THE AUTHORITY OF ANGER: *THREE GUINEAS* AS CASE STUDY

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"Don't use that tone of voice to me!" In "life," or "the world," we all know the circumstances and significance of that phrase: a generally hierarchical situation (parent and child comes immediately to mind) in which the speaker draws upon and claims authority through control or appropriation not just of the words of the exchange but of their tonal presentation. The context for this phrase almost always involves anger: the anger of the original speaker evoking the anger of the person who attempts to silence the upstart through an act of linguistic fiat. Even when the status of the speakers is more equal, lovers say, or colleagues, these words signify a move to establish or reestablish authority.

This scenario, so familiar to all of us, came increasingly to mind while I was preparing a history of the responses to *Three Guineas*, Virginia Woolf's analysis of the role that educated, professional women can and should play in confronting fascism and preventing war. Published in 1938, Woolf's controversial critique of her culture set off a series of rhetorical attacks and counterattacks that reverberated both in the media and in Woolf's correspondence. Today,

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after forty years of near invisibility, Woolf's text is experiencing a widespread revival that has touched off a new series of critical exchanges—or custody battles—among Woolf scholars and others, over the right to name the book's meaning and value.[1] Like all such battles, this one concerns anger—both Woolf's anger in her text and the way that readers respond to it—a battle that simultaneously focuses on and enacts itself through tones of voice. In the struggle over who defines Woolf's anger and to what ends, the will to power, whether masked or open, manifests itself in tones of voice that compete for authority in the critical marketplace.

Ultimately, what is at stake in this battle about anger and tone is the nature and status of feminist literary and cultural criticism, and the role of such criticism in the production of discourses that have a material impact in both the academy and the larger society. Rooted as it is in the interconnected concepts of universality, objectivity, and canonicity privileged by the (Anglo-American) critical establishment, the battle about the authority of anger surrounding feminist criticism can be read as a battle for or around "truth": an inscription of the discourse of "the true" constructed and disseminated by agencies of institutionalized authority (including the university and the media) that works to appropriate or silence the voices of opposition or dissent.[2] To the extent that the reigning discourses in our century, whether political, critical, or psychological, have constructed truths that condemn anger, at least women's anger, and with it feminist critique as destructive of truth, feminist criticism has struggled to find a voice with which to speak in the public realm. Paradoxically, by claiming the authority of

[1] *Three Guineas* also appears in debates within the peace movement, especially the women's peace movement; the women at Greenham Common, e.g., regularly cited the work in support of their action, while others, such as Karen Rosenberg in a review of these debates, find it a dangerous precedent ("Peaceniks and Soldier Girls," *Nation* [April 14, 1984], 453–57). I have borrowed the concept of the "custody battle" at work in debates about texts from Louis Renza, who uses it in a wide-ranging discussion of feminist criticism and canon formation: *"A White Heron" and the Question of Minor Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 94.

[2] See Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," trans. Rupert Swyer, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 215–37, esp. 219, 222–24, and "Truth and Power," trans. Colin Gordon, in *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 109–33, esp. 131–32. This battle can also be understood in terms of Foucault's elaboration of each society's "regime" or "general politics" of truth: "that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true" (*Power/Knowledge*, 131).

anger as the site of a discursive stance, feminist criticism becomes not only a different (and embattled) voice but also a continuing means of altering the truths by which we live.

Three Guineas provides an excellent case study. A feminist text that insists on women's historically different experience of culture as well as social and political institutions, *Three Guineas* associates the perspective achieved by difference with the survival of culture itself. Radical in its own time, years ahead of itself in terms of its insights, it emerges today as a blueprint for a contemporary feminist analysis of culture and its institutions. The scene is the late thirties; the pre-text is a letter from a male colleague who had asked the speaker/writer, "How in your opinion are we to prevent war?"[3] His "we" includes men and women, and it is here that difference enters the text, encoded in the speaker's "you" and "us": difference, and with it the possibility for changing society and ending war, located by Woolf in those women who were just entering the professions, including the academy, that are implicated in the production of truth.[4]

The perspective in *Three Guineas* is historical; "we cannot," Woolf had written earlier, "understand the present if we isolate it from the past."[5] For the speaker, who defines herself throughout as an "educated man's daughter," the history of the exclusions and denials experienced by this group of women, beginning with their limited access to the education provided their fathers and brothers, has created a gulf so deep between the two groups, the two sexes, who otherwise share the same status, as to make communication on such issues as how to prevent war almost impossible. Barred until recently from entering the professions or holding the positions that shape social and political policies, women, she argues, have not participated in the decision-making process associated with war. Equally important, being outsiders as well as inheritors in a patriarchal culture that denied them citizenship and the opportunity to compete for its awards, women view such concepts as

[3] Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1938), 3; subsequent references to this, the Harvest, edition appear in the text.

[4] In establishing the circumstances and implications of this difference, the narrator cites differences in education and the possession of capital, land, valuables, and patronage as a ground for the "considerable differences in mind and body" that shape a "whole made up of body, brain and spirit" and "influenced by memory and tradition." "Though we see the same world," she continues, "we see it through different eyes. Any help we can give you must be different from that you can give yourselves, and perhaps the value of that help may lie in the fact of that difference" (*Three Guineas*, 18). See also 103–4.

[5] Virginia Woolf, *The Pargiters: The Novel/Essay Portion of "The Years,"* ed. Mitchell A. Leaska (New York: New York Public Library, 1977), 9.

patriotism, honor, and honors from a different perspective. For the speaker, however, it is precisely this perspective, associated with the lessons learned from the centuries they spent in the private house, that allows women to bring to the public debate about war the text's most forceful and significant insight: that dominance and hierarchy in the public sphere, including their manifestation in fascism, are integrally related to dominance and hierarchy in the private sphere, and that we will never end war until we understand the desire for dominance at all levels of our lives. When women in the 1960s began to claim that the personal is political, they were echoing Woolf's prophetic and uncompromising belief that "the public and private worlds are inseparably connected; that the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other" (142).

This statement lies at the heart of the complex argument in *Three Guineas,* an argument that Woolf structures as a series of dialogues within dialogues. For in addition to asking how they could end war, the male correspondent had made three requests: that the speaker sign a manifesto that pledged her "to protect culture and intellectual liberty," that she join a society devoted to preserving peace, and that she support it with a monetary contribution (11, 85). Before she can respond, however, the speaker finds it necessary to explain why these actions, seemingly so straightforward, become problematic for women, whose experience even of these "abstract terms" (85) has been so different from his. In order to explain, she replies first to two other requests for support and contributions: one from a women's college that needs funds for rebuilding, the other from a society for professional women. And in the process of giving a guinea to each of these organizations, she explores the crucial role of education and the professions in enabling women to achieve the intellectual liberty at the heart of Woolf's vision: the liberty to think against the grain of conventional values, the liberty to criticize, the liberty to resist.

Most of all, however, this liberty entails the freedom to remain an outsider, even from within. If this vision appears contradictory, so much the better. For this contradiction, this duality, rooted in what she calls women's "ancestral memory" (82), becomes for Woolf the site of criticism, the site of change.[6] Claiming for women

[6] In *A Room of One's Own,* in a passage that has proved a rich legacy for contemporary feminist criticism, Woolf describes how "if one is a woman one is often surprised by a sudden splitting off of consciousness, say in walking down Whitehall, when from being the natural inheritor of that civilisation, she becomes, on the contrary, outside of it, alien and critical" ([New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1929], 101).

the position both of bridge dweller, situated on the boundary between the private house and the public sphere, and of outsider in a culture that simultaneously contains and excludes them, Woolf's speaker asks women to use their liminality as a place of refusal. This includes the refusal to join blindly or uncritically the centuries-old procession of educated men whose desire for possessions, power, hierarchy, and honors she identifies with the desire for dominance and war.[7] Standing on this bridge, she argues, women are in the position to challenge the reigning truths, whose partiality "seems to have escaped the notice of the dominant sex owing largely it must be supposed to the hypnotic power of dominance" (150). Even more important, women must ask themselves, "Do we wish to join that procession, or don't we? On what terms shall we join that procession? Above all, where is it leading us, the procession of educated men?" (62). The speaker's own terms are explicit: that women entering the professions not only promise to help others—black or white, man or woman—enter as well, but that they accept their cultural inheritance from their mothers and grandmothers—poverty, chastity, derision, and freedom from unreal loyalties (78 passim)—and transform them into strengths. In this way, like Antigone, Woolf's model, they will remain true to a law that transcends patriarchal laws and aspires to a different end.

