

The Emergence of Vegetarianism Alongside the British Suffrage Movement from the Mid  
Nineteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries

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**Abstract**

This study examines the emergence of vegetarianism in Britain in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and compares this with the developing women's suffrage movement during the same period. Through this comparison, the research examines how vegetarianism became associated with feminist theory, in contrast to the early days of male-dominated vegetarian societies. This research also discusses the shift of religious devotion in vegetarianism to a more secular motivation at the turn of the twentieth century as more women began to practice a vegetarian lifestyle. Finally, this paper argues that the feminist adoption of vegetarianism arrived through the development of active political citizenship, influenced through such measures as hunger strikes and forcible feedings.

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## Introduction

What's for dinner? This is perhaps one of the most asked questions in our daily lives, yet the answer is never the same. Women in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain were responsible for answering this question every single day for their husbands and families. During this period of time, enfranchisement movements to gain the vote were growing as women rallied for political representation on a local and national level. At the same time, a section of the population began to question their dietary habits for a variety of reasons. In broader terms, these two movements would be classified as suffrage and vegetarianism, respectively. Both suffrage and vegetarianism emerged out of the broader Reform movement that took place in Britain during the nineteenth century. While vegetarian and suffrage movements both developed and grew in the mid nineteenth century, it took until the turn of the twentieth century for the two movements to begin to overlap in a significant way. Some women seeking to escape the "cult of domesticity" looked to both enfranchisement and vegetarianism as a solution. The goal of this paper is to analyse how vegetarianism in Britain, which was largely practiced by men, became adopted by broader feminist movements, during the suffrage movement. I argue that this adoption only occurred as a result of a growing political awakening that emerged during the push for suffrage. While vegetarianism and veganism have become practiced more often by women in contemporary society, this was not always the case.

As the suffrage movement in Britain grew, some women would begin to critique other aspects of society such as diet and felt a unique connection to the concept of vegetarianism that previous male vegetarians did not experience. Vegetarians at the turn of the twentieth century would also drop the nineteenth century religious motivation for vegetarianism in favour of a secular, moral obligation to non-human animals, and an

economic rationale. Finally, women at the turn of the century looked to vegetarianism and suffrage as a way to fight patriarchal oppression that they faced in their daily lives. Gaining the vote meant giving women a voice in politics, which would enable a more equal and universal national voice in parliament. Moreover, vegetarianism was a way to fight patriarchal violence against non-human animals, and for women to free themselves from the oppressive duties of the kitchen, including needing to prepare meat dishes for their families. My research will examine how both the suffrage and vegetarian movements emerged separately in Britain during the nineteenth century, then look to how they became associated with each other by the turn of the twentieth century.

Before diving any further into the historiography of existing scholarship, or my own research in greater detail, an important note must be made. While this paper employs the word *vegetarian* throughout, the definition of the word has changed since it was first recorded in approximately 1843<sup>1</sup>. Early adopters of a vegetarian diet in Britain used such terms as “natural diet”<sup>2</sup> or “vegetable regimen”<sup>3</sup> to describe their lifestyle before the word *vegetarian* came into circulation. Moreover, in present society the word *vegetarian* often implies the addition of eggs and dairy products in one's diet, while *vegan* remains the word to describe the elimination of all animal products in one's lifestyle. The word *vegan* would not be introduced until 1944, one hundred years after the word *vegetarian*, to solve the distinction of which foods were admissible and which were not.<sup>4</sup> An early vegetarian cookbook, published in 1891 comments on this discrepancy,

In speaking on this subject Sir Henry Thompson observes: ‘The vegetable kingdom comprehends the cereals, legumes, roots, starches, sugar, herbs,

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<sup>1</sup>“vegetarianism, n.”. OED Online. April 2021. Oxford University Press. <https://oed-com.library.smu.ca/view/Entry/221881> (accessed April 8, 2021).

<sup>2</sup>Percy Shelley, *A Vindication of Natural Diet*. London 1813.

<sup>3</sup>John Smith, *The Principles and Practice of Vegetarian Cookery*. Frederick Pitman, Yorkshire, 1860, i.

<sup>4</sup>“vegan, n.and adj”. OED Online. April 2021. Oxford University Press. <https://oed-com.library.smu.ca/view/Entry/221868> (accessed April 8, 2021).

and fruits. Persons who style themselves vegetarians often consume milk, eggs, butter, and lard, which are choice foods from the animal kingdom. There are other persons, of course, who are strictly vegetarian eaters, and such alone have any right to the title of vegetarians.<sup>5</sup>

Even nineteenth century vegetarians acknowledged this issue of acceptable food under a vegetarian diet fifty years before the word vegan would be first recorded. In 1860, John Smith noted that until the science and chemistry behind food was understood, eggs and dairy might temporarily be required but the ultimate goal was the total removal of all animal products.<sup>6</sup> The argument often falls under the idea that the animal is not killed to obtain eggs or dairy products, whereas meat of course does require such slaughter, but ultimately an animal is required to source the food, still facing a sense of exploitation. As such, some who called themselves vegetarian in the late nineteenth century would be considered vegan in today's terms, while others would be considered vegetarian, because of consumption of certain non-meat animal products. While many nineteenth and early twentieth century vegetarians did not consume products such as milk and eggs, this distinction still needs clarification. This even came to light in a letter to the editor in *Shafts* from July 1893 from a reader who suggested to call vegetarians like herself that still consume eggs and milk “carnevalists, from the Latin - farewell to meat! Carnevale!”<sup>7</sup> Until the word *vegan* came into popular usage, this distinction is difficult to quantify, yet the distinction is nevertheless important to clarify.

I will now briefly touch upon the main secondary sources with which I frame my arguments. The most influential text is by Carol J Adams who addresses the feminist-

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<sup>5</sup>A.G. Payne. *Cassell's Vegetarian Cooking*. B.A., London 1891, 16.

<sup>6</sup>John Smith, *The Principles and Practice of Vegetarian Cookery*. Frederick Pitman, Yorkshire, 1860, iii.

<sup>7</sup>*Shafts*, July 1893, 104. Retrieved from:

<https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:kim297bin/read/single#page/10/mode/1up>

vegetarian connection in great detail.<sup>8</sup> However, there is a split in historiography between American and British vegetarianism, that Adams does not explicitly examine as noted by scholar James Gregory.<sup>9</sup> The two nations underwent different developments with respect to nineteenth century vegetarianism and enfranchisement movements that require distinction. Notably, Gregory is critical of Adams's historical analysis, especially in the British context as her sources tend to cover the American side of things. Gregory also calls out the "female [vegetarian] literary canon" that Adams claims begins in the early nineteenth century, and notes that, at least in Britain, this would not develop until much later, identifying while Adams's text is highly influential work remains to be done in this area of study.<sup>10</sup> Some scholarship enfranchisement, vegetarianism, or food economy without making the connections between these movements. Other major sources include Hilda Kean's article "The 'Smooth Cool Men of Science': The Feminist and Socialist Response to Vivisection," Leah Leneman's "The awakened instinct: vegetarianism and the women's suffrage movement in Britain," Linda Schlossberg's chapter in *Scenes of the Apple*, "Consuming Images: Women, Hunger and the Vote," and Dennis Michael Buckley's dissertation *Recipe for Reform: The Food Economy Movement in Britain During the First World War*. These sources contribute to separate aspects of the research which I bring together.

I will also briefly highlight the main primary sources for my research and their evolution over the timeframe of the 1800s to early 1900s. The first major source to discuss are vegetarian cookbooks, and the way in which they change over the Victorian and Edwardian periods. In essence, early cookbooks take a highly theoretical approach to food as a science, as well as providing lengthy introductions discussing vegetarianism as a concept.

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<sup>8</sup>Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-vegetarian Critical Theory*. Bloomsbury, 2019.

<sup>9</sup>James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians: The Vegetarian Movement in Nineteenth-century Britain*. London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007.

<sup>10</sup>James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, 161.

Later cookbooks largely drop the scientific, theoretical framework for a more practical and approachable construction. Moreover, as I discuss in more detail in the third chapter, cookbooks abandon more overt references to religion and instead utilize a more secular framework. from as early as 1892,<sup>11</sup> and more commonly by 1909<sup>12</sup>. Likewise, later cookbooks emphasize the economic benefits of vegetarianism much more frequently, in conjunction with the food reform movement emerging in the aughts of the 1900s and taking national attention at the outbreak of WWI.

I survey the suffrage and feminist journals such as *Shafts*, *The Suffragette*, *Votes For Women*, and the *Women's Suffrage Journal* to examine the contemporary arguments on the suffrage movement. One notable aspect is the development of anti-suffrage journals, such as the *Anti-Suffrage Review*, run by women against the right to vote campaign. Having resources from women on both sides of the argument is of course useful in developing a greater understanding of where they stood, and why they believed in what they did. The pro-suffrage journals were essentially always centred around achieving the vote and the struggles therein. Early editions of such journals emphasised the need for the campaign, while later journals nearing 1918 focused more on the major events and strategies surrounding the movement for enfranchisement. Additionally, early editions of publications such as *Shafts* include articles on animal liberation and vegetarianism, exemplifying the early connection made between feminist ideals and animal oppression.

Now that I have introduced the historiographical context, I can discuss upon how my research builds and expands upon the existing work to make an original contribution. The existing scholarship lacks the all-encompassing nature that my research aims to correct. By first examining the emergence of nineteenth century British vegetarianism, the early

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<sup>11</sup>Mrs. Bowdich, *New Vegetarian Dishes*. London, George Bell and Sons, 1892.

<sup>12</sup>Mrs. Mill (Jean Oliver), *Reform Cookery Book (4th edition) Up-To-Date Health Cookery for the Twentieth Century*. Scotland, 1909.



twentieth vegetarian movement is given the crucial context required to fully understand it. Through use of recent food consumption studies, and a chronology of disease outbreaks, the motivations for early twentieth century vegetarians become much clearer. I also compare the motivations between nineteenth and twentieth vegetarians and the growing secularization of the movement in the twentieth century. The thesis discusses why the female suffrage movement achieved the success of enfranchisement, in part due to increased militarization of the movement, while vegetarianism and anti-vivisectionists failed to reach the same level of success. In reference to vegetarian and vegan movements in the 2000s, I argue that during the vegetarian movement of the late 1800s, vegetarianism became attached to broader feminist movements as more women became involved in anti-vivisectionism and vegetarianism. I further discuss this transition in relation to the growing political involvement and active citizenship women experienced during the suffrage campaign, which led them to become involved in activism beyond goals for enfranchisement. Many women in the suffrage movement identified with animal oppression as another example of patriarchal violence. By expanding on existing scholarship and drawing my own conclusions through independent primary research, I hope to offer a unique contribution to this area of study.

I will now briefly outline the structure for each of the three main chapters of my research. In the first chapter, I isolate and examine the early days of vegetarianism in Britain, spurred largely by the Reform movement emerging in the same period. To establish my argument, I use nineteenth century vegetarian cookbooks, writings by Newton and Shelley, as well as build upon existing secondary scholarship such as James Gregory. In addition, I also refer to the fictional text *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, adding to the interpretation made by Carol Adams in *Sexual Politics of Meat*. Early actors such as John Frank Newton and Percy Shelley were some of the first to write about the “natural diet” in 1811 and 1813, respectively. While Newton and Shelley each identify small groups who also practice the

meatless “natural diet”, a notable vegetarian movement cannot be identified until a few decades later. By the mid nineteenth century, a more substantial following emerged, establishing a Vegetarian Society in 1847, also marking the first known use of the word vegetarian around the same time.<sup>13</sup> Various arguments in favour of vegetarianism during the early to mid-nineteenth century include religious motivations, biological discoveries of both food science and knowledge of the body, as well as morality-based reasoning.

As I will discuss in more depth, a large majority of British people during this period lived off a vegetarian or mostly-vegetarian diet. Meat was either too expensive or a conduit for disease, but those who chose to actively abstain from meat altogether were a rarity for many years. I further examine the limitations and male-dominated space of early vegetarian movements, in which women faced difficulty participating for a variety of reasons. Not until the emergence of political enfranchisement movements did women begin to identify and join vegetarian movements more broadly. In addition, the outbreak of the First World War allowed for women to assist with Britain’s growing food shortages in part with vegetarianism to enjoy a newfound sense of political engagement.

