

“Facts,” the Photograph, and Universality in Virginia Woolf’s *Three Guineas*

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Introduction

Despite her reputed modernist experimentalism in the 1920s, Virginia Woolf had increasingly engaged herself in “facts” by the early 1930s. She does not define the word “facts” clearly, but she usually uses it to refer to concrete facts rather than groundless impressions. In her diary entry from April 25, 1933, she writes about her emphasis on “facts” in *The Pargiters*, which was originally conceived as a “novel-essay.” The part that was intended to be a novel was eventually completed as *The Years* (1937) and the essay part as *Three Guineas* (1938).¹ In the latter, Woolf discusses the relationship between “facts” and “the photograph,” which she had already explored in her review of Turgenev’s novels published in December 1933. In *Three Guineas*, as we shall see, Woolf uses photographs to evoke universal emotions in the reader’s mind, thereby inspiring antiwar sentiments. The central argument of *Three Guineas* is that propagandistic activities encourage the patriarchal system that causes war; for this reason, the narrator opposes forming a propagandist organization. Instead, she proposes the formation of the “Outsiders’ Society” as a fictional organization of anti-organization—a utopian organization through which she aims to provide a solution to the problems of patriarchy.

This essay examines how, in *Three Guineas*, Woolf’s notion of “facts” and her preoccupation with photographs contribute to the

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revelation of a point of view that is made invisible within the public image of war formed by propaganda. I begin by considering Woolf’s conceptions of “vision” and “facts” through examining her unfinished autobiography “A Sketch of the Past” (1939) and her essay “The Novels of Turgenev” (1933), in which she discusses “vision” and “facts” in relation to “the poem” and “the photograph.” Then, I discuss the uses of photographs in *Three Guineas* in relation to “facts,” thereby examining how the universality of “facts” can prevent photographs from becoming propaganda. The last section of the essay discusses Woolf’s anti-propagandistic attitude in relation to her vision of the “Outsiders’ Society,” considering why Woolf, who shows a complex attitude towards associations, proposes to organize the “Outsiders’ Society.” In doing so, I reflect on the difficulty of realizing such a vision at Woolf’s time, and the possibility of its realization in the future.

Woolf’s Idea of “Facts”

In her diary entry from April 25, 1933, Woolf writes about her plan for *The Pargiters*, the “novel-essay” that was later split into *The Years* and *Three Guineas*. According to Liesl Olson, in *The Pargiters* Woolf “alternates between nonfiction essays and chapters of fiction, essentially commenting on her story as it develops, and emphasizing institutional and social facts that controlled women’s sexual lives” (84). Woolf states that her aim in the “novel-essay” is “to give the whole of the present society” by describing “facts as well as the vision” and combining them (*A Writer’s Diary* 197). Olson discusses the combination of “facts” and “vision” in *The Pargiters* as follows: “In the end, Woolf abandoned the essay / chapter divisions of the novel, and fused the two sections together, retaining facts through the novel’s dense materialism” (84). From this point of view, Woolf’s

attempt to combine “facts” and “vision” can be interpreted as expressing “facts” in a novel, which is a form suited for describing “vision.”

The key words in the passage quoted above, “vision” and “facts,” are not clearly defined here. In this section, I will interpret these words by closely examining Woolf’s notions of “being” and “non-being,” which help her represent her daily experiences. In “A Sketch of the Past,” Woolf suggests that “being” consists of memorable events in daily life. On the other hand, she argues that daily life is mostly occupied by innumerable things that are unexceptional or unmemorable, which she calls “non-being”:

Every day includes much more non-being than being. Yesterday for example, Tuesday the 18th of April, was [as] it happened a good day; above the average in “being.” It was fine; I enjoyed writing these first pages; my head was relieved of the pressure of writing about Roger; I walked over Mount Misery and along the river; and save that the tide was out, the country, which I notice very closely always, was coloured and shaded as I like—there were the willows, I remember, all plummy and soft green and purple against blue. I also read Chaucer with pleasure; and began a book—the memoirs of Madame de la Fayette—which interested me. These separate moments of being were however embedded in many more moments of non-being. I have already forgotten what Leonard and I talked about at lunch; and at tea; although it was a good day the goodness was embedded in a kind of nondescript cotton wool. This is always so. A great part of every day is not lived consciously. (70)

