From Essentialism to Constructivism? The Gender of Peace and War – Gilman, Woolf, Freud

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Is there a "natural" fit between gender and the pacifist or military impulse?

History seems to offer an answer to this question, even though general historiography of pacifism ignores it.[1] Only in recent histories of women in the peace movements has the discourse on this subject been initiated. Despite its antecedents in nineteenth-century Europe, this discourse gained momentum on both sides of the Atlantic around the two World Wars, persisted in the protest movements of the 1960s and 70s, and reached theoretical maturity in the post-gender heyday of the 1980s and 90s.[2]

This continuity notwithstanding, thinking on this issue has noticeably changed throughout the last century. Moreover, a close look at the *early* stages of the European peace movements reveals a complex

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[1] See Brock 1972, 1998; Cooper 1991; and Ceadel 1996. The first attempt to broach this subject from a broad interdisciplinary perspective is Goldstein 2001.

[2] See, for instance, Pierson 1987; Cooper 1987; Ruddick 1989; Carroll and Mohraz 1989; Liddington 1991; Alonso 1993; Swerdlow 1993. The same decades saw also the emergence of scholarship probing the opposite issue, namely, "women and war" (in particular, Enloe 1983, 2000; see also Berkin and Lovett 1980 and Elshtain 1987).

international picture in which diametrically opposite positions partially overlap almost from the start. This multifaceted scene has been described and analyzed by Jill Liddington, in her 1989 study *The Road to Greenham Common: Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain Since 1820*, where an attempt to disentangle the multiplicity of voices led to distinguishing three traditions of feminism, each with its own stance (1991: 6–8; 13–22).

The first and the oldest tradition, espoused by Victorian women as early as in the 1820s, is "maternalist" feminism. Having its modest beginnings in small Quaker-led "Female Auxiliary Peace Societies" (Liddington 14), the offshoots of the London Peace Society (established in 1816; see Brock 1972: 378), it adhered to a philosophy of "separate spheres" for the sexes, holding that pacifism was a natural effect of the maternal instinct and therefore part of women's *duties* as mothers and nurturers. In 1865, this position was "powerfully codified" (Liddington 19) by the eminent art critic John Ruskin, who decreed that "the woman's power is for rule, not for battle." Characteristically, he limited this rule – perhaps in the spirit of the Psalms (45: 14) – to "*Within his house*, as ruled by her" (emphasis added). His conclusion – "This is the true nature of home – it is the place of Peace" (ibid.) – served the maternalist peace feminists. However, on another occasion, the same year, Ruskin carried this concept to its logical conclusion, actually *blaming* European women, qua mothers, for not caring enough to prevent war… One can well imagine the consternation and conflicting reactions that this judgment aroused.[3] Curiously, he also encouraged women to wear black in protest: "a mute's black – with no jewel, no ornament" (Liddington 21) – an idea that materialized for the first time about half a century later, when 1500 women "dressed in mourning garb" gathered in New York for an anti-war parade in August 1914 (Alonso 56). More recently, this tactic has been revived in the vigils of the Israeli "Women in Black" and their international followers.[4]

On the diametrically opposite side of the spectrum Liddington identifies "equal-rights" or "liberalist" feminism, wherein peace was

[3] This lecture became a popular classic, according to Liddington: "Certainly the *Herald of Peace* [the mouthpiece of the London Peace Society – YF] was happy to echo this humbug; and the Peace Society even edited a booklet, *Ruskin on Women*, which remained in circulation a quarter of century later" (21).

[4] The organization "Women in Black," established in Israel in 1998, is described in Sharoni 1995 and Emmet 1996. For a critique see Azmon 1997.

linked with political *rights* for women (the suffrage campaign) but not with any "natural" sex-specific proclivity. Inspired by John Stuart Mill's Liberalism, this tradition sought to erase the age-old restrictive and demeaning perceptions that had been imposed on women's intellect and moral judgment. By the late nineteenth century it found itself estranged from the maternalist peace movements, believing, instead, that only the vote would enable women to gain political power and moral influence.

The third tradition, "radical" feminism, is more recent, suggests Liddington, a product of the early twentieth century. Stressing sexual differences, it attacks war and militarism as the expression of male natural proclivity for aggression, which it perceives as the public face of male violence in the domestic sphere. Accordingly, the radical tradition seeks to achieve peace by eradicating male dominance and subverting the existing social order.

Although this third, ostensibly newer tradition emphasizes a different aspect of the sexual-difference equation, it seems that it is closely related to its grandmother, or perhaps godmother, antecedent – namely, maternalist feminism. The proximity comes through clearly when we consider both the generational location and the overlapping of ideas between the authors chosen by Liddington to represent these feminist traditions. Despite her focus on Britain, Liddington sketches a wide international scene. Thus, "maternalist" feminism is represented by a South-African, Olive Schreiner (1855–1920), whose "Women and War" (a chapter of *Women and Labour*, 1911, also published separately as a pamphlet) is cited as a classic of the maternalist argument (68). In the same breath, however, Schreiner is also described as stressing "sexual difference" (69), a position attributed earlier in the book (8) to the representative of "radical" feminism, her American contemporary, Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1939). By contrast, the second feminist tradition, "liberalist" feminism, is represented by a British author of a younger generation, Virginia Woolf (1881–1941), whose emblematic text, *Three Guineas,* was published much later (1938) than the groundbreaking works of Schreiner and Gilman (1911).

It would appear then, that despite her tripartite division, Liddington herself is aware that the "maternalist" and "radical" camps have more in common than her history of ideas may seem to imply. In her own narrative, Schreiner and Gilman are often coupled together as the two contemporaneous authors who "found an enthusiastic readership in

Britain for their proclamation of *women's natural peace instincts* and their attack on *'male-made' war*" (13; cf. 65, 89; emphasis added). This statement is supported by the documentation of many followers (Mayreder, Key, Schwimmer, Hobhouse, Hallowes, to name just a few), who developed these ideas in various directions but basically accepted the maternalist argument. We may conclude, then, that most pre-World-War-I feminists assumed some sort of sexual difference as an undeniable given.

A possible exception may have been the Austrian-born leading peace activist Bertha von Suttner (1843–1914), author of the anti-militarist international "runaway bestseller" *Lay Down Your Arms* (1889) (Cooper 1991: 61). The first woman to win the Nobel Peace prize (1905), von Suttner is credited with "contributing to Alfred Nobel's decision to draw up his amazing will" (Cooper 1987: 65; cf. Cooper 1991: 81). She is nevertheless also reported to have candidly admitted that she saw "no difference between men's and women's viewpoints on peace" (ibid., 66). Although her critique of militarism was unmistakably voiced through the fictional autobiography of Martha von Tilling, a wife and mother, Cooper avers that the "methods and ideas in favor of peace, in von Suttner's estimation, had nothing to do with sex" (ibid.).[5]

On the whole, however, it would seem that in order to justify their separate organizational efforts, pre-World-War-I peace-movement feminists needed a sex-specific cause and therefore relied on "difference." And nowhere was this principle felt as in the (almost) wholesale adoption of "motherhood" as an emblem. Indeed, the history of the different uses to which this veteran banner has been put is still waiting to be written. Apparently, the rhetorical edge of the maternal instinct was too attractive to resist. It seems to have appealed to peace feminists of different schools, including some who had no personal experience of motherhood – most notoriously the American Jane Addams (1860–1935), another Nobel Peace prize winner (1935).