Finally, even as she sends her third guinea to her friend, as sister to brother, to help him fight the tyranny and dictatorship that have enveloped the public sphere, the speaker refuses to join his society, saying that women must use their difference, the source of their help, to find "new words" and "new methods" for their common battle (143). In this construction, women are in the position to create the space within the social system for "alternative acts and alternative intentions which are not yet articulated as a social institution or even project."[8] In 1938, with "the sound of the guns in [their] ears," this need takes precedence over the poets' dream of a "unity that rubs out divisions as if they were chalk marks only" (143). Instead, she calls upon women to remain a society of outsiders, preserving the duality of perspective gained by their

[7] Woolf's reading of the battles fought to keep women out of the professions (the battle of Westminster, e.g., or the battle of Harley Street) suggests to her that "almost every biography we read of professional men in the nineteenth century . . . is largely concerned with war" (63) and power, an analogue of Foucault's argument that "the history which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning" (*Power/Knowledge*, 114).

[8] Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: New Left Books, 1979), 252.

centuries-old exclusion from the society and social institutions (or societies) that turned their private brothers into public patriarchs advocating patriotism and war. Declaring war a male activity, the speaker states, "Let it be understood, soberly and rationally between us, that [men] 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 myself or my country. For . . . as a woman, I have no country. As woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world" (108–9).

Culminating seven years of intense research and a lifetime of reading and observation, *Three Guineas* inscribes Woolf's passionate desire to speak out in response to the events of the decade: the rise of fascism, the retreat from pacifism, the increasing inevitability of war. A lifelong pacifist, she reacted to these events with a building sense of frustration and anger: anger that everything she valued was threatened with extinction, and that men, including her own nephew Julian Bell, who died in Spain, seemed intent on completing this process. Confronting head-on the destructiveness she had long perceived in her culture's social structures and values, she set out to document its pervasiveness and source. Every book, every newspaper article that she read during these years became part of her larger vision.[9] Carefully chosen from the extraordinary collection of materials she gathered in her reading, the extensive quotations that punctuate the text and the notes of *Three Guineas* paint a devastating portrait of the conscious and unconscious attitudes that govern both behavior and discourse. Allowing her witnesses to speak for themselves within skillfully orchestrated, ironic dialogues, Woolf balances her ventriloquism with the insistence that the male correspondent hear the speaker as a woman; for their ability to work together for peace hinges on his acknowledgment of the validity, the authority, of women's perceptions and voice.

Under the circumstances, Woolf did not expect responses to the work to be favorable. When her husband commented that she must "expect some very angry reviews from men," she added, "from women too." What she wanted was that the book be taken seriously. Noting in her diary that she had "never [written] a book with greater fervour; under such a lash of compulsion," Woolf feared

[9] See Brenda R. Silver, *Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), and "*Three Guineas* Before and After: Further Answers to Correspondents," in *Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant*, ed. Jane Marcus (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 254–76, esp. 254–59.

only "the taunt Charm and emptiness."[10] To some extent, this fear proved valid; the contemporary reviews on both sides of the Atlantic reveal a number of rhetorical strategies that deny the authority of the text by denying it the authority of [its] anger. By extension, the ongoing reception of *Three Guineas*, including the shifting status accorded anger and the varying constructions of the speaker's voice, provides a graphic illustration of the contention that critics, as well as texts, are firmly rooted in the world and are subject to and producers of the circumstances surrounding cultural productions.[11] One of these circumstances is, of course, gender, but it is gender that is too often factored out in discussions of the production and reception of critical texts (in part by the claim of objectivity), even as it is covertly inscribed through the intersections of anger, authority, and tones of voice. It may well be, then, that in addition to our studies of gender and reading (and gender and speech) we need to explore what I am calling gender and hearing—the role of sexual politics in the perception and construction of tones of voice.[12]

The "construction" here is crucial; for the question of how people hear, or why they hear differently, needs to be translated into the question of what they hear, and this question in turn must be translated into the question of how they describe what they hear—that is, their representation of the tone of voice. To a great extent this representation resides in their representation of the author whose voice they identify with the voice in the text, an author who is herself constructed by the reader.[13] In these construc-

[10] *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell, 5 vols. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977–84), 5:146, 137, 141.

[11] Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 35.

[12] Feminist linguists such as Sally McConnell-Ginet have long recognized and explored the relationship between tone/intonation and gender, but they have tended to focus on the gendered production of tone rather than its gendered reception. McConnell-Ginet's early essay on the subject provides a tantalizing clue when she notes that in contrast to derogatory male imitations of female intonations she has "never heard imitation of a female using a derogatory male pattern, or been able to find any reports of such a phenomenon" and posits two reasons: "(1) Male intonations are heard as neutral," are " 'unmarked' for sex. (2) Men lose by sounding woman-like, whereas women do not lose (perhaps they even gain in some contexts) by sounding manlike" ("Intonation in a Man's World," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 3, no. 3 [Spring 1978]: 541–59, esp. 549).

[13] My own construction of Woolf's voice and vision is no exception. My reading of the tones of voice and the rhetorical strategies practiced by *Three Guineas* is necessarily governed here by the particular argument I wish to make—in this case, their inscription of anger. This is not to deny the variety of voices in Woolf's complex and subtle text.

tions, the identification of the author's tone with the author's name brings the representation of tone into the realm of what Foucault calls the "author function" and locates tone within the battle for truth and power at work even within literary criticism. For however much a construct, the author evoked by critics serves several crucial purposes in the struggles over a text, among them to stop the proliferations of the text's meanings by making the author's name a limit or boundary. This move turns the author into an ideological product and controls the meaning of the text.[14] If we analyze this use of the author's name—that is, the evocation of "Virginia Woolf" and her tone of voice—over time, if we make it the basis for a historical analysis of her text's "circulation, valorization, attribution, and appropriation,"[15] we can begin to understand the mechanisms at work in the battle for who controls the discourse of cultural criticism encoded in the history of *Three Guineas*.

Turning, then, to the reception of the text as inscribed in the construction of its author, Virginia Woolf, and the tone of voice she adopts in her text, I will focus on three historical periods, or moments: first, the moment of publication, when the threat of war gave the question of who controlled the discourse about war a central role in the work's public reception; next, the period between 1941 and 1968 when the book virtually disappeared from public view; and finally the recent rediscovery and partial canonization of the text, which has been surrounded by controversies that speak directly to the status of feminist criticism.[16] Within these controversies, anger, whether explicitly named or notable by its elision, marks the contested site of the text's authority. To the extent that this trajectory illustrates the complex interactions among text, readers, social/cultural conditions, and the "mechanisms of cultural selection and transmission" that constitute the "cultural reproduction of value," it foregrounds the ways in which value judgments, like value itself, are not only contingent, but contextual, enmeshed in structures that confer authority and dictate what survives as a living, speaking text and not just a relic of the past.[17]

[14] Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" trans. Josue V. Harari (1979), in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 101–20, esp. 118–19.

[15] Ibid., 117.

[16] While not drawing directly on Hans Robert Jauss's formulation of reception theory, with its emphasis on tracing the changing "horizons of expectation" evident in a text's reception and influence at particular historical moments, my argument clearly has affinities to it; see Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 3–45.

[17] See Barbara Herrnstein Smith, "Contingencies of Value," *Critical Inquiry* 10 (September 1983): 1–35, esp. 26–29, which includes her reading of the "test of

When *Three Guineas* appeared in June 1938, the "Virginia Woolf" evoked by readers and reviewers enjoyed the status of one of the most eminent literary figures of the period, a position that ensured the book a public hearing and influenced the public reception of the work.[18] Yet if Woolf's name assured the book's coverage in the press, the constructions of the author that emerge from the reviews illustrate both competing perceptions of what counts as effective, or authoritative, public discourse and a number of strategies for denying Woolf's text access to it. Within these competing discourses, the representation of Woolf's tone, in particular the care taken by both sympathetic and unsympathetic critics to distance the tone from anger, serves to locate the text not in the realm of the public debate about culture and war but in the realm of the aesthetic, with its implications of the private, the interior, the feminine. From its beginnings, then, the reception of *Three Guineas* raises one of the central questions confronting women who write cultural criticism or speak in the public realm: how to find a tone of voice, a rhetoric, a strategy for intervening or participating in a discourse that inscribes the institutionalized authority of men and that associates women's speech with the private and aesthetic. The result of the emphasis given to Woolf's style and voice was to undercut the authority of her arguments, in particular those about dominance and the origins of war that belong most clearly in the masculine realm. Instead, the arguments were all too often subsumed in praise of the art.[19]

"Praise" is the key word here—and the major strategy in the reduction, or limitation, of the text's authority. For the book was, for the most part, praised in the English press, officially, though not

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time" as complicit with cultural as well as other forms of power. Subsequent references appear in the text.

[18] Woolf's private correspondents, if not the reviews, were explicit on the subject. Philippa Strachey gleefully noted that "the gentlemen of our acquaintance will be forced to take [it] up on account of its author & will be unable to put [it] down because of its amusingness until they have reached the bitter end" (letter to Woolf, cited in Silver, "*Three Guineas* Before and After" [n. 9 above], 261). Less sanguine, a hostile male reader wrote to Woolf that "by virtue of your (literary) seniority the newspaper lords have now given orders to reviewers that your work must be treated with respect. This is an old English custom. Accordingly your last work has been praised but obviously not read" (letter to Woolf, cited in Silver, "*Three Guineas* Before and After," 261).

