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Fiona Perret

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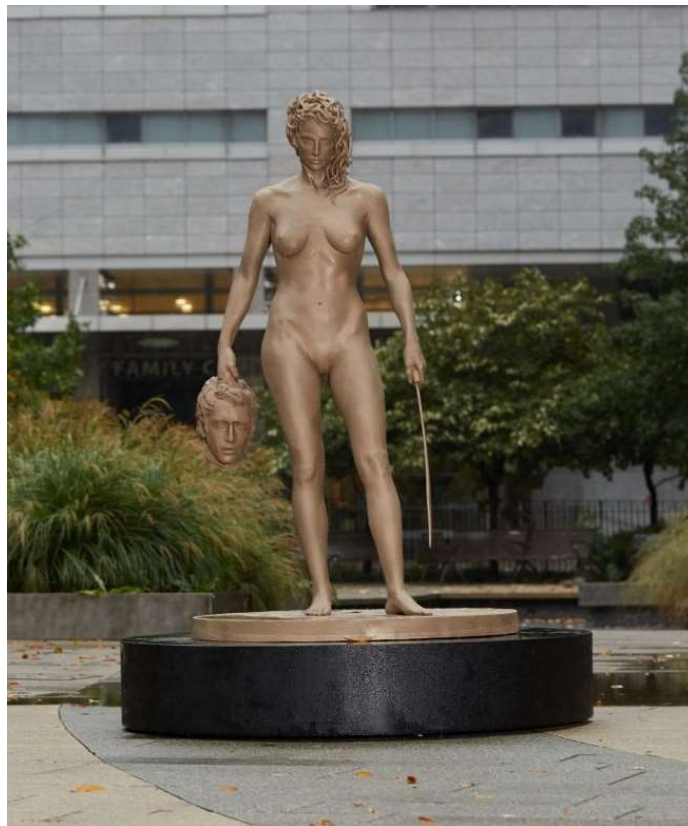


Université de Bretagne Occidentale

Subversive Women: Press Renditions of Feminist Violence in 20th century USA

Fiona Perret – Master 1 ALC TILE

2022-2023



Luciano Garbati, *Medusa With The Head of Perseus*, statue, Collect Pond Park, New York City, 2008.

Under the supervision of
Dr. Molly Chatalic



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des lettres &
sciences humaines

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Table of Contents

Foreword.....	6
Introduction	7
1. A Thorny Issue: Political Violence and 20 th century Feminisms.....	10
1.1. The Societal Taboo of Violence and Women: Reconsidering the Legitimacy of Subversive Violence	10
1.1.1. Violence in Modern Western Civilisation.....	10
1.1.2. Violence: A Gendered Turf.....	13
1.1.3. Fantasising Feminist Violence: Two Different Purposes.....	16
1.1.4. The legal and moral pertinence of violent activism	20
1.2. Socio-Historical Contextualisation of the Three Case Studies	21
1.2.1. Carry Nation and the Temperance Movement in the Early 1900s.....	21
1.2.2. The 1968 Miss America Pageant Protest: Denouncing More Than Beauty Injunctions	23
1.2.3. Lesbians, Femmes and the Stonewall Uprising in 1969: Standing up to Homophobia and Police Persecution	25
1.3. The Place of Violence in Each Case Study: Different Stances.....	28
1.3.1. Nation's <i>Hatchetations</i> : A Planned and Deliberate Use of Violence	28
1.3.2. The New-York Radical Women: Negating any Intentionality to Resort to Violence	29
1.3.3. Stonewall: A Spontaneous Reaction Sparked by yet Another Police Raid	32
2. Press Representations of Feminist Violence	34
2.1. General Thoughts: News-Making in Mainstream Media	34
2.1.1. Framing Events	34
2.1.2. Staying Within Acceptable Boundaries	35
2.1.3. The Economic Factor: A Thirst for Sensationalism.....	36
2.2. Heterosexist Portrayals in Establishment Media	41
2.2.1 Fighting Off Feminine Erasure in the Media: Violence as a Battering Ram	41
2.2.2. Threatening Women: Unsexed, Unpredictable and Deviant Figures.....	43
2.2.3. Discrediting Portrayals: Sexualisation, Pathologisation and Depoliticisation of the Event.....	49
2.3. Alternatives to Male-Dominated Mainstream Pressrooms: More Supportive Stances?	55
2.3.1. Newswomen in Mainstream Newspapers: Shifting the Lines From Within?....	55
2.3.2. Alternative Newspapers: More Sympathetic Stances?.....	57

2.3.3. Self-Owned Media: Discussing Issues for Their Own Sake	61
3. Double-Edged Representations: Mixed Impacts on Both the Movements and the Activists, and How the Public Perceives Them.....	66
3.1. Becoming the <i>Other</i> : A Deterring Threat	67
3.1.1. The W.C.T.U’s Aversion for the Hatchet	67
3.1.2. The Myth of Bra-Burning: A Heavily Ingrained Image Deterring Women’s Identification to the Movement.....	68
3.1.3. Off the Page: Stonewall’s Forgotten Heroines.....	70
3.1.4. On Ramifications within Socio-Political Movements: Are They Necessarily Detrimental to the Cause?	71
3.2. Galvanising Effects of Disruptive Models in the Media	72
3.2.1. Shedding Light Onto Overlooked Issues: Accounts of Violent Activism Start Conversations	72
3.2.2. Rallying Support	75
3.2.3. Transgressing Gender Boundaries: A <i>de facto</i> Reappropriation of the Self and of the Public Sphere.....	77
Conclusion.....	79
Appendix	82
Bibliography	85

Table of Illustrations

Figure 1: Press of Atlantic City. Photograph taken at the Miss America Pageant Protest of Atlantic City, 7 Sep. 1968.	39
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Foreword

At the start of my research, a question kept coming to mind: how can I make my voice as objective as I can in this thesis, when the issues it deals with echo with my own experiences as a non-heterosexual European woman, survivor of patriarchal violence and self-identified feminist? After I shared my concerns with Dr. Molly Chatalic, the supervisor of my thesis, we both came to this conclusion: when it comes to feminism, biases are unavoidable. The topic is too deeply personal to fully separate one's experiences from one's academic voice.

Fran Grace, the author of *Carry A. Nation: Retelling the Life*—which I have quoted extensively in this thesis—begins her preface as follows: “Anyone who chooses to write about a hatchet-swinging, God-appointed vigilante with a really bad public image must ask herself: what does this say about me?” (xi) I believe that Grace's statement really applies to the more general category of women's political violence, not just Carry Nation's case. What does my choice of subject, then, tell about me? As far as I am concerned, it exposes my interrogations about the origins of the mental barriers that have, on more than one occasion, prevented my body from shielding itself from external aggression. Investigating representations of individuals marginalised by gender who dared use violence to defend their integrity resonated with me.

There may be passages along this body of work where the turns of phrase and comments give away my presence. I choose to view this as the evidence of my thorough involvement in this research project, and the reason why it is adding to the ongoing conversation about women's and minorities' situations. I view academic conversations as rather resemblant of interpersonal conversations: they are made of multiple individual contributions that bounce off and enrich one another. It is my hope that this work will contribute, on its own small scale, to fuelling the collective reflection.

Introduction

The recognition of female and feminist violence is struggling to make its way into the public debate and into historical memory in an era that is otherwise clearly marked by mainstream feminism. Over the last few years, radical and anti-carceral feminist circles in France have timidly unearthed the topic through scarce content documenting women fighting back against masculine violence, for example in Irene's *La Terreur Féministe* or in the episode "Les femmes contre-attaquent" of Bienaimé's podcast series *Un podcast à soi*. In the United-Kingdom, most will be familiar with the struggle for women's suffrage in the early 20th century, but how many are aware that the militancy of the "Suffragettes" included the mastering of self-defence techniques, strategic bombings and property damage?

20th century USA witnessed its lot of feminist violence. While the vindications championed by the events in question are relatively well-known today, the concrete methods used to carry out activists' convictions have remained a blind spot in both academia and feminist milieus. This thesis ambitions to shed light on three feminist episodes of American history that were associated with political violence and on their representations in the American press of the time: Carry Nation's "hatchetations" in the early 1900s, the 1968 Miss America Pageant protest and the 1969 Stonewall Uprising.

Before going any further, the use of three key-terms needs explaining. The first one is that of "feminism". The expression, although unused by the activists involved in this study to refer to themselves, was thought to best encapsulate the concept of women-fought battles for women's deliverance from some of the many oppressive consequences of patriarchy. To name a few that are relevant to this study: economic domination, domestic abuse, normative beauty injunctions, societal partition of genders and gender binarity, obligatory heterosexuality.

This leads to the clarification of the term "women". This word, however common, is far from being consensual among feminists (Butler 3-4). In this work, it designates cisgender¹ as much as transgender women. This thesis explores the perceptions of the interactions between political violence and femininity, two concepts that are believed to be diametrically antinomic. "Womanhood" is only a pertinent reference point here because it is culturally distanced from the possibility of resorting to violence. Henceforth, the use of the term "women" appeals to the

¹ "A term used to refer to an individual whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth (...)." ("Cisgender". def.)

social perception of women and femininity rather than to a supposed inner essence or to anatomic criteria.

The notion of “political violence” remains. The events addressed are to be regarded as fundamentally entrenched in a context of socio-political struggle, rather than as inexplicable interpersonal outbursts of violence. The violence in question targets symbols of women’s oppression: infrastructures, daily life objects and representatives of state repression.

The corpus of primary sources for this thesis is made up of thirty-two press articles and one newsletter. All are contemporary to the events discussed in that they were published within a year of the episodes, except for article *S11*², issued two years after the Stonewall Uprising. The corpus comprises articles taken from the mainstream press as well as from alternative publications, including from militant press.

The choice of using the press rather than another media as primary material was motivated by several factors. This format presents several advantages; first, newspaper articles are a complex and rich medium that combines textual and pictorial modes to create meaningful content. Second, their short format induces the study of a larger variety of sources, which allows for a nuanced overview of the studied events. Last, the press and news media in general are a useful tool to understand dominant mindsets of a given time period, since the news can be thought of as a reflection of what is held to be true and factual by a society at large.

In a civilisation where states are considered to have a monopoly on legitimate violence, representing women’s deliberate enaction of violent acts for political purposes is significant. The transgressive nature of their modes of action raises the following question: into what narrative(s) were those activists’ images turned by the American press and to what effects on the movements and the activists themselves?

The thesis’ tripartite structure enables a progressive answer. Chapter 1 offers a sociological, feminist and historical approach of the question of political violence in 20th century USA, focusing on the three case studies aforementioned. Chapter 2 exhibits the nuanced results of the analytical work, based on media and gender studies, conducted on the corpus. The final chapter builds upon the second to ponder upon the aftermath of the three case studies’

² The primary sources are cited throughout the body of the thesis by a code to avoid repetitive and lengthy in-text citations. The appendix comprises a table referencing the articles and their attributed code, as well as the periodicity of the publications they were taken from.

coverage, in terms of the movements' evolutions, and their perception by the public. The chapter ends on the assessment of the personal benefits activists may have derived from being involved in violent political actions.

1. A Thorny Issue: Political Violence and 20th century Feminisms

1.1. The Societal Taboo of Violence and Women: Reconsidering the Legitimacy of Subversive Violence

1.1.1. Violence in Modern Western Civilisation

In order to better understand why this thesis claims that feminist violence is doubly transgressive in 20th century USA, this part will investigate the place of violence in modern Western civilisation. *Modern* here refers to the post-Middle Age era, from the 16th century to today. According to influential 20th century sociologist Norbert Elias in *La Civilisation des Mœurs*, civilisation can be defined as follows:

La notion de “civilisation” se rapporte à des données variées : au degré de l’évolution technique, aux règles du savoir-vivre, au développement de la connaissance, aux idées et usages religieux. Elle peut s’appliquer à l’habitat et à la cohabitation de l’homme et de la femme, aux méthodes de répression judiciaire, à la préparation de la nourriture, et -à y regarder de près- à tout ce qui peut s’accomplir d’une manière “civilisée” ou “non civilisée” ; c’est pourquoi il est toujours difficile de résumer en quelques mots l’ensemble des phénomènes susceptibles d’être désignés par le terme de “civilisation”. Mais quand on examine la fonction générale de la notion de “civilisation”, quand on recherche l’élément permettant de qualifier telles attitudes et actions humaines de “civilisés”, on découvre d’abord quelque chose de très simple : l’expression de la conscience occidentale, on pourrait dire le sentiment national occidental. En effet, le terme résume l’avance que la société occidentale des deux ou trois derniers siècles croit avoir prise sur les siècles précédents et sur les sociétés contemporaines plus “primitives”. C’est par ce même terme que la société occidentale tente de caractériser ce qui la singularise, ce dont elle est fière : le développement de sa technique, ses règles du savoir-vivre, l’évolution de sa connaissance scientifique et de sa vision du monde, et beaucoup d’autres choses de ce genre. (11-12)

In other words, the concept of modern Western civilisation is first and foremost a matter of self-perception, it is about a *feeling* of superiority rather than an objective and neutral assessment of the Western world’s progress compared to other civilisations, and in this regard, it can be connected to a form of national sentiment³. Among the elements that Western civilisation prides

³ As defined by Ernest Renan in his 1882 speech “What Is a Nation?”, “A nation is a spiritual principle, the outcome of the profound complications of history; it is a spiritual family, not a group determined by the shape of the earth. We have now seen what things are not adequate for the creation of such a spiritual principle, namely, race, language, material interest, religious affinities, geography, and military necessity. What more then is required? (...) A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. (...). To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more - these are the essential conditions for being a people.” (10).

itself with, Elias mentions “savoir-vivre”, which can translate to “good manners*⁴”, or “socially acceptable behaviour*”. *Savoir-vivre*, in modern Western civilisation, goes hand in hand with the prevailing of Reason over Emotion. 20th century USA is no exception to this paradigm, as illustrated by the short 1943 anti-nazi propaganda Walt Disney cartoon *Reason and Emotion*: each human protagonist in the film is steered by humanised allegories of Reason and Emotion. The former are depicted as sensible, good-mannered, and overall distinguished and *civilised* characters, while the latter straightforwardly represent stereotypical impulse-driven, *uncivilised* cavepeople with no sense of socially-acceptable behaviour and, among other things, a taste for violence (for instance, the male allegory of Emotion uses a bludgeon on several occasions). The threat of emotion-driven individuals on civilisation is implicitly formulated as a parallel is drawn between the indoctrination of Germans by Hitler and the taking over of the human mind by Emotion. This short cartoon illustrates the modern Western take on what constitutes civilised behaviour: it relies, among other things, on a system of permanent control of one’s impulses.

To ensure that such a system remains unchallenged, the self-monitoring of one’s behaviour has been necessary and encouraged. Elias goes to the extent of claiming that Western civilisation is in part founded on the “(...) sense of pride stemming from the self-control [people] have managed to self-impose” *⁵ (Elias, *La Dynamique de l’Occident* 37). If, on the one hand, praised social behaviours are worthy of self-pride, the necessary counterpart of that statement is that reprobate ones should cause the individual to feel shame. Consequently, people will “naturally”, or at least voluntarily, tend to stay away from such behaviours, as to avoid the unpleasant consequence of experiencing shame. Elias uses the compelling term of “a barrier of phobia*” (*La Dynamique de l’Occident* 186) to refer to the mental boundaries that deter people from indulging in frowned-upon conducts.

Such a term suggests that transgressing social norms is not without consequences. Those social norms have been necessary to instigate and perpetuate Western civilisation (*La Dynamique de l’Occident* 184-185). Intuitively, one would rightly think that there must be some kind of punishment administered to those who dare violate them, as they would thus embody a threat to said civilisation. The punishment is that of social ostracisation (*La Dynamique de l’Occident* 189, 212), and even pathologisation (Elias, *La Civilisation des Mœurs* 421). Abiding by the set of implicit social rules found in Western civilisation—Elias acknowledges that there

⁴ Short citations and titles followed by an asterisk were translated from French by the author of this thesis.

⁵ Original quote: “(...) fierté de la maîtrise de soi qu’ils ont réussi à s’imposer.”

may be some variations from one country to another—secures individuals with societal validation, which is essential in order to be a part of “the web of interrelations*” that, according to Elias (*La Dynamique de l’Occident* 184-185), characterises civilisation.

If civilised behaviour, in 20th century USA, is characterised by self-control and tamed-down natural impulses, it is pertinent to wonder what place physical violence holds in this social configuration. Norbert Elias, in *La Civilisation des Mœurs*, classifies physical aggressivity as a natural human impulse. Just as other impulses, that of violence has been subjected to codes and restrictions since the end of the Middle Ages (420-421).

Elias brings the reader’s attention to the fact that Erasmus’ treaty *De Civilitate Morum Puerilium*, an influential guideline to proper social behaviour published between 1525 and 1550, mostly focuses on adequate bodily enactments in society (*La Civilisation des Mœurs* 114-117). This specific choice of focus suggests that bodies hold a significant potential of transgressive power (otherwise, the socially acceptable ways of incarnating one’s body would not need to be addressed in such depth). It is therefore unsurprising that violence, a conspicuous physical expression, has been subjected to heightened control to the point of disappearing from everyday life spaces, as Elias notes in *La Dynamique de l’Occident* (188, 193).

Nonetheless, this does not mean that modern Western civilisation has completely ruled out violence:

*La décharge affective résultant de l’agression physique se limite à certaines “enclaves” dans le temps et dans l’espace. Du moment que le monopole de la contrainte physique est assuré par le pouvoir central, l’individu n’a plus le droit de se livrer au plaisir de l’attaque directe : ce droit est réservé à quelques personnes mandatées par l’autorité centrale, par exemple aux policiers, et les masses ne peuvent plus en user que dans des circonstances particulières, en temps de guerre ou de heurts révolutionnaires, dans la lutte socialement sanctionnée contre des ennemis extérieurs ou intérieurs. (Elias, *La Civilisation des Mœurs* 441)*

In other words, there is a double-standard concerning the legitimacy of physical violence: while states withhold its monopoly, episodes of violence perpetrated by the people —outside of strictly framed exceptions where said violence is directed toward an enemy that has been identified and acknowledged by a social majority— are condemned.

To further support the transgressive nature of popular use of physical violence in the modern context of Western civilisation, one may suggest that individuals resorting to violence outside of socially accepted contexts might be assimilated to the figure of the barbarian presented by French historian Bruno Dumézil in a fascinating conference. Dumézil explores

what barbarians evoke and what purpose they serve to Western civilisation. His main point of interest is that barbarians might not actually correspond to historically accurate peoples but rather embody a necessary concept of undesirable *alterity*, a crystallised *otherness* that helps materialise and define what is considered civilised (Dumézil 1:07:34-1:07:53). Civilisation becomes everything that is not uncivilised. The idea of barbarism reinforces, by opposing it, the Western world's certitude of its own civilisation and superiority. One of the evoked common stereotypes cast upon the barbarian figure is that of an unconventional relation to violence (Dumézil 00:15:15-00:15:45).

As previously discussed, violence is perceived as anti-social behaviour in modern Western civilisation; this might be, in part, because individuals resorting to violence appear to go against the vision of civilised behaviour and become identified as modern barbarian figures.

1.1.2. Violence: A Gendered Turf

In the same way that the legitimacy of violence is differentiated between states and the masses, double standards exist between men and women. Gender is not a parameter that Elias discusses in his analysis of civilised behaviour, but his omission of gender is substantial. He uses the gender-neutral noun "individus" and the masculine noun "homme" interchangeably to refer to people, although all the historical examples he uses in his chapter "Les modifications de l'agressivité" (419-447) in *La Civilisation des Moeurs* are centred around masculine nouns ("chevaliers", "prisonniers", "roi"), with only one feminine exception (425). Elias' use of masculine grammatical gender, which he means to be neutral⁶, juxtaposed to multiple examples of masculine violence, reveals the erasure of women's presence within the field of violence.

To further support this idea, one can try out the quick experiment of looking up the words "women" and "violence" simultaneously on an internet browser. This Google search is met with a multitude of results concerning violence committed *against* women. "Men violence", however, results in more varied outcomes: the results address both violence committed *against* men and *by* men⁷. Interestingly, if the Google search is set to show only articles published before 2010, the question of violence against men does not appear as often: most of the results tackle male-perpetrated violence. This does not apply to the query "women violence" set prior to 2010: the results still exclusively address violence against women. On the one hand, this suggests that society has only recently started to consider that men too can be

⁶ In that it supposedly holds a universal value.

⁷ The two are not mutually exclusive.

victims of violence; on the other hand, this corroborates the idea that the concepts of *violence* and *women*, in the collective imaginary, can only be pictured together in situations where women undergo said violence.

According to patriarchal society's idea of femininity, a woman is fundamentally non-violent, the opposite being simply unthinkable (Despentes 46; Irene 25). Traditional gender roles have confined women into a stranglehold of docility and harmlessness that clashes with the existence or possibility of their violence. Although First and Second Waves⁸ feminism in the USA sought to challenge different issues, and improvement did occur in women's lives—for some more than others—between the two waves, injunctions concerning the incarnation of feminine bodies persisted in varying degrees and nature throughout the country⁹. Carry Nation lived in an era that praised “True Womanhood”, a vision of femininity built around piety, purity, domesticity, submissiveness to men (Welter 152) and ornamentality (Grace 105), which is reminiscent of the ulterior 1950s’ “Housewife” ideal. The 1968 Miss America Pageant protest specifically denounced beauty injunctions, and the *No More Fun and Games*’ 1970 article “Using Self Defense” denounces that “The female body is supposed to be a beautiful object. Women often (...) view their own bodies as things to be looked at rather than used, decorated rather than developed” (Galligan 101). This unarguably shows continuity, or at least cyclicity in the confinement of women to a controlled and repressed corporality throughout the 20th century.

