

BOUDICA AND HER RECEPTION BY BRITISH SUFFRAGETTES¹

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Abstract: *This paper is about the reception of Boudica by British suffragettes, who played a prominent role in an episode that occurred during the 1st century AD, in 60 and/or 61 AD, which marked the roots of the formation of the British people. She was the queen of the Iceni tribe and led an army against the Roman Empire after her daughters were raped, and she was whipped by Roman officials. Boudica was regarded as the representative of the first women-led freedom movement. In this way, the queen of the Iceni was embraced by the suffragettes to empower and strengthen this social movement and to demonstrate the bravery of female leadership.*

Keywords: *British suffragettes; Feminist movement; Women of Antiquity; Gender studies; Intersectionality.*

BOUDICA E SUA RECEPÇÃO PELAS SUFRAGISTAS BRITÂNICAS

Resumo: *Este trabalho é sobre a recepção de Boudica pelas sufragistas britânicas, a qual foi protagonista de um episódio que ocorreu durante o século I d.C., em 60 e/ou 61 d.C., que marcou as raízes da formação dos britânicos. Ela foi a rainha da tribo dos Iceni e liderou um exército contra o Império Romano, depois de suas filhas terem sido violentadas e ela açoitada por oficiais romanos. Boudica foi tida como a representante do primeiro movimento de liberdade liderado por uma mulher. Dessa forma, a rainha dos Iceni foi tomada pelas sufragistas para conferir poder e força a esse movimento social e para demonstrar a bravura de lideranças femininas.*

Palavras-chave: *Sufragistas britânicas; Movimento feminista; Mulheres da Antiguidade; Estudos de gênero; Interseccionalidade.*

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Introduction

[...] all my life I have most readily responded: first, admiration for that spirit of fighting and heroic sacrifice by which alone the soul of civilisation is saved; and next after that, appreciation of the gentler spirit which is moved to mend and repair the ravages of war (Pankhurst, 1914/2011, p. 3).

This work aims to address the reception of Boudica by British suffragettes. She is a historical figure from Antiquity who played a prominent role in an episode that occurred during the 1st century AD, more specifically in 60 and/or 61 AD, which marked the roots of the formation of the British people. Boudica, the queen of the Iceni tribe, led an army against the Roman Empire after her daughters were raped, and she was flogged by Roman officials because she refused to accept an agreement that Cato Decianus, a tax collector, had made with her husband Prasutagus before his death. This agreement involved leaving half of their lands to their daughters and the other half to Rome.

In the face of Roman physical force against Briton women, it can be mentioned that the sexual violence inflicted by the Romans was a behaviour shaped by a set of contingencies within the society responsible for creating oppressors. Such a society exhibited permissiveness towards violent and abusive sexual practices (Buchward; Fletcher; Roth, 1993/2005; Connel; Wilson, 1974 apud Freitas; Morais, 2019, p. 110).

The image of Boudica was first-hand described in Antiquity by Tacitus and Cassius Dio. The first author mentioned that, being a woman, she was not fit for governance and leadership, while for the latter, she was portrayed as physically and psychologically masculine, with the voice, size, and weaponry of a man. Dio's portrayal of Boudica is unconventional, deviating from the norms and deemed "barbaric", resulting in her gender appearing ambiguous, and her clothing and adornments stereotyped as that of the "other" (Aldhouse-Green, 2006 apud Bélo, 2019, p. 69). Roman male opposition recognized their own women as the "others", relegated to the realm of alterity and submissive in social reality and symbolic terms (Cid López, 2011, p. 55-56).

The ancient writers echoed the Roman patriarchal view of women's

roles in the Mediterranean world of the time, portraying the warrior queen as an abnormal and unusual figure when she came to leading an army (Pinto, 2011 apud Bélo, 2019, p. 72). This demonstrated an intersectional³ perspective in the face of a queen (a woman in power), “barbarian” (foreigner), who was against Rome (a political stance). The agency of intersectionality was evident in Roman narratives through their violent treatment of Boudica and her daughters, intending to oppress and subject them to male and Roman power. In this way, Boudica’s history clearly bears the mark of Roman gender assumptions, which are the ones that create great social problematizations and, in the case of this historical period, were present at the basis of the formation of that society.

However, in the intersectional analysis of this case, it must be considered that for the Romans, women in power were considered something abnormal and problematic, but female leadership was already common to them, since they had already had female army and revolt leaders, such as Fulvia and Sempronia respectively; in addition to having seen female leaders in other “barbarian” groups, such as Cleopatra. On the other hand, the fact that she was considered a “barbarian” must also be evaluated, given that at that time in the Roman Empire and even within the Roman army, the presence of foreigners was already recognized.

