# "FIGHT TAUGHT RIGHT":[1] EDITH GARRUD AND THE ART OF SUFFRAJITSU IN *OLD BAGGAGE* AND *ENOLA HOLMES*

# "LA LUCHA BIEN ENSEÑADA": EDITH GARRUD Y EL ARTE DEL SUFFRAJITSU EN *OLD BAGGAGE* Y *ENOLA HOLMES*

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## Abstract

This article explores the revival and representation of Edith Garrud, the art of suffrajitsu and the jujitsuffragettes in Lissa Evans's novel *Old Baggage* (2018) and Harry Bradbeer's *Enola Holmes* films (2020, 2022). These works revisit the figure of this jujitsu instructor and her fellow suffragette trainees to respond to certain misrepresentations of these women in both historical and contemporary narratives and depictions of the suffragette movement. By resorting to the figure of Garrud and her self-defence lessons for suffragettes, the novel and films vindicate the contributions of these women to feminism. The works not only shed light on jujitsu's usefulness and relevance for women's own protection, but also on the potential of this martial art to empower women and subvert gender stereotypes. *Old Baggage* and *Enola Holmes* offer more accurate and faithful versions of the jujitsuffragettes and their trainer than those offered by detractors of women's suffrage during the period, thus restoring and commemorating the contribution of these women to first-wave feminism.

**Keywords**: suffragette, Edith Garrud, *Old Baggage*, *Enola Holmes*, feminist self-defence.

## Resumen

Este artículo explora el resurgimiento y la representación de Edith Garrud, el arte del *suffrajitsu* y las *jujitsuffragettes* en la novela *Old baggage* (2018), de Lissa Evans y las películas de *Enola Holmes*, de Harry Bradbeer (2020, 2022). Estos productos

rescatan la figura de esta instructora de jiu-jitsu y sus compañeras y aprendices *suffragettes* para responder a ciertas tergiversaciones sobre estas mujeres presentes en narrativas y representaciones del movimiento sufragista tanto históricas como contemporáneas. Al recurrir a la figura de Garrud y sus lecciones de autodefensa a las *suffragettes*, la novela y las películas reivindican las contribuciones de estas mujeres al feminismo. Estas obras no sólo iluminan la utilidad y relevancia del jiu-jitsu para la propia protección de las mujeres, sino también el potencial de este arte marcial para empoderar a las mujeres y subvertir los estereotipos de género. *Old Baggage* y *Enola Holmes* ofrecen versiones más precisas y fieles de las *jujitsuffragettes* y su entrenadora que las ofrecidas por los detractores del sufragio femenino durante ese período restaurando y conmemorando así la contribución de estas mujeres a la primera ola del feminismo.

**Palabras clave:** suffragette, Edith Garrud, *Old Baggage*, *Enola Holmes*, autodefensa feminista.

## 1. Introduction



There has recently been a growing offer of women's self-defence courses worldwide, triggered by women's "desire to overcome fear" (Burman 2024) and "tak[e] responsibility for their own safety" (Roussel 2023) due to the never-ending threat of, and potential exposure to male violence in both the domestic and public domains. Just to give a few examples, a "Women Fight Back class" teaching the Israeli self-defence method Krav Maga is offered in Paris. A new self-defence course in mixed martial arts, including boxing and jujitsu, is also available for Torontonian women as a result of the "partner violence […] epidemic in Ontario" (Burman 2024). Its founder, Nikki Saltz, explains that she aims to provide women with a "safe space beyond self-defence training" (2024), a space where they can share their experiences, support each other and feel empowered. Sisterhood and emancipation, the core course teachings, elucidate the links between women's self-defence training and feminism. Yet these ties are not new, since feminist self-defence is not a phenomenon of the present, and neither is gender violence.

In order to trace the origins of feminist self-defence it is pertinent to go back to the suffragette movement. Members of Emmeline Pankhurst's organisation of suffragettes, the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), showed interest in self-defence techniques after the physical and sexual violence used by the police during a march to the House of Commons on 18 November 1910 (Elliott 2018: 318). The police attacks lasted for around six hours and concluded with the arrest of 115 women and 4 men (Green 1997: 20). This event became one of the most violent episodes experienced by Pankhurst's troops, for many suffragettes

were "beaten, pinched and mistreated, and [some of them were even] indecently assaulted" (Billington 1982: 671). This episode was commonly known as Black Friday due to the brutality several WSPU members faced at hands of the police (Nym Mayhall 2003: 101). Black Friday marked a turning point, for it not only accelerated WSPU's shift towards more radical and violent forms of militancy but also encouraged suffragettes to take up jujitsu, a Japanese martial art based on self-defence that consists of deploying the attacker's strength and weight against him (Godfrey 2012: 91).