Much ink has been spilled in the attempt to explain this ostensible paradox. Most instructive is the defense offered by Harriet Hyman

[5] In a later study, Cooper attenuates this statement, saying that von Suttner "*initially* minimized any gender connection to the peace cause" (Cooper 1991: 63; emphasis added). It should be noted that Liddington does not hesitate to include von Suttner in the maternalist – though not necessarily feminist – camp.

Alonso in the introductory chapter of her study, *Peace as a Women's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights*:

> Understand, it is not necessary even within the context of this theory or of these organizations for all members to *be* mothers; just possessing the proper biology or the emotional capacity to "mother" has been enough to claim the superiority of motherhood. . . . Moreover, some of the most famous and most revered women, such as Jane Addams, Emily Greene Balch, and Carrie Chapman Catt, never had children. (1993: 12)

Alonso's deliberation over the use of the maternal metaphor by American peace feminists on the eve of World War I should be counterbalanced, however, with Liddington's material on the 1915 International Women Peace Congress in the Hague. Liddington's significantly titled chapter "War, Motherhood and The Hague" (87–106) sets up that crucial year as the turning point in the formerly precarious balance between maternalist feminism and liberalist feminism. In Liddington's trajectory, this move away from maternalism, especially in England, eventually led to the developments of the 1970s, when "Much of this new feminist anger reacted against any stereotyping of women as naturally *more* caring, *more* peaceful, *less* violent than men" (203). Curiously, she sees this critique as "echoing back" to Gilman's by then sixty-year-old attack on "the man-made family." I say "curiously," because Gilman's maternalist positions seem to be quite remote from the 1970s revolutionary stance on peace, motherhood, and the family structure.

In the following, I would like to suggest a different trajectory of the changes that took place during the last century. To my mind, these changes followed the general philosophical move from essentialism, prevalent around the turn of the twentieth century, to the social and cultural constructivism that has gained the theoretical upper hand by the end of the century.[6] Translated into feminist terms, this development may be defined as a shift from sexual binarism, with all its ramifications, to the theoretical conceptualization of "gender." Indeed, the effect of gender theory on the peace theorists of the 1980s and 1990s cannot be overestimated. They have especially relied on the ostensible fluidity

[6] This is not to deny that the binarism of constructivism vs. essentialism is itself problematic, as shown by Fuss 1989; Butler 1990.

and flexibility of gender – one of the culture-based features that had allowed for the distinction between "sex" and "gender" in the first place (Rubin 1975). And although this distinction has been since put into question,[7] it is still relevant to the issue at hand, *to the attempt to rescue the discussion about war and peace from the hoary binarism of sexual difference.*

In contrast to their precursors, contemporary scholars are painfully aware of the danger of essentialism that threatens any act of "gendering." This anti-essentialist impulse underlies key essays in the seminal collection *Women and Peace* (Pierson 1987) and informs the above-mentioned histories of feminism and anti-militarism in Britain and the US by Liddington (1991) and Alonso (1993); it is also present in Sara Ruddick's concept of "maternal *thinking*" (1989). This position is statistically backed up by the findings of Berenice Carroll and Dorothy Thompson, for example, which show that the historical records support no necessary correlation between the peace movements and women; similarly, they point to analogous differentiation among men and women alike around the issue of pacifism (in Pierson 1987). We may add here the historically crucial role played by male creative writers – from Tolstoy, Shaw, and Romain Rolland to Remarque and Hašek – in helping popularize the war against war...

It is this anti-essentialist awareness (or caution) that stands between contemporary gender perceptions and most ninetieth-century and early twentieth-century understanding of the differences between the sexes; and nowhere is this divide as strongly present as on the question of the gender of war.

To demonstrate my point, I offer an analysis of the most articulate and perhaps most puzzling of pre-World-War-I pacifists, Charlotte Gilman. As we shall see, hers is a "mixed legacy" (Golden and Zangrando 2000) in more ways than one. Although her arguments partially anticipated contemporary constructivism, her ideas – a mixture of maternalism and radicalism – were underpinned by sexual essentialism. These very ideas, which greatly influenced her European and British peers early in the century (see Liddington 1991: 13, 65, 88–89), have been subjected to both exploration and critique in the 1980s, precisely when the concept of "gender" began to inform contemporary scholarship (e.g., Hill 1980; Hobbs 1987).

[7] See, for instance, De Lauretis 1987; Butler 1990, 1993; and Garber 1993.

I would nevertheless argue that the transition to a more nuanced understanding of the relation between "the sexes" and "war or peace" had taken place well before the 1970s–1980s: it occurred, in fact, on the eve of World War II, in the work of Virginia Woolf. Obviously, the term *gender*, in the sense in which it has been used since the 1970s, was not available to Woolf. Yet it has been argued that Woolf had revolutionized the discourse of her time by inventing "gender" *avant la lettre* (Feldman 1999: 91–106). She did this through a sexual metaphor, *androgyny*, which for her meant a psychological and cultural capability to cross boundaries of traditional sex roles. Her ironic undermining of the conventional division between the sexes was first demonstrated in her fictional biography, *Orlando* (1928), and then conceptualized in the last chapter of *A Room of One's Own* (1929). It was the process of grappling with this concept that had prepared her to take on the conventional discourse about human aggression and war. She did this mainly in *Three Guineas*, a polemical work that, according to Liddington, is the best expression of liberalist feminist pacifism. As we shall see, Woolf's position is more complex. Amalgamating "equal rights" and "sexual-difference" positions, she nevertheless anticipated – as I hope to show below – not only the *gendering* of peace and war, but also the contemporary *psycho-political* analyses of the nexus of sexuality and nationalism (i.e., G. Mosse 1985, 1996 and his disciples, S. Gilman 1986, 1993, D. Boyarin 1996, et al.).

1. Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Essentialist or Constructivist?