Transitioning to the second chapter, I then examine the emergence of the suffrage movement in the late nineteenth century and the growing sense of political idealization women navigated. As mentioned above, I reference suffrage and feminist journals to gain a sense of the suffrage movement in full context, and to develop my own conclusions. In addition, I also expand upon existing scholarship covering the suffrage movement and enfranchisement. Much like the vegetarian movement, political enfranchisement grew out the larger Reform movement that characterised nineteenth century Britain. I discuss the passing of different bills throughout the century which enacted such changes as allowing more men to

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<sup>13</sup>Marti Kheel, “History of Vegetarianism,” *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History* Vol. 3, ed. Shepard Krech III, J.R. McNeill and Carolyn Merchant (New York: Routledge, 2004) p. 1273-1278.

vote and bringing certain property and divorce rights to married women. I also note the first enfranchisement bill in parliament in 1870, which came close to passing but ultimately never did. Although two bills concerning suffrage passed in 1918 and 1928, the road to this goal took several decades. Moreover, I look detail on the hunger strikes and subsequent forcible feedings that occurred during the road to suffrage. Expanding on ideas from scholars such as Linda Schlossberg and Carol Adams, I connect the symbolic and patriarchal violence of the forcible feedings to notions of vegetarianism and female agency. Furthermore, I address the issue of militant action in the suffrage movement, and that militancy was necessary for parliament to pass the first enfranchisement bill by 1918.

These arguments allow us to transition into the final chapter where I begin to tie the two separate movements together. The final chapter shifts focus from predominantly looking at primary sources to expanding on secondary scholarship more specifically. In this chapter I make two main arguments: I assert that, unlike suffrage, vegetarianism lacked a solid goal to rally behind, making the ability to gain a large following more difficult. Secondly, I argue that the growing political emancipation of women led to more women identifying with vegetarianism, and emancipation was a necessary step for this to occur. But, as more women adopted vegetarianism, this began the empathetic realization of patriarchal oppression, which both women and non-human animals faced. Before emancipation movements grew in popularity, many women faced patriarchal oppression even from within the vegetarian societies of the 1800s.

The third chapter looks to make more concrete connections to the present day in terms of how vegetarianism shifted from a male-dominated group to a female dominated movement. This chapter also focuses on the changing motivations for vegetarianism as more women identified with and adopted the diet. These changing motivations speak to the growing secularization of vegetarianism as well as how vegetarianism became more closely

aligned with feminist ideologies. I also highlight that despite vegetarianism being brought to national attention during World War I as a result of the food economy movement and need for rationing, vegetarianism failed to make significant ground across the populace, unlike the suffrage movement. Additionally, the third chapter looks at the work of anti-vivisectionists, because these female activists were often involved in the suffrage campaign and these two movements show the crossover and intersectionality of these kinds of activism. All things considered, this chapter aims to identify how vegetarianism became intrinsically linked to feminist movements today, despite vegetarianism's early days as a male-dominated movement.

## Chapter I: The Origins of Modern Vegetarianism in Britain

The beginnings of vegetarianism in Britain during the nineteenth century were inspired by scientific and religious motivations. Yet, the beginnings of modern vegetarianism, laid the foundations of a movement that continues today. While there were instances of vegetarianism throughout the world, especially pertaining to religious beliefs, the mid 1800s sparked the moment the diet would enter the mainstream to some degree.<sup>14</sup> Many of the vegetarian texts and cookery books were staunchly centred around the scientific discoveries in food chemistry, as well as the larger food reform movements occurring in Britain during this time until the emergence of the feminist suffrage movement at the turn of the century. Prior to this, vegetarianism was generally identified through a male perspective over a female perspective. The development of the diet and lifestyle by women and feminists will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. Until the late 1800s, the vegetarian movement consisted largely of gentlemen who preached the benefits of the diet to their literate scholarly circles. While thousands of working people were essentially vegetarian through poverty, those who identified as vegetarians deliberately avoided eating meat for specific moral, hygienic or religious reasons.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, supporters of vegetarianism were often “teetotalers,” or avoided alcohol on the stance that it was another physical and moral threat. This food reform movement focused on the elimination of unnecessary stimulation of the body and mind through substances such as alcohol.

John Frank Newton reflected on his positive experience with the “vegetable diet,” in *The Return to Nature* in 1811, marking one of the first major texts defending this regimented diet. Early vegetarians made a moral and religious claim to their beliefs such as the classic

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<sup>14</sup>James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians: The Vegetarian Movement in Nineteenth-century Britain*. London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007, 2.

<sup>15</sup>Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, 3.

example of Adam and Eve in Paradise. Newton suggests that eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil imposed a “premature diseased death.” Through Adam bringing disease into the world, and one of Adam’s sons taking the role of a shepherd, this justifies Newton’s claim of the perils man’s dominion over animals would signify.<sup>16</sup> The peaceful and harmonious life in Paradise could only be disrupted through this dominion, and to Newton a vegetable diet signified the return to this pacifistic, disease-free existence. Furthermore, Newton introduced the legend of Prometheus, a theme common to Percy Shelley’s defence of vegetarianism, as Mary Shelley’s text *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus*. Newton outlines how Prometheus was the first to use animal food and fire to make it more digestible, much to the chagrin of the gods. The thirst from meat-eating then led Prometheus to trade a drink of water for the gift of health, becoming diseased and eventually die.<sup>17</sup> Through a biblical myth and a classical myth, Newton outlines the commonality between meat-eating and the inevitable problems that can arise from it.

Another major argument Newton makes in his text concerns the health benefits of a vegetarian diet. He cites the lack of medicine needed for those on the diet, and overall positive feelings of the mind and body. One quirk to examine is Newton’s own apprehension to drinking “common water” and preferring to obtain any necessary water through fruit. He cites that unnecessary thirst is a result of eating animal flesh and that this is the root cause of mental and bodily disorders.<sup>18</sup> Presumably, the lack of clean water available during this period would have an effect on this claim, and when alcohol was one of the few sources of clean liquid, this claim begins to hold some weight.

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<sup>16</sup>John Newton, *The Return to Nature, Or, A Defence of the Vegetable Regimen*. London, 1811, 5-6.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 77.

Newton played a major role in Percy Shelley's adoption of the "natural diet." In his own piece published two years later in 1813, Shelley expands Newton's arguments and makes his own unique arguments that go well beyond considerations of health when he claims that adopting the "natural diet" "strikes at the root of all evil."<sup>19</sup> Shelley defends both the tale of Adam and Eve, as well as the myth of Prometheus as allegories that trace the existence of disease and despair to the act of humans eating animals as food. Shelley also contributes to the scientific debate centred around vegetarianism, noting that humans bear no resemblance to any carnivorous animal, but rather share a close resemblance to herbivorous animals instead.<sup>20</sup> Shelley, as well as Newton before him, blames animal agriculture on the emergence of impure "common water" frequently found in cities. During a period where clean drinking water could be difficult to obtain, Shelley points to vegetarianism as a potential relief from further contamination to water sources.

Shelley also raises a class-based, anti-imperialist stance and addresses the wealth inequality caused by the economic system of the early nineteenth century,

In the history of modern times, the avarice of commercial monopoly, no less than the ambition of weak and wicked chiefs, seems to have fomented the universal discord, to have added stubbornness to the mistakes of cabinets, and indocility to the infatuation of the people. Let it ever be remembered, that it is the direct influence of commerce to make the interval between the richest and the poorest man wider and more unconquerable. Let it be remembered, that it is a foe to every thing of real worth and excellence in the human character. The odious and disgusting aristocracy of wealth, is built upon the ruins of all that is good in chivalry or republicanism; and luxury is the forerunner of a barbarism scarce capable of cure. Is it impossible to realize a state of society, where all the energies of man shall be directed to the production of his solid happiness? Certainly if this advantage (the object of all political speculation) be in any degree attainable, it is attainable only by a community, which holds out no factitious incentives to the avarice and ambition of the few, and which is internally organized for the liberty, security and comfort of the many. None must be entrusted with power (and money is the completest species of power) who do not stand pledged to use it exclusively for the general benefit.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Percy Shelley, *A Vindication of Natural Diet*. London 1813, 6.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

Shelley's class-based critique is extremely valuable for its defence of vegetarianism, and moreover how it shows the potential for intersectionalist thinking which would not become commonplace until a century and a half later. Shelley also identifies how social woes are often interrelated, emerging from a variety of systemic inequalities. Furthermore, this claim predates pacifist, anarchist or general anti-capitalist or Marxist sentiment that would not enter critical theory for some time. Shelley also critiques the inherent alienation of labour that arrives from a capitalist economy, and the effect this has on the working class. As this thesis aims to identify the origins of modern vegetarianism and its relation to feminism, this portion of *A Vindication of Natural Diet* points to some of the connections between the movements. As one of the most influential writers in support of vegetarianism,<sup>22</sup> Shelley also published works such as *A Proposal for putting Reform to the Vote throughout the Kingdom*, and was among the first to demand legislative change for more ethical treatment of animals. Furthermore, Shelley's fears of dependency on foreign imports from across the British empire became a reality, as by the end of the century half of Britain's food was grown overseas.<sup>23</sup> While improving technology and cheap overseas labour helped reduce the cost of imported food, the overreliance on foreign goods would greatly impact Britain when the First World War erupted. Not only did imperialism impact those subjected to exploitation, but the reliance on empire also caused issues for the people of Britain as well.

While this text provides insight into the arguments by an early vegetarian, it would be disingenuous to call vegetarianism any sort of widespread movement in the early 1800s. Newton himself claims to know twenty-five people following the diet, all in good health and

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<sup>22</sup>Rod Preece, *Sins of the Flesh: A History of Vegetarian Thought*. UBC Press, 2008, 254.

<sup>23</sup>Michael Dennis Buckley, "Recipe for Reform: The Food Economy Movement in Britain During the First World War," (Ph. D thesis, University of California Berkeley, 2009), 1.



spending essentially no money on medicine unlike before the new diet.<sup>24</sup> Shelley makes note in defending those on the diet,

In April of 1814 a statement will be given, that sixty persons, all having lived more than three years on vegetables and pure water, are then *imperfect[sic] health*. More than two years have now elapsed; not one of them has died; no such example will be found in any sixty persons taken at random. Seventeen persons of all ages (the families of Dr. Lambe and Mr. Newton) have lived for seven years on this diet, without a death and almost without the slightest illness.<sup>25</sup>

While just under eighty people known to Shelley and Newton is a small number, it signifies the beginnings of a movement that would continue to grow in later years. There were, of course, others such as William Cowherd and William Metcalfe who espoused the benefits of the natural diet outlined in Howard Williams's *The Ethics of Diet* in 1883, but this fruit and vegetable-based diet was intentionally practiced by a very small number of people. By any rate, a movement cannot be identified until around the mid-1800s, with the creation of the Vegetarian Society in 1847 in Britain. This also marked the appearance of the word "vegetarian" as a term in the 1840s.<sup>26</sup> At the time of the Society's inauguration there were a few hundred members, and by the end of the century the Vegetarian Society could boast almost six thousand members.<sup>27</sup> The creation of the Vegetarian Society can be seen as one of the major points in turning vegetarianism from a relatively obscure movement to one that was noteworthy in British society.

As mentioned above, the instance of vegetarianism in *Frankenstein* deserves some attention. While Mary Shelley flirted with vegetarianism, whether she was as devoted to the lifestyle as her partner Percy Shelley is unknown.<sup>28</sup> The concept plays a role in Frankenstein's monster morality, when the creature makes the conscious decision to only eat twigs and

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<sup>24</sup>Newton, *The Return to Nature*, 71.

<sup>25</sup>Shelley, *A Vindication*, 5.

<sup>26</sup>Encyclopedia of World Environmental History, p. 1273-1278.

<sup>27</sup>Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, 3.

<sup>28</sup>Preece, *Sins of the Flesh*, 259.

berries to lessen the harm he does to the world. In relation to the subtitle, *Or the Modern Prometheus*, this abstention from eating animal flesh flips the Prometheus tale. In the original myth, Prometheus uses his discovery of fire to render animal flesh safely edible, allowing him to become susceptible to disease and taking away his health granted by the gods. In opposition to the mythical Prometheus, Frankenstein's monster learns that fire has the potential to harm, but can also be used to make certain food more palatable.<sup>29</sup> As Carol Adams acknowledges in the *Sexual Politics of Meat*, the interpretations of both Prometheus and Adam and Eve were rooted in Romantic vegetarian notions.<sup>30</sup> Interpreting famous myths and religious canons as a cautionary tale about meat eating was new and unique to Shelley and Newton's own ontological philosophy, one that could only arise through Romantic era thinking. Inspired by Romantic idealism, new analysis of ancient texts can still be found to contain new meaning for a variety of reasons.

Despite the revelation that he could use fire to cook meat, the monster does not abandon his simple diet of berries for more substantial food that requires cooking such as meat. While both Prometheus and the monster were quickly abandoned by their creators, the monster's herbivorous diet allowed him to live and show his creator the suffering Dr Frankenstein has caused through his own hubris. Through this seemingly insignificant detail to the character, the connections to Prometheus's tale and the morality connected to the vegetable diet are strengthened in the context of the novel.