³ The problem of “intersectionality” was first raised in Anglo-Saxon countries from the legacy of black feminism in the early 1990s, within an interdisciplinary framework, by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1994, 2002, 2010) and other English, American, Canadian and German researchers (Hirata, 2014, p. 62). Intersectionality refers to a transdisciplinary theory that understands the complexity of identity and social inequalities through an integrated approach. It refutes the confinement and hierarchy of the main focus of social differentiation, which are the categories of sex, gender, class, race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation (Bilge, 2009, p. 70; Hirata, 2014, p. 62-63), among other conditions of inequality. It should be borne in mind that the categories are not fixed, but it is important in an intersectional analysis to identify which of them are oppressive and which can vary and be diverse. From this perspective, norms and values that may have been of considerable significance for the formation of social identities can be based on gender, age, status and so on (Sjöberg, 2014, p. 320). The intersectional approach goes beyond simply recognizing the multiplicity of systems of oppression that operate from these categories and postulates their interaction in the production and reproduction of social inequalities (Bilge, 2009, p. 70; Hirata, 2014, p. 62-63). Intersectionality as a means of understanding multiple oppressions has been applied by scholars such as Sjöberg, focusing mainly on textual evidence in the context of the Ancient World (Sjöberg, 2014, p. 316). It is important to emphasize that intersectionality is active and not static, comprising an oppressive agency.

Though, it seems that the violence against Boudica and her daughters was much more a frustrated attempt at domination (Giddens, 1992, p. 15), because Cato Decianus could have seen an opportunity of rising up the social ladder. Violence would be the result of frustration, which can be understood as an inability to maintain or assume a position as a social subject marked by gender. Frustration can characterize the inability to receive the satisfactions or retributions expected from assuming a subject position or mode of subjectivity marked by gender (Moore, 2000, p. 39-40). Even so, Roman action on the warrior queen and her daughters ended up presenting devices that confirmed a structural patriarchy that was already materialized on their own women.

The Boudica depicted by Tacitus and Cassius Dio transcended the ages, as the information provided by these writers about her was later used in various forms of artistic expression, including plays, books, poems, paintings, political works, cartoons, sculptures, and more. Through these works, the warrior queen became a symbol of feminine strength for powerful women in England, such as Queen Elizabeth I and Queen Victoria. She was utilized as an emblem of the suffragettes' struggle and harnessed as a symbol of nationalism.

Boudica has been used as a point of comparison and contrast with Queen Elizabeth I, Queen Victoria, and even Margaret Thatcher. She is related to the feminist movement of intellectual women from the past and the present, connecting to the unfolding history of women and the entire struggle at the inception of gender studies. Furthermore, she has often been described as a masculinized woman, at other times as a devoted mother, or even as a superheroine, serving as a means for the British to qualify women with governmental powers and invoked as a male justification for accepting women in positions of power. Thus, it can be argued that Boudica has been appropriated according to each historical period and in alignment with how women were perceived and treated.

Specifically, this paper deals with the demonstration of a "Uses of the Past" approach and the reinterpretation of Boudica by British suffragettes in the early 20th century when she was regarded as the symbol of the first women-led freedom movement. In this way, the queen of the Iceni tribe was embraced by suffragettes to empower and strengthen their social movement and to showcase the courage of female leadership.

Boudica and the women of power in England

Our society is very odd. There's a sense that if women come to power, the only way we can cope with that is to make them superhuman figures. That's certainly what happened with Elizabeth I, Mrs Thatcher and Boadicea (Jeffries, 2004 apud Bélo, 2019, p. 75).

Boudica served as an influence for feminists and female leaders in England, starting with Elizabeth I, then Victoria and Margaret Thatcher. She also worked as an inspiration for poets, artists, and propagandists in each era. However, it wasn't necessarily the image of the warrior queen that made the British more accepting of female leadership. On the contrary, Boudica was often used as an argument and pretext to justify accepting women in power.

After the 1530s, with the emergence of Protestant England, the British began to reclaim their past and their origin history, associating the "savages" of America with the natives of *Britannia*. Consequently, Boudica became a representative figure of the "savage" excess, which was considered inevitable for a woman in government, and thus, she was not seen as entirely normal (Hingley; Unwin, 2005 apud Bélo, 2019, p. 76).

However, Boudica did capture attention and was portrayed as a patriotic woman who bravely fought against the Romans. Additionally, since Henry VIII's father was from Wales, and the Welsh were considered direct descendants of the Britons, Elizabeth I, his daughter, identified strongly with Boudica, with both figures being subjects of comparisons and contrasts (Mikalachk, 1998). Nevertheless, the image of a woman in power in the 16th century was not positive (Mendelson; Crawford, 1998), and the images of the two queens were confronted in works such as: Raphael Holinshed's *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1577/1586); Stephen Gosson's pamphlet *School of Abuse* (1579/1868) aimed at defaming English men; Petruccio Ubaldini's *The Lives of the Noble Ladies of the Kingdom of England and Scotland* (1591); John Speed's *The History of Great Britaine*; Thomas Heywood's *The exemplary lives and memorable acts of nine the most worthy women of the world*; among other works (Bélo, 2019, p. 79-84).