> The inextricable confusion of politics and warfare is part of the stumbling block in the minds of men. As they see it, a nation is primarily a fighting organization; and its principal business is offensive and defensive warfare.... Fighting, when all is said, is for them the real business of life; not to be able to fight is to be quite out of the running....
>
> Life, to the "male mind"... *is* a fight, and his ancient military institutions and processes keep up the delusion.
>
> (Gilman 2001: 177, 175)

Published in the United States in 1911, this provocative proclamation is one of the most articulate attempts to establish a *natural* link

between the male mind and the military impulse. Its author was the American activist, writer, and lecturer, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who, since the 1970s, has attracted the attention of general readers and scholars alike.[8] Interest in Gilman's fictional and theoretical legacy grew by leaps and bounds following the successful republication of "The Yellow Wallpaper" (Hedges 1973 [1892]), her haunting account of a woman's imprisonment within, and her escape from, the mental as well as physical walls of feminine hysteria and depression (Dock 1998; Lane 1999). Following this success, much of Gilman's legacy has been republished, featuring not only her fiction (Lane 1980), autobiography (1991 [1935]), and diaries (1994), but also her sharp social critique: of the exclusion of women from the economic system (*Women and Economics*, 1996 [1898]), and of the *androcentrism* of culture at large – a concept she coined in her 1911 groundbreaking book, *The Man-Made World or, Our Androcentric Culture* (cf. Lipsitz 1993: 39–43).

"Our androcentric culture is so shown to have been, and still to be, a masculine culture in excess, and therefore undesirable," declared Gilman (2001: 22 et passim). Proceeding from this stark premise, she tirelessly advocated her version of socialist feminism. She did this for a number of decades, in her lectures and books as well as in the monthly magazine *The Forerunner*, which she single-handedly wrote, edited, owned, and produced between 1909 and 1916. By 1915, her feminist vision veered toward fictional utopias of an ideal all-female world and of a fully egalitarian society in which women are liberated from household responsibilities since these are all taken care of by professionals.

The timing of her female utopias is not surprising. With the outbreak of World War I, Gilman's activism gained momentum. Like many of her peers, faithful heirs of the fictional Lysistrata and her allies, she was hoping to prevent the war in Europe, or at least to prevent the entry of the USA into the war. No wonder, then, that the question, "Who is responsible for the bloody history of mankind?" took on special urgency for her in those years. She began grappling with this question already in *The Man-Made World,* serialized in *The Forerunner* in 1909–1910 (see epigraph of this section), but reached an unambiguous position in

[8] See Hill 1980; Lane 1980; Scharnhorst 1985; Karpinski 1992; Golden and Zangrando 2000.

1914, in the essay "Masculinism at Its Worst" (quoted here from Hobbs 1987: 156):

> Being men, and men alone, they cannot restrain their masculinity. Unbridled masculinity means the kind of civilization we have so far produced; great and noble as it is, it is weakened by gross over-indulgence in food, in drink, in drugs; by vices that make crimes; by a rapacious and competitive business system that maintains poverty and injurious over-localized wealth; and by this fury of combat that vents itself in youth-destroying games; that crackles continuously in quarrels, prize-fights and murders; that bursts forth, over and over, in riot of open war.
>
> It is not humanity which does this; it is masculinity.

Gilman's condemnation is shocking, not for what it overtly states but for what it covertly assumes. It seems to proceed from the assumption that women have had no part in the creation of this deficient civilization or in the education and socialization of generations of men and women. As she had already argued in *The Man-Made World*,

> [t]he feminine attitude in life is wholly different. As a female she has merely to be herself and passively attract; neither to compete nor to pursue; as a mother her whole process is one of growth... all the watching, teaching, guarding, feeding. In none of this is there either desire, combat, or self-expression. (2001: 198)

"Desire, combat, self-expression" – this is the triple impulse that Gilman sees as essential to the male psyche. In *The Man-Made World* she gives detailed descriptions of the disastrous effects these three impulses have on "our androcentric culture," while celebrating their corollary absence from the female mind which, for her, is predominantly maternal. Her maternalist position is more fully expressed in a later essay, "The New Mothers of a New World," where she declares: "All the hate and rivalry between nations is not woman's but man's."[9] She therefore suggested a cure for the ills of "the man-made world" through "new motherhood," because woman, as mother, is the epitome of "equality, community service, and true cooperation" (ibid., 148). A fictional illustration of this cure in action is the utopia *Herland* featuring an all-female, peace-loving society...

[9] *The Forerunner* 4, June 1913: 149.

In Gilman's account, then, a straight line leads from a culture of conspicuous affluence, crime, and competition, in business as much as in sports, to the roaring of cannons and the bloodletting in the battlefields. And this line is inherently masculine. But how has it become so? Here we approach one of the inner contradictions of Gilman's mixed legacy. While in her "radical" social criticism she may have indeed been on the cutting edge of her time (cf. Hill 1980), in her understanding of sexual difference she was not. On the one hand, she tirelessly reminds her readers that male social superiority is a cultural rather than natural phenomenon, which should be corrected by "changed education and opportunity for every child" (2001: 247), but on the other hand, she falls again and again into the trap of biologism and other forms of naturalist essentialism.

Indeed, she searches low and high – from the playground to the planets – for metaphors for and analogies to the human sexual binarism that is fundamental to her teachings:

> Now there are certain essential distinctions in the sexes.... There is something inherently masculine also in the universal dominance of the projectile in their [males'] games.... From the snapped marble of infancy to the flying missile of the bat, this form endures. To send something forth with violence; to throw it, bat it, kick it, shoot it; this impulse seems to date back to one of the twin forces of the universe – the centrifugal and centripetal energies between which swing the planets.
>
> The basic feminine impulse is to gather, to put together, to construct; the basic masculine impulse to scatter, to disseminate, to destroy. (2001: 98–100)

Here is sexual binarism *ad absurdum*. The question is what led Gilman to this blatant position. It has been suggested that she relied on an 1890 study, already outdated by the time of her writing, in which sexual difference was anchored in the difference between the metabolic processes of the sperm and the egg (Hobbs 1987: 153). But I suspect that her insistence on sexual difference goes beyond biology and the animal world. What begins as "[t]he male naturally fights, and naturally crows, triumphs over his rival and takes the prize" (2001: 84), ends with what sounds like paraphrase of Genesis 1: 27 – "therefore was he made male" (ibid.). In Gilman's mind, male aggression is not only natural, rather, it seems to be divinely ordained.

As can be expected, this position came under scrutiny and reservation with the introduction of the distinction between sex and gender. Trying to make sense of Gilman's contradictions, Hobbs, for one, concludes that her reliance on the writings of several Darwinists cornered her into naturalist positions, which spilled over into racist attitudes as well (1987: 164–65). Liddington's judgment is even more severe: "Yet when America eventually entered the war, Gilman sided with the anti-German patriots – and, increasingly racist, drops out of this history" (1991: 89).

2. Virginia Woolf: *Orlando*, *A Room of One's Own*, and "The Leaning Tower"

About a quarter of a century separates Gilman's and Woolf's respective confrontations with the outbreak of war. Each of them had by then tried her hand at a critique of the place of women in society in times of peace. Gilman's *Women and Economics* (1898) is in some sense a forerunner to *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Woolf's foundational feminist essay, which adumbrated her critique of the exclusion of women from both higher education and the professions. At the same time, however, this treatise also gave expression to Woolf's belief in the supra-sexual nature of human creativity. She named this quality "androgyny," a term that has since accumulated a small library of polemical comment.[10] Controversies notwithstanding, in its cultural fluidity and flexibility, "androgyny" may be considered a grandparent to "gender,"[11] famously conceived by Simone de Beauvoir in 1949 ("One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," 1974: 301), but given this name only some half a century later. And it was this progressive idea that within a decade would both enhance and complicate Woolf's intervention in the on-going debate over women and men in war and peace.