In order to be maintained, such gender roles have been presented as natural feminine inclinations, as have been their proximity with nature. While some branches of feminism have not questioned this pairing and have even used it as an argument to support the legitimacy of women's participation in environmental and warfare issues, this has not been the case of radical feminism.

Ecofeminists and feminist pacifists have argued that women by virtue of their closeness to nature are in a unique position to avert ecological ruin or nuclear annihilation. This thinking marks a further departure from radical feminism, which maintained that the identification of women with nature was a patriarchal concept. (Echols 288)

⁸ The use of the plural form is intentional: Nancy Hewitt's 2012 article “Regenerating the Wave Metaphor” suggests the tide metaphor to refer to different eras of feminism. According to her, it would be more pertinent to consider the history of feminism as a series of multiple, coexisting radio signals of different lengths and intensity. This model's two main points of interest are that it leaves more ground to the highlighting of feminism's plurality (in terms of vindications, chronology, geography, race, class, etc.), and it gives importance to both the voices of the movement and their reach (658-680).

⁹ Judith Butler specifies that gender norms vary according to socio-cultural backgrounds (9-10).

Systematically associating, *essentialising* women to a deeply rooted sensitivity to nature participates in enclosing them within ideals of purity, gentleness, innocence, etc. These are all images that further deter women from considering to set foot on the socially masculine turf of violence.

Such an intrusion would defy, on the one hand, modern Western civilisation's policy of interpersonal pacifism, and on the other hand, traditional concepts of femininity. While Elias already provided this thesis with a theory about the outcomes of social transgressions resulting in social ostracisation, Judith Butler reaches the same conclusion concerning gender-based transgressions: "(...) we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender¹⁰ right." (Butler 178). Acting outside of the frame of gender expectations has negative social implications on individuals, and resorting to violence is therefore twice as perilous for women as it is for men.

Setting psychological and moral boundaries to the possibility for women to use violence maintains a system in which women's safety is tributary to the protection of men, thus hindering their effective liberation, according to Pat Galligan, a member of the radical feminist group Cell 16 founded in 1968 (99). Far from glorifying violence as such, Galligan rather realistically acknowledges the imbalanced power relationships that its differentiated permission of use can induce between men and women. A paradox emerges from this observation: as long as they will be made unable to defend themselves, women's existences will rely on their oppressors'. On a philosophical and sociological level, this paradox also emerges in Butler's attempts at defining womanhood. Is the defining common thread between women their shared experience of patriarchal oppression (Butler 7)? Or even, in a system of *obligatory heterosexuality*, do women feel like women only because of their involvement in relationships with men? Butler quotes Aretha Franklin's "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman" 1968 song to illustrate this hypothesis:

(...) "I feel like a woman" is true to the extent that Aretha Franklin's invocation of the defining Other is assumed: "You make me feel like a natural woman." This achievement requires a differentiation from the opposite gender. Hence, one is one's gender to the extent that one is not the other gender, a formulation that presupposes and enforces the restriction of gender within that binary pair. (29-30)

¹⁰ According to Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*, gender is a constant performance shaped by a succession of actions, behaviours, and conducts (180). Therefore, one "does" rather than "is" their gender.

The idea of women's existence relying on men's, be it regarding their physical safety or to the very core of their "gender identity"¹¹, constitutes an obstacle to women's emancipation.

Perhaps, then, women gaining awareness and acceptance of their capacity to make use of physical violence for subversive¹² purposes would be one way towards the reappropriation of the self. The American feminist organisation Cell 16, founded by Roxanne Dunbar in 1968, advocated for women to learn self-defence techniques not only to be able to fight back in case of assault, but also to reconnect with their bodies and cultivate their self-confidence, without necessarily needing to make use of those techniques (Galligan 101-102). Using subversive violence as a woman therefore has everything to do with subverting gender expectations.

1.1.3. Fantasising Feminist Violence: Two Different Purposes

Finding well-documented and relevant cases of 20th century American feminists' use of violence for this thesis was not an easy task. Although the occurrences of remarkable actions such as hunger strikes, picketing, marches, speeches, etc. were numerous, actual episodes of violent actions are scarce. Yet, narratives arguing that feminism has gone too far, including in its use of violence is commonplace (Irene 10). When the French conservative magazine *Valeurs Actuelles* released an issue titled "La nouvelle terreur féministe : Actions violentes, théorie du genre, PMA, parité, écriture inclusive... Enquête sur une inquisition"¹³ in May 2019, many French feminist activists denounced its reactionary tone as well as the groundlessness of the terrorism accusation. Irene later introduced her book *La Terreur Féministe* by reflecting upon the irrational fear that feminism inspires certain vocal social milieus and how this can be illustrated by the aforementioned front page of *Valeurs Actuelles*. She points out the inoffensive nature of what society and men in particular are scared about in regard to a so-called feminist threat: new levels of inclusivity in language or the possibility for all women to procreate. In fact, the fear of a real violent feminist threat such as "mobs of women planning to kill the rapists that the justice system has let loose*" seems so incongruous that it would never cross their minds (Irene 9-12).

¹¹ Quotation marks were included in order to highlight the impertinence of the term "gender *identity*" when rethinking gender through Butler's prism. She is categorical as to the socially constructed nature of gender, which therefore cannot be seen as an "identity" in the meaning of an "essence" (180).

¹² Subversive violence, based on Irene's use of the term in *La Terreur Féministe*, can be understood as self-defence against the omnipresence of patriarchal violence; it seeks to undo an oppressive system using traditionally prohibited tactics by that very system.

¹³ "The New Feminist Terror: Violent Actions, Gender Theory, Assisted Reproduction for All, Parity, Inclusive Writing... Investigating an Inquisition *"

Similar discourses are found in the USA today: in 2018, after the climax of the #MeToo wave and the accusations of sexual assault against associate justice of the Supreme Court Brett Kavanaugh, Donald Trump declared that the period was “a very scary time for young men in America” (Yan and Chavez), on the belief they could face false accusations; his son Donald Trump Jr also reacted to the controversy by claiming that the wave of women speaking out about their assaults made him more worried for his sons than for his daughters (Bever). All of this, in spite of statistics disproving the rationality of such fears: in the USA, 1 in 6 women has been a victim of an attempted or completed rape, but only 25 rapists out of 1000 will face a jail sentence and fake rape accusations are estimated at 2 to 10% (“Statistics”). The perception of feminism as a tangible threat therefore does not seem to be proportionate when compared to reality —except if one considers that losing the impunity to mistreat women is something to be mourned or worried about. This reflection implies two things: first, that actual violence is so marginal among feminist actions that the prospect of its actual enactment does not occur to people; second, that a certain imagery of violence is nevertheless fantasised and projected upon feminism, notably by conservative media, thus demonising the movement by associating it to socially unacceptable conducts.

The fantasising of violence is also found within feminist discourses, but it serves a different purpose from that of demonising the movement. Rather, its presence in the feminist lexicon could be interpreted as a kind of outlet or empowering tool, somewhat like rallying cries. Carry Nation, for instance, referred to her restless activism against alcohol as a “crusade” (Nation, [1908] 58), which is a term originating from the religious wars that occurred between the 11th and 15th century between Christian and Muslim territories. As a staunch Christian and pious woman, Carry Nation obviously picked that term to assimilate her fight to a religious mission, but the idea that women-led struggles have a belligerent nature is found on other occasions in her autobiography. In a chapter advocating for women’s suffrage, Nation draws a parallel between the aggressive ways in which maternal instinct manifests itself in other species and the way women should be allowed to make use of that protective instinct¹⁴ by being granted the right to vote¹⁵:

¹⁴ As explained in part 1.2.1., Nation believed women’s duty, as superior moral beings, was to save men and women from the social, economic and biological consequences of alcohol. She identified as a motherly figure.

¹⁵ Prohibition and the struggle for women’s suffrage went hand in hand, as suffragists were very active in the fight against alcohol in the USA. They saw the vote as a means to amplify their voices and help ban the selling of alcohol in the country.

In all ages woman has taken an active part in the defense of man. She is the best defender he ever had on earth, because she is his mother. (...) The hen will fight the hawk or dog, even man, to defend her little chicks. (...) The mother bear will die fighting for her cubs. The hunters say they dislike to kill her, because of her mother love, that never yields up those two little cubs that she places behind her, and then fights until she dies. (...) No one will say but that woman represents more morality than man, also that the mother is more interested in the children than the father; then of course, the party who has the most care and love should be allowed the largest privilege to exercise it. (Nation, [1904] 88-89)

This passage is interesting because Nation does not explicitly mention the right to vote. The juxtaposition of references to animal violence and the term “privilege” sheds a certain ambiguity onto the intended meaning of that word: does “privilege” stand for the political right to vote, or is Nation subtly condoning the use of violence? Either way, the parallel is not anodyne. Here are more recent examples of a lexical intertwining of the feminist struggle with the semantic field of violence: feminism is commonly labelled (by Gloria Steinem or bell hooks, to name but two) as a “revolution”¹⁶; left-wing feminist circles popularised the expression “*smashing monogamy*” in the 1960s (Echols 222)—and still today, the gerund is commonly found in “*smashing patriarchy*” (Russell); a 1990s underground feminist punk movement chose the name “Riot grrrls”: the term “riot” and the alternative spelling of “grrrls” conveys an aggressive and violent feel to the movement’s vision of womanhood. Feminism, although it has mostly taken peaceful forms in practice, still incorporates violent terms to its lexicon. The dissymmetry between words and deeds could stand for feminists’ inner (although muted) longing for violence as a response to the greater, sustained, and constant violence they witness and experience every day.

Elias’ outlook on violence can offer a lead as to why its presence within feminist language translates an underlying repressed urge to make effective use of violence in the face of oppression. He explains that violence, precisely because it is a socially forbidden impulse, is objected to a certain fascination expressed by means of various media: “On se réfugie dans le rêve, dans les livres, dans l’image: c’est ainsi que la noblesse en voie de curialisation¹⁷ se met à lire des romans de chevalerie, que le bourgeois va admirer la violence (...) au cinéma.” (Elias, *La Dynamique de l’Occident* 197). Militant language, too, could be a marker of fantasised violence among feminists, as well as a way of channelling their outrage so that it does not

¹⁶ A revolution can be defined as “A change in the way a country is governed, usually to a different political system and often using violence or war” (“Revolution”, def. 1.)

¹⁷ “Curialisation” was conceptualised by Norbert Elias in the field of Social Sciences. It refers to the spread of royal court practices to the rest of society.

outride the double social expectation of non-violence that is imposed on Western women by cultural and gender dynamics.

Sometimes, feminists' desire to take over the turf of violence is not simply implied by the re-characterisation of pacifically led feminist struggles with violent terms: it is also expressed in a very straightforward manner. Lindsay Van Gelder, the journalist who sparked the myth of bra-burning, declared years later: "I never burned my bra in the sixties. But I wish I had" (Van Gelder, "The Truth About Bra-Burners" 81). A similar phenomenon occurred in the early 20th century in reaction to Carry Nation's activism, based on an article embedded in Nation's autobiography: "This raid among decanters was a very singular and startling act, for a woman; but, somehow, people found it refreshing. It represented precisely what many had imagined in their minds, what thousands of women had wished they themselves could or dared do" (Carlton *qtd. in* Nation, [1908] 296). It is worth noting that in both cases, although the temptation to use violence is expressed unambiguously, its practical application was deterred: the social taboo that violence represents for Western women has significant discouraging effects.

Cardi and Pruvost sum up: "[La violence des femmes] a ceci de paradoxal qu'elle se présente sous le mode d'une présence/absence. Elle peut être reconnue, mise en scène, hypertrophiée." (27). From this stage onward, representations of women's violence can either serve a transgressive purpose or, on the contrary, validate misogynistic conceptions of women (27). In other words, amplifying the span of women's violence can either be instrumentalised for heroization effects by valorising the subversiveness of their act regarding their gender, or on the contrary, for misogynistic purposes such as feeding the pathologizing vision of women as irrational, emotion-driven beings. Either way, the fantasy of feminist violence conflicts with Western feminism's observable peaceful tendency in the 20th century.

1.1.4. The legal and moral pertinence of violent activism

This part does not aim to blindly defend the systematic use of political violence for the thrill of it. Nevertheless, it seeks to challenge the social taboo built around it by exposing the power relations at stake and exploring why some believe in the legitimacy (in political, moral and legal meanings) of using violence in the women's movement.

Peter Gelderloos, an American anarchist activist and writer, staunchly defends that violence should not be excluded from the range¹⁸ of possible tactics¹⁹ (like picketing, going on strike, marching, giving speeches, boycotting, making political art...) of activism. Elias and Gelderloos agree upon the idea that rejecting violence as a matter of principle within militantism only reinforces the asymmetrical power between states and the people (Elias, *La Civilisation des Mœurs* 441; Gelderloos 33). If the state can both oppress and repress the people but the latter can only defend itself with the means conceded by the former, the situation obviously benefits the state. This uneven pattern keeps social struggles from constituting a serious challenge to the established order (Gelderloos 18) and thus maintains activism and the expression of its vindications within a frame that was defined by the very instance of power it seeks to overturn. Using violence as a tactic is one way for a movement to make a more striking impact.

Moreover, Gelderloos and Irene agree on the fact non-violence is a place of privilege. Gelderloos explains²⁰: "(...) pacifism as an ideology comes from a privileged context. It ignores that violence is already here; that violence is an unavoidable, structurally integral part of the current social hierarchy" (19). Demonising violence regardless of its origin and motivation is the privilege of social groups who enjoy a certain position in the social hierarchy and thus benefit from the modern societal repartition of legitimate violence.

To add to this, Gelderloos claims that nonviolence is patriarchal because not only is violence considered a male turf, but the injunction to remain peaceful conveys the idea that, in the face of patriarchal violence, systemically and individually, women are expected to take it upon themselves without fighting back (45). Irene thus distinguishes oppressive patriarchal

¹⁸ Gelderloos makes it clear that nonviolent actions do not have to and should not be abandoned, and that results are obtained through the combination of several tactics (6).

¹⁹ Gelderloos favours the term "tactic" over "strategy" because he considers violence as a tool, not as a goal in itself.

²⁰ This quote is taken from his chapter "Nonviolence is Racist", but Gelderloos says in his chapter "Nonviolence is Sexist" that race privilege and gender privilege present similar mechanisms regarding violence. In other respects, Gelderloos makes highly interesting points about how nonviolence has been instrumentalised for imperialist purposes.

violence from feminist subversive violence (68), the latter being “vital, legitimate and necessary*” (15).

According to the two anarchist activists, legitimising violence as an acceptable political tactic against patriarchal violence is therefore one way to challenge gender privileges and to subvert them. Although one could disagree with them on the basis that adopting “manly” conducts to oppose patriarchy is paradoxical, this would equate to conceding that violence is indeed a male turf and to denying the socially constructed self-monitoring of impulses that is imposed on women in particular in modern Western society.

1.2. Socio-Historical Contextualisation of the Three Case Studies

Before analysing press representations of violent political events, it is necessary to draw an historically informed picture of the contexts they each took place in, of the movements they were a part of, of the goals they each sought to achieve. This step is all the more important given that, as the second chapter of this thesis will show, the 20th century press was regularly guilty of occulting the political message(s) behind violent militant feminist events.

1.2.1. Carry Nation and the Temperance Movement in the Early 1900s

Caroline Amanda Nation was born in 1846 in the state of Kentucky. Caroline grew into a staunchly religious woman and passionate activist for the temperance movement. She came to be (in)famously known as *Carry*²¹ *A. Nation*. As hinted by the pun, Nation considered herself a patriot and a saviour of her country. She would sign her writings with “Your Loving Home²² Defender”, hereby presenting herself as a motherly saving figure²³ to her nation and to her peers. The main reason why Carry Nation’s name has become a part of American history is because, having had enough of ineffective methods such as negotiating with saloon-owners or praying inside bars to stop the illegal sale of alcohol in the state of Kansas²⁴ where she lived, Nation, at age fifty-three, took up diverse arms like stones, bricks and hatchets—she only used the latter from 1901 onward—, to commit property damage in illegal bars (“dives”) and force

²¹ Carrie is also a valid spelling of her nickname; both Carry and Carrie are found interchangeably.

²² Note the polysemy of “Home”, which can be both read as the domestic space or the nation.

²³ In the foreword of her autobiography, a section which she titled “A Mother’s Cry”, she draws a parallel between herself and the Biblical figure of Rachel, mother of Joseph and one of the four founding matriarchs of the Jewish people. (Posner)

²⁴ Although the prohibition of alcohol was not made national until 1920 and the enactment of the 18th Amendment, Kansas had ratified a law in 1880 banning “the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors”.

owners to close down their businesses. Her first violent raid took place on June 6th, 1900, in Kiowa. She led several more hatchetations in Kansas that year, but she eventually put them to an end in March 1901. Nonetheless, she did not stop advocating for prohibition: she toured nationally and even abroad to address crowds, she funded a shelter for women whose husbands were alcoholics, published two media of her own, and even sold little souvenir hatchets to help finance her activism. She died a national—although controversial—legend in 1911 (Grace; Graham and Vollenweinder; Nation [1904]).

Nation's political battle against alcohol was grounded in the temperance movement of First Waves²⁵ feminism. Specifically, she was close to the W.C.T.U²⁶, the “largest organization of women” of its time (Bordin *qtd. in* Tyrrell 27) with more members than the NAWSA²⁷ (Tyrrell 27). Women, Nation believed, were the first victims of alcohol (Nation, [1904] 114). As Grace explains, women whose husbands returned home from the dives were at increased risk of being the victims of domestic abuse, infidelity, sexually transmitted diseases, and poverty: men would come back home drunk, having spent the home's finances on liquor and prostitutes (Grace 12). While Nation pitied the men who fell into the dangers of alcohol²⁸ and felt like she, seeing herself as a morally superior being²⁹ (Nation, [1904] 88), had to save them from themselves, she still fought for prohibition with the prime interest of women in mind. Bordin believes that the temperance movement was “the foremost example of American feminism” (*qtd. in* Burton). Additionally, Nation advocated for women's suffrage (Grace 118). Women's vote has practically become a synecdoche for First Waves feminism, even if it was not the only issue that was being addressed by feminists (Hewitt 663-666, 674). Many famous suffragists like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were temperance activists in the first place, but they found the impact of their work limited by the fact that they, as women, did not have the right to vote and thus came to demand access to the ballot box (Burton). Therefore, Nation's struggle was arguably feminist.

²⁵ The deliberate use of the plural is explained in footnote 8.

²⁶ Women's Christian Temperance Union

²⁷ National American Women Suffrage Association

²⁸ Obviously, temperance was very much a matter of public health too.

²⁹ Howard Zinn explains that the cult of True Womanhood that expanded in the American society after the 1820s brought out the idea of women's moral superiority (112). Women's virtue was likened to that of the Virgin Mary rather than to that of the sinful Eve.

1.2.2. The 1968 Miss America Pageant Protest: Denouncing More Than Beauty Injunctions

The Women's Movement of the 1960s encapsulated two major currents of Second Waves feminism: that of women's rights and that of women's liberation (Rosen 263). The former addressed issues such as economic emancipation and legal gender equality (Rosen 79, 86), thus negotiating a status for women within a pre-existing societal mould, even if fighting for equal rights was in itself a significant disruption of the patriarchal order (Welch 77). The latter, speaking to younger women, embraced a radical understanding of sexism as an oppressive system (Willis ix) rather than as uncorrelated personal experiences³⁰. Radical feminists, and specifically the New York Radical Women, emphasised the importance of "consciousness-raising" (Hanisch; Press)—the act of becoming aware of one's own oppression due to one's belonging to an oppressed group—to achieve a thorough revision of gender so as to make it extraneous (Echols 6). Analysis, so Howard Zinn says, constituted "the most profound effect" of the Women's Movement in the 1960s (511). Radical feminism, in other words, had at heart to tackle the root-cause of women's oppression rather than its symptoms.

The NYRW³¹ was formed in 1967 by a group of young radical women in their twenties who had split from the New Left, the civil rights and/or the anti-Vietnam war movements following a bitter awakening: the revolutionary circles they belonged to, just like the rest of society, was plagued with machismo and would not make room for the questions of women's liberation. Prominent figures of the organisation included Robin Morgan, Peggy Dobbins, Carol Hanisch, Shulamith Firestone and Pamela Allen. In 1968, they collectively decided to organise a protest in Atlantic City on September 7th to shed light on the societal problems they believed the Miss America Pageant, taking place that day in the city, embodied (Press). This protest has been remembered as a red-letter day in the history of the women's movement (Echols *qtd. in* Dow 130; Welch 70), and it has often wrongly been considered to be its kick off³². NYRW disbanded in 1969 but some of its former members parted into W.I.T.C.H.³³ and Redstockings, respectively focusing on concrete actions and collective thinking (Press; Zinn 507).

³⁰ This structural concept is at the core of slogans such as "The personal is political" and "Sisterhood is powerful".

³¹ New York Radical Women

³² Robin Morgan praised the efforts of NOW (National Organisation for Women), founded in 1966, thus preceding NYRW, in a collective interview led by Joy Press for the online media *The Cut*. Betty Friedan's 1963 *The Feminine Mystique* or the adding of "sex" to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are earlier possible sparks to the rise of a women's movement in the 1960s (Rosen 72-74; Zinn 505-506).