[19] The tendency to privilege women as writers of fiction rather than nonfiction or fact persists today; see Women in Publishing, *Reviewing the Reviews* (London: Journeyman Press, 1987), 20–29.

without an undertone that sounds a different note.[20] London's prestigious *The Times Literary Supplement,* for example, began by calling Woolf "the most brilliant pamphleteer in England," but in the larger context of the review even the word "brilliant" becomes loaded. In this case the praise was aimed at her "indictment of the man-made public world, built up with an irony that is never shrill and therefore extremely telling"; the underlying criticism is directed to her failure, associated with pacifism and depicted as utopian and dangerous, to recognize that war was as inevitable as the Fall.[21] The implication—which recurs throughout the reviews—is that Woolf's brilliance is stylistic rather than intellectual, a matter of rhetorical mastery rather than thought. G. M. Young, writing in *The Sunday Times,* provides the extreme example: "In the art of prose, she is, perhaps, our greatest practitioner: she has, beyond us all, the gift of saying what she means. . . . But does she always know what she means?"[22]

Praise, then, can be double-edged, effectively blunting the arguments and defusing the authority of the text. Nowhere is this clearer than in the recurring praise for Woolf's tone of voice, which is defined almost universally by its admirable lack of anger. Significantly, anger itself remains unnamed, if not absent from the 1938 reviews; but its presence permeates the discourse through the incessant evocation of its opposite: the emphasis on the book's "cool and quiet beauty," "sweet reasonableness," or "excellent" "manner and temper."[23] However flattering, however salutary this description of the tone, it serves all too often as a substitute for a

[20] The reviews in the United States raise somewhat different issues and construct a different author, one whose very Englishness, in particular her class, is often represented as a serious impediment to the American audience's engagement with the text. In many respects, however, their criticisms—and their praise—were more direct, more explicit, than those in England, where Woolf's social and literary position would have had more influence on the reviewers. Significantly, one of the most serious and perceptive readings came from an Irishwoman, Mary Colum, living in the United States (*Forum and Century* 100 [1938]: 222–26).

[21] "Women in a World of War," *The Times Literary Supplement* (June 4, 1938), 379.

[22] G. M. Young, "Women in the Modern World," *Sunday Times* (June 19, 1938), 7. Young's review became almost as controversial as the book itself, occasioning its own correspondence in the press. It also illustrates another way in which the reviews deflected Woolf's insights: by ignoring the entire argument about the origins of war and the connections among public and private dominance. The result is simultaneously to reduce the book to a statement about women's status and to disallow women's contributions to the public dialogue about war.

[23] The first two phrases appear in "A Woman's Views on Peace," *The Times* (June 3, 1938); the last in *Queen's Quarterly* (Autumn 1938), 417–19.

serious engagement in the dialogue initiated by the text and helps to create an image of the author incompatible with that of political analyst, prophet, or seer.[24]

What such representations reveal most vividly is the double bind confronting women who enter into the realm of public, political, polemical discourse, a double bind that often locates itself precisely in terms of tone. Woolf's response to the reviews reflects both her awareness of the dilemma and the impossibility of her situation. Feeling that the reviews took the book more seriously than she had expected, she nevertheless responded angrily to the emphasis on style and tone: "But oh Lord how sick I get of all this talk about 'lovely prose' and charm when all I wanted was to state a very intricate case as plainly and readable as I could."[25] Nor was Woolf's predicament lost on her women readers, in particular those women of her own generation who shared her anger and her perspective and who wrote private letters to the author rather than public reviews.[26] What they heard, and appreciated, in Woolf's text was the simultaneous expression and repression of their own rage. For these women, Woolf's major qualification for speaking for women resided in her ability to combine toughness of mind with artistic brilliance: her ability to channel her facts and her anger into a socially acceptable tone of voice. Mostly older, veterans of earlier feminist struggles, these women were political realists. They were well aware of the phenomenon, explored so graphically by Mary

[24] The relationship between anger and political discourse is a complex one and includes several different models for what counts as legitimate political discourse and the role of anger within it. Thus, while praise of political discourse for its lack of anger, its (Arnoldian) reasonableness, need not discredit it—can in fact empower it—it is my contention that many of the reviews use Woolf's (feminine) reasonableness to diminish the public impact of her arguments.

[25] *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, 6 vols. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975–80), 6:243.

[26] For a study of the letters Woolf received about the book, see Silver, "*Three Guineas* Before and After." With the exception of Q. D. Leavis ("Caterpillars of the Commonwealth Unite!" [1938], reprinted in *The Importance of Scrutiny*, ed. Eric Bentley [New York: New York University Press, 1948], 382–91); and Theodora Bosanquet (whose review appeared in *Time and Tide* [June 4, 1938], 788, 790, the feminist political journal started in 1920 by and for women), the women who reviewed the book in England shared the representation of Woolf as stylist, or novelist, rather than political analyst. These include Katherine John in the *New Statesman and Nation* ([June 11, 1938], 995–96), who is skeptical of Woolf's idealistic portrayal of women and finds it impossible to separate the ideas from their "enchanting presentment," and Mary Stocks, very briefly in the *Manchester Guardian* ([June 10, 1938], 7), who ends by commenting on its "incomparably lucid and lovely prose" while implying that it is too long. The numbers of women who reviewed the book in America were larger and the reviews themselves more varied, again suggesting a greater distance from the constraints of English cultural givens.

Ellmann thirty years later in her analysis of differences in tone and authority, that the most consistent critical standard applied to women is shrillness: "Blame something written by a woman as *shrill,* praise something as *not shrill.*"[27] This phenomenon, borne out vividly by the reviews, led long-time activist Philippa Strachey to comment specifically on the pleasure she received from Woolf's providing a "vent to evil feelings. You don't display these yourself but the exposition for the case for them is extraordinarily comforting to the restrained furies."[28]

But as Woolf also anticipated, not all women agreed; some, like Q. D. Leavis, not only heard anger in the text but responded angrily to it, a response that paradoxically grants the text the status of cultural critique so often denied it by the more superficially laudatory reviews. Anger, that is, differs from sarcasm, ridicule, or the passive resistance so often afforded to women's cultural or political criticism by taking the argument seriously enough to respond. It acknowledges and validates the argument by recognizing the depth of Woolf's own passion and the radical nature of what she was asking of women: nothing less than the transformation of their culture and their lives. Like Charlotte Brontë's female critics a century earlier, Leavis perceptively elucidates Woolf's heresy in the very act of decrying it. In Leavis's representation, the tone of *Three Guineas* is neither sweet nor reasonable but "bad-tempered" and "peevishly sarcastic," and the author lacks the qualifications necessary to speak as a woman for women.[29] How dare this upper-class amateur is a rough translation of Leavis's indictment, because Woolf had neither worked to support herself nor experienced a true woman's life, never had children, never did housework. Nevertheless, Leavis's very disagreements with the text make explicit the revolutionary changes in the social fabric for which it calls: "Then there are the unfortunate men who are to marry these daughters of educated men. If their wives choose to have babies . . . they must from the start share the work of tending their offspring. A

[27] Mary Ellmann, *Thinking about Women* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), 150.

[28] Cited in Silver, "*Three Guineas* Before and After," 261. For a historical analysis of the debates surrounding the expression of feminist anger in Woolf's day, see Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 243–70.

[29] Q. D. Leavis, 383. Leavis also comments specifically on the generally favorable reviews, which she blames on Woolf's tactics, not her name, tactics that ensure that "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" (383).

thorough-going revolution in their wage-earning pursuits, and so a regular social reorganization . . . must take place to allow this."[30] Philippa Strachey would have responded, "exactly."

But in 1938, neither Strachey's nor Leavis's response had any lasting impact; however powerful the text and the tone were for women on both sides of its arguments, their voices did not prevail. In the years following *Three Guineas*' publication, the outbreak of the war, Woolf's death, and the absence of any organized women's movement inaugurated a period of almost total silence about the text that lasted until the publication of J. B. Batchelor's essay and Herbert Marder's book on Woolf's feminism in 1968.[31] During these years, the second moment or period, the immediacy of Woolf's arguments and with it the passion of her vision and her voice were lost. Equally important, the "author" herself underwent a transformation in which the artist, the novelist, identified solely with her experimental style, so eclipsed the polemicist that any expression of cultural or political critique was perceived as an intrusion. Following the pattern and the tone established by E. M. Forster's influential 1942 essay on Woolf,[32] those critics who even acknowledged Woolf's social and political criticism, which became identified solely with her feminist anger, usually deplored it, their justification being its unfortunate effect on her art. One recurring response was to praise *A Room of One's Own,* which talked, after all, about women's writing and was addressed to an audience of women, for its charm and persuasiveness, in contrast to what Forster called "the cantankerous *Three Guineas*" (254). Bernard Blackstone, writing in 1949, is instructive here. Highly sympathetic to the arguments in *Three Guineas,* even the political arguments, he nevertheless lamented the effects of Woolf's political awareness on her mind and her art: "Alas," he sighs, not once but several times, what was destroyed in the process was her "sense of proportion," so that in *Three Guineas* "indignation sharpens the gentle voice" and a "sense of grievance . . . makes pure artistic expression impossible."[33] With this gesture, Blackstone pushes

[30] Ibid., 389.