In keeping with the theme of religious impact on vegetarianism, one note should be made on the Quaker's involvement in the vegetarian movement. Ian Miller argues that the Quakers were not alone in the religious impact on vegetarianism, and that mainstream

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<sup>29</sup>Mary Wollstonecraft (Godwin) Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*. Project Gutenberg E-text, 1818, 58.

<sup>30</sup>Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-vegetarian Critical Theory*. Bloomsbury, 2019, 149.

Christianity must also be taken into consideration.<sup>31</sup> As Miller further demonstrates, the influence of evangelicalism peaked in the 1850s, in conjunction with the formation of the Vegetarian Society, and vegetarianism gaining relevance in this time. After this peak, evangelical influence declined the very next decade, along with the Vegetarian Society itself.<sup>32</sup> While I agree with this statement, further investigation into groups such as the Quakers must also be considered. The Vegetarian Society owes its establishment and survival in the trough decades of the nineteenth century to radical Christian sects such as the Quakers.<sup>33</sup> At the formation of the society in 1847, Quaker had the second most members among religious groups, and their buildings were often used for Vegetarian Society meetings.<sup>34</sup>

Quakers, as a religious sect, follow a compassionate tradition towards animals, beginning with the founder George Fox.<sup>35</sup> Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Quakers would continue this compassion with the formation of the Friends Anti-Vivisection Association in 1890, and the Friends Vegetarian Society in 1905.<sup>36</sup> Quakers would play a significant role in the anti-vivisection movement, helping to propel the movement forward just as they had done with vegetarianism previously. Thus, while Christianity at large provided a venue for vegetarianism to develop from, such groups like the Quakers kept the movement from dying and falling into obscurity.

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<sup>31</sup>Ian Miller, "Evangelicalism and the Early Vegetarian Movement in Britain C.1847–1860." *Journal of Religious History* 35, no. 2 (2011): 202.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>33</sup>Samantha Jane Calvert, "Eden's Diet: Christianity And Vegetarianism 1809 – 2009", (Ph. D thesis, University of Birmingham, 2012), 80.

<sup>34</sup>Calvert, "Eden's Diet," 197.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 173.

Meat consumption doubled per person from 1860-1890.<sup>37</sup> Much to the chagrin of vegetarians in the 1800s, in about 50 short years consuming meat went from an extremely rare occurrence to a British cultural and dietary staple. Until the First World War, it would seem as though meat-eating in Britain was an unstoppable cultural force that would have left Shelley aghast. While industrialization was a major factor in allowing for this increase, ease of access to various foods also gave vegetarians more access to a variety of products as well. As Britain had faced food insecurity for most of the nineteenth century, large-scale availability of meat signified the abolition of poverty for the masses.<sup>38</sup> Yet, in 1849-50, the *Morning Chronicle* reported that most English agriculture labourers almost never consumed meat.<sup>39</sup> The lack of meat consumption largely arose from the inaccessibility and high prices, but as the prices lowered by the end of the century meat consumption began to rise.

Nineteenth century vegetarians like Henry Salt noted people of all classes welcomed the arrival of cheaper food, especially a meat-based diet as a plant-based lifestyle indicated a higher level of poverty.<sup>40</sup> However, as purchasing meat became cheaper and more common, the movement to explicitly avoid consuming meat expanded. Almost predictably, Newton and Shelley's fear of disease originating from raising animals for food came true as tuberculosis began to appear in Britain during the 1860s. Research into the spread of disease from animal to humans was just beginning to take shape and slowly began to support the claim that the disease did in fact originate from livestock and was a threat to public safety.<sup>41</sup> While the claims from Newton in the early 1800s concerning disease had no proven scientific research, these later studies proved his theories, and subsequently gave mid-century

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<sup>37</sup>Keir Waddington, "'Unfit for Human Consumption': Tuberculosis and the Problem of Infected Meat in Late Victorian Britain." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 77, no. 3 (2003): 637.

<sup>38</sup>Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, 19.

<sup>39</sup>Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, 14.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Waddington, "Unfit for Human Consumption," 640.

vegetarians further scientifically grounded motives. Food reformers, especially those focused on the health benefits of vegetarianism argued that a vegetarian diet would not face these same fears of disease. Despite the emergence of a disease connected to meat eating, and the large share of the market selling meat below the grade for human consumption, the Vegetarian Society, failed to capitalise on these circumstances, and did not experience any significant growth, and in fact almost entirely dissolved.<sup>42</sup>

While much of the groundwork was laid, and prominent figures promoted vegetarianism through pamphlets, books, and recipes in the mid nineteenth century, vegetarianism only emerged as a significant movement by 1888.<sup>43</sup> In the late 1800s until the eruption of the First World War, publication of vegetarian cookbooks increased significantly. Furthermore, a large increase of intentional vegetarians emerged during the same period as women's suffrage and emancipation efforts began to surface by the late nineteenth century. The relationship between and emergence of the two separate movements of vegetarianism and feminism will be examined in later chapters to show how vegetarian ideals became intertwined with feminist concepts of freedom and equality.

Beyond early advocates of the vegetable-based diet of people like Newton and Shelley, cookbooks became an additional and practical method to popularise the idea of vegetarianism to the public. Arguably the first dedicated vegetarian cookbook was *Vegetable Cookery With an Introduction, Recommending Abstinence from Animal Food and Intoxicating Liquors*, written by an unnamed Lady, published in 1833. Apart from the recipes, the introduction gives us excellent insight into early nineteenth century views on vegetarian cooking. The book opens with a staunch religious stance arguing in favour of the vegetable diet in the opening paragraph, that it "is more favourable to health, humanity, and

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<sup>42</sup>Preece, *Sins of the Flesh*, 51.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 53.

religion.”<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the stance on abstaining from alcohol as well brings to light the teetotalism that would become long associated with movements such as vegetarianism throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The author of *Vegetable Cookery* argues that in antiquity and today, in places like Asia and Africa, as well as locally in the Highlands and Ireland, millions of people have thrived on a vegetable diet.<sup>45</sup> The author also argues the affliction and onset of disease caused by consuming animal food favours the benefits of a vegetable diet.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, like Shelley, the author of *Vegetable Cookery* finds parallels in human biology and frugivorous animals like the orangutan. They also note of the potential temperament changes that a vegetable diet would enforce in that,

There can be no doubt, therefore, that the practice of slaughtering and devouring animals has a tendency to strengthen in us a murderous disposition and brutal nature, rendering us insensible to pity, and inducing us more easily to sanction the murdering of our fellow men. On the contrary, vegetable food clears the intellect, preserves innocency, increases compassion and love.<sup>47</sup>

This statement is quite clear in the ambitions of a vegetable diet’s benefit to society, as brought forth earlier by Newton and Shelley. Finally, the author spends a great deal of time in the introduction emphasizing the religious, in this case Christian, connection of a vegetable diet, and claims that any diet based on animal food is in direct opposition to any true religion.<sup>48</sup> As a whole, this early example of a vegetarian cookbook provides several essential arguments for the diet, setting the scene for later cookbooks and advocates of vegetarianism more broadly.

John Smith’s *The principles and practice of vegetarian cookery*, published in 1860 builds upon the arguments made by those like Shelley, and includes practical instruction on

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<sup>44</sup>Martha Brotherton, *Vegetable Cookery: With an Introduction, Recommending Abstinence from Animal Food and Intoxicating Liquors*, Effingham Wilson, 1833, 1.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 1.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 8.

how to adopt the diet through recipes and general advice. While the moral and practical motivations to adopt vegetarianism are outlined in *A Vindication of Natural Diet*, Shelley fails to assist the reader with methods of how to do so. Published in 1860, thirteen years after the creation of the Vegetarian Society, Smith presents both religious justification for the diet, as well as including a highly scientific approach, with reference to specific elements and chemical makeups. Smith summarizes this theory in the introduction, claiming:

Instead of adhering to the simple diet of nature as closely as climate, the engagements of civic and social life, and other circumstances would permit, man seems to have been contriving how he could depart the furthest from it. We should, however, rather regard his present habits as the gradual and cumulative result of circumstances, before science and rational inquiry had any influence in directing them.<sup>49</sup>

Unlike Shelley for example, Smith puts no blame onto the past mistakes of humankind, as he acknowledges the lack of scientific rationality or enlightenment of the past. He emphasises through recent social advancements, man now has the opportunity to rise above the past mistakes of his ancestors and eliminate the injurious nature that has plagued human history. Smith understands the past circumstances that would cause the need for eating meat but is adamant that contemporary society has no need for this practice. While he also highlights the connection of vegetarianism to his religious beliefs, he does not look to allegorical tales to explain the origins of meat eating, but rather simply the anthropological conditions that deemed it necessary for survival.

Looking to the title of the book, the emerging field of food science allows vegetarianism to have a stronger argument beyond moral obligation, using chemical compounds and theories to advocate the benefits of vegetarianism. Many of the scientific arguments made by Smith follow the limitations of the time, as well as popular theories of digestion and stimulation. Smith claims that food or drink in a hot state should be avoided to

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<sup>49</sup>John Smith, *The Principles and Practice of Vegetarian Cookery*. Frederick Pitman, Yorkshire, 1860, i.

reduce harm and strain on the internal organs and digestive system.<sup>50</sup> The theory posited by Smith and his contemporaries suggests the internal organs subjected to strain could cause negative side effects. Smith sees this theory as further supporting a vegetarian diet, or a non-stimulating diet because the food is closer to its natural state, he believes it will cause the least amount of strain to the body.

The fact that many people in the 1800s unintentionally practised vegetarianism or consumed almost no meat due to poverty was acknowledged by vegetarian advocates in the nineteenth century. For example, *Cassell's Vegetarian Cooking* notes that people in Scotland, Ireland, and even China thrived on virtually vegetarian diets for millennia.<sup>51</sup> The distinction of intentional vs unintentional vegetarianism differentiates the vegetarian from someone that has no access to meat. If the cited folk in Ireland had access and could afford to eat meat, they may have in fact done so. Furthermore, in Cassell's cookbook the author brings to attention the primary goal to highlight dishes that are both economical and savoury. The author hopes to sway the audience that meat is an unneeded expense for the average person despite any misconceptions that it is necessary for a strong body.<sup>52</sup>

Additionally, although contemporaries acknowledged the historical relevance of vegetarianism in the past, the supporters of vegetarianism straddled the line of advertising the lifestyle as simultaneously modern and anti-modern.<sup>53</sup> While meat consumption increased a great deal during the late nineteenth century, so did the support for vegetarianism. But this support was largely felt in the urban centres, where food choice was more plentiful, and vegetarianism was a way to "return to nature" in ever growing industrial landscapes. In today's landscape where meat consumption is at an all-time high, vegetarian or veganism can

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., ii.

<sup>51</sup>Payne, *Cassell's Vegetarian Cooking*, 17.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>53</sup>Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, 189.



be seen as a modern or progressive choice, but this sentiment is a recent development. In the mid to late nineteenth century, as meat consumption became more accessible and common, abstaining from meat would be more anti-modern than modern. By appealing to new scientific developments in biology, chemistry, and epidemiology, vegetarians looked to support modern ideals while championing an “old” diet.

Women’s involvement in the vegetarian movement in the 1800s and early 1900s was noted by contemporaries, and again by modern scholars. The role of women in the household created a unique power balance between agency and oppression. While it can be argued the role of housewife may have provided the opportunity to make choices for the household consumption, this was not often the case. Published in 1891, *Cassell’s Vegetarian Cooking* is wary of the dramatic effects to a household if a housewife elected to prepare an exclusively vegetarian diet.<sup>54</sup> The author states a large-scale transition to vegetarianism would only arise if done slowly and diligently. While the woman of the house prepared the meal, the man was still the patriarch and had final say over what was to be cooked. James Gregory, in *Of Victorians and Vegetarians* notes that in the early days of the Vegetarian Society female membership was quite low, and those enrolled were often daughters or wives of existing members. The growth of female membership by the turn of the century can therefore be tied to the overall growing movement of emancipation.<sup>55</sup> While modern vegetarian thought embraces the feminist angle and is supported by a large female presence, it took some time for this connection to develop into what it is today. The growing number of women-driven feminist journals in the late 19th and early twentieth centuries helped this growth and transition to a more female driven movement. Carol Adams argues that mid- to late nineteenth century vegetarianism was embraced and championed largely by women, however

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<sup>54</sup>Payne, *Cassell’s Vegetarian Cooking*, 17.

<sup>55</sup>Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, 164.

