

A LUNCHEON FOR SUFFRAGE: THEATRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF HETERODOXY TO THE ENFRANCHISEMENT OF THE AMERICAN WOMAN

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ABSTRACT: This article explores and discusses the intertextualities that are found in selected plays written in the circle of Heterodoxy in the 1910s, the Greenwich Village-based radical club for unorthodox women. The article examines some of the parallels that can be found in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Something to Vote For*, George Middleton's *Back of the Ballot*, Mary Jenney Howe's *An Anti-Suffrage Monologue* and *Telling the Truth at the White House*, written in collaboration with Paula Jakobi, Mary Shaw's *The Parrot Cage* and *The Woman of It*, and Susan Glaspell's *Trifles*, *Bernice*, *Chains of Dew* and *Woman's Honor*. The works are put in the context of the national movement for woman suffrage and focuses on the authors' arguments for suffrage as well as on their formal choices, ranging from realism to expressionism, satire and parody.

RESUMEN: El presente artículo explora y discute las intertextualidades que se encuentran en una selección de obras escritas en el círculo de Heterodoxy, el club para mujeres no-ortodoxas con base en Greenwich Village, en la década de 1910. Este artículo examina algunos de los paralelismos existentes entre *Something to Vote For* de Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Back of the Ballot* de George Middleton, el *Anti-Suffrage Monologue* de Mary Jenney Howe y su obra *Telling the Truth at the*

White House, escrita en colaboración con Paula Jakobi, las obras *The Parrot Cage* y *The Woman of It* de Mary Shaw, y *Trifles*, *Bernice*, *Chains of Dew* y *Woman's Honor* de Susan Glaspell. Las obras se contextualizan dentro del movimiento por el sufragio de la mujer en los Estados Unidos y se centra en los argumentos a favor del sufragio que los autores presentan, así como en sus elecciones formales, que varían del realismo al expresionismo, pasando por la sátira y la parodia.

The members of Heterodoxy, the “luncheon” club for unorthodox women, who, as Mabel Dodge Luhan said, “did things and did them openly” (143) was a unique meeting point for Greenwich Village women who considered themselves, in one way or another, radical. As is well known, Heterodites came from very different backgrounds. As Inez Haynes Irwin, one of the members, recalls in her unpublished memoirs: “Heterodoxy members came from many states of the Union. [...] Among them were Democrats, Republicans, Socialists, anarchists, liberals and radicals of all opinions” (qtd. in Schwarz 19). And they all had also different occupations, among them there were actresses, playwrights, editors, ministers, doctors, journalists, dancers, and psychoanalysts. This varied range of unorthodox women found in Heterodoxy a relief, a place to meet every two Saturdays and discuss openly issues that they did not even want to speak so freely in the bohemian context of Greenwich Village. In order to maintain the secrecy and freedom of the group, almost no records were kept, which makes research more difficult, yet more challenging. For instance, only one reference to a Heterodoxy luncheon can be found in Glaspell’s papers. In her 1921 diary, the March 19 entry reads: Heterodoxy at one.¹ As different as the members of the club were, they found that, as Judith Schwarz asserted in her ground-breaking study of the club, “Feminism was the one belief that united every member. Many of them were ardent workers for the cause of woman suffrage” (25). Sharing a common interest in making women abandon old roles, and aware of the fact that the old and conservative tactics that had been used for decades needed renewing, Heterodites supported woman suffrage through different literary means. The article examines some of the parallels that can be found in the works of some Heterodites, focusing on their arguments for suffrage as well as on their formal choices.

Although the bond between the suffrage movement and theater in the United States has not received the critical attention it deserves, this bond has a long history. While it is true that, as theater historians have pointed out, anti-suffragists discovered the potential of the stage to draw spectators into their cause before suffragists did, the situation changed early in the 20th century (Friedl, “General” 7). In an article entitled “Women of the Stage All Desire to Vote,” the *Billboard* affirmed:

¹ Holograph diary, Susan Glaspell Papers, Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

It may only be a passing fad, but woman's suffrage is just now the subject of general discussion of people of the stage. Some of them have really become worked up about it to such an extent that at tea and after theatrical performances, it is the sole topic of conversation". (qtd. in Auster 85)

But the alliance between the suffrage movement and the theater was not a passing fad, and this article, published in 1909, reflected the present and the future to come. Precisely the 1910s witnessed the proliferation of suffrage plays and in 1920, when women were awaiting the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, the stage was still used to advocate woman's right to vote.

