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# “Strong Women Make Strong Nations”: Women, Literature, and Sovereignty in Paula Gunn Allen and Virginia Woolf

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**Abstract:** This essay places Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* and *Three Guineas* alongside Paula Gunn Allen’s *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*. Reading these landmark texts together helps establish a transnational dialogue essential to twenty-first-century literary and feminist studies. *A Room of One’s Own* and *The Sacred Hoop* resonate with each other in striving to recuperate women’s history and literature, long denied or suppressed by patriarchal tenets and texts. A fruitful dialogic also emerges between *Three Guineas* and *The Sacred Hoop*, both of which argue for the eradication of patriarchy in favor of female-centric social structures in order to achieve individual and collective social and cultural equity. In examining the similarities as well as differences among these works, this essay also discusses the complementarities and conflicts among Indigenous and white/Western feminisms. Studying Woolf and Allen together builds a shared platform for intersectional analysis, vital to third-wave feminist concerns.

**Keywords:** feminism, transnationalism, intersectionality, Indigenous feminism, Native American women, coalition, Woolf (Virginia), Gunn Allen (Paula)

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In my research and teaching, I find great value in placing works together that might not immediately seem compatible but whose affinities as well as differences lead to fruitful comparative study. This essay, then, considers Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938) alongside Paula Gunn Allen’s *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (1986; 2nd. ed. 1992). While at first glance Woolf and Allen may seem an unlikely pairing, reading them together helps establish a transnational dialogue essential to twenty-first-century literary and feminist studies. The importance of each work has long been clear: *A Room of One’s Own* “has become a classic—if not *the* touchstone text—in the history of feminism” (Gubar xxxvi), *Three Guineas* “is generally recognized as a founding document in the history of gender studies” (Briggs 310), and *The Sacred Hoop* is “exceedingly influential” and “considered a foundation for the study not only of Native American gender but also of culture” (Van Dyke 69). Moreover, as third-wave feminism emphasizes “an intersectional and multiperspectival version of feminism” (Snyder 175) that “replaces attempts at unity with a dynamic and welcoming politics of coalition” (176), studying Allen and Woolf together, and the frissons between them, builds a shared platform for intersectional analysis.

*A Room of One’s Own* stems from Woolf’s 1928 lectures at Newnham and Girton, women’s colleges at Cambridge University. Her topic was women and fiction, and in *Room* she extrapolates upon such a deceptively simple-sounding issue. She strives to reconcile the powerful women of classical literature with the deplorable material conditions of women’s lives. She seeks literary foremothers and finds primarily

books written by men. She concludes that in order to write fiction, a woman must have 500 pounds annually and a room of her own, signifying the independence and privacy necessary for engaging in serious literary endeavor. Finally, she posits that women writers must attain the androgynous, incandescent mind of the unimpeded artist. *Three Guineas*, published on the cusp of the Second World War, assumes the form of a letter in response to a barrister's query asking how to prevent war. The only hope of doing so, Woolf argues, lies in the daughters of educated men refusing to participate in patriarchal society. While *A Room of One's Own* considers how women might attain the opportunities enjoyed by men, *Three Guineas* calls for radical societal overhaul. In *The Sacred Hoop*, Allen discusses American Indian traditions and the vital role women played, and continue to play, within them. Engaging the identity politics of second-wave feminism, a popular method of organization and activism in the mid- to late twentieth century, along with history, sociology, literature, orature, ritual, and personal experience, the essays comprising *The Sacred Hoop* establish the need for contemporary societies to model themselves upon woman-centered American Indian cultures—the only means, Allen argues, of achieving spiritual, social, and cultural health and equity.<sup>1</sup> All three works recuperate women's voices and construct counternarratives to patriarchal ideology.

Exploring the commonalities as well as the differences among *A Room of One's Own*, *Three Guineas*, and *The Sacred Hoop* yields fresh insights into the intersections of race, class, gender, and nation in women's writing and chips away at boundaries still imposed upon literary and feminist studies—the West versus the rest—for, as First Nations scholar Emma LaRocque states, “there is in mainstream Canadian and American feminist writings a decided lack of inclusion of our experience, analysis or perspectives” (67). My essay places Indigenous women's experiences, analyses, and perspectives, based on my understanding of the Native American and First Nations scholarly sources I have consulted, alongside those of Woolf, demonstrating their intrinsic value while also fostering greater inclusivity and diversity in feminist literary studies. R. Claire Snyder finds third-wave feminism, like its first- and second-wave predecessors, harboring a “white, middle-class bias” (181)—even as it rejects the second wave's “category of women”—for neglecting to consider fully women's distinct experiences stemming from race, ethnicity, and social class (183). Bringing Woolf and Allen together demonstrates how Native American thought and theory complement and complicate white or mainstream feminism and also how Western feminism bears relevance to Native American concerns.

Such a stance is not without controversy. Cree/Métis scholar Verna St. Denis, for instance, was initially skeptical about achieving “universal sisterhood” (44) among women of different racial and class backgrounds, but came to believe in the importance of Western feminist theory due to patriarchy's negative impact upon all women (47). LaRocque concurs, stating that “we cannot remove Aboriginal women's concerns from other women's concerns for we too live under overarching male-dominated conditions.... Feminism provides us with theoretical tools with which we can analyze historical realities such as patriarchy” (57). Luana Ross similarly believes that “to reject feminism completely is dangerous. Our larger sovereignty movement cannot omit issues of gender” (50). Such statements reflect the importance of *The Sacred Hoop* to Native American studies today, given its pan-tribal discussion of female-centric values and cultures. These statements also point to the ongoing relevance of *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* due to third-wave feminism's insufficiently deep or coherent analyses of patriarchy (Snyder 185). My goals here align with those of Renya K. Ramirez, who advocates “for the development of *multiple* feminisms rather than a *singular* feminism” (304; original emphasis). Instead of deriving from all three works a single theory or definition of feminism, I examine how these works speak with each other, in agreement and dispute, while mindful of Valerie Reed Hickman's observation that a vital concern for transnational feminism is

“how to forge a kind of coalition across lines of difference without simply erasing difference in the name of unity or, at the other extreme, reifying difference so absolutely as to prevent encounter altogether” (53). This essay strives for such coalition.

*The Sacred Hoop* and *A Room of One's Own* resonate with each other in considering the historical and literary record of women's lives. Both Allen and Woolf contemplate the discrepancies between women in fiction and women in fact, albeit from different ends of the spectrum: Woolf finds women in literature imbued with strength and agency yet considered second-class citizens in real life, while Allen recounts egregious depictions of Native women in Western texts contrasting starkly with their actual lives. Allen writes of pre-contact Indian cultures, wherein women wielded significant influence in public and private matters, the interconnectedness of all life forms was recognized and cherished, and communal responsibility was paramount. Numerous accounts of traditional Native American and First Nations cultures corroborate Allen's summation. As M. A. Jaimes Guerrero writes, Native nationhood was “premised ... on the matrilineal lines of kinship and descent for most if not all Native peoples prior to the impact of US colonialism and patriarchy on their indigenous lifeways. These communal models of indigenous governance granted women respect and authority” (63). According to First Nations scholar Winona Wheeler, “Women were not dependent on men, their role was very much in balance with men” (quoted in Guerrero 64). Kim Anderson also discusses the sovereignty of women in traditional Native American cultures, noting “that divorce was common, that women deserted men in abusive marriages, that women acted as warriors and shamans, that widows could support themselves rather than remarrying” (42).

However, LaRocque believes notions of pre-contact gender equality have been greatly romanticized. “It is simply not true,” she says, “that there was any universalized Aboriginal understanding about ‘womanhood’” (65). Andrea Smith similarly cautions against “overgeneraliz[ing] or giv[ing] the impression that Native communities were utopian prior to colonization. Certainly gender violence occurred prior to colonization” (2005a, 19). Nevertheless, Smith states, before colonization, “Women served as spiritual, political, and military leaders, and many societies were matrilineal” (2005a, 18). Poet and scholar Denise Lajimodiere notes that “many tribal cultures are gynocratic” despite the impression created by negative depictions of Native women throughout Western media past and present (105). As she states, “the best information on what it was like to be a Native American woman in early America would be from Native American women themselves, yet, considering the widespread, long-term history of violence and oppression waged against Indian people by non-Indians” (105), it is understandable that Indian women resist divulging such information to Euro-Americans.

