

Woolf and the Art of Exploration

Selected Papers from the Fifteenth
International Conference on Virginia Woolf

Edited by Helen Southworth and Elisa K. Sparks

The Fifteenth International Conference on Virginia Woolf took place at Lewis & Clark College, a small college in Portland, Oregon, on 9-12 June 2005. Coinciding with the bicentennial of Lewis and Clark's Expedition, the wide range of papers emphasized the adventurousness of Woolf's work. Nearly 30 essays were selected for publication that reflect her enterprising nature, with titles such as Cheryl Mares's "The Making of Virginia Woolf's America" and Emily Wittman's "The Decline and Fall of Rachel Vinrace: Reading Gibbon in Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*." In addition to these, the selected papers include essays by Christina Alt, Alice D'Amore, Karin deWille, Renee Dickinson, Elizabeth Evans, Diane Gillespie, Mollie Godfrey, Joanna Grant, Benjamin Harvey, Sally Jacobsen, Joyce Kelley, Gill Lowe, Katie Macnamara, Eleanor McNees, Ayako Muneuchi, Robert Reginio, Kathryn Louise Simpson, and Kelly Sultzbach. Chapter titles include Exploring: Woolf's Life, London's Spaces, Nature, Foreign Lands, Art and Empire, and Cultural Origins & Contexts.

The following keynote address by Diane Gillespie is a representative example of the book in progress, with anticipated publication in summer 2006.

GODIVA STILL RIDES:
VIRGINIA WOOLF, DIVESTITURE, AND *THREE GUINEAS*

by Diane F. Gillespie

PROLOGUE: THE SPIRIT, NOT THE LETTER

Horrified by the events of recent years, a number of us have gone back to Woolf's *Three Guineas*. When I read my tattered copy this time, seemingly unrelated ideas I'd been writing about over the past thirty years suddenly collided, then exploded in new directions. These odd links and changes in perspective are probably symptoms of a certain age and a certain stage in any career, academic or not. Having written on *Three Guineas* before ("Her Kodak"), I won't focus now on Woolf's use of photography to indict the competitive power hierarchies that oppressed women and brought England to the brink of another destructive war. Nor do I plan to detail an application of Woolf's argument to the global oppression of women and current violence. Equally important is Woolf's exploration of the nature of public protest. In other words, it isn't only the letter (or letters) of *Three Guineas* that can inform us. It is also the *spirit*. To define that spirit, for a conference focused on "the art of exploration," I'm going to try something exploratory myself, leaping across centuries, among media, and along the highbrow/lowbrow cultural continuum even more than I usually do.¹

PART I: INTRODUCTION: "A MAGNIFICENTLY CAPARISONED CHARGER"

In her 1938 "Foreword" to the collected edition of *Pilgrimage*, Dorothy Richardson notes that her "fresh pathway," her literary "adventure," has "turned out to be a populous highway." Among the explorers "who had simultaneously entered it," she writes, was an unnamed "woman," assumed to be Virginia Woolf, who is "mounted upon a magnificently caparisoned charger" (10, Richardson's italics). "Magnificently caparisoned" means richly draped or adorned and suggests (from Richardson's point of view) Woolf's upper-middle-class advantages and narrow perspective. Richardson's way of coping with Woolf's greater reputation as a woman writer is to use the equestrian image "to reduce" her writing, Gloria Fromm says, "to a stylistic show" (318-19).² This evaluation of Woolf as elegant stylist and privileged elitist was common enough in the 1930s. A caparisoned "charger," however, also evokes a war horse protected by leather or iron. By placing Woolf atop such a horse, Richardson echoes a related accusation she makes in private letters. Woolf, she concludes, "for all her femininity, is a man's, almost a male, writer" (*Windows* 400). Despite her parallel path-finding, Woolf reflects values and combines aesthetic forms in ways, Richardson implies, more attractive than her own to a masculine critical establishment (cf. Gillespie, "Political" 145).

I now see another dimension to Richardson's odd image. I think she had in mind some version, or perversion, of the medievalism that represents Lady Godiva exposed on a horse—one variously, but always "magnificently[,] caparisoned." I make this leap

because I notice now that the edition with Richardson's "Foreword" also includes, for the first time, the portion of *Pilgrimage* called *Dimple Hill* with a striking Godiva reference. Richardson's character Miriam, living with a Quaker family in 1907, listens as one of the brothers describes something he saw in London: "She rode down the middle of the street," he says, "with this great mass of hair falling nearly to the saddle." Miriam, who recognizes this "apparition," as she calls it, realizes that the man's "outward eye behold[s] an engaging picture, his inward, Godiva" (IV 440).³ The "apparition," George Thomson notes, is a marketing ploy for Edwards' "Harlene" hair products (113-14, 252) whose advertisements suggest not only the abundant hair of Pre-Raphaelite women, but also the unbound hair that obscures Godiva's naked body. In the context of this passage, I think Richardson, when she mounts Woolf on a "magnificently caparisoned charger," ignores the challenge to an oppressive patriarchy in the Godiva legend and alludes only to its inherent voyeurism. In one sentence, Richardson creates "Lady Virginia" and implies a kind of femininity complicit with masculine reductions of women to bodies, or of works by women writers to attractive aesthetic displays.⁴

Yet display in *Three Guineas*, as Amy Lilly recognizes in a different context, can be political (29). The Godiva legend, if read as public, partly disguised self-exposure for the purpose of social protest, helps to define the spirit of Woolf's book. Unlike Antigone or Lysistrata, both mentioned in the text, the Godiva of medievalist legend could very well have been the first *English* member of Woolf's "Outsiders' Society"—the fore-mother of all subsequent outsiders, including Woolf herself.⁵ For one thing, Woolf frequently refers to writing, *Three Guineas* particularly, as horseback riding. For another, she is uncomfortable with the very kind of "narrowing and restricting," "damned egotistical self" that she, in turn, attributes to Richardson (*D2* 14). This kind of autobiographical self-exposure she elsewhere equates with nakedness and reconsiders, especially in connection with *Three Guineas*.⁶ In 1930, when Vanessa Bell publicly exhibits a painting of nude women, Woolf wonders if her sister's paintings somehow expose the painter, as she violates traditional restrictions on women artists' subject matter. The "Foreword" Woolf writes for this exhibition, as much as its better-known counterpart, "Professions for Women," launches *Three Guineas* and informs the spirit of Woolf's work.

By the time she publishes *Three Guineas* in 1938, Woolf is ready to explore, as does the Godiva legend, boundaries between what is suitable for private and what for public scrutiny (a borderline of recent interest to scholars like Anna Snaith and Melba Cuddy-Keane). The Godiva legend and *Three Guineas* both reflect and challenge traditional gender norms in ways that shock conventional people. Both the legendary Godiva and Virginia Woolf risk personal, public divestiture—actual or metaphorical—on behalf of social reform, yet both maintain physical or mental chastity.⁷ Both thus use mediums that may distract from their social messages. In both cases, too, individual women scrutinize, publicly expose, and challenge oppressive social hierarchies.

Accepting divestiture in *Three Guineas* as both authorial condition and topic, Woolf is more ready than usual to face public scrutiny with defiance and humor. Whether or not readers miss, dismiss, or seriously consider the radical nature of her motivation and argument, writing *Three Guineas* empowers and relieves her.

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PART II: "AND SHOWERED THE RIPPLED RINGLETS TO HER KNEE"

Medieval historians recount what little we know about the eleventh-century woman whose Anglo-Saxon name was Godgifu.⁸ Briefly, she was a landowner; a wife to Leofric, the influential earl of Mercia; a benefactor, with her husband, to monasteries; and a devotee of the Virgin Mary. More relevant here is the "medievalism" of later centuries, the development of a legend that has little or no basis in reality. Unless "Anon" initially helped to transmit the story of Godiva's legendary ride, and, as Woolf thinks, "Anon" was "sometimes woman" ("Anon" 382), most of the narrators and visual artists perpetuating the legend reshaped it according to whatever masculine perspectives were characteristic of their times and places.