³³ Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell

NYRW's 1968 Miss America Pageant protest³⁴ gathered women from all over the East Coast in Atlantic City. NYRW had issued a press release beforehand announcing:

(...) We will protest the image of Miss America, an image that oppresses women in every area in which it purports to represent us. There will be: Picket Lines; Guerrilla Theater; Leafleting; Lobbying Visits to the contestants urging our sisters to reject the Pageant Farce and join us; a huge Freedom Trash Can (into which we will throw bras, girdles, curlers, false eyelashes, wigs, and representative issues of Cosmopolitan, Ladies' Home Journal, Family Circle, etc.- bring any such woman-garbage you have around the house); we will also announce a Boycott of all those commercial products related to the Pageant, and the day will end with a Women's Liberation rally at midnight when Miss America is crowned on live television (...). ("No More Miss America!")

Ten bullet points synthesised the criticisms NYRW made about the pageant ("No More Miss America!"), testifying to the complexity and comprehensiveness of their objections. The activists not only pointed out the objectification of women that the pageant perpetrated, but also its racism, its complacency towards the Vietnam War, its condoning of a capitalist and conformist consumer culture. Their message, in practise, was conveyed³⁵ by a number of symbolic happenings on the boardwalk of Atlantic City in the style of those found in protests organised by the New-Left, the anti-war movement and the civil rights movement (Kreydatus, "Contesting Miss America" 25; Welch 81, 85-86). Later, a few women infiltrated the pageant to hang a Women's Liberation banner from a balcony, chanted slogans during the handover speech delivered by Miss America 1968 and sprayed hair product in the room, which led to the arrest of Peggy Dobbins (Greenfieldboyce; Press).³⁶

Some incidents occurred in reaction to the presence of the activists on the boardwalk: a small counterprotest was held, in which a former Miss America took part holding a sign that read "There Is Only One Thing Wrong With Miss America: She Is Beautiful" (Kreydatus, "Contesting Miss America" 25). This corroborates Hanisch's point on the message's lack of readability, as some people misunderstood the protest as a display of jealousy towards the

³⁴ Another protest happened that same day in Atlantic City in the form of a counter pageant for the crowning of Miss Black America. Although the two protests sought to challenge white beauty standards (among other things), the media highlighted their differences rather than their commonalities (Welch 88).

³⁵ The readability of the message—beyond what it became in the hands of the press—was later criticised by Carol Hanisch in a document titled "A Critique of the Miss America Protest" on the basis that some aspects of the protest had given the impression that the NYRW had targeted the contestants rather than the pageant itself. Additionally, Hanisch regretted their excessive use of "'in-talk' of the New Left/Hippie movements" which, according to her, limited the accessibility of their discourse, thus crippling the goal of sisterhood.

³⁶ See the short film: Grant, Bev; Mitnick Liptak, Karen. "Up Against the Wall Miss America". Produced by Newsreel, 1968. *Youtube*, uploaded by Archivio Audiovisivo del Movimento Operaio e Democratico, 5 Oct. 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IINxpXhFoA4>. Accessed 9 Sep. 2023.

women participating in the pageant. Some hecklers also called the feminists “lesbians” and “communists” (Kreydatus, “Contesting Miss America” 25). Even if Kreydatus uses the term “mockery” (“Contesting Miss America” 25) to refer to those insults, both slurs translate a perception of feminists as transgressive figures and could therefore suggest that they even inspired fear, rather than just disdain: during the Cold-War, Communism was perceived as the ultimate antagonist of the American essence; lesbian women, through their refusal of obligatory heterosexuality, also deviated from established social conformity. This is in line with Hanisch’s observation that the Left was not taking the protest seriously and even found it laughable, but the Right indeed felt threatened by what it represented.

1.2.3. Lesbians, Femmes³⁷ and the Stonewall Uprising in 1969: Standing up to Homophobia and Police Persecution

From the night of June 27-28 to July 2nd, 1969 in Greenwich Village—“The Village”—in Manhattan, more specifically at and around the Stonewall Inn, 53 Christopher Street, several clashes opposed members of the LGBTQ+ community to the police after an umpteenth raid on the bar³⁸. At the time, gay bars were targeted by the authorities because engaging in homosexual interactions and crossdressing were illegal activities; also, gay bars sold alcohol illegally—they were run by the mafia and thus did not have a license (Armstrong and Cragg 737; Duberman 181, 192; “Stonewall Riots”). Gay bars—and the Stonewall Inn, although it was a dodgy place, was no exception—had provided a place for queer customers to gather and socialise out of society’s sight since the end of WWII (Duberman 76). They tended to cater to separate clienteles that grouped according to ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class (Duberman 40-42). Stonewall mostly welcomed gay men, but it has been wrongly circulated, including by historians like Rosen (166) and Zinn (617), that the Stonewall Riots—or

³⁷ Today’s understanding of gender has evolved compared to that of the sixties. The term “transgender” is not used in Duberman’s *Stonewall* but rather expressions such as “queens”, “female impersonators”, “crossdressers”, “transvetites”. This outdated terminology refers to gender-presentation rather than gender-identity and thus puts focus on people’s perception of others’ gender and sex, rather than on the self-labelling of one’s asserted gender identity. It is likely that among queens, crossdressers, etc of the twentieth century, some would today fall under the term of “trans women”, although the term is anachronistic to the period. For purposes of inclusivity and clarity, the term “femme” will be frequently used in this thesis to refer to “feminine-presenting” individuals regardless of their asserted gender-identity. The term femme is mostly used in the lesbian community, but transgender women and non-binary people also employ it to talk about their performed gender. This choice of terminology remains debatable and is to be dealt with with caution.

³⁸ The detail of what happened during the confrontations is thoroughly narrated in Martin Duberman’s *Stonewall* (92-208). The uprising involved kicking, throwing objects such as glass bottles at officers, besieging and attempting to burn down the Stonewall Inn while the police were inside. There were also slogans, graffiti, leafletting, speeches: the tactics used during the days that followed the raid were not exclusively violent.

Uprising³⁹—only involved cisgender homosexual men. In fact, lesbian women and genderqueer⁴⁰, feminine-presenting people like Sylvia Rivera were also present (Armstrong and Cragge 737; Duberman 182-183, 190, 197); Stormé Delarverie⁴¹ was later identified as the woman who gave the blow that spurred the crowd into fighting back (Goodman).

The violent confrontations at Stonewall are still commemorated today in June during Pride celebrations⁴². As Armstrong and Cragge have put it, Stonewall’s commemoration is what made the events so significant in Queer history rather than the events themselves (744): other occurrences of violent resistance to police raids had been listed in the sixties but there is less widespread awareness of them today (Armstrong and Cragge 725). According to Kopkind, Stonewall is “a material metaphor for emergence, visibility, and pride, and its historic power has been its affirmation of gay identity rather than its establishment of a particular homosexual agenda” (145). Stonewall is important because it symbolises the legitimacy of Queer existence. It is considered a watershed of American Queer history and the trigger of a renewed⁴³ feel of radicalism in the gay rights movement (Armstrong and Cragge 724; Rosen 166), but this does not equate to Stonewall being the birth of LGBTQ+ activism, as stressed by Duberman (76-153): organisations like the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis, founded in the 1950s, had set the stage for the possibility of rebellion at Stonewall⁴⁴: by applying the principles of structural analysis to the understanding of their situation as homosexuals, early communist members of the Mattachine Society challenged the pathologizing stance on homosexuality by identifying homosexuals as a systemically oppressed minority (Ashley 29; Duberman 76-77).

³⁹ Terminology is later discussed in 1.3.3.

⁴⁰ “Refers to individuals who blur preconceived boundaries of gender in relation to the gender binary; they can also reject commonly held ideas of static gender identities. (...)” (“Genderqueer.” def.)

⁴¹ Stormé Delarverie was a black butch lesbian nicknamed “the Gay Community’s Rosa Parks”.

⁴² Initially, the LGBTQ+ community would demonstrate on Annual Reminder Day on July 4th (the first Annual Reminder took place in 1965) to commemorate homosexual events. After Stonewall, it was decided that the events of June 1969 should be the main focus of LGBTQ+ commemorations and that the date should move to June 28th (Armstrong and Cragge 738-739).

⁴³ After the Mattachine Society gained national scope, its affiliation with communism presented a risk for the organisation’s reputation. Its early radicalism collapsed, and priority was granted to giving the community an image of acceptability. This is reminiscent of the attitude of NOW women from the women’s rights movement, which the Women’s Liberation did not relate with. In this aspect, the Gay Liberation Front can be compared to the Women’s Liberation movement.

⁴⁴ Moreover, the socio-political context of the late sixties provided breeding ground for an LGBTQ+ revolution: the spirit of civil disobedience as well as the amplification of countercultural voices from the Civil Rights, the anti-Vietnam-war movement and the Women’s Liberation movement—of which members of the LGBTQ+ community had been/were a part— called for more subversive postures than those found in the fifties, considered a time of “quiescence” by Duberman (98, 169). Additionally, the topic of homosexuality had been broached by the media in the early sixties in New York (Duberman 97), opening the way for more eye-catching activism.

According to Duberman, one must be aware of one's systemic subordination before one can fight against it (75): consciousness-raising was key to the women's movement and to the gay movement of the late 1960s.

As in every other societal sphere, women and gender minorities enjoyed less visibility and consideration than cisgender men within the gay movement (Duberman 77, 173). The DOB disputed that lack of representation and remained wary of gay men's misapprehending of lesbian-specific issues throughout the years: at the creation of NACHO⁴⁵ in 1966, the DOB was among the organisations that pushed for the preservation of each group's self-determination within the confederation because they fretted over the non-consideration of lesbian interests in the process of centralising the cause (Duberman 147, 153). Even after Stonewall and the founding of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA), "many lesbians discovered that gay men could be just as blind to the needs of women as straight men" (Rosen 166). Sylvia Rivera confided in Duberman that she, as a transgender person, had felt rejected at GAA meetings due to her gender non-conformity (236). Meanwhile, transgender people were particularly marginalised: Duberman claims there is evidence that "effeminate boys" had been targeted more than others by the police during the Stonewall Uprising (202). This is precisely why the events at Stonewall should absolutely be studied through the lens of Feminist Studies too: even in already marginalised communities, women and the *feminine* have tended to remain subordinate.

The women's movement's support towards lesbians was flawed too. Betty Friedan coined the expression of "lavender menace" to refer to them: according to some activists of the women's rights movement (activists from the women's liberation movement, as for many of them by the seventies, conversely leaned toward political lesbianism [Rosen 172-173]), welcoming lesbians into the movement would smear its acceptability and chances to gain women ground within the existing system, because of society's perception of lesbians as men-haters and plainly put, deviant individuals (Rosen 166). Women and gender minorities arguably had it worse than cisgender gay men in that they struggled to find support and inclusion from both the women's movement and the gay movement in spite of their cumulation of factors of vulnerability. As Ashley noted, striving for acceptability limited the gay movement's inclusivity and intersectionality (31); this thinking also applies to Feminist movements of all eras.

⁴⁵ North American Conference of Homophile Organizations

1.3. The Place of Violence in Each Case Study: Different Stances

Violence is a deeply controversial means of expression, especially when used by women for political purposes as previously developed in more depth in 1.1. “The Societal Taboo of Violence and Women: Reconsidering the Legitimacy of Subversive Violence”. This chapter evaluates the positioning of activists regarding the violence—or non-violence, in the case of the 1968 Miss America Pageant protest in Atlantic City—of their actions.

1.3.1. Nation’s *Hatchetations*: A Planned and Deliberate Use of Violence

When Carry Nation first decided to smash down a saloon in Kiowa with the hope to finally spur change in Kansas regarding the ongoing circulation of alcohol despite its legal prohibition, she knew that she was about to commit an action that would tarnish her reputation. In her memoirs, she confides: “Whenever I thought of the consequences of what I was going to do and what my husband and friends would think, also what my enemies would do, I had a sensation of nervousness.” ([1904] 55). Nevertheless, nowhere in her autobiography does she express any signs of remorse regarding her methods, which she even upheld with a certain sense of humour. One day, she was introduced at a convention by a Christian church member who both approved of her vindication and condemned its violence; he described her hatchetations as “crooked”. She reportedly replied:

I could not see that the term 'crooked' should be used. I rolled up the rocks as straight as I could, I placed them straight in the box, hitched up my horse straight, drove straight to Kiowa, walked straight in the saloon, threw straight and broke them up in the straight manner, drove home straight and I did not make a crooked step in smashing. ([1904] 58)

Her use of violence was therefore premeditated and fully deliberate.

Religion played a central role in Nation’s life, including in motivating her hatchetations. Nation claimed that God himself had sent her on a mission to accomplish his quest (53). While her unwavering claim to be God’s appointed vigilante participated in building her reputation as a lunatic, crazy and fanatic woman (Grace 6), stating to act upon God’s will is a common pattern found in the memoirs of women activists such as Sojourner Truth or Emmeline Pankhurst; implying that God, and not their inner voices, led them to take action was a way to clear themselves from the responsibility of frowned upon conducts (Grace 142). Publicly justifying her controversial actions and struggle by the irrevocable words of God enabled Carry Nation to present her crusade in a frame of societal acceptability.

It should be noted that, although unconventional, Carry Nations' hatchetations did not appear out of thin air: on the one hand, they were in line with a tradition of "agrarian protest, especially Kansas Populism" (Grace 10), notably carried out through similar saloon smashings conducted by women during the 1850s in the Midwest, which were supported by a significant share of society, including by men (Dannenbaum 242-243). On the other, the evolution of womanhood in the late 19th century provided a breach for Carry Nation to indulge in unapologetic activism. In the 1890s, so Fran Grace says, ideals of womanhood especially in the Midwest—as opposed to the Northeast where more superficial, ornamental and domestic images of womanhood prevailed—tended to praise women's involvement in community life. "True Womanhood" started shifting towards "Good Womanhood", according to which women were expected to do good around them rather than prioritise a neat and 'feminine' appearance. (Grace 92, 95, 103-105). This does not mean that her methods were unanimously approved of in the Midwest, but rather that the specific socio-cultural context she lived in might have allowed her to feel entitled to engaging in temperance in the way that she did.

As for the legality of her actions, one must first consider the situation in which Carry Nation lived as an American Woman born in the 19th century: as briefly mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, all American women did not enjoy the right to vote in the early 20th century. Hence, they could not champion the bids of politicians who advocated for the causes that would benefit their interests. Worse, politicians' popularity and careers therefore did not depend on women's approval of their agendas; consequently, what *effective* solutions were prohibitionist and temperance women left with to force politicians who were not required to represent them to enforce prohibition laws?

Carry Nation had anticipated the reluctance of her readers regarding her apparent breaking of the law—she was jailed more than twenty times during her lifetime (Nation, [1904] 85). Her autobiography features a series of national and federal laws concerning first the moral duty of governments and localities regarding the preservation of public health and secondly the moral duty and legitimacy of citizens to take charge of such enforcement when it is not carried out by the powers-that-be (75-77). Although those laws present some ambiguity because they address morality, Nation managed to back herself up on legal grounds.

1.3.2. The New-York Radical Women: Negating any Intentionality to Resort to Violence

Bursts of artillery fire, mass strikes, massacred protesters, bomb explosions—these are our image of revolution. But some revolutions are harder to recognize: no cataclysms mark their beginnings or ends, no casualties are left lying in pools of blood.

Though people may suffer greatly, their pain is hidden from public view. Such was the case with the American women's movement. (Rosen xi)

Those are the opening lines of Ruth Rosen's *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*. From the very beginning, the conclusion is final: the women's movement was entirely peaceful, and nothing suggests that it was ever meant to be otherwise. What, then, can be made of bra-burning?

The protest, as aforementioned, included a "Freedom Trash Can" in which women were invited to dump "instruments of female torture" ("No More Miss America!"). From this, narratives emerged around the occurrence of bra-burning. There is no unanimity on whether bras were indeed burned that day: Robin Morgan denied that any such thing happened and does not even recall any talks about bra-ignition among the group (Campbell; Van Gelder, "The Truth About Bra-Burners" 81). Other NYRW activists like Hanisch have claimed that there was no fire because the authorities did not grant them the necessary permit to carry it out. (Greenfieldboyce; Hanisch; Kreydatus, "Contesting Miss America" 26; Press). Campbell conducted his own investigation: he interviewed John Katz, a young reporter at the time who maintains that there *was* a fire, although it was brief and tiny. However, there is no additional evidence to back him up. There remains uncertainty as to the occurrence of symbolic violence on the boardwalk of Atlantic City that day, but more sources support the no-fire scenario, either by spite or by choice of the protesters. This thesis does not hope to decide on a definite answer regarding this question, but rather to examine the NYRW's view on the notion of violence.

Women who had fled from other movements due to ambient and undisputed sexism rejected aspects that they viewed as macho, such as leadership (Press), but also as violence, and specifically its "romanticization" by the New Left and the Black Panthers (Griffin *qtd. in* Rosen 136). Robin Morgan from the NYRW declared about the protest: "We don't want another Chicago⁴⁶" (Curtis, "Miss America Is Picketed By 100 Women"). A possible understanding of this dismissal is that radical feminists might have disavowed those facets of the male Left because they were directly reminiscent of their exclusion within revolutionary circles: women were relegated to secondary positions, and violence is considered men's appanage. Understandably, they did not wish to replicate in their own movement what they felt had been synonymous with their oppression as women.

⁴⁶ Morgan was referring to the violent outbursts during the 1968 Democratic National Convention which happened a few weeks before the Miss America Pageant protest.

Another possible explanation for the women's movement's distancing from violence is that violence is a strong, uncompromising statement. The social cost that can ensue from making use of it is such, especially for women, that one must feel a sufficient level of external validation⁴⁷ or of confidence in the validity of one's cause, to allow oneself to come to use such means. Van Gelder's 1992 article suggests that the NYRW, and more generally the women's movement, possibly lacked both. On the one hand, the women's cause was not taken seriously even within the Left ("The Truth About Bra-Burners" 80); on the other, Van Gelder retrospectively remarks that both herself and Morgan, in an article Van Gelder had written thirty-two years earlier for the *New-York Post* to announce the protest, sounded extremely "defensive". She goes on: "[Robin Morgan] is almost apologetic about organizing women around issues that might directly concern their own lives, and not just as extra troops getting behind the leftist approved agenda" ("The Truth About Bra-Burners" 81)⁴⁸. The male-dominated revolutionary feel of the 1960s, so it seems, left little space for women's liberation, and even led them to minimize themselves at times. This challenges Rosen's claim that the young radical feminists, unlike the activists from the women's rights movement, did not seek "respectability" (80). In fact, Welch observes that the NYRW's utterances looking back on the events of 1968 tended to "remain stuck on correcting the factual inaccuracy of bra-burning" (80), as if they had felt the need to ensure the movement was seen in a positive light. While radical feminists were more daring in their approaches to activism than their women's rights counterparts, Van Gelder's article and Welch's commentary hint that the NYRW still struggled to endorse an unapologetic stance towards their fight and the rumours of symbolic violence.

⁴⁷ Such as Carry Nation's supposed divine approbation.

⁴⁸ Without the full 1968 article available, it is not possible to review Van Gelder's analysis.

1.3.3. Stonewall: A Spontaneous Reaction Sparked by yet Another Police Raid

Unlike Carry Nation's thought-out hatchetations and the NYRW's possibly thwarted plans of setting fire to the Freedom Trash Can, Stonewall's violence was a spontaneous, knee-jerk reaction to yet another police raid. Commonly called the Stonewall Riots, the term Stonewall Uprising has nonetheless been considered more pertinent by some to refer to the confrontations. Howard Smith, who was a journalist for the *Village Voice* in 1969, remarked: "It really should have been called Stonewall Uprising. They really were objecting to how they were being treated, that's more an uprising than a riot" ("An Uprising, Not A Riot" 00:00:14-00:00:24). The renaming of the events allows for the collective consideration of the responsive nature of the crowd's reaction at the Stonewall Inn: violence did not come out of nowhere and the term "uprising" makes its legitimacy salient.

As in the case of Carry Nation, likewise the factor of systemic marginalisation played a central part in the rise of violence among Stonewall customers. As explained by Ashley, the uprising gathered the "poorest and most marginalized [individuals] among the gay community" (28). Armstrong and Crage remark: "Street queens and hustlers—marginalized by class, gender presentation, and often race—were more willing than others to confront police (...)" (744). Because doubly, triply, quadruply, etc oppressed individuals were among the least visible and most prejudiced against—sometimes violently—their voices held little power in the public debate and this limited their potential of influence regarding the improvement of LGBTQ+ rights and their embracement within society. Violence could thus come as a last-resort, desperate response for them. This idea shows through this quote of Sylvia Rivera: "I wanted to do every destructive thing I could think of to get back at those who had hurt us over the years. Letting loose, fighting back, was the only way to get across to straight society and the cops that we weren't going to take their fucking shit anymore" (Duberman 203). The Stonewall Uprising was about subverting the status quo and rebelling against an unendurable environment that dehumanised queer people, especially those who cumulated several criteria of discrimination.

Interestingly, the uprising was not condoned by the LGBTQ+ community as one. More privileged⁴⁹ and older strata of the community disavowed the rebellion against the police because of the sacrosanct concern for acceptability and of the belief that violence cannot solve problems. Some even sided with the police (Duberman 206). Gay activist Randy Wicker declared during a crowd address a few days after the uprising: "Rock through windows don't

⁴⁹ See Irene and Gelderloos' analysis of non-violence as a privilege in part 1.1.4.

open doors” (Duberman 215). Other members of the community simply did not feel concerned by the Stonewall Uprising: Yvonne Flowers, a Black lesbian, initially failed to see how she would have found her place among the protestors as an Afro-American lesbian. Karla Jay felt like the events had been “[an] all-male squabble with the prize nothing more than leading an unhampered bar life (...)” (Duberman 219). Whether because of the perception of violence as an obstacle to earning society’s tolerance, or because of the lack of intersectionality of the gay movement in the late sixties, Stonewall’s violence was not instantly embraced by the whole community.