Western historical accounts paint a distorted picture of Native womanhood, which arises from a patriarchal standpoint capable of understanding woman-centered cultures only insofar as they are perceived to threaten white men. “Any original documentation that exists,” Allen writes, “is buried under the flood of readily available, published materials written from the colonizer's patriarchal perspective” (32). Ruth Spack notes that “the journals, diaries, and letters of Euro-American travelers and traders ... described American Indian women's work as ‘menial’ and viewed the women themselves as ‘beasts of burden,’ ‘slaves,’ and ‘brutes’ who were ‘sexually lax,’ ‘uncultivated,’ and ‘inferior’ and who lived a life of ‘barbarism’ and drudgery” (27). Lajimodiere, too, finds that the first “Euro-centric accounts portrayed American Indian women as ... being treated very much worse than an animal,” like an “abject slave and drudge of men in her tribe ... dragging a travois, trudging along a trail behind her swarthy warrior husband, who was riding a horse” (105).<sup>2</sup> Such distorted representations of Native American gender roles not only falsify historical record, Allen explains, but also fortify “patriarchal socialization among all Americans, who are thus led to

believe that there have never been any alternative structures” (36) and therefore that no models exist for establishing woman-centered cultures.<sup>3</sup>

Such patriarchal socialization appears to emerge in *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, for in both texts Woolf, by and large, discusses patriarchy as if things had never been any other way. In *A Room of One's Own*, she muses that the turf at Oxbridge, emblematic of the university's exclusion of women, “has been rolled for 300 years in succession” (6), and, after her sumptuous lunch there, she ponders the founding of the university and conjures “a scene of masons on a high roof some five centuries ago” (19). With Allen's comment in mind, however, we see in *Room* Woolf's discernment that alternative modes of perception did indeed exist: Woolf laments that the woman novelist of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries “had altered her values in deference to the opinion of others” (73)—to the men who serve as arbiters of literary taste and who critique women's writing based on patriarchal values. A nineteenth-century woman's mind, she states, was “slightly pulled from the straight, and made to alter its clear vision in deference to external authority” (73). Woolf recognizes the imposition of male judgment upon uniquely female values and perceptions, marveling at the “genius” and “integrity it must have required in the face of all that criticism ... to hold fast to the thing as they saw it without shrinking” (73). As Laura Marcus finds, *A Room of One's Own* “calls for a new understanding and valorisation of specifically female values” (145).

In *Three Guineas*, Woolf dissects—and skewers—even further the misogyny pervasive in the professions, the church, and the universities, stating that although men and women “look at the same things, we see them differently” (7). She also recognizes women's lives historically as woman-centered, aligning with Allen's observation:

Much of women's culture bears marked resemblance to tribal culture. The perceptual modes that women, even those of us who are literate, industrialized, and reared within masculinist academic traditions, habitually engage in more closely resemble inclusive-field perception than excluding foreground-background perceptions. (243)

Allen explains that tribal culture and women's culture apprehend the world in a “unified-field fashion” (244), appreciating life's mutuality rather than insisting on fixed hierarchies. Reading *A Room of One's Own*, *Three Guineas*, and *The Sacred Hoop* together highlights the “accretive and fluid” nature of life and literature as opposed to the “unidimensional, monolithic, excluding, and chronological” mode of being propagated by Western patriarchy (Allen 244).<sup>4</sup> This nonhierarchical “unified-field” vision becomes evident in *A Room of One's Own*'s discussion of androgyny, for example. Woolf acknowledges that myriad sociocultural pressures will always exert themselves upon the mind, but she envisions a potential psyche free of repression and narrowness, one in which the “man-womanly” (96) and “woman-manly” (97) aspects of the mind fuse harmoniously (96, 97). Citing Coleridge's proclamation that “a great mind is androgynous,” Woolf imagines that such a “mind is resonant and porous; that it transmits emotion without impediment; that it is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided” (97).<sup>5</sup> She proffers Shakespeare's mind as an example—not unproblematically.

As Madelyn Detloff explains in *The Value of Virginia Woolf*, “Woolf's ‘epistemic insensitivity’ to Shakespeare's more partial perspectives shows that she was not immune to cultural biases, despite her feminist and socialist leanings” (30). Because Woolf sees Shakespeare as the pinnacle of the androgynous mind and literary incandescence, and because she is often assumed to conceive of “incandescence” and “objectivity” as one and the same, we could find her reifying patriarchal literary and cultural norms, for “literary value ... will be seen simply as ‘truths’ or observations about ‘human nature’ if the writer's interests

align neatly enough with dominant cultural perspectives" (Detloff 30). Yet Detloff offers an alternate interpretation of Woolf's concept of incandescence. She sees Woolf suggesting "an epistemological shift from an egocentric way of knowing to a contextual way of knowing ... the potential to think from a perspective attuned to others and the world *in relation* to one's self. Incandescence therefore offers the possibility of community formation that attends to the particularities of an individual within the community" (34). This epistemological shift resonates with third-wave feminism's emphasis on coalition: on women coming together and "occupying female subject positions" (Snyder 177) while at the same time demonstrating that there is "no one way to be a woman" (185).

Allen also nods toward a contextual way of knowing, I would argue, when she draws broadly upon centuries of American Indian gynocracies as well as personal experiences in countering degrading portrayals of tribal women in texts by whites. *The Sacred Hoop's* first section, "The Ways of Our Grandmothers," sets the stage by delineating the female divinities in American Indian creation stories, such as the Keres Thought Woman, who thinks the world into creation, and the Hopi Spider Woman, "Grandmother of the sun and ... the great Medicine Power who sang the people into this fourth world we live in now" (19). Lajimodiere writes of "White Buffalo Woman, who brought the Sacred Pipe to the Lakota" and of "Changing Woman in Navajo belief ... a power creator-figure who is responsible for the growth of crops and the birth of all new life. The Ojibwe tell of Sky Woman with the help of turtle and muskrat, [who] created Turtle Island following the great flood" (106). Thus we find a rich lineage of female creators behind contemporary Native American women's literature. In her work on transnational feminism, AnaLouise Keating notes that "some feminists see attempts to 'recover' woman-centered creation stories as extremely misguided" (94) for affirming patriarchal notions of an essential womanhood. Keating also cites Judith Butler's concern that "focusing on a time supposedly prior to or beyond present socioeconomic and political conditions inhibits feminist analysis and action in the present" (94). Allen's attention throughout *The Sacred Hoop* to present-day social, political, economic, and environmental concerns for Native Americans and for all of humanity, however, constitutes "a political act situated in the material present" (Keating 98). In addition, stories of "egalitarian communities of women ... offer a new teleological perspective" to women (Keating 93). Allen locates such perspectives in the work of contemporary Native American women writers. While acknowledging the terrible problems plaguing Indian country today, she notes with pride that American Indian women are taking control of their image in the poems, novels, and short stories they write. "[A] force is growing," she states, "and it is helping Indian women reclaim their lives. Their power, their sense of direction and of self will soon be visible. It is the force of the women who speak and work and write, and it is formidable" (Allen 50).<sup>6</sup>

While Allen shapes *The Sacred Hoop* around matrilineal contours, including those of her own family, the narrator of *A Room of One's Own* searches vainly for her foremothers. Scanning the shelves of the British Museum, the Woolfian narrator of *Room* sees numerous books about women by men: by "agreeable essayists, light-fingered novelists, young men who have taken the MA degree; men who have taken no degree; men who have no apparent qualification save that they are not women" (27). She also realizes that "nothing is known about women before the eighteenth century. I have no model in my mind to turn this way and that" (45). Aspiring women novelists overall "had no tradition behind them, or one so short and partial that it was of little help. For we think back through our mothers if we are women" (75). Using the plural, "mothers," Woolf speaks not only of a biological mother but also of female ancestors who might guide women toward a greater understanding of self and society. Allen similarly states that in Laguna culture, "your mother's identity is the key to your own identity" and that

your mother is not only that woman whose womb formed and released you—the term refers in every individual case to an entire generation of women whose psychic, and consequently physical, “shape” made the psychic existence of the following generation possible.... Failure to know your mother, that is, your position and its attendant traditions, history, and place in the scheme of things, is failure to remember your significance, your reality, your right relationship to earth and society. (209)

Male-dominated societies, in their erasure of female forebears, not only stunt women’s literary endeavors but also circumscribe their entire lives, as demonstrated in *A Room of One’s Own* by the distinctions between the centuries-old wealthy men’s university, Oxbridge, and the underfunded new women’s college, Fernham. As Berenice A. Carroll notes, “Virginia Woolf recognized in the society around her a political and social system geared to the destruction and perversion of human life and creativity” (116). Woolf’s foray into the material conditions of women’s lives and their effects upon their artistic, intellectual, and financial well-being bring such devastation into stark relief.