When the narrative of Godiva's ride appears 150 years after the actual woman's death, the essential details are all there: the servitude of the people of Coventry; Godiva's sympathy for the oppressed; her persistent negotiating with her husband on behalf of the suffering poor; his exasperated dare—if she rides naked through the public marketplace he will free the people; and her courage to accept his challenge. She mounts her horse, lets down the long hair that veils all but her legs, and rides, by some miracle, unobserved. From the beginning, the story positions chroniclers and readers as viewers of what the townspeople cannot see. That Leofric in the legend has power to lift whatever the "servitude" entails is an anachronism introduced after the Norman Conquest since records show that Godiva, not Leofric, owned the lands that included Coventry.

Renaissance and eighteenth-century writers add a public proclamation, made either by Leofric or Godiva, to keep the townspeople from looking. A related addition is a tailor named Tom who violates the taboo and is miraculously punished with blindness, sometimes even death. "Peeping Tom," as he is called by 1837, becomes a surrogate as well as a scapegoat for voyeuristic writers and readers. Finally, Godiva does not ride astride, as she would have done in the eleventh century. Instead, according to a fashion introduced in the fourteenth century, she most frequently rides side-saddle, a less authoritative perch that emphasizes her feminine grace and chastity (see Figure 1).

So pervasive was Godiva's story in literature, the visual arts, and popular culture during the nineteenth century and later, that it seems strange to find no direct references, positive or negative, in Woolf's published work or in letters and diaries. Even the *Dictionary of National Biography* volumes edited by her father Leslie Stephen, which contain very few women, devote a full four and a half columns to Godiva or Godgifu.⁹ Although the Godiva subtext I read into Woolf's concern with public divestiture as social protest is not dependent on her familiarity with the legend, circumstantial evidence indicates that she knew some of the most recent versions. In 1919, for instance, she reviewed *A Day-Book of Walter Savage Landor* and cites examples of Landor's ability to "say beautiful things beautifully." Among them is an excerpt from "Leofric and Godiva," the first of Landor's "Imaginary Conversations" (E3 111). The *Day-Book*, along with volume 4 of Landor's works containing all of the "Conversations," are among the Woolfs' books now at Washington State University.¹⁰ If Virginia did read more than the day-book excerpts, she would have found Leofric cast as an insensitive egomaniac and Godiva as a conventionally modest and flattering wife. Melted with maternal "tenderness and love," she begs her husband to relieve starving mothers and children (3). Leofric responds with his dare, and Landor



Figure 1: *Lady Godiva* by Mr. Ellis “The Limner,” 1681; courtesy of the Bridgeman Art Library, New York.

leaves Godiva struggling to find sufficient courage to accept it.¹¹

Woolf disliked Tennyson’s sentimentality (cf. Gillespie, *Sisters*’ 66-7), but young Virginia Stephen very likely knew his poem “Godiva,” written after a visit to Coventry in 1840. It appears in a volume of his works that still bears her bookplate, “AVS 1905.” The poem was immensely popular among Victorians. Like Landor, Tennyson describes Godiva’s sympathy with mothers and children, their starvation resonating with that of exploited industrial workers in nineteenth-century England (Donoghue 84). William Holman Hunt, in Moxon’s edition of Tennyson’s poems (1859)—not the one Woolf owned—merely shows a solitary Godiva unclasping, as Tennyson says, “the wedded eagles of her belt, / The grim Earl’s gift” (104).¹² Unlike Landor and Hunt, however, Tennyson verbally relishes what follows:

. . . anon she shook her head,
And showered the rippled ringlets to her knee;
Unclad herself in haste; adown the stair
Stole on; and, like a creeping sunbeam, slid
From pillar unto pillar, until she reach’d
The gateway; there she found her palfrey trapt
In purple blazon’d with armorial gold. (104).

Godiva’s saddle horse is magnificently caparisoned, but she rides forth timidly, dressed only, Tennyson says, in her chastity. Ironically, given the way his own eyes linger on the

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scene, Tennyson describes the punishment of the “one low churl” who peeped, how “his eyes, before they had their will, / Were shrivell’d into darkness in his head, / And dropt before him” (104). Unscathed himself, the poet hurries over Godiva’s return. She has removed the tax, he concludes, and “built herself an everlasting name” (104).

Tennyson’s poem, popular not only in Britain but internationally, inspired many paintings, woodcuts, lithographs, and sculptures.¹³ Nineteenth-century painters and printers, for instance, depicted, exhibited, and reproduced Godiva with Leofric, Godiva undressing, Godiva preparing to ride, and Godiva on her horse. Rarely covered by her hair as in written versions of the legend, Godiva provides “a variation of the Victorian gentlemen’s ‘pin-up’” (Clarke and Day 14) and also replaces nude classical goddesses as subjects for Victorian sculpture (Donoghue 96).

Joan Lancaster attributes the popularity of Godiva’s story, not so much to her nakedness, but to the depiction of “a great person temporarily divested of dignity and yet winning through in the end because of innate goodness and courage” (72). She points out, as do others, that “the discovery of oneself in public inadequately clad or naked” is a common anxiety “dream motif” (72), as I’m sure some of us know. This vulnerability was very real to a number of nineteenth-century women of letters, who struggled to balance private domestic life with public realms of publication, philanthropy, and social activism. Dorothy Mermin, in her study of women reformers and writers like Anna Jameson, Harriet Martineau, and Elizabeth Barrett, writes that Godiva’s “story miraculously unites display and modesty, courage and safety, political engagement and family life” (xvii). Identification with Godiva empowered such women to endure charges of unladylike knowledge or unfeminine behavior, including immodest self-exposure and presumptuous challenges to the status quo.

In *Three Guineas*, as scholars like Vara Neverow have noted, Woolf draws on a number of such “activist, dedicated, visionary” foremothers (14). Woolf cites Josephine Butler, for instance, but not her *New Godiva: A Dialogue* (1888). Butler’s epigraph is two lines from Tennyson’s well-known poem. “You would not let your little finger ache / For such as these?” scoffs Leofric. “But I would die,” counters Godiva. In Butler’s dialogue, an enlightened husband defends his wife to a traditional male friend. The “new Godiva,” he says, is one who leaves her comfortable home, exposes herself to agonizing “misconception,” and risks her reputation to work, in this case, among prostitutes (27-8).

Victoria, that “queen of paradox” (Mermin xvii), espoused a traditional feminine role as submissive wife and mother, but had more public duties and stature than any other woman of her time. Appropriate to this contradiction, she commissioned, as a birthday gift to Albert in 1857, “a gilded silver statuette of a nude Lady Godiva, sidesaddle on her horse” (Weintraub 239). Victoria also admired Edwin Landseer’s *Lady Godiva’s Prayer* (c. 1865, see Figure 2), seen in his studio before he exhibited it at the Royal Academy in 1866. Did the queen’s visit prompt Landseer to caparison Godiva’s mount in a magnificent ermine cape? Landseer’s Godiva is more likely a tribute to an actress and painters’ model called “Madame Warton,” known, mid-century, for her parts in the *tableaux vivants* at the Savile House in Leicester Square. One of her most famous, done in collaboration with Landseer, was a preview of *Lady Godiva’s Prayer* (Smith, *Exposed* 68).¹⁴ Landseer’s painting was much criticized for Godiva’s insufficiently idealized figure, and for the anachronistic



Figure 2: *Lady Godiva's Prayer* by Edwin Landseer, c. 1865; by permission of the Bridgeman Art Library, New York.

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costuming of the nun, whose closed eyes emphasize the painter's and viewers' gazing ones (Smith, *Victorian* 109).