Between the years 1609 and 1614, the history of Boudica was recounted

by John Fletcher (1609/1979) in “Bonduca”,⁴ adapted by George Powell in 1696, and by George Colman in 1778 and 1837. The author essentially pushed Boudica into the background, describing her with less violence and focusing on male characters (Matza, 2010). This work demonstrated a problematic tension of gender and history, disregarding the reign of Elizabeth I. The negative portrayal highlighted that the 17th century was marked by a process that privileged androcentrism. This perspective may have emerged during the reign of James I (1603-1625), who succeeded Elizabeth I. He was the son of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland, a cousin and a rival of the Red Queen. However, as Elizabeth I left no heirs, he was proclaimed King of England because he was the closest surviving heir to Henry VIII (Bélo, 2019, p. 86-87).

Shortly after the coronation of Queen Victoria, the artist Herry Courtney Selous painted a portrait of Boudica for the Queen of England in 1843. Like Queen Elizabeth I, Queen Victoria used the strength of this historical figure as a symbol of female leadership, commissioning the construction of a statue in honor of the warrior queen. The statue was erected in London by the artist Thomas Thornycroft, near Westminster Bridge, along the banks of the River Thames, facing the British Parliament, in opposition to Big Ben (Bélo, 2014, p. 124).

The statue was sculpted in bronze and consists of Boudica, with her hands raised to the sky, wearing a flowing gown, a cape, a crown, and holding a spear in her right hand. Her daughters are depicted kneeling behind the warrior queen, looking attentively and suspiciously forward, wearing tunics that expose their bare chests. They are in a Roman-style chariot, driven by horses in an alarming posture. According to Davies and Robinson (2009), this style of chariot does not align with those used by the Britons during the Iron Age. However, archaeologically, no chariot burials had been found in England at the time of the statue’s completion.

With the support of the State, this statue represents the Victorian conception of Boudica. On the south side of the sculpture, there are gold inscriptions: *Boadicea/Boudicca/ Queen of the Iceni/ Who died AD 61/ After leading her people/ Against the Roman invader*. On the east side, there are two lines from William Cowper’s poem (1782): *Regions Caesar never knew/ Thy*

4 This work was made in conjunction with another English playwright, Francis Beaumont (1584-1616).

posterity shall sway. The poem was used by the London City Council to effectively reinstate Boudica institutionally (Hingley; Unwin, 2005).

The artist of this sculpture, and Prince Albert, who supported its construction, both passed away before its completion (Webster, 1978). Consequently, the work did not receive sufficient funding for the final bronze casting, and the London City Council had to form a public committee to raise funds to finish it. The primary donors included members of the English royalty, academics, journalists, politicians, and wealthy Welsh lords (Hingley, 2000, p. 77). The latter seemed to recognize Boudica more as a Briton figure than an English one. They would later have an image of the warrior queen in Cardiff, Wales (Pinto, 2011, p. 137).

Figure 1



(© Author's photo, 2012)

Statue named *Boadicea and her Daughters*, by Thornycroft, 1902, London.

The statue was completed and erected a year after the Queen Victoria's death and following the British military victory in the Boer War. Hence, the sculpture was only delivered ready by the artist's son, John Isaac Thornycroft, and placed along the banks of the Thames by the London City Council in 1902. This event stirred strong patriotic sentiment, as Boudica's

portrayal as a warrior was then linked to the national sentiment regarding British historical roots and, subsequently, the glorification of the British Empire. As such, this work was intentionally positioned in front of the House of Commons, as if it is to defend that institution from potential attacks from the south, meaning from the continent (Pinto, 2011, p. 137), or as a representation of a woman advocating for her rights.

Boudica and the British suffragettes

In the early 20th century, the statue of Boudica in front of Parliament began to serve to another purpose, not just as a symbol of the empire. The warrior queen's attitude and her actions from the past, as recounted by the ancient Romans, as well as the use of her feminine image in support of powerful women, such as Queens Elizabeth I and Victoria, led her image becoming associated with the strength of women.

During a period of intense feminist activism for suffrage, British suffragettes ended up using the Westminster statue of Boudica as an icon of their struggle and a symbol of female representation. Boudica's rise as an imperial symbol during the Victorian and Edwardian eras may have been the reason why suffragettes adopted her image (Hingley; Unwin, 2005 apud Bélo, 2019, p. 114). In these circumstances, the location of Thornycroft's statue was considered highly strategic, as its positioning suggests that she is advancing upon Parliament with her chariot.

The statue has been a gathering place for suffragette protests, and to this day, it is used by feminist groups as a symbol of empowerment for women. An example of this is the group called *Climate Rush*, which not only fights for women's rights but also advocates for the environment. Inspired by the early suffragettes, the movement emerged in October 2008 with 11 women and later included men as activists.

