VIRGINIA WOOLF AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

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ABSTRACT

The chapters of this thesis analyse Virginia Woolf's novels and private writing, concentrating largely on the representation of early childhood symbols and language in her work. The aim of this thesis was to try to discover why Woolf used the perambulator motif so frequently in her novels. Counting the frequency of images in literary texts is usually one aspect of scholarship which can be fruitless but there are occasions when the results can be startling; for example the fact that the motif of the perambulator dominates almost all of her novels. In her novels, there is generally a surface narrative but I have looked beneath the surface at the multitude of symbols and language from early childhood that she uses. Underpinning all of this is the fact that Woolf never had children of her own.

Chapter one begins with a description of Woolf's own early childhood, which she wrote extensively about, using various sources, most notably *Hyde Park Gate News*. An indispensable reference for trying to glean an understanding of Woolf's early development is 'A Sketch of the Past' which can be found within the collection entitled *Moments of Being*. Memoirs such as this, her diaries and letters, also provided useful evidence to assist me in the analysis of her childhood. *Moments of Being* was central to Woolf's fiction and experience and it is within her memoirs, in particular that we discover the remembered world of childhood, both in 22 Hyde Park Gate, London and Talland House, St. Ives. Woolf's relationship with her father and mother will be examined and a separate discussion will explore the effect her parents had on her writing, focusing mainly on *The Years* and *To the Lighthouse*. Interwoven with this will be an examination of the concept of memory; the fallibility of memory, current psychological theories of memory as well as Freud's notion of screen memories and their importance in relation to Woolf's own childhood memories.

Chapter two focuses exclusively on childhood language and Woolf's use of pre-verbal language and nursery rhymes in her fiction. Three of her later novels show the prominence of pre-verbal language and provide the best examples of the nursery rhyme motif. *The Waves* is considered as it was this novel that Woolf used to break free from the constraints of plot and characterisation: she began to experiment with pre-verbal rhythms. Two other novels *The Years* and *Between the Acts* are analysed in relation to the nursery rhyme motif.

Chapter three begins with an examination of the reasoning behind Leonard Woolf's decision for the couple not to have children. Reading Virginia Woolf's work alongside her letters and diaries reveals how closely related the theme of children/childhood was in her own life. This is an area of her writing which warrants investigation in relation to the prominence of the perambulator motif and which advances our understanding of Woolf's own experience as a writer, sister, wife, aunt, daughter and childless woman.

The final chapter is divided into two sections allowing discussion of the nursemaid and the perambulator: both significant motifs from early childhood that Woolf utilises in her novels. The two fictional nursemaids focused on in this section are Mrs Constable in *The Waves* and the figure of the nurse in *Mrs Dalloway* who is found on a bench in Regent's Park. The short story 'Nurse Lugton's Golden Thimble' will also be examined. Chapter four looks in closer details at the technologies of childhood and the reoccurrence of the perambulator motif in her novels. Starting with *Night and Day* this section considers, in chronological order, each reference to the perambulator and suggests why Woolf has given prominence to this particular symbol. There will also be a brief discussion of *The Voyage Out* and why this is the only book that has no perambulator motif. My thesis presents a new way of approaching Woolf's work and a small glimpse into the wishes and regrets of this renowned literary figure.

Abbreviations and notes on referencing

Due to the frequency with which examples of Woolf's work appear in the text of this thesis, the following abbreviations are used to indicate the relevant source:

A Passionate Apprentice	APA
A Room of One's Own	AROO
Between the Acts	BTA
Hyde Park Gate News	HPGN
Jacob's Room	JR
Moments of Being	OB
'A Sketch of the Past'	ASOP
'Reminiscences'	R
'22 Hyde Park Gate'	22HPG
'Old Bloomsbury'	OB
Mrs Dalloway	MD
Night and Day	ND
Orlando	O
'Street Haunting'	SH
Three Guineas	TG
To the Lighthouse	TTL
The Voyage Out	TVO
The Waves	TW
The Years	TY

A NOTE ON THE TEXT: Virginia Woolf's punctuation, spelling and grammar have been followed in all quotations from her diaries, letters and manuscripts.

CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

> What a disservice we do her when we impose upon Virginia Woolf any template at all, whether it be Marxist revolutionary, Feminist, lesbian, madwoman, suicide victim or whatever. For Woolf had dozens of selves in her person and in her work.[1]

Virginia Woolf became a compulsive writer from early childhood and she possessed a passionate interest in the art and craft of writing throughout her life. Woolf's first novel *The Voyage Out*[2] was published in 1915 and her last, *Between the Acts*[3] posthumously in 1941. Her writings included reviews, critical essays, short stories, biographies, longer fiction, and critical articles: it can be argued that she even embarked on poetry with her novel *The Waves*[4] in 1931, which is often referred to as a play-poem. She not only expanded the conception of the novel, but she also left nearly 4,000 letters[5] and 30 volumes of a diary.[6] These private letters and diary entries provide fascinating insights into the mind of the artist. Although her life has become one of the most thoroughly documented of any twentieth century author, she still remains an enigma. Her public life in the Bloomsbury group of intellectuals and her marriage in 1912 to Leonard Woolf are seen as central to her literary development.[7] There are also the invisible, yet well documented events, which shaped her work: the memories of her childhood; her unusual education; the numerous deaths of crucial family members; mental health problems and her childless marriage.

The nursemaid and the perambulator

> The perambulator was going through the little gate in the railing. She kissed her hand; directed by the nurse, Jimmy waved his. (JR, p166)

This thesis explores the way Virginia Woolf uses symbols and language derived from early childhood in her writing. It developed because I wanted to understand the significance of her pervasive use of the symbol of the perambulator. I believe this is the first time that critical analysis has focused on this symbol and it is through identifying and trying to understand the significance of this symbol that the thesis evolved. Analysis of the perambulator motif leads in a historical direction: it introduces historical resonances into her novels. It was the first truly mass-produced vehicle for the transport of a child. The first record of a child's carriage dates to the 5th or 6th century; however, proper 'perambulators' did not appear until the mid 1800s. One of the most well-known brands in England is Silver Cross which was first manufactured in Leeds in 1877; this factory has now closed. Before its invention middle-class babies or young infants were carried by their servants on their daily walk. The arrival of the perambulator onto the market had a profound effect on the Victorian culture or motherhood. It is an ambiguous symbol that represents freedom yet also constraint. The perambulator enabled mothers, nursemaids and babies to leave the patriarchal home and perambulate freely in the parks and the streets. The journey could be extended as it was more comfortable and safe for both parties since the baby could now be pushed. Yet this object also demonstrated how central childbearing was to the women and the extent to which women were dependent on men. The production of children was women's primary means of being creative. By using this motif Woolf provides an insight into the Victorian society and this era's views on motherhood. Furthermore, it is linked to her own private store of imagery.

Due to the intense amount of labour required before mass production of carriages, perambulators were perceived as more than just practical; they were elegant status symbols as well. Nursemaids were also seen as a sign of status for the family that had the money to hire them. It was generally the nursemaid that Woolf describes pushing or watching over the perambulator. It was the nursemaid's job to ensure that the child in her care was healthy.

Rules of Conduct for Polite Society (1900)[8] stressed that a daily walk in the fresh air was a joy yet also a necessity to maintain good health. Parks provided a suitable place to stroll and until the 1880s there was a cow in St James's Park, London, which would supply milk for nursemaids and their charges. A Victorian nursemaid could be content that the perambulator would help to control the babies in public, an important requirement in Victorian society.

Alison Light's recent book *Mrs Woolf and the Servants* (2007)[9] draws attention to the significant role of servants in Woolf's life and work. In her novels the children are not often looked after by their parents or even seen playing with them. The function of the nursemaid provided the parents with domestic convenience. In Woolf's novels children do not figure very often and when they are present they are not often looked after by their parents or even seen playing with them. Often the parents view their children from a distance, from a window or behind a door.

Within this thesis, and interlinked with the analysis of the nursemaid, is a discussion of her main domain: the nursery. Judith Flanders, who has written extensively on the layout and structure of the Victorian house dedicates a whole chapter of *The Victorian House* (2003) to these rooms for children: 'In an ideal nineteenth-century world, all homes would have had a suite of rooms- a night nursery and a day nursery- ready and waiting for use after the birth of the first child, together with a full complement of servants: a monthly nurse for the first three months, then a nursemaid.'[10] J.C. Loudon in *The Suburban Garden and Villa Companion* (1838) had to explain to his readers that specialised rooms for children were called nurseries as the nursery itself was a relatively new concept.[11] Flanders comments that only twenty-five years later was the idea so well assimilated that the architect Robert Kerr simply assumed that they were necessary when discussing the ideal house.[12] Separate areas were deemed necessary for the various members of the household. Servants were firmly segregated from the main household, with their quarters behind closed doors in basements,

where they spent the majority of their day and the attics where they slept. Within the house men and women each had their own designated rooms, men in studies and libraries whilst women resided in drawing rooms. Children occupied the nurseries within which various activities took place such as eating, washing, sleeping and reading. Often the nursery could be viewed as a place of isolation, to contain the children, to keep them out of trouble and a place of punishment. Terence in *The Voyage Out* waits for news of Rachel and he observes he has 'never been so bored since he was shut up in the nursery alone as a child' (TVO, p342). In 'A Sketch of the Past'[13] Woolf asserts that Hyde Park Gate, her childhood home, 'in 1900 was a complete model of Victorian society' (ASOP, p150). The Stephens were a tightly knit family and they brought their children up along conventional and strict guidelines. The discipline of the nursery and the nursemaid ruled the lives of the Stephen children.

In Woolf's own life the nursery in St. Ives and Talland House held strong memories for her: the nursery was the place where she first remembers talking to her sister Vanessa within 'the great extent and mystery of the dark land under the nursery table'(R, p1). In 'A Sketch of the Past' she sees the catalyst for remembering her past as being this childhood room: 'I see it- the past- as an avenue lying behind; a long ribbon of scenes, emotions. There at the end of the avenue still, are the garden and the nursery' (ASOP, p81). Evidently, the nursery was an important place for the young Woolf as she mentioned this room six times in the opening pages of 'A Sketch of the Past'. At night it was a place where she would become the family storyteller, enabling her to escape into a world of fantastic adventures, free from patriarchal conventions. Her childhood was a constant struggle between family patriarchal pressures and her desire for creativity. Writing and telling stories gave her a sense of power in a family where she otherwise felt powerless. Even though she did not receive a formal education, Woolf showed an early literary talent and from the age of nine produced the *Hyde Park Gate News*[14], a journal of daily life for the family to read. Later, when she was a

teenager, the nursery would be converted into a study to facilitate her hobby. It was within the nursery in Hyde Park Gate that she developed her love for writing and her need to write, a passion that although formed in early childhood lasted her whole life.

The perambulator as a symbol of early childhood

> Coveys of nursemaids pushed perambulators along the paths. Babies lay fast asleep in them like images of faintly tinted wax; their perfectly smooth eyelids fitted over their eyes as if they sealed them completely. (TY, p177)

The perambulator is a prominent symbol of early childhood. It represents infancy and it is an emblem of new life, a place of protection where the baby can sleep safely and develop. This thesis will consider the motivation behind Woolf's writing and its link with her own childhood. The fragments of rhymes and pre-verbal language that are found throughout her work are acknowledged, identified and analysed. Woolf recognised a basic human condition which is that nursery rhymes, refrains and lines learned in childhood have a peculiar tenacity and recur in adult thinking. In her book *Boys and Girls Forever: Reflections on Children's Classics* Alison Lurie suggests the following about children and their beliefs: 'Children are ritualists; they believe in the power of certain gestures and words, oaths and promises are binding; charms influence events; counting-out rhymes call upon the powers of fate. Even the simplest verse can have an almost magical effect.'[15] It is this use of nursery rhymes and the magic of simple words that seemed to fascinate Woolf and that pervaded most aspects of her writing and to some extent her thinking and outlook on life.

Woolf was obsessed with language and ultimately the failure of language. Through the use of nursery rhymes she underlines the inability of language to explain the mysteries of human thought and human behaviour. Her fictional characters shared her awareness of the limitations of conventional language. For example, in *The Waves*, Bernard realises that he

needs, 'a little language such as lovers use, words of one syllable such as children speak when they come into the room and find their mother sewing' (p199). Woolf longed for a language to represent childhood. She used stream of consciousness and tunnelling in an attempt to find this 'little language' and she was interested in how far language could be made to express childhood experience: could the pre-verbal be incorporated into her writing? In this thesis Woolf's use of the pre-verbal will be analysed in relation to Julia Kristeva's concept of the 'chora'. The pre-verbal refers to our first experiences of language before the subject enters the symbolic.

The memory of early childhood intrudes and interrupts the consciousness of each of Woolf's characters just as it appeared to do in her own life. Her memoirs are the best way to investigate her early childhood as they highlight the unusual degree to which she used the events of her life, the people, the emotions and the childhood incidents and placed them in her fiction. Like Freud, Woolf believed that much in adult identity was formed in the first years of life. In 'A Sketch of the Past' she stated that her entire life had stood upon a base formed in early childhood. She wrote faithfully about her own class and history and it is clear that the period of her early life involved immense and radical social, technological and cultural change.

Born into the Victorian world, which her parents represented, and coming into maturity as an author in the modern world, she lived through the climax of Britain's prosperity and political supremacy and the decline during World War One. From these transitions in Britain's political status, new ideologies, such as feminism, developed. Victorian Britain was one of the world's leading powers; it represented the peak of economic and imperial achievement. To the young Virginia Woolf, Queen Victoria was an icon and a myth. At the age of 15 she notes in her diary that she was captivated by the procession and tradition of the Diamond Jubilee: 'Troop after troop- one brilliant colour after another...The

Queen...smiled & nodded, her poor tired head.'[16] Virginia Woolf could not escape the cultural and intellectual influences of the time.

What made Victorian life a man's world was not only the power of the domestic ideal, but also the simple demography of Victorian life. In England, there was always a surplus of women. The Victorian age was characterised by its repressive and excessive respect for marriage and family life. This thesis considers the two central relationships that would influence Woolf's life: her mother and father, Julia and Leslie Stephen. Woolf emphasises the pressure of nineteenth-century domesticity in her writings and her relationship with her parents influenced and inspired her to create a plethora of complex characters and motifs that reveal to the reader the intricacies of Victorian society and provide a glimpse into Woolf's own childhood.

Woolf actually disliked the word 'novel' but could not find a suitable alternative to describe her writing: 'Oh no- I'm not a novelist. Always wanted to name my books afresh' (L3560, V6, p365). Woolf often reflected that her novels could better be classed as 'elegies' or some other term to suggest that her writing was not traditional fiction. An elegy is a poem or song composed as a lament for a deceased person. Stella McNichol recognized that *To the Lighthouse* (1927) was an autobiographical elegy to Woolf's 'father and mother, childhood and St. Ives, the sail to the lighthouse and the universal themes of love and marriage, life and death.'[17] The Ramsays, a typical Victorian family, have eight children- Andrew, Cam, James, Jasper, Nancy, Prue, Roger and Rose, the same number as Woolf's own family, although they did not all share the same parents (Herbert Duckworth was the father of Stella, Laura, George and Gerald). Woolf's novels do contain a number of deaths, for example, Rachel in *The Voyage Out*, Mrs Ramsay and Prue Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*[18], Septimus in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925)[19], Jacob in *Jacob's Room* (1922)[20], Rose Pargiter in *The Years* (1939)[21] and Percival in *The Waves*. As in real life, different characters cope with death and mourn in a

variety of ways. In *The Years* Delia Pargiter dispassionately stands at her mother's deathbed wishing she would die and believing her father feels the same way. After the death of Percival in *The Waves*, Neville is devastated yet Bernard experiences joy and sorrow as the event coincides with the birth of his son. Although Clarissa, in *Mrs Dalloway*, did not know Septimus, she identifies with him after the news of his death. In *The Voyage Out* Rachel could never really accept her mother's death; her melancholia stems from an inability to detach herself from Theresa as indeed Woolf struggled in her life to detach herself from her mother. 'Reminiscences', although written earlier in 1908, is situated within *Moments of Being*[22] alongside 'A Sketch of the Past' and it is in the form of a letter addressed to Woolf's sister Vanessa's first-born son. In this piece Woolf describes the death of her mother on the 5th May 1895 as 'the greatest disaster that could happen'(R, p11). Throughout her adult life Woolf was dealing with issues of the past. Her childhood included a quick succession of bereavements, breakdowns and traumatic events: Stella Duckworth's death in July 1897 (she was a significant figure in Woolf's childhood), the loss of her father Leslie Stephen in 1904 and then her brother Thoby Stephen's death in 1906. Although she endured these bereavements, ultimately she repressed them, only attempting to deal with them in later life.

Virginia Woolf's life was an experiment in living but her past always dominated her adult life. Her early childhood memories appear to have been relived, remembered, yet also repressed, throughout her adulthood. During her life she gave papers to the Memoir Club[23] and wrote recollections of her parents, Leslie and Julia Stephen, her siblings and her Victorian upbringing. The mechanics of writing became a type of therapeutic medium for dealing with her unresolved or hidden conflicts. Woolf's autobiographical writings, *Moments of Being*, provide readers with an intimate glimpse into her representation of infancy but she did not choose to publish any of these seminal pieces during her lifetime. This may have been for a number of reasons, including the personal content of some of the work. *Moments of*

Being was edited with an introduction and notes by Jeanne Schulkind from the 'Monks House Papers'[24] held at the University of Sussex in Falmer. This autobiographical retelling of her childhood was not published until 1976, after Leonard Woolf died in 1969. He left Monks House and its papers to his executor Trekkie Parsons who then donated the papers to the University, where the public were given access to her private memoirs. During my research I visited this important collection. The papers fall into three groups: letters, press cuttings and manuscripts. There is the sense of progression of Woolf's career as a writer from her early sketches to her final piece of short fiction, 'The Watering Place', written a couple of weeks before her suicide. Within the extensive collection there are also tape-recorded interviews between Quentin Bell and Leonard Woolf and David and Angelica Garnett when they recall their relationships with Virginia Woolf. I was particularly intrigued by the correspondence between Leonard and others, especially with regard to his wife's health when in 1913-1914 he wrote to a number of doctors seeking advice about the feasibility of the couple having children. In an early draft of 'A Sketch of the Past', found in the Monk's House Papers, it is also revealed how Woolf often felt 'imperfect' and 'inferior' compared to her clever, sensible, self-sufficient older sister. Her inferiority complex would continue into their adult lives and was compounded by the fact that Vanessa Bell had three children and she did not have any. Finally, there are a large number of notebooks which demonstrate Woolf's precise and careful attitude to writing and redrafting.

Jeanne Schulkind, who edited the collection, chose the title 'Moments of Being' to portray Woolf's belief that life appeared to be divided into two types of existence. Woolf believed that most of life is lived in a state of, what she called, non-being, which she compared to cotton wool padding surrounding those 'moments of being.' The most significant moment of being for Woolf was her early memory of the night nursery in Talland House which is recalled lyrically in 'A Sketch of the Past'.

Woolf commenced 'A Sketch of the Past' in the final two years of her life, from April to July 1939, and then from June to November 1940. Within this intimate material she focused on representing her early childhood and bringing to the surface very early relationships, experiences and memories. 'A Sketch of the Past' is a difficult text to define as it does not fit neatly into a category or genre of writing; it could be described as a memoir because this was Woolf's most sustained autobiographical piece, drawing extensively on the past. Stella McNichol, in her informative book *The Poetry of Fiction* (1990) sums up this particular piece of personal writing by suggesting it is, 'a kind of psychological-philosophical autobiography built in the main out of an analysis of significant 'moments' from her past through which she constructs a 'life' of her self.'[25] During her life, Woolf often spoke of writing her autobiography, but these unpublished writings are as close as we get to her formal memoirs. Memory plays a significant role in Woolf's thoughts and novels, reclaiming the past and her lost world of childhood. Underpinning my analysis of memoirs is an examination of the concept of memory and the fallibility of memory. The recollection of infancy is ultimately a process of recreation because memory itself is a form of narrative. 'The Third Stroke: Reading Woolf with Freud' (1992)[26] by Mary Jacobus proved an illuminating and relevant essay for exploring the notion of memory. Mary Jacobus considers that childhood memories can be either retroactively recovered or retrospectively constructed. Current psychological theories on memory suggest that adult recollections of early childhood are typically fragmentary and often not very accurate. According to researchers such as Usher and Neisser[27] the average person can accurately recall a few autobiographical memories from age five or six onwards, but remember virtually nothing before the age of three. In 'A Sketch of the Past' Woolf attempts to recall her mother's personality: 'There is the memory; but there is nothing to check that memory by; nothing to bring it to ground with' (ASOP, p96). Writing her memoirs so late in life signalled to Woolf that memory is not inactive or

nostalgic but reconstructive. Woolf wanted to know how to write life yet it involved her deeply questioning the role and reliability of memory.

The perambulator: the walker

> Directly one gets to work one is like a person walking, who has seen the country stretching out before. (DIX, V2, p36)

In *A Room of One's Own* (1929)[28] Woolf's famous polemical essay, the narrator walks along with wandering thoughts, thinking about the social effects of the war, and recognises that the following statement is true: 'It is strange how a scrap of poetry works in the mind and makes the legs move in time to it along the road' (AROO, p17). This links into another area of consideration involving the symbol of the perambulator which is the fact that the term 'perambulator' refers to the person pushing as well as the actual vehicle. It was the Victorians who popularised the name from the Latin words 'per' and 'ambulo' which simply mean to walk through, over or about. Psychiatry uses the term 'dromomaniac' to describe compulsive walkers like Woolf: people who possess an uncontrollable urge to wander. Her daily walks were recorded diligently in her numerous diaries. Frank Dean, a resident of Rodmell, the small village where Monk's House is located, actually witnessed Woolf's daily perambulations. During my research I visited Monk's House, East Sussex, where Leonard and Virginia lived from 1919 until their deaths, and interviewed Dean, the resident of Forge House, situated at the top of Rodmell cross-roads. His father, Christopher Dean, is mentioned occasionally in Woolf's letters as he was Rodmell's local builder and general smith. He is also referred to in her diaries (DXXI, V4, p124, DIX, V2, p66). He carried out various building and carpentry work in Monk's House including moving cupboards (DVIII, V1, p303), working on the spare room (DXXIX, V5, p257) and fixing their problem of damp in the kitchen (L1080, V2, p388). His wife, Franks' mother, is described by Woolf as being similar to 'the mouthpiece of the nation' because of the way she gave her opinions about the

war (DXXVII, V5, p177). The Dean family appear to have a long history in Rodmell and Frank's daughter Sandra remembered playing in the Woolfs' garden. She also interviewed Leonard Woolf, after his wife's death, for a college essay she was writing about Virginia Woolf's novels. Frank Dean, a former blacksmith, was the only occupant remaining in 2003 who could remember Virginia Woolf. He provided me with his recollections of Virginia and her husband Leonard. The main memory he had of Woolf was as a devoted perambulator, roaming the lanes and fields around the village.

Mr Dean described Woolf's appearance: she was very tall and thin, looking like a 'beanstalk in that dreadful long mack'. She always had 'awful taters in her stockings.' She appeared to be a very shy woman and would usually walk in places where she knew she would not meet people. He showed me a photograph that Woolf had taken of him digging a grave. She had been on one of her daily walks and had spotted Mr Dean digging a grave in the local churchyard. She was fascinated and also amused by this image. She had asked if she could photograph him. He mused that perhaps she was interested in the juxtaposition between life and death in the composition of the shot. On other occasions Woolf would be seen as a lonely figure in the distance, wandering down below the village, through fields, between ditches and along the river bank. This was where she killed herself. Wally Auckett was one of the residents who had spotted her on her walk on the twenty-eighth of March, 1941 and he saw her go to the river and he "let her be" because he was working on the other side of the field and he, "D'aint know what she was at."[29] She filled her pockets with stones from the bank and walked into the water. Mr Dean remembered how he was called upon that afternoon to help drag the water in the river Ouse, but dragging was difficult as the rope wouldn't sink. Woolf's body lay on the river bed undiscovered for several days, eventually to be found by children playing near the river, and then was brought out from the water at the point she had entered it, with scarcely a mark on it. The information from the interview highlighted the fact

that even though Virginia Woolf lived in Rodmell for twenty-two years, her life alternated between homes in London and Monk's House; no one really knew much about her and even though people knew she wrote books, no one had ever read them. Mr Dean commented that for Woolf the village was a refuge from her hectic London life. Indeed both Leonard and Virginia enjoyed living there and the daily act of perambulation proved fundamental to her own creative process and state of mind.

Woolf carried out most of her own creative thinking, ideas and composing as she perambulated. Woolf learned to walk at St. Ives and her father had taught her this necessary skill along the shore path to Godrevy. During her youth she and Vanessa would make up stories on their daily perambulations. The act of walking was medicinal for the writer Woolf and during her breakdowns she was advised to partake in a daily stroll. It was on her walks that she learnt an amazing skill that she could write as she walked. This premise was central to Woolf's creative process: walking to stimulate ideas and generate thoughts. Her essay, 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure'[30] published in the *Yale Review* in October 1927 provides us with more insight into the parallels between walking and writing.

The narrator's strong desire for 'street rambling' inspires a suitable excuse to escape the house: to buy a lead pencil. This protagonist states that rambling the streets of London is 'the greatest pleasure of town life in winter' (SH, p1). The reason the walk has to be undertaken in winter is due to the fact that it will not be so hot and therefore more people will be out on the street, not seeking shade. Walking on the streets with the masses enables the narrator to feel anonymity of some sort and shed their usual persona. They leave their usual mask behind them as they close the door to their house. Bowlby discussed the figure of the flaneur and introduced the flaneuse in her essay entitled 'Walking, Women and Writing' (1988)[31] and the narrator in 'Street Haunting' could be classed as a flaneuse as the essay is structured around an actual walk through the streets of London. A letter to the editor of the

Yale Review implies that Woolf agreed to change her original title, possibly to add the phrase 'A London Adventure'. The story mentions the Strand which is an important and busy street in central London: it is frequently mentioned in Woolf's novels. The term flaneuse depicts a woman writer who finds creative stimulation whilst walking in the city. The urban streets provide a means of escape from the patriarchal home.

The narrator spends the whole journey imagining what is going on behind doors, curtains and in shops. Significantly, one scene is observed at the door of the boot shop as a dwarf is trying on various pairs of shoes. 'This lady' is unusual as she has 'perfectly proportioned' feet suited to a woman of normal size. The narrator imagines that the dwarf thinks that the rest of her body is as perfect as her feet: 'Feet are the most important part of the whole person' (SH, p5). However, once the shoes have been chosen and she had reached the street 'she had become a dwarf' again (SH, p5). The walk reveals city life and Woolf's emphasis on the importance of feet is striking yet the most interesting part of the story is the fact that this narrator is an outsider, always looking in. Is this due to her profession or her love of perambulating?