Gregory finds Adams analysis to be reductive because she imposes too much of a “narrow minded position,” as James Gregory states,

her enthusiastic identification of a feminist-vegetarian literary and historical tradition is demonstrated largely through American examples. Her claim that vegetarianism was ‘an integral part of autonomous female identity’ needs to be grounded in more detailed study of the British movement.<sup>56</sup>

Before WWI, food reformers, especially vegetarian food reformers praised the benefits of an economical meat-free diet that relied on more local foodstuffs. Cookbooks such as *Cassell’s Vegetarian Cookery* in 1891, or Mrs Colcord’s *A Friend in the Kitchen* in 1899 promoted inexpensive meals that could be prepared through a vegetarian diet. The pre-war food reformers would set the stage for how food reform would play out as shortages became a reality. Much of these efforts were spearheaded by the National Food Reform Association (NFRA) in 1908, who were a modern turn of the century organization, focused on populist enticement to convert as many people as possible to vegetarianism.<sup>57</sup> Through these discussions becoming known to the public to some degree in the early 1900s, later wartime food economy measures were a familiar concept that most people could follow.

Moreover, as Britain was faced with rampant food insecurity and malnourishment during most of the nineteenth century, proponents of vegetarianism hoped that these potential benefits of the diet would be appealing to anyone looking to secure their stomachs. The over reliance on foreign goods, and the expense of luxury food like meat was a major issue waiting to explode. Despite warnings from early adopters like Shelley to the Vegetarian Society itself that oversees food production was a major issue, these pleas were ignored.

Thus, as the First World War arrived on Britain’s doorstep, the question of food security and economy became even more relevant. The halting of overseas trade would

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<sup>56</sup>Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, 161.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 45.

double prices and quite rapidly reveal the deficiencies of the British supply line. As food became rapidly more expensive at the outbreak of war, food reform, fronted largely by the NFRA, entered the public consciousness largely due to government inactivity to respond to the food prices.<sup>58</sup> The need for nutritious yet economical food became a necessity rather than a choice. Furthermore, the efforts of food reform projects brought women into active volunteer wartime service largely for the first time.<sup>59</sup> Because of existing social roles, women had to be the target demographic for food reform to succeed. Additionally, their success in the food economy campaign by the end of the war brought both positive and negative implications to women's suffrage efforts.

On one hand, women were praised for their ability to assist Britain in their military victory, but on the other hand the domestic aspect of this role also reinforced certain gender roles. Nevertheless, suffragists drew on this experience and saw that domesticity could be used as a way to improve their political status.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, vegetarianism also began to experience more widespread recognition as a practical diet, as well as becoming more closely linked to feminist ideals than ever before. Expanding on ideas discussed above, the relation of food economy and British culture enjoys a long history and played a significant role during the First World War. WWI would provide a venue for women to further propel themselves into an active citizenship that proved to have both positive and negative side effects in their roles as domestic labourers.<sup>61</sup> Women's role as "quartermasters of the kitchen" also has implications in relation to their already ongoing push for suffrage, partially interrupted by the outbreak of war.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 63.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 65.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 183.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 1.

<sup>62</sup>Buckley, *Recipe for Reform*, 2.

As seen above, early supporters of vegetarianism were extremely vocal in issues that would inevitably arise from both imperialism and the desire to consume larger quantities of meat. Disease, food insecurity, malnutrition and lack of domestic production all came to fruition, just as early vegetarian advocates such as Newton and Shelley predicted. Food reformers looked to vegetarianism as the solution to these more complicated, global issues in a unique lens that the vast majority of their contemporaries ignored. While social issues such as these are quite complex, the perspective that vegetarians of this time possessed provide us with an alternate way of looking at imperialism, epidemics, and food scarcity. As with the goal of this research, these nineteenth century vegetarians give us perspectives into global issues that are still relevant today. Moreover, as will be discussed further, once vegetarianism was adopted more widely alongside feminist ideals, the lifestyle truly transformed into a modern movement. As suffrage ideals spread, and movements for equal representation began to appear, many activists became involved in different yet related issues.

## Chapter II: Domestic Revolutions: In and Out of the Kitchen

Although feminist–centric vegetarianism appears intrinsically linked today, active political participation and representation were a prerequisite for more lofty ideals to take hold. In the mid to late nineteenth century, progressive bills and petitions appeared in parliament, signalling the slow crawl to more equal representation for women. Over these decades, women began to protest and engage in political matters on a level not seen before. The possibility for a wife to identify and act as a separate person from her husband or a woman’s legal right to hold property were some of the ways that the idea of active citizenship appeared in the 1800s, ushering in newfound freedom to explore other ways in which women could express themselves and their own ideas about a multitude of issues. Women taking an interest in vegetarianism in their own volition required wider political self–idealization before this interest into other aspects such as diet could occur, at least in writing.

The turn of the twentieth century also marked a significant period for women’s rights in Britain. Spurred by the burgeoning reform movements of the late nineteenth century, the push for suffrage exploded into a substantial protest from women looking for equal citizenship in the eyes of the law. While the ability vote was finally obtained in 1918, albeit with certain restrictions, in some sense the largest and most visible goal had been achieved for the suffragists. Vegetarians, meanwhile, and especially those belonging to the suffrage movement, had no ultimate goal to which they aspired or nor any feat achievable in the same way as gaining the vote. In this chapter I explore the origins of the British suffrage movement, the challenges these activists faced, and draw upon connections to contemporary vegetarianism.

We can see the beginnings of gender equality in the Reform movement pushing for greater representation and restructuring of outdated policies. Like the food reformers

discussed above, reformers of the courts and parliament were influenced by both the rapid industrialisation of society and the burgeoning field of science. These reforms were necessary to adapt to the changing social landscape in a way that had not been seen for hundreds of years.

One note to consider before diving into the evolving women's suffrage movement pertains to the voting status of men in the nineteenth century. The Reform Act of 1832 allowed for a small segment of the male population to vote, while women became officially banned from voting.<sup>1</sup> This bill would therefore set the stage for the rest of the century as social, economic and parliamentary reform was sought in Britain. Prior to 1832, women did infrequently engage in some political activity, but participation was commonly done through informal measures that are difficult to systematically record.

The Reform Act of 1867 doubled the number of male voters from one to two million, but still greatly restricted who was eligible to vote. Additionally, during the mid to late nineteenth century, a few select bills appeared, granting a small measure of representation for women outside of voting rights specifically. Included in these bills are the Divorce Act of 1857 and 1870 Married Women's Property Act. However, current research suggests that the passing of these bills can be attributed more to economic necessity through the need to ensure hidden debts were paid rather than equality, but that does not diminish the precedent they set for future bills.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, many bills such as these were largely in scope as to what they accomplished in theory compared to reality.

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<sup>1</sup>UK Parliament, "The Reform Act 1832". Retrieved from:

<https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/overview/reformact1832/>

<sup>2</sup>Lester, V. Markham, *Victorian Insolvency: Bankruptcy, Imprisonment for Debt, and Company Winding-up in Nineteenth-Century England*. Oxford Historical Monographs, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, 3.

By 1918, with the passing of the Representation of the People Act, a select number of women over the age of thirty who met the property restrictions, as well as all men over the age of twenty-one became eligible to vote.<sup>3</sup> As such, six million of eleven million British women could vote. This limitation was put in place to “ensure that women would not enjoy a majority over men,” and societies like the NUWSS accepted this outcome temporarily so as to not risk prospects for full enfranchisement in the future.<sup>4</sup> NUWSS Work continued under a new name -- National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship -- in pursuit of full enfranchisement, fully aware that this was the crucial last step for women’s suffrage in Britain. Ten years later in 1928, all women over the age of twenty–one would finally be able to vote no matter their monetary or property status. Although not to diminish the efforts of the suffragists, understanding that many men were also barred from voting until 1918 requires acknowledgement.

Building on the Reform acts of 1832 and 1867 expanding the franchise for men, women’s suffrage as an organized movement began in 1866. Fifteen-hundred signatures were collected and presented to parliament by John Stuart Mill marking the beginnings of nineteenth–century suffrage.<sup>5</sup> In addition to societies such as the NUWSS, suffrage journals and newspapers became one of the most common ways for women’s rights ideals to reach the masses. One of, if not the first suffrage journal was the *Women’s Suffrage Journal*, originally *Manchester National Society for Women’s Suffrage Journal*, first published on 1 March 1870. One of the aims of the journal was to “extend to every isolated well-wisher the firm grasp of an outstretched hand, offering and seeking help,” giving women looking to achieve suffrage a

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<sup>3</sup>Sir Hugh Fraser, *The Representation of the People Act, 1918: With Explanatory Notes*. England: Sweet and Maxwell, 1918. 2, 63.

<sup>4</sup>Susan Kingsley Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain 1860-1914*. London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1990, 230.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 192.

sense of community.<sup>6</sup> The 1 March journal also makes reference to two bills, the Married Women's Property Act, mentioned above, as well as the petition known as the Women's Disabilities Bill. The journal claims that the Women's Disabilities Bill, which concerned giving women the right to vote was supported by 20,166 signatures at the time the bill was presented to parliament.<sup>7</sup> By April, one month later, 44,269 signatures would be presented in support of the bill, and great optimism was felt by the journal concerning the bill's future.<sup>8</sup> While the bill would ultimately flounder in parliament until 1904<sup>9</sup>, its existence set a precedent for future bills and petitions regarding women's suffrage.

Nevertheless, the Women's Disabilities Bill dominated the pages of the *Women's Suffrage Journal* for many months, waiting for parliament to officially pass the bill. The 1 April 1870 journal notes that "no notice of opposition has been given [to the bill]," further supporting the enthusiasm felt by those who supported it.<sup>10</sup> Surprisingly, the early days of the bill found some success, with parliament voting to support a second reading in a year's time. While the second reading ultimately failed to pass, a miscommunication by the Prime Minister was partly to blame. Members of the government largely followed the orders of the whip to vote against the bill, but in fact the bill was intended to be an open question, where government members could vote according to their conscience.<sup>11</sup> It is impossible to say what the result would have been if this miscommunication had not occurred, but evidence points to the possibility the bill could have passed based on support of the first reading. Although the Women's Disabilities Bill ultimately was left in a state of limbo for several years, even in the late 1800s suffrage repeatedly came much closer to fruition than largely appreciated. Tens of

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<sup>6</sup>*Women's Suffrage Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March 1 1870, 1.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid*, 1.

<sup>8</sup>*Women's Suffrage Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2, April 1 1870, 1.

<sup>9</sup>Exploring Surrey's Past, "Women Get the Vote!" Retrieved from:

<https://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/themes/people/activists/suffragettes/get-vote/>

<sup>10</sup>*Women's Suffrage Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2, April 1 1870, 1.

<sup>11</sup>*Women's Suffrage Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 16, June 1 1871, 1.



thousands of signatures from women across Britain, as well as recognition in parliament itself demonstrates the early nineteenth century struggles in gaining suffrage.

Like with the cookbooks and pamphlets covered in the previous chapter, the various suffrage-centred journals also served as a way to promote new ideas and build a community of people with similar goals. In conjunction with the suffrage societies that commonly backed the publications, connecting people together was the first step to starting more grand endeavours. Moreover, the first years of the twentieth century saw a great rise in these feminist-focused suffrage journals, similar to the emergence of vegetarian cookbooks. The rise of both suffrage journals and cookbooks thus encouraged greater accessibility and awareness of each movement, respectively. Vegetarian cookbooks started to become more practical and focused, with less detail that the average person would likely ignore, simplifying things for ease of understanding. Suffrage journals and societies also began to find more creative ways to bring their message to as many people as possible. Ironically, these methods included suffrage-branded cookbooks, dishware, tea sets and more. Yet specifically advertising through these domestic products “invokes the cult of domesticity the suffragettes were actively working to dismantle” and bring to light “contradictory ways in which images of food and eating function...surrounding the campaign for women’s political equality” as Linda Schlossberg argues.<sup>12</sup>

However, suffragettes and suffragists were not without their detractors. Outside of official parliamentary opposition that kept the aforementioned bills in political limbo, these women also faced criticism from other women. *The Anti-Suffrage Review*, a woman-run journal, was first published in December 1908 in London to criticize the methods and

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<sup>12</sup>Linda Schlossberg, “Consuming Images: Women, Hunger, and the Vote,” in *Scenes of the Apple: Food and the Female Body in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-century Women's Writing*, ed. Tamar Heller and Patricia Moran, SUNY Series in Feminist Criticism and Theory. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003. 89.

aspirations of suffrage movements both at home and abroad. The journal calls out the violent, disobedient measures that suffragettes employed, claiming these actions went against the very nature of what it meant to be a woman,

We protest against the parliamentary franchise from women, because it involves a kind of activity and responsibility for women which is not compatible with her nature and with her proper tasks in the world. Men who have built up the State, and whose physical strength protects it, must govern it, through the rough and ready machinery of party-politics. Women are citizens of the State no less than men, but in a more ideal and spiritual sense. The great advance of women during the last half-century, moral and intellectual, has been made without the vote...to plunge women into the strife of parties will only hinder that work, and injure their character. Have not the spectacles of the last few weeks shown conclusively that women are not fit for the ordinary struggle of politics, and are degraded by it?<sup>13</sup>

The society in charge of the journal, the Women's National Anti-Suffrage League further instils the claim that politics is a domain built and run by men, and the inclusion of women into this sphere would corrupt the delicate gender balance that England has created.<sup>14</sup> The allusion to the spiritual state of women and that party politics would in fact "injure their character" is a notable attack on enfranchisement. Pro-suffrage activists as we have seen also highlight the ideal and spiritual place of women, but use that argument to demonstrate how this ideal was needed in parliament for the betterment of the nation. Overall, this statement takes a contradictory stance, posing that women are equal citizens to men, and simultaneously placing women above men in certain cases, while below them in another. While men found themselves in large numbers on both sides of the debate, it is important to acknowledge women that vehemently opposed enfranchisement.

