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Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas*: The Past, The Present and Into The Future

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Abstract

Three Guineas (1938) is Virginia Woolf's most controversial work due to the themes it addresses and the angry tone in which it was written. Negative and positive reactions to this essay are amply documented and reflect the intended polemical nature of the text. The past of the essay, the background from where it arose, involves looking at history through Woolf's eyes, the effects World War I had in her life and later the violent 1930's in Europe which would lead to World War II, the rise of Fascism and the Spanish Civil War. The present of the text is twofold: it is the text itself, but also ideas discussed by contemporary scholars, which bring *Three Guineas* into our time. The use of anger as a productive force for a woman writer, the significance of both the printed pictures which accompany the essay and the ones that are simply, but insistently, referred to throughout the whole essay and the structures of power which promote and incite war are some of such topics. The future of the text focuses on the context of the war in the former Yugoslavia, which is strikingly similar to the one Virginia Woolf experienced in the 1930's. Out of the destruction created by the bloody conflict in the Balkans, a group of pacifists started their work. Women in Black Belgrade, their principles and constant resistance give *Three Guineas* an application for the future and reveal how Woolf's insights are valid to this day and continue to be a source of inspiration for those who fight against inequality and war.

Key words: Virginia Woolf, war, non-violence, outsiders, resistance, patriarchy, Women in Black Belgrade

Resumo

Three Guineas (1938) é a obra mais controversa de Virginia Woolf's pelos temas que aborda e pelo tom irado em que foi escrito. Reações positivas e negativas estão amplamente documentadas e refletem a natureza polémica e pretendida do ensaio. Para compreender o passado do texto é descrito o contexto a partir do qual surgiu *Three Guineas* olhando para a história através dos olhos de Woolf, revisitando os efeitos que a Primeira Guerra Mundial teve na sua vida e produção e, mais tarde, a violência dos anos 30 na Europa, o Fascismo e a Guerra Civil Espanhola. O presente do texto trata o texto propriamente dito e também ideias contemporâneas que transportam *Three Guineas* para os dias de hoje. O uso da ira como uma força produtiva nas mãos de uma escritora, de uma mulher, a importância das fotografias que acompanham o ensaio e das que são apenas, mas insistentemente evocadas e as estruturas de poder que promovem e incitam à guerra são alguns dos assuntos abordados. O futuro do texto centra-se no contexto da guerra na ex-Jugoslávia que se assemelha aos acontecimentos vividos por Virginia Woolf nos anos 30. Da destruição causada pelo conflito nos Balcãs nasce um movimento pacifista. As Mulheres de Negro em Belgrado, os princípios que defendem e a sua resistência dão a *Three Guineas* uma aplicação para o futuro e revelam como as ideias de Woolf são válidas nos dias de hoje e uma fonte de inspiração para aqueles que lutam contra as desigualdades e a guerra.

Palavras-chave Virginia Woolf, guerra, não-violência, resistência, patriarcado, Mulheres de Negro Belgrado

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Introduction

Three Guineas is Virginia Woolf's most controversial piece of writing. The tone used, the issues addressed and the imagery it contains all contribute to a piece of writing which has been perceived as "cantankerous", resentful and a mere "series of complaints."[1] E.M. Forster went as far as to say that "[i]n the 1940's I think she had not much to complain of and kept on grumbling from habit" (Marcus 1978:94). Men and women, contemporary of the author or from more recent times, reflect the intended polemical nature of this essay.

In "Virginia Woolf in Her Fifties" Carolyn G. Heilbrun confesses "[f]or many years I was made uncomfortable by *Three Guineas*, preferring the 'nicer' *Room* [*of One's Own*] where Woolf never presses against the bounds of proper female behavior", not without adding, though, "I say this to my shame" (Marcus 1983:241). I claim that it is the fact that Virginia Woolf crossed "bounds of female behavior", something not expected from a woman and least of all of a privileged woman, that has caused such irate disputes over the relevance and even the legitimacy of *Three Guineas*.

Elaine Showalter claims that "Woolf was cut off from an understanding of the day-to-day life of the women whom she wished to inspire" (Moi 2001:4), an opinion which echoes some of Queenie Leavis' concerns at the time of the publication of the essay in 1938 which she clearly exposed in *Scrutiny*.[2] Showalter defends that "*Three Guineas* rings false. Its language, all too frequently, is empty sloganeering and cliché (…) (It's) irritating and hysterical" (Moi 2001:7). Woolf wrote from her own perspective, from where she stood. She does not, however, ignore women of different condition to hers: "we are weaker than the women of the working class. If the working women of the country were to say: '[i]f you go to war, we will refuse to make munitions' (…) the difficulty of war-making would be seriously increased" (Woolf 2008:167). There is an element of distancing between "we", the "daughters of educated

[1] These were the opinions of E.M. Forster and Batchelor of *Three Guineas* (Silver 1991:352, 356).
[2] "Queenie Leavis angrily denounced Woolf's feminism as dangerous and silly, attacked her personally as not being a real woman because she was not a mother and as incapable of being a true socialist because she was not a member of the working class" (Marcus 1978:88).

men" and working-class women, although there is an indication that the latter are far more powerful due to the direct influence they have in society than her own privileged class, kept away from the public sphere.

Woolf was undeniably privileged and aware of her condition. She did not take it for granted, though. It is not uncommon to see references to money in her personal writings: a "luxurious sense of coins in my pocket" (Woolf 1982b:212) and "how pleasant to have coins in one's purse" (Woolf 1982a:227); she was aware that the lack of money limits one's life and that poverty is like a "terrific high black prison wall" (Woolf 1982b:255). In *A Room of One's Own* (1929) Woolf offers her opinion about what she considers essential for women to be able to be emancipated: "a woman must have money and a room of her own" (Woolf 2008:4). This was not only preached by Virginia Woolf but she was privileged enough to be able to put it into practice in her real life. She had her money, either from inheritance or from her work, she had her own space to write and, thus, her independence. These factors enabled her to have "a mind of (her) own" (Woolf 2008:237) and, thus, a voice. The shelter the Bloomsbury Group provided was also an important factor in Virginia Woolf's growth as an autonomous person and a writer. Alex Zwerdling considers Bloomsbury an "extraordinary opportunity for mental expansion" (1986:26, 27). *Three Guineas* itself proves that an independent woman is capable of doing what men regularly do: criticise, point out serious injustices in the way society is organised and propose alternatives using an angry tone. However, men are not usually "derided for mental instability or ludicrous Utopianism!"[3] (Lee 1997:691). The only violence used by this female writer arises from the powerful, shocking words in the essay and the fact that she dares to do it. In "Art and Anger" Jane Marcus remarks that "[w]omen are not supposed to raise their voices, shake their fists, or point their fingers in accusation" (1978:70). This is exactly what Virginia Woolf did in *Three Guineas*…and that is audacious.

Thinking was her fighting and the only fight that interested Virginia Woolf was intellectual. I intend to show with this dissertation that *Three Guineas* is a logical piece of writing, understandable given the context, both personal and political, it sprouted from, and not far removed from the real world as it is sometimes remarked. As a text it is still alive and is, as Jane Marcus defends, "a primer for protest and an encouragement

[3] Hermione Lee refers to the pacifist pamphlets written in the 1930's by Bertrand Russell and Aldous Huxley.

for women to struggle" (1978:88). For this purpose I have divided my work into three main chapters: the past, the present and the future of *Three Guineas*.

The first part of this dissertation, the past of *Three Guineas*, presents its direct historical context with the threat of National-socialism and Fascism all over Europe, the tangible evidence that could be witnessed in England with the amount of refugees both from the Spanish Civil War and Germany Virginia saw in the streets or read of in the newspapers and even met. Dr Sigmund Freud was one of the many people she encountered living in London escaping the Nazi persecution of Jews. The Spanish Civil War left a terrible indentation in Woolf's life with the trauma of the death of her nephew in the Iberian battlefield. All these events that will be described in chapter 1.1 took place in the decade Woolf was collecting evidence to write *Three Guineas* and are, therefore, essential to a complete understanding of this particular work.

With chapter 1.2 I intend to show how the experience through World War I had deeply affected Woolf's sensibility and helped define her pacifism. Through her personal writings we observe the everyday limitations that an armed conflict imposes on civilians, hiding from air raids, witnessing first-hand the vulnerability of one's human condition, life reduced to the precariousness of it which became impossible to ignore or dismiss, and the instability conscription inflicted in her own life through the attempted or actual drafting of her own husband and other male members of family and friends. All these facts contributed to an atmosphere of intense discussion and ultimately led to the definition of opinions which were developed, at least partly, due to the extreme historical circumstances. All these experiences and a natural tendency for non-violence delineated Woolf's need to write *Three Guineas*. This is the reason why I consider crucial to dedicate a part of this work to the historical background that led to the almost inevitable creation of the essay. However, it is history through Virginia Woolf's eyes that I will focus on to show how through her diaries and letters she reacted to what was happening, and not simply cold and distant historical facts; I want to place Virginia Woolf in the centre of the troubled and troubling times she lived through.

It is also noticeable how present the theme of war is in Woolf's whole body of work: personal writings, essays and fiction, which will be discussed in section 1.3 of this dissertation. More or less obvious references to the consequences war produces can be observed but the truth is they are constant. Images of war populate Woolf's writings: mentally disturbed returning soldiers like Septimus Smith in *Mrs Dalloway*, grieving widows like his wife Lucrezia and mothers for whom the war would never be over like

Mrs Flanders, the mother figure in *Jacob's Room* or just the brief interference of war in characters' everyday lives as in *Between the Acts*. It is my aim to demonstrate with this structure how war and the threat of it affected Virginia Woolf as a person and as a writer and how logical the publication of *Three Guineas* seems when placed against this background.

The second chapter of the dissertation will deal with the present of the text. What I have come to call the present of *Three Guineas* is twofold: it is the published text itself as written by Virginia Woolf, the topics it addresses, but also the contemporary ideas that can be utilised to aid the reading of the work in our days. The ideas of scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Susan Sontag, amongst others, will help me bring *Three Guineas* closer to our time by showing how concerns raised by Woolf in her essay are still the object of intense debate. Also, the references to daily newspapers, a technique used by Virginia Woolf herself in the production of the essay in question, will be used in this process. It is surprising how little one has to try to find stories in the media today that reflect the preoccupations Virginia Woolf felt in the 1930's.

Chapter 2 will start with a brief introduction about *Three Guineas*; it will refer to some general characteristics of the work, its inception, its intricate structure and reserve some room for both negative and positive instances of its reception. It will also address the symbolic significance of the use of an epistolary form, the guineas and the male presence in the text which I consider essential for a complete reading of *Three Guineas*.

Chapter 2.2 will be dedicated to "the precipice" (Woolf 2008:155) between men and women as observed by the female narrator in the areas of education and the professional world, the need for women to be independent in order to have a voice and the alternative educational plan devised to produce human beings capable of preventing war. Chapter 2.3 will continue to deal with the "precipice" between men and women in the way they look upon war and patriotism, although the connection established in *Three Guineas* between the patriarchal system and dictatorship opens up the possibility of a common interest of both sexes to fight together against the same enemy. I will also address the powerful aesthetic effect of photographs in the essay, both the ones that are constantly referred to and can be looked upon as the ultimate pacifist argument and the physical photographs that accompany the text. Chapter 2.4 will be dedicated to the vision of an Outsider's Society, Woolf's plan of resistance, its ethical principles and code of conduct. The crucial topic of the use of anger by a female writer will be dealt

with in this section as a means to understand Woolf's strategy, its effect and the origin of some, if not all, negative reactions to it.

Three Guineas can be looked upon as a dated piece of writing if one focuses on the references of the 1930's, such as Hitler's speeches and Baldwin as a contemporary politician, whose opinion and activity was still relevant when Virginia Woolf was writing her essay. However, if one is prepared to apply the concepts exposed to more recent contexts, *Three Guineas* arises as an essay which presents ideas "that survive unscathed and undated" (Zwerdling 1986:33). As a means to further prove this validity recognised by some authors of Woolf's essay in today's world, and to give it an application for the future I will dedicate the last chapter of this dissertation to the historical context of the war in the former Yugoslavia in section 3.1. I am aware that this topic is not the only way to demonstrate the future of *Three Guineas*. I chose it, however, since the similarities of what is described in *Three Guineas*, the context in Britain in the 1930's and the one observed in the 1990's in the war waged by the Serbian Republic are striking.

The work of a group of Serbian activists, Women in Black Belgrade, born as a response to the war they saw their government incite and promote in the last decade of the twentieth century, will be the focus of the final segment of this dissertation. It is of great significance that the translation of *Three Guineas* is part of their publication list of works to prevent war and I establish the connection between Woolf's essay, its ideas and propositions and the informed activism Women in Black Belgrade reveal. I researched their archive and interviewed them as a way to become familiar with their activity and also to better understand their motivations and goals.

I hope to show women crossing the line in different ways, resisting in a manner they found best suited them; a woman writer, female activists going against the status quo to challenge it, question its legitimacy and authority; women who transgress and seem to do what they deem necessary to shake the established order. I have put Virginia Woolf at the centre of this dissertation since "her hope crystallized in a vision of a radically changed world in the distant future" (Zwerdling 1986:325) motivated me to show how that future envisaged in *Three Guineas* or simply inspired by it, a future of equality and peace is still so distant.

1 Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas*: The Past

> Last night, beautiful, cloudless, still & moonlit, was to my thinking the first of peace, since one went to bed fairly positive that never again in all our lives need we dread the moonlight.
> Virginia Woolf, *Diary I*, 1918

1.1 Virginia Woolf and the 1930's

When *Three Guineas* was published in June 1938, Virginia Woolf was dreading the moonlight again. In the last two years of World War I the moonlight gave the enemy aircraft the visibility needed to bomb the civilian population, thus causing fear amongst those who were constantly hiding from air raids.

Europe was going through financial, social and political turmoil and war seemed closer and closer as the 1930's went by and history unfolded before Virginia Woolf's eyes. As early as 1931 Woolf wrote in her diary "the country is in throes of a crisis. Great events are brewing (…) Sometimes I feel the world desperate" (Woolf 1982a:39). In the following years the events that took place in her own country, Italy, Germany, Austria and Spain would be continually referenced in Woolf's writings showing how they affected her life, thinking and production.

Politics was never far from the Woolf's household. Leonard Woolf, Virginia's husband since 1912 (Bell 1996a:201), was involved in numerous political organisations, participating in conferences, debating and writing about the national and international state of affairs.[4] His intense political activity interfered with Virginia Woolf's existence as she reveals in her personal writings. In December 1936 Virginia refers to "L[eonard]'s eternal meetings - Labour Party; Fabian Research; Intellectual Liberty, Spanish Medical Aid" (Woolf 1994:94) and in March 1938 "Leonard is in the thick of meetings; the telephone never stops ringing; agitated editors arrive with articles intended to prevent war" (Woolf 1994:219). She alludes to her inevitable involvement in Leonard's activities due to the fact that quite a few of these gatherings took place at their home turning it into some sort of headquarters of political debate: "I am now in the thick of the political world, and seldom get an evening without someone asking me to tell them what is likely to happen in Poland, Abyssinia, or some such area" (Woolf

[4] Leonard Woolf founded with William Robson the magazine *Political Quarterly* in 1930, a channel for intellectuals to voice their opinions. "It was (…) left Wing politically (…) It proclaimed its object as to discuss social and political questions" (Woolf 1975:207).

1994:97). This situation had an impact on Virginia Woolf's much appreciated and necessary routine as her comments about a visit of Mr Gillies of the Labour Party in August 1937 reveal: "Oh! I'm so furious! He comes to lunch, late, hungry, yet eating with the deliberation and mastication of a Toad (…) It's 5.30. He's still there, masticating." (Woolf 1994:162). In a letter to her sister Vanessa, Virginia shows that, although she respected Leonard's efforts and ideals, she was different from him and suspicious of political organisations: "[d]on't tell Leonard this, for he lives in the delusion that they are good men" (Woolf 1994:163).

The Hogarth Press, set up by the Woolfs in 1917, had become political printing books such as *A Letter to an M.P. on Disarmament* by Viscount Cecil in 1931, *Caste and Democracy* by Kavalam Madhava Panikkar in 1933, *Quack Quack*, an attack on Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy by Leonard Woolf, in 1935 and *A History of Socialism* by Sally Graves in 1939, to name just a few. Leonard also published a series called *Day to Day Pamphlets* "devoted entirely to politics" between 1930 and 1939 (Woolf 1975:161). One of the best-selling titles of this collection of 40 pamphlets was Mussolini's *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism* in 1934, which shows the decade's interest in the far-right movement rising in Europe.

Although Virginia Woolf complained about the growing frenzy of the political activity around her, she inevitably came into close contact with it and even occasionally made an effort to take part in it. She notes having been to the Labour Party Conferences in 1932 in Leicester (Woolf 1979:109), in 1933 in Hastings (Woolf 1982a:181) and in 1935 in Brighton (Woolf 1982a:345). The latter did make an impression on Virginia, who frequently claimed she was not a politician but who was also not an insensitive observer of the world around her. George Lansbury, leader of the Labour Party since 1931 resigned after a vociferous attack on his pacifism by Ernest Bevin. Virginia Woolf registers in her diary: "[t]ears came to my eyes as L[ansbury] spoke" and notes that her "sympathies were with (Alfred) Salter who preached non-resistance. He's quite right. That should be our view" (Woolf 1982a:345). Leonard agreed with Bevin – "if you were going to fight against Hitler (…) you must have arms with which to fight" (Woolf 1975:245). In fact, the discussion about whether or not to bear arms was one of the crucial issues of the 1930's. Pacifist stances were taken by several people and organised groups. C.P. Trevelyan at the Labour Party Conference in Hastings in 1933 advocated a general strike in the event of war, the Oxford Union's resolution of 9 February 1933 stated that "this House will in no circumstances fight for its King and country" (Pugh

1980:648,651) and the Peace Pledge Union founded in 1934 "united tens of thousands who accepted the pledge "I renounce war and never again, directly or indirectly, will I support or sanction another"" (Rempel 1978:D1214). People were divided between radical pacifist or militaristic views and the possibility and acceptance of an armed conflict as the only way of protection from Fascist and Nazi forces. The League of Nations, of which Leonard was a member, was an example of a group of "people who profoundly desired peace (…) but who in the last resort were willing to accept war" (Lukowitz 1974:115). The Woolfs differed in their views. Virginia Woolf did not only attend conferences to keep her husband company or to adopt his viewpoint. She took sides and defined her own convictions amidst an atmosphere of intense and unavoidable political debate.

In her private life Virginia Woolf met several refugees fleeing from the troubles in continental Europe. These encounters are described in her personal writings. In April 1933 she was introduced to Bruno Walter, a musician and conductor who had left Germany after Hitler had come to power in January of that same year (Morgan 2001:616). She reports their meeting in her diary and how Walter described the situation he had left behind: "[y]ou must think of this awful reign of intolerance (…) Our Germany (…) We are now a disgrace (…) There are spies everywhere (…) All the time soldiers were marching" (Woolf 1982a:153). In January 1936 Virginia Woolf met Aldous and Maria Huxley's protégée Charlotte Wolff, a German-Jewish woman expelled from her native country by the Nazi regime and who was making a living as a palm-reader. Virginia had her palm read twice and found the experience greatly amusing. Despite showing cautiousness about the accuracy of the activity and confessing to have done it only because the Huxleys asked her, Virginia Woolf decided that she liked her and that the palmist could even be an inspiration for a future fictional character (Woolf 1994:3).

In March 1936 an anonymous girl fainted on the stairs of Tavistock Square, where the Woolfs lived, a "Jewess" refugee, alone in London and going hungry. Virginia Woolf wrote in her diary "[n]ever saw unhappiness, poverty so tangible." This incident shocked Virginia Woolf so deeply that she finished the entry with a sigh of frustration: "[w]hat a system" (Woolf 1985:19). On 24 June 1937 Virginia Woolf participated in a fundraising meeting for Basque children fleeing from Franco's attacks and although she found the event itself "a bore" she was proud of the collection of £1500 (Woolf 1994:139). A few days earlier her diary reported what she had seen in the streets of

London "a long trail of fugitives – like a caravan in a desert (…) Spaniards flying from Bilbao, which has fallen[5], I suppose" (Woolf 1985:97). All of these events took place while Virginia Woolf was writing *Three Guineas*.

The Woolfs' choice of holiday destinations also had an impact on their opinions. In May 1933 they travelled to Italy and Virginia confesses in a letter to Ethel Smyth: "I don't like Fascist Italy at all – but hist! – there's the black shirt under the window" (Woolf 1979:187). What she liked did not matter; the Fascists were there to stay. To avoid the Silver Jubilee of King George V in April 1935 they decided to have a more adventurous, if not utterly irresponsible, break in Nazi Germany. Aware of the possible dangers, Virginia notes wittily in her diary that their plan is to "drive to Holland and Germany, concealing L[eonard]'s nose", i.e., "our Jewishness" (Woolf 1982a:298; 1985:386). To avert any complications during their journey they carried a letter from the German Embassy granting them immunity and assistance from government officials. Leonard also thought it advisable to meet Ralph Wigram from the Foreign Office who had just visited Hitler in Berlin. "The Wigrams (came) to tea (…) Hitler very impressive; very frightening" (Woolf 1982a:304), though they thought it nonsense that the Woolfs should not visit Germany. What they saw there is reported in Virginia's diary: "a car with the swastika on the back window", "banners stretched across the street "The Jew is our enemy", but most importantly "[w]e almost met Hitler face to face" when they came close to a Nazi rally near Bonn where "all the children cried Hail!" Not surprisingly, their "nerves (were) rather frayed" (Woolf 1982a: 310, 311; 1979: 392). In his autobiography, Leonard refers to this holiday and remarks "there was something sinister and menacing in the Germany of 1935" (Woolf 1975:192). The Woolfs had planned a holiday that Virginia hoped would be "soothing after these incessant politics" (Woolf 1979:383). Instead, what they experienced in Germany was the reality of politics that had been part of their lives for so long.

The Nazi Party criminal activity was widely reported in the British press and Virginia Woolf was not unfamiliar with it. Nor was she indifferent to it as her diary entries and her letters disclose. Referring to the Black Weekend on 30 June 1934[6], Virginia notes that "this is inconceivable. A queer state of society" and that she "read

[5] Bilbao fell on 19 June 1937 (Tuñon de Lara 1983:644).

[6] During this weekend an estimated 1200 people were murdered by the Nazis to crush dissent against the party. Hitler seized the opportunity to have the leader of the Brown Shirts, Röhm, and the previous Chancellor killed in a clear display of repression of any possible opposition, to control the party and the country (Woolf 1982a:223).

articles with rage" (Woolf 1982a:224). Rage and outrage are clear in the words to describe a vivid scene of this "monstrous affair in Germany (…) these brutal bullies go about in hoods & masks, like little boys dressed up, acting this idiotic, meaningless, brutal, bloody, pandemonium." The same anger is noticeable in *Three Guineas*. How could it not? Virginia Woolf abhorred violence and the 1930's displayed plenty of it.

The situation in Britain was equally alarming. The British Union of Fascists was gathering momentum and *The Blackshirt*, its weekly publication, was widely available. Virginia Woolf notes seeing a copy of it casually lying in a car in November 1936 (Woolf 1985:36). In 1934 Oswald Mosley, the British Fascist leader, is mentioned in Virginia Woolf's letters in the first months of 1934 and it is clear that she despised him: "Leonard is caballing with the Labour Party as usual. They think Mosley is getting supporters. If so, I shall emigrate" and again "[w]e are to have Mosley within five years" (Woolf 1979: 273). At this moment the Austrian Nazis were reported to have massacred socialists and "everybody says here that this is the beginning of the end" (Woolf 1979: 277). In September 1935 Virginia Woolf reports in her diary "Mosley again active" and Mussolini is pursuing his ambition to attack Abyssinia which "everybody is talking about" (Woolf 1982a:337).

As a reaction to this intense Fascist activity, numerous movements to counteract it were only to be expected. In a letter to her nephew Julian Bell, in March 1936, Virginia Woolf remarks: "[e]very day almost I get rung up to be asked to sign this, subscribe to that (…) Society bubbles from Society; and what good they do I don't know; but I sign and I protest" (Woolf 1994:21). It is evident in her personal writings she joined the Committee of the anti-Fascist exhibition run by Elizabeth Bibesco, participating by collecting donations for it (Woolf 1979:368), and Vigilance, a group of intellectuals which included names like E.M. Forster and André Gide, in the French equivalent association. These commitments proved to be disappointing in one way or another and she resigned from both. The first committee was too closely linked to the Communist party and she notes she doubted they would be successful in a letter to R.C. Trevelyan in February 1935 (Woolf 1979:374), whereas Vigilance must have been too intense for a laywoman as she claims to have been "hauled out to Committees and meetings and abused and rooked and at last resigned (…) I withdraw, Leonard doesn't." What is interesting is that she adds the following comment: "No-one can't, alas, entirely withdraw" (Woolf 1994:60, 61). The situation was too extreme for Virginia to ignore it and clearly she did not. In March 1935 Virginia Woolf attended a meeting in

Hampstead and met André Malraux who was gathering support for an International Congress of Writers in Defence of Culture (Woolf 1979:290) and in 1937 she joined, with Somerset Maugham and H.G. Wells, a group of writers in a petition to set up commissions to ascertain the causes of international unrest (Woolf 1994:112).