Nevertheless, violence was still recognised by many as a necessary step to push forward the LGBTQ+ agenda in a less apologetic and self-flagellating style than that of the pre-Stonewall era (Duberman 171). Artist and Stonewall veteran Tommy Lanigan Schmidt declared “If you don’t have extremes, you don’t get any moderation” (“An Uprising, Not A Riot” 00:00:39-00:00:43); lesbian activist Martha Shelley quotes singer Joan Baez: “It isn’t nice to block the doorway, it isn’t nice to go to jail, there are nicer ways to do it but the nice ways always fail” (“An Uprising, Not A Riot” 00:00:53-00:01:02). Those two quotes suggest that Stonewall’s violence, although unfortunate, might have benefitted the more moderate streams that initially failed to be taken seriously by making them seem more acceptable in comparison to ruthless tactics.

This first chapter provided the background knowledge required to understand the inherent subversiveness in women’s political use of violence in a modern Western civilisation, and to grasp the motivations of women and gender minorities to use deliberate violence to fight for their existences and beliefs, or on the contrary to distance themselves from it, in the case of the NYRW. Chapter 2 is devoted to analysing renditions of the studied episodes, based on a corpus of selected newspaper articles from mainstream and alternative press.

2. Press Representations of Feminist Violence

The news can be defined as “A printed or broadcast report of information about important events in the world, the country, or the local area” (“News”, def. 3.) Focusing on print news media from the United States (on local and national scales), this second chapter explores the representations of women’s political violence in mainstream or establishment newspapers, underground press and self-edited publications.

2.1. General Thoughts: News-Making in Mainstream Media

2.1.1. Framing Events

The definition above brings to light a key element about the process of news making: newspaper articles address events that are *considered* important enough to be brought to the public’s eye. Hence, covering news is first a process of selection, based on what is or is not considered newsworthy by both newsmakers and readers (Tuchman, *Making News* 6-8). Because of their perceived self-evidence, impertinence or unavailability, some pieces of information will not make it into news reports (Tuchman, *Making News* 8). Consequently, the craft of news coverage is necessarily political in that it highlights certain facets of events at the expense of others.

Moreover, writing news articles falls within storytelling in that it does not circulate facts in a sanitised and strictly neutral manner; rather, the news craft constructs narratives around the event. While news pieces are expected to align with “the craft traditions of balance, fairness, accuracy, and objectivity” that are considered “the basic fundamentals of serious reporting” (Bradley 77), they remain an interpretation, a mediation of reality (Tuchman, *Making News* 5-6). The notion of “mediation” is pertinent to understanding why, as put forth by Tuchman, the news is the “social construction of reality” (*Making News* ix): news articles act as intermediates between events and readers, and thus convey an idea of reality that is indexed on reporters’ professional and societal biases (*Making News* 1), as will be developed in the next sections.

Facts can be communicated through different lenses or angles, which Tuchman calls “frames” (*Making News* 1). Gamson and Modigliani have defined the frame as “the central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events and weaves a connection among them” (143). In other words, framing an event means setting up—consciously or unconsciously—an approach to mediate events to the readers. In print media, news framing can be concretely achieved through reporting and editing choices such as

terminology, tone, selective information, illustrations, and layout, to name the main parameters used for the analyses of this thesis' corpus.

Due to news reporting's standardised methods of newsgathering relying on identifying "the who, what, when, where, why, and how" (Tuchman, *Making News* 134), the news media typically focuses on one-off incidents rather than on general movements (Tuchman, *Making News* 134)—the latter being more complex, evolving and hardly condensable in a single article. This idea is of foremost interest when discussing the coverage of women's politically motivated violence and will be further developed in part 2.2.3.'s focus on the depoliticisation of such events in the news. As remarked by Molotch and Lester: "to make news, members of social movements may have to assemble at an inappropriate time in an inappropriate place to engage in an accordingly inappropriate activity" (*cited in* Tuchman, *Making News* 135). Indeed, by disrupting order, members of social movements conform to news coverage methods and thus increase their cause's visibility within the public discourse. However, due to press institutions' reluctance to cover issues, the ins and outs of said issues risk being overlooked.

2.1.2. Staying Within Acceptable Boundaries

Constructing news stories that will secure readership necessitates to pass on those stories in a manner that is digestible and acceptable to said readership. In mainstream media, this translates as dealing with issues in a way that aligns with traditional discourses, unthreatening to socially constructed reality. This is what Marilyn Crafton Smith calls *the field of allowable images*, "a field that comprises a core of traditional images and those newly incorporated or on their way to incorporation" (76). Based on the conclusion made in Chapter 1, women partaking in violent activism for a movement that will ultimately benefit them as women is deeply transgressive. Henceforth, it can be hypothesised that establishment media's representations of events related to that kind of activism will struggle to produce renditions that loyally report on women's vindications. The reason for that would be that the media are neither designed nor willing to concede space to the train of thought that gives violent actions their symbolism and pertinence—especially, in all likelihood, in case of strong divergence of the activists from valued performances of femininity.

Crafton Smith's field of allowable images is all the more intelligible a concept when one looks at the news media as a "community of discourse", to borrow Tuchman's expression. She argues:

A community of discourse is comparable to a language: it integrates and controls; it provides common elements for strangers to use when they meet and creates structures for what can be noticed or said. Viewing the media as a community of discourse may enable a new understanding of both women's presentation by the media and the impact of the media on society. (Tuchman, "Women's Depiction" 540)

Once again, this highlights the socially constructed aspect of news media and undermines the pretence of strict objectivity that has been traditionally allocated to news reporting. Acknowledging the concept of *community of discourse* amounts to saying that the news industry adjusts the way it presents facts to the expectations of its target readership—the broader the target, the more traditional and unchallenging of the established system the coverage (Tuchman, "Women's Depiction" 536). As summed up by Bradley, modern journalism in mainstream publications is about "providing news, information, and entertainment that [is] attractive to readers in a context that [does] not upset the status quo or the advertisers' interest" (78).

The framing of social acceptability that is imposed on mainstream news making organisations originates in part, as hinted by Bradley, from sponsorship. Mass publications' economic sustainability heavily depends on adverts inserted in their pages (Creedon 13). Accordingly, the reputation of a news publication puts that of its sponsors at stake, thus creating an additional pressure factor for news coverage to remain within acceptable boundaries. Namely, "(...) the media have been asked to avoid making heroes of those who use violence" (Held 192): certain framings are thus socially favoured while others—anti-establishment ones—are frowned upon.

2.1.3. The Economic Factor: A Thirst for Sensationalism

After referring to the role of sponsors in printed mass media, this part further explores the implications of the profit-driven stance of the news industry. What benefits brands in sponsoring partnerships is the visibility gain: news publications that resort to sponsoring are therefore incited to increase their circulation numbers to attract brands and secure incomes. Consequently, as early as the 18th century and particularly in the late 19th century with the

emergence of New Journalism⁵⁰ and Yellow Journalism⁵¹, the craft of news making became closely tied to sensationalist coverage. Luther Mott defines sensationalism in news media as “stories which stimulate unwholesome emotional responses in the average reader”, “the detailed newspaper treatment of crimes, disasters, sex scandals, and monstrosities” (442). Yellow Journalism bequeathed certain editing styles such as “the enlargement and blackening of headlines” to contemporary journalism (Mott 541). The dramatic visual emphasis of news stories indeed participates in rousing the reader’s attention and interest in the article they are reading.

Oliver and Myers have argued that “disruptive, violent, large-scale events are more likely to be viewed as newsworthy” (*cited in* Armstrong and Cragge 726). Women’s militant violence, due to its inherently scandalous nature in modern western civilisation, is consequently an ideal topic for sensationalist coverage. Carrie Nation’s raids in illegal saloons were extensively covered in the press of her time, including in the “yellow” style that was customary to the period : articles *CN5* and *CN8*—both running on two pages, including half of the frontpages—published in the *Topeka State Journal* in February 1901 tell every single detail of what happened before, during and after the attacks on saloons, reporting entire conversations in direct speech, highlighting seemingly insignificant details such as Nation having breakfast, resting or praying, with equal emphasis as that put on the actual destructive actions. Some narrativized atmospheric descriptions could easily be taken from a novel: “Only the regular tramp of the crusaders broke the stillness of the early morning.” Both articles’ headlines take up more than half of the space of a column. The use of pictures, such as a drawing of the shattered mirror and the floor plan of the saloon in the *Topeka State Journal* articles, or a collage of Nation’s and her husband’s portraits surrounded by cartoons representing different scenes of her raid in *The San Francisco Call* contribute to creating an electrifying halo around the news story. Particular attention is given to crowds’ reactions to Carrie Nation’s presence in the descriptions, and one of the *Topeka State Journal*’s articles includes a drawing of a mob

⁵⁰ New Journalism emerged in the 1880s in the *New York World*, founded by Joseph Pulitzer. Mott describes the New Journalism formula in the following terms: “good news coverage peppered with sensationalism, stunts and crusades, editorials of high character, size, illustration, and promotion” (439).

⁵¹ Yellow Journalism arose from the economic competition between Pulitzer’s *World* and Hearst’s *Journal*. Yellow coverage was highly sensationalist in tone but, further than that, it was characterised by an additional sprinkle of dishonesty: “scare-heads (...), lavish use of pictures, many of them without significance, (...) impostures and frauds of various kinds (...)” (Mott 539). For more information on the reason behind the appellation “Yellow”, see Mott (525-526).

gathered in front of the raided saloon. All those elements participate in framing Carry Nation as a phenomenon of public interest, worthy of fascination and thus of sale.

Nation's hatchetations were in fact so famous that her very name seemed to create a stir: out of eight articles from establishment media, seven display her name in the title without providing complementary information about her identity—including in non-Kansan papers—probably because no additional information was needed for readers to instantly know who “Mrs. Nation” was. Her name even appeared in articles adjacent to the ones written about her such as in the *Kansas Agitator* (CN7): “Mrs Nation has occupied the attention of the people to such an extent that they have almost forgotten the war in South Africa and the Philippines”. The press made her so famous that she became paradigmatic. Fran Grace, one of Nation's biographer, reports that some newspapers would print posters to announce her arrival in town so that readers would be eager to buy their latest issue (182-183): her uncommon activism and name were used as selling points for the press.

Although Mott stated in 1942 that Yellow Journalism lasted for about a decade starting from 1896 and gradually disappeared after 1901 (539), it seems that the idea of violence perpetrated by women and femme-presenting people caused the press of the late 60s to fall back into its old 'yellow' habits. The analysis of the corpus shows that characteristic features of Yellow Journalism such as fake pictures appear in articles covering the 1968 Miss America Protest. Boucher's “Bra Burners Blitz Boardwalk” (PP4a) is illustrated by a picture (Figure 1) taken at the protest showing women holding a sign reading “Girls Crowned, Boys Killed”. The cropping of the picture largely conceals the word “Vietnam” written in smaller letters, as observable on a picture taken from a different angle by Bev Grant⁵². This shifts the symbolism of the event from that of anti-war and feminist, to that of pro-female supremacy and anti-men terrorism—a significantly more scandalous frame. In addition to this, the bra-burning trope that pervaded the protest's coverage by the mainstream press (five out of eight mainstream press articles mention bra-burning, four of which as early as in the title) in spite of the unfoundedness of any bra-ignition and the relative insignificance of bras at the protest compared to all else (varied shows of guerilla theatre and the disruption of the pageant) can easily be associated with Yellow Journalism for its blatant lack of fact-checking and its disproportionate interest for bras, which due to their association with breasts, are likely to attract more attention than more classic

⁵² For copyrights issues, the picture could not be featured in this work's table of illustrations. The picture's reference is featured in the bibliography.



THEY'RE BURNED UP — Protesting Miss America Pageant on grounds not altogether clear to bystanders, 75 New York women discarded parts of their wardrobes into a trash can in some symbolic action of sorts.

Figure 1: Press of Atlantic City. Photograph taken at the Miss America Pageant Protest of Atlantic City, 7 Sep. 1968.

ways of protesting. Even the articles that do not claim bras were burned, and thus do not capitalise on violence for sensational purposes, still highlight bras (out of the three articles that do not mention burning, one heavily dwells on the presence of female underwear: the seven-paragraph *Newark Sunday News* article comprises six occurrences of the word “lingerie”, including in the title).

The return to the “Yellow” style can be seen in the media coverage of Stonewall too. Alwood argues that Lisker’s article “Homo Nest Raided, Queen Bees Are Stinging Mad” (*S5*), “written in an entertaining and dramatic fashion, (...) evoked the days of yellow journalism, when newspapers put a premium on telling a story rather than finding the facts—or providing the truth” (88). Sensationalism truly infused the coverage of all three movements.

Interestingly, there is evidence that the success of media’s sensationalised stories was used as a Trojan Horse to enjoy increased coverage for the women’s and LGBTQ+ people’s cause. Lindsay Van Gelder, the self-proclaimed “Mother of the Myth of the Maidenform Inferno”⁵³, explained that she purposely used the image of bra-burning because she knew it would secure the publication of her piece (“The Truth About Bra-Burners” 80-81). Alice Echols, who conducted group interviews with members of the NYRW, claims that some of them deliberately spread the rumour of bra-burning: “(...) at least one of the organisers of the protest reportedly leaked word of the bra-burning to the press to stimulate media interest in the action” (94). The following year, gay activist Craig Rodwell, “ever conscious of the need of publicity—for visibility—and realizing that a critical moment had arrived, [...] called all three daily papers, the Times, the Post, and the News” (Duberman 198), thus contributing to making Stonewall a turning point of LGBTQ+ history by exploiting the rules of the media game to the Gay Liberation’s advantage.

⁵³ Lindsay Van Gelder was the New York Post journalist who wrote the article “Bra-Burners Plan Miss America Protest” (also referred to as article *PPI*, see Appendix) and started the bra-burning trope, three days before the protest.

2.2. Heterosexist Portrayals in Establishment Media

2.2.1 Fighting Off Feminine Erasure in the Media: Violence as a Battering Ram

In the last section, we evoked the inherency of framing in the news and how it is influenced by societal and economic factors. Acknowledging framing as a selection process results in abandoning the belief in objectivity as a realistic expectation of news media. In mainstream news media, decision-makers and powerholders are still “predominantly white males” (Creedon 13). Creedon argues that, as a consequence, news coverage standards have been constructed and established accordingly: “In sum,” she writes, “objectivity is a normative ideal; in practice, objectivity is a standpoint—white and male” (15).

The overrepresentation of white males in mainstream press rooms has direct consequences on women’s and minorities’ representations in news stories. According to Marilyn Gist⁵⁴, “news judgment [of what is news] inevitably reflects the perceptual biases and interests of those making the judgment” (109). Twentieth-century coverage of women in mainstream newspapers has its roots in gender-hierarchising discourses, as the post-Enlightenment world built its vision around dualisms that normalised the superiority of the *masculine* over the *feminine* (Creedon 4-5). Gist’s media-research resulted in the observation that in newsrooms where minorities and women were underrepresented as staff members, news coverage was generally invisibilising or stigmatising towards women and minorities (106-108). Surprisingly, Gist (109) and Tuchman (“Women’s Depiction” 535) note that female and minorities reporters, due to the institutionalised and internalised nature of white-and-male “objectivity” in news making, were also liable to reproducing this scheme (109), as is the case with Harriet Van Horne’s “Female Firebrands” (PP5)⁵⁵. Moreover, Tuchman (*Making News* 138), Gist (109), Adams et al.⁵⁶ (8) have found that women-related stories were confined into women-specific, lower-status sections of newspapers in the 20th century.

The corpus of articles scrutinised for the purpose of this thesis supports that violence, because it is seen as extra-ordinary, acted as a door-opener to the status of “real news” for women-centred stories in 20th century mainstream newspapers and defied the systemic invisibilising of women in news stories. Articles mentioning acts of violence (including articles

⁵⁴ Gist conducted media-analysis research about the impacts of staff representation on news-coverage based on three newsrooms in the early 1990s.

⁵⁵ This article is part of the corpus relating to the 1968 Miss America Pageant Protest. It is analysed in the following chapters. (PP5) corresponds to the article’s attributed code (see Appendix).

⁵⁶ Adams et al. studied the representations of women in *The New York Herald Tribune*, a mass newspaper, throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

that fabricated said-violence in the case of the 1968 pageant protest) made it out of women's sections, and thus shed the secondary-news status usually tagged to women's stories. In reverse, this has not been the case with articles that—correctly—did not relay any occurrences of bra-burning. Carry Nation's crusade was even found on frontpages on a regular basis, accounting for the considerable media attention she attracted.

It is harder to draw such clear-cut conclusions from the mainstream coverage of Stonewall, because only three mainstream papers make up the Stonewall section of the corpus. In those, women's presence in the uprising has been negated, misidentified, or merely implied. Article *S2* only mentions "young men"; article *S5* provides abundant descriptions of the feminine features of the protesters, and heavily insists on the fraudulence of their gender with sarcastic and scathing comments such as: "She was a he" and invalidating terms like "lady-in-waiting". Finally, article *S1* refers to the insurgents in gender-neutral terms. Yet, the illustration of the article with a picture showing three individuals with a passing as cisgender men⁵⁷ orients the reader's understanding of gender-neutrality as masculine.

While there may have been less women-passing than men-passing people at the Stonewall Uprising, women and femmes⁵⁸ were definitely present. What could have caused their erasure from mainstream newspaper coverage is not only the historical overlooking of women—and particularly of lesbians within the coverage of the gay community (Alwood 96)—in news stories, but also the incompatibility between establishment media's limited understanding of gender. Emily Skidmore reviewed press coverage of feminine transidentity in the pre-Stonewall era (1952 to 1966) and found that Christine Jorgensen's story in 1952 had set the standards for acceptable and legible feminine transidentity in the mainstream press, i.e. white womanhood, then characterised by "domesticity, respectability, and heterosexuality" (271). Clearly, none of those criteria were met by the trans women of Stonewall, who were, for a number of them, poor, non-white individuals and prostitutes (Armstrong & Crago 737, 744) violently resisting the police in a mob of gay people. By crossing that information with Skidmore's grid of legibility of the "Good Transsexual", it is not surprising that mainstream

⁵⁷ To "pass" as one's gender means that one's appearance is socially identified as being of one's reclaimed gender, which is considered a social privilege. For example, a person assigned male at birth who identifies as a woman and whose physical appearance aligns with social expectations of femininity (because they adopt clothing and behaviours that are perceived as feminine, and/or have undergone social, hormonal and/or surgical transitioning for instance) can be socially perceived as a person who was assigned female at birth. In the text, the author meant that the picture shows people who can be identified as cisgender men by society's standards.

⁵⁸ See footnote 377.

newspapers not only failed to identify the presence of women and femmes⁵⁹ at the Stonewall Uprising but also presented them as men in disguise.

Besides, the visibility of the Stonewall uprisings in mainstream newspapers seems to have been limited. Lisker's *S5* is the only one to appear on the front page of its section and to run on two pages: the other two are much shorter, take up considerably less page-space and only appear on pages 30 (*S1*) and 33 (*S2*) of their respective papers. Several hypotheses could be explored to explain why the police-directed violence of Stonewall did not attract the sensationalism-hungry mainstream press as much as hatchetations and bra-burning did: the lack of media-interest for the LGBTQ+ community in the mid-sixties⁶⁰, the commonality of raids in clandestine gay bars, the spontaneity of the uprising leaving too little time for mainstream pressrooms to react, or perhaps the lack of online archived primary sources causing the corpus to be unrepresentative.

It has been established in this part that on the one hand, Carry Nation and the New-York Radical Women drew important mainstream coverage in comparison with what was customary for women's issues at the hands of white, straight and male-dominated newsrooms; on the other hand, women and femmes who participated in the Stonewall uprising enjoyed less visibility. The two following parts discuss the frames used by mainstream newspapers to portray feminine violence.

2.2.2. Threatening Women: Unsexed, Unpredictable and Deviant Figures

As previously articulated in Chapter 1, the illegitimate⁶¹ use of violence by women is socially condemned. From this emerged the hypothesis that women who dared step out of conventional femininity by resorting to violence and thus embodied an antagonised Other, could have been perceived as modern Barbarians, if one sticks to Dumézil's take on the symbolism of barbarism⁶². It is no wonder that the author of article *PP5*, Harriet Van Horne, used the unequivocal archetypal name "Amazons" to refer to the protesters: the daughters of

⁵⁹ Skidmore mentions an occurrence of mislabelling trans people as "homosexuals" in a 1955 article from *Whisper*, due to the fact that both groups were perceived to be "equally deviant" (Skidmore 286). A similar confusion may have taken place regarding the transwomen and femmes of the Stonewall Uprising.

⁶⁰ Duberman's historical account of Stonewall and its background shows that while the existence of homosexuality was more openly acknowledged in the New-York mainstream press of the 1960s than in the pre-WWII years when homosexuals were "unmentionable" (Alwood 19), that acknowledgement was still extremely recent (Duberman 97). White women who were perceived to be cisgender and straight probably enjoyed more coverage opportunities than the LGBTQ+ community.

⁶¹ In the moral as much as in the legal sense.

⁶² Barbarians are antagonised because they threaten the idea of civilisation.