[31] J. B. Batchelor, "Feminism in Virginia Woolf" (1968), in *Virginia Woolf,* ed. Claire Sprague (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentiss Hall, 1971), 169–79; and Herbert Marder, *Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968). Further references to both these works will appear in the text.

[32] E. M. Forster, *Two Cheers for Democracy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1942), 242–58; further references appear in the text.

[33] Bernard Blackstone, *Virginia Woolf: A Commentary* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1949), 139, 145; further citations appear in the text. The other major work on Woolf during the 1940s, David Daiches's *Virginia Woolf* (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1942), also treats *Three Guineas* seriously, even as the

Woolf off the bridge of contradictory positions (public/private, inside/outside) that constituted the site of her anger and her cultural criticism and places her firmly in the private, internalized realm of pure art.

The rest, we could say, is silence. In speculating on why *Three Guineas* disappeared, I want to point first to the critical desire during the forties and fifties to separate art and politics, exemplified by the dominance of academic literary studies by the Leavisites in England and the New Criticism in America.[34] Radically divorced from its historical contexts, reified as a self-contained art object, the literary text became a way to counter the ills and ambiguities of the culture, including those introduced by the Cold War, by withdrawing from them. Neither *Three Guineas* nor Woolf as cultural critic were likely to interest these critics. More particularly, the orthodoxy established by F. R. Leavis and the *Scrutiny* group reduced Woolf to a footnote in the great tradition of ethical realism in the English novel, simultaneously preventing most critics from recognizing her social and cultural criticism and limiting what appreciation she did receive to her experimental fiction. Woolf's identification with the then unfashionable Bloomsbury Group also helped to obscure the text. For historians and literary scholars looking at the cultural scene of the twenties and thirties, including those on the Left, Virginia Woolf became synonymous with the Queen of Bloomsbury and that was that.[35]

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author registers his surprise at "the note almost of savagery in her attack on male domination and its effects on civilization," a surprise heightened by the "good-humoured" tone of her previous writing on "the position of her sex" (147). Daiches concludes his short review of her essays in general by commenting that she might have made, but was not by temperament, "a brilliant political pamphleteer. For while in her fiction her prose tends to be subtle and lyrical, elsewhere she can write in a most forthright and virile idiom" (151).

[34] See, e.g., Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 43–53. For a reading of the controversy between the Leavisites and Bloomsbury, see Noel Annan, "Bloomsbury and the Leavises," in *Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury*, ed. Jane Marcus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 23–38.

[35] See, e.g., A. J. P. Taylor, *English History, 1914–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 311; and Charles Loch Mowat's monumental *Britain between the Wars, 1914–1940* (London: Methuen, 1956), 217, 579. Martin Green places Woolf among those writers who rebelled against their fathers, and cites Q. D. Leavis's attack on her politics, but never mentions *Three Guineas* (*Children of the Sun* [New York: Basic, 1976], 60, 62, 260, 304). Samuel Hynes's study, *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s*, echoes the silence and the myth; commenting on Woolf's criticism of the thirties writers, he adds, "One had not expected such strict historical determinism to come out of Bloomsbury" ([London: Bodley Head, 1976], 392). Finally, with the exception of Jane Lewis's essay on

One final circumstance demands recording. At the conclusion of Forster's discussion of what was wrong with Woolf's feminism and hence with *Three Guineas*—that is, that it was an anachronism, a throwback to presuffrage days—he makes a prophetic prediction: "I speak as a man here, and as an elderly one. The best judges of her feminism are neither elderly men nor even elderly women, but young women. If they . . . think that it expresses an existent grievance, they are right" (255). For reasons that are just now beginning to be explored, young women during the forties and fifties were for the most part silent, at least in public, and Woolf's text remained mute.[36] As a result, when critics began once again to write about her feminism in the sixties, they had to reconstruct both her text and her voice.

This reconstruction initiates my third historical "moment," which is in fact a series of moments, or exchanges, that chart, along with changes in the political climate and the nature of literary criticism, the advent of feminist criticism. During this turbulent period, the shifting nature of the battles surrounding *Three Guineas'* rediscovery and reentry into the critical realm records the interests and desires of a new set of subjects as they foreground different aspects and functions of the text and reassess their value. Speaking from within a discourse that was radically reevaluating

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women between the wars, no mention of *Three Guineas* appears in the revisionary views of the period by English social and cultural historians at the end of the seventies (Jane Lewis, "In Search of a Real Equality: Women between the Wars," in *Class, Culture, and Social Change: A New View of the 1930s*, ed. Frank Gloversmith [Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1980], 208–39; John Lucas, ed., *The 1930s: A Challenge to Orthodoxy* [New York: Barnes & Noble, 1978]; Jon Clark et al., eds., *Culture and Crisis in Britain in the 30s* [London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1979]). Only at the end of the eighties do we find cultural historians such as Valentine Cunningham asserting the significance of Woolf's (and other women's) role in thirties' culture and citing *Three Guineas* as a symptomatic text (*British Writers of the Thirties* [Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988], 26, 70, 208).

[36] Notably, two works that did take *Three Guineas* and Woolf's cultural criticism seriously during this period came from women: Aileen Pippett's biography of Woolf, *The Moth and the Star* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1955); and Dorothy Brewster's *Virginia Woolf* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963). One older woman who violently disagreed with Forster and was angered by his reading of Woolf is Elizabeth Robins, whose vivid notes on the original lecture did not become part of the public record. For a description of and extracts from these notes, see Jane Marcus, "Art and Anger," *Feminist Studies* 4, no. 1 (February 1978): 93–94. For a reading of the negative impact of World War II on women, see Susan Gubar, " 'This Is My Rifle, This Is My Gun': World War II and the Blitz on Women," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987), 227–59.

the relationship of both art and literary criticism to their cultural contexts, these subjects, including self-identified feminist critics, began to claim cultural critique—and cultural change—as an integral part of their project. To the extent that feminism, both within and without the academy, redefined anger as a site of its revisionary discourse and a legitimate critical strategy, the authority of anger itself became an increasingly contested issue. Whose voice would control the critical discourse, what tone and with it what authority would prevail, became a matter of urgency that extended beyond, but is embedded in, the criticism of feminist texts.

In 1968, at the moment when men such as J. B. Batchelor and Herbert Marder were reclaiming Woolf as a cultural critic by constructing her feminism in their image, the "young women" whose voices E. M. Forster had previously associated with the only legitimate feminist judgment of *Three Guineas* were just entering the consciousness-raising process—and the graduate programs—that helped define their distinctive critical stance. The positive inclusion of Woolf's text in cultural criticism did not occur until the mid-1970s, when a significant number of feminist critics began not only to acknowledge the authority of anger in critical texts and cultural debate but also to make it a basis for a revisionary reading of "art." For them, *Three Guineas* clearly "expresses an existent grievance" (Forster, 255); the question was whether its expression was angry enough and whether it provided a model for their own critical work. By the beginning of the eighties, the feminist intervention had radically altered the image of Woolf and begun to establish its authority; it was no longer feasible for critics either to ignore Woolf's polemical work, including *Three Guineas*, or simply to disparage it. The text had entered the critical domain, where it evoked responses that had as much to do with its feminist critics as its feminist message. In the ensuing debates, the battle over anger in women's public discourse emerged once again, but now the stakes were less the authority of Woolf's text than the authority of feminist critique and its ability to effect institutional change.

In exploring the complex positions that constitute the recent reception of the book, I will concentrate on the relationship of representations of Woolf and her feminism, in particular representations of her anger, to the larger question of tones of voice and authority. My first examples of the shift in critical reception and direction come from Batchelor and Marder, one English, the other American, whose strategy in writing about Woolf's feminism in 1968 was to elide it into something other than a political stance or a criticism of patriarchy. At this time the language, the tones of voice, used to discuss *Three Guineas* became less sympathetic

and/or condescending than Forster's or Blackstone's had been in the 1940s and more clearly if not more explicitly angry. Having challenged the prevailing critical orthodoxy of the past two decades by choosing to write on Woolf, having, moreover, accorded her major status not only as a novelist but as a cultural critic, these men want her to conform to their standards and views. Ultimately, their reconstructions of Woolf and her voice subvert both the feminism and the anger through a strategy of pathologizing that denies *Three Guineas* the power to speak authoritatively in the sphere of public debate just as effectively as the strategy of praise had done in 1938.