Wishing to learn more about women, the narrator of *Room* is dismayed to find, at least until the nineteenth century, primarily books written by men. Intrigued by the Elizabethan era in particular, she wonders “why no woman wrote a word of that extraordinary literature when every other man, it seemed, was capable of song or sonnet” (41). She then questions the material circumstances of women’s lives: “Fiction, imaginative work that is, is not dropped like a pebble upon the ground ... fiction is like a spider’s web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners” (41)—attached “to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in” (42). She learns a bit about women’s lives in Trevelyan’s *History of England*, reading that “wife beating” in the Elizabethan age, “was a recognised right of man, and was practised without shame by high as well as low.... the daughter who refused to marry the gentleman of her parents’ choice was liable to be locked up, beaten and flung about the room” (42). Woolf marvels at how the historical record belies the extraordinary women found throughout classical literature: Cleopatra, Lady Macbeth, Clytemnestra, Antigone, Cressida, Rosalind, and Desdemona, to name several. She comes to a realization about women:

Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband. (43)

Woolf then conceptualizes what life would have been like for a woman of Shakespeare’s genius living in the time of Shakespeare—a sister to the Bard named Judith. After such a woman tells her parents of her desire to be a playwright, they lock her in her room, and she runs away in the middle of the night. Arriving in London, she is barred from the theaters, scorned, seduced, becomes pregnant, and eventually commits suicide.

Paula Gunn Allen locates a similar dynamic in poems by nila northSun and Marnie Walsh. “shadow is / my cousin,” northSun writes, who

hated herself because  
others hated her  
whites hated her  
Indians hated her  
called shadow

apple Indian  
whites saw only INDIAN  
fat drunk greasy squaw.

(quoted in Allen 133)

Walsh's poem tells of Aunt Nettie, who "went to Catholic school and then to college for a while" and whose life eventually unravels (quoted in Allen 133). She tries to ease her anguish through poetry: "when aunt nettie got too drunk / she told poetry /... but all the people laughed" (134). "Aunt and cousin," Allen writes, "caught in the same ambiguity; unable to be Indian, unable *not* to be Indian, they go the same route: drunk, crazy, isolated, having no point of reference that is meaningful to all their experience" (134). Struggling to establish a sense of self amid sex, gender, and racial prejudice can drive women to ruin, whether a woman with literary aspirations in Renaissance England or twentieth-century American Indian women navigating dichotomous worlds.

"Yet genius of a sort must have existed among women" (48), Woolf writes. "When ... one reads of a witch being ducked, of a woman possessed by devils, of a wise woman selling herbs, or even of a very remarkable man who had a mother, then I think we are on the track of a lost novelist, a suppressed poet.... Indeed, I would venture to guess that Anon, who wrote so many poems without signing them, was often a woman" (49). In the same vein, Allen calls for a shift from the male-oriented view of American Indian history to a female-centric one. "But let us suppose," she writes, "that among the true heroes were and are many women. Suppose the names of Molly Brant, Magnus, Pocahontas, Sacagawea, Malinalli, Nancy Ward, Sara Winnemucca, and scores of others were the names that came to mind when we thought of the noble and sacred past of the tribes" (263). Both Woolf and Allen seek to recover and augment women's lost voices, changing the way we conceive of women and men, past and present.

Accomplishing such a task is not easy, however, for the masculine values that prevail in patriarchy infiltrate fiction as well. "This is an important work, the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing-room" (73), Woolf writes in *Room*. In "Red Roots of White Feminism," Allen similarly recounts the male establishment's dismissal of women's concerns, explaining that centuries ago, tribal women and white women "often shared food, information, child care, and health care" (215), but no one would know it since "the study of Indian-white relations ... has been almost entirely documented in terms of formal white Christian patriarchal impacts and assaults on Native Americans" (216). As Allen exhorts Native women writers to continue shaping and controlling their own image, Woolf calls upon the women of Newnham and Girton to pursue her inquiries and rectify falsified or missing accounts of women's lives.<sup>7</sup> Allen calls for "An Indian-Focused Version of American History" (218); Woolf solicits a female-centric rendition of Anglo history and literature.

Despite its brilliance in teasing out England's gender inequity, *A Room of One's Own* does not call for major social change as forthrightly as *The Sacred Hoop*. Rather, the narrator of *Room* argues for women's entitlement to the opportunities and amenities enjoyed by men. After a dissatisfying dinner at Fernham and a discussion of the underfunding of women's colleges, the narrator "thought of all the books that were assembled down there"—on the "domes and towers of the famous city"—and "of the admirable smoke and drink and the deep armchairs and the pleasant carpets: of the urbanity, the geniality, the dignity which are the offspring of luxury and privacy and space" (23), and she suspects that "in a hundred years" women "will take part in all the activities and exertions that were once denied them" (40). As a result, some regard "Woolf's quest for a 'room of one's own' ... [as] a quest for political power through economic strength" and



claim that “playing by the male rules of the game is very much what Woolf’s political program in *A Room* is all about” (Solomon 335).

Many years ago, Bette London warned of the dangers of establishing Woolf as an idol that would brook no disagreement—a move that scholars must avoid lest they reproduce the power structures they strive to disassemble (25). As early as 1988, pioneering Woolf scholar Jane Marcus observed that Woolf “has become uncritically sainted” (*Art & Anger* xv). Marcus also called *A Room of One’s Own* “our literary feminist bible” (quoted in London 13), but London believes that *Room* “promises little access to the dispossessed of other classes and races” (15) and that *Three Guineas*’s call to the daughters of educated men embraces only those women closely connected to the male literary establishment (19). Marcus’s introduction to the 2006 Harcourt edition of *Three Guineas*, however, notes Woolf’s “lifelong concern for working-class women” (Woolf 2006, xli), and Naomi Black finds that *Three Guineas* “certainly spoke to inequalities of class and race, and also imperialism” (156). Woolf tells the barrister, who is also the president of a peace society, that he may have the guinea “on condition that you help all properly qualified people, of whatever sex, class or colour, to enter your profession” (2006, 96). Marcus also deemed Woolf “as foremost among ‘our sainted literary mothers’” (London 13), yet, as London states, “the choice of literary mothers and sisters entails its own set of exclusions ... for which feminism must assume responsibility if ‘continuity’ is not to become a cover word for institutionalization” (18). London’s words resonate with Julie Robin Solomon’s view that *Room* seeks to join, not change, patriarchal institutions.