Landseer was dead before Virginia and Vanessa Stephen were born, but both knew his paintings and considered them old-fashioned (cf. Gillespie, *Sisters*' 212-14). Whether or not they saw this uncharacteristic and controversial nude, I don't know. They had more contact with another painter of the legend, George Frederick Watts, who, like Tennyson, was a friend of the family.¹⁵ Watts first exhibited his rendition of the Godiva legend in 1885 and again, possibly reworked, at the Royal Academy in 1900. (See Figure 3: *Lady Godiva* by George Frederick Watts, c. 1880-90.) Although Virginia and Vanessa Stephen later visited Watts' studio, went to some of his exhibitions, and expressed their disdain for his moralizing and sentimentality (cf. Gillespie, *Sisters*' 64-66), they don't mention particular paintings. In Watts' unusual rendition, Godiva returns from her ordeal. Fainting and weak, she has to be lifted from her horse. The composition echoes Raphael's 1507 *Deposition*



(of Christ after the crucifixion). Sentimentalizing Godiva's feminine weakness and saintliness, Watts painted a moral protest against the use of her name as a title for what were little more than female nude studies (Clarke and Day 14).

In spite of the identification of some nineteenth-century women writers and reformers with Godiva's courage facing public exposure, the suffrage women did not embrace her. Although Martha Vicinus says that pageants honoring famous women included Godiva among "popular heroines" (266), she doesn't appear in Lisa Tickner's thorough study of suffrage iconography.

Figure 3: *Lady Godiva* by George Frederick Watts, c. 1880-90; reproduced with permission of the Trustees of the Watts Gallery.

Favored instead were warriors like Boadicea and, especially, Joan of Arc (Tickner 126-27). Like Godiva, the Joan of suffrage posters is on horseback, but she rides astride like a man. Unlike women discreetly costumed to suggest undressed Godivas riding side-saddle in traditional Coventry processions, we have women, fully dressed to suggest Joan of Arc's armor, riding astride as participants in suffrage spectacles.

In the 1920s, interpretations of Godiva continue to ignore her radical social motives in favor of the voyeuristic aspects of the legend. Freud, for instance, assumes knowledge of what he calls merely "the beautiful legend of Lady Godiva" when he uses the Peeping Tom portion in a discussion of neurotic blindness as a response to voyeurism or scopophilia (qtd. in Donoghue 105). D. H. Lawrence, in *Women in Love* (1920), satirizes the decadent sculptor Loerke's helpless Godiva figure, a brutalized child-woman on an oversized horse (Hyde 179). Woolf would have encountered that image when she read the novel in 1921 (*L2* 474). In 1926, a Belgian Chocolatier also chose the image it still uses to market, not self-exposure, but self-indulgence—an idealized Godiva whose slender beauty perhaps "appeals as much to women as men" (Donoghue 109). A well-known, 1898 painting by John Collier becomes in 1927 a *tableau vivant* upon which turns the plot of a Swedish film shown in England as *Matrimony*.¹⁶ Medievalist Daniel Donoghue calls Collier's Godiva, on her magnificently caparisoned horse, "relaxed," "meditative, even coy" (113). Although she sits astride in both painting and film tableau (Donoghue, pl. 8, 115)—or perhaps because she does, to me she seems eroticized from a masculine perspective—head bowed, submissive, and enervated. Leslie Hankins has found a reference to another film, entitled *Lady Godiva*, that appeared in 1928.¹⁷ Although there is no evidence that Woolf saw either film, clearly the legend was widely known well into the twentieth century.

A few women in the 1930s and afterwards began to look again at the personal and socially transformative powers of the legend and to reshape it for a new century. In 1937, for instance, Olive Popplewell published a play called *The Ride Through Coventry*.¹⁸ Another "forgotten radical,"¹⁹ she was popular mostly among amateur theatre groups in the 1930s. Among a number of additions to the legend in Popplewell's feminist/pacifist recreation, two are important here. First, a peasant woman redefines a social problem that goes beyond suffering women and children to include workingmen sacrificed to a war-like patriarchy: "Out there in Coventry," she tells Godiva, women's sons are merely "beasts of burden." They are willing to "give their due to the Earl, [...]" but he has dragged them from their ploughs and made them pay [...] till men who once were free are slaves, broken on the soil—and for what? To build a race of fighting men [...] who live on us, like lords at ease" (12). Second, when Leofric refuses to relieve Coventry's poor, this Godiva speaks for herself. She realizes what none of the male-created wives do: "Oh, God! I am less free than any serf! [...] I will possess myself," she vows, "I will be free!" (18-19). When Godiva begs Leofric to help the down-trodden, however, he issues the famous challenge, then sits back smugly. "That draws the teeth of little vixens," he concludes; "that will bring my falcon feeding from my hand" (20).

Discouraging voyeurism, Popplewell emphasizes Godiva's return. "I've known some men half kill their wives for less than this," Leofric chides Godiva. "Did they fear them so much?" she asks. "I have learned that men are often driven to hurt and kill because they fear" (26). Although Leofric, still assuming dominance, forgives Godiva, she counters

that he has killed her love. Just as Godiva grows in the play into a socially responsible woman, however, so Leofric, like men converted to the cause in turn-of-the-century suffrage drama, begins to understand what Godiva says. He admits he admires her courage, realizes he prefers love to submission, and tries to earn her respect.

In Popplewell's rendition, then, Godiva's ride signals one woman's courage to protest against private and public tyranny, to benefit the oppressed and reform their oppressors. Whether or not Woolf read or saw *The Ride Through Coventry*, it still anticipates her realization in *Three Guineas*, published a year later, that, as a woman, she is outside the power structure leading the nation into war. The play also anticipates Woolf's assertions that private tyrannies reflect public ones; and that individual women must educate, expose, and empower themselves if they wish to act on behalf of entire communities mired in oppressive social hierarchies, military buildup, and war.

PART III: "NAKEDNESS AS THE BACKBONE OF MY EXISTENCE"

When Woolf images women's publication as nakedness, no divine or social power prohibits or punishes reading, or, for that matter, reviewing.²⁰ Having had "3 outside opinions" already, Woolf writes as she awaits reactions to *The Waves* in 1931, she is "slightly less naked than usual" (*D4* 46). When she reads Vera Britain's *The Testament of Youth* in 1933, though, she wonders, "What urgency is there on [...the young] to stand bare in public?" She answers her own question. In the unacknowledged tradition of the Godiva legend, Woolf links nakedness with humanitarian motives. Brittain badly wants to expose certain facts—to help both herself and others. She has, Woolf writes, "the social conscience." Although she says she could never write such a "hard anguished" book (*D4* 177), Woolf is, at the same time, baring her mind in "The Pargiters" amidst snide remarks in the press about Bloomsbury. "Oh what a grind it is," she writes, "having perpetually to expose my mind, opened & intensified as it is by the heat of creation to the blasts of the outer world" (*D4* 289). Similarly, with *Three Guineas*, she's "uneasy at taking this role in the public eye—afraid of autobiography in public" (*D5* 141).

In contrast to Woolf's use of the bare body as an image of self-exposure in print, she also uses it as a positive metaphor for immunity from public scrutiny and judgment. Already in 1923 when she is writing *Mrs Dalloway*, she determines to write, even if she gets criticism, as Duncan Grant says he paints, "for the love of it," without "the motive of praise." Vowing that, she immediately adds, "I feel as if I slipped off all my ball dresses & stood naked—which as I remember was a very pleasant thing to do" (*D2* 248). Woolf here associates feminine costumes with public approval, and nakedness with writing for its own sake. She's getting a reputation, she realizes, "but many people are saying that I shant last, & perhaps I shant. So I return to my old feeling of nakedness as the backbone of my existence, which indeed it is" (*D2* 249).²¹

As for Woolf's fears of autobiographical or intellectual self-exposure in *Three Guineas*, she decides they "are entirely outbalanced [...] by the immense relief & peace I have gained [...] I am an outsider. I can [...] experiment with my own imagination in my own way" (*D5* 141). She may be pleased with responses to the book one day (*D5* 149) and "dejected" the next. But, overall, she feels "light & free," and, she repeats, "an outsider" (*D5* 169, 189). To be an outsider is to "have nakedness as the backbone of [...her] "existence,"

to be as free as possible of conventional concerns with appearances and approval, and thus able to speak her mind.

