THREE GUINEAS

4 June 1938

117. From an unsigned review, *Times Literary Supplement*

4 June 1938

'Oh it pleased me that the *Lit. Sup.* says I'm the most brilliant pamphleteer in England' (*A Writer's Diary*, 294).

Mrs Woolf in her novels makes masterly use of the reflecting mind's haziness and inconsequence to build up, out of images, a brilliant picture; and admiring readers, stimulated by this poetic process, are sometimes misled into supposing that it constitutes her chief artistic equipment. It is in her criticism, whether of books or institutions, that the keen edge of her other tool becomes apparent; and that other tool is precision itself, consequence, logic, directed by an irony that is sharp but never inhuman. Mrs Woolf seldom writes a pamphlet, but she is the most brilliant pamphleteer in England. *Three Guineas* is a pamphlet which, in various ways, challenges every thinking mind to-day; so that all should read it, not only for their enjoyment of its admirable style and wit, but that they may define in their own minds their answer to her arguments.

The New Lysistrata

In essence, the question propounded is that of Lysistrata—how can women help to stop war?—but the simple levity of Aristophanes's answer naturally bears no resemblance to Mrs Woolf's treatment of a matter that brooks no laughter. Humour she uses, but her seriousness is profound....

Majumdar, Robin (Editor); McLauren, Aden (Editor). Virginia Woolf.
London, GBR: Routledge, 1997. p 400.
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Some of the notes which contain the quotations also contain the quintessence of the author's wit, for example, those about lectures on English literature, about the maid's part in English upper-class life and about the rage of the educated class for trying to improve the working class, to mention only a few. Many readers of this book will applaud, others grind their teeth; some will mostly enjoy the display of graceful wit, others mostly ponder the arguments; but none, either the convinced or unconvinced, will be impervious to the dextrous bodkin, against which the only protection is a disinterestedness of action and a clarity of mind equal to Mrs Woolf's....

It needs more than one reading to enjoy the artistry, appraise the arguments and formulate such criticism as occurs. Nevertheless, we should like to have had Mrs Poyser's criticism and that of the mother who figures in *Sons and Lovers*. Also, in spite of the gulf, D.H.Lawrence might have had something to say regarding a matter not here touched on, the possessiveness of women in the private life; and the modern father of an emancipated daughter, with an allowance of her own, a flat of her own and an earned salary in addition, might observe that Mrs Woolf's continual quotations from the lives of a past generation of heroines do not really move him very deeply. Possibly, too, it might be said that Mrs Woolf cannot solve the whole problem if she only states it for educated women of a civilized *bourgeoisie*. Nevertheless, she limits her scrutiny with her eyes open, and it would be the grossest misunderstanding which accused her of intending to exacerbate the antagonism and mutual ignorance of the sexes which, in the end, she has ruefully to admit: 'as fighting thus is a sex characteristic which she cannot share, so it is an instinct which she cannot judge'. This is a fairer statement, and nearer to the truth, than the pleas of most believers in the perfectibility of mankind. Yet even Mrs Woolf seems hardly to appreciate the implications of this admission and its effect upon the fundamental problem. May it not be that the myth of the Fall expresses the truth that so long as there is flesh aware of flesh there will be conflict, and while there are bodies to hunger and desire, the poet's dream of universal, unbroken peace will never be realised?... to regain Paradise no number of guineas or societies will avail.

118. Theodora Bosanquet, from a review, *Time and Tide*

4 June 1938, 788–90

Three Guineas is the book of the year. Whatever other books may come, it is unlikely that 1938 will give us another volume by Mrs Woolf, and no other living English writer carries such an array of gifts and accomplishments under one bonnet or cap. Here, then, is this year's finest example of what England can produce in literature. Like all Mrs Woolf s works, it carries its author's signature on every page. It is made of vision translated by a subtle intelligence, passion lighted by wit, confident and easy control of words and phrases. It flows in a form which moves and gleams like the ripple of waves drawn by the irresistible magnetism of the moon. And as waves seem to return on themselves before each advance, so the movement of Mrs Woolf's mind seems to glide back, to catch up an earlier thread of the argument, only to gather momentum for flowing over a new crest to a higher level.

Yet for all the shimmer of its surface, *Three Guineas* is a revolutionary bomb of a book, delicately aimed at the heart of our mad, armament ridden world. Or, if not precisely at the heart, at an even more vital if less physiologically localized centre, the dark womb of the unconscious (or subconscious, as you will) where various undesirable eggs hatch into monsters which thrust their way to the surface in fears and oppressions, dictators and mass murders...