It is in *The Voyage Out* Woolf's first novel, that she stresses the importance of perambulating. Even though Virginia and Leonard were married in 1912 this novel owes little to Leonard's influence if only because she had already spent years on it. Walking dominates this novel. The novel opens with Helen and Ridley Ambrose walking along the Embankment. Further into the book Terence Hewet reads a newspaper article which describes a lady walking in the streets of Westminster who perceived a cat in the window of a deserted house (TVO, p113). In the book that Terence is reading the hero Hugh and his wife Betty have been on a walking tour in Switzerland (TVO, p303). In the hotel, Rachel Vinrace, the main protagonist, and Miss Allan notice the collection of walking shoes and boots along the passage, all different types and colours arranged in various ways. This sight motivates Miss

Allan to announce that people are like their boots (TVO, p263). Rachel and Terence discuss the possibility of married life and laugh at the simplicity of being able to walk together in London. The plot of this novel is centred on various walks and expeditions and the title indicates this emphasis on journeys: 'We discovered on the voyage out that we ought to have booked passage on the return boat, which is very full' (L223, V1, p186). In this letter to Violet Dickinson Woolf uses this phrase by chance but the sea journey in 1905 was the source of her inspiration for the title and early chapters of this novel.

The characters in *The Voyage Out* advocate the premise that walking assists the mind's quickness. Mr Dalloway describes to Rachel the fact that his best ideas have come to him when he has been perambulating the great court at Trinity (TVO, p60). Various characters use perambulating as a means of assisting thinking, a method of defining sensations. Both Rachel and Terence have to embark on walks as they attempt to comprehend their feelings for each other. Rachel starts one walk strolling; she does not see directly where she is going and is almost in a trance. As she walked her mind became less confused and she began to realise the cause of her exaltations. She wondered what it was like to be in love. When she recognised this was the emotion she felt for Hewet she discovered that unconsciously she had been walking faster and faster: 'her body trying to outrun her mind' (TVO, p175). In a similar way and at a comparable time in their relationship Hewet declares the need to go for a walk and his emotions propel him along so he is walking fast to the Ambroses' villa. Later in the novel Hewet asks his group if anyone was inclined for a walk (TVO, p204). Not surprisingly Rachel is. Walking facilitates their relationship and is a way for them to spend time together. When walking in the jungle Rachel and Hewet did so in silence yet 'their steps unconsciously quickened' (TVO, p278). It is on this walk that they awkwardly and uncomfortably declare their love for each other.

Characters stroll, pace and perambulate throughout the novel: on the ship, the Euphrosyne, in the hotel, Santa Marina and the jungle. Walking also serves another purpose in *The Voyage Out* as various walking speeds reflect the character's moods. When trying to broach the subject of love Rachel and Terence find they are walking faster than normal. This speed of walking suggests the excitement and indulgence of being in love. On the other hand, strolls are casual walks which don't involve very deep or meaningful conversations. 'Seeing life' was a phrase Rachel and Helen used for their habit of strolling through the town of Santa Marina after dark when they would watch the young men and women engaged in amorous talk (TVO, p96-7). Characters pace when they are disturbed or agitated about an issue, for example St. John paces when he is full of thoughts about his future career (TVO, p209). When Hewet is in a bad mood his movement reflects this: 'He walked fast in spite of the heat of the sun' (TVO, p246). The main cause of his frustration was that he believed that Rachel was in love with his friend St. John Hirst. When characters feel impotent, or when they do not know how to act, they walk. After the news of Rachel's death many characters begin walking round the hotel and the corridors. Mrs Flushing paces in her room, angry and furious at the tragedy and determined to beat death (TVO, p366). Mrs Thornbury walks along the passage not sure where she is going but needing to move. Words are not appropriate to display their emotions and grief at the loss of their young friend.

It is acknowledged in the novel that 'words lack substance' (TVO, p286) and Woolf hints that there is a lack of resolution in words yet movement seems to provide a release for the characters as well as transporting them from one place to another: 'Physical movement was the only refuge, in and out of rooms, in and out of people's mind' (TVO, p268). Woolf correlated walking with autonomy. In a similar way, Rachel in *The Voyage Out* finds that walking in Richmond Park provides her with freedom from her daily routine, freedom from her aunts and most importantly, freedom to think by herself, unrestricted. For Woolf, walking

provided a means of articulating her thoughts into solid sentences: 'I keep thinking of different ways to manage my scenes; conceiving endless possibilities; seeing life, as I walk about the streets, an immense opaque block of material to be conveyed by me into its equivalent of language' (DV, V1, p214).

Perambulation links to the extended and widely cited metaphor in Woolf's work of life as journey. In her novels mental states are described in terms of external landscapes. In *The Voyage Out* the journey is a metaphor of inward exploration. Woolf attempted to find a literary form for the representation of daily life, reality, and the wandering thoughts which enter the mind every minute of the day. She did this by breaking conventions of plot and narrative: 'Don't bother about the plot: the plot's nothing' (BTA, p56). Away from the constraint of plot Woolf was free to move between inner and outer worlds: a technique which makes the reader unsure whether an actual conversation has taken place or an internal passage of thought. Thought fades into speech as though the two were not perceived as separate. Her narratives shift swiftly from person to person incorporating different perspectives and points of view, in a similar way to the perambulator in 'Street Haunting' who crosses and walks down many different roads; stops outside various shops and thinks about innumerable issues. Woolf uses perambulation by showing the complexity of experience, demonstrating to the reader an internal and external view of the central characters of each novel. For example, in *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf introduces us to Clarissa's internal thoughts as she steps out into the London streets then one of her neighbours notices her standing by the kerb and gives the reader their first external perspective on this woman: 'A charming woman, Scrope Purvis thought her (knowing her as one does know people who live next door to one in Westminster); a touch of the bird about her' (MD, p6). Woolf was keenly interested in the connections between walking and writing and through the use of stream of consciousness and tunnelling techniques she attempted to capture in words the swarm and

confusion of life. By demonstrating the perambulations of the mind she tried to break down the numerous screens human beings use to hide their real self from other people. Therefore, it is not just the perambulator motif that is significant to Woolf's work but the use of perambulation.

The empty perambulator

> But in actually writing one's mind, as you know, gets into a trance, and the different images seem to come unconsciously. (L3055, V5, p422)

Finally, the predominance of the perambulator symbol in Woolf's work is made even more poignant when we realise that she would never have a reason to use a perambulator in her own life. The evidence from her private life shows that the symbol is a significant pointer to the fact that Woolf desired to have children of her own. In 1913, once Virginia Woolf had outwardly resigned herself to the fact that she would not have any children, her repressed longings and desires for children came to the surface in her public writing, most obviously with the inclusion of the perambulator symbol. It could be argued that the symbol of the perambulator arose from a deep inner necessity, just as images arise in dreams, and enabled Woolf's desire for a child to manifest itself in her creation. Woolf admits in the above quotation, taken from a letter to John Lehmann in 1935 that in her writing various images seem to be conjured up in her mind indicating the role of the unconscious.

There seemed to be two possible routes for Woolf as a woman, a clear choice of directions to follow: to be a mother, like her sister Vanessa, or to be a writer. Although they were very close the relationship between Vanessa and Virginia was also a source of jealousy for Woolf, as her sister had three children: Julian, Quentin and Angelica. Each of Woolf's mental breakdowns can be associated with a crisis in female identity; her conception of

society's views of female success and female roles. It appears that Woolf's most severe breakdown followed Leonard's decision that they would not have children.

Throughout Woolf's writing, artistic creation by women is figured as both a symbolic equivalent for mothering and something which is incompatible with actual mothering. In her diaries, Woolf frequently refers to her books as babies, and compares herself with her sister Vanessa Bell, who was both a mother and an artist. For example in a diary entry in 1929 Woolf writes:

> How odd to think that I have given the world something that the world enjoys- I refer to the Manchester Guardian- Orlando is recognised for the masterpiece that it is. The Times does not mention Nessa's pictures. Yet, she said last night, I have spent a long time over one of them. Then I think to myself, So I have something, instead of children, & fall comparing our lives. (DXVIII, V3, p217)

Woolf used her writing to compete with her sister's own creations. Woolf even personified her books and gave them human characteristics. When she wrote about her work in her diaries, and even her letters, she frequently used images of conception, labour and childbirth. In her article on this subject 'Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor' (1993)[32] Susan Stanford Friedman presents her findings on this popular metaphor for writing. She discovered that the childbirth metaphor has been prevalent among men as well as women writers throughout the centuries. Metaphors which link childbirth with creating or writing also reveal society's cultural notions on creating and childbirth. Dichotomies such as 'books-babies' often turn out to be a woman's dilemma; this suggests the confines of an alternative, either children or writing. Throughout the history of literature, numerous examples exist of women who have been given the advice to give birth to a child instead of writing or, on the other hand, who have sacrificed bearing children in order to be able to write.

Woolf's own compulsive and voracious writing filled much of her waking day. When she was in the process of writing a novel her working routine was almost non-stop and all-consuming. Woolf had her own perfect writing board with pen tray attached and she would even keep a pencil and paper by her bed which enabled her to scribble phrases and ideas down as soon as they came to her. Louie Mayer, the Woolfs' cook at Monk's House recalled viewing these essential writing implements by Woolf's bed when she brought her coffee in the morning. Mayer also recalled that during the night Woolf often spoke aloud the sentences she had written, asking herself questions and then giving herself the answers.[33] Woolf loved ordering and fashioning sentences and Mrs Mayer's recollection emphasises how important the shape and content of each sentence was. Whilst Leonard appeared to have all the control when it came to the decision not to have children, she asserted her control over words.

The actual moments when Woolf conceived an idea for a novel were often sudden, vivid, ecstatic and linked to her physical state of mind. Woolf admitted she conceived *Jacob's Room* as she looked at the fire in Hogarth Press and *To the Lighthouse* was conceived in Tavistock Square one afternoon. It is well-documented that the seed was sown for *The Waves* by a letter from Vanessa in 1927 and while having her bath she conceived an entirely new book, a sequel to *A Room of One's Own* about the sexual life of women to be called *Professions for Women* (DXX, V4, p6). Although the conception was often a very strong, powerful impulse, a period of gestation was necessary for Woolf to develop the initial birth of an idea. She writes candidly about her fears, when beginning writing a new book: 'I'm a little anxious. How am I to bring off this conception?'; 'I want to write nothing in this book that I dont enjoy writing. Yet writing is always difficult' (DIX, V2, p35-6).

Continuing this analogy, she refers to herself poignantly, when she has writer's block, as a virgin: 'For some weeks, since finishing The Lighthouse I have thought myself virgin, passive, blank of ideas' (DXVI, V3, p131). Even the simple act of writing is portrayed as

sacred and synonymous with the act of fornication. 'I cant bring myself to break the virginity of a sheet of paper' (DVIII, V1, p297). Her novels demonstrate the fertility of her imagination and she was acutely aware when she was producing good work that she was fecund and her mind was fully fertilised. She comments on this insight as she is preparing what would be her last novel *Between the Acts*, in her private diaries: 'Never have I been so fertile. Also: the old hunger for books is on me: the childish passion So that I am very 'happy' as the saying is: & excited by PH' (DXXIX, V5, p336). On the other hand, she was also painfully aware of when she struggled with writing and she literally describes herself as being impotent: 'After a sterile bitter morning, the vein flows' (DXXV, V5, p12).

Woolf experienced pain, illness and inner turmoil during the conception and labour of all her novels. Paradoxically, Woolf found illness to be a way of bringing a piece of work to birth. There was a definite link between creativity and illness and she confesses this strange fact in her diary: 'these curious intervals in life- I've had many- are the most fruitful artistically- one becomes fertilised' (DXIX, V3, p254). It was almost as if defying strict orders to rest enabled the process of conception to occur. Presumably, illness provided for Woolf revelations as well as miseries. Her creative works were not simply the results of her indefinable illness but both her creativity and her illness were the results of an unnaturally intelligent mind. Writing was alternately the cause and cure of Woolf's disturbing mental states and as she put more of herself into writing, so her mental state became progressively worse.

Writing for Woolf was always divided into two categories, which seemed to coincide with her state of mind and her health: one was hard work and one was speed and release, she referred to the difference as between 'donkey work' and 'galloping'. Accordingly, writing in her diary about her progress in *Three Guineas* (1938)[34] she recounts: 'Oh how violently I have been galloping through these mornings! It (the book) has pressed & spurted out of me'

(DXXVI, V5, p112). However, using the analogy of childbirth, not all her books were so easy to deliver; the most difficult appears to have been *The Voyage Out* and *The Years*. With these two novels she suffered two of her most severe breakdowns. *The Voyage Out* was Woolf's 'first-born' and in a similar manner to the mother giving her blood and body to her unborn child, Woolf gave herself completely emotionally and physically to this piece of work. The following quotation, taken from an early diary, indicates the violent and often distressing process of creation for Woolf as she writes that 'a page of Melymbrosia was strangled in the birth this morning' (L429, V1, p345). Whilst writing her first novel Woolf took rooms in Wells at the beginning of August 1908 and she confesses in a letter to her sister that the labour of this protean novel was a real struggle. During her stay in Wells, a lodging ran by someone called Dorothy Oram, the two Oram children played all day long beneath her window and this, combined with her challenging work, encouraged Woolf to think about having children: 'What it is like to have a child...I understood...the precise nature of the pain' (L432, V1, p348). She equated the struggle of writing with giving birth. Woolf endured an arduous, painful and prolonged labour for her first novel as it was over eight years after the novel's conception that it was eventually published. Following the completion and acceptance of this novel in 1913 she entered a prolonged period of depression and illness during which, on the 9th September 1913, she attempted suicide.

Later in her career during the process of revising *The Years*, the second longest after *Night and Day* (1919)[35], she again links in her diary to the process of childbirth and a long, laborious and painful labour. With *The Years*, in particular, she had set herself a difficult task as her aim was to give 'the whole of the present society- nothing less: facts, as well as the vision. And to combine them both' (DXXII, V4, p151). Woolf was an indefatigable researcher and most importantly she saw this piece of work as real life, an honest summing up of all she had observed and knew, including things she liked, and also despised, about her

society. When she did start to tackle the rewriting of this novel she calls it an 'awful moment' (DXXIII, V4, p261). Woolf recorded her progress privately within her diaries and we can see more examples of the childbirth metaphor: 'I must subconsciously wean my mind from it finally & prepare another creative mood, or I shall sink into acute despair' (DXXV, V4, p360). It seems that the most difficult period of the writing procedure for Woolf was when she commenced revisions, before the books were delivered into the world of male critics. This is confirmed by her husband Leonard Woolf in his autobiography: 'The weeks or months in which she finished a book would always be a terrific mental and nervous strain upon her and bring her to the verge of a mental breakdown.'[36] Woolf despised and resented the incessant correcting and editing of her own creations; often the actual process of writing appeared to be free, fluid and quick enough, yet the task of editing, the drudgery of correcting, would seemingly drain her mentally and physically. Evidence of this can be found in her diaries, where she admits that the 'repulsiveness of correcting' 'nauseates' her and that she cannot stand the 'cramming in & the cutting out' (DXX, V4, p16). Physical symptoms that seemed to occur when she was in the process of editing, include black moods, typical migraines, trembling hands, brain spinning, lethargy and tiredness: 'My mind is all tight like a ball of string' (DXXIV, V4, p290). When she writes of the drudgery and pain of correcting *The Common Reader* (1925)[37] she describes how she fainted and she compares the experience and the pain to childbirth: 'Then pain, as of childbirth; & then that too slowly faded; & I lay presiding, like a flickering light, like a most solicitous mother, over the shattered splintered fragments of my body. A very acute & unpleasant experience' (DXXI, V4, p121).

Clearly, the editing stage was a dangerous time for Woolf as it also produced doubts about her ability and the quality of her material: 'I am obsessed at nights with the idea of my own worthlessness' (L2057, V4, p80). Consequently, when feelings of worthlessness arose

her own devils re-emerged and her thoughts would often turn to the fact that she had no children.

Her private labour during *The Years* cannot be disputed and she even had an estimated date of delivery in 1935, in a similar way to pregnant women: 'I have promised to deliver The Years by 15th Feb' (DXXIV, V4, p356). Woolf set herself targets, sometimes unrealistic ones, as to when she would finish a piece of work and *The Years* was a little overdue; it was actually finished on the 8th April 1936 and Woolf posted the final pages of the revised typescript of the creation to Clark the printers. Her concentrated work on the revisions had already brought her close to nervous collapse, with familiar symptoms of headaches and sleeplessness. Subsequently, there were no entries in her diary between 9th April and 11th June 1936. Leonard Woolf later recalled this period as a 'terrifying time', when her depression and anxiety over this novel produced a state of mind and body which brought her close to suicide. Finally, on Thursday 11th June 1936 Woolf wrote:

> I can only, after 2 months, make this brief note, to say at last after 2 months dismal & worse, almost catastrophic illness- never been so near the precipice to my own feeling since 1913- I'm again on top. (DXXV, V5, p24)

As time passed she continued to look back at that long 'childbirth' and reflects in her diary how she still thinks about that summer: 'Every morning a headache, & forcing myself into that room in my nightgown; & lying down after a page: & always with the certainty of failure' (DXXV, V5, p31-2). These moments of extreme honesty, coupled with uncertainty, are representative of Woolf's juxtaposition of self doubt and dogged ambition. Her determination and labour is an example of Victorian industriousness. Her conscious use of the childbirth metaphor is blatant and obvious.

Throughout her life the completion of major written works would always be a dangerous time for Virginia Woolf: 'My books only gave me pain, Ch. Bronte said. Today I agree' (DXXIX, V5, p311). When her novels were finished she was left in a state of exhaustion, of near madness as her thoughts raced and she became possessed with doubts: about the worth; the value of the books she had written; if she ought to write again; if she will ever be able to write again; how her friends will react; how kind or cruel the critics will be; if she will be dismissed as a forgotten failure. After each novel was published, the delivery date reached and the book had entered the world Woolf suffered excruciatingly, almost experiencing a breakdown, as she had physically to let her creation go into the hands of the critics. Ultimately it could be argued that Woolf suffered from post-partum feelings after each one of her books had been delivered into the world and this has been likened to postpartum depression. There is a typical 'after-book gloom' as Woolf herself admits. Symbolically her books were her offspring; they were born of the mind and she was always concerned about how her 'babies' would be received by the male world of critics:

> Virginia was terribly-even morbidly- sensitive to criticism of any kind and from anyone. Her writing was to her the most serious thing in life, and, as with so many serious writers, her books were to her part of herself and felt to be part of herself somewhat in the same way as a mother often seems all her life to feel that her child remains still part of herself...the publication of a book meant something very like torture to her.[38]

As Leonard confirms in his autobiography, publication for his wife involved the 'throwing of it (the text) and herself to the critics.'[39]

It is within her diaries that we can see clearly the seed of each book germinating and growing. Readers can also acknowledge the pain and anguish Woolf suffered on the emergence of her creation into the public sphere. Perhaps the reason she consciously used

these images is to represent the intense and often painful emotions they represented and to give her creativity significance alongside Vanessa's own children.

Childlessness was a permanent source of grief for Woolf and without a child of her own she became reliant on her relationship with Vanessa's children. Woolf doted on her sister's children, praising their virtues and characteristics to many of her friends and correspondents. In particular, her relationship with Angelica, Vanessa's third and youngest child, born on Christmas Day 1918, is one of consequence and significance. *Deceived with Kindness* (1995)[40] by Angelica Garnett (nee Bell) is a revealing book as it provides us with a glimpse of Virginia Woolf from the perspective of a young child, not a contemporary. In her playful and quirky letters to Angelica, Woolf signed herself 'Jinny' or 'Ginny'; this was her own childhood name (therefore, she did become in a sense Angelica's sister). Woolf's sense of fun and humour is revealed in Angelica Garnett's memoirs: she was receptive and open to children; moreover they enjoyed her company.

There is an obvious mobility and a transition that is acknowledged in my thesis from Woolf wanting a child to becoming a child. Woolf remained a child, in some ways, throughout her life. Subsequently, childhood always forms an important background to the way the Woolf's characters think and act. Woolf's fiction displays a constant awareness of the past, especially early childhood. Early childhood is a prominent part of Woolf's work which is suggestive of her desire to return to this time. It appears that in Woolf's novels she employs two modes of consciousness, just as in real life at any one moment an adult can feel like a child again. In *The Years* Rose felt 'that she was living at two different times at the same moment. She was a little girl wearing a pink frock; and here she was in this room, now' (TY, p123). Woolf constructs similes to demonstrate that her characters still resemble or exhibit childlike mannerisms. In her novels it is often the older characters that retain some aspect of their infancy. In the section entitled '1914' Martin meets Sara at St. Paul's and

invites her to lunch. During their meal, Sara is described sitting at the table looking at the other customers 'as if she were a child that he had taken to a pantomime' (TY, p169). Furthermore, Mrs Swithin in *Between the Acts* noticeably changes when William Dodge talks to her: 'At that she revived, like a girl in a garden in white, among roses, who came running to meet him' (BTA, p122). Later in the novel while she reads a criss-cross letter from an old friend in Scarborough this elderly woman is depicted as a child: 'Lucy turned the page, quickly, guiltily, like a child who will be told to go to bed before the end of the chapter' (BTA, p129). In her private writing Woolf also uses these similes. She writes in her 1940 diary of a dinner she shared with Hugh Walpole and his reaction on discovering one of Woolf's friends had read his work: 'He looked like a small boy tipped- an endearing bashfulness' (DXXIX, V5, p258). She refers to her friend Frank 'Peter' Lucas as being 'nice, charming, boyish' (DXX, V4, p50). Woolf also uses these similes when writing about herself, for example, in 'A Sketch of the Past' she uses this figure of speech to depict her transition from the present to the past: 'Let me then, like a child advancing with bare feet into a cold river, descend again into that stream' (ASOP, p108). The excessive use of these similes in all her writing is significant and demonstrates Woolf's own belief in the continued existence and importance of early childhood.

CHAPTER ONE

TUNNELLING BACK TO CHILDHOOD

> Many bright colours; many distinct sounds; some human beings, caricatures; comic; several violent moments of being, always including a circle of the scene which they cut out: and all surrounded by a vast space- that is a rough visual description of childhood. This is how I shape it; and how I see myself as a child, roaming about, in that space of time which lasted from 1882 to 1895. (ASOP, p91)

Early childhood

This chapter deals with Woolf's early childhood about which she wrote extensively. The first section considers Woolf's own infancy and how it may have affected and shaped her output as a visionary and idiosyncratic writer. The analysis of Woolf's formative years is based on the primary sources of *Hyde Park Gate News*, Woolf's early journals for the years 1897-1909 published in 1990 with the title *Passionate Apprentice* and edited by Mitchell A. Leaska and *Moments of Being* which is a collection of Woolf's autobiographical writing, including 'A Sketch of the Past'.

Virginia Woolf was a late Victorian middle class child. She spent her childhood in Hyde Park Gate, London, which she describes in her memoir entitled 'Old Bloomsbury' as 'that little irregular cul-de-sac which lies next to Queen's Gate and opposite to Kensington Gardens' (OB, p43). Although Virginia did not meet her future husband Leonard Woolf formally in childhood, they did live in close proximity during their early years. Leonard Woolf and his eight brothers and sisters were also raised in relative affluence in Kensington until his father's early death in 1891, when Leonard was eleven years old, which prompted the family to move to Putney. Number 22 Hyde Park Gate, Woolf's childhood home, was a

complicated household containing six other children. Woolf's view of this home was 'a house of innumerable small oddly shaped rooms built to accommodate not one family but three' (OB, p44). This five-storey house is portrayed by Woolf as affording very little privacy and Woolf states in one of her memoirs that the commodity of folding doors was a focal and indispensable part of family life. In her autobiographical account simply entitled '22 Hyde Park Gate', which she read to the Memoir Club (1920), Woolf uses a rhetorical question to emphasise this feature of her childhood home and the importance of these dividing devices: 'How could family life have been carried on without them? As soon dispense with water-closets or bathrooms as with folding doors in a family of nine men and women' (22 HPG, p31). These folding doors were referred to in Woolf's early journals when she writes that she was hiding from Mrs Green, her father's visitor, in her 'usual position behind the folding doors' (APA, p82). Overall, the tone of '22 Hyde Park Gate' is humorous and light-hearted but it also does depict the hectic and busy schedule of the home. It describes how crowded the Stephen family was with a constant stream of visitors adding to the already extensive family that lived in this dwelling.

As well as coping with many visitors, the family also lived in close proximity to their neighbours and the children could see 'Mrs Redgrave washing her neck in her bedroom across the way' (OB, p44).The childhood home was reported to be gloomy because the street was incredibly narrow and from an infant's point of view the house may also have appeared dark due to their mother's choice of furniture: 'Mounds of plush, Watts' portraits, busts shrined in crimson velvet, enriched the gloom of a room naturally dark and thickly shaded in summer by showers of Virginia Creeper' (22 HPG, p31). Victorian furniture was intended to be elegant but comfortable; however it was mainly created from drab heavy woods like mahogany and oak. Additionally their childhood home had only a small garden at the back and no front garden. These circumstances may all have contributed to the Stephen children's

claustrophobic, intense childhood experience. Woolf describes the position of her childhood home as quiet, the only noises being made from 'an occasional hansom or butcher's cart' (OB, p45). In 'Old Bloomsbury' she remarked that the overall atmosphere of 22 Hyde Park Gate consisted of a 'muffled silence' (OB, p46).