PART IV: "TO LOOK UPON NAKEDNESS WITH THE EYE OF AN ARTIST"

In the contexts of the Godiva legend and of nakedness as a metaphor for publication, the "Foreword" Woolf wrote for her sister Vanessa Bell's 1930 one-artist exhibition, *Recent Paintings by Vanessa Bell*, now seems as important to the genesis of *Three Guineas* as is "Professions for Women," written in the same year.²² Women writers and reformers, as we've seen, identified with the Godiva legend to help them deal with public self-exposure when they challenged the status quo, and Popplewell wrote, for Godiva, a protesting voice. In the visual arts, women also challenged conventional gender hierarchies and perspectives when they identified with, and painted that immensely popular theme of Victorian and Modern art, the female nude. Traditionally, as with the Victorian Godiva "pin-ups," men painted the unclothed female form "in passive and erotic poses as the objects of male sexual desire" (Perry, *Gender* 205). In modernism, however, they often divested female nakedness of conventional historic, exotic, or mythological "trappings." They also used "non-naturalistic styles" (Perry, *Women* 119) and placed their models in contemporary settings. Griselda Pollock notes, however, the continuance in modernist painting of "masculine sexuality and its sign, the bodies of women—[...] the nude, the brothel, the bar" (54).

In *Three Guineas*, Woolf sympathetically cites the autobiography of Margaret Collyer to document the difficulties women painters traditionally faced when they wanted access to live, unclothed models (*TG* 183 n. 39).²³ Woolf also notes Laura Knight's similar frustration with having to draw from plaster casts while men "worked from the living figure" (*Reading* 2: 41). By the late nineteenth century, however, still in the midst of fierce opposition, and accusations of corrupting their own sex, women did find ways to paint at least from female models, sometimes by hiring their own, sometimes by studying abroad.²⁴

Socialized to define themselves in "the 'feminine position'" as passive and decorative "object[s] of the look," Mary Kelly asks, did women assume in front of their easels, "the 'masculine position' as subject[s] of the look" (98)? Picasso, even late in his career, as Karen Kleinfelder shows, continued to satirize women artists who presumed to take the masculine position by portraying them as unsexed, unattractive frumps, in contrast to their voluptuous nude models (142-8).²⁵ More likely, Kelly says, women painters learned to occupy a dual-gendered position (98). Whitney Chadwick shows how some European women artists of the period, like Paula Modersohn-Becker and Suzanne Valadon, both "collude with and challenge" traditional identifications of women with nature and reductions to "emotions, sexual instincts, and biology" (*Women, Art* 282, 290).²⁶ When women artists paint from nude female models, then, as when women reformers and writers identify with the Godiva legend, they obviously must go beyond simple voyeurism—men gazing, or peeping, at women. What of women artists' scrutiny of their own bodies, of other women's, of men's, or of painted nudes? Not to mention gazes of gays and lesbians, and mutual gazes between social classes, ethnic majorities and minorities, colonizers and colonized (Olin 213, 215, 217).

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Not surprisingly, several women of the period self-reflexively paint pictures about painting female models. Marie Laurencin, in *Woman Painter and Her Model* (1921, see Figure 4), paints an unabashedly feminine artist (not one of Picasso's frumps). Although her brush may retain—or parody—some traditional phallic associations, woman painter and equally feminine model, or perhaps painted model, stand side by side in mirror-like identification and intimacy, their black eyes equally penetrating, gazes triangulating with what is off the canvas.



Figure 4: *Woman Painter and Her Model* by Marie Laurencin, 1921; © 2006 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. Reproduction is prohibited by copyright laws and international conventions without the express written permission of ARS.

In Laura Knight's large *Self-Portrait with Nude* (1913, see Figure 5), we have a woman painter and her model who, according to the blurb on the wall in the National Portrait Gallery (London), is Ella Naper, also an artist. "This double portrait of artist and model," the blurb continues, "is a bravura statement about the ability of women to paint hitherto taboo subjects on a scale and with an intensity that heralds change." Knight ironically paints herself, fully and stylishly *over-dressed* in fitted red sweater and broad-brimmed black hat. Her model, who seems less object than alter ego, raises her arms over her head, not just revealing but also liberating her body from all such fashionable feminine clothing—like Virginia Woolf happily slipping out of her ball dresses.



Figure 5: *Self-Portrait with Nude* by Dame Laura Knight, 1913; © 2006 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London. Reproduction is prohibited by copyright laws and international conventions without the express written permission of ARS.

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Woolf's wry "Foreword" anticipates recent discussion of these issues among feminist art historians. "That a woman should hold a show of pictures in Bond Street," Woolf writes, "is not usual, nor, perhaps altogether to be commended. For it implies, I fancy, some study of the nude" (170). To be accepted by reputable London galleries, in other words, a woman artist must defy lingering prohibitions and show that she also can paint and exhibit the unclothed human figure. Woolf's tone is ironic, but her emphasis seems disproportionate since only three of the twenty-seven exhibited paintings are in this genre.²⁷ She is as concerned, I think, with the implications of divestiture as a topic for her own medium and, ultimately, with its challenge to gender hierarchies.

The only nude painting I can locate from Bell's 1930 exhibition is #7 *Study for a Composition* (see Figure 6).²⁸ Woolf refers to it as "naked girls couched on crimson cushions" (171), but, as the title suggests, Bell thinks of it as a "composition." Four relaxed women, whose gazes meet neither each others' nor ours, form an open circle in a comfortable domestic setting. Bell wrote to Grant, "I am going to paint my large nudes all over again[...], as I came to the conclusion I could never get the composition right with the old poses" (349). Already she was describing "a new composition" with three female nudes (350).

Woolf reveals more interest in her "Foreword" in women painting from unclothed models than Vanessa Bell does in her paintings. She paints others, and herself, at work. On occasion, she even poses for nude paintings by Roger Fry and Duncan Grant. The closest she comes to a painting about identifying with an unclothed female model, however, is *Interior with Two Women* (1932, see Figure 7).²⁹ As with Laurencin's painting, there is a comfortable equality between the two figures. Like Knight, Bell contrasts an unclothed woman—one arm, this time, above her head and partially turned towards the viewer—with a fully clothed, and again a well-dressed one. Frances Spalding thinks they are model and painter (250). There is no painting within a painting, however, as in Knight's work. If the clothed woman is an artist, perhaps giving herself and her model a break, she contemplates, not the model, but a plate of fruit on a table in a domestic setting. Is Bell amusingly contrasting the woman artist's genre options? Is Bell, as Spalding suggests, representing two sides of herself, the sensual, uninhibited woman and the more contemplative professional (251)? Or have professional and moral hierarchies between painter and model dissolved? Should we ignore unresolved questions like these and emphasize, as Bell herself does, a painting's composition?

Woolf tries in her "Foreword" to have it both ways. As a lay viewer and as a woman who looks upon nakedness with the eye of a writer, she can't escape so easily into "composition." She uses the painters' word, "nude," only once. Instead, she chooses eight variations of "naked," a word that connotes "some [...] embarrassment," and usually is reserved for an unclothed body that an artist has not reshaped into a "nude." Or so Kenneth Clark says (3). Sensitive to differences between the two words, Woolf uses "naked" in part to underscore the hypocrisy characteristic of viewers more puritanical than herself.

[...] and while for many ages it has been admitted that women are *naked* and bring *nakedness* to birth, it was held, until sixty years ago that for a woman to look upon *nakedness* with the eye of an artist, and not simply with the eye of mother, wife or mistress was corruptive of her innocence and destructive of her



Figure 6: *Study for a Composition* by Vanessa Bell, 1930; © 1961 Estate of Vanessa Bell, courtesy of Henrietta Garnett.