Suffragettes' deployment of jujitsu set an example for future feminist movements, since it emphasises the relevance and correlation of physical independence and empowerment. In this context, it is important to revisit the figure of one suffragette in particular: Edith Garrud, who in the early twentieth century became one of the British pioneers of jujitsu (Kelly 2019: 9). Together with her husband, William, Garrud first learnt jujitsu at Mr. Barton-Wright's Bartitsu[2] School in London, and then at the Golden Square's training school run by two Japanese instructors Yukio Tani and Sadakazu Uyenishi. William and Edith Garrud eventually took over the ownership of Tani and Uyenishi's martial arts hall —or *dojo* as referred to in Japan— as well as of their jujitsu teachings (2019: 11-12). Subsequently, Edith opened her own training centre at Argyll Place and offered jujitsu lessons for women and children (Godfrey 2012: 99-100). In 1909, Garrud gave a jujitsu demonstration at the Prince's Skating Rink's Bazaar, organised by the WSPU, where she showed her ability to throw a policeman to the ground despite his physical advantage over her (2012: 99). After this event, Garrud became involved in the Cause[3] and offered jujitsu classes exclusively to suffragettes twice a week (Godfrey 2012: 99; Callan et al. 2019: 536). She was in charge of training Mrs. Pankhurst's Amazons or 'The Bodyguard', a group of around thirty women whose role was to protect the WSPU's leaders from (re)arrest (Godfrey 2012: 99-100; Kelly 2019: 9). The term 'suffrajitsu' was coined to refer specifically to suffragettes' deployment of jujitsu (Callan et al. 2019: 531) and the term 'jujutsufragettes' to allude to the union's bodyguard (Kelly 2019: 13-14). Garrud's jujitsu instructions provided suffragettes with valuable skills and tools to defend themselves from anti-suffragist assaults, police attacks and arrest.



Despite her significant contributions to the Cause, Garrud has remained mostly unknown until recently, and absent from the popular imagery of the British suffrage movement. Scholar Simon Kelly claims the material about Garrud is reduced to a few newspaper articles, satirical drawings and magazine reports (2019: 19). Like many other WSPU members, Garrud has probably been forgotten because, when revisiting the suffragette movement, the focus has been mostly placed on the leaders of the organisation, more specifically, on the Pankhursts (Kelly 2019: 21).

Nevertheless, there has been a growing interest in honouring "this little-known suffragette" (Williams 2012) and rescuing her from oblivion. Such concern started in 2012 with the unveiling of a commemorative plaque —"Edith Garrud 1872-1971: The suffragette who knew jiu-jitsu lived here"— at her former house in London. The increasing popularisation of self-defence training for women has probably sparked curiosity towards the origins of feminist self-defence, and thus, towards Garrud. When looking into the roots of feminist self-defence, however, one realises the limited sources available about the pioneering role of Garrud, which has "added mystery surrounding Edith and her fellow jujutsuffragettes" (Kelly 2019: 19-20). The wish to unravel such a mystery has resulted in a diverse range of cultural, literary and media products and references related to the suffragettes' jujitsu instructor and her trainees.

Accounts of Garrud's resurgence have appeared in different fields ranging from the press —with magazine and newspaper articles including *El Pais*'s "Suffrajitsu: The women who used martial arts to fight for the vote" (Bravo 2023) and *Stylist*'s "Everything You Need to Know about The Awesome Art of Suffrajitsu" (Keegan 2018)— to media productions like Katherine and Tony Wolf's 2018 documentary *No Man Shall Protect Us: The Hidden History of the Suffragette Bodyguards* and Sarah Gavron's film *Suffragette* (2015). This offers an overview of the suffragette movement through Maude Watts, a working-class woman who progressively becomes involved with Pankhurst's union. Although Edith Garrud is not present in the film, there are some allusions to her, once again through the actress Helena Bonham Carter, who renames her character Edith in homage to the suffragette jujitsu instructor (Kelly 2019: 20). In addition, there is a short scene in which Maude, played by Carey Mulligan, is thrown to a mat by Edith, which hints at suffragettes' usage of martial arts to defend themselves from potential male attacks and sexual aggressions.[4] The figure of Garrud also reappeared on stage thanks to Kate Prince and Priya Parmar's musical *Sylvia* (2023). With a predominantly Black cast, the musical addressed the often-ignored racial aspect of the women's suffrage movement while emphasising the underrepresentation of Black people in both history and the arts. Although the musical focuses on Sylvia Pankhurst, it offers an overview of the suffragette campaign, devoting a scene to choreograph jujitsu moves, and pays homage to Garrud, whose role is here played by the Black actress and dancer Jade Hackett.

Literature has also been the target of Garrud's comeback. The 2018 centenary of partial voting rights for some British women generated manifold publications about the suffrage movement such as David Roberts's children's book *Suffragettes*: *The Battle for Equality* (2018), which includes a few pages about the art of suffrajitsu and the Amazons. Other authors writing suffragette stories for child audiences

include Iszi Lawrence, whose book *The Unstoppable Letty Pegg* (2020) follows a protagonist learning jujitsu from the suffragettes, and features Garrud as a key character. Additionally, it is important to highlight two graphic novels for young adults centred exclusively on the figure of Garrud and the suffragettes' bodyguard: Tony Wolf and Joao Vieira's trilogy *Suffrajitsu: Mrs. Pankhurst's Amazons* (2015), and *Jujitsufragistas: Las Amazonas de Londres*, published in Spain in 2023 (Xavier et al.) at the same time as the English version in the US, but originally published in 2020 in France. The fact that not all products of and references to Garrud and the suffragettes' self-defence have arisen from the British context reveals the transnational interest towards the origins of feminist self-defence as well as the popularisation of Garrud and the present-day relevance of her training in other countries beyond the UK.