*A Room of One’s Own* and critiques thereof lend insights into Native American and First Nations resistance to mainstream feminism. Guerrero explains that early white feminists, aiming primarily to achieve the rights accorded to white men, “were not concerned with other ‘women of color’” or with “racialized oppression” (59). St. Denis notes that “some Aboriginal women ... reject a form of feminism they understand argues for adopting and imitating white male practices, traditions, and processes” (39); she quotes Pam Colorado’s observation that “nothing I’ve encountered in feminist theory addresses the fact of our colonization or the wrongness of white women’s stake in it” (St. Denis 41). Native American women scholars and activists find “that non-Native women’s participation in various forms of Western imperialism have often made them complicit in the oppression of Native peoples” (Udel 43). And Lata Mani states we must learn “how to argue for women’s rights in ways that are not complicit in any way with patriarchal, racist, or ethnocentrist formulations of the issues” (quoted in St. Denis 48). For example, proponents of women’s rights and of racial justice can find themselves at cross-purposes. In *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, Andrea Smith discusses reproductive policies that “sell out the interests of Native women, poor women, and women of color” (96). She explains that “some activists refuse to address racism in abortion policies, arguing that abortion access represents ‘genocide’ for communities of color” and “fail[ing] to consider that restrictions to abortion can become another strategy to coerce Native women or women of color to pursue sterilization” (97).<sup>8</sup> In addition, Native activist Justine Smith critiques the mainstream reproductive rights movement’s problematic rhetoric of “choice”:

The reproductive rights movement frames the issues around individual “choice”—does the woman have the choice to have or not to have an abortion. This analysis obscures all the social conditions that prevent women from having and making real choices—lack of health care, poverty, lack of social services, etc.... In the Native context, where women often find the only contraceptives available to them are dangerous ... where they live in communities in which unemployment rates can run as high as 80 percent, reproductive “choice” defined so narrowly is a meaningless concept. (quoted in Smith 2005a, 98; original ellipses)

Andrea Smith, too, rejects the “single-issue, pro-choice politics of the mainstream reproductive rights movement” for not only disregarding the particular concerns of women of color but also for “actually promot[ing] the structures of oppression which keep women of color from having real choices or healthy lives” (104–5).

The intersection of gender and race impacts Native American women in matters of sexual assault as well. Native American women are at a higher risk of sexual assault than any demographic in the nation. In *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America*, Sarah Deer argues for a tribal-centered approach to sexual assault recovery for Native American women. Such an approach must consider racially charged federal laws, for instance, one of which prohibits the prosecution of non-Natives by tribal courts for crimes committed on tribal lands—a grave social justice issue, for as Louise Erdrich writes in a 2013 *New York Times* op-ed piece, “80 percent of sex crimes on reservations are committed by non-Indian men.”<sup>9</sup> Deer also examines the effect of rape upon Native communities. “Women play significant roles in tribal communities, culturally, spiritually, and politically,” she writes, “and have been referred to as the ‘backbone’ of tribal sovereignty. Sovereignty thus suffers when the women suffer” (13). According to the US Department of Justice, one in three Native American women will be raped in her lifetime, prompting the Native American Women’s Health Education Resource Center to publish *What To Do When You’re Raped: An ABC Handbook for Native Girls*. Sexual-assault advocacy programs, like reproductive rights programs, must take women’s racial and ethnic subject positions into account.

In the same vein, Lisa J. Udel cites Native American women’s valorization of procreation and motherhood as in conflict with issues promulgated by early Western feminism and, one could argue, by *A Room of One’s Own*, given its emphasis on women joining patriarchal institutions imbued with anti-female bias.<sup>10</sup> “Native women’s motherwork, in its range and variety, is one form of activism,” states Udel, “an approach that emphasizes Native traditions of ‘responsibilities’ as distinguished from Western feminism’s notion of ‘rights’” (43). As she also notes, some “Native women condemn Western feminism for what they perceive as a devaluation of motherhood and refutation of women’s traditional responsibilities” (44), while others “locate their activism not in feminist struggle, but in cultural survival” (49). Moreover, explains Ramirez, some Native American women find the issue of sexism “racially disruptive and divisive”: “Indeed, they sometimes assume that a feminist consciousness will automatically create tension between themselves and indigenous men” (303). Udel similarly observes that “Native women repeatedly fault white feminists for the devaluation of men in their revisionary tactics” (54)—tactics at play in the satirical, sarcastic tones of *Room’s* discussion of male privilege. Teresa Winterhalter notes the mocking tone used in *Three Guineas* as well, but finds it key to Woolf’s project of demonstrating through mimicry how patriarchal rhetorical modes perpetuate domination and control (242). And as Carolyn Heilbrun points out, Woolf’s recounting her thrill toward the end of *Room* upon seeing a man and a woman getting into a taxi together serves as her “metaphor for the conjoining of the two sexes rather than the separation of them into antagonistic forces” (1973, 154).

Allen’s work has come under fire as well, particularly from Italian scholar Elvira Pulitano in *Toward a Native American Critical Theory*. While Pulitano believes Allen’s work is important to Native American feminist studies, she finds Allen assuming “an overtly separatist stance” (16) and establishing a mode of “Indianness from the seemingly romantic, sentimentalized perspective of Eurocentric thinking” (21). Ultimately, Pulitano writes, Allen adapts Western binaries; “the only difference is that the terms are reversed and the Indian, operating as the ‘authoritative’ voice, is now granted a privileged position within the Eurocentric oppositional system” (26). Her remarks resemble London’s observation that Woolf criticism

has at times substituted one paradigm for another, “replacing brotherhood with sisterhood, fraternity with sorority,” for example, which fails to challenge established patriarchal norms (15). Furthermore, while scholars such as Kathleen M. Donovan (and myself) favor cross-cultural analyses of women’s writing, as evidenced in Donovan’s *Feminist Readings of Native American Literature: Coming to Voice*, Pulitano finds such attempts at bridge-building “in direct opposition to Allen’s separatist position” (38). Thus she disagrees with Keating’s assertion that Allen “attempts to enlist all US feminists—whatever their cultural backgrounds—in Native Americans’ ongoing political struggles” (Keating 101).

Native American scholar Jace Weaver offers a rejoinder to Pulitano in *American Indian Literary Nationalism*. Weaver sees an essentialist, nationalist strain in *The Sacred Hoop*, yet deems the work a “landmark” (2) and explains that “literary nationalism is not a confrontation, not a tearing down, but an upbuilding,” a commitment to explaining “specific Native values, readings, and knowledges and their relevance to our contemporary lives” (6). Such a commitment aligns closely with Allen’s project in *The Sacred Hoop*. Weaver finds Pulitano’s criticism of Allen characteristic of non-Native scholars’ propensity to dismiss or condescend to Native American writers and literary critics. “Even the title of [Pulitano’s] monograph,” Weaver writes, “probably one of the most misguided texts and one potentially most pernicious to indigenous agency published in Native American literary studies in a decade, bespeaks of ... [a] ‘barely concealed paternalism’” (19). Weaver furthermore finds Pulitano engaging in the same essentialism for which she faults Allen by insisting Native scholars embrace their hybridity—their non-Native ancestry, the multiplicity of their cultural experiences—while claiming that “Allen’s own strategic location within the discourse of the mainstream academy inevitably makes her complicit with the (Western) system from which she wants to be separated” (Pulitano 38), that is, in other words, makes her “less Indian.” Thus it is Pulitano, not Allen, who harbors misguided and romanticized notions of “the authentic Indian.”

Weaver’s concept of American Indian literary nationalism warrants further attention as well. Deeming “Native American literary output as separate and distinct from other national literatures,” Weaver calls for “a criticism of that literature that supports not only its distinct identity but also sees itself as attempting to serve the interests of indigenes and their communities” (15). He distinguishes between Native American criticism and criticism of Native American literature, stating that the former “must be in the hands of Native critics to define and articulate, from resources *we* choose. It must be simply a criticism of our own. This, it seems to me, is the essence of intellectual sovereignty” (17). I could not agree more, and I also attend to Craig S. Womack’s conviction that “Native literatures deserve to be judged by their own criteria, in their own terms, not merely in agreement with, or reaction against, European literature and theory” (quoted in Weaver 40)—thus my foregrounding of Native American and First Nations women throughout this essay as “speaking subject[s],” not “objects of discourse” (Donovan 9). I have no wish to subsume Native American women writers under the literary and cultural behemoth that is Woolf studies today. Rather, I agree with Donovan, also a white feminist scholar, that “[n]umerous parallels exist between Native American literature and feminist literary and cultural theories. Native American literature illumines feminisms, and feminisms help us to understand many of the issues raised by Native writers, especially Native women writers” (7). Donovan wrote her book, as she explains, to create a space in which Native women and white women might speak *to* each other, not *at* each other. I hope to enter and enlarge such a space, and I find Native American and First Nations women doing the same.