I hope I have made it clear that *Three Guineas* is a provocative and controversial book. Mrs Woolf is trailing not merely her coat, but a few delightfully and deliberately misleading scents. Quibblers can throw themselves hungrily on symbolic statements, special pleadings, extravagant flights of imagination. They can protest that 1919 is not the date she says it is, that Cambridge is not the only University, and that the Rev. Patrick Bronte may reasonably be held to have lengthened his daughter Charlotte's life, however unpleasantly he behaved about that affair of the curate. But Mrs Woolf is not writing as a lawyer, a

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London, GBR: Routledge, 1997. p 402.
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professor, or any other educated man. She does not pretend to be impartial. Women, she might say, cannot be impartial. And although I do not suppose that Mrs Woolf would maintain in the teeth of much evidence, that jealousy, vanity, greed and possessiveness are found only in public life and exhibited almost exclusively by the male sex, it is a fact that she does not believe that 'God Almighty made women to match the men.' She has never thought as badly of women as that.

It is not as Amazons but as Antigones that Mrs Woolf sees the daughters of educated men. Their freedom should be not to break laws but to discover the Law, the true pattern of life. Creon, you will remember, had Antigone shut up in a tomb, and Creon is the false pattern of a dictator with death in his face. Since Mrs Woolf is a prophet, her vision will no doubt be fulfilled; but since prophets are notoriously unreliable in matters of days and centuries, the world may have to wait a long time for that fulfilment–to wait perhaps for the crest of another great wave and the worship of another form of the Bona Dea. But today the daughters of educated men, children of earth and of the starry heaven, will, if they are intelligent, read *Three Guineas* with close attention and consider in its brilliant light the comparative merits of the birthright which they are asked to claim and a precarious mess of pottage.

119. Basil de Selincourt, from a review, *Observer*

5 June 1938, 5

Only the other day I drew down *Literature and Dogma* from its honoured place on a distant shelf and, as I revived my memory of its caustic expostulatory cadences, reflected with sorrow on the narrow range of their effectiveness. Nonconformity and Establishment pursue the beaten path in much the same spirit now as fifty years ago, softened only too little by the truth that penetrates and unifies; we are still bound to the

dead letter of our professional, our man-made creeds. Mrs Woolf's reasonings and expostulations, her irony and ridicule, in *Three Guineas* have much the tone of Matthew Arnold's, and I am wondering whether the world will swallow them and acknowledge the justice of her cause, as once it did of his, and afterwards roll on in practical indifference, too set in its ways to realise that those ways need changing. Of course, the professionalism of religion has been manmade in almost every country. And is it because men have laid down the lines not of religion only, but of so many other things—industry, law, education—that those lines are apt to be hard and fast lines, conspicuously lacking the resiliency and adaptiveness which life and growth require? Who, you may ask me, could lay down these lines but men? We are surely not to suppose, wherever we require it, a deus ex machina, a divine messenger arriving in the nick of time to cut each knot? That is far from being Mrs Woolf s suggestion. Her point is that men, who constitute but half the world, persist in behaving as if they were the only half that mattered; as if they were by necessity the creators and directors. Yet if you look around you, if you consider, for example, the condition of Spain, can you be sure that the direction and the initiation are the best that could have been found?...

It is a hateful story and it is also an absurd story; Mrs Woolf has done the best she could for us in showing how absurd. But she has also words of deep wisdom on the principal question, the question where we should look if we wish to find the seeds of war. Of course, there is an obvious animal combativeness which is the glory of the male. Among the subtler human motives she specially denounces the pride of privilege and possession: mainly male, no doubt, at present; but I fear women, too, will always tend to succumb when the interests of their children or their loved ones are at stake.

Majumdar, Robin (Editor); McLauren, Aden (Editor). Virginia Woolf.
London, GBR: Routledge, 1997. p 404.
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120. K.John, from a review, *New Statesman and Nation*

11 June 1938, 995–6

The review was entitled 'The New Lysistrata'.

This writer cannot make a point heavily, or endure the bleakness of abstraction for half a page. Everything comes to life at her touch. She ranks as a highbrow; yet no penny-a-liner is more careful to avoid dullness, and meet attention halfway. And *Three Guineas* equals anything of the sort she has done, but the question is what to say about it. Should one call it simply a work of art, and hold up her method to the despair of all bunglers? Can one discuss its ideas, as though they were not involved with that enchanting presentment? Reviewers must have had the same difficulty with *A Room of One's Own*....

If women were really solid for peace and freedom, I think they would have some chance of getting it, by whatever method—breaking shop windows, for example. For that matter, if they had been solid for the vote they would very likely have got it quicker. But a number of them were violent anti-suffragists—beginning with Queen Victoria, who was certainly not afraid to speak her mind, and whose mind was that the agitators should be well *whipped*. And to-day a number are Fascists: it may be unnatural and astounding, but there it is. Can we assume that in the moment of becoming independent they will veer round?