Figure 2



London statue of Boudica with the *Climate Rush* group.⁵

Figure 3



*Climate Girl Rush.*⁶

⁵ Available at: <http://www.ameliasmagazine.com/earth/climate-rush-bike-rush-1/2009/06/04/>. Accessed on: 09 dec. 2011.

⁶ Available at: <http://www.climaterush.co.uk/>. Accessed on: 21 dec. 2011.

The images above depict members of the organization on and around the Boudica statue during their protests. The montage, with one of the horses from Thornycroft's statue and the sculpture itself in the background, has become an emblem for this group and can be seen on websites associated with the movement. The group also uses the old feminist phrase, *Deeds not Words*, along with another quote from the historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich (2007): *Well-behaved women seldom make history*.

Figure 4



Boudicca agrees, deeds not words.⁷

The expression *Deeds not Words* emerged when the campaigns for women's emancipation in Britain took on a more militant and aggressive stance due to the lack of response to their demands. For this reason, they rejected polite tactics such as letter-writing and securing political influence in favor of their causes. As a result, they began engaging in a series of attention-grabbing, spectacular, and subversive interventions. They also used artists sympathetic to the feminist cause to spread their ideas across the United Kingdom, leading to a significant increase in female authors and actors during the period from 1905 to 1914.⁸

⁷ Available at: <http://www.climaterush.co.uk/>. Accessed on: 09 dec. 2011.

⁸ Available at: <https://womenslibrary.org.uk/event/katharine-cockin-a-pageant-of-great-women/>. Accessed on: 07 aug. 2023.

Claims, posters, leaflets and performances

To delve into the feminist agitation of the early 20th century, it is worth noting that it had an creative aspect, and the image of Boudica was evoked through artistic expressions. Various suffragette campaigns received support from artists sympathetic to the cause who contributed objects to be sold in suffragette stores, banners, postcards, newsletters, pamphlets, songs, plays, sketches, and other art forms. The production of Elizabeth Robins' play *Votes for Women* in 1907 demonstrated that suffragette drama could be commercially successful and politically effective (Robinson, 2022, p. 85).

In this context, Cicely Hamilton's play *A Pageant of Great Women* (1872-1952) was significant for that moment and underscored that this was the first consistently political agitation to harness the arts in its service. The author herself was an actress who later became a novelist and playwright. She was also a co-founder of the Women Writers' Suffrage League (WSL), which was non-partisan and involved writers who supported women's suffrage. She also played a role in the Actresses' Franchise League (AFL), whose mission was to promote the suffragette cause through theatrical entertainment. These smaller feminist groups were organized along regional, professional, or political lines (Robinson, 2022, p. 86-87).

The play premiered in 1909 at the Scala Theatre in London, and with its success, suffragette groups quickly gained recognition. The production travelled to several cities, including Bristol in 1910, where it was hosted at the Prince's Theatre and organized by the Women's Social and Political Union (W.S.P.U.), which Hamilton appears to have been a part of. She worked alongside the play's director, Edith Craig (1869-1947), who was a lesbian, costume designer, and, as reported, a theatre director – in other words, a subversive figure for that time. The latter ended up founding a theatre society in London, the Pioneer Players (1911-1925),⁹ which brought feminist writing to the stage. In this way, suffragette theatre was at the heart of London's artistic activism (Robinson, 2022, p. 86-87).

Hamilton's play drew an audience of approximately 3,000 people in Bristol, along with famous suffragettes such as Christabel Pankhurst. This

⁹ Available at: <https://womenslibrary.org.uk/event/katharine-cockin-a-pageant-of-great-women/>. Accessed on: 07 aug. 2023.

play was preceded by another one-act play called “How the Vote was Won”, which was also written by Hamilton and Christopher St. John. The Prince’s Theatre was destroyed during World War II, but in 2011, the play was re-staged in Hull to celebrate the centenary of its performance, with the addition of the lives of Mary Wollstonecraft and her daughter Mary Shelley.¹⁰

However, the staging in Bristol attests the city’s importance to the suffragette movement outside of London, with a long history of activism, including female strikes in candy factories, cotton, tobacco, docks, and other industries that occurred between 1889 and 1892.¹¹

Amidst characters such as Boudica, Joan of Arc, Cleopatra, Catherine the Great, Elizabeth I, Victoria, Hypatia of Alexandria, Zenobia, Sappho, Jane Austen, Marie Curie, and other important women, Hamilton’s work defended women’s rights, particularly those related to women’s suffrage, by presenting historical characters. However, it also featured working women without a specific gender identity and from various cultural backgrounds, including Black and Indigenous women, highlighting critical aspects related to race, ethnicity, and social status, categories which only became significantly discussed after the Third Wave of Feminism, starting around 1980. Nevertheless, the diversity in casting must have been carefully chosen to illustrate the breadth of the movement with historical accuracy, costumes, props, and contexts. Contemporary criticism of the play would be on the fact that black women were portrayed by white ones (Robinson, 2022, p. 86-87). However, it should be noted that the different representations aimed to emphasize the play’s anti-intersectional nature.