For Batchelor, the Englishman, this means divorcing "feminism," which, he says, Woolf rejects, from "femininity" (171) and "a passionate concern with the nature of womanhood" (178), characterized by its renewal of the creative and life forces of men, in part by protecting them "from their instinctual lust for war and death" (172, 174). The latter is the role of what he calls "the ideal woman" in *Three Guineas* (177), a work, however, he does not admire. Tracing its origins to "the spirit of resentment" that women felt during the thirties (169), he reads it as a series of complaints. One has the distinct feeling that men write cultural criticism but that women who criticize their culture only "complain"—a verb that appears often in Batchelor's descriptions of Woolf's (and other feminist) texts.[37] Jane Marcus provides a commentary on this phenomenon, endemic to Western culture, when she notes that whereas "anger and righteous indignation are the emotions of patriarchs in the state and in the family, . . . justified as imitations of Jehovah, god of retribution and justice," "hell is the source of women's wrath . . . ; the anger of the victim comes from the devil while the fury of a general or a prime minister is heroic and godlike" ("Art and Anger," 70). For Batchelor, Woolf's feminist anger and its negativity reside in her tone, described variously as "shrill and angry," "bitterly rancorous," and that of a "schoolmistress" (169, 170, 172).

A similar split occurs in Herbert Marder's more perceptive reading of *Three Guineas,* in which "feminism" is divorced from the strictly political ends associated with women's rights and incorporated into "androgyny."[38] Or, more accurately, not incorpo-

[37] See, in particular, his repetition of "complains" in his description of Winnifred Holtby's 1934 book *Women* (Batchelor, 170). A similar rhetorical and political disparagement occurs in the labeling of such fields as Women's Studies and African-American Studies "victim studies."

[38] "The word 'feminism' . . . must be understood in its broadest sense—as referring to Mrs. Woolf's intense awareness of her identity as a woman, her interest in feminine problems. Its meaning should not be restricted to the advocacy of

rated, for it is the failure of the work to attain the wholeness and harmony of androgyny found in Woolf's novels that for Marder ultimately undermines its value. This failure is most apparent in Woolf's inability to combine within it art and social criticism, art and polemics, illustrated by the fact that its "tone" is "subtly wrong" (155). What is this tone? Petulant, filled with "bitterness," "pallid," "shrill and self-indulgent" (97, 155, 175). Finally, in contrast to *The Years*, the "healthy" novel that was its companion and alter ego, *Three Guineas* is a "neurotic" book (174). When Woolf abandoned art for propaganda, he concludes, she could not control the "disintegrating effects of that indignation upon her personality," and her writing becomes "morbid" (176). In this reading, anger, unmediated by art, destroys androgyny and transforms a political vision into "self-absorption" and "one-sidedness" (175).

One way to unravel the significance of these critics' representations of Woolf lies in their semantic choices: naming her argument a grievance or complaint and labeling her tone neurotic. Implicit, albeit unacknowledged, in these choices are evaluative standards that the authors not only assume their readers will share but that dismiss any other contingencies as inappropriate or extrinsic. This process manifests itself in Batchelor's repetition of the verb "complain," a usage that in its context limits the possible meanings of the word and deprives *Three Guineas* of its social and legal, as opposed to its private or individualistic, meanings. The text ceases to constitute a legitimate "complaint": "a statement of injury or grievance laid before a court or judicial authority."[39] Instead, it conveys only the negative denotations of the verb "complain": "the expression of suffering passing into that of grievance and blame"; "to give expression to feelings of ill-usage, dissatisfaction, or discontent; to murmur, grumble." The word "grievance" becomes equally suspect, with the emphasis on the supposed rather than the real wrong or hardship considered to be a legitimate ground for complaint. Divorced from its public status, Woolf's "grievance" ceases to be a grievance "for all women who struggle to be free" (Blackstone, 145) and becomes instead "a purely personal preoccupation" (Marder, 175).[40]

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women's rights" but should be seen in her belief that the masculine faculties needed the influence of the feminine faculties in both the individual and the state in order to solve the existing social evils (Marder, 2–3).

[39] These and all subsequent definitions in this paragraph come from the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

[40] The shift from Blackstone's insistence in 1949 that Woolf's "sense of grievance" was "not a grievance for herself alone, but for all women who struggle to be

This process of cultural devaluation—the reduction of the public to the personal—also occurs in Marder's use of the terms "morbid" and "neurotic." In making this clearly negative evaluative judgment, Marder not only implies that there is a shared standard of what is a "healthy" or "sane" work of art but also participates in an assumption about tone that was current at the time. Writing about tone and voice at the same critical moment (that is, 1968), Taylor Stoehr, for example, identifies "tone" with the author's attitude toward his audience and "voice" with his (presumably singular, identifiable) character.[41] "An appropriate tone," he states, "grows up automatically if the writer is sure of his ground and his audience" (154). In contrast, when tone fails (and the failure is clearly ascribed to the author, not to the reader/hearer), when it calls attention to itself as tone, it ceases to issue from a voice/character that is "natural" or "integrated" and becomes inappropriate, a "flaw" or "excrescence," on occasion even "neurotic" (150–51, 154). From this perspective, Batchelor's and Marder's negative reading of *Three Guineas* inscribes an author "divided against [herself]" (Stoehr, 151) and unsure of her audience, exhibiting more tone than voice: hence neurotic. By extension, Woolf's "natural" voice inhabits her novels, where feminism and anger do not intrude themselves as tonal excesses on the art.

But a question clearly needs to be asked: what voice would be "natural," what tone "appropriate," for a woman writing a feminist complaint or critique of her culture, a feminist polemic? Whose standards provide the authority for judging? If these questions, and the conflicts they pose for women who attempt this discourse, were implicit in the comments made by Woolf's sympathetic women readers about her tonal self-control in 1938, they became more explicit in the assumptions about women's tones—and the proper sites of their discursive authority—made by men such as Batchelor and Marder at the moment of the emergence of a new feminist consciousness. The question becomes still more difficult to answer if, like Walter Ong, we identify "polemic" with the agonistic tradition of an exclusively male intellectual and academic discourse that had its origins in classical, public oration and was perceived to be threatened by the entrance of women into the academic world,

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free" (145) to Marder's privatization may well inscribe their different historical perspectives on the feminist movement.

[41] Taylor Stoehr, "Tone and Voice," *College English* 30, no. 2 (November 1968): 150–61, esp. 150; subsequent references appear in the text. "Tone" is defined as "the pervasive reflection . . . of an author's attitude toward his audience" and "voice" as "the pervasive reflection . . . of an author's character, the marks by which we recognize his utterance as his."

and hence public discourse.[42] In Ong's essentially biological construction, polemic, rooted in the Greek word for "war," belongs to the realm of male ceremonial combat, rooted in men's genetic make-up, that constitutes male sexual identity and rhetorical modes (as well as academic structures)—but not female ones. Initially barred from participating in public oratory because of the volume of their voices, characterized by a rhetorical style that relies more on indirection than forceful assertion, women, Ong argues, exhibit a "persuasive rhetoric" more naturally suited to "private conversational exchange" than public debate.[43]

Even in the legal realm, which Woolf deliberately evokes in *Three Guineas* by making her male correspondent a member of the Bar, the nature of women's participation in public debate, or polemic, can be problematic.[44] Mary Poovey beautifully illustrates the problem in her analysis of Caroline Norton's simultaneously subversive and conservative rhetorical tactics in her mid-nineteenth-century contribution to the battle to change divorce laws in England, a contribution fueled by her personal history and recorded in two (polemical) pamphlets published in the 1850s.[45] In order to transform her private wrongs into political terms, in order to authorize herself to speak in the public sphere, in order to make her complaint known and influence the pending legislation, Poovey notes, Norton split herself in two, adopting both the

[42] Walter Ong, *Fighting for Life: Contest, Sexuality, and Consciousness* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), esp. chaps. 1, 2, and 4. The fact that Ong's formulation of the interaction of sex/gender, tone, and polemic was published in 1981 situates it among the negative responses to feminist criticism that I discuss below; Batchelor and Marder could be said to enact, rather than analyze, the threat to their discursive authority.

[43] Ibid., 41, 140–41, 75–76. Woolf scholars have long debated whether the form of *Three Guineas*, in particular the use of quotations and the extensive notes, constitutes Woolf's attempt to beat men at their own rhetorical game, and whether or not the strategy succeeds.

[44] By associating the addressee with the Bar, Woolf's witnesses participate in a public tribunal even as they speak to the private man. The double nature of Woolf's essay, its straddling of the public and private, including its conflation of the private letter with the public essay, has generated some excellent criticism. See, e.g., Anne Herrmann, " 'Intimate, Irreticent and Indiscreet in the Extreme' : Epistolary Essays by Virginia Woolf and Christa Wolf," *New German Critique* 38 (Spring/Summer 1986): 161–80. Elaine Showalter explores the double nature and the difficulty of feminist polemic in general in "Miranda and Cassandra: The Discourse of the Feminist Intellectual" (in *Tradition and the Talents of Women*, ed. Florence Howe [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991], in press). I am grateful to Showalter for sharing an early version of this essay with me.