As indicated earlier, many find value in joining together American Indian and First Nations women’s activism with Euro-American feminism. In *Theorizing Native Studies*, Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith wish to “engage rather than reject conversation with schools of thought that may have compatible

intellectual and political goals” and they include feminist theory among fields with potential value for Native studies (12). Ross is among Native American women who self-identify as feminist and find solidarity in the “issues that all women encounter—for example, equal pay, children’s health and welfare, reproductive rights, and domestic violence” (40–41). She proudly identifies as feminist and cites Beatrice Medicine, Kate Shanley, and Paula Gunn Allen as major influences for their early, unapologetic public stance as Native American feminists. Similarly, Anderson writes of Cree/Métis educator Myra Laramee, who “has now come to a point where she can work with both Native and white grandmothers in her delineation of an enlightened womanhood” (30). Such comments reflect points of convergence for women despite their individual circumstances vis-à-vis race and ethnicity. Keeping the discourses of women of color and white women apart, on the other hand, forecloses dialogue and reifies for white feminists “the stereotype of the exotic and mysterious other” (Hickman 53).

Woolf’s understanding of how gender and race intersect emerges in *Three Guineas*’ no-holds-barred condemnation of imperialism, fascism, and war. “In naming her book for the coins minted with the proceeds from African slavery,” writes Jane Marcus, “Woolf invests her text with outrage at the exploits of English imperialists and makes the connection between race, capitalism, and patriarchy” (xliii).<sup>11</sup> St. Denis even cites *Three Guineas* while advocating for global feminism (36, 43–44). Andrea Smith’s “Native American Feminism, Sovereignty, and Social Change” provides a thorough account of the conflict between mainstream feminism and Native women’s activism, ultimately affirming that the two camps, so to speak, need not be antagonistic and reminding us that these highly complex issues “cannot simply be reduced to the dichotomy of feminist versus nonfeminist” (118).

Paula Gunn Allen self-identifies as feminist in *The Sacred Hoop*, stating that “[a] feminist approach to the study and teaching of American Indian life and thought is essential because the area has been dominated by paternalist, male-dominant modes of consciousness since the first writings about American Indians in the fifteenth century” (222). Allen develops “tribal-feminism or feminist-tribalism” as a corrective, explaining, “if I am dealing with feminism, I approach it from a strongly tribal posture, and when I am dealing with American Indian literature, history, culture, or philosophy, I approach it from a strongly feminist one” (222). As Allen combines tribal and feminist discernment for more sound literary and cultural analysis, so a joint reading of *A Room of One’s Own* and *The Sacred Hoop* can enhance our understanding of transnational, cross-cultural concerns regarding women’s lives. “Any ideas about transnational feminism must take into account the perseverance of colonialism for indigenous women,” states Ross (47), while Dian Million finds that “[t]o ‘decolonize’ means to understand as fully as possible the forms colonialism takes in our own times” (55). Read in the context of *The Sacred Hoop*, Woolf’s critiques of patriarchy, and, some avow, reproduction thereof can inform an understanding of how colonial paradigms function in the lives of Indigenous women today. “For Woolf,” Detloff explains,

the poet or artist teases open (and in some cases cracks open) the fissures in the hard shell of *habitus* (what we might call normativity or ideology) that deadens our perceptions and makes us susceptible to lockstep thinking—the dehumanization of others; the uncritical valorization of conquest, sacrifice, and violence; the insatiable desire to convert others to one’s preferred way of life; the premium on acquisitive rather than communal good. (11)

It is precisely such lockstep thinking that Woolf deconstructs in *Room* and *Three Guineas*. Reading her works attentively, Detloff contends, cultivates “habits of mind” conducive to personal and societal “openness and transformation” (13). Similarly, Keating regards Allen’s “transformational identity politics,” which “employs ... differences to generate new forms of commonality,” as “open[ing] up psychic spaces where

alterations in consciousness can occur” (5). Reading Woolf and Allen together may lead to even greater social change, as both writers delineate patriarchy’s means of wielding control and foster consciousness-raising among women across space and time.

Upon exploring the intertextuality arising from *A Room of One’s Own* and *The Sacred Hoop*, we may also recognize the dialogic that emerges between *The Sacred Hoop* and *Three Guineas*.<sup>12</sup> Both deconstruct the mechanisms of patriarchy and consider how it might be replaced with woman-centered social constructs. To begin, Allen finds that “the social transformation from egalitarian, gynecentric systems to hierarchical, patriarchal systems” occurs primarily from four actions: displacing female creators with male creators, stripping Native peoples of tribal sovereignty, forcing people off their lands so that they must “curtail or end altogether pursuits on which their ritual system, philosophy, and subsistence depend” (41–42), and replacing the clan structure with the nuclear family.<sup>13</sup> She discusses the ensuing “devaluation of women that has accompanied Christianization and westernization” and how patriarchy establishes and circulates misrepresentative accounts of tribal life (202). “Consequently,” Allen writes, “Indian control of the image-making and information-disseminating process is crucial, and the contemporary prose and poetry of American Indian writers, particularly of woman-centered writers, is a major part of Indian resistance to cultural and spiritual genocide” (42). In sum, she says, if all Americans embraced “the traditions of various Native Nations, the place of women in society would become central, the distribution of goods and power would be egalitarian, the elderly would be respected, honored, and protected as a primary social and cultural resource, the ideals of physical beauty would be considerably enlarged,” and nonhuman life would thrive (211).

Before envisioning the advantages of a woman-centric culture, Woolf enumerates in *Three Guineas* the catastrophes wrought by patriarchal society. In reflecting on the question put to her of how to prevent war, she considers the causes of war and reveals the link between private and public violence: the psychological violence inflicted upon the individual within the family unit and the widespread slaughter of modern warfare. She connects the oppression of women in the home with the photographs strewn on her desk of the “dead bodies and ruined houses” of the Spanish Civil War. Woolf considers universities, the professions, and the church, bastions of male privilege whose hierarchies, ceremonies, prizes, uniforms, and specializations foment competition, jealousy, and greed, thus “encouraging a disposition towards war” (27) in women as well as men when their keeping with the status quo meets with social approbation. As Jane Marcus finds, “it is clear that Woolf did not believe that nonviolence was innate in women” (2006, xxxviii). Unlike in *A Room of One’s Own*, in *Three Guineas* Woolf “refuses to recognize or sanction the inevitability of patriarchal authority or the ‘strategic objectivity’ of patriarchal values” (Solomon 341).

In response to the letter from the barrister, Woolf offers specific suggestions for preventing war. Although England has been patriarchal for centuries, opportunities nevertheless exist for establishing an alternate society. First, women must create an entirely new educational system made not of “carved stone and stained glass, but of some cheap, easily combustible material which does not hoard dust and perpetrate traditions” (43). The new women’s college must reject anything that divides, excludes, and segregates, a principle akin to “an Indigenous philosophy of putting community before individualism” (Guillory and Wolverson 74). When joining the professions, women must call upon what have commonly been their lives’ disadvantages and apply them towards creating a more just society. Women’s poverty, chastity (by which Woolf means independence of mind), derision, and freedom from unreal loyalties—all should be marshaled in opposition to patriarchy. “[Y]ou must refuse to sell your brain for the sake of money,” she states. Also, “[d]irectly badges, orders, or degrees are offered you, fling them back in the giver’s face. (...) By freedom from unreal

loyalties is meant that you must rid yourself of pride of nationality in the first place; also of religious pride, college pride, school pride, family pride, sex pride and those unreal loyalties that spring from them" (97). As Solomon observes, Woolf shows how women's existence on the margins of society enables them to "subvert and restructure" it (342).