Published in 1928, *A Room of One's Own* did not yet thematize the problem of war, which is referred to only obliquely, as part of Woolf's critique of male ambition. *Orlando*, however, which had preceded it by

[10] See Heilbrun 1973; Bazin 1973; Stimpson 1974; Singer 1977; Showalter 1977; Moi 1985; Weil 1992; Schwartz 1994; Kennard 1996; Feldman 1999; Rado 2000.

[11] For a detailed argument, see Feldman 1999, chap. 4.

one year, was already rife with Woolf's anti-militaristic irony. Insofar as it pretends to be a fictional biography of an English aristocrat, it cannot elide the martial arts. We encounter them, in fact, right in the opening scene, where Orlando practices his swordplay, in the tradition of his forefathers who "had fought and killed," we are later reminded, the Turk, the Pole, the Frank, the Austrian, the French, and more (48). "But of all that killing and campaigning ... what remained?" asks the narrator. Her answer divulges her critique: "A skull; a finger" (ibid.). This critique, though couched in male-authored Hamlet imagery, derives from a rather essentialist female-authored position. It is the *Queen* who had earlier *re*called Orlando from sailing to the Polish wars, for "how could she bear to think of that tender flesh torn and that curly head rolled in the dust?" (11). Furthermore, as soon as Orlando transforms into a woman, martial arts and the power to rule become the obvious gift that s/he is ready to give up: "she thanked Heaven that she was not prancing down Whitehall on a war-horse.... Better [she thought] be quit of martial ambition, the love of power, and all the other manly desires ..." (102). This traditional sexual binarism stands out starkly in a narrative that not only celebrates the force of "androgyny" in every other respect – "[d]ifferent though the sexes are, they intermix. In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place ..." (121) – but actually ridicules the very notion of fixed sexual identities (see Feldman 1999, chap. 4). Indeed, it is the categorization of martial ambition as "manly desires" that seems to be the last essentialist hurdle in Woolf's new order. And although she has vehemently rejected the "sexual difference" position of her World War I predecessor, Olive Schreiner,[12] this hurdle seems to resurface a decade later, when she is called upon to help to prevent war.

Clearly, by the late 1930s there was no evading the issue. The approaching war compelled Woolf to think through the place of war and aggression in her *gendered* vision of humanity. Her answer took the shape of the daring essay, *Three Guineas*. This was the first time that Woolf abandoned her cool detachment, the trademark of her writing. Here her graceful irony turned into sarcasm, and a "vulgar

[12] Zwerdling (1986: 241) documents Woolf's rejection of Schreiner's feminism (in her review of her published letters, 1925). Although we have no evidence that Woolf read Gilman, I suspect that she would have shaken off her ideas just as harshly, as "cramped & distorted by the intensity & narrowness of their convictions" (ibid.).

passion," rage, reigned supreme. Although it aroused dismay and consternation in its time, since the 1970s *Three Guineas* has become the cornerstone of a new scholarly approach to Woolf – the study of the socio-political contexts of her work.[13] As can be expected, opinions vary when it comes to evaluating these contexts, as well as Woolf's own positions vis-à-vis the burning issues of her time: feminism, pacifism, fascism. Thus, while Jane Marcus reads Woolf's "socialist feminist pacifism" as deriving from her aunt Caroline Stephen's Quaker pacifism (1987: 82), Alex Zwerdling adds the impact of the pacifist "fashion" of the two decades after World War I, and especially the influence of Woolf's father, whose "uncompromising contempt for war... preceded the *fashion* of pacifism by half a century" (1986: 272). And whereas Liddington suggests that "*Three Guineas* offers an important bridge between the earliest feminist flowering and the later 1980s wave of a women's peace movement" (169) – without, however, giving sufficient explanation, Berenice Carroll views this treatise as an important chapter in the construction of a feminist theory of peace yet argues that Woolf did not face directly the question whether there is "a necessary logical connection between feminism and pacifism" (1987: 18).

By contrast, I would like to suggest that it is precisely this nexus that is at the heart of Woolf's essay. Here Woolf laid the foundation not only for the *gendering* of war and peace but also for the *psycho*-political analysis of this very connection. Unfortunately, this part of her argument has been overshadowed by her sensational, ostensibly radical use of sexual difference (despite the abhorrence she had earlier expressed in regard to this tactic in the work of other feminists). No less elusive is her use of Freudian psychoanalysis – the new playing card that had entered the discourse about the roots of war and aggression in the few decades that separated Woolf both from World War I and Gilman's and Schreiner's publications. And although for many years the critical consensus was that Woolf rejected Freud's theories and was not affected by them, I believe that it is impossible to appreciate properly the groundbreaking innovations she has introduced in *Three Guineas* without considering the dialogue – albeit a hostile one – that she

[13] The study of Woolf's feminist-socialist contexts was pioneered by Marcus 1977, 1981, 1983, and 1987, and Carroll 1978, 1987, and further developed by Zwerdling 1986. See also next note.

conducted there with psychoanalysis. To my mind, she was ahead of her time in using Freud against himself, thereby pioneering an original analysis of the relations between the sexes and peace and war.

But how did she get to this point? How did she move from the binary sexualization of peace and war still operative in *Orlando* to a more nuanced "gendered" perception of politics and aggression in *Three Guineas*?

The answer may be sought in "The Leaning Tower," her last public lecture, given at the Workers' Educational Association in Brighton in May 1940. This lecture was a response to the younger writers of the 1930s, who censured her for her Bloomsbury aesthetics, alleging that it locked her in the ivory tower of "pure art." With her usual dexterity, Woolf turned the tables, attributing to her critics precisely that for which they blamed her: the inability to get off the ivory tower at will. As a metaphor for the tradition of nineteenth-century Symbolism and Aestheticism, "the ivory tower" was still alive in the early twentieth century, in the modernist ideal of separation between art and life. But Woolf recast the old ivory tower in a new metaphor. Probably inspired by the Tower of Pisa, "The Leaning Tower" was her effective image for the crumbling of old demarcation lines at a time of political upheaval. The tower's "leaning" to the left was the result, she said, of the political changes that had been shaking Europe since World War I:

> In Germany, in Russia, in Italy, in Spain, all the old hedges were being rooted up; all the old towers were being thrown to the ground.... But even in England towers that were built of gold and stucco were no longer steady towers. They were leaning towers. The books were written under the influence of change, *under the threat of war*. (1948: 139–40; emphasis added).