¹⁰ Available at: <https://historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1009/>. Accessed on: 02 aug. 2023. Citation suggested by the website: Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme, Alex Hutton, Paul Readman, ‘Pageant of Great Women, Bristol’, The Redress of the Past, <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1009/>.

¹¹ Available at: <https://historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1009/>. Accessed on: 02 aug. 2023. Citation suggested by the website: Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme, Alex Hutton, Paul Readman, ‘Pageant of Great Women, Bristol’, The Redress of the Past, <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1009/>.

Figure 5



The actresses in their roles as the great historical women.¹²

Figure 05 depicts Boudica portrayed by actress Elizabeth Kirby, holding a spear, alongside Joan of Arc, portrayed by Pauline Chase. This was a play that presented a courtroom setting where “Woman” and “Prejudice” presented arguments for and against women’s emancipation before “Justice”. “Prejudice” argued that women were men’s playthings and incapable of independent action. “Woman” opposed this and called upon various educated women, artists, saints, heroines, rulers, and warriors to silence “Prejudice” with “Justice” ultimately ruling in favour of “Woman”. Consequently, this work was a significant milestone for political activists in supporting of legislative change, especially considering that at that time, there were no

¹² Available at: <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-406515540/view>. Accessed on: 02 aug. 2023.

female lawyers in the profession. The dramatization also played a crucial role in raising awareness about the suffrage campaign, as the play toured, informing people and building an even larger community of women.¹³

The play elucidated the main arguments surrounding the theme of women's emancipation and provided women with the opportunity to practice public speaking and debate. The spectacular dramatization of these arguments increased understanding of women's history. By bringing together over fifty "great women" from the past of various countries on stage as evidence that women deserved the vote, the play had a visually impressive impact and a mindset-changing function. It created opportunities for local suffrage activists and supporters to act as these "great women" alongside important figures of the movement, such as Lady Constance Lytton. Everyone involved, the actors and the audience, effectively acted as witnesses to the successful prosecution of the case before "Justice".

Following the centenary of Hamilton's theatre play, on the eve of International Women's Day in 2015, women, inspired by this work, marched in procession in Glasgow and from other locations to gathered at the Glasgow Women's Library to celebrate the 24th anniversary of its establishment and then proceeded to Bridgeton to commemorate past achievements, women's lives, and accomplishments. This event, marked by considerable racial, ethnic, and class diversity, was documented in the 40-minute film "March of Women", directed by Marissa Keating and produced by Anna Birch.¹⁴

This film is a documentary that premiered on 22nd September 2015. It consists of interviews with participants of the march, highlighting the gap in women's representation in history and emphasizing the importance of having a generation of women to honour and draw inspiration from. The film also explores the daily lives of Scottish women who work as boat builders, students, librarians, and even politicians, all of whom are shown working leading up to the grand event on 15th March 2015. The most sig-

¹³ Available at: <https://womenslegallandmarks.com/2017/08/08/a-pageant-of-great-women-1909-1912/> and <https://historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1009/>. Accessed on: 02 aug. 2023.

¹⁴ Available at: <https://womenslibrary.org.uk/discover-our-projects/march-of-women/>. Accessed on: 02 aug. 2023.

nificant message of the film was to showcase the vibrant power of an active and collective voice while revealing how a century-old play was crucial to the feminist movement.¹⁵

In addition to plays, the image and even the name of Boudica were used in posters and pamphlets. Such works were common for this type of claim, including a pamphlet titled *The Suffragette* from 1914, authored by Hilda Dallas and edited by the feminist Christabel Pankhurst. It was published in the “One Penny Weekly” and is currently held at the Victoria & Albert Museum. This pamphlet was created for the Women’s Social and Political Union (W.S.P.U.), the leading militant organization campaigning for women’s suffrage in the United Kingdom (Bélo, 2019, p. 118).

The Suffragette, which was also the name of a weekly newspaper published by the W.S.P.U., featured a woodblock-printed advertisement depicting Joan of Arc carrying the organization’s emblem. Hilda Dallas, the pamphlet’s author, was associated with the Suffrage Atelier, formed in 1909, which encouraged artists to promote women’s emancipation through pictorial publications. Their activities also included training non-professional artists in printing techniques. The low-cost, low-tech method using woodblocks for this poster was inexpensive, quick, and easy to learn. The image of Joan of Arc reflects the increasingly bold strategies employed by the W.S.P.U. just before the outbreak of World War I. The newspaper was originally called “Votes for Women” but was renamed *The Suffragette* after Christabel Pankhurst, one of the key figures in the W.S.P.U., expelled the newspaper’s editors and financiers, Frederick and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, due to their objections to violent tactics.¹⁶

¹⁵ Available at: <https://womenslibrary.org.uk/discover-our-projects/march-of-women/> and <https://womenslibrary.org.uk/event/march-film-screening/>. Accessed on: 02 aug. 2023.