Figure 7: *Interior with Two Women* by Vanessa Bell, 1932; © 1961 Estate of Vanessa Bell, courtesy of Henrietta Garnett.

domesticity. Hence the extreme activity of women in philanthropy, society, religion and all pursuits requiring clothing (“Foreword” 170, my italics).³⁰

Woolf indicates, in her “Foreword,” however, that the greatest objection is to women artists gazing upon and painting naked men. “Every Victorian family,” Woolf continues, “has in its cupboard the skeleton of an aunt who was driven to convert the native because her father would have died rather than let her look upon a naked man” in a studio (170).³¹ When she writes in her “Foreword,” Mrs. Bell “is a woman, it is said, yet she has looked on nakedness with a brush in her hand” (170), Woolf defies, on her own behalf, and that of her sister and those Victorian aunts, what she calls in “Professions for Women” (published in the same year) “the extreme conventionality of the other sex” (240).³²

Still feeling those “puritans of the nineteenth century” looking over her shoulder, however, Woolf’s best defense is formalism. She dismisses her own literary preferences, for the time being,³³ and also denies that Bell reveals anything about herself. She even dubs irrelevant the fact she has emphasized: “One says, Anyhow Mrs. Bell is a woman; and then half way round the room one says, But she may be a man.” Why? Because children are no more important to her than rocks, and clothing no more than “stark nakedness” (“Foreword” 171).

Woolf knows what she is supposed to say. She also admires her sister’s silence and impersonality. In the deleted draft ending, however, Virginia joked about what Vanessa’s straight-laced grandfather would have thought of the exhibition (Lee 536). Her final question in the published “Foreword” returns us, less directly, to the issue of women painting nakedness with which she began: “one could become an inmate of this strange painters’ world, in which mortality does not enter, and psychology is held at bay, and there are no words. But is morality to be found there? That was the very question I was asking myself as I came in” (173 my italics).³⁴

Woolf’s “Foreword” infuriated one reader—“He says I am indecent, and must be suppressed,” she writes (*L4* 142). Not surprisingly, in “Professions for Women,” Woolf emphasizes the writer’s even greater difficulties in avoiding “morality” or “human relations” (238), a point she echoes in *The Pargiters* (xxxii). This is especially true when she writes “about the body, about the passions which it was unfitting for her as a woman to say” lest men “be shocked” (“Professions” 240).³⁵

In 1932, Virginia bought one of Vanessa’s nudes.³⁶ It is a three-part screen decorated for a Music Room she and Duncan Grant designed and exhibited. Here Bell depicts the nakedness of artists, two female nudes holding stringed instruments and one, on the central panel, with what may be a musical score (Shone 242, fig. 145). For Woolf who says, “I always think of my books as music before I write them” (*L6* 426), the screen must have reminded her continually of the self-exposure she risks in the verbal compositions that are her own reshapings of nakedness into “nudes.” Curiously, a year later, she wrote to Vita Sackville-West, “I am going to be painted, stark naked, by a woman called Ethel Walker who says I am the image of Lilith” (*L5* 174). I read this as a tease. Yet Walker was a serious painter, and the editors of the letters straightforwardly identify Lilith and note that “The portrait was never painted” (*L5* 174 n.3). The least we can conclude is that women painters’ treatments of female nakedness for public display were on Woolf’s mind, and so was her own.

PART V: "ASTRIDE MY SADDLE THE WHOLE WORLD FALLS INTO SHAPE"

The legendary Godiva is exposed on a horse, and Woolf's interest in nakedness and in reshaping it into nudes for public exhibition or, metaphorically, for publication is related to her comparison of writing to horseback riding. Since the story of Hippolytus in Greek mythology, the horse has stood for sexual passion, one reason, Donoghue thinks, why so many writers and painters are attracted to the Godiva legend (30). Several contemporary women scholars, however, expand the image of a woman on horseback to include both female empowerment and claims to masculine prerogatives (e.g., Cunningham 65, Wintle 66-7).

Long before Dorothy Richardson used an equestrian image to describe her rival, Woolf repeatedly compared life to a horse that must be ridden with courage (e.g., *D2* 236, 239, 241, 285; *D3* 225).³⁷ She also compares her work as a writer with the actions of a rider (cf. Gillespie, *Sisters*' 1-2), a metaphor that communicates, not the timid endurance of Tennyson's Godiva, but confidence and control, power and speed. There are many possible sources for the metaphor, from the Elgin marble friezes in the British Museum to polo games (e.g., *D2* 42). What is striking, though, is that, by 1923, Woolf describes her professional life as "the root & source & origin of all health & happiness, provided [...] one rides work as a man rides a great horse, in a spirited & independent way; not a drudge, but a man with spurs in his heels" (*D2* 259 cf. 305, 323). The conventional gender-inclusive noun "man" is appropriate, since work gives her, not so much a man's perspective, as Richardson implies, as the freedom and controlled strength traditionally dubbed masculine. Whatever she's writing, she notes in 1930, "having got *astride* my saddle the whole world falls into shape" (*D3* 343 *my italics*).

Since, as the Godiva renditions show, the side saddle was the fashion for women and remained so until World War II (Wintle 68), Woolf purposely writes "astride." True, so-called "new women" rode bicycles astride.³⁸ Yet would getting "astride my [bicycle]" have the same impact as Woolf's claim to a powerful traditional symbol like the horse? By 1932, in "Middlebrow," Woolf's equestrian becomes "the man *or woman* of thoroughbred intelligence," and the horse becomes a metaphor for the intellect, as she claims another masculine territory. Here Woolf embraces the label "highbrow," and defines it as one "who rides his mind at a gallop [...] in pursuit of an idea" (177, *my italics*).

Woolf worries in *Three Guineas* that "there will be no more horses" and that art will become mulish propaganda (*TG* 170), as Jane Marcus points out (283). When accumulating facts for the notes becomes tedious, Woolf calls *Three Guineas* "a good piece of donkeywork" (*D5* 127). Yet there is, on the whole, an exhilarating sense of power in Woolf's description of riding her intellect through that book. She is sure that once she "get[s] into the canter over Three Gs.," she will "pound along to the goal" (*D5* 62). Soon she is having what she calls "a good gallop" (*D5* 65). When she writes the last page, she records, "Oh how violently I have been galloping through these mornings!" (*D5* 112). She has "deserved this gallop," she concludes, after her struggles with *The Years* (*D5* 112).

PART VI: GODIVA STILL RIDES

Knowing she risks "autobiography in public" (*D5* 141) as she publishes the gallop she titles *Three Guineas*, Woolf both displays intellectual nakedness and edits it into nu-

dity, a crafted work of epistolary prose. Naomi Black may say that “attention to women’s bodies” has “virtually disappeared” from the book (54), and this may be true so far as women’s sexuality is concerned. On a metaphorical level, however, bodies of all kinds are central to *Three Guineas*. In the unacknowledged tradition of the Godiva legend, Woolf’s candid, ironic narrator strips herself of the false wings and fluttering draperies of that flatterer, “The Angel in the House” (“Professions” 236). She even challenges the veil St. Paul requires of a woman “who prays or prophesies” (*TG* 166), ultimately becoming the “un/veiled woman” of Christine Froula’s astute analysis (282).³⁹ Woolf’s narrator in *Three Guineas*, however, is not just concerned with individual women baring their minds in public. She is equally interested in exposing the “public bodies [...] of educated men,” like “Parliaments and Senates.” Wanting to get into their records, she wants to get down to, as well as “beneath the[ir] skin[s]” (*TG* 26), to the hierarchy-shattering nakedness and equalizing mortality groups of robed and uniformed professional men try to disguise from everyone, including themselves. As Bernard in *The Waves* concludes, “our bodies are in truth naked. We are only lightly covered with buttoned cloth; and beneath these pavements are shells, bones and silence” (113). To conventional public bodies dominated by masculine values, Woolf’s narrator juxtaposes another kind of “body”—a nonhierarchical “Society of Outsiders,” one far more difficult to describe. In line with her interest in female nudes by women painters, she borrows the image of “furtively” trying to paint a “model,” one who “dodges and disappears” but still exists (*TG* 115).