The house was associated with a whole spectrum of feelings and emotions. 22 Hyde Park Gate was where Vanessa, Virginia, Thoby and Adrian Stephen were born. Their grandmother died there as did both their parents, Julia and Leslie Stephen. Although Stella Duckworth had become engaged to Jack Hills at Hindhead, she lived in this house during their engagement. For Woolf, her childhood home was described in a memoir later in her life as 'tangled and matted with emotion' (OB, p45). In this same memoir, 'Old Bloomsbury', Woolf continues to detail these varied memories of her childhood home:

> When I look back upon that house it seems to me so crowded with scenes of family life, grotesque, comic and tragic; with the violent emotions of youth, revolt, despair, intoxicating happiness, immense boredom, with parties of the famous and the dull; with rages again, George and Gerald; with love scenes with Jack Hills; with passionate affection for my father alternating with passionate hatred of him, all tingling and vibrating in an atmosphere of youthful bewilderment and curiosity- that I feel suffocated by the recollection. (OB, p45)

From the secure base of the nursery Woolf developed her love of stories and her incredible mastery of words. Woolf's verbal ability was her main weapon in the nursery and she used this to fight for her identity and also her place in this large family. Woolf was the most beguiling of storytellers, a skill she learnt from a very young age. Storytelling was a nursery ritual and within the confines of this room all of the Stephen children fantasised freely about a number of topics, including their neighbours. For example, they would invent fantastic, intricate stories about Miss Rosalba, the governess and the Dilke family: 'How they

dug under the floor and discovered sacks of gold; and held great feasts and ate fried eggs "with plenty of frizzling"' (ASOP, p91). The children's narratives became more elaborate with their own experience of reading and literature.

The Stephen children would swap and share notes on their own individual reading. Throughout her own life, Woolf voraciously devoured literature and made a note of the books she had read, as well as including salient thoughts or criticisms in her diaries. She appeared to set herself a rigorous reading schedule, often reading more than one book at a time. In the collection of her early writings, in a section simply entitled 1897, she records on her birthday Monday 25th January that she was reading four books at once. Books were her passion from early childhood and in this journal she comments that 'books are the greatest help and comfort' (APA, p79). This was particularly relevant during Stella's illness and at the time of her subsequent death. Throughout her life, Woolf would read every genre of book available, considering it important to keep in touch with both classic texts and contemporary authors. Her father, Leslie Stephen, also read aloud to his children from a range of sources. The following list of books that he read to his children is documented in Hermione Lee's authoritative biography of Virginia Woolf:

> *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and *Treasure Island*...the thirty-two volumes of the Waverley Novels, which...when we had finished the last he was ready to begin the first over again, as well as Carlyle's *French Revolution*, Jane Austen, Hawthorne, Shakespeare and the great English poets, especially Milton.[1]

The varied literary background may have been one of the catalysts which encouraged and stimulated the children's imaginations.

Childhood for Woolf was divided between Cornwall and London: the idyllic, holiday world of St. Ives was juxtaposed with normal everyday life and routine at 22 Hyde Park Gate. The highlight of the Stephen children's year was undoubtedly the summer holiday to Cornwall, where Leslie Stephen had taken the lease on Talland House, above Porthminster Beach, on the edge of St. Ives. It is often reported that Woolf spent the happiest days of her life there; evidently the children felt free from the restraints of Victorian society at the seaside. The Stephen children invented repetitive tales that seemed to be associated either with their London home or with Talland House. Often the monotony and dullness of Virginia Woolf's daily walks around the Round Park, along the Broad Walk or Flower Walk in London inspired the creative narratives at the end of the day. For example the 'Jim, Joe and Harry Hoe' story about three brothers and their herds of animals belonged to their London night nursery. Woolf informs the reader in 'A Sketch of the Past' that a superior story was one composed in St. Ives about Beccage and Hollywinks, 'spirits of evil who lived on the rubbish heap; and disappeared through a hole in the escallonia hedge' (ASOP, p89). These stories provide an insight into the Stephen children's fertile imaginations and more importantly foreshadow Woolf's future career as an innovative and groundbreaking author.

Eventually the children's love of storytelling made a logical progression from the safe haven of the nursery to the publication of a weekly family magazine. Juvenile magazines appeared to be a favourite pastime in literary 19th century families such as the Brontes or the Bensons. In February 1891 the periodical *Hyde Park Gate News* was started. Journals such as *Cornhill* and *Pall Mall Gazette* may have influenced the choice of this street name as a title. This publication is only now beginning to receive the attention it deserves having recently been published in 2005 by Hesperus Press. Before its publication, the sixty-nine surviving issues were only to be found in the library of the British Museum. In the beginning Vanessa Stephen acted as the chief amanuensis although Virginia Woolf and her brother Thoby were

the main authors. Adrian also contributed to his siblings' magazine. Woolf was only nine years old when *Hyde Park Gate News* began and it is clear that even at this early age she enjoyed the game of publication and manipulating words and phrases. It was through this early role as journalist that Woolf could display her talents and this magazine provided her with an outlet and, indeed, an early apprenticeship, in writing. Hermione Lee confirms this fact in the foreword of the collection where she states that this publication reveals, 'early symptoms of one of the world's great diary writers.'[2]

Hyde Park Gate News is a superb source for biographers as it reports on Stephen family business in London and in St. Ives. It provides a clear insight into Stephen family culture and enables us to read a child's telescopic interpretation of the Victorian world. Virginia Woolf had an outwardly happy, secure and privileged childhood and the *Hyde Park Gate News* captures extremely well the innocence, simplicity and excitement of infancy. Inside its pages we learn more about Woolf's childhood, the games the children liked to play and the conversations they shared. Additionally the publication includes family gossip, correspondence (fictional letters), riddles, poems, accounts of plays and concerts, drawings and serialized stories.

Within its numerous pages, there are comments on the weather: the issues in February 1895 report that the frost had been continually severe and the ice on some parts of the Serpentine measured seven and a half inches (HPGN, p179). Consequently, all the pipes froze at Hyde Park Gate and the kitchen boiler did not work. As well as providing details of the weather, the children's birthday and Christmas presents are often listed. For example, on Woolf's tenth birthday it is recorded that she received a beautiful inkstand from her grandmother, a clock from one of her brothers, a blotter, a drawing-book and a box with writing implements inside. It becomes clear from studying the list what this young girl's passions involved.

The abundant and frequent visitors, alluded to above, that regularly called to see the family, are described within the pages of the *Hyde Park Gate News* and the Stephen children give their own interpretation of 'boring' or 'interesting' visitors. The edition dated Monday 21st December 1891 has a subtitle 'Sunday Visitors' in capital letters and then a gap - the gap here seems to be an in-joke. Perhaps the Stephen children were relieved that there were no 'Sunday Visitors' that day!

The *Hyde Park Gate News* represented the social and personal histories of the Stephen family and finely observed details are included within its pages. For example the reader is told about one of the games the children liked to play and one of Woolf's favourite childhood foods: 'Greatly to Miss Virginia's delight there were cherries for tea the first she has tasted this season. After tea they played Hide and Seek all over the house' (HPGN, p70). Other games the children enjoyed were also referred to; these included oranges and lemons, cat and mouse, consequences, 'up Jenkins' and 'Tom Tiddler's Ground' which is based on the story by Charles Dickens (HPGN, p89, p69). Other pastimes for the younger members of the Stephen family included dancing class with Mrs Wordsworth; singing class with Miss Mills; looking for birds' nests; riding; sailing boats; watching the annual boat race and cricket matches at Lords. It is evident, studying this list of activities, that she and her sister Vanessa Stephen were tomboys (Woolf admits this fact in 'A Sketch of the Past') and enjoyed playing cricket, catching bugs and rock climbing. From an early age, Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Stephen were avid amateur photographers creatively recording their views of the world as a historical record and a repository for their personal memories. It is possible that this enthusiasm was part of their visual inheritance from the famous Victorian photographer, their great aunt, Julia Margaret Cameron. There are more than twenty references to photography in the initial year of entries to Woolf's first published journal, *A Passionate Apprentice*. Sometimes the sisters would photograph an incident at Hyde Park Gate but, more often, they

would use their camera on holiday in St. Ives, Warboys and Fritham. The Frena was one of the first cameras owned by the sisters and was introduced to the world by R. and J. Beck in March 1896. The sisters would not only take photographs but they would also develop them in the privacy of their night nursery.

Woolf's early journal, contained in *A Passionate Apprentice*, provides us with additional detail of the content of Woolf's early childhood. Each day was varied but normally consisted of intellectually stimulating activities such as trips to the theatre, animatographs (cinema), pantomime, as well as visits to the zoo, the animal man in Covent Garden and the National History Museum. Moreover, dining out was an important part of their burgeoning social life. Frequent trips were made to the A.B.C- the Aerated Bread Company Ltd (bread and flour manufacturers) who operated numerous tearooms throughout London: 'We went into an ABC as usual' Woolf writes on Wednesday 20th January 1897 where she reports the group enjoyed coffee and buns (APA, p17). In January and February 1897, Woolf details seven visits to this establishment. In addition, Woolf's characters can often be found having tea and writing or reading in these cafes. In *Night and Day* Katharine Hilbery takes refuge in an A.B.C after missing a meeting with Ralph Denham. Florinda in *Jacob's Room* rests her love letters against the milk pot in an A.B.C. Other shops the children visited regularly include Marshall and Snelgrove (department store), Gunters (ice cream store), Larkes (florist), Army and Navy Stores, Sotherams (bookseller) and Madame Walker the dressmaker in Wimpole Street. On reading the numerous editions of *Hyde Park Gate News* and Woolf's early journals it becomes apparent that the whole Stephen family enjoyed the ordinary, simple things in life; this legacy was passed on to Woolf, and it was something she took into her own adulthood. Her husband Leonard Woolf listed his wife's adult pleasures as, 'eating, walking, desultory talking, shopping, playing ball, reading.'[3] The activities she found enjoyable in childhood formed the backbone to her adult life.

A key feature and enduring quality of the publication *Hyde Park Gate News* is the happiness, fun and laughter, which permeates the pages. The *Hyde Park Gate News* is full of riddles, anecdotes, in-jokes and the family alphabet game. The power of the jokes derives from the memory of a shared history, a closed circle where memories and in-jokes need no explanation. For example, snippets of news about routine events such as family haircuts provide an interesting insight: 'The Editor now looks so like a cockatoo that she is ridiculed on all sides' (HPGN, p12). Woolf complains (in this quotation) about having her fringe cut which was obviously a source of amusement to her family members and even herself. Subtitles such as: 'General Health of Hyde Park Gate', and 'Sundry Interesting Jottings' contain amusing asides. For example, 'many people do not know that when you have wrung a chikens (sic) neck it runs along without its head' (HPGN, p16). It is clear that in some respects, this magazine was considered a game but it cannot be denied that this was also a serious business to the children.

The Stephen adults, the children's parents, Leslie and Julia Stephen, were obviously a key factor in this publication and there is evidence that after each issue the children would wait eagerly for the verdict of their respected mother and father. Confirmation of this can be found in 'A Sketch of the Past' when Woolf reveals, 'how excited I used to be when the 'Hyde Park Gate News' was laid on her plate on Monday morning, and she liked something I had written' (ASOP, p105). The pleasure and approval of their parents was keenly sought and gratefully accepted. Woolf expands on these initial childhood feelings further on the same page of her memoir when she states that the recognition from her parents was 'like being a violin and being played upon' (ASOP, p105). The magazine provided the Stephen children with a context in which they could exercise freedom in a traditionally strict and conventional society. The young creative child Virginia was an exacting editor, an innocent witness and a voyeur, for example, she detects the tears welling in Julia Stephen's 'maternal eyes' as

Gerald Duckworth returns home (HPGN, p45). The publication reveals how observant and intuitive children can be as the parental attitudes to the Stephen children are often satirized within the pages. Indeed even the additional fictional letters and stories provide evidence of the foibles and prejudices of the family and the society. This information proves to be even more revealing when we read Woolf's fiction and see echoes of her early childhood, and the significant figures from this time, within her published writing.

Remembering father and mother

> Although we may never recall 'explicitly' what happened to us as infants, the experiences we had with our caregivers have a powerful and lasting impact on our implicit processes. These experiences involve our emotions, our behaviours, our perceptions, and our mental models of the work of ourselves.[4]

The most fundamental relationships in early childhood are formed with the caregivers: the parents/guardians. The two central relationships that dominated Woolf's infancy and would have a lasting influence on her whole life and creative output were her father, Leslie Stephen and her mother, Julia Stephen. In this section each parent will be discussed in turn and their relationship with Woolf considered. A separate discussion will explore the effect they had on Woolf's writing, focusing mainly on *The Years* and *To the Lighthouse.*

In contrast to his wife, Sir Leslie Stephen was a very formal and serious man who ran the household of 22 Hyde Park Gate in an almost military manner. He spent most of his time in the massive library, and the regular tapping of his rocking chair could be continually heard in the living room below.[5] He was a biographer, critic, philosopher and scholar, who had turned to literature after abandoning a promising career as a Cambridge Don because he felt such a position to be incompatible with his agnosticism. Leslie Stephen was a distinguished

literary figure of the intellectual Victorian aristocracy and to the young Virginia Woolf, the names on book covers referred to friends who gathered in the drawing room. Woolf was encouraged to read anything she liked and when she was fifteen she was given free range of her father's library. The following extract from 'Hours in a Library' captures the excitement and pride she felt when she gained this special privilege:

> For the first time perhaps all restrictions have been removed, we read what we like; libraries are at our command, and, best of all, friends who find themselves in the same position. It is a time of extraordinary exhilaration and excitement.[6]

An eminent Victorian, Leslie Stephen was the first editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography* and in its final form it consisted of 63 volumes and included 29,120 lives. He wrote 378 of the biographies and edited the first 26 volumes single-handedly. *The Dictionary of National Biography* has been described by Noel Annan as a 'monument to the Victorian age.'[7] It was an enormous labour that ultimately broke his health but also brought him success and fame. Woolf commented in *Orlando* (1928)[8] that 'the true length of a person's life, whatever the *Dictionary of National Biography* may say, is always a matter of dispute' (O, p291). Woolf used *Orlando* as a light-hearted reproach to her father or any biographer who thinks facts can convey the essence of a life. Woolf also once claimed in her 1923 diary that Adrian was crushed in the womb by the dictionary and it gave her 'a twist of the head too' (DXII, V2, p277) although she was already out of the womb when serious work on it started. Stephen accomplished this colossal task at home, his work often dominating domestic life, and he even changed the living arrangements of 22 Hyde Park Gate by adding two storeys to the top of the house to accommodate his needs.

Several critics have commented on the similarities between Woolf and her father: physically they were tall, gaunt and avid walkers; both were immensely well-read; both

thought a great deal about money (how much they had and how much they could spend); both were thoughtful and serious literary critics and both were extremely sensitive and prone to overwork. Like his daughter, Stephen subscribed to the Victorian gospel of work, which meant he was, in modern terms, a workaholic. In a letter to his wife Julia in 1887 he stated he was often afraid of beginning a piece of writing: 'The time it takes to plunge is simply monstrous. I am an absolute coward about going into cold water or beginning work, or reading reviews of myself.'[9] Both father and daughter were aware of their similarities. In his book *Leslie Stephen: The Godless Victorian* Noel Annan notes that in another letter to his wife, written on Virginia's ninth birthday in 1891, he admits that Virginia was 'certainly like me.'[10] Years later, Woolf confided to Vita Sackville West: 'I was more like him than her, I think; and therefore more critical: but he was an adorable man, and somehow, tremendous' (L1754, V3, p374).

In her memoirs Woolf remembers her father and explains what she terms the 'ambivalence' that she felt about him. Woolf reflects that he was a complex and interesting human being: 'I have a great devotion for him- what a disinterested man, how high minded, how tender to me, and fierce and intolerable' (L2005, V4, p27). This quotation taken from a letter to Vita Sackville-West reveals that Woolf used extremely oxymoronic language when describing her feelings about her father. As a small child she had idolized him: she was certainly indebted to her father for an early appreciation of literature. However, things appeared to change after the death of Julia Stephen when it is reported he literally ceased playing and interacting with his children. As Woolf grew older she seemed to become a rebel against her father's beliefs and in 'A Sketch of the Past' she wrote, 'we were not his children; we were his grandchildren' (ASOP, p149).

Throughout her memoirs Woolf described Leslie Stephen in a number of different ways: as the 'sociable father'; 'tyrant father' and the father with a 'violent temper' (ASOP, p122, p123, p117). In the 1930s she did compose a poignant tribute to her father: 'Leslie Stephen, the Philosopher at Home: a Daughter's memories' was published in *The Times* on 28th November 1932, the centenary of his birth and a short affectionate memoir was also included in the 1906 biography.[11] On the other hand, her father's staunch character was also used in her arguments against patriarchy in *The Years* and *Three Guineas.* Significantly enough, when Woolf wrote in 1929 about women's rights (by implication her own liberation) she used the metaphor of domestic space: a room of one's own. Darian Leader, a psychoanalyst, has commented on this famous father and daughter relationship and suggested that 'the reason why Virginia Woolf could never have a 'room of her own' was due to the fact that 'her father was always there with her.'[12] Hermione Lee asserts in her biography that it was not until Woolf was in her late fifties that she could write about Leslie Stephen as someone separate from her: 'It is a vital moment in laying a parent to rest, and the fact that she did it so late tells us how entangled her feelings were with him all her life.'[13]

It has been suggested by many critics, most notably by Lee, that the women in Leslie Stephen's life suffered most from his own feelings of failure, inadequacy and his worries over money. Lee suggests that the women in his life can be viewed as victims of his demanding emotions. In addition, Woolf's portrait of her father in *To the Lighthouse* was 'inspired by a rage which had simmered for over 20 years...she resented his treatment of Vanessa.'[14] After the death of his wife Leslie Stephen had expected his family to minister to him as Julia had done. Woolf writes in 'A Sketch of the Past' that as a result of the death of Stella Duckworth, Vanessa was promoted to a position of power and responsibility which was very demanding for a girl of her young age. Woolf describes her sister as being trapped in the maternal role typical in a traditional patriarchal family, and an assortment of demands

and requests were made of her. It is clear that Leslie Stephen had a tremendous effect on his daughter's early life; in Lee's biography she comments on the outcome this possibly had on his young girls: 'The daughters whose youth he darkened with his selfish grief and the assumptions of their servitude to him, and who only escaped to make their own lives by his death.' [15]

Additionally, Woolf admits in her diary, writing on the anniversary of her father's death, that she could never have written if he had not died. Woolf described the death of her father in 1904 as the opening out of her own life into writing, books and social/intellectual companionship. Indeed, the inspiration for *Melymbrosia*[16] can be traced to the death of her father in February 1904 when she needed a project to divert her mind from her loss. In her 1928 diary Woolf imagined what her life would have been like if Leslie Stephen had lived to ninety-six: 'His life would have entirely ended mine. What would have happened? No writing, no books;- inconceivable' (DXVII, V3, p208). As long as Leslie Stephen lived she could never be more than a little girl. However, even after his death, her adult identity was haunted by her childhood and her relationship with her parents and it appears that these memories were never entirely exorcised. After a brief discussion of Julia Stephen there will be an example from Woolf's fiction which provides convincing evidence for the previous statement.

Julia Prinsep Jackson Duckworth Stephen fervently believed in the importance of women's roles as carers and leaders within the domestic sphere; she created an atmosphere of feminine deference and sacrifice that implicitly authorized masculine dominance. In 'A Sketch of the Past' Woolf admits the following about her mother: 'She was a hero worshipper, simple, uncritical, enthusiastic' (ASOP, p98). At the vulnerable age of twenty four Julia Stephen's life had appeared devastated after the death of her first husband Herbert and her prescription for survival was to care for her children and to be a dedicated, devoted,

even compulsive, untitled nurse to all her sick relatives and friends. Woolf reminisces in 'A Sketch of the Past' about her relationship with her busy mother: 'Can I remember ever being alone with her for more than a few minutes? Someone was always interrupting' (ASOP, p95). From Woolf's memoirs it is revealed that as well as carrying out charitable work, her mother could speak French with a very good accent, was practical, shrewd even, widely read and was very talented musically and could play the piano.

Like her ambivalent relationship with her father, Woolf's feelings about her mother were powerful, difficult and mixed. This was another central relationship that would influence Woolf's creative output and her fragile state of mind. Hermione Lee asserts in her biography that Julia Stephen fulfilled a number of roles in her relationship with her daughter Virginia including nurse, muse and writer of stories.[17] Julia Stephen's stories were clever moral fantasies in which naughty children made up their own punishments, little sisters wanted to grow up to be nurses: her stories represented the accepted norms and values of the class and time. Her stories reinforced the connotations of the all-giving Victorian woman in a repressive male dominated world. Julia took great pride in her daughter Virginia's creative childhood achievements, in particular the *Hyde Park Gate News*; however, in her view the destiny of women should be the life of service. Indeed the nursery at Hyde Park Gate held copies of Charlotte M. Yonge's *Biographies of Good Women*[18] and Mathilda Bethan-Edward's *Six Life Studies of Famous Women*[19], both books honouring women such as Dorothy Wordsworth as models for the young.

Reading about Julia Stephen you get the impression that she endorsed the Victorian models for female behaviour as found in Coventry Patmore's *Angel in the House*.[20] Julia Stephen owned a copy of the fourth edition of this epic inscribed by the author (Julia's mother was a friend of the writer when he was a young man). She was active in the anti-suffrage movement and wrote several essays on this issue entitled: 'Notes From Sick Rooms'

(an amusing sketch dwelling at length on the evils of crumbs in bed!), 'The Servant Question' and 'Domestic Arrangements of The Ordinary English Home.' She believed that women's power was obtained from their position of command within the household. She also considered a woman's duty was to serve: to serve her husband, her children, her parents and those in need. In turn, she wanted her own daughters to dedicate themselves to a life of service.

Mr and Mrs Stephen agreed on the status of women; the unbending Victorian patriarchal society did not encourage personal growth and transformation for women. This view was accepted by the vast majority of their contemporaries and can be summed up concisely in a famous poem by Tennyson entitled 'The Princess': 'Man for the field and women for the hearth/ Man for the sword and the needle she/ Man with the head and woman with the heart/ Man to command, and woman to obey.'[21] Throughout her writing life, Woolf implicitly criticises the rigid roles assigned to husband and wife in traditional patriarchal marriage. For the young Virginia masculine and feminine roles were socially constructed in her childhood by observing vicariously her father and mother's relationship. Her Victorian upbringing consisted of a strict division between the outer, public, 'masculine' world and the private, domestic, 'woman's world'; this division that was evident in Woolf's own childhood was captured and exploited in many of Woolf's novels, in particular *The Years.*

In *The Years* Woolf highlights the powerless situation of the women who are locked out of all societal institutions (except marriage). Subsequently, they are locked/entrapped within their private homes; the prominence of lock-and-key images in *The Years* is deliberate and intended to emphasise Woolf's personal view that patriarchal values restrict and limit women's lives. For example, the Nurse's latchkey to Abercorn Terrace is hidden every night in a new place for fear of robbers. Rose steals it so she can escape her childhood home to visit Lamley's shop (TY, p19). Sir Digby Pargiter worries whether his wife Lady Eugenie has

locked the door and questions her; this leads to an argument as she had not replaced the lock. Maggie eavesdrops on her parents' disagreement about the lock. 'There had been a burglary up the street; her mother had promised to have a new lock put on the kitchen door but had forgotten' (TY, p106). It is presumed that Mr Toye is a locksmith as he is mentioned in connection with the fact that he has not put a new lock on Sir Digby Pargiter's kitchen door as he had promised. Locked doors symbolise the constraints imposed on young women in that patriarchal era. In contrast, Mrs Ramsay, in *To the Lighthouse,* is the typical angel in the house, who does not like open doors; her character will be explored in more detail later in this chapter. However, both Delia and Milly feel trapped and dream of escape from their family home Abercorn Terrace. Susan Squier in *Virginia Woolf and London: The Sexual Politics of the City* (1985) surmises what these young women living in a patriarchal family were subjected to:

> Imprisoned at the tea table...the women are confined to an endless round of errands, boring social functions, and obligatory family gatherings.[22]

Furthermore, in the novel Woolf refers to the fact that the sisters are 'cooped up, day after day' (TY, p23). This quotation suggests that these girls are trapped, deprived of their freedom.

In the '1880' section Woolf captures the claustrophobia, boredom and feelings of exclusion that the women in this era experienced; they needed to be given permission to venture outside the family home: the door was locked, the chain was always fastened and the curtains drawn. Anna Snaith focuses on the use of a letter to illustrate the point that Woolf was making:

> In *The Years* it is a letter which situated Eleanor firmly within the private house, since Morris has to post the letter she has written to Edward and she can only stand on the doorstep, the liminal space between public and private worlds, while he goes to the letter box, she is reliant on a man to convey her communication to her brother, because the public space is forbidden to her after dusk.[23]

Snaith has written extensively on *The Years* in her book *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations* (2000). It provides a detailed analysis of the private and public spheres in Woolf's work and in her own life, the differences between men and women and the spaces they could occupy. The incident highlighted by Snaith occurs at the beginning of the novel and as Eleanor stands at the front door, she remembers how she used to stand in the doorway when Morris was a young boy and she would wave goodbye to him as he left for day school, another arena or space forbidden to her. She recalls this old routine when she says goodbye to Crosby as Abercorn Terrace has been sold and she has to move on and finally, she revisits this situation in the present day section. However, over time, her memories became faded and she has forgotten if it was Morris she was watching posting a letter. The event is a constant reminder of her entrapment within the home and her lack of a formal education.

Such a position of isolation and exclusion for women is reiterated in Woolf's famous essay *A Room of One's Own* as the narrator is subjected to exclusion as she wanders round 'Oxbridge': 'I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in' (AROO, p31). Woolf's concern was with the damaging effects of patriarchy, which can restrict middle class women to the private interior, just as Eleanor Pargiter was confined to her house. It is well documented that Woolf resented the fact that no money was spent on sending Vanessa and herself to school: in this respect she was excluded from a traditionally male institution and denied a formal education. Although encouraged by her father to write when she was young, ultimately in her life she encountered male resistance

to her writing. *A Room of One's Own* highlighted the resentment she felt as a female who had to learn in rather a restricted and limited way at home, whilst her older brother Thoby, as a male, was enjoying all the advantages of an expensive education at Trinity College, Cambridge. Caught in a double bind, women found that since their inferior social status did not entitle them to education, money or an historical position, they lacked all the tools to escape their inferior position. Woolf was compelled to write in 1938, 'all the weapons with which an educated man can enforce his opinions are...beyond our grasp' (TG, p167). In her essay, *Three Guineas,* Woolf surmises that the powerlessness of women can be attributed, to some extent, to their lack of education and the prohibition in the past of their entry into the university system. It is an ambiguity that epitomises the double-edged sword of patriarchy: women locked out of society and locked into the institution of marriage. Only in the concluding 'Present Day' section of *The Years*, perhaps even the last page of the whole novel, does Woolf appear to be suggesting a new age is dawning; that the patriarchal grip is loosening. The latchkey image is used again but the context is different. Eleanor, looking out of the window spots a young man and girl getting out of a taxi together: 'A young man had got out; he paid the driver. Then a girl in a tweed travelling-suit followed him. He fitted his latch-key to the door' (TY, p318). Both man and girl enter the house together suggesting that a new kind of freedom and equality for women may be possible for the future generation. The use of the latchkey motif takes on a new and interesting significance. Additionally, the taxi motif is used again in *A Room of One's Own.* Mary Beton watches from her window as a couple meet each other from opposite sides of the street and get into a taxi together: 'The girl and the young man stopped; and they got into the taxi; and then the cab glided off as if it were swept on by the current elsewhere' (AROO, p125). This ordinary sight makes her think whether the mind has two sexes just as the body does, she considers the benefits of the 'unity

of mind' (AROO, p126): that the ideal creative mind must be androgynous, containing elements of both male and female.