In response to critics such as these, Emmeline Pethick Lawrence penned a piece in *Votes For Women* published in October 1907 titled "What the Vote Means," commenting on the personal connection she and many other women felt towards what gaining the vote would signify. Lawrence speaks on how women experience the world in a different way than men,

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<sup>13</sup>*The Anti-Suffrage Review*, No. 1, December 1908, 1. Retrieved from <https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:meq425nof/read/single#page/1/mode/1up>

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.

and their vote would represent the female perspective finally being considered in national matters. She argues the vote and “womanhood are essential to the human world...[and] to human progress,” without their voices being heard women will continue to be victims of a male-dominated world.<sup>15</sup> Her views presented here are reflective of how other suffragettes felt and provide insight into the deeply personal reasoning as to why the vote was necessary for women, men and Britain.

One of the most explicit forms of opposition to the suffrage movement was through forcible feeding. As Linda Schlossberg argues in her chapter “Consuming Images: Women, Hunger and the Vote”, there exists an intrinsic connection between women fighting for political enfranchisement and their representation as domestic workers through imagery of food and cooking.<sup>16</sup> The perspective Schlossberg takes on this issue helps to bridge the gap between the suffrage movement and vegetarianism I am looking to identify in this research. Furthermore, as Schlossberg suggests, the metaphoric and symbolic meaning of forcible feeding as a method to silence the voices of activists were insisted upon by the suffragettes and not the public.<sup>17</sup> By attaching their message directly to visible and physical methods of torture, the overall symbolism of systemic oppression gained greater weight.

Moreover, one common way for suffragettes to protest was through the hunger strike, first conducted in July 1909 by Marion Wallace Dunlop without knowledge or inspiration from any suffrage leaders. Dunlop began the hunger strike as a result of being imprisoned among the common criminals rather than with other political prisoners, fasting for ninety-one hours until she was released.<sup>18</sup> Within six weeks of the hunger strike as a strategy to gain early release, forcible feeding became the common way to punish those who were conducting

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<sup>15</sup>*Votes for Women*, Oct 1907, 5.

<sup>16</sup>Schlossberg, “Consuming Images: Women, Hunger, and the Vote,” 88.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>18</sup>June Purvis, “Did Militancy Help or Hinder the Granting of Women’s Suffrage in Britain?”, *Women’s History Review*, 28:7, 2019, 1203.

such strikes. Forcible feeding was considered standard medical practice, used on men and women in prisons, hospitals and asylums, usually on criminals who protested their sentence through hunger strike.<sup>19</sup> Although the suffragettes and their allies were appalled by the use of forcible feeding, the public at large felt much different. Mainstream press especially was reluctant to compare forcible feeding to torture, preferring to accept the act as a standard medical practice.<sup>20</sup> Only pro-suffrage journals like *Votes for Women* and *The Suffragette* criticized the act as barbaric and unnecessary. Thus, while these forcible feedings were done under full legal authority, the symbolic and contextual meaning behind them hold the greatest level of meaning for us today.

In the 30 July 1909 edition of *Votes for Women*, the hunger strike was cited as the greatest weapon the suffragettes had against the government.<sup>21</sup> After the previous decades of failed petitions and bills and unsuccessful protests, the suffragettes had to look inward to find new ways to make their stand. As a whole, conducting a hunger strike was seen as the polar opposite of what an ideal woman should represent. Again, Schlossberg postulates that the vote was a sustenance that women were unable to obtain, and choosing to avoid nourishment brought this concept to centre stage.<sup>22</sup> Choosing to engage in a hunger strike was the ultimate way for a woman to act out her personal agency and political involvement. In reference to the Women's Anti-Suffrage League, a hunger strike further undermined the ideal Victorian women that the League attempted to uphold. The fragile, delicate woman that should accept the male-dominated society was everything the hunger striker tried to uproot and eliminate.

To get a sense of contemporary discourse, an article published on 14 April 1913 in *The Suffragette* covers a speech made one month earlier by CW Mansell-Moullin, Vice-

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<sup>19</sup>Kevin Grant, "British Suffragettes and the Russian Method of Hunger Strike." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53, no. 1 (2011): 132.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>21</sup>*Votes for Women*, 30 July 1909, 1014.

<sup>22</sup>Schlossberg, "Consuming Images: Women, Hunger, and the Vote," 95.

President of the Royal College of Surgeons. One of the goals of the report was to challenge the understanding that forcible feeding was comparable to artificial feeding conducted in asylums. Mansell-Moullin argues that “they are as far apart from each other as the two poles”, noting those with limited mental cognition require assistance to eat, while the suffragettes are under no such impairment and prison officials simply force the women prisoners to eat in order to break their determination.<sup>23</sup> In the summer of 1912, authorities imprisoned 102 suffragettes, 90 were forcibly fed, 6 of those being men. One of the most significant statements in the report pertains to the fact that half of those subjected to forcible feeding were let free before their sentences were up as any further subjection would have killed them.<sup>24</sup> Forcible feeding was clearly a dangerous tool that in reality had little relation to actual medical practice, as pointed out by Moullin.

Additionally, the speech also claims not informing the public of this distinction was intentionally deceptive, misleading and dangerous. For prison officials to state that no one had been harmed and that the procedure was painless in Moullin’s view could not be further from the truth. Actual torture was being conducted, nothing less. Serious and irrecoverable injuries were rampant including completely destroying the nervous system, as well as food being driven directly into their lungs. Two men contracted pneumonia and died as a result of their forcible feeding.<sup>25</sup> Overall, Mansell-Moullin, as Vice-President of the Royal College of Surgeons, looked to inform the public of the acts of torture conducted through the ruse of a medical procedure, and the need to understand the difference between actual medical practice and senseless cruelty. Informing the public that forcible feeding occurred and was dangerous was up to publications such as *The Suffragette* when mainstream publications ignored the realities of abuse dealt within the prison system.

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<sup>23</sup>*The Suffragette*, No. 25, Vol. 1. April 4 1913, 405.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 405.

Moreover, those responsible for the forcible feedings argued that the act discouraged criminals from using hunger strikes as a way to avoid longer sentences and prevented the undermining of authority.<sup>26</sup> In the eyes of officials, forcible feeding was unavoidable despite the message that the act would signal to suffragettes. Likewise, as mentioned above forcible feeding was standard practice, eliminating any fear of more substantial backlash or legal trouble. In an effort to cull militant suffragettes, the Prisoners' Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health Act, colloquially known as the Cat and Mouse Act was sped through Parliament. June Purvis outlines the outcome of the act stating,

The new law allowed a prisoner who had been weakened through hunger striking to be released temporarily into the community, on a licence, in order to be nursed back to health and 'clawed back' by the state to continue her sentence. The act strengthened the government's hand since, before its passing, any forcibly fed suffragette who was released because of ill health could not be recaptured unless she broke the law again. The Cat and Mouse Act prolonged the torture and suffering of hunger striking suffragettes and in 1914 grim stories emerged of the government drugging the protestors with bromide in order to make them more docile for forcible feeding.<sup>27</sup>

The abuse faced through forcible feeding was immense, and an act such as this demonstrates the position Parliament was willing to take in order to control suffragettes found breaking the law. A hunger strike is a powerful tool, and Parliament took every measure possible to ensure a potential hunger striker could not use it to avoid a lengthy prison sentence.

Expanding on the symbolism that Schlossberg has identified through the use of hunger strikes and forcible feedings, the connection to vegetarianism and animal rights begins to surface at a more significant level. In one case, the medical officers conducting the abuse made "jokes about 'stuffing turkeys at Christmas'" highlighting both the sexualization and dehumanization that these women were subjected to.<sup>28</sup> Likening women to animals,

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<sup>26</sup>Grant, "British Suffragettes and the Russian Method of Hunger Strike," 132.

<sup>27</sup>Purvis, "Did Militancy Help or Hinder?" 1206.

<sup>28</sup>Schlossberg, "Consuming Images: Women, Hunger, and the Vote," 90.

especially an animal that has been raised in captivity and slaughtered for consumption may also highlight the compassion vegetarian suffragists felt for other exploited beings. As Carol Adams explores in *Sexual Politics of Meat*, comparing imprisoned women to the “stuffing of turkey’s” highlights her theory of the absent referent. Adams claims structure of the absent referent institutionalizes patriarchal values, on one hand dehumanizing women by comparing them to pieces of meat, and on the other hand seeing animals only as meat removes the animal in which the meat came from.<sup>29</sup> For a suffragette to abstain from meat would signal a rejection of patriarchal structures and make an explicit stance against the dominant culture that encouraged exploitation of women and non-human animals.

At a suffrage meeting, one activist stated that using vegetarianism “to help the Suffrage Cause is practically unlimited. Vegetarianism aims so directly, as we women aim, at the abolition of the unregenerate doctrine of physical force,” speaks to both forcible feeding and to the consumption of meat.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the identification and connection of these two separate causes by early twentieth century activists signals the intersectionality of feminism and vegetarianism. Moreover, suffragettes who went to prison for their actions were largely encouraged to turn vegetarian for better quality meals.<sup>31</sup> Although this may have been only a few women within the suffragette cause, the connection of vegetarianism with feminist movements began to increase through these public actions.

Ultimately hunger strikes, among other militant activities such as vandalism have undergone debate as to the efficacy in gaining the vote by 1918. As June Purvis explores, the result of hunger strikes, forcible feeding and various acts of vandalism brought suffrage

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<sup>29</sup>Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-vegetarian Critical Theory*. Bloomsbury, 2019, 67.

<sup>30</sup>Leah Leneman, “The Awakened Instinct: Vegetarianism and the Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain,” *Women's History Review*, 6:2, 1997, 280.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 273.

ideals front and centre, and could not be ignored by the public or by Parliament.<sup>32</sup> As discussed above, various bills advancing the status of women and suffrage petitions milled about for forty years in some degree of obscurity, so the militant actions taken up just after the turn of the century were the culmination of being ignored for so many decades. Purvis further argues that militancy shaped how women perceived themselves, awakening a new-found consciousness on a level not felt before.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, this militancy forced the government to acknowledge and eventually accept the demands of women who would not back down until their voices were heard.

While Carol Adams comments on the nineteenth century “feminist-vegetarian literary tradition” in Britain, James Gregory, in *Of Victorians and Vegetarians* disputes this claim. Apart from works like *Frankenstein* and potentially *Vegetable Cookery, Recommending Abstinence from Animal Food* published in 1833, there is little to support the claim of a longstanding female tradition of vegetarianism. Not until the end of the nineteenth century with texts like Edith Ward’s contribution to *Shafts* could a solid connection of feminist and vegetarian ideals be found in Britain.

Gregory also notes that while women participating in vegetarianism was not a new phenomenon by the turn of the twentieth century, vegetarianism took on a much different role.<sup>34</sup> Mid-century efforts of women have mostly gone undocumented, and the feminist connections have not been brought to attention in any significant sense. As discussed, the growth of women in the vegetarian movement largely reflected greater efforts of enfranchisement. As Gregory explains, much of Adams’ argument leans on American examples and female British vegetarian identity is lacking in evidence to make a claim

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<sup>32</sup>Purvis, “Did Militancy Help or Hinder?” 1212.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians: The Vegetarian Movement in Nineteenth-century Britain*. London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007, 164.



concerning any existing feminist vegetarian canon. With the establishment of the London branch of the Women's Vegetarian Union in 1895 by Alexandrine Veigelé<sup>35</sup>, a more concrete feminist connection to vegetarianism begins to appear. The London branch consisted of three hundred members, while a second branch established at the same time opened in Brussels, Belgium.