This literature "under the influence of change," says Woolf, is suffused with "anger; pity; scapegoat beating; excuse finding" (141); it is a literature "full of discord and bitterness, full of confusion and of compromise" (142). In her opinion, the cause for all this turmoil is an unavoidable conflict – the conflict between the younger generation's recognition that their class privilege imposes certain limits on the view they have from the top of the tower and their inability to do without it: "Trapped by their education, pinned down by their capital, they remained on top of the leaning tower" (142). Woolf, on the other hand, as a woman who never benefited from the privileges of capital or from a

college education enjoyed by the males of her class, sees herself free to get up and down the tower at will, exempt from class limitations it imposed.

The naïveté of her class-consciousness notwithstanding, Woolf was no doubt on target in pointing to the political upheavals of the twentieth century as the cause of the downfall of the ivory tower. And although her diagnosis of the ills of the younger generation is directed outside, at *them*, at least some of her insights can be applied to her own work of the same period. Indeed, in contrast to the image of the dainty Bloomsbury aesthete fostered by her own peers (and by later readers as well), recent research has revealed Woolf's involvement in the burning issues of her time.[14] As she sharply observed in that lecture, in the 1930s it was impossible to be sensitive and imaginative without getting involved in politics. One "could not go on discussing the aesthetic emotions and personal relations" (149), and Woolf herself was no exception. As early as 1936, with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, she qualified her own Bloomsbury-bred abhorrence of "art and propaganda," allowing that "when society is in chaos" the artist cannot "still remain in peace in his studio.... He [sic!] is forced to take part in politics" ("The Artist and Politics," in 1948: 226). Soon she would do just that, taking on fascism both directly, in *Three Guineas* and in her short essay "Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid" (1940), and indirectly, in her last work of fiction, *Between the Acts* (1941).

Three Guineas is of particular significance, because it weaves together different strains of Woolf's intellectual and artistic makeup: modernism, feminism, and politics. As her diary amply documents, this essay represents the angry and bold analysis that Woolf – the modernist – could not conceive as harmoniously inhabiting the fictional world of *The Years* (1937), her historical and to some degree autobiographical novel. The writing of that novel was an unusually tortuous and arduous process that lasted five years (1932–1937).[15] The originally planned essay-novel was transformed and split into two: an almost traditionally realistic novel, *The Years*, and the pugnacious long polemical essay, *Three Guineas*. The latter was a sequel of sorts to *A Room of One's Own*, with two points of difference: it was angrier, and it was heavily

[14] See Joplin 1989; Beer 1990; Mepham 1991, 159–80; Hussey 1991; Pridmore-Brown 1998; Pawlowski 2001.

[15] Marcus 1977, 1987; Zwerdling 1986; Mepham 1991; Poole 1991; Caughie 1991.

documented and footnoted, in the tradition of academic scholarship. The novel, on the other hand, was presumably cleansed of "propaganda," and was free to treat precisely those "aesthetic emotions and personal relationships" that Woolf thought the "young men" of the 1930s "could not go on discussing." The "vulgar passions," those very sentiments that had been excluded from the "civilized" thin air of Bloomsbury, were given unbridled expression in the essay, unnerving many a reader then as now. "Like the truths that Septimus Smith so much wanted to communicate [in *Mrs Dalloway*], the truths in *Three Guineas* belonged to an order of speech that was inadmissible at the time," says Roger Poole in his comprehensive review of Woolf and war (1991: 96).

3. *Three Guineas:* Women in Peace and in War

Three Guineas was Woolf's response to the question that occupied center stage during the 1930s, namely, how is the free world ("civilization," in Bloomsbury parlance) to protect liberty and prevent war? More specifically, how can "the daughters of educated men" help in this venture? Woolf's resolutely pacifist answer reveals that just like the tower of her younger peers, her own modernist tower of pure art was also "leaning to the left," perhaps even more so. Woolf's leaning, however, had an additional twist. Although she was concerned, like everyone else, with the threat to civilization that was rising on the continent, she had something else on her mind: the battle of the sexes. Never giving up her feminist perspective, she boldly analyzed Fascism as a sex-based phenomenon, as the public face of masculinist aggression (cf. Gagnier 2003: 111–12). In other words, she may indeed have been "*forced* to take part in politics" (Woolf 1948: 226; emphasis added), but her politics reached beyond the battlefront; it encompassed the home front as well, that is, the status of women (in war *and peace*). With her, the personal was not only political – it was gendered, too.

With the rage and courage that women generally dare to muster only in middle age (Heilbrun 1988, chap. 7), Woolf took the bull of gender essentialism and sexual difference by the horns:

> For though many instincts are held more or less in common by both sexes, to fight has always been the man's *habit*, not the woman's. *Law and practice have developed that difference,*

> *whether innate or accidental.* Scarcely a human being in the course of history has fallen to a woman's rifle; the vast majority of birds and beasts have been killed by you, not by us. (1977: 9; emphasis added)

Woolf's struggle with the question of sexual difference takes an intriguing turn. At the focus of her attention is the burning question of the time, the question of aggression. Like her World-War-I predecessors, she is confident that the sexes differ in their propensity to aggression; unlike them, however, she is hesitant when it comes down to putting her finger on the source of this difference: is it "innate" (namely, essential) or "accidental" (namely, historically or culturally determined, a "habit")? This quandary has bogged down any recent discussion of sexual difference. By positing this question as unanswerable but going beyond it, to historical evidence, Woolf, in fact, anticipated the sociocultural constructivism of contemporary theory. At the same time, however, the very use of the concept "instinct" puts her dangerously near the biologist camp, thereby bringing her into the orbit of Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, at the unavoidable cost of unsettling the validity of her own historical evidence.

Moreover, Woolf also anticipated, in what may seem a rather reckless exaggeration, the feminist principle of "inclusion," the one later suggested by Simone de Beauvoir. In contrast to Beauvoir, however, who equated the subjugation of women to that of two universally acknowledged marginalized others, blacks and Jews (1974: xxii, xxvii), Woolf dared to compare the plight of women to that of the liberal world at large. Maintaining a Cato-like campaign against the deprivation of women in education and in the "professions" (the two causes for which she figuratively donated the first two guineas of the title of this essay), she went on to equate male dominance over the fair sex with the would-be Fascist dominance over the human race.

Today, from a post-Word-War-II perspective, this gesture may seem disproportionate and tactless. We should not let this hindsight cloud our judgment, however. Woolf worked on this essay between 1932 and 1937, when even her imaginative mind could not yet foresee the horrors that the future had in store. In fact, the sample atrocities that she collected while working on the projected essay-novel were those of the Spanish Civil War (Lawrence 1991), in which her nephew, Julian Bell, was killed – a trauma which she intimately shared with her sister

Vanessa and which probably exacerbated the "vulgar emotions" she experienced while writing.

