

tions had by the twentieth century become possible alternatives to heterosexual relations, and the entrance of women not only into the industrial work force, but increasingly into higher education, the professions, and political life, caused a male reaction which made love relations between women appear perverted, criminal, and insane. Even liberal critics of Victorian society, such as the predominantly gay male Bloomsburyians in England, could espouse homosexual rights and socialism but could not believe women should be "independent of men" and found Sapphism "disgusting." They sent Virginia Woolf to doctors practicing "conversion of the Sodomites," "racial purity," anti-female eugenics, and rest cures⁹ such as those Gilman depicted in *The Yellow Wallpaper*.

It was these forces to which Virginia Stephen Woolf, who had been incarcerated by them, referred in her 1936 feminist treatise *Three Guineas*,¹⁰ where she advocates the Outsiders Society. Because her criticism of male civilization was taken as symptomatic of madness—and her lesbianism was viewed as neurosis which developed in women who pursued the unfeminine work of a professional writer—Virginia Woolf veiled the lesbian basis of her vision. The Outsiders Society was a strategic and perhaps utopian proposal. Women constitute an already existing group whose energy, labor, and lives are appropriated by men for their own aggrandizement in a system she saw requiring imperialism and war. During the rise of Hitler, Woolf called upon women to utilize their exclusion to withdraw services and support from the patriarchy. Without explicitly mentioning lesbianism, she tells the reader there are some things even she is afraid to write about because of sanctions occasioned by male fear, insecurity, and power over women.

Very little lesbian utopian vision-making survived in print until, with the advent of the women's liberation movement, journalist Jill Johnston called for "lesbian nation."¹¹ In 1973, Judy Grahn extended the sexual connotations of "wanting" a lover to the revolutionary—or utopian—dimension of wanting a city safe and healthy for women; "I wanted her as a very few people have wanted me—I wanted her and me to own and control and run the city we lived in. . . ."¹²

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tion of men by women, supported by a woman's culture, powered by cultural and material force, and encompassing women of all races, ages, and backgrounds. The diversity of the women in *Les Guérillères*¹³ contributes to their strength rather than dividing them, and they battle, sing, and celebrate their way to worldwide feminist victory. A few longhaired men, who are willing to accept a feminist society of primitive communism, are allowed to live. Highly romantic, stylistically disrupted from linear, causal or dramatic/narrative structure, the novel envisions a female culture as a strength for battle and simultaneously denounces it as a fragmented vision inadequate to the new world. The counter-weight to glorification of battle and killing of males is located in a persistently witchlike women's culture.¹⁴

Here lies a central contribution of the work and one which has had broad appeal in the feminist movement as it evolved from the left, susceptible to believing "Paradise exists in the shadow of the sword" (p. iii). Wittig connects revolution and change not only with guns, but also with language and with the cultural bases for empowering women.

The women say they have learned to rely on their own strength. They say they are aware of the force of their unity. They say, let those who call for a new language first learn violence. They say, let those who want to change the world first seize all the rifles. They say that they are starting from zero. They say that a new world is beginning (p. 85).

Wittig also assumes the necessity for transforming culture and putting women at the center by using the force of language and culture to crack (male) history. What appear as gaps in male history are women's experiences, and from this, called our weakness, we can build our strength. That message was crucial, particularly for women trapped intimately within white patriarchy.

They say, we must disregard all the stories relating to those of them who have been betrayed beaten seized seduced carried off violated and exchanged as vile and precious merchandise. They say, we must disregard the statements we have been compelled to deliver contrary to our opinion and in conformity with the codes and conventions of the cultures that have domesticated us. . . .