But they should be independent, in either case. There is no questioning the justice of Mrs Woolf's demands, or the beauty of her gospel—though it includes one or two hard sayings. I can't see, for instance, why she is so bitter on lectures, and on those who 'adulterate' their culture by mixing it with personal charm. All charming people of culture do this all the time, and can't help doing it. Mrs Woolf does it, inevitably, in every sentence of her personal style. Surely such 'adulteration' is one of the best things the world can offer?

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121. Graham Greene, review, *Spectator*

17 June 1938, 1110–12

Graham Greene (b. 1904). Novelist. See Introduction, p. 29.

There is a mythical quality about Mrs Woolf. It is sometimes hard not to believe that she is a character invented by Mr E.M.Forster. Listen to him describing the Schlegel sisters in *Howards End* and think how it applies.

> In their own fashion they cared deeply about politics, though not as politicians would have us care: they desired that public life should mirror whatever is good in the life within. Temperance, tolerance, and sexual equality were intelligible cries to them; whereas they did not follow our Forward Policy in Thibet with the keen attention it merits, and would at times dismiss the whole British Empire with a puzzled, if reverent, sigh.

It must have needed courage (what would the post bring?) on the part of an earnest, middle-aged barrister to write to Mrs Woolf asking her how in her opinion we were to prevent war and inviting her to join a society for that purpose. She would not join the society, but she sent him (the Schlegels could never have refused such an appeal) a guinea and a letter. This is the letter.

The question–how are we to prevent war?–involved elaborate and subtle research in that brain which I have always pictured as a large whorled shell with intricate convolutions trapping somewhere within them the sound of the sea (the sea which Mrs Ramsay heard splashing round the lighthouse, as she turned the pages of the Stores catalogue) and stamped on the outside 'A Present from...' some family resort. It involves the whole social relationship between men and women: it involves an appeal she has received for the rebuilding fund of a women's college and another from a society 'to help the daughters of educated men to obtain employment in the professions'. Men are reminded of the sacrifices women made for centuries that *they* might be educated at the

universities (has that education helped to prevent war?), of the opposition, often gross and physical in form, they raised to prevent women in their turn receiving a university education, and of the present unfair discrimination against women in the professions, particularly in the Civil Service. Yet now we turn to them and ask for their help. What can women do?–'What real influence can we bring to bear upon law or business, religion or politics–we to whom many doors are still locked, or at best ajar, we who have neither capital nor force behind us?'

The question is horribly just, and caught in that whorled shell goes echoing back. If man's university education, their professional life with its absurd pageantries, the wigs and ribbons and stripes, have done nothing for peace but rather encouraged competition and war, is it right to help women along the same road? Mrs Woolf's notes are crammed with the appalling utterances of our professional leaders–a judge interpreting England and the late Sir Ernest Wild on the proper influence of women, and her pages are illustrated with photographs–of the general, the judge, the archbishop, tinkling with trinkets. And though in the end Mrs Woolf does send a guinea each to the rebuilding fund and the society, to her latter gift she attaches a wise and austere condition. Biography–in the lives of such women as Florence Nightingale and Mary Kingsley–has taught her the value of the old unpaid-for education snatched with difficulty from the man-ruled home. 'We cannot deny that these, if not educated, still were civilised women.'

> This biography, when asked the question we have put to it–how can we enter the professions and yet remain civilised human beings, human beings who discourage war, would seem to reply: If you refuse to be separated from the four great teachers of the daughters of educated men–poverty, chastity, derision and freedom from unreal loyalties–but combine them with some wealth, some knowledge, and some service to real loyalties, then you can enter the professions and escape the risks that make them undesirable.... Such are the conditions attached to this guinea.

Chastity is given a very wide, very intellectual meaning: it has nothing–in Mrs Woolf's argument–to do with sexual experience; though it is hard to understand why Mrs Woolf should rule out the genuine chastity–as practised by Florence Nightingale and Mary Kingsley–from the value of their education.

It is here we come on the one defect of this clear brilliant essay. When Mrs Woolf's argument touches morality or religion we are aware of odd sounds in the shell. Can a shell be a little old-fashioned (quoting

Renan), a little provincial, even a little shrill? Can a shell be said to lead a too sheltered life? Mrs Woolf discusses Christianity only in terms of the Church of England, and one cannot imagine the most agnostic Frenchwoman—a countrywoman of Maritain, Bloy, Péguy, Mauriac—writing of the moral laws: 'That such laws exist, and are observed by civilised people, is fairly generally allowed; but it is beginning to be agreed that they were not laid down by "God", who is now very generally held' (note the unusual stylistic chaos: is some emotion imperfectly suppressed?) 'to be a conception, of patriarchal origin, valid only for certain races, at certain stages and times.' And only a very good woman, living at a 'good address', could write in connexion with what Sir Ernest Wild so complacently considered to be a woman's proper influence ('every man who had a woman to care about him liked to shine in her eyes'):

> If such is the real nature of our influence, and we all recognise the description and have noted the effects, it is either beyond our reach, for many of us are plain, poor and old; or beneath our contempt, for many of us would prefer to call ourselves prostitutes simply and to take our stand openly under the lamps of Piccadilly Circus rather than use it.