Virginia Woolf's other family members were also involved in political activity. Adrian Stephen, Virginia's half-brother and his wife Karin took part in an anti-Fascist "procession" in November 1936 (Woolf 1994:84). Clive Bell, Virginia's brother-in-law, contributed with "a letter to the N[ew] S[tatesman][7] against war" which Virginia approves of as it reveals "his genuine humanity" (Woolf 1982a:343). In November 1933 her nephew Julian is reported to be "running his museum, for which they need sixty scenes of atrocities", an exhibition entitled "No More War" held in Cambridge (Woolf 1979:245). In September 1934 Virginia Woolf notes his participation in an enormous and violent anti-Fascist demonstration in Hyde Park (Woolf 1979:329).

It was Julian who would have a lasting effect on Virginia Woolf's convictions and beliefs as he decided to renounce pacifism and fight against Fascism in the frontline in the Spanish Civil War. To spare his family he agreed to serve as an ambulance driver through a British Medical Aid unit and not a soldier. In a letter to his brother Quentin, Julian expresses his view that "the only real choices now are to submit or fight" (Lee 1997:667) and in a letter to E. M. Forster published posthumously entitled *War and Peace* he declares "we have to choose war, not peace" (Woolf 1994:166). These militaristic views that Virginia rejected and abhorred were now being defended by a young man she loved prepared to risk his life in the battlefield. Virginia was well aware of the dangers involved in such deployment. She was an avid reader of newspapers and did not ignore or avoid finding out about the latest developments in the escalation of violence in Spain since she was collecting material for her anti-Fascist pamphlet around this time, i.e., *Three Guineas*. She confesses in a letter to Julian Bell in November 1936 that "[p]olitics are still raging faster and fiercer. I've even had to write an article for the Daily Worker on the Artist and politics. Aldous [Huxley] is on the rampage with his peace propaganda (…) Spain, which is now the most flaming of all the problems" (Woolf 1994:83). In the very same letter Virginia Woolf reports having received "a packet of photographs from Spain all of dead children, killed by bombs" (Woolf 1994:85). These photographs will haunt the text of *Three Guineas*, images of the

[7] The New Statesman is an influential political magazine still published in Britain. Kingsley Martin, a friend of Leonard Woolf's, was its editor in the 1930's (Woolf 1975:207).

horrors of war lying on a table as she is writing her angry essay. By the time Julian went to Spain on 7 June 1937, Virginia Woolf was familiar not only with the distant and anonymous reports of massacres of the bloody Civil War taking place in the Iberian Peninsula, but also with casualties closer to home. Wogan Philips, an acquaintance of the Woolfs', joined the International Brigade and was wounded while driving an ambulance (Woolf 1994:138) and the son of the Confords', Virginia Woolf's old friends, had been killed in December 1936 on the Cordoba front (Woolf 1985:54).

Kenneth Morgan remarks "many scores of British working-class volunteers fought in the International Brigade" (2001:618). It seems that not just the working-class joined the anti-Fascist cause, but also privileged and idealistic young men who saw an opportunity to fight for what they believed in. Julian Bell managed to fight for his ideals for just over a month. He was hit by a shell on 18 July 1937 and died a few hours later at El Escorial hospital at the age of twenty-nine. The "very terrible" news of his death devastated Virginia who was "furious at the waste of his life" (Woolf 1994:146, 166). Leonard's account of the impact Julian's death had on their life is revealing: "[h]is death and the manner of it, a sign and symptom of the 1930's, made (a) terrible hole in our lives" (Woolf 1975:253). When in February 1939 Britain recognised Franco's government after winning the Spanish Civil War, Virginia Woolf was exasperated: "and Julian killed for this" (Woolf 1985:206).

Woolf's instinctive pacifist thoughts could not comprehend the motivation to bear arms, kill or be killed that seemed to gain support around her. Her nephew and his friends maintained political discussions with her and defended pacifism was irresponsible in the face of the mounting menace from Fascist forces (Woolf 1985:79). This belief was gathering sympathy. Even Virginia Woolf herself argued that Bertrand Russell's extreme pacifist position in his book published in 1936 *Which Way to Peace?* "was insane! Complete insanity! To tell us we are to submit to Hitler" (Woolf 1985:33). Nevertheless, she is adamant in declaring she is a pacifist and cannot accept that such a degree of human suffering is the only way to solve conflict. Trying to make sense of her nephew's decision that ended his young and promising life, Virginia Woolf reflects on his motivations in her memoir of him *Virginia Woolf and Julian Bell*. Julian believed in a just war, a cause and, although his aunt "understand(s) that (the Spanish Civil War) is (…) the cause of liberty (…) (her) natural reaction is to fight intellectually" (Bell 1996b:258). Virginia Woolf does eventually recognise his merit but she could not bring herself to accept the validity of violence and Julian's sacrifice. "It had become

necessary for (Julian) to go; and there is a kind of grandeur in that which somehow now and then consoles one. Only – to see what (Vanessa) has to suffer makes one doubt if anything in the world is worth it" (Woolf 1994:150). No cause justifies such grief, "a perpetual wound (…) one cant (sic) stop" (Woolf 1994:165). Having evaluated Julian's opinion, Virginia notes in a letter to Vanessa in September 1937 "[a]t last I think I understand his point of view", although not without adding "I don't agree" (Woolf 1994:167).

All these political events which engulfed Europe in the 1930's and brought heavy consequences on Virginia Woolf's personal life reinforced her need to write *Three Guineas*. As the years went by it seemed inevitable that such a text would have to be written as "a way of bringing order & speed again into my world" (Woolf 1982b:103). Thinking was her fighting and writing her profession, her medium to share her reflections on a world that made little sense, to ease the "terror (…) of things generally wrong in the universe" (Woolf 1982b:102), an ambitious task that was to be revised numerous times, such was the scale of the project. As early as 1931 Virginia Woolf describes how she had a Eureka moment in the bath and "conceived an entire new book – a sequel to a Room of Ones (sic) Own (…) which sprang out of my paper to be read at Pippa's Society" (Woolf 1982b:6).[8] Over the years the idea developed, the titles changed[9] and Virginia Woolf kept "dropping something new into the cauldron" (Woolf 1982b:96), an oblique and visual reference to herself in the role of a witch[10], a powerful woman stirring controversy. By February 1932 she claims to "have collected enough gunpowder to blow up St Pauls" (Woolf 1982b:77). Such comments reveal the wish to write a book that would have an impact on society written by a woman who pledges to "go everywhere & expose every cranny" (Woolf 1982b:348), a woman who is not limited and has a voice. Ultimately Virginia Woolf wanted to write a book as an argument with her nephew Julian (Woolf 1994:159) and lay out the reasons why violence cannot be an option to a civilised human being. As if she didn't want anyone else to dread the moonlight again.

[8] On 21 January 1931 Virginia Woolf addressed the National Society for Women's Service and presented it with her essay "Professions for Women" (Woolf 1979:6).

[9] *Opening the Door, A Tap on the Door, On Being Despised, The Next War* and *A Letter to an Englishman* are some examples of the titles Virginia Woolf thought for *Three Guineas* (Woolf 1979:6).

[10] "Most modern writers use the Old English word *Wicca,* meaning 'wisewoman' (…) Matilda Gage was one of the first theorists to describe witches as bearers of an alternative feminine tradition which could give women powers feared by the churches" (Humm1995:299).

> The moment force is used, it becomes
> meaningless & unreal to me.
> Virginia Woolf, *Virginia Woolf and Julian Bell*, 1937

1.2 Virginia Woolf's Pacifism

Alex Zwerdling refers to Virginia Woolf as "an instinctive pacifist" (1986:71). On the one hand, Woolf revealed a natural tendency to reject violence, as the quote I have used above shows, an inability to understand the use of force as if it were a different language she did not comprehend, let alone master. On the other hand, documents prove that her pacifism was reinforced by her family and social circles, and also by the effects that living through World War I had in her life. Surrounded by anti-war opinions and movements, chaos, death and loss, Woolf found a fruitful ground for the consolidation of her fundamental view that an armed conflict was a waste of human life.

Leslie Stephen, Virginia Woolf's father, when confronted with his male offspring's future life, stated adamantly that he would allow them to choose any professional area except for one connected to the armed forces or the navy (Zwerdling 1986:272). This attitude was uncommon at a time when a military career would bring honour and social approval to any man's life. Instead, Stephen recognised the need to oppose the standard belief by refusing to have his family involved in national defence institutions, thus instilling a sense of objection towards such organisations in his children.[11] This disregard for the military is clear in the participation of Virginia and Adrian, her half-brother, in February 1910 in what became known as the Dreadnought Hoax, a prank that involved dressing up as high officials from Abyssinia and pretending reverence to the British Navy. "(Virginia) wore a turban (…) Her face was black. She sported a handsome moustache and beard" (Bell 1996a:157-160). The group were disguised as foreign officials and staged an inspection of the Guard of Honour and a full tour of H.M.S. Dreadnought, breaching all possible security rules and showing utter contempt for British institutions. This incident shocked some and amused others when it

[11] Leslie Stephen was an "anti-conservatism man" who voiced revolutionary ideas in his early years. He was renowned for his "attacks on religion as the breeding-ground of intolerance and hypocrisy, his support for parliamentary and university reform, Irish independence and Church disestablishment" (Lee 1997:71).

became public in the national newspapers but must have made an impression on a young woman who dared mock and defy such powerful authorities.

Virginia Woolf's "instinctive pacifism" was certainly intensified by the traumatic events World War I brought to her life. She was 32 years old when the war broke out in August 1914. By this time both Virginia and Leonard were already involved in political activities linked to the Women's Cooperative Guild and in the summer of 1913 they had attended their first Fabian Society Conference (Lee 1997:328).

Leonard Woolf's engagement in political activities was rather more consistent and persistent than Virginia's flitting participation in a number of movements. She notes in her diary in August 1917 that her husband went to London to be part of a Labour Party Conference and discuss the possibility of a meeting in Stockholm where the socialist objectives for peace would be laid out; in April 1918 Leonard entertained members of The Committee of American League to Enforce Peace who greatly respected his ideas (Woolf 1976:41, 231).

Virginia was less committed than Leonard to organisations, although she did important work in some of them. She volunteered to work for Women's Suffrage in 1910 (Bell 1996a:198). She also presided over meetings of the Richmond branch of the Women's Co-operative Guild for four years until 1923 where meaningful matters were debated including peace (Lee 1997:360). Furthermore, her diary reports that on 13 November 1917 she addressed the Hammersmith Union of Democratic Control, an association created in September 1914 to unite and inform the population about anti-war opinions and advocate the need for a negotiation for peace (Woolf 1977:76). These examples prove that Virginia Woolf was not just a mere observer of the world around her. It is true she regarded all movements with suspicion[12], but it is also true that she admired and shared ideas with them. Referring to a Fabian Conference Virginia writes in her diary on 23 January 1915: "[t]he Fabians were well worth hearing (…) Mrs Webb seated like an industrious spider at the table (…) They all looked unhealthy & singular and impotent (…) the idea that these frail webspinners can affect the destiny of nations seems to me fantastic." But she can't resist the impulse: "I have now declared myself a Fabian" (Woolf 1977:26). Even though they appear to be ineffective and incapable of changing the world, she decides in the end that their ideas are valid enough

[12] Virginia Woolf regarded all movements as flawed. In her diary on 23 July 1918 referring to the numerous meetings Leonard attended at the time she states that "all these movements are as difficult & as much hindered by jealousies and spites as well can be." (Woolf 1977:171)

to proclaim herself a Fabian. Perhaps there is a certain element of irony and a whimsical personality behind the words in the last quote but Virginia Woolf did share the need for peace with the Fabians. The country was at war and there is no denying that it was a long traumatic event that affected everybody's lives.

World War I inspired, at least in the beginning, a number of sentiments that Virginia Woolf found unacceptable. Thomas Kennedy remarks that "the Great War was (…) the most popular in the nation's history. Enthusiasm for the war generated a great wave of patriotic wrath"(1973:105). In a letter to her friend Duncan Grant in 1915, concerned about whether her friend would be able to "escape conscription", Woolf states "the revelation of what our compatriots feel about life is distressing. One might have thought in peace time they were harmless if stupid: but now that they have been roused they seem full of the most violent and filthy passions." (Woolf 1976:71) The common idea that one had to fight for one's country, to die for it was repugnant to Virginia and she wondered if the people she loved could avert the dangers that were very real and close to home.

As a reaction to the widespread euphoric patriotism, voices started protesting against it defining peace as essential and total disarmament as the only possible option for a civilised world. Virginia Woolf was familiar with some of these influential voices. Clive Bell wrote anti-war pamphlets ("Peace at Once" and "Art and War"), Adrian Stephen[13] was an active member of the No-Conscription Fellowship, as was Bertrand Russell[14] (Woolf 1977:18, 122). The latter wrote for the Fellowship's weekly paper *The Tribunal* and his article in February 1918 was deemed seditious by the government[15] (Woolf 1977:122); he also held conferences in Caxton Hall in 1916 defending pacifism (Lee 1997:346) at least one of which Virginia Woolf attended (Woolf 1976:78).

However, people needed to do more than just have an opinion to face the severity of measures the British Government was to impose on its citizens. With the introduction of the Military Service Act in January 1916 single males aged between 18 and 41 were conscripted. In May of the same year conscription was extended to all males between the ages of 18 and 41 regardless of their marital status (Lee 1997:112). This would not

[13] By July 1918 Virginia Woolf refers to Adrian as a "violent politician (who) delivered an address on Peace on my Guild with the greatest success" (Woolf 1976:261).
[14] Virginia Woolf met Bertrand Russell through Ottoline Morrel before the war (Lee 1997:275). She refers to him in her diaries and letters as Bertie. The Hogarth Press would publish his *Amberley Papers* in March 1937 (Woolf 1994:65).
[15] Virginia Woolf writes in her diary on 13 April 1918: "Bertie broken down, & safe to be imprisoned either for his article or for his conscience" (Woolf 1977:137).

be the last revision of the conscription law which was updated according to the needs of the devouring war machine. Virginia Woolf registers in her diary on 13 April 1918 the introduction of the Manpower Act which added the need for conscription of all men up to the age of 50 and Irish males for the first time: "[e]lderly men are visibly perturbed. And Ireland has Conscription" (Woolf 1977:138).

The national state of affairs affected the Woolfs as well. "We had a horrid shock … L[eonard] has been called up" (Woolf 1977:56). Leonard was exempted on medical grounds due to an "inherited Nervous Tremor". The fact Virginia's health was unstable and that Leonard was his wife's primary carer also contributed to his exemption. Nevertheless, the government called him up again to reassess his already proven incapacity to join the armed forces. Doctors renewed their recommendation that Leonard Woolf was not fit for conscription. On 6 November 1917 Virginia remarks in her diary "visited for the last time let us hope in our lives, the Recruiting Office (…) L[eonard] was summoned, & given his paper which states that he is "permanently and totally disabled"" (Woolf 1977:72). Lytton Strachey, a close friend of Virginia's and one of the members of the Old Bloomsbury group, had his exemption granted for medical reasons in March 1916 but taken away in April 1917 as the government were reviewing similar cases. His appeal was successful and Lytton Strachey was not conscripted (Woolf 1976:86,150). It was, however, a long and painful process.

The impending threat of conscription forced a great number of men, among them friends of the Woolfs', to become Conscientious Objectors but not without consequences. This group were in the hands of the British government and Tribunals with ample powers to decide on their fate. Virginia notes in a letter to her sister Vanessa in May 1916 that Leonard did not evoke conscience reasons for his exemption "which annoys them. It is rather difficult to know what to do as the tribunals are so erratic" (Woolf 1976:95). Conscientious Objectors faced hostile institutions that questioned their ideas and were subjected to long fraught periods of anxiety in between appeals until their situation was resolved.

In May 1916 the Home Office Scheme was introduced allowing Conscientious Objectors to perform non-militarised work as an alternative to a jail sentence.[16] Virginia Woolf refers to this possibility in a letter to Duncan Grant "[d]id you see that 4 conscientious objectors were exempted on condition they worked on agriculture?"

[16] By this time there were approximately 400 Conscientious Objectors in British prisons (Kennedy 1973:112, 113).

(Woolf 1976:85). This was to be the fate of Duncan Grant, David Garnett[17], a friend of the Stephen sisters, Clive Bell and Adrian Stephen who were sentenced to farm work since they refused to any form of militarised participation in the war (Lee 1997: 346). Virginia reports in her diary that in October 1917 Adrian obtained a doctor's note exempting him from his land duties that proved to be too arduous to his frail physique (Woolf 1977:68).

Brock Millman states that "in the winter of 1916 between forty and sixty dissenters were being court-martialled daily for refusing to serve and if convicted were being sentenced to two years' imprisonment with hard labour" (2005:429). These radical Conscientious Objectors, the Absolutists, lost the right to vote for a period of five years with the Introduction of the Franchise Act of 1917. In total this author estimates that approximately five thousand Conscientious Objectors were imprisoned and another thirty thousand served the country in a non-militarised way. Bertrand Russell was arrested twice, forced to resign his job at Cambridge University and had his passport confiscated due to his defence of pacifism (Millman 2005:432,428).

The war affected the entire population of the United Kingdom. Men and women from all social backgrounds suffered, in one way or another, the consequences of the nation's participation in an international armed conflict. Women, however, saw their status change during this period. Kenneth Morgan remarks "women in Britain were supreme beneficiaries of the war years" (2001:589). In fact, if one puts to one side the ethical problems that benefitting from war involve, women were given the opportunity to occupy places in the public sphere that had been previously denied to them. A great number of women participated in the war effort working as nurses, in munitions factories producing the means of warfare such as shells, guns and aeroplanes or performing clerical jobs outside the home where they were expected to complete housework in exchange for no wages. Now, with their husbands and sons in the fighting front, women took their places joining the national movement to fight a war and win it (Ouditt 1994:71).

On 17 July 1915 the suffragette leader Emmeline Pankhurst and her eldest daughter Christabel took part in a march proclaiming the women's right to serve the country (Ouditt 1994:72), and cooperated with the government in campaigns to enlist soldiers, celebrating patriotism and waging war (Morgan 2001:589,560). "The leaders

[17] Vanessa Bell set up home in the countryside in East Sussex, where Duncan Grant and David Garnett could fulfil non-combatant service (Livesey 2007:132).

of the WSPU (Women's Social and Political Union) abandoned all suffrage work (…) and concentrated their services on the pursuit of martial victory" (Ouditt 1994:135).

The White Feathers movement was created for women to have a role in the recruiting of young men to the front. These campaigners would place white feathers in the lapels or hats of men who were seen in public not wearing a military uniform. Their feathers were meant as symbols of cowardice, a form of moral coercion with the intention of exposing and shaming all men who were not involved in the war (Gullace 1997: 179, 192).[18] Spiteful women spread the militaristic discourse defined by men and imposed it on men who disagreed with it, who had the right not to believe in it.

However, women did more than just join the propaganda incited by the government, they were involved in acts of war, actively fighting. Virginia Woolf reports in her diary on 7 June 1918 that one of the raids in East Sussex was "carried out by women. Women's bodies were found in the wrecked aeroplanes. They are smaller & lighter, & thus leave more room for bombs" and comments that "perhaps its (sic) sentimental but the thought seems to me to add a particular touch of horror" (Woolf 1977:153).

Women did not just subscribe to the national discourse and there are numerous examples of women who defended peace and organised themselves to defend it. Sylvia Pankhurst opposed her mother's and sister's ideas and led the dissident East London Federation of Suffragettes created in 1913 which linked militarism to oppression thus, refusing to support the war; the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (1915) worked in conjunction with other groups to pursue their belief that war should be ended by negotiation and compromise; the leading pacifist society from 1914 to 1924, the Union of Democratic Control, linked to the Labour Party and established by Charles Trevelyan and Arthur Posonby[19] had Helena Swanwick as one of the most active and influential members; Catherine Marshall was deeply involved in the No-Conscription Fellowship and is claimed to have been responsible for persuading Bertrand Russell to join the association (Ouditt 1994:136, 140, 141).

Surrounded by anti-militaristic opinions, which intensified during the war years, and faced with real threats that didn't spare those close to her or herself, Virginia Woolf

[18] Members of the WSPU founded by Emmeline Pankhurst were the first women to hand out white feathers (Ouditt 1994:135).

[19] Charles Trevelyan's brother, Robert was a personal friend of the Woolf's and a regular visitor (Woolf 1977:93); Virginia Woolf knew Arthur Ponsonby through Leonard's involvement in the Labour Party and records having been to one of his talks in November 1918 (Woolf 1977:434, 222).

lived through these troubled times in a country willing to sacrifice its citizens to win a war, resorting to propaganda which humiliated and punished those who were against the supposed national interest. Her diary reveals how the war interfered with her daily mundane life. The food shortages are a constant reference: "I counted my lumps of sugar, 31."; "[e]verything is skimped now. You can't buy chocolates, or toffee; flowers cost so much that I have to pick leaves instead. We have cards for most foods"; "[t]he bakers windows now provide almost nothing but little plates of dull biscuits; sections of plain cake; & little buns without any plums. If you see a plum, it is invariably a decoy plum; there are no others" (Woolf 1977:81, 100, 112). Food is counted, rationed, the dishes in the bakery are small as are the buns, dull, plain, bland buns and the fruit, should you see any, is make believe.

These facts limited her life, but there were far greater tragic events, inevitably brought on by the war, which affected the Woolfs. On 3 December 1917 Virginia reports in her diary the death of Cecil Woolf and the injuries of Philip Woolf, Leonard's brothers, hit by the same bombshell in the front in the Battle of Cambrai in France (Lee 1997: 351); on 12 October 1918, when the war was almost over, Virginia refers to the death of Margaret Llewelyn Davies'[20] nephew (Woolf 1977:83, 200); in a letter to Lady Robert Cecil on 16 June 1916, she writes: "[t]he war is a nightmare isn't it? Two cousins of mine were killed last week, and I suppose in other families is much worse" (Woolf 1976:100).

The constant air raids endured by the Woolfs are mentioned repeatedly in Virginia Woolf's writings. She refers to herself as feeling anxious and describes how she hid in the basement in the middle of the night with Leonard and the servants and how "one must talk bold & jocular small talk for 4 hours (…) to ward off hysteria" (Woolf 1977:55, 85, 116).

Seeing London, the city she loved, disfigured by the war saddened her and what it did to people, that "horrible sense of community which the war produces, as if we all sat in a third class railway carriage together" (Woolf 1977:121, 153), caused her anguish as the population were united in a degrading way and equal in the tragedy, misfortune and vulnerability they shared. Even the Armistice Day celebrations seemed "sordid and depressing (…) nobody had any notion where to go or what to do" (Woolf 1976:292). The war had finished but the scars it left behind were not erased by drunken festivities

[20] Margaret Llewelyn Davies was a leader of the Women's Co-Operative Guild and a friend of the Woolfs'.

in the streets. Five million men served the country between 1914 and 1918 (Zwerdling 1986:282) in a conflict which inaugurated horrors such as gas and tanks as weapons and the use of aerial and submarine warfare on a large scale; approximately one million British people lost their lives and more than two million were wounded (Trevelyan 1987:549, 550). In June 1916 sixty thousand allied troops perished in the Somme in one day alone (Morgan 2001:585). These numbers seem unreal, to use a word Virginia Woolf used herself, but show the true scale of this war.

The effects of this conflict would last in Virginia Woolf's memory and beliefs. In 1937 she would say of her generation: "we were all C[onscientious] O[bjector]s in the Great War" (Bell 1996b:258). Even though as a woman Virginia Woolf was not expected to fight in the war, she classifies herself as someone who would have refused to hold guns and use them. She would maintain the conviction that violence is absurd until the end of her life and her work, fiction, essays and personal writings reflect the horrors of the war she survived, and question its legitimacy.

One has come to notice the war everywhere.
Virginia Woolf, *Diary I*, 1918

1.3 War in Virginia Woolf's Work

Virginia Woolf's work is full of images of war. As the epigraph above reveals she noticed war everywhere in her life and this can be seen in her production. Armed conflict is a recurrent theme and quite often assumes a predominant role in her personal writings, essays and fiction.