Although *The Years* provides us with Woolf's view of patriarchy, it was an earlier book, *To the Lighthouse*, which she used to show the destruction of patriarchal society. Woolf proposed that patriarchy blocked and stifled the development of women's writing and creativity and she makes clear the conflict between this creativity and the conventional roles women were required to play. In particular, Lily in *To the Lighthouse* resents the price that women have to pay for domestic harmony; Lily refuses both mothering and motherhood in order to create through painting. Woolf's diaries attest to the truth that she exorcised the memory of her mother by composing *To the Lighthouse* and within her private writing she frequently records and relives her mother's death, noting the years that have passed since. Julia's Stephen's literary counterpart Mrs Ramsay is portrayed as a typical Victorian 'angel in the house'. Woolf never disguised the fact that she had conceived the character of Mrs Ramsay in the image of her own mother. If we are to believe Vanessa, the depiction was very lifelike. Woolf notes in her 1927 diary her sister's reaction to this character: 'She says it is an amazing portrait of mother; a supreme portrait painter; has lived in it; found the rising of the dead almost painful' (DXVI, V3, p135). Woolf does not reveal Mrs Ramsay's first name so she is only known by her married name; marriage is her only identity.

Woolf resisted the indelible role model of her mother and knew that she needed to fight against the oppressive shadow of patriarchy. In an address which she gave to a women's rights society in 1929, which was published in *The Death of the Moth* (1942) as 'Professions for Women', she revealed her intense irritation with her mother's selflessness and self-abnegation; Woolf reiterated the fact that before she could write she had to kill the phantom of Victorian womanhood. This 'angel in the house', Woolf informed the reader, used to 'come between me and my paper.'[24] Woolf's writing was a mirror of her own times; many

years of fighting for the rights of women politically and in the literary world. She was the voice of the women of her generation from the 1880's to the 1930's and her work still speaks to women today. Virginia Woolf was very intrigued by the notion of what motivates people to want to write or to read. It appears that Woolf's original aim was to find and develop her own voice, as before attempting to kill the Angel in the House she suffered an inability to express herself, partly resulting from her background, patriarchal society. Woolf cites the import of the Angel in the House as a central impediment to early twentieth century women's attempts to write professionally. For Woolf this figure was a writer's nightmare, continually getting in the way of 'integrity' and 'truth' which were the hallmark of her literary tradition. It could be argued that writing *To the Lighthouse* and destroying the symbolic character of Mrs Ramsay enabled her to deal with matrophobia. Adrienne Rich argues that a substantial segment of women's literature in the past has dealt with 'matrophobia' or fear of becoming one's mother. This term 'matrophobia' was coined by Lynn Sukenick and is mentioned in Rich's book *Of Woman Born: Motherhood of Experience and Institution* (1977)[25] Sukenick takes it as the fear, not of one's mother or motherhood, but of becoming one's mother. Ultimately the death of Mrs Ramsay reflects the horror that Woolf felt of repeating what patriarchal culture had determined to be women's position.

Woolf also highlighted aspects of the mother-daughter narrative in *To the Lighthouse.* In a sense, the death of Mrs Ramsay enables Lily to establish her autonomy and create her vision. Several recent interpretations, including Makiko Minow-Pinkey's book *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject: Feminine Writing in the Major Novels* (1987) has emphasised Lily's triumph over Mrs Ramsay in Part 3 of the novel when she wins her identity as a 'new women, professional, unmarried, independent.'[26] Lily is not Mrs Ramsay's daughter; she is an artist; but she is gifted with a daughter-like response to this woman and memories of her mother:

> Mrs Ramsay has faded and gone, she thought. We can override her wishes, improve away her limited, old-fashioned ideas. She recedes further and further from us...life has changed completely (TTL, p190).

Her mother had a tremendous influence on the growing Virginia Woolf and ultimately shaped the content and underlying message of her daughter's fictional as well as personal writing.

Julia Stephen continued until the end of her life to train and cherish her children; her last maternal words to Virginia were reported by her in 'A Sketch of the Past as, 'hold yourself straight, my little Goat' (ASOP, p95). Julia Stephen was only 48 years old when she died, after being struck down with influenza.

Writing memory

In 'A Sketch of the Past' Woolf admits that she visualised her childhood as a 'space of time' which ended abruptly on the day of her mother's death. Immediately after this tragic event she realised that, 'St Ives vanished forever' (ASOP, p140). Hermione Lee explains that due to this drastic break in Woolf's life, this home:

> retrospectively seemed to contain her childhood as in 'a bowl', separate and inviolable. The desire to get back inside that bowl, to write not just about childhood but *as if a child*, is one of the most powerful impulses in her writing.[27]

This comment does make sense because St. Ives proved to be a fruitful childhood haunt for the growing Virginia and was extremely important to her imaginative output (the setting for *To the Lighthouse* is really St. Ives rather than the Hebrides). Indeed *The Voyage Out*, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* all show the permanent influence of St. Ives upon her. In later life, she referred in her diary to Cornwall as 'the loveliest place in the world' (DX, V2, p105).

As well as being used in her fiction, throughout her life, St. Ives was also associated with a multitude of images of magic; an association which is highlighted during the Stephen children's pilgrimage back to Cornwall in 1905. In her journal, she uses a simple simile to describe the Great Western train as a 'wizard who was to transport us into another world, almost into another age' (PA, p281). This functional mode of transport is portrayed by Woolf as a supernatural, fictional being escorting them back in time to their own childhood. Subsequently, arriving at their destination, St. Ives, they found their childhood preserved, and the detail of the thirteen magical summers spent as a family appeared to have been engrained in their young minds.

In March 1921 when Woolf visited St. Ives again, with her husband, she questioned her undisputable affinity to the county:

> Why am I so incredibly & incurably romantic about Cornwall? One's past, I suppose: I see children running in the garden. A spring day. Life so new. People so enchanting. The sound of the sea at night. And now I go back "bringing my sheaves"- well, Leonard, & almost 40 years of life, all built on that, permeated by that: how much so I could never explain. (DX, V2, p103)

It was a place that literally had the power to transport her back to infancy. In 'A Sketch of the Past' she vividly remembers herself as a small child in the garden at St. Ives:

> I was looking at a plant with a spread of leaves; and it seemed suddenly plain that the flower itself was a part of the earth; that a ring enclosed what was the flower; and that was the real flower; part earth; part flower. It was a thought I put away as being likely to be very useful to me later. (ASOP, p84)

Years later she would use this childhood memory in her fictional novel *The Waves*, where the young child Louis wonders about the stalk of a flower:

> I hold a stalk in my hand. I am the stalk. My roots go down to the depths of the world, through earth dry with brick, and damp earth, through veins of lead and silver. I am all fibre. (TW, p8)

Woolf fervently believed that early childhood was the most important aspect of a writer's life and children inhabit all of Woolf's writing, even if sometimes they are only the ghosts of childhood past, the infants the characters used to be. For example, in *Mrs Dalloway* Clarissa opens her front door to go out into London and as she does she is aware of reopening the French window onto the lawn in the house she had lived in as a girl. J. Hillis Miller, who has explored the novel *Mrs Dalloway* in detail, has stated that *Mrs Dalloway* is a 'brilliant exploration of the functioning of memory.'[28]: 'a novel of the resurrection of the past into the actual present of the characters' lives.'[29] Indeed often, to get the whole value and worth of the present you must enhance it, perhaps with the past. J. Hillis Miller continues his argument by suggesting that for Woolf's characters the present is the perpetual repetition of the past:

> The weight of all the past moments presses just beneath the surface of the present, ready in an instant to flow into consciousness, overwhelming it with the immediate presence of the past.[30]

Delving into the past, which requires the use of memory and an understanding of how memories work, is integral to appreciating and enjoying Woolf's fiction; a concept which is discussed next.

Twilit regions of memory where past and present merge and blur. [31]

The term 'memory' can mean the system of retaining information, the actual storage system or the material that has been retained. Implicit in the past is the role of memory and memory is the means by which the individual builds up patterns of personal significance in which to anchor his or her life. How did Woolf define memory? The following quotation written by Woolf in *Orlando* provides us with an insight into her view of this primordial mental function:

> Memory is the seamstress, and a capricious one at that. Memory runs her needle in and out, up and down, hither and thither. We know not what comes next, or what follows after. Thus, the most ordinary movement in the world, such as sitting down at a table and pulling the inkstand towards one, may agitate a thousand odd, disconnected fragments, now bright, now dim, hanging and bobbing and dipping and flaunting, like the underlinen of a family of fourteen on a line in a gale of wind. (O, p75-6)

In this remarkable sustained passage of intense poetic writing, Woolf portrays memory as a tailor or a talented needlewoman whose unpredictable actions affect the randomness of people's memories. The prose becomes lyrical, dense with personification and metaphor and through these techniques Woolf illuminates the fact that memories fracture the surface of everyday reality; our memories can be recalled by a simple cue, which may be context or state dependent. For example, the straightforward act of moving an inkstand across a table acts as a catalyst to the revelation of innumerable pieces of memory. She is implying that a present moment may open up unpredictable pathways to the past. This concept of memory retrieval runs throughout her work as well as her private writing.

On reading Woolf's autobiographical writing it becomes apparent that the past was very important to the grown up Woolf as she indicates in her 1925 diary: 'The past is beautiful because one never realises an emotion at the time. It expands later, & thus we don't have complete emotions about the present, only about the past' (DXIV, V3, p5). In 'A Sketch of the Past' she records the proof of her theory that certain early memories are 'more real' than the present when she looks at Percy, her gardener at Monk's House, digging the asparagus bed but sees him through her childhood memory of her nursery and the road to the beach at St. Ives (ASOP, p80). The memory of her childhood was so close to her that it became like a constant presence rather than a distant recollection.

Almost at the end of her life Woolf articulated her theory that the past was divided into moments of being and non-being. These 'moments of being' which are episodes of heightened consciousness relate to what James Joyce would have called an "epiphany''. The most famous literary example of an accelerated moment of recollection must be the familiar story of Marcel Proust's ecstatic moment in *A la recherché du temps perdu*,[32] where a flood of involuntary childhood memories are activated upon eating a madeleine. This small rich pastry lets the narrator experience the past completely as a simultaneous part of his present existence; indeed his memories vividly return when he again tastes the cake dipped in linden tea just as he first tasted it as a small child.

'A Sketch of the Past' contains Woolf's descriptions of her own moments of being, two of which found their way into her fiction. The first is a vision of a flower as part of a whole comprised of flower and earth, which is recalled in *Between the Acts* by Isa Oliver's son George. The second is a memory of standing by a tree in the garden at night after overhearing the story of a man's suicide at St. Ives which is recalled in *The Waves*. However,

the most significant moment of being for Woolf was her early memory of the night nursery in Talland House.

As discussed earlier, St. Ives was a happy base for Virginia Woolf and happiness seemed to be always measured against the memory of being a child in that house: she was only six months old when she was first taken there. The following well-cited quotation from 'A Sketch of the Past' recalls lyrically the night nursery in Talland House:

> If life has a base that it stands upon, if it is a bowl that one fills and fills and fills- then my bowl without a doubt stands upon this memory. It is of lying half asleep, half awake, in bed in the nursery at St Ives. It is of hearing the waves breaking, one, two, one, two, and sending a splash of water over the beach; and then breaking, one, two, one, two, behind a yellow blind. It is of hearing the blind draw its little acorn across the floor as the wind blew the blind out. It is of lying and hearing this splash and seeing this light, and feeling, it is almost impossible that I should be here; of feeling the purest ecstasy I can conceive. (ASOP, p78-9)

In vivid detail Woolf recalls the way the yellow blinds fluttered in the wind, the manner in which the light emerged slowly through the window and the primal, rhythmic sound of the waves breaking repetitively on the beach. The repetition of the words 'one, two, one, two' acts as a type of soothing pre-symbolic lullaby which contributed to her overall feeling of ecstasy. Her detailed recollection includes colour and sound with vivid sensual and sensory description; it is consciously literary. How many internal retellings had Woolf rehearsed before deciding on these poetic words? She indicates in her memoir that this memory was so enduring and intense that when she recalled those sensations they became more real for her than the present moment. Memory offers this paradigm of travelling in time as it provides instant access to childhood. Numerous theories of memory have been propounded by various

cognitive psychologists for example Cahill and McGaugh, and Baddeley and Hitch. A couple are relevant here as they provide us with more insight into Woolf's writing. I am not attempting to evaluate these varied theories but merely to highlight different aspects of memory which appear in Woolf's writing.

Reconstructive memory

Clearly memory for past events is affected by their emotional significance[33] making them either very difficult to remember (Freud's motivated forgetting theory of repression) or 'unforgettable' as in flashbulb memories. To some extent Woolf used both of these concepts in her novels and in her private writing. A good example of a flashbulb memory would be the lyrical description of the night nursery discussed earlier. Brown and Kulik[34] coined the phrase 'flashbulb memory' to describe a vivid, detailed and long-lasting memory of an event; the term suggests how emotion can prevent forgetting. Brown and Kulik believed that a flashbulb memory was a special and distinct form of a memory because the emotionally important event triggers a neural mechanism, which causes it to be especially well imprinted into memory by shock or trauma. As memories are predominantly visual, such memories are described as being like photographs that preserve the scene when a flashbulb is fired; such memory associations are strong and of long duration. Some of the events that trigger the flash may be private and personal; others may involve news of powerful national import such as the World Trade Centre Terrorist Attacks and the assassination of President Kennedy. Brown and Kulik (1977) found around 90% of people reported flashbulb memories associated with personal shocking events, but whether they had such memories for public shocking events like assassinations depended upon how personally relevant the event was for them. In their research 75% of black participants had a flashbulb memory for the assassination of black-rights activist Martin Luther King, compared to 33% of white participants.

Cahill and McGaugh (1998)[35] proposed that, because it is adaptive to remember emotionally important events, animals have evolved arousing hormones that help respond in the short term and aid storage of the event in the long term. Flashbulb memories are often more detailed and accurate than most memories, and can be remembered in almost photographic detail. In relation to Woolf's novels, a prime example of a flashbulb memory can be found in *The Years*: the memory of the exhibitionist, the enemy near Lamley's shop will stay with Rose Pargiter throughout her life. This was one of the first scenes that Woolf wrote for this novel as she records in her 1932 diary: 'Done the child scene- the man exposing himself- in the Pargiters' (DXXI, V4, p130). Research has shown that flashbulb memories are most likely to occur when the event was not only surprising to the person but also had consequences for their own life. Rose never forgets that night when she ventures to Lamleys and spots the strange man; it is an experience that evokes nightmares for her. This scene was based on Woolf's own childhood experience as there was a man who used to behave in the same way in the streets around Hyde Park Gate and was seen by both Vanessa and Virginia.[36]

On the other hand, Freud in 'The Psychopathology of Everyday Life' (1901)[37] entitled a chapter, childhood memories and screen memories, and he questioned whether we have any memories at all from our childhood: 'Our childhood memories show us our earliest years not as they were but as they appeared at the later periods when the memories were aroused.'[38] Freud used the term 'screen memory' to represent some memories of early childhood that are constructed to hide the emotionally disturbing events of those early years- working in a similar way to the concept of repression. According to Freud, forgetting is a motivated process rather than a failure of learning or other processes. Repression refers to an unconscious process in which certain memories are made inaccessible; we repress or push the

memory out of consciousness. Memories which are likely to induce guilt, embarrassment, shame or anxiety are repressed from consciousness as a form of defence mechanism.

Freud questioned the status of memory and the inconsistencies and distortions that appear to exist especially with regard to recall of our early years. It seems that what Woolf writes about in 'A Sketch of the Past' is a process of tapping the unconscious mind for memories of events, which the conscious mind had screened. A relevant example of a screen memory from Woolf's own childhood is encased in the short story 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection.'[39] The images and fragments within this story appear to recall a well-known and well-cited episode in Woolf's own childhood. In the opening pages of 'A Sketch of the Past' Woolf describes herself as a six year old child standing on tiptoe to look at herself in a looking glass, which she did only if she was alone as she was ashamed of this action: 'The looking-glass shame has lasted all my life...I cannot now powder my nose in public' (ASOP, p81). She also used this memoir finally to reveal the source of her looking-glass shame; her looking-glass complex was her inability to look at herself in a mirror without diverting her eyes. Her looking-glass shame was a personal and physical embarrassment at seeing herself/her image caught. It was reported by Woolf in her memoirs that when she was six years old her grown up step brother Gerald Duckworth lifted her on a table and explored her private parts, therefore it could be argued that this complex was probably initiated by Gerald Duckworth's molestation.

In the story 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection' the 'looming figure' that turns out to be a postman is depicted in almost the same way Woolf used later to describe her nightmare vision in 'A Sketch of the Past':

> I dreamt that I was looking in a glass when a horrible face- the face of an animal- suddenly showed over my shoulder. I cannot be sure if this was a dream, or if it happened. Was I

> looking in the glass one day when something in the background moved, and seemed to me alive? I cannot be sure. But I have always remembered the other face in the glass, whether it was a dream or a fact, and that it frightened me. (ASOP, p83)

Whether fact or fantasy is not pertinent the shadowy 'something' and 'it' were connected to invasive male brutality and early anxiety: as a young child, Virginia Woolf had been frightened and terrorized. Even the slicing sharp 'gilt rim' of the fictional looking-glass seems to be a pun which attempts to displace the guilt Woolf felt for her own violation, her feelings about her body and how certain places must not be touched. Another possibility is that she had not come to terms with what had happened in her childhood; perhaps the memories had been repressed for too long. Woolf indicates in 'A Sketch of the Past' that she was not sure if she was dreaming when she saw the horrible face, but for Freud memory became a mode of 'reproduction' that resembles dreaming. In a similar way Freud suggested dreaming symbolizes the fulfilment of a repressed wish; memory represents a paradoxical desire- the wish to forget.

Remembering is an active process that involves 'effort after meaning'; making the past more coherent to fit in with existing knowledge. Constructivists such as Bartlett (1932)[40] suggest that memories are reconstructed over time, influenced and altered according to active schemas (including moods, existing knowledge, contexts, attitudes, feelings and stereotypes). This appears to support Freud's theory, as Bartlett suggested, that we may make inferences or deductions about what could or should have happened. Although we may repress certain incidents, we also appear to add to our childhood memories as we grow and develop into adults and as our own memories become more complex. But why? Research by cognitive psychologists, most notably Usher and Neisser suggest that children can remember nothing of

their infancy before the age of three. Children this young seem unable to retain simple episodic memories; more research is needed to be carried out in this field.

'Infantile amnesia' is a term used to describe profound memory loss associated with the start of life. Theories about infantile amnesia can be divided into two broad categories: those which hold that the memory loss is due to a storage difficulty (i.e. early experiences are not properly transferred into long term memory) and those that claim that memory loss is a retrieval problem (i.e. the memories exist, but we can't recollect them). Infantile amnesia has been explained by the onset of autobiographical memory. In this view, children need to acquire conventional and symbolic language and its cognitive prerequisites in order to describe themselves to other members of their linguistic community and in doing so, to remember themselves. Infantile amnesia seems to create a paradox concerning the brain's sensitivity to early experiences. Considerable evidence exists that early experiences do influence the development of the brain. Adult social behaviours, resistance to stress and some language skills are clearly affected by what happens during the first stages of life. If first memories are often visual and pictorial this must indicate that the non-verbal visual and personal memory centres of the right hemisphere mature before the language-dominant left hemisphere.

In 1925, years after his initial screen memories theory Freud used the example of the 'Mystic Writing Pad'[40] to illustrate how the psyche itself records material. Just like the children's toys of the same name, the mind can record an infinite amount of material while also having the ability to remain 'new'. However, this material does leave a faint, but perceptible trace on the waxen surface below, a trace that can be seen if you lift up the sheet of plastic and examine the wax surface. This provides us with an example of the primacy of writing yet on a deeper level Freud is intimating that we can only ever experience the world as it were, through the traces of previous, often early childhood, experiences. Even if these

early memories are only vaguely remembered, or even if we have reconstructed them, the trace that exists from childhood affects our adult life and ultimately our identity. As has been revealed in Woolf's short story 'The Lady in the Looking- Glass' her childhood experiences affected her later writing (Woolf's own looking-glass shame was poignantly revisited by Rachel in *The Voyage Out* and by Rhoda in *The Waves*) as what had occurred remained on the writing pad, even if it was just a trace. Woolf did not acknowledge her incest memory in print until 1939 in 'A Sketch of the Past'; however her unconscious revelations in 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass' are illuminating.

Tunnelling back to the nursery

Daniel Ferrer in his groundbreaking book *Virginia Woolf and the Madness of Language* (1990) considers that the past, maybe even repressed conflicts, ultimately shape and mould personality in adulthood. He suggests the importance of the forgotten past: 'The child's attitude in its ambivalence ... takes itself into the present and transforms the character into a battlefield where contradictory drives confront each other.'[42] With the phrase 'contradictory drives' Ferrer is alluding to Freud's theory of personality and the continuing conflict between the id, ego and superego and the assumption that adult personality is shaped by childhood experiences. Like Freud, Woolf also believed in the importance of childhood and Woolf's memory of childhood played a fundamental part in her fiction: childhood was alive in her characters' memory and present existence, still essential to their mature procedures for articulating the self in time.

Memory continues to be an active research field in psychology but there is not yet a single theory which is able to account for this hugely complex processing system. More importantly, Woolf developed her own psychological method of explaining memory and repression: she used the 'tunnelling technique' which she termed her 'discovery' in her 1923

diary: 'How I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters' (DXII, V2, p263). 'It took me a year's groping to discover what I call my tunnelling process, by which I tell the past by instalments, as I have need of it' (DXII, V2, p272). In the same way psychoanalysts may use free association, dream analysis or projective tests to gain an insight into a person's repressed unconscious so Woolf developed a method of showing her readers the true depth of fictional characters; illuminating memories are recalled from the past into the characters' present moments. Tunnelling enabled Woolf's fiction to examine the repression that her characters endured, the motivated forgetting. For example, no one, not even the narrator, knows Mrs Ramsay's secrets in *To the Lighthouse*. She has 'had experiences, which need not happen to everyone (she did not name them to herself)' (TTL, p70). Woolf wanted the reader to know that this woman has constructed a barrier of silence, sadness and self-protection. Primitive and instinctive feelings control and motivate Woolf's characters; these non-conscious forces are expressed by Woolf as fragmentary memories of childhood.

Through tunnelling, Woolf cleverly juxtaposes childhood memories and characters' soliloquies and in doing this, she enables the reader to gain a greater and deeper understanding and empathy for her characters. Mrs Dalloway feels deserted and lonely as she climbs the stairs to her room and thinks of herself as 'a child exploring a tower' (MD, p35). Later, the reader discovers, and can acknowledge, that this image comes from an incident in Clarissa's childhood when she 'had gone up in the tower alone and left them blackberrying in the sun' (MD, p53). It appears that adult existence and identity are often haunted by childhood memories. In particular, sensual memories and sensory description are used by Woolf; sights, smells and especially sounds remind characters of their past. The sound of hammering reverberates throughout the '1910' section of *The Years* and reminds Kitty of a past time in Oxford. Siegfried's hammering recalls a young man from her past, someone who kissed her when she was fifteen. She does not associate the sound as the hammering she

heard the day she had tea with the Robsons when Jo was mending a chicken coop. This highlights the elusiveness and the fallibility of memory, in line with Freud's theory of screen memories, which Woolf also wanted the reader to acknowledge.

Undoubtedly the recollection of early childhood is an active process of recreation because memory itself is a form of narrative. Memory, a powerful tool facilitated by Woolf in her writing, allowed adults access to their childhood to remember and to relive their past. As discussed in the first section of this chapter Woolf also used memory to try to exorcise the memory of her parents. It is difficult to imagine Woolf without her early childhood memories which ultimately shaped her fiction. The next chapter investigates the significance and predominance of pre-symbolic language and the motif of the nursery rhyme in Woolf's work. An important feature of the nursery rhyme is the power they appear to have to transport a person back to childhood and to relive early childhood memories and emotions.

CHAPTER TWO

THE INTERRUPTED LULLABY

> The rhythm of a Woolfean sentence is calculated to counter the monotony of this remorseless beat by which life measures and doles out life. [1]

From early childhood, Woolf developed a strong relationship with words; they were a source of comfort to her, as she reminisces in 'A Sketch of the Past', for example, she used deliberately to wake her sister Vanessa if she could not sleep just to hear someone's voice. Even at this relatively young age Woolf seemed to possess an innate desire to use language accurately. Her father recollected, in a letter to a childhood friend, how his daughter was dogmatic and precise about what she considered to be the correct use of words: 'My daughter Virginia is a great purist about language, she does not like us to use the word 'wire' we always have to say 'telegram.'[2]

Language served various purposes for Woolf throughout her life. As a young child she enjoyed language as a toy and entertainment and she also became intoxicated with the power of words. She was aware from an early age of the force inherent in words and she used the medium of words as a form of weapon, for instance to embarrass her sister Vanessa in front of company by calling her 'Saint' because of Vanessa's uncompromising need to tell the truth at all times. Although Woolf was fascinated with words, language was consciously paradoxical for her; in later life, in particular, she found language to be a burden due to its instability and the uncertainty of its reference. In her fiction, numerous essays and sketches, Woolf endeavoured to indicate the boundaries of language. Her 1937 essay on 'Craftsmanship' (broadcast on the 29th April 1937 for the BBC radio series 'Words fail Me' and first published in the BBC magazine *The Listener* on May 5th 1937) is a eulogy to words:

'Words, English words are full of echoes, of memories, of associations-naturally.'[3] In this essay she recognizes words as the 'medium of the writer's craft' and she continues by remarking that 'words, like ourselves, in order to live at their ease, need privacy' ; 'our unconsciousness is their privacy, our darkness is their light' ; 'they hate being lectured about in public.'[4]

Woolf was extremely aware of the enormous rift between words and what they represent; a constant theme in Woolf's work is the fact that words are not sufficient to portray reality. In *The Voyage Out* Terence Hewit wants to write 'a novel about Silence...the things people don't say' (TVO, p220). The problem of communication is a key motif which can be seen in the relationships between Helen and Ridley Ambrose; Orlando and Marmaduke; Isa and Giles Olivier, and Mr and Mrs Ramsay. Attempts at communication are often flippant or frustrated. Lucio P. Ruotolo suggests that 'what emerges through the series of tea parties that fill Woolf's novels is that real talk seldom occurs, that people rarely say what they think, much less what they feel.'[5] To try to capture the complexity of human experience, Woolf developed narrative methods and techniques that relied on the nonverbal rather than just the verbal. For example, Richard Dalloway finds it impossible to tell his wife that he loves her using words so he gives her roses. Woolf was profoundly aware of the 'unsaid', the 'unspoken', the 'unsayable', and sometimes even the 'unthinkable', in life and society. She sometimes used silences in her novels to mark her own uncertainty about what life was really like. In her novels, silence reveals the absurdities of self and human relationships, the difficulty of knowing anyone. Silence indicates language's mask: the uncertainties and limitations of interpretation in literature and life. Since silence has no one single meaning, Woolf highlights the ambiguities of language.