Ares, the god of War in Greek mythology, “(...) were thought to dwell at the edge of what the Greeks considered their 'civilized' world (...)”(Cartwright), which utterly aligns with Dumézil’s understanding of Barbarians as materialisers of the boundaries of civilisation. To Dumézil, because of their use of violence as women, Amazons were indeed transgressive figures in Ancient Greece (00:14:23-00:15:15). The results of the analysis conducted on articles retrieved from mainstream newspapers confirm that hypothesis to an extent, in the sense that women and femmes of this study are certainly framed as threatening in multiple ways, although the astounding ambivalence of the coverage of Carry Nation’s battle stands out.

To begin with, threat comes from violence’s apparent overpowering of the protagonists’ humanity. The terms “Bra-Burners”, “Saloon-smasher”, “Saloon-wrecker”, “Saloon-destroyer” are found in several papers, including in headlines and titles, to refer to the women who picketed Miss America and to Carry Nation. Those terms reduce activists to their deeds rather than to their vindications and frame them as inherently violent individuals.

This is reinforced in the way some articles cast their actions as unpredictable, uncontrollable natural hazards: article *CN5*’s headline begins with “Mrs Nation’s Weapon Falls on Joint (...)” as if alluding to random thunderstorms. Her raids, just like the Stonewall uprising, are likened to a “cyclone” (*CN6*; *S5*). The imagery of untamed nature is also evoked by a floral metaphor illustrating the escalation of violence at the Stonewall Uprising: “The lillies of the valley had become carnivorous jungle plants”. A witness⁶³ of the scene also assimilated the uprisers to “a swarm of hornets attacking a bunch of butterflies” (*S5*).

Even if the imagery of threatening nature is not particularly prevalent in articles covering the 1968 protest, the protesters are still made to look chilling. Van Horne’s and Boucher’s articles (*PP5*; *PP4a*)’ depictions of bra-burning scenes around the Freedom Trash Can evoke sinister rituals, in that the protestors are shown cruelly rejoicing over violence, creating eerie dissonance: in article *PP5*, one reads that the burning was accompanied by “screams of delight”, which is reminiscent of witch⁶⁴ figures and their characteristic resounding laughs. In article *PP4a*, titled “Bra-Burners Blitz Boardwalk”⁶⁵, a picture of exulting women

⁶³ Tuchman (*Making News* 95) argues that using selected witnesses’ testimonies are a way for reporters to express their own opinions without breaking the rule of apparent objectivity. Articles *S5*, *PP4a* and *PP4b*, for instance, only feature pejorative testimonies.

⁶⁴ Witches can be considered the epitome of threatening femininity: they are powerful, independent, they do not fit into conventional beauty standards. In short, they do not yield to the patriarchal order.

⁶⁵ Note the parallel made between feminists and Nazis: The Blitz is a historic reference to the shelling operation named “Blitzkrieg” conducted by Nazi Germany during WWII against the United Kingdom,

gathered around the unlit trashcan and a sign reading “Girls Crowned, Boys Killed” is captioned “They’re burned up – Protesting Miss America Pageant on grounds not altogether clear to bystanders, 75 New York women discarded parts of their wardrobes into a trash can in some symbolic action of sorts”. The photograph also evokes witchcraft and even human sacrifice, due to the sign’s cropped message⁶⁶. The scene’s mysticism is enhanced by the caption, which conveys the idea that the symbolism of the so-called *burning*, and thus the reason behind the protesters’ anger, is obscure and illegible, making it all the more frightening. The protagonists involved in the three case studies have thus been framed through a lens that emphasises their violence, anger and even cruelty at the expense of their humanity by the mainstream press.

One may wonder why feminist violence has inspired such fear-permeated narratives, or more precisely *what* is believed to be threatened by feminist violence. A first-level, pragmatic understanding of the issue orients the answer to this question towards the perennity of law and order, which is disrupted by material damage, injuries, and general agitation. Clearly, one of the hats worn by activists in the mainstream press is that of public nuisance. Indeed, several articles put forward the amount of the material losses caused by Nation’s raids (*CN1*; *CN6*; *CN8*). One even features a drawing of a broken mirror (*CN5*). In article *PP5*, NYRW activists are assimilated to “noisy, lumpish, little girls” whose disruptive presence is a burden to others: “If they can’t be pretty, dammit, they can at least be quiet!”. Articles *PP4*, *CN1* and *S5* each imply that the saloon raids, the Pageant protest and the Stonewall Uprising disturbed peace: for instance, article *PP4*’s opening sentence frames the protest as, to borrow from narrative structure terminology, the inciting incident disrupting the status quo: “Miss America Pageant contestants were rehearsing (...) while outside on the boardwalk a brigade of 75 women (...) staged a two-hour demonstration protesting the image of Miss America”. Political activists are accused of threatening peace and tranquillity by the mainstream media.

Furthermore, the question of the legality of the events is often raised in the corpus of mainstream articles. By doing this, activists are perceived as (potential) offenders⁶⁷ rather than as people resorting to violence as a strategy to convey a message. Articles on Stonewall decidedly adopt a pro-police perspective on the uprising, as it has been remarked by Kapsis et

which was allied to the USA, among other countries. This is an interesting pre-Internet example of Godwin’s law.

⁶⁶ See Figure 1.

⁶⁷ It can be argued that they were. Yet, as it will be discussed in the next part, mainstream coverage’s omission of women’s and gender non-conforming people’s political vindications creates imbalance in the framing of activists.

al (*cited in* Tuchman, *Making News* 94): emphasis is put on the violence suffered by the police forces. Articles *S1* and *S2*, right from the title and on several more occasions in the body of the text, inform the readers on the number of officers wounded by the uprisers. Articles *S1*, *S2* and *S5* all ignore the casualties on the side of the latter. In fact, they even occult the physical violence inflicted on uprisers, who are presented as having had the exclusivity of physical violence in articles *S1*, *S2* and *S5*. Additionally, all three articles make it very clear that the Stonewall Inn was illegally selling alcohol—and what is more, to homosexuals—, and that the police had a warrant to raid the bar. Consequently, resisting the raid violently turned the uprisers into rioters and outlaws in the eye of the mainstream press. As a result, the reader is made to empathise with the police and to deplore the uprisers. In article *PP7*, the columnist comments: “It is one thing to protest against a system or an institution, but it another (sic) to take the law into your own hands and burn your bra”, thus inaccurately framing Women’s Liberation activists as dangerous offenders.

While feminists and LGBTQ+ activists using violence might inspire fear because they disrupt society’s daily life, what this thesis intends to show is that fear really comes from the symbolism behind the rebellion of oppressed groups against a system of heteropatriarchal morals, norms, institutions, etc. “For feminists, being cast as outsiders, troublemakers, even evil women, is inevitable since they challenge the very basis of a patriarchal society” (Beck 140). An underlying feel of angst emerges from the body of mainstream articles, especially those written by white, presumably cisgender and heterosexual men in the late 1960s. What one needs to bear in mind is that the sixties saw the uptight norms of the fifties shattered by the surge of the counterculture, the struggle for civil rights and the anti-war movement. Suddenly, Amerika⁶⁸ was under threat. The coverage of feminist and queer activists of that time is symptomatic of the moral panic of the 1960s:

A moral panic is a widespread fear, most often an irrational one, that someone or something is a threat to the values, safety, and interests of a community or society at large. Typically, a moral panic is perpetuated by the news media (...). Moral panics are often centered around people who are marginalized in society due to their race or ethnicity, class, sexuality, nationality, or religion (Crossman).

This is particularly striking in the *Sunday Press*, in which article *PP4a* by J. Boucher appears. In addition to mentioning the “unprintable” messages seen on protest signs, testifying to the moral threat represented by feminists, the article is edited on the same page as two articles

⁶⁸ “American society viewed as racist, fascist, or oppressive, especially by African-Americans” (“Amerika,” def.).

addressing violent events relating to the counterculture. One alludes to the Black Panthers and the other to the Chicago Democratic Convention. The documents' juxtaposition creates the following message: the Women's Liberation is part of the web of movements that violently threaten the American establishment. A similar concern is expressed in article *PP7* by Buchwald. He accuses the "bra-burners" of "going too far" (the phrase is repeated twice) and of "trying to destroy everything this country holds dear."

The activists' subverting of gender binarity and rigid gender expectations may well be the main source of concern in the mainstream media. In part 1.1.2, "Violence: A Gendered Turf", it has been established that failing to abide by traditional gender "rules" was socially⁶⁹ punishable (Butler 178). As aforementioned, article *S5* features scathing remarks about the protesters' feminine gender-presentation. Visibly, the illegibility of their identity compared to the traditional binary Western understanding of gender—"She was a he" (*S5*)—and their non-conformity to the "Good Transsexual" model (Skidmore 271) discussed in part 2.2.1 unleashed the reporter's transmisogynistic and homophobic tone.

The "gender scare" is just as observable, if not more explicit, in the coverage of the pageant protest. Admittedly, by denouncing beauty and societal injunctions imposed on women, and refusing to talk to male reporters, the NYRW frontally challenged gender norms and patriarchal domination. As a result, the mainstream press has portrayed them as unfeminine misandrists (*PP2*; *PP4a*; *PP4b*; *PP5*; *PP7*). While it does not appear in the corpus, assumptions of lesbianism were made against the activists of the Women's Liberation (Kreydatus, "Contesting Miss America" 25). By withdrawing from traditional femininity, feminists are consequently assumed to withdraw from heterosexuality. As explained by Butler, obligatory heterosexuality is a facet of socially validated gender performance⁷⁰ (30). Therefore, when one's gender performance does not match societal expectations, prejudiced assumptions are made about the "deviance" of one's sexual orientation.

Deviance—this is what the mainstream media reproached to insurged women and femmes. Buchwald, the author of article *PP7*, goes as far as making the following appalling statement: "(...) there is no better excuse for hitting a woman than the fact that she looks just like a man." The perceived threat to moral values and norms that subversive women represent is such that, to Buchwald, it justifies violence. Interestingly, representing outcast women as

⁶⁹ This was also legally reprehended: there used to be anti-crossdressing laws in the state of New-York until 2011 ("Arresting dress").

⁷⁰ This is why Monique Wittig argues that lesbians are neither men nor women (Butler 25).

deserving of the violence they suffered was paradigmatic in certain mainstream news publications of the early 20th century (Adams et al 47): the pattern had not died by the 1960s.

The results of the analysis of Carry Nation's coverage differ from those of the two other case studies. While there is no negating the fact that she did become the target of pejorative and insulting coverage in certain publications, as recalled in both of the studied editions of her autobiography *The Use and Need of the Life of Carry Nation* and in Fran Grace's *Carry A. Nation: Retelling the Life*, the articles studied in this thesis' complexify the mediated picture of the temperance activist. While she was definitely a controversial figure and her raids were undeniably sensationalised, it seems that she was judged less harshly in a number of mainstream newspapers than her 1968 counterparts for proportionately much more violent deeds. Indeed, the NYRW did not burn any bras; even if they had, it would not have physically harmed or inconvenienced anyone significantly. Yet, some articles of the corpus condemned their protest very harshly.

Most articles studied here represent Nation as an awe-inspiring figure: she is portrayed as a witty, stubborn, and rebellious leader (CN4; CN5; CN6; CN8; CN9). While her assimilation to a natural hazard and her strong personality may arguably inspire fear, the narrativized and detailed accounts of her raids translate a form of fascination towards her. It is undeniable that her crusade and methods were controversial regarding the law: articles of the corpus do not hide that she was seldom arrested and brought to trial⁷¹ (CN3; CN5; CN6; CN8; CN9). However, that she, as a woman, resorted to violence as part of her political activism did not systematically arouse the expected outrage and moral panic in the mainstream media. In fact, some of the corpus' articles show complacency for her cause and method. For instance, article CN9, written by the editor of the newspaper, explicitly shows support; articles CN4 and CN6 report officials' condoning of her raids; article CN7 makes use of the honorific metaphorical proper noun of John Brown⁷², and the no-less congratulatory archetypal title of Founding Father is granted to Nation in article CN9. The use of archetypes and metaphors create mental associations with notorious figures: unlike the term "Amazons" used in article PP5 to refer to "bra-burners", periphrases found in the mainstream journals of this corpus to refer to Nation reflect that she was held in high esteem by some.

⁷¹ This does not mean that she was systematically found guilty at the trial or jailed: sometimes she was also released free of charges.

⁷² John Brown was a 19th century abolitionist who became famous for his radical and violent activism in Kansas.

This finding reveals the importance of the *moral superiority* facet of True Womanhood, an importance that this research had underestimated before reaching the analytic phase. What Fran Grace calls “Good Womanhood” (92) might correspond to that specific facet of True Womanhood, according to which women were considered responsible for the nation’s moral elevation. As Adams et al comment, some women bypassed the otherwise suffocating ideals of True Womanhood by using the moral superiority alibi to access political activism (10, 76). Nation’s violence was being employed to save the nation from alcoholism. Mattingly claims that “Prohibition, undeniably, had come out of the true-womanhood code (...)” (*cited in Adams et al 106*). This supports that Nation’s motive might have been considered praiseworthy and patriotic enough to spare her from the mainstream media treatment endured nearly seventy years later by the NYRW and the Stonewall Uprisers. Nation had visibly understood how sustaining a respectable image in the media would benefit her, as she confided in her autobiography: “I never want a picture of me taken without my Bible” ([1904] 105).

Furthermore, although Nation included the improving of women’s lives in the reasons behind her activism, as women were collateral victims of men’s alcoholism, her autobiography attests to her willingness to cater to men’s well-being (Nation, [1904] 88-91), which aligns with her metaphorical embracing of motherhood. Even if Nation’s life was decidedly distant from domesticity, she could still be identified as a domestic woman through that metaphor and thus be seen as less menacing to patriarchy. The Pageant Protest and the Stonewall Uprising, on the other hand, were clearly about self-liberation. Morally speaking, the violence of the two events of the late 1960s was possibly more threatening than Nation’s repeated raids on saloons to the heteropatriarchal order.

2.2.3. Discrediting Portrayals: Sexualisation, Pathologisation and Depoliticisation of the Event

Perhaps as a way of dispelling the threat of feminism, the mainstream press chiefly discredited activists and downplayed their political legitimacy. This is especially salient in the late 1960s coverage, likely because of the reasons relating to moral panic and to self-oriented combats mentioned in the previous part.

First of all, the reliability and credibility of women and femme-presenting activists is questioned, if not negated in several articles. This is achieved in part through pathologising portrayals. Article *S5* straightforwardly associates the Stonewall Uprising with insanity in its title “Homo Nest Raided, Queen Bees Are Stinging Mad”, as was customary in mainstream coverage of the gay community (Alwood 23) The article also uses the archetypal name

“Madwomen of Chaillot”⁷³. One of article *CN3*’s intertitle reads “‘WELL-MEANING, But Crazy’, So Says the Brother of Mrs Nation”. The quote was actually from Nation’s brother-in-law, not from her biological brother, as the article later confesses—this is perhaps another example of the sensationalised inaccuracies of Yellow Journalism. Insanity accusations against assertive women, whether true or not, were frequent, according to Fran Grace (6). Nation’s mental health made a splash in the mainstream press, and outwardly supportive articles would start off by ruling out insanity avenues: “Mrs. Nation, who has attracted so much attention by her attacks on the saloons and whisky men of Kansas, is said by some people to be crazy. We make no such accusation” (*CN4*). Whether she was or was not mentally unwell is not for this thesis to decide, but by debating over her mental health, the press deviated the main focus of interest from temperance to her legitimacy in occupying a leading position in the cause. This can be interpreted as rather misogynistic.

Infantilising portrayals are also commonplace. The condescending adjective “well-meaning” (*CN3*) is found in article *PP7* as well, in the phrase “well-meaning but misled females”. As it has been said in the previous part, article *PP5* compares NYRW protesters to “little girls”, which is also the case in article *S5* to refer to the Stonewall uprisers. In article *S5*, the “sissy”⁷⁴ stereotype is abundantly displayed, even if it does not provide any valuable information in order to better understand the events. For example, a parenthesis is made in the narrative to zoom in on a transgender woman “[wailing] uncontrollably (...)” because “her hair was in curlers and she was afraid her new beau might be in the crowd and spot her. She didn’t want him to see her this way, she wept.” Apart from portraying the Stonewall uprisers as weak and childish little girls, this abstract does not provide any crucial information; rather, it renders them laughable (because of the patriarchal despising of feminine characteristics.) Generally, patronising and paternalistic frames discredit the validity of activists’ vindications since they are treated like children by the press, therefore they could not possibly be taken seriously.

Simultaneously, the selected corpus shows that the mainstream press produced sexualising discourses about the activists studied here. While no such discourses appear in the corpus, as the articles gathered for this thesis happen to be generally supportive, Fran Grace has observed that the men who wrote about her cast her raids as the consequence of her sexual

⁷³ This is a reference to Giraudoux’s play *La Folle de Chaillot* (1943), the protagonist being an eccentric woman.

⁷⁴ “An offensive word to describe a boy or man who is considered to be weak, easily frightened, or interested in things considered only suitable for girls or women.” (“Sissy.” def.)

frustration (5-6). It has already been observed by scholars that the media's bra obsession shifted Miss America protesters' message from its initial aim to that of sexual availability⁷⁵ (Dow 130; Kreydatus "Confronting the 'Bra-Burners'" 491). The case of Stonewall femme uprisers also aligns with the sexualising trend: article S5 hyperbolically highlights the femininity of uprisers. For instance, enumerations of "femme fatale" (S5) accessories are found in the article, and descriptions of protesters' isolated body parts recreate a sexualising and dehumanising gaze on the latter: the headline's description of a "queen of Christopher Street" follows the trajectory of a bottom-to-top double take on her body. Further in the article, an upriser is designated as "a beauty of a specimen", which on top of objectifying her, depicts her as a freak. The "queens'" violence, in the same way as that, fantasised, of the Women's Liberation Front, is sexualised through the allusion to female underwear: "Last weekend the queens had turned commandos and stood bra strap to bra strap (...)". As argued by C. Stewart Dyer, "as sex objects in this society, women are especially vulnerable to reputational harm from portrayals of a sexual nature" (327). Such portrayals have therefore weakened the vindicative aspirations of those political events.

However, the antagonistic discourse coexists with the one just mentioned. The mainstream press also disqualified the activists' femininity. Again, this is the case for NYRW activists and the Stonewall uprisers more than for Carry Nation in this thesis' corpus, but both Nation in her autobiography and Grace in her retelling of Nation's life report that Nation's gender performance was criticised for being too masculine or too feminine⁷⁶ (Grace 6), some people uttering that she "[unsexed] herself" (Nation, [1908] 344). In article *PP4*, the anti-pageant protesters' arrival emphasises their non-conformity to beauty and to youth injunctions: "Except for an advance guard of eight mini-skirted, slacks-glad young women, for the most part, sans-make-up, and 68-year-old Clara De Miha, the bulk of the demonstrators (...) arrived in two chartered buses." In article *PP7*, the protesters' 'masculine' appearance is mocked and confused for unattractiveness: "The protesters think they're bringing about a revolution by discarding all feminine make-up, but actually they're turning back the clock to pre-civilization days when men and women did look and smell alike." Article *PP5* is in the same vein: the protesters are "sturdy lasses in their sensible shoes" who "(...) perfectly match Nina Epton's

⁷⁵ Sexual liberation at least partly further objectified women: not only did they obtain a new social permission to have sex in a more unbridled way, but they were expected to. Sexual liberation imposed new injunctions on women's sexuality (Rosen 175; Van Gelder, "The Truth About Bra-Burners" 80).

⁷⁶ Masculine because she resorted to violence and showed assertiveness, feminine because her violent tactics were considered symptomatic of feminine hysteria.

description of certain English women. ‘They look,’ [Epton] wrote, ‘unstroked, uncaressed and emotionally undernourished.’” According to this article, being desired by men is what women should aspire to; yet, feminist activists are formally unattractive, thus their existence as women is vain: “(...) most of us would rather be some dear man’s boob-girl than nobody’s cum laude scholar.” (PP5).

Stonewall femme-presenting uprisers’ hyper-feminine appearance, as has already been mentioned in part 2.2.1., is ridiculed in article S5 for failing to hide body characteristics socially considered masculine and thus letting show what transphobic discourses present as gender deception: “She was so upset she hadn’t bothered to shave. A day-old stubble was beginning to push through the pancake makeup. She was a he.” According to Skidmore, racialised transwomen’s bodies “were less intelligible as “authentic” (read white) women, and therefore they appeared in the mainstream press as subjects of ridicule, not as ‘authentic transsexuals” (271) because “African American and Latino men have both been hypermasculinized in the media, making their bodies virtually incompatible with mainstream expectations of femininity.” (295).

This integration of opposing narratives regarding sexual attractiveness, if one believes Stewart Dyer’s emphasis on the leverage women’s sexuality can hold on their reputation, suggests that the male-dominated mainstream press of the sixties tried by all means necessary to discredit the activists by exploiting the contradictory injunctions faced by women and denounced by the NYRW as the “Madonna-whore combination” (“No More Miss America!”): a woman should both aim to be sexually attractive to men—implying strict compliance to the feminine codes of cisheterosexuality—and respectably modest, without falling into the excesses of either side. And yet, this was the criticism levelled against the activists by the mainstream press.