Bearing this timing in mind, we may perhaps be able to assimilate her analogy between the homespun (yet universal) patriarchal oppression of women and the danger posed by dictatorships abroad:

> There, in those quotations [advocating separate worlds for men and women], is the egg of the very same worm that we know under other names in other countries. There we have in embryo the creature, Dictator we call him when he is Italian or German, who believes that he has the right, whether given by God, Nature, sex or race is immaterial, to dictate to other human beings how they shall live; what they shall do. (61)
>
> The daughters of educated men who were called, to their resentment [sic], "feminists" were in fact the advance guard of your own movement. They were fighting the same enemy that you [i.e., men] were fighting and for the same reasons. They were fighting the tyranny of the patriarchal state as you are fighting the tyranny of the Fascist state. (117)

A startling conclusion indeed. Overtly, Woolf arrives at it through close readings – literal and metaphorical – of cultural representations of women. But her materials include not only epiphenomena of culture. She boldly enlists the help of Freudian psychology, thereby becoming one of the first practitioners of psycho-politics, that is, the application of Freudian concepts to the analysis of social and political realities, especially nationalism and fascism. This analytic mode has become particularly prominent in the last couple of decades, in the work of Mosse (1985, 1996) and his followers.

4. Between Woolf and Freud

My quotation marks around the word "help" are meant as an ironic qualification. For one of the most intriguing questions in Woolf scholarship is the deciphering of her complex attitude to Freud and his ideas. On the one hand, Bloomsbury's "major role in bringing Freud to the English" has been established early on, and the specific role of the Woolfs' Hogarth Press in publishing Freud in English is well known (Goldstein 1974; Meisel and Kendrick 1985; Zwerdling

1986; Abel 1989). On the other hand, there is no substantial evidence that Freud's writing had any effect on Woolf in the same years (the 1920s). Moreover, in her diary Woolf did not miss any opportunity to make fun of psychoanalysis and of what she named "Freudian fiction." There is certain cautiousness on her part, perhaps a defensiveness that was retracted only in her last years. In 1921 she is still very guarded: "James puny and languid – such is the effect of 10 months psychoanalysis," she wryly comments upon the return of James Strachey, Freud's translator, from a sojourn in Vienna (*Letters* II: 242).

The causes of this defensiveness are not too difficult to surmise, particularly in view of Woolf's wretched history with mental health specialists (Lee 1996). Add to this Woolf's notorious squeamishness about sexuality (Goldstein 1974), as well as the popular belief that psychotherapy may damage one's artistic genius, and her wariness is perfectly understandable. Yet one more reason emerges from what she confided to her diary in the besieged years of World War II.

On December 2, 1939, almost a whole year after the Woolfs' acclaimed visit to the elderly master in his new home in Hempstead (January 1939), she refers to his work in a brief diary entry: "Began reading Freud last night; to enlarge the circumference: to give my brain a wider scope.... Thus defeat the shrinkage of age. *Always take on new things*" (1984, *Diary* V: 248). The emphasis is mine, meant to highlight the impression this entry gives of her never having read Freud before. Although most scholars (with the exception of Elizabeth Abel) generally accept this "fact" without reservation (Bell 1972, II, chap. 1; Goldstein 239; Zwerdling 297; Mepham 198; Lee 722), I believe that this impression is false. In 1929, for example, Woolf's familiarity with psychoanalysis left a mark on *A Room of One's Own*, although in a typically mocking tone: "Had he been laughed at, to adopt the Freudian theory, in his cradle by a pretty girl?... A very elementary exercise in psychology, not to be dignified by the name of psycho-analysis, showed me..." (28). Still further on she soberly finds that she can adopt "a new attitude to the other half of the human race," almost "forgive" them, in fact, because "they are driven by instincts which are not within their control" (33). As we have seen above, "the instincts," a fundamental psychoanalytic concept, serve her also in the opening argument of *Three Guineas*. So what was that *new* Freud she was reading at the late date of December 1939?

As suggested by several critics (Zwerdling; Abel; Mepham; Lee),

Woolf may have been reading Freud's "anthropological" papers, possibly in the collection published that year by the British analyst John Rickman with the Hogarth Press. This volume, *Civilization, War and Death: Selections from 3 Works by Sigmund Freud*, included excerpts from "Thoughts for our Time on War and Death" (1915), "Civilization and Its Discontents" (1929), and "Why War?" (1933), Freud's famous reply to Albert Einstein. Woolf's registered reaction to these readings in her diary (December 9, 1939), about a week after her first comment, may explain her earlier distance from (and reticence about) psychoanalysis: "Freud is upsetting; reducing one to whirlpool; & I daresay truly, if we are all instinct and unconscious, what's all this about civilization, the whole man, freedom etc.?" (1984, *Diary* V: 250). Obviously, Freud's ideas must have upset her, as they totally contradicted the Bloomsbury understanding of the nature of civilization and personal freedom, and of the source of artistic inspiration.

Disturbed as she sounds here, 1939 must have been the right time for her to absorb these ideas sufficiently for them to affect what she wrote in the last year of her life, both personally and publicly. Indeed, as her diary attests, she was aware that she was performing "psychoanalytic therapy" while working on her late, autobiographical piece "A Sketch of the Past" (Woolf 1985). In addition, the title of her 1940 essay, "Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid" (Woolf 1967), sounds like a conscious inversion of Freud's title "Thoughts for the Time on War and Death" (one of Rickman's selections; see Abel 165n. 44). A direct reference to Freud's influence on the younger writers of the 1930s can be found in "The Leaning Tower":

> The leaning-tower writer has had the courage . . . to tell the truth, the unpleasant truth, about himself. That is the first step towards telling the truth about other people. By analyzing themselves honestly, with the help of Dr. Freud, these writers have done a great deal to free us from nineteenth-century suppressions. (1948: 149)

However, the most significant Freudian trace in Woolf's work of that year is the tangible presence of *Civilization and Its Dicontents* (the major selection in Rickman's collection) in her last novel, *Between the Acts*. Here, for the first time in her fiction, humankind is perceived as part of the animal world, and the primal instincts play a major, even if parodic, role. *Civilization* was, of course, Freud's most extensive analysis

of the primordial struggle between Eros and the death drive (Thanatos), his "dual instinct theory" suggested first in 1920 ("Beyond the Pleasure Principle"). In *Civilization* he elaborated his pessimistic view concerning the constancy of the aggressive ("animalistic") instincts and their unavoidable conflict (i.e., war) with mankind's hard-won civilization. This essay was however also his apotheosis of Eros and sublimation as the only protective wall against the aggressive instincts. This psycho-sexual double helix can be traced in the poetic closure of Woolf's last novel:

> Alone, enmity was bared; also love. Before they slept, they must fight; after they had fought, they would embrace. From that embrace another life might be born. But first they must fight, as the dog fox fights with the vixen, in the heart of darkness, in the fields of night. (*Between the Acts*, 219)