Woolf's resistance to conventional story telling persisted from the beginning of her career to the end. Indeed, as she developed as a writer, she tried to capture thought because

she realised that the contemporary adult society she now lived in demanded a new type of language. To develop this new form of language she experimented with a number of groundbreaking ideas: one of them was the use of the nursery rhyme motif in her novels. Three of her later novels, in particular, show the prominence of nursery rhymes and pre-verbal language: *The Waves, The Years* and *Between the Acts*. Each novel is discussed in chronological order below, focusing on this new type of language incorporated by Woolf into her fiction and reasons advanced as to why this motif is recurrent in her fiction.

The language of the nursery

> The little hum & song of the nursery. (DXXIX, V5, p345)

Woolf's fictional characters shared her awareness of the limitations of conventional language. For example, in *The Waves,* Bernard realises that he needs, 'a little language such as lovers use, words of one syllable such as children speak when they come into the room and find their mother sewing' (TW, p199). It is evident that the character of Bernard functions as a partial surrogate or an alter ego for the author. Bernard makes up phrases in order to escape reality (both Woolf and Bernard, to some extent, manipulate language to serve this purpose):

> I must make phrases and phrases and so interpose something between myself and the stare of housemaids, the stare of clocks, staring faces, indifferent faces, or I shall cry. (TW, p20)

In the novel Bernard uses his control of words and phrases to prevent himself losing control, whereas Susan has physically to purse her lips or screw her handkerchief up in order to stop herself crying; as a child her sense and control of language is elemental; she is tied down with single words; Bernard like Virginia Woolf, searches for a perfect story: 'Some people go to priests; others to poetry; I to my friends, I to my own heart, I to seek among phrases and

fragments something unwritten' (TW, p180). Anna Snaith also recognises the link between Bernard and Woolf in her book *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations* and points out that both of them demanded a new type of language:

> Woolf also calls for an unambiguous language of fact, knowing full well, in her anticipation of postmodernist ideas, that all language takes part in the play of signifier.[6]

There is a feeling of Woolf in Bernard; a man trying to fight off the death he yearns for, by constructing rhythmical phrases and a new type of language. However, it must be acknowledged that Virginia Woolf's style did not develop from a perverse desire to create a new form for the sake of it but because conventional forms did not accurately represent life and all its complexities. Bernard in the final section of *The Waves* turns against the significant story, the meaningful sequence and the traditional conclusion, preferring pre-verbal language, the little language of lovers: 'A rushing stream of broken dreams, nursery rhymes, street cries, half-finished sentences and sights'(TW, p173).

The pre-verbal is our first experience of language before the subject enters the symbolic and this is supported by Kristeva's concept of 'chora'. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Julia Kristeva's linguistic theory came to be increasingly influenced by psychoanalysis. Kristeva defined the pre-verbal as the: 'dynamic and...poetic dimension of language: its rhymes, rhythms, intonations, alliterations.'[7] Kristeva's chora is a word adapted from Platos' *Timaeus*, a dialogue between Timaeus and Socrates about the nature of existence where the chora is usually translated into English as the 'receptacle'. Plato and Kristeva both relate the chora to the maternal, it is associated with the mother's body. John Lechte in *Julia Kristeva* (1990) suggests that the chora is also unrepresentable.[8] The chora, according to Kristeva, precedes everything that is symbolic; it is a place of rhythm and movement. It is an experience in which the developing child is nurtured, through feeding and interaction. The

child hears words spoken around them but has not yet been taught formal language. Therefore, they experience the world predominantly in terms of rhythmic or sporadic movements, sounds without prescribed sense. Kristeva believed that the mother's body becomes the focus of the semiotic, the word she used to denote the pre-symbolic:

> The unarticulated sounds a baby makes are thus not entirely insignificant and arbitrary, even if they have no specific (symbolic) meaning. These sounds, rarely manifest without any form of control whatever, thus constitute the pre-symbolic significance. Significance, Kristeva argues, is always present in the operations of the symbolic-such as the everyday language of communication.[9]

The child will hear a variety of tones as they grow and will come to associate sounds with feelings; for example, as the baby feeds on the breast they may associate this with their mother's soft soothing whisper. This initial relationship with the mother's body makes future language acquisition possible. The choran voice is displayed in *Jacob's Room* as the two women, Betty Flanders and Rebecca the nursemaid, 'murmured over the spirit-lamp' (JR, p7). In the nursery they ruminate over the sleeping children in echoing, soothing and murmuring tones, enclosing the children with their voices in a womb-like space.

This idea of a choran voice recalls Woolf's own first memory of Talland House nursery which was discussed in chapter one. Susan Squier, writing in *Virginia Woolf and London,* highlights the significance of Woolf's recollection: 'Cradled in semi-sleep in the country nursery, she heard the soothing repetition of waves upon the shore like the soothing rhythm of breathing a child would hear as she nestles, after feeding, at her mother's breast.'[10] Squier eloquently suggests that Woolf's memoirs are structured both unconsciously and deliberately to underscore her 'primitive moment of preverbal pleasure', the nursery, the waves, the rhythm, the blinds, the light, with the feeling of maternal presence.[11] This memory

is the base for the accumulation of life experiences to follow and her fondest recollection was of hearing the pre-verbal rhythm of the waves breaking on the bay of Godrevy. In her description of this memory Woolf captured the comforting beat and repetition of the waves which is a powerful reminder of the importance and enduring quality of pre-verbal rhythm.

The Waves, Woolf's seventh novel, is an excellent example of Woolf's use of pre-symbolic language. Indeed, the language used in Bernard's final speech, when he eats chicken with his silent companion, is reminiscent of the rich, deep lyrical language used to represent Woolf's first memory of Talland House nursery. In writing this novel Woolf concentrated upon what she saw as the divorce between conventional language and the experience of the individual. She focused on escalating her literary experimentation to its natural limits; she was aiming to compensate for the inadequacies of existing language. Throughout the latter stages of composition of *The Waves* Woolf indicated that she was writing to a 'rhythm not to a plot' (DXIX, V3, p316) and undoubtedly this could only be 'the rhythm of the waves' (DXIX, V3, p312). An earlier letter to Vita Sackville West dated 16th March 1926 illuminates Woolf's belief in the principle of rhythm:

> Style is a very simple matter; it is all rhythm...Now this is v profound, what rhythm is, and goes far deeper than words. A sight, an emotion, creates this wave in the mind long before it makes words to fit it. (L1624, V3, p231)

Makiko Minow-Pinkney, writing in *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject,* discusses the prominent image of the sea in *The Waves*: 'The rhythm of the sea as a metaphor of the semiotic chora- its patterns and pulses of one/two, in/out, rise/fall- cuts across the syntax of sentences and plot throughout the text.'[12] Woolf's writing attempted to catch the ebb and flow of the human mind; writing for her involved placing and choosing words carefully and then the rhythm would contribute to the ultimate meaning of the text. A good

example is when Bernard tries to convey his feelings of loneliness: 'For ever alone, alone, alone' (TW, p151). Bernard's silence and fear is captured concisely in the rhythmic iambs, almost like lyric verse.

Almost all the narrative in *The Waves* is speech: all the characters exist through what they say verbally or pre-verbally. They do not seem to be speaking to each other, but to themselves. The voices/soliloquies do not represent ordinary talk but lullabies for the poetic ear, comparable to the sound of waves reverberating in a seashell. In this novel the pre-verbal is the most important component; sound becomes a dominant force over and above the significance of language. The language which the characters choose to use reflects the pattern, rhythm and significance of their lives.

Woolf uses subtle pre-verbal rhythms to convey meaning; the text is very fluid and various linguistic rhythms urge the work forward. The birds singing in the interludes, with their song and rhythm, parallel the writer using language: Virginia Woolf frames *The Waves* with the birds sections running parallel to the 'voice' sections of the soliloquies. The importance of the birds in the interludes takes various forms. The sound of the birds and the sea are a subtext, they are sub consciously present throughout the novel. The birds, together in chorus or alone parallel the movement of the characters that come together and then draw apart. This is a dominant theme of *The Waves*. Furthermore, the young children are aware of and take notice of the birds, for example, Rhoda spots that 'the birds sang in chorus first..now..off they fly..But one sings by the bedroom window alone' (TW, p7). The dialogue of the children is short and clipped at the beginning and gets longer and more detailed; in a similar way the birds also develop their song as the day progresses.

The rhythm of this novel is the diastole movement of the waves, the repeated pattern of surge and ebb. In Woolf's first version of this novel the waves were linked to the rhythms

of a woman's body as she gives birth: 'Many mothers, & before them many mothers, & again many mothers,' she wrote: 'Have groaned, & fallen. Like one wave, succeeding another. Wave after wave, endlessly sinking & falling as far as the eye can stretch. And all these waves have been the prostrate forms of mothers, in their nightgowns, with the tumbled sheets around them holding up, with a groan, as they sink back into the sea.'[13] This quotation highlights the natural, albeit painful, rhythm of childbirth as the child forces its way into the world. The lurid description of the waves being like pregnant women was edited from the final draft of the novel perhaps due to its graphic nature. We may recall the pre-verbal rhythm of the ebb and flow of the waves being used in an earlier novel, *To the Lighthouse,* where Woolf also uses free indirect discourse. Mrs Ramsay is found listening to

> the monotonous fall of the waves on the beach, which for the most part beat a measured and soothing tattoo to her thoughts and seemed consolingly to repeat over and over again as she sat with the children the words of some old cradle song, murmured by nature. (TTL, p19)

It is in the nonsensical rhythmical repetition that one comes closest to the movement of nature. Nature can produce its own verbal fluidity.

In *To the Lighthouse* the nursery is depicted as the main domain of pre-verbal language. Mrs Ramsay is annoyed to discover that her small children are still awake late at night. The boar's skull Edward had found earlier is still hanging in the nursery and evidently upsetting the children. In particular, the skull frightens Cam and her mother attempts to reassure her by draping her green shawl over the skull. The skull in the nursery is a clear symbol of the passing of time.[14] The juxtaposition of youth and death is a poignant reminder that all things will inevitably die. The animal, from which the skull came, is now nothing more than a lifeless piece of debris hanging in the children's room, without meaning or

purpose. Its placement in the nursery is significant given Mrs Ramsay's concerns about the passage of time, her preoccupation with wanting her children to stay young: 'She would have liked always to have had a baby. She was happiest carrying one in her arms' (TTL, p68). She wants her children to avoid the suffering which comes from age and experience: 'She never wanted James to grow a day older or Cam either' (TTL, p67-8). She throws the shawl over the skull to attempt to stop time passing; she is aware of the waves in the background, a rhythmic ominous sound foreshadowing death.

Mrs Ramsay attempts to soothe her children with her maternal warmth and pre-verbal language; she tells Cam that beneath her cloak the skull has been transformed into a mountain and a garden. As she sits with her children, she calms her offspring: 'I am guarding you- I am your support' (TTL, p19). Mrs Ramsay lulls her daughter Cam to sleep 'monotonously' and 'rhythmically' before her language becomes nonsensical. The moments in the nursery survive in Cam's memory long after her mother's death. In part three, 'The Lighthouse', when she is travelling in the boat, Cam's mind wanders into an underwater world where it meets a ghostly presence shrouded in a green cloak which recalls Mrs Ramsay's green shawl draped over the boar's skull. Cam remembers her mother speaking a rhythmical and nonsensical preverbal nursery language of mountains and birds describing her shawl as a magical garden. She finds the memory comforting but this has become a foreign tongue in the adult world- this pre-symbolic language has been interrupted.

Nature's lullaby

> The pigeons in the squares shuffled in the tree tops...crooned over and over again the lullaby that was always interrupted. (TY, p3)

Pre-symbolic language has its roots in early childhood. This particular time in life always forms an important backdrop to the way that Woolfian characters think and behave. *The Years*, Woolf's eighth novel, contains numerous descriptions of early childhood; children play hopscotch in the street, infant memories are recalled and analysed and a profusion of examples in this novel highlight the limitations of conventional language. Important events such as births, marriages and deaths are omitted. Innumerable nursery rhymes are recalled and then recited for a variety of reasons, by older, adult characters. Not only did Woolf use pre-symbolic language; she used the nursery rhyme motif. Nursery rhymes remind a character of their past, mostly their childhood, and this motif hints at the soothing, pre-symbolic nursery language that Woolf may have experienced. Due to the structure of the eleven chapters of *The Years*, an immense sense of time passing quickly is conveyed, yet the childish memories of nursery rhymes are still fresh and tangible in the character's mind, returning to the surface repeatedly. Nursery rhymes serve an important function by enabling the characters to drift back into childhood thoughts, mindsets and feelings and to understand the present moment through the past. For example, after Peggy has just attacked her brother verbally at Delia's Party there is tension between them as they go to supper. However, they revert to childhood ways to deal with this strain. Peggy and North 'fall back on childish slang, on childish memories, to cover their distance, their hostility' (TY, p289). Together they laugh at William Whatney, the old man in the white waistcoat who was standing in the doorway; they call him 'the old mock turtle' a lugubrious character in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* who very slowly and sadly sings the Lobster Quadrille. An earlier link to this song is referred to when Sara is debating whether to go to a meeting at Abercorn Terrace with Rose. She asks her sister Maggie to help her make the decision: 'Shall I go, or shan't I? Shall I go, or shan't I?' (TY, p126) Sara echoes here, as she also does later when deciding whether

to go to Delia's party (TY, p247), the refrain from the Lobster Quadrille sung by the Mock Turtle: 'Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?' [15]

Leonard and Virginia Woolf appeared as Carollean creations at the 12th birthday party of their niece Angelica Bell, on the 18th January 1930, dressed as the Mad Hatter and the March Hare. In the following quotation from Quentin Bell's biography of his aunt he describes the party and the effort Virginia Woolf put into ensuring Angelica had a good birthday:

> As an aunt, as a sister, she felt obliged to go to a New Year Party in Vanessa's studio at No. 8 Fitzroy street; it was for her niece Angelica, who was twelve years old- a fancy-dress affair, everyone being disguised as a character from *Alice in Wonderland.* [16]

Leonard was Lewis Carroll's Carpenter, complete with paper hat, green baize apron and chisels. His wife had the paws and ears of the March Hare. Roger Fry appeared as 'The White Knight' at this party. In a letter to Frances Spalding, Quentin Bell suggested that the nickname, The White Knight, was used 'long before that celebrated party.'[17]

The character of Sara in *The Years* also acts the part of a Lewis Carroll creation- the dormouse at the Mad Hatter's tea party who sleeps through the party yet repeatedly manages to interject comments into the conversation. Sara sleeps in Hyde Park (TY, p180); she half-sleeps/dozes at Maggie's house (TY, p216); she states bluntly 'I want to sleep' at Delia's party (TY, p268) and eventually does fall asleep during the final party (TY, p316). These examples indicate her similarity to this Carollean creation. 'The Dormouse slowly opened his eyes. "I wasn't asleep," he said in a hoarse, feeble voice: "I heard every word you fellows were saying."' [18] It appears that Carroll's books ran in the bloodstream of Woolf's generation. Quentin Bell implies that the Stephen children must have possessed both the Alice books, although he had no clear evidence. There are obvious links between Lewis Carroll and

nursery rhymes. When Alice meets Humpty Dumpty he is on the wall, adamant that he will never fall, while she waits with her arm outstretched ready to catch him, knowing what his future is because it is written in the book. The completion of the nursery rhyme is the completion of his destiny. Humpty Dumpty is not the only connection. Tweedledum and Tweedledee, names of Carroll's famous twins, originated in counting-out rhymes, such as those collected in *Halliwells' Nursery Rhymes of England* (1840).[19]

The simple nursery rhyme is one of England's most enduring forms of oral culture; some date back to the seventh century. Nursery rhymes are the first furnishings of the mind and they are the very first poetry that most of us will hear. The earliest surviving collection was published in London in 1744. Before 1740, there was little writing for children. Until the middle of the 18th century, children were seldom regarded as they are today, as different creatures from the rest of us and requiring preferential treatment and a separate literature. The universal appeal and simplicity of nursery rhymes is that they have been inherited from grandparents, parents and nursemaids and will continue to be passed on to future generations. Due to this method of transmission, the intimacy of telling, their rhythm and the fact that they are participatory means they are often easy to remember and generally associated with nostalgia, memory and innocence. One of the best achievements of Iona and Peter Opie, the famous British folklorists, was to recognise the power and fascination of children's nursery rhymes and rhythms. The Opies' work on the children's oral tradition in Britain is unequalled.[20]

Nursery rhymes are a universal part of early childhood; there is a period when almost the whole extent of infants' experience of literature is the deceptively simple nursery rhyme. However, strong links exist between children's early knowledge of nursery rhymes and their developing phonological skills. Children are natural mimics and when they hear particular features of language, they are likely to try them out for themselves. Recent research by P.E

Bryant, L. Bradley, M. MacLean and J. Crossland (1989) suggests that nursery rhymes are related to the child's subsequent sensitivity to rhyme and phonemes.[21] Often the words used are nonsensical; therefore, it is often their sounds, not their sense, that matters. Children and adults appear to love the patterning of language as it brings satisfactions of the rhythm and is further evidence to the earlier references on pre-verbal rhythm.

The Years is a suitable novel to demonstrate the important leitmotif of nursery rhymes, as they wind their way from the beginning of the book to the end; they pervade the character's lives and become a permanent background tune to the action of their lives. Sara hops about 'with one shoe off and one shoe on' (TY, p127) as she gets ready to go to the meeting at Abercorn Terrace with Rose; this recalls the nursery rhyme 'Diddle, diddle, dumpling, my son John', the title being the street cry of hot dumpling sellers. The nursery rhyme serves a number of functions in *The Years*: a popular type of nursery rhyme is used in 'counting-out' games, e.g. 'Eenie, meenie, minie, mo.' In this way the simple nursery rhyme acted as an aid to learning as well as an infant amusement. During the air raid at Maggie's house Eleanor counts the seconds between the booming of the guns, 'one, two, three, four' (TY, p213). The same counting rhythm and rhyme is used in the opening section of the novel. Woolf describes how throughout London 'virgins and spinsters...carefully measured out one, two, three, four spoonfuls of tea' (TY, p3). The counting theme runs throughout the novel as Eleanor and Rose hear St. Paul's chime ten times to signify ten o'clock. Nursery rhymes have been used for centuries to quieten and soothe babies when they are restless, make them forget, make them laugh or rock them to sleep. Rose uses the 'counting-out' sequence as she tries to fall asleep; she attempts to count sheep but finds it difficult to get past the number four, as the fifth sheep would not jump (TY, p29). She uses the counting rhyme to try to lull herself to sleep and rid her mind of the flashbulb image of the strange man's face. Additionally, Peggy also employs the counting method to count the stars in an attempt to

forget the young, arrogant man Paul with whom she has been talking at Delia's party (TY, p265).

Most of the main characters have recalled and remembered these counting rhymes from their childhood consciousness and use these familiar relaxing techniques to help them in their adult lives; this comforting childlike way of relieving stress has been incorporated into their adult lives. Eleanor becomes a representative of this group of people, when later in the novel she is described as she makes a cup of tea: 'Stretching out towards the tea caddy, she measured the tea. "One, two, three, four," she counted' (TY, p111). Martin watches his sister Eleanor measuring the tea methodically.

Woolf's own personal sense of anger at the constraints of Victorian domesticity is channelled through her fictional characters in *The Years*; it is the female characters that look after and care for the males. The females, at an early age, have learnt clearly defined conventions and have internalised patriarchal codes, 'tea-table training' as Woolf called it in 'A Sketch of the Past' (ASOP, p152). Sara counts lumps of sugar for North when he visits her before he leaves for the Front, 'One. Two. Three. Four' (TY, p208). Woolf used repetitions and parallels to draw attention to key concepts, which were of particular significance to her. These interlacing motifs drift rhythmically through the whole text, soothing the reader, in a similar way to a mother reciting a nursery rhyme to her baby. The young doctor, Peggy, watching the older generation replay their childhood behaviour, thinks:

> Each person had a certain line laid down in their minds, she thought, and along it came the same old sayings. One's mind must be criss-crossed like the palm of one's hand. (TY, p263)

These 'old sayings', hypnotic rhythms and nursery rhymes all help to unify the overall structure of the novel. These childhood memories and the tunnelling technique increase the reader's understanding and empathy for Woolf's characters.

In her diary entry of 21st November 1935, Woolf stated her intention for *The Years:* 'I want to keep the individual & the sense of things coming over & over again & yet changing. Thats whats so difficult: to combine the two' (DXXIV, V4, p353-4). Indeed, the actual phrase 'over again' recurs during the course of the novel. Also, each chapter opens with a description of the weather, which recalls the interludes of *The Waves*. The interrupted lullaby is mentioned on the opening page of *The Years*. The reader is given the dominant image of the pigeons cooing in the tree tops:

> The pigeons in the squares shuffled in the tree tops, letting fall a twig or two, and crooned over and over again the lullaby that was always interrupted. (TY, p3)

This lullaby, the refrain of the wood pigeons, is repeated throughout the novel; it punctuates the narrative but more significantly it is always interrupted. The lullaby is mentioned later in the novel as Kitty Malone returns to the Lodge after visiting the Robson family and she listens to the pigeons cooing and compares her life with Nelly Robson's. The Robson's house is full of light and life; the Lodge may be superior in terms of possessions like china and silver but not in terms of lightness. Kitty is a character who is alert to the sounds and sights of her environment: 'Far away pigeons were cooing- Take two coos, Taffy. Take two coos. Tak..'(TY, p54). This is a reference to a children's rhyme 'Taffy was a Welshman, Taffy was a thief,/ Taffy came to my house and stole a leg of beef.' 'Taffy' is a derogatory nickname for a Welshman (corruption of 'Dafyd') , used typically, in this children's rhyme, as a taunt by the English against the Welsh on St. David's Day.[22] This rhythm makes Kitty half close her eyes and her memory takes her back to the terrace of an Italian inn with her

father. After composing herself and beginning to brush her hair the same lullaby interrupts Kitty's thoughts again: 'The pigeons were cooing Take two coos, Taffy. Take two coos... But there was the dinner bell' (TY, p55). Her daydream is interrupted, the rhyme is interrupted and she runs down to dinner feeling like a child again. This simple, almost natural, lullaby forces the characters to recall their childhood in a variety of ways; the nursery rhyme provides a direct link to the past. In a letter to Emma Vaughan, dated Monday 11th September 1899, Woolf uses the same haunting lullaby as her postscript: 'Take *two* coos Taffy- take *two* coos (that is what the evening pigeons are saying all round at the present moment)' (L27, V1, p29). Virginia Woolf would have been seventeen years old when she composed this letter so the rhyme must have been recollected from her own childhood and formed the background to her own consciousness. Fragments of nursery rhymes can infiltrate a child's memory and stay there into sophisticated adulthood, as the lullaby of the pigeons continues to haunt *The Years*.

The same lullaby appears significantly when Eleanor visits her sister Delia's house intending to comfort her after Parnell's death is announced: 'Pigeons crooned on the tree tops' (TY, p83). Eleanor watched the leaves fall as she hears the pigeons crooning in the tree top: 'Take two coos, Taffy; take tow coos, Taffy; tak...then a leaf fell' (TY, p84). By using an ellipsis Woolf indicates that the lullaby had been interrupted and the memory had been disturbed and displaced. Once again we see that memory enables Woolf to establish a sense of continuity between the past and present in her novels. As Rose and Sara walk to Abercorn Terrace 'pigeons were shuffling and crooning on the tree tops' (TY, p128). Eleanor hears the pigeon's refrain as she is in her meeting with Miriam Parrish, Mr Spicer, Martin and Kitty (TY, p130). Later, Sara who was in the same meeting as Eleanor, also acknowledges the presence of the pigeons. Furthermore, it is the character of Eleanor who notices the murmuring lullaby of the birds in the garden of Morris's mother-in-law's home in Dorset

(TY, p145). Kitty Malone notices and appreciates this haunting lullaby when she arrives at her house in the North of England as being the 'voice of early morning, the voice of summer' (TY, p201). The repetition of the lullaby, 'take two Taffy', gives a striking rhythm to the different sections of this novel. Finally and significantly, in the penultimate passage of the novel, Eleanor draws the company's attention to the sound of the pigeons outside the very building in which the meeting has taken place in 1910. Kitty asks herself if she can hear wood pigeons: 'She put her head on one side to listen, Take two coos, Taffy, take two coos...tak...They were crooning' (TY, p317). The last acknowledgement links us to the start of the novel where the lullaby began. The lullaby serves the dual purpose of linking the characters in the novel. It also serves a similar function as the interludes in *The Waves*, showing nature creating its own pattern, its own pre-symbolic language.