In the previous sections of this work I have shown how we can follow history quite accurately through the letters and diaries of a writer who lived through World War I and experienced the threatening 1930's which would eventually lead up to World War II. The Spanish Civil War, although taking place in a foreign territory, also played an important part in her life as her nephew volunteered to participate in the battlefield and was killed in action. Virginia Woolf did not live to see the end of World War II, but she saw the destruction and death that it caused up to March 1941[21]: "the passion of my life, that is the City of London – to see London all blasted, that too raked my heart"; "everyone (…) in that house (…) had sheltered in the basement. All killed I suppose." London was being bombed and to add to the intensity of the experience, the Woolfs were personally affected and were forced to permanently move to Rodmell, their weekend refuge in the countryside: "[w]e have been completely bombed out of London"[22] (Woolf 1994:431, 429, 483).

The essays Virginia Woolf produced also show war as an important issue; a reflection of the times she lived in. In *The Times Literary Supplement* (*TLS*) Woof reviewed the war poetry of Siegfried Sassoon in "Mr Sassoon's Poems" (1917), which she defends as having such a powerful effect on the readers that "we say to ourselves, 'Yes, this is going on; and we are sitting here watching it'"; and "Two Soldier Poets" (1918) where the poet shows "the terrible pictures which lie behind the colourless phrases of the newspapers" (Woolf 1995a:120, 269, 270). "War in the Village", a review of Maurice Hewlett's poem *The Village Wife's Lament* published in the *TLS*

[21] Virginia Woolf committed suicide on 28 March 1941(Woolf 1994:481).
[22] Both houses rented by Virginia and Leonard Woolf were bombed in World War II. 37, Mecklenburgh Square was the first to be hit by bombs in September 1940 and 52, Tavistock Square followed a month later. The Hogarth Press had to be moved from Mecklenburgh Square to avoid complete destruction. (Woolf 1994: 428, 432)

reflects on a woman, a war widow, a rural woman who is affected by war, "a force so remote (…) she can hardly figure to herself what the nature of it is" (Woolf 1995a:292, 293). Woolf shares with the author a sense of incomprehension of violence and the suffering it inflicts on people who, although not immune to its consequences, take no part in the decision to start a conflict. She will reveal in her later essays her interest in understanding the origins of war, the forces behind it. Such themes are the essence of her 1938 work *Three Guineas* and *Thoughts of Peace in an Air Raid* published in 1940 in the *New Republic* based in New York.

Not surprisingly, Virginia Woolf's fiction is also filled with references to war. *Jacob's Room* was published by the Hogarth Press on 22 October 1922, with a dust jacket designed by Vanessa Bell, inaugurating Virginia Woolf's freedom from other publishers (Hussey 1996: 126). Leonard's reaction to this novel is reported in Virginia Woolf's diary: "[h]e thinks it my best work (…) He calls it a work of genius (…) he says that people are ghosts; he says it is very strange" (Woolf 1978:186).

Indeed, the experimental narrative of *Jacob's Room* takes us through fragmented episodes of Jacob's life, which we follow trying to grasp its reality and make sense of the rather sketchy information provided only to find out in the very last words of the novel that Jacob has been dead all along. It is the life of a ghost we are reading about and the book is riddled with allusions to Jacob's elusive nature. Throughout the novel he is rendered "profoundly unconscious", "indifferent, unconscious", "extraordinarily vacant" and intangible "there is that young man (…) I don't see him (…) No, you can't see him" (Woolf 2012a:426, 438, 440, 531). He cannot be grasped as he has ceased to exist, there are only memories left. If one tried collating memories of a dead person, the result would be similar to Woolf's narrative, a dispersed series of events which, pieced together, shape a vague, nebulous image of the life of a human being, so complex in itself. The result could only ever be the shadow of the person sought. Full knowledge and understanding is impossible, therefore scraping memories is all that can be done to attain a certain level of meaning and to connect us to others, to maintain a link with the past.

From the first pages of *Jacob's Room* we learn the family portrayed holds a surname which in 1922, the post-war period that enclosed recent and traumatic memories, was synonymous with fighting, war and death (Zwerdling 1986:64). Flanders is not just a surname; it is like a premonition engraved in people's lives, as are the tears Mrs Flanders sheds at the beginning of the book. We witness Jacob's mother weeping

making “the entire bay quiver” and “the lighthouse wobble” as if the world around her shuddered as a reaction to her crying, responded to her grief. The tears produced a “horrid blot” as Betty Flanders tried to write a letter (Woolf 2012a:421). Her life will be tainted, stained as the letters she writes: “[m]y son, my son – such would be her cry” (Woolf 2012a:485).

What we are faced with, in the following pages, is the life of Jacob displayed in an intricate collage of events. We are given the clues that will establish the links, the possible key to the riddle that was Jacob’s life and death, as suggested by the narrator: “it’s no use trying to sum people up. One must follow hints” (Woolf 2012a:439). Following the narrator’s recommendation, and so looking for clues in the text itself, we learn that Jacob was educated in Cambridge and that after finishing his studies, moved to London, enjoyed visiting the British Museum and was fascinated by St Paul’s Cathedral (Woolf 2012a: 438, 465, 494), both symbols of male domination. He read *The Daily Telegraph* (Woolf 2012a:438), a conservative newspaper, hence a channel for the voice of patriarchy. Jacob is referred to several times as “unworldly”, in other words gullible. He is, after all, a product of institutionalised power, which he believes in and his mission is to uphold and perpetuate it.

He would soon be a victim of this power and to accompany the shift in his role, his status from privileged male bastion of society to a casualty, we observe a change in his attitude as he starts questioning the system that enveloped him and was prepared to sacrifice his life. On page 473 he “cursed the British Army” and on page 477 it is stated that “he had a violent reversion towards male society, cloistered rooms, and the works of the classics; and was ready to turn with wrath upon whoever it was who had fashioned life thus.” At this point in the novel we realise that Jacob is revaluating the legitimacy of the society he was immersed in and that “the British Empire was beginning to puzzle him” (Woolf 2012a:519). We find out just before the end of the book that all of Mrs Flanders’ sons, Archer, Jacob and John were “fighting for their country” (Woolf 2012a:548).

The circumstances of Jacob’s death are merely suggested: “[d]id he think he would come back?” asks his good friend, appropriately named Bonamy, on the last page (Woolf 2012a:548). Mrs Flanders is holding an empty pair of Jacob’s shoes not knowing what to do with them, reinforcing the idea of the empty room, both symbols of a void that will remain. Jacob will not inhabit his room or wear his shoes again. They are the empty shoes of a man who will not come back from a conflict that obliterated a

generation. Jacob fell victim of an "anti-humane masculine ideology" (Hussey 1996:128), a system that educates its subjects, provides them with privilege and grants them the supposed ultimate honour of dying for it.

Jacob is one of the war victims of this novel as he lost his life fighting for a regime that he had started questioning, but there are others. His brothers are also in the frontline. His mother, referred to constantly as "poor Betty Flanders" is often depicted crying, making her one of the women who suffered loss in the war: "the eyes of all the nurses, mothers and wandering women are a little glazed" (Woolf 2012a:504). Captain Barfoot, Mrs Flanders' lover/companion, his name suggesting the counterpart of the empty shoes she holds at the end of the novel, "was lame and wanted two fingers on the left hand, having served his country" (Woolf 2012a:434). Jacob's empty shoes could hardly be filled by a man, who, judging by his name and his injured leg, is fit for no footwear. The Empire had also taken "Morty, (Mrs Flanders') brother, lost all these years (…) last heard of – poor man – in Rangoon" (Woolf 2012a:484, 518).

If we follow the hints, we are left with a tale of death, loss and grief caused by a system which shows no mercy and transforms both men and women into victims, an idea that Virginia Woolf would pursue and explore for the rest of her life as a writer. William R. Handley defends that *Jacob's Room* is not a conventional anti-war work but that Jacob represents the millions of unknowable soldiers killed in World War I (Hussey 1992:130). It is, thus, a novel deeply concerned with war and its effects on people both in the battlefield and on the home front, an elegy for the generation of men that was slaughtered in the war (Hussey 1996:126). Alex Zwerdling remarks, though, that Woolf's elegy "is revisionist: there is nothing grand about Jacob; the sacrifice of his life seems perfectly pointless" (1986:73). The war sacrificed so many individuals, left so many empty rooms and mothers holding empty shoes that we may venture the idea that *Jacob's Room* is an elegy not only to the soldiers who purposeless died, but to everyone who has been touched by war, those maimed and the ones left to mourn, everyone who has had to endure the emptiness and void a war inflicts.

Jacob was created not as a presence but as an absence (Hussey 1996:127), the young man that is no more, killed in a war that only affects the text obliquely. There are no violent battles or excruciating deaths described. We solely hear of them when we are piecing the hints together, as if they were reports of what we know is happening. In *Mrs Dalloway*, a novel published on 14 May 1925 by the Hogarth Press, this absence is reinforced by the idea that "the War was over" (Woolf 2003: 4) but early on we are told

of its effects that are still felt "the War was over, except for someone like Mrs Foxcroft at the Embassy last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed (…) or Lady Bexborough (…) they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed; but it was over" (Woolf 2003: 4). Mrs Dalloway can try and not see the remnants of the war around her but she will be forced to do so.

The action of *Mrs Dalloway* takes place in one single day in June 1923. As Clarissa went out to buy flowers to prepare for a party in her central London home later that evening, the reader is faced with parallel events that interrupt the narrative, thus becoming part of it. Septimus Smith and his wife, Rezia, short for Lucrezia, were wandering the streets on their way to Harley Street to see Dr Bradshaw, when an explosion caused by a car was heard. Clarissa jumped, everyone looked and while the people in the street were discussing who might be the occupant of such elegant and loud vehicle, Septimus' "world wavered and quivered[23] and threatened to burst into flames"; Rezia said to herself in desperation: "[h]elp, help! she wanted to cry." The couple looked out of place. One onlooker thought they "both seemed queer" (Woolf 2003:12). They seemed strange because their life had been deeply touched by war, the very same war Mrs Dalloway is glad is over. The war was not over for Septimus, as his life was ruled by the horrors he had endured at the frontline. As a good citizen, drawn by the initial euphoria of waging war, "Septimus was one of the first to volunteer. He went to France to save (…) England" (Woolf 2003:64). He enlisted as he thought was his duty, "he developed manliness (…) They were proud of him; he had won crosses" (Woolf 2003:64, 65). He served his country diligently, was decorated for behaving like a true, valiant man.

He was safe now the war had ended, on that June morning back in England, a nervous wreck, nonetheless. What happened to him in the battlefield would haunt him for the rest of his days. This would be his last day. He had seen his closest friend Evans be killed just before the Armistice was signed and "congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably"; "[t]he last shells missed him. He watched them explode with indifference" (Woolf 2003:64). This is how he is described as having reacted during the war. Now that it was over, he panicked in the streets of London in the face of a loud, seemingly harmless noise. Septimus is a shell-shock victim of World War I.[24]

[23] Septimus' world shuddered like Mrs Flanders' did.

[24] "Shell-shock (was) a term introduced to the public in 1922 when the Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into "Shell-shock" was presented to the British parliament. The report (was) (…)

He is a war casualty; he had not lost any limbs, but his sanity had slipped away. His symptoms were numerous and varied. He suffered from auditory and visual hallucinations "(sparrows) sang in voices prolonged and piercing in Greek words"[25]; "saw faces laughing at him, calling him horrible disgusting names, from the walls, and hands pointing"; saw "Evans (…) behind the railings" in Regent's Park on a warm June morning in 1923; he "talk(ed) to himself or to that dead man Evans", he felt "sudden thunder-claps of fear", he often cried, had frequent headaches, insomnia, nightmares and was suicidal (Woolf 2003:18, 50, 64, 16, 68, 17).

Rezia is a young Italian woman, displaced in London, not having mastered the English language, feeling lonely and homesick, looking for help by taking her husband to seek a second opinion on Septimus' condition. Doctor Holmes had "said there was nothing the matter with him", dismissed a serious, but relatively newly identified illness[26] as "nerve symptoms and nothing more" and suggested he "take up a hobby" [27] (Woolf 2003:17, 68). Rezia knew that this was not the case but could not understand her husband's behaviour: "[e]veryone has friends who were killed in the war", "it was cowardly for a man to say he would kill himself, but Septimus had fought; he was brave; he was not Septimus now" (Woolf 2003:17, 50). Rezia embodies common prejudice and ignorance of mental illness, as does Dr Holmes. However, this simple woman with no medical qualifications recognised that the husband she lived with was not the same man she had married and pursued her quest to find a solution. Sir William Bradshaw's diagnosis was more helpful: "it was a case of extreme gravity. It was a case

extensively quoted in *The Times* in August and September 1922" (Hussey 1996:174). Virginia Woolf must have been familiar with it as she was an avid reader of newspapers, particularly interested in issues concerning war and mental illness.

[25] During Virginia Woolf's breakdowns, she is reported to have displayed symptoms Septimus presents, such as birds singing in Greek and emotional anaesthesia (Poole 1995:186).

[26] Septimus' illness would probably be diagnosed today as Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It "results from experiencing or witnessing traumatic, life-threatening events including combat-related experiences" (Smith 2009:90).

[27] Elaine Showalter sees a parallel between the diagnoses applied to women and traumatised soldiers showing symptoms of what she defined as "male hysteria" in *The Female Malady.* "The Great War was a crisis of masculinity (…) Placed in intolerable circumstances of stress, and expected to react with unnatural "courage", thousands of soldiers reacted instead with the symptoms of hysteria (…) it is a feminine kind of behaviour (…) the hysterical soldier (…) (showed) the same constellation of traits associated with the hysterical woman." By referring to Virginia Woolf and *Mrs Dalloway* Showalter points out the way in which Woolf connects "the shell-shocked veteran with the repressed woman of the man-governed world through their common enemy, the nerve-specialist." (1987:171, 172, 175, 192)

of complete breakdown" (Woolf 2003:70). Nevertheless, his prescription leaves much to be desired: a rest cure in a home.[28]

The system that was prepared to send these young men to war was not equipped to treat them when they returned, wounded, shell-shocked. In her personal writings, Virginia Woolf reflects on these matters: "[t]he more one sees of the effects on young men who should be happy the more one detests the whole thing" (Woolf 1977:123). The establishment inflicted lifelong mental and physical pain which limited real lives. She saw an even greater irony when she visited her brother-in-law, Philip, who had been wounded in World War I and was recovering in hospital. She records in her diary: "[a] feeling of the uselessness of it all, breaking these people & mending them again, was in the air" (Woolf 1977:92). The pointlessness of war is everywhere.

It is through Lady Bradshaw, the doctor's wife, that Septimus invaded Clarissa's world. The news of his suicide left her indignant. Her party was a success, all was going swimmingly, so "what business had the Bradshaws to talk of death at her party?" (Woolf 2003:133). Clarissa's world, the world she had chosen, embodies the institutionalised power. "The Prime Minister (…) this symbol of what they all stood for, English society" had come and her guests were so distinguished "everybody in the room ha(d) six sons at Eton" (Woolf 2003:125, 138). Richard Dalloway himself, "a Conservative", "was already at the House of Commons" (Woolf 2003:30, 88). Alex Zwerdling sees Clarissa's party as "a wake for the established power"[29] (1986:122). Only a decaying class would allow the interference of Septimus, a common mad veteran, in such a triumphant and luxurious sphere.

There are other symbols and images of the ruling power. All around London we come across scenes that took place on that same day in June. St Paul's Cathedral reappears as an emblem of the system appealing to a "seedy-looking nondescript man" who thought it "offers company (…) invites you to a membership of a society; great men belong to it; martyrs have died for it" (Woolf 2003:21). A man seeking shelter and a sense of belonging wondered whether St Paul's Cathedral could be his refuge. The reader is left with his hesitation on the steps and will never know what his decision was.

[28] The rest cure had also been prescribed to Virginia Woolf: "the private home at Burley Park, Twickenham, for ladies with mental problems (helpfully indexed by Quentin Bell as 'a madhouse'), where Virginia went for 'rest cures' in 1910 and 1920" (Lee 1997:182).

[29] The following facts constitute some of the evidence of a decrepit Conservative party in June 1923: "The elections of 1922 and 1923 marked the (…) rise of Labour"; "in 1922 the Irish Free State was proclaimed" and in India there were the first signs of "agitation for independence" (Zwerdling 1986:121).

Near St Pauls military music was being played "the noise was tremendous (…) as if people were marching; yet they had been dying" (Woolf 2003:100). In Whitehall "boys in uniform, carrying guns, marched with their eyes ahead of them (…) praising duty, gratitude, fidelity, love of England" (Woolf 2003:37). Snippets of a day full of independent events that are brought together by an imaginative writer with a voice and a purpose. London was showing itself as a proud city, encouraging public patriotic moments in a people profoundly traumatised by World War I.

Septimus Smith is one of the war victims of *Mrs Dalloway* but, like in *Jacob's Room*, there are others. Septimus stands with his hallucinations as "the giant mourner with legions of men prostrate behind him" lest we forget: "London has swallowed up many millions of men called Smith." (Woolf 2003:53, 63). Rezia represents the widowed wives, the women left behind, "poor women waiting to see the Queen go past – poor women, nice little children, orphans, widows, the War" (Woolf 2003:15). Woolf would not leave women unnoticed. Just like Mrs Flanders, Mrs Foxcroft and Lady Bexborough in the very first pages of *Mrs Dalloway* are the mothers who nurtured their boys only to have them killed by a war waged by a system that disregards human life.

Miss Killman, her name suggesting her radical nature, is a different sort of female war victim. Although she too had lost a brother in the war and is, thus a woman who lost a male relative, "she would not pretend that the Germans were all villains" (Woolf 2003:90). She made her opinion heard and, as a result, lost her job as a history teacher, her opinions not deemed suitably conventional for a well-respected, conservative school. Another element of interest is introduced with this character and her attitude. Both men and women, as we have seen, are portrayed by Woolf as victims of the establishment and this category would have to include both men and women recognised as the "enemy" of the structures of power and its discourse. Those who defend the "enemy" must be labelled as enemies and adequately removed from mainstream society. "This late age of the world's experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears" (Woolf 2003:7). This "well of tears" does not have a nationality, is not gendered and includes those affected by an armed conflict, regardless of their origins.

These two novels are not the only instances of Woolf's fiction which show a deep preoccupation with war. There are others scattered through her life. In *To The Lighthouse*, written in 1927, Andrew Ramsay is killed in World War I. Minow-Pinkney claims that in the section "Time Passes" "what is literally destroying the house is rain, rats and wind, but what is figuratively destroying it is the First World War" (Hussey

1996:316). In *The Years*, a book from 1931, a conversation in the 1917 Chapter is interrupted by insistent sirens announcing military attacks: "[t]he siren wailed again. 'The Germans' (…) 'Another raid'" (Woolf 2012b:199). Woolf's last novel *Between the Acts* published posthumously in July 1941 by the Hogarth Press includes a similar interference in daily life. When Reverend G.W. Streatfield is addressing the audience after the village play, he is disrupted by a flight of military aircraft, "twelve aeroplanes in perfect formation like a flight of wild duck came overhead" (Woolf 2012b:397).

Leonard Woolf didn't think of his wife as political. He did, however, contest "the myth of Virginia as queen of Bloomsbury and culture, living in an ivory drawing-room or literary aesthetic hothouse" (Woolf 1975:80). A writer who produced constant images of war cannot have lived in a secluded world untouched by the facts that disrupted her life and the lives of those around her. Such a writer would not have produced any of the works mentioned in this chapter. Virginia Woolf might not have been political as her husband was, but she was political in her own way. She was deeply concerned with society, its structure and its legitimacy to wage war. She abhorred violence, noticed it and exposed it everywhere.

2 Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas*: The Present

> I must be bold & adventurous. I want to give the whole of present society – nothing less: facts, as well as the vision. Virginia Woolf, *Diary IV*, 1933

2.1 *Three Guineas*

Three Guineas[30], Virginia Woolf's epistolary essay, constitutes a manifesto of reform which appeals for a change in society's patriarchal paradigm, a system claimed to be conducive to a state of affairs where violence rules. The author intended to denounce the injustices and the grave errors society is based on, by resorting to "facts" found in newspapers, which are "history in the raw", "biography and autobiography" that can be supplemented "by looking at the picture of the lives of others" (Woolf 2008:159), and also propose an alternative way of life, regarded as "the vision."

Through a carefully constructed form, Woolf deals with three letters from three different sources, soliciting her help in three apparently different causes. *Three Guineas* argues that the first letter is remarkable since it comes from a man; an educated man pleading for a woman's support. His requests include the narrator's opinion on appropriate strategies to prevent war[31], signing "a letter to the newspapers" declaring the need to protect culture and intellectual liberty[32], joining a society whose main goal is to protect peace, and contributing financially towards it.

The second missive is from a woman, an honorary treasurer in need of funds to rebuild a women's college, while the third item of correspondence is written by another woman, another honorary treasurer of a society dedicated to helping daughters of educated men obtain employment in the professions, also in need of funding. The narrator articulates all three letters by justifiably digressing into what she identifies as being the root of the problems posed, and, in the process, suggests crucial changes in society, which, it is argued, would lead to a world where war would not be acceptable.

[30] Three guineas was the standard fee of a doctor's appointment, as Hermione Lee notes: "the charge of a medical specialist consultation who didn't know what to do with (Virginia Woolf)" (1997:455). There is, thus, in the title an element of irony directed at the ineffective male-governed world which is under scrutiny in the essay.

[31] Leonard Woolf was writing articles "intended to prevent war" as stated by Virginia Woolf herself in a letter to Ethel Smyth on 18 March 1938 (Woolf 1994:219).

[32] In March 1935 Virginia Woolf participated in a meeting to gather support for an International Congress of Writers in Defence of Culture (Woolf 1982a:290); she also attended a meeting at Adrian Stephen's house of a group named *For Intellectual Liberty* in 1936 (Woolf 1985:12).

This is the reason why the causes are only apparently different. All three of them are good causes that could help change society in a way that preventing war would be a priority. The three guineas are to be divided between these three correspondents as donations for their institutions. They all receive their guinea… eventually.

The guinea motif, money in the hands of a woman, is the token symbol of power as Krista Ratcliffe points out (1993:409). The woman-writer has money to spare for charitable causes, has the option to decide how to spend her money and the right to impose conditions on her correspondents of both sexes. The choice of genre for the text is certainly not innocent, either. Christine Froula remarks "(the) letter (was) - for centuries the only genre open to women writers" (1994:29). However, the letters in *Three Guineas* involve radical attitudes that cross the line of the feminine sphere in an openly provocative fashion. They are not the stereotypical letters expected from a woman. This woman-writer is a powerful entity. She has money, opinions and demands.

The preparation of this project was lengthy and complex. It was originally conceived of as part of *The Years*, a book published in 1937 that was to be composed of chapters of "fiction" commented on by inter-chapters stating the "facts." This idea was dropped having proven to be ineffectual because it was too complex to handle. The inter-chapters assumed an importance that deserved a book of their own.[33]

Brenda Silver has identified "twelve volumes of reading notes … including three fat scrapbooks of cuttings and quotations" during the preparation of *Three Guineas* (Marcus 1983:254) and Virginia Woolf herself confessed as early as 1933 that "this (book)…releases such a torrent of fact I didn't know I had in me. I must have been observing & collecting these 20 years – since *Jacob's Room*" (Woolf 1982a:133).

Woolf was aware of the controversial nature of such a book and predicted "I shan't, when published, have a friend left" (Woolf 1994:218). *Three Guineas* did arouse some angry reviews but many were also inspired, like those who had been waiting for such a daring piece of writing by a woman. Pippa Strachey, the Secretary of the National Society for Women's Service and a personal friend of the Woolfs', was one of the enthusiastic readers as she declares in a letter to the author: "I have read it with rapture - It is what we have panted for for years and years" (Woolf 1985:147). Not only women sanctioned Woolf's book; A.G. Sayers, a male senior partner in a London firm of chartered accountants, wrote to Virginia Woolf expressing his admiration for her

[33] "I'm leaving out the interchapters" (Woolf 1982a:146); *Three Guineas* "only repeats *The Years*, with facts to prove it" (Woolf 1994:232).

work. She replied on 15 June 1938 "I am grateful to you for your generous approval" (Woolf 1994:238).