Through the efforts of early suffrage campaigns, British women began to experience a newfound sense of personal agency and active citizenship. The growing movement of suffrage and enfranchisement allowed for women to explore other issues that they identified with more freely. Moreover, the establishment of a "feminist-vegetarian literary tradition" could only surface through a wider push for suffrage. The significance of this claim will be discussed in the following chapter.

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<sup>35</sup>*International Vegetarian Union (IVU)*, "Vegetarian Federal Union 1889-1911." Retrieved from: <https://ivu.org/history/vfu/1897-report-women.html>

### Chapter III: One Thing Leads to Another: Activism Outside Suffrage

In the two previous chapters I discussed the beginnings of modern vegetarianism in Britain, and covered the suffrage movement, which eventually led to emancipation in 1918 and 1928. Having established the context of the vegetarian and suffrage movement, I can begin to explain why the intersection between animal rights and women's rights emerged in the 1890s to the 1920s. This chapter will comment, expand, and critique the current scholarship to build a valuable contribution by offering a new perspective. Furthermore, this chapter will focus on how the growth of enfranchisement movements led women to explore other avenues of activism such as vegetarianism and anti-vivisectionist movements. Moreover, I will examine how vegetarianism became more associated with secular and feminist ideology, as opposed to the religious and male-driven vegetarianism of prior decades. Additionally, this chapter will explore the gendered distinction between public and private spheres, and how vegetarianism and suffrage led to the breaking down of these barriers. I will comment on the overall success of enfranchisement and why anti-vivisectionists and vegetarians did not enjoy this same success. Finally, I will examine how the strands of feminist and vegetarian movements became integrally linked through the efforts of various activists and groups.

I will first explore the demographics of vegetarianism and the shift from male to female dominance in terms of membership. As commented upon in the first chapter, mid-nineteenth-century vegetarians were largely male, and the few women enrolled in the Vegetarian Society were usually related to existing male members. A census from the Vegetarian Society claims that in 1866 there were 701 current members, and that 22.5 percent of those were women.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore as James Gregory argues, the female role in the

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<sup>1</sup>James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians: The Vegetarian Movement in Nineteenth-century Britain*. London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007, 162.

Vegetarian Society was often overlooked or ignored, further reinforcing the lack of women interested in joining the movement. Despite the potential “progressive” nature of a vegetarian organization, women still had to face the overbearing structure of patriarchal society. In conjunction with the growing emancipation movement, more women began to join the Vegetarian Society as James Gregory explains,

As a percentage of the total of new recruits, female participation (excluding associates) in the period 1874-85 stood at 12.78 per cent (140 out of 1095). In the period 1894 – to early 1899 women formed 20.65 per cent of the new members (57 out of 276). But whilst at least 35 per cent (49 of the 140) in 1874-85 were married to/daughters of vegetarians, in the later period some 22.8 per cent (13 of the 57) clearly fall into these categories.<sup>2</sup>

Slowly, the numbers began to shift towards more female participation by the turn of the century, suggesting a link between active political citizenship and pursuing goals publicly without the influence of a spouse. Others have noted the correlation that vegetarianism relied on the wave of other social reforms to propel its popularity.<sup>3</sup> In the initial mid nineteenth century movement we saw vegetarianism ride alongside broader food and social reform movements. The resurgence of vegetarianism at the turn of the century was propelled by the suffrage movement, as well as World War I to some degree. Later popularity of vegetarianism can be tied to second wave feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, and more recently a link with environmental concerns has become more common.

In comparison, more recent numbers suggest women largely outnumber men. While exact numbers are difficult to determine, studies suggest 63%<sup>4</sup> of vegans or vegetarians in

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 164.

<sup>3</sup>Andrew Linzey, *The Global Guide to Animal Protection*. UPCC Book Collections on Project MUSE. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2013, 17.

<sup>4</sup>“Find Out How Many Vegans There Are in Great Britain”, *The Vegan Society*, 17 May, 2016.

Accessed from: <https://www.vegansociety.com/whats-new/news/find-out-how-many-vegans-there-are-great-britain>

Britain are women, and between 74%<sup>5</sup> to 79%<sup>6</sup> in the United States. Although these statistics leave something to be desired in their methods and sample size, scholars such as James Gregory and Carol Adams agree in their work that in Britain vegetarianism is practiced largely by women in the late twentieth and 21st century. While the sociological reasons for this reversal go beyond the scope of this paper and are covered in works such as Adams *Sexual Politics of Meat*, I argue the shifting of demographics within vegetarianism began at the turn of the twentieth century as the suffrage movement became more public.

Furthermore, the basic motivations for adopting vegetarianism have an impact on who will do so. Colin Spencer argues “vegetarianism did not really become involved in the welfare of animals until the 1870s and then it was the issue of vivisection that elicited passionate denunciation from all the most prominent campaigners.”<sup>7</sup> Recalling the sources covered in the previous two chapters, this claim by Spencer holds true in a variety of ways. As was evident in the *Shafts* articles of the 1800s, women who argued for animal liberation and vegetarianism did so from a precise and empathetic perspective unlike anything seen prior. For example, the works of Shelley or Newton mention the plight of animals as a reason for vegetarianism, but their approach differs from later feminist writers. Shelley’s *A Vindication of Natural Diet* is a reflection of the time in which it was written, full of lofty ambition and Romantic sentiment. While Shelley states the vegetable system “promises no Utopian advantages” and that it merely “strikes at the root of all evil” his central thesis relates to grand ideas beyond the scope of what one would relate vegetarianism to as a whole.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>“Study of Current and Former Vegetarians and Vegans,” *Humane Research Council*, December 2014, 5. Retrieved from: [https://faunalytics.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Faunalytics\\_Current-Former-Vegetarians\\_Full-Report.pdf](https://faunalytics.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Faunalytics_Current-Former-Vegetarians_Full-Report.pdf)

<sup>6</sup>“Veganism Is A Woman's Lifestyle, According To Statistics”, Taste Editors, *Huffington Post*, 4 January, 2014 (Updated 7 December 2017). Retrieved from: [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/vegan-woman-lifestyle\\_n\\_5063565](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/vegan-woman-lifestyle_n_5063565)

<sup>7</sup>Colin Spencer, *Vegetarianism: A History*. Havertown: Grub Street, 2016, 266.

<sup>8</sup>Percy Shelley, *A Vindication of Natural Diet*. London 1813, 4.

Additionally with John Newton's *The Return to Nature*, his analogies to Prometheus, Adam and Eve among other legends take a similar Romantic and ambitious approach to their defence of vegetarianism, or the "natural diet" as it was known.

Conversely, later texts arguing for the same goal of vegetarianism take a much different approach, especially in relation to gender distinction. In the *Shafts* article from 19 November 1892, the author boldly takes the stance that "the case of the animal is the case of the woman".<sup>9</sup> While both Shelley and the *Shafts* article of 1892 argue the natural diet will "strike at the root of all evil", *Shafts* dives deeper into why this elimination of violence is a women's rights issue. As Josephine Donovan points out, "women animal rights theorists seem to have developed more of a sense of emotional bonding with animals as the basis for their theory than is evident in the male literature", further supporting a gender divide in how animal rights were approached.<sup>10</sup>

While Carol Adams's *Sexual Politics of Meat* remains the inspiration for the theoretical basis, as James Gregory states throughout *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, the female literary canon on vegetarianism was a much later development than Adams claims, at least in Britain. Evidence gathered thus far supports the notion that while this pattern did eventually take hold, especially in relation to today's conception of vegetarianism, early vegetarianism operated within patriarchal boundaries in many ways. While Adams highlights important texts such as *Frankenstein*, the contributions of women in the vegetarian movement were limited until greater social reforms became more widespread in society. Adams contends that vegetarianism appealed to women on the basis of identifying with non-human animals as symbols of male structured violence, this identification was not inherent or self-evident. Gregory explores how husbands often had difficulty in convincing their wives to

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<sup>9</sup>*Shafts*, Nov 19, 1892, 35.

<sup>10</sup>Josephine Donovan, "Animal Rights and Feminist Theory." *Signs* 15, no. 2 (1990): 351.

adopt vegetarianism for a variety of reasons.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, in *Cassell's Vegetarian Cookery*, the author is aware of the “revolution it would create in their households” if a husband adopted vegetarianism and forced his wife or the rest of his family to follow suit.<sup>12</sup> While women were championed as leaders of the domestic sphere well into the First World War and beyond, constraints on their agency remained within that space. Evidently, that is one reason why hunger strikes pose a controversial yet powerful image of Edwardian women, as emphasised in the previous chapter.

Highlighting the role of women in the domestic sphere, the Great War was a turning point for both suffrage and vegetarianism as alluded to in the first chapter. Adams argues that “The Great War quickened vegetarianism, propelling it as a movement into the twentieth century and as a subject into the novels of women writers”. She highlights the idea that active citizenship was crucial for vegetarianism, and underlines the notion that the female literary canon on vegetarianism would not develop in a significant way until this period.<sup>13</sup> The need for a national food economy at the onset of the war brought vegetarianism to the forefront for everyone in Britain as their imported food supply was cut off. The notion that the food economy in Britain was ignored until disaster loomed, harkens back to the claim concerning militancy in the suffrage movement.

During the war effort, Britain heralded the role of a woman as “quartermaster of the kitchen”<sup>14</sup> while just months prior some female suffragettes had faced abuse in the form of forcible feeding. As long as women adhered to the stereotypical view of how a woman should act they were praised, but deviation from this image would not be accepted. Their role

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<sup>11</sup>Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, 162.

<sup>12</sup>A.G. Payne, *Cassell's Vegetarian Cooking*. B.A., London 1891, 17.

<sup>13</sup>Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-vegetarian Critical Theory*. Bloomsbury, 2019, 163.

<sup>14</sup>Michael Dennis Buckley, “Recipe for Reform: The Food Economy Movement in Britain During the First World War”, (Ph. D thesis, University of California Berkeley, 2009), 2.

in the domestic sphere found a new level of appreciation in the face of crisis, but this support alone would not garner enough appreciation to establish enfranchisement. Suffrage societies themselves would turn to the food economy movement as their sole focus, hoping their contributions would assist both the war effort and their goals for enfranchisement.<sup>15</sup>

I argue that the praise of women in the domestic sphere was one way to discourage more militant action in the suffrage movement. As June Purvis argues, militancy finally forced parliament to acknowledge the suffragettes' demands and begin work on an enfranchisement bill. Suffrage activists' involvement in the food economy movement brought women to a higher level of active citizenship, yet further instilled the deeply entrenched gender roles they fought against. In the end however as Michael Buckley suggests, the food economy movement failed in practice, limiting any potential influence the movement could have enjoyed. Moreover, he claims that the food reform movement in fact empowered women in the home and reinforced their roles as homemakers.<sup>16</sup> The food reform movement became a trap of enforcing certain gender roles, while at the same time using this praise as an excuse to delay enfranchisement.

As more women began to identify with vegetarianism as a feminist issue, the concept of religious vegetarianism lost some ground. As seen in the nineteenth century with the Quakers' involvement in vegetarianism, and the religious stance inspiring Shelley and Newton, religion played a central role in highlighting the importance of a meat-free diet. Additionally, cookbooks during this period also emphasized the religious aspect of vegetarianism and why a devout follower would benefit from this diet. Yet, as women pursued enfranchisement and empathising with vegetarianism to a greater extent, the religious focus began to fade to some degree. This trend would continue to today, where a

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<sup>15</sup>Buckley, *Recipe for Reform*, 154.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

large portion of contemporary vegetarians and vegans in the West do not identify with any major religion. For example, in the United States, 47% of current vegetarians and vegans claim to not actively practice any religion, while only 34% identify as Christian. Another 9% identify as Buddhist or Hindu, 3% Jewish and 7% of other religions.<sup>17</sup> These numbers point to a significant number of secular vegans and vegetarians, in comparison to the demographics in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Of course, with this in mind, that is not to say women at the turn of the century were not religious or influenced by religion, but in comparison to the vegetarians that preceded them, religion as a motivator had diminished. Women most often advocated for vegetarianism in the early 1900s because of economy and morality. Economy was the main reason the food economy movement adopted aspects of vegetarianism during the First World War. Food insecurity was at an all-time high, and as more women began working for wages, earning small amounts of cash, a primary concern became ensuring they could feed themselves and their family. In *Cassell's Vegetarian Cooking* the author states “One great motive for adopting a...vegetarian diet is economy,” and hopes the cookbook shows that one does not have to harm their health in order to adopt a more economical diet.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, an article in *Shafts* entitled “To Beginners” outlines the steps to adopt a vegetarian diet and how to avoid the basic pitfalls when trying to become vegetarian but lacks knowledge on what food to eat or how to prepare it. The “To Beginners” author highlights how “vegetarianism claims to be the basis of long life and economy... and of good health,” hoping this will convince the reader to adopt the diet.<sup>19</sup> In *Shafts*, no religious factors for Vegetarianism were

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<sup>17</sup>“Study of Current and Former Vegetarians and Vegans”, *Humane Research Council*, December 2014, 5.

