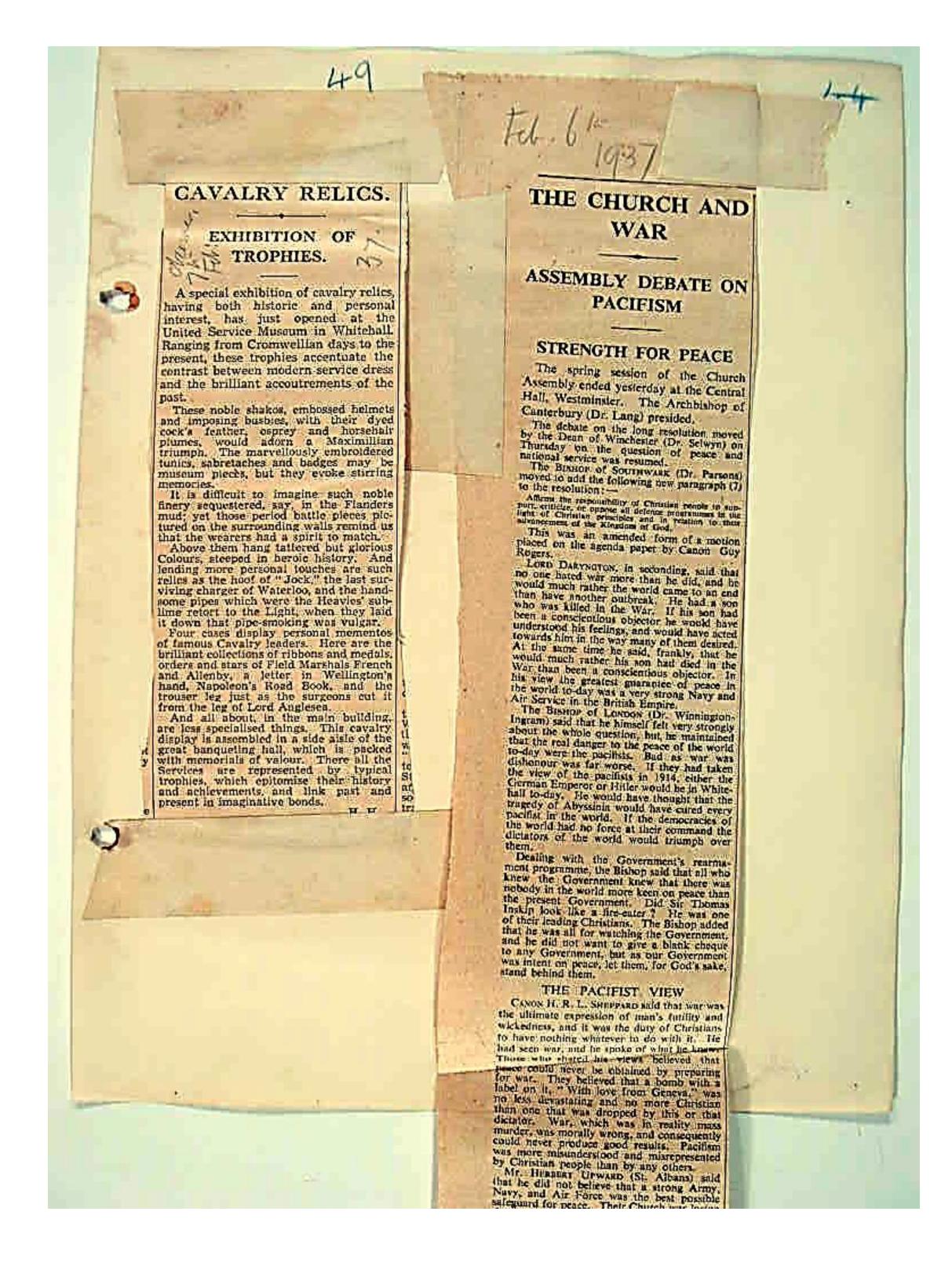
PACIFISM: WOOLF

A Different Peace

Throughout *Three Guineas*, Virginia Woolf explores feminism and pacifism's interconnection. She argues that women, by virtue of being different from men, are uniquely capable of preventing war. Such differences stem from the different education women have traditionally received from their "four great teachers... poverty, chastity, derision and freedom from unreal loyalties" (96), such as national and school pride (97). We see in Woolf's scrapbooks how these loyalties can detract from the cause of peace. On the page visible here, a British man says that "he would much rather his son had died in the War than been a conscientious objector" (Monks House Papers/B.16f. Vol 2 (Sussex), 49):



A record of 'unreal loyalties': Much of the content of Woolf's scrapbooks suggests direct connections to ideas in Three Guineas, and this page is no exception. Image courtesy of Southern Connecticut State University.

The remainder of the article makes clear that this preference is due to that fact that he views dying for one's country as a glorious act of patriotic devotion, whereas promoting peace through objection would not bring glory to his nation. Woolf's argument thus follows that women's freedom from these national loyalties allows them to renounce interest in war completely, instead adopting an attitude of "indifference" (129). To remain indifferent to a system, one cannot participate in it, and Woolf's "Outsiders' Society" (126), echoes this idea that "[women] can best help [men] to prevent war not by joining [their] society but by remaining outside" (170). Thus *Three Guineas* declares that women's ability to be effective pacifists originates in their inherently different experience from that of men. While men can work towards peace within existing structures and institutions, for the daughters of educated men in particular solutions to war must be found outside of and beyond these.

Works Cited

Three Guineas Reading Notebooks. (Monks House Papers/B.16f. Vol 2 (Sussex), 49). Southern Connecticut State University. Web. 16 March, 2015.

Woolf, Virginia. *Three Guineas*. 1938. Ed. by Mark Hussey. Annotated and introduced by Jane Marcus. Orlando: Harcourt, 2006. Print.

music; English literature with Greek literature, for translations abound. When all these comparisons have been faithfully made by the use of reason, the outsider will find herself in possession of very good reasons for her indifference. She will find that she has no good reason to ask her brother to fight on her behalf to protect "our" country.

"' Our country," she will say, "throughout the greater part of its history has treated me as a slave; it has denied me education or any share in its possessions. 'Our' country still ceases to be mine if I marry a foreigner. 'Our' country denies me the means of protecting myself, forces me to pay others a very large sum annually to protect me, and is so little able, even so, to protect me that Air Raid precautions are written on the wall. Therefore if you insist upon fighting to protect me, or 'our' country, let it be understood, soberly and rationally between us, that you are fighting to gratify a sex instinct which I cannot share; to procure benefits which I have not shared and probably will not share; but not to gratify my instincts, or to protect either myself or my country. For," the outsider will say, "in fact, as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world." And if, when reason

198

THREE GUINEAS

has said its say, still some obstinate emotion remains, some love of England dropped into a child's ears by the cawing of rooks in an elm tree, by the splash of waves on a beach, or by English voices murmuring nursery rhymes, this drop of pure, if irrational, emotion she will make serve her to give to England first what she desires of peace and freedom for the whole world.

Such then will be the nature of her "indifference" and from this indifference certain actions must follow. She will bind herself to take no share in patriotic demonstrations; to assent to no form of national self-praise; to make no part of any claque or audience that encourages war; to absent herself from military displays, tournaments, tattoos, prize-givings and all such ceremonies as encourage the desire to impose "our" civilization or "our" dominion upon other people. The psychology of private life, moreover, warrants the belief that this use of indifference by the daughters of educated men would help materially to prevent war. For psychology would seem to show that it is far harder for human beings to take action when other people are indifferent and allow them complete freedom of action, than when their actions are made the centre of excited