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"Being" refers to the consciously lived moments and memorable experiences. It is buried in "non-being" or "cotton wool," which occupies most of our daily lives. In the above passage, Woolf uses the phrase "moments of being" to mean the time of memorable events, while "moments of non-being" are the times that one lives unconsciously. As examples of "being," Woolf refers to distinctive activities such as reading Chaucer. For "non-being," on the other hand, she lists trivial acts that everyone does:

One walks, eats, sees things, deals with what has to be done; the broken vacuum cleaner; ordering dinner; writing orders to Mabel; washing; cooking dinner; bookbinding. When it is a bad day the proportion of non-being is much larger. I had a slight temperature last week; almost the whole day was non-being. (70)

Here, "non-being" is exemplified by the list of impersonal actions. "Being" and "non-being" correspond to "vision" and "facts." "Vision" implies memorable and meaningful events or moments, and "facts" are trivial things or times.

Woolf's ideas of "vision" and "facts" are already seen in "The Novels of Turgenev," which appeared in *Times Literary Supplement* in December 1933. In this essay, Woolf discusses these ideas in relation to "the poem" and "the photograph." Woolf argues that Turgenev seems to emphasize the importance of "the right expression" arising from "the depths unconsciously," while he also stresses the significance of "observation" (55). His attitude is relevant to Woolf's project of combining "vision" and "facts." Woolf considers Turgenev to be a rare novelist who "combine[s] the fact and the vision" by the "double process" of "observation" and "interpretation"; he

“observe[s] facts impartially” and “also interpret[s] them” at the same time. She compares “the photograph and the poem” to “the fact and the vision” (56). As “the photograph” shows all objects and actions within its angle of view, it corresponds to Woolf’s idea of “facts,” which refer to countless unremarkable things. “The poem,” on the other hand, belongs to the realm of “vision,” which requires subjective “interpretation.” For Woolf, Turgenev’s observation is equivalent to photographs. Thomas S. Davis rephrases Woolf’s discussion of the “double process” of “observation” and “interpretation” as “one way to fuse sharp, empirical attention to fact and appearance with the poetic or visionary power to see beyond it”; this, Davis argues, echoes the idea of documentary as “creative treatment of actuality” defined by John Grierson, the leader of the British documentary movement of the 1930s (Davis 75–76). Indeed, like the documentarists, Woolf was concerned with photographs and ordinary “facts” in daily life. As I have already discussed, Woolf considers that “facts” are unremarkable, but they are countless if written down. As she writes in the passage quoted above from “The Novels of Turgenev,” photographs can “observe facts impartially” because they show not only remarkable things but also unconscious things. The list of impersonal actions in “A Sketch of the Past” can be read as a series of objective shots in which photographs show things unconsciously. Thus, “facts,” which refer to time that is lived unconsciously, can be understood in analogy to “the photograph.”

Woolf’s discussion of “the photograph” in “The Novels of Turgenev” is important, as she becomes interested in “facts” in her later works. In “A Sketch of the Past,” she writes that “[t]he real novelist” can convey “being” and “non-being”; Woolf herself tried it in *Night and Day* (1919) and *The Years*, but she thinks that she did not succeed (70). Woolf mainly explored “vision” in her novels of the

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1920s such as *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and in *The Years* she returned to her attempt at depicting "facts," which she had tried in *Night and Day*. While in the 1920s Woolf was concerned with "facts" only so far as to make "vision" distinctive, in *The Years* she focuses on "facts" themselves, thereby seeking to show "the whole of the present society," as she states in her diary. Woolf's devotion to "facts" becomes apparent in the late 1930s. As I will argue in my discussion of *Three Guineas* (the essay originally paired with *The Years*) in the next section, this can be seen in the use of photographs. Taking into account that "facts" are objects not of interpretation but of observation, I will argue that, in *Three Guineas*, Woolf intentionally avoids including sensational photographs that limit viewers' interpretations to a single propagandistic purpose.

Photographs and Propaganda

Three Guineas is an essay written in the form of a reply from a female narrator to a letter from a male barrister who asks, "How in your opinion are we to prevent war?" (89). They both belong to the upper middle class that the narrator calls "the educated class" (90), but she insists that they are not in the same class because she could not have the same education as he had. Therefore, in response to his question, the narrator calls herself one of "the daughters of educated men" (90), thereby distinguishing herself from the class to which the letter's sender belongs. This attitude of the narrator does not make her reject the sender's question. Rather, she sees the significance of the very fact that an educated man asked such a question to a woman, and she paraphrases the man's question as "how we are to help you prevent war" (91). For the sender, "we" includes both "sons" and "daughters," but for the narrator, "we" refers to "daughters" and "you" refers to "sons." Therefore, the narrator thinks that "we" need to think about

preventing war in a different way than “you.” The fact that “we” are not educated as “you” are means that “we” do not have “knowledge of politics, of international relations, of economics” to understand the causes of war, and “we” have not been trained in philosophy or theology, either (91). Because of this, she says, the role of “daughters” is to think about how to prevent war from the perspective that war is caused by “human nature, the reasons, the emotions of the ordinary men and women” (91). Thus, the narrator repeatedly emphasizes the difference between “the daughters” and “the sons” of “educated men,” or “we” and “you”:

“‘Our country’,” she [the narrator] will say, “throughout the greater part of its history has treated me as a slave; it has denied me education or any share in its possessions. ‘Our’ country still ceases to be mine if I marry a foreigner. ‘Our’ country denies me the means of protecting myself, forces me to pay others a very large sum annually to protect me, and is so little able, even so, to protect me that Air Raid precautions are written on the wall. Therefore if you insist upon fighting to protect me, or ‘our’ country, let it be understood, soberly and rationally between us, that you are fighting to gratify a sex instinct which I cannot share; to procure benefits which I have not shared and probably will not share; but not to gratify my instincts, or to protect either myself or my country. . . .” (185)

“Our” country does not include women who are uneducated and economically and legally hindered. The narrator emphasizes that women are irrelevant by pointing out that when men say they will fight to protect “our” country, women are not included; she instead suggests that men are fighting to satisfy male instincts that women

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cannot understand. While the difference between "the daughters" and "the sons" of "educated men" is emphasized, photographs play an important role in connecting them. At the beginning of the letter, the narrator shows the addressee some photographs from the Spanish Civil War. Although Woolf actually shows some photographs to the reader by inserting them into the text, the photographs from Spain mentioned here are not included. The narrator insists that "[t]hose photographs are not an argument; they are simply a crude statement of fact addressed to the eye" (96). Therefore, "facts" themselves are interpreted by those who see them. Thinking back to Woolf's discussion of "facts" and "the photograph" in "The Novels of Turgenev," "facts" are objects of observation, and "the photograph" objectively shows "facts." However, photographs are not entirely objective; when any photograph is taken, it contains the photographer's subjectivity. As John Berger points out, photographs reflect "[t]he photographer's way of seeing" because the photographer selects "sight from an infinity of other possible sights." When we look at photographs, we also depend on "our own way of seeing" (10). The idea of seeing "facts" corresponds to Turgenev's interpretation; Woolf thinks that he not only observes "facts" but also interprets them. Therefore, the question raised in this part of *Three Guineas* is how to use "facts," because, depending on the context, "facts" can be used as propaganda. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines "propaganda" as "systematic dissemination of information, esp. in a biased or misleading way, in order to promote a political cause or point of view."² Woolf's "facts" themselves are unprocessed information, but if raw "facts" are used "in a biased or misleading way," they can become propaganda. Because "facts" are actual events or things, they can be abused depending on the context. As Woolf understands the ambivalent nature of "facts," she avoids inserting

photographs in a biased way. According to Elena Gualtieri, Woolf saw that the photographs of the children killed due to bombing during the Spanish Civil War were used as propaganda (168). Ira Nadel argues that, as a response to such a dangerous use of the photographs, Woolf describes the evil of war by deliberately excluding these sensational photographs (145–46). Moreover, as Vara Neverow points out, because Woolf does not name the authoritative men in the photographs, “these men’s status and authority” are not identifiable (188).³ This is another way to avoid using photographs as propaganda.

The narrator insists that, despite different educational and traditional backgrounds, “we” and “you” are equally provoked by the “facts” shown in the photographs of the dead bodies, and feel universal emotions, namely “horror and disgust” (96). However, considering that the photographs were used as propaganda, it turns out that, depending on the context in which they appear and who sees them, the photographs may have the opposite effect of Woolf’s antiwar purpose in *Three Guineas*. And yet, the narrator argues that the photograph is not a textual medium of thought, but a “crude statement of fact addressed to the eye.” By writing about the effects of such a “fact” and the emotions that the photographs provoke in the minds of the viewers, Woolf attempts to make the photographs objects that can evoke universal emotions. By doing so, she tries to inspire readers to perceive the evil of war itself, instead of making them hate the enemy.