It is all a little reminiscent of the words of that good man who would rather have given his daughter poison than a copy of *The Well of Loneliness*.

122. Q.D.Leavis, review, *Scrutiny*

September 1938, 203–14

Q.D.Leavis. University teacher and literary critic. Wife of F.R.Leavis. Her pioneering study *Fiction and the Reading Public* was published in 1932 (see Introduction, p. 29). When she read this review, Virginia Woolf commented 'I read enough to see that it was all personal–about Queenie's own grievances and retorts to my snubs' (*A Writer's Diary*, 301).

This book is not really reviewable in these pages because Mrs. Woolf implies throughout that it is a conversation between her and her friends, addressed as she constantly says to 'women of our class', though bits of it are directly and indirectly aimed at those women's menkind. What 'our class' is turns out to be the people whose fathers function at Westminster, who 'spend vast sums annually upon party funds; upon sport; upon grouse moors...lavishes] money upon clubs–Brook's, White's, the Travellers', the Reform, to mention the most prominent.' Mrs. Woolf would apparently be surprised to hear that there is no member of that class on the contributing list of this review. On the other hand, readers of this review will be surprised to hear that Mrs. Woolf thinks this class–the relatively very few wealthy propertied people in our country–is to be identified with 'the educated class' and contains at this date the average educated man and the average student of the women's colleges of the older universities. This is the first of many staggering intimations for the reader that Mrs. Woolf is not living in the contemporary world: almost the first thing we notice is that the author of *Three Guineas* is quite insulated by class. What respectable ideas inform this book belong to the ethos of John Stuart Mill. What experience there is of domineering and hostile man (for that purports to justify the undertaking) is secondhand and comes from heresay.*

* Often unreliable. Mrs. Woolf instances as one burning injustice: 'Not a single educated man's daughter is thought capable of teaching the literature of her own language at either

It is no use attempting to discuss the book for what it claims to be, which is a sort of chatty restatement of the rights and wrongs of women of Mrs. Woolf's class, with occasional reflexions where convenient on the wrongs of other kinds of English-women. Mrs. Woolf, by her own account, has personally received considerably more in the way of economic ease than she is humanly entitled to, and as this book reveals, has enjoyed the equally relaxing ease of an uncritical (not to say flattering) social circle: she cannot be supposed to have suffered any worse injury from mankind than a rare unfavourable review. Writing this book was evidently a form of self-indulgence—altruism exhibits a different tone, it is not bad-tempered, peevishly sarcastic and incoherent as this book is throughout. As a reviewer I must say it impresses me as unpleasant self-indulgence, and as a member of a class of educated women Mrs. Woolf has apparently never heard of, I feel entitled to add that it is also highly undesirable. The reviewers have indeed all blessed the book, but any man who objected would lay himself open to the obvious charges of (a) being no gentleman and (b) expressing a resentment easily explicable in psychological terms, while any woman who refused to vote solid would of course be a traitress to the cause. Nevertheless I venture to voice what I know to be the opinion of many educated women, that Mrs. Woolf 's latest effort is a let-down for our sex. *A Room of Ones Own* was annoying enough, causing outpourings of disgust in the very quarters in which Mrs. Woolf, one gathered, expected to earn gratitude; but this book is not merely silly and ill-informed, though it is that too, it contains some dangerous assumptions, some preposterous claims and some nasty attitudes.

The method is a deliberate avoidance of any argument—its unity is emotional. She tries in fact to make a weapon of feminine inconsequence, and I felt sympathetic with another reader of *Three Guineas*, of course of the wrong sex, who remarked to me that Mrs. Woolf's mental processes reminded him of Mrs. Nickleby's. The result affects me like Nazi dialectic without Nazi conviction. Take pages 39 to 40. They run like this (I preserve Mrs. Woolf's wording where possible): men dress up in their professional capacities as warriors, lawyers, courtiers, dons; they forbid us women to wear such uniform, but don't

university.' There are at present six women regularly on the lecture-list for the English Tripos and I believe at no time in the last ten years has there been less than four—a generous representation for two colleges. Again: 'The great majority of your sex (Englishmen) are to-day in favour of war.'

