

**Bodies at their Limits:
Rethinking Political Violence Through Women's
Hunger Strikes**



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Declaration

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

Abstract

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Kerry Mackereth

Hunger strikers operate in a liminal space between the active political subject and the passive object of violence that underpin many theories of political violence. Through a feminist and anti-racist analysis of two women's hunger strikes in the United Kingdom – the hunger strikes conducted by members of the British suffragette movement between 1909-1914 and the 2018 hunger strike at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) – this thesis makes three arguments regarding how women's hunger strikes challenge theories of political violence centred around the liberal humanist subject. First, in response to approaches that frame hunger strikes as a form of political speech, this thesis argues that gender and race shape how the pained body speaks. Second, it insists that an analysis of what the hunger-striking body *says* must also include an interrogation of what the hunger striking body *does*. Consequently, this thesis examines the performative qualities of the hunger strikes in the suffragette movement and at Yarl's Wood, showing how the significance and the effects of these hunger strikes extended beyond their rhetorical effects. Third, this thesis argues that hunger strikes have the potential to undermine the liberal humanist figure at the centre of many theories of political violence. It notes that the suffragettes' use of hunger strikes in the service of an imperialist political agenda demonstrates how hunger striking in and of itself does not necessarily disrupt this liberal humanist ideal. However, it also contends that the Yarl's Wood hunger strike shows how hunger striking can challenge the division between the liberal humanist subject and its inhuman 'others'. Together, these three arguments lay the foundations for rethinking certain concepts of political violence, in particular how political violence produces the human and its inhuman counterparts, and how self-destructive political protests may disrupt this distinction.

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Introduction

Understanding Hunger Striking and Political Violence

This project interrogates the specific character of hunger striking as a form of political protest, examining how hunger strikes challenge theoretical approaches to political violence. Hunger is a widely used form of protest in prisons, detention centres, and other sites of contestation across the globe (Bargu 2016:10). In the context of the United Kingdom, the poor conditions and indeterminate nature of detention inspired over 3000 hunger strikes across the British detention estate between 2015-2019 (Hill 2019). Meanwhile, hunger strikes, alongside other modes of self-harming protest like self-immolation, self-mutilation, and self-killing, have profoundly shaped the political landscape of the twentieth century and, in the early twenty-first century, show no sign of abating. Acts of self-directed political violence, including the self-immolation of Thích Quảng Đức in South Vietnam (1963), the self-immolation of Jan Palach in Czechoslovakia (1968), the hunger strikes by Bobby Sands and other Irish Republican prisoners at The Maze Prison (1980-1981), and the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi (2010) that sparked the wave of political unrest and revolutions known as the Arab Spring (2010-2012), have played a central role in the history of revolutions and uprisings in both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The widespread use of self-harming protests like hunger strikes is deeply concerning; even when hunger striking does not result in death, hunger strikers may experience severe physical maladies produced by prolonged starvation, such as permanent brain damage caused by vitamin deficiency or Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome (Bargu, 2016:4). Consequently, hunger strikes and other forms of self-harming protest are often interpreted as acts of desperation, undertaken as a last resort amid conditions where life has become ‘unliveable’.

The prevalence of these extraordinary, costly, and (self-)violent protests provokes questions about the character of contemporary political violence, power, and resistance. It necessitates an investigation into the conditions that render self-destructive forms of violence a ‘real, if bleak and limited, form of political agency’ (Bargu 2013:805). The prevalence of hunger strikes and other forms of self-harming protest also requires theoretical frameworks that can address the distinctive qualities of self-harming forms of political violence. The hunger striker’s self-infliction of harm subverts many traditional models of political violence, where

violence flows from perpetrator to victim. Through self-starvation, the hunger striker takes the body, ordinarily understood as the object of violence, and rearticulates it as both the subject and object of violence (Anderson 2010:10; see also Feldman 1991; Ziarek 2008). Furthermore, the hunger striker's self-inflicted harm upends conventional models of instrumental rationality (Bargu 2016:16). The deathly character of the hunger strike subverts the ordinary logics of means and ends, raising existential and metaphysical questions about the meaning of life and what it is to be human (Bargu 2016:16). Consequently, hunger strikes and other forms of self-directed political violence 'challenge the contours of the political as they are conventionally imagined'; in particular, they subvert the parameters of political violence, power and resistance (Bargu 2017:5).

Hunger striking necessitates and offers a different approach to political violence. This project examines women's hunger strikes and asks how these women's political protests complicate theories of political violence. While this project recognises the breadth of scholarship on political violence, it specifically critiques approaches to political violence that treat violence as a neutral instrument deployed by agentic, capacious political actors for rational political ends (see Clausewitz 1984; Weber 1994). Building upon an existing trajectory of feminist and anti-racist scholarship, it argues that women's hunger strikes demonstrate how political violence is shaped by and productive of gendered and racialised relations of power. Political violence, it argues, does not merely act upon gendered and racialised individuals. It actively produces gendered and racialised subjectivities and subjects. Moreover, given that the hunger strike is fundamentally an embodied form of protest, this project examines how political violence acts upon and produces gender and racialised *bodies*. While some theories of political violence treat the body as a neutral object or recipient of violence, this project foregrounds the agentic capacities and characteristics of bodies, examining how hunger strikers' bodies make political claims. Finally, considering the hunger strike as both an embodied and an existential form of protest, it argues that the hunger strike also raises questions about what it means to be human. This project takes into account how hunger strikes function as an expression of desperation. It also does not romanticise the hunger strike as a form of protest, acknowledging the 'deep physical and emotional suffering' caused by hunger striking (Miller 2016:2). Nonetheless, it insists that understanding hunger striking as a 'last resort' protest obscures why hunger strikers select this particular form of political protest, and how protesters often deploy hunger strikes alongside other forms of resistance

and agitation. The framing of hunger striking as an act of pure desperation conceals some of the larger political and existential claims hunger strikers make with and through their bodies.

Through a feminist and anti-racist analysis of two women's hunger strikes in the United Kingdom – the hunger strikes conducted by members of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) between 1909-1914 and the 2018 hunger strike at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) – this project explores three questions that women's self-harming political protests raise regarding the relationship between political violence, the body, and the liberal figure of the human. First, this project asks how gender and race shape the capacity of the suffering hunger-striking body to 'speak' of political injustice. Although self-harming forms of protest are frequently rationalised as a form of political speech, this thesis argues that what the pained body means and signifies is deeply shaped by gendered and racialised relations of power. Second, moving away from an emphasis on what the body says or means to what the body does, this project asks how hunger-striking bodies make and enact their own political claims. Third, this thesis asks how women's hunger strikes shape and are shaped by concepts of humanity and inhumanity. It shows how hunger striking contains the potential to unsettle the binary between the liberal concept of the human and its inhuman, dehumanised, objectified, or animalised counterparts. In doing so, it offers alternative understandings of what it means to be human.

The rest of the introduction is structured in the following way. First, it provides an overview of hunger striking as a mode of political protest and an interrogation of the existing literature on this topic. As a part of this overview, it explores how hunger striking complicates existing theorisations of power, violence, and resistance. The introduction then puts forward this project's three key theoretical contributions and outlines this project's theoretical framework. Next, the introduction examines the key methods and methodologies that inform this project. This is followed by a brief overview of the two examples of women's hunger strikes that form the basis of this thesis, as well as their relevant political and sociohistorical contexts. Finally, the introduction provides a summary of the structure of this thesis and an outline of each chapter.

Hunger Striking and the Problem of Self-Inflicted Political Violence

Hunger striking, in this thesis, is broadly defined as the expressive and intentional refusal of food over an extended period of time in the service of a political cause. While hunger strikes are conventionally understood as the total refusal of food, some hunger strikers will consume liquids, including liquid foods such as broth, fruit juice, or water infused with electrolytes in order to prolong the fast. While the hunger strike has been associated with various traditions of pre-modern political and religious fasting (Fierke 2012:108), the first instances of the hunger strike as a modern form of political protest are considered to be hunger strikes by Russian political prisoners in the late nineteenth century (Grant 2011:114). In the early twentieth century, hunger striking was introduced to the United Kingdom by Russian political exiles (Grant 2011:114). Marion Wallace Dunlop, a British Suffragette, was the first to independently adopt this ‘Russian method’ of protest in 1909 (Grant 2011:115). The WSPU promptly adopted the hunger strike as a key method of protest, and the American and Irish suffragettes followed suit. In response, the British government transferred the practice of ‘artificial feeding’, referred to by the suffragettes and sympathetic media as ‘forcible feeding’, from the asylum into the prison (Miller 2016:38). The force-feeding of suffragette prisoners incited a century of debate over the politics and ethics of force-feeding, the rights of prisoners, and the responsibility of the state to ‘save’ its suffering subjects (see Miller 2016).

Although Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst called off the suffragettes’ hunger strikes after the declaration of war in 1914, conscientious objectors and Indian and Irish nationalists quickly adopted this mode of resistance during the war and in the post-war period. Hunger striking became a significant mode of anticolonial contestation, particularly in the context of anti-imperialist movements in Ireland and India in the first half of the twentieth century (see Grant, 2019). In the second half of the twentieth century, political prisoners in South Africa (1966, 1990), Morocco (1977), Poland (1984, 1986), Turkey (1980s and 1990s), and imprisoned anarchists in Germany (1970s) all utilised the hunger strike in service of a variety of political projects (see Melzer 2015; Bargu 2016; Kenney 2017; Biondi 2020). Furthermore, Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails conducted at least fifteen hunger strikes between 1968 and 2017 (Tahhan 2017). Hence, despite being a relatively novel phenomenon in the United Kingdom at the beginning of the twentieth century, by the end of the twentieth century the hunger strike was a widely recognised and utilised form of political protest. Over

this period of time, medical and political responses to hunger strikers also shifted. After decades of controversy, the World Medical Association declared force-feeding to be an unethical practice in 1975 (Miller 2016:5). In the British context, the condemnation of force-feeding provided the conditions for the death of ten Republican hunger strikers in Northern Ireland in 1981, who, unlike previous hunger strikers in the United Kingdom, were not force fed (Miller 2016:5).

The use of hunger strikes has intensified during the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, in part due to the globalisation of mass incarceration techniques and the expansion of the international immigration detention estate. The twenty-first century has seen hunger strikes and ‘death fasts’ in Turkey (2000-2007) (Bargu 2016:3-6) and a series of hunger strikes at Guantánamo Bay (2002-2013) (Velasquez-Potts 2019:28). Acts of self-directed political violence, including hunger strikes, also occur frequently in immigration detention centres and refugee camps (Bargu 2016:10). The most widely reported incidents of self-directed political violence occurred at Manus Island Regional Processing Centre, the Australian detention centre in Papua New Guinea, including a four-hundred-person hunger strike in 2015 (Bargu 2017:2). Numerous hunger strikes have also occurred in detention centres in Australia, Bahrain, Bulgaria, France, Finland, Greece, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Bargu 2016:10). In the United States or in facilities administered by the U.S. Government, some of these hunger strikes have been met with force-feeding. At Guantánamo Bay, force-feeding has been used by the U.S. Government to suppress detainees’ hunger strikes since 2002 (Velasquez-Potts 2019:26). At the beginning of 2006, force-feeding became increasingly brutal and restrictive, with the U.S. Government affirming the use of restraint chairs and the forced separation of hunger-striking prisoners (Velasquez-Potts 2019:30). Furthermore, in 2019 the U.S.’s Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) force fed hunger-striking immigration detainees in an immigration processing centre in El Paso, Texas (Stevens 2019). Hence, despite the World Medical Association strongly reiterating its condemnation of force feeding in 2006, force feeding continues to be deployed by the American government to combat hunger striking as a form of political protest (World Medical Association 2006).

In the twenty-first century, hunger strikes have also occurred with increasing frequency outside of the prison, the refugee camp, and the detention centre. Environmental activists

have increasingly used hunger strikes to draw attention to climate change and other environmental crises; for example, in 2019 the environmentalist direct-action group Extinction Rebellion held a global hunger strike, involving 520 protesters worldwide (Murray 2019). Furthermore, in the context of the United States, protesters against racism, anti-blackness, and police brutality have staged numerous hunger strikes (2015, 2016, 2017, 2020), often as a part of the Black Lives Matter movement or in solidarity with the movement and its goals (see Hall 2008; Miller 2015; Mitchell 2016; Herrera 2016; Duster 2017; Herrera 2020; BBC News 2020). There are some twentieth-century precedents for mass hunger strikes. Nonetheless, hunger strikes in the twenty-first century have been notable for their unprecedented size and scale. For example, in 2013, an estimated 30,000 prisoners in jails across California co-ordinated a hunger strike to protest against solitary confinement, group punishment, and poor food and rehabilitation programmes, among other concerns (Carroll 2013). Similarly, thousands of Kurdish prisoners, activists and allies went on hunger strike in 2019 to protest against the imprisonment and solitary confinement of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan (Butler 2019). While the meaning, characteristics, and goals of hunger strikes continue to evolve, the use of this form of protest shows no signs of slowing.

In light of the proliferation of hunger striking and other forms of self-directed political violence, what theoretical tools and frameworks exist for understanding and responding to this particular form of political protest? Hunger strikes intersect with various areas of political theory including, though not limited to, civil disobedience and nonviolence; practices of resistance; and terrorism. While these areas of scholarship illuminate important aspects of hunger striking as a mode of protest, resistance, and a form of political violence, they largely fail to capture the ambivalence of the hunger striker as both the subject and the object of political violence. The first approach, nonviolence and civil disobedience, highlights how hunger striking is frequently characterised as a form of 'passive resistance' (Melzer 2015:160). Yet, the terminology of non-violent protest conceals how even traditional methods of so-called passive resistance, such as sit-ins, boycotts, and marches, require participants to put themselves in the way of bodily harm (Biggs 2014:1). Hunger striking highlights the inadequacy of the concept of non-violent resistance as the gruelling process of self-starvation often produces serious and enduring physical and psychological harm, or even, when taken to its logical extreme, the death of the striker. Moreover, hunger strikes feature prominently in both violent and non-violent social movements, with Kevin Grant arguing that

the suffragettes' hunger strikes inspired two different trajectories of hunger striking in the British Empire, one which was committed to an ethic of non-violence and another which employed hunger striking alongside militancy and armed protest (Grant 2011:141). While it is helpful to locate hunger strikes within a wider repertoire of protests employed by social movements, hunger striking's inherently violent character requires an analytical framework beyond those offered by the concepts of civil disobedience and non-violent protest.

Similarly, theories of 'weapons of the weak', 'everyday resistance', and other contestations of state power describe certain aspects of the hunger strike as resistance but fail to capture its distinctly spectacular and self-destructive properties. The emerging field of resistance studies aims to theorise the diversity of resistance, both in terms of its practical manifestations and its conceptualisation across different academic disciplines (Hollander and Einwohner 2004; Baaz et al. 2016). The field of resistance studies is especially indebted to the work of James C. Scott, whose scholarship on 'weapons of the weak' challenged earlier approaches to resistance by examining the covert, subtle, and coded versions of resistance that characterise the everyday discourse of subordinated political groups (Hollander and Einwohner 2004:539; Scott 2008:17; see also Scott 1985). As hunger strikes generally occur in circumstances where 'sovereignty has already been lost or severely curtailed' (Fierke 2012:7), hunger striking is sometimes interpreted as a resistance technique used by the weak against the strong (Bargu 2016:23). Michael P. Vicaro, for example, argues that American prisoners at the federal, state and local levels, as well as immigration detainees and asylum seekers, 'have seized this "weapon of the weak" as a means of persuasion designed to leverage the bio-political state's obsessive concern with the bare bodily life of those in its control' (Vicaro 2015:183). The lens of resistance highlights how dominated subjects practise agency and 'strategic engagement' within contexts shaped by deeply asymmetrical relations of power (Fierke 2012:17).

However, 'weapons of the weak' fails to capture the specific qualities of self-directed political violence in comparison with other, less extraordinary, forms of contestation and resistance (Bargu 2016:24). The 'weapons of the weak' are low risk forms of protest, such as gossip, jokes, folktales, and anonymous acts of violence, (Scott 2008:19). Through opacity and ambiguity, these acts protect the perpetrators from identification and help them to avoid punishment or harm (Scott 2008:18-19). Conversely, hunger strikes are highly visible and costly forms of protest (Bargu 2016:353). As Bargu argues, acts of self-directed political

violence are ‘overt and frontal confrontations, indeed collisions, with power’, rendering them different in character from the hidden subversions of everyday resistance (Bargu 2016:353). Unlike the low-risk ‘weapons of the weak’, hunger strikes depend upon a logic of existential risk and the potential threat of death that accompanies such a protest (Kenney 2017:205-206; Anderson 2010:3). Other theorists of hunger striking foreground the importance of the hunger striking body as a visual political spectacle (Ellman 1993:14, 17; Melzer 2015:162). While the hunger strike may be the weapon of weaker actors, it should not be conflated with the ‘weapons of the weak’.

The overt, extraordinary, and existential nature of the hunger strike as a form of protest makes it comparable with suicide terrorism and other forms of protest that deliberately weaponise human life and the body through self-destruction (Wilcox 2014; Lyness 2015; Bargu 2016). The extensive literature on suicide terrorism (see Enns 2004; Pape 2006, Lyness 2015), which includes a significant sub-literature on female suicide terrorism (see Cavarero 2011; Wilcox 2014; Lyness 2015), examines how political actors aim to ‘gain supporters and to coerce opponents’ through their self-infliction of harm (Pape 2006:9). Hunger strikers and suicide bombers often share the goal of attaining self-determination for a dominated community, framing their protests as a contestation of occupation by a foreign power (Fierke 2012:25-26). The literature on suicide bombing also explores the discourses of terrorism, fanaticism and martyrdom that similarly shape public responses to hunger striking (Fierke 2012:2; Bargu 2016:20-22). Furthermore, like suicide terrorists, hunger strikers arguably weaponise their bodies for a political cause (Miller 2016:1; see also Bargu 2016). Hunger strikers and suicide bombers both subvert the Western liberal ideal of self-preservation and the avoidance of pain (Wilcox 2014:20). Like the hunger striker, the suicide bomber radically collapses the boundary between the object and subject of violence. In an act of suicide terrorism, Talal Asad argues, the ‘perpetrator of death dealing dies of his own free will at the very moment of the crime’, meaning that ‘crime and punishment are united’ (Asad 2007:90). In this sense, hunger striking, like suicide bombing, is also vulnerable to being coded as a “premodern” or “barbaric” form of protest. Hunger striking is less vulnerable to these racialised interpretations than suicide bombing and other forms of self-harming protest such as lip sewing due to its association with white protesters like the British suffragettes and Bobby Sands. Unlike suicide terrorism, hunger striking has not become mistakenly emblematic of an ‘Islamic “culture of death”’ (Asad 2007:1; see also Pape 2006). Nonetheless, hunger strikes undertaken by immigration detainees, inmates at Guantánamo

Bay, and other racialised subjects still risk being interpreted as ‘barbaric’ practices (Fiske 2016:117; Bargu 2017:6). The literature on suicide bombing and hunger striking thus share some similar concerns and overlapping themes relating to the political significance of self-inflicted pain.

However, while hunger strikers may try to pressure or influence political authorities through their act of self-starvation, they do not attempt to incite a general climate of terror through their self-harming protests. Some political groups, such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the suffragettes, have used hunger strikes while also engaging in various forms of terrorist activity. Yet, as Karin Fierke argues, ‘the power of political self-sacrifice – as distinct from coercion – does not lie in the ability to harm another...on the contrary, it rests on accepting harm to the self’ (Fierke 2012:84). Unlike suicide bombing, which is driven by a punitive logic, hunger strikers require a sympathetic media environment and support among political publics who are then able to put pressure on state actors to concede to the hunger striker’s demands. In this sense, hunger striking bears more similarities to non-violent resistance techniques in that they are less likely to be effective in extremely authoritarian contexts and/or states with unsympathetic media environments (Arendt 1970:53; Grant 2011:142-143). Some political theorists, such as Bargu, account for these differing logics by categorising self-directed political violence into ‘offensive’ forms, like suicide bombing, and ‘defensive’ forms, such as hunger striking (Bargu 2016:15). However, this thesis prefers to separate hunger striking from other forms of self-inflicted political violence like suicide bombing in order to attend to its particular form of violence, where the striker serves as both the sole object and the sole subject of violence. Unlike the more overt instrumentalisation of the body in suicide bombing, hunger striking more clearly illustrates the combination of the subject of violence and the object of violence into a single body.

Hunger striking illuminates the need for analytical frameworks tailored to the distinct challenges posed by forms of violent resistance that collapse the binary between victim and perpetrator. A number of recent works theorise self-inflicted and self-directed forms of political violence (Fierke 2012; Bargu 2016, 2017) and examine the challenges of researching these violent acts (Bargu 2013). Some scholars specifically focus on hunger striking, theorising how self-starvation produces ‘violence, suffering, disappearance and loss differently from other practices’ (Anderson 2010:10; Ellman 1993), examining the history of hunger striking (Vernon 2007; Grant 2011), and analysing the use and hunger strikes in

specific sociohistorical contexts or political movements (Hall 2008; Fierke 2012; Melzer 2015; Simpson 2016; Kenney 2017). The scholarship on hunger striking is still dominated by literature on the extensive history of hunger strikes in Northern Ireland (Feldman 1991; Ellman 1993; Aretxaga 1995; Fierke 2012; Velasquez-Potts, 2019). A range of contemporary literature also examines the numerous hunger strikes conducted by detainees at Guantánamo Bay (Wilcox 2014; Vicaro 2015; Nieminen 2019; Velasquez-Potts 2019), alongside an expanding body of work on hunger strikes undertaken by immigration detainees, migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in a variety of international contexts (Tyler 2013; Fiske 2016; Bargu 2017). Finally, a number of works by medical professionals and legal scholars examine the legal, bioethical, and medical issues associated with the medical management of hunger strikes and hunger strikers (Brockman 1999; Williams 2008; Geddes 2008; Miller 2016). Taken together, this transdisciplinary body of literature captures the distinctive qualities of hunger striking as a form of protest and its complication of theoretical approaches to political violence and resistance.

Nonetheless, this thesis pushes forward the scholarship on hunger striking and political violence through its focus on the relationship between the hunger-striking body, gender, and racialisation. It responds to the underrepresentation of women's hunger strikes in the existing literature on hunger striking, which is dominated by accounts of male hunger strikers such as Bobby Sands and the hunger strikers at HM Prison Maze (1980-1981), Irish Republican hunger striker Terence MacSwiney (1920), and Mahatma Gandhi (1913-1948). Even the British, Irish, and American suffragettes, who were among the first demonstrators of modern hunger striking's 'political potency', rarely receive sustained attention in the literature on hunger striking and other forms of self-directed political violence (Miller 2016:3; for exceptions, see Grant 2011; Kenney 2017). The exception to women's marginalisation in the literature on hunger striking are the hunger strikes and dirty protests of female Northern Irish prisoners in HM Prison Armagh (1980-1981), with a particular focus on their use of menstrual blood as a medium of protest (see Aretxaga 1995; Lyness 2015). Hence, this project contributes an in-depth study of two cases of hunger strikes conducted almost entirely by women: the hunger strikes in the British suffragette movement between 1909-1914, and the hunger strike conducted by detainees at Yarl's Wood. It intentionally centres these women's experiences, narratives, and bodies to counteract the predominance of male voices and experiences in existing approaches to hunger striking and other forms of self-directed political violence.

In doing so, this thesis foregrounds how the power relations of gender and sexuality shape the performance, meaning, and effects of women's hunger strikes. A number of works interrogate how gender and sexuality shape the hunger strike as a form of protest (see Ellman 1993; Vernon 2007; Hall 2008; Ziarek 2008; Anderson 2010; Lyness 2015; Simpson 2016, Velasquez-Potts 2019). As Patricia Melzer notes, the characterisation of hunger strikes as a mode of passive resistance has facilitated an understanding of hunger strikes as a feminised method of protest, especially in colonial contexts and in the case of the British and the American suffragettes (Melzer 2015:160). For example, when Irish suffragette Hannah Sheehy Skeffington went on hunger strike, she noted that Sinn Fein thought of hunger striking as 'a womanish thing' (Vernon 2007:62). Similarly, a number of these works examine how certain forms of political violence, such as the feeding tube, invasive body searches, and rectal feeding, are used to emasculate and feminise male hunger strikers (Ellman 1993; Velasquez-Potts 2019). The literature on hunger striking connects to and builds upon a wider body of work that draws attention to how political violence operates through reference to gendered logics and how political violence produces gendered subjectivities (see Cohn 1987; Aretxaga 1995, 2001; Hansen 2001; Young 2003; MacKinnon 2006; Wilcox 2014; Weber 2014). By focusing on female hunger strikers and interpreting their strikes through the lens of feminist and gender theory, this project shows how hunger striking is a distinctly gendered form of political violence that operates through and in reference to gendered relations of power.

This project enriches the existing literature on hunger striking by situating hunger strikes within the interlocking relations of racialisation, imperialism, and colonialism. The analytical frameworks of imperialism and colonialism play a significant role in theoretical approaches to hunger striking (see Aretxaga 1995; Fierke 2012). These theorisations of the anti-imperialist character of specific hunger strikes largely frame self-directed political violence as an expression of a community's desire to exercise sovereignty or self-determination (Fierke 2012:10). However, framing hunger striking as an anti-imperialist form of contestation obscures hunger strikes conducted by political groups who are not pursuing national self-determination, such as feminists, anarchists, and environmental activists. Moreover, these anti-imperialist approaches rarely engage with the role of race and racialisation. This project aims to examine how hunger strikes respond to and are produced by imperial relations and the colonality of power (see Quijano and Ennis 2000), while also

attending to how imperialism and colonialism are entwined with histories of racialisation. In doing so, it offers greater insight into the relationship between gender, hunger striking, and political violence by illuminating how gender is produced through and by racial relations of power. The existing literature on hunger striking rarely engages in a sustained way with racialisation as a vector of power (for an exception see Simpson 2016). Since only a limited number of works on hunger striking frame race and gender as mutually constitutive of one another (see Hall 2008; Melzer 2015; Velasquez-Potts 2019), this project intentionally posits race, coloniality, and gender as co-constitutive relations of power. This project foregrounds the role of racialisation in the production of normative genders and sexualities, and the deployment of gendered ideas and binary concepts of sex in the construction of racial hierarchies (Dillon 2018:14-15; Schuller 2018:17). In doing so, it provides critical insight into how female hunger strikers deploy and are shaped by gendered logics that are founded upon racialised concepts, histories, and forms of knowledge.

Rethinking Political Violence Through Women's Hunger Strikes

Gender, Race, and Political Violence

Gender, in this thesis, refers to sets of norms, beliefs, and practices around the concepts of masculinity and femininity that partially operate through reference to biological sex but also extend beyond and are distinct from sex. Rather than treating gender as a singular property of biological bodies, this project treats gender as an interpretive lens (Young 2003:2). In the words of Iris Marion Young, gendered logics, frameworks, and images shape 'the way people interpret events and circumstances, along with the positions and possibilities for action within them, and sometimes provides some rationale for action' (Young 2003:2). Crucially, this thesis insists that gendered logics and racialised relations of power work by and through one another (see hooks 1981; Davis 2003; Crenshaw 1989, 1991), along with other vectors of power such as class, language, citizenship, disability, and species hierarchies (see Haraway 1991; Chen 2012; Anzaldúa 2012; Puar 2017). This project approaches race as 'not... a biological or cultural descriptor but...a conglomerate of socio-political relations that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans' (Weheliye 2014:3). It uses the term racialisation to capture the violent categorisation and hierarchisation of human bodies along racial lines. This thesis treats race and racialisation as a linked but

distinct set of relations from coloniality and imperialism. Following Aníbal Quijano, it casts race as a key axis of colonial power, one which was developed and deployed to justify one of colonialism's other key axes, the extraction of labour (Quijano and Ennis 2000:533-537). Moreover, it works from the premise that colonialism produced a constellation of racialised hierarchies and binaries – modern/premodern, rational/irrational, Western/non-Western, civilised/uncivilised – that continue to shape the contemporary world despite the formal cessation of Western colonialism (Quijano and Ennis 2000:533, 542). This project foregrounds the continued salience of colonial and racial categories, and how the hierarchical differentiation of political subjects shapes the construction of the human.

This project contributes to the literature on political violence by showing how political violence is both produced by and productive of gendered and racialised relations of power. First, it shows how political actors justify violence and make it legible through gendered norms and frameworks of meaning. Canonical theorists of political violence such as Carl von Clausewitz and Max Weber portray violence itself as a neutral instrument that is rationally deployed for political ends (see Clausewitz 1984; Weber 1994). However, these theorists fail to recognise how certain forms of violence are distinctly gendered, gaining their political currency and significance from gendered logics and frameworks. This project posits that hunger strikes are a distinctly gendered form of self-directed political violence. On the one hand, hunger striking forcibly inserts the body, coded as irrational, feminised, and racialised, into the political sphere, a realm traditionally characterised as masculine, rational, and reliant upon speech and discourse, producing a 'feminization of political subjectivity' (Bordo 2003:5; Melzer 2015:155). On the other hand, hunger strikes are shaped by the historical feminisation of self-starvation as a form of bodily violence. In the West, self-starvation in the forms of fasting, dieting, and eating disorders has been coded as a feminine and feminising activity (see Ellman 1993; Brumberg 2000; Wolf 2002; Silver 2002; Bordo 2003; Orbach 2005). This project challenges the assumed neutrality of violence as a political instrument by emphasising how the gendering of self-starvation affects the practice, meaning and reception of hunger strikes. While female hunger strikes may strategically deploy gendered norms in order to legitimate their political actions and engender sympathy among publics and audiences, they must also negotiate the limitations that gendered narratives place upon their political acts.

Second, this thesis shows how political violence actively produces gendered subjects. While this project does not romanticise the violence of self-starvation, it does insist that theories of political violence reckon with the coercive contexts that renders hunger striking a viable form of political action. This thesis foregrounds the role of normative violence, or the violence that ‘acts as a precursor to the violence we are more familiar with, making certain lives, certain bodies subject to violence that is not considered a wounding or a violation’ (Wilcox 2014:9). In her work on vulnerability, violence, and mourning, Judith Butler offers the key questions: ‘who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And, finally, what makes for a grievable life?’ (Butler 2003:10). Gendered relations of power, colonial forms of knowledge, and the racial hierarchisation of human beings work together to produce subjects among whom capacities, life chances and vulnerabilities to ‘premature death’ are unequally distributed (Haritaworn 2015:212). By foregrounding the necropolitical character of contemporary political violence (see Mbembe 2003; Haritaworn et al. 2014), this project interrogates the tensions between subjects who are already disproportionately vulnerable to forms of killing and premature death using self-harming forms of political violence. It shows how female hunger strikers who are rendered more killable and less grievable by normative violence must work to reconstitute themselves as grievable subjects in order for their self-harming protests to take hold. At the same time, this project also argues that female hunger strikers use political violence to forge new gendered subjectivities. It posits that the self-directed violence of hunger striking actively produces gendered identities that contest the gendered and racialised subjectivities that are violently imposed by the state. Through its exploration of women’s hunger strikes, this project contests approaches to political violence that frame agency as the property of autonomous, capacious, and rational subjects, exploring the ‘deformations of freedom’ that emerge in the absence of full liberal personhood (Weheliye 2014:2).

Political Violence, Embodiment, and the Body in Pain

This project further enriches theories of political violence by centring the embodied character of hunger striking as a form of protest, arguing that approaches to hunger strikes must consider the politics and the sociality of bodies themselves (Wilcox 2014:2). Theories of political violence have historically characterised bodies as objects that ‘exist to be manipulated, possess no agency, and are only driven by the motivations of agents’ (Wilcox

2014:2). Similarly, some theoretical approaches to hunger striking cast this form of protest as a deliberate objectification, instrumentalisation, or weaponisation of the body (Feldman 1991; Bargu 2016). They examine how hunger strikers use their bodies to bargain with state actors (see Kenney 2017), communicate with external publics (see Fierke 2012), and resist the subjectification of the state (see Feldman 1991; Anderson 2010; Bargu 2016). These analyses highlight the strategic and rational use of the body for political ends, combatting narratives that cast hunger strikes as irrational or pathological acts. However, in doing so, they risk reproducing the mind/body dualism that pervades Western political thought, casting the body as the inert prosthetic to the active political mind or will (Bordo 2003:5). Some of these scholars, such as Allen Feldman and Padraic Kenney, examine how hunger strikers deliberately bifurcate their minds from their bodies, allowing them to instrumentalise their bodies and intentionally subject them to political violence (Feldman 1991:138; Kenney 2017:215).

However, the notion that hunger strikers engage in a deliberate separation of the body and the mind obscures how the hunger strike operates through a ‘paradoxical combination of instrumentality and the abolition of instrumentality’ (Bargu 2016:16). The body acts as an ‘intermediary’ for a set of political demands, and yet ‘is not an empty, mediate vessel to achieve political ends precisely because its deployment only by way of its destruction defies the distinction between means and ends and obliterates instrumental rationality’ (Bargu 2016:16). Bargu argues that this abolition of instrumentality requires a theoretical movement beyond the body, since ‘even though this intervention is made through the body, it is irreducible to the corporeality of the body’ (Bargu 2016:16). This project acknowledges the importance of the metaphysical significance and the discourses that attach to the hunger-striking body. Nonetheless, it focuses on how hunger-striking bodies, beyond their use as instruments for political causes and their existential self-destruction, make particular political claims on the body politic.

Furthermore, this project foregrounds the gendered and racialised character of the body. Many liberal theories of political violence often treat bodies as ‘relevant to politics only as they live or die’ (Wilcox 2014:3). Put differently, bodies only become visible or significant in the moment of their violation. By treating bodies solely as the woundable objects of violence, these theories of violence implicitly propagate the idea of a basic, universal human body (Wilcox 2014:2). Similarly, pain and death are treated as neutral physiological or biological

experiences to which all human bodies are inherently vulnerable. By treating bodies as ahistorical and apolitical objects of pain, theories of political violence frame embodiment as a pre-existing biological substance or condition that exists prior to the forces of gender or racialisation (Wilcox 2014:2; Weheliye 2014:4). However, this project follows Alexander G. Weheliye's suggestion that it is misleading to speak of universal biological bodies that exist prior to the shaping forces of gender and race (Weheliye 2014:2). It insists that bodies are themselves produced by and productive of gendered and racialised relations of power. This thesis argues that studies of hunger striking must consider how this particular form of protest is practiced and enacted by bodies that are already differentiated along gendered and racial lines, as well as how different forms of violence are deeply vested with gendered and racialised meaning (Aretxaga 2001:6). This project also foregrounds the ambivalence of political projects based upon the protection and salvation of the 'imagined universal suffering body', such as sentimentalism and humanitarianism (Ticktin 2011:4). Through its critique of the universal suffering body, this project draws attention to the gendered and racialised foundations of sentimentalism and humanitarianism, examining how these affective registers work to distinguish agentic political subjects from their objects of pity and concern (see Fassin 2011; Ticktin 2011; Strick 2014; Schuller 2018).

This thesis also highlights the gendering and racialisation of the supposedly neutral body in order to question the concept of the speaking body. Theories of hunger striking and other forms of political violence foreground the communicative character of the hunger strike, arguing that protesters use their suffering bodies to speak in situations where words fail (see Brockman 1999; Fierke 2012; Vicaro 2015; Fiske 2016). Ian Miller, in his historical work on the practice and ethics of force-feeding in the United Kingdom, explicitly frames hunger striking as 'a form of political expression transmitted via the body' (Miller 2016:11). In this vein, Fierke argues that contemporary political self-sacrifice is concerned with 'communicating a political message' (Fierke 2012:39). Similarly, Bargu suggests that the weaponisation of life embodied in the form of hunger striking and other forms of self-inflicted violence is less a political instrument than a kind of '*political expression*' (Bargu 2016:16, emphasis in original). As a result, she suggests that the examination of hunger striking and other forms of violently embodied protest, such as lip sewing, requires an approach that interrogates these protests' expressive function, and how they are 'symbolic and communicative' in ways that are irreducible to their formal political demands (Bargu 2017:7).

However, while this project acknowledges the essential communicative and symbolic functions of the hunger strike as a form of political speech, it also suggests that this emphasis upon what the hunger striking body says or means can obfuscate the embodied, enacted, and performative qualities of hunger striking bodies. This thesis recognises the significance of communication in the rationale and aims of the hunger strike, and specifically, the key role that audience reception plays in whether or not a hunger strike is deemed to be “successful”. As Fierke notes, there are often multiple audiences for a hunger strike, and hunger strikers both address and produce audiences through their highly emotive, violent acts (Fierke 2012:98). It is also important to note that the act of speaking to an audience through the body can be, in and of itself, an act of resistance regardless of the outcome, especially when this form of speech is attempted by an ‘abject Other who should not be heard and therefore must not speak’ (Fierke 2012:78).

Yet, this thesis suggests that focusing primarily or solely on the audience can unintentionally obscure how hunger-striking bodies enact political claims that extend beyond their external audiences. Again, this is not to say that bodies are not imbricated within or produced by discourse and (Ellman 1993:3-4), but that they also make political claims that extend beyond metaphor or symbolism. In this vein, this project follows the trajectory of recent debates around feminism, gender, and the body in its shift from ‘what a body “means”, to what a body can do’ (Ferreday 2012:140). This thesis offers an interpretation of the hunger strike as both a communicative *and* a performative form of protest. The hunger striking body speaks of political grievances while simultaneously enacting alternative political projects, allowing for the production of new gendered subjectivities that contest those imposed by the state. Furthermore, this thesis foregrounds both the positive and negative claims that hunger strikers make on the British body politic. It highlights how these bodies enact positive political projects and how hunger strikes form part of a wider repertoire of embodied protests that lay claim to political rights. It also considers how hunger strikes constitute an embodied refusal to live life on the terms of a dominative state (Bargu 2016:16).

Political Violence, Liminality, and the Liberal Humanist Subject

Finally, this project contributes to the scholarship on political violence by interrogating the relationship between political violence and the human. By placing their lives on the line in service of a political cause, hunger strikers provoke existential questions around what constitutes a liveable life or a meaningful existence (Bargu 2016:16). These existential acts of violence thus provoke and contribute to a wider debate around what it means to be human. This thesis examines how female hunger strikers lay claim to being human through existing concepts of humanity, while simultaneously interrogating how women's hunger strikes offer alternative visions of what it means to be human. It argues that theories of political violence place a specific iteration of the human at their centre: a rational political actor who is agentic, capacious, and coded as white and masculine. This particular approach to the human, which Sylvia Wynter refers to as 'Man', colonises what it means to be a human being (Mayblin 2018:41-42). In doing so, it casts gendered and racialised subjects outside of the figure of the human, resulting in the racialised stratification of political subjects into the categories of human, partly-human, and nonhuman (Weheliye 2014:3).

This thesis also examines how this iteration of the human is constructed through and alongside inhuman and nonhuman others. On the one hand, it interrogates how the liberal, empathetic, and modern concept of the human is constructed in opposition to the object of humanitarian pity, the disempowered victim of violence. On the other hand, it explores how the liberal humanist subject is also constructed through the production of inhuman, objectified, and animalised subjects who are devoid even of these humanitarian relations of pity. Yet, this project argues that hunger striking possesses the potential to disrupt the hegemony of Man, referred to throughout this project as the 'liberal humanist subject', over the category of the human. By harming their own bodies to make their political statement, hunger strikers breach the basic principles of self-interest and bodily self-preservation that underpin liberal humanist theories of rationality. Furthermore, this thesis shows how women's hunger strikes foreground the interdependency of human bodies and lay the groundwork for a politics of mutuality, solidarity, and interdependency that stands in contradiction to the autonomous figure of the liberal humanist subject.

This project explores the subversive potential of the hunger strike through the concept of liminality. Liminality describes 'moments or periods of transition during which the normal limits to thought, self-understanding and behaviour are relaxed, opening the way to novelty and imagination, construction and destruction' (Thomassen 2016:1). Liminality operates

throughout this project in three distinct ways. First, this thesis examines how women's hunger strikes respond to conditions of 'permanent liminality', the condition where liminality becomes a 'fixed' state (Thomassen 2016:14). It argues that both the British suffragettes and the immigration detainees at Yarl's Wood went on hunger strike to contest their position as subjects permanently suspended in a liminal space both inside and outside of the British body politic. Second, this project uses the concept of liminality to explore the distinct qualities of the hunger-striking body, which hovers between the binaries of active/passive, subject/object, victim/enemy, and life/death, working 'against the drive to wrench these terms into opposition' (Anderson 2010:2; Ziarek 2008:100). Theorists of liminality critique the fetishisation of indeterminacy and the transgression of borders, highlighting the profound anxieties of existing in liminal spaces (Thomassen 2016:8). This project is similarly wary of romanticising the immense violence of the hunger strike and the coercive conditions that render hunger striking an agentic practice. That being said, it also shows how the hunger strike's liminal qualities distinguish this form of protest from the modes of political action ordinarily practised by the liberal humanist subject. Finally, this project explores how hunger strikes can engender societal transformation, examining how hunger strikes can create 'limit situations' where existing social and political structures can be re-imagined and reformed (Wydra 2015:4). Here, this project draws on the concept of liminality as a 'passage experience' or a 'rite of passage', where passage indicates 'a process of transformation undertaken, but not yet finished' (Thomassen 2016:13). This sense of unfinished transformation captures the ambivalence of the hunger strike as both a desperate form of political protest and an attempt to establish new ways of living and being human.

Comparing and Researching Women's Hunger Strikes

This project explores how women's hunger strikes challenge theories of political violence through a comparative study of two hunger strikes comprised primarily of female protesters: the hunger strikes undertaken by the British suffragettes between the years 1909-1914, and the 2018 hunger strike at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre (IRC). This project takes the coincidence between the centenary celebrations of the passing of the Representation of the People Act 1918 and the Yarl's Wood hunger strike in 2018 as a jumping-off point to explore the discomfiting relationship between race, colonialism, and the British women's suffrage movement. In February 2018, while the year-long celebrations of the hundredth

anniversary of (some) British women receiving the right to vote were enthusiastically underway, at least 120 women at Yarl's Wood went on hunger strike. The hunger strikers and their supporters drew explicit connections between their own protests and the historical legacy of feminist protests established by suffragette hunger strikers (Arnold 2018; Considine 2018; Hudson 2018). One protestor, speaking through an anonymous statement delivered by Women for Refugee Women at their International Women's Day lobby of Parliament, highlighted the continuities between the suffragettes' self-harming protests and the protests at Yarl's Wood:

The restrictions placed on women 100 years ago should never have been and today they seem ridiculous. Today, we should not be locked up because of our immigration status, and one day it will be seen for what it is: an unjust abuse of human rights. I invoke the spirit of the suffragettes to help me every day I am detained and am hungry for freedom and we need to remember the sacrifice these women made a century ago so that we can have a vote and therefore have a voice today. We urge every woman to use that vote to keep fighting to make our society fair for our daughters and for generations to come (A Woman of Yarl's Wood 2018).

Yet, despite the obvious coincidence of these protests, the Yarl's Wood hunger strike was barely acknowledged by public figures and organisations who were celebrating the vote centenary. The veneration of the suffragettes' hunger strikes and the public's muted reception to the Yarl's Wood hunger strikes could be attributed to the transformative effect of hindsight. After all, in their own sociohistorical context the suffragettes' protests were highly polarising, and it has taken a century of recuperative effort to reinvent the suffragettes as the foremothers of contemporary British feminist movements (see Chidgey 2018; Kay and Mendes 2020). Nonetheless, the quieter reception of the Yarl's Wood hunger strikes during a year characterised by public discussion of the suffragettes' self-harming protests also shows how the efficacy and meaning of hunger striking is deeply shaped by gendered, racialised, and nationalist relations of power.

This thesis uses the discrepancy between the centenary celebrations of the suffragettes' hunger strikes and the contemporaneous protests at Yarl's Wood to examine how Britain's imperialist and colonial legacies continue to shape who is included and who is excluded from normative understandings of womanhood. The differential reception of the two hunger strikes is especially telling given the centrality of the British suffragettes in the construction of genealogies of feminist protest in the context of the United Kingdom (see Chidgey 2018).

The protestors' attempts to locate the Yarl's Wood hunger strikes within a longer legacy of feminist protest shows how citizenship play a central role in constructing the specific gendered and racialised subject that lies at the heart of British feminist activism. By comparing the hunger strikes of white Edwardian women with racialised migrant women at Yarl's Wood, this project shows how gendered subjects are produced differently by racialisation and histories of racial violence. On the one hand, it draws attention to the similarities that emerge between the suffragettes' and the detainees' carceral conditions and their embodied protests. On the other hand, this thesis explores how the suffragettes enjoyed certain privileges accorded to white women that were produced through racial and imperialist relations of power. The suffragettes' violation by state actors, whether in the form of police brutality, physical and sexual assault, or force-feeding, at least possessed the potential to provoke public outcry and criticisms of the government's barbarism. Conversely, contemporary immigration detainees at Yarl's Wood are rendered 'ungrievable' through their precarious position as non-citizen racialised women. Their experiences of sexual violence, labour exploitation, and physical assault in the space of the detention centre illuminates the centrality of whiteness in normative constructions of womanhood (Dillon 2018:14-15). In these two examples, the hunger strikers' differing experiences of violence and subjectification at the hands of the state provide fertile ground for examining the complex political relationship between race, citizenship, coloniality, and feminism in the British context.

In order to analyse these two examples of hunger striking, this project draws upon a variety of materials produced by the hunger strikers and their supporters, the media, and the state. However, this thesis focuses on the personal testimonies, narrations, writings, and documents of female hunger strikers in order to foreground the lived experience of self-inflicted violence (Bargu 2016:30). The centrality of hunger strikers' personal experiences is especially crucial in relation to theorising self-starvation and hunger striking. As Debra Ferreday argues, the anorectic or emaciated female body is primarily deployed as a metaphor or an abstract concept within popular discourse and feminist theories of the body (Ferreday 2012:139). Consequently, the complicated lived experiences of self-starvation are reduced and simplified within discourses of representation that aim 'to fix the "meaning" of something called "the anorexic body"' (Ferreday 2012:139). This project, wary of invoking the hunger-striking body as solely a symbol of political discontent, attempts to animate these theoretical discussions through hunger strikers' own narrations of their protests (Ferreday 2012:140).

Although it considers how women's hunger strikes are portrayed and received by external audiences in their specific sociohistorical contexts, it focuses on the testimonies of female hunger strikers in order to grasp how female hunger strikers understand, describe, and interpret the meaning of their own behaviour (Brumberg 2000:7).

Moreover, this project draws upon hunger strikers' personal testimonies to contest feminist approaches that characterise anorexia nervosa or other eating disorders as 'hunger strikes' against patriarchal systems of power. For example, Susie Orbach insists,

a woman who overrides her hunger and systematically refuses to eat is in effect on hunger strike. Like the hunger striker, the anorectic is starving, she is longing to eat, she is desperate for food. Like the hunger striker she is in protest at her conditions. Like the hunger striker, she has taken as her weapon a refusal to eat. Like the suffragettes at the turn of the century in the United Kingdom or the political prisoners of the contemporary world, she is giving urgent voice to her protest. The hunger strike becomes the means of protest to draw attention to the illegitimacy of the jailer, the moral righteousness of the cause, or in her case, the necessity for action. She is driven to act in a dramatic and seemingly self-punishing way through the conviction that she jeopardizes her cause if she eats, just like the explicitly political prisoner. But unlike her fellow hunger strikers, she may not be able to articulate the basis of her cause. The hunger strike may be her only form of protest' (Orbach 2005:82-83).

Following Orbach, Naomi Wolf asserts, 'Susie Orbach compared anorexia to the hunger strikes of political prisoners, particularly the suffragists. But the time for metaphors is behind us. To be anorexic or bulimic *is* to be a political prisoner' (Wolf 2002:208). Yet, in drawing parallels between the self-starvation of suffragette hunger strikers and subjects who experience anorexia nervosa, or positing anorectics as hunger-striking political prisoners, Orbach and Wolf elide the stark differences between the lived experiences of suffragette hunger strikers and anorectics. In making this claim, Orbach's work does not engage with the suffragettes' self-narrations of their protest, which emphasise the political intentionality of their acts as a conscious, strategic, and highly visible contestation of power (Bargu 2016:353). This thesis works from the premise that the complicated and painful experiences of anorectics do not constitute hunger strikes (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2010:145-156; for an exploration of the lived experiences of individuals with anorexia nervosa, see Warin 2009). The pitfalls of the hunger strike as metaphor demonstrates the necessity of centring hunger strikers' personal testimonies and narrations of their violent protests.

This thesis also centres the personal testimonies of female hunger strikers to counteract historical and theoretical approaches to women's hunger strikes that have silenced or

marginalised women's voices. This project draws upon the suffragettes' writings, publications, and oral histories to combat the misogyny and masculinism that has permeated much of the historiography of the suffragette movement (see Holton 2011; Purvis 2013a). Sandra Stanley Holton argues that feminist histories of the suffragette movement must work to 'challenge the masculinist perspectives that have created the image of the twentieth-century suffragette as abnormal among her sex, simultaneously hysterical and mannish, weak in her political understanding and exhibitionist in her search for the public spotlight' (Holton 2011:834). Likewise, June Purvis highlights how these masculinist accounts of the suffragette movement deprive the suffragettes' personal experiences, writings, autobiographies, and their recollections of the movement (Purvis 2013a:582). Purvis notes how historian Martin Pugh criticises the suffragettes' personal accounts as 'largely fantasy', while historian Andrew Rosen dismisses historiography that centres on the suffragettes' personal experiences (Purvis 2013a:582). Following this line of argument, this project centres the official publications and writings of the WSPU and members of the Pankhurst family, as well as the prison diaries and autobiographies of lesser-known suffragettes such as Katie Gliddon and Kitty Marion. It prioritises the 'social relationships and interactions among people who actually existed; the particular significance of specific events in individual lives; and the cultural meanings attaching to such relationships and events' in order to understand the meaning of the hunger strikes for members of the suffragette movement (Holton 2011:837). Through this range of first-hand perspectives, this thesis attempts to convey some of the ideological and political diversity that existed among members of the suffragette movement (Holton 2011:834).

The problems of voice and silencing manifest even more acutely in relation to immigration detainees. The existing literature in the field of refugee and forced migration studies is deeply concerned with the politics of refugees' voices and the problematics of 'giving voice' to refugee subjects. As Nando Sigona notes, the plurality of refugees' experiences are rarely represented in popular and academic discourses, which 'tend to privilege a one-dimensional representation of the refugee which relies heavily on feminized and infantilized images of "pure" victimhood and vulnerability' (Sigona 2014:370). By wresting people's stories from their specific sociohistorical contexts, these simplified representations of refugees as victims 'ultimately lead to the silencing of refugees' (Sigona 2014:370). Similarly, Heath Cabot draws attention to how both advocates and ethnographers, in their desire to give voice to refugees, may 'perpetuate images of refugees as vulnerable and tragic figures, thus

contributing to the silencing of refugees as active and critical subjects' (Cabot 2016:647-648). Consequently, even sympathetic coverage of refugees' struggles does not necessarily mean 'that these subjects are "given voice" in the media', meaning that refugees themselves largely remain excluded from public discourse surrounding immigration (Gray and Franck 2019:280). This project foregrounds the testimonies given by the hunger strikers at Yarl's Wood, alongside the personal experiences of other individuals detained at Yarl's Wood and at other IRCs in the British detention estate. It explores how detained individuals deploy institutionally sanctioned narratives, such as the meagre protections offered by international human rights frameworks and norms. Yet, it also shows how detained individuals contest these accepted narratives of refugeedom through the appropriation, subversion, or the outright rejection of these discourses of victimhood (Sigona 2014:378).