The bond between the members of Heterodoxy as a cohesive group and the theater has not been deeply explored, apart from the individual studies on those members who worked for the theater. Nevertheless, Marie Howe, who founded Heterodoxy in 1912, had discovered the potential that the stage had to draw voters into the suffrage cause. Indeed, her work as chair of the Twenty-Fifth Assembly District division of the New York City Woman Suffrage Party and as the vice-president of the New York State Suffrage League was marked by innovative political strategies, among which two were theatrical in essence: the organization of a forum called "Twenty-five Answers to Antis" at the Metropolitan Temple in New York in 1912, and the two famous feminist mass meetings at Cooper Union two years later (Schwarz 27). Furthermore, as Bettina Friedl has pointed out, Marie Howe "had organized her own theater group of professional and amateur actresses and actors in the Twenty-fifth District of the New York Woman Suffrage Party" ("Plays" 31). In *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism* (2000), Susan A. Glenn refers to this theater group in these terms:

In the United States the most prominent of the suffrage theater groups was Marie Jenney Howe's Twenty-Fifth District Players, a theatrical stock company composed of the Twenty-Fifth Assembly District members of the New York Woman Suffrage Party. In addition to Howe [...] the players included popular Broadway actress Mary Shaw, Fola La Folette, charismatic daughter of the Wisconsin senator (both members of Heterodoxy) and Caroline Caffin, who wrote on modern dance and vaudeville. (137)

Therefore, taking into account that Marie Howe found in the stage an effective tool to discuss woman suffrage, and that many Heterodoxy members, such as Susan Glaspell, Zona Gale, Edna Kenton, Margaret Wicherly, Alice Rohe or Mary Shaw, worked actively for the theater as playwrights, secretaries, actresses or critics, it is not surprising that "Heterodites found the theater a wonderful outlet for their talents and views" (Schwarz 62). Moreover, as Schwarz has pointed out, Heterodoxy

“members frequented the theatrical performance of all three Village groups,² and faithfully read each other’s articles and books” (65), prompting a fruitful net of intertextual references among Heterodites’ works not studied so far.

My attempt to trace these intertextualities starts with Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Something to Vote For*, a play that predates the creation of the club in 1912, but which I think served as an inspiring work for many suffrage writers. Gilman’s play, unproduced professionally to the date, was published in her own journal, *The Forerunner*, in 1911, which probably helped to the circulation of the play among Heterodites. This propagandistic one-act, an early staging of how many women’s clubs constituted a strong opposition to woman suffrage, is the first play to present the ballot as the best means of protection. The play deals with the topic of pure milk, an interest that eventually turns club women into more than mere domestic feminists. Furthermore, as Judith A. Allen has suggested, the play illustrates Gilman’s “blending of suffrage advocacy, rebuttal of the Antis, and the articulation of a Progressive reform program beneficial to women and children” (157). At the beginning of play, these club women, all from a wealthy position, are not interested in the vote at all. Their reasons recall the well-known ideas the anti-suffragists had been spreading for years: the vote would break up the home, and consequently, church and government; if women had the vote, children would be left unattended; and the vote is dangerous for women because God has made them pure and politics would stain them.³ By the end of the play, the joint effort of the determined woman doctor, too obviously named Dr. Strong, and an honest milk inspector reveals that good milk is sold to the rich, while impure milk is left for the poor. This leads the President of the club, Mrs. Carroll, to convert, to stand up, and to lead her friends to fight for the vote:

Now we see what our “influence” amounts to! Rich or poor, we are all helpless together until we wake up to the danger and protect ourselves. That’s what the ballot is for, ladies – to protect our homes! [...] I’m willing to vote now! I’m glad to vote now! I’ve got something to vote for! Friends, sisters, all who are in favor of woman suffrage and pure milk say Aye. (161)

Significantly, Gilman strategically subverts the sphere of influence at the end of the play. While the domestic sphere had been for centuries the sacred domain of women, from where they projected their benevolent and just guiding influence – hence another reason to deny her the right to vote; women were theoretically

² Schwarz refers here to the Neighborhood Playhouse, the Provincetown Players, and the Washington Square Players.