Some nursery rhymes appear embedded in people's subconscious; they recur as reminders of a personal past or a means of identifying character. The fellowship of women is one of the themes of *The Years* and it is revealed in the nursery rhyme sung by Pippy, the childhood nurse of Eleanor and Martin. A haunting, vivid memory of Eleanor Pargiter is a curious little song that her nursemaid Pippy used to sing to her, 'Sur le pont d'Avignon' 'l'on y danse, tout en ronde', the song possesses significance which connects to the theme of oppression in the novel. In the section '1891', Eleanor is sitting at her writing table pondering the spotted walrus with a brush in its back, surprised that this solid object might survive them all. In a sense, nursery rhymes have the same effect as solid objects in that they appear to survive time and place. Small solid objects seemed to Woolf to represent human lives. As Eleanor sits thinking, she hears a barrel organ playing up the street:

> 'Sur le pont d'Avignon' she hummed in time with it. How did it go?- the song Pippy used to sing as she wiped your ears with a piece of slimy flannel?' 'Ron, ron, ron, et plon, plon, plon,' she hummed. Then the tune stopped. (TY, p66)

It is an example of a nursery rhyme that foreshadows and at the same time presents an image of a woman's future. Susan Squier is a critic who has commented on the childhood rhyme that Eleanor recalled and suggested that it 'emphasizes the qualities of discontinuity, change, and movement in the circle dance on the bridge of Avignon.'[23] Woolf uses the image of the bridge to express the impossible choice facing women in society: oppressions of the private world and the different oppressions of the public world. Furthermore, her rhyme represents the experience of most of the Pargiter women: most of whom choose to dance on the bridge, not jump from it, for instance Maggie's happy marriage.

Nursery rhymes can easily be read as charming amusements intended for young children but readers are often horrified that childhood innocence and nursery rhymes should be contaminated by politics. A member of Woolf's own social circle performed innocent childhood nursery rhymes as her party piece. Marjorie Colville Strachey (1882-1964), nicknamed Gumbo, a teacher, who was the youngest of Lytton Strachey's five sisters, has been described by Woolf in her diary as an elderly fat woman who 'distorted nursery rhymes' (DXII, V2, p223). Various sources, including Quentin Bell, refer to her impressive party piece which involved 'obscenely comic renderings of nursery rhymes.'[24] In addition, it was recorded that Marjorie gave one of her legendary performances on Tuesday 3rd January 1933 at Angelica's birthday party in Vanessa's Fitzroy Street studio, which required the guests to attend in fancy dress. Her performance was a rendering of English nursery rhymes in a manner that was funny yet also obscene. Woolf describes the routine in her diary: 'She opens her mouth, grimaces, claws, paws, stumps, projects, hawks, pirouettes- should have been on stage' (DXXI, V4 , p140).

It is clear from this evidence that nursery rhymes were a form of amusement and enjoyment at adult parties and social events. It appears that their origin was in the 'grown-up'

world of theatre and songbook, before arriving in the nursery. (Fairy-tales made a similar transition). My research on these rhymes suggests that they have a double appeal, for adults and children, and Woolf exploited this flexibility in her writing. However, in *The Years* Eleanor does not acknowledge the political message of her nursery rhyme, 'Sur le Pont d'Avignon', and as the organ moves away, Eleanor returns to her present problems; the family accounts.

It becomes apparent to the reader that Pippy the nursemaid used to sing different songs and nursery rhymes depending upon the sex of her listener. To Martin Pargiter who grows up to be a wealthy and successful businessman Pippy sings 'The King of Spain's daughter came to visit me/ All for the sake of my silver nutmeg tree.' This is a traditional nursery rhyme which dates from at least the sixteenth century, and a tune that appears to form the background of Martin Pargiter's life:

> But who wrote that song, he wondered, as he strolled on, about the King of Spain's daughter, the song that Pippy used to sing him, as she wiped his ears with a piece of slimy flannel? (TY, p165)

Martin refers to the nursery rhyme as 'his little song', it is a private mantra and he will not sing it when Sara is with him. He uses it to comfort himself and boost his ego whenever he feels scared. In the section '1908', Martin is humming this nursery rhyme as he turns the corner of Browne Street; he is sad to see Digby and Eugenie's house is already sold, as they had not been dead long. He remembers how he used to enjoy going there to visit when he was younger (TY, p108). The nursery rhyme suggests Martin's role of sexual and economic superiority; in the context of the rhyme he orders the attention of the King of Spain's daughter because of his wealth, embodied in a silver nutmeg tree. His rhyme is repeated at the beginning of the section '1914', as ironically Martin is on his way to visit his stockbroker

in the city of London; Martin wonders what a silver nutmeg tree was (TY, p164). In the fantasy world of the nursery rhyme, as in real life, Woolf noted that the role of the woman is ancillary. The woman in the nursery rhyme is defined by her powerful male relative, the King of Spain. Susan Squier remarks that 'male, sexual and political domination are both associated with the nutmeg tree, for many (male) wars were fought for possession of lands, planted with those valuable spice harems'. [25]

Kitty asks Ann what she thinks of Martin in '1914': 'I thought him charming!' Ann exclaimed. 'And what a lovely tree!' (TY, p187). Although she is talking of the pink-blossomed tree in the china tub that stands in the door, she could have been referring to the silver nutmeg tree in Martin's song. Furthermore, Martin does become a powerful and successful business person but, ironically, Eleanor still treats her brother as if he were still a small, impotent and vulnerable boy. Martin never marries or has children in the course of the novel; therefore, his nursery rhyme does not foreshadow his future precisely.

In Martin's youth, the nursery rhyme was part of a ritual of release. The childhood memories of the characters are inextricably linked with the wonderful, universal pre-symbolic nursery rhymes they were able to recite long before they could read or write. The mingling of generations, classes and voices at the end of the novel seems to imply continued confusion and a lack of any hope for new, more successful modes of communication. Two children, the offspring of the caretaker, stood in the doorway. Martin asks them to 'sing a song for sixpence' (TY, p314) which is a phrase that echoes the first line of the nursery rhyme. 'Not a word was recognizable' of the children's song that represents the infants of this new era (TY, p314). The song also ends in mid verse leaving the adults and the reader unsure of how to respond.

The series of rhythmic sounds that have no meaning for their listeners, the 'distorted sounds' and 'unintelligible words' of the caretaker's children give voice to what is normally submerged, repressed and mute (TY, p314). Their 'song' reminds the reader of the 'whining plaint' of the stone-deaf and bed-ridden Mrs Potter, one of Eleanor's tenants, in the '1891' section of the novel. Her 'words ran themselves together into a chant that was half-pliant, half-curse' (TY, p72). There is a connection here with the biblical confusion of Tongues[26] , the premise that people of the world originally spoke one language and lived together in peace before being scattered and diversified into conflict. The etymology of the word Babel is based on a similar Hebrew root 'balal' as 'confusion' or 'mixing'. Babel became a synonym for the confusion caused by language differences, which was part of the divine punishment for the pride displayed in the building. The tower of Babel was Babylon's symbol of the pride of man and his inevitable fall - also inevitable problems of communication, the confusion of tongues and subsequent dispersal of humankind. As can be demonstrated in this biblical tale, language is a powerful force in this world but it can also be used as a tool of destruction.

The close of *The Years* depicts a bleak world of social constraint and isolation full of lonely, frustrated characters who have fragmented thoughts and speak incomplete sentences, who share only abortive attempts at communication. The prominence and significance of the nursery rhyme in the novel illustrates the overall failure to communicate from which each character suffers as language becomes inadequate for ordinary people to use to express themselves. Perhaps the main reason that this was Woolf's best-selling novel when she was alive was because it dealt with the economic and social problems of society; the end song by the caretaker's children enables Woolf to comment on our actual human predicament: our own interrupted lullabies.

The failure of language

> She waited for a rhyme, it failed her. (BTA, p39)

In a similar vein to *The Years*, *Between the Acts* is a novel about language, the limitations of language and its detachability from the experiences and feelings it is supposed to represent. Her early ideas of *Between the* Acts can be found in her diary: 'Scraps, orts & fragments' 'I'm playing with words' (DXXIX, V5, p290).

Mark Hussey in his book *The Singing of the Real World- the Philosophy of Virginia Woolf's Fiction* (1986) explains:

> The novel gives a sense of being afloat on a sea of words. Words and phrases reverberate throughout, slipping in & out of different minds, reflected sometimes by actors, sometimes by the audience. On this particular day, words will not stay still: to Giles Oliver they rise up and become menacing (74) or scornful (174); to William Dodge they become symbolical (88).[27]

This quotation highlights the importance of language in Woolf's work and yet again the appearance of the common nursery rhyme in her writing. *Between the Acts* is a lyrical novel about speech; the last words of the novel are, 'they spoke' (BTA, p130). The staccato rhythms of plot and dialogue are continually interrupted with gaps, broken syllables and fragments of nursery rhymes.

As has been acknowledged above Woolf had an intense respect for words and she was passionately concerned that each word and even each punctuation mark was perfectly placed. Jeanne Schulkind[28] writing in her introduction to *Moments of Being* notes that Woolf's punctuation is highly expressive and idiosyncratic. In *Between the Acts* Woolf uses punctuation such as the ellipsis, dashes and brackets expressively to convey the sense of

incompletion and the indeterminacies of language. Even the characters accept that language is insufficient to portray their reality; as Mrs Swithin protests, 'we haven't the words- we haven't the words' (BTA, p35). The inadequacy of language reflects the frustrations and sterility of communication in modern society. In *Between the Acts* characters forget names and surnames, sentences are half-finished and the actors/actresses lose their lines. During the pageant, the words of the actors and the song sung by the villagers are lost, blown away by the wind; therefore, they appear to the audience in fractions and segments; the words are disintegrated, smashed and disunited: 'The words died away' (BTA, p84). The wind interrupts the words so they become inaudible; the power and strength of nature destroys the words, rendering them inconsequential. Daniel Ferrer in the *Madness of Language* suggests that in the novel the pre-verbal is the most important component: 'Beyond the meanings of the words, the phonic substance comes to the fore, sound becomes the essential thing.'[29] Once again, in Woolf's novels sound and rhythm become a dominant force over and above the significance of language: The 'scraps, orts and fragments' (BTA, p112) of which life appears to be composed, are analogous to the 'stream of broken dreams, nursery rhymes, street cries, half-finished sentences and sights' that Bernard describes in *The Waves* (TW, p173).

Between the Acts voices silent thoughts (unspoken ideas and unfinished lines of poetry and rhymes) and the sounds of nature (cows coughing) and of various machines such as the gramophones 'tick-tick' or the zoom of planes. Indeed, the gramophone player continues ticking, buzzing and chuffing throughout Miss LaTrobe's play and this rhythm 'tick tick, tick' or 'chuff, chuff' is suggestive of a nursery rhyme. Miss LaTrobe's play within the novel highlights the development of language, Miss LaTrobe seems to symbolize the artist in relation to reality and she uses the vehicle of the nursery rhyme to lull the audience into submission and encourage them to appreciate her hard work. Miss LaTrobe watches her

audience 'sink down peacefully into the nursery rhyme' (BTA, p75). It appears that nursery rhymes have the power to pacify and appease adults as well as children; they have a potency that can transport us back to that precious time in our lives when language was presymbolic. We see many characters using this potent power to their advantage. Lucy Swithin seeks to soothe William Dodge with 'an old child's nursery rhyme to help a child' (BTA, p45). The popular nineteenth century nursery rhyme, attributed to W.R. Mandale, 'Pop Goes the Weasel' transports Mrs Manresa back to her own childhood; she exclaims, 'did your Nanny sing that!...Mine did. And when she said "Pop" she made a noise like a cork being drawn from a ginger-beer bottle. Pop!' (BTA, p86). Giles and Mrs Manresa find a point of verbal contact through this nursery rhyme.

Between the Acts is peppered with references to nursery rhymes but repetition has made them meaningless, senseless and incomprehensible. The well-known nursery rhyme 'tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man, beggar, thief', which is based on a stone-counting game, is revised and elaborated by Mrs Manresa who chooses a rather grand version: 'Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, apothecary, ploughboy' (BTA, p32). This jingle is also repeated later in the book by Bartholomew who is talking in his sleep (BTA, p129). These nursery rhymes are often used to ornament conversations: 'Songs my uncle taught me' (BTA, p33). William Dodge exclaims this phrase, yet often these rhymes cannot adequately be recalled. Isa suffers this exact problem: tip of the tongue phenomenon: 'She waited for a rhyme, it failed her; but somewhere surely one sun would shine and all, without a doubt, would be clear' (BTA, p39). The character in this novel who recites the most nursery rhymes is Isa Oliver for example, she recites the following lyrics: 'Should I mind not again to see may tree and nut tree' (BTA, p63) and 'four and twenty blackbirds, strung upon a string' 'which of you is ripe...to bake in my pie?' (BTA, p106). Many suggestions have been made as to why her character uses the most nursery rhymes. Is it a form of release for her? The only

part of her life she can control? Her poems do appear to be escapist as she yearns towards a different existence. Isa is constantly talking to herself in verse, murmuring fragments of rhyme and recording her best attempts in an account book, which she hides to make sure that her husband won't find it. Makiko Minnow Pinkey is another critic who has commented on the pre-verbal language that can be found in Woolf's later works. In particular she remarks that: 'Fragments of nursery rhymes create a rhythmic babbling, such as precedes sleep, reaching back to early childhood before separation from the mother (a language later used by such female characters as Sara in *The Years* or Isa in *Between the Acts*).'[30] 'Abortive' is the word that characterises Isa to herself and it echoes throughout the book, the action of the book is also abortive as there is no real development or plot.

In her final novel Woolf conveyed again what was hinted at in *The Years*, that even though the nursery rhymes taught in childhood may have been forgotten over time, the actual rhythms and events linked to the rhymes have been embedded deeply into our sub conscious. Mrs Swithin is aware that everyday speech is significant and that nursery rhymes imbue the common consciousness: 'Words raised themselves and became symbolical' (BTA, p45). Although the rhymes appear meaningless to the people reciting them, Woolf has put them in her writing for a purpose. She includes the following simple tune several times in the novel: 'The King is in his counting house, Counting out his money, The Queen is in her parlour Eating bread and honey' (BTA, p70). This nursery rhyme is referred to again on p74, p107, p108 and then on p109 where 'the tune changed; snapped; broke; jagged'. It is a rhyme played at the performance to make a statement about money, privilege and the war. Simple innocent childish rhymes are used by Woolf to make significant and salient comments about the society she was living in. She has used this device before in *Three Guineas*, a book on women as the scapegoat of history; Woolf questions how long women will have to endure:

> The old tune which human nature, like a gramophone whose needle has stuck, is now grinding out with such disastrous unanimity? 'Here we go round the mulberry tree, the mulberry tree, the mulberry tree'. (TG, p238)

This well-known children's rhyme may have begun life as a song, a chant that inmates at Wakefield prison sang as they exercised around the mulberry bush in the prison grounds. 'Here we go round the mulberry tree' attributes war to the mesmerizing power of property: 'Singing the same old song, 'Here we go round the mulberry tree, the mulberry tree, the mulberry tree' and if we add 'of property, of property, of property' (TG, p108). Metaphorically, of course, this term implies going round and round an issue continuously; Woolf must have often felt that she was broaching the same issues in her writing but they were obviously of great importance to her. Woolf also linked nursery rhyme and patriotism:

> Some love of England dropped into a child's ear by the cawing of rooks in an elm tree, by the splash of waves on a beach, or by English voices murmuring nursery rhymes. (TG, p313)

The preservation of our nursery rhymes and nursery tales from remote ages to the astonishing persistence of popular tradition is reinforced by the characteristic conservatism of childhood which insists on having rhymes repeated the same way each time. The rhymes, which we so fondly recall from our childhood, will be eventually passed on to our children and produce yet another generation of nursery rhyme lore. Is this how English values and beliefs are transmitted from generation to generation?

A new language

In her diary Woolf often contemplated the functioning of the brain. Howard Harper in his book *Between Language and Silence: The Novels of Virginia Woolf* (1982) suggests that Woolf often wrote of the 'capricious nature of the mind, its fluctuating, flitting, fluttering rhythms, and of the difficulty of arresting its movement with static language.'[31] Throughout her life Woolf searched for a new language that would represent the conscious and unconscious movements of the mind; she turned to pre-symbolic language to try to capture 'real life'; silences, interrupted conversations and childhood nursery rhymes all became an intimate and revealing way for readers to enter a character's mind. The rhythm of the birds in *The Waves* and *The Years* affects the characters who notice the song; it interrupts and affects their lives. In her later work the nursery rhyme motif in particular added richness and density to Woolf's prose; it also provided much continuity in the midst of the modernist transformation. These nursery rhymes have remained with the characters in each of the novels focused on in this chapter, just as they have stayed with many others around the world for years. It can be argued that nursery rhymes are recurrent motifs in Woolf's fiction used to symbolize the futility of language but also the power of pre-semiotic language. Woolf uses pre-symbolic/ semiotic language and nursery rhymes in her novels to make a statement about the inadequacies of language and the significance of the rhymes that we learn in childhood. Woolf exploited the forcefully subversive elements of the nursery rhyme and questioned the importance of the pre-symbolic language that we devour when we are young. By using these rhythms and rhymes Woolf tried to do something with language that was ineffable: she tried to capture thought. Death is the ultimate interruption of the lullabying rhythms and repetitions of language which create meaning.

As demonstrated in this chapter, pre-symbolic rhythms permeate Woolf's language as well as the rhythms and music of the mother's voice. The replacement of the maternal, rhythmic language by the law of the father closely resembles Lacan's account of the child's entry into the symbolic order. Perhaps pre-symbolic language and nursery rhymes were used to convey Woolf's ultimate distrust of the old language and a desire for a new language, which was a characteristically modernist concern. In this chapter we have seen examples of pre-symbolic language; for example, the rhythmic babbling, the rhythm and lilt of each sentence, used by Mrs Ramsay to lull her daughter Cam to sleep that arise from repetition. Mrs Ramsay and her children find domesticity where 'custom crooned its soothing rhythm' (TTL, p37). Mrs Ramsay is a symbol of fecundity, fertility and motherhood as is the character of Susan in *The Waves*. In a similar way to Mrs Ramsay's maternal voice, Susan's motherly voice is described as being like a lullaby, providing comfort: 'Sleep, sleep, I croon, whether it is summer or winter, May or November...I sing my song by the fire like an old shell murmuring on the beach' (TW, p115). Susan is a matron of domesticity, who passively submitted to farming and motherhood, who embodies the maternal instinct that Vanessa wanted her sister to write about. Furthermore, continuing this analogy, Susan's children are described as the waves of her life: 'My children will carry me on; their teething, their crying, their going to school and coming back will be like the waves of the sea under me' (TW, p88). Therefore, we can argue that the rhythm of the nursery rhyme represents maternity in some respects; motherhood and domesticity appear to have a pre-verbal rhythm. Ultimately this may be why the lullaby or nursery rhyme always appeared to be interrupted or incomplete in Woolf's novels, as Woolf herself never truly conformed to the ideals of domesticity. This leads us to chapter three and an attempt to discover why Leonard and Virginia never had children of their own and Woolf's view of the maternal instinct.

CHAPTER THREE

LABOUR AND CREATIVITY

> If I could I would tell you what you and the children have meant to me. I think you know. (L3708,V6, p485)

These simple yet poignant sentences are the last written words from Virginia Woolf to her sister Vanessa Bell; taken from Woolf's suicide note they convey the sisters' ultimate bond of closeness and intimacy. This emotional and steadfast union had its foundation in early childhood. Indeed as children they shared everything, not only the nursery, and their time was divided between the social demands made upon them and their own individual pursuits of painting and reading. Throughout their lives Vanessa appeared to be Virginia Woolf's guardian and protector, a maternal role that was only reversed once in their lives after the death in 1937 of Julian Heward Bell, Vanessa's first-born son. In an early draft of 'A Sketch of the Past' found in the Monk's House Papers[1] it is revealed that Woolf often felt 'imperfect' and 'inferior' compared to her clever, sensible, self-sufficient older sister. Her inferiority complex would continue into their adult lives and was compounded by the fact that Vanessa Bell had three children Julian, Quentin and Angelica and she did not have any. The first part of this chapter considers the reasons why Virginia and Leonard Woolf never had children. Although this has been well documented its inclusion in my thesis will provide a background to the initial statement about the significance of the perambulator motif. Woolf's feeling about her childlessness gives an insight into her views on the maternal instinct and motherhood. Interwoven with this topic is a brief discussion of Woolf's complex relationship with her sister Vanessa. Also within this chapter, Woolf's relationship with Angelica Bell is examined using the revealing text *Deceived with Kindness* written from Angelica's perspective of a child growing up with Virginia and Leonard Woolf. There appears to be a

noticeable transition that Woolf seemed to experience from wanting a child to becoming like one. The final part of this chapter examines the analogy of labour and childbirth with writing, in particular the notion that the Hogarth Press for Woolf was a 'more than maternal tie'.

A reading of Woolf's earliest journal contained in *A Passionate Apprentice* indicates that Woolf was always worried about her sister getting married and what that would mean to their relationship. In the following diary entry in May 1897 she is describing her sister Vanessa's eighteenth birthday: 'Nessa (still *Miss* Stephen thank goodness- but who, I say, can tell what next year is to bring- change of names & otherwise!)'(APA, p92). Vanessa did eventually marry Clive Bell in 1907 and the marriage of her sister so quickly after Thoby's death was a double loss to Woolf. Virginia Woolf felt that she had lost her sister Vanessa, first to marriage and then to motherhood with the birth of Julian on February 4th 1908. She remarked in a letter to her close friend Violet Dickinson, in August 1907, that even before Julian was born her sister had retreated into the world of motherhood: 'Nessa comes tomorrow- what one calls Nessa; but it means husband and baby, and of sister there is less than there used to be' (L380, V1,p307). The implication is that motherhood acted in a similar way to a thief; stealing away her sister's time and love. Subsequently in later correspondence to Violet Dickinson in 1908 Woolf again writes of Vanessa and her maternal situation: 'Her nurse has now gone on a weeks holiday, so she sees nothing but Julian. Lord! What it must be to have a child' (L430, V1, p346). Woolf had begun to hypothesise what it would be like to have a child and the all-encompassing bond that exists between a mother and child.

Woolf's personal writing at this time (both letters and diary entries) reflect the fact that she was envious of her sister's growing family but it also reveals that she anticipated with great delight a family of her own. Violet Dickinson knew how important the idea of having a baby was to Virginia Woolf; as early as 1902 Woolf was intimating in letters her desire to have children: 'I am training for a curate and 11 children. Curate first children after

of course' (L50, V1, p55). Additonally, there is a notable and well-cited episode in 1904 when apparently Violet Dickinson had tried to find a baby for her friend:

> Virginia became obsessed with the idea of having- or looking after- a baby, almost as if she wanted to nurse or mother the wounded child within herself. Violet tried to find a suitable baby but was unable to do so. Unfortunately, no other information survives about this crucial incident.[2]

These details are found in a fragment of a letter from Violet Dickinson to Vanessa Bell contained in the Tate Archive (c. 1943-5). In this piece of illuminating correspondence Violet writes about Virginia's three month visit to her in the summer of 1904, when Woolf was experiencing her first breakdown: 'I was terribly fussed over the Goat being ill that I brought her down; & she remained here for months. I went to Dr Schrwalback (sic) with Mrs Crum to try & get her a baby!' The above quotations are taken from James King's fascinating and in depth biography simply titled *Virginia Woolf* (1994). It was at Violet's house that Woolf attempted suicide by throwing herself out of a window.

Woolf appeared to flirt with the idea of having a child from an early age and before she was married. In a letter to her sister from 1911 she relayed an incident that occurred with Janet Case, a tutor and close friend. To pass the time on a train journey, Janet had asked what she was thinking about. Taken by surprise, Woolf replied, imprudently she admits: 'Supposing next time we meet a baby leaps within me?' (L576, V1, p473). In response to this brash statement Miss Case told the young Virginia Woolf that this was an unsuitable way to speak.

In a letter to her future husband, Leonard Woolf, dated May 1st 1912, she hoped that from their marriage, which would take place in a few months, Leonard would give her, 'companionship, children and a busy life' (L615, V1, p496). In the same letter she reiterated

this strong desire: 'I want everything- love, children, adventure, intimacy, work' (L615, V1, p496). Therefore, even though it is documented that she viewed marriage with some trepidation, it appears that she did intend to produce children from this intimate union. After Leonard and Virginia's wedding on Saturday 10th August 1912, Violet Dickinson was keen as ever to help her friend and she sent the newly titled Mrs Woolf the well intentioned gift of a cradle. Evidence reveals that Woolf was embarrassed but the following quotation, from another letter to Violet Dickinson, exposes the fact that she was also optimistic that the present would be of use to her and her husband:

> Yesterday, happening to go into one of the bachelor sitting rooms, I discovered a cradle, fit for the illegitimate son of an Empress. When I brought forth my theory however, they fathered the cradle on me. I blushed, disclaimed any intention and so on; and blushing leant my elbow on a table. "What a beautiful table this is anyhow!" I exclaimed, thinking to lead the conversation away from my lost virginity and the probable fruits of it. (L648, V2, p9)

Later in this same letter Woolf takes a more bold and positive tone and affirms with the use of the modal verb 'shall' her plans for the future: 'My baby shall sleep in the cradle.' In the same confident, self-assured tone she also declares that she will eat her dinner from the table that night. An additional quotation from a subsequent letter to Violet Dickinson reinforces the assumption that Woolf did picture herself as eventually becoming a mother; as she describes her new rooms in Clifford's Inn she also reveals her desired plans for the future: 'There's a little patch of green for my brats to play in' (L649, V2,p10). The inclusion of the adjective 'my' reflects the fact that she hoped that the children described would be hers and not just her sister's children. However, as time passed, she became extremely defensive about the subject of children possibly due to the fact that her sister had conceived almost immediately: 'We aren't going to have a baby, but we want to have one, and 6 months in the country or so is

said to be necessary first' (L665, V2, p23). In April 1913 the Woolfs planned to spend one out of every three weeks in London and live in the Sussex countryside for the majority of their time, as this was deemed appropriate for Virginia's failing health.