However, even as this project privileges the voices of female hunger strikers, it does not uncritically reproduce these protesters' self-narrations. Following Bargu's interweaving of ethnography with political theory, this project reads hunger strikers' personal testimonies alongside the discourses produced by state authorities, the public, and media commentators (Bargu 2013:806; Bargu 2016:30). By doing so, this project takes 'neither the dominant narratives of power nor the narratives subjugated by them at their word' (Bargu 2013:806). This contextualised interrogation of hunger strikers' self-narrations is of particular import in relation to the suffragette movement, given the ways in which the suffragette hunger strikers' political project was produced by and deeply imbricated within wider imperialist and colonial relations of power in Edwardian Britain. Rather than uncritically celebrating the feminist actions and networks of female friendship and solidarity that emerged during the movement (Purvis 2013a:106), it highlights how the movement was deeply shaped by imperialist ideals, such as notions of British civilisational superiority. In this sense, this thesis takes seriously the hunger strikers' narrations of their protests, but also engages critically with their wider political platforms and the specific sociohistorical contexts in which their protests were situated.

For the suffragettes' hunger strikes, this project drew from archival material on the suffragettes collected from five British archives: The Women's Library at the London School of Economics, the Girton College archives, the Museum of London, and the National Archives. The Women's Library, the Girton College Archives, and the Museum of London hold the personal documents of many prominent suffragettes, which include books,

pamphlets, periodicals, prison diaries and correspondence, press cuttings, objects, autobiographies, and photographs. The Women's Library and the Girton College archives also hold a selection of oral histories. Meanwhile, the National Archives holds an extensive collection Home Office documents, court cases, and prison records relating to the British suffragettes. It also holds a large number of newspaper clippings that recorded the media coverage of the imprisonment, hunger strikes, and force-feeding of British suffragettes. Together, these archives provided a varied range of documents that captured both the diverse perspectives of the suffragettes and the state's responses to their embodied protests.

In comparison to the wealth of available materials from the suffragette movement, this project has drawn on a narrower base of sources in its analysis of the 2018 hunger strike at Yarl's Wood. It compares detainees' personal testimonies of the hunger strike with media coverage and state responses to the protests, as well as drawing upon other testimonies and studies of the wider British immigration detention estate. This project does not use original interview data from current or former detainees, since, as many current or former detainees at Yarl's Wood have experienced torture, sexual violence, and/or gender-based violence, interviews with immigration detainees require experienced researchers who have previously worked with vulnerable individuals. Consequently, this thesis draws its personal accounts of the hunger strike from anonymous testimonies posted to the website *Detained Voices*. This website, operated by supporters outside of the detention centre, records and publishes testimonies by detainees across the British detention estate. Statements are received by email, fax, or written by volunteers word-for-word over the phone, before being read back to detainees for confirmation (detainedvoices.com n.d.). Accounts posted on *Detained Voices* are regularly cited in media coverage of the British detention estate (see Green 2015; Gayle 2015; D. Taylor 2016; Courtney-Guy 2020). *Detained Voices* also publicised several sets of demands put forward by the hunger strikers, as well as frequent updates from hunger strikers throughout the course of the protest.

This thesis examines testimonies of immigration detention submitted in written form to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the use of Immigration Detention, hosted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Migration (2014-2015). Alongside these testimonies, this project draws upon Parliamentary inquiries into immigration detention by the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (2019) and the Joint Committee on Human Rights (2019). Finally, this project examines media coverage

of Yarl's Wood and independent research conducted by non-governmental organisations and charities like Women for Refugee Women (2014, 2017). Through this variety of resources, this project captures both the institutional logics of the British immigration system and personal experiences of immigration detention, interrogating the self-narrations of hunger strikers and immigration detainees alongside the narratives produced by the Home Office and other governmental bodies.

Thinking through Women's Hunger Strikes: Hunger strikes in the Women's Social and Political Union (1909-1914) and at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre (2018)

Hunger strikes in the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU).

This project examines the hunger strikes undertaken by the British suffragettes between 1909-1914. It expands upon scholarship on the British suffragettes and the wider women's suffrage movement through its analysis of the politics of gender, race, and the body in the WSPU. While this project, necessarily, cannot speak to the vast literature on the women's suffrage movement, it makes three key contributions to this field of study. First, this project frames the suffragettes' protests as a form of embodied politics, examining how the suffragettes laid claim to citizenship and political space through their gendered bodies. Second, this thesis builds on existing analyses of the suffragettes' force-feedings as a form of institutionalised sexual violence or 'oral rape' to examine the central role of gendered and sexualised forms of violence during the suffragette campaign. This project foregrounds how institutionalised forms of political violence were used to punish and terrorise suffragettes, while also producing them as the infantilised and feminised dependents of a patriarchal British state. However, it also examines how the suffragettes contested the production of these gendered subjectivities. Third, this project foregrounds the role of whiteness and white embodiment during the suffragette campaign. It examines how the Edwardian state's positioning as the benevolent protector of suffragette women, as well as the suffragettes' emotive pleas to the Edwardian republic regarding their 'torture' at the hands of the British state, explicitly drew upon normative ideals of white femininity. In doing so, this project enriches the existing scholarship on race, colonialism, and women's suffrage in the British

context (see Rendall 1994; Burton 1994; Cohler 2010; Dyhouse 2013; Mukherjee 2018), while also illuminating areas for future scholarship and intellectual exploration.

The British suffragettes' hunger strikes took place at the height of the campaign for women's suffrage in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Victorian feminists had made significant gains over the course of the nineteenth century, including areas such as education, paid work, and the legal erosion of coverture or the forfeiture of a married woman's legal rights to her husband (Steinbach 2005:267). The vote was one of the last areas where nineteenth-century feminists had struggled to see concrete gains, and thus became the focus of pre-war twentieth-century feminist efforts (Steinbach 2005:265). The first recorded petition for women's suffrage was presented to Parliament in 1832, while the first mass petition for women's suffrage was presented by MP John Stuart Mill to Parliament in 1866 (Steinbach 2005:285). Between 1867 and 1884 bills and amendments were discussed every year in Parliament, and between 1884 and 1897 several more were debated; however, none of these amendments were passed (Steinbach 2005:297). 1897 also saw the formation of the National Union for Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), the organisation that united a variety of woman's suffrage societies across the country under the leadership of Millicent Garrett Fawcett (Holton 2014:251). Committed to achieving the women's vote through peaceful and constitutional means, the largely middle-class NUWSS employed traditional pressure group techniques to encourage cross-party support for the women's vote (Holton 2014:252).

The campaign for women's suffrage radically shifted with the formation of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in 1903. Founded by Emmeline Pankhurst in Manchester as a breakaway group from the Independent Labour Party (ILP), the group was originally intended to promote sexual equality within the labour and socialist movements (Holton 2014:251). However, the WSPU turned to spectacular methods of protest in order to put pressure on the incoming Liberal government and reinvigorate press coverage of the issue of woman's suffrage (Holton 2014:252). The turn towards militancy was instigated by the arrest of Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney in 1905 for disrupting a political rally in Manchester (Holton 2014:252). The wide-scale publicity around their imprisonment catapulted the movement for the vote into the public eye, to mixed responses from constitutional suffragists (Holton 2014:252). The suffragettes originally used a variety of forms of political activism designed to demonstrate wide-scale popular support for women's

suffrage, such as heckling, marches, and deputations. In 1907, a number of suffragettes broke away from the WSPU to form the Women's Freedom League (WFL) due to their discomfort with the Pankhursts' autocratic leadership style (Atkinson 2019:73-75). On 30th June 1908, Mary Leigh and Edith New conducted the WSPU's first window-smashing protest, shattering two windowpanes at the prime minister's residence (Atkinson 2019:107). Window smashing and other forms of property damage became increasingly prominent forms of protest throughout the course of the suffragette movement.

The character of suffragette resistance changed significantly after 1909, when, on July 5th, the suffragette Marion Wallace Dunlop launched the WSPU's first hunger strike (Atkinson 2019:157). After 91 hours of fasting, Wallace Dunlop was released from prison (Atkinson 2019:157). Although Wallace Dunlop's protest had not been planned by the WSPU, the WSPU recognised the strategic value of her protest and rapidly adopted the hunger strike as a key mode of struggle (Atkinson 2019:157). Martin Pugh calculates that 1,085 suffragettes and nine male supporters were imprisoned between the years 1905 and 1914, with many suffragettes arrested multiple times; of those imprisoned, Pugh estimates that 241 suffragettes went on hunger strike (Pugh 2000:210-212 in Gullickson 2008:465). In September 1909, the Liberal government adopted the policy of force-feeding hunger strikers (Atkinson 2019:167). Although prison doctors and government officials insisted that force-feeding was necessary to save suffragettes from their own self-starvation and was part of the state's duty of care to its subjects, suffragettes portrayed their experiences of force-feeding as unnecessarily brutal, punitive in nature, and conducted in a dangerous or incompetent manner (Miller 2016:48-50). In 1910 Home Secretary Winston Churchill introduced Rule 243A, which gave imprisoned suffragettes some of the privileges granted to political prisoners, in order to mollify public discontent and neutralise the effectiveness of the hunger strike (Geddes 2008:84). However, the loss of these privileges in June 1912, marked by the movement of Emmeline Pankhurst and the Pethick-Lawrences from the First to the Second Division, sparked another wave of hunger strikes for political prisoner status (Geddes 2008:85). These experiences of imprisonment, hunger striking, and force-feeding played a definitive role in the formation of a distinct suffragette identity as well as in the retrospective memorialisation of the suffragette movement (Schwan 2013:149; Chidgey 2018:85).

While the hunger strikes continued throughout the latter years of the WSPU's campaign, suffragette tactics shifted significantly between the years 1912-1914, becoming 'increasingly

clandestine and more violent' (Holton 2014:254). In the first decade of the twentieth century there was considerable overlap and movement between constitutional and militant suffrage groups, with the two frequently working 'in symbiosis' with one another (Holton 2014:253). However, in 1912, after the failure of the government's Conciliation Bill and the subsequent escalation of violence by suffragette militants, the NUWSS formally rejected the WSPU's militant methods (Holton 2014:254). By 1912, the WSPU, which was now a smaller, more radical faction under the increasingly autocratic leadership of Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, escalated its militant activities through attacks on public figures, bombings, and arson attacks against both private and public property (Holton 2014:254). In 1913, overwhelmed by the number of suffragette prisoners on hunger strike, the government passed the Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Ill Health) Act (Miller 2016:55). The Act allowed the Government to temporarily release hunger-striking suffragettes and arrest them again once they had recovered, avoiding the risk of a suffragette dying in prison without reducing her sentence (Geddes 2008:88). Suffragette militancy steadily escalated until the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, upon which Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst negotiated a truce with the Liberal government, agreeing to halt all militant operations and support the war effort (Atkinson 2019:508-509). In return, the Liberal government released all suffragette prisoners (Atkinson 2019:508-509). On February 6th 1918 the Representation of the People Act 1918 extended the franchise to all men over the age of 21 and to women who were over the age of 30 and met certain property requirements (Atkinson 2019:516, 519). Women finally received suffrage on equal terms with men in 1928 through the passing of the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act 1928, which extended the vote to all women over the age of 21 (Atkinson 2019:521-522).

Immigration Detention in Britain and the 2018 hunger strike at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre

This project also examines a hunger strike at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre in 2018. It contributes to the growing body of literature on immigration detention in the United Kingdom by foregrounding how the detention centre operates through gendered and racialised forms of violence, and how detainees use hunger striking and other forms of self-directed political violence to resist their violent subjectification by the state. As there is an extensive and rapidly proliferating body of work on refugees, migration, and asylum seekers, this project draws upon some of the literature but does not aim to respond to the large

questions raised by this field of inquiry. Instead, it contributes to the limited literature on self-harming forms of protest in the context of the British immigration detention estate. There is a growing literature on self-directed political violence in detention centres and refugee camps worldwide, including hunger striking, lip sewing, and self-immolation (see Fiske 2016; Bargu 2017). However, despite the large number of hunger strikes across the British detention estate, there is still significant scope to examine the practice, significance, and effects of these protests in the context of the United Kingdom (see McGregor 2011 and Tyler 2013). Furthermore, by examining how race and racialisation shape the British detention estate and the experiences of immigration detainees, this thesis enriches existing scholarship that examines how race and coloniality underpin the British immigration detention system (see Bosworth 2014; Turnbull 2017). In doing so, it contributes to the wider literature on the relationship between race, empire and migration in the British context (see Mayblin 2018; El-Enany 2020; Goodfellow 2020).

Immigration detention refers to the detaining or holding of people in custody while they are waiting for permission to legally enter the country or prior to their deportation or removal from the country (AVID n.d.). Crucially, although the conditions of immigration detention bear similarities to incarceration, detention is an ‘administrative process, not a criminal procedure’; this means that detainees are held in custody on the order of the Home Office with limited judicial oversight (AVID n.d.). The current UK detention estate consists of seven Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs): Brook House, Colnbrook, Harmondsworth, Morton Hall, Tinsley House, Yarl’s Wood, and Dungavel (Silverman, Griffiths and Walsh 2020:3). There are also two short-term holding facilities, one pre-departure accommodation facility, thirty holding rooms, and a number of short-term units within some IRCs (Silverman, Griffiths and Walsh 2020:3). Between 2009 and 2019 the total number of people entering detention per year has ranged from approximately 24,000 to 32,000 (Silverman, Griffiths and Walsh 2020:5). The vast majority (81-86%) of these individuals are male, and approximately half of all individuals detained have claimed asylum in the United Kingdom (Silverman, Griffiths and Walsh 2020:5,8). In 2016, the UK Government introduced the ‘Adults at Risk’ policy in order to prevent the detention of vulnerable individuals, defining torture survivors, survivors of gender-based and/or sexual violence, survivors of human trafficking, disabled individuals, and individuals with serious mental or physical health problems as ‘at risk’ and unsuitable for detention (Home Office 2019a:5-8). However, the introduction of the Adults at Risk policy appears to have made little difference to the

detention of survivors of torture and gender-based violence, as these individuals continue to be detained (Lousley and Cope 2017:6).

Compared to immigration detention in Europe, the British immigration detention system is unusual in lacking a time limit on detention. In theory, detention is only intended to hold migrants prior to an imminent deportation or if they constitute a threat to the safety and the well-being of the British public; consequently, detention should only be used sparingly and for the shortest amount of time possible (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2019:8). However, approximately one-third of immigration detainees in the United Kingdom are held for longer than 28 days (Silverman, Griffiths and Walsh 2020:9). The lack of a time limit persists despite the fact that both the joint inquiry by the All-Party Parliamentary Working Group on Migration and the All-Party Parliamentary Working Group on Refugees, and the inquiry held by the Joint Human Rights Committee, recommended the instatement of a 28-day time limit on detention (All-Party Parliamentary Working Group on Migration and the All-Party Parliamentary Working Group on Refugees 2015:9; Joint Human Rights Committee 2019:3). That being said, as of January 2018, immigration detainees have been granted automatic bail hearings, leading to a significant increase in the proportion of detainees released on bail and a steady decrease in the number of individuals held in detention facilities (Silverman, Griffiths and Walsh 2020:8-9). As of May 2020, the number of individuals held in detention has fallen to a record low, most likely due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Silverman, Griffiths and Walsh 2020:8-9).

Yarl's Wood IRC, located in Bedford, Bedfordshire, is the United Kingdom's only predominantly female immigration detention centre. When it opened in 2001, Yarl's Wood IRC was administered by Global Solutions Ltd, a company owned by Group 4 Falck (BBC News 2007). In 2007, the private company Serco assumed management of the centre, although it contracts the security company G4S to provide certain services, such as healthcare (BBC News 2007). The detention centre was built to house approximately 900 detainees, although due to the fire and safety concerns, it currently holds up to 410 individuals (D. Shaw 2015). Until 2010, Yarl's Wood also served as the United Kingdom's detention centre for family units (BBC News 2010a). In 2010, Nick Clegg, then Deputy Prime Minister, pledged to end the detention of minors (Stratton 2010). Since then, the Home Office has pursued a policy of family separation, significantly reducing the number of children in detention (Home Office 2017). However, children continue to be detained in British immigration removal

centres, albeit at much lower rates; in 2019, 73 children were detained, compared to 1,100 children in 2009 (Silverman, Griffiths and Walsh 2020:5). Moreover, immigration detainees, undercover staff, and whistle-blowers have documented numerous incidents of physical, sexual, and racist abuse against immigration detainees at Yarl's Wood. In 2003, an undercover report by Nick Sommerlad for the *Daily Mirror* documented instances of physical assault and racist abuse (BBC News 2003). Between 2013 and 2015, female detainees made at least six allegations of sexual assault against male staff (BBC News 2016). Meanwhile, a 2015 undercover investigation by Channel 4 News revealed racist and sexist verbal abuse by guards and a miscarriage related to inadequate healthcare provision (Channel 4 News 2015). As of August 2020, Yarl's Wood has been repurposed as a holding centre for Channel migrants in order to reduce the strain on holding facilities in Kent, due to a record number of migrant arrivals from across the Channel (Grierson and Taylor 2020). While the number of detained women has decreased during the pandemic, the Home Office is housing the remaining women in other detention facilities and is still actively seeking their removal from the country (Grierson and Taylor 2020).

Since the centre opened in 2001, detainees at Yarl's Wood have engaged in numerous hunger strikes, protests, and acts of collective resistance. In 2002, male detainees rioted and burnt down the male wing of the detention centre, causing at least £35m in damage (Hamilos et al. 2002). In 2005, between 57 and 112 Zimbabweans went on hunger strike across the detention estate, including five women at Yarl's Wood (McGregor 2011:597; Community Care 2005). In the same year, 30 Ugandan women conducted hunger strikes to protest detention conditions and appeal their asylum status (BBC News 2005). In 2008, a large group of African detainees performed a naked protest followed by a hunger strike in protest at the violent mishandling and deportation of fellow African detainees (Tyler 2013:104). 2010 saw at least 50 women go on hunger strike to protest both the length and conditions of detention, 20 of whom were on hunger strike for over two weeks (Hirsch 2010; Taylor 2010). In response, Serco staff allegedly placed the hunger strikers on 'lockdown' with no access to toilet facilities, water, or food, with several detainees fainting after being trapped in an 'airless' corridor for a day (Hirsch 2010). Several hunger strikes also took place in 2015 and 2016 and were documented on *Detained Voices* (Graham 2015; detainedvoices.com 2015j; detainedvoices.com 2015i; detainedvoices.com 2016b; detainedvoices.com 2016c).

This thesis primarily focuses on the 2018 hunger strike. On February 21st, 2018, over 120 Yarl's Wood detainees went on hunger strike to protest some of the Home Office's 'offensive practices' (detainedvoices.com 2018a). These included the violation of the writ of habeas corpus; the indefinite nature of detention under the UK system; the lack of access to adequate medical services; the incarceration of trafficking victims; victims of rape, torture and forms of sexual torture; the detention of adults who came to the UK as minors; and the treatment of LGBTQ+ individuals (detainedvoices.com 2018a). The strike was intended to be a three-day strike but was extended to last for a month. Alongside the hunger strike, a number of detainees conducted a sit-in protest and a work strike (detainedvoices.com 2018k; detainedvoices.com 2018gg; detainedvoices.com 2018e). The hunger strike ended on March 21st 2018 (SOAS Detainee Support 2018). The hunger strike received extensive media interest and a visit from the shadow Home Office Secretary Diane Abbott, but the Home Office made no concrete concessions to the hunger strikers.

Structure and Chapter Outlines

This thesis is divided into three sections, which are thematically connected through the concepts of limits, liminality, and thresholds. The first section, 'The Limits of Communication', focuses on the communicative aspects of hunger striking, examining how gender and race shape how the hunger-striking body 'speaks'. It examines two approaches to the hunger striker's pained body, one which rationalises self-injury as a form of political speech, and the other which venerates self-inflicted suffering as a form of self-sacrifice. This section illuminates the limits of analysing hunger strikes primarily as a communicative act or a form of political speech by identifying how gendered and racialised relations of power limit or silence female hunger strikers' rhetorical acts. The second section, 'The Limits of the Body', pivots from an analysis of what the hunger-striking body says or means to examining what the hunger striking body does. This section explores how the female hunger strikers in both cases pushed their bodies to their physical limits in order to make political claims upon the British body politic. The third section, 'The Limits of the Human', explores the relationship between hunger striking and humanity. It examines whether the hunger strike, as a mode of protest that suspends the body in a liminal state between subject and object, active and passive, and life and death, can illuminate the limits of what it means to be human. Put

differently, it explores how hunger strikes possess the ability to contest a particular iteration of the human based on self-sovereignty, autonomy, and liberal self-preservation.

The first chapter, 'Silenced Speech', examines the concept of hunger striking as an 'act of speech', where the pained body is used to communicate discontent in contexts where ordinary modes of political speech are repressed or circumscribed. It suggests that the hunger strike as political critique emerged alongside a modern liberal approach to the suffering body which framed pain as both a universal experience and a negative phenomenon to be avoided or ameliorated as quickly as possible. This chapter critiques this liberal notion of the universal suffering body, arguing that the meaning of the pained body and its ability to 'speak' of political grievances is shaped by gendered and racialised relations of power. Drawing upon Rae Langton's work on the silencing of women's speech acts, it posits that gendered and racialised discourses silence female hunger strikers' acts of speech by making them unrecognisable as political critique. It focuses on the silencing effects of two intertwined discourses, humanitarianism and medicalisation, which establish the suffering bodies of female hunger strikers as the objects of male knowledge and patriarchal intervention. This chapter argues that during the suffragette movement, discourses of hysteria and mental incapacity were deployed by the state and other opponents and critics of the WSPU in order to portray the suffragettes as incapable of political speech. This chapter then turns to the case of Yarl's Wood to examine how the contemporary British Home Office medicalised the 2018 Yarl's Wood hunger strikes through the terms of 'food and fluid refusal', portraying their protests as a medical, as opposed to a political, problem. In both cases, this chapter concludes, state actors and medical practitioners established themselves as the benevolent and patriarchal authorities over women's suffering bodies and in doing so attempted to stymie their political speech.

The second chapter, 'Suspended Sacrifice', examines another form of communication engendered by the suffering body, one which draws on spiritual discourses such as self-sacrifice, heroism, and martyrdom. These frameworks reject the liberal avoidance of pain, framing the endurance of bodily pain as a sign of the hunger striker's moral superiority, a test of the hunger striker's masculine virility, or an act of transcendence that eludes the power of the state over the striker's body. This chapter argues that the suffragette leadership's use of religious iconography and the languages of sacrifice and martyrdom appropriated gendered notions of altruism and self-abnegation and re-articulated them within a distinctly feminine

heroic. However, it then argues that the suffragettes' experiences of sacrificial violence at the hands of the state, particularly in the form of force-feeding, offer a re-articulation of political violence that centres the role of sexual violence in the sacrificial experience. This chapter then turns to the context of contemporary immigration detention to show how detainees are produced as ungrievable subjects by the state, or subjects who cannot be sacrificed. It argues that rather than subjecting immigration detainees to deliberate humiliation or acts of sacrificial terror, the contemporary British Home Office governs and controls immigration detainees through violent indifference. It concludes with the argument that theories of self-sacrifice and martyrdom must account for the normative violence that designates some forms of violence to be extraordinary, noteworthy, and sacrificial, while designating other forms of violence as utterly mundane.

The third chapter, 'Reclaiming Space', frames the suffragettes' hunger strikes as part of a wider range of protest through which the suffragettes pre-emptively enacted their citizen rights. Edwardian women, this chapter suggests, occupied a liminal position between citizen and non-citizen, where they were technically able to participate in political life but could only do so in limited and gendered ways. In order to contest their liminal positioning, the suffragettes forcibly inserted themselves into masculinised political space through political techniques like heckling politicians, public speaking, and petitioning the king. Through these protests, the suffragettes resisted the gendered separation of space into masculine and feminine spheres of influence and their liminal suspension between the gendered division between the public and the private realms. They used their bodies to lay claim to public space, and, in doing so, rejected the exclusion of women from politics on the grounds of their gendered embodiment. They further enacted citizenship through their embodied protests in the context of the prison, where they went on hunger strike and used their bodies in a variety of ways to place pressure on prison infrastructure, with the goal of attaining political prisoner status. The suffragettes also used the experience of imprisonment as a way of building and strengthening the political identities of WSPU members, breaking down the division between the prison and the outside world of Edwardian society. Nonetheless, while the suffragettes actively laid claim to their own political rights, they also attempted to act *for* others, specifically other women who they saw as downtrodden, vulnerable, and oppressed. Although the suffragettes' attempts to act for other women demonstrated a degree of gender-based solidarity, it also illuminated the complicated class politics of the movement, and the tensions inherent in laying claim to rights on behalf of others.

The fourth chapter, 'Rejecting Waste', examines the specific qualities and temporality of the hunger strike – namely, its slow wastage of the flesh – through the case of the 2018 Yarl's Wood hunger strike. It centres around the theme of 'waste'. Following Lauren Berlant, this chapter first argues that detained subjects experience indefinite detention through the temporality of 'slow death', where they are physically and mentally worn down by the systemic violence of immigration detention. This chapter also suggests that detainees' experiences are shaped by temporalities of repetition and circularity, meaning that detained subjects exist in a liminal space outside of the linear flow of time. Offering a reading of the body as an archive, it suggests that detainees' bodies hold and record previous memories and experiences of trauma, which are then repeatedly relived in the traumatic context of immigration detention. This chapter then connects these temporal forms of waste to the way that immigration detention produces captive non-citizens as the abject waste products of the British state. Finally, this chapter offers a reading of the 2018 hunger strike as an embodied enactment of 'slow death', arguing that detainees staged the physical and mental devastation of immigration detention on the surface of their bodies. Next, it suggests that the 2018 hunger strike contested and refused the state's production of immigration detainees as a waste population. Inverting Veena Das' work on the relationship between violence, memory, embodiment, and trauma, this chapter argues that the hunger strikers at Yarl's Wood abjectly regurgitated their pain. In doing so, their archival bodies became an embodied critique of the state's violent practices in the context of the immigration detention estate.

The fifth chapter, 'Hunger Beyond the Human', examines how the discourses of humanity and inhumanity shaped the 2018 hunger strike at Yarl's Wood and the hunger strikes during the suffragette movement. First, this chapter explores how both suffragists and anti-suffragists used discourses of humanity and inhumanity during the suffragette movement. It examines how anti-suffragists used languages of inhumanity and animality to delegitimise the suffragettes' political claims, while the suffragettes used these languages to critique patriarchal violence. However, this chapter then explores how the suffragettes laid claim to humanity and the rights of citizenship through racist, imperialist, and eugenic discourses. It argues that the suffragettes established their humanity through colonial ideas of civilisational progress and white saviourism, thus reproducing an exclusive and racialised concept of the human. This chapter then examines how immigration detainees' attempts to lay claim to the liberal humanist subject are stymied by the racist and colonial exclusions upon which this

genre of the human was historically founded. However, it contends that the liminality of the hunger striker can contest the capacious, autonomous, and rational political actor produced and centred by liberal theories of the human. It frames the Yarl's Wood hunger strike as a reclamation of life on the strikers' own terms, an act which rejected their inhuman status or animalisation at the hands of the state and their status as humanitarian victims. The chapter then suggests that the hunger strike undermined the autonomy of the liberal figure of the human through its framing of emancipation as a shared, collective project.

The conclusion of this thesis draws together the themes brought forward throughout the chapters and articulates how these two examples of women's hunger strikes complicate approaches to political violence that place the liberal humanist subject at their centre. In particular, it returns to the problem posed by the hunger striker's liminal positioning as both the subject and the object of violence. It also highlights how this project's investigation of the female hunger striker's liminal body illuminates the gendered and racialised character of political violence. The conclusion then examines how these themes could influence the direction of future feminist and anti-racist scholarship. First, in light of the centenary commemorations of the suffragette movement, it questions the memorialisation and representation of the suffragette movement and how these representations can better contend with the WSPU's imperialist ideologies, practices, and sentiments. Second, it offers future directions for this project's theorisation of how women's hunger strikes can subvert the figure of the liberal humanist subject, focusing on the idea of capacity. Finally, it suggests that this project contributes to feminist and anti-racist critiques of carceral institutions and emphasises the importance of this topic for future research.

PART I: THE LIMITS OF COMMUNICATION

Chapter 1: Silenced Speech

Introduction

This chapter explores the framing of hunger striking as a form of political speech, where the hunger-striking body aims to communicate a political message through self-inflicted bodily suffering. In this approach to the hunger-striking body, the hunger strike is distinguished from other forms of self-starvation through its explicitly stated political motives. For example, Maud Ellman insists that ‘the act of self-starvation can achieve the status of a hunger strike only through a declaration of intention... hunger strikers must append a text of words to the mystery of their disintegrating flesh’ if they wish for their self-starvation to be ‘readable as protest’ (Ellman 1993:18-19). This chapter picks up the problematic offered by Ellman to ask: what makes hunger strikes readable as protest? Moreover, what processes render hunger strikes unrecognisable or unreadable as protest, silencing their attempted acts of political speech? To that end, this chapter questions the concept of the speaking body, arguing that theories that frame the hunger strike as a form of political speech rely upon the communicative potential of the body in pain.

The first part of this chapter, “‘We needed a voice and more importantly we needed someone to listen’: hunger striking as a form of political speech’, examines hunger striking as an ‘act of speech’, considering how hunger strikers use their suffering bodies to speak within contexts that silence or ignore their ordinary political speech (Fierke 2012:37). It connects the rhetorical power of the hunger strike as a critique of government to the growing liberalisation of British society, and the associated transformation of bodily pain from an inevitability of life to a condition that could and should be avoided wherever possible. However, drawing on Rae Langton’s work on the silencing of women’s speech acts, it then examines the various techniques opponents of hunger strikers use to silence hunger strikers’ acts of speech.

The second section, “‘A common tongue of suffering’?: illocutionary silencing and the gendered and racialised construction of the body in pain’, focuses upon the concept of illocutionary silencing to examine how gendered and racialised discourses can render women’s hunger strikes unreadable as protest. It problematises the assumption that pain constitutes a universally understood language of suffering, examining how ideas about pain, feeling, and sensitivity historically differentiated the empathetic white liberal subject from ‘insensate’ and ‘premodern’ racialised subjects. In other words, it foregrounds how pain and the capacity for feeling or recognising pain produces gendered and racialised distinctions between bodies that affect the extent to which these bodies can speak through self-inflicted suffering.

The third and fourth sections of this chapter examine how two mutually constitutive discourses – humanitarian approaches to suffering and the medicalisation of pain – work together to limit and silence women’s hunger strikes. These two discourses produce women’s hunger-striking bodies as objects of humanitarian sympathy and of medical knowledge. In doing so, they render their self-harm illegible as political speech. The third section of this chapter, “‘She is very weak—minded and eccentric’: hysteria, infantilisation, and mental capacity during the suffragette movement’, examines how state and medical authorities drew upon gendered discourses of female psychopathology to portray the suffragettes as ‘hysterical hooligans’ who were incapable of rational political speech. This section also acknowledges how the suffragettes contested their portrayal as hysterical women, suggesting that the Edwardian Home Office and medical authorities were only partially successful in their attempt to silence the suffragettes’ hunger strikes through these languages of pathology.

Finally, the fourth section, “‘They are medically assessed’: the body as an object of medical knowledge in immigration detention’, turns to the case of Yarl’s Wood. It shows how medicalising discourses such as ‘food and/or fluid refusal’ frame hunger strikes in the detention estate as a medical, rather than a political problem. This section also examines how the systemic ‘culture of disbelief’ in the Home Office and across the immigration detention estate and the hostile framing of migrants as inherently deceptive are used to delegitimise self-harm as a manipulative and narcissistic form of behaviour and silence detainees’ self-harming protests. Together, these examples show how the concept of the speaking body must

consider how gendered and racialised relations of power affect the ability of the body to communicate political discontent.

1.1 ‘We needed a voice and more importantly we needed someone to listen’: hunger striking as a form of political speech

Numerous theoretical approaches to the hunger strike work from the premise that ‘hunger striking itself is a form of political expression transmitted via the body’ (Miller 2016:11). They frame hunger striking as a form of communication and argue that the efficacy of the hunger strike as a form of protest depends upon its ability to communicate with authorities, publics, and sympathetic audiences (see Brockman 1999; Fierke 2012; Vicaro 2015; Fiske 2016; Miller 2016). The concept of the speaking body contradicts approaches to embodiment that separate the voice from the body, casting bodies as mute and apolitical (see Bordo 2003; Wilcox 2014). One method of resolving the apparent contradiction of the speaking body is casting the hunger strike as an inversion of the speech act, or an ‘act of speech’ (Fierke 2012:37). In this approach to the hunger strike, hunger strikers instrumentalise their starving bodies to communicate with outside audiences in circumstances where ordinary forms of political speech are limited or silenced (Fierke 2012:46). For example, in the context of the prison hunger strikes are used to re-open the ‘invisible’ space of the prison and speak to a political community outside of the prison walls (Fierke 2012:78). In contexts characterised by asymmetrical relations of power, hunger striking ‘speaks louder than words, without using words, through the suffering of the body’ (Miller 2016:1; Fierke 2012:84). In this sense, hunger striking can be interpreted as a form of ‘communicative suffering’ (Biggs 2014:1). Hunger strikers willingly inflict harm on themselves in order to convey ‘voluntary sacrifice’ to exterior audiences, demonstrating their commitment to their political cause, and ‘unequal harm’, highlighting the unjust nature of retaliatory violence or punitive measures taken by opponents or the state (Biggs 2014:1). When the political violence of an incumbent regime aims to destroy the voice of repressed communities, hunger striking acts as a refusal to reproduce the voice of the oppressor and as a method for communicating a group’s political plight (Fierke 2012:89).

During the suffragette movement, the leadership of the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU) explicitly framed suffragette militancy as a form of speech within a political system

that silenced or ignored women's voices. A leaflet published by the WSPU in ca. 1910 entitled 'A Message from the WSPU' argues, 'For fifty years we have believed and laboured in silence, but now we have realized that the day is past for silence' (WSPU ca. 1910:2). Consequently, the suffragettes portrayed their quest for the vote as a quest to be heard as citizens and political subjects in their own right. In the wake of the 'Black Friday' incident in 1910, when a suffragette deputation to Parliament was violently attacked by a number of plainclothes policemen, the suffragette Georgiana Solomon wrote that 'no amount of persecution will drive us away til that door is opened to admit of our voice being heard' (Solomon 1910:4). Similarly, in her ca. 1912 pamphlet 'Broken Windows', Christabel Pankhurst insisted, in light of the suffragettes' window-smashing campaigns, that 'the message of the broken pane is that women are determined that the lives of their sisters shall no longer be broken, and that in future those who have to obey the law shall have a voice in saying what that law shall be' (C. Pankhurst ca. 1912a:2). The suffragettes' emphasis on voice and self-representation extended to their representation in local and national press coverage. The suffragettes expressed a strong distrust in the national media and its representation of the suffragette movement, arguing that it silenced the authentic voices and aims of the WSPU. In her autobiographical account of the movement, the suffragette Kitty Marion claims that 'the voice of Woman's Suffrage... has been stifled by the wire-pulled Party Press', arguing that the press was guilty of a 'conspiracy of silence' (Marion ca. 1930:216). Likewise, the WSPU warned its readership that 'the facts about the Woman's Movement are steadily misrepresented in the Press', encouraging readers to buy the suffragette publication *Votes for Women* instead (WSPU ca. 1910:2). The suffragettes' political activism, alongside their publications and propaganda efforts, constituted an attempt to claim back their political voice.

These contestations over political voice similarly shaped anti-suffragist responses to the movement, which mocked and criticised outspoken women. Anti-suffragist propaganda and material cultures did not merely portray women's political speech as humorous or infantile. They also suggested that outspoken Edwardian women should be violently and punitively silenced. For example, numerous Edwardian postcards depicted women in gags, women with caged mouths, women with their tongues sliced off, and women with their tongues nailed to posts, among other acts of violence directed at mouths and tongues (Wright 2017). While some of these postcards were explicitly anti-suffragist in nature, others were part of a broader collection of anti-feminist materials that critiqued women who deviated from patriarchal

norms (Wright 2017). In the British context, these images resonated with the historical use of ‘branks’ or the ‘gossip’s bridle’, a torture device used to silence and punish women who were considered loud, troublesome, gossips, scolds, or potential witches (Davis 2003:41-42). In 1910, *Votes for Women* reprinted an article that had previously appeared in *The Manchester Guardian*, describing violence directed towards the WSPU as ‘a sort of recrudescence of the sentiments which once found expression in the scold’s bridle and the ducking-stool’ (Collette 2013:141). Throughout the suffragette movement, the suffragettes attempted to speak with their bodies during their militant protests and their hunger strikes in response to their exclusion from official forms of political engagement, as well as in response to the facets of Edwardian society that attempted to silence women’s political speech.

Nonetheless, even within this hostile patriarchal environment, the suffragettes still had more opportunities for political speech than contemporary immigration detainees. Even though the suffragettes were denied a voice in Parliament, they were still able to speak in the public sphere through their political events, propaganda, and publications. The suffragettes even had their own publishing house, *The Women’s Press*, established in 1907, through which they published their periodicals and other materials in favour of the women’s vote (Murray 2000:199). Through their independent publishing house, they questioned and problematised the ‘male hegemony over communications’ that shaped the mainstream press (Murray 2000:202). In contrast, immigration detainees face more acute difficulties around communication, speech, and language. Many detainees experience language barriers due to a lack of adequate translators or because they do not trust the translators provided by the Home Office (Bosworth 2014:1-2, All-Party Parliamentary Working Group on Migration and the All-Party Parliamentary Working Group on Refugees 2015:46). Detainees struggle to communicate with family, friends, the Home Office, and immigration lawyers from inside the detention centre due to inadequate infrastructure and insufficient access to communication technologies (All-Party Parliamentary Working Group on Migration and the All-Party Parliamentary Working Group on Refugees 2015:43-44). While detention centres like Yarl’s Wood have computers with internet access, the Home Office blocks access to certain websites, including a blanket ban on all social media (All-Party Parliamentary Working Group on Migration and the All-Party Parliamentary Working Group on Refugees 2015:43-44). The blocking of certain websites also prevents detainees making complaints about the immigration detention system. While attempting to gather testimonies of immigration detention, the All-Party Parliamentary Working Group on Migration and the All-Party

Parliamentary Working Group on Refugees found that detainees could not access the inquiry's website, and thus were unable to submit their experiences of detention (All-Party Parliamentary Working Group on Migration and the All-Party Parliamentary Working Group on Refugees 2015:11). Immigration detainees face multiple, overlapping forms of silencing that affect their ability to communicate with the outside world and limit their opportunities for political speech.

During the 2018 hunger strike, protesters at Yarl's Wood emphasised how their protests sprang from the need for the Home Office and the British public to hear and understand the realities of immigration detention. The hunger strikers emphasised how detainees possess very few avenues for expressing political discontent; as a result, they felt 'voiceless, forgotten and ignored' (detainedvoices.com 2018n). One protester described how the barriers to effective communication with the outside world felt like a deliberate form of silencing on the part of the Home Office:

about the signal, we can't get any calls through because there is no signal, this is over a week now and I kind of feel like it's on purpose. We have to go outside in the rain to make phone calls. I have been told by officers it's outside as well but I would like to find out the reason as it's distressing and very inconvenient when people can't contact lawyers and family. I feel even more cut off as most of the time I can't get back to anyone (detainedvoices.com 2018u).

In light of these barriers, the strikers attempted to use their self-starvation as a form of political speech. During the protest, one of the protesters argued that she went on hunger strike because 'we needed a voice and more importantly we needed someone to listen' (detainedvoices.com 2018r). Collectively, the strikers stated, 'we want our voices to be heard, we need an end to this indefinite detention' (detainedvoices.com 2018b), asking civil society members to 'help us out there, to get our voices out' (detainedvoices.com 2018d). The hunger strike thus functioned as a form of political speech in a highly coercive environment where detainees' opportunities for political speech were greatly circumscribed.

However, if authorities can silence a group's political speech, it follows that they can also limit or silence their *acts* of speech. Since the act of speech functions as an inversion of the speech-act, this chapter now turns to Rae Langton's work on speech acts to examine the properties of the speech act and how speech acts 'misfire' (Langton 1993:301). J. L. Austin's speech-act theory argues that speech does three main things. The first form of action contained in speech is the locutionary act, which refers to the content or the meaning of the

speech as traditionally conceived (Langton 1993:295). The second act is the perlocutionary act, which refers to some of the effects of this speech, such as persuading or convincing the listening party (Langton 1993:295). The final act is the illocutionary act, or the action enacted or performed by the speech itself; examples are to urge, command, and compel through language (Langton 1993:296). While a perlocutionary act is ‘performed *by* saying something’, the illocutionary act is ‘performed simply *in* saying something (Langton 1993:300, emphasis in original). However, Rae Langton argues that speech-acts ‘can be unhappy, can misfire’, meaning that they can perform a different action to what they were intended to perform, or fail to perform any act at all (Langton 1993:301). One function of power is to have the capacity to perform speech acts as intended (Langton 1993:314). Conversely, one sign of powerlessness is a subject’s inability to perform speech acts that they wish to perform (Langton 1993:314). Extrapolating from this argument, this chapter argues that another sign of powerlessness may be an actor’s inability to perform their desired act of speech. Like ordinary speech, acts of speech are ‘necessarily a dialogue whose meanings do not end with the intentions of the speaker but depend upon the understanding of the interlocutor’ (Ellman 1993:3). In other words, as the starving body attempts to overcome silence and speaks to its audiences, these audiences enter into a dialogue about the meaning and significance of this violent act (Fierke 2012:46). Depending on the outcome of this dialogue, a marginalised subject’s act of speech may fail to communicate its intended message, or to communicate anything at all.

Like speech acts, acts of speech can ‘misfire’ on three different levels. First, hunger strikes can be silenced at the most basic level, the level of the locutionary act. Locutionary silencing, achieved through intimidation, violence, or the belief that speaking would be futile, prevents subjects from physically speaking in the first place. When silencing occurs at the locutionary level, ‘no words are uttered at all’ (Langton 1993:315). Correspondingly, acts of speech undergo locutionary silencing when protesters are physically unable to act. Hunger strikes may be physically silenced in a number of ways, including by repressive measures such as police brutality and beatings (Kenney 2017:218-219). Most commonly, though, hunger strikes are silenced at the locutionary level through the controversial process of force-feeding. Force-feeding, historically referred to as ‘forcible feeding’, describes the insertion of liquid food into a noncompliant and non-consenting subject, usually through the mouth and oesophagus or via the nasal passages (Miller 2016:2). Force-feeding physically breaks the striker’s fast, inhibiting the striker’s ability to speak with their body. Moreover, as force-

feeding often constitutes a painful, degrading, and even dangerous procedure, the threat of force-feeding is used to prevent, discourage, and inhibit hunger strikes.

In the case of the suffragette movement, force-feeding played a central role in the Edwardian Home Office's response to the WSPU's hunger strikes. Although the Edwardian Home Office and prison authorities portrayed force-feeding as a necessary response to the suffragettes' self-inflicted starvation, the suffragettes argued that during force-feedings their bodies were 'battered, assaulted, and harmed in an orgy of prison violence' (Miller 2016:36). Despite its ineffectiveness as a medical technique, many suffragettes were force-fed numerous times, with force-feedings occurring twice a day until a suffragette broke her strike or was too weakened by the force-feedings to remain in prison. While force-feeding is the most obvious form of locutionary silencing, it is also highly controversial and politically risky, especially from 1975 onwards when force-feeding was declared unethical by the World Medical Association (Miller 2016:5). Consequently, in the case of the 2018 hunger strike at Yarl's Wood, locutionary silencing operated through means other than force-feeding, such as forced removal. During the 2018 hunger strike, the Home Office attempted to dissuade protesters through the threat of expedited deportation. In a letter to the hunger strikers dated March 2nd, 2018, the Home Office stated that their food and fluid refusal 'may, in fact, lead to your case being accelerated and your removal from the UK taking place sooner' (Busby 2018). In these examples, force-feeding and forced deportations are forms of coercion that physically silence hunger strikers, intimidate them into ceasing their protests, and encourage them to believe that acts of speech will be futile.

Second, acts of speech may be silenced at the perlocutionary level. Langton refers to this second kind of silencing as '*perlocutionary frustration*', where 'one argues, but no one is persuaded; one invites, but nobody attends the party; one votes, hoping to oust the government, but one is outnumbered' (Langton 1993:315, emphasis in original). In the case of the act of speech, protesters successfully go on hunger strike, but they fail to persuade hostile authorities and outside publics of the legitimacy of their cause. Perlocutionary frustration, Langton argues, is an ordinary fact of life, but gains a political dimension when this frustration relates to the speaker's social position (Langton 1993:315). Similarly, women's acts of speech may fail to persuade audiences and authorities of the legitimacy of their political causes, especially in patriarchal contexts where women's voices are regularly disbelieved. Although the suffragettes' hunger strikes and other forms of militancy generated

significant publicity for the women's vote, it remains debatable whether their acts persuaded the general Edwardian public of the rightfulness of their cause. Ian Miller suggests that the suffragettes proved adept at exploiting the modern emotional economies of Edwardian Britain through their emotive publications on the government's brutal treatment of hunger striking prisoners (Miller 2016:56). However, Elizabeth Crawford notes that letters from the general public to the press tended to favour the government's repressive response, particularly in the later stages of the suffragette campaign as the WSPU's militancy became increasingly violent (Purvis 2019:1219). By 1914, a newspaper billboard produced by *The Evening Standard* read: "LET THEM STARVE": VIEWS OF PUBLIC MEN' (*The Evening Standard* 1914). Similarly, despite the support of a vocal minority, the suffragettes failed to convince the majority of the medical profession that force-feeding constituted a form of torture (Miller 2016:41, 44). Hence, the extent to which the suffragettes managed to persuade their contemporaries through their acts of speech remains questionable.

Likewise, while the hunger strikers at Yarl's Wood received a degree of public sympathy during their strike, their protest struggled to persuade the relevant political authorities to acquiesce to their demands. Akin to initial controversy generated by the force-feeding of suffragettes, the hunger strike at Yarl's Wood received a reasonable amount of media coverage and was discussed in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords (see Hansard HC Deb. 6 March 2018; Hansard HL Deb. 27 February 2018). Yet the marginal status of immigration detainees also meant that the hunger strikers struggled to persuade the Home Office, detention centre staff, or other authorities to accede to any of their demands. Some of the hunger strikers at Yarl's Wood felt that Home Office officials refused to take their strike seriously as a form of political speech; one striker reported to *Detained Voices* that 'a Home Office official just walked past us and asked if we are having a party, the home office workers know we are on a hunger strike but they keep walking past with their lunches' (detainedvoices.com 2018m). Another hunger striker, reflecting on their attempted discussions with the Home Office, reported to *Detained Voices* that 'it can be summed up as talking to a brick wall like every other occasion I've had to speak with an immigration officer' (detainedvoices.com 2018n). In both of these cases, the hunger strikers managed to gain some public traction through their protests but were unable to fully convince or persuade the relevant authorities to take action on their behalf.

Although both the hunger strikers in the suffragette movement and at Yarl's Wood experienced forms of locutionary and perlocutionary silencing, this chapter primarily focuses on the third type of silencing Langton elucidates in her work: the '*illocutionary disablement*' of the speech act (Langton 1993:315, emphasis in original). Illocutionary deactivation occurs in social contexts where certain actions become 'unspeakable' or become unrecognisable as actions. It removes the performative function of a speech act, so that the speech-act cannot act in and of itself. Langton explores this in relation to the word 'no', examining how this word can and often does misfire within the context of sexual intercourse. She argues that certain forms of violent pornography entrench the understanding that women's spoken refusal of sex does not *actually* entail a refusal, so that 'refusal is not simply frustrated but disabled' (Langton 1993:321, emphasis in original). In other words, she argues that certain forms of pornography create a discursive context where 'women cannot *do things* with words, even when we think we know how' (Langton 1993:328, emphasis in original). Although Langton's claims regarding the properties of pornography are open to debate, this concept of illocutionary deactivation captures how women's hunger strikes are depoliticised by gendered and racialised discourses.

Rather than being unable to perform the act itself, hostile discursive environments render female hunger strikers' actions illegible as a form of protest. Instead of being unable to *do things* with words, they cannot *say things* with their bodies. This is not to say that male hunger strikes do not experience forms of illocutionary silencing which render their self-starvation unrecognisable as protest, but that the illocutionary silencing of women's hunger strikes often operates through reference to gendered logics. Indeed, male hunger strikers' acts of speech are often silenced at the illocutionary level through the deployment of gendered and racialised discourses. For example, the hunger strikes conducted by a small number of male suffragettes were depoliticised through feminising and queer discourses that cast the strikers as 'unmanly, un-English weakling(s)' (Holton 1997:234). The Edwardian authorities' description of male suffragette Hugh Franklin as 'pale complexion, dark moustache; wears spectacles; Jewish appearance' also demonstrates how gendered discourses operated alongside and through racialised antisemitic stereotypes (Holton 1997:234). Similarly, during the 2002 men's hunger strikes at Woomera Immigration Reception and Processing Centre, the Australian government insisted that they would not be "manipulated" by such "barbaric" behaviour' (Klocker and Dunn 2003 in Fiske 2016:117). The government's language of barbarism illuminates how detainees' political speech is depoliticised through colonial forms

of knowledge that position racialised subjects as premodern, antithetical to modernity, and exterior to liberal notions of progress (Schuller 2018:8). In this sense, gender and race fundamentally shape how the pained body speaks.