Like Godiva’s, part of Woolf’s motivation is human suffering and its causes. Her parallels to the starving women and children of Coventry include “photographs from Spain” of “dead children, killed by bombs” and of “ruined houses” (*L6* 85; *TG* 10-11), evidence of public bodies destroying those of the private, domestic realm. Close to home, Woolf’s private sufferers include Vanessa Bell when her son Julian dies in the Spanish Civil War. Behind these are all the thwarted foremothers, with whom Woolf identifies, whose biological or social patriarchs denied their bids for financial independence, university degrees, and professional or artistic training. Their momentum, Woolf suggests, can build towards a constructive leavening of the public realm, factions of which are feeling what women have felt: “shut up” and “shut out,” now by patriarchal dictators threatening England from the continent (*TG* 102-03).

But how can change occur when the educated man’s daughter has had no formal education, public voice, or money of her own (*TG* 12)? Women, say the anti-suffragists whom Woolf’s narrator quotes, need no public platforms, because they can influence powerful men. But influence of that sort, she says, “is either beyond our reach [...] or beneath our contempt” (*TG* 15). The lengths to which Godiva in the legend must go indicate just how little traditional influence, even at the top of the social hierarchy, is worth. Woolf writes in *Three Guineas*, however, that “the word ‘influence’ [...] has changed,” and a woman can now publicly “declare her genuine likes and dislikes” and “criticize” (*TG* 17). Yet Godiva’s story, and Woolf’s own repetition of the words “courage” (e.g., *TG* 116, 128) and “fear” (e.g., *TG* 128-9), remind us of what it takes to do so, especially in ways that draw serious attention to a cause, rather than responses that trivialize its advocate, her methods, or her advice.

In *Three Guineas*, Woolf gallops forth in part to respond, in terms of the Godiva legend, to a dare. As others have observed (e.g., Black 81-4), Woolf’s notes for *Three Guineas*

contain several appeals of the kinds she fictionalizes in the book. One peace manifesto stresses, not literal serfdom, as in Godiva's Coventry, but, rather, intellectual and creative slavery. Writers, it reads,

will be constantly subjected, on the plea of military expediency, to militaristic propaganda, to censorship, to repression. Everything will be done to train them to accept without criticism all ideas presented to them with official sanction [...] They will long to dress up not only their bodies but also their minds in uniform [...] (*Reading 2: 28*)

This manifesto calls for writers to “help men to know themselves, to be aware of their own motives, to feel and think sincerely” (*Reading 2: 28*). On her own terms, Woolf accepts this challenge.

After the book appeared, Woolf wrote to Margaret Llewelyn Davies, “I felt it great impertinence to come out with my views on such a subject; but to sit silent and acquiesce in all this idiotic letter signing and vocal pacifism when there's such an obvious horror in our midst—such tyranny, such Pecksniffism—finally made my blood boil into the usual ink-spray” (*L6 250*). As in the Godiva legend, the alternative to silence, or petitions to those in the established hierarchy, is a bold intellectual riding into the marketplace, this time on a mount caparisoned with enough evidence to identify and challenge what Woolf defines as masculine infantile fixation and traditional scapegoating of women. Alternatives to uniformed minds are ones stripped of “possessiveness,” “jealousy,” “pugnacity,” and “greed” (*TG 83*). Naked minds prefer “ridicule, obscurity and censure,” are wary of “unreal loyalties,” refuse to sell their brains for money, and desire just “enough [...] to live on” (*TG 80*).

It takes different perspectives to define and expose uniformed minds for what they are. What happens when individual women scrutinize, and express their opinions of, powerful individuals and public bodies? Among Woolf's notes is an account from Elizabeth Haldane's *From One Century to Another* of a

party in Cambridge in 1907 [...] Various persons received degrees [...], and it was amusing to listen *through a peephole* in the room of Mrs. Butler (the Master's wife) to the speeches taking place at the Feast which was held in Trinity College [...] The whole surroundings seemed medieval. (*Reading 3: 52 my italics*).

This dual gender perspective and turnabout voyeurism includes peeping and laughing at men immersed in their traditional ceremonies. Haldane is among the women Woolf mentions in *Three Guineas* who gain knowledge of professional life, she writes, by “*peeping through doors, taking notes, and asking questions discreetly,*” taking the subject position, in other words, and scrutinizing what is forbidden (*TG 49, my italics*). Tom, the tailor in the Godiva legend, is punished for peeping, and thus becomes a scapegoat for voyeuristic narrators, readers, painters, and viewers. To peep at Godiva also insults the powerful man who possesses her, and violates the class hierarchy. For an educated man's daughter not only to peep, but to encroach with irony and wit, not to mention pages of evidence and endnotes, on the masculine preserves of research and argumentation, to accuse the patriarchy of the tyranny it condemns only in others, and worse, to publish the five now-

familiar photographs that make uniformed bodies representing public bodies look absurd is a similar violation and cause for outrage.

Since women, as Woolf's narrator says, are already scapegoats, and since no miraculous blinding seems likely in the twentieth century, those offended by *Three Guineas* exercise other options. Some reviewers damn her with faint praise, as in a cartoon from *Time and Tide* (Hummel 157; cf. Lee 698). In it men doff their hats to honor Woolf's reputation and skill as a writer, even as they stamp on her book to denounce her ideas. Like Godiva, Woolf is protected to some degree by her status. Still, just as Godiva's long hair only partly veils her nakedness, so Woolf's persona only partly deflects public scrutiny of author and argument. Woolf's usually voluble male friends silently ignore the book as a public embarrassment, closing or covering their eyes like the nun in Landseer's Godiva painting.⁴⁰ Others rage in print, like the reader who calls the book "indecent, almost obscene!" (L6 251 n. 1). Or they pull rank, as Q. D. Leavis does, by dismissing Woolf as an ignorant amateur (409-10). But that is merely another way of defining the outsider status Woolf embraces, as do many readers who, like the oppressed in Godiva's Coventry, express gratitude for her courage (Snaith, *Virginia* 123-4).⁴¹

Whatever the reactions, neither Godiva nor Woolf loses her domestic base because of her public ride. Unlike Leofric in the Godiva legend, however, no one mentioned in, or connected with, *Three Guineas* promises reform if Woolf gallops into the marketplace. Leonard, the more politically active of the Woolfs—at least in conventional ways—does see the book into print, however unenthusiastic he is about it. As with recuperative readings of the Godiva legend, *Three Guineas* asks for social transformations that will, if not render society's hierarchical public bodies obsolete, at least expose their skins, a prerequisite for self-examination and reform. Like the Godiva legend, *Three Guineas* is, in itself, a dare. The unspoken challenge in both is this: If you think what I do is extreme or what I ask is impractical, then what would you suggest? The horse is in your stable.

EPILOGUE: "SHE DIDN'T CARE IF THE WHOLE WORLD LOOKED"

In decades since the 1930s, the humanitarian side of the Godiva legend still struggles against popular culture renditions of her naked ride in ads for chocolate, lingerie, and bath products; Halloween costumes and soft porn; pop songs and cartoons.⁴² At least the theme song for Norman Lear's 1970s TV series, "Maude" links Godiva and Joan of Arc as social activists: "Lady Godiva was a freedom rider, / She didn't care if the whole world looked. / Joan of Arc with the Lord to guide her, / She was a sister who really cooked" (qtd. in Donoghue 108). On a more serious level, there is a new entry on "Godgifu [Godiva]" in the recently published *Oxford DNB*. Its author, Ann Williams, notes that, in the 1990s, "the Godiva International Award has [...] been instituted, to be bestowed on a woman of international reputation in the field of social welfare" (576).