[45] Mary Poovey, "Covered but Not Bound: Caroline Norton and the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Acts," in *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 51–88.

role/language of the female victim in conventional melodrama and the role/language of the male defender, before collapsing the distinction between them. (That this transformation occurred in the public space of the courtroom, when she was on the witness stand, emphasizes the public nature of her private life.) The effect of this rhetorical strategy was to "[elevate] her personal complaint to a political critique of existing laws" and to "[violate] the separation of spheres within representation" that granted women authority in literature but not "'masculine' discourses like medicine, law, and theology." Ultimately, however, Poovey argues, the fact that Norton "formulated her complaint in terms derived from the prevailing ideology" as inscribed in melodrama worked against her; for as long as she occupied the place of the female victim she could ask only for protection, not rights. Although "the woman who spoke melodramatically of domestic wrongs articulated the effects of the contradiction she lived," she could not overcome it.[46] What discourse, then, what language, is appropriate to women when complaining in the public sphere, and by what standards is the effectiveness of their discourse judged?

Finally, in assessing definitions of what is "natural" or "appropriate" for a text—whether a work of cultural criticism or a work of art—we would do well to question the categories and the terms themselves, keeping a wary eye on the conflation that turns social and cultural constructions of what is appropriate into universal laws of nature—or rhetoric. As feminist linguists and speech act theorists have insisted and documented, the perception and reception of a particular illocutionary act (or discursive document) must be seen as a matter of social and cultural contexts, among them the social relation of the speaker and the addressee and the interests at stake. Hence, whether a speaker is perceived as performing a legitimate cultural critique when she or he "complains" or merely as whining will depend on "the intentions, attitudes, and expectations of the participants, the relationships existing between participants," including relationships of authority, "and generally, the unspoken rules and conventions that are understood to be in play when an utterance is made and received."[47]

[46] Ibid., 65, 81, 88. One reviewer of Norton's *Letter to the Queen* (1855) comments specifically on her audacious and potentially radical mixture of the language of emotion/literature with legal rhetoric in terms that anticipate those applied to *Three Guineas* in 1938: "Such are the charms of her style that, we may have cause to dread, lest, where we agree with the writer, we may be led away by our feelings, and not influenced by our judgment (*Law Review* 23 [1855]: 334; cited in Poovey, 225).

[47] Mary Louise Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 86.

The shifting reception of *Three Guineas* more than supports this contention and underlines its implications for historical analysis. For if male critics in the 1960s tended to hear and emphasize tone over voice and define the tone as neurotic, if they perceived self-division as failure rather than the expression of contradictions that were themselves the legitimate site of criticism and saw the style as a flaw, if they reduced the legal complaint to a private grievance, feminist critics in the 1970s, with different expectations and in defiance of the unspoken rules and conventions, heard and articulated a significantly different text. Ten years after the publication of Batchelor's and Marder's works the tone of voice and the language used to talk about *Three Guineas* had radically altered, reflecting the emergence of a generation of feminist critics who accepted the interrelationship between Woolf's art and her political vision, her novels and her cultural criticism, as a given.[48] For my purposes what distinguishes these feminist readings is their recuperation of anger and authority. This recuperation functions in several interrelated ways. For one thing, it distinguishes Woolf's feminism from androgyny and identifies it as a political position that accepts anger as part of its authority. Seen in this light, Woolf's anger in *Three Guineas* expresses itself through deliberate narrative strategies and not uncontrolled tones of voice. Most important for my argument, the word "anger" itself explicitly enters the debate, transforming "resentment," "grievance," and "complaint" into collective, public concepts associated with social and political change. Placed in the context of anger, Woolf's tone ceases to be heard as neurotic, morbid, or shrill and becomes the expression of an ethical or moral stance.[49]

[48] The year 1978 provides a useful moment for assessing this change, being the publication date of several overviews of Woolf criticism that explore the increasing recognition of Woolf's political vision as well as the role of previous criticism in obscuring it: Sonya Rudikoff, "Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" *American Scholar* 42 (Spring 1978): 245–71; Michele Barrett, "Towards a Virginia Woolf Criticism," in *The Sociology of Literature: Applied Studies*, ed. Diana Laurenson, Sociological Review Monograph 26 (1978): 145–60; Berenice A. Carroll, " 'To Crush Him in Our Own Country': The Political Thought of Virginia Woolf," *Feminist Studies* 4, no. 1 (1978): 99–131. The same issue of *Feminist Studies* included Marcus's essay on "Art and Anger." The year before saw the publication of two major collections of Woolf criticism, a special issue of *Women's Studies* devoted to exploring the social and political aspects of Woolf's work (vol. 4, nos. 2/3 [1977]); and a special issue of the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* devoted to reassessments of *The Years* and *Three Guineas* (vol. 80, no. 2 [1977]).

[49] Even the feminist readings that argue for Woolf's insufficient expression of her anger accept anger as a valid rhetorical/critical stance and posit its social uses. For my purposes what characterizes this particular moment in feminist criticism is exactly its emphasis on anger as a political stance. See, e.g., Patricia Spacks, *The Female Imagination* (New York: Knopf, 1975), esp. chap. 1; and Elaine Showalter, *A*

In these readings, *Three Guineas* emerges as a carefully crafted and radical analysis of Western culture, a text that used art to give voice to righteous and prophetic anger. For Marcus, writing in 1977, the revolutionary use of art to propagate political opinions places *Three Guineas* within the same literary tradition as Milton's *Areopagitica* and Swift's *A Modest Proposal*: that is, "a passionate polemic enhanced by innovative technical genius."[50] Beverly Schlack, also in 1977, describes Woolf's anger as a "strategy of scorn": an act of courage, integrity, and rebellion, prompted by an "ethical anger" that is comparable to Shelley's.[51] For these critics, Woolf's anger enhances rather than mars *Three Guineas,* sharpening Woolf's vision and giving her voice authority. In the controversy evoked by the feminist claim to the terrain of cultural critique, the focus of the battle around *Three Guineas*—and its anger—has increasingly shifted from Woolf's text to her (angry) feminist critics.

In order to assess this shift, it is important to note that the reclamation in the 1970s of Woolf's anger, or more properly the naming of the informing principle and the tone as anger and angry, can be situated in a broader reevaluation of anger occurring simultaneously in a number of arenas, academic and activist alike. To a great extent, this reevaluation has sought, and continues to seek, to remove anger from the exclusive realm of the emotions and internal states: to move anger away from guilt, neurosis, or depression, and into the purview of cognition, external behavior, social relations, and politics. To become angry, to recognize that one has been angry, to change what counts as being angry, becomes a political act.[52] Moreover, one is not just angry, one is angry *about*—

Literature of Their Own (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), 263–97, esp. 264, 287. Previously, Adrienne Rich had established anger as a marker of feminist consciousness and authority when she identified the "dogged tentativeness in the tone" of *A Room of One's Own* as "the tone of a woman almost in touch with her anger" ("When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" [1971], in *Adrienne Rich's Poetry,* ed. Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi and Albert Gelpi [New York: Norton, 1975], 90).

[50] Jane Marcus, " 'No More Horses': Virginia Woolf on Art and Propaganda," *Women's Studies* 4, nos. 2/3 (1977): 265–90, esp. 273; originally presented at the 1974 MLA convention, Marcus's essay was instrumental in stimulating the renewed interest in the book.

[51] Beverly Schlack, "Virginia Woolf's Strategy of Scorn in *The Years* and *Three Guineas,*" *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 80, no. 2 (1977): 146–50, esp. 150; the reference is to Shelley's preface to *Adonis.*

[52] These three categories inform Naomi Scheman's essay on "Anger and the Politics of Naming," in *Women and Language in Literature and Society,* ed. Sally McConnell-Ginet, Ruth Borker, and Nelly Furman (New York: Praeger, 1980), 174–87; subsequent references appear in the text.

and the difference can be crucial.[53] What is at stake is our own history, defined not as "the formal chronicle of events, but . . . the subjective feelings and thoughts with which we experience the events of our everyday lives," history as lived reality.[54] For Peter Lyman, in an essay entitled "The Politics of Anger," it is exactly this history that is silenced, inauthenticated, when "the rules of politeness and rationality that govern social dialogues . . . make it impossible to say what needs to be said by making certain topics impolite, certain tones of voice or emotions irrational, or simply defining topics as psychological and not political" (59).