¹⁶ Available at: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O685356/the-%20suffragette-1d-weekly-poster-dallas-hilda/the-suffragette-1d-weekly-poster-dallas-hilda/>. Accessed on: 22 feb. 2020.

Figure 6



Pamphlet called *The Suffragette* with Joan of Arc, 1914.

Following a pattern of modern women's vindications, the poster features the word "Justice" on the figure's chest, which could recall the character from Hamilton's play, indicating the new political mission focused by the movement. Additionally, the image's protagonist holds a flag with the initials W.S.P.U. in her left hand and a sword in the other hand. However, the pamphlet doesn't explicitly name the heroine, although its implications appear clear, suggesting that Joan of Arc could be a common image within the group, as she became a patroness of feminists.

It's worth noting that the poster features the colours purple, green, and white, which are representative of suffrage. In the next commemorative

poster with the name *Boadicea*,¹⁷ a yellow or orange wheel is drawn in the centre of the poster, reminiscent of the Queen's chariot wheels, along with swords, emphasizing her warrior character. There is also a green sash and branches of some type of plant, all set against a blue background.

Figure 7



Commemorative poster¹⁸ made in 1908. Courtesy of the Museum of London.

¹⁷ The diversity of Boudica's name comes from the fact that Tacitus recorded the name as "Boudicca", but according to the Celtic language, it is suggested that the name be spelt with just one "c". Cassius Dio registered the name with influence from the Greek language, as "Boudouika", which can be translated as "Boudouca", while "Boadicea" was used by the Victorian poets, who rescued it from the Medieval period, when the "u" was replaced by "a" and the second "c" by "e" (Hingley & Unwin, 2005). However, nowadays, according to Webster (2004), it is called Boudica, and so this spelling of the name has been established for this work.

¹⁸ Available at: <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/suffrage-banner-representing-boadicea-lowndes-mary/ygG1ma8hB3qIQw?hl=en>. Accessed on: 15 jul. 2023.

The poster titled *Boadicea* is currently housed in the Museum of London and was created by Mary Lowndes (1857-1929), one of eight children of a rector from Sturminster Newton, Dorset. Initially, she was a stained-glass artist and later became a poster painter, trained by Henry Holiday, whose wife and daughter were also suffrage supporters. Mary was one of the founders of Lowndes & Drury in 1897, where she made stained glass, which until 1906 was based at 35 Park Walk, Chelsea, near Sylvia Pankhurst's house. Their first meeting took place at the Women's Social and Political Union, and soon after, the artist became involved in feminist events such as the Congress of Women in London. In 1907, she founded the Artists' Suffrage League and became its president. Between 1907 and 1908, she began creating posters for the Women's Freedom League, and in 1913, as she was associated with the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and the London Society for Women's Suffrage, she became part of the executive committee of the latter (Crawford, 1999, p. 358).

Figure 8



Sketch of the design and fabric strips for the *Boadicea* poster. © The women's Library, from Mary Lowndes' album.¹⁹

¹⁹ Available at: <https://archives.lse.ac.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=2ASL%2f11>. Accessed on: 19 jul. 2023.

On 13th June 1908, Mary Lowndes created several posters for the NUWSS procession, including the *Boadicea* poster, making the suffrage display quite impactful (Crawford, 1999, p. 358).

Figure 9



Votes for women poster by Theodore Blake Wirgman.
© The Trustees of the British Museum.²⁰

In an album by Mary Lowndes, which is located at The Women’s Library, a drawing by the Belgian painter, draughtsman, and illustrator Theodore Blake Wirgman (1848-1925) was found. Wirgman was born in Leuven, lived in England and Paris, and became known for his chalk drawings of politicians and writers (Erger, 1985). The drawing is a lithograph, dated approximately 1863 and/or 1921, measuring 270 millimetres in height and 325 millimetres in width. The engraving depicts Boudica’s chariot with her daughters and, in the background, the British Parliament, giving the impression that the chariot is moving through the city streets. One of the daughters is holding the reins, and the other is looking ahead. Boudica, on the other hand, holds a balance, representing “Justice,” in her

²⁰ Available at: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1921-0819-5. Accessed on: 19 jul. 2023.

right hand instead of her spear, suggesting a non-violent attitude, and in her left hand, a flag with the inscription *Votes for Women*. Boudica is being crowned by an angel with a laurel wreath going towards her, symbolizing her queenly status. On the margins of the figure, there are mothers with their children, emphasizing Boudica's maternal character from her past.