let them suppose that they are anything but a ridiculous spectacle to us; preserving archaic costume for public ritual in the universities emphasizes the superiority of educated men over other people; this arouses competition and jealousy, emotions making for war; women therefore can help to prevent war by refusing to wear academic dress (though they have at present a legitimate grievance in not being allowed to wear it at Cambridge) or to accept public honours, and by openly despising the men who do. I cannot understand all this as anything but phrases which have no meaningful connection with each other, but it is a fair specimen of the rhetoric in which the 'argument' of *Three Guineas* is conducted. This passage moreover is illustrated with photographs, but as they are evidently selected with malice and as the thought perforce leaps to mind how a corresponding selection, probably as stupid-looking or ridiculous, could be compiled of eminent women's faces and persons in gala dress, the method defeats itself. As does another artifice. This is to write as though the defects of human nature existed only in the male branch (if deliberate it's bad tactics because it outrages common sense and if unconscious, as there seems reason to suppose, it discounts the whole undertaking). For example, Mrs. Woolf gives much space to the Victorian father who almost without exception, she thinks, kept his daughters in intellectual and economic subservience. I do not myself believe that the bourgeois fathers at any period were worse than the mothers, or that both varieties of parent are not at all times equally inclined to proprietary behaviour wherever unchecked by self-knowledge, whatever the state of the law and public opinion. Mrs. Woolf writes as though the Victorian fathers whom she adduces as jealous of their daughters marrying or achieving economic independence were not to be paralleled in many ages, including our own, by the common case of mothers who try to run their sons' lives (D.H.Lawrence's mother is a well-known type) and it is even arguable that the moral and emotional pressure exerted by mothers upon their children, particularly sons, is worse than the economic dependence of daughters and wives.

In fact the release of sex hostility this kind of writing represents is self-indulgent because it provides Mrs. Woolf with a self-righteous glow at the cost of furnishing an easy target for unsympathetic males, and at the still greater cost of embarrassing those women who are aware that the only chance of their getting accepted as intellectual equals by intelligent men (and so ultimately by the men who run the institutions and professions) is by living down their sex's reputation for having in

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general minds as ill-regulated as Mrs. Woolf's is here seen to be.* It is a reputation that will die the harder for *Three Guineas*.

For just think of the proposals made here for improving the position of educated women. There is her proposal for reforming the evils of the professions by women refusing to acquiesce in them. Instances given are: refuse to approve of academic dress and decorations because these somehow cause wars; accept University lectureships in literature and then refuse to lecture because all such lectures and all teaching of literature (except by creative writers to those itching to become such themselves) is Vain and vicious',† refuse to pander to 'adultery of the

* Mrs. Woolf heaps contumely upon Mr. Joad for alleging that conversation–by which he presumably means, as many of us do, serious discussion–is ruined by the presence of women. Though he might have put it less irritatingly, a conscientious woman would often feel obliged to admit from her own experience that this attitude is understandable. I have frequently heard accounts from educated women of their discomfort at discussions which have been nullified or spoilt by shameless exposures of the limitations of female intellects. Such accounts have often ended with the formula 'I blushed for my sex.' The remedy is of course a more rigorous intellectual discipline and that acquaintance with standards which produces humility. Mrs. Woolf's idea however is to abolish that kind of education altogether–see below.

† There are notoriously perfectly worthless lectures on literature–the kind students call 'potted textbook,' and those which are summaries of texts, answering to Mrs. Woolf's account of 'sipping English literature through a straw'. But Mrs. Woolf does not apparently mean these. It seems curious that she does not make the obvious suggestion that women should show their mettle by offering the right kind of teaching (for there is a right kind, unless the opinion of the better students is negligible, and she might have satisfied herself that this is so by undertaking some field-research–a necessary preliminary, one would have thought, to voicing an opinion on a subject of which Mrs. Woolf can have no firsthand knowledge having, according to *Who's Who*, been educated at home). She alleges in general terms the danger of infection from 'a mature mind lecturing immature minds' on literature. This looks like a joke if you happen to know that the invariable complaint made by serious students of literature at *any* English university is that they suffer from working under lecturers who haven't the wherewithal for impressing a student with anything but boredom. The very marked objection of the run of such lecturers to a method of discussing literature that stimulates students to ask questions (I have heard of the objection being made in these words) is then understandable. And the objection of inferior or spoilt writers to the potential creation of a public capable of distinguishing between good and bad art is also understandable. By seeking information at the right instead of the wrong end of the process Mrs. Woolf could have learnt that the effective method of teaching literature does not tell young men and women what to approve or disapprove of (to do so, would of course merely antagonize) but develops in them individual sensibility–a capacity for discovering what is of value in art, and how those values can be usefully organized. Examinations then become not what Mrs. Woolf censures as 'the reduction of English literature to an examination subject' but a test whether a student has profited by his studies to become a person capable of discriminating, evaluating, and organizing his judgments, as well as whether he has studied widely enough to have acquired a sound basis for judging. 'Vain and vicious' seem to be the right terms for those who would prevent such genuinely educational work.