1.2 ‘We can recognize suffering wherever we see it’: illocutionary silencing and the gendered and racialised body in pain

The concept of hunger striking as a form of political hinges upon the ability of the body to communicate pain to an outside audience. Yet, the starving body is not a ‘self-evident indictment of an unjust regime’ (Vicaro 2015:177). Although theorists like Elaine Scarry and Hannah Arendt insist that pain itself is a private, intimate, and speechless experience, hunger striking depends upon pain’s transformation in into a political statement that can be publicised, circulated and shared (Arendt 1998:50-51; Scarry 1987:4; Vicaro 2015:175). In the context of the United Kingdom, the communicative power of bodily suffering derives from the social, medical and cultural transformation of pain from an experience with a ‘multitude of uses’ to a negative phenomenon to be minimised, avoided, and prevented wherever possible (Chaney 2019:34). By the end of the nineteenth century, public displays of pain were recoded as ‘barbaric’ practices and associated with premodernity (Chaney 2019:13; Miller 2016:18-19). Although hunger strikers risked having their protests cast as a form of irrational, premodern, or ‘barbaric’ behaviour, they could use their public, pained bodies to communicate their desperation and offer a profound moral critique of an incumbent regime. The development of the hunger strike as a form of protest specifically drew upon the transformation of starvation from a moral failure on the part of the individual or an expression of divine will into a ‘collective social problem’ (Vernon 2007:2-3). By the early twentieth century, the hunger strike became a viable form of political critique due to this wider public intolerance for pain and starvation, combined with the growing sense that hunger represented the moral failure of a government that was willing to let its subjects suffer (Vernon 2007:42; Ellman 1993:5).

However, the concept of pain as a shared language obscures how gender and racialised relations of power differentiate bodies in pain. The communicative power of pain relies upon the universality of suffering, and the assumption that ‘we can recognize suffering wherever we see it, because there is a common denominator to being human, located in our bodies,

particularly in our bodies in pain' (Ticktin 2011:11). Hunger strikers aim to translate individual experiences of self-starvation into a common tongue of suffering in order to generate sympathy and support for their political cause (Ellman 1993:6). However, bodies are not indivisible and pre-existing biological substrates; instead, they are located within, produced by, and productive of gendered and racialised relations of power (Weheliye 2014:4). These relations of power shape how bodies in pain 'speak'. Gendered and racialised hierarchies shape who is *able* to speak through bodily suffering. They also shape *how* pained bodies speak, in terms of what their pain means, whose pain matters, and what narratives these pained bodies tell.

For example, the modern liberal abhorrence of pain emerged alongside evolutionary and pseudoscientific discourses which argued that racialised subjects were less able to feel pain. Both Kyla Schuller and Simon Strick note how nineteenth-century humanitarianism and sentimentalism emerged through and alongside scientific racism, foregrounding the entwined histories of humanitarianism, medicalisation, and biopolitics (see Strick 2014; Schuller 2018). In the nineteenth century humanitarian discourses on pain and suffering constituted bodies as 'differently capable of painful affect and in need of rescue through compassion' (Strick 2014:2). These pseudoscientific forms of knowledge separated the 'refined, sensitive, and civilised subject who was embedded in time and capable of progress, and in need of protection, from the coarse, rigid, and savage elements of the population suspended in the eternal state of flesh' (Schuller 2018:8). In other words, the entwinement of science with the liberal abhorrence of pain produced scientific forms of racism that insisted there were 'lower' and 'higher' forms of human embodiment, and that the 'lower' forms of humanity were less able to feel pain (Schuller 2018:5; Phillips 2015:25). Hence, pain cannot be taken as a universally recognisable phenomenon. Instead, what pain means, and whether or not it is even recognised as pain, is shaped by gendered and racialised relations of power.

Moreover, when the pain of gendered and racialised subjects is recognised, it may still fail to effectively function as political critique due to the fetishisation of the suffering body. Nineteenth-century humanitarianism developed alongside and through the emotional excesses of sensationalism, which portrayed pain as both 'revolting and exciting' (Croll 2011:106). The humanitarian impulse to bear witness to another's pain involved from the outset a degree of voyeurism, one which distinctly objectifies and silences the racialised body in pain (Sontag 2013:30,46-47). Consequently, while these liberalised subjects gained

privileged access to the ‘discursive currency’ of pain, other subjects were marginalised, silenced, and denied authority over their experiences of suffering (Strick 2014:14). The centrality of the anti-slavery movement in the development of British humanitarianism illuminates the uneasy relationship between humanitarianism and the hypervisibility of the racialised body in pain (Barnett 2011:57; Hartman 1997:18-19). Like many humanitarian movements that would follow, abolitionists attempted to generate sympathy for enslaved people through visceral visual and literary depictions of violated, wounded, and suffering black bodies (Hartman 1997:18-19). Hortense Spillers offers the term ‘pornotroping’ to describe how the captive black subject’s suffering body becomes both a site of ‘an irresistible, destructive sensuality’ and at the same time, is reduced to a ‘thing’ that both functions as an expression of otherness and ‘embodies sheer physical powerlessness that slides into a more general “powerlessness”’ (Spillers 1987:67). Spillers’ concept of the pornotrope elucidates how the concept of a shared tongue of suffering obscures the power relations and ethical dilemmas inherent to the recognition and representation of pain (Scarry 1987:6).

The ethical quandaries posed by the representation of pained bodies extends to the representation and understanding of hunger as a collective social problem. Even as hunger became an increasingly important humanitarian concern in nineteenth-century Britain, hungry bodies were not considered to be ‘equally deserving of compassion, sympathy, and sustenance’ (Croll 2011:130). The humanitarian concern with hunger was distinctly gendered, with media coverage of famines and starvation focusing on the suffering of ‘innocent’ women and children (Vernon 2007:19). During their hunger strikes, the suffragettes skilfully appropriated the humanitarian preoccupation with women’s suffering (Vernon 2007:61). Their condemnations of force-feeding also exploited the gendered dynamics of male prison doctors deliberately inflicting harm on vulnerable female bodies (Miller 2016:36). In particular, their framing of doctors as ‘torturers’ attempted to arouse the modern liberal abhorrence of pain, as well as the liberal subject’s intolerance of torture as a ‘barbaric’ practice (WSPU ca. 1914). However, the suffragettes were able to appeal to these forms of humanitarian sympathy due to their position as white British women. Unlike the suffering bodies of enslaved black subjects, which were widely circulated by white humanitarian actors, the suffragettes were able to exercise control over their own image. In their publications, they deliberately staged and photographed incidents of force-feeding and provided extensive and visceral descriptions of force-feeding’s bodily horrors (see S.

Pankhurst 1913; Billingham 1913; Marion ca. 1930; Lytton 2008; Marlow 2015; Atkinson 2019). The suffragettes intentionally exploited the paternalistic sensibilities of humanitarianism, and its positioning of the white, British, female body as vulnerable to male violence and in need of protection, through their existing avenues of political speech.

That being said, the suffragettes' deployment of sentimental discourses around the female suffering body competed with medical and humanitarian discourses that established medical and political authorities as the 'experts' over suffering bodies (Strick 2014:2). Put differently, as the objects of humanitarian compassion, the suffragettes risked being constituted as suffering subjects who were unable to speak for themselves. In the nineteenth century, humanitarianism worked through and alongside paternalistic and imperial ideologies by distinguishing the mute 'humanitarian object' from the empathetic liberal subject (Barnett 2011:55; Vernon 2007:28-29; Strick 2014:2). The liberal subject's abhorrence of pain allowed him to act, speak, and feel on the behalf of the humanitarian victim and attempt to save them from their suffering. Although the liberal subject may succeed in alleviating the pain of the humanitarian victim, they do so in a way that silences and denies the voices of suffering subjects. In this sense, humanitarianism operates through a 'paradox of emancipation and domination' (Barnett 2011:11). As Didier Fassin notes, humanitarianism is inherently founded on inequality, based on the expression of compassion towards suffering subjects with no expectation or possibility of reciprocity (Fassin 2011:3). Humanitarian discourses thus silence women's hunger strikes at the illocutionary level by denying female hunger strikers' authority over their own experiences of pain. Although they may, like the suffragettes, attempt to deploy these sentimental discourses for their own benefit, they also risk becoming represented as silent humanitarian victims in popular and political discourse.

The twin discourses of humanitarianism and medicalisation specifically silence women's hunger strikes through discourses of anorexia nervosa and other forms of mental illness. Opponents and state authorities do undermine male hunger strikers' political speech through the discourses of madness, irrationality, and mental illness. However, these discourses are especially effective during women's hunger strikes due to the gendered coding of self-starvation as a pathological feminine activity. Joan Jacobs Brumberg notes how women have historically used various forms of food refusal as 'a form of expression' more frequently than men have, drawing attention to long histories of female fasting in the Western world (Brumberg 2000:5). However, by the nineteenth century the modern

medical profession rejected the mystical and religious functions of fasting and recast extreme self-starvation as a pathological practice (Brumberg 2000:7). Building on these feminised histories of self-starvation and the framing of anorexia nervosa as a feminine disease, political opponents silence women's hunger strikes by reframing their self-starvation as eating disorders. For example, while working with hunger strikers during the Turkish death fasts (2000-2007), clinical psychologist Sahika Yuksel emphasised the 'anorectic aspect' of the protest, insisting that female strikers had a particularly 'morbid fascination with watching their bodies deteriorate. And just as with normal anorexics, they reach a point where they cannot think straight, where they literally cannot see how bad off they are' (Anderson 2001). By foregrounding the 'anorectic' qualities of the Turkish strikers' protests, Yuksel obscures the political goals of the hunger strikes. Moreover, by insisting that the hunger strikers 'cannot think straight' and 'literally cannot see how bad off they are', Yuksel implies that the strikers are unable to make rational decisions, suggesting that they do not have the capacity for political speech.

Moreover, discourses of female psychopathology produce the self-starving woman as an ideal humanitarian object, one whose emaciated body is the subject of revulsion, compassion, and voyeuristic fascination. Popular, medical, and academic discourses around anorexia nervosa reduce the immensely complex realities and lived experiences of women's self-starvation to a spectacle of thinness (Warin 2009:9). The sensationalised circulation of images of the emaciated female body reproduces the concept of 'the female body as public, as an object to be examined, beholden and always visible' (Warin 2009:9). The saturation of popular, medical, and academic discourse with imagery of slimness, Debra Ferreday argues, doubly silences the anorexic subject, 'first by being positioned as the object of a gaze...and, second, through a mental health discourse that positions her words as the mere ramblings of hysteria' (Ferreday 2012:142). Consequently, the self-starving woman rarely speaks for herself; instead, she is spoken *for* and presented as a subject that needs to be saved (Ferreday 2012:139). Even feminist approaches to women's self-starvation are not immune to these relations of power, as they sometimes silence anorexics by reducing the lived and embodied experience of self-starvation to a symbol for broader social issues, treating the anorexic body 'as a metaphor for the social body' (Ferreday 2012:141; Warin 2009:10). By casting the anorexic as a physical embodiment or 'crystallization' of patriarchal culture, feminist theorists like Susan Bordo reproduce the 'voicelessness' that characterises prominent popular and medical approaches to the self-starving female subject (Warin 2009:10; Anderson

2010:36). When female hunger strikers are described as anorexics, they become enmeshed within a complex set of humanitarian discourses that silence self-starving women and deny them authority over their own experiences of self-starvation.

1.3 ‘She is very weak-minded and eccentric’: hysteria, infantilisation, and mental capacity during the suffragette movement

During the suffragette movement, state authorities, medical professionals, prison staff, and certain forms of media coverage tried to silence women’s hunger strikes through the discourses of mental illness and mental incapacity. Prison doctors’ medical reports attaining to suffragette prisoners contain numerous diagnoses of mental instability. On March 7th, 1912, Dr W. C. Sullivan labelled the suffragette Ethel Smyth as ‘somewhat eccentric and mentally unstable’ (Sullivan 1912a). A week later, on March 15th, he described the mental state of suffragette Ida Cairns as ‘very unsatisfactory. She has become very nervous and hysterical’, suggesting that her symptoms pointed to ‘the possible danger of insanity’ (Sullivan 1912b). On April 19th, 1912, Sullivan diagnosed hunger-striking suffragette Mabel Inglis as being ‘of weak mind’ (Sullivan 1912f). On the same day, he advised against force-feeding the hunger-striker Elise Evans as she was ‘weak—minded and eccentric’ (Sullivan 1912e). In the same year, he also described Emmeline Pankhurst’s mental condition within the framework of hysterical over-emotionality, stating ‘mentally she is in a somewhat nervous and irritable condition... she works herself up into fits of excitement which are followed by a certain degree of depression’ (Sullivan 1912c). Through these diagnoses, the protests of the suffragettes were coded as an expression of internal pathology, rather than functioning as a critique of broader societal and political structures.

Similarly, the media painted the suffragettes as hysterical and mentally unstable, suggesting that the suffragettes suffered from ‘suffragist hysteria’ and ‘hysterical hooliganism’ (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2010:147). In 1908, *The New York Times* reprinted a commentary by *The Times* of London that insisted ‘one does not need to be against woman suffrage to see that some of the more violent partisans of the cause are suffering from hysteria – a kind of enthusiasm that has degenerated into habitual nervous excitement’ (*The New York Times* 1908). Similarly, in response to the public outcry that followed the first suffragette force-feedings, the anti-suffragist publication *The Times* insisted that ‘in the case of these women

we have no doubt that the whole thing was carried out with all the consideration that their own insane conduct would permit' (Geddes 2008:83). Although some commentators were more sympathetic to the suffragettes' perceived madness, labelling them 'victims of hysteria', the overall effect served to delegitimise the suffragettes' political activism and position them as subjects who were incapable of rational political speech (*The New York Times* 1913:10).

The framing of the suffragettes as 'hysterical hooligans' drew upon entrenched sociocultural connections between hysteria and feminine biology. At the time of the suffragette movement, 'women were believed to be more vulnerable to insanity than men, to experience it in specifically feminine ways, and to be differently affected by it in the conduct of their lives' (Showalter 2014:7). Elaine Showalter argues that the Victorian and Edwardian medical profession distinguished between men's madness, which was attributed to the external conditions and social pressures placed on 'civilised' men, and women's madness, which was attributed to women's essential biological nature (Showalter 2014:7). During the so-called 'golden age of hysteria' between 1870 and the First World War, 'hysterical' became increasingly synonymous with 'feminine' in Victorian and Edwardian literature and culture (Showalter 2014:129). As a 'protean disease', or a disease that could imitate almost any other illness, hysteria was used to explain any malady that did not fit within existing models of disease or did not neatly subscribe to any other medical condition (Chaney 2019:117). In other words, hysteria became a catch-all paradigm used to describe the physical and mental illnesses that emerged from women's bodies (Chaney 2019: 117). In the context of the suffragettes' hunger strikes, prison doctors and authorities entrenched the link between hysteria and female biology by connecting the perceived hysterical behaviour of suffragette prisoners with their reproductive organs. Dr W.C. Sullivan links suffragette prisoner Ida Cairns' presumed state of emotional and mental instability to the possibility that Cairns could be in the 'very early stage of pregnancy', which, he argues, 'would further aggravate her mental instability' (Sullivan 1912b). Similarly, during Marion Wallace Dunlop's hunger strike, prison governor James Scott suggested that Wallace Dunlop was 'probably passing through the Climacteric Period', or menopause, which was 'likely to aggravate her mental condition' (Scott 1909a). Prison authorities thus delegitimised the suffragettes' hunger strikes through reference to their feminine biology, suggesting that women's reproductive cycles and organs made them less capable of rational political thought, speech, and action.

Furthermore, discourses of hysteria undermined the communicative potential of the suffragettes' hunger strikes by framing women's self-harm as deliberately manipulative and self-seeking forms of behaviour (Showalter 2014:133). By the early twentieth century, hysteria was not only considered to be a disease (Chaney 2019:118). It had also become a specific feminine personality type characterised by 'manipulative and deceitful tendencies' (Chaney 2019:118). Although many male doctors believed that hysterical women were especially inclined to cheat, lie, and engage in self-seeking and self-serving behaviour, these doctors treated hysteria as a symptom of the naturally deceptive character of women (Chaney 2019:141). The concept of the deceptive hysteric complemented a wider set of Edwardian biological discourses that cast women as inherently manipulative and untrustworthy. For example, in 1911 the British doctor Frederick Parkes Weber suggested that the 'facility (instinct) for deception is probably greater in the average female than the average male' (Chaney 2019:126). Consequently, medical authorities and state actors interpreted the suffragettes' hunger strikes and other forms of militant activity as pleas for attention or as blackmail, a distinctly feminised form of deviance based on cowardly manipulation of another's weakness (Melzer 2015:171). For example, in 1912, Sullivan described Emmeline Pankhurst's threat of hunger striking as a 'game of bluff', suggesting that Pankhurst had 'far too keen an appreciation of her creature comforts to be anxious under ordinary circumstances to carry the idea beyond the stage of vapouring about it' (Sullivan 1912d). By portraying Pankhurst's threat of hunger striking as a form of blackmail, rather than a strategic political act, Sullivan situated her threat within wider patriarchal discourses of feminine manipulateness.

During the suffragettes' hunger strikes, these discourses of hysteria, mental instability, and narcissism fed into the state's insistence that child-like suffragettes needed to be "saved" from their own irrational actions. In particular, the Edwardian Home Office justified its decision to force-feed suffragettes through languages of paternalism and the desire to preserve and protect the lives of its citizens. Analyses of force-feeding often emphasise its biopolitical function, treating the feeding tube as a materialisation of the state's power to 'make live and let die' (see Anderson 2010; Wilcox 2014). However, the state's imperative to 'make live' coincides with 'another apparently more benign image of masculinity', that of the chivalrous masculine protector who cares for a feminised civilian population (Young 2003:4). Force-feeding illuminates the connections between sentimentalism and biopolitics, showing how the biopolitical state operates through reference to logics of benevolent and

patriarchal protection (see Strick 2014; Schuller 2018). In 1913, the Law Office informed the Home Office that ‘it is the duty of those who have in their charge a prisoner to do what they reasonably can to keep them in health, and (still more clearly) to *save him from death*’ (Law Officers 1913:1). Likewise, when Labour MP Keir Hardie inquired about suffragette prisoners in Winson Green Gaol, Birmingham, a representative of the Home Secretary defended the force-feeding of these prisoners on the basis that “women’s lives were ‘sacred’ and ‘must be preserved’” (Purvis 2000:145).

Through these discourses of ‘saving lives’, the Edwardian Home Office attempted to frame the suffragette hunger strikers as the infantilised beneficiaries of the state’s patriarchal protection. Orbach argues that anorexic subjects ‘become enmeshed in a paradox, for on the one hand they describe the anorectic as weak and childish, and on the other hand they experience her as a crafty, strong and unyielding opponent’ (Orbach 2005:5). The suffragettes similarly experienced illocutionary silencing through this patriarchal paradox. On one hand, the suffragettes were ‘victims of hysteria’ who required the benevolent intervention of the state and the medical profession. On the other hand, they also constituted ‘hysterical hooligans’ who needed to be disciplined into complying with the state’s patriarchal expectations of acceptable feminine behaviour. Hence, in the case of the suffragettes, force-feeding functioned as both a form of both locutionary and illocutionary silencing. Force-feeding aimed to physically halt the suffragettes’ hunger strikes, while simultaneously reducing their bodies to objects of medical knowledge that required both care and discipline from the state.

That being said, the suffragettes actively contested their image as hysterical women. In Kitty Marion’s autobiography, she describes how, during the 1908 Hyde Park demonstration, she heard leaders from the suffragette movement speak for the first time: ‘I recognized the other “mad women”, the women who had actually been demanding changes in conditions of which I had practically only been “talking in my dreams”’ (Marion, ca. 1930:68). Similarly, in a speech at the Hampstead branch of the WSPU in 1913, Emmeline Pankhurst explicitly critiqued the framing of suffragette militancy as the product of individual pathology (Metropolitan Police, 1913). She insisted that the suffragettes’ protests were not the product of ‘hysterical hooliganism’, but were rather deliberately undertaken to procure the vote from an intransient political system:

We tried by constitutional ways to get you to give us the vote, but you did not do it. And I want you, not to see these as isolated acts of hysterical women, but to see that it is being carried out on a plan and that it is being carried out with a definite intention and a purpose (Metropolitan Police, 1913).

Additionally, the suffragettes subverted the language of hysteria by framing the state and state actors as hysterics in their panicked response to suffragette activism. In 1909, the Newcastle Daily Chronicle described how after a suffragette threw a stone through a windowpane when the police ran to arrest her, ‘well-mannered but excited’ the suffragette coldly remarked ‘Don’t be so hysterical’ (Marlow 2015:99). The article continued, ‘the hysteria was all on the Government’s side – above all that hysteria of panic which refused the prisoners bail over Sunday’ (Marlow 2015:99). This suffragette highlighted how hysteria was used to disempower women’s legitimate claims for political rights, as well as the gendered double standard inherent in the concept of hysteria.

The suffragettes’ contestations of their characterisation as ‘mad women’ show how the state only partially silenced their hunger strikes through discourses of hysteria, irrationality, and madness. Although some elements of the press propagated the image of the suffragettes as ‘hysterical hooligans’, other commentators at the time argued that the suffragettes’ actions were entirely rational, if misguided. In a piece published in the medical journal *The Lancet* in 1913, physician and mental illness expert T. Claye Shaw insisted that ‘there was no evidence of insanity’ in suffragette militancy (Shaw 1913). Although he showed no sympathy to the suffrage cause, he posited that it was unhelpful to describe suffragettes as ‘victims of hysteria’, arguing that the suffragettes were ‘neither insane nor hysterical’ (Shaw 1913). Even prison doctors grudgingly accepted that even if they considered many suffragettes to be weak-minded, hysterical, or otherwise unwell, imprisoned suffragettes were not necessarily medically insane. During Marion Wallace Dunlop’s hunger strike, neurologist Dr Horatio Bryan Donkin insisted that even though Wallace Dunlop ‘used very strong and improper language concerning those in authority’, she did not show any sign of a mental disorder (Donkin 1909). As a result, Donkin suggested that Wallace Dunlop was ‘an extreme fanatic, but not at all insane’ (Donkin 1909). Prison Governor James Scott aggressed, insisting that ‘it would not be easy to certify her as being legally insane, but I consider her to be a highly neurotic fanatic’ (Scott 1909a). The suffragettes’ continued proof of mental capacity frustrated prison doctors as they were less able to cast force-feeding as a justified response to insanity. Although prison authorities considered suffragette prisoners to be mentally unstable

to a certain degree, they were unable to fully silence suffragettes' hunger strikes through the language of mental instability.

1.4 'There is not a hunger strike at Yarl's Wood': illocutionary silencing and the body as an object of medical knowledge in the British immigration detention system

Suffragette protesters experienced a degree of illocutionary silencing through biologised discourses of mental incapacity, hysteria, and feminine pathology. These discourses produced the suffragettes' bodies as objects of medical knowledge which needed to be 'saved' by white, male medical experts. Similarly, hunger strikers at Yarl's Wood were produced as the objects of medical knowledge by Serco, the Home Office, and members of the Conservative government. Medical and state authorities depoliticised the 2018 Yarl's Wood hunger strike through recourse to the clinical language of food and/or fluid refusal. When dealing with hunger strikes in the immigration detention estate, the Home Office, private companies, and detention centre staff try to avoid the term 'hunger strike' due to its association with political prisoners (Bosworth 2014:191). For example, when questioned about the 2018 Yarl's Wood hunger strike, Serco insisted that 'there is not a hunger strike at Yarl's Wood', suggesting instead that there was 'an increased number of people who chose not to attend meals in the restaurant for the two days prior to Ms Abbott's visit but that has subsided now' (Child 2018). By framing hunger strikers as 'food and/or fluid refusers', the Home Office and other stakeholders in the immigration detention estate individualise hunger strikers' protests and reframe them as an expression of personal grievance. When questioned about the Yarl's Wood hunger strike in the House of Lords on February 27th 2018, Baroness Williams of Trafford suggested that 'there may be a multitude of reasons for refusing food and fluid. As the noble Lord has pointed out, they may be in protest against their detention but there may also be dietary and religious reasons' (Hansard HL Deb. 27 February 2018). The strikers at Yarl's Wood fervently rejected Baroness Williams' explanation, with one protester writing:

while I cannot speak for every detainee in Yarl's Wood I can tell you that our group of protesters who are participating in the hunger for freedom strike are of mixed backgrounds and religions but we all have one thing in common, We are detained INDIFINITELY! and we are refusing food because we are DESPERATE at the treatment we endure by the HOME OFFICE, not because of religious beliefs but rather fundamental ethics regarding our rights as HUMAN BEINGS (detainedvoices.com 2018o).

Nonetheless, by publicly casting the Yarl's Wood hunger strike as an expression of detainees' dietary preferences and religious traditions, Baroness Williams portrayed detainees' self-starvation as an individualised choice as opposed to a collective response to state violence.

The coding of the Yarl's Wood hunger strike and other hunger strikes across the British immigration detention estate as food and/or fluid refusal illuminates how the political speech of hunger striking is neutralised through medicalisation (see Home Office 2019b). By redirecting the public debate over the Yarl's Wood hunger strike to the medical management and health status of hunger-striking detainees, the hunger strike was framed as a clinical issue rather than a political one. The hunger strikers at Yarl's Wood experienced illocutionary silencing through biological discourses that reduced protesting detainees to their medical status, producing them as objects of medical knowledge. The Home Office and Serco's medicalising discourses attempted to reduce hunger-striking detainees from vocal political actors to 'mere organic life-forms to be mechanically sustained and warehoused' (Vicaro 2015:180). When questioned about the procedure during a hunger strike, Julia Rogers, the managing director of Serco, responded: 'If we believe we have an individual who has been refusing food and fluid for 48 hours, they immediately go onto a different type of system whereby we monitor them with the aid of healthcare to make sure they are not suffering from a medical point of view' (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2018a:42). When asked about the welfare of hunger-striking detainees, Rogers replied:

In terms of welfare, as I say, they are medically assessed. Clearly that is one of the most critical considerations. Our medical staff will assess if they need to be supported in any way. If their health has deteriorated for instance, our medical colleagues would be seeking outside medical assistance if that was required (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2018a:42).

Rogers' sole focus on whether detainees are suffering 'from a medical point of view' epitomises how detainees are reduced solely to their physical health status. The medicalisation of hunger strikes through the language of food and fluid refusal closes down discussions of the political motives behind detainees' hunger strikes and limits detainees' attempted acts of speech.

The Yarl's Wood detainees' hunger strikes were neutralised through the discourses of individualised medical risk. During the 2018 hunger strike at Yarl's Wood, Minister for

Immigration Caroline Nokes emphasised how the Home Office was responsibly informing the Yarl's Wood hunger strikers of the self-imposed medical risk posed by their self-harming protests. In a debate regarding the hunger strike in the House of Commons on March 6th 2018, Nokes insisted that 'we take the issue of individuals refusing food and fluid very seriously indeed. We do not want any individual to put their own health and wellbeing at risk' (Hansard HC Deb., 6 March 2018). Consequently, she noted that strikers receive

an extensive welfare interview, which happens with a medical professional, and is used to explain to individuals the very real risk that they are putting themselves at by refusing food and fluid. We want nobody in detention to be in that situation and it is important that we explain to them the risks involved (Hansard HC Deb., 6 March 2018)

Nokes' focus on explaining the medical risks of the hunger strike to Yarl's Wood detainees reproduces the benevolent patriarchal approach taken by the Edwardian state to hunger-striking suffragettes. Like the suffragettes, the detainees at Yarl's Wood are assumed to be ignorant of the potential self-injury caused by their hunger strikes, requiring careful explanation and guidance regarding the 'risks involved'. Similarly, the Home Office's guidance on managing food and fluid refusal in immigration detention includes the template for the letter sent to hunger-striking detainee. If removal directions are already in place, the letter reads, 'in the interests of your health and safety, we may prioritise your removal from detention and the UK' (Home Office 2019c). Against the explicit wishes of detainees who wish to remain in the United Kingdom, the Home Office frames its decision to deport as being in the detainees' interests.

That being said, despite the prevalence of these discourses of violent care, the Immigration Minister and the Home Office's response to hunger strikes in the immigration detention estate reflects how they consider hunger-striking immigration detainees *as* risks, or as threats to the general wellbeing of the British public. In this sense, the Home Office aims to minimise the risk that migrants and asylum seekers pose to the health of the British body *politic*, rather than solely the bodily health of the individual detainee. In their analysis of the British mainstream media's views on refugees between September 2015 and March 2016, Harriet Gray and Anja K. Franck identify how refugees are portrayed as both 'as/at risk', hanging precariously between 'the threatened' and 'the threat' (Gray and Franck 2019:276). Asylum seekers, immigrants, and refugees are constructed as 'as/at risk' through the linking of national security to border control through counter-terrorism discourses like the Prevent

strategy (2011) and anti-immigration discourses such as the ‘hostile environment’ policy (2012) (Gray and Franck 2019:276; see also Goodfellow 2020). Together, the entwined discourses of national security and border control produce the figure of the illegal immigrant as a threat to British national security and wellbeing. During the 2018 hunger strike, Minister of Immigration Caroline Nokes drew upon the discourses of ‘as/at risk’ subjects by justifying the continued detention of hunger-striking detainees through reference to the risk they posed to the safety of the British public. When questioned in the House of Commons on March 6th 2018 about the Yarl’s Wood hunger strike, Nokes repeatedly referred to detained individuals as ‘immigration offenders’ with ‘no right to remain the UK’ (Hansard HC Deb. 6 March 2018). The term ‘immigration offender’, alongside Nokes’ insistence that ‘there are also those in immigration detention who are foreign national offenders and those who pose a risk to our society’, criminalised the hunger-striking immigration detainees and framed immigration detention as a mitigation of national risk (Hansard HC Deb. 6 March 2018).

Similarly, detainees’ hunger strikes are often interpreted as threats to the security of the immigration detention estate. During Mary Bosworth’s ethnography of the British immigration detention estate, staff at Yarl’s Wood expressed concern over a hunger strike at Campsfield House IRC (Bosworth 2014:191). A member of the Senior Management Team at Yarl’s Wood warned staff that ‘these things have legs and will grow. As you know we had one before. So everyone pay close attention...We need to be vigilant and careful’ (Bosworth 2014:191). Furthermore, the Home Office’s official guidelines on managing food and/or fluid refusers in immigration detention outlines the existence and purpose of the Food Fluid Refusal (FFR) tactical group, which exists to ‘identify strategic issues such as risk to business reputation, media interest and legal challenges which are relevant to any proposal to strategic directors’ (Home Office 2019b:22). While food and/or fluid refusers are positioned as bodies *at risk*, detainee hunger strikers are also portrayed *as* risks to both the detention estate and the British body politic as a whole.

The state’s positioning of hunger-striking detainees as bodies as/at risk draws upon the broader xenophobic production of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees as deceptive, opportunistic liars (Sigona 2014:374). The UK Home Office is characterised by ‘an institutional emphasis on truthfulness’ which ‘exists alongside an endemic image of asylum seekers as liars and opportunistic cheats’ (Griffiths 2012:8). For example, in 2010 Home Secretary Theresa May described her reforms to the United Kingdom’s immigration policy as

an attempt to prevent the ‘abuse’ of the British immigration system by opportunistic migrants (BBC News 2010b). Consequently, detention staff frequently place themselves as the authoritative voices on detainees’ experiences of pain, producing detainees as the objects of medical knowledge and denying them authority of their own bodies and bodily experiences. State actors systematically disbelieve detainees’ accounts of their bodily pain. Many detainees, especially the 50% of detainees who have claimed asylum, have experienced serious trauma and have complicated mental and physical health needs (British Medical Association 2014:2). Yet as medical staff on site are responsible for clearing whether or not a detainee is fit for deportation, medical services in detention centres are also characterised by a ‘culture of disbelief’, as medical staff believe that detainees fake medical problems in order to delay or escape forced removal (Independent Monitoring Board at Yarl’s Wood Immigration Removal Centre 2014:3-4). Detainees at Yarl’s Wood repeatedly testify that health services at detention centres approach detainee complaints with scepticism (Channel 4 News 2015; Anonymous 3 2014:1; Anonymous 25 2014:1). Afiya, who was detained for over five months at Yarl’s Wood, recalled how a detainee told the nurse, ‘I hit my head and I feel funny’, to which the nurse replied, ‘How do you know that you hit your head?’ (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2018a:8). Afiya’s response to the incident that ‘even a four-year-old knows that they have hit their head’ contests the assumption that detainees cannot truthfully attest to their own bodily experiences.

The systematic disbelief of detainees’ bodily experiences extends to self-harming forms of behaviour. Rather than interpreting detainees’ self-harm as acts of political speech, state actors recode detainees’ acts of self-harm as deceptive and manipulative practices. According to an undercover report by Nick Sommerlad, published by the *Daily Mirror* on December 8th 2003, trainee staff at Yarl’s Wood were told during their suicide awareness trainings that immigration detainees were ‘cunning’:

Some keep razor blades in their mouths. We had one who swallowed a blade broken off a disposable razor, passed it out and used it. If they ask for a pen to write a letter, watch them. Some break the pen and use that to cut themselves. Those people that want to do it will do anything. (Prisons and Probation Ombudsman for England and Wales 2004:11)

Rather than framing self-harming behaviour as a sign of desperation, or even as a sign of mental illness, self-harm is placed within a wider narrative of detainees’ tendencies towards manipulateness and deceptiveness. Similarly, in Bosworth’s study, which took place

approximately a decade after Sommerlad's investigation, a Yarl's Wood detainee covered in scars from self-harm and the subject of intervention from a local NHS mental health team was labelled a 'development nominal', a term borrowed from policing to describe to someone hard to control (Bosworth 2014:191). Furthermore, 'underneath this particular woman's picture a staff member had written, "uses her self-harm to manipulate staff"' (Bosworth 2014:191). Even highly symbolic and politicised forms of protest like lip sewing are treated as deceptive acts; although lip sewing is rare in the British immigration detention estate, Bosworth records how one staff member at Colnbrook IRC insisted that detainees only 'pretended' to sew their lips together, 'always leaving enough room to smoke a cigarette' (Bosworth 2014:192). Just as detainees' acts of self-harm are interpreted as manipulative and deceptive actions, their self-harming protests are coded as opportunistic lies.

Staff at Yarl's Wood also frequently characterise self-harming behaviours as a form of narcissism, suggesting they are caused by detainees' desire for attention. In the 2015 Channel 4 undercover investigation at Yarl's Wood, a staff member remarks: 'they are all slashing their wrists apparently. Let them slash their wrists...It's attention seeking.' (Channel 4 News 2015). Likewise, in Mary Bosworth's study, a Detention Custody Manager at Yarl's Wood informed her that detainees on suicide watch 'quite like the attention of, of being monitored. It's only when it gets really intrusive (laughter) that they start saying "I think I'm better now"' (Bosworth 2014:188). The insistence that detainees enjoy the attention of suicide watch and other forms of monitoring infantilises detainees and recodes their protests as feminised forms of narcissistic behaviour. In this way, detainees' attempts at political communication are reduced to infantile and selfish acts of manipulation, limiting the ways their suffering bodies can speak.

By infantilising detainees through the discourses of narcissism and 'seeking attention', the Home Office presents its treatment of hunger-striking detainees as being in the detainee's best interests. Immigration detention is often justified and defended by state actors and immigration detention providers through languages of humanitarian care, illuminating how state violence is framed in the terms of 'care and rescue' (Ticktin 2011:5). Although care is often approached as a set of 'good intentions, positive outcomes, or sentimental responses to suffering', care constitutes a complex constellation of material and affective relations, many of which are rooted in exploitation and domination (Puig de la Bellacasa 2012:198; Puig de la Bellacasa 2017:4; Stevenson 2014:3). Together, these relations shape 'the way someone

comes to matter and the corresponding ethics of attending to the other who matters' (Stevenson 2014:3). They distinguish 'morally legitimate' suffering bodies to which ethical obligations are owed from bodies to which there are no ethical obligations (Ticktin 2011:5). The role of care in producing bodies that matter and the ethical obligations to bodies that matter explains why care itself can produce suffering, such as in the form of 'armed love' (Ticktin 2011:5) or through regimes of 'violent-care' that protect some forms of life at the expense of others (van Dooren 2015).

These regimes of violent care shape the management of Yarl's Wood. The companies that run and manage immigration detention centres, such as Serco, specifically frame their provision of services through the languages of care. When asked about hunger-striking detainees at Yarl's Wood, Serco's Managing Director for Justice and Immigration Julia Rogers insisted that 'they are very clear with us that the reasons for their protest are not to do with Serco, with us and our care, but they were to do with policy' (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2018a:42). In the same Oral Evidence session, Rupert Soames, the CEO of Serco, claimed that he was proud of the care that Serco provided to detainees at Yarl's Wood, insisting that 'we are there to look after people' (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2018a:63). These languages of care extend to the day-to-day operations of British immigration detention centres. In her ethnographic study of the British immigration detention estate, Bosworth found that detention custody officers emphasised the caring elements of their role, preferring to minimise its more coercive aspects (Bosworth 2014:188). For example, although detention custody officers, like detainees, refer to IRCs as 'prisons', they also describe immigration detention centres as 'community centres, hospitals, or schools' (Bosworth 2014:187). One Detention Custody Manager at Yarl's Wood suggested that the detention centre was 'like a, a stricter boarding school if you like, for some of the people here and there are those who will always be needier than others' (Bosworth 2014:187). Detainees express resentment towards the infantilising effects of immigration detention. In Sarah Turnbull's ethnographic study, a Yarl's Wood detainee argues that 'we're adults; some of us are older than them... We're used to surviving our own self, and [they] bring us here and reduce us to kids' (Turnbull 2016:69). The state's reduction of detainees to children demonstrates how care functions as a form of governance over detained subjects (Fassin 2011:2).

By infantilising detainees through the discourses of narcissism and seeking attention, the Home Office justifies the ‘reasonable and proportionate’ use of force against hunger-striking detainees through languages of violent care. It is important to note that the guidelines explicitly prohibit the force-feeding of immigration detainees, as ‘at no time may coercion to eat or drink be applied to a detainee refusing food and/or fluid’ (Home Office 2019b:14). However, detainees may be ‘actively encouraged’ to resume eating and drinking by raising their awareness of the ‘practical and medical consequences of their action’ (Home Office 2019b:14). This reference to the medical consequences of hunger striking once again portrays the hunger strike as a medical, rather than a political, problem. Moreover, the citing of ‘practical consequences’ opens the door to subtler forms of coercion and intimidation, such as threats of expedited deportation or forced transferral to other detention centres. The guidelines suggest that ‘male food and/or fluid refusers who are **clinically assessed** as requiring full-time or frequent nursing care must be considered for transfer to a centre with enhanced care unit facilities’ (Home Office, 2019b:11, emphasis in original). While detention centre staff are prohibited from force-feeding, they can be forcibly moved to a care unit:

In the event that a detainee is non-compliant with an agreed move, the IRC supplier staff, in conjunction with the Compliance Team manager, will need to consider whether it would be appropriate to use force to effect the transfer, taking into account advice from IRC healthcare as to the detainee’s state of health. As with any use of force, where it is considered necessary, the force applied must be reasonable and proportionate (Home Office 2019b:11).

Hence, while the Home Office may not openly and explicitly coerce detainees into consuming food or fluids, they still justify certain forms of violent intervention in the name of care.

Nonetheless, hunger-striking detainees at Yarl’s Wood were not subject to this particular patriarchal intervention as ‘this does not apply to female detainees refusing food and/or fluid at Yarl’s Wood as they cannot be transferred to a centre with enhanced care facilities elsewhere in the detention estate’ (Home Office 2019b:11). The refusal to transfer female detainees to enhanced care facilities reflects the lack of provision within the British immigration detention system for female detainees outside of Yarl’s Wood. It also shows how the mitigation of medical risk operates along gendered lines. Unlike the white, female suffragettes, whose lives were ‘sacred’ and deemed in need of protection through violent intervention, the racialised female detainees at Yarl’s Wood do not receive these coercive protections. Yarl’s Wood detainees exist in a liminal space where they are paradoxically

produced as objects of medical knowledge and as subjects existing outside of the bounds of the state's care.

Conclusion

This chapter opened with the problem of how hunger strikers make their self-starvation legible as political speech. Hunger strikers, it has been shown, must transcend various levels of silencing in order for their acts of speech to register as political protest. This chapter, though, has also critiqued one of the core precepts of these communicative models of hunger striking; namely, the assumption that the pained body is universally recognisable and able to speak of political discontent to an external audience when other forms of political speech are limited or silenced. This chapter has shown that silencing does not only operate at the level of speech or the speech act. Silencing also limits the rhetorical effects of suffering bodies. It focused on two specific discourses – humanitarianism and medicalisation – to specifically examine how hunger strikes are silenced at the illocutionary level, or how these discourses render self-starvation illegible as a form of protest. This chapter showed how humanitarianism's 'paradox of emancipation and domination' shaped the affective dimensions of the hunger strikes carried out by the suffragettes and detainees at Yarl's Wood IRC and limited their ability to speak as agentic political subjects (Barnett 2011:11). It also demonstrated how medicalising and biologising discourses frame hunger striking as primarily a clinical, rather than a political issue. State and medical authorities undermined the political speech of female hunger strikers in both cases by framing their protests as the symptoms of 'natural' biological defects or as individualised, narcissistic, and attention-seeking behaviours. By positioning suffering subjects as unable to speak on their own behalf, these gendered and racialised discourses undermine the ability of female hunger strikers to "speak" with their pained bodies. The second chapter turns to another facet of the hunger-striking body's rhetorical aspects – its symbolic significance as an act of sacrifice – in order to further consider how gender and race limit and shape how the suffering body speaks.

Chapter 2: Suspended Sacrifice

Introduction

This chapter also foregrounds the communicative qualities of the hunger strike, examining how the hunger strike speaks through the suffering body. However, it moves from asking what the hunger-striking body says to examining what the hunger-striking body means, symbolises, and represents. It specifically focuses on what the hunger strike means in relation to the discourses of sacrifice, self-sacrifice, and martyrdom. This chapter offers another lens on the communicative nature of the suffering body, moving away from a liberal insistence or focus on the avoidance of pain to examine how certain approaches to hunger striking valorise the endurance of suffering as a self-sacrificial behaviour. This chapter then pushes theories of liminality further by using the concept of the threshold to examine the limits of sacrifice in relation to political violence. It focuses on the threshold that separates extraordinary, sacrificial violence from ordinary and mundane forms of violence, foregrounding how this threshold is constructed and maintained through distinctly gendered and racialised violent practices. Consequently, it argues that theories of sacrificial violence must centre gendered, sexualised, and racialised forms of political violence in their understanding of sacrifice.

The first section of this chapter, “‘We have our martyrs in our midst’: sacrificial womanhood and militant feminism in the WSPU”, examines how the British suffragettes framed their militant activity through the discourses of sacrifice, martyrdom, and references to Christian imagery, scripture, and iconography. This section interrogates how the suffragette leadership utilised gendered discourses around women’s natural moral superiority to promote a specifically feminine form of heroic self-sacrifice.

The second section of this chapter, “‘I felt a man’s hand trying to force my mouth open’: torture, sacred terror, and sexual violence in the suffragette movement”, examines the suffragette hunger strikes through the lens of mimetic violence, arguing that the state and the suffragette strikers engaged in a mimetic spiral of violence over their mutual object of desire: control over the female body. It then argues that the suffragettes articulated a feminist interpretation of political sacrifice where the scapegoat is sexually violated, rather than killed. It draws upon the work of Begoña Aretxaga to argue that the suffragettes’ experiences of

force-feeding as a form of institutional sexual violence show how the state's sacrificial violence operates in gendered and sexualised forms.

The third section, “‘We don’t care if you die’: violent indifference in immigration detention’ turns to the contemporary case of British immigration detention to highlight the conditions under which political violence fails to produce sacralised victims. The bodily suffering of immigration detainees, rather than producing martyrs or victims, incites little or no recognition from the state. Caught in a liminal space between citizen and non-citizen, this section draws on Giorgio Agamben’s theory of bare life to argue that immigration detainees are liminal figures who can be killed but not sacrificed. Consequently, immigration detainees’ bodily suffering and acts of self-harm receive only violent indifference on the part of the state, exposing the limits of the sacrificial model.

Finally, the fourth section, “‘Its about racism in detention centres’: the gendering and racialisation of ungrievable life in immigration detention’ explores how the production of immigration detainees as ungrievable ‘bare life’ occurs through gendered and racialised forms of violence. It examines the normalisation of sexual violence at Yarl’s Wood, and how sexual violence operates in distinctly racialised ways. This section then examines how racial hierarchies and logics undergird the institution of immigration detention. In doing so, it shows how, contra to Agamben’s universalising figure of bare life, bare life is differentiated on gendered and racialised lines.

2.1 ‘We have our martyrs in our midst’: sacrificial womanhood and militant feminism in the WSPU

How do hunger strikers evoke sacrificial logics, discourses, and relations through their self-inflicted bodily suffering? Although hunger strikes are often strategically undertaken for specific political ends, they elude traditional concepts of instrumental rationality, as self-harming forms of protest remain ‘embroiled within a logic of sacrifice’ that obfuscates the logics of means and ends (Bargu 2016:6). Hunger strikers’ discourses of sacrifice do not necessarily draw upon the vocabularies of organised religion, as they may be framed by secular worldviews or directed towards secular ends (Fierke 2012:10). However, the extraordinary event of the hunger strike ruptures profane and ordinary politics, producing a

liminal period or ‘limit situation’ which facilitates the development of new political communities or allows new social and political orders to emerge (Fierke 2012:38; Wydra 2015:2-3). Hunger strikers draw upon discourses of martyrdom and sacrifice in order to portray their bodily self-harm as ‘an act of witness to truth or injustice’ (Fierke 2012:4). Fierke argues that as a spectacular ‘visualization of “bare life”’, the wasted body of the hunger striker becomes a ‘metaphor for the humiliation or destruction that has been experienced by the community’ (Fierke 2012:83-84). During and following a hunger strike, the hunger striker’s body becomes an ‘organ of representation’ for a community’s discontents (Bargu 2016:17). Consequently, the hunger strike provokes a bitter contest over the meaning and symbolism of the body in pain (Fordahl 2018:4). As Fierke notes, the suffering body of the hunger striker becomes a deeply moving, emotional conduit, with emotions circulating out from the hunger striker’s body and attaching to the political community who bears witness to the act (Fierke 2012:79-80). If these emotions successfully ‘stick’ to the community that witnesses the hunger strike, ‘the audience, in its identification with the sacrifice, abandons its fear and is transformed, engaging in acts that imitate or express support for the cause to varying degrees’ (Fierke 2012:80). While hunger strikers and their audiences frame the strikers’ protests within the languages of martyrdom and sacrifice, state authorities attempt to reframe their protests as premodern and irrational acts of suicide, terrorism, fundamentalism or extremism (Fierke 2012:48). Describing the hunger strike as an act of sacrifice illuminates not only the sacred discourses that shape the hunger strike, but also the discursive contestation that follows the hunger striker’s self-sacrifice (Fierke 2012:84).

Furthermore, the self-sacrificial politics of the hunger strike offers another lens on the communicative power of the suffering body. In the context of the post-911 Western world, the ideas of sacrifice and martyrdom are often portrayed as barbaric, pathological, and counter to Western concepts of progress and modernity (Fierke 2012:33). This racialised and Islamophobic reading of sacrifice obscures the continuities and similarities between archaic sacrificial practices and modern concepts of political self-sacrifice (Fierke 2012:33). However, this coding of sacrifice as a premodern phenomenon does reveal how the sacrificial politics of hunger striking draws upon ideas about pain that are directly antithetical to the modern, liberal avoidance of pain discussed in the previous chapter. Instead, they draw upon anti-liberal, sacrificial codes that imbue suffering with deep spiritual and moral value. Many hunger strikers treat their starving bodies as vessels of ‘ethical achievement’ that demonstrate

their total commitment to a political cause (Fordahl 2018:4; Fierke 2012:4). Terence MacSwiney, the mayor of Cork who starved himself to death in 1920, succinctly captured the hunger striker's sacrificial logics of pain when he said, 'the contest is one...of endurance. It is not those who inflict the most but those who endure the most who will conquer. Those whose faith is strong will endure and in the end triumph' (Fierke 2012:112). To some extent, the hunger striker's bodily suffering constitutes an abnegation of power that subverts hierarchical relations through its 'spectacle of disempowerment' (Ellman 1993:20). It offers an understanding of strength based on moral and spiritual superiority, indicated through the hunger striker's endurance of bodily suffering.

Yet, the emphasis placed on the endurance of bodily pain by this politics of sacrifice can produce the hunger strike as a test of the striker's *personal* strength, a test that is sometimes masculinised as a form of male fortitude or virility. For example, Marek Kulczyk, a participant in the Hrubieszów Prison hunger strike (1982) by Polish political prisoners, saw the hunger strike as 'a physical and mental test, in which the prisoners proved themselves as men and as citizens' (Kenney 2017:222). Conversely, during the hunger strikes at the Maze Prison in Northern Ireland (1980-1981), Margaret Thatcher attempted to delegitimise the hunger strike by asking if the strikers were trying to 'prove their virility' (Ellman 1993:104). The valorisation of men's hunger strikes has historical precedents in the different medical and social approaches to men's and women's self-inflicted starvation. As Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska notes, the same time period which saw women's self-starvation was recategorized as a form of mental illness or pathology also saw a heightened interest in male fasting (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2010:142). When practiced by men, fasting was associated with masculine willpower, virility, and strength (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2010:142). The persistent significance of men's hunger strikes, in particular those by Bobby Sands and the other male Irish hunger strikers at the Maze Prison, can be attributed to these strikers' 'spectacular imbrication of *endurance* and *masculinity*' (Anderson 2010:60, emphasis in original). Hunger strikes that do not display both endurance and masculinity risk being rendered 'soft' hunger strikes that do not sufficiently demonstrate the hunger striker's willingness to suffer and perish in the name of a political cause (Simpson 2016). In this manner, the self-sacrificial act of hunger striking may become locked into a 'male heroics of violence' which valorises the masculine endurance of pain (Lyness 2015:158).

However, the suffragettes appropriated these masculinised languages of sacrifice and bodily suffering for their feminist political agenda. Although no suffragette died while on hunger strike, members of the WSPU repeatedly framed the bodily suffering of self-starvation and force-feeding through the language of martyrdom and self-sacrifice. For example, in a prison diary entry, Katie Gliddon points to the potential of self-sacrifice that characterised the suffragettes' hunger strikes: 'everyone who hunger strikes knows that she is offering her life for the cause. She does not know whether the sacrifice will be taken or not' (Gliddon ca. 1912-1913:6). Similarly, in her 1913 article for *The Suffragette*, 'The Appeal To God', Christabel Pankhurst castigates the Church's refusal to support the suffragette struggle, arguing that 'a Church whose seed was the blood of martyrs has no pity for the martyrs of the present day' (C. Pankhurst 1913d:1). The suffragettes used these religious narratives to cast state officials as persecutors of Christ's true followers (C. Pankhurst 1913b:250) and emphasise their struggle's continuity with the sacrifices of past Christian martyrs (C. Pankhurst 1913c:257). Moreover, the suffragettes drew extensively on Christian sacrificial iconography, portraying themselves as Christ-like in their endurance of suffering. For example, the June 5th 1914 issue of *The Suffragette* read: 'Christ is being crucified in Holloway' (Hartman 2003:35). Fictional and autobiographical accounts of force-feeding similarly compared the outstretched body of the suffragette being force-fed to that of Christ on the cross (Hartman 2003:41-42; Nelson 2010:233). Through these religious languages, the suffragettes and their supporters located hunger striking as part of a Christian tradition of fleshly suffering, endurance, spiritual transcendence, and the ultimate redemption of a sinful mankind.