It is clear that Woolf did anticipate having children but perhaps she had accepted that due to her mental history there might be additional physical and psychological stress involved. Leonard Woolf also may have wondered if his wife's vulnerabilities would allow her to take proper care of a baby and he also may have feared the possibility of pregnancy worsening his wife's fragile mental state. Subsequently, Virginia Woolf's precarious state of health at this time led her husband to consult a number of doctors about whether his wife should have children: doctors were divided in their opinion. In his autobiography Leonard Woolf's views on this delicate issue are concisely and poignantly revealed:

> We both wanted to have children, but the more I saw the dangerous effect of any strain or stress upon her, the more I began to doubt whether she would be able to stand the strain and stress of childbearing. I went and consulted Sir George Savage, he brushed my doubts aside. [3]

Sir George Savage was a leading nerve specialist who thought Woolf's health would improve if she concentrated on bringing up babies rather than writing books. Ironically, Leonard Woolf appeared to dismiss Savage's advice even though Savage had been the Stephen family doctor since 1904 so presumably knew Virginia Woolf intimately both medically and psychologically. Additionally, Leonard consulted two other leading physicians, Maurice Craig, a London neurologist and T.B. Hyslop. He also asked the advice of Jean Thomas, the owner of Burley nursing home where Woolf had previously been admitted on three occasions: July-August 1910, February 1912 and July-August 1913. All these individuals were strongly against the idea of Virginia Woolf having children. T.B Hyslop's opposition to Virginia Woolf bearing children evolved from his fervent belief that 'the more our women

aspire to exercising their nervous and mental functions so they become not only virile but also less capable of generating healthy stock.'[4] Hyslop's views on this subject are well documented and he had maintained in a 1905 paper that:

> The removal of woman from her natural sphere of domesticity to that of mental labour not only renders her less fit to maintain the virility of the race, but it renders her prone to degenerate and initiates a downward tendency which gathers impetus in her progeny. [5]

At that time the current theory of psychology was that reading and writing (intellectual effort) were damaging to the reproductive system of women. Woolf later acknowledged the power of the medical profession to forbid childbirth in her depiction of the nerve specialist Sir William Bradshaw in *Mrs Dalloway*: 'Sir William not only prospered himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalized despair' (MD, p110). Woolf's attack on Bradshaw implies her anger at her own personal treatment by doctors. Septimus' insanity was undoubtedly based on Woolf's own experiences when her mental health deteriorated; put away in a nursing home, unable to see her friends and made to eat cream and eggs which she hated. This famous rest cure, developed by the nineteenth-century American physician (and novelist) S. Weir Mitchell, was widely thought to be especially helpful in treating nervous women, yet doctors at that time had little understanding of mental illness. Sanity was a patriarchal tool for subjugating women. Woolf used material that originated in her own experience yet her novels had an authenticity of their own. They do not rely for their undoubted quality on her mental state.

Vanessa Bell, who had helped nurse her sister through previous breakdowns, also agreed with Leonard Woolf's fears. She admitted the following in a letter to her sister's husband which can be found in the Monk's House Papers: 'On the whole she (Virginia) could

plunge into a new and unknown state of affairs when she starts a baby.'[6] Interestingly enough Leonard Woolf's consultations had not included his own wife, despite the fact that she was looking forward to motherhood. Based on these mixed opinions and his real fears, Leonard alone came to the decision that it would be best if they did not have children. An interview with Trekkie Parsons, a painter with whom Leonard shared his life in Rodmell for many years after the death of Virginia Woolf, revealed that Leonard had wanted children and gave up his own desire for them in order to safeguard and protect his wife.[7] Another illuminating admission and support for Trekkie Parson's statement is the documented fact that Leonard had chosen a favourite name for a child, a name that he wanted to call his own daughter. This fact was divulged in a letter to Vanessa Bell after the birth of Angelica, Vanessa's third child born on Christmas day 1918, as the two sisters were debating the name of the baby. Previously in the letter, Woolf had suggested the names of Paula, Susanna, Esther, Vashti then she continued discussing the colour scheme of the name Bell and how the first name depends on the surname of Angelica's future husband:

> I like a name that has the look of a clear green wave; there's distinct emerald in Sidonia, just as there's the splash of the sea in Vanessa; and a chandelier or lustre in Miriam, with all its eyes. By the way, Leonard wants you to call her Fuchsia; that is his favourite name, and he long ago decided to call his daughter that. (L1020, V2, p330)

Sadly, within a few months of his proclamation to his wife informing her of his heartbreaking decision, Virginia Woolf was to fall into the worst and most prolonged of her periods of madness. During this time she expressed animosity to Leonard and struggled to let him near her. However, later in her life, her anger redirected itself and turned against herself. She reflected in a diary entry, dated September 1926, that she wished she had been more assertive and not so compliant when the decision was made for her: 'A little more self control on my

part, & we might have had a boy of 12, a girl of 10: This always rakes me wretched in the early hours' (DXV,V3, p107). Woolf confided to her friend Ethel Smyth in February 1927: 'I'm always angry with myself for not having forced Leonard to take the risk in spite of the doctors; he was afraid for me and wouldn't; but if I'd had rather more self-control no doubt it would have been all right' (L1716, V3, p329). Especially in her later years, Woolf bitterly envied her sister and her relationship with her own children yet she would also rely on them: 'What a pleasure your brats are to me' (L3583, V6, p381).

In Woolf's private writing there is an ambivalence which emerges about Vanessa's motherhood and Woolf's own childless state: 'I put my life blood into writing, & she (Ness) had children' (DXXVI, V5, p120). In this diary extract from 1937 Woolf had been comparing her income from various companies such as Cosmopolitan and Harper's with the money Vanessa made from her painting. Equating her own professional literary success with her sister's domestic and artistic achievements is a frequent theme in Woolf's private writing. She always matched her desires and needs against her sister and she often questioned which one of them was more satisfied and more content. She believed that as Vanessa had the children, she deserved the fame from her writing, it would not be fair otherwise. The following quotation from *Among Women* (1981) by Louise Bernikow, a critic who has researched extensively the sisters' close and also unusual bond, reveals that whilst Vanessa assumed the role of mother and advocated motherhood, Woolf took the route of intellectuality and imagination:

> Virginal, barren woman versus the sensual, maternal one; the domestically inept versus the practical and competent; the dependent versus the independent; the conversationalist versus the silent listener; the mentally unstable versus the sane. [8]

These pairings are used throughout Woolf's fiction, for example, the sane versus the insane are juxtaposed in *Mrs Dalloway* through the characters of Septimus Smith and Clarissa Dalloway respectively. Septimus Smith and Clarissa Dalloway represent two contrasting visions of truth: Septimus is the irrational, withdrawn and tormented side of the outgoing, calm, female protagonist. Woolf wrote in her diary her vision for *The Hours* which was the original name for *Mrs Dalloway*: 'I want to give life & death, sanity & insanity' (DXII, V2, p248). Similar pairings are replicated throughout Woolf's work; most significantly in her fiction where mothers are often juxtaposed with the childless women. For example, in *The Voyage Out* we see Helen Ambrose, a calm, married maternal figure paired with Rachel Vinrace, the other heroine who is naïve, impulsive, childless and inquisitive. Lyndall Gordon in *Virginia Woolf: A Writer's Life* commented that it is easy to draw true life parallels between Helen/Virginia, to view the two female characters as a 'contrast of Greek and Biblical figures: Vanessa's statuesque splendour; Virginia eager, impulsive, searching'.[9] Helen Ambrose has two children (a boy of six, a girl of ten) and when she talks of them it makes Rachel feel excluded.

There are other examples of these pairings in Woolf's later novels including the relationship between Lily (the creative, single woman) and Mrs Ramsay (the fertile, providing mother) in Woolf's highly experimental novel *To the Lighthouse.* This diverse pairing has been extensively written about. In *The Years* we see Maggie Pargiter (married to Renny, with two children) juxtaposed with Eleanor Pargiter (she never marries but would have liked to have married a man like Renny). In *Between the Acts* there is the mother, with two children, Isa Oliver in contrast to Miss La Trobe the childless artist who has written the village pageant. In *The Waves* the opposing characters of Rhoda and Susan are depicted by Woolf. Rhoda describes experiences that Woolf herself describes in her autobiographical writings, most notably her inability to step over a puddle. Maternal passion is captured

succinctly in *The Waves* via the fecund and brooding Susan who is looking forward immensely to having children:

> I shall be debased and hide-bound by the bestial and beautiful passion of maternity. I shall push the fortunes of my children unscrupulously. I shall hate those who see their faults. I shall lie basely to help them. (TW, p89)

As an adult, Susan is a representation, caricature even, of the maternal instinct; she is closely associated with the maternal and natural world. She marries a farmer; lives in the country, and is extremely protective of her own children. In the novel Neville notices Susan's shabby dress, rough hands and describes them as emblems of her maternal splendour. The 'hands expressing motherhood' relate to a diary entry that Woolf made about Irene Noel-Baker in 1925 (DXIV, V3, p29). Woolf comments on her friend and admits she had felt 'some waves of ancient emotion, chiefly at the sound of her voice & sight of her hands.' Several critics have also pointed out that the character of Susan shares similar traits with Woolf's sister. As well as being a source of envy Vanessa Bell and her maternal instinct were an inspiration for Woolf's fiction. Woolf stated in a letter to her sister that she did desire to write about her: 'What a poet you are in colour- one of these days I must write about you' (L3583, V6, p381). Moreover, within Woolf's novels there is a strong current of maternal love; Mrs Ramsay's matriarchal role in the household brings to mind Vanessa Bell at Charleston. Additionally, we also see paternal instinct in *To The Lighthouse* as Mr Bankes reveals he 'would have liked a daughter of his own' (TTL, p63).

The maternal instinct

> How instinctive the mothers reaction is! (DXXIX, V5, p333)

What does the phrase 'maternal instinct' mean? The maternal instinct can be defined as the mother's understanding of the infant's needs and desires. It may be called intuition and it is thought to be influenced by hormonal conditions that exist during pregnancy. Sensory stimuli provided by the offspring, for example social releasers such as smiles, are also important in creating a bond between mother and infant. Mothers unconsciously touch a new baby in the same way on first meeting, exploring their fingers before moving across to the palms of the baby's hands, down the arms, along the legs and finally around the baby's trunk; this untaught process has convinced scientists of the existence of maternal instinct.

It was widely believed that Vanessa Bell was, metaphorically, the Bloomsbury Group's maternal instinct as she and Clive Bell were the first members of the group to marry and have children. It is documented that both sisters shared a Bloomsbury party visit to a film of a caesarean operation in 1915. Woolf commented it was odd entertainment but Leonard 'actually felt ill during the film.'[10] Vanessa Bell was apparently fascinated by the maternal instinct so much so that she wanted her sister to write a book about this phenomenon, which she felt had never been sufficiently explored in writing. Vanessa wrote candidly to her sister requesting her to write on this topic on April 23rd 1927: 'Start with birth, which also has never been described except by men.'[11] The wisdom of this reasoning could be questioned when Vanessa was fully aware that her sister had never given birth and the subject was very sensitive. Prior to this request Vanessa had written to Virginia Woolf on the 16th April 1927 asking her to consider the topic of motherhood:

> I wonder how you'd really like the problem of children added to your existence. I don't feel at all equal to dealing with it myself.' (Berg) 'You must write to Tavistock now. First, defend your position as mother; next as artist. Why do you say that the chief end of life is one's work?' [12]

In her responding letter to her sister, dated 21st April, Woolf considered what she would have been like as a mother:

> I'm sure, to return to your letter, that I should make a vile mother. For one thing, (though this I try to hide from you) I slightly distrust or suspect the maternal passion. It is obviously immeasurable and unscrupulous. You would fry us all to cinders to give Angelica a days pleasure, without knowing it. You are a mere tool in the hands of passion. Other mothers are much worse, and I've no doubt I should be worst of all- Helen Anrep and Faith(Henderson) appal me when they talk of their children: In fact what you feel about marriage I feel about motherhood, expect that of the two relations motherhood seems to me the more destructive and limiting. (L1745, V3, p365-66)

Woolf appeared to change her view whilst she was writing this letter and she closed her letter with the following:

> But no doubt I'm merely trying to make out a case for myself: there's some truth in (it) though; I don't like profound instincts- not in human relationships. (Ibid)

Woolf's response indicates that she had thought extensively on the subject of the maternal instinct and questioned whether she had killed it. In one small diary entry from 1934 she writes three negative statements about the maternal instinct and the possessiveness which mothers often feel, preferring their child to others: 'This is the religion & superstition of motherhood'; 'Why does it irritate me so , this maternal partiality?'; 'Most of all I hate the hush & mystery of motherhood. How unreal it all is' (DXXIII, V4, p264). Woolf was sometimes horrified and disgusted by the extremes of passion created by this natural instinct. Writing of her new nephew Julian Bell she states that 'a child is the very devil- calling out, as I believe, all the worst and least explicable passions of the parents- and the Aunts' (L409, V1, p328). Readers may recall the hideous description of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's newborn baby in *Flush: A Biography* (1933)[13], using the dog's sensory consciousness the baby is first

referred to as making an animal's sound: 'There was a faint bleating in the shadowed room'; ' horrid thing waved and mewed by her side' (p83). The baby is associated with darkness, ugliness and jealousy as Flush admits he was 'torn with rage and jealousy' (p83). The innocent baby is literally portrayed in the 1933 text as a 'repulsive presence' (p83) and a 'helpless, weak, puling, muling lump' (p84). However, later in the chapter the baby is on the nurse's lap and Flush is on Mrs Browning's lap and the text indicates that the dog and baby were actually quite similar. 'Did not the baby somehow resemble Flush in many ways?' (p84).

It could be argued that due to the fact that Woolf did not have any children, or give birth herself, that she could not experience this maternal instinct. However, this is not the case as Woolf became reliant on her relationship with Angelica and their close quasi-maternal relationship is demonstrated in the following extract of a letter to Vanessa, in 1928, who was staying with the children in their new villa in Cassis, France:

> You must be back on the 30th. I am rapidly drying- Angelica has become essential to me. An awful kind of spurious maternal feeling has taken possession of me. (L1887, V3, p490)

Repeatedly in the late 1920s Woolf wrote in her letters that her sister's absence, especially losing Angelica, was similar to a draught and that she was 'watered' by their return: 'I am feeling extremely barren and dry without you- Angelica will be a small shower of rain' (L1895, V3, p501). Furthermore, the absence may have recalled the initial separation anxiety that she encountered in her childhood. Separation anxiety is a behaviour first identified by John Bowlby (1963)[14]. It describes the distress shown by infants when separated from their main caregiver. Psychologists use this behaviour as a measure when assessing the security and strength of a child's attachment. This separation anxiety was the same worry that had

plagued Woolf as a child when she used to wait anxiously by the window at 22 Hyde Park Gate, frantically watching for the return of her mother from one of her charity visits. Separation anxiety may have been a reason why she unintentionally rejected the maternal instinct. Jane Dunn, in her book *A Very Close Conspiracy* (1990)[15], which documents the two sisters and their relationship, suggests that this childlike quality possessed by Woolf was a motivating factor in her never becoming a mother:

> Like Persephone, Virginia never quite cast off the chrysalis of daughterhood to assume full sexual maturity, and with it the burden of motherhood.[16]

Vanessa Bell's natural maternal instinct was to protect her own children and Woolf often viewed herself as one of her sister's offspring. Virginia's intimacy with Vanessa's children was not only a compensation for her childlessness. She was practically one of them. Later in life, Woolf sustained the animal nicknames from early childhood and the fantasy that she was both her sister Vanessa's child and her unrequited love. Vanessa used to mother her sister as a child and it could also be argued that she continued this role throughout her life. In a letter dated 17th March 1921, Woolf asks her sister candidly, 'why did you bring me into the world to go through these ordeals?' (L1169, V2, p458). Furthermore, in another letter, Woolf also describes herself as Vanessa's "firstborn" (L1000, V2, p312). Indeed this mother/child relationship is part of the foundation of her friendships with women such as Vita Sackville West and Violet Dickinson. Woolf's relationships with women have been well cited. Some researchers have specifically looked at the power and endurance of Woolf's relationships with women, most notably Vanessa Curtis, whose book *Virginia Woolf's Women* (2002)[17] includes chapters on Ottoline Morrell, Katherine Mansfield and Ethel Smyth. Woolf appears to have chosen relationships where she could receive nurturing, to be mothered and to be protected and cared for; even her husband Leonard Woolf provided a kind of maternal

protectiveness for his wife. Woolf distrusted the maternal instinct yet she also demanded it. Several of her key relationships involved the other person lavishing this protection on her and she chose her 'mothers' carefully.

For Woolf her sapphist tendencies, her having close relationships with women, often took the pattern of using babyish language. The language of animals was often used as were nicknames learned in childhood. She adored nicknames and this is evident in all her relationships: with her sister (Billy Goat and Dolphin); with Violet Dickinson Sparroy was Woolf's nickname; Woolf refers to her friend Ka Cox as the bear or 'bruin'; with Vita (Bosman's Potto and the Pinche Marmoset) (L1863, V3, p462) and with Leonard their nicknames were Mandril and Mongoose (L682, V2, p35). A letter to Clive Bell in 1910 illustrates her habit of inventing animal names and characteristics for her friends and family: 'There was great excitement in the singeries last night' (L539, V1, p437). 'Singeries' refers to the 'apes', the plural name by which Woolf often called herself ('singes'); the 'smaller monkeys' could be Julian and Quentin; 'Mango' may be Adrian; and 'Wombat', the dog Hans. Woolf also knew that to hide behind childish pet names was to avoid talking and confronting adult issues.

Furthermore, the following quotations from letters to Violet Dickinson reveal she openly revealed this egocentric desire to be babied and soothed: 'I wish you were a Kangaroo and had a pouch for small Kangaroos to creep to' (L83, V1, p79). As already stated above Violet Dickinson was an intimate friend, a comforter and a firm supporter of Woolf's writing. She was a maternal figure: 'I like drivelling away, as a Baby slobbers, to my Violet' (L110, V1, p103). Earlier in the letter she had asked her to 'take the Sparroy to your breast.' Woolf's need for maternal affection is revealed in the mother and child terms she uses for her closest relationships with women. 'You make me feel like a baby having drunk sweet milk' she confesses to Vita Sackville West after having spent the night at Long Barn the preceding

day (L2019, V4, p40). At the start of the affair between Virginia and Vita she listed in her diary all the things she loved about her friend; it is not surprising that the first quality in the list is 'her motherhood (but she is a little cold & offhand with her boys)'. Vita's sons were Lionel Benedict (1914-1998) and Nigel (b. 1919) Nicolson. Woolf enjoyed the 'motherly' aspect of Vita's personality; she 'lavishes on me the maternal protection which, for some reason, is what I have always most wished from everyone' (DXIV, V3, p52). In turn, Vita acknowledged in a letter to her husband Harold Nicolson that her friend Virginia Woolf, who was spending a week's holiday in Burgundy with her, 'has a sweet and childlike nature, from which her intellect is completely separate.'[18]

There is an obvious mobility that has to be acknowledged here, the transition from wanting an infant to becoming an infant. Being a child means a form of escape from the pressures of adult adjustment and a way of regressing towards the irresponsibility of youth, childhood and infancy. This aspect of Woolf's personality is discussed in the next section of the thesis.

Witcherina and Pixerina

Virginia Witcherina. (L3429, V6, p263)

In his 'Portrait of Virginia Woolf', broadcast on the BBC home service, 29 August 1956, Ralph Partridge (the first paid assistant to the Hogarth Press) focused on the childlike quality she possessed. Indeed, many of Woolf's friends and family commented upon and loved this aspect of her personality. Woolf's future biographer and nephew, Quentin Bell shared his memories of his aunt and her infant-like mannerisms:

> Her conversation was full of surprises, of unpredictable questions, of fantasy and of laughter- the happy laughter of a

> child who finds the world more strange, more absurd and more beautiful than any one could have imagined possible.[19]

Virginia Woolf's lively humour and wit was appreciated by children as much as it was by adults. Her correspondence is peppered with accounts of playing with or telling magical stories to Vanessa's children or Emma Vaughan's children. Woolf always maintained the belief that children inhabited a special world: a secret world. Furthermore, she wanted to enter that world: however, as the option of motherhood was taken away from her she used her sister's children, in particular her unique relationship with Angelica Bell, to provide access to that world of imagination. Although Woolf was close to all three of her sister's children, the most notable relationship she was to have with a child was the bond she established with Angelica, Vanessa's youngest child, and the only girl. In April 1918, Vanessa had confided in her sister that she was pregnant; this baby was to be Angelica. Ironically, also that year Mrs Webb had told Woolf that she should have two great personal relationships in life: marriage and parenthood. Prior to the birth of Angelica, Woolf had dreamt that the 'nameless one' (L992, V2, p303) was a boy but on the 25th December, Vanessa gave birth to a daughter. Although she was Duncan Grant's child, the new baby was presented to the world as the daughter of Clive Bell to whom Vanessa was still married. The baby was first registered as Helen Vanessa Bell and in March, following a conversation with Virginia, Vanessa added the name Angelica.

In her sincere memoirs *Deceived with Kindness* Angelica Garnett (nee Bell) recalls her special alliance with her aunt Virginia Woolf.

> She was convinced that I inhabited a world of fantasy special to myself, and she longed to enter it. In this world she was Witcherina and I, Pixerina; we flew over the elms and over the downs, our main object, as far as I remember,

> being to bring back fictitious information about other members of the family.[20]

The creation of two new nicknames Witcherina and Pixerina and a secret world for Woolf and her niece perhaps brought Woolf back into her own childhood and stimulated past memories of laughter, games and stories in the Stephen household. The language of witches and pixies was intended to be an exclusive means of communication between the two of them.

Woolf's tremendous childlike imagination is one of the reasons that she connected so well with children. In a letter to Madge Vaughan after she had left Giggleswick Woolf includes a message for Madge's son Halford Vaughan in which she described a trip to the Zoo where she depicts 'all the Dragons lashing their tails and gnashing their teeth till the blue fire spurted from them-oh horrible' (L196,V1, p161). Her furtive and fertile imagination was evident from childhood with the childhood stories that the young Stephen children indulged in, for example Beccage and Hollywinks and Jim, Joe and Harry Hoe.

Through their unique relationship Woolf invited her young niece into her adult world. A letter to Angelica from 1930 reveals their close bond. Woolf describes Pinka's puppies and gives them names. She compliments Angelica on her talent for sewing and then jokes about seeing Ottoline whose hair is bright red, like Pinka's coat. Furthermore, she calls this a secret between the two of them: 'How I wish you would run in now and then we could have some pranks with the sugar' (L2185, V4,p173). They would often throw sugar cubes from the front window of Monk's House for the cart-horses waiting below. The letter has an affectionate tone: a comradeship, a seemingly mutual respect.

Indeed, Mrs Garnett's childhood viewpoint provides an interesting and revealing perspective on Virginia Woolf, a different point of view from that of a contemporary. The

absorbing book *Deceived with Kindness* provides the reader with insights about Angelica's childhood and, in particular, the time she spent with the Woolfs, for example, having tea with the couple at Monk's House:

> At the tea-table, where we sat in high-backed chairs as though in a nursery, Leonard pretended to talk to me like a grown-up, pinning me down by a glance from his sapphire-blue eyes, under which I shrank into being what I was- a small child.[21]

Angelica supplies the reader with an understanding of Leonard's authority and how he strongly disapproved of the way she has brought up (revealed in later conversations between them reported by Angelica Garnett in *Deceived with Kindness*). Ritually after meals, Leonard would have one striped humbug that he would offer to Angelica. After dinner, almost like sisters, Virginia Woolf and Angelica would retreat to the sitting room at the top of the house, whilst Leonard would descend to the basement. In her playful and quirky letters to Angelica, Woolf signed herself 'Jinny' or 'Ginny'; this was her own childhood name (therefore, she did become, in a sense, Angelica's sister). Angelica provides us with one example of what the two of them would do as entertainment: 'Virginia produced rolls of coloured paper...and with scissors, paste and pins proceeded to create a doll, the image of Ottoline Morrell, over which unexpected triumph she emitted hoots of laughter.'[22] With her niece Woolf was dynamic, imaginative, girlish and protective and she enjoyed shopping as much as any child.

Woolf's sense of fun and humour is revealed in Angelica Garnett's memoirs; she was receptive and open to children, moreover they enjoyed her company. Numerous reports exist of her taking various children out on trips, not just her sister's children but also Judith, her niece, the second daughter of Adrian and Karin Stephen, and the children of Will and Madge Vaughan: Janet, later Dame Janet Vaughan; Halford; and Barbara (b. 1903 she died in 1909).

There was a second son David who was born in 1906. Quentin Bell, was one who, in childhood, looked forward to her visits more than anything. His mother, Vanessa Bell also reiterated this point:

> My children, from the age they were able to enjoy anything beyond their animal satisfactions, enjoyed beyond anything a visit from Virginia. They looked forward to it as the greatest treat imaginable.[23]

Quentin Bell attributes this to the fact that they took pleasure in playing together like other children: 'For children she was a treat.'[24] Nigel Nicolson, Vita Sackville West's son, also verified that Woolf was marvellous with children as she treated him and his brother as if they were grown-ups and believed that there was something special within each child that grown-ups could never possess. Indeed Woolf never underestimated or patronised children and, as she indicated in her diary, she was aware of 'how quick & hard & unexpected childrens minds are' (DXXIV, V4, p340). She sympathised with children and understood that they were sometimes overlooked or misunderstood.

Children haunt Virginia Woolf's novels. Phyllis Jones is a child in *Between the Acts* who personifies England at the opening of Miss La Trobe's village pageant. In the same novel Caro and George Oliver are the baby daughter and son of Isa and Giles Oliver. In *The Waves* childhood events reverberate throughout the six character's lives. *To the Lighthouse* is full of children with James and Cam being the youngest. Elsie Mitchell in *Mrs Dall*oway is a little girl playing in Regent's Park. Mrs Coates in *Mrs Dalloway* looks up at the skywriting aeroplane and holds her baby. Woolf's work very often displays the consciousness of the child when she was not actually writing of children.

Woolf captures the innocence and yet the frustration of childhood. She depicts James and his fury at his father for stating they could not travel to the lighthouse the next day. Mrs

Ramsay is aware of the effect it will have on her son and she acknowledges the fact that children never forget. In *The Waves* the children's initial sensory perceptions of the world stay with them throughout their adult life. Woolf created a unique language to express their experience of early childhood. Bernard sees a ring, a spider's web, walls cracked with gold cracks and the dining-room window. Susan sees a slab of pale yellow, leaves around the window and a caterpillar. She also hears the birds singing. Rhoda sees a snail, cold water on mackerel and a tablecloth. The children's dialogue is basic with a heavy reliance on simple present tense yet it also foreshadows the future relationships of these six characters. Usually the children's experiences are through their sight and hearing, yet Neville and Jinny also experience the new world via the sense of touch. The stones feel cold on Neville's feet and Jinny burns and shivers. What the children see and hear is indistinct and we are not certain if it is a metaphoric idea or what the child actually thinks they observe. Woolf also captures wonderfully the fears and vulnerability of children; for example in *The Waves,* Susan sees Jinny kiss Louis and gets upset, then Bernard sees Susan, follows her and attempts to make her feel better. In *Jacob's Room* Jacob forcefully plunges his hand into the rock pool to catch the crab, Rose runs back from Lamley's in the dark, her adventure over, frightened of the man with the white, peeled face in *The Years*. Nancy Ramsay, in *To the Lighthouse*, broods over a rock pool imagining it is a universe.