Ultimately, the lack of press acknowledgement of the political nature of violence represents the hardest obstacle for activists to overcome. As Arlette Fage wrote in the preface of Cardi and Pruvost’s *Penser la violence des femmes*:

Dans les combats et révolutions, la dénégation la plus cruelle, le déni le plus intenable en ce qui concerne la violence féminine, c’est de ne jamais cesser de lui retirer toute motivation politique, tout engagement militant, toute participation consciente et sue à la vie politique. (11)

The depoliticisation of violence is achieved to several degrees in the articles of this corpus. First, the mainstream press does not always acknowledge the political nature of women’s

groups. Article *PP5* links the protest to the Women's Liberation Front in the second paragraph, after the first one referred to the protesters as "sturdy lasses in their sensible shoes who picketed the Miss America contest". The "group of 100 women" belonging to official political organisations is only mentioned in the very last lines of article *PP2*. In article *PP4*, the legitimacy of the group's identity is contested: "a brigade of 75 women identifying themselves as a "women's liberation" group (...)". Indeed, there is a discrediting subtext to the turn of phrase "identifying themselves as" juxtaposed to the movement's name in quotation marks. That interpretation of the use of quotation marks as a discrediting tool against political movements has been articulated by Tuchman in *Making News* (96). Article *PP7* simply does not connect the protest to any official group. Mainstream coverage of the protest therefore failed to present it as a serious and thought-out event.

Furthermore, the vindications of the protesters have been largely clouded and trivialised by the mainstream press. While it is clear from the articles that the activists were angry, it is difficult for an uninformed readership to understand why. Article *PP5* suggests that the protesters' discontent comes from men's lack of interest in them. Article *PP7*'s paternalistic tone discards their action as being misinformed and impertinent. Article *PP4a*, although it briefly mentions some of the protests' targets, calls the demonstration ridiculous. The adjacent article, *PP4b*, and the illustration's caption—"Protesting Miss America Pageant on grounds not altogether clear to bystanders (...)"—emphasise the crowd's disapproval or utter incomprehension: the ending line of article *PP4a* concludes on the words "but I wish to God I knew what they were marching about'." Added to the sexualised media interpretation of bras, the Miss America Protest clearly did not get the political credit its organisers had hoped for by sending newsrooms detailed explanations enclosed in their press release. Also, the intended parallel of bra burning with the ignition of Vietnam soldiers' draft cards did not catch on in the media (Dow 129, 131; Van Gelder, "The Truth About Bra-Burners" 81).

Most articles of the mainstream section of this corpus simply do not provide any background information as to what issue caused the surges of violence. This is especially true of the coverage of Nation's raids and of the Stonewall uprising. Nation's autobiography puts forward detailed arguments as to why the sale of alcohol should be stopped, and not just because it was illegal in Kansas at the time. She also talks about public health and the situation of women harmed by their husbands' drinking. None of those reasons are mentioned in the press articles retrieved for this thesis. While it has been said that they were not as unsupportive as expected, they did not provide much information that might help the readership make their own opinion

about her cause. The mainstream coverage of her raids, decidedly, aimed to sell engaging stories. As for the Stonewall Uprising, articles *S1* and *S2* only frame the events as a fight between gay men and the police. No mention of the issue of rampant LGBTQ+-phobia in the USA and police harassment of LGBTQ+ people appear in those articles. Without any additional explanations of its root causes, violence is, at best, framed as a good selling story. At worst, it is irrational and thus illegitimate.

As aforementioned in 2.1.1., the mainstream news industry is formatted to cover events rather than issues and it can only navigate throughout a field of allowable images. Accordingly, as Crafton Smith argues, “the process of incorporation is one of dilution, whereby images of feminist struggle that are taken in by the mass media are made to conform to dominant values and representations” (76). The political issues studied here have been toned down and even erased, likely so that the events could be covered in alignment with mainstream press craft guidelines.

Finally, it would be disingenuous to ignore the specificities of the late 1960s’ movements. To an extent, they complicated the task of mainstream newsrooms to thoroughly cover the events in an enlightened way. News reporters are used to interviewing the leaders or an organisation for information about the movement they represent (Tuchman, *Making News* 93). The NYRW, in their radical operating mode, rejected the idea of hierarchy (Tuchman, *Making News* 141) and refused to talk to male reporters so that newsroom would send female reporters to cover the protest instead (“No More Miss America!”). This means that the newsmen who still covered the protest obtained second-hand and potentially distorted information. The Stonewall Uprising was spontaneous, therefore there *was* no leader to interview.

2.3. Alternatives to Male-Dominated Mainstream Pressrooms: More Supportive Stances?

The dominating white male standpoint⁷⁷ prevalent in mainstream pressrooms set the standards of newsworthiness and of narrative frames in the coverage of feminist and LGBTQ+ events in the 20th century. This section explores whether alternatives to this model presented noticeable differences with generally event-based, heterosexist, or transphobic (sometimes all of the above) coverage. The alternatives involved display different standpoints: mainstream-press newswomen's, alternative- and underground-press newsmen's; last but not least, the focus will be given to media edited by activists of the studied movements.

2.3.1. Newswomen in Mainstream Newspapers: Shifting the Lines From Within?

The 1968 Miss America Protest stands out from the two other case studies. While all non-anonymous⁷⁸ mainstream articles about Carrie Nation and the Stonewall Uprising were written by men, the protest's coverage in mainstream papers was also provided by women. This section discusses articles *PP1* by Lindsay Van Gelder, *PP3* by Charlotte Curtis, *PP5* by Harriet Van Horne. This is due to the NYRW's press release indicating they would not talk to men reporters: on the one hand, this forced newsrooms to mission their women employees to cover a topic that did not relate to the domestic sphere. On the other hand, this also implied that their articles would be relegated to the less-esteemed women's section of mainstream papers (except for article *PP5*, but it is a column and not a report.)

The most noticeable difference between those articles and the ones written by newsmen is that the "bigger picture" issue is incorporated into the telling of the events to a more significant extent. Article *PP1* features an interview of Robin Morgan on behalf of the NYRW, in which the mediation of her explanations regarding the protest's aims is kept to a minimum thanks to direct speech. Article *PP3* both describes the protest and provides non-judgmental clarifications on the symbolism of the guerilla-theater performances, which greatly contrasts with articles *PP4* and *PP7*'s insinuations of vagueness and impertinence: "The Miss America puppet (...) had chains hanging from her red, white and blue bathing suit. The women said she represented 'the chains that tie us to these beauty standards against our will'" (*PP3*). This article

⁷⁷ Creedon highlights the importance of feminist standpoint epistemology, that is, the acknowledgement of how one's social position can influence one's interpretation and retransmission of reality, as "a direct challenge to traditional newsgathering norms including objectivity" (Creedon 14-15).

⁷⁸ While it cannot be stated with absolute certainty, it is likely that the corpus' unsigned articles (those are mainly articles about Nation's raids) were written by men because the profession was largely masculine in the early 20th century (Hatcher).

also portrays the protesters as respectful of the law and of order, as they are given the opportunity to explain their intentions in short interviews: “‘We don’t want to incite or provoke,’ Miss Morgan said. ‘We don’t want another Chicago.’”. Articles *PP1* and *PP3* are more sympathetic to the cause and comprehensive than those written by men journalists. Van Horne’s column *PP5*, while it openly discredits the protest and uses some *ad personam* arguments about the desirability of the protesters, quotes passages of the NYRW’s letter to the press and thus displays some of the points made by the organisation, as they had articulated them. The name of the organisation is not written between quotation marks or preceded by turns of phrase such as “identifying themselves as”, as was the case in articles *PP4* and *PP8*. Women-written articles in the mainstream press seem to give more legitimacy to the NYRW as an official organisation with set vindications.

Even if women’s contributions to the protest’s coverage differs from men’s in that regard and show more acknowledgement of feminist issues⁷⁹ than men-written articles as far as this corpus is concerned, it still conforms to the standards of the industry. Van Gelder, author of article *PP1*, although she personally adhered to the message carried by the NYRW’s protest, was asked to write a “humour piece” by her hierarchy (Van Gelder, “The Truth About Bra-Burners” 80). Tuchman reports that she felt like she had to make the protest into soft news⁸⁰ or the article may not make it into the publication at all (Tuchman, *Making News* 137-138). Her article thus plays the sensationalist card by using the lurid imagery of breasts and underwear in the rhetorical question: “Would you believe a bra-burning?” and in the choice of the expression “degrading mindless-boob-girlie” to synthesize what the protest denounced—as was the case in article *PP7* by Art Buchwald. As for Curtis’ *PP3*, it is illustrated by a photograph of the winner of the pageant, which gives the impression that the protest targeted the contestants rather than the pageant. The framing of the protest as female bickering and jealousy, as remarked by Welch (88-89), also appears in articles *PP5*, *PP8* and *PP9*. This can be thought to have contributed to inflating the saleability of this news story by dramatizing the situation. Once again, this ambivalence concerning the seriousness of the issues embodied by the protest contributes to

⁷⁹ It has been said that “the coverage of the second wave in [Charlotte Curtis’] section was immensely helpful to feminism” as she “was putting on the newspaper agenda stories that had not previously been declared news” (Bradley 81-82). Curtis, the author of article *PP3*, was appointed editor of the Family/Style section in 1965.

⁸⁰ “Soft news, also called market-centred journalism, journalistic style and genre that blurs the line between information and entertainment. (...) By contrast [with hardnews], soft news usually centres on the lives of individuals and has little, if any, perceived urgency. Hard news generally concerns issues, politics, economics, international relations, welfare, and scientific developments (...)” (Mills-Brown).

constructing the idea that feminists were fighting for a cause that was not truly deserving of utmost attention.

As epitomised by article *PP5*, which has been said in the previous parts of this thesis to adopt a despising tone towards the protesters, not all newswomen were supportive of the feminist cause or did justice to feminist analysis and reasoning in the mainstream media. From this, it follows that coverage is not solely a matter of gender, but of institution too. As Crafton Smith (76) and Steiner (121) have put it, “dilution” of feminist concepts is a common phenomenon in the mainstream press, as much, as seen in the two previous parts, as are demonising and trivialization. Indeed, for feminist concepts to enter the mainstream *field of allowable images*, those concepts needed to be toned down to fit the expectations of a pro-establishment community of discourse. Sometimes, women journalists even showed exaggerated zeal in their disavowal of feminist discourses as undeniable proof of their “objectivity” (Tuchman, *Making News* 143-144), of their *professionalism*⁸¹. Consequently, other platforms enjoying more independence from institutional guidelines need analysing.

2.3.2. Alternative Newspapers: More Sympathetic Stances?

This section looks at articles from non-mainstream newspapers owned and edited by people other than the activists studied in this thesis, even if some of them were activists of other kinds⁸². It is a curious choice to label the specific corpus section discussed here by what it is not—“mainstream or corporate-owned” (Lilburn). “Alternative” would likely be the closest-fitting term to qualify this section, but the “alternative” category is so vast that it is more telling to point out the common defining characteristics of all the types of newspapers it encompasses. The Oxford Reference Dictionary defines “alternative media” as follows:

Newspapers, magazines, radio stations, or online media which are not corporately owned and which circulate political messages felt to be under-represented in ‘mainstream media’ (seen as geared towards maximizing profits and supporting a ‘free-trade’ agenda). (“Alternative media”, def. 2.)

Accordingly, the articles discussed in this section were selected for the following reasons: article *CN2* is from a prohibitionist paper. Articles *PP6*, *PP10*, *S6*, *S7*, and *S11* fall under the

⁸¹ This entire part has questioned the journalistic milieu’s sexism and the difficulty for newswomen and minorities to put their stamp on the mainstream news media industry. For more information, see Creedon, Pamela. *Women in Mass Communication*. Sage Publications, 1993.

⁸² The editor of the *Backbone*, from which article *CN2* is taken, was probably a temperance activist himself, but they were not a part of the saloon-raiding branch of the movement. It can also be assumed that editors of underground papers were affiliated with counterculture activism.

far-left underground⁸³ press of the late 1960s. Articles *S3* and *S4* are taken from the *Village Voice*, the nation's first alternative weekly newspaper founded in 1955. Most of the alternative section of this corpus is from the late 1960s, as this corresponds to a remarkable increase in the number of alternative papers in the USA (Duberman 170).

The deliberateness behind the absence of objectivity is particularly striking in this sample of the corpus. As debunked in section 2.2, objectivity is a mirage, even in mainstream press (and especially in columns, which are intentionally personal). Only, alternative articles seem to overtly adopt subjectivity as an asserted standard. For instance, articles *S3*, *S4* and *PP10* are written in the first person; most 1960s articles use terminology intrinsically associated with countercultural and New Left milieus, such as “pigs” (*S6*; *S7*; *S11*) in place of “officers”. The style is often more informal and expressive, too. The community of discourse, and thus the target audience of such publications is therefore more specific than that of the mainstream press.

The alternative press, to varying extents, offers generally more sympathetic representations to women activists, including to those of them making use of violence. To start with, some articles were written by women and sexual minorities directly concerned by the issues discussed: Robin Morgan is the author of *PP10*; a member of the LGBTQ+ community wrote article *S11*. The alternative media made an interesting communication tool for activists in the late 1960s since some papers were open to the possibility of featuring their own speeches instead of just a few isolated quotes.

As for transgender and lesbian women of the Stonewall Uprising, who were virtually erased from the mainstream press, their existence is unambiguously mentioned in more than half of the alternative pieces (*S3*; *S4*; *S6*). This is a direct challenge to the concealing of women from the LGBTQ+ community. Unfortunately, those appearances occur along sexist, lesbophobic terms like “chick” (*S6*), “dyke” (*S3*; *S4*), and generally homophobic slurs such as “faggot”, “fags”, “cat” (*S3*; *S4*; *S7*). Articles *S3* and *S7*, for comedic ends, zoom in on stereotypical features of homosexual men such as the “limp wrists” (*S3*) and the gay lisp, as shown in the cartoon illustrating article *S7* where a femme-presenting character is saying “Up Againtht (sic) The Wall !!” This reflects the 1960s straight and male alternative media's relative

⁸³ “The underground press developed to serve the communication needs of political and cultural radicals in the 1960s and early 1970s. Its salient features were its opposition to the Vietnam War and its promotion of drug use, rock music, and free sexual expression. Underground papers also experimented with new styles of type and layout and rejected traditional notions of journalistic objectivity.” (“UNDERGROUND PRESS”).

lack of understanding of LGBTQ+ issues, despite visible support over identified shared vindications, as explained in the next paragraph.

Another feature of alternative representations of feminist and LGBTQ+ activists is that of the acknowledgment of their actions' political essence. In the late 1960s counterculture press, this translates as the recognition of the Women's Liberation and the Stonewall Uprising as one of the links of the counterculture chain. The Stonewall Uprisers "joined the revolution" (S6) and, according to article PP10, the NYRW activists' political relevance is comparable to the Black Panthers': "[The contest] is the female World Series (can you imagine if the Panthers tried to disrupt the 9th inning?)" or to the Yippies':

Chicago is comparable to throwing a brick through the window of a police station. The Atlantic City action is comparable to peeing on an expensive rug at a polite cocktail party. The Man never expects the second kind of protest, and very often that's the one that really gets him up-tight. (Florence Kennedy, qtd. in article PP10)

Carry Nation, for the first time in the corpus, is referred to as "the president of the Barber County W.C.T.U." (CN2) while, in the mainstream press, she was commonly introduced as the "Kansas Saloon-Smasher" with no link with the established temperance movement whatsoever. The alternative press took feminist and LGBTQ+ activism more seriously than the mainstream press, likely because alternative media does not seek to protect the establishment.

Furthermore, the alternative articles of the corpus—apart from article S4, in which Howard Smith recalls the violence of both the police and the protesters on equal grounds without alluding to the systemic harassment and discriminations targeting the LGBTQ+ community in the late 1960s—grant more importance to the societal issues raised by the events than the mainstream press does. Article S3, for instance, presents a structuralist argument testifying to the systemic oppression faced by the LGBTQ+ community: an interviewee declares: "We're one of the largest minorities in the country—10 per cent, you know. It's about time we did something to assert ourselves." Emphasis is put on the self-liberating, self-empowering scope of the events, thus showcasing their political significance (S3; S6; S7; S11). Reaching similar effects, the Pageant Protest is presented first and foremost as a thought-out contestation of the American system embedded in the Women's Liberation movement agenda along other upcoming planned actions advocating for other women-liberating issues (PP6; PP10).

From this, it follows that activists themselves are depicted in a more flattering way than in the selected mainstream newspapers. The congratulatory archetypal name “John Brown”, previously seen in the mainstream article *CN7*, appears again in the title of article *CN2*, “A John Brown Raid”. Nation’s alignment with “Good Womanhood” is also highlighted in article *CN2*: she is “a fine-looking woman of about sixty years of age, educated, refined and motherly.” Her respectability as a woman, and not just as an activist with a praiseworthy cause (the article underlines the illegality of saloons and mentions that Nation had tried to talk the saloon-owners into shutting down days before the raid), stands out.

The cases of Second Waves⁸⁴ radical feminists and LGBTQ+ people differ slightly: they are also depicted in a good light, but for the opposite reason. Rather than conforming to society’s expectations, they are perceived as anti-system, revolutionary, subversive, etc. In other words, they are social avengers. This is especially salient in the antagonistic descriptions made of the police⁸⁵. They are referred to as “pigs” (*S6*; *S7*; *S11*), “New-York City police-puppets” (*S11*) and framed as an authoritative entity: “As on every other front, the forces of order responded with overkill” (*PP6*). This implies that activists, on the contrary, are well-meaning victims of an abusive state unit. The anti-police stance may well have been a key factor in rallying the underground press’ support towards the Miss America Protest and the Stonewall Uprising: by identifying a common enemy (and similar criticisms of the belligerent capitalist and racist system, in the case of the Women’s Liberation), countercultural publications may have sympathised more with the Women’s Liberation and Stonewall uprisers, despite unquestioned sexism found in the New Left and ignorance towards LGBTQ+ issues. Article *S6* is titled “Gays Hit NY Cops”, suggesting that the main point of interest of some underground journalists was indeed that the police had been challenged.

This is less true of articles *S3* and *S4*, from the *Village Voice*, an alternative yet more liberal and more widely distributed newspaper than the underground *Chicago Seed*, *The Rat*, the *Old Mole* or *Berkeley Barb* (Anastas). In those, the violence of protesters is framed as both powerful and uncanny: “the sudden specter of “*gay power*” erected its brazen head and spat out a fairy tale the likes of which the area has never seen” (*S3*). In article *S4*, the atmosphere even leans towards the supernatural through the author’s mention of the moon and his referring to

⁸⁴ See footnote 8.

⁸⁵ On a similar note, the strategy of criticising or mocking detractors as a way of siding with the protesters applies to the inversion of the sexual stigma in article *PP6*. Where mainstream article *PP5* suggests that the protesters were sexually frustrated, article *PP6* reverses that perception by describing hecklers around the boardwalk protest as “convention lechers who drool over tits they can’t touch (...)”

the crowd as a mob of nervous unshackled creatures: “A strange mood was in the crowd—I noticed the full moon. (...) Loud defiances mixed with skittish hilarity made for a more dangerous stage of protest; they were feeling their impunity. This kind of crowd freaks easily.” This is reminiscent of the witch-like depiction pattern of the NYRW protesters in articles *PP4a* and *PP5*, even if articles *S3* and *S4* are nowhere as slanderous.

The alternative press, in its variety of asserted standpoints, offers a more issue-oriented take on activism. Violence, when it occurs, is more likely to be contextualised and thus seen as a tactic or as an understandable response rather than as an outburst of hysteria. The Miss America protest is not portrayed as violent for sensationalistic and monetary purposes: the bra-burning trope is only found in the mainstream articles of this corpus. Nevertheless, the stamp of sexism and homophobia still remains in some of the male-written⁸⁶ articles.

2.3.3. Self-Owned Media: Discussing Issues for Their Own Sake

In response to the fragmentary, and sometimes straightforwardly insulting coverage that women and femmes received from both the pro-establishment mainstream news press industry and from alternative papers, which were not fully exempt from sexist, homophobic or transphobic biases, all three groups studied for this thesis published their own visions of their cause and of themselves.

Carry Nation, contradicting Crafton Smith’s claim that papers exclusively owned and run by women were specific to Second-Waves⁸⁷ feminism (68), ended up purchasing her own press to publish *The Smasher’s Mail*⁸⁸, a monthly newsletter mostly dedicated to the showcasing of the mail she received from “Patriotic Friends and Coworkers” and “The Enemies and Hinderers” as sequenced in *CN10—The Smasher’s Mail* n°6 of May 18, 1901. Publishing her own medium allowed her to refute the negative coverage she received, especially pathologising assumptions about her mental instability (Nation, [1904] 72).

⁸⁶ This mainly concerns the articles on Stonewall, since the articles about the protest in Atlantic City were written by women. To some extent, this remark also concerns article *CN2*. Her description highlights her compliance to Good Womanhood/True Womanhood ideals, as aforementioned. Thus, it could be said that it also advocates sexist gender roles.

⁸⁷ See footnote 8.

⁸⁸ Initially, her publication had been relying on “this negro (sic), who was not in sympathy with [her] cause, but to the reverse. [She] was often humiliated at the way [her] articles were tortured.” She then obtained publication from *The Kansas Farmer*, before she eventually gained complete editorial and publishing freedom. *The Smasher’s Mail* lasted for thirteen editions before it stopped due to Nation’s time-consuming lecturing activity. (Nation, [1904] 72)

The Women's Liberation movement published their own monthly newsletter, *The Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement*. Article *PP11* was published in October 1968 in the 4th issue of the newsletter. They, too, aimed to disown the unsupportive depictions of women and of the movement by spreading their own ideas and interests (Crafton Smith 63; Steiner 121). Steiner (124) and Crafton Smith (66) remark that as opposed to the mainstream media's thirst for financial gains, feminist-owned papers rather aimed to provide a platform for political expression, awareness-raising, sisterhood, etc. For instance, this was reflected by the importance given to readers' participation in Second-Waves publications, as evidence of activists' willingness to achieve horizontality and a feeling of community (Steiner 127-129). Interestingly, this feature was already found in Nation's *Smasher's Mail*, even if it did not only feature letters from women.