Yet this poetic formulation of the Freudian ambivalence in the coda for Woolf's artistic oeuvre is not the last stop in our inquiry. I would like to propose that Freud's *Civilization* left its mark not only on *Between the Acts*, with its wistful ending, but on *Three Guineas* as well. In contrast to the commonly accepted belief that Woolf "anticipated Freud" (as Zwerdling 297, Mepham 198, and Lee 722 maintain – just because she had not mentioned Freud before in her diary),[16] it stands to reason that she could have read *Civilization* already in Joan Riviere's translation, which the Hogarth Press and the Institute for Psycho-Analysis published in 1930.[17] Her Freud-inspired writings in 1940 only reinforced the use she had made of psychoanalysis in *Three*

[16] Zwerdling supports this argument with a quote from *A Room* (1986: 297), which I, however, interpret not as proof that Woolf anticipated Freud, but as an expression of her instinctual anti-militarism (of home-and-family origin), the roots of which Zwerdling himself so convincingly outlined. Moreover, recent scholarship takes almost for granted traces of Freud's ideas in Woolf's work starting with the 1920s. A recent article (Neverow 2001), in fact opens with the following statement: "In *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, Virginia Woolf interweaves her version of Freudian psychoanalytic theory and her own reading of Fascist dogma to explain the origins of patriarchal violence. With surgical precision, she reduces psychoanalysis and Fascism to a homology in which the patriarchal father is the dictator and vice versa" (56).

[17] See the history of the publication of *Civilization and Its Discontents* given in the Norton edition of this essay (1962: 5). See also Peter Gay's enthusiastic appreciation of Reviere's translation (1988: 741–42).

Guineas, published two years earlier. To ignore the strong Freudian traces in *Three Guineas* is to miss, in my opinion, precisely the thrust of this "'unreadable' work of genius" (Poole 1991: 99), namely, the psychological (and therefore constructivist) grounding of its ostensibly essentialist analysis of masculinism and militarism.

5. Psycho-Politics: Psychoanalysis in the Service of Political Analysis

There was one staggering difference, so far hardly appreciated by scholars, between what Woolf had read in Freud's work and what she herself wrote. The object of Freud's anthropo-psychological narrative is "Man," which for him, as for Western philosophy at large, was a conventional stand-in for "humankind." Without articulating her discomfort at this identification, as later feminists have done, Woolf simply read Freud literally. Making the object of *her* Freudian narrative man, as in the male sex, she performed a sleight of hand that shifted the whole burden of culpability. If humankind does not have any chance of eliminating the aggressive instinct (it can only be modified or channeled by an enhanced Eros, human erotic bonds, says Freud), Woolf would strike out *human* and replace it with *man* instead. In her quasi-Freudian narrative the culprit is "male-kind," even masculinity *per se*, while the female sex is taken out of the equation.

This alignment may seem at first to bring Woolf and Gilman close together. Yet this is only a surface similarity. For, despite her protestations, Woolf's argument is anchored not in biology but rather in Freudian psychology (which Gilman had apparently rejected; see Lane 1999: xli). Her understanding of sexual difference is, in the end, culturalist rather than naturalist. And though in her rage she took women out of Freud's "mankind," this was only a strategic and heuristic move. In the final analysis, Woolf did not see female difference as a stable, inherent *nature*, but rather as an acquired feature, a *construct* – what contemporary theory has labeled *gender* – the result of socialization, which is amenable to change and growth.

This aspect of her argument has so far attracted little attention. And no wonder. For, in order to understand Woolf's specific take on the linkage between women and peace or war, we must first understand her fierce dialogue with Freud's (male) psychology. In fact, her powerful counter-reading may be considered the first reading of Freud against the

grain, an anticipation of contemporary critiques (feminist and others) that blame psychoanalysis for the valorization and dissemination of masculinist values. As we shall see, this counter-reading consists of reinterpreting two foundational Freudian concepts: the Oedipus complex, and the aggressive instinct.[18]

At first glance, *Three Guineas* gives the impression of being antipatriotic. On the face of it, Woolf discourages women from participating in the war effort. After inciting them to resist volunteering, she encourages them instead to join what "could be called the Outsiders Society" (122–23). Her explanation for this startling position is no less shocking: "As a woman, I have no country" (125). The puzzled reader is treated to a deconstruction (*avant la lettre*) of the idiom "our country," the country that "throughout the greater part of its history has treated me as a slave." Yet the deconstruction of national history does not suffice. The next to be put under the scalpel is the Church. Mercilessly exposing its double standards, Woolf takes her probe all the way back to the sources, protesting her inability to "altogether reconcile the ruling of St. Paul, or another, with the ruling of Christ himself who 'regarded men and women alike as members of the same spiritual kingdom... and as possessors of the same spiritual capacities'" (141). This is what she might have meant when, early in 1932, she gleefully reported in her diary (Feb. 16): "I have collected enough powder to blow up St. Pauls"...

In order to undermine, "to blow up St. Pauls," she would dig further, with the help of the science of depth psychology. Admittedly, she does not enlist Freud himself, but rather one Prof. Grensted, whose report of the Archbishops' Commission on the "Ministry of Women" she documents, with a full scholarly apparatus. The honorable Professor of Religion explains why the practice of the Church has so greatly diverged from its "democratic" origins. He seems incredibly well versed in Freudian jargon: in the space of one page we are treated to "infantile fixation," the "Oedipus complex," the "castration complex," non-rational sex-taboo, male dominance and female inferiority – all

[18] Elizabeth Abel's intriguing analysis of the dialogue between *Three Guineas* and Freud (in her *Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis*, 1989), has not been sufficiently absorbed into later scholarship. My own reading, though taking a different tack, supports her insight that, "near its end," *Three Guineas* "initiates the explicitly psychoanalytic moment of the text" (103).

apparently stimulated by "a powerful and widespread subconscious motive" (144).

For a moment, present-day readers (myself, for example) may suspect a parody here. But apparently none is meant. Earnestly, and in a gesture that anticipates recent feminist revisions of psychoanalysis, Woolf turns Freudian rationalization on its head. In this deconstruction of Freud (as we might call it today), "infantile fixation" (148) is the root that lies at the bottom of men's need to dominate and of women's "basic fear." The Oedipus Complex is not the boy's rite of passage into morality and civilization; it is not the spring of the (specifically masculine!) superego, which holds infantile drives in check, allowing the subject to become a responsible member of a civilized society. Ironically, man (not capitalized) is held hostage at this infantile stage even in maturity, never outgrowing his subconscious need to control, dominate, possess, and conquer. The transition from individual to collective psychology (politics) is imperceptible. Family relations, professional achievements (male), personal and national greed, and even military tyrannies and imperialistic conquests – all of these are motivated by the same "strong force," which was "all the stronger because it was a concealed force" (156).

King Creon of Greek mythology is used as the classic example of oedipally driven tyranny: he sows death and destruction all around, both politically and personally, as king and as father of his son, bridegroom of Antigone (148, 161). Closer to home, Victorian biographies provide ample cases of oedipally-fixated fathers who tyrannized over their daughters (and sons too, in the well-known case of Elizabeth Barrett-Browning's father; 149). Finally, "another picture has imposed itself on the foreground. It is the figure of a man; some say, others deny, that he is Man himself, the quintessence of virility" (162).