Before one can speak one's anger, however, one must name it, an act that is inherently political and that proceeds from and depends on a collective social and political consciousness. Speech acts are rooted in the available social lexicon, but the authority of this lexicon can be challenged and changed. In her 1980 analysis of why women have been prevented from understanding their feelings as anger (and the importance of consciousness-raising in this process), Naomi Scheman points as well to the judgmental aspect of anger, which demands an ability to trust one's own feelings enough to criticize and judge (178). This act of judgment, so psychologically difficult for those in dependent or subordinate positions, carries with it the potential for insubordination and change; by becoming angry, by judging, we make ourselves equal to the person we judge and assert the validity of our own standards and views.[55] Within the confines of an individualistic psychic economy, Scheman argues, in which the "rights to [one's] own(ed) feelings" are, like other rights, a matter of social position and power, the assertion of anger, as well as "the bestowing or withholding of [the] name" of anger, becomes "personally and politically explosive" (180–81).

No wonder that responses to feminist anger exhibited "defensiveness and belligerence" (Scheman, 185). No wonder that nonfeminist critics of Woolf, most of them male, have reacted strongly and specifically not only to the text but also to the readers as angry.

[53] This difference informs "cognitivist" theories of the emotions, in contrast to those theories that argue that emotions are dumb events. For a study of the philosophical debate on the emotions and its political implications, see Elizabeth V. Spelman, "Anger and Insubordination" (in *Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy*, ed. Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall [New York: Unwin Hyman, 1989], 263–73).

[54] Peter Lyman, "The Politics of Anger: On Silence, *Ressentiment*, and Political Speech," *Socialist Review* 11, no. 3 (1981): 55–74, esp. 55; subsequent references appear in the text. Lyman, like others, distinguishes anger from rage or aggression by emphasizing its verbal aspect as well as its paralinguistic expression through tones of voice, etc. (60–61).

[55] The judgmental aspect of anger is explored in depth by Spelman.

Sharing the cultural contexts that brought both *Three Guineas* and their feminist colleagues into the critical arena, they found themselves in a difficult position; they could no longer ignore the significance or the validity of the text as cultural criticism, but they wanted to distance themselves from the cultural authority granted feminist criticism—and anger—by the feminist readings. As a result, they often responded by representing Woolf's attitudes and tone as reasonable, in direct contrast to the unreasonable attitudes and tone of her angry feminist readers. By an odd act of transference, in these arguments it is Woolf's critics, not Woolf, who are made to betray in their writing a personal grievance or a distorted view. Whereas feminism, particularly when associated with anger, was once thought to be inimical to Woolf's artistic vision, it is now considered by these writers to be inimical to critical clarity.

Thus Perry Meisel, who states that his goal in his 1980 study of Woolf's relationship to the literary fathers, in particular Walter Pater, is not to "neglect feminism as a factor in Woolf, but rather to situate it within a more purely literary equation."[56] His reason: "The increasingly political tone of Woolf studies has lately turned us away from the question of Woolf's literary filiations . . . , and so obscures the fact that she was . . . a 'learned' writer whose texts murmur with echoes of the English tradition at large" (xii). His subject, however, as he defines and elaborates it, betrays an anxiety other than the strictly literary: that is, "the question of authors, authority, and influence," and Woolf's attempt to "expunge" the authority of the fathers (xv), even as she "forwards her own imperial design under cover" (232). In his reading of *Three Guineas,* the text becomes an act of "literary theft" (237), characterized by Woolf's "Stalinist" and fascist methods for seizing power and authority for herself ("In her very zeal to do away with struggle, competition, war, and fascism, Woolf covertly deploys their methods" [231–32]), an act that he specifically associates with "the formulation and formalization of female letters as an adversary aesthetic enterprise" (241). Rather than being what it appears at first to be—an argument

[56] Perry Meisel, *The Absent Father: Virginia Woolf and Walter Pater* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980), xv; subsequent references appear in the text. I am excluding the well-publicized criticisms of the feminist misreadings of Woolf and *Three Guineas* written by Quentin Bell, her nephew and official biographer, which reproduce earlier views of her (lack of) political understanding ("Bloomsbury and 'the Vulgar Passions,' " *Critical Inquiry* 6 [Winter 1979]: 239–56); see also "A 'Radiant' Friendship," *Critical Inquiry* 10 (June 1984): 557–66. Nevertheless, Bell's anger, barely disguised by his urbanity, deserves note. Barbara Herrnstein Smith provides a gloss on the outraged nature of these men's tone when she notes that "the literary academy has no way to acknowledge [the sound of genuine evaluative conflict coming from its challengers] except, perhaps, in the language of counteroutrage" (9–10).

for literature as a common ground without authors and authority (238)—*Three Guineas* becomes "a polemic of property and power for Woolf as woman writer" (236), in which difference serves to reinstitutionalize and revitalize personality and authority, "particularly the personality of Virginia Woolf, which wields its new strength and power under the misleading trope of sex" (242). By analogy, Meisel implies, feminist criticism politicizes criticism "under the misleading trope of sex" and threatens its common, "learned" enterprise by using difference "to seize and colonize a territory not properly [its] own" (242).

The critical desire to control the discourse about Woolf predominates in Michael Rosenthal's 1979 reading of *Three Guineas* as well, where the anger and its target—the authority claimed by feminist criticism—are more explicit. If, on the one hand, he admits that Woolf was "certainly interested in women's rights" and takes her writings on the subject seriously, on the other hand, he insists that she was "not as radical as current feminists would like her to be."[57] Rosenthal's goal is to divorce Woolf from the representations of her recent feminist critics; his strategy is to zigzag between his two positions, creating a portrait of the author that flatters Woolf even as it discredits his adversaries. In Rosenthal's words, "the polemical grinder of the feminist movement has greedily devoured Woolf, spewing her forth as the appropriately committed feminist whose preoccupation with the cause is somehow the key to her fiction. Such a view of Woolf is not particularly useful. It is of course true," he continues, shifting gears, "that she was very much concerned with the economic and social plight of women, and deeply sensitive to the psychic crippling inflicted on them by a male dominated world. . . . But to focus on her fiction through any sort of politicized feminist lens is seriously to distort it" (36). In the end, when confronted directly with *Three Guineas,* Rosenthal resolves the dilemma of Woolf's feminism and her cultural critique by locating the work and its author not in the tradition of (angry) political satire, but in the mainstream of "civilized" values and "civilized people" that he claims for himself as well. *Three Guineas* becomes a Bloomsbury rather than a "narrowly feminine" text, the "construction of [a] moralist, not [a] political or social analyst," "the protest of an extraordinarily civilized sensibility" (242–43).

Meisel's and Rosenthal's responses have at least two characteristics in common: on the one hand, the attempt to reclaim Woolf for a theoretically "universal" but in fact male civilization and/or literary tradition defined in their own theoretically impersonal or

[57] Michael Rosenthal, *Virginia Woolf* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 17; further references appear in the text.

desexualized image, to restore her name to its previously controlled and controllable limits; on the other hand, the attempt to dismiss feminist critics of Woolf by asserting a "universal" standard of criticism that authorizes their discourse but is inaccessible to angry feminist critics. Just as anger, in contrast to reason, is held to inauthenticate political speech (Lyman, 66), anger, when associated with (feminist) politics, is held by the defenders of the critical establishment to inauthenticate a criticism they define in terms of more properly literary questions. Forced to justify their position in order to sustain their authority, these critics depict feminist criticism (to borrow Herrnstein Smith's terminology) as a form of "barbarism" that threatens critical standards and they represent feminist critics as "suffering from crudenesses of sensibility, diseases and distortions of perception, . . . cultural or historical biases, [or] ideological or personal prejudices" to which they, "duly trained and informed, and generally competent," are immune (Herrnstein Smith, 18). The result is a perpetuation of the myth that empties or purifies criticism of its historical and ideological intentions, its cultural contingency, by naturalizing the status quo.[58] Through this rhetorical act, the feminist critic becomes a voice in the wilderness whose authority can be undermined by an appeal to authority itself: "Don't use that tone of voice to me!"

Feminist critics have responded to the multi-edged attempts to deny feminist texts—or themselves—either their history or the authority of their anger by exposing and challenging the myth of pure art or pure criticism. Recognizing that angry speech reveals the assumptions of the critical order and "the fairness of the rules of participation in [its] discourse," they reveal these rules as rhetorical claims "made by the dominant about their legitimacy" (Lyman, 66–67). One strategy has been to insist not only that Woolf's emergence as "an angry old woman" (Marcus, "Art and Anger," 69) was a courageous and healthy stance but also that her deliberate assumption of an angry tone in *Three Guineas* provides a model for contemporary cultural critics. Carolyn Heilbrun, drawing upon personal history, succinctly chronicles this process. Affirming that "the tone of *Three Guineas was* angry," she comments: "For many years I was made uncomfortable by *Three Guineas,* preferring the 'nicer' *Room* where Woolf never presses against the bounds of proper female behavior—where, it could seem, her art prevailed. I say this to my shame. What prevailed was not her art alone, but her fear (and mine) of arousing the patriarchy to disgust, of acting

[58] See Roland Barthes's definition of myth and its functions in *Mythologies,* trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill & Wang, 1972), 142–43; see also 117.

wholly apart from the 'script' assigned to women." For Heilbrun, Woolf's "extraordinary" action was not only to overcome her deep fear of anger and ridicule but also "to search out a new creative vein, to allow one's anger to drive one to the discovery of new forms. This measures the terrible daring of Woolf's, and all the best, feminist writing; by its nature it opposes what we have learned from the great art of the patriarchy, that anger is inimical to creation."[59]

Today, in the late 1980s, feminist criticism stands in a problematic relationship to the authority of anger that infused its early rhetoric and vision. Anger itself has become for women and for feminists a subject fraught with complexities, and the anger that women experience and express is addressed as much to each other as it is to men. For many feminists, anger among women is both infuriating and paralyzing, leading to repression rather than to speech. The challenge is to keep the anger that energizes the struggle for institutional and cultural change alive while acknowledging the very real conflicts, and the anger, within: to see anger itself as a multifaceted response to the lived realities of the historical moment.