As for Stonewall, the preliminary research for this thesis failed to find any women/femmes uprisers-written news articles published within a year of the events. A possible explanation for this could be that before Stonewall, the number of LGBTQ+ publications was limited (Alwood 77, 79) and the voices of the lesbian and trans communities were more marginalized than those of white cisgender gay men. The LGBTQ+ media that were able to cover the uprising were those that were affiliated with pre-existing, less radical organisations than the Gay Liberation Front or STAR⁸⁹, which were founded in the aftermath of the uprising. For instance, articles *S8* and *S9* respectively come from *Tangents*, ONE Incorporated's monthly newsmagazine and from the *Ladder*, Daughter of Bilitis' bimonthly newsmagazine. Only article *S10* from *Come Out!*, Gay Liberation Front's bimonthly newsletter, constitutes a first-hand account of the uprising by early GLF-member and ally of trans rights, Bob Kohler. However, his account is not that of a woman or of a femme-presenting person, and it was published seven months after the uprising. Like article *S11*, "Gay Pride Week", which is briefly discussed in the previous part for its short reminder of what happened during the uprising, article *S10* is more about constructing Stonewall's significance for LGBTQ+ history than about providing a report-like article about the events.

More than half of the seventeen-pages-long issue of the *Smasher's Mail* selected for discussion is made of sympathising letters of support addressed to Nation, including from members of the W.C.T.U. A section addresses national news relating to temperance; another

⁸⁹ "Street Transgender Action Revolutionaries", originally "Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries". This organisation was founded by Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson in 1970 in order to support homeless trans youth in Manhattan (Duberman 251).

showcases poems about temperance and the saloon raids. Her voice is salient in the publication too—she writes her editorial and answers her reader’s letters. The editorial line chosen by Nation allows to present temperance as an important cause endorsed by a seemingly significant portion of the population—at least this is the impression given by the amount of supportive contributions to the publication. Nation said about *The Smashers’ Mail* that “[it] accomplished this much, that the public could see by my editorials that I was not insane.” (Nation, [1904] 72).

As in underground press articles, and even more emphatically so in the case of the pageant protest, issues make up an important part of the pieces written by activists. Events are still described, but their importance comes from their intrinsically political symbolism. Article *PP11* ticks off almost all the points (seven out of ten) raised by the NYRW in their press release before it even begins to tell what happened in Atlantic City. This is more than article *PP6* from the *Old Mole*, which focused mostly on issues also denounced by the male New Left (capitalism, warfare, conformity) rather than on the pageant’s sexism. This suggests that for the women’s cause to be taken seriously in the New Left media, it had to be associated with other struggles. Only authors belonging to the “Women’s Lib”—Robin Morgan and Judith Duffet—have highlighted strictly women-oriented vindications as serious⁹⁰ matter in this corpus.

The importance of the Stonewall Uprising as a milestone of Gay Liberation is not as salient in articles *S8* and *S9* as in article *S10*, which was issued seven months after the rebellion. Article *S8* is not devoid of a political reading of the events, since it acknowledges that the riots were “sparked” by certain “conditions” undergone by LGBTQ+ people in society. However, its tone is more sympathetic towards the police than other underground articles of this corpus. The bars selling alcohol to gay customers are referred to as a “perfectly legitimate target of police raids”; no additional comments about the political symbolism of the events are uttered, nor is it the case in article *S9*. Article *S10*, however, delivers an intimate testimony of Stonewall’s impact in the author’s self-empowerment as a gay man and ally of gender non-conforming people. Kohler confides:

I don’t know if the Stonewall riots will ever be recorded in history books but I do know that my world (...) has not been the same since. (...) I learned something this past Summer, (...) whatever it is, it helped my [sic] to stand in front of the Village Voice on a Gay Picket line and say Fuck You to the Closet Cases and Straights who looked at me aghast for standing up to be counted. (...) It helped me to walk through Wall Street with Mitzi and Sal⁹¹ and say Up Yours to the gaping crowd. (S10)

⁹⁰ In a non-sexualised, non-sensationalised and non-trivialised way.

⁹¹ Mitzi and Sal are invented names for two young drag queens whom Kohler was friends with.

This analysis seems to corroborate Duberman's statement that not every branch of the Gay Rights Movement saw in Stonewall what radicals saw. Some of the older activists from earlier currents did not feel as aggrieved with the status quo as the radical generation (Duberman 205). The analysis also confirms Armstrong and Crage's understanding of Stonewall as a fabricated beacon: the acknowledgement of Stonewall as a historical event was not immediate (Armstrong and Crage 744): articles *S8* and *S9* were published several months before article *S10*: accordingly, they do not frame Stonewall as a red-letter day, whereas this idea can be felt in *S10*.

The framing of activists offered by newspapers and articles crafted by those concerned is built in opposition to the derogatory sexist, homophobic and transphobic narratives most found in mainstream and male-written articles. The notion of *opposition* translates in articles *S8* and *S9*, which directly react to the homophobic terms used by Lisker, Smith and Truscott in articles *S5*, *S4* and *S3*. Article *S9* is fully constructed as an intertextual denunciation⁹² of article *S5* through direct quotations and reported speech with added comments:

Lisker is too busy, in his many columns of fine print on the story, deriding homosexuals, calling them butterflies, girls, hummingbirds, queens, lilies of the valley, carnivorous jungle plants, Wonder Woman, Florence Nightingale and Madwoman of Chaillot, to bother recounting how many of them were brutalized and injured. (S5)

The author thus opposes homophobic labels and reaffirms the validity of LGBTQ+ people to exist on their own terms.

On a similar note, women and femmes enjoy visibility in either neutrally factual or empowering ways in the articles studied here. In *The Ladder*'s article, the uprisers are designated as "400 men and women", which allows for the inclusion of women in the collective mental field of political violence. In Kohler's piece, femme-presenting individuals are openly mentioned without added comments about their gender, which allows for the normalisation of their existence. Article *PP10* also counters male-written renditions of Atlantic City's protesters: they appear powerful and determined, rather than ridiculous or harmful: the low-angle shot picture shows a protester staring straight into the lens of the camera with a serious expression. This image makes the protester look assertive and mighty. Also, the support of some observers

⁹² This draws attention to the much shorter deadlines of gain-oriented daily mainstream mass media and smaller militant publications: all alternative and underground newspapers of this corpus were published on a weekly or less frequent basis. As a result, alternative and militant journalists could form a more comprehensive image of issues because they had access to already existing coverage, had more time to interview people other than the police, to investigate and to check facts than mainstream news reports (Tuchman, *Making News* 89, 94, 134).

during the protest is mentioned in the article, which nuances the pariah image that the mainstream press repetitively cast on the protesters. Without much surprise, no mention of bra-burning is made in the article, and no specific highlighting of bras in general is achieved.

Perhaps, then, underground newspapers and self-owned newsletters constituted a way out of traditional and politically sterilised depictions in favour of “authentic communication” dedicated to ideas and interests of women and gender non-conforming activists rather than to profit-making (Steiner 124). After all, Crafton Smith said of Second-Waves feminists that their access to printing was facilitated by its low cost (65) and by their previous experiences in other radical movements’ media (63). However, as Gelderloos points out, it was impossible for 20th century alternative media to compete with mainstream mass media due to “gross inequities of scale” (58): the reach of alternative media is significantly narrower than that of mainstream media because of a lack of sponsoring, but also of subscriptions which could at times lead to indebtedness (Steiner 125).

This whole chapter has shown that, generally speaking, it has taken women and femmes activists to write about themselves to best showcase the political nature and the significance of their actions without their gender being instrumentalised against them by institutional practices and pro-establishment mindsets. In those renditions, the coexistence of femininity and self-advocating⁹³ militant violence has been found to be depoliticised, unrepresented, or made-up as to serve discrediting narratives. Only Carry Nation, under the clearing covers of moral superiority and of motherly concerns towards men, partially⁹⁴ avoided condemning narratives from the mainstream media.

⁹³ In a similar sense to that of identity politics.

⁹⁴ As aforementioned, the findings of this thesis regarding the mainstream coverage of Carry Nation do not fully match with her complaints about the press’ depictions of her in her autobiography, nor with Fran Grace’s analyses. However, both are not mutually exclusive: what this thesis wishes to achieve is simply to add nuances to the picture of the public’s perception of Nation and to suggest a hypothesis explaining why, in some regards, she has been perceived in a better light than 1960s feminist activists. There is no intention to invalidate Nation’s experience nor Grace’s analyses.

3. Double-Edged Representations: Mixed Impacts on Both the Movements and the Activists, and How the Public Perceives Them

A medium, in the term's generic meaning, comes from Latin *medium*, "the middle, midst, center; interval" ("Medium", def. 1.). A medium has an intermediary function between two or more entities. In the case of news media, the medium acts as an intermediary vehicle between reality and the readers. As Oliver and Myers have put it, "the link between public events and the public sphere is the mass media" (38). The previous chapter of this thesis showed that newspapers—both mainstream and alternative—, rather than objectively reflect facts as a mirror would reflect an image, filter, frame and sometimes distort or falsify information. Making news is more than a reporting industry, it is also a channel that interprets, *constructs* reality and disseminates that interpretation to the public. This chapter will reflect on the impacts that the coverage of the three movements studied in this thesis had on the public perception of those movements and on the movements themselves, building upon the starting assumption that news media are at least partly⁹⁵ responsible for people's opinions on political matters.

Several scholars and researchers in the field of Communication Studies applied to Feminism have agreed on mass news media's potential for influence on the American population's opinion-making about political issues (Kahn and Goldenberg 105; Terkildsen and Schnell 882; Tuchman, *Making News* 2). Terkildsen and Schnell conducted an experiment showing the direct effects of exposure to certain media frames on people's perception of feminism. Their research allowed them to assert that "frames not only shape the considerations voters use to evaluate policies, but are capable of shifting attitudes toward policies as well" (882). Clearly, the images created by the American press about Nation's hatchetations, the NYRW's pageant protest and the Stonewall uprising contributed⁹⁶ to the shaping of the perception of American feminism in the 20th century.

⁹⁵ Tuchman, although she acknowledges the role of news media in the making of public opinion, especially when the public is unknowledgeable about an issue, refutes the theory of "stimulus response" according to which exposure to certain discourses systematically produces a given response. Rather, she adheres to the vision of the media as *communities of discourse*: different media might discuss the same topics in differing frames that match their readers' expectations and codes (Tuchman, "Women's Depiction" 538, 540). The news media, in her vision, can be understood to reinforce beliefs and thought patterns rather than to dictate them.

⁹⁶ As Ellen Willis, in the foreword for Echols' *Daring to Be Bad*, warned: it is difficult to "distinguish the effects of a specific political movement from those of other cultural and economic influences" (x). A cautious stance will be adopted in this chapter as to avoid drawing hasty conclusions about the concrete effects of the selected media representations alone.

3.1. Becoming the *Other*: A Deterring Threat

The mainstream press built an image of otherness around violent feminists and LGBTQ+ femme-presenting uprisers, distancing them from traditional femininity and gender binarity. Adams et al, who studied press depictions of women in the early 20th century, have argued that the construction of the “acceptable [True Woman], including the woman who needed minor corrections, necessitated the truly unacceptable Other” (9). In other words, in order to maintain women within the boundaries of good womanhood, representations of “miscarried” femininity flourished in the early 1900s to show women what they should *not* be. As Beck remarked, “It is not difficult to see how anyone who indicates she/he wants to change the world, even by an activity as simple as accepting a feminist label, becomes a threat. And not many people want to be known as a threat to everything American” (140). It is no wonder, therefore, that certain aspects of the mainstream coverage studied in this thesis deterred the public’s support for the causes or for the methods employed.

3.1.1. The W.C.T.U’s Aversion for the Hatchet

This thesis’ corpus of articles on Carry Nation does not proportionately reflect the harshly slanderous coverage described by Fran Grace nor by Nation herself. As said before, this does not invalidate the veracity of the existence of such coverage. Nation was well and truly a polarising figure: her tactics were at the heart of disagreements between “saloon-smashers” and some non-violent branches of the Temperance movement.

The W.C.T.U held an ambivalent stance towards Nation: of course, they supported the substance of the raids, but not necessarily their form. Nation tells in her autobiography that, at a convention in Medicine Lodge held a few weeks after her raid of June 6, 1900 in Kiowa, Sister Hutchinson from the W.C.T.U kept her from publicly disclosing that the organisation had been aware of her plan ([1904] 54). Once, the W.C.T.U uninvited her from a conference in Topeka—which did not stop her from attending and taking part in anyway— (Graham and Vollenweider 00:54:39-00:55:25). To this day, Carry Nation’s name is nowhere to be seen on the W.C.T.U’s website. Nation, too, rejected the conformist facet of the organisation:

Oh! that the W. C. T. U. would do as they did, what a reform would take place. I love the organization of mothers. I love their holy impulses but I am heart-sick at their conventionality, their red tape. This organization could put out of existence every drinking hell in the United States if they would demand it and use the power they have even without the ballot (Nation, [1904] 112).

Grace argues that not only did Nation's violent method spur fractures within the movement, but it also pushed away potential supporters (281) towards "the comfortably male-dominated, procedurally moderate ASL⁹⁷." (280). As an activist, Grace goes on to say, her legacy has been largely erased:

Sadly, her actual historical importance has received little attention or analysis. This oversight is not surprising. Northeastern pressrooms dominated by men with a distate for Kansas politics and a bias against nonconforming women manufactured an image and a narrative about her that she could never overcome. (279).

In summary, Nation's reputation, respectability and legacy suffered from some press depictions of her. The W.C.T.U and sympathisers of temperance probably feared being associated with her public image, leading to the collective oblivion of her achievements.

3.1.2. The Myth of Bra-Burning: A Heavily Ingrained Image Deterring Women's Identification to the Movement

One long-lasting impact of the mainstream coverage of the Miss America Pageant protest is that of the reduction of Second-Waves⁹⁸ feminists to bra-burners. Houvouras and Carter's analysis of college students' definitions of a "feminist" in 2008 reveals that forty years after the protest, bra-burning still came to mind as a defining characteristic from both self-identified feminist and non-feminist students (250, 252). Kreydatus introduces her 2008 article "Confronting the *Bra-Burners*" by sharing her repeated observation of students calling feminists "bra-burners" throughout her teaching career. According to Houvouras and Carter, this ingrained myth has likely reinforced negative biases against feminism, a concept whose principles were shared by many Americans at the time of the analysis' publication, even though they would not embrace the label for themselves (239, 252). Long-term public understanding of and adhesion to feminism may have been pervaded by the image of bra-burning.

This would likely have been the case at the time of the coverage, too. Some articles' insistence on the unfeminine and therefore undesirable appearance of protesters could have acted on women readers as a reminder to behave like "real women", which is to say, not like feminists. This hypothesis is inspired by the aforementioned analysis of Adams et al. about media policing of womanhood in the early 20th century. As seen in article *PP7*, the mainstream press threatened women with the risk of male-rejection if they dared come close to establishment perceptions of radical feminists: "If the average American female gave up all her

⁹⁷ Anti-Saloon League

⁹⁸ See footnote 8.

beauty products she would look like Tiny Tim⁹⁹, and there would be no reason for the American male to have anything to do with her at all". A similar implication is made in article PP5, as previously discussed in Chapter 2. Dow claims:

If the Second Wave feminist mantra was the "personal is political", implying that women's individual problems were the outgrowth of their political status as an oppressed class, then the corresponding media mantra was precisely the reverse: the "political is personal", implying that the validity of feminist objections to a patriarchal system was easily discredited by the articulation of individual women's disavowal of that oppression (128-129).

Building on Dow's claim, the fact that Van Horne, as a woman, ridiculed protesters and politically discredited them on the grounds of their assumed failure at "successful" heterosexuality,, may have intentionally served the establishment media's interest in discrediting anti status quo movements.

It is hardly surprising that the myth of bra-burning was instrumentalised in the way that it was. A majority of articles spreading the myth were written by men; yet, the protesters had refused to talk to male reporters and those who did were told off by the others (PP3, PP4a). As shown by the corpus studied in this thesis, newsmen covered the protest anyway. In all likelihood, they based their articles on second-hand sources, cut short interviews, other press articles or overheard conversations of activists with newswomen. Male journalists' lack of reliable first-hand sources did not stop them from publishing their takes on the protest. Overall, this may have harmed the Women's Liberation image more than it upgraded the positions of female reporters in the news press industry.

⁹⁹ Tiny Tim was an American singer of androgynous appearance, most famous for his interpretation of "Tiptoe Through the Tulips" in a falsetto voice.

3.1.3. Off the Page: Stonewall's Forgotten Heroines

The effects of mainstream coverage of the Stonewall uprising on lesbian women and transgender women and femmes are particularly difficult to assess, because of the systemic erasure of their presence in those accounts (as well as in some articles from the alternative press corpus.) Perhaps, the outcome is in fact quite self-evident: on top of further reinforcing the mutual exclusivity of “authentic”¹⁰⁰ femininity and violence, the non-representation of “authentic” feminine figures participated in further erasing and marginalising transgender and lesbian women within the LGBTQ+ rights movement and within society at large.

According to Tuchman, the news give events their public dimension (*Making News* 3). By denying coverage to lesbian women and femmes in such a defining moment as the Stonewall uprising for the LGBTQ+ community, the mainstream and non-LGBTQ+ press thus virtually denied them their social existence. This, of course, is of inexpressible moral violence. Additionally, it may have hindered the ability of lesbians and trans femmes to build as visible and large communities as gay cisgender men did, for the sense of community, on an admittedly smaller scale, could come close to that of “nation” as defined by Ernest Renan¹⁰¹. The sentiment of belonging to a nation, according to Renan, rises from shared experiences and common achievements (10). Press representations certainly put gay men in a position to take credit for the achievements of the Stonewall Uprisings, but the same cannot be said of lesbian women and transgender femmes in equal measure.

By and large, the coverage of Stonewall potentially further fragmented the LGBTQ+ community by making gay men stand out from the other subgroups. The community, it should be reminded, was already split over the pertinence of the Stonewall uprising in terms of the consequences it would have on the community's relationships with the police and with “straight” society (Armstrong and Cragge 741).

¹⁰⁰ As seen in Chapter 2, the mainstream press sometimes presented activists as men in disguise. Their femininity was used to ridicule them, rather than to assert the validity of their existence.

¹⁰¹ See footnote 3.

3.1.4. On Ramifications within Socio-Political Movements: Are They Necessarily Detrimental to the Cause?

The activists studied in this thesis have sometimes been met with disapproving stares from the American public as well as from other less unapologetic, strictly non-violent branches of the same movements those activists were a part of. A likely explanation for this may be that of movements' interest in protecting their "respectability" in the eye of the public: this is something the Women's Rights group was more concerned about than the Women's Liberation movement, according to Ruth Rosen (80). Similar reputational concerns existed among the LGBTQ+ community, as seen in part 1.3.3.

Presenting feminism as an intrinsically peaceful movement has been a foreground preoccupation for feminists (Cardi and Pruvost 26; Irene 12-13). One of the popular slogans among French feminists, popularised by Benoitte Groult, reads: "Le féminisme n'a jamais tué personne. Le machisme tue tous les jours."¹⁰² Irene proves this claim wrong in her book *La Terreur Féministe*, and questions feminism's avail in being labelled an inoffensive movement (13). Cardi and Pruvost have argued about feminists' efforts to disavow its potential violence:

La mise à distance par les féministes de la violence des femmes se comprend sur un plan stratégique en termes de hiérarchie des luttes. Du point de vue politique et juridique, il a paru plus important, pour ne pas dire plus urgent, de faire reconnaître les femmes, de par la violence subie, comme victimes de la domination masculine. Mettre au jour l'hétérogénéité de la catégorie « femme » ne pouvait venir que dans un second temps.
(26)

In other words, movements striving to obtain widespread acknowledgement of a group (women in this case, but the same goes for LGBTQ+ people)'s oppression may consider the use of violence to be an obstacle to said acknowledgement. Henceforth, as seen throughout this thesis, splits may occur over chosen strategies within a movement.

Gelderloos views such splits as detrimental to activists who include violence in their arsenal of militant tactics. By losing the support of other activists, they "lose access to resources, and they lose protection from being scapegoated by the media or criminalized by the government" (5). In Gelderloos' opinion, splits within movements on the grounds of disagreements over tactics has weakening and discrediting effects.

¹⁰² "Feminism has never killed anyone. Machismo kills every day*."

Butler's vision is more nuanced: she wonders, "Is 'unity' necessary for effective political action? Is the premature insistence on the goal of unity precisely the cause of an ever more bitter fragmentation among the ranks?" (21). In her vision, giving primacy to unity hinders a movement's efficiency.

Perhaps it is not necessarily a sign of internal failure for feminist movements to be ramified. While branches of feminism that were associated with violence may have suffered from the rejection of their pacifist peers, perhaps they have also made more moderate vindications seem more acceptable and help those more moderate branches gain supporters and public approval. As aforementioned, Grace hypothesised that Nation had likely pushed some prohibitionists towards the "procedurally moderate ASL". It might be considered a loss for Nation, but was it a loss for temperance? The question remains open and may be asked for each of the three case studies: did the assimilation of the Women's Liberation to a violent movement make liberal feminism "more palatable", in the same way that its radicality did (Echols 11)? Did the Stonewall Uprising allow more moderate LGBTQ+ groups, including lesbian organisations like D.O.B., to gain public approval and thus help normalise the LGBTQ+ agenda? Either way, Irene concludes: "Tactical diversity is key*" (15).