Furthermore, the suffragettes framed the women's movement as a 'new religion', albeit one that drew heavily on Christian beliefs and iconography (Hartman 2003:35). This new religion was forged through the bodily suffering of WSPU activists. WSPU member Elizabeth Robins argued that 'the ideal for which Woman Suffrage stands has come, through suffering, to be a religion. No other faith held in the civilised world to-day counts so many adherents ready to suffer so much for their faith's sake' (Robins 1913:7 in Purvis 1995:111). During Marion Wallace Dunlop's hunger strike, prison governor James Scott wrote with some alarm that 'she frequently refers, with apparent fanatical zeal, to the possibility of her dying here, from starvation, and revels in... "the tremendous advantage to the Cause sure to arise from this"' (Scott 1909b:1-2). In 1912, Manuel Terrero wrote to the *Pinner Gazette* in support of his wife, Janie Terrero, a suffragette on hunger strike in Holloway Prison. In the letter, he

explicitly frames the suffragette movement as a 'religion', one that directly inspired the suffragettes' heroic self-sacrifice:

This the reason why the hunger strike is undertaken; it cannot fail if thoroughly carried out, and requires an amount of heroism, determination, and self-sacrifice, of which I fear few of us outside the suffragette ranks would be capable... Mrs. Terrero is but one of hundreds prepared to suffer likewise if needful for the cause, which to them is what their religion was to the Christian martyrs (Terrero 1912)

Moreover, the suffragettes narrated their involvement in the women's movement through the genre of the 'conversion narrative' to frame their participation through the Christian concept of conversion and their 'subsequent new lives' as suffragettes (Hartman 2003:35). Central to these narratives of conversion were imprisonment and the bodily suffering of the hunger strike and force-feeding, which produced suffragettes as 'martyr-saviour(s)' and facilitated 'moral change and spiritual transcendence through a crisis of near-death and new birth' (Hartman 2003:41,47). These conversion narratives also shaped the suffragettes' responses to the harassment, physical assault, and sexual violence they endured throughout their campaign for the women's vote. After experiencing police violence during the 'Black Friday' incident, Georgiana Solomon wrote that 'my sufferings – in common with those of my brave comrades – having only been surpassed by a profound peace of mind and the joy of anticipated victory for our Cause' (Solomon 1910:2). The suffragettes thus framed their movement for the vote around the religious concepts of righteous suffering and political self-sacrifice.

The death and sacralisation of Emily Davison in 1913 epitomised the suffragette movement's use of religious and spiritual discourses. On June 4th 1913, Emily Davison ran out onto the racetrack at the Epsom Derby in front of the King's horse, Anmer (Purvis 2013b:353). It is still debated whether Emily Davison intended for herself to be harmed or killed by the King's steed, or whether she was primarily attempting to attach a WSPU flag to Anmer's bridle (Atkinson 2019:416). Nonetheless, she was knocked to the ground with great force, fracturing her skull and resulting in grave internal injuries; she died four days after the collision (Purvis 2013b:353). Davison had previously attempted to make a martyr of herself in 1912 while imprisoned at Holloway (Gullickson 2008:469). During a mass session of force-feeding, Davison threw herself off the balcony in protest; she fell ten feet, colliding head-first with a metal staircase (Gullickson 2008:469). Afterwards, she wrote 'I did it deliberately...because I felt that by nothing but the sacrifice of human life would the nation be brought to realise the horrible torture our women face (Davison 1912:4 in Gullickson,

2008:472). Although the WSPU leadership privately disagreed with Davison's protest, in public they immediately moved to honour her following her death as a 'secular saint' (Atkinson 2019:414). Emmeline Pankhurst claimed Davison as "one of our valiant soldiers," who had 'gladly laid down her life for the cause of women's freedom' (E. Pankhurst 1913:8 in Gullickson 2008:462). The June 13th 1913 issue of *The Suffragette* cast Davison as an angel and subtitled the illustration: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends' (Purvis 2013b:358). On June 14th 1913, the WSPU's attempts to present Emily Davison as a martyr for the Cause culminated in a 6,000-person funeral procession through the centre of London (Atkinson 2019:414). Through their collective mourning, the suffragettes attempted to combat the state's narratives of lunacy, irrationality, and criminality with their own discourses of martyrdom and self-sacrifice.

The suffragettes re-articulated the ethos of self-sacrifice through a distinctly feminised sacrificial imaginary. Their enthusiastic uptake of female saints and martyrs as patrons for their movement placed the suffragettes' self-sacrifice within a genealogy a feminine religious suffering. Although suffragette martyrology included prominent British martyrs such as Anne Askew (WSPU ca. 1914:2), the Protestant preacher tortured and killed by Henry VIII on charges of heresy, the suffragettes specifically revered Joan of Arc as the 'embodiment of religious militancy' (Nelson 2010:228). Emily Davison's funeral procession included purple silk banners inscribed with the final words of Joan of Arc: 'Fight On and God Will Give the Victory' (Atkinson 2019:415). Furthermore, an issue of *The Suffragette* entitled 'A Famous Militant' included a caption by Christabel Pankhurst venerating Joan of Arc as a feminist inspiration for women everywhere: 'Joan of Arc lives on as the glory and inspiration of France. To British women also she has left a great inheritance...of simplicity, purity, courage, and militancy...she belongs to the womanhood of the whole world' (Atkinson 2019:408-409). The suffragettes' veneration of Joan of Arc shows how feminised interpretations of both militancy and martyrdom worked hand in hand to produce a new kind of British feminist (Nelson 2010:228). Like Joan of Arc, the suffragette leadership believed they had been called by God to do battle against the English government for a righteous cause (Nelson 2010:228). They also believed that, like Joan of Arc, they would suffer in distinctly feminised ways for their rebellion; Joan of Arc, like Anne Askew and many other female martyrs, was burned at the stake. Finally, the suffragettes believed that their revolutionary violence, like that of Joan of Arc, would ultimately be vindicated by divine will:

The Suffragettes may be told that on the contrary by their violence they are disfranchised in Christ. So Joan of Arc was told by those who lived when she did. Yet time's illumination have shown her right and her accusers wrong – has shown her violence to be of divine quality because divinely inspired (C. Pankhurst 1913b:250).

Inspired by Joan of Arc, the suffragettes believed that, contrary to critiques of their unholy violence, their battle for enfranchisement on Earth would also lead to their enfranchisement in Christ. The modern British suffragette, exemplified by the suffragette suffering on hunger strike, would ultimately be sanctified by sacrificing her body for the righteous cause of the women's vote.

Through their invocation of feminine sacrificial imagery, the suffragettes insisted that self-sacrifice was a distinctly feminine trait, one that proved the moral superiority of their sex and justified their claim to the vote. The suffragettes saw their self-sacrificial hunger strikes as emblematic of a distinctly feminine form of militancy based on altruism, abnegation, and self-control (Holton 1997:210-211). These suffragettes saw hunger striking as a manifestation of women's greater capacity for self-sacrifice. For example, Constance Lytton argued that

What do men choose? They have recourse to violence. But what the women of this movement have specially stood out for is that they will not kill, they will not harm while they have other weapons left them. These women have chosen the weapon of self-hurt to make their protest, and this hunger-strike brings great pressure upon the Government. It involves grave hurt and tremendous sacrifice, but this is on the part of the women only, and does not physically injure their enemies. Can that be called violence and hooliganism? (Lytton in Jorgensen-Earp 1999:139).

Similarly, in a speech called 'Freedom or Death', delivered in Hartford, Connecticut on November 11th 1913, Emmeline Pankhurst emphasised how suffragette militancy was founded on an ethic of self-sacrifice:

Human life for us is sacred, but we say if any life is to be sacrificed it shall be ours; we won't do it ourselves, but we will put the enemy in the position where they will have to choose between giving us freedom or giving us death (E. Pankhurst 1913b).

Similarly, one suffragette retrospectively recalled how 'Mrs Pankhurst gave us strict orders ... there was not a cat or a canary to be killed; no life; we were only allowed to give our lives' (Purvis 2019:1206). Moreover, the suffragettes interpreted hunger striking as a demonstration of women's superior dietary restraint, arguing that the discipline required to go on hunger strike made it especially well-suited to women (Vernon 2007:61). The suffragettes appropriated and re-articulated feminised histories of starving, religious fasting, and dieting

to cast hunger striking as a distinctly feminine form of political sacrifice. The WSPU leadership drew upon the association of femininity with dietary restraint and self-control during the 1908 'Self-Denial Week', where they encouraged women to abstain from butter, sugar, meat, and sweets and donate any money they saved to the WSPU (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2010:145; Gullickson 2008:476). Although these arguments reproduced the feminisation of self-starvation, they also rearticulated the hunger strike as a distinctly feminine protest, one that could only be successfully utilised by women and one that was uniquely suited to their feminist cause.

During the course of the movement, the suffragette leadership solidified the WSPU's identity around a rhetoric of distinctly female rebellion and heroism (Holton 1997:210). Unlike male violence, which was portrayed as excessive, destructive and fearful, the WSPU leadership conveyed women's political violence as restrained, righteous, and unwillingly undertaken in the name of the Cause (Holton 1997:218). A WSPU pamphlet, 'The Unholy Alliance', proclaims that the 'Government's violence against women has been far greater than the violence used by women...the women's violence is used in a great and just cause, while the Government use violence simply to crush out the demand for liberty' (WSPU ca. 1912:1). Throughout the course of the suffragettes' campaign, female militants increasingly justified their violence in the terms of a holy war between the sexes, construing militancy as a form of self-defence against male violence and violent masculine institutions (Holton 1997:218). In doing so, the suffragettes appropriated another aspect of Christian political thought, the Just War tradition, which grappled with the problem of political violence in the pursuit of virtuous ends and rearticulated it within their feminine sacrificial ethic (Jorgensen-Earp 1997:9-10). During the suffragette movement, hunger strikers saw themselves not only as political prisoners, but also 'prisoners of war' (L.G. Anderson 1912b) who were fighting in the WSPU's 'splendid War of Independence' (E. Pankhurst 1914a:1). Emmeline Pankhurst and Christabel Pankhurst characterised the suffragettes' mission not merely a political movement but as a 'holy war against evil' (E. Pankhurst 1914b). An entry from Katie Gliddon's from Holloway Prison captures the narratives of Christ-like struggle and triumph that shaped self-representations of militancy and imprisonment during the suffragette movement:

This is a holy place, for so many wonderful women have lived here. It is Bethlehem because here a great idea of Liberty and love has come to birth. Yet to them in earlier years it must have seemed like Gethsemane (Gliddon 1912:7).

By framing their struggle as a ‘holy war’, the official organs of the WSPU sought to infuse their movement with religious levels of zeal, emphasise their commitment to political transformation and the pursuit of social purity, and legitimise their use of violence amidst public hostility towards both their actions and their cause (Nelson 2010:237, 240).

At the same time, critics of the movement derided the suffragettes’ use of religious imagery and their self-sacralisation as martyrs for the Cause. Opponents of the suffragette movement undermined suffragette hunger strikers’ self-sacrificial rhetoric by portraying their actions as obsessive, hysterical, and cult-like. Holloway’s prison governor, James Scott, noted that Marion Wallace Dunlop was ‘quite fanatical about what she calls her “principles”, and “the cause”’, a fanaticism fuelled by her ‘highly nervous temperament’ (Scott 1909b:1). Even supporters of women’s suffrage, like author Israel Zangwill, critiqued the cult of personality developed by the WSPU around its two leaders, Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, and its resultant ‘religious exaltation’ (Zangwill 1913:567). Suffragette rituals, he argued, ‘are the communions of a new religion that has already its ritual, its hymnology, its sacred music, its symbolism (the broad-arrows of the prison garb its proudest emblem), its pageantry, its martyrology, and its dogma of Pankhurst infallibility’ (Zangwill 1913:563). While the suffragettes’ religious language may have built solidarity within the movement, it was only partially successful in encouraging publics and authorities to believe in their cause. Their invocation of self-sacrifice also raised questions about the relationship between martyrdom and victimhood. In a report on the health of Emmeline Pankhurst, prison doctor W.C. Sullivan suggests that Pankhurst might use hunger striking, a ‘pseudo-heroic method of protest’, to falsely present herself as a ‘victim of persecution’ (Sullivan 1912d). Likewise, a sarcastic recipe for ‘Cabinet Pudding and How to Make It’ suggests that the suffragette ‘pudding’ in question could be garnished ‘with a sauce of martyrdom’ (Marlow 2015:82). The suffragettes’ self-sacralisation thus competed with oppositional discourses of narcissism and victimhood propagated by anti-suffragists and by the British state.

2.2 ‘I felt a man’s hand trying to force my mouth open’: torture, sacred terror, and sexual violence in the suffragette movement

The suffragettes deployed discourses of martyrdom and self-sacrifice throughout their campaign for the vote. However, through their hunger strikes and their subsequent force-

feedings by the Edwardian state, they also engaged in self-sacrificial forms of political violence. In his theorisation of sacrifice, the anthropologist René Girard argues that archaic forms of sacrifice functioned as a societal mechanism for resolving internal conflict in lieu of mass violence (Fierke 2012:35). Rather than resolving internal conflict, Fierke argues that political self-sacrifice draws its symbolic and political power as a visceral representation of the violation of a specific body politic (Fierke 2012:66). Hunger strikers stage the scapegoating of one political community by another upon their ravaged bodies (Fierke 2012:36). Moreover, rather than resolving conflict through their self-sacrifice, the hunger strike is characterised by the *intensification* of mimetic violence between the striker and the state. Girard's theory of mimesis posits that all human behaviour is based upon imitation and mimicry (Girard 1987: 7). The mimetic nature of human behaviour produces 'acquisitive mimesis', which in turn provokes 'mimetic rivalry' (Girard 1987:7-8). Humans desire something because other people desire that particular object, and competition over these shared objects of desire forms the basis of human conflict (Girard 1987:288-290). In the case of the hunger strike, the scapegoated body of the hunger striker becomes object of mimetic rivalry. It functions as the battleground for both physical control of the striker's rebellious body and symbolic control of the striker's body politic. Throughout the strike, the violence exacted by the hunger striker against their own body, through extended and severe self-starvation, is often matched by the escalating violence of the state, through techniques such as force-feeding, beatings, and other forms of violent intimidation. In the most extreme cases, the mimetic character of violence means that the violent stand-off between the striker and the state is only resolved by the striker's death. The death of the striker is then understood as the ultimate sacrifice for the sake of their scapegoated community.

Force-feeding epitomises the mimetic conflict over the hunger striker's body. In order to prevent the hunger striker from winning the mimetic conflict through their self-inflicted death, the state may choose to force-feed hunger strikers. Force-feeding is frequently interpreted as a tool of biopolitical governance, where the state intervenes at the level of the body's biological functioning in order to make the subject live (Wilcox 2014:53). However, while force-feeding is justified through rational and medicalised languages of care and bodily maintenance, it also exposes the ecstatic excess of the state (Aretxaga 2001:5-6). Force-feeding demonstrates the state's irrational fantasy to have complete control over its unruly subjects (Aretxaga 2001:5-6). During hunger strikes and force-feedings, the state and the hunger striker engage in a battle to 'break the sacrificial practices of the other' (Kahn

2008:12). In this encounter, the sacrificial violence of the state, or the sacred terror it enacts to demonstrate its sovereignty and maintain the existing political order, clashes with the self-sacrificial violence of hunger striking (Kahn 2008:12, 173). Paul Kahn argues that

political violence seeks to undermine the capacity of the enemy to see his own death as a sacrifice for the sovereign to which he is pledged. He is to see himself as sacrificed but not martyred. At the point at which the enemy sees himself as pure victim, defeat occurs. The experience of moving from martyr to victim is degradation. Torture is a means of accomplishing this movement (Kahn 2008:176).

During the world-breaking violence of torture, strikers battle with the dominative power of the state as they struggle over ‘whose reality, whose truth, and whose world survives’ (Nieminen 2019:518-519). Like other forms of torture, force-feeding aims to enforce the reality, truth, and world of the state and undermine the hunger striker’s challenge to the state’s sacred power. By force-feeding hunger strikers, the state does not only force hunger strikers to live, preventing their death by self-starvation and their subsequent sacralisation. It also specifically forces hunger strikers to live according to the state’s will and under its command, demonstrating the totalising reach of the state’s sovereign power. Hence, during a force-feeding, the state attempts to transform the hunger-striking subject from a potential martyr to a powerless victim and break the sacrificial practices of the hunger striker and their community.

The suffragettes’ writings and publications emphasise the deliberate degradation of force-feeding, and how the procedure was intended to transform them from martyrs into victims. Force-feeding, they asserted, was a procedure useless for the maintenance and prolonging of life; it was deployed ‘to coerce and break the spirit’ (WSPU ca. 1914:2). The suffragettes unsparingly describe the brutality of force-feeding, focusing on its effectiveness as a form of physical and psychological torture, and its ineffectiveness as a form of nutrition for hunger-striking prisoners. During a botched force-feeding, Marion describes how ‘from the waist up, I experienced every pain imaginable. That food had remained down, I coughed and vomitted [sic] back... I was bent from the waist and could not lift a foot to walk a step’ (Marion ca. 1930:220). Similarly, Rosa May Billinghurst recounts how the prison doctor repeatedly attempted to force the feeding tube through her nasal passage: ‘this caused me excruciating agony to eye nose and ear as it passed own the back of the nose. I could not help moaning with the pain...I was deaf for a long while afterwards and my nose bled violently all night’ (Billinghurst 1913). Suffragettes also describe how prison doctors deliberately humiliated

suffragettes during force-feedings in order to complete the degradation of suffragette prisoners. In Constance Lytton's autobiography *Prisons and Prisoners*, the aristocratic suffragette is violently force-fed while disguised as a working-class woman called Jane Warton:

as the doctor left he gave me a slap on the cheek, not violently, but, as it were, to express his contemptuous disapproval...I saw Jane Warton lying before me, and it seemed as if I were outside of her. She was the most despised, ignorant, and helpless prisoner that I had seen (Lytton 2008:237).

Lytton's separation from the character of Warton helps her cope with the degradation of force-feeding, even as she endures its physical agony. However, her emphasis on the doctor's slap depicts the centrality of humiliation to forcible feeding and its attempt to create pure victims out of self-sacrificing martyrs.

However, theories of sacrifice and mimetic violence rarely account for how humiliation operates in gendered and sexualised ways. In theories of sacrificial violence, such as that offered by Girard, sacrifice is usually framed in relation to the death or the social exclusion of the scapegoat. Theories of sacrifice rarely engage with the role of sexual violence in these sacrificial practices, despite the fact that in many foundational myths of Western nation states, acts of sexual violence and gendered mutilation prelude or are integral to the sacrificial killing of women. Moreover, it ignores how the state uses forms of institutionalized sexual violence, such as rectal feeding, in order to humiliate and emasculate male political actors (Velasquez-Potts 2019: 33). For example, the 'masculinized imagery of Christian martyrdom' that shapes commemorations of the male Irish Republican hunger strikes at HM Prison Maze not only occludes the sacrifices made by the female Irish Republican hunger strikers at HM Prison Armagh (Lyness 2015:87). It also marginalises the male hunger strikers' extensive experiences of institutionalised sexual violence, including invasive searches in the mouth and anus (Velasquez-Potts 2019: 34). Reframing self-sacrifice to include experiences of sexual violence acknowledges how gender is not just a dimension of political violence, but rather an 'intrinsic component of it' (Aretxaga 1995:144). Moreover, it illuminates how sexual violence is an especially effective form of world-breaking violence, because, unlike self-starvation, sexual violence is currently irreconcilable with a 'male heroics of violence' that casts enduring pain as a sign of strength or virility (Lyness 2015:158). As Michelle C. Velasquez-Potts notes, 'rectal feeding as a hyper-masculine mode of torture seeks to make explicit not just physical domination, but sexual domination, which

is to say feminized humiliation' (Velasquez-Potts, 2019: 34). Theories of sacrificial violence must reckon with how sexual violence is central to the state's expression of sovereign power and its ability to transform martyrs into victims (Aretxaga 2001:21).

The force-feeding of suffragettes epitomises the state's use of sexualised violence to dominate, humiliate, and break its rebellious female subjects. As Begoña Aretxaga suggests in her anthropology of female prisoners' experiences during the Troubles in Northern Ireland (1968-1998), the state's exercise of sovereignty occurred over bodies that were already differentiated and deeply inscribed with gendered and sexual difference (Aretxaga 2001:8). The state drew upon gendered discourses of sexual subjugation in order to reduce the insubordinate suffragettes from agentic political subjects into the passive objects of male authority (Aretxaga 2001:21). In their accounts of hunger striking, multiple suffragettes describe force feeding as a form of oral rape (Ellman 1993:33; Melzer 2015:161). By casting state violence as a form of rape, the suffragettes offer an alternative understanding of political sacrifice where the sacrificial victim is produced through sexual violence rather than death. Through the invasive procedure of force-feeding, the state realised its fantasy of total control by physically occupying the body, transforming the hunger-striking body from a site of resistance into a victim of the state's biosovereign power (Aretxaga 2001:8). During this process, suffragette prisoners were simultaneously transformed 'from political to conforming prisoners, but also, and equally important, from rebellious to subordinate women' (Aretxaga 2001:18). As a result, the resolution of mimetic conflict occurred not through the death or exile of the suffragette hunger striker, but through the Edwardian state's sexual violence.

The Edwardian state's enactment of sovereignty through a 'fantasy of sexual violence', challenges narrow definitions of rape and sexual violation and highlights the sexualised character of institutional violence (Aretxaga 2001:8). Some historians argue that the suffragettes' accounts drew parallels between force-feeding and sexual violence (Ellman 1993:33; Miller 2016:49, 56). However, the suffragettes' recollections of force-feeding suggest that they did not merely *compare* these two forms of bodily assault, describing force-feeding through the metaphor of rape. Instead, their testimonies suggest that the penetration of the feeding tube constituted, in and of itself, a form of sexual violence. The suffragettes explicitly connected the physical characteristics of the procedure, such as being held down by multiple people and having their mouths and throats penetrated with a foreign object, with the act of gang rape. Sylvia Pankhurst recalls how a man attempted to force her mouth open

while she was held down on her bed ‘by the shoulders, the arms, the knees, and the ankles’ (S. Pankhurst 1913:90). Lillian Lenton records how the doctors ‘amused themselves trying first one tube, then another, over and over again, pushing tubes, obviously far too thick, as far down as they could make them go’ (Lenton, ca. 1913:2-3). Furthermore, the rare accounts of rectal and vaginal feeding elucidate how force-feeding was not merely interpreted as an act of oral rape, but explicitly served as a gendered technique of degradation and domination (Purvis 1995:123). In this sense, the Edwardian Home Office attempted to subdue the recalcitrant bodies of the suffragettes through a ‘form of violence that phantasmatically replicate(d) the scenario of rape’ (Aretxaga 2001:6).

The enactment of sacred terror through institutionalised forms of sexual violence also illuminates the gendered character of the state, and how the state masculinises itself and feminises its imprisoned subjects through violent sexual practices. Although force-feedings were practiced and overseen by male doctors, they were abetted by female wardresses, the female prison staff who were responsible for the majority of everyday interactions with the suffragette prisoners. In their testimonies and recollections of imprisonment, the suffragettes often described the wardresses in positive terms, with several suffragettes suggesting that the wardresses were ‘most sympathetic’ and ‘nice to us throughout’ (Harrison 1976b; Harrison 1976a; Ede 1912). Dr Frances Ede, for example, notes that ‘I do have a very good word for the wardresses and the matrons both in Holloway and in Aylesbury...There seems to be an innate cruelty in man which does not exist in woman’ (Ede 1912). This presumption of women’s innate goodness was enforced by the wardresses’ emotional reactions to suffragette force-feedings. Both Kitty Marion and Rosa May Billinghurst describe how during and after force-feedings some of the wardresses would weep in sympathy (Marion, ca. 1930:219; Billinghurst 1913). However, the wardresses’ sympathies co-exist uncomfortable with their indispensable role in the violence of force-feeding. During force-feeding, numerous wardresses held struggling suffragettes in place. In her autobiography, Kitty Marion describes how during her first account of force-feeding she ‘was seized and overpowered by several wardresses...each arm held to the arm of the chair by a wardress, two others holding my shoulders back, two more holding my knees down’ (Marion ca. 1930:191). Although the wardresses may have offered some sympathy to the suffragette prisoners under their care, they also acted as an extension of the masculine state through their perpetration of institutionalised sexual violence.

2.3 ‘We don’t care if you die’: violent indifference in immigration detention.

The suffragettes created a sacrificial imaginary based on a self-sacrificing feminine heroic. Meanwhile, the Edwardian state attempted to break this imaginary through its use of institutionalised forms of gendered and sexual violence. The contemporary commemorations of individual suffragettes as ‘martyrs’ suggests that in the long term, the WSPU’s sacrificial imaginary prevailed over the sacred terror of the Edwardian state (see Chidgey 2018; Kay and Mendes 2020). However, unlike the suffragettes, detainees at Yarl’s Wood struggle to access vocabularies of sacrifice, martyrdom, and heroic struggle. Some theorists, such as Paul Dumouchel, would attribute this struggle to the obsolescence of sacrifice under the political conditions of modernity (Dumouchel 2015:xxxii). In modern times, Dumouchel argues, Girard’s sacrificial transfer of violence is no longer ‘economical’, resulting in the radical expansion of the state-sponsored killing of so-called ‘acceptable’ victims (Dumouchel 2015:xxxii). Instead, the sacrificial mechanism has become ‘barren’, that is, unable to protect citizens from violence or give rise to a stable social and political order (Dumouchel 2015:xxxii). In the most famous theorisation of the failure of sacrifice, Giorgio Agamben’s theory of bare life, Agamben takes the ancient Roman figure of *homo sacer*, the subject who can be killed without impunity yet whose death does not constitute a sacrifice, as the starting point for the state’s sovereign power (Agamben 2017:10). Political modernity, Agamben argues, is characterised by the movement of the realm of bare life from the hidden margins of the polis into the political realm (Agamben 2017:11). The unprecedented entry of bare life into the political realm destabilises the sovereign distinction between bare life and political existence, rendering all citizens vulnerable to becoming bare life: lives that can be killed, but not sacrificed (Agamben 2017:11). In other words, certain subjects are produced, in Judith Butler’s terms, as ‘ungrievable’ subjects, whose lives are considered unworthy of collective grieving by the state and the nation (Butler 2003:10,12).

The immigration detention centre operates as a spatial site of legal exceptionality, one which produces ungrievable and unsanctifiable subjects. The detention centre is sometimes interpreted as a ‘space of exception’ that constitutes the literal and metaphorical frontier of the state (Bargu 2017:14). As a spatialised state of exception, the immigration detention

centre shares certain similarities with sites of sovereign exception like Guantánamo Bay, a space that attempts to reduce its subjects as bare life (Wilcox 2014:50). Detainees at Yarl's Wood regularly draw comparisons between themselves and detainees at Guantánamo Bay ('detainedvoices.com 2016d). One of the Yarl's Wood hunger strikers, talking to *Detained Voices*, remarks, 'I could not accept that I would be prevented from speaking to an elected official, the last time I checked I was still in Britain and not Guantanamo (or am I?)' (detainedvoices.com 2018g). Another hunger striker describes how, during a forced deportation, the detainee was 'strapped like a Guantanamo inmate' (detainedvoices.com 2018ff). At this frontier, immigration detainees occupy a liminal space where they are both obscured by and yet overdetermined by the law. Detainees at Yarl's Wood highlight the precarity of being 'outside the justice system', in an 'unlawful' situation', and living in a 'lawless place' (Girma et al., 2014:19, 20). One of the Yarl's Wood hunger strikers, speaking to *Detained Voices*, explains, 'I feel very isolated in here. It's not like just a lonely feeling. It's a different kind of isolation. I feel like I have already been removed to a place with different laws' (detainedvoices.com 2018j). Another hunger striker, commenting on the legality of the forced removal of a friend and fellow detainee, remarks: 'who knows what's legal anymore? I certainly don't' (detainedvoices.com 2018q). Akin to the figure of *homo sacer*, immigration detainees are included in the legal framework of the polis through their exclusion, or their lack of rights to reside within British borders. The space of the detention centre precludes the sacralisation of its subjects as it produces lives that the state deems are no longer sanctifiable and no longer grievable.

Consequently, unlike the 'sacred' lives of the suffragettes, the suffering of immigration detainees is largely met with a kind of 'violent indifference' on the part of the British state (Simpson 2016). Social indifference, Dumouchel argues, indicates the failure of the sacrificial mechanism in modern politics (Dumouchel 2015:xix). This indifference provides the normative, institutional, and material conditions for violence to proliferate. In Kahn's analysis of torture, the state's sacrificial violence aims to humiliate its rebellious subjects, transform the potential martyr into a helpless victim and breaking their political faith in the process (Kahn 2008:176). However, as Avishai Margalit notes, the relationship between the humiliator and the humiliated is a paradoxical one (Margalit 1996 in Fierke 2012:72). To be humiliated, one 'must retain sufficient agency to recognize and acknowledge that he or she has been humiliated' (Margalit 1996 in Fierke 2012:72). To some extent, the state is so indifferent towards immigration detainees that it does not even see detainees as subjects who

could and should be humiliated. Speaking to *Detained Voices*, one of the hunger strikers argues that at Yarl's Wood, 'you are treated as non-existent' (detainedvoices.com 2018aa). Similarly, an individual detained for over 22 months describes how 'they just close the door on you and you are forgotten' (Anonymous 6 2014:2). During a debate in the House of Commons regarding the Yarl's Wood hunger strike, Labour MP David Lammy foregrounded the indifference that lay at the state's approach to the detained hunger strikers:

Does the Minister understand that at the heart of her answer is an indifference, first, to indefinite detention, and secondly, to the fact that many women at Yarl's Wood have been there for months and months, running into years? That is why many of them are refusing food (Hansard HC Deb. 6 March 2018).

In this sense, the violence of indifference operates not by inflicting world-destroying pain on the immigration detainee (Nieminen 2019:518), but by ignoring them and their pain altogether.

The concept of violent indifference illuminates the structural violence of immigration detention, and in doing so shifts attention from active violence to the harm caused by apathy and inaction (Canning 2017:48). Detainees' experiences of violence and even their deaths are not recognised as events or crises (Povinelli 2011:4). They do not provoke collective outrage or acts of public mourning. Instead, detainees' suffering is considered unremarkable, 'ordinary, chronic, and cruddy rather than catastrophic, crisis-laden, and sublime' (Povinelli 2011:3). Put differently, it is incorporated into the fabric of normalised, everyday violence and operates through the quieter registers of abjection, abandonment, and despair (Povinelli 2011:4). While the British state offers fleeting apologies in response to instances of sexual violence and deaths in immigration detention, it does not take the necessary concrete actions required to prevent immigration detainees experiencing harm (Simpson 2016). In an early report on cultures of racism and violence in Yarl's Wood, Stephen Shaw, the Prisons and Probations Ombudsman for England and Wales, suggested that racist remarks and violent incidents were 'attributable to a small handful of people' and not indicative of a culture of racism or excessive violence (Prisons and Probations Ombudsman for England and Wales 2004:41). By refusing to consider the possibility of a culture of excessive violence, the British government fails to protect detainees from further harm. The state's non-alleviation of harm even manifests in the physical architecture of Yarl's Wood (Canning 2017:48). In the 2015 Channel 4 News undercover investigation at Yarl's Wood, officers admitted that two to three detainees had attempted suicide by jumping off a stairwell. Despite this, as of 2015

there was ‘no net or barrier should someone try to jump again’ (Channel 4 News 2015). Through apathy and inaction, the state refuses to treat immigration detainees as grievable lives.

This violent indifference also manifests in detention custody officers’ responses to detainees’ bodily suffering in Yarl’s Wood and across the British detention estate. The ‘inadequate healthcare’ offered by the detention centre, a key site of contestation during the 2018 hunger strike at Yarl’s Wood, reflects the Home Office’s more general indifference towards detainees’ health and wellbeing (detainedvoices.com 2018t). In their first set of demands, the hunger strikers at Yarl’s Wood insist that ‘the healthcare system does not meet the needs of most detainees, Ailments are left to become [sic] before being dealt with if at all’ (detainedvoices.com 2018a). Detainees across the detention estate emphasise how healthcare always ‘think you are pretending and just give you paracetamol’ (Anonymous 5 2014:2). A man detained for three months at Harmondsworth in 2010 insists that ‘even if you were dying they would just give you the same tablet – paracetamol. And just the lower dose’ (Anonymous 7 2014:3). A detainee at Yarl’s Wood, speaking to *Detained Voices*, describes how healthcare services treat detainees with both scepticism and indifference: ‘when we are sick the healthcare team say we are pretending. I have been very sick and recently vomited blood. I struggled to walk to healthcare and instead of being treated I was asked how did I manage to walk to here’ (detainedvoices.com 2015a). In this sense, detention centre staff do not only interpret detainees’ descriptions of pain as a sign of manipulative or deceptive behaviour. They also respond with near-total indifference to detainees’ bodily suffering.

The British detention estate’s general indifference towards detainees’ bodily suffering extends to their practices of self-harm. When one detainee cut herself, a custody officer responded: ‘Silly girl!...You know they (the women) complain that we don’t give them everything they ask for, but when we do they do stupid things like that!’ (Bosworth 2014:191). Similarly, Voke, detained at Yarl’s Wood for eight months, collapsed after she starved herself over the course of two months. She recalls how the staff poked her eyes and saying ‘Stupid girl, why don’t you want to eat? You want to kill yourself?’ (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2018a:16). State actors’ indifference towards detainees’ self-harm means that that detainees’ self-harming protests fail to communicate their grievances and struggle to symbolise detainees’ discontent. In these

cases, self-starvation and self-harm was met solely with violent indifference, failing to meet the necessary thresholds to constitute sacrificial violence. Moreover, detainees argue that the state's violent indifference towards immigration detainees causes them to self-harm. They accuse the state of outsourcing their violence onto the detainees themselves. One detainee from Yarl's Wood suggests that 'in my country people do bad things to you but they will finish you off and be done. In this country they push you to kill yourself' (Girma et al. 2014:35). Similarly, the individual detained for over 22 months argues that 'detention is a way to destroy people: they do not kill you directly, but instead you kill yourself' (Anonymous 6 2014:1). By outsourcing their violence to self-harming immigration detainees, the state does not need to break detainees through its own sacrificial violence. Instead, it constitutes detainees as subjects who do not even need to be humiliated in order to maintain the state's sovereign power.

2.4 'Its about racism in detention centres': the gendering and racialisation of ungrievable life in immigration detention

The British state's violent indifference operates through gendered and racialised forms of violence and is differentiated along gendered and racialised lines. If modernity is responsible, as Dumouchel claims, for the failure of the sacrificial mechanism, then it is essential to examine the co-production of modernity with the power relations of coloniality and racialisation (Quijano and Ennis 2000:533-534). The colonial project of modernity produced the differentiation of grievable from ungrievable life along racialised lines. Agamben's conceptualisation of bare life attempts to transcend coloniality and racialisation through recourse to the concept of 'absolute biological matter', imagining that the human exists as 'an indivisible biological substance anterior to racialization' (Weheliye 2014:4). In other words, Agamben's theory does not attend to the 'negative differentiation of bare life', especially in regard to gendered and racialised difference (Ziarek 2008:89). This negative differentiation, Ewa Plonowska Ziarek argues, means that bare life is not only an erasure of an individual's political life, but also an attack on an entire '*form of life*', and the difference considered integral to this form (Ziarek 2008:89). The negative distribution of bare life among gendered and racialised subjects is central to the creation and maintenance of the state's biopolitical body. The normative violence of the sovereign and biopolitical distinction between bare life and political life, demarcating which bodies are vested with futurity, which lives are able to

flourish, sets the preconditions for physical, sexual, and institutional violence (Puar 2017:15; Wilcox 2014:9). By declaring their lives to be expendable, the state precludes the sacrifice and martyrdom of these gendered and racialised ungrievable subjects (Kenney 2017:216).

The production of gendered and racialised detainees as subjects who can be wounded, assaulted, or killed but not sacrificed sharply illuminates the distinctions between suffragette hunger strikers and the hunger-striking detainees at Yarl's Wood. Although they existed in a liminal space between citizen and non-citizen, white Edwardian women were still considered grievable life. Their deaths, as evidenced by the funeral of Emily Davison, were leveraged by the WSPU for great outbursts of public mourning by receptive audiences, establishing themselves as grievable political subjects. Moreover, the suffragettes deliberately drew upon tropes of white feminine vulnerability in order to portray themselves as martyrs to the cause of the women's vote. The suffragettes' defence of hunger striking as a feminist form of sacrificial protest sat uncomfortably alongside the WSPU's more conventional appeals to masculine chivalry through reference to the victimised and abused female body. Their self-starvation appealed to a modern and civilised English masculinity based on notions of national superiority, with Zangwill suggesting that 'Englishmen are not so brutish that they can bear the sight of martyred innocence' (Zangwill 1913:575). Consequently, some contemporary feminist critics of the suffragettes saw their self-harming militancy as a harmful 'internalisation of the dubious Victorian virtue of self-sacrifice and selfsubordination' (Hartman 2003:46). In this sense, while the WSPU's invocation of sacrificial Christian imagery, genealogies of female rebellion and divinely inspired feminine militancy produced a novel Edwardian politics of gender, this politics was still dependent upon and made legible through existing gendered, racialised, and classed relations of power. The interaction between gender and racialisation fundamentally shapes which lives are considered grievable and worthy of protection, and which lives are ungrievable and thus disproportionately subject to violence.

While the state attempted to break the suffragettes' sacrificial practices through sexual violence, the state remains violently indifferent to the sexual violence experienced by detainees at Yarl's Wood. Unlike the suffragettes, whose suffering and bodily sacrifices were able to produce emotions of grief and mourning among certain sectors of the British public, the violation of detainees is met with little acknowledgement on the part of the state and the wider body politic. As early as 2005, the Black Women's Rape Action Project and Women

Against Rape declared Yarl's Wood's institutional conditions to be 'a recipe of rape' (Black Women's Rape Action Project and Women Against Rape 2014:2). The legal firm Birnberg Pierce, which has represented three formerly detained women who have accused Serco staff of sexual assault, highlights how the institutional conditions at Yarl's Wood render detained women exceptionally vulnerable to sexual violence:

Many of the other women who have spoken out say that they were similarly frightened to reject a person in a position of authority making sexual advances towards them. They feared they might get into trouble and they all feared that if they complained about the conduct of the officer or member of staff afterwards they would suffer as a consequence, most notably that they might be threatened with deportation and/or that it would adversely affect their immigration status. They were also in an environment where those officers may continue to work whilst they were still detained and where the friends of those officers would have power and control over them (Birnberg Peirce & Partners 2014:6).

Unsurprisingly, given this institutional 'recipe of rape', Serco staff have faced multiple accusations of sexual exploitation and abuse since assuming management of Yarl's Wood in 2007. In 2014, ten members of staff were dismissed in relation to eight separate cases of 'improper sexual contact' at the immigration removal centre (Press Association 2014). Despite this, the government renewed their contract with Serco to manage Yarl's Wood in 2014 for another eight years (Criado-Perez 2014). Moreover, in 2020 the government also awarded Serco a contract to manage two more detention centres, Brook House IRC and Tinsley House IRC (Grierson 2020). Despite serious concerns about the safety of detainees at Yarl's Wood, the Home Office continues to allow Serco to manage immigration detention centres, putting more individuals at risk of sexual violence.

Detainees also highlight how they are routinely violated through institutionalised forms of sexual violence. In particular, detainees experience strip searches as institutionalised sexual violence, one that demonstrates the near-total power of the state over its detained subjects. During a strip search, one detainee describes how:

A male officer held me down and a female officer put their hands in my knickers to get my phone so I couldn't tell anyone what was happening to me. They did similar to my friend. We were so scared...A male officer tried to search me once. I told him not to come near me three times. But he didn't stop so I punched him and gave him a bruise. The police came and they took me to court and the judge fined me £15. I feel like they sexual assaulted me. They can do anything. (detainedvoices.com 2015c)

The strip search illuminates the relationship between visibility, violence, race, and violence in space of the detention centre. Visually, white women's bodies occupy a paradoxical position between public and private; it is positioned 'both as a naturalized object of visual consumption and as the privileged signifier of domesticity in the traditional public/private distinction' (Osucha 2009:71). Put differently, white women's bodies are required to provide visual pleasure to white men while simultaneously requiring protection from the invasive gaze of other (racialised) men (Osucha 2009:71). The bodies of racialised women do not receive these limited protections and are not considered vulnerable to being violated by the gaze (Osucha 2009:79). A woman detained in Yarl's Wood on two separate occasions recalled how, on one occasion, 'I was showering when a particular officer came into the room, using his key and without knocking. I was naked and vulnerable, he apologised but didn't look away' (Anonymous 10 2014:1). Another woman recounted that 'I was having a shower when they opened the door. It was a woman and a male guard. I was naked. On another occasion I had locked the door and the woman officer opened the bedroom door and I was naked and everyone could see. The male officer was there' (Girma et al. 2014:31). The detainees' penetration by the gaze of detention centre staff is not disciplinary or panoptical. Unlike Foucauldian theories of the prison, where panoptical forms of surveillance discipline prisoners to produce docile bodies, immigration detention is not intended to produce ideal citizen subjects (Turnbull 2016:64). Instead, this sexually violent and penetrative gaze produces female immigration detainees as a sexualised and racialised form of bare life.

The detention custody officers' threats of violence against racialised female detainees elucidates how the ideology of male chivalry applies solely to the protection of white women. At Yarl's Wood, racialised women are considered the rightful targets of male violence. During the 2018 hunger strike, a woman at Yarl's Wood described the violently sexualised deportation of a detainee, showing how both physical and sexual violence are built into the ordinary operations of immigration detention:

There were loads of officers, I couldn't count how many. Male officers too. And she was naked. She had a pink nighty, very short short short, up over her. And they handcuffed her hands behind her back and pulled them up to her neck. They were punching her on her side. She was crying and we were screaming, "This is how you treat people?!" (detainedvoices.com 2018dd).

Likewise, in the Channel 4 News undercover investigation, one detention custody officer remarks 'Should've f***ing headbutted the b****...headbutt the b****. I'd beat her up'

(Channel 4 News 2015). The normalisation of physical and sexual violence against detainees highlights how detained women are produced as ungrievable lives in the exceptional space of the immigration detention centre. In particular, the co-articulation of anti-blackness and sexism produces black female detainees as subjects who can be hurt or killed with near impunity. Black feminists have established how the delicacy and fragility of ‘women’ historically excluded black women, who laboured alongside men during the violent institutions of plantation slavery and the convict leasing system (Davis 2003:72; Dillon 2018:14). The ‘forced queering’ of detainees at Yarl’s Wood, or the way that ‘the state and capital produce nonnormative gender and sexualities through racial violence’, illuminates the centrality of whiteness in normative constructions of heterosexuality, and how white heterosexuality is produced in relation to racialised forms of gender non-normativity (Dillon 2018:15).

Put differently, rather than constituting ‘at risk’ migrant subjects, black female detainees at Yarl’s Wood are constituted *as* risks, where they are framed as violent, threatening, and dangerous towards staff. For example, a Nigerian woman and rape survivor detained at Yarl’s Wood was accused of assaulting four detention custody officers during an attempted deportation (Taylor 2020). This deportation involved eleven guards who handcuffed, struck, and dragged the detainee ‘like a bag of cement’ (Taylor 2020). Although a Luton district court eventually cleared her of these charges, these accusations show how anti-black racism constructs black female bodies as inherently dangerous, even when outnumbered eleven to one (Taylor 2020). Through policies like handcuffing, even when detainees insist that they pose no risk to public safety detention centres and their staff cast detainees as threatening, and violent. A detainee held at Yarl’s Wood on two occasions describes going to a doctor’s appointment: ‘I was taken by two officers, in handcuffs, to see the nurse. This was degrading and unnecessary. What did they seriously think I would do?’ (Anonymous 10 2014:1). Another Yarl’s Wood detainee, detained for approximately two months in 2013 despite being six months pregnant, recounted how she was brought to the hospital in handcuffs: ‘Everyone was looking at me like I was a criminal, like I was a murderer and I had murdered someone. I was so embarrassed’ (Anonymous 3 2014:1-2). These practices cite and reinforce racist histories that produce black subjects as ‘*carriers* of terror, terror’s embodiment’, rather than subjects who are disproportionately terrorised by various forms of state violence (Sharpe 2016:79).

Racialised and gendered logics of coloniality undergird the ungrievability of detainees' lives, providing the conditions of possibility for the state's violent indifference (Gray and Franck 2019:276). The practice of immigration detention and the policing of the British border rely on racialised logics of exclusion that emerged from British imperial and colonial domination, in particular, immigration policies that 'targeted non-white former colonial subjects for strict control and/or exclusion from the nation' (Turnbull 2017:146). Contemporaneously, the British Home Office primarily detains non-white migrants and racialised Eastern European migrants (Turnbull 2017:148-149). It very rarely detains white migrants from nations such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (Turnbull 2017:148-149). Speaking to *Detained Voices* in 2016, a Yarl's Wood detainee insisted that

[w]hen you look in Yarl's Wood there is no white person in here, we are all Indian, Chinese and African. It is racism. They don't want any people of colour in this country. There are white Zimbabweans who are claiming asylum but they can do it outside (detainedvoices.com 2016a).

Similarly, during Turnbull's ethnography of four different detention centres across the British immigration detention estate, a Yarl's Wood detainee observed that 'all of these English concentration camps only consist of Asians, Africans, Arabs and other mixed-race people but no whites! Does this imply that white people cannot be illegal immigrants in the UK?' (Turnbull 2017:154). Although the detention centre does not constitute a 'concentration camp', it connects the immigration detention centre to previous forms of extraordinary violence perpetrated by the British state, such as concentration camps in South Africa during the Boer War (1899-1902), internment camps during the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960), and concentration camps in Kenya during the Mau Mau Uprising (1952-1960). In this sense, the British immigration detention estate produces detainees as ungrievable subjects through both its legal and spatial exceptionality *and* its citation of previous histories of racialised violence.

Furthermore, detainees also foreground how racism shapes their daily experiences of the immigration detention centre. During the hunger strike, the protesters explicitly critiqued their experiences of racism during their dealings with the Home Office and in the British detention estate, arguing that 'we are on a hunger strike because we are suffering unfair imprisonment and racist abuse in this archaic institution in Britain' (detainedvoices.com 2018o). Similarly, speaking to *Detained Voices*, one Yarl's Wood detainee insists 'its about racism in detention centres. Im being bullied, its racial discrimination here. They are picking

on me all the time...Its racialised and its because I'm a woman. I'm being punished. Its OK for them to abuse you instead of protect you [sic]' (detainedvoices.com 2016e). This detainee's insistence that racialisation makes it 'OK' for detention custody officers to abuse detainees reflects, to some extent, the indifference to racialised suffering on the part of some detention custody officers. During Bosworth's ethnographic study, some detention custody officers racialised detainees' expressions of joy, sorrow, and despair through cultural stereotyping (Bosworth 2014:150-151). For example, one custody officer at Yarl's Wood suggested that 'the Jamaican way of life...is totally, you know, raising their arms and raising their voice. But... it's their culture. Get used to it' (Bosworth 2014:150-151). That being said, the racialised treatment of the detention custody officers themselves also illuminates the centrality of racialisation in producing detainable and ungrievable subjects (Turnbull 2017:154-155). Turnbull recounts a conversation with a Yarl's Wood detention custody officer where he describes how, at a previous detention centre,

some Eastern European detainees would tell him that he should be in detention because he is black and they should be out because they are white. The DCO also explained that some of the black detainees told him it was wrong to work in a place that locked up his own people, suggesting that they thought this type of work was something that white people should do (Turnbull 2017:154-155).

Like the wardresses who sympathised with their female captives but played an instrumental role in the state's masculinised violence, this detention custody officer occupied a liminal position between his ethnic identity and the structural whiteness of his role as a British detention custody officer. The experiences of both detainees and detention custody officers reveal how the racial logics of the detention centre produce detainees as ungrievable subjects through their daily racialised interactions with each other.

It is also important to note how different forms of racialisation negatively differentiate the lives of detainees within the space of the detention centre. The detainee population at Yarl's Wood encompasses a wide variety of ethnic and racial groups. In her ethnography of British detention centres, Bosworth emphasises the heterogenous and racially divided nature of Yarl's Wood, highlighting the racial tensions that exist between ethnic groups: 'Jamaican and Nigerian women mocked Chinese speech patterns, chanting "Ching Chow Min"', she notes, 'while Chinese nationals accused them of being overly sexual, promiscuous, and aggressive' (Bosworth 2014:138). These racial stereotypes are actively perpetrated by state officials and detention custody officers working in Yarl's Wood, creating racialised hierarchies that render

certain ethnic groups disproportionately vulnerable to state violence. Reflecting the British state's anti-black ideology and policies, black female detainees are especially overdetermined by the co-production of race and gender. On the one hand, the hypersexualisation of black female bodies renders black female detainees especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation and harassment (Bordo 2003:9). One of the former detainees lodging a sexual abuse claim against Yarl's Wood testified to the distinctly racialised character of the sexual violence, recounting that one guard told her, *'I like black women, show me your pussy'* (Birnberg Peirce & Partners 2014:4). On the other hand, their racialisation contributes to the indifference towards their suffering. In the Channel 4 News undercover investigation, one detention custody officer remarks: 'some of those women in... They're evil. Yeah? A lot of them are really nice, but some of them, these black women, they're f***ing horrible mate'" (Channel 4 News 2015). In detention, institutional violence produces gendered and racialised subjects not only in inferior relation to whiteness, but through hierarchical relations to one another. In other words, the distinction between grievable and ungrievable lives is produced through gendered and racialised relations of power that complicate Agamben's concept of bare life.

Conclusion

Discourses of sacrifice and self-sacrifice foreground the role of sacred and spiritual logics in hunger striking, while simultaneously illuminating the role of systemic violence in both state-making and subject formation. Yet the British suffragettes' hunger strikes and the strikes at Yarl's Wood both complicate theories of sacrifice and sacrificial violence by highlighting the distinctly gendered and racialised character of political violence. The suffragettes and detainees at Yarl's Wood both foreground the centrality of systemic and structural forms of violence in gendered and racialised domination. However, these cases sharply diverge from one another in terms of their access to sacrificial discourses and languages. The suffragette movement drew upon sacred discourses, like those of sacrifice, martyrdom, and Christian imagery and vocabularies, in order to justify their militant violence and proclaim the righteousness of their cause. That being said, they contested the masculinisation of heroic sacrifice and incorporated these discourses into a distinctly feminine sacrificial ethic. Their integration of gender-based and sexual violence into sacrificial frameworks and imaginaries offers a feminist theorisation of sacred violence. Moreover, the suffragettes' prison experiences show how sacrifice can operate through forms of violence that do not kill, but

instead degrade or humiliate through sexual violence. Sacrifice, this suggests, operates through gendered logics and structures of meaning, and attempts to produce gendered subjects according to the will and whim of the state.