In the visual arts, Jo Hockenhull's Godiva (see Figure 8: *Ride Free!* 1993), astride a vigorous, male horse, gallops free of the city altogether and takes back the night. Peeping eyes don't intimidate, but swirl round her shoulders like a transparent cape. Her hair streams out behind, blending with individual and communal imperatives and declarations: "Ride to a new self; Ride for a new world; I will be free."⁴³

As for Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas*, serious editorial work and discussion now



Figure 8: *Ride Free!* by Jo Huckenhull, 1993; by permission of Jo Huckenhull and the Washington State University Press.

dominate treatment of her book. Practical applications of her ideas are emerging in response to the policies of national and international bodies, still as mentally uniformed as in Woolf's day. Eileen Barrett, for instance, recently updates the "facts of education, property, and war to shed light on the status of women today" (25). She concludes with a list of organizations to which we can send "our guinea, worth today about \$75" (27).

Syndicated columnist Ellen Goodman of the *Boston Globe* quotes Woolf in a recent editorial: "I look upon disregard or abuse as part of my bargain. I'm to write what I like and they're to say what they like."⁴⁴ Goodman's topic is "the dearth of women on the op[inion]-ed[itorial] pages [...]. Yes," she says, "there are more women on op-ed pages than in tenured science positions at Harvard. But [...] the number of syndicated columns written by women is less than one in four and holding." Goodman doesn't want to conclude that "fewer women jump into the pool because they fear the sharks." Her advice?

Grant “only a few people the right to make you feel rotten” and develop a tough skin about the others (4A)—her version of Woolf’s nakedness as the backbone of existence.

So what is the spirit of *Three Guineas*? It is a risky gallop into the public marketplace to protest past and ongoing oppression. It is “A Portrait of the Writer/Rider as an Educated Man’s Daughter” that, at the same time, is a Godiva-like baring of its author’s point of view. Violating certain feminine values and valorizing others, *Three Guineas* demonstrates the courage to speak up for communal self-examination and for the reformation of public bodies by stripping away mental uniforms that foster oppression and conflict. *Three Guineas* channels desperation into research, exposure into exposition, and anger into irony. Woolf was in her fifties when she wrote the book. By then, she didn’t care if the whole world looked.

Notes

1. I illustrated this featured presentation with about fifty visual images, most of which I have had to eliminate from this published version. For preliminary information about Godiva images, I am grateful to Ronald Aquilla Clarke of the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry. For information about Vanessa Bell nudes, Tony Bradshaw of the Bloomsbury Workshop, London, was very helpful. Claire Harries, PA to the Domus Bursur at Kings College, Cambridge, initially helped me obtain a slide of Bell’s *Study for a Composition*. For assistance and for permission to reproduce the eight images I have chosen, I would like to thank David Savage of the Bridgeman Art Library, New York; Richard Jeffries, Curator of the Watts Gallery, Guildford; Cristin O’Keefe Aptowicz of the Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; Henrietta Garnett; Jo Hockenull; and Marc Lindsey of the Washington State University Press.
2. Woolf’s view of Richardson was similarly ambivalent (cf. Gillespie, “Political” 138-9, 142-4).
3. This ability to detect a man’s inward eye may be an instance of what Jane Garrity calls Miriam’s “self-masculinization,” her own attraction to women “as she oscillates between the two genders” (103).
4. Woolf’s *Three Guineas* appeared five months before the collected edition of *Pilgrimage*. Although Richardson had her own views on dictators and pacifism (*Windows* 384), I find no evidence that she expressed them in response to *Three Guineas*. Had she read it, she probably would have isolated more evidence of Woolf’s supposedly sheltered experience among “the daughters of educated men” (*TG* 4).
5. It is true, so far as English history and literature go, that the Elizabethans interested Woolf more than the Anglo-Saxons or their Norman conquerors. Those who find medievalism in her work find it primarily in Arthurian associations with Percival in *The Waves* (e.g., Garrity 245, 272, 288).
6. Others have written, in different ways, on Woolf and the body. See, for instance, Doyle and Kitsi-Mitakou.
7. The verb “to divest” *literally* means to strip not only of clothing, but also of arms, rank, rights, or titles. *Metaphorically*, to divest can mean to strip oneself, or others, of all sorts of disguises, conventions, or hypocrisies. The motives can range from beneficent to malign, but the implications are almost always radical.
8. A number of sources provide historical facts as well as follow the development of the legend, among them Gordon, Lancaster, Clarke and Day, Williams, and most recently, Donoghue.
9. Gordon notes, however, that “Her fame as a religious foundress has been eclipsed by the story of her Coventry ride, around which legend has freely grown” (*DNB* 36). Black writes that “up to 1985 only 4 percent of the cumulated [*DNB*] entries recounted women’s lives.” In 1993, a “Missing Persons” volume brought that number up to “only 12 percent” (163-4).
10. The Woolfs’ books at WSU include 11 of the 16 volumes of Landor’s *Complete Works* (1927-36). Leonard Woolf reviewed vols. 1 and 2 in the *Nation and Athenaeum* (15 October 1927) 86.
11. Woolf knew Michael Drayton’s poems, since two books of selections, one a present to her, remain among the Woolfs’ books at Washington State University. The portion of Drayton’s *Polyolbion* narrating the Godiva legend, however, is not among the selections. Leigh Hunt’s autobiography also is among the Woolfs’ books at WSU but not his *Tales* (1891) containing his prose “Godiva.”
12. Hunt’s *Lady Godiva* (1857) is reproduced in Clarke and Day, p. 10.
13. Many of these are reproduced and/or described in Clarke and Day as well as in Lancaster and elsewhere.
14. Eliza Crowe (a.k.a. Madam Wharton) also impersonated Godiva in 1848 at the Coventry Grand Show