All these literary and cultural representations revive the herstory[5] of suffrajitsu to commemorate the movement, as they give voice to Garrud and the Amazons and emphasise their courage, bravery and empowerment. Against this background, this article focuses on two other examples that update the figure of Garrud and the jujitsuffragettes for contemporary audiences: Lissa Evans's novel *Old Baggage* (2018) and Netflix's *Enola Holmes* film (2020) and its sequel, Enola Holmes II (2022), the last two based on Nancy Springer's young adult series of detective novels *The Enola Holmes Mysteries* (2006-2023). These examples have been chosen because of their instructive potential in presenting feminist self-defence and the history of women's resistance to younger audiences and general readers unfamiliar with the suffragette movement. Both Evans and Bradbeer resort to fiction to offer accessible and captivating stories that emphasise the contribution of martial arts to women's emancipation and political activism. The didactic approach behind Evans's work of historical fiction is clear in its inclusion of a protagonist that teaches lessons about the women's suffrage movement and later creates a girls' club and trains them in jujitsu. The *Enola Holmes* films exploit the inherent didacticism of the young adult books on which they are based, prompting audiences to (un)learn certain ideas about the suffragette movement. Although Springer's books refer to Enola's mother Eudoria and her involvement with the women's suffrage movement, they do not develop this aspect. Hence, for this study, I have chosen to focus on the films, as they incorporate the figure of Garrud into the story, which is not present in the books. The films develop Eudoria's role as a suffragette who knows jujitsu and teaches it to her daughter, thus becoming "the first mainstream production to feature suffrajitsu-style action as a major plot point" ("Martial Arts" 2020). This article thus analyses *Old Baggage* and *Enola Holmes* as representative examples of contemporary cultural artefacts revisiting Garrud and the Amazons. I claim that the novel and the movies under analysis challenge certain misrepresentations of the women's suffrage movement and the

suffragettes, such as their portrayal as inherently violent individuals and their association with terrorism and prejudices stemming from their use of military tactics such as arson and bombing. Additionally, I argue that by revisiting the art of suffrajitsu, Evans and Bradbeer highlight the suffragettes' contribution to feminism by representing the politicisation of women's bodies through jujitsu. Such a portrayal underscores suffragettes' use of this martial art to challenge gender prejudices and empower women.

*Old Baggage* follows the story of Mattie Simpkin, a middle-aged Londoner who was active in the suffragette movement. Set primarily in 1928, as universal suffrage nears approval, Mattie believes the fight for equality is not over, so she delivers lectures on the women's struggle and then founds the Hampstead Heath Girls' Club. Drawing from the martial art of jujitsu, she trains the club members —called the Amazons— in both combat techniques and the ideological skills needed to embrace their new roles as enfranchised citizens. The *Enola Holmes* films are about Sherlock Holmes's little sister Enola, who in each movie must solve a mystery. To accomplish her missions and fight back against her enemies, Enola resorts to the art of jujitsu she learnt thanks to her suffragette mother Eudoria, played by Helena Bonham Carter. Eduoria's knowledge of jujitsu comes from lessons received from Edith Grayson, a self-defence instructor whose character clearly alludes to Garrud, here represented again by a Black actress, Susan Wokoma.[6]



In the first section of this article, I will deploy different analyses of feminist historiography and women's suffrage (Billington 1982; Green 1997; Nym Mayhall 2003; Purvis 2013; Elliott 2018; Cooper-Cunningham 2019) to unravel how the novel and films contest suffragettes' traditional association with violence and account for their deployment of insurgent tactics, either as a means of protest or self-defence, but never to hurt anyone. Subsequently, I will examine suffragettes' association with terrorism, drawing on examples from Evans and Bradbeer to illustrate how the novel and films strategically engage with this theme to contest the presentation of WSPU members as terrorists. Finally, I shall point out how the analysed products also disprove the falsehood that women only became enfranchised thanks to their contributions during wartime, focusing rather on the suffragettes' bravery. In the second section, I will first delve into the political functions of jujitsu training halls to illustrate they were not just seen as sports or self-defence clubs but as safe spaces for suffragettes. Then I shall focus on the novel and films' references to the dual potential of suffrajitsu to defy gender biases and expectations. To explore these ideas, I rely on historical studies on women's involvement in sport (Kay 2008; Harvey et al. 2013; Cahn 2015), archival material related to Edith Garrud and the suffragettes (Godfrey 2012: 100; Rouse 2017; Callan et al. 2019; Kelly 2019) and a variety of contemporary feminist theoretical

frameworks (Butler 1990; Butler 1993; Ahmed 2004; Gillis et al. 2004; Budgeon 2011; Ahmed 2017; Rivers 2017; Genz 2021). These studies will be helpful to illustrate jujitsu's political and feminist potential since suffragettes' deployment of this martial art served both as a strategy to challenge prejudices about women's physical strength and power, and as a method of empowerment and emancipation for women.

## 2. Suffragettes Fight Back: From Defencelessness to Self-Defence

As explained in the introduction, *Old Baggage* and *Enola Holmes* are works that incorporate the figure of Garrud and the art of jujitsu to contest one of the most recurrent stereotypes of the suffragettes: their portrayal as violent subjects by nature. During the women's movement, its detractors resorted to various images —mainly propagandistic posters— to promote a counter-discursive narrative against the Cause. These biased representations were mostly disseminated by members of openly anti-suffrage groups. One of the largest anti-suffrage parties was the National League for Opposing Women's Suffrage (NLOWS), which was created by Mrs. Humphry Ward in 1910, and by 1914 had a total of 42,000 members. The NLOWS resulted from the union of two existing anti-suffrage societies: The Women's National Anti-Suffrage League and the Men's League for Opposing Woman Suffrage. Among its members were renowned personalities, most notably Queen Victoria (1819-1901), who considered the Cause "a wicked folly" (Roberts 2018: 48); PM Asquith, known as the most resentful enemy by the suffragettes; and Home Secretary Winston Churchill (1874-1965), who was much criticised for his cruelty when ordering repressive actions against suffragette activists during Black Friday. The most reactionary and anti-pedagogical representations against the women's suffrage campaign presented its members as the instigators of violence, and policemen and anti-suffragists as the victims (Rouse 2017: 131-133), grotesquely depicting suffragettes as aggressive, dehumanised cannibals, even inciting violence against them.[7] Such inaccurate depictions deliberately reversed roles, since the police and some men from the crowd were the ones throwing spoiled fruits and vegetables at suffragettes, and even verbally abusing and sexually assaulting them, often making of suffragettes the victims of taunts, pushes, kicks and blows (127). Different suffrage societies responded to such an array of misrepresentations with their own images and artistic productions to clarify that women were not the agents but the object of violent attacks, and to vindicate their true objective: equality between men and women, specifically in the political terrain.[8] Garrud herself sought to challenge anti-suffragists' perception