Figure 10



“Justice” and “Prejudice”. © The women’s Library, album of Mary Lowndes.²¹

Another work found in Mary Lowndes’ album is this figure, who, like Boudica, is on a cart with a balance representing “Justice” driven by a woman. As if it was in a competition such as race. She competes with “Prejudice,”

²¹ Available at: <https://archives.lse.ac.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=2ASL%2f11>. Accessed on: 19 jul. 2023.

who also appears on a cart wearing Roman attire. It can be observed that “Justice” and “Prejudice” were commonly protagonists in the artwork used to explain the demands for women’s suffrage, either originating from or becoming prominent after Hamilton’s play. In addition, in the engraving, there is a tombstone beside the path followed by the carts indicating the year 1913.

The date indicates the death of Emily Wilding Davison (1872-1913), an activist who became a martyr for the suffrage cause when she entered the racecourse at the Epsom Derby and stepped in front of King George V’s horse, which hit her with full force, leading to her death four days later.²² That being said, the drawing represents Boudica as a symbol of justice in support of Emily, while the Roman figure characterizes the patriarchal emblem of disrespect for women and their voting rights.



Emily certainly played a pivotal role in keeping women’s suffrage demands in the headlines of newspapers.²³ On the cover of *The Suffragette* newspaper dated 13rd June 1913, she was honoured with an illustration of an angel, accompanied by the words “*in honour and in loving, reverent memory of Emily Wilding Davison, she died for women*”.

Figure 11
Cover of *The Suffragette* magazine honouring Emily Wilding Davison.
© The women’s Library.²⁴

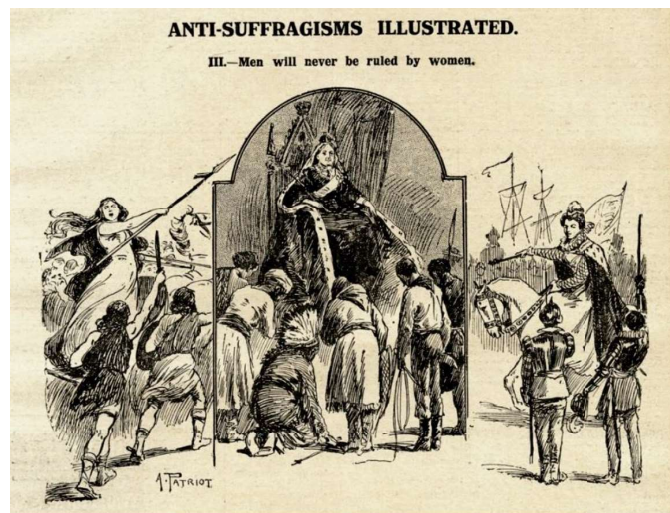
²² Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Emily-Davison>. Accessed on: 17 jul. 2023.

²³ Available at: <https://www.channel4.com/news/suffragette-emily-wilding-davison-terrorist-heroine>. Accessed on: 19 jul. 2023.

²⁴ Available at: <https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:jot845wom>. Accessed on: 19 jul. 2023.

As a result, her death led to the suffragettes' pilgrimage after 50,000 women and supporters of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) gathered in Hyde Park for a suffrage rally. The event culminated in the Women's Suffrage Pilgrimage, which lasted for five weeks and was inspired by Katherine Harley, motivated by the Women's March from Edinburgh to London in 1912. The pilgrimage began on 18th June 1913, with routes from Carlisle to Newcastle, passing through London, and ultimately ending in Portsmouth. During the pilgrimage, they encountered both passive and aggressive receptions at various points along the way.²⁵

Figure 12



Anti-suffragist image with Queens Boudica, Victoria and Elizabeth I.²⁶
© The women's Library.

Images of the three queens – Boudica, Victoria, and Elizabeth I – adorned the covers of *Votes for Women*, created by the cartoonist and suf-

²⁵ Available at: <https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/the-1913-suffrage-pilgrimage-peaceful-protest-and-local-disorder/>. Accessed on: 17 jul. 2023.

²⁶ Available at: <https://www.outskirts.arts.uwa.edu.au/volumes/volume-31/marguerite-johnson>. Accessed on: 08 aug. 2023.

fragist Alfred Pearse, known as A. Patriot. They were used ironically with the sarcastic phrase “*Men will never be ruled by women*”. Boudica appears on the left, rallying her men for battle; Victoria is in the middle, with men of various ethnicities at her feet, as if she were the queen of a vast empire; and Elizabeth I is shown on a horse, giving orders to her men. The first two covers are from 1910, and the last one is from 1912. They demonstrate an appreciation for the use of powerful and historical women in support of the suffrage movement, reminiscent of Hamilton’s play, *A Pageant of Great Women*.