Virginia Woolf was an independent woman, she had a room of her own, financial stability and no Angel in the House[34] to fight against. She was also an intellectual surrounded by her equals, an observant and bold writer who lived through troubled times and could not leave them unwritten. But she felt that she needed to go further: "one thing I think proved; I shall never write to 'please' (…); now am entirely & forever my own mistress" (Woolf 1985:105). The ultimate defiance as an autonomous woman and writer would be to produce a book like *Three Guineas*, a book which addresses a world that did not grant women a visible place. Victoria Middleton notes that "Woolf substitutes a male auditor for the female audience of *A Room of One's Own*" (1982:413). The anonymous "Sir" in *Three Guineas*, by having no name, no definite identity himself, embodies any man, any educated man. He is referenced throughout the whole text as if he were to receive all three letters as a reply to his missive. We can almost see him waiting patiently for his turn to have what he has asked for and in the meantime having to read/listen to all the recommendations, suggestions, considerations and demands the author deems necessary to contribute to causes that would prevent war. Although he is the first to be addressed, his guinea comes last. Woolf transgresses and invades a sphere that is not hers, discussing political, social and cultural issues not in an oblique way as would be expected or desirable in a patriarchy, but in an open, direct, critical and angry manner.

As a woman, Virginia Woolf was discriminated against in many ways. She was home-schooled, read the classics in her father's library and did not have access to the formal education her male siblings had (Lee 1997: 143). The vote for women over the age of 30 only was granted under the Representation of the People Act of March 1918. She reports having voted for the first time in December 1918 at the age of 36 (Woolf 1977:207, 229). In April 1935 Virginia Woolf paraphrases a conversation with E.M. Forster at the London Library whose Committee was discussing the possibility of

[34] In *A Room of One's Own* (written by Virginia Woolf and published in 1929) it is argued that women need their own space and money to be independent. In *Professions for Women* (a speech given by Woolf to the London Branch of the National Society for Women's Service in 1931) the Angel in the House is a ghost women have to fight with determination, so they are free to look after themselves and not be limited to the care of their households and families. The expression "Angel in the House" was first used in a poem by Coventry Patmore (1858); it is a Victorian construction which reflects the desire to place women in the private sphere of society. In Portuguese ("Fada do lar") the angel becomes a "fairy", showing the same preoccupation revealed at the insidious level of language to describe the ideal role of women in a patriarchy (Macedo, Amaral 2005:63).

"allowing ladies (…) but they were quite determined. No, no, no. Ladies are quite impossible" (Woolf 1982a:297).

Woolf also endured the violent events that history brought into her life. It was time to have her say: "I never wrote a book with greater fervour; under such a lash of compulsion" (Woolf 1985:137). It is apparent from her personal writings *Three Guineas* was a necessary book for Woolf. The result shocked some, like George Malcolm Young, who wrote in the *Sunday Times* on 19 June 1938: "[t]here are things that should be ignored and (Woolf) has not ignored them. There are faces that should remain behind a veil … and she has dragged the veil away. A terrible sight. Indecent. Almost obscene" (Ratcliffe 1993:408). The transgression is intended and lifting the veil can cause a certain unsettling feeling, but blinding revelations are still necessary as veils persist.

Three Guineas had a more practical use that, although not originally intended, gives it a greater dimension as a cultural, political and social document: the manuscript was donated to The American Guild for German Cultural Freedom in February 1939 to raise money for German refugees affected by World War II (Woolf 1994:314, 319). I cannot think of a better destiny for a book Susan Sontag called in the twenty-first century Woolf's "brave, unwelcomed reflections on the roots of war" (2003:3).

Woolf's intention was to provoke thought as she states in her diary: "certain people will be stirred; will think; will discuss" (Woolf 1985:142), and that goal was attained. It is still a work of reference used by scholars and students as a productive source of discussion about issues which are relevant to this day.

"Words (…) were (…) her chosen weapons."
Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf: a Biography*

2.2 *You* and *Us*

The author of the first letter is addressed in a state of near shock in the first lines of *Three Guineas*: "[a] letter perhaps unique in the history of human correspondence, since when before has an educated man asked a woman how in her opinion war can be prevented?" (Woolf 2008:153). This fact is considered a "momentous occasion in the history of civilization" (Woolf 2008:302) and the narrator intends to analyse the reasons of such astonishment.

It is clear the educated man is writing to an educated woman, whose opinions he would find valuable. The narrator acknowledges the similarities between them by referring to their social status as part of the educated class, their similar accents, their table manners, their servants, the ability to discuss social and political issues and the good fortune of being able to earn their living. However, a "precipice" divides them. As the essay unfolds, several precipices are noted, crucial differences between the sexes which necessarily render them different from each other.

The "precipice" of education takes a leading role in *Three Guineas.*[35] Important concepts about women's education are discussed before any of the guineas are distributed since to answer the question the educated man has posed, it would be beneficial, if not essential "some knowledge of politics, of international relations, of economics" (Woolf 2008:157), which women do not have easy access to. The first notion, which will be used throughout the whole essay, reveals that women's identity depends on their relationship with men: the daughters/sisters of educated men. "Our

[35] Woolf includes in her personal writings complaints about her lack of formal education: "I owe all the education I ever had to my father's library" (Woolf 1994:234); in a letter to Benedict Nicolson on 24 August 1940 she states "I never went to school or college. My father spent perhaps £100 on my education" (Woolf 1994:419). The old Bloomsbury group seems to have contributed to Virginia Woolf's education greatly. It was constituted mainly by her brother Thoby's male friends from Cambridge University represented for Virginia Woolf a space of learning and debate that she had never experienced as she did not attend school or university: " Never have I listened so intently to each step and half-step in an argument. Never have I been at such pains to sharpen and launch my little dart (…) From such discussions Vanessa and I got probably much the same pleasure that undergraduates get when they meet friends of their own for the first time" (Woolf 2002:51). Bloomsbury allowed Virginia Woolf to bloom as an independently-minded woman and provided her with "a familiar and stimulating atmosphere" (Woolf 1977:73).

ideology is still so inveterately anthropocentric that it has been necessary to coin this clumsy term – educated man's daughter- to describe the class whose fathers have been educated at public schools and universities" (Woolf 2008:369). These women without an education themselves exist in the shadow of their educated male relatives. Women will be referred to not as individuals with a well-defined and independent status, but as subjects of the patriarchal power.

To add to the secondary role women play in the public sphere and to the unimportance of their education, the idea of Arthur's Education Fund is borrowed from Thackery's novel *Pendennis*. Very simply, families would keep an Arthur's Education Fund to invest in their male offspring's education to the detriment of the female elements, who had been forcibly contributing to this "voracious receptacle" by sacrificing their own education, their paid-for education. Until 1919, the year of "the Act which unbarred the professions" (Woolf 2008:172) women were trained to be held in the private sphere and very little financial effort was put into their formal education. To illustrate this point, the narrator refers to Mary Kinsley and the fact that being allowed to learn German was all the paid education this daughter of an educated man was entitled to, in contrast with the £2,000 spent on her brother's. In note 2 (Woolf 2008:369), it is estimated a total of £20 or £30 were spent on Mary Kinsley's paid-for education. The inequality is clear and irrefutable. There is a *you* and an *us*, two groups of people divided by, amongst other things, the access they have to education. The *you* are educated, the *us* are "members not of the intelligentsia, but of the ignorantsia" (Woolf 2008:280), another term coined in the text to reflect the status of women in society.[36]

From this ignorance stem other limitations. Relevant and influential professions are denied to women: "both the Army and the Navy are closed to our sex (…) We cannot preach or negotiate treaties (…) the decision what to print, what not to print – is entirely in the hands of your sex" (Woolf 2008:166, 167). Women cannot participate fully in the political life of the country as the influential jobs that define its future are out of bounds. The Armed Forces, the Church, the high level political posts such as

[36] In "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" Adrienne Rich seeking to identify sources of male power, uses Kathleen Gough's suggestions as a framework for her essay. One of the strategies used to keep women outside the public sphere is, according to the author, "to withhold from them large areas of the society's knowledge and cultural attainments" (2003:18,19). By denying women access to knowledge and keeping them ignorant it is possible to control them and limit them to a private role in society.

diplomatic jobs, the control of the press are men's jobs.[37] Some professions linked to the areas of Civil Service and to the Bar have been open to women, although these are still considered precarious.

The difference between salaries women and men earn is one of the arguments used to illustrate the poverty that women have to endure. Using Whitaker's Almanack which "collected all the facts about all, or almost all, of the professions that have been opened to the daughters of educated men" (Woolf 2008:217), the narrator finds in the data recorded evidence that women's wages are much lower than men's:[38] "all the names to which the big salaries are attached, are the names of gentlemen" (Woolf 2008:220). Again, money assumes a central role in the discussion and women's poverty derived from their family's neglect of their education and, more recently, from the low incomes obtained in their professional lives, hinders the potentially useful part they could play in the public sphere, participating in its life as full and equal members.[39]

The investment in women's education is ridiculed through the vivid image of the honorary treasurer of a women's college, the second correspondent, who has to "stand at the door, cap in hand" (Woolf 2008:198) as if she were a beggar.[40] Contrasting with this charity case, facts about the financial status of men's most exclusive universities are

[37] Although women in Britain have an infinitely better status today than in 1938, problems persist. *The Guardian* reported on 1 November 2012 the story of Dame Helen Ghosh, who having worked in the Home Office herself, declared the Cabinet is not within women's easy reach: "[i]t is actually quite difficult for a woman to get in as part of an Old Etonian clique." The men who have attended elitist male schools are still the ones more likely to be in power in Britain. A more open case of restriction is that of the Church of England whose General Synod voted against allowing women to become bishops. *The Guardian* published this story on 21 November 2012 and the Press in general covered this debate that is taking place in British society.

[38] The issue of equal pay is still relevant today. On 24 October 2012 *The Guardian* reported that a group of women in Birmingham had won the right to sue the city council, their former employer, for breach of equal pay law. On the same day the same newspaper covered a story entitled "Suffragette great-granddaughter leads march on Parliament" where it is said Helen Pankhurst participated in the protest to lobby Members of Parliament on various issues including equal pay and women's representation in Parliament.

[39] In *Who Sings the Nation-State?* Judith Butler and Gayatri Spivak discuss what effects the Nation-State has on immigrants, refugees and those in exile. If we apply the concepts they use to the reading of *Three Guineas*, then Virginia Woolf's ideas become contemporary. Judith Butler defends that "[t]he state can put us, some of us, in quite a state. It can signify the source of non-belonging"; "one does not belong to the set of juridical obligations and prerogatives that stipulate citizenship" (Butler 2010: 4, 6). This is what Virginia Woolf argues is the situation of women. They live alongside men but don't enjoy the same rights as them. If we take the examples of the fact that "by law she becomes a foreigner if she marries a foreigner and the idea that "our country (…) has treated me like a slave; it has denied me education or any share in its possessions" (Woolf 2008:312, 313), then do women feel the sense of belonging that a citizen would normally feel towards their native land? If discrimination is rampant and in some cases legal how can women be full citizens? Women have been maintained as second-class citizens and this is what is denounced in *Three Guineas*.

[40] This image is used on different occasions in the text. Women hold a "hat in hand" and also a" cap in hand like beggars" (Woolf 2008: 233, 285).

provided: "the income of Oxford University is £435,656 (1933-4), the income of Cambridge University is £212,000 (1930)" plus donations which are "announced from time to time in the newspapers" and "must in some cases be of fabulous proportions" (Woolf 2008:185). Women's colleges enjoyed much lower recognition as all their money derived from charitable contributions, "collected laboriously from private purses" (Woolf 2008:191). One of the most generous donations was given by Miss Ewart to Newham College: the meagre sum of £1,000. Others contributed with voluntary work, including female students themselves, and small amounts of money. When asked to give financial support to Girton College Cambridge, a women's college, Walter Bagehot replied "I assure you I am not an enemy of women. I am very favourable to their employment as labourers or in other menial capacity" (Woolf 2008:377). Poverty raged in women's colleges. Bigotry raged towards them. Words, her chosen weapons, raged within Woolf.

In *The Student's Handbook* to Cambridge University, 1934-5 quoted in *Three Guineas* there is a limitation of 500 female students at all times and no reference to any restrictions in the numbers of male students; in 1935 the same University "still refuses to admit women to the full rights of membership; it grants them only titular degrees and they have therefore no share in (its) government" (Woolf 2008:377).[41] The short history and dissimilar status in education and in the professions render women a necessarily different heritage and "though we see the same world, we see it through different eyes" (Woolf 2008:175).

The aim of women's education had traditionally been marriage, "the only profession open to (them)" (Woolf 2008:206), an unpaid-for profession that required no paid-for education, no certificates or diplomas. "It was this unpaid-for education (…) that fitted them, aptly enough, for the unpaid-for professions" (Woolf 2008:267). It is in fact a vicious circle that the narrator is describing and what is so challenging is to break out of that circle and create an alternative way to practise life, a whole new system of beliefs, rights, opportunities and flexible institutions which would not allow such vicious circles to occur.

The patriarchal society imposes restrictions on women which are perceived by the narrator as a negative and repetitive chant "you shall not learn; you shall not earn; you

[41] In 1937 Cambridge was the only University in Britain which still refused equal membership to women, who were given only titular degrees. This situation was only changed in 1948 when Girton and Newham were accepted as full Colleges (Woolf 1994:132).

shall not own" (Woolf 2008:307) that echoes the religious commandments "[t]hou shall not…", accepted as the essential rules of a community and repeated by its members insistently to ensure its integrity and continuity. In spite of the "harsh music" that rules society, it is defended in *Three Guineas* that "the value of education is among the greatest of all human values" and "so innate in human nature … that the same desire … existed too among women" even if "that desire for learning in women was against the will of God" (Woolf 2008: 307, 185, 186). The principles propagated by the Church and their influence on women's education, or rather, women's lack of education "can scarcely be overestimated" (Woolf 2008:376). The patriarchal nature of the Anglican Church reflects the structure of society. In fact, in *Three Guineas,* it is claimed that all institutions within society such as the Armed Forces, the Law, the Universities, the family reproduce and therefore perpetuate the discourse which excludes women.[42] Raising a family, looking after the household and sick or elderly relatives was the expected future of daughters of educated men, a free-of-charge contribution to the system which, in return, hampers women's lives, capabilities and aspirations.

The educational system, as part of the wider network of institutions, had also succeeded in reproducing a state of affairs that enclosed women in the private sphere and was reluctant to change. "It seems as if there were no progress in the human race, but only repetition" (Woolf 2008:249).[43]

It is claimed that women themselves have helped perpetuate the patriarchal system and this is clearly stated in *Three Guineas*: "she was forced to use whatever influence she possessed to bolster up the system which provided her with maids; with

[42] Michel Foucault defends that "power is a productive network which runs through the whole social body (…) power means relations, a more-or-less organised, hierarchical, co-ordinated cluster of relations (…) but operated from above" (Foucault 1980:118, 198, 200). Virginia Woolf recognises institutions and social relations which reproduce the discourse she is denouncing and operate in "the form of a chain (…) exercised through a net-like organisation" (Foucault 1980: 98), making it impossible to avoid or at least question if one is not aware of how the dissemination of power works, permeating all aspects of society and the relations within it. Pierre Bourdieu claims that "the eternalization of the structure of sexual division (is) performed by interconnected institutions such as the family, the church, the state, the educational system" (Bourdieu 2001: viii). *Three Guineas* denounces the very same institutions and personal relationships that perpetuate women's view as inferior to men.

[43] Pierre Bourdieu studied the effects the education system has on reproducing the social system in society; his findings can be applied to the point Virginia Woolf is making in *Three Guineas* regarding the reproduction of inequality. Bourdieu concluded that "[e]ducation serves to maintain rather than reduce (…) inequality (...) The system of higher education (…) functions to transmit privilege, allocate status, and instill respect for the existing social order" (Robbins 2000 vol.2:207). Bourdieu also argues that "the way to change goes through the verbalization and analysis of the unspoken and repressed rules that govern our behaviour" (Robbins 2000 vol.4:324). What is done in *Three Guineas* is exactly what Bourdieu suggests would generate change: uttering and thus denouncing the unspoken social wrongs and actually putting forward more or less practical ideas for change, can modify perspectives, incite discussion and eventually operate real and visible alterations in the system.

carriages; with fine clothes; with fine parties" (Woolf 2008:207). Participating in society, abiding by the existing rules and accepting the chant mentioned above that denied them full citizenship also meant that women encouraged war: "[h]ow else can we explain that amazing outburst in August 1914, when the daughters of educated men (…) rushed into hospitals (…) drove lorries, worked in fields and munition factories (…) persuade(d) young men that to fight was heroic and that the wounded in battle deserved all her care and all her praise?" (Woolf 2008:208). Women did participate in the war effort during World War I as a result of their acceptance of the order they lived in, an order that not only does not prevent war but entices it and dwells on its supposed glories. The underlying idea in this argument is that the system is so securely devised and protected that even those, at least some of those, who are discriminated against because of it, do not recognise their position and participate in its perpetuation, that is, in their own oppression. This is the perfect form of oppression, the one that is accepted from within.[44]

Either acceptingly oppressed or reluctantly so, how can the daughters of educated men who are still so limited in their actions and role in society help prevent war? The solution will have to come from education and the access it gives to the professions. The ruling education system has failed in preventing war and "the sum of that filled Arthur's Education Fund (…) has been wasted or wrongly applied" (Woolf 2008:279). Well-educated women would have improved jobs. Having their own money, a fair amount of money in return for valid work would render women able to exert disinterested influence over the men who decide on the destinies of the country, who wage war: "[s]he needs no longer use her charm to procure money from her father or brother (…) she can express her own opinions (…) she need not acquiesce; she can criticize" (Woolf 2008:174). Disinterested influence could be a weapon for women to use, but independence is needed from the patriarchal paradigm which subjugates women.

[44] In *Novas Cartas Portuguesas* (*New Portuguese Letters)*, a pivotal work published in 1972 by three Portuguese authors living under the repression of a dictatorship, this topic is addressed: "Perfect repression is the sort that is not felt by the person suffering from it, the sort that is consciously accepted, thanks to a traditional upbringing, with the result that the mechanisms of repression come to be internalized within the individual, and hence become a source of personal gratification" (Barreno / Horta / Costa, translated by Helen R. Lane 1975:268); ["A repressão perfeita é a que não é sentida por quem a sofre, a que é assumida, ao longo de uma sábia educação, por tal forma que os mecanismos da repressão passam a estar no próprio indivíduo, e que este retira daí as suas próprias satisfações"] (Barreno / Horta / Costa 2010:198).

Three Guineas does more than identify problems and their origins; it suggests change. In response to the correspondent who is in need of funding to rebuild a college, the narrator embarks on a quest to define "what is the aim of education, what kind of society, what kind of human being it should seek to produce" (Woolf 2008:198) and devise an alternative plan for the education of women.

It is argued that the rebuilt college will have to function according to different rules if it is to develop a peaceful society, a radically new and civilised society. It must be "experimental (and) adventurous" (Woolf 2008:199) and it will have to take advantage of the fact "it is young and poor" to build itself on diverse guidelines and principles. The architectural aspect is the first part of the plan suggested: "let it be built on lines of its own. It must be built not of carved stone and stained glass, but of some cheap, easily combustible material which does not hoard dust and perpetuate traditions. Do not have chapels. Do not have museums and libraries with chained books and first editions under glass cases" (Woolf 2008:199). This first and physical part of the plan is clearly a reaction to the existing colleges, a new vision of education based on what it should not be like since what is available has resulted in the exclusion of women and contributed towards an unequal and war-promoting society.

The alternative plan is thus original and refreshing: "let the pictures and the books be new and always changing. Let it be decorated afresh by each generation with their own hands cheaply" (Woolf 2008:199). Nothing built or kept on ancient moulds. A truly innovative idea involving individuals in the construction of their own learning process, valuing what is new rather than tradition and modifying the object of study regularly, so as to avoid the everlasting and self-perpetuating weight of patriarchal heritage. With this same goal in mind, it is suggested what ought not to be taught. Again, a reaction to the prevailing system by scrapping what is common practice in order to build something new. "What should be taught? … Not the arts of dominating other people; not the arts of ruling, of killing, of acquiring land and capital" (Woolf 2008:199). These are, as it were, the negative objectives of the educational plan in *Three Guineas*. The reverse objectives, the positive aims are stated without delay: "[t]he poor college must teach only the arts that can be taught cheaply and practised by poor people; such as medicine, mathematics, music, painting and literature. It should teach the arts of human intercourse; the art of understanding other people's lives and minds, and the little arts of talk, of dress, of cookery that are allied with them" (Woolf 2008:200). Overall, this is education with a human face, a combination of scientific and

artistic subjects and people's skills without neglecting the everyday needs for a balanced social and family life which would prepare students for a more inclusive and enjoyable future.

It is added that "the aim of the new college should be not to segregate and specialise, but to combine. It should explore the ways in which mind and body can be made to co-operate; discover what new combinations make good wholes in human life" (Woolf 2008:200). In this passage we notice the use of several operative words that suggest that this plan would be beneficial for both women and men. Words such as "not segregate", "co-operate" not "fight against", "human" not "female" all work in conjunction to create the notion that this is an inclusive plan, a plan that will consider the male half of the patriarchal society, the same patriarchal society which promotes "cities of strife, cities where this is locked up and that is chained down; where nobody can walk freely or talk freely for fear of transgressing some chalk mark" (Woolf 2008:200). In the new college, the poor college, nothing would be locked up or chained down. Women wouldn't be locked in or locked out either.[45]

With freedom in mind and a strong idealistic sense of life, the narrator continues arguing that the new college would receive students who love learning not for what they can do with the qualifications, but for learning itself. There would be no pomp and circumstance, no competition but instead the will to learn and freedom. Total freedom, that is, where "advertisement is abolished; and there are no degrees; and lectures are not given, and sermons are not preached, and the old poisoned vanities and parades which breed competition and jealously…" (Woolf 2008:201). Here the letter stops. Abruptly. The voice of the honorary treasurer seems to bring the author back from her idealistic considerations by claiming "dream your dreams … but we have to face realities" (Woolf 2008:202). The narrator accepts that her plan that awards no degrees would prevent women from entering the professions and is, therefore, impractical. However, she refuses to donate a guinea to rebuild the college on the old plan. In a fit of anger, she suggests using the guinea to buy "rags, petrol and matches (and) burn the college to the ground" (Woolf 2008:202) in order to eliminate the traces of the old system. Reason, though, prevails. Education must prepare women for professional life, the only alternative to the private sphere and the only viable way women can have an active role in society and, thus, prevent war.

[45] In *A Room of One's Own* (1929) Woolf uses the same image of women locked in the private sphere and locked out of the privileges conceded to men (Woolf 2008:31).

The narrator is resigned to giving her guinea to the honorary treasurer "and let her do what she can with it" (Woolf 2008:203). From a comprehensive plan which included architectural guidelines, negative and positive aims, she is reduced to a "rather lame and depressing answer (since) we can ask them to do nothing." (Woolf 2008:203). What is crucial is to donate profusely to build and rebuild women's colleges for them to be able to be independent. In the same way, individual women need to earn their living, so as not to depend on others, the male others, and be free to have their own opinions, the women's college needs financial security to resist.

Although this is an imperfect plan, it seems to be the one possible and "we must hope that in time that education may be altered" (Woolf 2008:208). "The doors (to a full participation in public life) are still locked, or at best ajar" (Woolf 2008:181). Change will come but women need to be in a position to keep pushing that door open. A radical plan would not give them access to the door.

To add to the idea of a door which is not fully open (nor fully closed), we find women standing on "the bridge which connects the private house with the world of public life", repeated several times throughout *Three Guineas*[46] (Woolf 2008:176). The bridge is a space of transition that suggests there is still some way to go to achieve the other bank of the river. It reflects the idea that although women's status had improved in recent years during Virginia Woolf's lifetime, there was (is) still a long way to achieve equality. The narrator of *Three Guineas* is insistent on these images of incompleteness of which the procession of educated men is another vivid instance. "There they go, our brothers who have been educated at public schools and universities mounting those steps, passing in and out of those doors, ascending those pulpits, preaching, teaching, administering justice, practising medicine, transacting business, making money (…) trapesing along at the tail end of the procession, we go ourselves" (Woolf 2008:240, 241). Even though women are allowed to participate in the procession and not just look from the windows of their homes, they are relegated to the end of it, walking clumsily in the hope that if they "who now agitate these humble pens may in another century or two speak from a pulpit" (Woolf 2008:242) and preach against war in a world where there is no difference between *you* and *us*.

[46] "[T]he educated man's daughter (…) stands on a bridge"; "(…) both have bridges (…) for us to stand upon"; "We are here on the bridge" (Woolf 2008:172,183, 242).