of jujitsuffragettes as "masculinised Amazons preying on innocent policemen" (133). Mattie, the protagonist of Old Baggage, voices Garrud's preoccupations in emphasising suffragettes' role as victims of aggression, for she claims that

> women asking questions of Cabinet Ministers at public discussions would be dragged from the hall, punched and kicked, shaken and indecently manhandled, often in full view of an unprotesting audience. I myself have a permanent depression in one calf resulting from a steward jabbing the ferrule of his umbrella directly into the muscle. (Evans 2018: 31-32)

Garrud declared that the martial art was only taught for self-defence (Callan et al. 2019: 540) to provide suffragettes with methods to protect themselves from possible attacks and (sexual) assaults, thus alluding to jujitsu's principles of using "soft flowing movements to absorb, disrupt and redirect force and aggression rather than seeking to oppose [the attackers] with brute strength" (Kelly 2019: 9).

Besides jujitsu moves, Garrud trained women in the use of domestic tools and homemade arms such as the wooden Indian club that jujitsuffragettes concealed under her garments and used for defensive ends (Godfrey 2012: 100; Kelly 2019: 17). Like Garrud, Mattie combines her jujitsu tactics with the use of weapons to face potential enemies. The novel opens with a reference to a club that Mattie usually carries in her bag for protection, which in turn hints at the title "old baggage", possibly in reference to the equipment that Mattie would carry. She is later depicted practicing jujitsu using domestic weapons: "she windmilled through another exercise, then tucked the rolling pin under one arm and lunged with the club towards an imaginary policeman, feinting and thrusting" (Evans 2018: 57). Mattie reproduces Garrud's methodology, for she bases the training of her girls' club on the art of jujitsu and instructs her pupils to rely on the use of weapons "as a protest; as a means of defence: as an exercise in coordination", adding that arms do not just serve to initiate conflicts but are also useful to stop them (67). This claim further calls into question the belief that suffragettes were the instigators of violence and proves that Mattie serves as the voice for Garrud, for she also warns her pupils that "violence should always be a last resort and have a purpose" (69) and claims, "I am not teaching these skills with violence in mind […]. I also make certain there is no one at all in the next-door gardens during our practice sessions" (78). This latter statement in turn appears as an illustration that jujitsu's philosophy fits well with the WSPU's ideology, which was based on Mrs. Pankhurst's premise of not hurting anyone in the name of the Cause (Purvis 2013: 584).

The *Enola Holmes* films also defy the idea of suffragettes being the perpetrators rather than the object of violent attacks. The jujitsu scenes included in the movies illustrate either women practicing this martial art between them or using it to defend themselves when facing aggression or being chased. For instance, in the first

film, Enola puts her jujitsu skills into practice with Edith Grayson, unsuccessfully trying to throw her to the ground with "the corkscrew manoeuvre", one of the jujitsu moves that she later tries again to combat a man in the street who pushes her into a wall and her head into a water barrel. In the same manner that Arthur Conan Doyle had Sherlock Holmes use Bartitsu skills to fight Professor Moriarty in "The Adventure of the Empty House" (1903), the movies depict Enola practicing and using jujitsu to repel her enemies. This is a novelty that Bradbeer incorporates into the story, emphasising jujitsu's potential for women's self-defence not only through its protagonist but also through other characters, including Eudoria and Edith Grayson. As reflected in the second film, mother and daughter appear together with Grayson using their jujitsu moves against three police officers who are running after them. The aforementioned examples highlight the actual purpose of jujitsu, particularly in the context of the suffrage movement, and suggest that similar to Conan Doyle's popularisation of Bartitsu (Dorlin 2022: 207), Bradbeer contributes to the re-popularisation of jujitsu for women's agency, independence and empowerment. In turn, his film adaptations memorialise women pioneers in feminist self-defence, for they simultaneously pay homage and give visibility to the sometimes silenced voices of Garrud and those suffragettes who bravely and exclusively used this martial art in self-defence.