Towards the end of the letter, the narrator shows “you” a photograph of countless collapsed houses and dead bodies, which provokes “horror and disgust” in both “we” and “you.” However, according to the narrator, this picture is not included in the photographs that she showed at the beginning of the letter. She says that, throughout the letter, she has “add[ed] fact to fact” (214). This

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indicates two things: she has discussed the facts of women's oppression throughout history, and she has also shown photographs of dressed-up men—the actual photographs inserted in the text—as facts, which reveal her perspective. The narrator writes that, by “adding fact to fact” in these ways, “another picture has imposed itself upon the foreground” (214). This picture shows, she says, a figure of a man, whom she addresses in various languages; for example, “Führer or Duce,” and “Tyrant or Dictator” (214). This suggests that she is referring not to a specific individual but to some generalized notion of the oppressor called by these names. In this way, without fueling hatred of the enemy, she shows that this man is the cause of war, which is common to every country. She examines the cause of war by connecting facts to a tyrant from her own perspective, instead of accepting the image of war shown in the photographs sent from the Spanish government.

She considers that the photograph suggests that “the tyrannies and servilities” in “the public and the private worlds are inseparably connected,” and “we” are the same as the figure of the tyrant (214–15). Midori Ichikawa points out that here the pronoun “we” is extended from the limited sense of “the daughters of educated men” to include “the sons of educated men” (who are initially referred to as “you”) (92). The use of “we” (in opposition to “you”) suggests that “the sons of educated men” are oppressors in the private world; at the same time, both “the sons” and “the daughters” are oppressed in the public world. The narrator emphasizes that “we” can change the figure of the tyrant “by our thoughts and actions” (215). Since she insists that there is a connection between the private and the public worlds, this can be read as suggestive of the possibility of overthrowing authority if “the sons of educated men” stop their oppression in the private world, and “the daughters of educated men”

are liberated from their dominance.

The treatment of photographs in *Three Guineas* provides a clearer picture of Woolf's idea of "facts" as presented in "A Sketch of the Past." "Facts" are a myriad of events and things that cannot be remembered unless they are consciously written down, whereas a "vision" is an exceptional experience worth writing about. Portraying innumerable "facts" in everyday life or describing visible "facts" in words (as *Three Guineas*'s passage on the photographs does) can be understood as an attempt to textualize that which is excluded from text, thereby making it universally accessible.

This two-sidedness of "facts," which can be exploited as propaganda or lead to universal understanding, is related to Woolf's ambivalent attitude towards politics. She contributed an essay entitled "Why Art Today Follows Politics" to *The Daily Worker* on 14 December 1936. It presents her view on The Artists' International Association, an organization supported by the Communist Party. In the essay, she takes an ambiguous attitude towards the question of whether or not artists should be actively involved in politics; she argues that artists cannot be separated from politics because they materially depend on a society that is their "paymaster" (214). Society is also their "patron" (214); therefore, even if in times of peace artists are intellectually independent of society, in times of war their work becomes a luxury and is abandoned by society. This is because the "patron" cannot afford to understand works of art; art is not a priority in wartime. In this situation, the "patron" "will only buy pictures that flatter his vanity or serve his politics" (214). Then, artists become "the servant of the politician" (215) because they must present the significance of their works from the viewpoint of national interest. The pressure on artists to produce works for politics exposes artists themselves or their works to crisis. This is why politics is an important

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matter for artists. However, although Woolf insists that politics and art are related, she does not urge artists to actively participate in politics. She thinks that "the artist—the plastic artist—is affected by the state of society"; therefore "we must try to define the relations of the artist to society" (213). As Ben Harker points out, Woolf's article for *The Daily Worker* is reserved about politics even though she writes for the Communist Party's newspaper. Woolf is actually not satisfied with the convergence of art and politics, but she had no other option (Harker 434). She argues that artists are forced to organize associations and participate in politics. In *Three Guineas*, she overcomes the conflict between the necessity of converging art and politics and the need for art to be independent of politics by showing the vision of the "Outsiders' Society," an association that is paradoxically opposed to the idea of associations, as I will discuss later.