Finally, Woolf urges women to exercise the power of abstinence to effect change: abstain from subscribing to newspapers that encourage war, abstain from any war efforts such as nursing or the manufacturing of weapons, and abstain from joining any profession that privileges material gain over human dignity. If patriarchal society cultivates and unleashes selfishness and violence, women must create a Society of Outsiders, working with patriarchy when striving for the same goals, such as avoiding war, but from the outside, not from within. Such are the "passive methods" Woolf proffers "for protecting culture and intellectual liberty" (117). In fact, she cites several newspaper reports indicating that the Society of Outsiders exists already—in the Mayoress of Woolwich's refusal to "do as much as darn a sock to help in a war" (137); in women's sports leagues whose rules forbid bestowing a "cup or award of any kind to a successful team" (137); and in the "paucity of young women" (139) attending church.

Some find Woolf suggesting that women collectively opt out of society altogether—a dubious and unlikely prospect. Jane Marcus sees Woolf "stretched to the limit" in *Three Guineas*: "While her attacks on middle-class professional men were right on target, her hopes for an alliance of all the alienated workers and disaffected women of all classes were not fulfilled," she writes (2006, liii). Briggs sees a "sense of frustration and helplessness" throughout the book, "a recognition that some problems might have no solutions" (328), manifest, for example, in a question Woolf poses after enumerating the steep obstacles facing women who seek societal change: "Had we not better plunge off the bridge into the river; give up the game; declare that the whole of human life is a mistake and so end it?" (90). This is a hypothetical question, however, perceived as an understandable query from women burdened by a seemingly impossible task. Woolf's implicit response to the question is "no," for she then delves into nineteenth-century gender relations as a further means of understanding women's present-day struggles. Briggs also believes women in the Outsiders' Society will act "as observers rather than agents" (328), yet as aforementioned, Woolf provides guidelines for women who join the professions. "She believed that women would be the most important agents of the necessary social transformations," writes Black (17).

Once they earn their own living, for example, women will have economic power—to the extent that "their refusal to earn [their livings] would be a matter of concern to the work master" (Woolf 2006, 132). Woolf models how a woman with money might influence society as she establishes the specific conditions under which she will contribute the guineas to those who solicit her—a women's college, "a society to help the daughters of educated men to obtain employment in the professions" (51), and the barrister's peace society. "Since you, too, are asking for money," she writes to him, "it might be possible to ask you, also, to define your aims, and to bargain and to impose terms" (119). As Black writes, "*Three Guineas* gives substantial attention to the role of women as actual and potential agents of change" (17), while the Outsiders' Society shows "a number of ways in which individual women and women's groups can transform public life" (18). Transforming public life is Andrea Smith's goal for Native American women as well—to "'make power' by creating those structures within our organizations, movements, and communities that model the world we are trying to create" (2005b, 130). Despite the profound difficulties of achieving a just world, Woolf tells the barrister that the very nature of his query on how to prevent war "assure[s] us of a unity that rubs out divisions as if they were chalk marks only" and of "the capacity of the human spirit to overflow boundaries and make unity out of multiplicity" (169). Woolf would likely have concurred with Smith that "we can be

part of a collective, creative process that can bring us closer to a society not based on domination” (2005b, 131), and she affirms in her response to the barrister that developing such a process is possible: “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” (169–70).

Reading *The Sacred Hoop*, we see no need to create new methods, for models already exist in Native American gynocratic ideals, which, as Allen writes, “value peacefulness, harmony, cooperation, health, and general prosperity, systems of thought and practice that would bear deeper study in our troubled, conflict-ridden time” (29). In *Three Guineas*, Woolf also demonstrates that pacifism and the prevention of war can only prevail in tandem with respecting women. Both writers envision a female-centered worldview leading to a more just society for women, men, and all living beings, for as Woolf reminds her male interlocutor, “Scarcely a human being in the course of history has fallen to a woman’s rifle; the vast majority of birds and beasts have been killed by you, not by us” (9). Allen’s poem “Molly Brant, Iroquois Matron, Speaks” (1988, 13) similarly notes non-Indian destruction of the environment:

All that is left is not so precious after all—  
great cities, piling drifting clouds  
of burning death, waters that last drew breath  
decades, perhaps centuries ago,  
four-leggeds, wingeds, reptiles all  
drowned in bloodred rivers of an alien dream  
of progress. Progress is what  
they call it. I call it cemetery,  
charnel house, soul sickness,  
artificial mockery  
of what we called life.

Both Woolf and Allen bear in mind the well-being of all life forms.

There exist further key and illuminating differences among *A Room of One’s Own*, *Three Guineas*, and *The Sacred Hoop*, such as their consideration of anger in women’s writing—when anger serves as an appropriate response to oppression or when the suppression of anger constitutes a more effective rhetorical strategy. In *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf lauds Jane Austen for “writing without hate, without bitterness, without fear, without protest, without preaching” (67) and states that anger compromises a woman’s artistic integrity—her primary criticism of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*. When one finds the anger blazing across Brontë’s pages, Woolf writes, “one sees that she will never get her genius expressed whole and entire. Her books will be deformed and twisted. She will write in a rage where she should write calmly” (69). Solomon finds such a stance problematic, for Woolf’s condemnation of “anger wherever she finds it—in herself or in others ... rall[ies] behind the flag of ‘objectivity’ ... [but] ignores a crucial factor: ‘objective’ values and standards are the creations of male-dominated social institutions” (334). Conversely, Laura Marcus suggests that Woolf’s fable of Shakespeare’s sister and critique of Brontë are themselves expressions of anger, while Jane Marcus believes “Woolf’s anger is directed at Haworth Parsonage, not at Brontë”—that is, directed at the restricted life Charlotte was forced to lead by her authoritarian father (1988, 132).<sup>14</sup>

In her study of anger and sentimentality in the works of nineteenth-century Native American women writers, Cari M. Carpenter states that “social proscriptions against female anger” date back to the 1800s; these proscriptions were “doubly challenging for the first published American Indian women writers” (2) as whites have conflated Native anger with “savagery” (10).<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Million recounts the fierce

backlash faced by Native Canadian women who exposed in their fiction and personal narratives the horrific abuses they suffer as colonized peoples, and she quotes Emma LaRocque's take on the situation: "Our anger, legitimate as it was and is, was exaggerated as 'militant' and used as an excuse not to hear us. There was little comprehension of an articulate anger reflecting an awakening and call to liberation, not a psychological problem to be defused in a therapist's room" (Million 63). As Carpenter finds, "anger is not entirely translatable: it looks and perhaps even feels different across cultures" (8). Anger, she says, "is raced" (10)—as are readers' responses to it.

Contrary to Woolf's devaluing of women's anger in *A Room of One's Own*, Allen deems as essential the anger suffusing Native women's writing—anger that manifests "our continuing awareness of imminent genocide," she writes (155). Janice Gould also finds "pain, anger, and [a] sense of alienation inscribed in much indigenous North American women's poetry" (797) and sees these poets engaged in the same recovery work as Allen: "Our imperative is to resurrect, sometimes hundreds of years after the fact, a history that has been buried, lost, or ignored" (799). Native women's rage stems from collective historical trauma to which their poetry bears witness. But "[i]f there is sorrow and rage in American Indian women's writing," Gould, herself a poet, says, "there is also hope" (805), for poets "notice what is beautiful" and offer "expressions of hope and healing" (815).