The films further address the connection between suffragettes and violence by denying the links established between the movement and terrorism. WSPU members such as Emily Davison and other suffragettes involved in acts of bombing and arson have at times been related to terrorism (Pugh 2013: 5), and they have been even referred to as "Britain's forgotten terrorists" (Webb 2014). Historian Simon Webb argues that the violence that these suffragettes conducted has been frequently omitted from the history of suffrage and questions the extent to which such violent tactics postponed rather than contributed to the achievement of the franchise. The *Enola Holmes* films somehow respond to Webb's claim of the omission of suffragettes' more combative tactics, including numerous references to their acts of arson. One of the first allusions to explosive material appears in the first film, in Edith Grayson's dojo, where Enola sees a box with bangers — the same she sees at her home, in the meeting room where her mother and other suffragettes plan to set fire to different locations around London. After this episode, Enola discovers a storehouse filled with bombs, bangers and barrels inscribed with "dragon firework", "gun powder" and "black gunpowder amberlite". There are also pamphlets that read "Votes for Women. Make Your Voices Heard", "Protest unrest and civil disobedience" featuring the "Orsini bomb" (Bradbeer 2020: min. 48),[9] and a newspaper with the headline "The dynamite outrages at the West End London" featuring images of a bombed-out building and a post box burnt down. The sequel also contains references to suffragettes' acts of arson since it opens with

an image of Eudoria dropping an incendiary device into a post box and becoming the target of search and arrest as a result. These examples contribute to the questioning of suffragettes' image as terrorists since they show that the WSPU's used incendiary devices against property, not against people, and simultaneously bring to light what suffragettes were willing to do for the Cause.

The *Enola Holmes* films not only challenge the scepticism towards the WSPU's more combative approach but also defy other deep-rooted misconceptions about suffragettes. By giving visibility to their more extreme militant tactics, the films emphasise the extent of suffragettes' courage and bravery to question the recurrent misbelief that women's suffrage was approved exclusively thanks to their contributions during wartime (Nym Mayhall 1995: 334). The movies in turn question other prejudices and stereotypical representations of the suffragettes as careless mothers.[10] This becomes clear at the end of the first film, when Eudoria tells Enola, "I didn't leave you because I didn't love you, I left for you because I couldn't bear to have this world be your future. So I had to fight. You have to make some noise if you want to be heard" (Bradbeer 2020: min. 113), in turn recalling Emmeline Pankhurst's "make some noise" motto.



Evans' novel refutes the same misrepresentations of Pankhurst's followers as those contested in *Enola Holmes*. On the one hand, Mattie's lectures are oriented toward resisting suffragettes' role as terrorists. In one of these lectures, she argues that suffragettes never intended to harm anyone despite being the target of violent attacks. A man from the audience contests her claim, referring to the arson and bombing campaign some suffragettes carried out during 1913-1914 (Bearman 2007: 864), which included burning golf courses, cricket pavilions, the orchid house at Kew Gardens and the Oxford boathouse (Roberts 2018: 98). When asked about suffragettes' "criminal acts of arson", Mattie replies that "men have been allowed to use bloodshed and disorder to gain their freedom —have been celebrated for their passion in pursuit of the vote— and yet the suffragettes, who hurt not a single person with their fires, are condemned" (Evans 2018: 33). On the other hand, Mattie denies that women won the right to vote due to their work during wartime. This becomes evident when a member of the audience suggests this idea and she responds that it was "only the Government's fear that militancy would return after the war that forced the bill through" (37). Mattie thus devotes her lectures to the suffragettes' pre-war contributions to reinforce the idea that the right to vote was achieved thanks to suffragettes' deeds and sacrifices, a purpose that becomes clear in her first lecture when she claims

> I hope over the next hour and a half, to convey something of the history and methods of the militant suffragette movement, to slice through the integument of myth and slander that has so often overlaid the truth of its beliefs and actions, and to expose to clear view those of its aims that have yet to be achieved. (28)

Therefore, by challenging the different misbeliefs about the WSPU and their members, Evans and Bradbeer prove their interest in counteracting biased references to suffragettes such as their perception as the UK's "forgotten terrorists" and rather reclaiming their role as Britain's (at times) forgotten feminist pioneers.

## 3. Suffragettes' Bodies as Battlegrounds: The Politicisation of Jujitsu

*Old Baggage* and *Enola Holmes* not only revisit the herstory of suffrajitsu and the figure of Garrud to question some of the aforementioned misapprehensions surrounding the WSPU and its members, but also to emphasise their courage and empowerment. Both the novel and the films mirror how jujitsu underwent a politicisation process in the context of the suffrage movement, as this martial art was not only seen as a sport or a self-defence tool but also as a vehicle to challenge gender biases regarding women's capabilities. Suffragettes' deployment of jujitsu can be seen as a performative expression defying traditional gender constructs, which echoes Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity (1990). Butler argues that "gender is performatively produced [adding that] there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler 1990: 34). Suffragettes' expression of strength and resilience through jujitsu thus contributed to the resignification of female bodies in the public domain and the political context. It is not surprising that Evans and Bradbeer resorted to suffrajitsu to make visible and reclaim suffragettes' contribution to feminism, since it became a form of literally embodying the political as jujitsu offered suffragettes a vivid and concrete manifestation of their political struggle. Pankhurst's followers relied on the politicisation of their bodies throughout their campaign. WSPU members turned to militancy, convinced that the women's movement needed "a new approach, a shift from the gently audible to the boldly visible" (Evans 2018: 30), as Mattie replicates. At the beginning of their campaign, they believed in the relevance that the body on display had for the Cause and combined fashionable femininity with activism based on the idea of an "ornamental body as a civic body" (Green 1997: 3). At this stage, marches, processions and demonstrations became their main strategies to demand enfranchisement. At a more advanced phase of the movement, many suffragettes resorted to acts of civil disobedience and were consequently incarcerated. While in prison, they needed to find a way to keep fighting, which resulted in their shift from the ideal of the "ornamental body" to the image of the "docile body", as they decided to go on hunger strikes and undergo forcible feeding for the Cause (25). In her work *Living a Feminist Life*,

Sara Ahmed discusses the notion of wilfulness in the context of contemporary feminism as "the persistence in the face of having been brought down" and presents persistence as "an act of civil disobedience" (2017: 84). Against this background, suffragettes' willingness to adopt militant tactics and sacrifice their bodies for the Cause can also be read as an act of feminist wilfulness. Towards the end of their campaign, a significant number of suffragettes took up jujitsu lessons and self-defence training became a further way of turning the physical into something political (Rouse 2017: 6-7). Hence, Ahmed's theorisation proves to be relevant once again. Her notion of "feminist killjoy" resonates with the actions of the suffragettes who can be seen as "willing to get in the way" (2017: 66) —to borrow Ahmed's phrasing— since they refused to conform to the Edwardian ideal of a woman based on passivity and subjugation and persistently used their bodies to challenge this traditional perception of womanhood.