³ These well-spread anti-suffrage ideas can be found, for instance, in Grover Cleveland’s “Woman’s Mission and Woman’s Clubs” (1905), in Abbott Lymann’s “Why Women Do Not Wish the Suffrage” (1903), and in the article “While there’s Life there’s Hope,” published in *Life* in 1906.

influential from home – Mrs. Carroll's final words make use of this influence to reach outside their homes in a more direct way. Women, as Gilman finally calls for through Mrs. Carroll, must protect their homes from inside, as usual, but also from the outside, thus making a political call for female enfranchisement.

There is a very clear connection between Gilman's *Something to Vote For* and George Middleton's *Back of the Ballot. A Woman Suffrage Farce in One Act* (1915). While George Middleton was not a member of Heterodoxy – being a man directly disqualified him as one – he was closely connected to the group. He had married the actress, suffragist and Heterodoxy member Flora Dodge "Fola" La Follette in 1911 and fully supported his wife's activities. He marched in suffrage parades, participated in suffrage debates, gave speeches, and rallied for the cause (Friedl, "Plays" 35). He was also a close friend of Marie Howe, and through her and his wife he met prominent suffragists, such as Jane Addams and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. As he himself noted, his contribution to woman suffrage "stemmed from the group of wonderful women with whom it was my privilege to be closely associated" (qtd. in Friedl, "Plays" 35). Middleton wrote *Back of the Ballot* to comply with his wife's and Marie Howe's wishes, and as Middleton wrote, the play "went well enough" on the stage and it earned him the label "propagandist" (qtd. in Friedl, "Plays" 35-36). This play, as Gilman's, is indeed highly propagandistic and didactic, but Middleton turned from realism to farce. Jennie, the young protagonist whose name is a clear reference to Marie Jenney Howe, is an ardent suffragist getting ready to march in a parade. As in Gilman's play, in this play there is also a compulsory movement from home to outside when suffrage is at stake. The farcical, extravagant, situation is created when a Burglar appears in Jennie's bedroom. Jennie will not miss the opportunity to draw a voter into the cause. The issue of pure milk, which was the spark that made women convert to suffrage in Gilman's *Something to Vote for*, appears again when Jennie offers the Burglar a glass: "You won't mind taking a chance, as our babies?" (333). And exactly as in Gilman's play, the vote is presented as the only means of protection: "if a lot of men think any of the laws unjust, you can vote to have them changed. If we women don't like them, we can do nothing. See?" (332).

Significantly, Middleton subtly added one key argument suffragists were using at the time: the fear of the foreign and uneducated vote, which had been, actually, one of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's main concerns: the vote should not be universal, but educated. At the turn of the century, suffragists complained that men who spoke little or no English, who came from religious and social backgrounds which had imbued them with conservative beliefs as to what the position of woman had to be, or who were indecent, could vote and, what was more important, that these men stood between women and the vote (Flexner and Fitzpatrick 83; Kraditor 123-62). The three male voters Middleton puts on the stage respond to this complaint. The Burglar could register to vote in the district after being a resident for

one month – and not a very good citizen, we assume. The Butler is an immigrant who cannot speak proper English, and the Irish policeman responds to the conservative Catholic stereotype according to which women should be left at home and as far as possible from the dirty politics of the mundane world. In the farcical happy ending, obviously, the three male characters are eventually convinced by Jennie's eloquence that they have to vote for woman suffrage. The injustice of the law is presented as the key argument for woman suffrage, as proved in Jennie's words:

If you were caught, you'd be tried by men. You see, if I committed a murder, I wouldn't be tried by my own sex, would I? [...] you men have *some* say in the law under which you are to be tried. I have also got to obey the law, and yet I have *no* say in making it. (*Smiling*) Don't you think that's a good argument? (332, emphasis in original)

The Burglar is absolutely convinced after such a clear presentation of the reason for woman suffrage, which prompts him to convince – even using his gun – the other two voters with a speech that echoes the suffragists' complaint pointed out earlier: "ain't you guys ashamed of yerselves? Tink of de rotten injustice in dis world. You and me can vote 'cause we wear trousers. [...] What did yer guys ever do to have the vote" (340-341).

Instead of presenting this argument in a realistic or farcical form, as in Gilman's or Middleton's plays, Susan Glaspell defended woman's right to be judged by a jury of one's peers, and also implied, women's right to vote to have a say in legal matters, in a symbolic way. As is well known, in *Trifles* (1916),⁴ Glaspell presents a parallel, symbolic, trial in which Minnie Wright, who has killed her husband, is found non guilty. Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters, by reading the symbolic clues they find in Minnie's kitchen, come to the conclusion that Minnie had the right to kill John. The messy kitchen, the chores left half-done, the dirty towels, Minnie's shabby clothes, her spoiled preserves, and her quilt – half nicely sewn, half queer and enigmatic – lead these women to think that Minnie was imprisoned at the farm and that her husband John was a hard jailer. A symbolic dead canary serves as the ultimate proof: John had killed the canary as he had killed Minnie's lively spirit (Hedges 1995).

The canary is indeed a symbol that appears in other suffrage plays Heterodoxy members wrote. The most significant case is Mary Shaw's *The Parrot Cage* (1914). Mary Shaw was a popular actress, whose political awareness, as Friedl says, "certainly led to an increase of feminist activism in the American theater"

⁴ First produced by the Provincetown Players in Provincetown, Massachusetts on August 8, 1916. In November 1916 the Washington Square Players produced *Trifles*, and the Provincetown Players staged it at their Playwrights' Theatre on April 25, 1921 (Sarlós 178).

(“General” 7). Shaw became notorious by touring the country with Bernard Shaw’s *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*, and in 1909 she played the lead in the first New York performance of her friend Elizabeth Robin’s *Votes for Women*. In *The Parrot Cage*, presented at the Berkeley Theatre on January 24, 1913, and produced by Marie Howe’s Twenty-fifth District Players (Irving 42), Shaw embodies different kinds of women in parrot types: the Philistine, the Rationalistic, the Idealistic, and the Theological. They all, symbolic of their animalization, repeat words that anti-suffragists had incorporated to their agenda. “The highest mission of a parrot is to minister to the happiness of a private family,” says the Idealistic Parrot (303). “We only feel safe behind bars!” “We are afraid of the Unknown!” exhorts the Rationalist Parrot (304). Only the Free-Souled Parrot, to whom the audience has listened shouting “Let me out! I want to be free!” “I was not made to amuse him! I was made to be myself!” and “I can’t be myself chained up in a cage” (301) – the same words Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters imagine the silenced Minnie Foster Wright saying in *Trifles* – is the one to break the chains and fly free. The Free-Souled Parrot’s final words also make a call to the female bonding found at the end of Glaspell’s *Trifles*, when the two women decide to take with them the canary and amend the messy quilt that would give the male detectives the final proof of anger they are looking for:

Come! Come my sisters! Follow me! Your wings are clipped, I know! But perhaps they are strong enough to bear you to the forest! I will help you with my strong, young wings! But even if you fall and perish, at least you’ll die free parrots! With the longing for the forest in your hearts! Not caged, mutilated things! Without souls enough to realize the wrongs that have been done to you! Follow me! Follow me! (Shaw, *Parrot* 305)