<sup>18</sup>Payne, *Cassell's Vegetarian Cooking*, 17.

<sup>19</sup>*Shafts*, Feb. 11 1893, 227. Retrieved from: <https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:yaw345dol>



addressed at all. On the same token, the time one would save in the kitchen was also highlighted, which could be considered a “time economy” to some degree. Addressing the Vegetarian Society in 1907, Margaret Cousins notes the time a woman could save, and in turn use that time to reflect on life and further the suffrage cause during these newfound periods of rest.<sup>20</sup> Thus, not only would vegetarianism serve as a way to save money but was also a method to save precious time that could be better spent on more productive endeavours.

Morality, especially in relation to a feminist perspective, was the second major motivating factor for vegetarianism after economy. One suffrage advocate Charlotte Despard argued that “vegetarianism is pre-eminently a woman’s question. It is horrible to think that women should have to handle and cook dead flesh.”<sup>21</sup> Not only was vegetarianism a solution to the moral question of slaughtering for food, but also the necessity of handling and preparing the food when this act was found unpleasant. Although the *Vegetarian Messenger*, published articles concerning animal rights, later magazines like *Shafts* derive from a wholly unique female perspective. An article titled “A Discourse on Animals” originally published in France in 1859, and translated for a British audience the same year, discussed the familiar topic of horses being exploited for their labour, as well as the vivisection of live animals for experimentation.<sup>22</sup> The “Discourse on Animals” makes several valuable points in defence of animal liberation, but the prose lacks the appeal to emotion that the *Shafts* articles lean into. We can see from publications of the *Vegetarian Messenger* from this period, vegetarianism was still very much a male-dominated social movement in a variety of ways, and the female perspective on vegetarianism differs greatly. To emphasize once again, the female-oriented

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<sup>20</sup>Leah Leneman, “The Awakened Instinct: Vegetarianism and the Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain”. *Women's History Review*, 6:2, 1997, 277.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>*Vegetarian Messenger*, April 1 1859, 37. Retrieved from: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015074190458&view=1up&seq=928&size=125>

writing on vegetarianism did not emerge in a significant way until the years around the turn of the century.

Moreover, any reference to religion as a motivator for these beliefs is notably absent from either text mentioned above. This may speak to growing secularization within British society, or the need to develop new arguments for the same cause. To some degree, new generations need to alter their strategies for their contemporaries. If the previous arguments for vegetarianism failed, strategies would necessitate changing with the times. While the exact reasoning for this shift perhaps speaks to wider societal developments beyond the scope of this paper, the central argument that religion slowly became less vital to vegetarianism remains.

Expanding on the economic aspect, recent research by Ian Gazeley and Andrew Newell has determined notable aspects regarding nutrition of poor and working folk in Britain in 1904. One significant claim they make argues that this group of people, while facing challenges to maintain a healthy diet, were not as undernourished as previously believed. They also note the gender divide in that women usually had to live on around 80 percent of what a man would consume.<sup>23</sup> Much like previous decades, the diet of the poor and working class of Britain consisted of mostly bread, flour or other wheat products. However, with the influx of more readily available meat products, members across all classes began to consume meat at a comparable rate. The skilled and unskilled labourers consumed a similar amount of meat per week, despite the cost. For the working class, although their diet consisted mainly of bread and flour most of their weekly budget went towards purchasing meat products.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ian Gazeley and Andrew Newell, "Urban Working-class Food Consumption and Nutrition in Britain in 1904." *The Economic History Review* 68, no. 1 (2015): 101.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 110.

The evidence presented here is quite telling. Although most of one's budget went towards meat products, this was still a small portion of the overall diet. Thus for Edwardian vegetarians, convincing their contemporaries to adopt a vegetarian diet for economical reasonings makes even greater sense. Although health was another major pull, undernourishment was not as frequent as believed, perhaps why economic reasoning prevailed in vegetarian literature during this time. Furthermore, the social reasoning to consume meat was at an all-time high, where lower classes could finally purchase meat whenever they could afford to; ditching this habit would signal they were abandoning a "British tradition" or admitting to their lower economic status.

Additionally, Gazeley and Newell note the gender divide in food consumption, and highlight that while evidence is mixed, conclusions point towards women having less food than men, and especially lower quantities of high protein foods like meat.<sup>25</sup> They cite a food study conducted in the 1930s as stating "In a household in which deficiency plays a far larger part than fulfilment, it is certain that the mother... will deprive herself, instinctively or deliberately, for the sake of her husband or children," making an astute connection to women as the head of the household, willing to go hungry for the sake of her family.<sup>26</sup> This plays back into the notion of hunger strikes and starving oneself for the betterment of the nation on a micro scale. If women were willing to go hungry so their children or husband could eat, then they may be equally willing to use the same tactic to improve society on a macro scale<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 113.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid

<sup>27</sup> I write 'willing' for lack of a better term, as especially in the case of the household there may be no other choice and starving is not an act of willingness, but necessity. Likewise in the case of the hunger strike, women of course only conducted these strikes out of necessity for enfranchisement after previous plans failed, not out of a 'willingness' to actively starve themselves. Moreover, there is little or no current evidence of a husband going hungry over a wife, further supporting patriarchal claims over basic subsistence, despite the general praise of women being 'masters of the kitchen' and essential to the nourishment of the household, and subsequently the nation.

Furthermore, the symbolism behind the “cult of domesticity” further instils itself here in that women were the “quartermasters of the kitchen”<sup>28</sup> who would do anything to serve the patriarchal whims of her husband, or of her nation during times of crisis.

Lastly, the concept of vegetarianism may have an impact in economic reasoning if the notion of women lacking protein rich foods is accurate. Adopting vegetarianism may have been a way for women to not only feed their family properly, but also themselves through cheaper protein sources such as beans and nuts rather than bacon and sausages. Adopting this train of thought may also further support growing independence and agency in the domestic sphere insomuch that women who wanted to feed themselves and their family properly could finally do so through vegetarianism. Moreover, the rigid distinction of private vs public life comes to life once again. Josephine Donovan addresses how relegating women to the private sphere specifically in the nineteenth century allowed for the public spheres of politics and science to surrender control to “objective” masculine beliefs and practices.<sup>29</sup> Thus freedom from the domestic sphere gave women a chance to enter the male-dominated sectors of public life and introduce a fresh perspective.

Moving on, anti-vivisection activism deserves some attention in relation to growing female political engagement, morality and compassion in relation to non-human animals, as well as vegetarianism. Overall, women were the “primary activists and energizers of the nineteenth-century antivivisection movement” furthering the empathetic connection to animals some women experienced.<sup>30</sup> Of course, as Leah Leneman points out not all anti-vivisectionists were vegetarian, but all vegetarians were anti-vivisectionist.<sup>31</sup> New campaigning strategies were also implemented, borrowing from the concurrent suffrage

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<sup>28</sup>Buckley, *Recipe for Reform*, 1.

<sup>29</sup>Donovan, "Animal Rights and Feminist Theory," 363.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 366.

<sup>31</sup>Leneman, “Awakened Instinct,” 277.

movement's ideas.<sup>32</sup> The previous strategies in the suffrage movement such as petitioning parliament while traditionally the most common way for people, especially women, to air their grievances, slowly became much more ineffective at instilling change. For example, a bill such as the Women's Disabilities Bill of 1870 could float in parliament for several years without anything becoming of it. More direct action would be required if concerned men and women wanted to see change implemented at an official level. During an event in London in 1909, activists "marched from Trafalgar Square to Hyde Park, replete with banners... demonstrating together for the animals' cause," and continued to engage in similar events in the future. These public demonstrations for animal rights were directly inspired by the demonstrations conducted from within the suffrage movement.<sup>33</sup> Whether or not these were the same protestors remains a question, however, the impact each movement had on each other is clear.

The efficacy of anti-vivisectionist activism remains a much more complicated issue. As with vegetarianism more generally, while there was support from a wide range of people from differing backgrounds, true success was never realized in the same way that suffragettes experienced. One reason for this lack of success can be attributed to the notion that the goals of anti-vivisectionists and vegetarians were much more idealistic and multi-faceted, whereas suffragettes could sum up their desires into one word: enfranchisement. Moreover, the strategies implemented by the suffragettes elicited a highly personal response, especially in regard to hunger strikes. The image of an imprisoned woman choosing to starve herself and subsequently forcibly fed by the state became extremely symbolic in a multitude of ways as previously discussed. Furthermore, other militant action such as destruction of property

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<sup>32</sup>Hilda Kean, "The 'Smooth Cool Men of Science': The Feminist and Socialist Response to Vivisection." *History Workshop Journal* 40, no. 1 (1995): 27.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

forced parliament to take a stand on suffrage, arguably ushering in enfranchisement more rapidly than if no militant action been taken at all.

On the other hand, anti-vivisectionists were left to protest and demonstrate as their primary way to voice their concerns. As alluded to, unlike the suffragettes anti-vivisectionists, and especially vegetarians lacked a unifying message to rally together. Although anti-vivisectionists upheld a message of protecting non-human animals from experimentation, the overall lack of parliamentary or wider public support hindered any wider success this movement tried to secure. Notably, much of the pushback originated from critics denouncing anti-vivisectionists in the 1920s as “new feminists” who abandoned the equal rights goals of “old feminists”.<sup>34</sup> On the same token, vegetarians shared much of this same dilemma as their anti-vivisectionist counterparts. Much of the uneven response to these campaigns derives from the fact that forcing an entire population to switch diets is an insurmountable task, and requires more than the act of passing legislation.

While critics of female suffrage were worried granting the vote would cause more harm than good, passing a bill to allow political participation is a completely different task than altering the diet of millions. Even with the outbreak of the First World War with extensive food shortages across Britain, the temporary widespread adoption of a vegetarian diet did not last for longer than required. Although numbers of dedicated vegetarians are difficult to determine, in 1945 only 100,000 people in Britain were estimated to be vegetarian.<sup>35</sup> Compared to the overall number of supporters for the suffrage movement, vegetarianism was a fringe movement but was no doubt gaining some level of traction in the early decades of the twentieth century, especially from women. Despite their best efforts,

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>35</sup>World History of Vegetarianism,” *Vegetarian Society*. Retrieved from: <https://vegsoc.org/about-us/world-history-of-vegetarianism/>

anti-vivisectionists were unable to gain the wider support from the public or eventually parliament in the same manner as the suffrage movement.

Taking a look at various *Shafts* publications in the 1890s, women's activism in suffrage, vegetarianism and anti-vivisection becomes apparent. Throughout these publications, apart from suffrage-specific material, political theory, anti-vivisection and general animal rights content largely filled the pages of *Shafts*. In addition to the articles, the "Correspondence" section of letters to the editor provides information deriving from the average reader of *Shafts* and not just the hired writers. One of the recurring concerns in the letters relate to the exploitation and subsequent desire for protection of horses in London and elsewhere.

An article titled *Our Comrades, the Horses* discusses the idea that horses were subject to animal exploitation that had largely gone unnoticed. The author comments on the needless abuse of horses in the city of London, forced to walk on hard wooden pavement and to wear restrictive blinders, reins and bits. The author encourages horse riders to improve their physical health by walking instead. The last line encourages the reader to "stamp it out," in other words abolish the use of horses in any and all situations.<sup>36</sup> Compassionate to the cruel treatment of horses, the author paints a vivid picture demonstrating that horses are sentient beings capable of emotion and suffering. Notably, this article touches upon an important discussion in the realm of animal liberation beyond those raised for food or vivisection.

A second article in the same issue of the journal comments on animal rights more broadly. Furthermore, the article takes a woman-centric viewpoint in animal rights, steadfastly claiming that "the case of the animal is the case of the women." The author Edith Ward takes great care in establishing an argument that outlines why women should care about

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<sup>36</sup>*Shafts*, Nov 19, 1892, 35. Retrieved from:  
<https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:kof773biq/read/single#page/2/mode/1up>

animal welfare to the same degree as women's enfranchisement, highlighted through this excerpt,

We have seriously to ask ourselves, what is the attitude of women towards the great question of breeding and slaughter for food;...and torture and death for supposed scientific advantages? ...The recognition of animals' rights on a broad basis of justice can alone unite the various 'causes' I have enumerated; and except amongst vegetarians, I know no body of animal friends whose armour is whole, and whose logic does not present terrible rents and tatters under the attack of the enemy....What for example could be more calculated to produce brutal wife beaters than long practice of savage cruelty towards the other animals? And what, on the other hand, more likely to impress mankind with the necessity of justice for women than the awakening of the idea that justice was the right of even an ox or a sheep?...I do not wish to make the case against women look blacker than it really is. I believe to thoughtlessness and want of knowledge is due the present lack of interest in the question of animals' rights. Such ignorant thoughtlessness is the result of early training, and it especially behoves those whose consciences have been awakened to allow no opportunity to pass of preaching a gospel of humanity...'Justice for all,' our battle cry.<sup>37</sup>

Ward also calls out those who are not vegetarian as hypocritical and lacking a moral base, highlighting an early, explicit example of how feminist and vegetarian theories intersected. Ward notes the inherent complication in connecting animal rights to women's rights, but is adamant addressing a compassionate society requires resisting every form of patriarchal oppression, bringing attention to the patriarchal dilemma surrounding the exploitation of both women and animals. As a whole, the connection of women's suffrage to animal liberation permeates this article, and provides an explicit and early example of such a theory.