Yet researchers have constantly ignored or failed to recognise the potential that practicing jujitsu had in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries for women's personal and political empowerment and have merely focused on the usefulness of this martial art for purposes of self-defence (Rouse 2017: 8). Sport historians, however, have often perceived women's involvement in sports as part of the emancipation movement (Kay 2007: 539). Either consciously or not, women's participation in physical activities and competitions became a tool to claim the control and enjoyment of their bodies, so advocates of women's sports "shared an agenda and an activist spirit with self-defined feminists involved in reproductive rights campaigns, antirape organising, women's health clinics, women's self-defence classes, lesbian feminist activism, and self-help efforts that encouraged women to explore their own sexuality" (Cahn 2015: 252). In the context of the women's suffrage campaign, the Gymnastic Teachers' Suffrage Society, founded in 1909, was the only women's sport association that actively took part in the suffrage movement (Kay 2008: 1347-1348). Nevertheless, when it comes to the involvement of women sport instructors and practitioners in the Cause, Garrud's contribution to women's emancipation as a jujitsu pioneer for women in Western Europe was unique (Callan et al. 2019: 531). Garrud not only helped to popularise jujitsu at the beginning of the twentieth century with her self-defence lessons for women, but also delved into its political potential through her writings (Kelly 2019: 14). Garrud emphasised women's situation of vulnerability in England during the Edwardian period and relied on jujitsu's reformative capability in conjunction with the suffragette movement (Callan et al. 2019: 536). WSPU members also acknowledged that women's lack of political emancipation was related to their physical and sexual oppression (Rouse 2017: 149). Suffragettes believed that this martial art offered them a means of rebellion against their subjugation; a way to put equality "into motion" (Dorlin 2022: 43),

and challenge definitions of women as "the weaker sex". During the suffrage campaign and the post-suffrage era, women's sport instructors advocated women-only lessons, since they defended the idea of physical exercise exclusively offered by and for women (Kidd in Harvey et al. 2013: 54). Against this background, Garrud taught jujitsu to women and offered sessions exclusively to suffragettes twice a week in her dojo at Argyll Place (Callan et al. 2019: 536; Kelly 2019: 14). Inspired by Garrud's writings, demonstrations and instructions, suffragettes "politicized their bodies", embracing the possibilities that jujitsu offered them to "struggle together, for themselves and by themselves" (Dorlin 2022: 46), and used this martial art as a tool to defy and both literally and metaphorically overthrow the patriarchal system that oppressed them (Kelly 2019: 9). Thus, the figure of Garrud attests to the "politicization of women and sport" (Callan et al. 2019: 531) since her dojo was not just perceived as a training centre but also as a political site of struggle.

The political dimension jujitsu acquired in the context of the women's movement is manifested in both *Old Baggage* and *Enola Holmes*. Mattie's and Edith Grayson's sessions recall Garrud's exclusive lessons for women and suffragettes, because the club Mattie creates is only for girls, and when Edith's dojo features in the films, only women appear training in the background. Mattie's house and Edith's dojo also serve the political functions of Garrud's training halls. Garrud's dojos in Argyll Street and Golden Square provided suffragettes a place to train for physical combat, but also became "safe spaces" for their gatherings and, more specifically, for those campaigners who sought a place to hide from the police and avoid being (re)arrested, and to recover physically after being released from prison (Godfrey 2012: 101; Callan et al. 2019: 539; Kelly 2019: 17). Mattie's place, for instance, is referred to as "the Mousehold" because, during the suffrage campaign, it was used as a refuge and a place of recovery for suffragettes, known as "mice", once liberated from jail under the Cat and Mouse Act (Evans 2018: 54).[11] Edith Grayson's training centre, for instance, is used to store explosive material. Besides, both Enola and Sherlock visit Edith's dojo to see if their missing mother is hiding there, which again reminds us of the political ends of Garrud's training halls. These examples illustrate that jujitsu was not only an expression of anger and defiance but also a reflection of female solidarity. The sisterhood linked to jujitsu's practices and spaces reveals "how emotions work as a form of cultural politics" (Ahmed 2004: 210) for emotions like solidarity between women became political tools that define collectives such as the suffragette movement.