While the Free-Souled Parrot offers sisterhood, the other parrots, symbolic of anti-suffragists and those who had not joined the suffrage cause yet, do not follow her. As John D. Irving has noted, “Mary Shaw did not hesitate to criticize those women who, by failing to take up the challenge, gave their tacit support to the status quo” (149). Furthermore, the final words of the play, uttered by the Theological Parrot, poignantly blame these parrots’/women’s entrapment on how the patriarchal structure of religion has taught them to stay imprisoned in their cage/home. It is no coincidence that the Theological Parrot, “very solemnly and sadly,” repeats the Man’s voice “Pretty Polly,” “Scratch Polly’s head” (306), satirizing thus women’s subjection to male dominance. Mary Shaw was aware that the form she had given to this play was a novelty compared to the conventional taste of the commercial drama one could find on Broadway, which promoted realism and melodrama. Her use of satire was a very conscious decision, as implied in Shaw’s words: “Satirical dramas that lash the audience and show them up to themselves as the bunglers or indifferent beings that they are really do more good in the long run than the much lauded plays that run the tear ducts dry” (qtd. in Cobrin 80).

Heterodites such as Mary Shaw were at their best when they satirized the arguments of the anti-suffragists. The choice of satire is a political act in itself. As Ruben Quintero affirms, “satirists write in winters of discontent. And they write not merely out of personal indignation, but with a sense of moral vocation and with a concern for public interest” (1). And as Ronald Paulson says, the satirist “demands decisions of his reader, not mere feelings”, he “wishes to arouse [the readers’] energy to action, not purge it in vicarious experience” (15). It is significant to note that Paulson uses “he” to refer to the satirist, since, as Stephanie Barbé Hammer has asserted, “Satire, as literature of power and attack has been seen as radically masculinist, and in fact a form of power exerted frequently against women” (11-12). We have often read that women use “humor,” implying that satire is gendered, and for decades female satirists were ignored (1995: 12).

As seen, the plays discussed so far echo, sometimes in a mocking way, some of the anti-suffragist arguments. Marie Howe’s *An Anti-Suffrage Monologue* (1913), nevertheless, stands as an early and powerful example of women’s success at pure satire. The monologue served its satiric purpose: it sold very well and was well used in political debates around the country (Schwarz 61). Following the traditionally satiric dialogical form, Howe presents the anti-suffragist arguments in couplets, just to ridicule all of them. Howe ridicules the anti idea that men and women should not have the same rights because they are physically different when she says that women cannot vote because they are not strong enough to take the ballot and drop it. She then goes one step further claiming that if women are strong enough to vote and they do it once, then they will be voting all day long, day after day, because when women like one thing, they cannot stop (255). But Howe also satirizes one of the main anti arguments, one also present in some of the plays discussed so far: if women had the vote, they would neglect their homes. Howe mocks this mouldy anti idea in the following way:

I am the prophet of a new idea. No one has ever thought of it or heard of it before. I well remember when this great idea first came to me. It waked me in the middle of the night with a shock that gave me a headache. This is it: woman’s place is in the home. Is it not beautiful as it is new, new as it is true? Take this idea away with you. You will find it very helpful in your daily lives. You may not grasp it just at first, but you will gradually grow into understanding of it. (257)

Besides mocking the antis for using the same arguments again and again – certainly, the idea that woman’s place was home was not a novelty in 1913 – Howe is also emphasizing how this idea is indeed latent in society. This anti argument is present, for example, in a number of Glaspell’s realistic plays. In *Bernice*,⁵ Laura confronts Margaret, the New Woman character, for not being a traditional, home-based,

⁵ Presented by the Provincetown Players on March 21, 1919 (Sarlós 174).

woman: “You who have not cared what people thought of you – who have not had the sense of fitness – the taste – to hold the place you were born to” (189). And in *Chains of Dew* (1920),⁶ when Nora convinces Dotty to struggle for women’s rights, the traditional character Mrs. McIntyre confronts Nora: “Have you no idea of the sanctity of the home? [...] “You come here – you come here from your lawless, godless life – you enter a Christian home with your degenerate – immoral – ” (154). In Howe’s couplet, and in reply to the possible counter-argument that women were already working outside their homes – as Margaret does in *Bernice* and Nora in *Chains of Dew* – her counter-counter argument is highly satiric: “think of the great modern invention, the telephone. That has been put into the home. Let woman stay at home and answer the telephone” (257). Glaspell visualizes this image in *Chains of Dew*, where at the beginning of Act II we find out that Dotty’s main activity at home is to answer the telephone and write down messages for her husband.