There are several reasons why theorizing—and, even more, writing—about feminist anger have become increasingly difficult. One of these is men. Despite the abstract acceptance granted the feminist critical enterprise, the battle for who controls critical discourse still rages in the critical establishment at large, and anger remains one of its contested sites. At one extreme, Denis Donoghue, representing the old male guard, still felt free in 1986 to discredit feminist criticism by focusing on its tone (whether "a real fury . . . or willed turbulence worked up for the occasion"), its "bizarre hyperbole," its "complaint[s]," and its barbarian disregard of the "criteria . . . generally accepted in literary criticism" for what constitutes literature, literary value, or criticism. His own hope is that "authorities" can bring about the "change of disposition" that transformed the "avenging Furies" in the *Oresteia* into the "benign Eumenides" by "observing the propriety of discourse."[60]

If some myths die hard (and it would be a mistake to underestimate the persistence of Donoghue's attack), others are in the

[59] Carolyn Heilbrun, "Virginia Woolf in Her Fifties" (1981), reprinted in *Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant*, ed. Jane Marcus (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 236–53, esp. 241, 245.

[60] Denis Donoghue, "A Criticism of One's Own," *New Republic* (March 10, 1986), 30–34 (reprinted in *Men in Feminism*, ed. Alice Jardine and Paul Smith [New York: Methuen, 1987], 146–62, in conjunction with Nancy Miller's critique, "Man on Feminism: A Criticism of His Own," where she names Donoghue's thematic "a poetics of anger" [in *Men in Feminism*, 137–45, esp. 139]).

process of making; the almost inevitable pattern that leads from "the poetics of gender" to "the poetics of anger" manifests itself in other forms as well.[61] While some men come to feminism as sympathetic participants in its larger project of cultural and social critique, identifying themselves *with* feminism as men, others fight to claim the authority from within. For feminist critics, this has led to a dilemma: how to respond to what often feels like the appropriation of their project, at least at the theoretical level, particularly when some of the men involved are well intentioned, how to insist that feminist criticism is more than theory. Anger under these circumstances, however real a response to the failure of male feminism to translate into changes in hiring, tenure, the curriculum, or the canon—to confront, that is, its own structural position and privileges—becomes a long-term, often frustrating, commitment.[62]

Another frustration confronting at least white Western women who wish to write their anger today grows from the fact that many feminist critics within the academy have adopted the conventional academic discourse and the rules of rationality and propriety it entails. For to speak otherwise still entails the risk of being ignored or not taken seriously.[63] Few mainstream feminists have pursued Adrienne Rich's 1981 call to "renounce the temptation to be graceful, pleasing, respectable," to overcome the dangers of complicity heard in the strained tone of white academic feminists who were "trying to exchange collegial banter without perceptible 'bitterness,' bringing into play a panoply of terms and methods learned in the classrooms of lit. crit."[64] In addition, the association of anger with an essentialist Anglo-American criticism by such critics as Toril Moi—her critique of the assumption that "feminists

[61] This transition occurred literally in the series of annual poetics colloquia initiated by Michael Riffaterre at Columbia University. In 1984 Riffaterre and Nancy Miller sponsored a colloquium on "The Poetics of Gender"; the following year, Riffaterre introduced his colloquium on "The Poetics of Anger" with a comment about its being the logical successor to the previous topic.

[62] Claire Pajaczkowska expresses this feeling well: "I am tired of men arguing amongst themselves as to who is the most feminist, frustrated by an object feminism becoming the stakes in a displaced rivalry between men because of a refusal by men to examine the structure of the relations between themselves": "The Heterosexual Presumption: A Contribution to the Debate on Pornography," *Screen* 22, no. 1 (1981): 79–94, esp. 92.

[63] For Jane Tompkins, who expresses the dilemma eloquently in her very personal statement about feminist anger and feminist critique, feminists who write in this mode "uphold a male standard of rationality that militates against women being recognized as culturally legitimate sources of knowledge"—militates, that is, against the recognition of emotion as a form of knowledge ("Me and My Shadow," *New Literary History* 19 [Autumn 1987]: 169–78, esp. 170–71).

[64] Adrienne Rich, *Blood, Bread, and Poetry* (New York: Norton, 1986), 99, 89.

must at all costs be angry all the time"—established an opposition, a hierarchy, however false, between "anger" and more ironic, post-structuralist critical modes.[65] This opposition not only makes the claim to the experience—or the authority—of anger more difficult to express directly but also highlights conflicting claims to authority within feminist criticism itself. The question then remains, What tone of voice can feminists adopt in our polemical critiques of the culture and institutions within which we speak and write? To the extent that tones of voice are complicit with the structures that constitute authority, including the authority to speak "the true," we cannot escape the implications of our rhetorical choices.

Nowhere is the question of complicity raised more clearly, nor feminist anger inscribed more powerfully, than in the anger expressed within feminism—anger that has made any single claim to anger or authority no longer desirable or possible. Much of the anger occurring within feminism is directed by women of color, Third World women, and materialist feminists at the exclusiveness—the partial truths presented as universals—that has characterized mainstream Western feminist theory and practice, obscuring the diversity and specificity of individual women or groups of women under a generic "woman" and a generic "feminist critique."[66] What disappears in this totalizing process (as it did in the early consciousness-raising groups) is recognition of the all-too-real differences of race, color, class, age, ethnicity, and sexual identity that separate women and generate conflicts among them. As Mary Childers illustrates, even feminist readings of *Three Guineas* participate in this partiality. By constructing the text as a model for feminist politics without recognizing its exclusion of women other than those belonging to Woolf's self-defined class—and by eliding the conflicts among women this

[65] Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 40. While Moi's critique of anger is directed specifically at Patricia Spacks (39–40) and, in a different context at Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (59–64), her extended criticism of the Anglo-American feminist reception of Woolf supports this position. Moi's praise for Perry Meisel's poststructuralist reading of Woolf, which she says is "by no means an antifeminist or even an unfeminist work" (17), illustrates the extent to which her desire to separate herself from what she defines as Anglo-American humanist essentialism limits her historical understanding of the politics of critical authority in the United States.

[66] Hazel Carby speaks for many women of color when she asks, "What exactly do you [white feminists] mean when you say 'WE'??" ("White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood," in *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70's Britain*, Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies [London: Unwin Hyman, 1982], 212–35, esp. 233).

exclusion entails—these readings reproduce Woolf's own class blindness and bias.[67]

Childers's critique foregrounds not only class relations and class bias within feminism but also the ways in which consciousness, voice, and authority are contested feminist terrains. The question it poses is whether women can learn from those "who [speak their] own language with different intonations," whether internal conflicts and anger can be translated into social and cultural change. Most important is the question whether mainstream feminism can respond to the angers coming from those women perceived to be on the "margins" without replicating the politics of authority and tone practiced by those in power when their position is threatened. "Tell me how you feel," Audre Lorde cites a white woman as saying when confronted with racism, "but don't say it too harshly or I cannot hear you."[68]

Where do these conflicts among feminists leave feminist anger and authority? At this point I can only speak for myself. Like other women around me, I know that the anger I feel is real and has its roots in the circumstances in which we experience our private and professional lives. I know what my anger is about. I know that the battles I set out to fight, including the battles about critical authority and institutional change, are far from won and that the sense of urgency I feel is shared by women who differ from me in significant ways. If I get angry when the anger born of these differences threatens to subsume my own anger and my voice, I can also acknowledge that all these angers, all these voices, are necessary to feminist critique today. For just as there is no one feminist criticism, there is no one feminist anger, and no one tone of voice appropriate to its ends. However difficult to name, however hard to write, I would still argue that the angers that continue to animate feminist consciousnesses and critiques may well be the most compelling source of our strength.

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[67] Mary Childers, "Virginia Woolf on the Outside Looking Down," in *Women Write Work*, a study of representations of class and work in Charlotte Brontë, Virginia Woolf, working-class women's autobiographies, and feminist criticism, forthcoming.

[68] Audre Lorde, "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism" (1981), in *Sister Outsider* (Trumansburg, N.Y.: Crossing Press, 1984), 124–33, esp. 125.