The suffragettes were able to offer a feminist re-articulation of self-sacrifice because, as white women and citizens of the British state, their lives were still grievable. Though these characteristics were insufficient to protect the suffragettes from torture at the hands of the state, in particular sexualised forms of violence like force-feeding, they prevented the state from killing suffragettes with impunity. In contrast, immigration detainees at Yarl's Wood have far more tenuous access to these discourses of self-sacrifice, as their position is far more akin to that of *homo sacer*, the person who can be killed with impunity and without sacralisation. Caught in a liminal position between citizen and non-citizen, immigration detainees must overcome the state's violent indifference if their protests are to have any effect. The British state and contracted state actors like the staff at Yarl's Wood refuse to acknowledge the suffering of immigration detainees, constituting them as ungrievable and unsanctifiable subjects. At Yarl's Wood, sexism and patriarchal domination operate through 'institutionalised cultures of xeno-racism' that work to produce iterations of bare life distinctly differentiated and produced by race and gender (Canning 2017:59). In Yarl's Wood, the immigration detainee is not *homo sacer*, 'sacred man', but a gendered and racialised subject who can be harmed not with impunity, but with indifference.

Together, the first and second chapters have offered some critical reflections on the ability of the gendered and racialised body in pain to speak to an external audience. The communicative potential of women's hunger strikes is stymied by gendered and racialised forms of political violence that work to render women's self-inflicted harm unrecognisable as protest. These two chapters have considered two different approaches to the body in pain: liberal emotional economies that disavow pain and suffering, and sacrificial affective registers that valorise self-inflicted pain as a form of political commitment, ethical superiority, or spiritual transcendence. They have shown how gender and race shape women's hunger strikes at the levels of speech and self-sacrifice. The following chapters turn away from understanding the hunger strike as primarily a communicative form of protest in order to consider the performative qualities of the hunger strike. They do not deny the communicative aspects of hunger striking. Instead, they aim to complicate approaches to hunger striking based on the ideas of speech and communication, at the expense of

understanding how the body possesses its own ‘politics and sociality’ (Wilcox 2014:2). While the preceding two chapters have emphasised the serious limitations placed on the efficacy of women’s hunger strikes by gendered and racialised forms of political violence, the following two chapters will interrogate how the suffragettes and immigration detainees at Yarl’s Wood contested the power of the state at the level of their bodies. The fourth chapter will also explore how hunger-striking detainees contest their status as ungrievable and unsanctifiable life, moving beyond the paradigm of bare life to examine the forms of agency that arise from these liminal sites of exception and extraordinary state violence.

PART II: THE LIMITS OF THE BODY

Chapter 3: Reclaiming Space

Introduction

This chapter shows how the suffragettes used hunger striking as part of a wider repertoire of embodied protests to lay claim to full inclusion in the Edwardian polis. Suffragette scholarship often focuses on the spectacular qualities of the suffragettes' protests, suggesting that their activism was primarily designed to grab headlines and draw attention to the women's cause (see Ticker, 1987; Vessey, 2020). However, this chapter argues that the WSPU's political activities were also ways of enacting citizenship or acting as if they were citizens. Suffragette militancy is often associated with the suffragettes' more violent forms of activism, such as property damage, arson, bombings, and assaulting public figures, that were largely undertaken by a small number of WSPU members in the later years of the suffragette movement (Purvis 2019:1200). However, suffragette militancy included a wide range of political practices, 'both legal and illegal', through which the suffragettes laid claim to political rights and public space within a context that only allowed women to participate in politics in limited and gendered ways (Purvis 2019:1200). By showing how the suffragettes made political claims with and through their bodies, this chapter contributes to suffragette scholarship that critiques interpretations of the women's suffrage movement as a single-issue campaign focused solely on attaining women's voting rights (Vessey 2020:4; Holton 2014:259; Purvis 2013a:580). Through hunger striking and other forms of embodied protest, the suffragettes pushed their bodies to their physical limits to illuminate and contest their liminal positioning at the limits of the British body politic.

The first part of this chapter, "'It is deeds, not words, that matter in politics': enacting political rights in Edwardian Britain', explores how the suffragettes' political protests responded to their liminal positioning between citizen and non-citizen in Edwardian Britain. It contextualises the suffragettes' hunger strikes through an exploration of their other embodied forms of political protest. This section argues that while the suffragettes' activism aimed to procure the women's vote, their protests were, in and of themselves, 'acts of citizenship' (Isin and Nielsen 2008:2). By acting as if they were already citizens, the suffragettes illuminated their partial and contradictory inclusion in the Edwardian polis and

used their bodies to lay claim to full and equal citizenship in defiance of normative prohibitions on women's full participation in the political sphere.

The second section of this chapter, "'You may break our bodies, but you can never break this determined spirit': gendered embodiment and laying claim to public space' examines the suffragettes' acts of citizenship in relation to the gendered division between the public and private spheres, or the 'separate spheres' ideology. It argues that the suffragettes' embodied protests problematised their liminal positioning between public and private. Suffragette women forcibly inserted their gendered bodies into public, political spaces that were coded as masculine, and in doing so, laid claim to women's right to move through this space. The retaliatory violence the suffragettes experienced showed how the state policed public space through distinctly gendered forms of violence. Later in the suffragette campaign, the suffragettes turned towards destroying both public and private property, further destabilising the boundary between the public and private spheres of life.

The third section of this chapter, "'We shall take steps to secure our rights': enacting citizenship through political imprisonment' examines how the suffragettes laid claim to citizenship in the space of the prison. The suffragettes formally went on hunger strike in order to attain political prisoner status and therefore to be recognised by the Liberal government as political actors. However, through hunger striking and other forms of prison protest, the suffragettes acted as though they were political prisoners, and in doing so, laid claim to their rights to be political subjects. Through their collective protests, the suffragettes refused to comply with the restrictions placed on 'ordinary criminals' and threatened both the authority and the practical capacities of the Edwardian prison system. Moreover, their collective acts forged bonds of solidarity between WSPU members, laying the foundations for future contestations of state power and future acts of citizenship.

The fourth section of this chapter, "'The oppression of their sister women': class in the suffragette movement and the problems of acting for others' interrogates the tensions between the suffragettes' enactment of their own political rights, and their claims to be acting on the behalf of others, namely, the 'oppressed' members of their own sex. The WSPU pursued a variety of social and political reforms intended to protect the rights of women and promote their distinctive gendered interests, on issues ranging from sexual exploitation and labour conditions all the way through to prison reform. On the other hand, middle- and upper-

class suffragettes' insistence that they were campaigning to help and lift up their oppressed sisters reproduced class dynamics that positioned working-class women as the passive beneficiaries of the actions of middle and upper-class women. Despite a significant working-class membership and the good intentions of the WSPU leadership, class inequalities and prejudices still permeated the suffragette movement, shaping the suffragettes' acts of citizenship and how they moved through public space.

3.1 'It is deeds, not words, that matter in politics': enacting political rights in Edwardian Britain

The suffragettes distinguished themselves from other women's suffrage organisations through their commitment to 'deeds, not words'. The suffragettes' embodied protests are often interpreted and theorised as deliberately staged political spectacles designed to generate maximum publicity for the cause of women's suffrage (Vessey 2020:3). Press coverage, David Vessey argues, was a 'primary objective' of the suffragettes' protests, resulting in the suffragettes' continuous escalation of militant action in order to retain the attention of the press (Vessey 2020:3). Lisa Tickner, examining the rich visual culture of the suffragette campaign, argues that the suffragettes 'did not mind if the publicity was unfavourable so long as there was noise' (Tickner 1988: 59 in Vessey 2020:3). The suffragettes' attention-grabbing forms of political activism and protest certainly added a 'fresh immediacy and glamour' to the women's suffrage campaign (Holton 2014:253). As Red Chidgey notes, the enduring legacy of suffragette spectacles, such as the images of women chaining themselves to railings or being violently arrested in the streets of London 'speaks to how thoroughly the militant women's suffrage campaign was mediated, and mediatised, at the time' (Chidgey 2018:69).

However, this focus on the suffragettes' protests as a form of media spectacle privileges the visual and discursive currency of the WSPU's protests (Mayhall 2003:8). It obscures how 'Edwardian women sought to represent themselves politically, not merely visually' (Mayhall 2003:8). Consequently, Laura Nym Mayhall argues that centring 'passionate bodies of suffragettes in protest risks taking 'one extreme end of the campaign as the whole campaign and (missing) the continuum along which suffragettes practiced militancy' (Mayhall 2003:7). Like Mayhall, this chapter situates the suffragettes' hunger strikes within a much wider constellation of civic acts. Unlike Mayhall, though, this chapter chooses to centre the

suffragettes' 'passionate bodies' in order to examine how the suffragettes laid claim to citizenship through their embodied protests. Specifically, it argues that the suffragettes' protests were 'acts of citizenship' that disrupted the existing political order and laid claim to full participation in the Edwardian polis (Isin and Nielsen 2008:2). Rather than framing citizenship as a legal status or category, Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen draw attention to the acts and practices that produce citizen-subjects (Isin and Nielsen 2008:2). In this chapter, their concept of 'acts of citizenship' is used to highlight how the suffragettes disrupted the existing political order and laid claim to full and equal participation in Edwardian politics. In this sense, the hunger strikes were part of a wider set of political acts through which the suffragettes laid claim to citizenship. Through their activism, the WSPU called for women to be recognised as full citizens of the Edwardian polis. They contested women's 'exclusion from citizenship' and critiqued the government for 'withholding from them the rights of citizenship' (C. Pankhurst ca. 1912b:1; C. Pankhurst ca. 1912a:2). Georgiana Solomon argued that the suffragettes only wanted to 'share with our men those responsibilities and citizen rights which will empower us to render effective service to the State (Solomon 1910:4). Consequently, they framed the vote as the most 'fundamental right of citizenship' (WSPU ca. 1912).

Yet, through their political activism, the suffragettes also laid claim to their citizenship rights by pre-emptively practising these rights. In doing so, they actively produced themselves as citizen-subjects. The suffragettes' political agitation illuminates the paradoxes that underpin approaches to political rights that construe rights as entitlements, or as the property of individual rights-bearing subjects (Dembour 2010:7). Contra the notion of rights as entitlements, Jacques Rancière argues that the Rights of Man are 'the rights of those who have not the rights that they have and have the rights that they have not' (Rancière 2004:302). Put differently, subjects that are officially excluded from the rights of citizenship lay claim to these rights by showing that they are already able to practise these rights and act as though they are political subjects (Rancière 2004:304). The most obvious example of this paradox of rights in the case of women's suffrage occurred in November 1867, when Lily Maxwell, a storeowner in Manchester, was accidentally registered as a voter in a by-election for a local Member of Parliament; she seized the opportunity to vote and became the first woman to vote in the United Kingdom (Marlow 2015:12). By voting, Maxwell showed that she did not have the rights that she had, and yet had the rights she had not. Through their political activism, the suffragettes

demonstrated their capacity to act as citizens and illuminated the hypocrisy of their exclusion from full participatory citizenship.

According to the WSPU, acts of citizenship allowed Edwardian women to establish political subjecthood by seizing political rights for and by themselves. Although the suffragettes were not the only women's suffrage organisation that engaged in militant protest or direct-action techniques, the suffragettes actively distinguished themselves from constitutional suffragists through their emphasis 'deeds, not words'. The suffragettes justified their turn to militant and direct-action techniques through recourse to the failure of constitutional methods to procure the women's vote. Reflecting retrospectively on the women's suffrage movement in 1976, suffragette Hazel Inglis insisted that,

they'd been asking for the vote for forty years. And successive governments had promised it and always at the last moment they'd let them down or someone had talked it out or something like that...finally Christabel said...we're going to have a new motto. Deeds, not words (Harrison 1976b).

The suffragettes' insistence upon demanding their political rights and actively laying claim to them in the political sphere contradicted Edwardian gender ideologies that encouraged women to 'ask politely' for their rights (Purvis 2019:1202). Within a context where women's political representation was denied or heavily circumscribed on the basis of gender, the suffragettes' acts of citizenship asserted women's capacity for and right to independent political action.

Furthermore, the WSPU's policy of 'deeds, not words' stressed the importance of women's self-representation on the national political stage. Anti-suffragists argued that male politicians adequately represented women's interests and that enfranchised women would lose the 'chivalrous attention' they enjoyed under male protection (Harrison 2013:72-73). The suffragettes and their supporters disagreed with this analysis, arguing that women needed to represent themselves rather than relying on male benefactors to do so (Harrison 2013:72). In her autobiography, Kitty Marion suggests that anti-suffragist men did not want to be deprived 'of the role of 'rescuing angel', doling out charity to the victims' (Marion ca. 1930:217). The vote was essential, she asserts, because 'prevention is better than cure, and protection and safety better than rescue' (Marion ca. 1930:217). Similarly, in a letter to politician and women's suffrage supporter Henry Harben, Christabel Pankhurst suggested that women must

independently enact their own political rights if they are to be freed from patriarchal governance:

Women must grow their own backbone before they are going to be any use to themselves or to humanity as a whole. It is helpful and good for men themselves when they try to promote women's emancipation; but they have to do it from the outside and the really important thing is that women are working for their own salvation, and are able to do it even if not a living man takes any part in bringing it about. (Holton 1997:210)

Consequently, the suffragettes called upon women to 'rise up' on their own behalf and seize their unjustly denied citizen rights through acts of citizenship (Marlow 2015:60).

The suffragettes' insistence on self-representation and political independence both highlighted and contested their liminal status in Edwardian society. Some theorists, such as Ziarek, argue that the suffragettes' hunger strikes represented the revolt of 'bare life' against the Edwardian state (Ziarek 2008:98). However, this characterisation of suffragette women as 'bare life' does not acknowledge women's extensive participation in Edwardian politics and society, along with how this participation was shaped and limited by gendered norms. The idea that Victorian and Edwardian women were fully excluded from political activity, or, as Ziarek suggests, only included in the political realm through their exclusion, has been thoroughly refuted. Sarah Richardson opens her work on Victorian women's political culture with the statement that the question is 'not whether women were able to engage in politics in the nineteenth century...but rather what were the nature and extent of their political worlds' (Richardson 2013:1). Prior to obtaining the vote, Victorian and Edwardian women were formally and informally involved with politics in a variety of ways, from upper-class women's political canvassing, philanthropic work, and hostessing through to working-class women's participation in temperance campaigns, street politics, labour movements, and food riots (Holton 2014:249; Lawrence 2001:204). Furthermore, as women's political participation became increasingly formalised from the 1880s onwards, women became increasingly visible as political figures (Lawrence 2001:206). Although women could not vote in national elections, they could vote in local elections and became increasingly important volunteer workers for their preferred political parties during national elections (Lawrence 2001:206). Women were thus part of, and in many ways, integral to, the functioning of the Edwardian body politic.

Nonetheless, women's participation was still highly unequal and subject to forms of gendered regulation, meaning that women were only able to politically participate in partial and deeply gendered ways. Kathryn Gleadle, in her analysis of the political activities of middle- and upper-class women between 1815-1867, argues that these Victorian women constituted 'borderline citizens', whose status 'hovered permanently in the interstices of the political nation', ensuring that their political subjecthood was 'often fragile and contingent' (Gleadle 2009:25, 3). Women were able to observe and participate in aspects of political life, such as political hustings, but they were largely expected to sit separately from the male crowds, meaning that 'men and women did not possess that space equally' (Lawrence 2001:204). They were also not expected to speak in this context, unless speaking on behalf of an absent male relative (Lawrence 2001:203). Hence, while many Edwardian women were highly involved in political life, they were barred from full participation in a masculinised political sphere. Put differently, Edwardian women were suspended in a liminal position between citizen and non-citizen, experiencing only partial inclusion in the Edwardian polis.

The suffragettes' enactment of citizenship rights deliberately exposed the contradictory and partial inclusion of women in the Edwardian polity, calling their marginalisation into question (Lawrence 2001:204). In the early years of the suffragette campaign, suffragettes used techniques like heckling to forcibly insert themselves into political spaces that traditionally ignored or marginalised women's voices. Although Jon Lawrence argues that the suffragettes' 'politics of disruption' aimed to generate widescale national publicity, he also highlights how the suffragettes' participation in the arenas of street politics challenged women's marginalisation in these hypermasculine political spaces (Lawrence 2001:210). In 1905, Annie Kenney and Christabel Pankhurst conducted one of the first acts of suffragette militancy in their questioning of Sir Edward Grey at a political meeting. Public meetings and hustings, of centrally important to Victorian and Edwardian street politics, were highly masculine spaces shaped by the anticipation or actuality of street fights (Lawrence 2001:203). The underlying threat of male violence meant that even though women were not formally excluded from these spaces, they were coded as 'powerfully male environments' (Lawrence 2001:203). Kenney and Pankhurst disrupted the meeting through their insistence on bringing women's voices and a 'woman's issue' into this masculinised political space (Lawrence 2001:208). By heckling politicians, disrupting public meetings, and displaying suffragette iconography and 'votes for women' banners, the suffragettes contested their marginalisation and enforced silence within these masculinised political spaces. The suffragettes' heckling

was an act of citizenship that laid claim to the right to speak in public space, forcing male members of the Edwardian polis to reckon with women's partial inclusion in political life.

Moreover, the suffragettes explicitly framed certain acts of citizenship, such as deputations, as ways that they could practise citizenship in the absence of voting rights. The suffragettes insisted that, according to British civic and legal traditions, citizens of the United Kingdom had the right to petition the King with their grievances. Consequently, the suffragettes organised and sent numerous deputations, often numbering several hundred women at a time, to take their complaints to Parliament (C. Pankhurst ca. 1912b:1). Emmeline Pankhurst, in a letter to the WSPU membership, framed the ability to approach and petition the king as one of the few avenues of political speech available to disenfranchised women: 'we, being women, are denied representation, Parliament is not directly responsible to us. We must therefore use our own constitutional right and make our deputation large and representative, and so ensure its success' (E. Pankhurst 1914a). Similarly, on June 22nd, 1909, Marion Wallace Dunlop emphasised the right of women to march on Parliament by stencilling a passage of the Bill of Rights on the walls of Westminster (Atkinson 1909:149). The passage read, 'it is the right of the subject to petition the King, and all commitments and prosecutions for such petitioning are illegal' (Atkinson 1909:149). After she was arrested for damaging the House of Commons, she claimed that this action was 'fully justified' as 'Mr. Asquith (the Kings proxy) has persistently (by his refusal to receive women's deputations) violated this right' (Atkinson 1909:149; Wallace Dunlop 1909). The Liberal party's refusal to entertain the WSPU's deputations once again revealed the contradictions in women's political status. By disallowing the suffragettes from exercising their legal and constitutional right to 'petition the King', the Liberal government illuminated the normative and political barriers to women's citizen rights.

That being said, even the WSPU's less spectacular and more ordinary forms of political activity focused on practising citizenship rights. The daily schedules of members of the WSPU involved activities such as public speaking, advertising meetings, and selling suffragette publications (Purvis 2000:138). Though these activities were considered relatively ordinary when women canvassed on behalf of male politicians, they became controversial and provocative when undertaken by women for women's causes (Lawrence 2001:206). Rank-and-file suffragettes emphasised their initial fears around speaking in public about the cause of women's suffrage and the political skills they developed throughout the campaign.

Margaret Wynne Nevinson, a member of the WSPU and the Women's Freedom League, describes how she originally 'refused to speak street corners and in the open; I could not overcome my Victorian prejudices; it seemed such a vulgar thing to do, and I shrank from the rudeness and violence, the rotten eggs and garbage' (Marlow 2015:56). However, in 1906, Nevinson overcame her gendered 'Victorian prejudices' and the 'dizzy sickness of terror' to advocate the suffrage cause in public for the first time (Marlow 2015:56). From then on, she 'preferred' outdoor speaking over other forms of activism, despite the 'roughness and physical strain' it entailed (Marlow 2015:57). Similarly, in an interview with Brian Harrison, suffragette Connie Lewcock describes how her experiences as a public speaker during the suffragette campaign proved 'invaluable' in her later career as a trade union activist (Harrison 1976c). In this sense, the suffragettes' acts of citizenship facilitated the development of civic skills as well as laying claim to political subjecthood.

3.2 'You may break our bodies, but you can never break this determined spirit': gendered embodiment and laying claim to public space

The suffragettes' acts of citizenship were also intended to lay claim to public space. The suffragettes' political activism and insistence upon participating in the 'public, male world' of street politics also produced 'various forms of abuse' from onlookers and opponents (Purvis 2000:137). Nevinson describes in great detail the 'roughness' that met suffragist campaigners, including physical assaults and being pelted by garbage, rotten food and other missiles during speeches (Marlow 2015:57). Amid the tumultuous and often violent world of street politics, the suffragettes persisted in acting as citizens in these spaces, turning ordinary street corners into sites for political engagement and discussion around the cause of women's suffrage. By occupying public space and acting as citizens, suffragette speakers challenged gendered codes that prevented them from occupying these masculinised public spaces (Purvis 2019:1202). The suffragettes' acts of citizenship problematised the division between public and private spheres and how these separate spheres shaped gendered notions of citizenship. As Amanda Vickery notes, the historical narrative of women's confinement within the domestic sphere 'fails to capture the texture of female subordination and the complex interplay of emotion and power in family life', to the extent that Vickery questions both the centrality of the separate spheres framework in British women's history (Vickery 1993:401, 393). Certainly, the public and private spheres were co-constitutive, 'rife with internal

contradictions’, and constantly under construction (Steinbach 2012:830). Yet as Susie Steinbach argues, the concept of separate spheres ‘flourished as an idea if not as a lived reality’ during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, acting for the rising middle-class as both a form of ‘social organisation’ and ‘self-identification’ (Steinbach 2012:830). As Nevinson's comment about her ‘Victorian prejudices’ shows, many Edwardian women internalised the gendered ideal of separate spheres, even if this ideal did not exactly correspond to the material realities of men’s and women’s lives.

The concept of differentiated male and female roles based on gendered spheres of influence underpinned the arguments of male anti-suffragists (Bush 2007:8, Harrison 2013:56). Male anti-suffragists who were ideologically opposed to the women’s vote largely supported the separation of spheres between the sexes, believing that women’s political participation would detract from their central role as wives and mothers (Harrison 2013:56,58,60). Female anti-suffragists, in contrast, were less likely to buy into the ideology of starkly divided public and private spheres; instead, domestic duties and public work were ‘overlapping and mutually reinforcing’ activities (Bush 2007:6). Unlike many male anti-suffragists, female anti-suffragists supported women’s greater involvement in local governance in line with their broader commitments to educational and social reform (Bush 2007:16). This being said, both groups of anti-suffragists converged on the premise that for women, citizenship lay in the promotion of the social good in local communities, not in political participation at the national and parliamentary levels (Harrison 2013:59; Bush 2007:17). Deborah Cohler suggests that anti-suffragist representations of suffrage women depicted them as ‘disrupters of normative gendered, sexual, and national identities predicated on often-hyperbolic idealizations of a coherent Victorian domesticity’ (Cohler 2010:37). By commandeering both ‘public space and the rhetoric of citizenship in their quest for the vote’, the women’s suffrage movement opened up alternative forms of feminine subjectivity that diverged from the ideology of separate spheres (Cohler 2010:33).

By forcibly inserting their feminised bodies into what was understood to be the masculine political sphere, the suffragettes laid claim to their right to occupy public space. Mayhall argues that militancy should not be interpreted ‘as being primarily about the deployment of women’s bodies in public space’ (Mayhall 2003:7). However, as Edwardian women were specifically excluded from or marginalised within political spaces and institutions on the basis of their gendered embodiment, the suffragettes’ embodied and public protests both

symbolically and materially challenged the gendered boundaries between the political and domestic spheres. For example, in 1909, two suffragettes, Daisy Solomon and Elspeth McLellan, took advantage of Post Office regulations that allowed for the posting of 'human letters' and posted themselves from the Strand to Downing Street (Marlow 2015:69). Likewise, on the night before the 1911 census, Emily Davison was found hiding in the crypt at Westminster Hall, in the hope of being able to put the Houses of Parliament as her residential address (Marlow 2015:138-140). In both of these cases, women used their bodies not just to draw media attention to the cause of women's suffrage, but also to lay claim to those political spaces from which they were currently excluded on account of their female embodiment.

One of the suffragettes' most iconic acts of citizenship, chaining themselves to the railings of governmental buildings, similarly challenged the gendered partitioning of public space. Suffragettes rarely chained themselves to railings, but this particular act of citizenship has become emblematic of the suffragettes' wider direct-action campaign, as militant suffragists used this form of protest to break down the physical barriers that prevented women from equitably accessing political space. On October 28th 1908, two members of the Women's Freedom League, Muriel Matters and Helen Fox, chained themselves to the grille that separated the Ladies Gallery from the House of Commons. At that time, women could only watch parliamentary proceedings from the segregated Ladies Gallery (Marlow 2015:76-77). The grilles formally separated the female spectators from the male politicians, keeping them hidden from public view. It also made it more difficult for women to observe Parliamentary debates in the House of Commons (Takayanagi 2017). In order to remove the two suffragettes from the House of Commons, parliamentary doorkeepers had to remove the grilles entirely, symbolically and materially breaking down the barriers between the masculine space of the House of Commons and the feminised political space of the Ladies Gallery. Through this form of protest, the suffragettes contested their liminal position between citizen and non-citizen, using their enchained bodies to break down the divisions between gendered spheres of influence.

Furthermore, the suffragettes assembled in large groups to collectively lay claim to public space. As Judith Butler notes, freedom of assembly is distinguished from freedom of expression because 'the power that people have to gather together is itself an important political prerogative, quite distinct from the right to say whatever they have to say once

people have gathered' (Butler 2018:8). By gathering together, the suffragettes and their supporters made a political claim to being citizen-subjects, where collective citizenship was enacted by the assembly of 'plural, persisting, acting' bodies (Butler 2018:59). The suffragettes similarly laid claim to citizenship rights through a range of public gatherings, such as demonstrations, deputations, meetings, and marches. In 1907, the WSPU held its first suffrage procession through London, known as the 'Mud March' due to the poor weather (Holton 2014:253). On June 21st 1908, the suffragettes held a large demonstration in Hyde Park, where over 30,000 women marched in procession and 500,000 were believed to have attended (Marlow 2015:67). Through their public gatherings, the suffragettes' bodies made a collective claim to public space that extended beyond their formal, stated demand for the vote (Butler 2018:8,18,26). Their gendered bodies contested the masculinity of political space.

Even as they increasingly turned to more violent methods in the latter stages of the suffragette movement, the WSPU continued to organise processions, deputations, and mass marches to demonstrate support for the women's vote. In October 1908, in response to anti-suffragist Herbert Henry Asquith becoming the new Prime Minister, the WSPU organised a 'rush' on Parliament (Willmott 2018:17). Although Emmeline Pankhurst, Christabel Pankhurst, and Flora Drummond urged supporters to 'come unarmed, and without sticks or stones', the three were still arrested for 'inciting the public to do a certain and wrongful and illegal act, to rush the House of Commons' (Willmott 2018:17). Nonetheless, even with the Pankhursts and Drummond in police custody, the rush on Parliament proceeded, with over 60,000 people – including suffragettes, their opponents, and 'intrigued spectators' gathered in Parliament Square (Willmott 2018:17-18). In June 1911, the WSPU organised the 'Women's Coronation Procession', where a collective of women over seven miles long marched from Embankment to Albert Hall (C. Pankhurst ca. 1912b:1). Notably, the procession included representatives from a wide variety of women's suffrage societies, including the National Union of Woman Suffrage Societies, marking 'the solidarity of women in their demand for the Vote' (C. Pankhurst ca. 1912b:2). Through these plural acts of citizenship, the suffragettes jointly laid claim to bodily space and collectively refused to be excluded from the Edwardian polis.

In response, the Edwardian government attempted to restrict the suffragettes' access to political space, exposing the masculinist bias of the Liberal state. When political parties banned women from attending political meetings and public events, they exposed the

gendered exclusions that, prior to these interruptions, had operated in a tacit form (Lawrence 2001:221). In 1908, the Government pushed through the 'Public Meetings Act', which criminalised disorderly behaviour at public meetings (Purvis 2019:1208). The Liberal Party also introduced mechanisms such as only allowing ticketed guests to attend political events (Willmott 2018:17). In order to prevent suffragette hecklers from disrupting meetings, some organisers invoked a blanket ban against all female attendees. Suffragette protests in Parliament led to the banning of all women from the Ladies Gallery, and a ban on demonstrating near Parliament (Lawrence 2001:221). Consequently, suffragette demonstrators outside Parliament were regularly arrested for 'disturbing the peace' (Purvis 2019:1202). These prohibitions on occupying and moving through public space raised questions about the 'liberalism' of the Liberal Government (Willmott 2018:85). For example, after the WSPU was prohibited from holding meetings in Hyde Park, the Free Speech Committee wrote to the Secretary of State that the ban went 'against the whole spirit of any government that can call itself Liberal' (Willmott 2018:85). The limitations placed on the suffragettes' freedom of movement and freedom of assembly illuminated the broader gendered contradictions that underpinned the British body politic at the time.

Furthermore, the mob violence and police brutality that followed the suffragettes' deputations revealed how patriarchal violence policed women's movement through public space. The WSPU was not unique in its use of large assemblies to demonstrate support for women's suffrage; the NUWSS held large marches and peaceful 'pilgrimages' to demonstrate popular support for the women's vote (Willmott 2018:81). However, unlike the peaceful gatherings of the NUWSS, the suffragettes' deputations frequently produced violent clashes between suffragette marchers, state actors, and hostile crowds. Suffragettes' accounts describe how members of deputations were regularly thrown, beaten, and attacked by policemen and crowds while marching peacefully to Parliament. At a meeting at Caxton Hall on October 13th 1908, Kitty Marion was 'frightfully mauled' after joining a deputation to the Prime Minister; in her autobiography, she describes how 'aching in body and soul, I went home at last to find my arms and shoulders black, blue and painful, as were every woman's who had taken part in this rightful, legal, peaceful petitioning' (Marion ca. 1930:172-173). During one of the most violent incidences in the suffragette campaign, the 'Black Friday' deputation of 1910, Georgiana Solomon recalls being 'knocked about, tripped up, their arms and fingers twisted, their bodies doubled under, and then forcibly thrown, if indeed they did not drop stunned, on the ground' (Solomon 1910:2). The violence against suffragette demonstrators

undermined the ideology of separate spheres of influence that underpinned anti-suffragist arguments. Violence against suffragette women served to advertise the reality of male brutality, undermining anti-suffragists' arguments for male chivalry and the benevolent protection of women by enfranchised men (Harrison 2013:72). This violence also showed how women's marginalisation in political life could no longer be easily attributed solely to natural incapacities or an innate preference for local politics and the domestic sphere.

The public assaults on suffragettes' bodies clearly showed how the division between women and men's gendered spheres of influence was upheld and maintained through male violence. Specifically, the suffragettes were punished for their political acts through sexual violence, revealing how gender-based violence policed women's ability to move through public space. In the context of the suffragette campaign, the threat of sexual violence on the part of hostile mobs or policemen served to discourage and punish suffragettes for their acts of citizenship and occupation of public space. On several occasions, hostile crowds tore off the clothes of suffragette hecklers; for example, in September 1912, an angry crowd 'stripped two women to the waist and took home pieces of their shirts as souvenirs' (Grant 2011:136-137). As Susan Rae Peterson notes, 'rape is a practice which effectively prevents women from... walking freely in public places' (Peterson 1977:362). Moving about freely, in contrast, is a 'male privilege, which only immoral women seek to exercise' (Peterson 1977:362). The public stripping and sexual assault of suffragettes shows how gendered forms of violence were used to spectacularly punish immoral suffragette women for their attempt to exercise the privilege of 'walking freely' and acting as citizens within political space.

Although many of these incidents of violence were perpetrated by independent actors, the state also used sexual violence to punish and subdue suffragette protesters. Alongside the sexual violation of the force-feeding tube, state actors like plain clothes policemen used sexual violence against deputations and other suffragette gatherings to dissuade suffragettes from moving freely in the public sphere. During the 'Black Friday' incident, suffragettes decried the sexual nature of attacks by plain-clothes policemen. Georgiana Solomon was seized by the breast and described the scenes around her as an 'orgy' of violence (Solomon 1910:2). Similarly, a suffragette called 'Miss H.' described how a policeman forcefully grabbed her left breast, while saying 'you have been wanting this for a long time, haven't you' (Purvis 2000:139). A suffragette's statement in a report entitled 'Treatment of the Women's Deputation by the Police' (Marlow 2015:128) described how:

several times constables and plain-clothes men who were in the crowd passed their arms round me from the back and clutched hold of my breasts in as public a manner as possible, and men in the crowd followed their example.... On the Friday I was also badly treated. My skirt was lifted up as high as possible, and the constable attempted to lift me off the ground by raising his knee. This he could not do, so he threw me into the crowd and incited the men to treat me as they wished. Consequently several men who, I believe, were policemen in plain clothes, also endeavoured to lift my dress (Marlow 2015:127)

H.N. Brailsford, the Secretary for the Conciliation Committee, investigated the events and came to the conclusion that even if the police were under orders to prevent the women from advancing, 'the impression conveyed by this evidence is from first to last that the police believed themselves to be acting under an almost unlimited licence to treat the women as they pleased, and to inflict upon them a degree of humiliation and pain that would deter them or intimidate them' (Marlow 2015:128). State-sanctioned and state-perpetrated forms of sexual violence thus functioned as a humiliating public spectacle that publicly punished the suffragettes for breaching the gendered division between public and private space.

In response to these acts of physical and sexual violence, the suffragettes moved towards other acts of citizenship that broke down the barriers between the public and private spheres of life, namely property damage and imprisonment. In 1908, two members of the WSPU acting on their own volition, Mary Leigh and Edith New, threw rocks through the windows of 10 Downing Street (Purvis 2019:1203). Their act ushered in a new stage of suffragette militancy focused first on the destruction of public property, before later expanding to include acts of vandalism against private property. Although they still used collective gatherings to show popular support for the cause of women's suffrage, the suffragette leadership turned towards property damage in order to spare suffragettes from the physical and sexual assaults that resulted from sending deputations to parliament (Purvis 2019:1204). In 1912, Christabel Pankhurst argued that while 'a window can be replaced; a woman's body cannot' (C. Pankhurst ca. 1912a:1). Hence, while the suffragettes still tried to lay claim to citizenship through practicing assembly, the personal toll of these attacks encouraged the WSPU to pursue other acts of citizenship (Purvis 2019:1204-1205).

3.3 'We shall take steps to secure our rights': enacting citizenship through political imprisonment

The suffragettes' turn towards property damage ushered in another phase of their political activism, centred on enacting rights in the space of the prison. The suffragettes' prison sentences for window smashing attempted to depoliticise their acts of protest, reducing their acts of political speech to apolitical vandalism. In her autobiography, Emmeline Pankhurst highlights the hypocrisy of the suffragettes' prison sentences for breaking windows, describing how a men's riot in Winchester resulted in 'property of various kinds' being destroyed, and yet 'no punishment was administered' (E. Pankhurst 2014:109). 'Window breaking', she consequently argues, 'when Englishmen do it, is regarded as honest expression of political opinion. Window-breaking, when Englishwomen do it, is treated as a crime' (E. Pankhurst 2014:109). However, the suffragettes appropriated these prison sentences and used them to demonstrate that they were already capable of acting as citizens. From 1905 onwards, when Annie Kenney and Christabel Pankhurst chose imprisonment rather than paying a fine after they disrupted the Free Trade Hall meeting, the suffragettes pursued a policy of eschewing fines and other punitive actions in favour of imprisonment (Purvis 2019:1201). In his work on the paradox of rights, Jacques Rancière recounts how during the French Revolution, the revolutionary Olympe de Gouges argued that 'if women are entitled to go to the scaffold, they are entitled to go to the assembly' (Rancière 2004:303). In other words, if French women were equal to men under the guillotine, then 'they had the right to the whole of equality, including equal participation to political life' (Rancière 2004:304). Similarly, the suffragettes argued that if they were entitled to be 'tortured' through police brutality, force-feeding, and the Cat and Mouse act, they were also entitled to the vote.

The suffragettes used hunger strikes to enact and lay claim to political-prisoner status. June Purvis characterises the suffragettes' hunger strikes as a form of 'passive, non-violent resistance to the injustices that women experienced because of their sex' (Purvis 2019:1204). However, this emphasis on the passivity and non-compliance of the suffragette's hunger strikes obscures how these protests were powerful acts of citizenship through which the suffragettes laid claim to being political subjects. On the one hand, the suffragettes attempted to gain the formal recognition as, and the privileges associated with being, political prisoners. On the other hand, by hunger striking – a form of protest uniquely associated with Russian political prisoners – the suffragettes acted as political subjects (Grant 2011:114). Between 1905-1908, magistrates allocated suffragette prisoners to one of three divisions; the First Division, which was intended for political prisoners; the Second Division, for so-called 'respectable' or middle- and upper-class prisoners, and the Third Division, for 'ordinary

criminals' (Geddes, 2008: 81). From 1907 onwards, suffragette agitators were deemed ordinary prisoners and allocated to the Second and Third Divisions (Geddes, 2008: 81). In 1909, members of the WSPU went on hunger strike to pressure the Liberal government into granting them First Division privileges, or the privileges afforded to political prisoners (Geddes 2008:81). Although the suffragettes desired the material privileges of First Division prisoners, which included the right to wear their own clothing rather than a prison uniform, access to books and writing materials, increased visiting rights, and the right to have food sent into the prison, they primarily fought for these privileges as part of a wider struggle to be recognised as political subjects (Geddes 2008:81). In a speech delivered on April 15th 1912, the suffragette Dr Frances Ede emphasised how the hunger strikes were not necessarily intended to secure their early release, or even intended to obtain the vote. Instead, they were explicitly aimed at attaining 'political privileges':

We were not striking against our unjust sentences or for shorter sentences, not to be let out, not for the vote. What we struck for was this; previously by similar means and others, we won from Mr. Winston Churchill, certain privileges, and those privileges it was understood were to be granted to prisoners who occupied the status of political prisoners. It was for those political privileges we were standing out (Ede 1912).

By using a form of protest associated with political prisoners and deploying it in pursuit of the unique privileges granted to political offenders, the suffragettes doubly laid claim to being political citizen-subjects.

The suffragettes further 'acted as' political prisoners through their refusal to comply with the restrictions attached to their status as so-called 'ordinary prisoners'. They laid claim to political-prisoner status by refusing to accept their designation as 'ordinary criminals'. In her recollections of the suffragette movement, Ellen Crocker recalls how 'we were listed as second class [sic] prisoners, but we deemed ourselves political prisoners' (Crocker ca. 1940:2). Similarly, Kitty Marion writes, 'we were not treated as 'political' offenders, as we always demanded to be and should have been, but never were, and protested against ordinary prison treatment in every way by disobeying the rules as it suited us' (Marion ca. 1930:212). While in prison, the suffragettes contested their status as ordinary criminals through a variety of collective protests, including but not limited to smashing the windows of their cells and staging 'mutinies', where they refused to return to their cells (Harrison 1976b; Crocker ca. 1940:1). Consequently, the large number of suffragette prisoners admitted during the WSPU's window-smashing campaigns placed great infrastructural pressure on the Edwardian

prison system. In 1912, Home Secretary Richard McKenna encouraged Commissioners to distribute suffragette prisoners among other, ordinary prisoners ‘in the general interests of order’ (McKenna, 1912). In a prison diary entry on March 7th, 1912, Katie Gliddon described how the prison staff were ‘only letting a few of us out at a time because they are afraid of a mutiny’ (Gliddon 1912:2). Kitty Marion recalls how the suffragettes had to be shifted to other women’s prisons because ‘there was no room for us all in Holloway’ (Marion ca. 1930:218). Through their collective refusal of the prison’s governance, the suffragettes both laid claim to their status as political prisoners while simultaneously laying claim to the space of the prison, attempting to occupy it on their own terms.

In particular, the suffragettes’ hunger strikes constituted a profound rejection of their status as ordinary criminals, challenging both the ‘authority’ and the ‘practical capacities’ of the prison system (Grant 2011:129). Theories of hunger striking often focus on the ‘visibility’ of the hunger-striking body; Patricia Melzer, for example, insists that ‘is not the starving itself, but the “spectacle of their starvation”, that effectively challenges the state during a hunger strike’ (Melzer 2015:162). However, this focus on the hunger strike as a visual spectacle obscures how the suffragettes’ hunger strikes were an embodied refusal of the state’s power. Specifically, they challenged the state’s capacity to discipline and control their bodies in the space of the prison. When the suffragettes first used the tactic of hunger striking, the unprecedented release of ‘dozens’ of prisoners during the summer of 1909 posed a significant threat to the general order and discipline of the prison (Grant 2011:132). Emmeline Pankhurst, in her speech ‘Freedom or Death’, painted the hunger strike as a strategic coup: ‘the authorities have to choose between letting you die, and letting you go; and then they let the women go’ (E. Pankhurst 1913b). Similarly, Katie Gliddon argues, ‘the women who hunger strike now say “you refuse to deal justly with me and put me in prison. But I refuse to stay in prison”’ (Gliddon 1913:5). Emmeline Pankhurst and Katie Gliddon both foreground how the suffragettes’ collective hunger strikes undermined the state’s control over the bodies of its incarcerated subjects.

The Liberal government introduced force feeding in order to prevent the large-scale release of suffragette prisoners. However, force feeding offered its own practical problems. The Edwardian prison system struggled to cope with the infrastructural, physical, and emotional challenge of force-feeding the suffragette hunger strikers, who could number up to dozens at any one time (Grant 2011:130). Marion, describing a brief hiatus during a collective hunger

strike, suggests that the prison doctors and the other prison staff were ‘much more relieved by the break in the strike than we were’ (Marion ca. 1930:221). A memorandum from the Prison Commission to the Home Office in March 1912 illuminates the real pressure placed on HMP Holloway by the large numbers of suffragette prisoners and hunger strikers:

In order to relieve the great strain on Holloway...it is proposed that all the prisoners convicted at Sessions shall be moved out of London in parties of 20 to 30 e.g., to Aylesbury, Maidstone, and Birmingham, at which prisons there will be sufficient staff to cope with any difficulties that might arise. There are, of course, objections to moving these prisoners, but I think this must be faced: otherwise there is a danger of insubordination at Holloway greater than we should be easily able to control, if all these prisoners with different sentences and different grievances were capable of combined action, either in the shape of hunger-striking or of open mutiny, at exercise, chapel &c. (Prison Commission 1912)

Subsequently, the Liberal government’s 1913 Cat and Mouse Act aimed to reduce the pressure on prison wardens and medical officers, who complained of the ‘intolerable strain’ of force-feeding hunger striking suffragettes (Vernon 2007:77; Miller 2016:55). As well as laying claim to political prisoner status, the suffragettes’ embodied protests fundamentally challenged the prison staff’s ability to control and dictate prison space. In doing so, the suffragettes turned the prison, a site of disciplinary power and state surveillance, into a liminal site of political contestation.

This transformation of the prison from a site of state control into a space for enacting citizenship also occurred through the suffragettes’ attempts to build a collective identity inside and around the prison. In line with their use of religious imagery and the development of a distinctly feminine ethic of self-sacrifice, the suffragettes and their supporters sacralised the prison as a site of rebirth and regeneration for both individual suffragette ‘martyr-saviour’ and the WSPU as a whole (Hartman 2003:41). Imprisoned suffragettes saw the prison as a transformative site, one characterised by the strengthening of the militant spirit and political growth. In a letter to her mother smuggled out of Holloway Prison in March 1912, Louisa Garrett Anderson wrote that ‘a prison in which block after block is full of people who feel it a consecration to be in it ceases to be a prison’ (L.G. Anderson, ca. 1912). Meanwhile, Israel Zangwill claimed, ‘in that prison the real WSPU was born’ (Zangwill 1913:565). Inside the prison, the suffragettes strengthened their sense of collective identity through shared political symbols and rituals, such as shouting ‘Votes for Women!’, writing ‘No Surrender!’ on the walls of their cells, waving WSPU banners, wearing the suffragette colours of green, white, and purple, and singing suffrage songs (Kenney 2017:210; Marion ca. 1930:257,261). They

built group cohesion through activities like football games, singing, reading aloud, storytelling, acting and dancing when group activities were permitted (Purvis 1995:111; Gliddon 1912:24-25). When prison rules limited contact with other suffragette prisoners, they found innovative ways to communicate such as hiding notes in their stockings and passing them to one another during church services (Purvis 1995:112). Through these activities, the imprisoned suffragettes became, in the words of a WSPU member, ‘a sympathetic family helping each other to endure’ (Purvis 1995:111). The suffragettes’ solidarity contested the power of the prison to divide and control the state’s unruly subjects, as well as laying the groundwork for future contestations of the state (Melzer 2015:189).

Furthermore, the prison community built by the suffragettes obfuscated the boundaries between the prison and civil society. By staging protests both within and across prison walls, the suffragettes further disrupted the state’s governance over the space of the prison. The suffragettes’ hunger strikes and other prison protests were not just an extension of their movement into the space of the prison. Instead, their prison protests generated their own political platform that shaped the suffragettes’ activism outside of the prison and generated ideas that linked these worlds together (Kenney 2017:234). Suffragette crowds would gather outside women’s prisons and sing suffragette anthems such as ‘The March of the Women’ and the women’s ‘La Marseillaise’ (Purvis 1995:112). They would also smuggle materials into and out of the prison, including letters to or from family members and copies of suffragette publications (Purvis 1995:115). Ellen Crocker recalls ‘a chicken being sent in stuffed with our paper “Votes for Women” which was taboo’, as well as receiving messages from the outside world via ‘placards exposed in succession from a house outside the prison’ (Crocker ca. 1940:3). Outside of the prison, the WSPU commemorated suffragette hunger strikers and prisoners through public processions, medals for hunger striking, and illustrated scrolls commending their ‘self-forgetfulness and self-conquest’ during imprisonment and solitary confinement (‘Procession to Welcome the Released Suffragette Prisoner Patricia Woodlock’ 1909; Topical Press Agency 1908; WSPU 1909; WSPU 1912; WSPU ca. 1908-1909). Even as imprisonment was a source of immense suffering for individual suffragettes, it was also a site of collective pride and identity for members of the WSPU.

3.4 ‘The oppression of their sister women’: class in the suffragette movement and the problems of acting for others

The suffragettes attempted to lay claim to their political rights through enactment. However, their enactment of political rights for and on their own behalf exists in contradiction with their desire to act on the behalf of all women. As Holton notes, the women’s suffrage movement as a whole attempted to foster collective solidarity among women as members of an oppressed ‘sex-class’ in order to try and transcend ‘economic-class consciousness and unite women in their shared interests as a subject group’ (Holton 2014:250). To this end, Christabel Pankhurst insisted that ‘any class which is denied the vote is branded as an inferior class’ (C. Pankhurst 1913e:117-118). Some working-class suffragettes, such as Annie Kenney, claimed that the oppressions they faced as women far outstripped class-based barriers. Constance Lytton recounts a conversation with Annie Kenney where Lytton shared her belief that ‘class prejudice and barriers were more injurious to national welfare than sex barriers’; in response, Kenney said,

‘Well, I can only tell you that I, who am a working-class woman, have never known class distinction and class prejudice stand in the way of my advancement, whereas the sex barrier meets me at every turn’. Of course, she is a woman of great character courage and ability, which gives her exceptional facilities for overcoming these drawbacks, but her contention that such powers availed her nothing in the face of sex prejudices and disabilities, and the examples she gave me to bear out her argument, began to lift the scales of ignorance from my eyes. (Lytton 2008:58)

Consequently, suffragettes like Lytton highlighted the cross-class nature of the suffragette movement and emphasised the ‘common bond that united all women’ (Purvis 1995:111).

Similarly, the WSPU’s publications and circular letters to their membership repeatedly appeal to a sense of shared womanhood or to the status of women as a subjected sex as the central motivation behind their political activism. Emmeline Pankhurst argued that men saw and treated women as a ‘servant class’; consequently, women needed to collectively lift themselves as a sex out of their subjected state (Purvis 2000:143). Likewise, Christabel Pankhurst insisted that the suffragettes ‘are conscious of intolerable evils and of deep wrongs inflicted upon the poorest and most miserable of their sex’ (C. Pankhurst ca. 1912a:2). Similarly, in 1910 the WSPU called upon its membership to help and care for other women, rhetorically asking who could ‘have a closer claim or to whom can you give them with a more understanding sympathy than to members of your own sex, who share the same joys

and dangers, on whose shoulders rest the same responsibilities and duties?’ (WSPU ca. 1910:1). In this sense, the suffragettes perceived themselves as both agentic political actors, laying claim to rights on their own behalf, *and* representatives of an oppressed collective, on whose behalf they fought.

That being said, the suffragettes were also aware of the ways in which women’s lives were sharply differentiated along the lines of class. As a result, they campaigned extensively for the rights of working-class women. The WSPU emerged out of the Independent Labour Movement, and although the Union eventually broke ties with the Labour party, many of its members identified with socialist ideologies and politics (Holton 2014:251). The suffragettes, Lawrence argues, were aware of class privilege and did not want to alienate members from working-class backgrounds, nor confirm allegations that the WSPU’s goal was merely ‘votes for ladies’, rather than votes for women as a whole (Lawrence 2001:214-215). Here, the class politics of the suffragette movement differed sharply from that of the anti-suffragists. In her study of British women’s opposition to women’s suffrage, Julia Bush notes that while recent histories of the women’s suffrage movement have emphasised its connections to labour movements and the role of working-class women, ‘anti-suffragism consolidated behind an upper middle-class leadership with strong links to the political aristocracy, but only a token interest in enrolling working-class women’ (Bush 2007:9). While the suffragette movement spanned social classes, it explicitly campaigned against the exploitation of women’s labour and other issues that primarily affected working-class women, which leads historians like Liz Stanley and Ann Morley to claim that the WSPU was ‘feminist socialist’ in its orientation (Purvis 1995:107).

The suffragettes often framed their campaign for the vote around the specific barriers faced by working women. The suffragettes frequently highlighted how granting women’s suffrage in other countries produced legislation that supported working women’s specific interests, such as wage raises and an end to ‘sweated labour’ (C. Pankhurst ca. 1912b:3). For example, in the ca. 1912 pamphlet ‘Some Questions Answered’, Christabel Pankhurst argued that ‘the improvement of working women’s wages is a very urgent need’ (C. Pankhurst ca. 1912b:3). She insists that if working women had the vote, they could demand legislation which would help them get better wages and labour conditions, and that ‘the only certain way of getting justice for working women is to give them the vote so they can protect themselves’ (‘C. Pankhurst ca. 1912b:3). Moreover, some of the more radical suffragettes, such as Kitty

Marion, also campaigned against taboo topics such as the routine sexual exploitation of working women (Marion ca. 1930:177, 182). Even though sexual violence was ‘not a “nice” subject to discuss’, Marion reasoned that this was ‘all the more reason to discuss it publicly out of existence’ (Marion ca. 1930:201). Hence, while the suffragettes pushed forward notions of a shared fate as a subjugated sex-class, they also campaigned actively for the specific struggles faced by working-class women, and in doing so acknowledged and responded to the social stratification of women in Edwardian society.