3.2. Galvanising Effects of Disruptive Models in the Media

Press representations of subversive violence in women and femmes also came out with positive effects on their causes, without those representations necessarily needing to picture the activists in a positive light.

3.2.1. Shedding Light Onto Overlooked Issues: Accounts of Violent Activism Start Conversations

A great obstacle that women's issues in the 20th century have had to battle with is that of mediatic snubbing (Kahn and Goldenberg 105). In order for those issues to be taken seriously and discussed as public and most of all, political subjects, entering the news sphere is nonetheless crucial, based on Tuchman's claim that the news defines the preoccupations of the public debate (*Making News* 3) and thus influences American politics.

Gelderloos aligns with Oliver and Myers (*cited in* Armstrong and Cragge 726), according to whom violent events have heightened potential for newsworthiness:

Because of its imperative principles, corporate media cannot ignore a bombing as easily as it can ignore a peaceful protest. And even though the media will slander such actions, the more images of forceful resistance people receive through the media, the more the narcotic illusion of social peace is disrupted. (Gelderloos 60)

The idea that comes forth here is that coverage content is of limited importance: the mere fact that issues are being discussed in the media and that a system's criticism is made visible is already a win.

One thing that the three case studies certainly have in common is that they made a mediatic splash and drew public attention to causes that initially lacked it. Carry Nation's battle echoed as far as France (Grace 4) or New-Zealand¹⁰³, not mentioning throughout the whole of the USA. Grace (15, 180) and Nation¹⁰⁴ ([1904] 93, 99, 111, 134) are unanimous: the hatchetations propelled the temperance movement to unprecedented levels of mediatic visibility. Additionally, as Grace remarks, the method proved effective in reaching local governments: all saloons of the county of Kiowa were effectively shut down within three months of Nation's raids.

The same goes for the coverage of the Miss America Pageant Protest. According to Beck:

This protest represented a relatively minor blip on the movement time line and received far more coverage than it really deserved, especially since feminists had been toiling in obscurity for years over such issues as jobs, pay equity, child care, and other far less inflammatory causes. (142)

This thesis supports the following hypothesis: the protest drew unexpectedly disproportionate attention from newspapers because it was presented as a violent event. It would be interesting to study what this changed in the way the "less inflammatory causes" mentioned by Beck were represented in the media in the decades that followed the protest: were the spotlights finally directed towards those long-standing issues? In any case, there were prompt effects to the protest and its media resonance: Pepsi withdrew its sponsorship from the pageant (*PP11*), and

¹⁰³ An impressive number of archived articles about Carrie Nation can be found on the website *Papers Past*. See *Papers Past*, National Library of New Zealand and New Zealand Government, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>. Accessed 9 Sept. 2023.

¹⁰⁴ Nation says so herself, but the words of her supporters enclosed in her autobiography also corroborate this.

the pageant itself underwent some internal changes intended to rectify its sexist image¹⁰⁵ (Dow 135). Even though the protest was not violent, the fact that it was depicted as such by the mainstream media was enough, so it seems, to cause similar repercussions as if it had been: as with Nation's raids, the protest attracted significant coverage and immediately resulted in changes on a local scale.

The mediatic frenzy around Stonewall expressed itself differently. The uprising was immediately covered by the news press in the wake of the confrontations between LGBTQ+ protesters and the police (as shown by the corpus), because of its sensational dimension. Nevertheless, circumstances allowed its impact to last in the long run. After the uprising, the number of LGBTQ+ press publications increased locally and nationally, which fuelled new accounts of the events in the following months. Additionally, the uprising's symbolism kept growing within the LGBTQ+ community in later stages; as Armstrong and Crague argue: "It is often assumed that Stonewall is commemorated because of its impact on the movement. This suggests that commemoration is secondary to the movement. In fact, Stonewall made its impact on the gay movement *through* its commemoration" (744). Rather than Stonewall's early coverage, it is the later accounts of the events at the yearly occasion of Pride that built the events' impact on the cause. The myth of Stonewall reached such significance that, as already discussed in the first chapter of this paper, it is often wrongly assumed that the uprising was the birth of LGBTQ+ activism (Armstrong and Crague 743). While this is factually wrong, it also suggests that prior movements/organisations/actions had not drawn sufficient press attention to be identified as LGBTQ+ activism history in the collective imaginary¹⁰⁶. Therefore, the sustained cyclical presence of Stonewall in the press durably established LGBTQ+ issues in the public sphere.

Yet, it should be highlighted that narratives around Stonewall did not equally "start the conversation" about every topic relative to the LGBTQ+ community: trans women in particular and lesbian women to some extent, as this study has shown, have been largely forgotten from

¹⁰⁵ For more information about the evolution of the Miss America Pageant's appropriation of feminism throughout the years, see Dow's "Feminism, Miss America and Media Mythology" from page 135 onwards (the full reference appears in the bibliography).

¹⁰⁶ Armstrong and Crague's unravel their analysis of the Stonewall Uprising as a media myth in an engaging article. They explain, among other things, why other uprisings comparable to Stonewall have not been remembered as equally important episodes in the history of LGBTQ+ rights. Armstrong and Crague explain that Stonewall, unlike the four other events they compared it with, had both "commemorability" and "mnemonic capacity"—Stonewall was extraordinary enough to be commemorated, and the necessary communication tools (such as flourishing LGBTQ+ press) were available to keep the myth alive (726, 737-740).

20th century¹⁰⁷ press narratives around Stonewall. Even in revolutionary movements for self-liberation, gender tends to constitute a hierarchising parameter in determining who gets to be brought forward and who remains in the shadows.

3.2.2. Rallying Support

As much as the representations of feminist activists as dismissed incarnations of alterity may have deterred many from ideologically and concretely getting involved in feminist causes, they may also have triggered an until then repressed or dormant¹⁰⁸ will in others to act. In the time periods considered in this thesis, widespread public awareness of the studied events would have been achieved thanks to news media, and notably by the press.

Admittedly, the influence of the written press in the early 1900s was greater than in the late 1960s, when television and radio news programs had become well-established contributors to the world-picture constructed by mass media. Therefore, it can be considered to a certain extent that the public's responses to Nation's hatchetations were in fact, for the most part, responses to their mediated renditions in the press. *A priori*, the same applies to Stonewall. There could have been radio broadcasts of the uprising but none of the sources encountered in this research suggest so, and there was no TV footage of the events (Weiss). The Miss America Pageant protest, however, would have likely been mentioned on TV and on the radio, since it aimed to disrupt a highly mediatised event of the American life; therefore, the root-cause of the public's responses to the protest cannot be attributed solely to the written press.

Fran Grace has unambiguously correlated Nation's deeds with emulating other women into rallying the cause (16), at a time of inertia for the Temperance movement (142). In fact, several groups of women either joined Nation in her raids, as seen in articles of the corpus (CN2; CN3; CN5; CN6; CN7; CN8; CN9), or started their own crusades inspired by the work of Nation. Blanche Boise, for instance, is one of those figures, as seen in a 1903 publication of the *Topeka State Journal* ("SMASHES - Blanche Boise Opens War on the Joints"). Moreover, Nation received plenty of supportive letters that she featured in the Smasher's Mail and in her

¹⁰⁷ The 21st century has seen an increase in trans people's visibility in popular culture and the public debate. Accordingly, the Stonewall myth has been revisited and reviewed as to finally acknowledge transwomen's significance in the uprising, as can be asserted from the number of online articles dating from the late 2010s and early 2020s that recentre Stonewall around trans women of colour. Interestingly, there are ongoing tensions within the LGBTQ+ community about the issue of the erasing of some to the benefit of others: some lesbian groups even spoke up against their sustained invisibilisation from the Stonewall uprising in 2018, which they ironically blamed on trans women (Gordon).

¹⁰⁸ This echoes the suggestion made in part 1.1.3 that resorting to violence in the face of experienced oppression is sometimes fantasised.

autobiography. For example, a letter sent by a supporter and published on p. 2 of *CN10* reads: “Mrs. Carrie Nation:—I have just written a new song entitled, ‘Crusaders’ Battle Hymn’. I have been wonderfully pleased with your work. You will see by one of these verses, that the work has also begun at Centerville, Iowa. (...)”. Doubtlessly, the mediatisation of Nation’s work gave Temperance momentum on the national scale.

The case of Stonewall appears to verify Virginia Held’s reflections about the part played by the media in political violence. Held, in alignment with what has been said in this thesis, argues: “In any case, political violence is newsworthy and should not be ignored, though it should be covered truthfully rather than as a drama that can be exploited to increase ratings, as some producers advocate. What should not be ignored are the issues and the background of the political disaffection that fuels violence (...)” (193). The *Village Voice*’s coverage, precisely because it was homophobic, sparked an additional night of violence (Armstrong and Cragge 745). It is interesting to note that action is not always taken as a consequence of positive and condoning coverage. It is quite the opposite in Stonewall’s case: articles viewed as dismissive by activists, instead of deflating a movement’s synergy, may galvanise it by stirring up belligerent animosity.

News of rebellious women burning their bras to protest women’s shared oppression could have created new heroic figures of identification for women. According to Gist, one’s self-efficacy, which is to say “one’s belief in one’s capability to perform a task”, can be influenced by media representations. Did representations of transgressive women attacking a symbol of patriarchal domination effectively resonate in some women readers, despite the loudly despising and belittling takes cast on the events by a number of newspaper articles? It appears to have been the case, based on this Robin Morgan quote from a 2017 interview led by Joy Press for the magazine *Cut*: “(...) this protest caught the public imagination. The next week [NYRW¹⁰⁹] had our meeting and 300 women showed up! People were forming groups all across the country and it was out of hand.” The least that can be said is that the protest’s coverage did not discourage new supporters from flocking the ranks of the Women’s Liberation Movement, far from it.

¹⁰⁹ New-York Radical Women.

Lastly, and this applies to all three case studies, the alternative press and more specifically activists' own newspapers would have greatly helped concretise adhesion and support to the movements studied. As argued by Crafton Smith about the Women's Movement:

A primary condition for the successful launching of a social movement is the ability to communicate with potential adherents. The media outlets developed by the women's movement activists became central organizing tools, with their capacity to relay information about political actions, to create a space for discussion about their concerns, and to offer support to and seek input from their readers. (65)

Such publications are truly designed to organise, share key information relative to the movements, expand and sharpen collective reflection. In the same way that violence may be viewed as a vehicle amplifying the reach of activists' vindications, activist-owned press makes up another tactic within the strategy of communication.

3.2.3. Transgressing Gender Boundaries: A *de facto* Reappropriation of the Self and of the Public Sphere

The Women's Liberation's slogan, "the personal is political", has established that personal difficulties encountered by women gender minorities are symptomatic of the patriarchal system. Conversely, acts of self-reaffirmation may be stamped as politically significant—although Echols points her finger at the drift of the women's movement on the matter: she takes a dim view at the interpretation of the saying "that made questions of lifestyle absolutely central" (18). Without reaching such extents, one is invited to acknowledge that political strength may emerge from personal empowerment. This final part considers the consequences of breaching gender expectations on activists' existences within a heterosexist patriarchal system by using violence. Only the cases of Stonewall and of Nation's raids will be discussed here. As it has been made abundantly clear throughout these pages, the Miss America Pageant protest was not violent, despite what some press articles made it look like.

Perhaps the very act of carrying out a political message in such an unrepentant manner as that of physical violence is in itself a "revolution from within". In other words, an event impacts the people who experienced it just as much as those who read about it in the press, if not more. As seen in Chapter 1, the turf of violence is gendered. For Stonewall activists who were either women, homosexual men perceived as effeminate and thus as lesser men, or femme-presenting individuals, occupying their bodies in a defensive and offensive manner in the face of a state unit of power was necessarily powerful, for LGBTQ+ people's public manifestations required courage (Armstrong and Crage 728, 740). The effects of Stonewall were immediate on the uprisers, as Bob Kohler's testimony in article *S10* shows (this has been discussed in part

2.3.3). The events allowed them to reclaim themselves in the public space, as this anecdote told from activist Craig Rodwell's point of view in Duberman's *Stonewall* indicates:

(...). But the events at Stonewall had had their effects. After a half hour of marching quietly in single file¹¹⁰, two of the women suddenly broke ranks and marched together, holding hands. Seeing them, Craig thought elatedly, "O-oh, that's wonderful!"(210)

To follow up on the idea of taking up public spaces, Carry Nation's audacity commands admiration. Her striking activism in the saloons of Kansas brought her fame, which she used to her advantage as it allowed her to tour the United States to give lectures in all kinds of places, from conferences to vaudeville stages (Nation, [1904] 113, 134). She even forcefully attempted to meet then-President Theodore Roosevelt at the White House to have a conversation about temperance (Nation, [1904] 119). Nation travelled abroad, to Canada, Scotland and England (Nation, [1908] 281, 385-386). She was decidedly independent from the stranglehold of domesticity valued by ideals of True Womanhood. Her appropriation of the public space, and above all of the political space, was astounding. About her impromptu invitation to make her way onto vaudeville stages to advocate for prohibition, Nation believed that the "hatchet opened it" ([1904] 134). As far as this thesis is concerned, it seems that the hatchet "opened" more than just that for Carry Nation. Her activism, arguably, gave her power over her life.

¹¹⁰ The anecdote takes place in Philadelphia at the Annual Remembrance Day on July 4, 1969. Back then, the ancestor of Pride marches (the term "Gay Pride" is now considered obsolete for it excludes the other letters of the acronym "LGBTQ+") was nowhere as exuberant as the celebrations we know today.

Conclusion

This thesis has confirmed that "nonconforming" femininity saw itself ostracised in the American mainstream news press of the 20th century. The women and femme activists studied in this research were frequently assimilated—directly or indirectly—with malicious and non-human figures such as the witch, the Amazon, the madwoman, or even animals. Those figures share an incompatibility with the modern Western idea of civilised humanness. Women and femme-presenting activists who resorted to violence in a politicised context were pictured as incarnations of American society's modern Barbarians: they can be thought of as the materialisation of a threshold of civilisation that other women ought not to cross. The Stonewall uprisers concerned by this study were notably erased from most accounts of the uprising, possibly because of their "illegibility" not only as women, but also as transgender women. It should be noted that Nation's case partially escaped that fate, probably because she benefitted from the "Good Womanhood" cover.

Interestingly, some of the noxious images created about transgressive women, such as the bra-burner or the witch, have been reappropriated by feminists in the last decades and turned into symbols of power and liberation: the 2012 "#FreeTheNipple" hashtag, in an article from the website *SheKnows*, is cast as "this generation's version of burning bras" (Long). The ecofeminist movement gives the witch a central place place, as suggested by publications such as Franco-Swiss ecofeminist Mona Chollet's *Sorcières*¹¹¹. History truly is about the continuous renewal of a society's interpretation of its past.

Regrettably, the activists' political vindications were often dismissed, mocked or diluted by the male-dominated mainstream press and less frequently by some alternative papers. This can be explained, on the one hand, by the dissonance between radical women-centred vindications and the (patriarchal) conventionality imposed in large distribution news media. On the other hand, the profit-oriented industry's taste for sensationalism prioritised events over issues, even if that meant sacrificing the emphasis of the socio-political context in which the violent actions took place or the veracity of the information divulged. The mainstream press of the 20th century decidedly set the criteria for newsworthiness; it would be interesting to

¹¹¹ Chollet, Mona. *Sorcières. La puissance invaincue des femmes*. La Découverte, 2018. (*Witches. The Undefeated Power of Women**)

investigate how online social media such as *X* (formerly known as *Twitter*) may have challenged that authority and how this may have facilitated the public's exposure to feminist discourses.

While the derogatory, sometimes misleading, and patchy coverage of feminist actions may have partly deterred public rallying and contributed to internal splits within the movements studied, its prolificity gave them significant visibility and still roused the support of many; this is especially true of the Women's Liberation and of the Temperance movement. However, non-white women and femmes' situation, as members of the LGBTQ+ community, remained secondary to that of gay men.

Alternatives to the mainstream press such as underground publications of the New Left in the 1960s provided more space for the issues raised by feminists and were generally more condoning of the cause, possibly because the feminist movement was identified as yet another challenge to the establishment. Nevertheless, some male-written articles still contained sexist or homophobic terminology and most articles highlighted the vindications that the Women's Liberation shared with the radical-left, at the expense of strictly "feminine" issues. Unsurprisingly, the publications included more comprehensive and clearly politicised explanations of their actions, without falling into the sensationalising of violence.

Undeniably, reality is constructed by the press through frames of different aperture, depth and blind spots depending on who is writing and for whom. Some of those frames enjoy greater broadcasting platforms than others, which gives all its meaning to Hewitt's wave metaphor for feminism: just because a wave is emitted does not mean it will be received by all. Consequently, some of the frames applied to feminism and feminist violence have been more persistent and tougher to challenge than others.

Violence is never something to rejoice in, and none of the activists studied for this thesis resorted to it out of pleasure, although some found the collateral feeling of self-empowerment quite galvanising, notably Stonewall uprisers. Their will was never to reverse domination patterns, but rather to reclaim their safety and integrity in public spaces and society at large as women and femme-presenting people. This, because of society's deafness to their formerly peacefully expressed vindications, was judged to require violent methods (or the rumours of them, in the case of the Miss America Pageant protest). For this, their violence can be regarded as subversive, rather than oppressive, in the words of the anarcho-feminist scholar and writer Irene.

Violence may come as a last-resort option to counter patriarchal oppression, and it is sometimes easy to see why. The current rollback of women's rights and safety in the USA is deeply worrying. The #MeToo movement has unveiled the tragic reality of sexual assault in the USA and in the whole world; the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision granting women the federal right to have an abortion was overruled last year; 2021 turned out to be the deadliest year since at least 2013 for transgender women in the USA and worldwide (Carlisle); Black women and girls make up a disproportionately large group of gun violence victims (Beckett and Clayton). Whatever people think of it, the violence perpetrated by women, including for defensive purposes, is nowhere as normalised as the patriarchal violence of which they are the victims.

Appendix

The primary sources below are cited throughout the body of the thesis by their attributed code to avoid repetitive and lengthy in-text citations.

Section 1: Carry Nation’s Hatchetations (CN)

Document	Periodicity of publication	Attributed code
“The Kiowa Saloons Raided”. <i>Barber County Index</i> , vol.20, no°1, 6 June 1900: pp. 3-4.	Weekly	<i>CN1</i>
“A John Brown Raid: Kansas Women Demolish Illegal Saloons in Wichita. The End Is Not Yet”. <i>Backbone</i> , vol.5, n°1, 1 Jan. 1901: p. 1.	Monthly	<i>CN2</i>
“Mrs Nation Will Get Cold Reception If She Goes to Chicago”. <i>Akron Daily Democrat</i> , vol.9, n°246, 1 Feb. 1901: p. 1.	Daily	<i>CN3</i>
“Mrs Nation Continues the Crusade Against Saloons”. <i>Mt. Sterling Advocate</i> , vol.11, no°, 5 Feb. 1901: pp.1, 8.	Weekly	<i>CN4</i>
“Down Comes Hatchet”. <i>The Topeka State Journal</i> . 5 Feb. 1901: pp. 1, 6.	Daily	<i>CN5</i>
“Mrs Nation Continues to Wreck Saloons and Gains Adherents”. <i>The San Francisco Call</i> , vol.89, n°68, 6 Feb. 1901: p. 1.	Daily	<i>CN6</i>
“Brewers After Mrs Nation”. <i>Kansas Agitator</i> , vol.2, n°36, 8 Feb: p. 4.	Weekly	<i>CN7</i>
“Use Their Hatchet”. <i>The Topeka State Journal</i> . 18 Feb. 1901: pp. 1, 8.	Daily	<i>CN8</i>
Griffin, C.W. “The Merry Work Goes On”. <i>The Chanute Times</i> , vol.29, n°20, 22 Feb. 1901: pp. 1, 8.	Weekly	<i>CN9</i>
Nation, Carry. <i>The Smasher’s Mail</i> , vol.1, n°6, 18 May 1901.	Monthly	<i>CN10</i>

Section 2: The Miss America Pageant Protest (PP)

Document	Periodicity of publication	Attributed code
Van Gelder, Lindsay. "Bra Burners Plan Miss America Protest". <i>New York Post</i> , 4 Sep. 1968.	Daily	PP1
"Lingerie Dumped in Pageant Protest". <i>Newark Sunday News</i> . 8 Sep. 1968: p. 22.	Daily	PP2
Curtis, Charlotte. "Miss America Pageant is Picketed by 100 Women". <i>New York Times</i> . 8 Sep. 1968.	Daily	PP3
Boucher, John L. "Bra-Burners Blitz Boardwalk". <i>Press of Atlantic City</i> . 8 Sep. 1968: p. 4.	Daily	PP4a
Katz, John. "What's Going On? Sightseers Asked". <i>Press of Atlantic City</i> . 8 Sep. 1968: p. 4.	Daily	PP4b
Van Horne, Harriet. "Female Firebrands". <i>New York Post</i> . 9 Sep. 1968.	Daily	PP5
Cohen, Bonny. "American Beauty". <i>The Old Mole</i> . Sep. 1968: p. 5.	Biweekly	PP6
Buchwald, Art. "The Bra Burners". <i>New York Post</i> . 12 Sep. 1968.	Daily	PP7
"The Winner, a Rival in Black and Some Ribroast Ribbing". <i>Life Magazine</i> . 20 Sep. 1968: pp. 92.	Weekly	PP8
"Miss America Gets Some Competition". <i>American Druggist</i> . 22 Sep. 1968: p. 69.	Monthly	PP9
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