brain' by writing for journals or publishers (alternative source of income for professional women writers not inheriting five hundred a year and rooms of their own not indicated). Then there is the plan for abolishing the man-made university with its examinations, degrees, and distinctions based on native ability, and substituting the ideal college as conceived by and for woman. At a time when all responsible educationalists are expressing radical dissatisfaction both with the existing college system and with the accepted idea of university education this attracts our attention as a hopeful sign. But as a nice practical start Mrs. Woolf won't hear of university students being prepared in any way to earn a living, even by studying specialities. She thinks that adults from eighteen to twenty-one can justify their existence as burdens on the state by studying what she calls the art of living. Most people might feel that the art of living is best acquired incidentally to some discipline, either that given by brute circumstances when one is forced to stand on one's own feet (ideal: Robinson Crusoe) or that acquired in the pursuit of specialist studies—and many educationists now think it would be an improvement to combine the two. Without some such discipline the art of living becomes a pitiful affair. Mrs Woolf's conception of it turns out to be the variety implied in the prospectus of an Arts Theatre I once received which announced something like this, that it would be a place where people who appreciated the arts of dress, epicurism and conversation would be able, in appropriate surroundings, to feed a corresponding taste for the art of drama. It seems to me the art of living as conceived by a social parasite. Mrs. Woolf wants studies in her college to be pursued by 'the clever and the stupid' side by side, without any troublesome distinctions or standards to spoil things. But if an institution for the higher education of adults is to defend humane values, as Mrs. Woolf in theory at any rate desiderates, it can only do so by jealously maintaining the highest possible standards where the arts are concerned and conducting the most rigorous scrutiny of intellectual processes generally. Hence its very first duty would be to inculcate the critical attitude and its second to develop in its students the ability to discriminate, judge and reject, along with the practice of responsible thinking and conduct. Mrs. Woolf however feels even more strongly than about the wrongs of women of her class the wrongs of writers like Sir Edmund Gosse and Tennyson (specified along with Keats as objecting to criticism—a few instances of better-known objectors to criticism, such as Miss Edith Sitwell and Marie Corelli, would have made the point clearer) and her most

cherished project of all is to uproot criticism root and branch in the Nazi manner. With access to some practical control Mrs. Woolf would evidently develop into a high-powered persecutor; this throws a pretty light on her conception of truth, freedom and intellectual liberty which she calls upon educated women to maintain. She wants to penalize specialists in the interests of amateurs, and so her university, in spite of a promise that learning should be studied there for its own sake, could only be a breeding-ground for boudoir scholarship (a term I once heard applied to the learning of one of Mrs. Woolf's group) and belletrism. I cannot believe that any one else would think this an improvement on the existing kind of university studies, or that such a higher 'education' would be more successful than the present kind in discouraging meanness of spirit, hostility to freedom of thought and hatred of disinterestedness. Mrs. Woolf 's is no doubt a feminine conception of congenial study, as opposed to the existing masculine one of disciplined studies towards an end, but is it the kind of education women have struggled for admission to in the past? *Three Guineas* draws freely on the impressive biographies of the leaders of female emancipation, but from the quotations she gives I conclude the desires of these women were the same as mine and those of most men on entering college, the desire to continue a general education by disciplined specialist studies under the best available instructors (who, shameful admission, still happen to be men in most fields) and as far as possible in the company of those students able to set the highest standards and work with the greatest degree of maturity (who also happen to be men, which explains why sensible women would never dream of imitating Mrs. Woolf's feminist heroics). The least damning thing you might say about Mrs. Woolf's proposals is that they are irresponsible.

Out of these babblings the noble and dignified utterances of Josephine Butler, the vigorous good sense with which Sophia Jex-Blake pursued her reasonable demands, the humility of Anne Clough, appeal to Heaven against the context in which they find themselves. I think such women would rather not have had the claims of their sex advocated by Mrs. Woolf's methods. I myself stipulate that any piece of female writing advocating equality of opportunity for the sexes should prove its author to have a highly developed character and a respectable intellect, to be free from mere sex-hostility, to have an at least masculine sense of responsibility and that capacity for self-criticism which impresses us as a mark of the best kind of masculine mind, and

over and above that to come from a woman capable of justifying her existence in any walk of life. There really are quite a number of women like that about. I would rather the kind of men who need converting from gross prejudice against women's abilities should read not *Three Guineas* but, among other recent women's books, *Highland Homespun* (Margaret M.Leigh), *Can I Help You, Madam?* (Ethyle Campbell), *I'm Not Complaining* (Ruth Adam), *Sex and Temperament in Savage Society* (Margaret Mead)—books which in varied ways exhibit women capable of doing a job (farming, business, education, social sciences) which demands sterling qualities of mind and character. These books are impressive documentation of women's right to share interests and occupations that have sometimes been considered suitable only for men.