We here (…) are only sheltering under a leaf.
Virginia Woolf, *The Years*, 1931

What passing-bells for these who die like cattle?
- Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle.
Wilfred Owen, "Anthem for Doomed Youth", 1917

2.3 *You* and *Us* and War

Virginia Woolf never had to fight during the Great War, so called perhaps because of the great losses it caused, the sheer enormity of it. She was a civilian dividing her time between London, Asheham in Surrey and the occasional stay in Twickenham for a rest cure, enduring air raids, shortages and rationing but not being physically involved in the battlefield. She experienced, as Karen Levenback notes, "a movement toward understanding that the sense of immunity from effects of the war – shared by much of the civilian population – was an illusion" (1999:10). Nobody was unscathed, no man and no woman was left untouched by it. In February 1915 she wrote in her diary that "[t]here was a terrific explosion (…) And it always seems utterly impossible that one should be hurt", but in October 1917 she confesses to feeling "anxious about raids", (Woolf 1977:32, 54). No-one can remain indifferent to the consequences of a war. Later in life as World War II had just begun, Woolf refers to it in her diary on 6 September 1939: "this is the worst of all my life's experiences" and "any idea is more real than any amount of war misery" and in June 1940 she finds herself walking around London with "my morphia in pocket", suicide having been discussed and agreed amongst the Woolfs in the event of an invasion by the German army and capture by the Nazis (Woolf 1985:234, 235, 297).

The effects of World War I proved to be too real, too visible and close to home not to deconstruct any possible illusions, or rather, delusions that life could go on just the same. The idea of the precariousness, the vulnerability of human life[47], not male or

[47] Judith Butler distinguishes between the physical vulnerability of life that we all share, "precariousness as a shared condition and "precarity as the politically induced condition that would deny equal exposure through the radically unequal distribution of wealth and the differential ways of exposing certain populations (…) to greater violence" (2010:28). Perhaps the ultimate piece of evidence that Virginia Woolf revealed empathy towards fellow human beings lies in an entry in her diary. She noted in

female but human, protected only by a frail leaf expressed in the first epigraph of this section is a constant theme in *Three Guineas*. The photographs of the Spanish Civil War laid out on the table as the narrator writes her letters keep cropping up as a reminder of what war entails, thus framing the whole essay. They show the precariousness of life but also the precarity of it inflicted on those caught up in the middle of two opposed forces at war. It is noted that they "are all this time piling up (…) photographs of more dead bodies, of more ruined houses" (Woolf 2008:210); as time passes, as the essay unfolds more and more photographs come into play, more and more people become victims of war: it is as if the bodies are piling up as well. Susan Sontag claims that "atrocity photographs were scarce in the winter of 1936-37: the depiction of war's horrors in the photographs Woolf evokes in *Three Guineas* seemed almost like clandestine knowledge" (2004:21). The narrator, the female writer behind the essay possesses uncommon and secretive visual information which is to be used as evidence in her anti-war manifesto.

The photographs work as a regular reference, and the ultimate reference, for the narrator of *Three Guineas*, who keeps evoking them[48], images that a civilised person, man or woman, cannot allow to happen. They are constantly referred to and they multiply, serving a purpose that Susan Sontag so vividly remarked: "[n]arratives can make us understand: photographs do something else. They haunt us" (2004:80). Indeed, these photographs haunt the text and its narrator, reminding her why she defends non-violence and used as an argument to defend pacifism.[49] The photographs put every argument, habit or belief into perspective for their aim is to serve as the strongest reason why war must be prevented and so bring the male and female correspondents into agreement about the abomination of war and the hopeless repetition of it: "we listen to the voices of the past, as if we were looking at the photographs again" (Woolf 2008:363). War is not a new phenomenon. What is unthinkable is that knowing about

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September 1918 that the German prisoners of War in Surrey "who are social democrats, only fought because they would be shot for refusing" (Woolf 1977:191). This brief comment reveals her general belief that soldiers were also war victims, but a more inclusive idea is added that enemy soldiers had also to be considered as equals, that is, that their lives are equally precarious and that they too suffered oppression from their governments to fight a war they did not believe in. In Woolf's fiction these ideas are also present. In *Mrs Dalloway* Miss Killman suffers the consequences of defending Germans, of refusing to accept that all Germans are evil. See chapter 1.3 of this dissertation.

[48] The photographs of dead bodies and ruined houses in Spain are alluded to throughout the whole text on pages 164, 180, 198, 209, 210, 213, 292, 296, 363 and 364 (Woolf 2008).

[49] Judith Butler defends that "non-violence is derived from the apprehension of equality in the midst of precariousness" (2010:181). If one regards life as vulnerable, all life as vulnerable, one's own and others, the Other's, then as it is essential that one's own life is preserved, so is the life of the Other. In this sense, Virginia Woolf showed that she did look upon life, all human life as worthy of being protected.

the destruction and misery it causes has not been a deterrent to avoid or prevent it. To this day the photographs in *Three Guineas* remain a pertinent pictorial reminder of what war is. The narrator saw the past in them, history repeated and we, later readers of this essay, can see the future in them as we can refer to numerous occasions where war has occurred since Woolf's words were published.[50]

These photographs generally show "ruined houses and dead bodies", but some inspire a more careful look: "[t]his morning's collection contains the photograph of what might be a man's body, or a woman's (…) so mutilated (…) that it might (…) be the body of a pig" (Woolf 2008:164). These are anonymous victims of war, unrecognisable, devoid of human value, documents of the effect war has on its victims: the obliteration of their identity, their lifeless bodies turned into undefined objects. Simone Weil wrote in 1940 "violence turns anybody subjected to it into a thing" (Sontag 2004:10). The photographs in *Three Guineas* remind us of that effect extreme violence has on people showing us images of pieces of bodies that have lost their human component, former human beings reduced to bits of flesh. These are disfigured victims of war, lifeless bodies with no faces and no names, their picture used by the narrator to show that "the scale of war's murderousness destroys what identifies people as individuals, even as human beings" (Sontag 2004:55). Nonetheless, these used to be people with children, homes and pets, now shrivelled to representational remains of an armed conflict. Only vague remnants of their lives and their possessions are left: "[b]ut those certainly are dead children (…) there is still a birdcage hanging in what was presumably the sitting-room" (Woolf 2008:164).

Although it is claimed that "these photographs are not an argument; they are simply a crude statement of fact addressed to the eye" it is also noted that "the eye is connected with the brain; the brain with the nervous system" (Woolf 2008:165). They show facts, but these facts become an argument since they are the reason, the ultimate

[50] As I am writing these words on 8 May 2013, The Guardian reports the on-going civil war in Syria and the boycott to Israel the physicist Stephen Hawking has joined by pulling out of a Conference hosted by president Shimon Peres, in protest at treatment of Palestinians. On 13 May 2013 the same daily newspaper reports the claims of Jeremy Scahill, a journalist who has published a book containing evidence that the United States of America have conducted drone strikes with the compliance of the United Kingdom aimed at terrorist targets in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq and Mali but killed an estimated 2,000 civilians. The harrowing photograph awarded the World Press first prize in 2013 entitled "Gaza Burial" shows the bodies of two children killed by an Israeli missile strike being carried by their male relatives on the way to their funeral in Gaza City. The photographs constantly released by the media that emerge from all these conflicts could well be those sitting on the table while the female narrator is writing *Three Guineas*.

reason why war must be averted. They are used as the most effective "method of persuasion" (Woolf 2008:292) for those who need convincing that war must be prevented.

The quest to find the people responsible for the atrocities is one of the main goals of this essay. Women cannot be held accountable since they are denied access to the public sphere, to political life. It is the powerful men who make the decisions concerning the state who are responsible for war and would therefore be in a position to prevent it; it is these men the narrator denounces. Side by side with the pictures of "ruined houses and dead bodies", only referred to and not printed, the text of *Three Guineas* includes physical photographs of a soldier, a group of royal heralds, male academics gathered at a procession in Cambridge, a judge and an archbishop all in full regalia.[51] These pictures represent the men the female narrator holds responsible for the state of affairs in society.

Men who are entitled to hold public jobs parade themselves ostentatiously wearing clothes that "make us gape with astonishment" (Woolf 2008:177). Evidence of this fact is given through the actual pictures that accompany the text. It is noted that they wear jewellery, gowns, plumes, the finest embroideries, hats and wigs, medals and "ribbons of all colours" in lavish ceremonies. Priests, lawyers, University professors all engage in this parading of power and distinctions. What seems to be more shocking is that "your finest clothes are those that you wear as soldiers" (Woolf 2008:180). The luxurious garments are rendered "a ridiculous, a barbarous, a displeasing spectacle" in contrast to "the photographs of ruined houses and dead bodies" (Woolf 2008:180) by the woman searching for ideas on how to prevent war. The pageantry of war, that is, the ornate and futile outfits of men, who participate in war and make it a glamorous affair, collide with the lives that have been obliterated by conflict, the harsh reality of war.

This is not, however, the only contrast evoked by the printed photographs. In fact, none of these professions are permitted to women and the dress code for the female sex has constraints as well. Although women's status had recently improved with the right to vote, access to both education and the professions, they see the world "through the shadow of the veil St Paul (that) still lays upon our eyes"[52] (Woolf 2008:176). Women's

[51] These photographs have been an integral part of *Three Guineas* since the first edition (Hussey 1996: 287, 288).

[52] In the letter to the Corinthians St Paul recommended women should wear a veil when praying (Woolf 2008:391). The rationale behind the dress code for women in Church is given in the New Testament in the First Letter to the Corinthians: "the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the

faces are covered by fabric which darkens their world, limits their vision and action, a metaphorical garment that is a symbol of the restricted influence women have in society, while men show off the power they have in their ostentatious clothing and wage war.

The identification of the patriarchal society with the need of violence is a crucial argument in *Three Guineas*: "to fight has always been the man's habit" (Woolf 2008:158). Women have not been involved in the decision to start a conflict or in the fighting in the battlefield. The reasons why men engage in war are threefold: "war is a profession; a source of happiness and excitement; and it is also an outlet for manly qualities, without which men would deteriorate" (Woolf 2008:160). Men promote war and it generates pride and vanity; it is fostered among the patriarchal society and triggers futile sentiments such as honour and glory. War is, thus, linked to the notion of dominant masculinity which uses violence as a way to express its virility.

The argument is stretched further when the figure of the patriarch coincides with the figure of the dictator, that is, the embodiment of oppression. Quoting Hitler and his position on the role of women in society who defended that "[t]he woman's world is her family, her husband, her children, and her home" (Woolf 2008:229), the connection becomes evident. The most feared dictator, the man threatening Europe in the 1930's, defends the very same principles patriarchy enforces, reducing women's actions to the private sphere: "[a]re they not both the voices of Dictators (…) and are we not all agreed that the dictator when we meet him abroad is a very dangerous as well as a very ugly animal?" (Woolf 2008:229).

Having established the association between these two apparently different figures, but who are both tyrants, the narrator concludes logically that if a foreign entity entices violent reactions from those who refuse to be subjugated by him, if a dictator such as Hitler is to be resisted, then surely the dictators ruling England should equally be suppressed: "[s]hould we not help her to crush him in our own country before we ask her to help us to crush him abroad?" (Woolf 2008:230). The need to "fight that insect (…) without arms" (Woolf 2008:229) is presented as a necessary course of action to prevent war, to eradicate a regime of force which victimises women, but also men.

man; and the head of Christ is God (…) 4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. 5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head." Further misogynist references are made in this section of *The Bible*, which make clear the inferior status given to women by the gospel: "8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. 9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (Carroll 1997:215).

Referring to the threatening historical events of the 1930's, the narrator advises her male correspondent: the dictator "is interfering now with your liberty; he is dictating how you shall live; he is making distinctions not merely between the sexes, but between the races. You are feeling in your own persons what your mothers felt when they were shut out, when they were shut up, because you are Jews, because you are democrats, because of race, because of religion" (Woolf 2008:304). A space of common interest is created to legitimise the fight of women and men for a society ruled by "the great principles of Justice, and Equality and Liberty" (Woolf 2008:305), a fair society which would not discriminate against any of its citizens, male or female, and would repudiate war. Fighting the patriarchal regime is fighting dictatorship and vice-versa and the need for a just society is not just a woman's issue or an exclusively English problem. Recognising that tyrannical power oppresses both men and women and knows no boundaries, gives the male and the female correspondents common ground from which to operate their fight: "[t]he whole iniquity of dictatorship, whether in Oxford or Cambridge, in Whitehall or Downing Street, against Jews or against women, in England, or in Germany, in Italy or in Spain is now apparent to you. But now we are fighting together" (Woolf 2008:304).

A radical ceremony is suggested to celebrate this conclusion: the burning of the word "feminist", which in a world where men and women are "working together for the same cause" (Woolf 2008:303) becomes obsolete. "Let us write that word in large black letters (…) then solemnly apply a match to the paper. Look, how it burns! What a light dances over the world!" (Woolf 2008:302). This vivid image of a word burning and therefore its meaning vanishing with it, the fire that illuminates the imagination and the ideal future envisaged recalls that of the burning of the college suggested so as to "set fire to the old hypocrisies" (Woolf 2008:202). The word is objectified, and since its meaning is no longer needed, it is physically burnt, thus becoming a corpse: "a word without a meaning is a dead word" (Woolf 2008:302). The next logical words to undergo this process would be "Tyrant" and "Dictator" but "alas, those words are not yet obsolete" (Woolf 2008:304). This fact makes the fight against patriarchy/dictatorship still relevant.

Another photograph, this time, a fictional one, although not difficult to imagine, assumes a relevant role in the meanderings of *Three Guineas*: "[i]t is the figure of a man (…) Man himself, the quintessence of virility (…) tightly cased in a uniform. Upon the breast of that uniform are sewn several medals and other mystic symbols. His hand is

upon a sword (…) and behind him lie ruined houses and dead bodies – men, women and children" (Woolf 2008:364). This is the picture of hegemonic masculinity, imposing and aggressive, standing glorious against a background of destruction, the embodiment of the principles and values that need to be crushed by civilised people working together towards preventing war.

One of the values cherished by these men who parade themselves proudly wearing exquisite garments and waging war is patriotism. The love and pride for one's country, the need to defend it is part of the military discourse to engage the population in the justification of extreme violence and the misery it causes. It is argued in *Three Guineas* that since women are seen as second-class citizens, restricted to the private sphere, treated differently to men, their access to education and the professions that matter in the functioning and destiny of society limited, they have no good reasons to feel patriotism. Quoting Lord Hewart in his speech at the banquet of the Society of St George at Cardiff, patriotism is addressed: "Englishmen are proud of England. For those who have been trained in English schools and universities, and who have done the work of their lives in England, there are few loves stronger than the love we have for our country (…) We are greatly blessed, we Englishmen" (Woolf 2008:161, 162). It is clear that this speech is given to an audience of men. The word "Englishmen" is used twice within a short quotation and "those who have been trained in English schools and universities, and who have done the work of their lives in England" are men; a higher education and a career still being uncommon amongst women at the time this essay was written. It is also presented as a morally correct sentiment that is nurtured by the educational and professional system and is felt by respectable men who are grateful for their privileges. What the female narrator argues is that women have "very little to thank England for" since what is referred to as "our country" "has treated me like a slave; it has denied me education and a share in its possessions (…) still ceases to be mine if I marry a foreigner" (Woolf 2008:313). Clearly, the reality of "their" country was different to women. Women "are stepdaughters, not full daughters, of England" (Woolf 2008:372). All these arguments lead to rebellious statements which denote the refusal to accept the idea of belonging to a social order that uses patriotism to wage war: "as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world" (Woolf 2008:313). What is more, the female narrator's refusal to belong to a country would avoid her name being used to wage war: "if you insist on fighting to protect me, or "our" country, let it be understood (…) that you are

fighting to gratify a sex instinct which I cannot share" (Woolf 2008:313). As a woman, the narrator does not expect to witness acts of destruction in her name to protect her as she claims to know these principles disguise the true reasons why men fight.

Examples of the struggle for equal rights are given throughout the text, documenting with facts the difficulty of a fair status for women and the arguments a patriarchal society felt the need to use against the female half of the population. An event which took place in the past is used: in Edinburgh in 1869 women had applied to the Royal College of Surgeons. They encountered resistance from the male students and decided to demonstrate outside the College: "nearly 200 students assembled (…) The gate was closed in their [the women's] faces" (Woolf 2008:248). The arguments used to crush the prospective female students make it clear why the narrator feels that women have been treated like slaves by England: the male students "said that God was on their side, Nature was on their side, Law was on their side, and Property was on their side. The college was founded for the benefit of men only" (Woolf 2008:248). It is noted that this incident took place in the past, but Cambridge University is mentioned as an example of an institution which still enforces restriction policies towards women.

To add to the opposition of the two sexes, the financial aspect, a cherished argument to the female narrator of this essay, is brought into discussion. The annual cost of war waged and fought by men, £300,000,000, contrasts with the funds raised by the WSPU in the peak of their activity linked to the fight for women's suffrage in 1912, £42,000. The financial investment in women's causes is used to oppose the difficulty with which women have to deal with when fighting for principles such as equality to the enormity of the figure collected to fund war. The institutional power dominated by men sponsors the horrors of war and ignores the struggles of women, who are left fighting from the margins to rebel against tradition which excludes and oppresses them. The door to the public sphere is no longer locked, but women are barely aware that the key has been turned. In an intricate network of circular arguments all leading to the same conclusions, the female narrator defends that the feeling of patriotism is an impossibility for women who reflect on their status in the English society of the 1930's.

Exceptions show that there have been women who did not oppose this sentiment and, in fact, supported it but there are also men who have rejected patriotism and war. The male correspondent is one instance of a man interested in preventing war. When looking at the photographs of "ruined houses and dead bodies" "you, Sir, call them 'horror and disgust' (…) War, you say, is an abomination; a barbarity; war must be

stopped" (Woolf 2008:165). Members of both the military and the Church are cited as examples of men who, although living under the wing of patriarchy, still feel that war is indefensible. Wilfred Owen, the war poet and author of the second epigraph of this section, is cited as an example of a man who does not condone war. Although not conscripted and voluntarily enlisted, he experienced the horrors of World War I that would lead him to a mental institution as a shell-shock victim[53] and eventually kill him a few days before Armistice Day. Having witnessed atrocities in the frontline, he was haunted by real images, not just photographs, of extreme violence and absurdity of people dying "like cattle" to the sound of the only melody of the battlefield - the noise of guns. His poetry reflects those troubled visions turned into nightmares of someone who having written about them without being able to make any sense of them, concluded that men should not "resort to arms" (Woolf 2008:160).

The Bishop of Birmingham is quoted as an example in the Church of England who "described himself as an 'extreme pacifist'" not able to understand how "war can be regarded as consonant with the spirit of Christ" (Woolf 2008:163). His voice opposed that of the Bishop of London a believer in the fact that "the real danger to the peace of the world today (are) the pacifists" (Woolf 2008:163). Both their statements were published by *The Daily Telegraph* on 5 February 1937 (Woolf 2008:370).

The use of examples of women who support war and men who feel it must be prevented, blurs the initially intended clear-cut division between *you* and *us*. What arises from such a combination of facts and arguments is an ideal *us* constituted by civilised men and women who recognise each other's precariousness, are haunted by photographs of "ruined houses and dead bodies", refuse to accept war and will work together in an effort to prevent it.

[53] Both Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, two of the most celebrated war poets, spent time at Craiglockhart Military Hospital, an institution for shell-shocked soldiers to recover from the mental strains of having served in World War I (Showalter 1987:180).

She lived in a world of her own making.
Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf: a Biography*

Life seen without illusion is a ghastly affair.
Virginia Woolf, *Diary I*, 1917

2.4 Outsider

In the process of denouncing the origins of the problems which cause inequality and promote war, the female narrator in *Three Guineas* suggests profound changes in society, particularly in women's behaviour to combat their status of second-class citizens, excluded by the hegemonic discourse. In this fictional work, Virginia Woolf designed a "world of her own making", a utopian solution to fight against the insidious system long in place, an act of creation filled with illusion, perhaps, to battle against the ghastliness of life she witnessed and intensely disliked.

The male correspondent does receive his guinea as a contribution for his cause. However, the female writer declines the request to join his society, her reasons being listed in the last few lines of the essay: "we can best help you to prevent war not by repeating your words and following your methods but by finding new words and creating new methods. We can best help you to prevent war not by joining your society but by remaining outside your society but in co-operation with its aim" (Woolf 2008:366). In other words, an alternative project is necessary as the social system and its institutions have failed and do not produce people who prevent war.

In an essay written in 1920 entitled "Men and Women" addressing the difficulty women feel to express themselves using male language, Virginia Woolf had suggested the following strategies to overcome this hurdle: "[t]o try the accepted forms, to discard the unfit, to create others that are more fitting, is a task that must be accomplished before there is freedom or achievement" (Woolf 1995b:195). In *Three Guineas*, this methodology previously suggested by Woolf herself is taken to the extreme and pushes the boundaries of language. The word 'feminist', old colleges and ideas are burnt and therefore discarded, new words and phrases such as 'Ignorantsia' and 'daughters of educated men' are created and new forms of action in the shape of a Society of Outsiders are proposed. In short, a new conceptual world takes shape, a world "more fitting" not only to women, but also to men as the project does not neglect them.

Three Guineas constructs a plan of resistance where women would work as members of a Society of Outsiders, defending specific values which would give them a necessarily different status and avoid fusion with the mainstream set of rules regarded as oppressive. Madeline Moore remarks "Woolf understood that unless there was a total reform in the misogynist nature of English, or, indeed, any patriarchal society, the only freedom possible for women in a society that would enslave them, was to maintain a necessary separateness" (DeSalvo1985:285). This separateness would provide women with more powerful tools to have a role in a society which would otherwise ignore them. In short, the constitution of a Society of Outsiders would be a way in which women could participate in the community without accepting the old values and making their position clear by refusing to perpetuate them. Anne E. Fernald suggests the term "feminist resistance" for the solution suggested in *Three Guineas*, "a counter public sphere" (Fernald 2005:178), an alternative space where women would move freely and actively criticise the patriarchal values with the ultimate objective of defeating and eliminating them. It is not an easy task and objectives are often negative, but as the female narrator explains "if we have no example of what we wish to be, to have, what is perhaps equally valuable, a daily and illuminating example of what we do not wish to be" (Woolf 2008:321).

The Outsiders' Society would not have a treasurer, funds, a headquarters or a president, it would not hold meetings or conferences. It would be "anonymous and secret" and would work to attain "justice and equality and liberty for all men and women" (Woolf 2008:314, 309). Its methods include "not to fight with arms", "refuse in the event of war to make munitions or nurse the wounded" and "maintain an attitude of complete indifference", indifference towards patriarchs and refusal to participate in "patriotic demonstrations", "any (…) audience that encourages war", "military displays, tournaments, tattoos, prize-givings and all such ceremonies as they encourage the desire to impose 'our' civilisation or 'our' dominion upon other people." (Woolf 2008:310, 314). Indifference would constitute an effective way to prevent war since men would not be praised but ignored for their supposedly heroic participation in an armed conflict. This attitude, a type of reverse psychology, should work with adults as well as it does with children: "[t]he small boy struts and trumpets outside the window: implore him to stop; he goes on: say nothing; he stops" (Woolf 2008:314). If men's involvement in war is ignored, they will have no audience to applaud their actions and lose one of the main reasons to fight – their vanity.

What seems clear through the analysis of the proposal in *Three Guineas* is that the difference in women's code of conduct that would enable them to become Outsiders, lies in principles which would have to be instilled in them from a young age. In the response devised for the honorary treasurer, who is concerned with the access to the professions of the daughters of educated men, values are defined that would help women reinvent the world they live in; values which would have to be developed in their education, so women would use them in their professional life. The old Victorian principles, the "unpaid-for" education women had, are adapted to modern living and their meanings revised. Poverty now means enough money to live upon so independence is possible; chastity is applied to the brain and signifies the refusal to sell oneself; derision is the refusal of all methods of advertising merit, and freedom from unreal loyalties refers to the rejection of feelings of pride in any institutions and nationality (Woolf 2008: 270, 271). These radically altered ethical principles would work towards a fairer society, where nobody would be discriminated against: "[y]ou shall swear that you will do all in your power to insist that any woman who enters any profession shall in no way hinder any other human being, whether man or woman, white or black, provided that he or she is qualified to enter that profession, from entering it; but shall do all in her power to help them" (Woolf 2008:249). The Society of Outsiders would be constituted by women who follow and practise these refurbished principles that would serve a more just community. Christine Froula remarks "Woolf's concern that women not only enter the historically masculine public sphere but use their newly earned freedom of speech to renounce complicity with an aggressively patriarchal state, religion, and empire and to fight for the rights of all" (1994:38). As arguments unfold in *Three Guineas*, it becomes clear that the ideal society envisaged in this work would be one that integrates all regardless of sex or colour and fights against tyranny, all tyranny.