Woolf's ambivalent attitude towards politics can be seen in her letter to the painter Ben Nicholson in 1940: "My puzzle is, ought artists now to become politicians? My instinct says no; but I'm not sure that I can justify my instinct. I take refuge in the fact that I've received so little from society that I owe it very little. But that[sic] not altogether satisfactory. . ." (420). Woolf dismisses the question of whether or not artists should become politicians with the statement that "I've received so little from society that I owe it very little." However, it is just "refuge"; Woolf thinks that having received little or no benefit from society is not a justifiable reason not to participate in society. Even so, Woolf does not conclude that artists should become politicians. Clara Jones suggests that Woolf's ambivalence in the above letter does not have to do with "her theory of women's outsidership in *Three Guineas*," which, according to Jones, does not entail "social participation" (207). However, this is because Jones

defines “social participation” in a rather limited sense. Certainly, as we will see in the next section, the “Outsiders’ Society” is not literally “social participation” because the association urges women not to go to church and not to participate in a society organized by men, and appeals to women to present themselves by their absence. And yet, this attitude is not an abandonment of social participation. In “Why Art Today Follows Politics,” Woolf is concerned that the artist is in danger of becoming the servant of the politician. Therefore, she takes an ambiguous position towards artists’ organization and subjugation of art to anti-fascist politics. The “Outsiders’ Society” can be considered a solution to this challenge; by influencing society through its absence, it seeks to “participate” in society in an alternative way.

The “Outsiders’ Society” as an Anti-Organization

What is the “Outsiders’ Society,” and why does Woolf, who takes a complex position on organizing associations, propose to form it? The society is open to women in the whole world and to all classes because it has no membership requirements. The members show their existence through their absence. They do not go to church and do not join associations organized by men. Moreover, the society is free from national borders; the narrator insists that “in fact, as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world” (185). Woolf is conscious that “[t]he working men have no country” in *The Communist Manifesto*. This suggests that Woolf explores the possibility of a form of solidarity that cuts across class and national boundaries.

As discussed above, Woolf was concerned about the possibility of art becoming a servant to politics by political organization of artists. In the context of the fight against Fascism, works of art can be exploited as propaganda. However, the “Outsiders’ Society” does not

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easily lead to propaganda because, as it has no membership requirements, its members spread all over the world. Therefore, the society is imagined as being essentially anti-hierarchical. This form of society is glimpsed in Woolf's quotation of Samuel Taylor Coleridge in her notes to *Three Guineas*. Coleridge questions what the "*rightful*" constitution of government is, and quotes Rousseau's following passage as a response to it: "To find a form of society according to which each one uniting with the whole shall yet obey himself only and remain as free as before" (Coleridge 192; qtd. in Woolf 252–53, italic in original). Woolf is concerned that by organizing an association, its members will be subordinated to its single purpose by following the political aim of the association, which, as a result, makes art a servant to politics. However, in the vision of association imagined by Coleridge, the members can unite by acting in their own ways, and they only share their purpose.

Judging from the fact that the "Outsiders' Society" aims to become the kind of universal form of society that Coleridge speaks of, Woolf implies that it is possible for "the sons" to join the society in the future, even though, at the time of Woolf's writing, the status of "outsider" was limited to women. In fact, when the narrator urges that "we are not passive spectators doomed to unresisting obedience but by our thoughts and actions can ourselves change that figure," "the sons" are included in the "we" and "our" (215). "The sons," like "the daughters," are oppressed in the public world because "the sons" may go to war. It can be argued that Woolf envisions femininity becoming universal; and yet, such femininity should be understood in terms not of gender differences but of the "outsiderness" of women. Toru Nakayama interprets the state of being an outsider in terms of the sexual difference in the psychoanalytic sense; it can be understood as presence or absence of the phallus, which symbolizes authority. In

this case, femininity (or “outsiderness”) means freedom from authority. At Woolf’s time, it would have been difficult for the “Outsiders’ Society” to become immediately effective, or for men to participate in it; as she repeatedly writes, we or you “are pressed for time” (e.g. 135, 141) Woolf’s utopian suggestion was a response to the approaching war, the fundamental cause of which is patriarchy.

Though Woolf via the narrator envisions the “Outsiders’ Society,” in the end she turns her attention to the “facts”:

Even here, even now your letter tempts us to shut our ears to these little facts, these trivial details, to listen not to the bark of the guns and the bray of the gramophones but to the voices of the poets, answering each other, assuring us of a unity that rubs out divisions as if they were chalk marks only; to discuss with you the capacity of the human spirit to overflow boundaries and make unity out of multiplicity. But that would be to dream—to dream the recurring dream that has haunted the human mind since the beginning of time; the dream of peace, the dream of freedom. But, with the sound of the guns in your ears you have not asked us to dream. You have not asked us what peace is; you have asked us how to prevent war. Let us then leave it to the poets to tell us what the dream is; and fix our eyes upon the photograph again: the fact. (215)

In this passage, the narrator favors the photograph over poetry. It is suggested that the “Outsiders’ Society” corresponds to poetry, as the poets’ discussion of the “unity out of multiplicity” is a “dream,” which cannot be completely realized at that time. In an endnote, Woolf writes that Coleridge expresses “the views and aims of the outsiders” (252). As Coleridge is a poet, this also suggests that the

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“Outsiders’ Society” belongs to the field of poetry. In contrast, the photograph refers to the “facts” of the Spanish Civil War and the approaching war.