Howe was right in her belief that many of the antis’ arguments were comic enough in themselves and ready material for satire. Together with Paula Jakobi, another Heterodite, she wrote a one-act that mirrors a very absurd episode in the suffrage movement, again from a satiric point of view. When Alice Paul and Lucy Burns formed the Congressional Union, and later the National Woman’s Party, to have the Susan B. Anthony Amendment passed by Congress, several Heterodites, such as Crystal Eastman or Inez Milholland, who led the notorious suffrage parade while riding a white horse in Washington D.C. on March 13, 1913, joined these women in D.C. As is well known, the Congressional Union and the National Woman’s Party were notorious for their use of unorthodox tactics. Some other Heterodites joined them when the National Woman’s Party decided to go one step further in their unorthodox tactics and picket the White House. Alison Turnbull Hopkins and Doris Stevens⁷ were arrested on July 14, 1917, for picketing and sentenced to sixty days in the infamous Occoquan workhouse. Another Heterodite, Alice Kimball, was arrested on August 10, 1918, and sentenced to 15 days in the D.C. jail for taking part in a meeting in Lafayette Square. Paula Jakobi was also arrested on November 10, 1917, and sent to the Occoquan workhouse, where she served 30 day during which she was denied any kind of privacy from male eyes, and, eventually forcibly fed (Schwarz 44-45). With *Telling the Truth at the White House* (1917),⁸ Howe and Jakobi presented the surrealistic way in which the early trials of some of these women were carried out, and the stupid excuse used for their arrest: these women pickets were charged with obstructing the traffic. Comically

⁶ Presented by the Provincetown Players on April 27, 1922 (Sarlós 180).

⁷ For a detailed and first-hand account of these events, see Doris Steven’s *Jailed for Freedom* (1920), especially Part III “Militancy,” pp. 91-191.

⁸ There is no evidence that the play was ever produced. I believe that Jakobi’s imprisonment at Occoquan two months after the play was published quite probably made Howe and Jakobi forget about production plans- if they ever had them.

enough, the eleven women who are being tried in the play do their best to be sent to jail. As the character called Lucy Barnes – a clear reference to Lucy Burns, who was arrested for the first time on June 22, 1917 – says, “Alice Paul will never forgive us if we don’t go to jail” (129). The scene makes clear Alice Paul’s longing for publicity for woman suffrage, whatever the means. The play further made popular the *blasphemous* banners these real women were holding, as seen in the following scene:

D. ATTORNEY (*trying to prove his case*): This young woman when arrested was carrying a banner on which were printed traitorous and seditious words.

JUDGE (*severely*): What was printed on your banner? (*Picket unfurls banner. Judge leans forward and reads*): “We shall fight for the things we have always carried nearest our hearts, for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments.” Hm! Hm! Sounds like anarchy. Who said this?

PICKET: The President of the United States. (129)

The scene recalls the National Woman’s Party strategy to apply President Wilson’s words on democracy to woman suffrage. Alice Paul herself was burning Wilson’s discourses in front of the White House on October 20, 1917, when she was hit by the mob, arrested by the police, and sentenced to seven months in Occoquan workhouse. Probably, given that the play was published in September, Howe and Jakobi wrote this piece early in the summer, when news about the inmates’ mistreatment had not been heard yet. Otherwise, they could probably have chosen a darker tone than the satiric one. As suffrage historians have chronicled, although the silent picketing of the White House started on January 10, 1917, arrests did not begin until June 22, although Lucy Burns and Katherine Morey, the only two arrested, were never brought to trial. Of the twenty-seven women arrested between June 22 and June 26 for “obstructing the traffic,” twenty-one were released, and the other six pickets, who refused to pay the \$25 fines, spent three days in prison. Wilson administration started then raising penalties: on July 14, sixteen pickets were given sixty days in Occoquan workhouse; just to be released three days later. However, from August 17, pickets were arrested and sentenced to sixty days at Occoquan, without pardon, and their ill treatment began. Leaded by Lucy Burns, these women demanded to be treated as political prisoners. In return, many of these women were treated as common inmates, shared cells with criminals, were put in solitary confinement, and, when they went on hunger strike, they were forcibly fed. Paula Jakobi herself experienced this ill treatment after her arrest on November 10, when she was among those women who picketed to protest the treatment of Alice Paul and suffrage prisoners. Jakobi was in Occoquan the night that came to be known as “the Night of Terror;” that night on November 15 when the November 10 pickets were transferred to Occoquan and Superintendent Raymond Whittaker set in motion the brutal