The suffragettes’ commitment to acting on behalf of other women was particularly pronounced in relation to women’s prisons and the project of prison reform. Their prison experiences strengthened bonds between members of the WSPU and, in the minds of the suffragettes, also forged relations of solidarity between them and the plight of other imprisoned women. The suffragettes’ experiences of prison and its material deprivations increased their empathy and awareness of the conditions experienced by female criminals, especially those who came from lower-class backgrounds and were categorised as Third Division prisoners (Purvis 1995:110). In their recollections of their experiences in prison, suffragettes like Sylvia Pankhurst and Hazel Inglis recalled messages scratched onto cell walls by previous prisoners. While Inglis avoided reading their ‘dreadful feelings of sorrow for what they’d done’, Sylvia Pankhurst found some messages ‘cynical and bitter’, others ‘infinitely sad’: ““I only did it for my poor children”; “O God when shall I know my fate?” – so two of them ran’ (Harrison 1976b; S. Pankhurst 1913:88-89). To some extent, imprisonment granted certain suffragettes an intimate lens onto the suffering of other women. While imprisoned in Holloway in March 1912, Louisa Garrett Anderson wrote to her mother that:

from the selfish personal point of view this has been a big experience. It brings one up close against the most tragic and terrible facts about women's lives and is a sort of concentrated proof of how necessary it is that some radical alteration (should) be made in their position. (L.G. Anderson 1912b)

Suffragettes thus left the prison with a new resolve to address the state of the Edwardian prison system as well as to continue their agitation for the women’s vote.

However, the suffragettes’ insistence on the importance of women pursuing their own emancipation exists in tension with their desire to act on the behalf of the ‘sweated and decrepit’ members of their sex (Purvis 2000:143). Although suffragettes often regarded

themselves as ‘comrades’ and ‘fellow prisoners’ with other imprisoned women, they also claimed they acted for those who were less able, less enlightened, or less capable to lay claim to their rights (L.G. Anderson 1912b). To some extent, the suffragettes’ determination to act on behalf of other women did reflect real socioeconomic inequalities and differences in the responsibilities between women. In a circular letter to the WSPU membership Emmeline Pankhurst recognised how ‘some women are able to go further than others in militant action and each woman is the judge of her own duty in far as that is concerned’ (E. Pankhurst 1913a). Many suffragettes themselves were unable to risk imprisonment due to family and caring responsibilities at home, or due to a fear of losing their jobs and livelihoods (Purvis 2000:140-141; Schwartz 2019:68). While middle- and upper-class women could rely on servants and domestic help to care for their dependents while they were imprisoned, working women had to rely on family networks and neighbours to provide this labour (Purvis 2000:142). The suffragette leadership demonstrated an awareness of the ways in which class privileges and familial situations affected the extent to which suffragettes could risk imprisonment and engage in militancy.

Yet, the suffragette leadership enacted class privileges in framing the suffragettes’ activism as a form of rescue. In the ca. 1913 pamphlet ‘The Appeal To God’, Christabel Pankhurst argues that the suffragettes struggled ‘against the oppression of their sister women’ (C. Pankhurst ca. 1913d:1). Similarly, in a 1913 article in *The Suffragette* entitled ‘What Militancy Means’, Christabel Pankhurst argued. ‘suffragist violence is committed with the intent to put to an end the violence done to sweated women, to white slaves, to outraged children’ (C. Pankhurst 1913a:492). Hence, Christabel Pankhurst claimed that ‘it for the sake of other people more helpless and more unhappy than themselves that the militant women are ready to pay this heavy price (C. Pankhurst 1913a:492). Despite her recognition that militancy depended on each woman’s personal circumstances, Emmeline Pankhurst still insisted that militancy was an absolute moral obligation owed by each member of the WSPU ‘to other women who are less fortunate than she is herself, and to all those who are to come after her’ (E. Pankhurst 1913a). Through their references to the helpless and oppressed members of their sex, the suffragettes unintentionally entrenched social and political divides between themselves and their disadvantaged ‘sister women’.

By deciding to act on the behalf of their ‘oppressed sister women’, the suffragettes reproduced the humanitarian power relations between agentic political subject and

passive humanitarian object. As the suffragettes laid claim to rights for themselves, they constituted other members of their sex as the subjects of what Rancière terms ‘humanitarian rights’, or ‘the rights of those who cannot enact them, the victims of the absolute denial of right’ (Rancière 2004:307). The writings of the WSPU leadership, especially those of Emmeline Pankhurst and Christabel Pankhurst, frame themselves as giving rights to those who are unable to claim them on their own behalf. In 1910, the WSPU insisted, ‘we want to help women. We want to gain for them self-respect and such freedom as is consistent with our duty to others; we want to gain for them all the rights and protection that laws can give them’ (WSPU ca. 1910:2). The suffragettes’ insistence that they spoke and acted *for* women and their rights exists in tension with the diverse political, social, and economic perspectives of Edwardian women. For example, it obscures women’s extensive participation in anti-suffragist movements and organisations (see Bush 2007). In 1913, Christabel Pankhurst scorned the opposition of women to the vote, asking, ‘Have the Anti-Suffragist women any idea of what the wrongs of women really are?’ (C. Pankhurst 1913e:19). To some extent, Pankhurst’s critique may be rooted in the largely middle- to upper-class demographic of the leading female suffragists. However, it also reflects how Christabel Pankhurst believed that the suffragettes knew *better than* other women what it meant to be a woman and to face gender-based prejudice.

This claim to know more and act on behalf of other women, even those who explicitly did not support their aims or want their help, also manifested along class lines. The WSPU’s campaign for better conditions for working class women demonstrated solidarity and awareness of their distinctive struggles. A large number of working-class women participated in the suffragette movement, and some, such as Annie Kenney, occupied prominent leadership positions in the WSPU (Purvis 2000:142). However, as Laura Schwartz notes, attitudes of cross-class collaboration did not prevent the marginalisation of working-class women in the suffragette movement or their disempowering objectification as ‘victims’ (Schwartz 2019:67). The suffragettes’ insistence on acting on the behalf of other women often reproduced class divides between upper- and middle-class philanthropists and their willing or unwilling lower-class beneficiaries. Consequently, their support for working-class women was also shaped by certain forms of class prejudice. Christabel Pankhurst framed the vote as an ‘education’ for British women, especially working-class women, who needed to develop ‘self-respect’ and

greater civic skills in order to become equal with men (C. Pankhurst ca. 1912b:3). ‘The chief cause of the under-payment of female labour’, Christabel Pankhurst argued in 1912, ‘is that women regard themselves and are regarded by others as socially and politically inferior to men. To give women the vote will be a great education, and will teach them to respect themselves more and stand out for better conditions’ (C. Pankhurst ca. 1912b:3). Christabel Pankhurst’s insistence that the vote would teach working women to ‘stand out for better conditions’ obscures the extensive history of working-class women’s active political involvement in trade unions, riots, strikes, and other forms of political activism. This history includes female workers’ role in the ‘unprecedented levels of industrial action’ of the Great Unrest of 1907-1914, a movement which corresponded with the heights of suffragette militancy (Schwartz 2019:2). The leadership of the WSPU frequently insisted that they knew what was best for women as a class and acted on the behalf of other women without necessarily consulting or corroborating with the women they were supposedly acting for.

The ambivalence of acting for others is exemplified in the prison experiences and writings of Lady Constance Lytton, one of the few aristocratic members of the WSPU. Lytton’s writings demonstrate a genuine commitment to combatting the various forms of gender- and class-based prejudice experienced by working-class women. However, her autobiography is also rife with the romanticisation of working-class women and female prisoners, valorising these women in ways that deny them both voice and agency. The preface to Lytton’s autobiography, *Prison and Prisoners*, describes how Lytton went to prison intending to help prisoners (Lytton 2008:50). Contrary to her expectations, ‘the prisoners helped me. They seemed at times direct channels between me and God Himself, imbued with the most friendly and powerful goodness that I have ever met’ (Lytton 2008:50). Lytton’s description of the transformative goodness of the prisoners reverses the established class relationship of upper-class philanthropist and working-class beneficiaries, but her emphasis on the prisoners’ angelic nature idealises the prisoners and casts them primarily as instruments of her own spiritual growth.

Similarly, Lytton’s assumption of a working-class identity during the suffragette movement epitomises the tension between genuine solidarity and romanticised sentimentality. In 1910, Lytton assumed the persona of a working-class woman called Jane Warton to prove that the Liberal government and prison staff differentiated between suffragette prisoners on the basis

of their class. As Lady Constance Lytton, Lytton had gone on hunger strike and been released without being force-fed on account of her weak heart; as Jane Warton, her heart was declared ‘a ripping, splendid heart’ and she was violently force-fed (Lytton 2008:241). The force-feeding of Lytton as Jane Warton clearly demonstrated how the government’s treatment of suffragette prisoners was shaped by class dynamics. Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp celebrates Lytton’s bodily self-sacrifice as a mimetic act that bore witness to the suffering of working-class women (Jorgensen-Earp 1999:145). Yet, she also cautions that performative martyrdom risks reproducing and privileging the voice of the majority, specifically by ‘taking advantage of the enhanced ethos granted to them by their presumed objectivity’ (Jorgensen-Earp 1999:146). Lytton’s adoption of the persona of Jane Warton epitomises how empathy, or the attempt to feel with someone else, can become an act of overidentification and erasure (Hartman 1997:19). The character of Jane Warton gave Lytton the opportunity ‘to go beyond empathy to an identification with such women’, allowing her to embody and fully inhabit a personal narrative of working-class struggle and resistance (Mulvey-Roberts 2000:162). Lytton’s impersonation of a working-class woman constituted an act of solidarity with working-class women. At the same time though, it also erased the voices and experiences of women like Jane Warton by Lytton’s decision to speak and act on their behalf.

The writings of middle and upper-class suffragettes reveal further ambivalences in their attitudes towards lower-class women (Schwan 2013:155). For example, Gliddon’s prison writings extensively critique the ‘refined cruelty’ of prison and, in particular, its degradation of working-class women, insisting that ‘the prison system is absolutely wrong. It is not only not constructive of character but it is destructive. It aims at repression, nothing is done to help to rebuild the weak or erring’ (Gliddon 1912:20; Gliddon 1913). Nonetheless, her writings also reproduce the WSPU class-based narratives of victimisation through her excessive pity for the ‘poor creatures’ imprisoned in Holloway (Gliddon 1912:13). Moreover, middle- and upper-class suffragettes’ autobiographical writings frequently convey forms of class contempt towards working-class women. For example, in her autobiography Marion describes activists in the women’s movement as ‘intelligent, educated, (Upper class not “low hooligan”) women’ (Marion ca. 1930:170). Although Marion’s comment may be a critique of media coverage of suffragette protests as acts of hooliganism, her juxtaposition of hooliganism with intelligent, educated, and upper-class women reproduces Edwardian class structures and norms (Marion ca. 1930:168). Similarly, when describing a wardress who stopped suffragettes from dancing together, Gliddon insists that ‘it is the sense of class hatred

that comes out so often in the uneducated woman which gives her pleasure in this exercising of power over any member of the cultured classes who may come into her power' (Gliddon 1912:35-36). In one of her prison letters, Louisa Garrett Anderson suggests that the middle-class suffragettes endured the prison food and cold water better than those from 'poorer homes', going on to wonder whether 'officers stand deprivations with much less suffering than the men' (L.G. Anderson 1912a). Despite their overtures to sex solidarity, existing class prejudices shaped relations between middle- and upper-class suffragettes and the women they believed they were 'acting for'.

The persistence of class differentiations also affected how the suffragettes laid claim to and moved through political space. The suffragettes' insistence on acting on the behalf of working-class women operated through and alongside a broader politics of respectability within the suffragette movement. This politics of respectability, tied to middle- and upper-class concepts of gender, affected how suffragettes occupied and moved through public space. The suffragette activists often dressed in 'fine and ostentatiously "feminine" attire' (Lawrence 2001:214). By wearing such feminine finery, the suffragettes aimed to invoke 'social taboos' surrounding middle-class femininity, and in doing so protect themselves from some of the excesses of street violence while canvassing for the women's vote (Lawrence 2001:214). The press struggled to reconcile the suffragettes' violent and 'unladylike' agitation with their feminine dress, and they frequently referenced suffragettes' fashion choices in their coverage of the WSPU's militancy (Boase 2018:158). Additionally, by presenting as highly feminine, suffragette activists counteracted anti-suffragist portrayals of them as masculine women, unfashionable 'bluestockings', and ugly spinsters (Lawrence 2001:214). However, the focus on respectable dress meant that when working-class suffragette Alice Milne visited the London branch of the WSPU in October 1906, she found it 'full of fashionable ladies in silks and satins... Ours was a movement for the middle and upper classes' (Boase 2018:158). The suffragettes laid claim to public space through reference to middle-class norms of ideal womanhood, presenting femininity as a 'universal', as opposed to a classed, concept (Lawrence 2001:214). Women, it seemed, were still unable to occupy public space on entirely equal terms to men. Instead, they moved through these spaces in ways that were still conditioned by co-articulated ideas of gender and class, complicating notions of gender-based and cross-class solidarity.

Conclusion

The suffragette campaign was characterised by the suffragettes' commitment to laying claim to and enacting political rights, both for themselves and for the good of other women who they believed were less able to lay claim to the full rights of citizenship. The suffragettes were not the only campaigners who enacted citizenship rights. Indeed, the political canvassing of suffragist activists and organisations could constitute women acting as political subjects. Nonetheless, what distinguished the WSPU from many of these constitutionalist organisations was their insistence on occupying and moving through public space in ways that directly contravened gendered expectations of women's behaviour. As this chapter has shown, women were not excluded from political space or from various forms of political action. They were, however, confined to specific gendered forms of political engagement, and could not occupy political space in equal ways to men. Through their political actions, the suffragettes illuminated both the legal and the normative barriers that suspended women in a liminal space between citizen and non-citizen. They also questioned the ideology of separate spheres, highlighting the role of male violence in the construction and the maintenance of these gendered spheres of influence. Furthermore, the suffragettes' enactment of citizenship stretched beyond their public and civic activism into the space of the prison, where they assumed the status of political prisoners and rejected the state's authority over their bodies through protests such as hunger striking. However, the suffragettes' insistence on laying claim to their own rights existed in tension with their desire to act on behalf of other women, specifically those women considered to be less educated or less capable than themselves. These class dynamics permeated the suffragette movement, and they continue to shape historical approaches to the movement and its current commemoration.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that this chapter has primarily focused on the earlier years of the suffragette campaign and has only sparingly discussed the suffragettes' more explicitly violent activities. In particular, it has not focused on the WSPU's more controversial campaign of arson, bombings, and property damage that was undertaken by some suffragettes between 1913-1914, famously including several arson attacks at Kew Gardens in 1913, the bombing of David Lloyd George's 'weekend house' on February 19th 1913, and Mary Richardson's 'slashing' of the Rokeby Venus in the National Gallery in March 1914 (Atkinson 2019:374,378,466-467). As the suffragettes moved towards creating an

‘intolerable situation’ for the government ‘and, if need be, for the public as a whole’, they alienated previously sympathetic suffragist organisations, most notably Millicent Garrett Fawcett’s National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (C. Pankhurst ca. 1912b:2). The suffragettes’ turn towards increasingly violent forms of protest also splintered the movement internally, producing several breakaway groups (Atkinson 2019:453). Most notably, in 1914, Sylvia Pankhurst split from the WSPU and founded the East London Federation of Suffragettes (Atkinson 2019:451-452). The WSPU’s violent activism only ceased in 1914, when Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst negotiated a ceasefire with the British government upon the outbreak of the First World War.

These more violent aspects of the suffragettes’ legacy remain controversial and continue to complicate retrospective evaluations of the suffragettes’ enacted claims to citizenship rights and public space. Some historians have critiqued the WSPU’s violence as a concerted spate of domestic terrorism (see Monaghan 1997; Bearman 2005). Others, such as Fern Riddell, describe this violent period of the suffragette campaign as a neglected part of the WSPU’s political activism and celebrate the lives of suffragette arsonists and bombers like Kitty Marion (Riddell 2018; see also Riddell 2019). Others still, such as June Purvis, have explicitly rejected the framing of the suffragettes as terrorists, arguing that the suffragettes only attacked property, not people, and that their violent acts did not incite an atmosphere of fear or terror among the general public (Purvis 2019:1207). Purvis’ rejection of the suffragettes’ violence as a form of terrorism relies, in part, on racialised and Islamophobic stereotypes about terrorist violence (Pape 2006:4); ‘terrorism in the present’, Purvis argues, ‘is linked to religious extremism, not to women fighting for equal rights in a patriarchal society’ (Purvis 2019:1207). Furthermore, while the WSPU leadership claimed their attacks did not target human life, Lauren Wilmott notes that it was only ‘good fortune that the unreliable nature of home-made bombs or prompt discovery’ meant no civilians were harmed during the suffragettes’ bombings (Wilmott 2018:57). Yet the historiographical focus on the efficacy of the suffragettes’ violent protests should not obscure the ways in which, prior to this move towards more punitive measures, the suffragettes used their bodies to lay claim to their political rights and to public space.

Chapter 4: Rejecting Waste

Introduction

This chapter further interrogates what the hunger-striking body does by pivoting from the spatial qualities to the temporal qualities of the hunger strike. Chapter 3 explored how hunger striking functioned alongside a larger repertoire of embodied protests through which the suffragettes laid claim to political rights and to public space. This chapter turns away from the body's occupation of space to examine the relationship between violence, time, and the body during the hunger strike. It enriches the existing literature on hunger striking in the British detention estate (see McGregor 2011; Tyler 2013) by connecting the uncertain temporalities of detention with the temporal characteristics of the hunger strike (see Anderson 2010; Kenney 2017; Velasquez-Potts 2019). This chapter calls attention to the distinctive temporality of hunger striking – namely, the slow wasting away of the body – to offer a reading of the hunger strike as a response to certain temporalities of violence.

Specifically, this chapter frames the 2018 hunger strike at Yarl's Wood as a response to the temporalities of waiting and uncertainty that characterise immigration detention (see Griffiths 2014; Turnbull 2016). Time is central to logics of border control and security, and, 'like all border experiences, the temporal dimension is experienced differently depending on one's class, status, race, gender, country of origin, and so on' (Nyers 2008:178). This chapter argues that the state exercises power over immigration detainees by suspending them in a *temporal* state of exception, where time loses its meaning and linear flow. It posits that detainees are physically and mentally worn down by the temporal uncertainties of immigration detention. Moreover, it connects these temporalities of wastage to the deliberate humiliation and degradation of immigration detainees, suggesting that the temporal registers of waste help produce immigration detainees as an abject waste population (see Tyler 2013). The 2018 hunger strike, it argues, constituted a mimetic enactment and appropriation of the forms of waste and wasting detainees experience in the detention estate (Aretxaga 1995:142).

The chapter's four sections are thematically connected by different aspects of waste and wastage. The first section of this chapter, "'The purgatory that is Yarl's Wood': the slow death of immigration detention", examines the temporality of waste in immigration detention. It argues that immigration detainees are produced as a waste population through the process

of ‘slow death’ (Berlant 2007). Immigration detention physically and mentally wears away at its captive subjects over time, breaking down detainees through slow, ordinary, and unspectacular forms of violence. However, this section also shows how the slow death of the detention centre works through and alongside the radical uncertainty and continuous fear of violence that shapes detainees’ everyday experiences. Put differently, immigration detainees are liminally suspended between slow and spectacular forms of violence.

The second section of this chapter, “‘Trauma upon trauma upon trauma’: wasted time and the repetition of trauma’, examines how detainees’ experiences are shaped by repetition and circular time. Drawing on Lisa Baraitser’s notion of ‘unbecoming time’, this section argues that immigration detention wastes detainees’ time and their ability to correctly perceive or make sense of time. It demonstrates how immigration detention forces detainees to relive previous experiences of trauma that are held and archived deep within the body, and it continues to haunt detainees long after they are released. In this sense, detainees are not just liminally suspended both inside and outside of the body politic. They also exist both inside and outside of the linear flow of ordinary time.

The third section of this chapter, “‘They treat us like shit’: abandonment, abjection, and immigration detainees as waste populations’, examines how these temporal registers of waste contribute to the broader production of immigration detainees as the ‘waste’ of the British state. It frames the immigration detention centre as a spatial and temporal zone of abandonment that produces immigration detainees as a ‘waste’ population through degrading and abjectifying forms of violence. It then examines how the state’s production of immigration detainees as waste through degradation and abandonment is enforced by security discourses which position racialised female immigration detainees as dangerous, toxic waste that threatens the sanctity of the white body politic.

The fourth section, “‘We are still hungry for our freedom and justice’: reclaiming bodies and time through the hunger strike’, theorises the 2018 hunger strike in relation to these forms of wastage and degradation experienced by detainees at Yarl’s Wood. It argues that the hunger strike, which is both a spectacle of violence and also a slow process of starvation, functioned a visceral embodiment of the detention centre’s paradoxical temporalities of violence. This section then offers a reading of the 2018 hunger strike as an embodied and performative refusal of the state’s designation of detainees as a waste population. Rearticulating the work

of Veena Das, it argues that the hunger-striking detainees at Yarl's Wood abjectly regurgitated their experiences of violence at the hands of the state, making this pain knowable to an exterior audience. In doing so, the Yarl's Wood hunger strikers exercised agency over the script of their bodies, rejecting their status as the objects of humanitarian or medical knowledge.

4.1 'The purgatory that is Yarl's Wood': the slow death of immigration detention

The immigration detention centre is a site of 'slow death', or a space that slowly breaks down detainees' bodies and minds over an extended period of time. Slow death, according to Lauren Berlant, 'refers to the physical wearing out of a population and the deterioration of people in that population that is very nearly a defining condition of their experience and historical existence' (Berlant 2007:754). The concept of 'slow death' captures how violent indifference operates through the 'temporalities of the endemic', operating through the unspectacular registers of boredom, exhaustion, and quiet misery (Berlant 2007:756; Povinelli 2011:4; Turnbull 2016:65). The immigration detention estate operates through these mundane temporalities, physically wearing out detainees through the indefinite nature of detention. One hunger-striking detainee, speaking to *Detained Voices*, states that 'the uncertainty that we face everyday is unbearable which leads us to have stress, panic, and in turn a lot of health complication' (detainedvoices.com 2018i). Another describes how when she was detained she stopped menstruating for four months. When she went to health care, they told her it was 'due to stress' and, astoundingly, that in order to start menstruating again she simply 'should not worry' (detainedvoices.com 2015b). Similarly, detainees emphasise how indefinite detention is 'mentally draining', wasting away their sanity and their sense of self (detainedvoices.com 2018hh). Voke, a former detainee, testifying to the House of Commons Home Affairs committee about the effects of immigration detention, states:

mentally I was not myself... I was there from February to October. Trust me, my life was taken away from me. It is like it was not me anymore. It was like everything they were asking me, instead of me saying A, I was saying B. Mentally, I was not there anymore. That place breaks you down mentally. Instead of making it good, it makes it worse' (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2018a:14).

Another detainee describes how:

These six months' time period which I have spent and am still spending in Yarl's

Wood has made me a completely different person. I am not the bubbly, jolly, and full of life person which I was before. That person is lost in this detention centre (detainedvoices.com 2018z).

These detainees' testimonies demonstrate the physical, mental, and emotional degradation that is a 'defining condition' of immigration detention.

Yet even as detainees are subject to forms of slow death in the detention centre, they also experience being *suspended* in time, entrapped in a state of liminal uncertainty (Griffiths 2014:1998, 2001; Turnbull 2016:76). Immigration Removal Centres are intended to hold illegal immigrants for a short-term period while they await their impending deportation (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Migration 2015:16). However, the lack of a time limit in detention, the detention of asylum seekers and migrants who do not pose any flight risk, and the detention of over a third of detainees for more than 28 days all suggest that the detention centre does not function as a short-term holding site prior to deportation (Silverman, Griffiths and Walsh 2020:9). Like the prison, the detention centre functions as a warehouse for the mass immobilisation of lives deemed criminal and disposable by the British state (Dillon 2018:3). Yet, unlike prisoners, who are able to 'do' or 'kill' time towards their release date, detainees are unsure as to when they will be released (Turnbull 2016:62; detainedvoices.com 2018hh). A man detained in 2014 describes the temporal experience of immigration detention as 'only waiting and waiting it is exhausting it is like my doomsday, I am waiting for my judgement before death' (Anonymous 25 2014:3). His description shows how the detention centre functions as a zone of 'simultaneous emergency and abandonment', where detainees must negotiate both the slow death of indefinite detention and its conditions of radical uncertainty (Simpson 2016; Griffiths 2014:2001).

Detainees are mentally and physically worn down by the radical uncertainty they experience in immigration detention. While they are detained, immigration detainees must wait to find out both how and when detention will end, as they are uncertain whether detention will end in deportation or in their release back into the community (Turnbull 2016:62). Speaking to *Detained Voices*, one Yarl's Wood detainee describes the uncertainty of the detention centre and the ever-present possibility of deportation as 'this threat over my head like a guillotine' (detainedvoices.com 2018w). Another Yarl's Wood detainee explains how she does not know what is worse, 'the anticipation of the event or the event itself' (detainedvoices.com 2018ff).

In the hunger strikers' second set of demands, they framed the heightened anxiety and radical uncertainty of indefinite detention as 'systematic torture':

Systematic torture takes place in detention – at any point an officer could turn up and take your room mate; you're constantly on edge, not knowing what will happen next. Those who are suicidal now have their privacy taken away because they are being watched – you don't know if an officer is coming to check on you or coming to take you away. Our rooms are searched at random and without warning; they just search first and explain later (detainedvoices.com 2018c).

This anticipation of violence evokes the temporalities of a violent intimate relationship; in the prison writings of Barbara Saunders, prison is compared to an abusive domestic relationship where 'you can never be sure what will happen next and what it will require emotionally' (Davis and Dent 2001:1239). In this sense, the detention centre reproduces gendered dynamics of violence, while also enacting a specific form of institutional violence based on waiting and uncertainty.

The temporal suspension and radical uncertainty of immigration detention also functions as a form of governance (Griffiths 2012:11-12). Melanie Griffiths suggests that the uncertainty of immigration detention, rather than being entirely intentional or constructed by design, is produced by a chaotic institutional culture and an undertrained, overworked, and underpaid workforce (Griffiths 2012:12). Nonetheless, even if the uncertainty of detention is an unintentional product of the Home Office's culture, it is still a key expression of its power, as the ability to make someone wait creates unequal relations of domination and subordination (Turnbull 2016:62,76). Moreover, detainees suggest that the immigration detention system uses chaos and uncertainty to wear down the wills of detainees, encouraging them to give up their legal cases and agree to leave the country (Griffiths 2012:11-12; Turnbull 2016:67). A man detained for at least a year at Brook House insists that detention is 'intended to make you feel unhappy, to make you feel so wretched and ill that you sign and go' (Anonymous 36 2014:2). Similarly, Hindpal Singh Bhui, the Inspection Team Leader for Immigration in HMI Prisons, notes that in immigration detention 'all too often we see cases where a kind of standoff develops, where the Home Office is really waiting for detainees to give up' (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2018b:3-4). Hence, while detainees utilise various coping strategies in the face of institutionally produced uncertainty, these forms of uncertainty emphasise their dependency on the state and their vulnerability to the state's decision-making power (Turnbull 2016:71-72).

That being said, while the radical uncertainty of immigration detention function as a form of governance, the temporal suspension of immigration detainees also complicates theories of biopolitics and sovereignty. In immigration detention, the state refuses to let detained subjects fully live. However, in the vast majority of cases, the state also refuses to let detainees die. For example, the male detainee held at Brook House for over a year suggests that ‘the bottom line is that they do not want you to die in here. That would be too much of a shock...They do the bare minimum; they offer a basic standard of care’ (Anonymous 36 2014:2). Immigration detainees, like prisoners, describe the detention through a vernacular of death that places it inside ‘a continuum of dying, or “being dead”’ (Rodriguez 2005:54). A man detained at Gatwick and Harmondsworth suggests that being stuck in detention ‘feels like being a dead body’ (Anonymous 9 2014:4). Meanwhile, Voke testifies that ‘I was just like a walking corpse in there, just waiting to explode’ (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2018a:14). On *Detained Voices*, one detainee at Yarl’s Wood compares the experience of detention to ‘purgatory’ (detainedvoices.com 2018w), while another detainee insists that ‘most people are often in a daze and unresponsive so it’s like The Walking Dead...This is my worst nightmare only I get to wake up to it and not wake out of it’ (detainedvoices.com 2018s). A woman detained at Yarl’s Wood for over four months describes how waiting for deportation is ‘so stressful’ that

you feel like dying. To me, it feels like being on death row, and your execution day is set for one day – you hear it is postponed, but the guards will still insist to show you the execution chamber (Anonymous 4 2014:1).

The analogy of death row highlights the temporal similarities between the two spaces, where captives must endure confinement in the present while anticipating future violence (Bosworth 2014:160). In this sense, immigration detention wastes away its entrapped subjects and simultaneously produces them through the paradoxical temporalities of emergency and abandonment as the waste products of the British state.

4.2 ‘Trauma upon trauma upon trauma’: wasted time and the repetition of trauma in immigration detention

The detention centre does not just waste away detainees’ bodies, spirits, and minds: it also wastes their time. One of the hunger strikers at Yarl’s Wood, speaking to *Detained Voices*, explains how immigration detention steals detainees’ time: ‘time is taken away from our

lives...Months are taken away from us, we can't get that back. It's not fair' (detainedvoices.com 2018hh). Immigration detention does not only steal time from detainees' lives. It also disrupts the perceived or assumed linearity of time. The traumatic environment of immigration detention holds subjects in a 'permanent condition of "being in pain"' (Mbembe 2003:38). As a result, time loses its linear formulation and becomes time lived without its ordinary flow (Baraitser 2017:12). This concept of wasted time is best captured by what Lisa Baraitser describes as 'unbecoming' time: 'time that is lived as radically immovable, experiences of time that are not just slow, sluggish, or even interminable...but are radically suspended' (Baraitser 2017:15). Melanie Griffiths, for example, highlights how immigration detainees, undocumented migrants, and asylum seekers who are caught indefinitely in the immigration system experience time not just as 'slow' and 'sticky', but also as 'stuck' or totally suspended (Griffiths 2014:1995, 1997). Similarly, during the hunger strike, the strikers emphasised how indefinite detention suspends detainees in states of permanent pain:

Our lives are not valued, our human rights are not upheld, our spirits are crushed, our identities are anonymous, our faces without form, and we continue to be detained indefinitely, perpetually imprisoned pending an endless unjust administrative hellish nightmare (detainedvoices.com 2018gg).

The hunger strikers' emphasis on the endless pain of immigration detention illuminates how indefinite detention creates pools of time that entrap and suspend detainees in a liminal space where they are both inside and outside of time's flow (Baraitser 2017:12).

The 'unbecoming time' of immigration detention breaks down some detainees' ability to understand, process, and experience time on their own terms. The testimonies of immigration detainees illuminate how, in the space of immigration detention, time loses its ordinary pace. A male detainee, detained in 2014, describes how detention is an "aging machine" I am here for nearly 2 months but it feels like 2 years' [sic] (Anonymous 25 2014:1). A woman detained at Yarl's Wood in 2014 describes how she has 'been here in yarlswood since may which is 5 months.is like five years out there' [sic] (Anonymous 35 2014). In this sense, the detention centre does not only waste detainees' time: it also damages their ability to modulate, understand, and experience the flow of time itself. Penny, a former detainee at Yarl's Wood, describes how the traumatic experience of detention itself affected her perception and understanding of time, stating, 'during the process of being- of travelling to Yarl's Wood, I had lost all memory' (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees and the

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Migration Joint Parliamentary Inquiry into the Use of Immigration Detention 2014a:3). The former detainee writing under the name ‘Joy’ similarly captures how the experience of detention collapsed together past, present, and future (Freedom from Torture 2019). In her description of the violent deportation of her roommate, she says it ‘was like watching the future. I did not know what I could do to save myself’ (Freedom from Torture 2019). For these detainees, immigration detention wasted both their physical time and their sense or perception of time, suspending them in a state of pain.

Furthermore, ‘unbecoming time’ operates through the temporalities of repetition and circular time, temporalities which disrupt time’s linear flow. The degradation of detainees’ experience of time occurs through the detention centre’s citation of detainees’ previous experiences of violence. In *Bodies that Matter*, Judith Butler enriches her theory of gender performativity by arguing that ‘performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate “act,” but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names’ (Butler 2011:xii). Butler’s emphasis on the reiterative and citational qualities of gender performativity provide the starting point for this chapter’s interrogation of the archival, citational, and circular nature of violent trauma. Rather than examining the citationality of gender, this thesis uses Butler’s concept of citationality to illuminate how immigration detention reproduces or cites detainees’ previous traumatic experiences. It reads the notion of citationality alongside the concept of the ‘body archive’, which Julietta Singh describes as ‘an assembly of history’s traces deposited in me’, in order to examine how trauma is deposited deep in the body and how these violent traces resurface within immigration detention (Singh 2018:29). Moreover, citationality serves as a way to explore immigration detention produces or compels new iterations of prior trauma. In relation to gender performativity, Butler writes that ‘the norm of sex takes hold to the extent that it is “cited” as such a norm, but it also derives its power through the citations that it compels’ (Butler 2011:xxii). Similarly, this chapter suggests that immigration detention gives previous traumatic experiences, especially those caused by gendered and racialised forms of violence, new power to hold detainees in states of ‘unbecoming time’.

Due to their similarity to prisons, immigration detention centres replicate the conditions under which detainees may have endured forms of state-perpetrated violence such as torture and police brutality. Yarl’s Wood detainees interviewed by Women for Refugee Women described detention as a ‘second torture’ (Girma et al. 2014:6). One woman recounts how the

detention ‘brought back all the memories of torture’ she had experienced at the hands of state authorities in Zimbabwe (Girma et al. 2014:6). In a 2017 study by Women for Refugee Women, another woman, who had survived rape and extraordinary physical violence, describes how ‘I had a bad life in my country, but the way they’re making me feel here, locked up in this place – it’s like I’m still there’ (Lousley and Cope 2017:22). Janahan, who was captured and tortured in Sri Lanka in 2009, similarly describes how his detention at Harmondsworth collapsed the division between past and present by forcing him to endlessly relive his previous experiences of torture:

One hundred and fifty-odd days I lived there, but the torture I endured in 10 days I lived in the 150 days, every single day, all those 10 days every single day. I tried to explain to them, ‘This is how you bring back everything, the memories’... They keep repeating the trauma and the memories are like cancer (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2018a:6).

Janahan’s suggestion that his traumatic memories are ‘like cancer’ illuminates how the Home Office physically and mentally wears away at detained subjects by forcing detainees to relive previous experiences of violence. Moreover, it further undermines detainees’ ability to distinguish past from present, wasting away their sense of linear time.

In Yarl’s Wood, the repetition of trauma specifically manifests through the immense fear of sexual violence. Detainees at Yarl’s Wood emphasise how the atmosphere of the detention centre is permeated by previous experiences of rape and sexual assault. In their study of 46 asylum seekers who had been detained or were at that time detained in Yarl’s Wood, Women for Refugee Women found that 33 women (72%) had been raped, eight women claimed asylum because they were lesbians, and that more than half of the women said they had been persecuted specifically because they were women (Girma et al. 2014:4). These previous experiences of rape and sexual violence, especially for those who experienced violence at the hands of state actors in their countries of origin, heighten detainees’ fear of and vulnerability to forms of institutionalised sexual violence (Girma et al. 2014:11; Bosworth 2014:193). Several asylum seekers detained in Yarl’s Wood disclosed that they had been assaulted by state authorities or prison guards in their countries of origin and were intensely afraid that the same thing would occur in Yarl’s Wood (Girma et al. 2014:4). One detainee, speaking to Women for Refugee Women in 2014, recalls:

When the big door closed it brought back everything that had happened to me back home when I was in prison. I thought that I was going to be raped. The fear overtook me and I thought that they could do what they liked with me... I felt that I was not

strong enough to go through anything like that again (Girma et al. 2014:18)

Consequently, instances of sexual violence at Yarl's Wood cite detainees' previous experiences of sexual violence.

Furthermore, even when staff do not intend to cause harm, their appearance and actions provoke the relentless return of detainees' traumatic memories. Certain policies, such as multiple male guards detaining or transporting a single female detainee, are 'very frightening' for detainees who have experienced sexual violence (Girma et al. 2014:18). Another detainee, speaking to Women for Refugee Women in 2014, emphasises how the presence and uniformed appearance of detention custody officers reproduce previous experiences of both male violence and state violence:

Oh God, it was like a prison again, I saw prison again, my memories came back and it was like too much, and I kept on remembering what happened to me in prison, what it was like and it was all too much... I kept on saying it, and they [security guards] kept saying we're not going to rape you... it's not like that here, we won't stab you, but inside I did not feel comfortable at all (Girma et al. 2014:17).

Similarly, Afiya describes how being put on suicide watch made her relive her previous experiences of imprisonment, physical assault, and rape: 'I told them I was not comfortable because men kept on coming, even not knocking at the door, and each time I am so afraid. I freak out when I see a man in my room' (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2018a:8). At Yarl's Wood, detainees are suspended in a nightmarish state as they relive intensely traumatic memories of physical and sexual violence, cited again and again through the detention centre's institutional practices.

Moreover, the repetition of trauma operates through the architecture and spatial logics of the detention centre, suggesting that detention centres are in themselves unsuitable for traumatised subjects. The carceral logic of the detention centre manifests through the organisation of space. Although the Home Office attempts to distinguish detention centres from prisons, visitors such as detention centre chaplains emphasise how certain centres, particularly those built to Category B Prison Standards, look, sound and feel like prisons, noting that 'the attempts to call the places where the detainees sleep a 'room' is confounded by the fact that they are manifestly cells' (Bosworth 2014:48; Fletcher 2014:1-2). Detainees recall how the prison-like environment of the detention centre cites and reproduces the olfactory, auditory, and tactile experience of previous episodes of incarceration. Janahan,

detained in Harmondsworth and Morton Hall, insists that the sights and sounds of detention are ‘just memories captured everywhere’:

Since I was alone in the room, all I heard was locking of doors, walking, the key chains, the walkie-talkies. It was taking me back to what I used to have in my memory because those are the things I used to recognise when I was abducted by the Sri Lankan army. It just took me back to Sri Lanka again and again (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2018a:4).

Similarly, a male detainee who was previously imprisoned in Bulgaria explains how his previous experiences of violence are cited by the architecture of the detention centre and institutional practices such as suicide watch:

My friend was detained in our country for 2 years, every week people were taken to be hanged, sometimes the ropes and bodies remained in the kitchen, this happened before the sunrise every day we were waiting to be called to be hanged. Now in this detention we say we have mental problem and officers try to help by knocking all the time on our door and checking what we are doing, but this does not help. The sound of the door brings back the memories of our country and puts him in deep stress; my friend says he is experiencing stress like in our country. 3-4 times a night I am back in prison in my country, he says he wishes he was killed there rather than experiencing this every night (Anonymous 25 2014:2).

Through the repeated knocking on the door, the guards transport this detainee into a painful past, which then manifests itself in the present. The space of the detention centre echoes and magnifies detainees’ memories of trauma, so that these archived experiences refract between detainees’ bodies and the detention centre’s walls.

The citation of previous experiences of trauma and the repetitive nature of trauma shows how, in the immigration detention system, ‘time can fold-over, rather than unfold over time’ (Baraitser 2017:203). Detainees describe how the trauma of immigration detention builds, layers, and repeats itself. For example, after witnessing the violent removal of her friend, a Yarl’s Wood detainee, speaking through *Detained Voices*, states: ‘I’m tired of this trauma. I’ve been through too much trauma. I’m tired. It is too much. Trauma upon trauma upon trauma’ (detainedvoices.com 2018dd). The repeated detention of detainees, where detainees are released only to be re-detained, intensifies the circularity and citationality of trauma. Detention cites not only previous experiences of violence outside of the detention centre, but also prior instances of being detained by the Home Office. One Yarl’s Wood detainee remarks that ‘of course some people get let out after a few weeks but then they come back again. If you want to bring them again here then why give them bail and then bring them back’ (detainedvoices.com 2017a). One of the Yarl’s Wood hunger strikers similarly

critiques the way the Home Office releases detainees, only to ‘redetain them over again and cause trauma to them for obeying your rules to go and report’ (detainedvoices.com 2018f). In this sense, the constant threat of re-detention functions as a technology of degradation, wearing out detainees and their hope for a future in the United Kingdom: ‘because once we are released, it’s just a matter of time when we back here again. It is like a cycle. They take away our futures and lives’ (detainedvoices.com 2018hh). This degradation, though, is accompanied by a sedimentation of trauma, one which evokes previously archived memories while committing new acts of violence, which are recorded in the body’s memory.

Moreover, in the detention centre, trauma operates through temporalities of past, present, and future, which all ‘fold-over’ onto one another. Immigration detention evokes past memories of violence. It subjects them to violence in the present through practices and processes of slow death. Finally, it torments detainees with fears of future deportation. Even when detainees are released from immigration detention, they remain haunted by their experiences and trapped within these enduring loops of time, as evidenced by the account of a woman detained repeatedly at Yarl’s Wood:

This is my second time in Yarl’s Wood. When you get to detention centre the first time I hated the fact I was locked up. I was there for 7 months... The second time is worse. It was harder than before because I was released for three months and now I’m back. It makes me feel that I didn’t do much. For the first 1 and half month of being released, I was still trapped. I didn’t go out, I only went out for appointments... I feel like I wasted that time (detainedvoices.com 2015d)

Former detainees emphasise that even if they receive legal residence in the United Kingdom, ‘those who are released are never free for the rest of there [sic] lives’ (Anonymous 35 2014). Lydia Besong, a former detainee at Yarl’s Wood, insisted that even when she left detention,

Yarl’s Wood followed me to Manchester. Sometimes I feel like I’m in a trance, I feel I hear the footsteps of the officers, I hear the banging of the doors and the sound of their keys. Even though I’m out of detention, I’m not really out - I still have those dreams’ (Girma et al. 2014:2).

Besong’s revelation that she is still ‘not really out’ shows how, in Lauren Berlant’s words, ‘trauma can never be let go of: it holds you. It locates you at the knot that joins the personal and the impersonal, specifying *you* at the moment you have the least control over your own destiny and meaning’ (Berlant 2011:126-127). Detainees are haunted not only by the violence and stigma of immigration detention, but also by the memories of trauma it cites and reproduces, experiences that continuously suspend detainees in a state of pain.

Moreover, immigration detention suspends detainees ‘at the knot that joins the personal with the impersonal’ by repeating both detainees’ personal experiences of violence *and* wider, impersonal histories of gendered and racial violence. In particular, anti-black histories shape the specific temporalities of violence experienced by black detainees in the British immigration detention estate. Black immigration detainees are held ‘in the wake’ of anti-black imperialist violence, specifically in the wake of the slave ship and the ontological violence it wreaked and still wreaks upon black subjects (Sharpe 2016:3). The wake, described by Sharpe as ‘a region of disturbed flow’, shows how racial trauma is not a single act of disturbance, but a *current* that holds and suspends all those who are caught within its waters (Sharpe 2016:3). These histories of racial violence shape detainees’ interpretations of immigration detention; for example, the mass abduction of black bodies during the slave trade is paralleled by detainees’ insistence that they have been ‘kidnapped’ by the British state (Turnbull 2016:71, 73). Detainees also describe how they are held in a state of ‘limbo’ in immigration detention (Anonymous 15 2014:5; Anonymous 20 2014:2). This sense of limbo evokes the ‘liminal spatial and temporal site’ of the Middle Passage (Rodriguez 2005:43) to the extent that both Alex Rodriguez and Christina Sharpe cast immigration detention and migrant ships as contemporary re-articulations of the hold of the slave ship (Rodriguez 2005:52; Sharpe 2016:71). Detainees highlight the ‘genealogical linkages’ between the detention centre and other forms of state-sponsored mass bodily violence against black subjects (Rodriguez 2005:54). In 2015, one Yarl’s Wood detainee insisted that detainees are treated ‘like slaves’ (detainedvoices.com 2015j), while another argued that ‘it’s like back in the day slavery’ (detainedvoices.com 2015e). A third Yarl’s Wood detainee explicitly frames Yarl’s Wood as a contemporary ‘slave ship’:

it really reminds us of the history you read about slaves. When they used to take people and put them in the ships, to take them and go and sell them. Now, they are doing this here. Yarl’s Wood is a slave ship (detainedvoices.com 2016a).

In this way, detainees interpret their experiences of immigration through the lens of previous histories of racial violence, illuminating how the violence of the hold ‘repeats and repeats’ in novel forms (Sharpe 2016:73).

In particular, the policy of family separation reproduces traumatic histories of anti-black violence and how this racist violence operated in distinctly gendered forms. After the English High Court ruled that the detention of children was unconstitutional in 2010, the Home

Office instated a policy of separating children from their detained parents, resulting in many of these children being placed in foster homes or care homes while their parents were detained (Bail for Immigration Detainees 2013:7). The House of Commons Home Affairs committee found that the Home Office's family separation policy failed to effectively safeguard children, calling for the introduction of legislation to prevent nursing mothers from being separated from their children, and also to prevent family separations that result in children being placed into care (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2019:18). In light of the separation of families during the transatlantic slave trade, Hortense Spillers contends that the destruction of the patrilineal family in the hold of the slave ship abolished black motherhood 'as female blood-rite/right' (Spillers 1987:72). In the context of the British detention estate, the separation of families also functions as a key enactment of white power (Spillers 1987:75).

Unlike white citizen families, whose familial privacy and social reproduction are enshrined as natural rights by the British state, detained women are stripped of their blood-rite/right to motherhood. During their protest, the hunger strikers at Yarl's Wood demanded that the British state stop separating families, as it was an 'inhumane' policy that breached 'their right to private life and right to privacy' (detainedvoices.com 2018c). A female detainee who was held for a week at Yarl's Wood recounted the traumatic effects of 'not knowing where (her) child was or what she was doing at a point in time', describing how she panicked to the extent that she felt her heart palpitating (Anonymous 11 2014:1). Another detainee at Yarl's Wood, speaking to *Detained Voices*, describes the extraordinary mental and emotional strain regarding her forced separation from her children:

I'm just homesick because I just left my children. I'm so, so depressed, I can't even eat. 2 months I haven't seen the face of my children, I talk with them on the phone but I can't see them (detainedvoices.com 2018ii).

One of the hunger strikers during the 2018 protest states even more emphatically that 'Separation from our children is killing us' (detainedvoices.com 2018l). The Home Office's policy of family separation through detention demonstrates how gendered constructs like the sanctity of the heterosexual family are produced through racial violence (Spillers 1987:74). It also shows how previous histories of racist violence are repeated and used to wear down and wear out detained non-citizen subjects, suspending them in states of immense pain.

4.3 ‘They treat us like shit’: abandonment, abjection, and the production of immigration detainees as waste populations

Furthermore, the wasting away of detainees’ bodies, minds, and time is part of the wider production detainees as a ‘waste population’. The British state treats waste populations as sites of emergency and abandonment. Immigration detainees are construed as immediate risks to the British body politic, requiring and justifying their detention in order to secure the safety of the British public. However, once in detention, detainees are seemingly abandoned by the state, left to waste away indefinitely in the space of the detention centre. In both of these cases, immigration detainees are understood as *disposable* populations, who need to be expelled from the body politic and whose suffering produces only violent indifference on the part of the state. The production of ‘waste populations’ is intimately tied to racialised histories of modernity, as imperialist and colonial conquests created frontier wastelands that functioned as ‘dumping grounds’ for the state’s waste populations (Bauman 2004:5-6). However, in the context of contemporary immigration detention, these wastelands take the form of spatial and temporal zones of abandonment, where people are held in a liminal space ‘between encompassment and abandonment, memory and nonmemory, life and death’ (Biehl 2013:4). While waste populations may be considered disposable by the state, this does not mean that these populations do not have social and political value. The production of so-called ‘waste’ populations establishes the boundaries of the polis and distinguishes ‘good citizen’ subjects from other, disposable forms of life (Tyler 2013:19). In this sense, the state is unable or unwilling to fully rid itself of waste populations, or the enemy within, so to speak, because the state defines itself in relation to the production of these wasted subjects (Tyler 2013 46).

Moreover, immigration detainees, like other waste populations, are paradoxically sites of capitalist value. Melissa Wright’s argues that the global capitalist myth of the ‘Third World Woman’ produces a subject who ‘personif(ies) the meaning of human disposability: someone who eventually evolves into a living state of worthlessness’, and yet ‘generates widespread prosperity through her own destruction’ (Wright 2006:2). Likewise, while detainees are considered disposable by the British state, their bodies function as raw material for private companies’ pursuit of profit, as companies like Serco receive lucrative contracts to provide and run immigration removal centres (Davis 2003:95). Private companies make lucrative

profits from running immigration removal centres. Although Serco's profit margin in relation to Yarl's Wood is currently unknown, the security G4S had a 20.7% profit margin at Brook House IRC, which far exceeded the limit of 6.8% stipulated in the original contract (Allison and Hattenstone 2017; McIntyre 2018). As a result, detainees suspect that they are detained in order to produce more profit for private companies. In Sarah Turnbull's ethnography of detainees' experiences in the British detention estate, several detainees theorised that their detention was a 'matter of economics' rather than a matter of national security (Turnbull 2016:74). In this manner, the wasting away of detainees' bodies and minds is exploited for private profit.

The entwining of private capitalist interests with the state's carceral project illuminates how immigration detention, like the 'prison-industrial complex', weaves together the state's racist ideologies with the pursuit of profit (Davis 2003:84). Like private prisons, the private companies that run detention centres exploit detainees' labour, paying them £1 an hour to perform services such as cleaning, hairdressing, and welfare support (Taylor 2019a). During a hunger strike at Yarl's Wood in 2015, a protester remarks that 'we want people in detention centres to be free. They want us to work here for one pound an hour' (detainedvoices.com 2015f). Similarly, a detainee participating in the 2018 hunger strike asks: 'Do they detain you so they can come and work in here and be part of their staff and exploit us?' (detainedvoices.com 2018d). While labour in the detention centre is not, by official definitions, a form of forced labour, it does at the very least constitute 'state-sanctioned exploitative, coercive and unfree labour' (Bales and Mayblin 2018:192). Although private companies are primarily responsible for the exploitation of detainees' labour, the British government facilitates and encourages the exploitation of detainee labour. Indeed, the Detention Centre Rules (2001) state that detention centres should 'encourage and assist detained persons to make the most productive use of their time' (Detention Centre Rules 2001:2). In other words, the state and private companies work together to produce immigration detainees as disposable subjects who generate profit through their own slow destruction.

