not coincidental at all. Through one of the state repressive apparatuses, he aims to suppress women and discourage them to pursue their dreams. That is why, when Maud and her comrades are imprisoned, they are undressed forcibly, which actually is against the law as Edith Ellyn reminds the wardresses that “we’re political prisoners. We have the right to wear our own clothes” (00.34.16). This indicates that these women are regarded as criminals or rather dangerous militants. Besides, just like Pankhurst and several of her comrades underwent while being imprisoned, Maud experiences forcible feeding and the doctor and wardresses’ wrapping her with a white sheet complements the journalist Fulford’s resemblance. In the portrayal, instead of a prisoner, Maud is treated as if she were insane⁷ (01.18.20-01.19.50). Even the inspector Arthur Steed (acted by Brendan Gleeson), a person that is the embodiment of the anti-suffrage stance, claims that “treatment of them grows increasingly barbaric” (01.20.02). In fact, all these women wanted was to obtain their rights but all they got was torture and suffering.

In addition to the brutality they were subjected to, even one of them died for their cause. This woman was Emily Davison and through the end of their struggle, she sacrificed herself dying under the King’s horse at the Derby on 4 June 1913. Her funeral was so crowded that *The Sunday Times* commented that “it was the most remarkable funeral procession London has ever seen” (qtd. in Purvis, 1994, p. 321). Purvis states in her article that nearly 50,000 people attended her funeral and even residents of London’s ‘pleasure district’ were there. *The Daily Herald*’s commentary of the funeral is as follows: “There were painted women, sisters of the world’s sorrow and vice, who stood on tiptoe to see the coffin of one of their sex who died for them. . . . Their tribute was wonderful” (qtd. in Purvis, 1994, p. 321). At this point, it should be noted that the women’s cause was eventually recognised and acknowledged not only in England but also worldwide. Even if their emancipation caused Emily’s death, they achieved their vote in the end. In Sarah Gavron’s *Suffragette*, the film ends with Emily’s (acted by Amanda Lawrence) death and her funeral. Gavron’s choice of ending the movie with the funeral seems to be significant because just before Emily runs and waits for the horse to kill herself⁸, she says to Maud that “Never surrender. Never give up the fight” (Gavron, 2015, 01.31.02), which is an indication of her resolution and determination. Moreover, during her funeral, how the suffragettes are attached to one another and their solidarity are foregrounded (01.36.00-01.40.00). Thus, it can be maintained that through suffering, misery but determination and solidarity, women were able to achieve their vote. This was absolutely their power and success.

All in all, for centuries women were perceived as inferior to men both in England and in other countries. In England, their awakening can be speculated to start in the eighteenth century. From that time on, they struggled to have equal rights and it took almost three centuries to have an equal life as men. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they demanded amelioration in their lives through their writings. Besides, they attempted to get

⁷ The image in figure 7 shows how Maud is forcibly fed.

⁸ The image in figure 8 shows the death of Emily.

rid of the attributions embedded on them by the patriarchal society. In time, their struggles brought changes in their status. However, obtaining their enfranchisement can be considered the biggest challenge for them and they strove to gain their rights to vote for almost fifty years. With Pankhurst's founding the WSPU, they took action and experienced suffering and pain. They underwent police brutality, were othered by their neighbours and acquaintances, and forcibly fed in prison. Yet, through hardships and anguish, they managed to obtain their suffrage. Sarah Gavron's *Suffragette* elaborately dwells on the Suffragette Movement specifically the period between 1912 and 1913. In the movie, the suffragettes' struggles as well as suffering are presented in depth and Gavron explains her rationale behind her choosing this movement as follows: "[I]deas for a film about the Suffragettes would flash across my mind. There were the charismatic Pankhursts and the purple, white and green of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), force-feeding, and the startling, ambiguous death of Emily Wilding Davison in 1913 - the story called to me, dramatically and visually" (2015, p. 986). Indeed, as a feminist, she presents both the suffragettes' hardships and their solidarity so elaborately that the film categorised as a historical drama can reanimate that period in depth.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author of the article declared that there is no conflict of interest.

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Figure 1. Mr. Taylor surveils the women.



Figure 2. Maud is under the male gaze.



Figure 3. How the police treat the suffragettes



Figure 4. Violet, the working class woman and suffragette, is beaten by her husband.



Figure 5. How neighbours accuse Maud of her actions.



Figure 6. 'Unwomanly' clothing of the suffragettes



Figure 7. Maud experiences forcible feeding in prison.



Figure 8. Emily sacrifices herself for the cause at Derby in 1913.