In a chapter in *The Sacred Hoop* called "Angry Women are Building: Issues and Struggles Facing American Indian Women Today," Allen provides a concise and devastating summation of the horrors of colonization and the grievous problems facing Native Americans today. As she concludes, she asserts that Native American women "have no intention of disappearing, of being silent, or of quietly acquiescing in our extinction" (193). Rather than standing in peculiar isolation, as Woolf seems to view the anger of *Jane Eyre*, Allen and Gould highlight women's anger as existing in a constellation of emotions along with cultural and historical factors that together "embody, articulate, and share reality" (Allen 55). Similarly, Audre Lorde finds women's "well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought that anger into being" (127). Such anger, she writes, "can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change" (127).<sup>16</sup>

Unlike in *A Room of One's Own*, anger plays an integral role in *Three Guineas*, wherein Woolf "was able to indulge the glorious release of letting her anger rip" (Heilbrun 1981, 21). Brenda Silver presents a case study of critical responses to the anger in *Three Guineas* along with responses to anger in feminist critical discourse overall. She finds that "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" (346). In her work on the critical reception of *Three Guineas*, Black discovers that "the most common response to *Three Guineas* specifically was that because Woolf was so well off, her anger (and her feminism) reflected some sort of psychological defect" (150). While Carpenter notes that in Native American writer Alice Callahan's nineteenth-century novel *Wynema*, "the anger that is central to the self-development of the white heroine ... is denied her Indian counterpart" and that "it is only the anger of the white woman that can be imagined" (24), Silver and Black demonstrate that white women's anger has also historically been denied or impugned. *Three Guineas* itself reveals the same dynamic, for as Hermione Lee notes, "the fight for the franchise (along with the fight for the professions) is repeatedly instanced as an example of the caricaturing of and violence against women" (277). While "Woolf's short-lived period of suffrage activism affiliated her to the suffragist rather than the more militant suffragette cause" (L. Marcus 144), Woolf rues in *Three Guineas* the press's ongoing trivialization of the suffrage movement and its tactics. "The younger generation therefore can be excused," she writes, "if they believe that there was nothing heroic about a campaign in which only



a few windows were smashed, shins broken, and Sargent's portrait of Henry James damaged.... Burning, whipping and picture-slashing it would seem become heroic when carried out on a large scale by men with machine-guns" (193).<sup>17</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s, Silver finds in feminist readings of *Three Guineas* the "recuperation of anger and authority" that "identifies [Woolf's feminism] as a political position that accepts anger as part of its authority" (361): "To become angry ... becomes a political act" (362). Heilbrun locates in the anger of *Three Guineas* Woolf's "terrible daring" and a truth about "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" (1981, 25). In addition, Winterhalter finds Woolf deliberately eliciting emotional responses such as anger in *Three Guineas*, for "publishing only rational accounts of war delegitimizes outrage at such images [for example, dead bodies and ruined houses] and casts emotional responses as something to be kept in check, something not to trust.... Woolf seems to hold that a truly ethical rhetorical position cannot be separated from an emotional one" (243-44).

Toward the end of her study, Silver considers the reluctance of white Western women to express anger in their writing due to "conventional academic discourse and the rules of rationality and propriety it entails" (368). At the same time, many erroneously assume that white feminist criticism is inherently angry, prompting Silver to ask, "What tone of voice can feminists adopt in our polemical critiques of the culture and institutions within which we speak and write?" (369). Yet she acknowledges that asking which tone (singular) of voice to adopt absorbs all women into a monolithic category—a "totalizing process" that fails to consider "the all-too-real differences of race, color, class, age, ethnicity, and sexual identity that separate women and generate conflicts among them" (369). Closing her essay, she states, "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" (370). Bearing relevance here is Hickman's view that the "central ethical and political problem" of Woolf's 1925 novel *Mrs. Dalloway* "becomes not simply how to get people to 'only connect,' but how to do so in a way that won't do violence to those with whom we seek connection" (59). We might consider Butler's optimistic stance that precisely because women "cannot be totalized or summarized by a descriptive identity category, the very term becomes a site of permanent openness and resignifiability" (50). *A Room of One's Own*, *Three Guineas*, and *The Sacred Hoop* together launch a conversation that "releases the term [women] into a future of multiple significations" (Butler 50).

Earlier, I provided an account of divergent views of feminism among Native American, First Nations, and white Western women. Woolf's rejection of the term "feminism" in *Three Guineas* also warrants attention—although, as Black states, *Three Guineas* is "explicitly feminist in spite of the denials in the text" (147). While discussing her gift of a guinea to the barrister, Woolf deems it "a free gift, given freely" (120). She then ponders the word "free" and links it with women's newfound freedoms outside the home—a circumstance in need of celebration and therefore a new ceremony: "What more fitting," she asks, "than to destroy an old word, a vicious and corrupt word that has done much harm in its day and is now obsolete? The word 'feminist' is the word indicated" (120). In Woolf's dictionary, a feminist is "one who champions the rights of women.' Since the only right, the right to earn a living, has been won, the word no longer has a meaning" (120-21). She finds the word "feminist" divisive since her goal is "men and women working together for the same cause" (121). As Christine Froula explains, "Woolf argues [that] to fight one form of tyranny must logically be to fight them all, as those nineteenth-century women activists misleadingly labeled 'feminists' were doing from the start" (34). Fighting only for women's rights perpetuates inequities. Thus "Woolf

declined to call her position ‘feminist,’” Carroll states, which “did not imply a rejection of feminist theory or politics, but a discomfort with all labels, dogma, and hierarchical or bureaucratic organization” (121). Such a stance resonates with Native American and First Nations women’s aforementioned concerns about mainstream feminism as a potentially damaging ideology. Beneath the terminology, however, we see the common goal in Allen and Woolf of achieving equity for all people.

When considering *The Sacred Hoop* and *Three Guineas* together, perhaps the most problematic among Woolf’s suggestions for women is that they reject tradition and nationhood, for achieving nationhood stands at the forefront of Native American activism. For many Native Americans, the primary distinction between the feminism of Native and non-Native women lies in the former’s promotion of cultural sovereignty first and foremost (Ross 41). “In the view of the traditionals,” Allen writes, “rejection of one’s culture—one’s traditions, language, people—is the result of colonial oppression and is hardly to be applauded” (210). Throughout *The Sacred Hoop*, Allen stresses the importance of tradition and nation in tribal life, without which no equitable society can exist. Smith also recognizes the link between nationhood and gender equity; one will not be achieved without the other, for “we must understand that attacks on Native women’s status are themselves attacks on Native sovereignty” (Smith 2005b, 123). In patriarchal England, on the other hand, traditions and concepts of nationhood foment arrogance, aggression, and the violence of modern warfare while at the same time excluding and degrading women.

“What does ‘our country’ mean to an outsider?” Woolf asks (127), for women in England were *de facto* outsiders, historically denied education, land, employment, property, and legal protection. “Thus the nationality men enjoy, rather than an advantage, is a stigma, a wound, and an embarrassment” for Woolf, writes Marian Eide (49), eliciting Woolf’s reiterated call for abstinence. Once again, she urges women in wartime to refuse to make munitions, refuse to nurse the wounded, and refuse to incite her brothers to war, instead “maintain[ing] an attitude of complete indifference” (127): no rallying cries to defeat “foreigners” because “for her [woman] there are no ‘foreigners,’ since by law she becomes a foreigner if she marries a foreigner” (128)—just as Native American women were stripped of their tribal status upon marrying white men due to United States governmental policies aimed at depleting tribal rolls and weakening tribal sovereignty. After considering woman’s place in English society over hundreds of years, women can only conclude, Woolf writes, “that [their] sex and class has very little to thank England for in the past; not much to thank England for in the present; while the security of her person in the future is highly dubious” (128), hence her declaration, “as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman, my country is the whole world” (129). Woolf articulates a sense of concurrent global female exile and belonging.

Smith appears to adopt a similar stance when acknowledging the link between feminism and sovereignty, since Euro-American misogyny led to loss of Native lands to begin with. “Before Native peoples fight for the future of their nations,” Smith states, “they must ask themselves, who is included in the nation?” (2005b, 121). While some consider issues of sexism and survival as distinct, Smith argues that decolonization efforts must address sexism. Similarly, LaRocque states, “history teaches us that it is in moments of nationalisms that we are most vulnerable not only to essentialisms/fundamentalisms, but to the disempowerment of women” (68), resonating with Woolf’s declaration in *Three Guineas* that women must take no part in “patriotic demonstrations” and reject “all such ceremonies as encourage the desire to impose ‘our’ civilization or ‘our’ dominion upon other people” (129). Smith finds “Native feminist theory and activism mak[ing] a critical contribution to feminist politics as a whole by questioning the legitimacy of the United States specifically and the nation-state as the appropriate form of governance generally” (2005b, 128). Her assertion could apply to any nation that oppresses others under the guise of patriotism and nationalism.