reception of the new prisoners. They were dragged, carried, pushed, and beaten into their cells. In Lucy Barnes's case, she was even handcuffed to her cell's bars with her arms above her head all night long ("Tactics and Techniques of the National Woman's Party" np). But, as said earlier, Howe and Jakobi could not imagine the dimension these trials and imprisonments would take when they satirized the first trials and the absurd charge of obstructing the traffic. Nevertheless, their satiric aim was absolutely clear: to ridicule the antis and to call their readers into action.

This two-fold goal is also present in Mary Shaw's *The Woman of It or Our Friends, the Anti-Suffragists* (1914), presented by Marie Howe's Twenty-fifth District Players and first performed at an Equal Suffrage meeting at the Hotel Astor in January 1912 (Friedl, "Plays" 34). The mottoes of the Anti-Suffrage Club, which are "to be framed and hung" in the clubroom (286), are visually ridiculed. Over two intertwined hearts, these women have represented what they consider the two great moments in a woman's life: "I love you," says the first, representing the first kiss to her husband. The second motto, "Oh, My Dear Baby" represents her first kiss to her baby (286). This play bears resemblance to a couple of plays by Glaspell. The words of the President of the Anti-Suffrage Club in *The Woman of It*: "love is our religion. Husband – home – child. That is our Trinity" (288), find a parallel in the painting of the Sistine Madonna that presides in the Standishes' living room in *Chains of Dew*. The Sistine Madonna visually encapsulates Dotty's Trinity, the traditional model that guides her life. As in Glaspell's *Woman's Honor* (1918),⁹ the female characters in *The Woman of It* are expressionistic types: Mrs. Allright, Mrs. Sweet, Mrs. Grouch, Mrs. Pure-Drive, Mrs. Grundy, and Miss. Noodle. They all have their different arguments against woman suffrage. Apart from this formal coincidence, both plays mirror one key issue that marked the breach between suffragists and anti-suffragists: the idea of chivalry. The antis valued chivalry, while suffragists denounced its absurdity and uselessness. As an example, when anti-suffragists campaigned to reject the New Jersey state referendum to pass woman suffrage on October 15, 1915, one of their posters read:

EVERY SUFFRAGIST, by demanding the vote, practically DECLARES
THAT HER HUSBANDS, FATHERS, SONS AND BROTHERS ARE NOT TO
BE TRUSTED BY THEIR WIVES, MOTHERS, SISTERS AND DAUGHTERS.

Should strife and conflict come to our shores, as come they may, TO
WHOM BUT OUR MEN CAN WE TURN FOR PROTECTION?

If men alone can protect and govern in times of storm and strife, shall we
not place EQUAL RELIANCE UPON THEM WHEN WE ARE AT PEACE? (qtd.
in McGoldrig and Crocco 58, emphasis in the original).

⁹ Presented by the Provincetown Players on April 26, 1918 (Sarlós 174).

That is, one of the arguments the antis employed was that women did not need the vote because their husbands voted for and protected them. Indeed, just asking for the vote was a clear declaration of distrust on male protection, even a war declaration. In Mary Shaw's *The Woman of It*, the president of the Anti-Suffrage Club, echoing the anti argument discussed above, argues with a young woman who is wavering between joining this club or not:

Mrs. Allright: Women were just made to be loved and protected by the strong arm of a loving husband?