But I have passed over Mrs. Woolf's plan for the complete emancipation of women of her class from the prison-house she considers every part of the home other than the drawing-room to be. To judge from *Three Guineas* Mrs. Woolf wants the women of her class to have the privileges of womanhood without the duties and responsibilities traditionally assumed by them, and to have the advantages of a man's education without being subsequently obliged, as nearly all men are, to justify it. Thus she urges the re-endowment of the almost extinct class of 'idle, charming, cultivated women' whose function would be to provide those dinner-tables and drawing-rooms where the art of living, as previously defined, is to be practised, and she is indignant that the early students of Girton and Newnham had to make their own beds and suffer plain living—though some responsible educationalists now advocate university reform in the direction of obliging even men to conduct their education in the more realistic surroundings provided by the absence of servants.

On the other hand, 'Daughters of educated men have always done their thinking from hand to mouth...They have thought while they stirred the pot, while they rocked the cradle. It was thus that they won us the right,' etc. I agree with someone who complained that to judge from the acquaintance with the realities of life displayed in this book there is no reason to suppose Mrs. Woolf would know which end of the cradle to stir. Mrs. Woolf in fact can hardly claim that she has thus helped to win us the right, etc. I myself, however, have generally had to produce contributions for this review with one hand while actually stirring the pot, or something of that kind, with the other, and if I have not done my thinking while rocking the cradle it was only because the daughters even of uneducated men ceased to rock infants at least two

generations ago. Well I feel bound to disagree with Mrs. Woolf's assumption that running a household and family unaided necessarily hinders or weakens thinking. One's own kitchen and nursery, and not the drawing-room and dinner-table where tired professional men relax among the ladies (thus Mrs. Woolf), is the realm where living takes place, and I see no profit in letting our servants live for us. The activities Mrs. Woolf wishes to free educated women from as wasteful not only provide a valuable discipline, they serve as a sieve for determining which values are important and genuine and which are conventional and contemptible. It is this order of experience that often makes the conversation of an uncultivated charmless woman who has merely worked hard and reared a family interesting and stimulating, while its absence renders a hypertrophied conversation piece like *Three Guineas* tiresome and worthless. Mrs. Woolf's plan for a new society intrigues me nevertheless. We are to have one kind of educated women, the idle charming cultivated women, who are to be subsidized as hostesses for the art of social intercourse (it is presumably to spare the sensibilities of these exquisite creatures that criticism of literature is to be prohibited—perhaps because they tend to dabble in letters themselves). Then we are to have a sterner kind of educated woman, the professional woman, for whose benefit the men's colleges are to be thrown open and all the available scholarship money divided equally between the sexes—the women who are to be just like men only more high-minded. Both these kinds are the five-hundred-a-year-by-right-of-birth-as-daughters-of-the-ruling-classes women. Then there are to be the base-born women who come in on the edge of the picture as drudges, to relieve both the other kinds of women of their natural duties (I mean of course nursing and rearing their own infants) as well as the routine of home-making. To impress hired labour for such work is enlightened ('remember we are in the twentieth century now,' writes Mrs. Woolf, and quotes a feminist writer to the effect that a mother is only incapacitated from pursuing her profession for two months per child) but Mrs. Woolf's ancestors who thought it advisable to send their daughters about London accompanied by a personal maid are the objects of much laboured irony (see p. 294). Then there are the unfortunate men who are to marry these daughters of educated men. If their wives choose to have babies—for women are to avert war by refusing to bear children, but apparently not indefinitely—they must from the start share the work of tending their offspring. A thorough-going revolution in their wage-earning pursuits, and so a regular social reorganization, unenvisaged

by Mrs. Woolf, must take place to allow this. I like to think of the professional man hurrying home at four-hour intervals to spend upwards of half an hour giving the baby its bottle (for breast-feeding will only be able to survive among the uneducated)—among other duties; and presently he will have little time to give to his profession if he has any unenlightened doubts about trusting the growing mentality and sensibilities of his child to hirelings. But perhaps Mrs. Woolf does not mean to be taken as seriously as this. Or perhaps she is advocating the Soviet system of handing the child over to the State to rear at the earliest possible age. If so she should say as much and clear up her projects: they are at present all too nebulous.