Boudica appears in other suffragette representations, such as in the November 1907 issue of *Votes for Women*, which advertised a feminist game sold by the W.S.P.U.’s literature department. The game was called *Suffragette* and aimed to increase suffrage propaganda through entertainment. It featured suffragettes versus anti-suffragettes, with the goal of gaining the most votes to secure the desired bill. Many portraits of well-known suffragists illustrated the game, with questions like one involving Boudica: “*Who was the earliest Suffragette?*” The answer was: “*Boadicea, and the House of Commons smiles upon her statue*”. The answer is ironic, as if the House of Commons had to swallow or endure the first suffragette in front of it by the presence of the Westminster statue.²⁷

On 1st July 1884, the *Women’s Suffrage Journal* commented on the speech by Mr. William Woodall (1832-1901), a politician who entered Parliament as an MP for Stoke-upon-Trent (1880-1885). He was an advocate for women’s suffrage in the House of Commons and presented several unsuccessful bills for this cause. To encourage the feminist movement, the journal reported that he spoke about Joan of Arc and Boadicea, describing them as brilliant military women, although he mentioned that they were remembered as having premature endings.²⁸

There was a report by *Jus Suffragi* on 5th November 1906, which explained a proof of the gathering for feminist demonstrations under the statue of Boudica in front of the House of Commons and the vicinity of Westminster. Mrs. Monteriore, who was a prominent activist and lecturer, used to give speeches

²⁷ Available at: <https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:hof597qab/read/single#page/9/mode/1up>. Accessed on: 08 aug. 2023.

²⁸ Available at: <https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:tiv489tev/read/single#page/11/mode/1up>. Accessed on: 08 aug. 2023.

and even travelled to Denmark and Finland for this purpose. However, after speaking in various places, she settled in Westminster to establish a branch of the W.S.P.U. She began by holding two outdoor meetings per week; later, she and Jessie Kenney used a stack of railway tracks (which had been piled up on the Embankment for the installation of new railway lines) as their platform and started making long and engaging speeches right by the statue of Boudica,²⁹ giving birth to the meeting place for suffragettes there.

Conclusion

In this work, it can be observed the continuous use of Boudica's image by British suffragettes. Over time, her representation was carefully crafted to have an associative and emotional quality, which connected the suffragettes to a historical identity.

For the suffragettes, Boudica's image provided a strong representation that served as a foundation and support for the movement promoting for gender equality and women's active social roles. In this way, the coherence of the suffragettes' actions regarding the memory of Boudica comes from the set of memories from an extreme moment, which corroborated to a succession of events of women who organised themselves around a single thought in relation to an interest, thus relying on the strengthening of characters who were part of a historical past and who referred to the foundation of the women's struggle, causing the group to identify with Boudica and other characters, such as Joan of Arc.

The letters written to demand, used at the beginning of the feminist struggle, had an effect that decreased over time, which led them to have an agency that violated traditional customs for women, with the materialisation of claim strips, pamphlets, banners and processions, aimed at making their actions striking and memorable. Their open-air speeches were also a remnant of more expressive actions, in which comparisons with characters such as Boudica were used to boost their demands.

Within this movement, Boudica gained significant social acceptance, portrayed as a mother who fought for her daughters' vengeance and the

²⁹ Available at: <https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:nuk347xax/read/single#page/2/mode/1up>. Accessed on: 08 aug. 2023.

freedom of her people. Her actions facilitated comparisons with the feminist struggle, promoting an understanding of the intention to consciously connect with a significant and justified past. Boudica's character, marked by conflict, aligned her with contemporary women's issues such as freedom, symbolic and physical violence, the fight for better living conditions, and the pursuit of a dignified social position, i.e., the fight for respect and recognition. However, Boudica's history legitimised what memory considered to be honourable. This was a borrowed memory from the past, a learned, written and long memory that was unified with the British suffragettes.

Boudica became linked to the memory of historical tragedies, contributing to defining the field of what is memorable, thereby constituting strong memory. This is the memory of suffering, pain, and misfortune (Candau, 2011 apud Bélo, 2019, p. 238), which raises controversial issues. Boudica's history was part of the suffragette quest for dignity, addressing themes of prejudice and violence against women. The flogging of Boudica and, especially, the rape of her daughters are topics that have persisted in women's experiences from ancient times to the present day.

Regarding the use of material culture for advocacy, as it occurred and still occurs with the statue of Boudica in London, it can be mentioned that these constructions involve a historical reconsideration that directly confronts the notion of "tradition". However, in general, they are initially designed based on the values and social representations of the time. Although the passage of time can lead to the reformulation of the meanings of objects, the memory of the location where the statue of Boudica in Westminster stands, as well as time itself, are always parameters for a revitalization of forms and symbols that force a re-examination of historical facts as representations to evoke something new in line with contemporary politics, society, and values. In the meantime, the Westminster statue of Boudica has transitioned from a symbol of the British Empire to a feminist icon.

Currently, the statue not only holds the memory of the woman who lived in ancient times, but also the memories of her use in the women's struggle, with one example being the Climate Rush group mentioned earlier, which remembered the early 20th-century feminists. Often, a movement that appears to break with the past still finds the past relevant, and even though this movement is responsible for a new situation, it refers to something old or establishes its own past as an almost obligatory repetition (Hobsbawn;

Ranger, 1983 apud Bélo, 2019, p. 243), as in the case of Boudica and her reception and reinterpretation in various historical periods.

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