Miss Berry: Protected from what, Mrs. Allright?

Mrs. Allright: I don't know exactly. But men are very sensitive on that power, Miss Berry. They all say that woman needs protection by the strong arm of man – and they know ... Chivalry is a very beautiful idea [...] the more inferior to them a woman is the greater they feel the chivalry (289).

Shaw is here mocking the common use that anti-suffragists were doing of the concept of chivalry to keep women away from the vote. Moreover, in Shaw's play, neither Miss Berry nor Mrs. Allright can grasp the use of chivalry, but it is explicitly stated that it is a means of subjugating women. In Susan Glaspell's *Woman's Honor* chivalry also appears as a concept by which men feel they are protecting women, at the same time that they justify women's subjugation to male power. The expressionist female characters, the Shielded One, the Motherly One, the Scornful One, to name a few, posture, as Sharon Friedman has noted, "according to type even as they satirize assumptions about their prescribed roles" (41). I also agree with Barbara Ozieblo that "The characters are all stock comedy figures and are identified as stereotypes of the different models of survival open to women" (115). Used to assume a role to survive in a patriarchal society, all these women want to be the man's alibi so that he does not have to reveal the name of the woman with whom he was the night of the murder he is charged with. But as Friedman affirms, "Their speeches undermine the myth of chivalry as each one alludes to the harsh reality of women's social, economic, and legal position" (41). The central theme of the play is revealed when the Scornful One wonders, "Did it ever strike you as funny that woman's honor is only about one thing, and that man's honor is about everything but that thing?" (134). And her comment makes the others question "What is woman's honor?" And they resume that it is just "A thing men talk about," "A safe corner," "A star to guide them," and also a "vice for them" (144- 45). As J. Ellen Gainor believes, Glaspell reveals the "patriarchal constructs underlying the convention; honor, like other aspects of women's identity, is a male creation foisted upon women but one that they accept begrudgingly or even embrace unquestioningly within male-dominated society" (85). Glaspell had also undermined the idea of patriarchal protection and the strong arm of man in *Trifles*, where two key ideas for woman suffrage surface. First, that women have to protect themselves

– and this is why Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters ally against patriarchal order (Hallgreen 212-13), subverting the legal order which did not let women become members of a jury of one's peers (Hernando-Real 152-55). And second, that the strong arm of man does not always mean protection. Through the eyes of Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters, readers and spectators are led to think that John Wright, a violent man who killed an innocent canary, used to batter his wife (Smith 179-80), which is another reason to find Minnie non guilty, as the female characters do at the end of the play. Therefore, Glaspell led her audience to consider whether a battering man had his wife in mind when casting the ballot. Most probably not. Finally, it is significant to note that, almost seventy years after Elizabeth Cady Stanton had denounced the concept of *femme covert* in her “Declaration of Sentiments” (1848), implying that it could no longer be used to keep women unenfranchised, naively believing that their husbands’ votes, out of their chivalry, also represented their wives, Shaw and Glaspell mocked this principle, testing if, whether realistically, as in *Trifles*, or through laughter, as in *The Woman of It* and *Woman’s Honor*, the audience would eventually react.

To conclude, in his notes to *Back of the Ballot*, Middleton dedicates the play to his “friends the Antis,” adding, “when argument fails, try laughter” (326). The plays discussed in this article have ranged from realism to expressionism, going through symbolism, and above all, satire and parody. While many critics still see satire and parody as self-defeating and pointless forms (Rose 28), I have tried to demonstrate their reconstructive purpose, and how, read in the context of Heterodoxy, all these forms created a rich source of intertextual nets in which Heterodites were successfully trapped in their struggle for woman suffrage. Furthermore, even though the role of Heterodoxy in the struggle for the vote in the United States had already received critical attention in general terms, with this article I hope to have demonstrated that their use of the theater and drama was solid enough to consider it a powerful tool in their contribution to the enfranchisement of the American woman.

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