I should like to end by making one part of them a little less so. It will be necessary to draw upon the disagreeable facts of experience instead of confining ourselves with Mrs. Woolf to assertions and wishful prophecy; but to import even a little reality into such a discussion should be a service. The position then with regard to further female emancipation seems to be that the onus is on women to prove that they are going to be able to justify it, and that it will not vitally dislocate (what it has already seriously disturbed—and no responsible person can regard that without uneasiness) the framework of our culture. It is no use starting all over again with the theory with which the Victorian emancipators began, we have to look at the results of fifty years of experience and consider facts which worry thoughtful women. One is that it is the exceptional and not the average woman student who is the intellectual equal of the average serious undergraduate in the same subject. 'Every year I have from one to two dozen men reading my subject [one of the humanities, taken by a comparable number of each sex, in which women generally get better preparation at school than men] with whom I can discuss it as equals. I have learned from long experience that among the women students there will be only one such in three years, if that.' Observations of this kind from perfectly openminded witnesses are not unusual, and substantiate the regular complaint of outstanding women students that there is a dearth of congenial intellectual company to be found in college—whereas the men can always find such company. Either, that is, the women's colleges do not cream the country as the men's do, or else there is precious little intellectual cream available for them to skim off. In relation to this, we may examine Mrs. Woolf's implication that women are victimized because they are restricted to about ten per cent of the students at both Oxford and Cambridge. It is an open secret that even at present the

entrance lists can hardly be filled without lowering the standard of admission undesirably—this may well be because it is harder for intelligent girls at the lower end of the economic scale to get to college than for their brothers, but Mrs. Woolf is concerned only with daughters of the well-to-do and she may rest assured that none of these if up to honours standard is ever prevented from entering Oxford or Cambridge because the quota is filled.* Again, Mrs. Woolf thinks it monstrous that the men's scholarship list at Cambridge is more than six times the length of the women's, but the general informed opinion seems to be that to throw all scholarships open to both sexes would mean that women would probably get fewer scholarships than at present, and rarely any in some subjects (scholarships being awarded on evidence of promise as well as of acquirements). To say that this is because women have not had the educational advantages of men, that is, of being taught by men at school, only puts the difficulty further back. The obvious course is to advocated co-education at an earlier stage than college, as a preliminary to women's storming the older universities.† Mrs. Woolf's guns should have been trained not on the protectionists of the men's colleges but on the women of her own class who don't give their daughters the chance to start fair with their brothers, but send them to conventional establishments where they never come up against masculine standards. Mrs. Woolf should logically be campaigning for two things—co-education from the primary to the boarding schools, and a change in the social structure which will allow the daughters of *any* men to enter upon the highest course of studies they are fitted for. As for the daughters of Mrs. Woolf's class, evidence suggests that they value the opportunities offered by the universities less than in the early days when these had to be struggled for. 'I am in the minority of those who go there to work and they think it funny,' the daughter of an educated man, in her first year at one of

* Though of course, on general principles the restriction of their numbers should be left to the wisdom of the women's colleges themselves, which could be trusted to do that in their own interests. But Mrs. Woolf does not take this line.

† If Mrs. Woolf were to reply that those who cannot take high honours may nevertheless profit from going to college and should have the chance of doing so, we should have to remind her of the existence of the modern universities, to which women, like men, have unrestricted access. I say 'remind', but the regular use of 'either university' in *Three Guineas* suggests that Mrs. Woolf has never heard of any but Oxford and Cambridge. To say that there is a case for keeping the older universities for those students capable of the highest standards in many specialisms is not to deny that it would be desirable for the modern universities to have much more of the atmosphere and educational method of the former. Here is another reform Mrs. Woolf might more reasonably have demanded in the name of women.

the Oxford colleges, remarked to me recently. Perhaps related to this is the complaint often heard from intelligent Oxford undergraduates that the women students there make themselves a nuisance. It suggests another reason for deploring the tone of *Three Guineas*. One hears there is still plenty of sex-hostility about in the common-rooms and combination-rooms; Mrs. Woolf only cites the indefensible manifestations of such an attitude, but women cannot afford to give such prejudice any grounding.

If from evidence of what limited progress we have made in equalizing the sexes we wish to move to a more profitable attack on theory than *Three Guineas* makes there is *Sex and Temperament in Savage Society*. Miss Mead's investigation of different kinds of societies where (a) the women are 'masculine' in temperament and activities and the men 'feminine,' (b) both sexes are 'masculine,' (c) both are 'feminine,' provides real evidence (assuming the other anthropologists have checked the sources) that many qualities and habits of feeling which we think sex-linked are the arbitrary results of social forms. If a competent social psychologist were to apply the findings of this book to the problems connected with emancipating women within our culture we might get somewhere at last. Certainly there is no longer any use in this field of speculation for the non-specialist like Mrs. Woolf.