*Old Baggage* and *Enola Holmes* further depict how the Japanese martial art became political when practiced suffragettes through Mattie's instructions to the girls and Eudoria's education of Enola. Both women train their pupils in

mind and body, taking as their point of departure the philosophy of the suffrage movement, which encouraged the notion of *mens sana in corpore sano* to prove that women were both physically and mentally capable and thus met the requirements to exercise their right to vote (Godfrey 2012: 86). Mattie thus argues that her lessons on self-defence "nicely balance the brain work which is also part of the club regime" (Evans 2018: 87). The opening scenes of *Enola Holmes I* illustrate that Eudoria teaches different skills to her daughter, ranging from reading, science and chess to darts, archery, fencing and jujitsu. As Enola herself explains, a working day with her mother consisted of history, lunch and fitness followed by fight combat (Bradbeer 2020: min. 50). By equipping Enola with both intellectual and physical skills, Eudoria is teaching her to think critically and defend herself, thus challenging traditional Victorian educational norms for girls based on domestic skills. Eudoria's reluctance to comply with the educational expectations of the period when teaching her daughter recalls Butler's theorisation on gender and subversion. Butler argues that gender identity is based on a set of "regulatory ideals" (1993: 26) and explains that such ideals depend on specific manifestations of femininity and masculinity (176). Therefore, failing to embody pre-established notions of femininity implies subversion, which is what Eudoria demonstrates in the films. She relies on self-confidence and independence as the basis of her teaching in a world that often restricts women. Considering Eudoria's involvement in the suffragette movement, her training can also be read as Eudoria's way of preparing Enola to follow in her footsteps and take part in broader societal struggles.



Mattie and Eudoria not only teach jujitsu for self-defence, but also rely on the possibilities that Garrud saw in jujitsu to "introduce women to new ideas about the possibilities for their gender and undermine assumed notions of their vulnerability" (Callan et al. 2019: 541). Both Mattie and Eudoria decide to transmit this idea to their trainees, which indicates that the novel and films represent intergenerational female interactions as encouraging and motivating (Gillis et al. 2004: 3). Mattie argues that "a woman who can unerringly thread a needle can accurately throw a stone" (Evans 2018: 66). Similarly, Eudoria passes her suffrajitsu skills on to her daughter, insisting on the need to be autonomous and self-sufficient, which is something that Enola's name symbolises (when read backwards it becomes "alone"). Eudoria clarifies that the choice of her daughter's name is not meant to imply Enola should be a lonely woman, but an independent one. Both characters thus echo and vindicate Garrud's perception of self-defence as "an ongoing process of embodying equality and putting it into practice" (Dorlin 2022: 48) and encourage their pupils to understand and deploy jujitsu in the same terms. Against this background, a feminist ideal based on female bonds and intergenerational connections (Rivers 2017: 5) is promoted in *Old Baggage* and *Enola Holmes* to

reproduce an ongoing perception of common fight (Cooper and Short 2012: 166-167). This idea of a mutual struggle is what Eudoria and Mattie seek to convey to Enola and the Amazons, respectively.

Mattie and Eudoria therefore promote a new understanding of femininity inspired by Garrud and the jujitsuffragettes, acknowledging their contributions to the feminist movement. Garrud sought to redefine femininity and present it more dynamically while insisting that women's practice of jujitsu did not mean losing their ladylike attributes (Godfrey 2012: 103). This is evident in *Enola Holmes II*, when Eudoria, Enola and Edith demonstrate their jujitsu skills against three police officers despite wearing corsets and long skirts, in typical Edwardian fashion. This scene proves that jujitsu could be practiced even while out of uniform and despite wearing these most uncomfortable and constrictive garments. However, the scene is also relevant for other reasons. On the one hand, having the three characters fight together contests the notion that women tend to relate better to people of the same or similar age than to other women, and thus recognises the potential for feminist interactions among women from other generations (Budgeon 2011: 280). On the other hand, it recalls Garrud's intentions to dismantle ideas about women's inherent weakness and to encourage them to interact with and understand their bodies differently so that they could defend themselves against attacks from men. Suffragettes also recognised jujitsu's potential to provide a new idea of womanhood based on empowerment and self-confidence (Rouse 2017: 8) and to challenge gender stereotypes that presented men as strong, aggressive and violent and women as fragile, passive and peaceful (116). Although Mattie and Eudoria clearly question gender prejudices through their lessons, Enola also participates in this disruption. For instance, in the second movie, there is a scene that reverses gender roles by presenting Enola as capable of fighting and teaching Lord Tewksbury, one of the leading male characters, who is unskilful in physical combat, how to punch and deflect the blows of his enemies. *The Enola Holmes* films thus vindicate the relevance of self-defence training to empower women and deny the misbelief that they needed male protection.



Similarly, the fact that Mattie deploys the jujitsu skills she learnt as a suffragette as the grounds of her teaching to girls for their new life as enfranchised subjects not only reclaims the connections between women's physical empowerment and their (political) emancipation (Rouse 2017: 117), but also reinforces the relevance of intergenerational dialogues and lessons. Eudoria and Mattie's teachings to the younger generations prove to be helpful to show that although the different feminist phases have had their specific aims, the movement as a whole has equity among men and women as its common goal (Genz 2021: 202). In this context, jujitsu is presented as one of the means to vindicate equality between the sexes,

since by training and practicing this martial art, suffragettes "literally used their physical stamina to fight for the vote" (Rotunno 2016: 42). Old Baggage and Enola Holmes therefore echo Garrud's and the suffragettes' perception of the physical being political (Schultz 2010) and reaffirm the contributions of the jujitsuffragettes and their instructor to feminism. That is why they can nowadays be remembered and commemorated —deploying Ahmed's terminology— as "feminist killjoys and wilful subjects" (2017:11) for they refused to abide by gender norms, and "stood up, [spoke] back, [and put their lives at risk] in the struggle for more bearable worlds" (1).