However, even as detainees function sites of capitalist value, they are also produced as 'waste products' of the British state through the abject relations of pollution, dirtiness, and disgust. The term waste population also accounts for how the British immigration detention estate produces detainees as waste populations through the logics of abjection. Abjection captures

the bodily experiences that unsettle and disrupt the boundaries between self and other. Although abjection refers to any kind of matter or experience that challenges the distinction between self and other, abjection is exemplified by the body's waste products, such as bodily fluids, excrement, vomiting and menstruation, and by the physical reaction of discharge, convulsion, and expulsion (Tyler 2013:27). Correspondingly, abjection refers to the affective response of disgust, an emotion which reflects affirms the boundaries of the social body by distancing or ejecting people, things, or practices that are collectively understood as corrupting influences (Tyler 2013:23). Detainees cast themselves in these abject terms when describing how staff at detention centres treat them like 'trash' (Anonymous 5 2014:3) and 'dirt' (Anonymous 10 2014:1). Moreover, detention staff actively produce immigration detainees as abject subjects by forcing them to wait in their own bodily waste. In an extremely distressing account, the woman who was detained at Yarl's Wood on two occasions describes the guards' violent indifference towards her need to use the toilet after a trip to the hospital:

I kept saying I needed the toilet but they wouldn't take any notice...I had no choice but to go where I was. I was sat in the back of the taxi, handcuffed, with officers there, sitting in urine, in wet clothes. I was humiliated. It was degrading. (Anonymous 10 2014:3)

Later, the same detainee recalls how she was once again forbidden to use the toilet and was consequently forced to publicly urinate in the reception area at Yarl's Wood, leaving her feeling 'dirty, humiliated and unworthy of humane treatment' (Anonymous 10 2014:3). Through these cruel and neglectful practices, detention centre staff produce detainees as disposable subjects.

The production of detainees as abject subjects through the use of bodily fluids draws upon gendered ideas of dirtiness and disgust. While bodily fluids are broadly understood as contaminating substances, these fluids are differentiated on the basis of gender, making women's bodily fluids especially disgusting, fearful and polluting substances (Wilcox 2014:98). As a result, women detained or formerly detained at Yarl's Wood highlight how the lack of menstrual products produced them as 'disgusting' subjects. One detainee, held at Yarl's Wood for over three months in 2014, describes how her friend had her period but was not provided with menstrual products, so she resorted to using her bedsheets as a sanitary pad (Anonymous 2 2014:2). The detainee who was forced to wait in her own urine also recalls how she was held in detention for nine hours while she was on her period and was not

permitted to wash or clean herself (Anonymous 10 2014:1). As a result, she felt ‘dirty’ (Anonymous 10 2014:1). Hence, at Yarl’s Wood, female detainees are specifically produced as abject subjects through gendered concepts of pollution and uncleanness.

Waste populations are considered disposable by the state and, at the same time, are construed as a security risk to the state’s health and national wellbeing. Despite being sites of capitalist value, waste populations are also villainised as sites of toxicity and danger. Immigration detainees are presented as a racialised threat to a white female British body politic. Feminist theorists note how representations of the body politic have historically drawn upon white, male, and non-disabled experiences of embodiment (Wilcox 2014:87). Unlike female bodies, which are portrayed as leaky, fluid, and inherently abject, the masculinised body politic embodies the immortal and autonomous body of the sovereign (Wilcox 2014:87, 88). However, this obscures how Western body politics are often imagined and narrated in the form of a white female body, as evidenced by the figure of Britannia in the United Kingdom’s nationalist imaginary. As a white female body, the body politic is inherently leaky, ‘soft, weak, porous’, and never fully secured against penetration or invasion from the outside (Ahmed 2014:2). These others tend to be racialised and non-normatively gendered or sexed, as evidenced by the perverse sexualisation of the terrorist and the illegal immigrant (Weber 2014:73). The racialisation of these foreign threats, from both outside and inside the body politic, constitute the feminised body politic as distinctly white in character and in need of white masculine protection. The policing of borders through rhetoric around sexual violence, which disproportionately focuses on spectacular acts of sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by racialised immigrants, reproduces the spectre of the racialised sexual predator and his desire to supposedly take advantage of white women (Ticktin 2008:864). In response, the hard, masculine counterpart to the feminised body politic – the state – functions as the body politic’s benevolent masculine protector, expelling the racialised other in order to uphold the honour and dignity of the feminised nation (Young 2003:7-8). Xenophobic discourses thus operate through gendered and racialised registers to produce illegal immigrants as a dangerous, toxic waste product that threatens the white, feminised body politic.

The exclusion of female detainees from the protections of heterosexual norms, and the production of racialised bodies as inherently threatening to the integrity of the white body politic, crystallise in the figure of the pregnant detainee. Despite the House of Lords voting to

ban the detention of pregnant women in the United Kingdom in 2016, Home Secretary Theresa May continued the practice of detaining pregnant women, albeit with the introduction of a 72-hour time limit (Boffey 2016). While citizen mothers are revered as “mothers of the nation”, pregnant non-citizens are discursively produced as bearers of a foreign, outsider nation, one that threatens the white reproductivity of the British body politic (Tyler 2013:108). The bodies of pregnant non-citizens function as ‘corporeal border zones’ that are actively policed by the state in order to prevent invasion and penetration by the non-citizen they carry (Tyler 2013:108). Consequently, despite significant evidence that detention poses serious risks to pregnant women’s health and wellbeing, the British state still treats pregnant detainees as sites *of* risk (Girma et al. 2014:38; Lousley and Cope 2017:26-27; see also Medical Justice 2013). One pregnant detainee ‘was so worried about the baby inside me’ throughout her time at Yarl’s Wood (Girma et al. 2014:26). Another, suffering from weakness and dizziness, was frightened to get out of bed in case she fell down and hurt the baby (Anonymous 3 2014:1). Sadly, their fears were not unfounded: in 2015, a pregnant detainee who collapsed in the dining hall was taken to hospital but was not permitted to stay in hospital overnight (Channel 4 News 2015). The following day she had to be taken back to hospital, where she was told that she had lost the baby (Channel 4 News 2015). In 2016, a trafficked Vietnamese woman miscarried while she was questioned for eight hours by immigration officials at Heathrow (Taylor 2019b). Despite doctors’ insistence that she stay overnight in hospital, as it was likely she was miscarrying her baby, she was still taken by the Home Office to Yarl’s Wood and detained there for three days (Taylor 2019b). The detention of pregnant women clearly shows how the British state’s discourses of the sanctity and the protection of life do not apply to the non-citizen populations it deems to be disposable.

4.4 ‘We are still hungry for our freedom and justice’: reclaiming bodies and time through the hunger strike

How did the 2018 hunger strike challenge these forms of waste and wastage in immigration detention? The Yarl’s Wood hunger strikers protested their production as an abject waste population and the violent temporalities of slow death through the slow wastage of their bodies. In doing so, they aimed to reject their status as a waste population and reclaim their wasted time from the state. The hunger strike constituted a mimetic appropriation and re-enactment of these various, violent forms of waste and wastage (Aretxaga 1995:142). Hunger

striking enacts and embodies the slow, structural, and unspectacular forms of violence endemic to the detention centre. Like the detention centre, which is shaped by the temporalities of emergency and abandonment, the acute and the chronic, hunger strikes embody both slow and spectacular temporalities of violence. While the hunger strike intends to be an attention-grabbing event or spectacle, it also occurs slowly and over an extended period of time, ‘viscerally and affectively (summoning) us to bear witness to the long, slow wasting away of human flesh’ (Anderson 2010:2). As Patrick Anderson argues through the example of anorexia nervosa, self-starvation is never static or stationary; instead, it ‘cannot be named except in reference to its enactment through stretches of time’ (Anderson 2010:38). In the case of the hunger strike, the duration of the protest is also strategic, for while hunger strikers may insist they are ready or willing to die, their protest must also be prolonged enough to allow them to negotiate with political authorities (Kenney 2017:206). As a result, many contemporary hunger strikers, such as the strikers during the Turkish death fasts (2000-2007), deliberately employ a variety of techniques to prolong their fasts, rendering them ‘pioneers in the field of human starvation’ (Anderson 2001). Indeed, Irom Sharmila, the world’s longest hunger striker, ended her sixteen-year-long hunger strike in 2016 with a lick of honey (Safi 2018). Slow death, the physical wearing out of the body over time, is thus a central component of hunger striking.

The hunger strike at Yarl’s Wood physically embodied the dual temporalities of emergency and abandonment. As an event, the hunger strike disrupted the stagnant pools of time that hold immigration detainees in place and erode their sense of time’s meaning (Baraitser 2017:12). Yet through the slow wastage of the strikers’ bodies, the hunger strike also drew attention to how the detention estate operates through slow, normalised, and institutionalised forms of political violence. The hunger strikers’ demands foregrounded the suffering caused by indefinite detention and the temporalities of waiting and uncertainty that define the everyday experience of immigration detention. In the hunger strikers’ first set of demands, they state that ‘The U.K. is the only country in the E.U. with no time limit on detention and people are detained indefinitely [sic] pending the Home Offices incompetent and untimely manner in handling cases’ (detainedvoices.com 2018a). In their second set of demands, released a few days after the first, the hunger strikers called for shorter bail periods, as ‘legally it should [sic] 3-5 days, however it can take anywhere up to 21 days, or even a month before you get a bail hearing date’ (detainedvoices.com 2018c). Moreover, they also insisted that ‘redetention should not be allowed – if you have been detained once, you should not be

re-detained if you are complying with the laws they have applied' (detainedvoices.com 2018c) and that 'detention periods shouldn't be longer than 28 days (detainedvoices.com 2018c). The detainees prioritised not only the end of infinite detention through the installation of a time limit, but also called for the immediate release of anyone who had been detained for more than six months (detainedvoices.com 2018c). One of the Yarl's Wood hunger strikers, speaking under the false name of Helena, told Al Jazeera:

We want the Home Office to listen to us and stop the injustice of indefinite detention...It is the uncertainty that is most difficult, I can deal with imprisonment if I know my sentence. But here, there's no criminal record, and no clarity about what's going to happen to me. It's a pain that we all bear on a daily basis (Child 2018).

Another hunger striker, speaking through *Detained Voices*, likewise insisted 'I am involved in the hunger strike because I think we face very unfair conditions in that we are detained for an indefinite amount time' (detainedvoices.com 2018i). In this sense, the detainees at Yarl's Wood went on hunger strike in order to re-establish control over their wasted time.

By hunger striking, the detainees at Yarl's Wood also contested the state's control over when and how they should eat. At Yarl's Wood, regulations around food and eating are central mechanisms for governing both detainees' bodies and detainees' time. Under the Detention Centre Rules 2001, detainees are forbidden 'to have any food other than that ordinarily provided' (Detention Centre Rules 2001:5). Detainees regularly complain about the quality of the food served at Yarl's Wood, describing it as 'horrible', 'bad', 'stodgy', as well as 'dry and tasteless' (detainedvoices.com 2017b; detainedvoices.com 2015a). In their demands, the 2018 hunger strikers compelled the government to 'give us proper food to look after our diets' (detainedvoices.com 2018c). Other detainees emphasise how the traumatic experience of immigration detention often results in a loss of appetite, as they are left in an anxious or depressed state where they are unable or unwilling to eat. An asylum seeker who was detained three times between October 2010 and April 2013 describes how in the detention centre, 'with no peace of mind, it is hard to eat and hard to sleep' (Anonymous 5 2014:2). Another detainee testifies that at Yarl's Wood 'I lost [sic] appetite and most time compare the life I'm leading now to death' (Anonymous 38 2014:1). Detainees' unwillingness or inability to eat in detention also reflects how immigration detention takes away their ability to control the temporal flow of their own lives. Detention centres dictate what and when detainees eat. Rather than living by the tempo of their own impulses, detainees' bodily rhythms are subject

to the imposed schedule of the detention centre (Berlant 2011:135). In Turnbull's research, one detainee notes that 'if we want to eat, we have to wait for the appointed time to eat. Some of us, we don't eat this early... You got to do everything in accordance to them' (Turnbull 2016:69). By collectively refusing to eat, detainees refused to let the detention centre and Home Office control their sense of time, and 'the return of time [brought] with it the restoration of agency' (Feldman 1991:142).

Moreover, the hunger strikers' refusal to consume food also constituted a refusal to *be* consumed by the British state. In his analysis of anorexia nervosa, Patrick Anderson suggests that anorexia is characterised by the competing drives of consumption and the refusal to consume (Anderson 2010:38). In this sense, while the anorectic subject is critiqued for consuming patriarchal values regarding thinness and the commodification of the body, their self-starvation refuses to reproduce capitalist norms of consumption (Anderson 2010:51). The hunger strike contested the slow wasting away of detainees' bodies, minds, and lives in the British detention estate, an experience that some detainees describe through the language of consumption and being consumed. One detainee at Yarl's Wood, speaking to *Detained Voices*, suggests that 'it's like I'm in the wolf's den and I will get eaten eventually' (detainedvoices.com 2018ff). Bashir Barrow, a male migrant detained in four immigration detention centres, describes how 'if you go to jail you know the day you get released. But in detention, you don't know the day you got released. So mentally it will eat you, it will finish you' (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Migration Joint Parliamentary Inquiry into the Use of Immigration Detention 2014b:13). However, by refusing to eat, the protesters at Yarl's Wood also refused to *be* consumed. Specifically, by undertaking a work strike alongside their hunger strike, the protesters at Yarl's Wood refused to let their bodies be consumed for the production of private profit. On February 25th 2018, the protesters stated that 'on Monday 26/02/18, we will cease to participate in detention, we will not eat, use their facilities or work for them' (detainedvoices.com 2018k). They explicitly demand 'an end to the Home Office's of employing detainees to do menial work for £1 per hour, it preys on the vulnerable and forces them to participate in their own detention' (detainedvoices.com 2018k). Another detainee framed her refusal to work as a refusal to 'exploit' herself for the Home Office (detainedvoices.com 2018d). By refusing to labour for the detention centre, the detainees rejected Serco's extraction of value at the expense of their wasted bodies.

Moreover, the hunger strikers did not just refuse to be consumed. They also refused to *swallow down* their pain and accept their status as waste products of the British state. The repetition and circularity of trauma explored earlier in the chapter offers an understanding of the body as *archival*. The body, in other words, holds and records previous experiences of violence. In her work on Partition (the separation of India and Pakistan in 1947), Veena Das asks how women, reduced to ‘passive witnesses’ and silent bearers of Partition’s extraordinary violence, mourned their ‘loss of self and the world’ (Das 2006:54). She argues that in the wake of this violence, women inverted the relationship between surface and embodiment that ordinarily shaped rituals of grief and mourning, where women bore witness to death through publicly demonstrated harm on their bodies (Das 2006:50). Refusing to let their bodies openly bear witness to the violence of Partition, ‘women drank the pain so that life could continue’, and, in doing so, transformed their passive spectatorship of violence into a form of agency (Das 2006:55-56). Das’ account emphasises the archival nature of these women’s bodies, describing how women referred to their bodies as ‘discarded exercise book[s] in which the accounts of past relationships were kept’ or as repositories of poison (Das 2006:54). However, Das also notes that the women who described themselves as vessels for ‘poisonous knowledge’ did not desire ‘to give expression to this hidden knowledge’ (Das 2006:54). Instead, containing this violence was itself the agentic expression of these experiences (Das 2006:54). Women exercised control over these narratives of violence by imbibing, holding, and submerging violent memories within their bodies, refusing to let them play out on the body’s surface.

However, the Yarl’s Wood hunger strikers inverted the relationship between surface and embodiment offered in Das’ work, exercising agency by moving their experiences of pain from their bodily interiors to the surface of their bodies. Patrick Anderson frames hunger striking as ‘the ingestion’, and subsequent appropriation, ‘of modes of violence typically performed by the state’ (Anderson 2010:114). However, rather than swallowing down the pain, hunger strikers refused to eat, abjectly regurgitating their pain, spitting themselves and their experiences of trauma at the hands of the British state into the world. In doing so, they took their deeply embedded experiences of state violence and displayed them openly on their bodies’ surface. The hunger striker, an abject and ‘excessive body that makes pain manifest’, makes ordinary and hidden forms of state and structural violence visible on the surface of body (Wilcox 2014:68). The hunger-striking body functions as an archive of the state’s

violence, providing a deeply '*incorporated* historiography of trauma' (Anderson 2010:32, emphasis in original). While scholars interpret self-starvation as an attempt to renounce the past or exercise mastery over past trauma (Ellman 1993:10-11), the hunger strike functions as a testament to this wounded past and its repetition in the present. The hunger-striking body encodes and records its experiences of trauma but then openly displays them, becoming 'the living dossier of its discontents' (Ellman 1993:17). In this sense, hunger strikes cite not only previous examples of political protest (Ellman 1993:14), but also previous experiences of *pain*, archived deep within the body. As excessive bodies that made their pain manifest, the hunger strikers at Yarl's Wood appropriated and rearticulated their own abjection, pointing to how abjection can be '*queered* through alternative citational practices' (Tyler 2013:37, emphasis in original).

Through their reversal of the relationship between surface and embodiment, the Yarl's Wood hunger strike also subverted racialised concepts about the connections between bodily interiors and bodily exteriors. Racialisation and the operation of racial relations of power depend upon the relationship between surface and embodiment, where the body's exterior testifies to the subject's internal qualities, where 'the visible traces of the body are tied to allegedly innate invisible characteristics' (Chun 2009:10). Anti-racist projects have aimed to denaturalise racial categories and destabilise the racialised relationship between genotype and phenotype, undoing the assumed fixity of racial knowledge. However, as scholars like Ann Stoler have noted, racialisation depends upon the malleability or fluidity of racial knowledge, or how the signification of the racialised body shifts in the face of uncertainty (Chun 2009:15). This disjunction that opens up between what the body says and means drives the racialised compulsion to know the truth about the other's body (Chun 2009:14; Ahmed and Stacy 2001:4). By positioning itself as the authority over the 'truth' of racialised detainees' bodies, the British state produces immigration detainees as objects of scientific, medical, and racialised knowledge. However, through the hunger strike, the Yarl's Wood strikers contested the state's authority over the meaning and the 'script' of their bodies. The strike constituted both an abject rejection of their status as 'waste' and a refusal to be reduced to the racialised and medicalised objects of the state.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the relationship between violence, the body, and time in immigration detention and during the 2018 Yarl's Wood hunger strike. By focusing on the temporal character of immigration detention, this chapter has drawn attention to the ways in which political violence operates in slow, mundane, and unspectacular forms. It has drawn a parallel between the temporal character of immigration detention and the distinctive temporality of the hunger strike, suggesting that immigration detainees and hunger strikers both experience the temporalities of waiting, uncertainty, slow death, and radical suspension in time. This chapter argued that the 2018 hunger strike attempted to disrupt the stagnant pools of time that form in immigration detention (Baraitser 2017:12). It has offered a reading of the hunger strike as a mimetic enactment of the 'slow death' detainees experience in immigration detention. Moreover, it has also framed the hunger strike as an abject protest where detainees refused to swallow their status as a 'waste' population, choosing instead to abjectly regurgitate their pain. In doing so, detainees aimed to establish control over their wasted bodies and their wasted time. This chapter has, of course, only offered a single interpretation of the hunger strike at Yarl's Wood through a close analysis of the testimonies offered by hunger-striking detainees. It is important to note that, like the work of Veena Das, this chapter does not attempt to 'give voice' to the hunger-striking detainees at Yarl's Wood or speak on their behalf. Instead, it offers a particular lens through which to view and understand this hunger strike, a lens that illuminates the gendered and racialised character of political violence and how this violence operates through distinct temporal registers. The final chapter will return to these themes of voice and agency through its examination of how hunger strikers at Yarl's Wood, through their embodied protests, resisted their status as humanitarian 'victims' or the dehumanised waste products of the British state.

PART III: THE LIMITS OF THE HUMAN

Chapter 5: Hunger Beyond the Human

Introduction

What insights do women's hunger strikes offer into the human and its limits? This chapter examines how the suffragettes' hunger strikes and the 2018 Yarl's Wood hunger strike were shaped by the ideas of human rights, humanity and inhumanity. Contemporary hunger strikers frequently draw upon discourses of human rights in order to make political claims and to hold oppressive political regimes accountable to an international political community (Fierke 2012:11). Yet, although human rights are often framed as a moral and apolitical project centred on preventing human suffering, human rights are also a 'particular form of political power carrying a particular image of justice' (Brown 2004:453). As Jasbir Puar notes, human rights discourses 'produce human beings in order to give them rights' (Puar 2017:15). These rights-bearing liberal humanist subjects are usually coded as white and masculine within human rights discourses and frameworks (see Mutua 2001; MacKinnon 2006). It interrogates these hunger strikes' relationship to a specific, constructed, and contingent iteration of the human, referred to in this chapter as the liberal humanist subject. The liberal humanist subject, it argues, is agentic, autonomous, self-preserving, and protected by human rights norms and frameworks. Consequently, this chapter examines how female hunger strikers, by deploying the languages of human rights and notions of a shared or common humanity, align themselves with the rights-bearing human subject produced by the modern liberal imagination.

Yet this chapter also examines how women's hunger strikes may offer divergent understandings of what it means to be human. Hunger strikes demonstrate which lives are recognised as human and which lives have only partial or tangential access to humanity. In doing so, they illuminate how the liberal humanist subject is violently produced in relation and opposition to 'humans produced as objects, as property, as animals, as subhumans unworthy of political consideration' (Puar 2017:29). Building on the forms of politicised inhumanity explored above, this final chapter examines the forms of nonhuman or inhuman life that are co-produced alongside the capacious, rational, rights-bearing subject. One of these forms of political inhumanity, discussed extensively in the first chapter, is the humanitarian victim. While human rights rely on discourses of rights and protections

provided by legal codes and frameworks, humanitarianism centres around discourses of needs and the fragile protections offered by sympathy and moral sentiments (Barnett 2011:16). Another form of political inhumanity, as explored in the fourth chapter, is the disposable or abject waste population. This chapter examines how women's hunger strikes often respond to and protest these conditions of inhumanity, animality, and objecthood. However, it also considers how hunger strikers' self-destructive protests may illuminate alternative forms of political life that emerge at the violent threshold of the human. The hunger striker's mode of protest – self-destruction – contradicts one of the basic premises of the liberal humanist subject: bodily self-preservation (Fierke 2012:4). Through their eschewal of individualised self-interest, the hunger striker may gesture towards kinds of humanism based on relationality and mutual dependency. In doing so, they may subvert the hegemony of the liberal humanist subject over the figure of the human.

The first half of this chapter examines how the suffragettes drew upon concepts of humanity and inhumanity to critique patriarchal violence and lay claim to the women's vote. The first section, "‘I realised how often women are held in contempt as beings outside the pale of human dignity’: discourses of (in)humanity, objecthood, and animality in the suffragette movement" examines how the WSPU and their critics related suffragette agitations to ideas of animality and inhumanity. First, it explores how anti-suffragists and opponents of the suffragette movement dehumanised suffragettes on the basis of their perceived sexual and social deviance from normative ideas of gender. This section then examines how the suffragettes themselves invoked languages of dehumanisation as a means of critiquing patriarchal violence, characterising women as a subjugated species. It also explores how some suffragettes interpreted violence against animals as part of a wider patriarchal system of violence against women and other marginalised subjects, and consequently pursued animal rights causes alongside and through their feminist political projects.

The second section, "‘Women are the mothers of the race’: civilisational advancement, maternal imperialism, and the racialisation of the human in the suffragette movement" explores the suffragette movement's languages of humanity and human equality. It argues that the suffragettes laid claim to a human subject vested in racist, civilisational, and imperialist relations of power. Although approaches to the British Empire, colonialism, race, and racialisation differed between individual suffragettes, the writings of many suffragette activists are permeated by imperialist and eugenic discourses related to civilisational progress

and the advancement of the British ‘race’. The suffragettes laid claim to and enacted a form of liberal humanism through a racialised politics of maternalism and an imperialist impulse to ‘save’ classed and colonised subjects.

The third section, “‘Even an animal would not be moved like this’: human rights, political animality, and inhumanisation in the British immigration detention estate’ explores how discourses of humanity, inhumanity, and human rights shaped the hunger strike at Yarl’s Wood. It first examines how hunger strikers at Yarl’s Wood and detained subjects at other British detention centres deploy human rights norms and frameworks in their critiques of the immigration detention estate. In light of these languages, the hunger strikes at Yarl’s Wood could be read as a movement for inclusion within this liberal humanist model of humanity. Yet detained individuals also testify to how the British detention estate produces them as animalised, objectified, or otherwise inhuman subjects, situating them within what Allen Feldman labels a ‘habitus of inhumanization’ (Feldman 2010:117). Rather than losing or being stripped of their humanity by the British state, immigration detention reproduces racialised and colonial relations of power that constitute detained migrants as the inhuman counterparts to the liberal humanist subject.

The fourth section of this chapter, “‘None of us are truly free until we are all free’: the reclamation of life through the Yarl’s Wood hunger strike’, examines how the 2018 Yarl’s Wood hunger strike created a liminal situation that offered a brief window into other ways of living and being human. Against approaches to the hunger strike that emphasise its deathly character, this section characterises the Yarl’s Wood hunger strike as both a refusal to live on the state’s terms and a stubborn and persistent refusal to die. Through the hunger strike, the Yarl’s Wood protesters rejected their animalisation at the hands of the state and their positioning as humanitarian victims. Their protest undermined the liberal figure of the human by framing emancipation as a collective project, forging relations of solidarity and interdependency within and outside the detention centre walls. In doing so, it offered a glimpse into forms of agency that emerge at the threshold of the human.

5.1 'I realised how often women are held in contempt as beings outside the pale of human dignity': discourses of (in)humanity, objecthood, and animality in the suffragette movement

How did the WSPU and its opponents negotiate discourses of humanity and inhumanity throughout the suffragette movement? Anti-suffragists used dehumanising discourses to delegitimise suffragette activism and silence the WSPU's political speech. Anti-suffragist publications such as the *Daily Express* emphasised the inhumanity of women who directly contravened or abandoned middle-class feminine ideals. The refusal to use feminine pronouns functioned both as a critique of the suffragettes' deviance from sexual norms and as a form of dehumanisation, showing how Edwardian ideas about gender fundamentally shaped their understanding of what it meant to be human. By 1914, the *Daily Express*, notable for its intransigent opposition to the suffragette movement, stopped using the pronouns she and her in reference to suffragette activists, 'thereby stripping them of their femininity' (Vessey 2020:22). Vessey notes how the *Daily Express* degendered a suffragette who heckled the King in 1914:

Soon after the curtain had risen at His Majesty's Theatre a 'woman' rose from a seat in the stalls and shouted. There was a special staff ready, and It was quickly bundled out. Two other interruptions followed, and in the second case the interrupter was found to be chained to Its seat. It shouted twice in the direction of the royal box, 'You're a Russian Czar', before a detective placed his hand on Its mouth. It promptly bit him. Later, however, it mumbled a promise that It would shout no more. It was released, but immediately broke Its promise and shouted again. In a few moments a carpenter arrived, the arm of the tip-up seat was removed, and the interrupter was hustled out (Vessey 2020:22).

Vessey reports how, several days later, the same tactics were deployed in the court hearing of the suffragette Nellie Hall:

Meanwhile Nellie Hall was struggling and yelling like a maniac. ... It flung Itself backwards and forwards, with the police clinging to It, and punctuated Its struggles by repeating the cry: 'I will not be tried!' With its hat torn from Its head, Its hair dishevelled and Its blouse disarranged, It continued to fling Itself backwards, and once It almost fell over the rear rail of the dock (Vessey 2020:22).

The *Daily Express*' use of the pronoun 'it' signalled the suffragettes' abdication of womanhood through their willingness to enter the masculine realm of politics (Vessey 2020:22). The defeminisation of female suffragists was a well-established line of anti-

suffragist critique. For example, in her 1907 publication ‘Woman or Suffragette?’, notable anti-suffragist Marie Corelli argued that ‘the Suffragette seeks out to be what Woman naturally is not’ (Corelli 1907 in Cohler 2010:38). However, the combination of the objectifying, degendered pronoun ‘it’ and the *Express*’ portrayal of the suffragettes as bestial and animal-like also dehumanised suffragette women. These newspaper articles show how anti-suffragists interpreted suffragette militancy as a deviation from a wider set of Victorian and Edwardian ideologies that tied together gender codes, imperial interests, and notions of racial purity with the idea of humanity (Cohler 2010:40).

Furthermore, opponents of the suffragette movement used languages of animality to delegitimise the suffragette movement’s aims and actions. Anti-suffragists drew upon animal metaphors and discourses to naturalise patriarchal inequality. In particular, they invoked Victorian and Edwardian animal and gender ideologies around cats to portray women as domestic, feline creatures. Anti-suffragist postcards and media depicted suffragettes as cats to convey suffragist activists as loud and ‘infantile’ (Wrenn 2019:806). They also coded the suffragettes’ political demands as ‘frivolous’ and unworthy of serious attention (Wrenn 2019:806). On October 15th, 1908, Christabel Pankhurst was sent an anti-suffrage postcard featuring an angry kitten hissing ‘I want my vote!’ (‘I want my vote!’ 1908). Another anti-suffrage postcard depicts a white kitten in a ‘Votes for Women’ sash preaching to an audience made up of children’s toys (‘Fifi the Militant’ ca. 1908-1914). In 1910, *The New York Times* reported that, after suffragettes ‘invaded a hall at St. Pancras where Chancellor of the Exchange Lloyd-George was making a speech’, Lloyd George responded: ‘take no notice of these cats meowing’ (*The New York Times* 1910:5). The use of cat imagery and metaphors depoliticised the suffragettes’ political speech through the gendered coding of felines as domestic creatures (Wrenn 2019:806). In Victorian times, pet cats and dogs differently embodied ideas about white middle-class feminine and masculine behaviour (Amato 2015:57-58). Dogs were considered to be ideal masculinised animal subjects, occupying a liminal position between ‘companion and citizen’ and were incorporated into the liberal political order as political subjects in their own right (Feuerstein 2019:14). Conversely, cats were distinctly feminised animals; they were considered to be women’s pets, represented the domestic sphere of life and were associated with various characteristics that paralleled stereotypes about middle-class Victorian women (Amato 2015:60). At the same time, they were simultaneously feared and reviled as innately sexual, vain, promiscuous, and dangerously independent creatures (Amato 2015:60). By comparing the suffragettes to cats,

anti-suffragists drew upon the feminisation of cats and their association with the domestic sphere in order to limit the suffragettes' political claims and keep them suspended in the liminal space between citizen and non-citizen.

However, the suffragettes appropriated and subverted anti-suffragist discourses of animality. The WSPU challenged their representation as housebound cats through their characterisation of the 1913 Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health) Act as the 'Cat and Mouse Act', casting the state as the 'cat' in this instance (Wrenn 2019:806). The Cat and Mouse Act allowed the government to release hunger-striking prisoners on the grounds of ill-health, and re-arrest prisoners to finish their sentences once they had recovered (Miller 2016:55). The suffragettes decried the Act as a form of 'torture' that steadily destroyed the health of suffragette prisoners, likening it to a cat playing with its prey (WSPU ca. 1914:1; Atkinson 2019:385). The suffragettes' critiques of the Cat and Mouse Act drew on gendered ideologies of feminine helplessness and masculine violence, exploiting the 'emotive issue of inflicting pain upon a woman' to great effect (Miller 2016:56). For example, in a 1914 poster published by the WSPU, a cat, representing the liberal government, grasps the limp body of a suffragette between its jaws (Wrenn 2019:806). In these materials, the cat is distinctly more feral and masculine in appearance, eschewing the feminine and domestic housecat in favour of a wild tomcat (Wrenn 2019:806). That being said, the suffragettes' self-representations as helpless prey obscure how suffragettes actively resisted and eluded capture by government "cats" through various forms of deception and innovative escapes (Marion ca. 1930:243, 250, 266; Atkinson 2019:425, 429). The Act, as Diane Atkinson notes, was a failure, as once released from prison the suffragette prisoners proved adept at escaping the police, meaning that 'very few of the released 'mice' were caught and brought to justice' (Atkinson 2019:385). Kitty Marion describes how contrary to the Act's intent, 'a Suffrage "Mouse" would simply "disappear [sic] if that suited her purpose, until spotted by a police "cat" and dragged back to prison, and the whole situation was worse instead of better' (Marion ca. 1930:243). In this sense, by casting the state as a tomcat and themselves as persecuted yet wily mice, the suffragettes appropriated the gendered symbolism of these animals and rearticulated them in line with their feminine heroic.

More broadly, members of the WSPU used languages of animality, inhumanity, and objecthood to describe and critique patriarchal subjugation. In 1913, Christabel Pankhurst critiqued how the married woman's economic dependence on her husband meant that she

‘must eat out of her hand, as it were’ (C. Pankhurst 1913e:115). Similarly, Constance Lytton castigated the ‘maiming subserviency’ that characterised upper-class Edwardian womanhood: upper-class women, she argued, are ‘driven through life with blinkers on, they are unresentful of the bridle, the rein and the whip, uncritical of the direction in which they are driven’ (Lytton 2008:78-79). The suffragettes also inappropriately deployed languages of property and enslavement to protest the unequal position of women in Edwardian society. Christabel Pankhurst, for example, insists that ‘the relation between man and woman has been that of an owner and his property – of a master and his slave – not the relation between two equals’ (C. Pankhurst 1913e:20). Similarly, Lytton decries the circumscribed options available to women like herself who never married, asking why women should ‘be more or less slaves because they do not happen to marry’ (Mulvey-Roberts 2000:172). Correspondingly, the WSPU’s publications regularly appropriated languages of bondage, freedom, and emancipation deployed by abolitionists and anti-slavery activists. An illustrated scroll produced by the WSPU and awarded to Elsa Gye upon her release from prison opens with the proclamation: ‘On behalf of all women who will win freedom by the bondage which you have endured for their sake’ (WSPU ca. 1908-1909). Christabel Pankhurst framed the campaign for the vote as the ‘emancipation’ of women:

Upon men the effect of women’s enfranchisement will be to teach them that women are their human equals, and not the subhuman species that so many men now think them; not slaves to be bought, soiled, and degraded, and then cast away. We know to what bodily and spiritual corruption the subjection of women has brought humanity. Let us now see to what cleanness and nobility we can arrive through her emancipation! (C. Pankhurst 1913e:23)

The comparisons drawn by the suffragettes between the position of Edwardian women with the British and American systems of slavery may have alluded to doctrine of coverture. Under coverture, married women had no independent legal or economic identity as their legal personhood was subsumed under that of their husband’s (Steinbach 2005:267). Victorian and Edwardian feminists saw both the vote and the abolition of coverture as essential in order to be seen as full persons by the law and by the state, as together they kept women ‘unjustly subordinated in private and in public’ (Steinbach 2005:272). Yet, their framing of white Edwardian women’s social position to slavery was grossly inaccurate, given that there were vast disparities in the political, economic and legal status of married women and that of enslaved persons. In this sense, the suffragettes’ use of the term slavery illuminates both the emotive currency of abolitionist language and imagery and the troubling racial and class dynamics of the suffragette movement (see Hartman 1997). Nonetheless, their

characterisation of women as property or a 'subhuman species' highlights how the suffragettes perceived themselves to be politically excluded from full personhood.

Moreover, the suffragettes drew upon languages of animality to highlight the dehumanising character of the state's violence and the inhumane nature of state actors during their experiences of imprisonment, hunger striking, and force-feeding. Suffragettes and their supporters critiqued the 'inhuman tortures' conducted on suffragette bodies through the languages of animal suffering (WSPU ca. 1914:2). During an incident of mass force-feeding, Marion described the prison as a 'slaughter-house', drawing parallels between terrified animals awaiting slaughter and suffragette prisoners forced to listen to the cries of other suffragettes being force-fed while anticipating their own turn (Marion ca. 1930:220). Similarly, Sylvia Pankhurst, in an account of her first force-feeding while imprisoned in 1913, wrote 'I felt I should go mad; I felt like a poor wild thing caught in a steel trap' (S. Pankhurst 1913:90). The suffragettes also used languages of animality to describe the brutal character of the prison. Constance Lytton emphasised the repressive, cage-like nature of the prison, describing Mrs. Pankhurst's prison conditions through the metaphor of a horse stable:

She went to a cell door, many of which lined one side of a passage as the horse-boxes of a stable, and drew aside the shutter of a small grating. I looked through into a kind of animal's den, dimly lit and furnished only with a bare wooden bench running along the side of the wall (Lytton 2008:68).

Likewise, in her autobiography, *Memoirs of a Militant*, Annie Kenney describes the Black Maria or the prison van as a cage where 'each species of humanity has its little cage with the small iron grating to nose through' (Marlow 2015:41). Meanwhile, Katie Gliddon also drew upon animal suffering to critique the practices of imprisonment, especially solitary confinement: 'we realise the cruelty of shutting wild animals up in boxes, of shutting wild birds up in tiny cages but the conscience of the community is dead to the cruelty (of solitary confinement)' (Gliddon 1913). Against anti-suffragist discourses of animality that aimed to delegitimise the suffragettes' political claims, the WSPU's use of animal metaphors and imagery illuminated the inhumane violence of the Edwardian state.

However, the suffragettes' use of animal metaphors extended beyond a critique of patriarchal subjection or governmental violence. Their languages of animality gestured towards a broader critique of violence that linked gender-based violence with human violence against other species. In doing so, the suffragettes challenged one of the key premises of the liberal

humanist subject: the superiority of the human over other forms of animal life. The suffragettes claimed that the state's inhumane violence upended the human/animal hierarchy by arguing that state actors behaved more brutally or more inhumanely than animals. Kitty Marion describes how she would rather be attacked by animals than experience sexual violence at the hands of an angry human crowd:

My clothes were ripped back and front, my very undergarments torn to shreds. Being thrown to wild beasts is nothing to being thrown to an infuriated human mob. The former might tear you to pieces but draw the line at indecent assaults, and so do I. I don't [sic] mind the cuffs, kicks, blows, aches and pains a man might get in such a struggle (Marion ca. 1930:224).

Moreover, in the suffragettes' accounts of mob violence and police brutality during suffragette protests, animals are depicted as showing more human kindness to suffragette protesters than humans themselves. Georgiana Solomon, a delegate in the Black Friday deputation, describes how a police horse showed her more kindness than the violence and sexual abuse of the police officers and the angry crowd:

[The horse] stopped; I looked into his fine eyes, and spoke to the warlike and noble creature. He recognised a lover of his kind. Continuing to stroke his face, I addressed the people, and seized the opportunity to offer public thanksgiving to the Almighty God, who – in the midst of the appalling inhumanity of man... had granted me mercy by the humanity or humaneness of His beautiful animal (Solomon 1910:3).

Solomon's account undeniably romanticises her interaction with the police horse. Yet, by praising the horse's 'humaneness' amidst 'the appalling inhumanity of man', Solomon problematises the assumed moral superiority of humanity over inhuman animals, drawing attention to fleeting moments of inter-species compassion.

Some suffragettes took this inter-species compassion even further and drew on languages of animality to imagine new and different ways of being human. Many suffragettes understood and practised feminism through a wider ethic of care that encompassed both humans and animals. For a significant number of suffragettes, compassion for animal life was considered part of a wider feminist project towards a more egalitarian social order (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2010:136). For example, some suffragettes saw vivisection and medical experimentation on animals as evidence that the medical profession sanctioned forms of 'torture' (Miller 2016:41). They drew similarities between violent medical practices directed towards animals and the force-feedings they experienced at the hands of prison doctors (Wrenn 2019:806). Although vegetarians were relatively scarce in Edwardian society,

suffrage campaigners were disproportionately represented in their ranks (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2010:143). Some vegetarian suffragettes downplayed the importance of an egalitarian world view in their vegetarianism; in an oral history interview with Brian Harrison, Grace Roe downplays the ethics behind her vegetarianism: 'I don't like the idea of killing anything...(but) I think people make too much out of that' (Harrison 1974). However, for other suffragettes, vegetarianism was a central part of their feminist worldview and their commitment to ending various forms of injustice against oppressed and marginalised forms of life. In Lytton's autobiography, she notes how relatively early in life she 'became a strict vegetarian...all these years I had caused untold suffering that I might be fed, and determined that in future the unnatural death of an animal should not be necessary to make up my bill of fare' (Lytton 2008:52). Furthermore, Lytton describes her self-defined 'conversion' to the feminist cause through the following incident:

One morning, while wandering through the little town, I came on a crowd. All kinds of people were forming a ring round a sheep which had escaped as it was being taken to the slaughterhouse. It looked old and misshapen. A vision suddenly rose in my mind of what it should have been on its native mountain-side with all its forces rightly developed, vigorous and independent. There was a hideous contrast between that vision and the thing in the crowd. With growing fear and distress the sheep ran about more clumsily and became a source of amusement to the onlookers, who laughed and jeered at it. At last it was caught by its two gaolers, and as they carried it away one of them, resenting its struggles, gave it a great cuff in the face. At that I felt exasperated. I went up to the men and said, "Don't you know your own business? You have this creature absolutely in your power. If you were holding it properly it would be still. You are taking it to be killed, you are doing your job badly to hurt and insult it besides." The men seemed ashamed, they adjusted their hold more efficiently and the crowd slunk away. From my babyhood I have felt a burning indignation against unkindness to animals, and in their defence I have sometimes acted with a courage not natural to me. But on seeing this sheep it seemed to reveal to me for the first time the position of women throughout the world. I realised how often women are held in contempt as beings outside the pale of human dignity, excluded or confined, laughed at and insulted because of conditions in themselves for which they are not responsible, but which are due to fundamental injustices with regard to them, and to the mistakes of a civilisation in the shaping of which they have had no free share (Lytton 2008:59).

Although the suffragettes' opposition to cruelty against animals did not necessarily overturn the human/animal hierarchy, it explicitly drew parallels between the suffering of women and cruelty towards animals. In doing so, it encouraged some of those involved with the movement to rethink the nature of patriarchal violence and what it meant to be human.

5.2 ‘Women are the mothers of the race’: civilisational advancement, maternal imperialism, and the racialisation of the human in the suffragette movement

What role did languages of humanity and human equality play in the suffragette movement? Some suffragettes explicitly framed their campaign for the vote through the language of human equality. In her anti-venereal disease pamphlet *The Great Scourge and How to End It*, written in 1913, Christabel Pankhurst argues that the only solution to the problem of venereal disease is ‘Votes for Women, which is to say the recognition of the freedom and human equality of women’ (C. Pankhurst 1913e:21). Similarly, Kitty Marion insisted gender-based violence could only be resolved if ‘humanity evolves to a free, self-respecting manhood and womanhood on an absolute spiritual, political, and economic equality neither subservient to, nor dominated by, the other’ (Marion ca. 1930:248). In ‘Freedom or Death’, Emmeline Pankhurst frames the suffragettes’ struggle for the vote as a struggle for the recognition of women’s humanity and their equality to men as human beings:

We women, in trying to make our case clear, always have to make as part of our argument, and urge upon men in our audience the fact - a very simple fact - that women are human beings. It is quite evident you do not all realize we are human beings...We have, first of all to convince you we are human beings, and I hope to be able to do that (E. Pankhurst 1913b).

In their fight to be recognised as human beings, the suffragettes explicitly critiqued medicalising discourses that cast suffragettes as mad, hysterical, or otherwise incapable of political action. In a written response to an article published in *The Lancet* on May 17th 1913 entitled ‘The Psychology of the Militant Suffragette’, the suffragette Ellen Isabel Jones insists that ‘an American psychologist has said that women are human beings in an abnormal environment i.e. subjection; may it not be to this environment, and not to sex, that we must look for an understanding of the factors that produce the Suffragette?’ (Jones 1913). Jones’ insistence that ‘primarily, the suffragette is a human being’ highlights how the suffragettes drew on discourses of equality and common humanity to contest patriarchal notions of female inferiority (Jones 1913).

Nonetheless, the suffragettes’ languages of humanity or human equality were shaped and conditioned by their imperial context. Despite their rhetoric of sex solidarity and feminist sisterhood, the wider suffrage movement ‘often tried to gain entrance through their

disenfranchisement of other marginal classes', especially racialised women and men (Cohler 2010:35) Suffragist writings were shaped by a 'consciousness of progress, of participating in a progressive movement of civilisation, to be differentiated from those other parts of the world still dominated by a "savage" brutality' (Rendall 1994:141). These discourses of progress were not 'mere figures of speech'; instead, they reflected a preoccupation with evolution on the societal level that shaped British thought in the third quarter of the nineteenth century (Rendall 1994:141). As Lucy Mayblin notes, 'ideas of civilisational inferiority, incommensurability and the self-conception of Europe as singularly modern facilitated the domination of colonial subjects, understanding their place in the world as being below that of the European "race" in a world hierarchy of humanity' (Mayblin 2018:83). The suffragettes' languages of human equality, whether framed as a pre-existing natural right or an aspirational political project, frequently drew upon ideas of humanity linked to these imperialist ideologies. The suffragettes' personal views on race and imperialism varied greatly from individual to individual, reflecting the startling divergences in the suffragettes' politics. Yet, even when members of the WSPU did not explicitly support imperial projects, the British Empire and its associated imperialist ideals still framed the suffragist imagination (Mayhall 2000:179).

Many suffragettes, including leading figures like Emmeline Pankhurst, Christabel Pankhurst, and Emily Wilding Davison, framed their claim to human equality through the imperialist discourses of progress, civilisation, and the flourishing of the British nation. In her analysis of suffragist writings in the period between 1866-1874, Emily Wilding Davison framed the women's vote as an inevitable step forward for 'human progress' (Davison in Marion ca. 1930:236). The WSPU leaflet 'A Message from the WSPU' insists that every word spoken against women's enfranchisement is a word against 'the progress of humanity' (WSPU ca. 1910:2). Consequently, the suffragettes framed their campaign for the women's vote as part of a wider national and international project of civilisational advancement. In her speech 'Freedom or Death', Emmeline Pankhurst insisted that women must have the vote because 'the race must be saved, and it can only be saved through the emancipation of women' (E. Pankhurst 1913b). These suffragettes thus justified their claim to the vote through the rhetoric of national and civilisational progress, casting the vote as both an inevitable stage of human advancement and a necessity for the successful evolution of the 'race'.

Furthermore, the suffragettes laid claim to the right to vote through a distinctly feminised form of imperialism. Suffragists and anti-suffragists were often united in the belief that human advancement required ‘a more influential role for women’ so that they could fulfil their roles as ‘biological bearers of racial strength and as guardians of moral values’ (Bush 2007:13). Leading imperialists such as Lord Milner insisted that English women were especially suited to pushing forward human progress through the medium of Empire, as women were more likely to uphold public and imperialist interests (Fletcher 2003:248). Many suffragists, Julia Bush notes, were deeply committed to a ‘maternal philanthropic vision of British imperialism’, expanding their desire to act for others to the international stage (Bush 2007:11). This maternal imperialism is evident in Christabel Pankhurst’s *The Great Scourge*, where she argues that ‘when women have political power, equal with that of men, they will not tolerate the exploitation of their sisters in India and elsewhere’ (C. Pankhurst 1913e:155). Although some members of the WSPU, such as Sylvia Pankhurst, became staunch critics of British imperialism, a large number of British suffragettes were invested in the British imperial project and ‘wished to promote moral and “pure” imperialism’ (Mukherjee 2018:29). Moreover, a number of Edwardian suffragists and suffragettes justified their claim to the vote through their ability to effectively promote imperial interests. For example, in a draft of a speech that she intended to deliver in 1911, Emily Wilding Davison insisted that ‘the woman’s point of view is needed for the Empire’ in order to foster unity and peace amongst its colonised subjects (Collette 1913:113). In this sense, the suffragettes claimed not only to serve the interests of other British women, but also the broader British imperial project.

Furthermore, the suffragettes’ victimisation of women they perceived as ‘helpless and oppressed’ was imbricated in broader imperial logics of white saviourism that aimed to civilise colonised subjects (Schwan 2013:157). The suffragettes’ vocabularies of social reform, like those of many Victorian and Edwardian philanthropists, were rife with racialised metaphors and the tropes of the civilising mission (Burton 1994:2). Like the ‘white saviours’ of the civilising mission, the suffragettes saw it as their feminist duty to ‘bring light to those who sit in darkness’ (Schwan 2013:157). The ca. 1910 leaflet ‘A Message from the WSPU’ insists, ‘no matter in what circumstances you are placed, it is in your power to give the greatest gifts in the world – sympathy and a helping hand – to the helpless and oppressed’ (WSPU ca. 1910:1). It then continues, ‘it is given to the influence of women to upraise and purify humanity. But if we are to develop this power at its highest, we must first be free

women' (WSPU ca. 1910:2). In this pamphlet, the WSPU lays claim to the vote through a distinctly imperial form of feminism, one which instructs British women to save other women in the name of sisterhood (Holton 2014:250; Burton 1994:172).

Moreover, these suffragettes' gendered imperialism specifically expressed itself through a politics of maternalism. Although anti-suffragists disagreed with women's political participation on the basis that it would interfere with their primary role as mothers and caretakers, maternity played a central role in women's political involvement and social action, whether in the form of philanthropic work or participation in local government (Bush 2007:14). Hence, in contrast to the detained women at Yarl's Wood, the suffragettes experienced special protections and elevated social status as (potential) mothers of the British nation. Some historians have approached the suffragettes' hunger strikes as a 'symbolic refusal of motherhood' and a contestation of the definition of 'woman-as-mother' (Purvis 1995:107). However, the suffragettes appropriated and deployed languages of maternity throughout their writings to lay claim to social and political equality with Edwardian men. In *The Great Scourge*, Christabel Pankhurst insists:

Nature, in giving women the chief share in continuing the race, has singled them out for special honour. It is certainly not the less developed and less powerful sex to whom the great task of maternity has been entrusted. Their capacity for maternity is, therefore, an evidence of woman's vitality and special human worth. If only for this reason, women must feel a special pride in being women. They must, and they do, condemn every law and custom which belittles and condemns to social and political inferiority the mother sex to which they belong (C. Pankhurst 1913e:109).

Emily Davison similarly connected the health of the British nation with women's suffrage through discourses of maternity, arguing that 'it is absolutely essential for the welfare of this nation that women as well as men should be citizens of their country, because you must be sons or daughters not of the bondwoman but of the free' (Collette 2013:118). While the suffragettes did not solely lay claim to the vote through the discourses of maternity and motherhood, they did draw upon their social role as mothers and carers in order to justify their increased political influence.