Outsiders would have to "earn their own livings (…) create new professions in which (they) can earn the right to an independent opinion (…) press for a wage to be paid by the State legally to the mothers of educated men"; "obtain full knowledge of professional practices, and to reveal any instance of tyranny or abuse in their professions (…) to cease all competition (…) remain outside any profession hostile to freedom" (Woolf 2008:315, 316, 318, 319). The only way for women to intervene is to exert their influence indirectly as "outsiders … and refuse to teach any art or science that encourages war … pour mild scorn upon chapels, upon degrees, and upon the value

of examinations … refus[e] to lecture … and … if we are offered offices and honours … refuse them" (Woolf 2008:204). Refusal to cooperate with the official vehicles of perpetuation of the dominant principles, its institutions such as schools, universities and churches, is at the core of the alternative plan for women in *Three Guineas*.

In real life Virginia Woolf refused a number of invitations to lecture and several honours awarded to her such as the Clark lectures at Cambridge in 1932, even knowing she was the first woman to be offered such a position "I shall refuse: because how could I write 6 lectures (…) without becoming a functionary (…) without putting off my Knock at the Door" (Woolf 1982a: 79); a doctor of letters degree at Manchester University in 1933 which Woolf justifies in a letter to the Vice-chancellor of the University : "as I have always been opposed to the acceptance of honours, whether civic or academic, by writers, I feel that I should be acting with great inconsistency if I accepted any such honour myself" (Woolf 1979:171). In a more satirical manner in the privacy of her diary, Virginia Woolf refers to this honour as a "tuft of fur put on my head" and states, as she was writing *The Years*, that it is "an odd coincidence! that real life should provide precisely the situation I was writing about" (Woolf 1982a:148). She also declined the Companion of Honour, a recommendation offered by the Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald to King George V for inclusion of Woolf in his Birthday Honours list in 1935 (Woolf 1982a:314) about which she wrote in a letter to Ethel Smyth " I said No thanks; I don't believe in Honours" (Woolf 1979:396), and the presidency of PEN International, an association created to foster contact and cooperation between writers, in succession to H. G. Wells in 1935 (Woolf 1982a:330).[54]

The plan of action embodied in the Society of Outsiders would allow women an active social participation from the margins; the female narrator refuses to participate in the existing system which would not authorise such initiative from whom it views as second-class female citizens. Therefore this alternative is the only possible way to operate change in society. It is perhaps idealistic and impractical, but a valid starting point for the long, exhausting journey which is crossing the bridge to the public sphere. Virginia Woolf herself is aware of the limitations of her plan: "I can't myself conceive

[54] Virginia Woolf did accept some preferential treatment and honours such as the French literary prize Femina for her novel *To The Lighthouse* in 1928, and being photographed by Man Ray; she also allowed for one of these photographs to be used on the cover of Time Magazine in 1937 when her book *The Years* became a success in the United States (Hussey 1996:85, 225). It was difficult for the original outsider, the creator of the idea of The Society of Outsiders to always be consistent with what was advocated in *Three Guineas*. She was, however, aware of that difficulty.

any position more positive than an outsiders (sic), if one could put it into practise. One can't - that's the difficulty" (Woolf 1994:303).

Nevertheless, crossing the line is necessary if any change is to happen, a bold, rebellious suggestion for the social organisation of women that would be the start of a deeper and radical transformation as Naomi Black claims: "the transformation not just of women's role, but also of society and finally of men" (Marcus 1983:193), that is, a total reformulation of the system in place, which would eradicate the profound inequality that is fostered by the prevailing social model.[55] Since a totally separate plan is not feasible or productive as it would only perpetuate women's invisibility and their lack of influence in society, resisting within the existing structures benefitting from a diverse status, seems to be attainable and useful as women would be operating from inside the system and not outcast or locked in the private sphere with no opportunity to participate in public life. "Instead of assuming the label of a patriarchal society, Woolf claims the status of an Outsider, a perspective available to anyone who can imagine herself (or himself) on the margins of the dominant culture" (Middleton 1982:414).

After the publishing of *Three Guineas*, Virginia Woolf was inundated with correspondence stating people's opinions about her book. She defended her intentions and insists on a fact that divided points of view: "I did not write it merely to annoy. It has roused a good deal of interest here - both anger and approval" (Woolf 1994:268). Real people reacted positively to the proposal of a Society of Outsiders, although not everybody was prepared to embrace its spirit: Lady Rhondda, editor of *Time and Tide* and a feminist wrote to Virginia Woolf in May 1938 to whom Woolf replied "I'm very glad that you call yourself an outsider – the first to take the name" (Woolf 1994:229); "Mrs Mounsey writes to ask me to head an Outsiders' movement" in September 1938 (Woolf 1985:171); in June 1939 "a nun writes to invite me to stage a meeting of Outsiders in Hyde Park" (Woolf 1985:219); in December 1939 "a soldier in the trenches who says he's read *Three Guineas* and "feels it is true" (…) a lady (who) wants to start an outsiders Society among the women of Yeovil [Somerset]. She's shocked to find them all in uniform, greedy for honour and office" (Woolf 1994:375).

[55] Bourdieu refers to women's resistance and comments on the need "to invent and impose forms of collective organization and action and effective weapons, especially symbolic ones, capable of shaking the political and legal institutions which play a part in perpetuating their subordination" (Bourdieu 2001:ix). Published in1938, *Three Guineas* devises an alternative and ideal plan of collective organisation, a Society of Outsiders with their own code of conduct, and suggests the use of symbolic weapons, women's attitudes towards the hegemonic discourse spread by the social institutions which promotes, validates and incites acts of war.

However, *Three Guineas* also provoked a series of negative responses which are amply documented. Q.D. Leavis, one of Woolf's most fierce critics, refers to its tone as "bad-tempered and peevishly sarcastic" and claims Woolf does not have the experience of being a real woman since she is privileged, which renders her the status of an "upper-class amateur"; Herbert Marder's choice of words to describe Woolf's epistolary essay ranges from "petulant" to "filled with bitterness" to "self-indulgent", "shrill" and "neurotic" (Silver 1991:351, 357). *Three Guineas* is a controversial piece of work and, unsurprisingly, when one denounces a state of affairs that only serves the interest of a few and proposes a radical change that would turn the oppressed into a powerful force, violent reactions against it are only to be expected. It is, perhaps, the tone used, anger uncovered in the words of a woman that elicited such attacks. *Three Guineas* is not the work of a passive aesthete – it is a profoundly irate response to an outraging world, the words of an irreverent woman who felt she had a valid contribution to offer. This fact in itself is threatening.

According to Jane Marcus, "anger and righteous indignation are the emotions of patriarchs in the state and in the family…hell is the source of women's wrath…the anger of the victim comes from the devil while the fury of a general or a prime minister is heroic and godlike" (1978:70). It seems anger may have been perceived as unbecoming a woman, that a woman was not entitled to express her outrage in an open way. This woman writer overtly exposes her incendiary ideas, suggesting the burning of words, of a college and its "old hypocrisies", and also of the windows of the houses so they blaze in celebration of a new reality (Woolf 2008:202, 275). Destruction by fire reveals radicalism, but another image arises with the fire. A threatening image of women crying "Let it blaze! Let it blaze!" and dancing around "the new house" whose windows are burning (Woolf 2008:203, 275), evoking an image of witchcraft, the dreaded knowledge of women who dare confront the established order in an attempt to destroy the old traditions which oppress them and create alternative spaces for the female population. Thus, words, concepts, conceptual spaces are burnt so that a new world is more possible, more real, a new, alternative order could begin. Hannah Arendt explains that "only where there is reason to suspect that conditions could be changed and are not does rage arise. Only when our sense of justice is offended do we react with rage" (1970:63). Frustration fuels anger, the frustration of seeing the world organised in such a way that half of it is discriminated against due to essentialist prejudice carefully

constructed to oppress some and benefit others gives Woolf the conditions to express her outrage and denounce what she sees as the problems in the society she lives in.

Change by destruction, such rage exposed by a woman elicits fear. The female narrator in *Three Guineas* identifies feminine fear and masculine anger as obstacles necessary to transcend in the process of transformation of society: "our fear and your anger" (Woolf 2008:345), the fear of the dominated group towards the dominant one and the latter's anger at any revolt in the status quo. If, however, there is a proposal of change in the patriarchal order, wouldn't that fact invert these feelings? The dominated, in their eagerness to free themselves from the established order would necessarily display rage and anger, and the patriarchs and their supporters would regard any acts of rebellion with suspicion and fear of seeing their privileged and comfortable positions vanish.

Kathleen Helal defends that "Woolf's insights about anger are what connects her to so many other women writers; to express anger through writing is not only to overcome anxiety and reduce abstraction, but also to perform power, to become visible, to define an identity, and to redraw boundaries." (2005:93) Power, visibility and identity in the margins of the patriarchal society which redefines it are proposals that emerge from this essay. Woolf intended her text to be angry, which shocked many readers. Helal adds "while masculine rage seems socially inherited and justified, feminine fury is latent, repressed and punished." (2005:81) It is, perhaps, natural that the overtly provocative attitude of a female writer caused negative reactions, but if her goal is not to let women stand in the middle of the bridge and operate change in society, then it is necessary to transgress, to shock in order to break with the past and move forward. Brenda Silver states that "the anger (she, Brenda) feel(s) (in 1991) is real and has its roots in the circumstances in which we experience our private and professional lives" and even defends "the angers that continue to animate feminist consciousness and critiques may well be the most compelling source of our strength." (Silver 1991: 370) In this light, anger is transformed into a productive means for an active voice: "placed in the context of anger, Woolf's tone ceases to be heard as neurotic, morbid or shrill and becomes the expression of an ethical or moral stance" (Silver 1991: 361). Anger, eloquence and genius all participate in the making of *Three Guineas*, a "utopian (piece of writing)…a kind of performative political poetry that functions as a force for social change" (Froula 1994:48). Cultural, social and political issues are raised in this epistolary essay in an angry tone, which is the only possible tone considering the 1930's

context in which Woolf wrote it. What is admirable is that, as Froula argues, "Woolf articulates many of the challenges that, over a half century later, still confront women and men, races, religions, classes and nations in our continuing struggles to deal with differences by attempting to speak across, negotiate, transcend, or peacefully erase boundaries rather than by violence" (1994:49).

Krista Radcliff is of the opinion "Woolf's arguments are far from being dated" (1993:413). In 2013 we can refer to the pictures of the Spanish Civil War as a painful memory of history and add those of the horrors of Iraq and Afghanistan, two ongoing wars sponsored by the government of Virginia Woolf's homeland. Although women's status in Britain today is infinitely different than it was in 1938, Woolf would still have strong arguments for not being patriotic and advocate a society that, contrary to the existing one, produces people committed to preventing war. A plan for an all-inclusive society that would not resort to violence is, according to Michael Rosenthal "the protest of an extraordinarily civilised sensibility" (Silver 1991:365). A civilised sensibility that longs for a civilised society. The idealism embodied in "*Three Guineas* (is) a source of inspiration and hope" (Marcus 1983: 269) To this day.

Equality is far from being a reality as there is still the need for Gender Studies and its variations in Universities and organisations around the world to promote advancement for women in various areas ranging from access to education to equal pay in the professions and violence specifically aimed at women and girls. In Britain, where the situation has improved in recent years, there are a number of charities working to defend women's rights. Equals, a coalition of several institutions set up by Oxfam's Global Ambassador Annie Lennox, present the following figures and insights on their website: "[w]e still live in a world where one in three women will experience violence at some point in their lives, where women hold only 19% of the world's parliamentary seats and where only about 24% of the people in mainstream broadcast and print news are female. In 2011 we still live in a world where women perform 66% of the world's work, produce 50% of the world's food, earn 10% of world's income and own 1% of the world's property. In the UK, it's easy to feel as if the fight for equality has been won, but at the current rate of progress, it will take 200 years to achieve an equal number of women in UK parliament, and 73 years to achieve equal numbers on FTSE 100 boards."

Furthermore, war is not over. The annual Global Trends Report published by UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) shows that as of the end of

2012, more than 45.2 million people were forcibly displaced. Looking at the details we can see that 55% of refugees listed in the report come from five countries affected by war: Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq, Syria and Sudan. 48% of the refugee population in 2012 was female, including women and girls, a proportion that has been a constant in the past decade, and children under 18 years of age constituted 46% of the refugees in 2012. The United Nations Security Council acknowledged there are specific issues that affect the female population in an armed conflict as it passed Resolution 2106 in June 2013 concerning sexual violence in war.

In light of these facts, and to use Virginia Woolf's words, inequality and war are not obsolete just like the words tyrant and dictator weren't when *Three Guineas* was written and could not, for this reason, be burnt. In the same way, inequality and war need to be addressed, studied and discussed so that they can progressively be erased, deleted, set alight or, at least, confronted as two of the main issues that hinder human existence.

3 Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas*: Into The Future

The human race seems to repeat
itself insufferably.
Virginia Woolf, *Letters VI*, 1941

We went out in the rain & walked up the
broad stucco streets of Belgrade.
Virginia Woolf, *Diary IV*, 1932

3.1 Yugoslavia at War

When Virginia Woolf wandered around the streets of Belgrade in 1932 the country formed as an outcome of World War I and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes had been renamed Yugoslavia, the country of the Southern Slavs in 1928 by King Alexander. Despite his efforts to create a sense of national unity, or rather because of them, he was assassinated in 1934 by Croatian nationalists (Doder 1993:10). Rivals under the same imposed nation continuously fought for either more autonomy or more unity, which objectively meant that Yugoslavia was always a centre of friction between the peoples it forcibly held together. An unsurprising fact if we consider the following remark which sums up the origin of the troubles in that part of the world: "[t]he starting point is the long and widely suppressed fact that Yugoslavia is a country without Yugoslavs" (Lendvai 1991:253). According to a report issued by the Centre for European Studies of the University of North Carolina published in the Autumn of 2004, in 1989 there were Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Slovenians, Albanians, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Hungarians, Bulgarians or any mix of two or more of these nationalities and a choice of different religions[56], but still no Yugoslavs.

Alongside the nationalistic issues that caused constant strife, Yugoslavia had to cope with the legacy of World War I, one of destruction, loss and economic depression, the ideal context for the radicalism that would come in the 1930's culminating in World War II, the next wave of conflict in the Balkans which would not be the last. In 1938 Virginia Woolf commented on the troubled decade that caused her an unsettling feeling

[56] According to the same report, the census data that reflects the pre-war situation shows that Slovenia (70.8%) and Croatia (76.5%) were mainly affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church; Bosnia and Herzegovina were 40% Muslim and 31% Eastern Orthodox; Serbia and Montenegro were 65% Eastern Orthodox; Macedonia were 67% Macedonian Orthodox and 30% Muslim.

of helplessness: "[a] veil of insanity everywhere" (Woolf 1985: 129). Yugoslavia was no exception.

The break out of World War II exposed divisions within Yugoslavia further and the country soon found itself involved in a civil war as well as a worldwide conflict. The different factions defended allegiance to the German forces or fought against them. During World War II a so-called Croatian nation-state was formed and its ruling Ustaša forces, a fascist organisation and a marginal party aligned with Germany and Italy active before and during the war period, perpetrated atrocities against Serbs and other minorities in the region such as Jews and Gypsies in Krajina and Bosnia (Doder 1993:10). On the Serbian side the nationalist Četnik forces violently repressed Muslims in Bosnia and Croats and carried out massacres, responding to the Ustaša in kind (Gagnon 1994-1995: 133, 134; Doder 1993:10). Most Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia, however, joined the multi-ethnic partisan forces led by Josip Broz, best known as Tito, a Croat with a Slovenian mother, who became the Prime Minister of the again renamed country the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia in 1945 when the war ended. This second Yugoslavia, modelled on the federal system of the Soviet Union, was composed of six republics: Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Slovenia, and Montenegro, as well as two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina, both belonging to the Republic of Serbia.

Tito's rule, which lasted until his death in 1980, is described by Paul Lendvai and Lis Parcell as an "authoritarian state with a market economy and private ownership" (1991: 254). The surprising breakaway from the USSR and Stalin in 1948 allowed Tito to develop his own version of communism independent from the Soviet Union. Yugoslavia was an independent state which proclaimed and enforced the Yugoslavian spirit, trying to dilute by repressing the nationalistic feelings that were always present within the different peoples living within a constructed idea of a united country that in practical terms did not contribute to a national sense of belonging, but rather to a feeling of separateness and a need for othering. Although in the early 1960's Tito's reforms allowed for a decentralised federation and the different republics were given more autonomy, the extreme nationalist groups in the different provinces were purged and silenced violently (Gagnon 1994-1995:143, 144).[57] During this time, massive purges

[57] The Constitution of 1974 "proclaimed the Yugoslav federation "a state community of voluntarily united nations and their Socialist Republics" and accorded sovereign rights to "nations and nationalities."

took place in Croatia, progressive forces in Serbia, Macedonia and Slovenia which led to the lack of representation of these republics in the central political stage where decisions were made (Lendvai 1991:256). In 1964 Tito created yet another nation in his Yugoslav commonwealth – the Bosnian Muslims (Doder 1993:12).

In May 1980 Tito died and with him the Yugoslavian spirit perished as well. Dusko Doder remarks about this crucial event in the history of Yugoslavia that "the glue that held the federation together was gone" (1993:14). The economic crisis caused by the global recession of the late 1970's, the oil shock and the enormous foreign debt Yugoslavia had run up, all contributed to the revival of the need for reform which sparked a reaction from extreme nationalists and a construction of the discourse that would lead to yet another deadly conflict. In 1985 an ideological manifesto was drawn up by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts for the Serbian Communist party in which under the cover of an allegedly democratic wish within Yugoslavia, the centralised and repressive system in place before Tito's 1965 reforms were endorsed. This document declared the Serbian population in Kosovo and Croatia to be endangered (Gagnon 1994-1995:148). The victimisation of the Serbian community in the neighbouring republics, mainly Kosovo, Bosnia and Croatia, became the central issue in the more and more intense radical discourse which relied on a paranoid "anti-Serbian coalition" idea within Yugoslavia. Following from this political support the Serbian minority in Kosovo demonstrated in the streets claiming to be a target of genocide engendered by the nationalism of ethnic Albanians. The press confirmed and reinforced these claims. Slobodan Milošević was elected head of the Serbian Communist party, renamed Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) in January 1986, and by the end of 1990 he had been elected president of Serbia (Gagnon1994-1995:147).[58] His political strategy involved the intensification of what some historians entitle ethnic nationalism[59] the rhetorical tactic which places ethnicity as the central issue of discourse, the justification for all decisions and attacks on those who do not share the same characteristics.

Milošević's propaganda to entice ethnic nationalism and violence against other groups included the vilification of Albanians, Croats and non-Serbs in general, in

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It also recognised the existence of Bosnian Muslims (Doder 1993:13) and more autonomy to Kosovo and Vojvodina (Lendvai 1991:258). This document declared Tito as president for life.

[58] Milošević was re-elected in 1992 and became the Yugoslav president in 1997. He was ousted in October 2000.

[59] Gagnon distinguishes between "nationalism" or "hypernationalism", which are described as sentiments and beliefs, and "ethnic nationalism", a political strategy that defines a nation in ethnic terms and is used to manipulate a group into believing the need for certain decisions to be made for self-protection and preservation (1994-1995:131).

regular inflammatory rallies[60], the threatening of moderate Serbs accusing them of treason, the conscious provocation of armed incidents with Croatian police and violent confrontations aimed at terrorising neighbouring villages. In the Summer of 1990 the Serbian media continuously showed images of massacres committed against the Serbs in World War II, focusing on the fact that the Croatian forces had been responsible for the atrocities and linking the culprits to the Croatian Democratic Union, the ruling party at the time of Milošević's rise to power, accusing them of plotting to repeat anti-Serb attacks in their territory (Gagnon 1994-1995:155). Frenzied hatred designed to instill fear, distrust and suspicion. A dangerous recipe for disaster was in place. In 1991 the SPS began an alliance with the neo-fascist Serbian party led by Vojislav Šešelj and infamous for its guerrilla groups, benefitted from the cooperation of the Yugoslav army, the approval of the Belgrade regime and the support of the Bosnian Serbian Democratic Party by this time composed of Serbian nationalist hard-liners (Gagnon 1994-1995:156, 159).

The collapse of the communist block and the reformist wave in Eastern Europe led by Mikhail Gorbachev accelerated the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the nationalist movements fuelled by furious propaganda and gratuitous violence around the country that never was, made the break-up a traumatising experience for all. Nationalist parties won the first free post-Cold War elections in 1990 in all republics (Doder 1993:14) and soon they all demanded independence. Slovenia and Croatia both declared independence in June 1991. Slovenia was able to break away with just a brief period of fighting as its population was composed by 90% ethnic Slovenians. Croatia, however, engaged in a bloody conflict with its Serbian population encouraged by the Serbian regime which used the Yugoslav official military and paramilitary units to terrorise, murder and expel non-Serb civilians. The Serbs who refused to cooperate with the violent strategies of the central power and the neo-fascist guerrilla groups led by Šešelj, recruited by the Serbian forces to aid in the conflict, were persecuted and demonised (Gagnon 1994-1995:159,160). Thousands were drafted to fight against their will, many deserted to avoid the senseless killing of several thousand people, and an estimated 170,000 deportations took place in the early 90's in Croatia (Hagan 2006:136). The

[60] Virginia Woolf listened to Hitler's public speeches on the radio and records her impressions of one of them in her diary on 13 September 1938: "Hitler boasted and boomed (…) Mere violent rant (…) then howls from the audience (…) Then another bark (…) & the voice was frightening" (Woolf 1985:169). Milošević's speeches were equally frightening for the inhabitants of the former Yugoslavia and for all those who could watch the rabid public addresses which foreshadowed a bloody conflict.

fighting in that particular region was ended in March 1992 with the deployment of United Nations peacekeeping forces, although the terms of the agreement were not immediately fulfilled and the country remained a dangerous and volatile territory (Doder 1993:19).

In April 1992 Muslims and Croats in Bosnia expressed the desire to vote to separate from Yugoslavia, leading to the second war in the region. In this territory, the Serbian military were supported by two Bosnian Serbs, Radovan Karadžić and General Ratko Mladić who are currently in custody of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague[61] for war crimes.

In an attempt to assert and legitimise his power in Bosnia Herzegovina, Karadžić declared the formation of an independent Republika Srpska or Serbian Republic of Bosnia and became its president. The guerrilla tactics incited by these figures, Milošević's allies, at this time in charge of yet another republic in the area and supported by their now official army, which in turn had the support of the Serbian army, culminated in the most devastating atrocities that took place in Europe since World War II: the attacks on Bosnian Muslims in the Siege of Sarajevo from 1992 to 1996 and the Srebrenica massacre in 1995, where over 8,000 Bosnian Muslim boys and men were killed to impede the procreation and proliferation of that ethnic group. Ethnic cleansing was happening in Europe again.[62] Humanity was repeating the same mistakes and the world was watching. A ceasefire in Bosnia was declared with the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, although the Siege of Sarajevo continued until 1996 (Hagan 2006:133).

The war in the former Yugoslavia did not finish either with the peace accord in 1995 or the end of the siege in Sarajevo. Its focus turned to Kosovo, a third war which opposed two nationalities and exposed the clash between the hegemonic ambitions of the Serbs and the wish for independence of the Albanians, who constituted the majority of the population. After Tito's death in 1980 Kosovo erupted in a number of public protests demanding the status of the province to be elevated to that of a republic. The protests were quashed, although the idea of Kosovo as an independent nation state never

[61] On May 25, 1993 the NATO Security Council decided to "establish an international tribunal for the sole purpose of prosecuting persons responsible for serious violations of international human rights law committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia" (Koshy1997:1389). The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia is still actively at work in 2013.

[62] The Rwandan genocide that took place in 1994 cannot be ignored as another example that, in the words of Virginia Woolf, "the human race seems to repeat itself insufferably" (Woolf 1994:464), although it falls beyond the scope of this dissertation.

abandoned its inhabitants.[63] In 1988 Kosovo's autonomy was, instead, restricted and officially abolished in 1990 (Lendvai 1991:258). The consequences of the frustrated ambitions of the Kosovan people were to be long-lasting and the radicalisation of the Albanian population was at the centre of the armed conflict until it ended in 1999. An organised guerrilla group, the Kosovo Liberation Army, was created to defend Albanian interests in the region and to resist attacks from the Serbian military and paramilitary forces. Although they disrupted some Serbian intervention, they could not avert the killing of an estimated 10,000 Kosovar Albanians and the expulsion and deportation of approximately 400,000 people, which represented one third of the ethnic Albanian population of Kosovo (Posen 2000:62, 63). This particular conflict lasted eleven weeks and led the controversial NATO bombings[64] in early 1999, which eventually put an end to all fighting in the area.