A present-day reader versed in Woolf's biography may expect another fatherly "tyrant" in this sequence, not necessarily the Führer or the Duce, whom Woolf goes on to inscribe into her closure. Yet hers is not an exercise in therapeutic free association, so we must leave the ghost of Sir Leslie, her father, where she had left him, in the shadows of her own subconscious. My focus here is not on Woolf's psychic pain but rather on the way in which she transformed it into a powerful social critique. At the time when the free world was falling under the sway of the most vicious adaptations of Otto Weininger's racial-sexual

essentialisms,[19] Woolf was calling for an overall reevaluation of the nexus of nationalism and masculinism, again anticipating later scholarly interest (cf. Mosse 1985, 1996; S. Gilman 1986, 1993; Boyarin 1997). Whatever she thought of Freudian psychology as individual therapy (not much, to judge from her circumspection in the matter and from Quentin Bell's testimony), she obviously learned from it one important lesson: that normalcy differs from the pathological margins only in measure, not in substance. Equipped with this tool, she was able to unmask masculinity per se, asking her readers to see "a very important connection": that "the public and the private worlds are inseparably connected; that the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other" (162).

6. Conclusion: Pacifism as Psychological Defense

The Liberalist thrust of Woolf's polemical analysis is unmistakable. So is her radical tendency. Only one tradition of peace-feminism is totally missing from her argument – the maternal. In contrast to Gilman and Schreiner (as well as many others) who saw motherhood as the epitome of womanhood and therefore as the cornerstone of female pacifism, Woolf refers to motherhood very sparingly, using in her argument the image of sibling relations more often than those of filial/maternal ones. The "maternal instinct" is mentioned by her only in passing, in the framework of the prevalent belief that fighting and mothering are analogous "sex characteristics," each exclusive to one sex only, unshared by the other: "male fighting," she says, is "the counterpart some claim of the maternal instinct" (1977: 123). Moreover, she immediately qualifies this binarism in a long endnote (note 15 in section 3), which she opens with a strong reservation: "The following quotation shows, however, that if sanctioned the fighting instinct easily develops." Her point in case is a testimony from the Spanish Civil War, cited at length

[19] See *Sex and Character* (Weininger 1908 [1903]). Though recent scholarship has focused on Weininger's *self*-hatred (e.g., Sander Gilman 1986, 1993; Harrowitz and Hyams 1995), Weininger's impact on Nazism is indubitable. In the words of David Abrahamsen, the author of *The Mind and Death of a Genius* (1946): "As late as 1939, I heard in Norway a radio broadcast beamed from Nazi Germany, which used some of Weininger's attacks upon the Jews" (122).

from *The Martyrdom of Madrid* (1937): Sergeant Amalia Bonilla, a 36 year old "amazon" from Granada, attests that she joined the army to avenge her younger daughter who had been killed in battle. To do this she herself has (so far) killed five or six enemies.

From this perspective, Woolf's plea to women to join the Outsiders Society takes on a new meaning. What seems at first a politically unpatriotic, subversive act, inciting women to undermine the war effort, turns out to be a psychologically defensive move. It would appear that Woolf's pacifist position is motivated by her concern about women being contaminated by the male malaise – "unconscious Hitlerism," as she will soon name it, borrowing this term from Lady Ascot ("Thoughts on Peace," 1967: 174). What triggers her concern is a perceptive *non*-essentialist intuition. Unlike maternalist feminism, she is not at all sure that the female/maternal instinct, supposedly sex-specific, will withstand the pressure of socialization in the world of masculine aggression. This is in keeping, of course, with her careful historical contextualization of the "aggressive instinct" at the opening of the essay. [20]

Woolf advocates, then, gender (rather than sexual) difference – an argument that establishes her as the "mother" of constructivist gender theory. In the final analysis, the freedom from tyranny for which she yearns is not conceived by her only as an equal-rights ticket of entry, but also as a license to differ, as the liberty to keep one's own (cultural rather than essential) difference, so that women should not "merge [their] identity in yours" (121).

However we might interpret Woolf's individual fear of loss of boundaries, she herself perceived it as the result of the present political state of siege, an era of "the bark of the guns and the bray of the gramophones" (163), which she was at the time absorbing into the fictional universe of *Between the Acts*. Moreover, she was fully aware of the contradiction between the need to preserve one's gendered identity intact *under duress* and her old dream of androgyny, of "the capacity of the human spirit to overflow boundaries and make unity out of multiplicity" (ibid.). In contrast to Roger Poole's contention that in *Three Guineas* Woolf vindicated his doubts "about the possibility of

[20] A fictional support of Woolf's warning is the figure of the mother in Jennifer Johnston's popular 1974 novel, *How Many Miles to Babylon?* In this belated reconstruction of World War I, it is the mother who is on the side of war and patriotism whereas the father takes an absolute anti-militaristic stand.

'the androgynous mind'" (Poole 1991: 100, note 8), she wistfully avers that the capacity to overflow boundaries is a dream for the poets in a time of peace. For now, she must maintain her freedom by staying on the outside; and she must drive her point home by contributing *equally* to women's causes and to war-prevention efforts (to which she finally gave her third guinea): "The aim is the same for us both. It is to assert 'the rights of all – all men and women...to the great principles of Justice and Equality and Liberty'" (164).

"Gender equality? Why not in a war zone?" Woolf seems to be reiterating (pace Chazan 1989), paradigmatically weaving together feminism and politics, at the expense of modernist ivory towers and her own androgynous dreams. But does her psycho-political analysis of the gender base of aggression lead to the logically analogous inference that pacifism is female based? Unlike Gilman and her peers, Woolf rejected this essentialist inference, precisely as some contemporary feminists do. Let us recall that in order to escape the essentialist fallacy recent scholarship has suggested replacing the correlation between "women and peace" with "pacifism as a feminist problem" (Carroll 1987: 15). This replacement stems from the need to escape the connotation of passivity attached to womanhood and maternity in biologically based perceptions. Biology is therefore replaced with a willful act of political choice, an act that is a necessary condition for a feminist position as much as for a pacifist one. The emphasis is on choice, not on the force of nature.

Such was precisely Woolf's stance in *Three Guineas*. Her critique of masculinism may at times remind us of Charlotte Gilman's critique of androcentrism, yet this is not the case with her view of women. Concealed within her critique of militarism is a rejection of maternalist feminism. Finding an ally in Bertrand Russell, she ridicules the idea that masochism, passivity, and endurance are typically female characteristics (160); nor does she delude herself – as did Gilman – that the maternal instinct is natural and strong enough to withstand the pressure of military socialization. Implied then in Woolf's multi-layered argument is a conclusion that traveled well down our war-torn century, clearly setting the stage for contemporary agendas: women would perhaps be women (and mothers), but they need to be educated, in politics as much as in feminist consciousness, in times of peace and war alike.

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