The suffragettes also conveyed their narratives of human progress through the metaphors of birth and natality. In a 1913 article in *The Suffragette* entitled 'Christmas and Ideals' Christabel Pankhurst writes, 'it is the period when the New must be born and when other Ideals must be carried forward, torchlike, in the vanguard of human progress' (C. Pankhurst

1913c:257). Likewise, in a prison diary entry on March 12th 1912, Gliddon rationalises the suffragettes' struggles in prison as a temporary pause in the gestation of human progress:

What is 2 months out of a lifetime to give to a great force like our movement. A woman gives a year of her life to the creation of each child. So many of us are willing to give months of our lives to birth of the idea of women's equality with man. Birth always means waiting as we progress and again we are giving the waiting a meaning now to our cause (Gliddon 1912:21).

Gliddon explicitly connects the biological process of birth with the birth of gender equality, laying claim to political equality through the feminised experience of pregnancy and birth. Hence, rather than rejecting their social roles as mothers, these suffragettes invoked a gendered politics of maternity in order to solidify their claim to the vote.

The suffragettes further drew upon racist and imperialist discourses of maternalism that granted women political and social status as 'mothers of the race' (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2010:128; C. Pankhurst ca. 1912c:4). Despite their other differing political opinions, suffragists and anti-suffragists both believed in 'the importance of sound, healthy maternity for social cohesion and national efficiency' (Bush 2007:14). The late-Victorian preoccupation with national development and the evolutionary success of the 'race' meant that liberal thought increasingly turned towards an understanding of self-preservation that connected the preservation of the individual to the self-preservation of the 'race' (Rendall 1994:128-129). Both Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst framed violence against women as a threat to the 'race', invoking eugenic discourses of 'race motherhood' in order to do so. Christabel Pankhurst partially justified the WSPU's turn towards window smashing as a form of agitation on the basis that 'if any other method of protest was available as an alternative to have their bodies injured, women, if only because their race responsibility, ought to adopt that alternative' (C. Pankhurst ca. 1912a:1). In a circular letter to the membership of the WSPU in 1913, Emmeline Pankhurst encouraged suffragettes to engage in heightened militant action against the Liberal government on behalf of both women and the British race: 'if any woman refrains from militant protest against the injury done by the Government and the House of Commons to women and to the race, she will share the responsibility for the crime' (E. Pankhurst 1913a). Furthermore, in *The Great Scourge*, Christabel Pankhurst explicitly links together the success of the British 'race', women's rights, and maternity: 'As woman's influence increases, her interests and the interests of her children – in a word, the interests of the race – begin to take their due place in medical consideration (C. Pankhurst

1913e:21). Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst thus justified women's claim to increased political power and influence on the basis that the protection of women's interests was essential for the flourishing of the 'race'.

The WSPU leadership's discourses of race motherhood illuminate the troubling relationship between Victorian and Edwardian feminism and the field of eugenics, and its broader imbrication with violent imperial relations of power. Although eugenicists were not necessarily sympathetic to or supportive of feminist interests, eugenics appealed to many feminists due to its focus on sexual and reproductive politics (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2010:129). Many suffragists and anti-suffragists alike were deeply concerned with reproductive politics, the notion of 'social purity', and the perceived slippage in standards of sexual morality (Bush 2007:14). To this end, Christabel Pankhurst's *The Great Scourge* argues that the only way that social purity can be achieved is through 'Votes for Women and Chastity for Men' (C. Pankhurst 1913e:vii). To some extent, Pankhurst's critique of Edwardian men's sexual practices was deeply concerned with the prevalence of venereal disease, the hypocritical tolerance of male promiscuity, and the sexual exploitation of women (C. Pankhurst 1913e:vii-viii). However, the campaign for social purity was also intertwined with fears of imperial and racial decline. The anxieties of social purity reformers were heightened by the failures of the South African War (1899-1902) and the heightened interest in eugenics that followed (Prior 2013:2; Burton 1994:3). Christabel Pankhurst's writings on venereal disease reflect these anxieties, linking together the campaign for women's suffrage, the movement for social purification and the survival of the 'race'. In *The Great Scourge*, Christabel Pankhurst insists that 'the sexual diseases are the great cause of physical, mental, and moral degeneracy, and of race suicide' (C. Pankhurst 1913e:vi). Pankhurst explicitly framed the feminist concern with venereal disease and sexual immortality in eugenic terms, arguing that 'a woman infected by syphilis not only suffers humiliation and illness which may eventually take the most revolting form, but is in danger of becoming the mother of deformed, diseased, or idiot children' (C. Pankhurst 1913e:16). She also warns that certain forms of venereal disease can cause miscarriages and sterility, resulting in 'race suicide' (C. Pankhurst 1913e:17,18). Pankhurst's pamphlet pushes forward a disturbing eugenic idea of human progress, illuminating the darker undercurrents of the WSPU's quest to 'purify' humanity.

5.3 ‘Even an animal would not be moved like this’: human rights, political animality, and inhumanisation in the British immigration detention estate

How do these racialised and colonial legacies affect the relationship between immigration detention and the liberal figure of the human? Contemporary immigration detention draws upon a history of differential rights and policies used to exclude ‘undesirable’ racialised migrants from former British colonies (Mayblin 2018:148). In the early nineteenth century, Caroline Shaw argues, the United Kingdom established itself as the liberal protector of political refugees, producing the politically persecuted male refugee as the ‘the ideal liberal subject: heroic, morally righteous, and independent’ (C. Shaw 2015:3,5). Nonetheless, by the end of the nineteenth century, the fears surrounding British racial, material, and imperial decline in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century provoked the hardening of attitudes towards refugees and stateless people (C. Shaw 2015:7). The immigration restrictions instated by the 1905 Aliens Act, which was driven by anti-Semitic opposition to Eastern European Jewish refugees, ‘reflected a deep national commitment to maintaining a distinction between persecuted foreigners and run-of-the-mill migrants’ (C. Shaw 2015:207). Correspondingly, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century the figure of the refugee transformed from the ‘liberal freedom fighter’ to ‘the helpless woman, child, or aged person—a prototype of the refugee that remains with us today’ (C. Shaw 2015:220). In this sense, refugees were reinvented in the twentieth and twenty first centuries as depoliticised, traumatised, and distinctly feminised subjects (Pupavac 2008:272).

That being said, even this more heroic figure of the refugee was always shaped and conditioned by racial and colonial relations of power. There were some exceptions to the representation of refugees as helpless victims in the twentieth century; for example, in the West Cold War refugees were commonly romanticised in literature and popular culture as ‘political heroes and courageous defenders of freedom, not traumatized victims’ (Pupavac 2008:273). Yet, the example of Cold War political dissidents also highlights how British colonialism, imperialism and racism shaped which refugees were portrayed as ‘heroes’ and accepted with open arms, and which refugees were refused entry. While exploring the coding of Cold War refugees as masculinised, politicised subjects, Vanessa Pupavac also highlights the discriminatory treatment of Kenyan Asians in 1967, when the British government rushed through legislation that removed their right to enter Britain on their own British passports,

meaning that they were ‘excluded from protection both as citizens and refugees’ (Pupavac 2008:274). The colonial impulse to distinguish ‘desirable and deserving refugees’ from unworthy, ordinary migrants influenced how both the human and the refugee were later configured in international human rights law (Mayblin 2018:145). In her analysis of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (the Geneva Convention), Lucy Mayblin argues that ‘universal humanity was not intended, at the founding of the right to asylum in international law, as including all human beings’ (Mayblin 2018:142). Consequently, racialised migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers struggle to access the protection of human rights frameworks that were themselves founded upon colonial ideas of racial hierarchy (Mayblin 2018:142).

However, immigration detainees are often aware of the tensions between universal human rights discourses and the selective implementation of these rights by legal and political institutions (Fiske 2015:8). Detained protesters strategically deploy human rights discourses as a way of delegitimising state violence and making this violence legible to national and international audiences. In their first set of demands, the 2018 Yarl’s Wood hunger strikers framed indefinite detention as a breach of the writ of *habeas corpus* (detainedvoices.com 2018a). During the strike, the hunger strikers emphasised the lawlessness of the British state and its refusal to comply with international regimes of human rights law, stating, ‘we need the Home Office to be held to account for their actions and to be regulated in some way so that it will no longer break the law and abuse our rights with impunity’ (detainedvoices.com 2018t). The hunger strikers also drew on the idea of freedom of speech in their critiques of the government’s response to the hunger strike. On *Detained Voices*, one striker notes, ‘What happened to human rights, freedom of speech and expression? Should we just keep quiet when we are not happy and pretend like everything is alright?’ (detainedvoices.com 2018p). By drawing on these discourses of human rights, the Yarl’s Wood hunger strikers laid claim to being humanity through the frameworks of liberal humanism.

Moreover, through their invocation of human rights discourses, detainees challenge the contemporary British state’s self-image as a liberal protector of human rights on the international stage. The United Kingdom, they argue, has no right to position itself as an educator, defender, and protector of international human rights given its abuse of human rights in the context of immigration detention. In an interview with Women for Refugee Women, a former detainee explains how ‘when I was in Yarl’s Wood I found it hard to

believe that I was in the UK. I seemed to be in a place where human rights don't exist' (Girma et al. 2014:27). Another detainee, speaking to *Detained Voices*, argues, 'I thought being in (*country redacted for anonymity*) you get tortured and then being here you don't get tortured. My human rights are being violated. Being in the detention centre you get tortured 24/7' (detainedvoices.com 2016e). The former detainee Joy shares how immigration detention shattered her image of the United Kingdom as the benevolent liberal protector of human rights: 'I had been imprisoned and tortured in my home country. In the UK I expected some humanity. Where I come from the UK is a role model for human rights, so I was shocked to find ill-treatment and abuse' (Freedom from Torture 2019). During the Yarl's Wood hunger strike, the protesters foregrounded the disjunction between the government's own self-image as a protector of refugee and human rights and its punitive policies towards asylum seekers and migrants. The hunger strikers used their protests to critique the British state's hypocrisy, stating:

We do have hope that people are starting to wake up to what is really happening in this country that likes to present itself to the rest of the world as a leader in human rights and civil liberties, which we have none within its borders (detainedvoices.com 2018x).

Through their critiques, the hunger strikers delegitimised the British state's role as a humanitarian protector of the less fortunate. In doing so, they rejected their position as the humanitarian objects of concern, positioning themselves as liberal humanist subjects who fight to secure their own rights.

Furthermore, the hunger strikers challenged the patriarchal model of protection offered by the British state. Iris Marion Young argues that the security state draws upon gendered ideas of masculine protection in order to subordinate its citizenry, promising them protection in exchange for compliance (Young 2003:7). Detainees at Yarl's Wood emphasise the falsity of the patriarchal state's protective bargain, casting the state as the masculine abuser against which it claims to defend its citizens. One detained woman at Yarl's Wood insists, 'our rights and our dignity are being taken away from us. They say they are security and are here to protect us but they are not protecting us. They are abusing us' (detainedvoices.com 2016c). Although, as non-citizen women, detainees at Yarl's Wood are exempt from this protective bargain, the accusations they level against the state threaten its image as a chivalrous male protector (Young 2003:4). They undermine the British state's self-presentation as a modern, liberal, and civilised protector of women and girls. One detainee at Yarl's Wood argues,

we heard that United Kingdom is very kind to people and as specially with girls and ladies. But may be on that point we are wrong. We heard that English people have more value for woman but the way they are treating to us its seams that they don't care about woman (Anonymous 2 2014:3).

Another insists, 'don't we have rights? Are we not women?' (detainedvoices.com 2015g).

These detainees' testimonies illuminate the racialised and colonial construction of the category of woman, which has historically placed the woundable, vulnerable white woman at its centre. Yet, their insistence that the United Kingdom fails to protect women's rights affects the international legitimacy of the British state as a liberal defender of human rights. The Yarl's Wood hunger strikers appropriated the British state's liberalised languages of international human rights and patriarchal protection, using them to critique the behaviour of the British state within its borders.

However, detainees also describe how the British immigration detention system fails to see them as human. As Feldman notes, the term dehumanisation often troublingly 'presupposes a humanity torn from itself in conformity with the international definition of human rights violation as 'the theft or loss of civil dignity' (Feldman 2010:115). Dehumanisation, the stripping away of humanity, presumes a pre-existing human subject. The suffragettes were able to appropriate opponents' languages of inhumanity and animality due to their pre-existing claim to humanity as white 'mothers of the race'. Their animalised or inhuman status ultimately remained metaphorical, an *allusion* to their refusal to subscribe with gender norms. Conversely, immigration detainees are dehumanised through their production as politically animalised subjects. Feldman argues that in his ethnographic work on political violence, 'practices, images, and memories of violence were rendered tangible, material, and intractable through the figure of the animal' (Feldman 2010:117). In these instances, he suggests, political animality functioned as a 'habitus of inhumanization' which entrenched 'specific anthropocentric norms through ideological projections of humanity's negations, alters, and antagonists—all those who lack humanity yet densely signify the human in their lack' (Feldman 2010:117). In these violent contexts, metaphors, images, and discourses of animality work as 'encrypted ontologies of political subjugation and a visual culture of exposable or bared life' (Feldman 2010:119). Put differently, animality plays a central role in constructing the liberal figure of the human in relation to those forms of life deemed animal or inhuman. Consequently, for contemporary immigration detainees, the animal is not a site for imagining other ways of being human or for forging human-animal alliances. Instead, it is

a way of visualising and understanding immigration detainees' political inhumanity under the violent conditions of immigration detention.

Both detained subjects and state actors compare the status of immigration detainees to that of animals or objects. During the 2018 hunger strike, one of the strikers' goals was the end of 'charter flights and the snatching of people from their beds in the night and herding them like animals' (detainedvoices.com 2018c). Similarly, a Yarl's Wood detainee describes how when migrants are first taken to an immigration removal centre, 'they just grab you and take you as if you're a sack or an animal. You're not human to them at that moment' (Taylor 2018). Across the British detention estate, detainees emphasise time and time again how detention centre staff and Home Office officials 'just see you like animals' and how detainees are 'treated as animals' (Girma et al. 2014:31; detainedvoices.com 2016a; Anonymous 2 2014:1; Anonymous 35 2014). Disturbingly, in the 2015 Channel 4 News undercover investigation, a member of Serco management claims that detainees at Yarl's Wood are 'animals. They're beasts. They're all animals. They're caged animals. Take a stick in with you and beat them up' (Channel 4 News 2015). Moreover, detainees describe how the conditions of the detention estate makes them feel like animals. Esther, a former Yarl's Wood detainee, describes in the Channel 4 News, undercover investigation how, in the detention centre, 'I did feel like I was an animal. Every morning they count you...It's just like animals that they do count to make sure they are at their right number. Not human beings' (Channel 4 News 2015). The treatment of immigration detainees as animals shows how the immigration detention estate fails to recognise detainees as human.

Furthermore, immigration detainees argue that some animals are treated *better* than detained humans. The politics of inhumanisation renders certain animals more human than others, showing how animality is constructed and regulated in both animals and humans (Feuerstein 2019:3, 34). Furthermore, it imbues some animals, such as certain birds and domestic pets, with 'qualities similar to those of liberal subjects and prized by liberal discourses'; in doing so, it places them closer to the liberal humanist subject than other human beings (Feuerstein 2019:35). For example, the animal used to denigrate the suffragettes, the cat, was still a domestic pet incorporated into British national culture and considered worthy of some degree of protection (Feuerstein 2019:51). Conversely, detainees' testimonies imply that liberalised animals have more protection than certain racialised and non-citizen human populations. In 2015, a Yarl's Wood detainee insisted on *Detained Voices*, 'I can't treat my animal like that,

the way they are treating us here' (detainedvoices.com 2015h). Another detainee, held at both Gatwick and Harmondsworth, argues, 'we are human beings. There are people who are fighting for the rights of animals, but even would not treat them like that' (Anonymous 9 2014:4). Likewise, the former detainee writing under the name Joy recalls how, when she was detained at Yarl's Wood, 'I felt that animals have more rights in this country than asylum seekers' (Freedom from Torture 2019). In this context, detainees do not only present immigration detention as dehumanising. They also point to the wider devaluing of racialised migrant lives, suggesting that within institutionally racist structures, certain animal lives matter more than the lives of refugees, asylum seekers, foreign national offenders, and undocumented migrants. In other words, these detainees highlight the political animality that underpins the liberal figure of the human (Biehl 2013:40).

5.4 'None of us are truly free until we are all free': the reclamation of life through the Yarl's Wood hunger strike

Amid these relations of animalisation, how do immigration detainees exercise agency at the threshold of the human? Without romanticising the act of self-destruction or the coercive conditions that provoke hunger strikes, this section interrogates how hunger striking may rupture the habitus of inhumanisation that shapes detainees' lives (Bargu 2013:805). The starving body 'forces the viewer to the very threshold of humanity, to the sill that divides the human and the nonhuman, or, rather to the boundary that marks the division between the human and the nonhuman within the human' (Lloyd 2005:163 in Lyness 2015:179). In many cases, such as the concentration camp inmate, the anorectic, and the famine victim, starving bodies are grossly reduced to symbols of the human threshold, unbearable bodies that mark 'the threshold between the human and the inhuman, the ethical and the unethical' (Enns 2004). As a result, analyses of the emaciated body can fetishise the extraordinary suffering that occurs at the threshold of the human or reproduce humanitarian relations of victimhood. However, the final part of this chapter considers how the collective hunger strike at Yarl's Wood could constitute both a rejection of detainees' state-produced inhumanity *and* a means of laying claim to a form of humanity that does not reproduce the racist, gendered, imperialist figure of the liberal humanist subject. Despite its claims to universality, the liberal humanist subject is only a single form of humanism that has colonised what it means to be human (Mayblin 2018:41-42). By taking their bodies to their physical limits, hunger strikers probe

the ethical and ontological limits of the human, producing a liminal moment where one idea of humanness vanishes and another idea may emerge (Biehl 2013:40).

The Yarl's Wood hunger strike shows how hunger striking can function as a reclamation of life at the threshold of the human. Hunger striking is sometimes conceived as a deathly politics of refusal, where hunger strikers refuse to live within the parameters of life offered to them by the state. Through this lens, the hunger strike is primarily 'a project of refusal aimed (however unconsciously) at death', one that 'imagines the death of the subject as its potential final effect' (Anderson 2010:3). Bargu warns against equating hunger striking with a 'death drive' or framing it as a 'refusal of life as such' (Bargu 2017:15). Nonetheless, she still theorises the Turkish death fasts (2000-2007) as a form of 'necroresistance', or an embodied and total refusal that wrenches 'the power of life and death away from the apparatuses of the modern state' (Bargu 2016:27). However, the Yarl's Wood hunger strike did not centre death at the heart of their protest. Instead, their protest pivoted around a persistent refusal to *give up* their lives to the British state and capitulate to immigration detention's conditions of slow death. Speaking to *Detained Voices*, one of the hunger strikers describes the strikers' mounting desperation, saying:

I speak for myself and many others when I say the situation for us is getting worse, we are not coping with the constant pressures on us and how can we fight our cases in this sorry state. For most of us it is a fight for life as we know it, if not for life itself' (detainedvoices.com 2018v).

Another hunger striking detainee states, 'we were all really depressed in here, that's why we had to do something. Even though the women are on hunger strike they have life' (detainedvoices.com 2018h). Audra Simpson, reflecting on the 2012-2013 hunger strike by Attawapiskat Chief Teresa Spence, argues that Spence's hunger strike was both a refusal to live on the 'extractive and simultaneously murderous' terms of the Canadian state, but also a 'stubborn, resolute, and sovereign refusal to die' (Simpson 2016). Like Teresa Spence, the hunger strike at Yarl's Wood was also a failure of these bodies 'to do what (they were) supposed to – perish' (Simpson 2016). Unlike the suffragettes, who emphasised their willingness to die for the Cause of the women's vote, the hunger strikers at Yarl's Wood framed their protest as a reclamation of life.

Accordingly, the hunger strikers at Yarl's Wood framed their strikes as a (re)humanising act. Their strike was motivated by the need 'to change the manner we are treated by the Home

Office in general when handling our cases to make sure they respect us as human beings' (detainedvoices.com 2018t). In 2018, one of the hunger strikers at Yarl's Wood framed the hunger strike as an act that re-established their political personhood amidst the state's systemic dehumanisation: 'we needed to be reminded that we are human beings...most of us are so dehumanised by this process of detention and the way we are treated in detention that you start to forget' (detainedvoices.com 2018r). The hunger strikers also refused to be the objects of humanitarian concern. One of the Yarl's Wood hunger strikers cast the strike as both a refusal of the state's dehumanising regime *and* a rejection of victimhood: 'I am sick of feeling like a helpless institutionalised victim and refuse to participate in detention' (detainedvoices.com 2018e). In rejecting their subjugated position as humanitarian objects, the strikers also refused the state's paternalistic logics of care. Against Serco's insistence that 'we look after people really well in terms of their residency at Yarl's Wood' (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2018a:62), the hunger strikers refused to be "looked after" by Serco and the British state:

We are not happy here and we don't want to use your gym, we don't want to go to your library, your salon, your shop, these are all token activities you use to justify our incarceration but know that we want our freedom not your silly limited activities. We are not your guests, we are your captives whom you choose when to detain and when to release and when to deport (detainedvoices.com 2018e).

Their refusal echoed the 2015 Yarl's Wood hunger strikers, who stated, 'We don't eat. We don't do anything. We don't want their food. We don't want their activities. We just want our freedom' (detainedvoices.com 2015g). Both of these groups of strikers undermined the Home Office's and Serco's languages of paternalistic care and foregrounded the dehumanising violence that lies at the heart of the British immigration system.

In this sense, rather than accepting their abject status as 'bare life', the hunger strikers at Yarl's Wood chose to try and *bear* life. Unlike the spectre of bare life, which is 'unbearable to look at', the Yarl's Wood hunger strikers called for the recognition of the dehumanising and degrading forms of violence that occur at the threshold of the human (Enns 2004). Rather than constituting a deathly project of pure refusal, hunger strikes under the conditions of ongoing death issue an ethical call to 'know the unbearable' (Baraitser 2017:207). Following Walter Benjamin, Bargu argues that hunger striking articulates both the desire for justice and, simultaneously, a 'recognition of the impossibility of its realization under the political

conditions in which these violent performances take place' (Bargu 2016:17). Likewise, despite their general sense of hopelessness, desperation, and loss of faith in the possibility of change, the Yarl's Wood hunger strikers persisted in their hunger strike in the hope of generating widescale systemic change. One hunger striker describes how the protest derived from a collective 'desperation and frustration and a deep sense of injustice felt by myself and others' (detainedvoices.com 2018r). After a violent forced deportation, a Yarl's Wood detainee describes how she has 'never felt so alone and hopeless in my life, but I have never felt such anger either. I hope we can all stick together and stop this happening again, all detainees should stop being afraid, or use that fear to fight for their own and each other's survival' (detainedvoices.com 2018l). Similarly, one hunger describes her struggle 'to find reasons to keep going every morning' after five months of detention at Yarl's Wood (detainedvoices.com 2018cc). Although she believes that she is 'fighting a losing battle' when it comes to her own personal immigration case, she continues to fight against 'this corrupt, immoral practice that is indefinite detention...because I don't have a choice, there is no alternative for me or indeed for so many people in here. So I will keep going, and try to stay strong, and I will not go gracefully, to exile' (detainedvoices.com 2018cc). These detainees hold in tension the realities of immigration detention and their hopes for collective change.

Unlike the suffragettes, who articulated their embodied protests through the discourses of progress, heroism, and martyrdom, the Yarl's Wood detainees framed their protests through the temporalities of endurance and persistence. The 2018 Yarl's Wood hunger strike constituted a refusal to submit or give up in the face of hopelessness. One striker emphasises how 'every day is a battle, personally I have to think of a reason to go on living every day, to go on fighting, to not give up' (detainedvoices.com 2018r). Yet, another hunger striker notes, 'even though many of us have health issues such as high blood pressure and diabetes we have nevertheless persisted to continue the hunger strike because we want the public to know what we face and make sure there is a change in policy' (detainedvoices.com 2018i). Notably, the Yarl's Wood hunger strikers narrated their protest through the present continuous and the future continuous tense, tenses that convey temporalities of endurance and persistence. During the strike, the hunger striker Opelo Kgari asserted that, despite the Home Office's attempts to deport her and her mother while they were on hunger strike, 'we're still here and fighting' (Kgari 2018). Another records how 'we have hope but we will still continue with the hunger strike so that something will definitely be done' (detainedvoices.com 2018i). At

the end of the strike, the protesters declared: ‘we will continue with our fight for freedom, basic human rights, and a fair due process until all the injustices we are subjected come to an end’ (detainedvoices.com 2018aa). The strikers reiterated how they were enduringly, persistently hungry for collective emancipation: ‘even though the hunger strike is now over, we are still hungry for our freedom and justice’ (detainedvoices.com 2018x). In this sense, the hunger strike was not only a physically liminal experience, but also a temporal one. In the words of Bjorn Thomassen, ‘to think with liminality very basically has to do with a thorough understanding of passages and passage experiences...the word ‘passage’ indicates a displacement, a process of transformation undertaken, but not yet finished’ (Thomassen 2016:13). This sense of passage, the transformation that is still being undertaken, captures the enduring temporalities that shaped the Yarl’s Wood hunger strikers’ refusal of the British state.

By persistently bearing life, the Yarl’s Wood hunger strikers put forward an alternative notion of the human based on ideas of interdependency, mutuality, and solidarity. Yarl’s Wood is shaped by racial and ethnic tensions, linguistic differences, and divisions between detainees with criminal records and those without criminal records (Bosworth 2014:137-138, 140-141). The uncertainty, boredom and fear that characterises immigration detention, combined with frustrations over shared living spaces and close confinement, produce real tensions between detained individuals and act as ‘barriers to intimacy’ (Bosworth 2014:137-138, 141). Nonetheless, detainees and their supporters draw attention to the relations of care that emerge in Yarl’s Wood. Tom Nunn, an immigration solicitor at Bail for Immigration Detainees, highlights how Yarl’s Wood is distinctly characterised by high levels of desperation but also a strong sense of solidarity; ‘at Yarl’s Wood’, he notes, ‘it feels like there are a lot of people who are encouraging each other to come and speak to us, who are saying, “You need to stay strong”’ (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee 2018a 22). In Bosworth’s ethnography of immigration detention, one member of Home Office staff described how Yarl’s Wood has a ‘fantastic community spirit’: ‘you can see it in how the ladies sit round doing clothes, hair and nails. They are always smiling’ (Bosworth 2014:136). With this description, this staff member transformed the detainees’ hard-earned solidarity into racialised and infantilised forms of banal contentment. However, the 2018 hunger strike demonstrated the networks of collectivity forged by the desperation of detainees’ circumstances. One hunger striker, under the imminent threat of deportation back to Uganda,

insists that ‘no matter what happens, let me be remembered as a Uganda Detainee that was fighting for the vulnerable and mistreated asylum seekers’ (detainedvoices.com 2018p). Rather than acting benevolently on the behalf of oppressed others, this hunger striker acted with, by, and alongside other asylum seekers.

Moreover, by acting with and alongside one another, the hunger strikers framed their emancipation from the state as a collective project. Unlike the rights-bearing liberal humanist subject, the Yarl’s Wood hunger strikers did not imagine freedom as the property of the individual. The hunger striker Opelo Kgari insisted that freedom could only be secured through the wholesale dismantling of the detention system, stating, ‘My mum and I are working for freedom from these walls to live a normal life and be with our friends again. But I know in my heart that none of us are truly free until we are all free. Detention doesn’t work for anyone’ (Kgari 2018). Similarly, another detainee describes how the hunger strike came from a place of individual desperation but also a desire to do ‘what is right’, saying, ‘we have to make a stand for not just our rights but for what is right. Unity and Solidarity is what will make the difference (detainedvoices.com 2018ff). The hunger strike was necessary for the individual and collective survival of the detained women at Yarl’s Wood. Nonetheless, it was simultaneously a ‘stand’ against the state’s violation of the most vulnerable. By moving from ‘our rights’ to ‘what is right’, this hunger striker rejected an individualist notion of rights premised on the rational, self-sovereign political actor. She, like the other hunger strikers at Yarl’s Wood, offered an understanding of the human premised not on individual self-preservation but upon solidarity and interdependency.

The collective character of the 2018 Yarl’s Wood hunger strike ruptured the boundaries of the liberal, self-preserving humanist subject. It was an abject protest that obfuscated the boundaries between self and other. Although some famous theories of pain emphasise its isolating effects (see Scarry 1987), hunger striking gestures towards how pain may be lived with, through, and alongside the pained bodies of others (Ellman 1993: 54-55; Wilcox 2014:69). Hunger strikes transform the outside spectator from a bystander to a witness, so that the spectator becomes implicated in and integral to the spectacle of the strike (Anderson 2010:10). The Yarl’s Wood hunger strike refracted out from the detention centre and across civil society, building relations of solidarity across and through the detention centre’s walls. During the Yarl’s Wood hunger strike, civil society supporters staged their own hunger strike or ‘Freedom Fast’ on International Women’s Day, March 8th 2018 (Hodgetts and Whitaker

2018). In response to the support offered by outside activists, one of the Yarl's Wood hunger strikers offered her thanks for their 'sincere, competence and humanly concerns for detainees, especially solidarity to living a better world' (detainedvoices.com 2018bb). Strikingly, the detainees at Yarl's Wood also framed their protest as an attempt to protect the freedom of the British body politic. One hunger striker, commenting on the 'charges and the lengthy sentences' levied against the Stansted 15 protesters, notes, 'because the home office acts with impunity regarding immigrants, their actions will trickle down to other parts of society and I am truly fearful for the liberty of all' (detainedvoices.com 2018y). The Yarl's Wood hunger strike aimed to restore the freedoms of those entrapped at Yarl's Wood, but also to protect the conditions of possibility *for* freedom at the level of the British body politic. Through their collective acts, the hunger striking detainees and fasting supporters acted with and alongside one another, breaching carceral and bodily borders. In doing so, they also temporarily disrupted the unequal humanitarian relations of philanthropy and pity that partially produce the liberal humanist subject.

Conclusion

Hunger strikes, as liminal protests that hover between life and death, raise existential questions about what it means to be human. They provoke an interrogation of the category of humanity, including which lives are recognised by certain definitions of the human, and which lives are excluded from this category. This chapter's exploration of the discourses of humanity, animality, and inhumanity in the suffragette movement and the 2018 hunger strike at Yarl's Wood showed how these hunger strikes were produced by and within wider debates around who could lay claim to being human. Both the suffragettes and immigration detainees described their experiences of violence through languages of dehumanisation, animality, objecthood, and inhumanity. These vocabularies offered profound critiques of how the liberal category of the human is constructed through hierarchal relations to dehumanised, objectified, and animalised subjects. In the case of the suffragettes, discourses of animality identified connections between patriarchal violence and human violence against other forms of animal life, offering opportunities to rethink the relationship between humans and other species. Nonetheless, the suffragettes' capacity to embrace non-human forms of life relied upon the pre-existing assumption of their own humanity and their belonging to the British 'race'. The hunger strikers at Yarl's Wood, in contrast, were imbricated within relations of

political animality and inhumanity that refused to recognise or treat detainees as human. Yet, the hunger strike at Yarl's Wood illuminates how hunger striking can potentially disrupt the hegemony of the liberal humanist subject over what it means to be human.

Conclusion

This thesis asked how women's hunger strikes challenge existing conceptions of political violence. It argued that women's hunger strikes offer three key challenges to instrumental models of political violence. First, it illuminated the gendered and racialised character of political violence, foregrounding how violence operates through gendered logics and norms, while also showing how political violence produces gendered subjectivities. Second, this thesis foregrounded the politics of the body in its analysis of women's hunger strikes, placing the gendered and racialised hunger-striking body at the centre of its analysis. In doing so, it rejected the marginalisation of embodiment that often characterises masculinist theories of political violence. Third, it argued that the liminality of the hunger striker problematises numerous binary divisions central to the liberal humanist subject, such as the division between subject/object, life/death, active/passive, and human/inhuman. The conclusion draws together these thematic threads that underpin the entire thesis. Next, it offers three future directions for feminist and anti-racist scholarship on women's hunger strikes and in relation to the broader theoretical questions raised by this thesis on the topic of gender, race, and political violence. These future directions include the politics of commemoration and the critical construction of feminist genealogies; the relationship between the liberal humanist subject and the concept of capacity; and finally, the implications of self-directed political violence for broader critiques of carceral regimes, including prisons and the immigration detention estate.

Rethinking Political Violence Through Women's Hunger Strikes

Hunger Striking, Gender, and Race: Normative Violence, the Gendering and Racialisation of Political Violence, and the Production of Gendered Subjectivities

This thesis has explored the ways that political violence takes distinctly gendered and racialised forms and how political violence produces gendered and racialised subjects. It has built upon scholarship that foregrounds the gendered character of violence and the normative violence that shapes the parameters of what counts as violence. This project has shown how political violence produces gendered and racialised subjectivities, how it operates through gendered and racialised logics, and how it is produced by and productive of imperialist and

colonial forms of knowledge. It highlighted the interdependence of gendered and racialised forms of political violence, showing how racialised non-citizen women are excluded from the gendered protections of white British femininity. The first two chapters argued that normative violence limits the communicative potential of women's hunger strikes. The first chapter interrogated the normative violence that limits or silences female hunger strikers' protests by framing them as the objects of humanitarian and medical intervention, rendering them incapable of political speech. The second chapter foregrounded the gendered character of sacrifice, examining how the Edwardian state's sacrificial terror operated through imaginaries of sexual violence. This chapter also examined how normative violence produces racialised female detainees as 'ungrievable' subjects who are subjected to institutionalised, structural, and state-sanctioned forms of political violence.

Nonetheless, this project also foregrounded how hunger striking enacts and expresses agency under violent and coercive political conditions (Bargu 2013:805). Specifically, it showed how hunger-striking suffragettes and the hunger strikers at Yarl's Wood contested the gendered subjectivities produced by the state's political violence through their self-harming protests. In the case of the British suffragettes, it elucidated how gendered forms of violence, especially sexual violence, were used to police public space and ensure that women only entered and participated in public space in limited and gendered ways. In the case of Yarl's Wood, this thesis explored how the normative violence of immigration detention constitutes detainees as the abject waste products of the British state. It also examined the hunger strike in relation to the distinctive temporalities of violence in immigration detention, framing the uncertainty and boredom of indefinite detention through the paradigm of 'slow death'. Through these two concepts of waste, this thesis then framed the Yarl's Wood hunger strike as a restaging of the slow death of the immigration detention estate and an embodied refusal to be expelled as the state's waste products. The fifth chapter foregrounded the normative violence that constructed the liberal category of the human through the processes of racialised, gendered, species-based, and colonial exclusions. Nonetheless, this chapter also framed the Yarl's Wood hunger strike as a paradoxical reclamation of life within a context of slow death and the state's violent indifference to detainees' suffering. Together, these five chapters have demonstrated the various ways in which gender, racialisation, and colonialism shape political violence, and how political violence differentiates subjects along racial and gendered lines.

Hunger Striking, Political Violence, and the Body: Embodied Enactments and the Politics of the Body in Pain

This project has also centred the politics and relationality of bodies, focusing on the gendered and racialised character of embodiment. Against the reduction of the starving body to a symbol of wider social and political discontent, this thesis centred female hunger strikers' narrations of their bodily, lived, and sensory experiences, foregrounding the embodied character of hunger striking and the lived experience of violence (Bargu 2013:806). In doing so, this project challenged the notion of a pre-existing biological body that exists anterior to gendered and racialised relations of power, foregrounding how gendered and racialised violence produces and differentiates bodies. In particular, the first two chapters challenged the concept that the universally recognisable suffering body can provide a normative and ethical basis for a more inclusive form of politics. The first chapter emphasised how sentimental and humanitarian relations around pain, sensitivity, and feeling are themselves regimes of power that produce gendered and racialised bodies as differently capable of sensing pain. Consequently, it problematised the concept of the hunger-striking body as a form of communication or political speech by examining how gendered and racialised relations of power limit the rhetoric of the suffering body. Additionally, the first chapter emphasised how public sympathy for the suffragettes' bodily suffering drew upon gendered and racialised concepts of white female vulnerability, constituting the suffragettes as infantilised subjects in need of patriarchal protection. Correspondingly, the second chapter highlighted the exclusion of racialised female detainees from these gendered protections. It showed how the suffragettes succeeded in sacralising their bodily pain, as evidenced by their commemoration as feminist martyrs. In contrast, detained women's bodily suffering largely produced violent indifference on the part of the state.

Furthermore, this project enriched understandings of hunger striking by moving away from what the hunger-striking body says or means to offering some insights into what the hunger striking body does. The third and fourth chapters pivoted towards an understanding of the body as both active and performative, examining how the hunger strikers' bodies made political claims that extended beyond their rhetorical effects. The third chapter focused on how the suffragettes publicly inserted their gendered bodies into masculinised political spaces, showing how they used their bodies to lay claim to public space they could only occupy in limited and gendered ways. The fourth chapter turned inwards, examining the

archival qualities of bodies and suggesting that bodies themselves record trauma and experiences of violence, reading the hunger strike as a regurgitation of these archived experiences of violence. These two chapters also illuminated the relationship between the concept of the physical body and the embodied imagining of the social body or the ‘body politic’. In particular, it critiqued the imagining of the British body politic as a white, female body, elucidating how the vulnerability of white femininity produces and polices the borders of the British polis. That being said, both the fourth and the fifth chapter examined how the abject quality of the hunger strike as a mode of protest breached the borders of the individual hunger strikers’ bodies and the borders of the body politic. To this end, the fifth chapter ruminated upon concepts of bodily relationality, considering how the relational and embodied politics of the hunger strike could challenge relations of inhumanisation and the violent construction of the liberal humanist subject.

Hunger Striking and the Human: Liminal Bodies, The Liberal Humanist Subject, and its Animalised, Inhuman, and Humanitarian Others

This thesis foregrounded the liminality of the hunger-striking body, a body undergoing a rite of passage between life and death. It connected the liminality of the hunger striking body to the conditions of liminality experienced by Edwardian women and by immigration detainees. It characterised both groups as subjects who were suspended in a liminal space both inside and outside of the body politic, albeit to differing extents. For example, the second chapter examined how the British immigration detention system produces liminal subjects who can be killed but not sacrificed. It also framed the detention centre as a spatial zone of exception, where detainees exist both inside and outside of the law. The liminal suspension of detainees also shaped the argument of fourth chapter. Contra to biopolitical approaches that emphasise the state’s imperative to ‘make live and let die’, it argued that immigration detainees are suspended in a half-dead state where they are unable to fully live or fully die. Although the detainees at Yarl’s Wood experienced these conditions of liminality more acutely than the British suffragettes, this project also framed the suffragettes’ hunger strikes as a response to their liminal positioning as both citizens and non-citizens. It demonstrated how the suffragettes’ attempted to lay claim to full and equal claim to citizenship within the Edwardian polis, allowing them to move out of this liminal space. However, the fifth chapter showed how the suffragettes’ campaign for inclusion depended upon their positionality as

white, British, imperial subjects. It relied upon the continued exclusion of racialised and colonised others from the British body politic.

Nonetheless, this thesis also asserted that the liminal figure of the hunger striker can challenge the division between the capacious liberal humanist subject and its inhumanised and dehumanised counterparts. The final chapter of this thesis argued that the Yarl's Wood hunger strike refuted the characterisation of detainees as 'bare life', while simultaneously calling for others to *bear* life. Their protest emphasised the importance of solidarity and interdependency both within the detention centre and across the detention centres' walls. In doing so, it challenged the premises of individuality, autonomy, and rational self-interest that underpin many liberal conceptions of the human. However, while this thesis foregrounded the relations of solidarity that emerged among detainees during the hunger strike, it did not uncritically position relations of care as a riposte to state violence. It illuminated the ambiguities of care and humanitarianism as a technique of governmentality and control, examining how the British state positioned its violent policies through the rhetoric of 'armed love' (Ticktin 2011:5). To this end, the first chapter examined the production of female hunger strikers as objects of state intervention through humanitarian and medicalising discourses. Meanwhile, the third chapter explored how the paradoxical humanitarian affects of solidarity and pity shaped class dynamics in the suffragette movement. Nonetheless, the fifth chapter also argued that the Yarl's Wood hunger strike offered an example of protesters acting *with*, as opposed to acting *for*, violently oppressed subjects. Consequently, it insisted that the Yarl's Wood detainees' project of (re)humanisation did not uncritically reaffirm the exclusionary, imperialist, and colonial figure of the human celebrated by the suffragettes. Instead, the Yarl's Wood strikers' abject and liminal protest called for a rewriting of the concept of the human.

Future Directions

Remembering Imperial Feminist Histories and Rethinking Contemporary Feminist Activism

This thesis has focused on the enacted and performative qualities of the suffragettes' hunger strikes and militant activism. It has dealt less explicitly on the question of suffragette remembrance and commemoration in contemporary Britain. This project coincided with the centenary celebrations of the passing of the Representation of the People Act (1918) in Great

Britain and Ireland. Throughout 2018, a large number of organised events, exhibitions and displays commemorated the women's suffrage movement, with a special focus on the WSPU and the militant battle for the vote (Evans 2018). The predominance of WSPU imagery in these commemorative events demonstrates the continued hold of the suffragettes' spectacular protests over the public imaginary of the women's suffrage movement (Chidgey 2018:68). Although the suffragettes' direct action constituted only a fraction of the organisation and activism around women's suffrage, imagery such as suffragettes chaining themselves to railings, hunger strikes, and force-feeding have become emblematic of the women's suffrage movement in popular memory (Chidgey 2018:68). These commemorations of the women's vote reproduced the WSPU's languages of sacrifice, martyrdom, and struggle. In 2013, the centenary of Emily Davison's death was marked by a large number of commemorative events that portrayed her as a feminist martyr, including a campaign for a minute's silence at the 2013 Epsom Derby (Chidgey 2018:74). In 2018 the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn insisted they would posthumously pardon all suffragette prisoners and offer an official apology to the suffragettes (Elgot 2018). They argued that the pardon and apology would acknowledge the 'enormous contribution and sacrifice' of suffragette activists (Elgot 2018). Historic England even lists forty-one sites of 'Suffragette Protest and Sabotage', including targets of suffragette bombings, as sites of National Heritage, (Purvis 2019:1208). While the question of who won the vote – suffragists or suffragettes – remains hotly contested in women's suffrage scholarship, the suffragettes appear to have won in terms of the public remembrance of the women's suffrage campaign.

The celebration of the suffragettes is especially prominent in contemporary British feminist movements, which construct genealogical linkages between the suffragette movement and contemporary feminist campaigns for women's rights. Some British media outlets, such as *The Times* and *The Daily Mail*, use the suffragettes to delegitimise contemporary feminist movements, painting contemporary feminists as weak successors to the 'heroic' suffragettes (Kay and Mendes 2020:145). However, many contemporary feminists draw on suffragette legacies and re-enact their iconic protests to connect the struggles of British feminists across time and space (Chidgey 2018:91-92). On June 10th, 2018, over 100,000 women marched in multiple locations across the United Kingdom in celebration of the centenary of women's partial suffrage (Kennedy 2018). Many marchers wore suffragette costumes, donned the WSPU's colours of purple, white, and green, and carried placards and banners with suffragette slogans such as 'Deeds, Not Words' (Kennedy 2018; BBC News 2018b). The

marchers also drew attention to contemporary feminist issues, such as reproductive rights in Northern Ireland and the continued underrepresentation of female politicians in the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Like the suffragettes' mass demonstrations, deputations, and public gatherings, these contemporary marches laid claim to public space and thrust feminist issues into the public eye. They cited previous histories of feminist agitation while fighting for further social, political, and normative change. However, the construction of these feminist lineages also incited debates about imperialist ideologies and class divisions within the woman's suffrage movement and how these power relations continue to shape contemporary British feminisms (see Sanghani 2015). These critiques demonstrate the pressing need for a critical interrogation of suffragette commemorations that explicitly focuses on the role of race, imperialism, and colonialism in the suffragette movement.

This critical contestation of feminist genealogies of protest is especially urgent given the ways in which movements for women's rights are co-opted by nationalist projects. Notably, centenary celebrations of women's suffrage incorporated the suffragette movement into a nationalist narrative of British modernity. For example, Red Chidgey notes how the National Portrait Gallery's commemoration of the women's suffrage movement presented the campaign for the women's vote as a crucial step forward in the creation of British liberal democracy (Chidgey 2018:71). In other words, the National Portrait Gallery placed the suffragettes' struggles into a linear narrative of national progress, one which reproduces old imperial concepts of British political and civilisational superiority. Moreover, events like the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Summer Olympics cast the suffragettes as distinctly British icons, presenting the WSPU as part of a proud national history. In the Olympic opening ceremony, the suffragettes appeared in a segment entitled 'Pandemonium', which depicted the Industrial Revolution and other social and political disruptions of modernity. The opening ceremony portrayed a sweeping historical narrative that traced the story of Great Britain from its agricultural origins through to the development of modern Britain. By placing the suffragettes' militant 'pandemonium' within a larger historical narrative of modern upheavals, the opening ceremony coded the women's suffrage movement as part of Great Britain's story of modernisation, progress, and civilisational advancement (Chidgey 2018:97).

The nationalistic commemoration of the women's suffrage movement also manifests itself in the erection of statues and memorials in honour of the women's suffrage movement. In 2018,

a statue of Dame Millicent Garrett Fawcett, the leader of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, was erected in the statue garden opposite Parliament (BBC News, 2018a). Meanwhile, in 2019, a statue of Emmeline Pankhurst was erected in Manchester to celebrate the historical role of the Pankhurst family in the women's suffrage campaign. Through statues, memorials, and commemorative events, the co-opting of the women's suffrage movement into a teleological narrative of national development. This narrative obscures how the women's suffrage movement aimed to extensively transform British society and politics, campaigning for extensive social and political changes beyond the vote (Chidgey 2018:71). Nonetheless, the nationalist commemoration of the women's suffrage movement also reflects the suffragettes' self-propagated 'heroic progress narratives' (Chidgey 2018:71). In other words, these commemorative statues and events link together the suffragettes' imperialist concepts of progress with a contemporary political project of national mythmaking. In this sense, the nationalist commemoration of the suffragettes is not just an appropriation of the movement; it also reflects some of the nationalistic and imperialist ideologies propagated by certain members of the WSPU.

Hence, the imperialist, colonial, and racial ideas that permeated the suffragette movement, and their manifestation in contemporary recollections of the movement, are crucial future directions for suffragette scholarship. A growing body of scholarship on the British suffragettes attends to the significance of class dynamics in the suffragette movement (see Schwartz 2018) and understandings of gender, sexuality, and queerness in the women's suffrage movement (see Cohler 2010). However, these interrogations of race, gender, and class could expand into a wider examination of how racialised and imperial concepts, such as modernity, progress, and civilisation, underpinned the suffragettes' social and political goals. For example, research on the influence of eugenic ideologies on members of the WSPU, notably Christabel Pankhurst, would contribute to a body of literature that examines the relationship between eugenics and feminism and foregrounds how women were both the 'agents and subjects' of eugenic policies (Wanhalla 2007:178; see also Cohler 2010). Moreover, future research on race, imperialism, and the WSPU should include further investigation into the WSPU's vocal opposition to the so-called 'White Slave Traffic', or the national panic surrounding the enslavement and sexual exploitation of young, white, British women (see Dyhouse 2013). The campaign against the White Slave Traffic, heavily influenced by racialised and xenophobic discourses, offers valuable insights into the racialised construction of white British femininity and normative female sexuality (see

Dyhouse 2013). Overall, interrogations of how racialisation and imperialism shaped the suffragette movement would allow for a more nuanced and critical project of public remembrance. It would also facilitate greater reflexivity in the construction of feminist genealogies, illuminating how the legacies of racist and imperialist thought in the history of British feminisms continue to shape contemporary feminist activism in the United Kingdom.

Rethinking Capacity and the Liberal Humanist Subject

This project has argued that the liminality of the hunger striker challenged some of the key precepts of the liberal humanist subject. As argued in the fifth chapter of this project, the figure of the human put forward by the modern liberal imagination is only one way of being human. This project has argued that although liberal humanism's version of human existence is currently privileged above other forms of living and being human, hunger striking and other forms of political agitation can disrupt its hold over what it means to be human. That being said, there is still far more scope to examine how hunger strikes, especially those enacted by gendered and racialised subjects, could subvert this particular model of the human. In particular, the hunger striker's problematisation of the concept of capacity could extend beyond the ideas offered in this thesis. This thesis' emphasis on bodily enactment foregrounds the political claims made by the body and emphasises the importance of thinking beyond the hunger strike as an act of communication or political speech. Yet this focus on what the body does, as opposed to what the body says, hinges upon ideas of capacity, agency, and political action. Future explorations of the relationship between hunger striking and the liberal humanist subject could interrogate how self-starvation's complicated relationship to (in)capacity could trouble the liberal concept of the human (see Velasquez-Potts 2019). This work would enrich a body of scholarship which contests the active/passive binary that undergirds the liberal humanist subject (see Halberstam 2010; Anderson 2010; Kim 2015; Puar 2017). While the hunger striker's deliberate assumption of passivity and powerlessness is framed as a subversion of state power (see Ellman, 1993; Fierke 2012; Kenney 2017), there is still more room for a greater interrogation of how the hunger striker's liminal positioning between active and passive, subject and object may challenge the very definition of capacity itself (see Halberstam 2010).

Gender, Race, and Carceral Institutions: Rethinking the Prison and the British Immigration Detention Estate

Finally, this project's analysis of women's hunger strikes in the context of Holloway Prison and Yarl's Wood has contributed to a body of scholarship on the relationship between gender, race, and carceral institutions. By illuminating the gendered and racialised character of state violence in the context of the prison, this project has also shown how the prison as an institution is undergirded by various forms of institutionalised gendered, sexualised, and racialised violence (see Davis 2003; Dillon 2018). Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 also showed how detention centres, like prisons, reproduce histories of racialised violence (see Rodriguez 2005). The history of hunger striking is intimately tied to the history and the development of carceral institutions and the modern phenomenon of political imprisonment (see Kenney 2017). Numerous high-profile hunger strikes, including the hunger strikes at HM Prison Maze (1980-1981) and HM Prison Armagh (1980) in Northern Ireland and the Turkish death fasts (2000-2007), explicitly campaigned for improvements in prison conditions. Hence, there is great promise in connecting hunger striking and other forms of self-harming protests with the field of critical prison studies. In terms of the examples discussed in this thesis, the suffragettes' activism regarding prison conditions and their critiques of incarceration offer areas for exploring historical antecedents to the contemporary movement for prison reform and prison abolition. In particular, the prison writings of Katie Gliddon and the autobiography of Constance Lytton could provide a useful starting point for examining the suffragettes' critiques of the prison and their campaigns for prison reform. Furthermore, this project's analysis of Yarl's Wood lays the groundwork for further critiques of the British immigration detention estate. Hence, this thesis' project of rethinking political violence could refract outwards into a broader critique of the institutionalisation of state violence in the form of the prison and the detention centre.

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