

IMAGE AND/THROUGH TEXT IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S THREE GUINEAS

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Abstract:

Three Guineas gives an altogether different perspective on Virginia Woolf's literary performance. Readers accustomed to Woolf's work see her modernist novels as the writer's effort to discover the uniqueness and recover the unity of the human being. These novels primarily are about the essence of life, or spirit, or experience, as she calls it, beyond any temporal limitations. Too little insight do readers get into Woolf's contemporary society when reading them. Seldom, if ever, are issues of gender, class, or age tackled. The modernist is more inclined to weave differences into a harmonious whole rather than approach them as potential sources of conflict. However, once modernism reaches its dead-end, there is an opening up towards postmodernism. Consequently, those issues that had previously been relegated to the background tend to come to the fore. *Three Guineas*, alongside *The Waves* or *Orlando*, is proof of Woolf's work oscillating between modernism and postmodernism. Yet, what both her modernist and postmodernist writings do share is Woolf's decision to transgress boundaries between genres and experiment with multimodal communication by resorting to methods pertaining to different arts. *Three Guineas* is the perfect example of how text and image work together to enhance the power of the message and to obtain an enduring effect on the reader. Techniques of drawing, painting, or photography are employed alongside the literary ones. In addition, the essay raises awareness of issues of intercultural communication with subtle, and often ironic, focus on the cultural encounter and clash. It expresses the modernist writer's ideas about the society and the education system of her time, providing readers with a clear-sighted analysis of the relations between genders. Through a meandering line of argumentation, Woolf artfully connects the conflicts caused by gender relations to the more damaging ones, such as wars, likely to affect whole societies. Familiar with the art of photography, Virginia Woolf includes in her essay a number of five images that add explanatory force to the images she creates through words. She could have doubtless also used photographs that depicted the atrocities of war, yet she avoids it and decides instead to create these images textually and to use them recurrently in the text of the essay in order to make them as impactful as possible. The effect is so powerful that, once you finish reading the essay, it is these images that obsessively linger. These textually created images reinforce the message of the text.

Keywords: Text; Image; Intercultural communication; Gender; Education.