The country Tito wanted united was now divided, torn, destroyed and grieving for all its dead regardless of their nationality, ethnic group or religious affiliation. A handful of men, violent and powerful men, had managed to turn people against each other and I would argue that it was their discourse of fear-mongering and paranoia that caused wars in the former Yugoslavia, not the sense of wanting to belong to one nation state or one ethnic group. The contemporary historian Mark Marzower is of the opinion that the war in the 1990's in the former Yugoslavia "represented the extreme force required by nationalists to break apart a society which was otherwise capable of ignoring the mundane fractures of class and ethnicity" (Hagan 2006:133). The regular citizens going about their everyday lives want peace and stability in order to have a prosperous existence and raise their families without fear and the constant threat that war imposes.

[63] Kosovo declared independence in 2008.

[64] The United Nations were involved throughout the whole war of the former Yugoslavia with peacekeeping forces and efforts to open channels for diplomacy. NATO had resisted armed intervention until it seemed that no other strategy would end the conflict which was feared to spread to other countries. The announcement of military intervention in 1999 left public opinion uneasy and led to protests in cities all around Europe. Russia, a long standing ally of Serbia, preferred diplomatic solutions to the conflict. Germany, Italy and Greece agreed to NATO air attacks in principle, although opposed its escalation when the initial attack on Serbian forces proved ineffective and collateral damage such as the bombing of the Chinese Embassy on 7 May and the killing of 87 Kosovar Albanians in the village of Korisa on 13 May questioned the legitimacy of NATO forces. However, The United States of America and Britain were adamant that only the intensification of the bombing would bring a close to the conflict. On 3 June 1999, after the stepping up of NATO air strikes in central Belgrade and the indictment of Slobodan Milošević for war crimes by the International Tribunal in The Hague on 27 May, Serbian forces agreed to international demands and to a political role of the UN in the administration of Kosovo, officially putting an end to the war in the former Yugoslavia (Posen 2000).

Echoes of the imaginary picture described in *Three Guineas* resonate in our minds: "[i]t is the figure of a man (…) Man himself, the quintessence of virility (…) tightly cased in a uniform. Upon the breast of that uniform are sewn several medals and other mystic symbols. His hand is upon a sword (…) and behind him lie ruined houses and dead bodies – men, women and children" (Woolf 2008:364). Slobodan Milošević, Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić to mention just a few, could be the men standing proud with a landscape of destruction behind them. The three of them were captured, handed over to the International Tribunal and brought to justice.[65] Amongst their charges we find the dreaded words genocide, crimes against humanity and mass rape.

By this time, Virginia Woolf had been long dead, but "a veil of insanity" covered Europe again and this time the world did not have difficulty in accessing the images of the horrors of war. We did not just have clandestine photographs of the atrocities committed. Every day the newspapers and the television reported the crimes perpetrated in the former Yugoslavia. We watched as the events unfolded, as refugees fled their homes, as whole villages were destroyed, populations were terrorised, whole families sacrificed in the name of nationalism. Amidst all the terror and destruction, a group of women decided to act.

[65] Milošević was handed over to the The Hague in June 2001 and died in custody in March 2006; Karadžić was captured and transferred to the International Tribunal in July 2008 and Mladić remained at large until May 2011.

(Virginia Woolf) seems extremely
near, contemporary, timeless.
Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf*

3.2 Women in Black Belgrade

Virginia Woolf watched the troubled 1930's unfold before her eyes just like the inhabitants of the former Yugoslavia witnessed the mounting threat of the rampant nationalist discourse of the Milošević regime take over, terrorising populations and transforming their countries into the stage of the most horrific armed conflict Europe had seen since World War II. Virginia Woolf, as an intellectual, responded to the political circumstances with a book; as we know, *Three Guineas* was produced out of a need Woolf felt to denounce the grave errors she could identify in the society she lived in. Referring to what she thought could have been the end of the process of writing her polemic, Virginia Woolf remarks in her diary in October 1937: "Oh how violently I have been galloping through these mornings! It has pressed and spurted out of me (…) like a physical volcano. And my brain feels cool and quiet after the expulsion" (Woolf 1985:112). It is clear by these words the sense of relief Woolf felt after finishing the work she had seething inside her.

In a different manner but fuelled by similar concerns, a group of female citizens of Serbia responded to the menacing actions of their government with the creation of Women in Black Belgrade, a "feminist anti-militarist peace organisation" as advertised on their website.[66] Fifty-three years divide the publication of *Three Guineas* (1938) and the start of this movement in 1991. The world had changed in many ways during that period but the war in the former Yugoslavia, another senseless conflict that affected millions of people, made us wonder if the atrocities repeated in the Balkans meant that we are incapable of learning from former mistakes and of preventing such extreme violence in our lives. It seems that the horror of World War I, the war to end all wars but didn't, and the trauma of World War II lived by the next generation were not sufficient to convince humankind that sheer destruction solves no conflicts, it simply destroys people's lives, families, towns, cities and whole countries.

[66] www.zeneucrnom.org

At the end of the twentieth century we watched how whole communities were exterminated, interned in concentration camps and persecuted because of their ethnicity again. All around the world images of the suffering of the population in the former Yugoslavia were shown on television, printed on the front cover of newspapers allowing us to follow the intricate moves of the various sides involved in the war mediated by the ineffective United Nations, an organisation ultimately created to promote dialogue and mutual understanding and avoid these types of conflicts. These were the images Women in Black Belgrade witnessed first-hand at the start of the war. They were the images of their countrymen and women not just anonymous "photographs of ruined houses and dead bodies" (Woolf 2008:180).

Unsurprisingly, an analysis of the principles and goals Women in Black Belgrade set for themselves and the organisation of their community echo those proclaimed by Virginia Woolf. The two contexts, that of England in the 1930's and Yugoslavia in the 1990's, although separated by fifty-three years of history and circumstances, were horrifyingly identical and the connection becomes, thus, understandable and undeniable. As Jane Marcus states "*Three Guineas* (is) a source of inspiration and hope" (Marcus 1983: 269); Women in Black Belgrade are the living proof of it. The translation of Woolf's *Three Guineas* is incorporated in Women in Black Belgrade's list of publications to prevent war. In their manifesto entitled *Always Disobedient* the group explain the importance of their publishing activity: "[w]e create an alternative women's history by writing about women's resistance to war" (Zajović 2006:6) to fight against women's invisibility, which Virginia Woolf referred to as a "gap on your shelves" (Woolf 2008:263), the lack of books written by and about women. They create *herstory*, women's history through showing war witnessed and written by women thus presenting a non-patriarchal point of view of what war means and entails by showing the long-lasting effects it has on a community and, most importantly, devising a plan to prevent violence. The translation of Woolf's work is, thus, seen as an important tool in Women in Black Belgrade's activity, worthy of being translated and included in their list of publications, as if reading it was part of their answer to the question posed by the male correspondent in *Three Guineas* "[h]ow are we to prevent war?"

The ideas defended by Woolf are at the core of this group as valid insights into the structures of power and the values that are conducive to war. The ideal Society of Outsiders, the utopian vision in *Three Guineas*, is adapted to a contemporary group that could still be named outsiders as we are before a group of women working from the

margins and refusing to accept or participate in the oppressive system that encourages war. Women in Black Belgrade, however, defend a more practical outlook and a more clearly defined code of conduct than the one devised by Virginia Woolf, necessary to ensure the visibility of the movement and its effectiveness in the real world. Let us not forget Virginia Woolf was a thinker, a writer, a theorist; Women in Black Belgrade are activists doing field work, although there is an inevitable element of idealism in everything these women do.

On 9 October 1991, at the beginning of the war in the former Yugoslavia, Women in Black Belgrade, Žene u Crnom Beograd in their native language, started their actions under the slogan "Always disobedient to patriarchy, war, nationalism and militarism…" and remain active to this day. They are integrated in an international network which originated in 1988 at the start of the first Intifada when women from both Israel and Palestine embarked on a joint project to protest against the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank by the Jewish State, the extreme violence inflicted on civilians by the Israeli armed forces and the severe breaches of human rights observed. There are Women in Black groups in other places in the world[67] and, although they reflect the same preoccupations, concerns and goals, they each have their own specific objectives which depend on the political and social circumstances of their particular community. They wear black to their protests as a symbolic tool, the colour traditionally worn when mourning for the dead, all the dead in a recent armed conflict that are still very much present and will not be forgotten. Mourning is in Serbia's cultural context a private act; Women in Black Belgrade subvert this tradition and publicly expose their bodies covered in black to mourn the war dead. Their preferred form of demonstrating is through regular silent vigils, the silence that women are condemned to under patriarchy and "characterizes the life of the majority of citizens in this country" (Zajović 2013:9), now transformed into an active and visible voice of non-violence in the main squares of cities in Serbia and neighbouring countries affected by the war in the former Yugoslavia; the silent voice that cannot express the horrors of the atrocities committed in the nineties most of these protesters witnessed.[68] It is significant that men participate in these vigils and are not excluded from any of group's activities as long as they "don't

[67] In addition to the founding group in Israel and the Serbian branch, there are active Women in Black organisations in Italy, Belgium, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, India, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain and Uruguay.
[68] In *Three Guineas* the silence of women is represented by the punctuation used: "…Again there are three dots; again they represent a gulf – of silence this time" (Woolf 2008:331).

have a problem to call themselves Women in Black" (Zajović 2013:45). "These are men who refused to go to war, hid themselves from violent mobilization, deserted from the battlefields, or, after the war, spoke out with us for conscientious objection, abolishing the military, and (supporting) all forms of demilitarization" (Zajović 2006:10).

Women in Black Belgrade's main goal is to achieve a non-violent society composed of "civilised human beings; human beings, that is, who wish to prevent war" (Woolf 2008:262) by eradicating long-term values disseminated by the Serbian institutions, which allowed the war to take place: patriarchy, militarism and nationalism. The description of the Serbian institutions provided in their published works is clear in denouncing, as *Three Guineas* did, the causes of war identifying patriarchy and dictatorship as one and the same force behind the official discourse that incited the war in the former Yugoslavia. They declare themselves "radically anti-patriarchal because patriarchy is not only a system of domination (…); patriarchy is the main cause of war", denounce militarism as "armed patriarchy" and group "sexism, nationalism and militarism" as "the patriarchal triad" which led their country to the extreme violence they themselves experienced in the 1990's and has left visible wounds in Serbia (Zajović 2006:82).

Women in Black Belgrade's main objective is, therefore, to "crush him in our own country" (Woolf 2008:230), i.e., extinguish the patriarchal, dictatorial and criminal figures who have been in power in Serbia and established a warmongering discourse spreading fear, suspicion and the need to fight against a non-existent enemy by promoting a model of masculinity which viewed the soldier as a hero and ignored the human costs of war. Women in Black Belgrade claim that only the general acceptance of these -isms insidiously represented in all institutions of Serbia allowed the state of affairs that led to the war which they saw happen in their own country and the world witnessed live on television. Instead of opting for the indifference the female narrator suggests in *Three Guineas* as a means of resistance and "pour mild scorn" (Woolf 2008:204) over the powerful networks in society, Women in Black Belgrade, as activists determined to live in a fairer and safer environment, pour heavy scorn over all the sacrosanct branches of Serbia's ruling power structures which are male and rather than ignoring them, they confront them. They have found out "new ways of approaching the public" and "consider it their duty to investigate the claims of all public societies to which, like the Church and the universities, they are forced to contribute as taxpayers" (Woolf 2008:297, 319).

The physical photographs that accompany Woolf's written work depict the men held responsible for the state of affairs in Britain in 1938 by the female narrator: a soldier, royal heralds representing the proud subjects of the regime, academics, a judge and an archbishop. The military, the government and their faithful followers, the educational and court systems and the church are the targets Women in Black Belgrade have chosen in their process to transform society simply because they are the channels that convey the messages they deem necessary to eradicate in order to achieve their objectives. Transforming society and its power structures involves changing "the old tune which human nature, like a gramophone whose needle has stuck, is now grinding out with such unanimity" (Woolf 2008:238). The "old tune" which produced disastrous effects can still be heard and is not yet in the eyes of Women in Black Belgrade, obsolete and, so, in the world of *Three Guineas* not yet ready to be burnt. Every day there are still visible signs of the "retrograde fascist tendencies" (Zajović 2006:47) in Serbia and this is what these women set out to denounce, question and change. A new set of human values is necessary for Serbian society to exist free from discrimination and fear and then, only then, will/would the burning of the old structures be possible.

In their publication entitled *Women for Peace* they declare in the first few pages: "[w]e Women in Black Belgrade wish to stimulate different values than those dominated by the patriarchal spirits which are imposed upon us: non-violence in place of violence, solidarity instead of oppression, life instead of destruction" (Zajović 2013:10). These general objectives echo those proclaimed by Virginia Woolf in 1938 when the female narrator of *Three Guineas* addresses the first correspondent "[t]hat aim is the same for us both. It is to assert 'the rights of all – men and women – to the respect in their persons of the great principles of Justice and Equality and Liberty'" (Woolf 2008:366).

The figure of the dictator/patriarch, "a very dangerous as well as a very ugly animal" (Woolf 2008:229) has not yet disappeared from everyday Serbian life. In 2006, when there were no doubts about the responsibility of the atrocities perpetrated in the former Yugoslavia, Women in Black Belgrade pointed out that the governmental structures "tolerate retired generals appearing in uniforms at the funeral of a war criminal", the funeral of the former president Slobodan Milošević who died of natural causes while in custody during his trial by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (Zajović 2013:215). This is not the only sign, however, that the situation has not changed much since the end of the war as "individuals who belonged

to the regime (…) are still in positions of power, in the civil service, army, police, judiciary, in short, at all levels of government"; "the glorification of war criminals (primarily Karadžić and Mladić) and the crimes they committed (for instance the slogan 'Knife, Wire, Srebrenica') can be heard at football games, but also on Belgrade Streets, especially during Women in Black Belgrade's vigils (…) The main feature of the counter-protesters (…) was a shirt with a picture of Radovan Karadžić" (Zajović 2013:172). The symbols of what should be a shameful past for Serbia are still being proudly paraded in the streets, a case of what Virginia Woolf would describe as "a barbarous, a displeasing spectacle" (Woolf 2008:180) and what Women in Black Belgrade consider to be the root of the problem in the society they live in, that the principles that led to the war they endured are still upheld by a significant and visible segment of society and the culprits who should be imprisoned are, instead, in positions of power and enjoy popular support.[69]

Determined to question the authority of the Serbian government, Women in Black Belgrade constantly remind it of the responsibility the institutions have had in the atrocities committed during the war and demand to know facts. In 2010 a letter was sent to the "relevant ministries which dealt, or should deal with, the confrontation of the Serbian state with the past, with demilitarization, reparations, rights of war invalids, material and non-material damages, human security, domestic violence, mental health" amongst others; the letter included 19 questions about the war which were never made public, such as the exact number of civilian and military deaths, the number of victims still unaccounted for in mass graves in Serbia and neighbouring countries, the figures referring to war invalids, refugees, volunteers serving in the army, deserters and the punishment they faced. Needless to say all these facts remain military secrets.

Another letter sent to President Tadić in 2010 reminded him that on "15 January 2009 the European Parliament voted a resolution which declares 11 July as the Memorial Day of the genocide in Srebrenica" (Zajović 2013:43), the implication being that the Serbian government should mark the occasion. Women in Black Belgrade and other associations always do, but the structures of authority in Serbia would rather not acknowledge the criminal past, would rather deny it than confront it.

[69] General Zoran Stanković is given as one of such examples. Having served in Bosnia Herzegovina with Mladić, he was appointed as a member of the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation under the Koštunica presidency (Zajović 2013:216).

In 2008 Women in Black Belgrade in conjunction with seven other non-governmental organisations presented the national assembly with a "Declaration of the obligation of the state of Serbia to undertake all measures aimed at protecting the rights of the victims of war crimes, particularly the rights of the victims of the Srebrenica genocide (…) to confess that the crime of genocide has been committed on our behalf, and thus legitimately and morally demonstrate that it distances itself from the crime" (Zajović 2013:24, 56). The declaration was officially rejected; the suggestion of having a monument built in memory of the victims of genocide was equally declined by the government in March 2011.

One of the essential principles Women in Black Belgrade defend is that crimes commanded by the government and carried out by the army and paramilitary groups must be acknowledged and justly punished. As Serbian women, not part of the structures of power and therefore excluded from the decision-making spheres, they recognise and declare knowing "that genocide has been committed in our name and who committed it" (Zajović 2013:23). Through their on-going campaign entitled "Not in our Name" Women in Black Belgrade condemn the crimes that the Serbian government committed under the guise of what Virginia Woolf identified as one of the common arguments men use to wage war: "I am fighting to protect "our country"" (Woolf 2008:311). Women in Black Belgrade want to live in a society where nobody is discriminated against and adamantly oppose nationalism, one of the main justifications used in waging war in the former Yugoslavia. Instead of opting for Woolf's pledge "[a]s a woman I have no country" (Woolf 2008:313) these Serbian activists adopt Adrienne Rich's revision of Woolf's rejection of nationalism proclaimed in "Notes Toward a Politics of Location" in which accountability for place, for the concrete space of the community we belong to plays an important role in what we do since "a place on the map is also a place in history" (Freedman 2007:369). Women in Black do not think they can move forward without looking back, they do not want to forget what was done in their name and demand that war criminals, their own countrymen and women be brought to justice for the atrocities they committed.

Women in Black Belgrade vehemently refuse to be included in a violent, nationalistic campaign in the name of all Serbs. The criminal forces in power at the time of the war clearly did not represent the whole of the population in Serbia, judging by the

number of anti-war protests[70] and defections in the region. Women in Black Belgrade were at the time of the war active in publicly protesting against the regime and protecting deserters; support for "the men who refused to participate in all military formations (…) in the aggressor army as well as in the armies of the aggressed countries" (Zajović 2013:96) was made public in October 1991 in one of the first announcements the Serbian group made. From 1996 to 2002 the group published nine issues of their magazine entitled *Objection* in which they divulged their principles and informed the public about the advantages of the creation of the Conscientious Objector status. Women in Black Belgrade's activists founded a Safe House for deserters in Budapest, in Hungary, where men hid to escape from conscription to the Serbian military. These acts of civil disobedience reflect the belief that it is necessary to confront the regime and openly defend the refusal to conform and cooperate with a government they deem criminal, and support those who disobey it to achieve a fairer society.

Changing society is a lengthy process but it is Women in Black Belgrade's ultimate objective. They look upon remembrance as a civic responsibility and they engage in campaigns that echo Virginia Woolf's words in the essay "Men and Women": "[t]o try the accepted forms, to discard the unfit, to create others that are more fitting, is a task that must be accomplished before there is freedom or achievement" (Woolf 1995b:195). Aware of the inappropriateness of some street names and public places which evoke nationalist figures, that is, acknowledging that "the accepted forms" are harmful for the future of their country, Women in Black Belgrade suggest discarding "the unfit" references to names that represent the values they want to eradicate and propose replacing them with names of pacifist and feminist activists, thus creating new forms "that are more fitting" in a society that would prevent war.

Not only do they operate on the level of language by trying to abolish the insidious presence of nationalistic references in people's daily lives, but also on the

[70] During the war Women in Black Belgrade report protests initiated by the general public. In July 1991 a group called Mothers against War staged a memorable action of civil disobedience: "several hundred parents, predominantly mothers of young recruits, broke into the Parliament of Serbia, interrupting its session and demanding the return of their sons from the Armed Forces and the end to all conflicts" (Zajović 2013:88). The Serbian activists supported the cause of the parents of conscripted soldiers. Similar movements like the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina are cited by Women in Black Belgrade as an inspiration and an example of engaged motherhood and resistance against the atrocities of their government. The South-American movement started in 1977 in response to the "Dirty War" waged by the military junta that ruled the country between 1976 and 1983, period during which thousands of people disappeared, were tortured and murdered by state officials.

legislative level by putting forward proposals which clearly clash with the patriarchal vision of masculinity of the soldier as a brave and honourable figure, spread by the government at the time of the war and always by the military who divulge their glamorous and valiant image ignoring "the photographs of ruined houses and dead bodies" they leave behind (Woolf 2008:180). In 1998 in the manifesto entitled "I am a Conscientious Objector", Women in Black Belgrade pledged "for the recognition of conscientious objection as a fundamental human right" and established that this status "is a right to a choice (…) an expression of disobedience to patriarchy" (Zajović 2013:97). The fact that these women activists fight for the right of men not to engage in military conflict clearly evokes the female narrator in *Three Guineas* when she states that since the patriarch/dictator "is interfering now with your liberty; he is dictating how you shall live (…) a common interest unites us" (Woolf 2008:304, 364); men and women must fight together against the oppression of patriarchy and dictatorship, which are one and the same force.

Women in Black Belgrade participated in the collection of signatures with the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights in a campaign that demanded the right for any citizen to refuse to be part of an armed conflict. In 2003 the status of Conscientious Objector was recognised in Serbia and a civilian service option to military activity was legalised. In 2010 another significant achievement Women in Black Belgrade had been pressing for was attained with the abolition of compulsory military service, another step towards the demilitarisation of society and a freer future for a community capable of preventing war.

Women in Black Belgrade continue to "advocate for military reform, civil and democratic control of the armed forces, decreasing military expenditures and transferring these funds to the civil sector" (Zajović 2006:65). The budget for the armed forces was also criticised by the female narrator of *Three Guineas*, who remarked that "we are spending £300,000,000 annually upon arms" compared to "the minute income" of women's movements and the Society for the Abolition of Slavery (Woolf 2008:217), causes she considers important for the construction of a fairer society. What is more, women's income derived from their professions is put in contrast with men's salaries and, consequently, assume an even more minute dimension when contrasted with the enormity of the amount spent on the military. Women in Black Belgrade denounce the

poverty that the population in general and women in particular[71] are subjected to and compare it to the "tremendous budgetary sums (that) were allocated to the Yugoslav National Army"; the link "between war and the sudden accumulation of wealth by particular groups in power" "well-paid generals, warmongers and profiteers – all those who force other people to kill in order to defend their power and privileges" is also made by the women activists (Zajović 2013:71, 12).[72] The patriarchal system in place in Serbia rewards the military, corrupts those who belong to it and perpetuates the values that make it impossible to prevent war. Through their campaign entitled "Everything for Peace, Health, and Knowledge – Nothing for Armament" Women in Black Belgrade make their priorities clear and openly pledge for the demilitarisation of Serbian society, advocating the transference of the sums spent on the military to the civilian community's health and education systems.

As a women's movement, Women in Black Belgrade's own budget is minute compared to the amounts spent on the Serbian armed forces; they are not funded by the state that governs their country but rather by institutions, groups or individuals from all around the world who believe in their aims and activities. These include, to mention just a few, UNIFEM (the United Nations Development Fund for Women), the European Commission, the Urgent Action Fund for Woman's Human Rights in the United States of America, Associazione per la Pace in Italy, Women's Aid to Former Yugoslavia in the United Kingdom and other Women in Black groups.

Changes to the military structures have been introduced and Women in Black Belgrade have been an active voice campaigning for them, although one of the major alterations has been the possibility of women to join the armed forces. This fact is viewed by these pacifist activists as a serious setback in their struggle for a better future as it militarises women and thus spreads unwelcome principles to wider segments of society. It is their view that the military structure should be changed and not allowed to spread their "old tune" even further. In this sense, they would prefer total exclusion from a system that was created with objectives they see harmful for their community and perhaps wish, as the female narrator of *Three Guineas* did of the Church of England

[71] Although women's status has evolved in the period that divides the publication of *Three Guineas* and the date when Women in Black Belgrade started their activity, the Serbian activists point out the unprivileged role of women in their society. As the primary carers of homes and families in Serbia, women generally have a lower standard of education and qualifications and dedicate their time to what Virginia Woolf defined as "unpaid-for professions", the jobs women do at home. The lack of independent access to capital, property, loans and resources, place the average Serbian woman in a very vulnerable situation. (Zajović 2013:275).

[72] Mladić is said to have been on the Army of Yugoslavia payroll until 2002 (Zajović 2013:73).

"long may she exclude us" (Woolf 2008:273). If institutions are organised around values that clearly clash with their aspirations, it is logical that groups like Women in Black Belgrade, as outsiders, should want to remain distanced from them rather than wish to become part of them.