## 4. Conclusion

In sum, *Old Baggage* and *Enola Holmes* resort to suffrajitsu for revisionist purposes, offering a corrective and more accurate portrayal of the history of the suffragette movement, which undermines specific misrepresentation of suffragettes such as their image as intrinsically violent subjects. Both the novel and films provide faithful versions of these first-wave feminist icons because they emphasise their bravery and empowerment by revisiting Edith Garrud and the jujitsuffragettes. Rather than seeing jujitsu as a mere vehicle of physical self-defence, the novel and films acknowledge the political potential of this martial art as a tool to defy gender norms and express women's agency and solidarity. Borrowing Barbara Kruger's famous statement "Your body is a battleground" (1989), these cultural products demonstrate that by means of jujitsu, suffragettes literally made their bodies a battleground to fight back against the patriarchy and metaphorically questioned the inequalities of the patriarchal institutions and system that oppressed them.



Through the depiction of figures such as Mattie and Eudoria transmitting their knowledge and physical abilities to the younger generations, Evans and Bradbeer also remind contemporary audiences of the relevance of intergenerational interactions for the feminist mission. The exchanges and bonds among women from different (feminist) generations not only serve to emphasise the importance of carrying on the fight for equality, but also to insist on the undeniable link between physical autonomy and political emancipation. These contemporary representations thus illustrate the politicisation of women's bodies as a valuable tool to advocate for equality between men and women. Therefore, *Old Baggage* and *Enola Holmes* recover the figure of Garrud and her suffragette practitioners with reparative and commemorative aims, seeking to dissociate the suffragettes from violence while highlighting their revolutionary potential and lasting contribution to feminism.

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# Notes

1. "Fight Taught Right" features in one of Netflix's promotional posters of the first Enola Holmes film together with a picture of Susan Wokoma, the actress playing Edith Garrud, who appears wearing jujitsu training clothes.

2 Resulting from a blending of its creator's name and the Japanese martial art of jujitsu, Bartitsu was the term given to a method of self-defence combining boxing, French kickboxing and jujitsu that Edward William Barton-Wright introduced in Britain and taught in his Bartitsu Club, founded in 1898 (Godfrey 2012: 91).

3. Historically, the term 'the Cause' has been used to refer to the British women's suffrage movement. An illustration of this is The Common Cause, the name given to the newspaper of the largest suffrage association (National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS)). Ray Strachey's work The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain (1928) is also an example of the common usage of the term to denote the suffrage campaign.



4. Although the scene about suffragettes' self-defence is brief, it can be inferred that they resort to this martial art to defend themselves not only against physical attacks but also against sexual assaults by males. In the movie there are various scenes in which women face violence from different men, including male bystanders, police officers and their own husbands. Gavron also draws particular attention to sexual abuse through the character of Mr. Taylor (played by Geoff Bell), the boss of the laundry company where Maud works. In one scene, Violet, one of Maud's coworkers, is sexually harassed by Mr. Taylor, who also abuses Maude. Gavron's inclusion of this topic in the film reveals her intention to denounce the patriarchal system's abuse of women's bodies and recalls one of the reasons that motivated suffragettes' use of jujitsu.

5. This notion refers to the re-examination of history from a feminist lens (Colman 2015). In the context of this article, the term proves to be useful to refer to suffragettes' deployment of jujitsu from a feminist perspective.

6. The choice of a Black woman to play Garrud's role has generated some controversy. Although it can be read as a way to recognise the contributions of people of colour to the fight for women's suffrage and position women of colour as pioneering feminist role models for contemporary audiences, having a Black woman represent a white suffragette has also been related to whitewashing and colour-blindness strategies. For instance, a review of the film presents the incorporation of people of colour into the show "more like boxes checked than meaningful characters" (Johnson 2020). In addition, having a Black woman represent the figure of suffragettes' jujitsu can be read as a form of reproducing the exoticization of Black women and their stereotypical portrayal as being "sexually aggressive" (Hill Collins 2000: 82), "unfeminine and too strong" (76).

7. An example of this portrayal is the anonymous poster "We want the vote" (1908), which can be found in Cooper-Cunningham's article about posters from the British women's suffrage movement (2019).

8. An example of pro-sufffrage propaganda highlighting suffragettes' goal of achieving the franchise, and equality for all people, appears in the poster "The Appeal of Womanhood" (Gosling et al. 2018: 57).

9. Named after its creator, the Italian revolutionary Felice Orsini, the artifact was initially designed to kill Napoleon III in 1858. However, replicas and adaptations of this explosive device became tools of radical combat used by terrorists and insurgents for different revolutionary purposes until the 1910s (Crossland 2023: 355).

10. An example of this biased portrayal of suffragettes appears in Walt Disney's film *Mary Poppins* (1964). Its director, Robert Stevenson, depicts women's suffrage as a pastime and comically represents Mrs. Banks giving support to Emmeline Pankhurst, participating in suffragette marches and neglecting her duties as a mother. Ms. Poppins, the nanny, is cast as the one in charge of restoring the family order and fulfilling the tasks that Mrs. Banks disregards. The messages implied in this Disney production are therefore similar to those conveyed by anti-suffrage propaganda like the poster "A Suffragette's Home" (Devaney 2018) and the postcard "What is a suffragette without a suffering household?" (Nikolic 2019), which presented suffragists and suffragettes negatively to emphasise women's role as "the angel of the house".

11. This was the common name given to The Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health Act of April 1913, which consisted of liberating those imprisoned suffragettes who had become physically weak after going on hunger strikes to avoid their death in jail and foster their recovery outside prison. Once their health improved, the police, commonly known as "cats", rearrested the temporarily released suffragettes, metaphorically known as "mice", and sent them back to jail (Brown 2002: 635).



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