- Fair. The Coventry processions go back to 1678, but, in the middle of the nineteenth century, moralists reduced them to every third year. The processions were popular because there was always the tourist-attracting rumor that this time the Godiva figure would actually be naked. In fact, she wore “fleshings, a skirt and veil” (Smith, *Exposed* 68; see also Clarke and Day 27-8).
15. Woolf spoofs both painter and poet in her 1935 play *Freshwater*.
 16. Donoghue reproduces Collier’s wilted Godiva on the cover of his book; it appears on several Godiva web sites; and the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, sells it as a postcard and poster. The film, directed by Gustaf Molander and produced by Oscar Hemberg, was titled, in Swedish, *Hans Engelska Fru* and was shown in England as *Matrimony* and in the U.S. as *Discord* (Donoghue 141 n. 25).
 17. This film, included in the Ghosts of Yesterday Series on the British Film Institute list, was directed by George J. Banfield and Leslie Eveleish. Two Godiva films appeared in the fifties, *Lady Godiva Rides Again* (1951) and *Lady Godiva* (1955) starring Maureen O’Hara (Donoghue 121, 141 n. 20).
 18. Not much is known about Popplewell. I know of two other full-length plays, *The Pacifist: A Play for Women in One Act* (London: H. F. W. Deane, 1934) and *This Bondage*, in *Five New Full-Length Plays for All-Women Casts*, ed. John Bourne (London: Lovat Dickson and Thompson, 1935). She also wrote several one-act plays in the 1930s, some for all-women casts. The Loft Theatre, a nonprofit group performing in Leamington Spa since 1922, lists on its web site Olive Popplewell’s *They Fed the Fire* as part of its 1935/36 season. It is clear that Popplewell had a strong political orientation and that her plays were sufficiently well received to merit publication.
 19. See Ingram and Patai on other such women of the period 1889-1939.
 20. Woolf also images artistic creativity as nakedness. For instance, Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* always experiences “a few moments of nakedness when she seemed [. . .] exposed [. . .] to all the blasts of doubt” before she can concentrate on painting (158). W. H. Auden, on the other hand, embraces nakedness, this time defined by Woolf as “being honest, simple, naked, taking off literary clothes” (*D5* 108).
 21. There is perhaps a link between these comments while writing *Mrs. Dalloway* and Woolf’s characterization of young Sally Seton, who is a potential Godiva—both daring in her actions and socially conscious in her statements. But Sally grows into, rather than away from, a conventional feminine role. Septimus Smith also anticipates the theme of divestiture as protest when he draws pictures of the self-important people in his office “naked at their antics” (*MD* 90).
 22. In contrast, Spalding dismisses Woolf’s “Foreword” as formal and uncritical high praise—as merely “a short encomium” (235). More recently, Lee agrees that Woolf “brazenly puffed” Bell’s exhibition and notes that the “Foreword” is another instance of “family business” in Woolf’s career (536). Bell had some concerns, but thought Virginia’s comments would promote the exhibition effectively (cf. Gillespie, *Sisters*’ 68).
 23. Woolf herself, when she was still Virginia Stephen and thinking of becoming “an artist to the public, and keep[ing] . . . my writing to myself” (*L1* 170), already knew, since Vanessa had begun her work at the Slade, that drawing the unclothed human body was important. Among Virginia’s surviving drawings are two copies of nude figures from Blake’s work and one of a classical female figure (signed AVS) that is a bookplate, now partially defaced, in a volume of Euripides (1902) still among the Woolfs’ books at Washington State University (cf. Gillespie, *Sisters*’ 27-8, 321 n. 11).
 24. Paintings like *The Female Life Class* by Alice Barber Stephens, 1879, indicate as much. Models, however, were scorned as little better than, if not actually, prostitutes. On the other side were a few who claimed such work encouraged “a healthy respect for the body” and “exposed the double standard” in the training of male and female artists (Smith, *Victorian* 220-22, 228, 232).
 25. Renoir, known for his paintings of fleshy female nudes, agreed that “The woman artist is merely ridiculous” (qtd. in Chadwick, *Women, Art* 234).
 26. Among Chadwick’s examples are Modersohn-Becker’s earthy but powerful nude *Self-Portrait with Amber Necklace* (1906) and Valadon’s unidealized *Reclining Nude* (1928) (289). Looking at less well-known painters, Perry argues that Emilie Charmy, for instance, “has appropriated and reworked a ‘male gaze,’ removing some of the erotic pleasure” (*Gender* 207-13).
 27. Compared to Duncan Grant’s frequent, often whimsical treatments of both male and female nudes throughout his career, Bell’s paintings of nudes are relatively few in number. Examples preceding the 1930s include *The Bedroom, Gordon Square* (1912), *The Tub* (1917), a woodcut version (1918), all in domestic settings, and *Nude* (1922-3). Bell rarely painted male nudes. Exceptions include a painting of David Garnett, visible only to the waist (1915), a seated male figure in an early painting of bathers (1911?), and nude male children in a few paintings and decorative murals.
 28. Because in her “Foreword” Woolf refers to “naked boys ankle deep in the pale green sea,” one of the nude

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paintings in the exhibition must be #15 *Wading*. Perhaps this is the painting Bell refers to in a letter to Grant as “Quentin at sea” (351). Another is an unidentified *Nude* (#16), about which Bell writes in a letter to Duncan Grant, “I defy anyone to look at her without thinking of volumes” (351). Bell thought Maynard Keynes’s purchase of *Study for a Composition* “very odd” (351). (It is listed among the seven Bell paintings that Keynes owned; Scrase 64.) Bell’s and Grant’s relations with Keynes were strained at this time, and they did not have a high opinion of him as an art collector or exhibition organizer (Spalding 245).

29. Keynes also bought this painting (Scrase 14).
30. When painter Henrietta Ray had two nude paintings accepted for a Royal Academy Exhibition in the 1880s, she was advised not to “pervert her artistic gifts by exhibiting such works.” She was urged to reply “that she had recently given birth to a son ‘who came into the world entirely naked,’ thus proving that there was no impropriety in representing the human form as it was created” (Smith, *Victorian* 232).
31. As Smith notes, “a man posing for a woman” during the Victorian period, “was so awful to contemplate that all purists could do was maintain a discreet silence” (*Victorian* 222).
32. Does the fact that her sister paints what Woolf calls “boys” and “girls” rather than “men” and “women,” help to deflect puritanical criticism? Is this also why Woolf repeatedly refers to her sister with conventional formality as “Mrs. Bell”? Just as the Victorian censors back off when Orlando marries, however unconventionally, so “Mrs.” probably helps to legitimate Bell’s paintings of naked bodies (Lee 536).
33. A few years later, Woolf was to dub Walter Sickert’s work literary and thus “all that painting ought to be” (L5 254).
34. Woolf’s question about morality recalls Lytton Strachey’s talk, “Art and Indecency” (1921). Although he thinks “art for art’s sake” is “a reasonable proposition,” he still maintains that “the effects produced by a work of art may be of an ethical nature” (254). “We are considering,” Strachey concludes, “a state of mind [. . .] not a state of body” (257). In Woolf’s “Foreword,” then, traditional disapproving gazes are at issue, not Bell’s nudes *per se*.
35. In *The Waves*, a year later, Woolf tries to “look upon nakedness” with the eye of a *writer*, to create characters conscious of their physicality, of thoughts and feelings about their bodies, and of seeing and being seen. Although the word “nude” doesn’t appear in Woolf’s “play-poem,” “naked” appears fifteen times (Haule and Smith). Jinny, the character perhaps most influenced by Vanessa Bell’s nudes, enjoys and flaunts the physicality she knows Victorian puritans, like those Woolf mocks in her “Foreword,” would denounce. As Jinny watches her body shrink and age, however, Woolf gives us much more than the young female models her older sister painted.
36. Bell continued to paint a few nudes after the 1930 exhibition. Some surviving examples include *Standing Nude* (1930s), *Nude* (1930s), *The Green Necklace* (1930s), and *Two Nudes Bathing* (1931-2).
37. In *The Voyage Out*, *Night and Day*, and *Jacob’s Room*, Woolf uses images of women on horseback to signal fantasies of escape from conventional feminine demands or to evoke a woman’s courage to face life. By the decade of *Three Guineas*, however, young Rose’s fantasy of being “Pargiter of Pargiter’s Horse [. . .] riding to the rescue of a besieged garrison” in *The Years* is shattered by an exhibitionist (27-9). The adult Rose, more a Joan of Arc than a Godiva, becomes a militant suffragette.
38. There is a 1896 picture reprinted prominently across from the contents page in a book Woolf owned, Bott’s *Our Mothers* (1932). “The Old Love and the New: The Morning Bicycle Parade, Hyde Park” depicts the “new woman” on a bicycle between a man riding astride and a woman riding side saddle.
39. Woolf’s “epistolary persona” wears the veil, Froula says, but adds to its meaning a “quasi-anthropological vantage on the civilization men have created” and on the masculine scapegoating of women (261).
40. They may, Woolf says, send her “to Coventry over it” (D5 188-89), a phrase that suggests public ostracism but not (so far as the *OED* is concerned) the Godiva legend. The most likely explanations for the phrase, are that 1) in the 17th century, supporters of the king were killed or taken prisoner and sent to Coventry, a stronghold of parliament, or 2) that a religious faction was forced out of a neighboring town and came to Coventry.
41. Snaith introduces and edits the *Three Guineas* letters as well (see Snaith, “*Three Guineas* Letters”).
42. In the post-WWII, feminist-backlash fifties, a then well-known novelist and playwright, Clemence Dane (Winifred Ashton), wrote a radio play called *Scandal at Coventry* (1958). True to the times, Leofric says, “Stick to your household chores and leave me to govern the Midlands!” (22). Godiva also materializes as the “I” of Sylvia Plath’s poem “Ariel” (1962). We can read her lines either as self-destructive, or as liberating, a divestiture of an over-socialized, feminine self (cf. Donoghue 125-26). Donoghue summarizes several literary versions of the legend, all written by later twentieth-century men. None of them emphasizes Godiva’s humanitarian motives.

43. Hockenhull originally created this print as an illustration for my earlier article "The Ride. . . ." We were both members of an interdisciplinary, collaborative group, begun in 1987 with support from the Washington State University Graduate School. We discussed and wrote about women and travel and ultimately published an essay collection.
44. Goodman quotes from an entry Woolf made in her diary already in 1922 (D2 168).

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