At the end of the letter, the narrator emphasizes the importance of the photograph and “facts.” She affirms that “we” and “you” see the sense of evil itself in the picture of the tyrant. However, the ways in which they oppose war are different:

And though we look upon that picture from different angles our conclusion is the same as yours—it is evil. We are both determined to do what we can to destroy the evil which that picture represents, you by your methods, we by ours. And since we are different, our help must be different. What ours can be we have tried to show—how imperfectly, how superficially there is no need to say. But as a result the answer to your question must be that we can best help you to prevent war not by repeating your words and following your methods but by finding new words and creating new methods. We can best help you to prevent war not by joining your society but by remaining outside your society but in co-operation with its aim. That aim is the same for us both. (215–16)

Instead of “joining your society” in the manner of authoritarian men, “we” oppose war by “remaining outside your society.” The men in the photographs in *Three Guineas* show off their presence by dressing up and wearing decorations, but “the daughters,” in contrast, show their presence through their absence. This is not a mere trivial idea; the “Outsiders’ Society”—the narrator’s “vision”—also demands “the daughters” to take action on the “facts” of everyday life: to refuse to knit socks for the war, to abolish awards for the winners in

women's sports, to refuse to attend church. Nakayama points out that, as the church has relied on volunteers from "the daughters," their absence would result in a significant impact (149). Therefore, the narrator states, "by making their absence felt their presence becomes desirable" (194). As "the daughters" and "the sons" have received different kinds of education, their ways of opposing war are different, and they "look upon that picture from different angles"; even so, the narrator maintains that their "conclusion is the same . . . —it is evil" (215). Returning to the contrast between "the poem" / "vision" and "the photograph" / "facts," the picture of the tyrant corresponds to "facts." Therefore, "facts" can evoke universal emotions in people with different backgrounds. If there are terms of admission into the "Outsiders' Society," they are that one must be an outsider. Being an outsider in the above passage is to feel the evil in the picture of the tyrant. Therefore, in order to change the patriarchal society, which is the root cause of war, it is necessary for "the sons" to realize their "outsiderness" in the public world. The universality of "facts" makes it possible to reconsider the conflict between men and women, and reinterpret it, even if temporarily, as the broader conflict between the oppressors and the oppressed.

Conclusion

As discussed above, Woolf understands that the objectivity of photographs allows them to be abused as propaganda. This is why she does not use the sensational photographs but describes them in words, thereby evoking universal feelings regardless of gender or class or nationality. Moreover, she transforms the sensational photograph of the Spanish Civil War, which makes the public hate the enemy, into an image of a tyrant. In doing so, she shows the cause of war that is

concealed in propaganda. Such a strategy of demonstrating her perspective on the dominant image of propaganda is related to her insistence on the invisible organization of the “Outsiders’ Society,” which is imagined as essentially anti-propagandistic and anti-hierarchical. Although the strategies of the “outsiders,” such as not going to church, appear passive, they are practical because this absence reveals the importance of their uncompensated work. Even so, Woolf acknowledges the limitations of the organization; the “unity out of multiplicity,” which underlies the idea of the “Outsiders’ Society,” is a dream that belongs to the realm of poetry. Such a visionary idea takes a long time to have an effect as an antiwar activity; and yet, the significance of the “Outsiders’ Society” is its potential to transcend differences in gender, class, nationality, and even age, as the only condition for becoming a member is being an “outsider.” Although Woolf might have supposed that her contemporary “outsiders” were women, from today’s point of view, the “Outsiders’ Society” potentially includes anyone living under precarious conditions regardless of gender. In this regard, the idea of the “Outsiders’ Society” is still effective in the sense that it shows the possibility for people in difficult situations to unite across various sections of society.

Notes

1. For Woolf’s conception of the “novel-essay,” see Hoffmann.
2. “Propaganda.” *Oxford English Dictionary* [Online], www.oed.com/view/Entry/152605?rskey=HPhc58&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid. Accessed 8 Nov. 2020.
3. For psychoanalytic interpretation of the representation of male authority in *Three Guineas*, see Nakayama.

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