In exploring *A Room of One's Own*, *Three Guineas*, and *The Sacred Hoop*, I hope to have shown the potential for literary and feminist studies of bringing together the voices of Native American and white Western women. Their “shared concerns may transcend racial, national, and generational differences” (Courington 245), while such differences shed light upon the impact of interlocking sociocultural facets on women’s lives.<sup>18</sup> When viewed through an intersectional or coalitional lens, sites of contestation in and among these works become sites of opportunity for fruitful, broad-ranging discourse in keeping with third-wave feminist sensibilities. Ultimately, I believe Allen would have agreed with Woolf that “[a] common interest unites us; it is one world, one life” (2006, 168) and that Woolf would have championed Allen’s assertion that “Strong women make strong nations” (30). Placing Allen and Woolf in conversation with each other might help create a better world for all of us.

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## Notes

I wish to thank the anonymous reviewers of this essay as well as Vara Neverow and Erica Delsandro for their invaluable suggestions on earlier drafts.

1. In using the terms “Native American” and “American Indian,” my intention is not to paint North America’s hundreds of tribes with a single brush. Scholars such as Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Margaret Kovach resist pan-Indian approaches in their work and caution others to do the same, due to the diversity between and within individual tribes and to the risk of essentializing, appropriating, or misconstruing the experiences of “individuals outside one’s racial and cultural group” (Mihesuah 5). Yet they and other scholars note certain commonalities among Native American and First Nations cultures. Kimberly Roppolo sees “a strong Pan-Indian culture in the Americas today” arising from shared experiences of colonization as well as “syncretic spiritual experiences” (265). Mihesuah notes that while “it is preferable to refer to the Indigenous people of this country by their specific tribal names, for the sake of space” she opts for broader terms in her work on Indigenous American women (xxi). Kovach grounds her research in Cree epistemology yet also discusses Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples, cultures, and methodologies more broadly.

2. One need not look far to find such depictions today. In the *New York Times* bestseller *The Heart of Everything That Is: The Untold Story of Red Cloud, An American Legend*, published in 2013, authors Bob Drury and Tom Clavin write that in the mid-eighteenth century, the Sioux “transported their smallish lodgepoles and tepee skins across these rocky highlands on the backs of their dogs, women, and children—including girls as young as six or seven” (41). By the late 1700s, they write, “the Sioux were still on foot: slow, plodding travelers, lugging whatever belongings their women, children, and dog travois could carry” (51). The authors refer to Sioux women as “closer to slaves than second-class citizens by modern standards of thinking” (65) and take “a Sioux woman’s inferior status” for granted (72).

3. Guerrero echoes Allen in her “conceptualization of ‘Native Womanism’ [that] advocates for more ‘historical agency’ in reenvisioning a pre-patriarchal, pre-colonialist, and pre-capitalist US society, as well as for Native women’s self-determination in reclaiming their indigenous (that is, matrilineal/matrifocal) roles that empower them with respect and authority in indigenous governance” (67).

4. Allen embraces the productive interplay between Native American and white women’s creativity, stating, “the patchwork quilt is the best material example I can think of to describe the plot and process of a traditional tribal narrative, and quilting is a non-Indian woman’s art, one that Indian women have taken to avidly and that they display in their ceremonies, rituals, and social gatherings as well as in their homes” (243).

5. The literature on Woolf’s concept of androgyny (by scholars such as Elaine Showalter, Carolyn Heilbrun, Mary Jacobus, Kari Weil, and Laura Marcus, among others) is vast and beyond the scope of this essay to rehearse.

6. Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird, editors of *Reinventing the Enemy's Language: Contemporary Native Women's Writings of North America*, the first anthology of Native American and First Nations women's writing edited by Indigenous women, also write of the "ills of colonization [that] have visited us in its many forms of hatred, including self-doubt, poverty, alcoholism, depression, and violence against woman, among others" (21). And so they celebrate their anthology, many years in the making, for "to speak, at whatever the cost, is to become empowered rather than victimized by destruction" (21).

7. Women ought to examine "the psychology of the other sex [women] ... when you have five hundred a year of your own" (36), Woolf states. Curious about Elizabethan women, she muses, "What one wants, I thought—and why does not some brilliant student at Newnham or Girton supply it?—is a mass of information" (44–45) and observes that "It would be ambitious beyond my daring ... to suggest to the students of those famous colleges that they should rewrite history" (45). Regarding the effect of discouragement upon the mind, she points out, "Here the psychologists of Newnham and Girton might come to our help" (52). In addition, an "amusing book" might be made out of "men's opposition to women's emancipation ... if some young student at Girton or Newnham would collect examples and deduce a theory" (55), and she suggests that examining men's obsession with women's chastity "might provide an interesting book if any student at Girton or Newnham cared to go into the matter" (63).

8. Smith writes, "As a result of the Hyde Amendment, which eliminated federal funding for abortion services in 1976, IHS [Indian Health Services] cannot provide abortions unless the mother's life is in danger or the pregnancy is the result of incest or rape. Because most Native women rely almost exclusively on IHS for their healthcare, and IHS does not provide abortion services except under these limited circumstances, it is clear that the Hyde Amendment discriminates on the basis of race.... Unfortunately, this issue has not been addressed by either racial justice or pro-choice organizations. In fact, in the early 1990s, pro-choice organizations such as NARAL (National Abortion Rights Action League) and Planned Parenthood made the conscious choice to sell out the interests of Native women, poor women, and women of color when they supported the Freedom of Choice Act, which retained the Hyde Amendment provisions" (2005a, 96).

9. In *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe*, in 1978, "the Court ruled that Indian tribes lack the inherent sovereign authority to exercise criminal jurisdiction over non-Indian defendants" (Duthu 18). Bruce Duthu discusses this case and its ramifications at length in *American Indians and the Law*.

10. As Black writes, "Woolf never presents women's experiences as child bearers and child rearers as a potentially valuable influence on society" (191).

11. "The ring of those olden golden guineas ritually invoked by the title reminds us again and again that this civilization is based on slavery," Marcus writes, "that the English empire and its present democracy derived much of its capital power from the buying and selling of slaves and the use of their labor. We are meant to connect this fact to the patriarchal use of the unpaid labor of women" (2006, lix). Black situates the guineas of Woolf's title differently: "The guinea ... is the unit of money that a middle-class person would have used in the 1930s for, among other things, a donation to a good cause.... The guinea therefore represents women's use of economic and cultural resources to produce social change, and *Three Guineas* tells them just why and how to do so" (17–18).

12. I use the term "dialogic" instead of "dialectic" in keeping with David L. Moore's assertion, as explained by Suzanne Lundquist, that "dualistic and dialectic approaches to Indian/White deliberations are terminal—static, fixed, deadly" (Lundquist 292), while a "dialogic emphasizes ... the changeability of meaning in 'both' participants, the colonized and the colonizer, the text and the author, the text and the reader, by showing how they are not aligned dualistically but rather are surrounded by influence in a multiple field" (Moore quoted in Lundquist 292–93).

13. Smith's *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* also explains colonization's systematic dismantling of matriarchal social structures.

14. Such a reading is certainly plausible given that in *Three Guineas* Woolf criticizes Patrick Brontë outright for refusing to allow Charlotte to marry (156).

15. In "Facing the Fire: American Indian Literature and the Pedagogy of Anger," Jeffrey Berglund writes that his Native American students and colleagues are often "called angry or told not to be so angry" and that "too often, Native students are faced with two options, neither of which are satisfactory: (1) shut up and put up, or (2) be viewed as angry and militant, a prickly rabble-rouser" (83).

16. Echoing comments in *Three Guineas* and *The Sacred Hoop* that it is men rather than women who have devastated the natural world, Lorde writes, "For it is not the anger of Black women which is dripping down over this globe like a diseased liquid. It is not my anger that launches rockets, spends over sixty thousand dollars a second on missiles and other agents of war and death, slaughters children in cities, stockpiles nerve gas and chemical bombs, sodomizes our daughters and our earth" (133).

17. Janet Lyon names additional militant tactics, including "anonymous letter-box bombings, arson, golf-course vandalism ... window-smashing, assaults on policemen and politicians" (103).

18. Courington refers here to Virginia Woolf and Alice Walker (245), but I believe the sentiment applies as well to Woolf and Allen.

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