One notable letter to the editor urges "all Anti-Vivisectionists, Vegetarians, in fact, Humanitarians in general, not to contribute to Hospital Sunday until the barbarous practice of vivisection had been abolished" and that as anti-vivisectionists had predicted, human vivisection was also becoming an issue.<sup>38</sup> Not only were anti-vivisectionists rallying against the cruel treatment of animals, but looked to abolish the practice altogether to prevent scientists taking the "easy step from the lower to the higher animal."<sup>39</sup> The addition of

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>38</sup>*Shafts*, July 1894, 296. Retrieved from:

<https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:xox843veh/read/single#page/8/mode/1up>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.



vegetarians in the above list marks a notable inclusion in both their contribution to social issues and animal rights alongside the diet itself.

In another edition of *Shafts* correspondence includes one letter discussing a dog nurtured back to health on a vegetarian diet, and another letter with a vegetarian recipe for readers interested in pursuing the diet. The letter on the dog links to animal liberation by suggesting that even domestic animals do not require the killing of other animals to survive. While the recipe was submitted by a reader with the intention to show vegetarianism “is the cheapest, most nutritious, and wholesome” diet available.<sup>40</sup> Once again, we see economy touted as one of the reasons to adopt the diet, apart from nutrition and morality.

The 28 January 1893 edition of *Shafts* brought to the attention of the formation of a “Horse Protection League,” which prompted enthusiastic responses from readers in subsequent issues. The brief article on the Horse Protection League claims that “women love animals and helpless things as a rule. They fly to the protection of birds, and dogs, and cats, and caterpillars. Why are they so inconsiderate of horses, the best of servants, the dumbest of dumb animals?”<sup>41</sup> The gender-driven argument M.E Haweis presents seems to reinforce certain gender stereotypes, while also using these stereotypes to gain support for her cause.

In the next issue, two letters were submitted and published heralding their support for the Horse Protection League. Both letters share a striking commonality in that each letter-writer emphasises how cruelty arrives from a poor upbringing, and that both men and women share in this responsibility. Each of the readers mention how their father taught them to treat animals with respect, and that others need make their children if cruelty to animals is ever to

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<sup>40</sup>*Shafts*, June 1893, 83. Retrieved from:

<https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:tiz348yex/read/single#page/11/mode/1up>

<sup>41</sup>*Shafts*, January 28, 1893, 83. Retrieved from:

<https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:xon465leq/read/single#page/5/mode/1up>

be eliminated.<sup>42</sup> The two writers, R Harty Dunn and R L Sprague took great interest in the establishment of the Horse Protection League, and more broad anti-cruelty societies as well.

Other correspondence letters to *Shafts* includes examples such as petitioning for the abolition of private slaughterhouses that were seen as “cruel and unsanitary.”<sup>43</sup> In the same issue, an article by Edith Temple criticizes sport hunting and animal-based fashion for their inherent cruelty to animals. In addition, the article states “cruelty in their pleasures is a fault of the upper classes -- we meet cruelty in the lower, but rarely in their enjoyments and pleasures” heavily criticising the rich and upper classes committing thoughtless cruelty for pleasure, compared to lower classes who would endure such acts out of necessity such as food for the table.<sup>44</sup> A claim such as this harkens back to Shelley’s criticism of the upper class and their responsibility towards the injustice and exploitation of both the people and animals below them.

We can see from the examples in a feminist publication such as *Shafts: A Paper for Women* that writers and readers shared an interest in animal liberation and vegetarianism. Those active in the suffrage movement also saw other causes such as vegetarianism, protecting horses, banning vivisection, and the ceasing of sport hunting as ideas worth fighting for. While suffrage was the grand unifying message and goal, this unintentionally brought together like-minded individuals who also saw animals as a group that required attention. Furthermore, many women identified these causes as explicitly a woman's cause, in that women were supposed to be caring and nurturing, thus they strengthened certain gender stereotypes, while breaking others.

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<sup>42</sup>*Shafts*, February 25, 1893, 83. Retrieved from:

<https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:bej786gix/read/single#page/7/mode/1up>

<sup>43</sup>*Shafts*, March 1893, 17. Retrieved from:

<https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:boj737mex/read/single#page/9/mode/1up>

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid*, 6.

Ultimately, vegetarians and suffragettes alike had great aspirations and goals for building a more just world. Although most suffragettes overall were not vegetarians, most vegetarians were suffragettes. The emerging suffrage movement gave women a chance to think critically about the world around them and created a community to put these thoughts into action. The gendered division of the public and private spheres became more apparent, and women began looking for ways to break this division of domestic and public life. Moreover, suffrage movements emerged women began to look into other avenues of society that were also problematic. As explored, anti-vivisectionist activism developed as another pro-animal movement, spearheaded by women.

Like the connection between suffragism and vegetarianism, not all anti-vivisectionists were vegetarian, but all vegetarians were anti-vivisectionist. Women found a unique empathy with animals in a different way from men and argued for animal rights in a completely new way. As the articles in *Shaft* highlight, women writers and readers claimed animal liberation as a staunch feminist issue. Men had outnumbered women in earlier vegetarian societies for several decades, but the growing enfranchisement movement brought more women into vegetarianism from a female perspective, eventually leading to vegetarianism being seen as a feminine issue today a link writers such as Adams reinforced in the *Sexual Politics of Meat*. While vegetarianism did not become widely adopted, even during the First World War, nor succeed in the same way suffrage did in 1918 and 1928, in the early 1900s vegetarianism became intrinsically tied to feminist movements like never before. Finally, the examination of correspondence and articles in publications such as *Shafts* demonstrates the growing consensus towards the protection of animals.

## Conclusion

As we have seen, the intersection between feminist ideology and vegetarianism began taking shape as political enfranchisement and active citizenship became more commonplace in the late 1800s and early 1900s. I argue that without the political engagement that emerged during this period, vegetarianism would not have become as intrinsically linked to feminist movements. Many Victorian and Edwardian women identified animal rights as a ‘women’s issue’ and their engagement subsequently altered how vegetarianism itself was perceived as a movement. This identification transformed the demographics towards a more female-centred movement, linking animal oppression to patriarchal oppression in a way not thought of by the early and mid-nineteenth century vegetarians. Moreover, the audience of newspapers such as *Shafts* should be considered, because well-to-do women had ample leisure time to commit to such causes. Thus, the impact of a vegetable-based diet would free women from the kitchen to pursue active citizenship more freely. Of course, these idealised and ambitious claims arose from both vegetarians and suffragettes alike, but the potential implication of the point remains. However, the overall eating patterns of the average Briton should not be understated here. While most people, especially in the lower classes rarely or never consumed meat in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, actively abstaining from meat through vegetarianism was much different than eating a vegetable and bread diet due to poverty or socioeconomic conditions.

The aim of this research is to understand past events in relation to how they affect us today. Vegetarianism as a movement emerged in Britain in the early nineteenth century but did not pick up steam until the mid to late century. Simultaneously, women’s rights and enfranchisement emerged as a visible movement by the mid to late nineteenth century as well. Spurred by the greater ambitions of the Reform movement, both vegetarianism and

enfranchisement possessed goals to establish a more equal and peaceful society. As emphasised however, the two movements did not share common members or goals until the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century through the emergence of large-scale female political activism. As more women, specifically suffragettes became involved with vegetarianism, this crossover would challenge the pre-existing vegetarian movement that had long since been championed by men. The adoption of vegetarianism and anti-vivisectionist ideals during the campaigns for suffrage brings to mind the emergence of intersectionalist activism that would emerge in the latter half of the twentieth century, emerging from such texts as Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*. Moreover, the turn of the century transition of the early 1900s signalled the coupling of vegetarianism with feminist thought that continues today. In the nineteenth century, most vegetarians were men, while today a large majority of vegetarians and vegans are women. By identifying the shift at the turn of the twentieth century, in demographics and in ideological terms, we can see the origins of these connections.

A further area to explore relates to the definitions of vegetarian and vegan. Both present writers and those writing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have noted the trouble relating to the consumption of animal products such as milk and eggs in that they still require an animal to produce the food. This ideal takes greater shape into the feminist angle in relation to the exploitation of the female reproductive system in the case of producing dairy and eggs. While some evidence exists pointing towards the dichotomy of consumption historically, further research is required to define the separation more clearly between what we now call vegan or vegetarian. Looking at this distinction in depth may also help to explain the differences in motives for adopting vegetarianism or anti-vivisectionist beliefs, in regard to whether an individual was doing so for health, economic or moral reasonings. This would also help to lay a foundation towards further explaining the why the word *vegan* came into

use in the 1940s, and to why self-identified vegans felt the need to separate themselves from vegetarians. Such discussion brings to light the common conflicts between Marxist, Leninist, or other leftist groups that present similar goals but utilize different methods. Additionally, while a review of the efforts for enfranchisement shows the challenges faced by suffragettes from parliamentary rulings, imprisonment and acts like forcible feedings, a potential avenue could examine the challenges faced by vegetarians in their goals for universal adoption of vegetarianism or animal liberation. Finally, a discussion could be taken looking into other groups of vegetarians such as anti-suffragists to examine the differing motivations for adopting a vegetarian diet, while standing against enfranchisement for women.

Another aspect of further research could examine the suffrage and feminist newspapers more closely, especially in the case of *Shafts*. I suggest a close reading of a few specific publications with a predetermined time frame to examine specific perspectives and how they changed over time. Analysing these sources to an even greater degree may reveal more potential insight into the development of the suffrage movement alongside the development of anti-vivisectionist ideals, animal rights and vegetarianism. The letter to the editor sections of such newspapers additionally provides a unique look into the perspectives of the readers, which can be compared to the edited articles and general social ideals of the time. Finally, consideration could be made towards vegetarian-specific publications in more detail, towards any expressions on the topic of suffrage and the anti-vivisection movement. Comparisons could be made between the vegetarian newspapers and suffrage newspapers to identify more closely the patterns that emerge from both respective publications, and how they differ.

# GRACE BEFORE MEAT

"For what you are about to receive..."



Mr. McKenna, Forcible-Feeder-in-Chief to the Cabinet, has described with moving candour the loving and chivalrous care, the almost pious delicacy, with which the Government treats those of its Suffragist enemies who fall into its tender hands.

McKenna, F.F. in C. (to the World at Large):—

*"Observe how we treat every case  
With the Chivalrous Tact of our Race—  
How before we proceed  
To forcibly feed,  
We NEVER omit to say Grace!"*

*The Daily Herald, 24 May 1913, London.*

As one last potential source of interest, I point towards the images circulated during the forcible feedings and the implications of such images. The image included above is

extremely relevant to this research for a variety of reasons. Thinking back to the notion of ‘stuffing turkeys at Christmas’, we can explicitly see how such a statement may present itself from those responsible for the forcible feedings. The image caption of “grace before meat...for what you are about to receive” invokes a peculiar imagery of sexualizing both women and non-human animals under the violence and oppression of existing patriarchal structure and religion. Likening women to animals and meat explicitly, further instils the notion that women may find a unique sense of empathy towards an animal that has also experienced systemic oppression. The image presents insight into feminist-vegetarian theory, comparing women to animals, sexualizing them, and highlighting a direct loss of agency. The funnel placed in the mouth of the woman in the image also speaks to the notion of silencing the voice of the suffragette directly, symbolically and literally. Moreover, the rope tied around the woman further instils the idea of silencing and restraining women as they are subjected to patriarchal oppression.

Additionally, if the phrase ‘grace before meat’ refers to the woman being specifically force-fed meat, this implication also highlights a further degree of patriarchal control over both women and animals, as both the woman and the animal are victims of this violent act. On one hand, the animal is raised under constant control and slaughtered for consumption, while on the other hand, the activist arrested and thrown in jail experiences a loss of dignity and autonomy, leading both agents to a loss of self.



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