Women in Black reject the essentialist prejudice that women are naturally more inclined for peace than men, although they recognise that "war has been predominantly a male activity" (Zajović 2013:78)[73], and they cite various examples of women who, integrated in the regime's discourse, repeated the dreaded warmongering words and committed war crimes. In 1991 the Movement of Women for Yugoslavia, commonly known as "women in fur coats" with similar goals to the White Feathers movement in World War I, was created to support their male relatives in high-ranking military positions to wage war, militarise Serbia, annihilate armed groups in other republics, and incite all the Serbian population to participate in the war effort. Other "patriotic" groups of women such as The Central Circle of the Serbian Sisters were driven by the need they felt to participate in the war. Their leader Biljana Plavšić was convicted for war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Reports show evidence that, although not in large numbers, women participated in war clashes as part of military or paramilitary groups (Zajović 2013:80).

Women in Black Belgrade denounce all these instances of active female participation in the war and what is deeply disturbing is that "a large segment of the Serbian population views war criminals as national heroes, assumes that prison camps did not exist, and maintains that the number of people killed in Srebrenica is exaggerated by international agents" (Zajović 2013:59). Only in a militarised society whose objective is not to prevent war, would the Law of Assistance to The Hague Indictees be acceptable. Adopted in 2004, this document allowed indictees and their families to apply for financial support from the Serbian government (Zajović 2013:73).[74]

One of Women in Black's main concerns is that military values are present in all spheres of life and it is this state of affairs Women in Black Belgrade want changed. The educational system is identified as one of the structures that needs urgent reform and the group of activists advocate "a radical change in the dominant values system

[73] "To fight has always been the man's habit" (Woolf 2008:158).
[74] Ratko Mladić's family received 90,000 euros of government money after his arrest under the Law of Assistance to The Hague Indictees (Zajović 2013:73).

(which is sexist, nationalist, militarist, xenophobic, and homophobic) through changes in the educational system at all levels. We pressure institutions to include gender equality, non-violence and multiculturalism in compulsory education" (Zajović 2006:7). As Serbian women educated in the system in question, they experienced nationalist chanting promoted in school[75] and still observe a certain revision of history that celebrates the "greatness" of the Serbian nation without any critical approach or condemnation of undeniable facts. The inculcation of values that lead to war remains visible in the course books adopted in schools in all subjects, but particularly in the subjects of history, literature and religion. The implication is that all structures behind the adoption of the books used to educate Serbian children, such as the Ministry of Education, the publishing houses, the authors, the schools themselves and their teachers participate in the construction of an education that must be reformulated since it has been "a weapon used in function of war and/or to preserve the established social order" (Zajović 2013:112).

Women in Black Belgrade recognise that only by destroying these values that permeate the educational system, can society produce people who will prevent war. Again, Virginia Woolf's words echo: "since the old education of the old colleges breeds neither a particular respect for liberty nor a particular hatred of war it is clear that you must rebuild your college differently" (Woolf 2008:199). With this objective in mind, the Serbian activists have devised an educational project which values the triad education, information and memory and intends to turn education into a weapon for peace.

First and foremost Women in Black Belgrade work on educating themselves by participating in international conferences[76] in order to keep up to date with the realities of other countries, seek support from the international network they are part of and discuss the implementation of strategies for change with numerous associations working towards the same ideals. The educational plan to prevent war put into practice by the Serbian activists involves several initiatives and various target audiences. Schools are

[75] Children were taught and sang lines such as "Hey young pioneers, we're a real army" and "If Yugoslavia were a little girl, Tito would be her daddy" (Zajović 2013:74).

[76] Women in Black Belgrade regularly attend international events. Listed in their manifesto *Always Disobedient* are, to name just a few, several United Nations Conferences in Vienna in 1993, in Cairo in 1994, in Beijing in 1995, a European Parliament initiative in Brussels in 2000 entitled "Women's Contribution to Stability in Eastern and South Eastern Europe and various Forums for Peace in Istanbul in 2003, in Florence in 2005 where they meet organisations such as Amnesty International and War Resisters International. They have also participated in the Summer School for Democracy in Croatia in the years 1996, 1997, 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2005 (Zajović 2006:73, 74).

the obvious place to start an alternative educational plan. Their project entitled "Education for Democracy – Law in our Everyday lives" aimed at teachers placed in primary and secondary schools in over thirty cities in Serbia was ministered from October 2002 until June 2003 in cooperation with The Forum for Free Education from Zagreb in neighbouring Croatia and with the financial support of UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation). The Ministry of Education and Sport of The Republic of Serbia verified this programme as a form of professional training of educators aimed at enabling them for the application of interactive and participatory methods in education for democracy and human rights. Of 61 participants, 58 completed the training successfully; a total of 325 workshops in 31 cities were held. This programme was cancelled due to withdrawal of support from the Koštunica government in January 2004.

Educating the public is another way to spread information so that collective memory will help prevent war in the future. Women in Black Belgrade permanently engage in educational work by creating and spreading knowledge with publishing activities[77], travelling workshops, demonstrations, silent vigils, artistic performances, all intended to work against the manipulation and denial of the past and to educate future generations to prevent war and the repetition of the past. Srebrenica assumes a leading role in the public sphere and has become the ultimate symbol of the responsibility of Serbia in the disastrous events in the 1990's: "[i]n the most official place, in the center of Belgrade, we bring the citizens of this country face to face with what they want to forget" (Zajović 2013:50). Forgetting the horror, the real effects of the war and denying responsibility will not help the population move forward and achieve a peaceful society. Women in Black Belgrade's job is to constantly remind people of what happened. In 2008 "The Women of Srebrenica Speak", a video installation by Milica Tomić, was projected in Republic Square[78] where passers-by were confronted with statements of the grieving female victims of the genocide in Bosnia Herzegovina; in 2011 in the same square Women in Black Belgrade activists held posters with the names of the identified victims of the massacre, 8,372 so far in total, and read every single one out. All participants were also holding stickers with the word Srebrenica which were carefully

[77] Women in Black Belgrade publish educational material, anthologies containing texts from important authors from all over the world addressing the essential issues they deem necessary to discuss and use them in their travelling workshops.

[78] Republic Square is in the centre of Belgrade not far from the National Assembly of Serbia and is one of the most commonly chosen places for Women in Black Belgrade to protest.

stuck to the ground of Republic Square in a symbolic gesture to avoid the erasure of history. The careful staging of these protests reveal Women in Black's sensitive approach to the victims of the state who killed in their name. The constant reminder of unthinkable acts of war will, one hopes, eventually stick to people's memory; what cannot be forgotten is that the victims, every single one of them, were individuals with a life, a family caught up in the insanity of violence. The female narrator in *Three Guineas* suggests that the anonymous bodies in the photographs belong to real people[79] who have been subjected to the obliteration of their identity. Women in Black Belgrade refuse to accept the annihilation of the Other by voicing the victims' names, by giving them an identity and making them equal to them, to us, lives as precarious and grievable as any of ours.[80] Voicing people's names makes it impossible for a severely mutilated body to become "the body of a pig." Srebrenica happened and the victims are remembered as individual human beings not just as part of anonymous figures in war statistics.

Virginia Woolf's words in *Three Guineas* when an alternative and "lame" educational plan for women seemed to be an unattainable task have not lost their validity: "[w]e must hope that in time that education may be altered" (2008:208). Women in Black Belgrade have an alternative plan for the whole country, its institutions and citizens and, although it does seem like a constant struggle, they too think that "to destroy that system, to get rid of the causes of war, it takes time" (Zajović 2013:44).

Persisting in the face of powerful structures is characteristic of Women in Black. They do not flinch in courtrooms, a place for "educated men to emphasise their superiority over other people" (Woolf 2008:180). They denounce the shortcomings of the legal system and demand fair punishment for the war crimes committed as they recognise that reconciliation is not possible without justice. They accuse the legal system of not providing justice by relativising war crimes and treating them as separate incidents rather than part of a plan devised by the state as a war strategy, thus concealing and avoiding the responsibility of the Serbian state and the prosecution of its

[79] "This morning's collection contains the photograph of what might be a man's body, or a woman's (…) so mutilated (…) that it might (…) be the body of a pig" (Woolf 2008:164).

[80] In *Precarious Life* Judith Butler remarks: "we seldom, if ever, hear the names of the thousands of Palestinians who have died by the Israeli military with United States support, or any number of Afghan people, children and adults. Do they have names, faces, personal histories, family, favorite hobbies, slogans by which they live?" (Butler 2006:32). Through the naming of the victims of the Srebrenica genocide, Women in Black Belgrade give the victims an identity and prevent their eradication as tangible casualties of war whose life is worth grieving.

commanders. During the war in Bosnia, and according to United Nations and The Hague Tribunal estimates, between 20,000 to 50,000 women were raped as part of a grand plan of ethnic cleansing; only 12 cases have been prosecuted (Zajović 2013:221).

The monitoring of trials is one of the strategies Women in Black Belgrade use to "learn about the institutional model of transitional justice[81] and (other) models that strengthen civil society's responsibility to confront the past" (Zajović 2006:35). Also by informing the national and international public of the outcomes by releasing statements to the press, organising internal and public discussions of the analysis of the court cases, these activists expect to raise awareness of the injustices practised by Serbian institutions. Women in Black Belgrade report having followed the trials of the massacres of Bosnians in Sjeverin and Štrpci, the assassination of Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić and the killing of Bosnians by the Scorpions Unit[82], a neo-fascist paramilitary group linked to the Srebrenica massacre (Zajović 2006:34, 35). The outcome of these trials revealed a poor conviction rate and an institutional tendency for acquittal and release of the defendants. From this monitoring activity, alarming conclusions arise: "[i]n a disturbed system of values, criminals become heroes, murderers become patriots, and war looters turn into respectable members of society" (Zajović 2013:75).

In their seemingly endless range of activities to denounce the institutionalised values that are conducive to war, Women in Black Belgrade demand that the Serbian state be secular. The Serbian Orthodox Church, a patriarchal structure, is accused of having supported the aggressors during the war by blessing and divulging the nationalist discourse thus enticing discrimination against other nationalities which had a disastrous effect on the whole of the population and on women in particular. In 1992 the ruling Socialist Party of Serbia adopted as their congress document "Upozorenje"[83] which stated that "Serbian women should bear children for patriotic and moral reasons (…) their desire to have children should be mobilized." This document was supported by The Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Serbian Orthodox Church (Zajović 2013:81). The Church was involved in the rhetoric that reduced women's role to

[81] Transitional justice is a collection of institutional, political and social processes, measures and decisions related to the transition from a criminal/dictatorial regime to democracy (Zajović 2006:36).
[82] Two members of the Scorpions unit were indeed convicted, although their sentences were mitigated following an appeal to the Supreme Court of Serbia in September 2008. One of the accused saw his twenty-year sentence reduced to fifteen years and the other one a five-year sentence abolished. Women in Black protested against this decision through a statement addressed to the public entitled "Shameful Decision of the Supreme Court of Serbia" (Zajović 2013:220).
[83] Upozorenje can be translated into English as warning.

childbearing and cooperated with the state in the diffusion of their message. In 2006 through several street actions of which I selected one entitled "We will give birth if we want, when we want, and with whom we want", Women in Black protested against "the clericalization of the state and the propaganda of clerical-nationalist institutions which demands the prohibition of abortion and the implementation of policies to increase natality in Serbia" (Zajović 2006:58).

It is the whole society that seems to hold retrograde tendencies and its institutions reproduce each other's discourse creating a vicious circle that is so hard to break out of. However, "the ring once broken, the captives would be freed" (Woolf 2008:298). It is towards the breaking of the ring that Women in Black Belgrade work, doing or trying to do what Hannah Arendt viewed as "the permanent possibility of taking further action to interrupt apparently inexorable processes or set politics off on a different direction (1998:xviii). To my question "[i]s it ever frustrating doing what you do, working from the margins?" Women in Black Belgrade replied: "[y]es, all the time." They are still insulted and attacked in the streets by extremists; on the tenth anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre in 2005, they had tear gas thrown at them (Zajović 2013:317); in 2008 their Peace March was banned, although with the support of numerous associations, artists and public figures, they managed to protest a week later under the slogan "Postponed March 8th – Enough with prohibitions, fear and violence! Free citizens, never obedient!" (Zajović 2013:181, 182). It is frustrating, but, they added, they have learnt to live with small victories. They resist and they persist, echoing Virginia Woolf's words: "[w]e who now agitate these humble pens may in another century or two speak from a pulpit" (Woolf 2008:242). Women in Black Belgrade agitate their pens, their voices and silence, but encounter numerous obstacles: "[o]ur voice is either demonized or minimized" (Zajović 2013:204). They will resist, though, with their politics of counter-memory, their own "counter-public sphere" (Fernald 2005:178) questioning the institutions of their country, disrupting apparent peace with petitions, marches, vigils and any non-violent action to challenge the status quo. They will keep crossing the line, igniting severe criticism and irate attacks but they will not give up conquering and creating an alternative public space of peace, solidarity and non-discrimination. Virginia Woolf's work was also the target of violent responses, but a more elevated status was achieved with the writing of *Three Guineas*: "I've done my duty as an outsider for some months. And I suppose have only made myself more

unpopular: ah yes: but freer" (Woolf 1985:246). Women in Black will not back down in the face of what seems to be (still!) the natural reaction to feminine opinion: rejection.

It is not my claim that Women in Black Belgrade are the embodiment of the Outsiders Society outlined in *Three Guineas*, although there are points in common such as the identification of the causes of war and the link between the patriarchal society and dictatorship, the need for an alternative education that would cause "change in the mindset, both of women as well as men" (Zajović 2013:207), the priority the armed forces assume in government budgets over truly important aspects of society and the common interest that both sexes share as they are both victims of the system. One of the differences that can be noted is that, unlike the Society of Outsiders, Women in Black Belgrade take honours, are proud of them and publicise them. "In Serbia (…) we have not received any institutional recognition" and are frequently blockaded by local authorities. They have, however, been acclaimed by several international organisations and awarded the Millennium Peace Prize by UNIFEM in 2001; they have also been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001, 2003 and 2005 and the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2006 (Zajović 2006:76, 77).

Three Guineas represents an artist's response to the world in the 1930's; Women in Black Belgrade is a proactive response of the civilian community to the context in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990's. The principles defended by the Serbian women simply transport Virginia Woolf's work to the contemporary world as a valid piece of writing. Woolf would probably not join this Society in Serbia, knowing how she felt about associations even if she agreed with their values, although I am convinced she would dispense one or two and quite probably even three guineas towards the cause Women in Black Belgrade are fighting for.

> Virginia Woolf's Orlando (…) lives for centuries; so does – so will – Virginia Woolf.
> Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf*

> But what can literature do? Or rather: what can words do?
> Maria Isabel Barreno, Maria Teresa Horta, Maria Velho da Costa, *New Portuguese Letters*

Conclusion

In *Three Guineas* Virginia Woolf refers to an odour, an atmosphere hanging over women who expose themselves in the public sphere: it "is one of the most powerful, partly because it is one of the most impalpable, of the enemies with which the daughters of educated men have to fight" (Woolf 2008:228). Fighting the invisible force of prejudice has never been, nor will it ever be, a smooth process. Challenging the institutions which perpetuate discrimination insidiously, confronting them, denouncing them and claiming the need for alternatives is, I suspect, always going to be a confrontational act. Going against the grain causes friction, but friction, insistent friction can also cause the spark that ignites change.

Virginia Woolf wrote an essay as she felt the need to expose structures of power which are in place to this day. The text equates patriarchy with dictatorship, denouncing it as an oppressive system which limits citizens, both women and men, advocates non-violent resistance, equality and suggests the transformation of society through an alternative education capable of producing civilised human beings. All this is done through a strategy that Adrienne Rich would deem necessary for women to adopt to shake the established order: "renounce the temptation to be graceful, pleasing, respectable" (Silver 1991:368). If the objective is to revolutionise society then women must refuse to comply with the docile behaviour that is expected of them by the regime that constrains them and act differently, renounce the façade imposed on the female part of the patriarchal society. *Three Guineas* does exactly that: it is a shocking text as it uses radical thoughts, anger, extreme language and imagery, what one might traditionally label as unladylike features.

Woolf's text has been commonly perceived as a threat by many, but also as source of energy for others. Through the cause of Women in Black Belgrade I wanted to show some of the echoes of *Three Guineas* that resonate in the contemporary world. The Serbian activists show through their principles and struggle Woolf's text in action, as it were. They confront institutions that spread the discourse which oppresses both women and men, demand change, believe in an alternative education that would produce "the kind of society, the kind of people that will help prevent war" (Woolf 2008:199), display an attitude of non-conformity and adamantly refuse the use of violence. All these concepts produce an "odour" intended to dismiss as irrelevant or hysterical a voice they insist on having in the twenty-first century. It seems that there is evidence to indicate that there is an important number of women who are still "trapesing along at the tail end of the procession" (Woolf 2008:241), although there are clear examples of women who are now running parallel to the procession, disrupting it, brandishing their voices or silence, pointing out corrupt structures which encourage war, benefit the elites and impoverish the majority of the population.

Security, they claim, "is the absence of fear, violence and poverty" (Zajović 2006:53). Peace is not just the absence of war. A population who lacks opportunities for a prosperous future, who lives under the deprivation of basic needs such as food, housing, access to education, healthcare and employment is not a population in peace. This lack of fulfilment of essential elements of life has devastating effects on society and it generates the perfect conditions for oppression, dictatorship and violent conflict. War does not break out in an affluent, well-educated and informed environment of social justice. Women in Black Belgrade denounce these facts in their country. However, the facts they denounce are not exclusive to Serbia nor are they absent from Woolf's country today.

A quick glance at the newspaper today shows the relevance of the ideas in *Three Guineas*. On 13 September 2013 the stories in *The Guardian* include the sentencing to death of four men involved in gang rape which resulted in the death of the female victim in Dehli in India; a suicide bomb in Afghanistan; the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the failed Oslo peace accords between Palestine and Israel which granted Yasser Arafat, Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994; Anders Breivik[84], a confessed proud fascist and anti-feminist imprisoned for the murder of 77

[84] In his manifesto released on the day of his attacks and available on the internet, Anders Breivik reveals his paranoia over the influence of movements such as feminism in institutions in the Western world:

people in Norway in 2011, has been accepted as a student of political science at Oslo University; the British Liberal Democrat MP Sarah Teather[85] is to stand down at the next election leaving the party increasingly "in the hands of elderly white men" (as quoted in the article); the civil war in Syria continues.[86] Violence against women derived from rampant inequality, war, radical fascist followers, unequal representation in the world of work and public office, and dictatorship have not been eradicated.

The status of women has improved significantly in the United Kingdom since 1938 when Virginia Woolf's essay was published: women are full citizens by law, discrimination against them is illegal, education is compulsory for both sexes and there is no legal impediment for women to pursue a professional life even to the detriment of a family life. Nevertheless, as Pierre Bourdieu suggests: "the visible changes that have affected the condition of women mask the permanence of the invisible structures" (2001:106). The "odour" remains. Equal pay and representation in the public sphere are still not a reality. Woolf's homeland is also currently involved in a war in Afghanistan and recently disengaged in Iraq, where violence has not been halted.[87] Parliament voted against British military intervention in Syria on 29 August, a result, perhaps, of the disastrous invasion of Iraq, which has made politicians more cautious about sending the now voluntary-only troops into another war.

What the newspapers show us today is that "pictures and voices are the same today as they were 2,000 years ago" (Woolf 2008:363), that although things have changed, they have not changed completely and not everywhere. The access we have to the pictures and the voices is easier, making us more aware of what is happening. Being more aware adds to our responsibility of not complying with the repetition of mistakes which produce "photographs of more dead bodies, of more ruined houses" (Woolf

"[t]he goal of radical feminism was never the equality between the sexes, it was about the destruction of the nuclear family and of the power structures in general after two generations of Second Wave Feminism (…) the West has skyrocketing divorce rates and plummeting birth rates, leading to a cultural and demographic vacuum that makes us vulnerable to a take-over by … Islam" (2011:361).

[85] The odour surrounds Teather as she leaves as *The Daily Telegraph* reports on 16 September. Tim Loughton, a Conservative MP who served as family minister until 2012 with Sarah Teather accused her of not being a good family minister because she didn't "believe in families" and "certainly didn't produce one of her own." He also adds that the "ghastly regiment of feminists (…) have taken us so far from family values."

[86] Haunting images of an alleged chemical attack in Syria on the outskirts of Damascus were published on 21 August all around the world. Virginia Woolf's words resonate: "those certainly are dead children" (Woolf 2008:164). The Portuguese newspaper *Público* printed pictures of what could have been dozens of children asleep. Its English counterparts opted for a more veiled view of children's bodies wrapped up in white fabric.

[87] UK troops left Iraq in May 2011. On 15 September 2013, *The Observer* reports: "Iraq: 53 die in a day as wave of violence continues. Amid worst violence since 2008, many fear country is returning to same level of killing that drove it to brink of civil war."

2008:210). Pacifist stances are not unfashionable as prominent scholars today adamantly refuse the use of force as a solution as did respected intellectuals in the 1930's, such as Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein[88]. Judith Butler is one of such examples. In her response to an attack published in the *Jerusalem Post* on the awarding of the Adorno Prize, Butler explains in August 2012 why she favours boycotting Israel: "I do not endorse practices of violent resistance and neither do I endorse state violence, cannot, and never have. This view makes me perhaps more naïve than dangerous, but it is my view." Again, the "odour" of the invisible powers interfering in the thought and events of today's world, again a woman of critical words[89] publicly dismissed as anti-semitic, a taboo-word since World War II, a generally accepted insult in the "civilised" world.

"But what can literature do? Or rather: what can words do?" (Barreno 1975: 266). Virginia Woolf herself was aware of her limitations in the face of such extraordinarily intricate and complex problems: "how little the goodness or badness of my books affects the world" (Woolf 1985:56). However, her voice is still heard and it sounds contemporary. Words record memory, denounce, educate, spread concerns and alternatives. Words shout out solutions and if they are ignored, they need to be insistently repeated.

In the third chapter of this dissertation I have applied the insights of *Three Guineas* to the context of the war in the former Yugoslavia and the current situation in the Republic of Serbia, where Women in Black Belgrade operate. This is, by no means, the only possible approach to the demonstration of Woolf's relevance in today's world as my reading of today's *The Guardian* shows. It was my aim with this dissertation to bring examples of different women in distinct periods in history, of diverse public recognition and backgrounds who dared fight against the "odour" that surrounds them.

[88] Freud and Einstein exchanged letters on the issue of pacifism in the early 1930's. Einstein poses a question to Freud which could have been the question of the male correspondent in *Three Guineas*: "[t]his is the problem: is there any way of delivering mankind from the menace of war?"

[89] Judith Butler is not shy in her criticism of Israel as can be seen in her book *Precarious Life*. Of Jewish origin herself, she exposes the dangerous binary thinking which radicalises speech and actions: "If one holds out for a truly democratic Israel/Palestine, is one therefore anti-Israel?" (122). The extremism of Israeli discourse leads to contradictions and legitimises violence on one side of the conflict: "[t]he term "terrorist" is used, for instance, by the Israeli State to describe any and all Palestinian acts of resistance, but none of its own practices of state violence" (2006:4). Butler defends a solution for the region which equally respects the human value of Israelis and Palestinians and denounces what she considers a grave error in the identity of the Jewish State: "I am (…) passionate about Israel giving up religion as a prerequisite for the entitlements of citizenship, and believe that no contemporary democracy can and ought to base itself on exclusionary conditions of participation" (99). Judith Butler is not showing anti-semitism by sharing these opinions; she disagrees with the justification Israel equates for the mighty use of force and discrimination of non-Jewish citizens in the area.

The instances selected do not close the circle of this inquiry. Future applications are possible and, I would add, recommended and necessary. Lines of inquiry proliferate in different areas of knowledge, be it literature, politics, feminism, sociology, history, or all those combined in a cultural perspective. Studies into violence, the role of women in violent conflict, pacifism, non-violent resistance, these are all possible approaches for future use. The vast, complex and multi-faceted work of Virginia Woolf, offers a range of possibilities and the above topics could be combined with her thinking and production. I have briefly looked into the theme of war in Virginia Woolf's writings in section 1.3 of this dissertation. A more detailed analysis of such theme would certainly be a fascinating option for any academic.

Jane Marcus defined Virginia Woolf as "a guerrilla fighter in a Victorian skirt" (1981:1). What she wrote in 1938 was "bold & adventurous" (Woolf 1982a:151) exactly as she intended: "I am an outsider. I can take my way: experiment with my own imagination in my own way" (Woolf 19852:141). She wrote *Three Guineas* on her own terms, knowing her words would shock. This is what words can do, too. They shock and hopefully, by doing so, allow systems of oppression to shake. While the world is in disarray, while there are structures that need shaking, and the "odour" of prejudice persists, the words of Virginia Woolf will be alive, and through her work, she will, like Orlando, live for centuries.

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