Childhood always forms an important background to the way Woolf's characters think and act. Perhaps due to the fact that she was childlike in many ways she seemed to possess the ability to spot the former child within her adult acquaintances. Her letters and diaries are peppered with descriptions of adults looking, behaving or acting like young children. Woolf also used almost immature and basic similes which recall associations of simple connections, not a technique you would normally associate with a gifted writer like Woolf. Friends and acquaintances often remind her of children who have childish quirks or

qualities. Her close friend Vita Sackville West is illustrated as acting 'like a schoolgirl' due to her shyness when confronted with Woolf's servants (DXV, V3, p88), her husband Harold is described as 'a spontaneous childlike man' (DXVI, V3, p145) and Ethel Smyth is portrayed as acting 'like a child with a sugar mouse' (L2851, V5, p273). This childishness was often seen by Woolf as an endearing quality; making the adult appear vulnerable or needing attention or assistance. Writing of Madame Grave, a dressmaker, Woolf states bluntly: 'I like her childishness' (DIX, V2, p17). Woolf appears to relate to this aspect of people; the truthfulness. This may have been what attracted her to Leonard who is described as having a childlike love of gardening: 'L. runs out like a child allowed to get down & go' (DVIII, V1, p302).

However, not everyone is described in a positive light if they retain signs of childhood. Woolf's relationship to her mother-in-law is an interesting one and could be researched more extensively. Marie Woolf, nee de Jongh, was Dutch born, widowed in 1892; she had raised a family of six sons and three daughters. It has been documented that Virginia never really accepted Leonard's family; she despised their religious beliefs, manners, loudness and closeness. In particular, she struggled to like her mother-in-law, whom she considered had never truly grown up. On numerous occasions she refers to Marie Woolf as being childlike or acting in a childlike manner: 'She has, I think, the qualities of a person who has never altogether grown up, in spite of 9 children & all her cares' (DIV, V, p161). Virginia explains what it was like having a conversation with her: 'It is like talking to a child; a child, too, with 'feelings': a child with "rights" & a sense of propriety & respectability & what ought to be said & done' (DXVII, V3, p193). It is not clear why Virginia appeared to dislike this woman so much: it could have been due to the fact that she raised a large family and constantly talked about her children and the love for her offspring.

In her novels Woolf often employs childlike phrases and similes to provide the reader with insight into the characters' feelings. In *To the Lighthouse* according to Barbara Edwards-Aldrich, Woolf employs over one hundred similes, figures of speech making an explicit comparison between two things essentially unlike, to enliven her description of things, places, and people. The majority of these similes relate to people; furthermore, of those relating to people, over thirty describe Mr and Mrs Ramsay.[25] The similes Woolf uses to describe Mr and Mrs Ramsay fall into three major categories: forces or objects of nature; human, and animal and reveal Woolf's feelings about her parents. Her human similes not only reaffirm Mr Ramsay's childishness and his wife's impulsiveness but also suggest the couple's remoteness and distance from each other. After Mrs Ramsay reassures her husband of his genius and takes him 'within the circle of life' (TTL, p44), he becomes 'like a child who drops off satisfied' (TTL, p45). Later that evening, we glimpse adolescent impulses in Mrs. Ramsay when for a few moments, 'for no reason at all... [she] became like a girl of twenty, full of gaiety' (TTL, p116); however, rather than follow her desire to be with the younger generation, she feels forced to join her husband for a quiet evening in the library.

Characters who can see the child in others or feel like a child again play a prominent part in her novels. In *The Years* Eleanor feels like a child next to Kitty Lasswade when she accepts a lift in Kitty's magnificent car: 'She felt flustered and dowdy as if she were a schoolgirl suddenly' (TY, p132). Peter Walsh in *Mrs Dalloway* feels like a child as he walks in Regent's Park: 'Odd, he thought, how the thought of childhood keeps coming back to me' (MD, p62). In *Mrs Dalloway* alone there are forty-two references to children/childhood and childbirth. Woolf reverts to her basic similes on a regular basis. Sally Seton is portrayed 'like a child who has been in mischief' (MD, p67). There are some notable egocentric characters like Miss Kilman and her penchant for pink cake. Woolf had an understanding that childhood is always at the centre of the character's actions as it is in real life: the past is always behind

the present. Clarissa Dalloway 'felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged' (MD, p10).Woolf fervently believed that early childhood was the most important aspect of a writer's life and children inhabit all of her writing, even if sometimes it is only the ghosts of childhood past, the infants the characters used to be. The memory of early childhood intrudes and interrupts the consciousness of each of her characters just as it appeared to do in Woolf's own life.

Woolf maintained a firm belief that childhood was still alive in her and her childishness permeated the relationships she shared with children, especially Angelica. Was it this quality of hers that made her ultimately distrust the maternal passion? Whilst writing *Orlando* in 1927 she contemplates the apparent loss of her desire to have children, now she appears to have an insatiable desire to write. In a diary extract she writes about Nessa's children and admits that 'the little creatures acting moved my infinitely sentimental throat' yet she confesses 'oddly enough I scarcely want children of my own now' (DXVI, V3, p167). At this time she states that she also became aware of the 'ravaging sense of the shortness & feverishness of life.' Certain aspects of physical life appeared to upset Woolf:

> I don't like the physicalness of having children of one's own. This occurred to me at Rodmell; but I never wrote it down. I can dramatise myself as a parent, it is true. And perhaps I have killed the feeling instinctively; as perhaps nature does. (DXVI, V3, p167)

Woolf's passion for books and creating reveals her own maternal instinct, albeit not conventionally. In an early letter to Violet Dickinson she stated that: 'I run to a book as a child to its mother' (L333, V1, p274). In her essay 'A More than Maternal Tie', Rachel Bowlby explores Woolf's essay 'The Patron and Crocus'. Within this essay, Woolf suggests that the most important bond in life is not biological as we may assume but the bond between

the writer and the 'patron': the individual or organisation that pays for and publishes the writing. Was Woolf suggesting within this metaphor that professional or literary bonds may themselves be stronger than the bodily proximities of either mother or babies in the womb? Within Woolf's essay, there is an enigmatic allusion to the 'more than maternal tie' which Bowlby uses as a title for her essay. The maternal tie is an interesting and compelling issue, which Bowlby acknowledges, yet 'it also has the peculiarity of being a tie that has always been broken already; the cord must be cut in order for the baby to be born.'[26] Bowlby discusses how the bond of mother and baby has been broken literally once the umbilical cord is cut, in order for the baby to survive. Consequently, the 'more than maternal tie', in this sense, would be one which was never withdrawn and which also, for the same reason, would not be charged with both the anxiety and the lure of a lost wholeness. Woolf's view was clear on this matter; the 'more than maternal tie' was one in which the tie was never broken. Although she did not have a patron as such, her relationship with her own printing press, the Hogarth Press, which is still in business today, was a more than maternal tie:

> The Hogarth Press is a small, out-of-the-way tree which grows at Richmond and bears from time to time peculiar fruit.[27]

The above quotation from Desmond MacCarthy's 'Affable Hawk' (his nickname) review gives an indication of the uniqueness of this printing press and its importance to the Woolfs. It was during Victorian times that publishing became a highly lucrative business; the Hogarth Press was a source of pride and solace to Virginia Woolf. It was on the evening of the 25th January 1915, Woolf's 33rd birthday, she and Leonard decided that if they possibly could they would live at Hogarth House; they would also buy a printing press and a bulldog: 'Sitting at tea we decided three things: in the first place to take Hogarth, if we can get it; in

the second, to buy a Printing press; in the third to buy a bull dog, probably called John' (DI, V1, p28).

Evidence suggests that Woolf was very excited by the prospect of having her own press. Hogarth House was one-half of what had been built around 1720 as a single residence; the other half was called Suffield House. Further to the conversation on her birthday, exactly a month later, on the 25th February 1915, Leonard Woolf signed a five-year lease on Hogarth House, an elegant and beautifully proportioned house in Richmond; the rent was 50 pounds per year and subsequently, the Hogarth Press was born. The Woolfs would live there for nine years and they in turn christened their brand new publishing house Hogarth, after their home. The whole idea was very challenging as they had no real capital and they had no prior experience of producing and selling books. In March 1917, Leonard and Virginia Woolf finally scraped together enough money to buy a second hand printing press and they had to learn how to operate the press and set the type. Leonard suggested that Virginia should attend the St. Bride school of publishing, which she did, but being Virginia, she also published a pamphlet on the art of printing.[28] Woolf appeared to find the physical tasks of printing invigorating and she looked forward immensely to the afternoons when she set down her pen and joined her husband at the press as this quotation from Woolf's diary in 1924 aptly demonstrates:

> I enjoy my printing afternoons, & think it the sanest way of life- for if I were always writing, or merely recouping from writing, I should be like an inbreeding rabbit, - my progeny becoming weakly albinos. (DXIII, V2, p326-7)

The physical labour of publishing is sometimes underrated but for her it was obviously also a labour of love. This labour of love ultimately created the success of the Press.

Unlike other literary figures whose publishers were quite separate from their lives and art, she and the press were in the same house. Therefore, the business of the press was part of her everyday life and the effect this had on her writing should not be underestimated. The intimacy between writer and book is intense and Woolf in her personal writing often described the Press as being like her own child, a view that is demonstrated in the letter Woolf wrote to Barbara Bagnell in 1923 in which she compares the Press to a mother pig feeding its young:

> One cant ever go away with out some such reason. I assure you the Press is worse than 6 children at breast simultaneously. Consider the Sow. She shows no embarrassment. But Leonard and I live apart- he in the basement, I in the printing room....When one's up, the other's down. Then you and the sow say that maternity is worse! (L1410, V3, p55)

Woolf wrote this letter in a moment of despair during the time when she worked in the press and had to read other people's manuscripts even though she longed to be writing her own. Moreover, in her diary, she actually classes herself and Leonard as parents to the ever growing and expanding Press: 'The Hogarth Press, you see, begins to outgrow its parents' (DX, V2, p144). Hogarth House became their office and the work of the Press spread everywhere. An effective analogy is that the manuscripts and office paraphernalia took over the house just as children's toys take over the parents' once clean and organised living room. Subsequently, Woolf continues to personify the Press as a young and developing child whose presence engulfs the whole house: 'Here that strange offspring grew & throve; it ousted us from the dining room, which is now a dusty coffin; & crept all over the house' (DXIII, V2, p283). Even though some critics, perhaps crudely, suggested that as the Woolfs had no children of their own the Hogarth Press performed the function of a substitute child. Woolf herself implicitly pointed out the obvious link between the Press being as demanding as a

child, both physically and mentally, to her and her husband. Was this a deliberate or unconscious use of language? Quentin Bell even writes of the intense relationship between his uncle Leonard Woolf and the press blatantly stating that 'the Press was his child and as time went on he was not perfectly rational about it.'[29]

The Hogarth Press was Woolf's vehicle for her own writing as well as a form of therapy, which she readily admitted in her diary: 'Now the point of the Press is that it entirely prevents brooding, & gives me something solid to fall back on' (DXIII, V2, p308). Owning the Press enabled Virginia Woolf to experiment; it gave her freedom in the arena of her work, and she acknowledged this fact: 'What I owe the Hogarth Press is barely paid by the whole of my handwriting.' 'Yet I'm the only woman in England free to write what I think' (DXIV, V3, p42-43). The Hogarth Press gave Woolf control over her own work; its first publication was 'The Mark on the Wall.' In addition, this was her first prolonged experiment in literary form. She was able to do what she wanted because she did not have to deal with editors or publishers. It can be said that many of Virginia Woolf's books were created entirely by her: she conceived the first idea, wrote them, printed, bound, packaged and sometimes even delivered them. Leonard Woolf in his autobiography viewed the Press as a source of therapeutic activity as well as a means of publishing poems and other short works, which the commercial publisher would not look at. Katherine Mansfield was one of the first authors Leonard and Virginia Woolf published when they finally started the Press and the Press, which is still running today, eventually published other notable authors such as E.M. Forster, T.S. Eliot and Sigmund Freud.

Authors are as exacting as mothers. (L1276, V2, p549)

Even though she appeared to mistrust the maternal instinct it appears that the issue of childlessness preyed upon Woolf's mind and she wrote about it in her copious diaries. Each of Woolf's major breakdowns was associated with a crisis in female identity; her conception of society's views of female success and female roles. Her worst breakdown followed Leonard's decision that they would not have children. Her feelings of female inadequacy and her immense internalised anger against Vanessa became overwhelming. Only self-destruction seemed commensurate with this despair as she struggled to deal with the idea that she would never be a mother and share her sister's joy. Woolf's childlessness left her feeling ambivalent but sometimes unfulfilled as a woman. Quentin Bell summarised this feeling as her own 'perennial and incurable regret that she had no children.'[30] Indeed, through reading Woolf's diaries and letters it is apparent that she often felt that she was inadequate and had failed as a woman. It is poignantly clear, especially from her diaries, that Woolf felt herself to be unfulfilled because of her childlessness. In Woolf's deepest plunges of melancholy or in her times of failure she always uttered the words 'children.' 'I have no children of my own; & Nessa has' (DXVII, V3, p189); 'But why am I feeling like this? Let me watch the wave rise. I watch. Vanessa. Children. Failure. Yes; I detect that. Failure failure'(DXV, V3, p110). Woolf wrote to her sister in 1911 that her 'hairy black' devils beset her during a storm: 'To be 29 and unmarried- to be a failure- childless- insane too, no writer' (L570, V1, p466). Of course, some of these devils would be later exorcized but the underlying longing for children permeates her diaries and I will argue that it also creeps into her novels with the perambulator motif. However, it is possible that if Virginia Woolf had produced children she might not have been able to cope with them, may have broken down and may not have written. Gerald Brenan, a noted writer and a correspondent with Woolf gave his perspective:

> There could have been no question of her ever having children though she may occasionally have day-dreamed of it. She knew that her bouts of madness put her in a different category from other women.[31]

Claudia Roth Pierpont refers to an infamous comment made by Q.D Leavis, a literary critic, about Virginia Woolf's maternal ability. As well as writing and teaching, Leavis had raised three children of her own. 'Queenie' Leavis believed that Virginia Woolf was an unusual representative of real women's lives: 'There is no reason to suppose Mrs. Woolf would know which end of the cradle to stir'.[32] Woolf herself admitted in a letter to Molly MacCarthy: 'I'm very ignorant about what one does after a child has been born' (L561, VI, p456). Woolf's imaginative journeys in her novels came about due to the immense freedom she experienced in her life. She was exempt from typical chores and duties such as the daily visit to the shop or needing to push the baby in the perambulator. Would having a child stop any creative pulses from flowing?

It is not an exaggeration to comment on the fact that she could not live without writing. What can she do but write, she poignantly demands in a letter to her nephew Julian Bell: 'Dont tell me you have given up writing. What else is there worth doing?' (L1865, V3, p464). When she is writing well she realises she possesses an 'exalted sense of being above time & death' (DXXIII, V4, p245).

Woolf had an absorbingly and seemingly innate concern for the art of writing which she acknowledges in the following diary entry from 1938:

> Ever since I was a little creature, scribbling a story in the manner of Hawthorne on the green plush sofa in the drawing room at St Ives whilst the grown-ups dined. (DXXVII, V5, p192)

In Woolf's time, traditional female forms of creativity included childbearing, motherhood, cooking and nurturing, being able to bring people together in a social situation yet as an author Woolf felt that her writing was a valid form of creation, similar to having children. Hermione Lee proposes in her perceptive biography that Woolf believed, through her writing, that: 'she could compete with marriage and maternity. Writing vied with conception.'[33] Although writing and childbearing are obviously very distinct forms of creativity and self-representation, they do, in one sense, compete for the same resources: a woman's time, effort and patience. Undoubtedly Woolf uses the traditional metaphor that likens the process of artistic creation to giving birth. Woolf, in her personal writings, made competitive comparisons between her writing and the relationship between mother and baby, she metaphorically suggests, both consciously and unconsciously, that writing and publishing a book is equated with bearing a child.

> A book is so much a part of oneself that in delivering it to the public one feels as if one were pushing one's own child out into the traffic. If it be killed or hurt the injury is done to oneself, and if it be one's first-born...awkward and vulnerable and needing all the tenderness and all the understanding that no critic will ever give, anxiety for its fate becomes acute.[34]

Woolf's nephew Quentin Bell seemed to appreciate and understand his aunt's powerful feelings about her art. The analogy between writing and mothering was used frequently and consciously by Woolf to validate her own pathway in life. Her writing was an inner source of fertility: 'I wasn't at all sure that you would find anything good to say of my offspring' (L1307, V2, p576). In this quotation from a letter to Ka Arnold Forster she is describing *Jacob's Room* in a similar manner as if it was her own child and to Woolf her books were like children, products of herself, giving her a sense of pride and creation. Often her books seemed more real, more true and more important than the actual events in her own life. For

example, at a meeting of the Women's Co-Operative Guild in 1933 she describes *The Pargiters* (*The Years*): 'The P.s is more real, truer harder, more veined with blood than all this' (DXXI, V4, p165). The analogy with labour that Woolf uses in her private writing can not be denied or ignored and her books can indeed be basely viewed as substitutes for the children she would never have.

To conclude and summarise, in her work as early as 1905, Woolf was trying out oppositions between writing and childbirth, for example in the following review of Nancy Stair: 'The world might, perhaps, be considerably poorer if the great writers had exchanged their books for children of flesh and blood.'[35] However, for a woman to find her deepest realization of herself in creative work was going totally against the codes and norms of the first part of the twentieth century. Woolf in her childlessness was most probably reacting to the way in which femininity was constructed by her society when she was growing up. She often had the feeling of being stuck between centuries as the following quotation from *Three Guineas* succinctly describes:

> In imagination perhaps we can see the educated man's daughter, as she issues from the shadow of the private house, and stands on the bridge which lies between the old world and the new. (TG, p172)

Woolf arrived at a sense of desolation at her resultant childlessness; her writing could also be viewed as a kind of therapy that she used to deal with her childlessness, she could avoid the feeling of purposelessness by working constantly. Indeed much of her work could be seen as stimulated by the pain of not having children and this leads us to the next chapter, the inclusion of the perambulator motif in all her novels.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NURSEMAID AND THE PERAMBULATOR

> Every secret of a writer's soul, every experience of his life, every quality of his mind is written large in his works. (O, p200)

THE NURSEMAID

In her recent book, *Mrs Woolf and the Servants* Alison Light explores the hidden history of domestic service. The broad premise of this detailed research is that the 'service relationship was at the heart of most women's lives in nearly all periods of British history.'[1] In her prologue Light illustrates the fact that the labouring poor were often 'obscured as individuals', yet at the same time, were 'a visible sign of their employer's status.'[2] The nursemaid acted in a similar way to the perambulator which was an outward sign of the wealth of a family. Indeed, often the nursemaid *was* the main perambulator. It is generally the nursemaid that Woolf describes pushing or watching over the perambulator. Woolf and her brothers and sisters did presumably have experience of the role of the nursemaid in their own childhood home but no names are left recorded as to who they may have been; indeed most of the servants at Hyde Park Gate were transient. Sophie Farrell, the family cook was the only exception and Light dedicates a whole chapter to this woman whom she calls 'the family treasure.'

The character of the nursemaid throughout literature is a peripheral figure. Light acknowledges that, 'the servant is everywhere but nowhere in history.'[3] However, scattered throughout Woolf's novels are the elusive figures of nursemaids, some of whom are given names such as Rebecca in *Jacob's Room* and Pippy in *The Years*. Occasionally the nurses have nicknames, for example in *Mrs Dalloway* an old nurse is mentioned from Bourton, 'old

nurse, old Moody, old Goody' (MD, p68). In *Orlando*, Orlando lists an 'old Nurse Carpenter' as one of his numerous servants, presumably caring for him in infancy (O, p67). Other nursemaids, like the elderly grey woman who shares a bench with Peter Walsh and Sandra Wentworth Williams' nursemaid are nameless figures. A nursemaid is a historical term of employment for a female servant in a prosperous household. The nursemaid reported to the nurse and assisted her in taking care of the children of the family. The nursemaid was also useful for morale and for practical information. At the beginning of *The Voyage Out* Helen Ambrose is shown to be tearful and upset at leaving her children although it is interesting to note that she leaves her nursemaid with the responsibility to inform her children that their mother will be away for several months: 'Somewhere up there above the pinnacles where the smoke rose in a pointed hill, her children were now asking for her, and getting a soothing reply' (TVO, p7).

It is revealed at the end of chapter one in *Jacob's Room* that the Flanders' family do have the services of a nursemaid called Rebecca, who is baby John's nurse. The implication is that the family are wealthy. With the help of Rebecca, Betty puts the children to bed and these two women are literally described as members of a secret society, 'plotting the eternal conspiracy of hush and clean bottles' (JR, p7). Woolf must have felt this was a significant line as she repeats it further down on the same page. Did this line summarise her view of the nursemaids' role? Everything that a mother ordinarily might do, especially the more onerous tasks, could be turned over to a nursemaid. Their tasks involved ensuring the children were healthy; that they were dressed, fed and cleaned properly; they would have been required to watch over the children as they played and they would have needed to tidy and maintain the nursery and sleep in the same room as the children.

To cope with the demands of the large Ramsay family in *To the Lighthouse* a number of servants are mentioned, including the nursemaid. Mildred is frequently described as the

cook but she obviously also has additional duties handling the upbringing of the children. After his story with his mother, Mildred is the servant who collects James for his bath at the end of section ten (TTL, p72). Additionally, she shares a bedroom with James and Cam Ramsay, the two youngest children. In part two, Mrs McNab tries to recall Mildred's name, only remembering that she was fiery 'like all red-haired women' (TTL, p156). Mrs Ramsay was annoyed with Mildred when her two children were still awake at eleven o'clock due to the boar's skull being in the nursery: 'There was James wide awake and Cam sitting bolt upright, and Mildred out of bed in her bare feet, and it was almost eleven and they were all talking' (TTL, p131). It appears that Mildred could not calm the children and she could not take the skull down since James screamed if she touched it. Mrs Ramsay thinks, 'Mildred should be more careful' (TTL, p131). She had 'told Mildred to move it, but Mildred, of course, had forgotten' (TTL, p131). The clause 'of course' indicates that Mrs Ramsay did not have much faith in the ability of this woman to do important tasks. It could also imply Woolf's attitude towards servants which Light focuses on in her biography, when she writes that in Virginia Woolf's work 'the figure of the Victorian servant...conjured a complex mixture of feelings, of longing, of rage and of guilt.'[4]

Woolf often depicted these functionary figures as disciplining and commanding the children, in a custodial role, yet it is often ineffectual discipline that the nursemaids display. Cam is first introduced in *To the Lighthouse* picking flowers and refusing to give one to William Bankes when her nurse tells her to; Cam disobeys her nurse and clenches her fist and stamps her feet. After this event Mr Bankes privately names her 'Cam the Wicked' (TTL, p27). Furthermore, in *Mrs Dalloway*, Lady Bruton recalls her own childhood and getting into mischief as she clambered through shrubbery and dirtied her clothes: 'What old Nurse used to say about her frocks' (MD, p124). These archetypal authoritative mother substitutes are sometimes portrayed as cold, inept and menacing figures, juxtaposed with some nursemaids

being revered by characters in her novels. The sinister nurse, Nurse McInnis, can be seen in *The Voyage Out* during Rachel's illness.

At the time Woolf was writing, the incompetent or wicked servant loomed large in the minds of the middle classes. Mrs Warren for instance, told of a nursemaid who caused a child's death by taking the child out when she was told not to.[5] Parents were solicitous of the health of their children in the care of nursemaids and they were worried about children being dropped- by the nursemaid, not the mother! In several novels Woolf shows the nursemaids talking and gossiping, which leads to them neglecting their own duties and sometimes endangering the children in their care. In *Night and Day* a story is told about Katharine when she was a small baby in her perambulator and her nurse Susan was supposed to be looking after her but was more interested in spending time with her sailor fiancé: 'When she ought to have been attending to the baby, her eyes were on the sea' (ND, p138). This lack of attention nearly resulted in a horrific accident as the perambulator was left alone in a field where there was a bull. The majority of nursemaids often saw their work as transitional and temporary, a stage to be undertaken on the way to marriage and this may have been why their attention was often elsewhere. In the case of Susan she was more interested in her future husband than the child in her care.

Historically, nursemaids had a reputation for being gullible and sexually available- they were sometimes christened 'dolly-mops'. Henry Mayhew writing in *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861)[6] attributed this partly to the fact that nursemaids had little time or opportunity to meet respectable men of their own class. Notoriously it was policemen and off duty soldiers who were the usual objects of affection as they could fraternise with these types of men during the essential daily walk to the park with their charges contained in the perambulator. Finding faults with servants came easily to many employers and is depicted comically in an illustration called 'Servants of the Wrong Sort' taken from *The Graphic* of

21st December 1878. One of the illustrations is of a careless nursemaid more interested in looking for soldiers than watching over the child in her care who is in a perambulator which is rolling down the street and off the pavement. Although the majority of nursemaids were probably hard working and trustworthy, a minority proved to be careless and became responsible for the bad reputation of these servants.

In *Between the Acts* Amy and Mabel, the nursemaids, are employed to look after Giles and Isa's two young children. However, Woolf portrays them as a pair of gossips; their words are described as sweets rolled thin off their tongues, and their conversation is not about their children or even with the children George and Caro. Instead they are gossiping about the cook's asparagus and 'a feller' (BTA, p9). Mabel's actions in particular are described as abrasive; she turns the pram 'sharply' and tells George off 'sharply'. Mabel gives 'him a push towards the man' as she urges George to say good morning to his grandpa Mr Oliver (BTA, p10).

Rose Pargiter's nurse in *The Years* is portrayed as inattentive a number of times. Rose has a green smudge on her pinafore which makes Milly comment: 'Nurse might have put you on a clean pinafore' which is a clear indication that even the other children in the family feel that the nurse was not doing her job properly (TY, p8). A brief reference later to the nurse stealing sugar is a hint that the servant may be dishonest (TY, p22). Most crucially this nurse demonstrates lack of concern for Rose; as she was sewing she was also gossiping with Mrs C [7] and consequently does not pay attention to what Rose is saying or the fact that Rose sneaks out of the house by herself to go to Lamley's. The nurse 'was not attending; she wanted to go on with what she was saying to Mrs C. about the grocer's daughter' (TY, p19). It is Eleanor, not the nurse, who goes to comfort Rose when she is scared in her nursery due to the man she saw on the streets. Finally, the nurse arrives in the nursery to carry out her job and it is detailed that this nurse, 'felt a little guilty' as she had

stayed downstairs with the other servants gossiping about Mrs Pargiter (TY, p31). Light acknowledges this aspect of a servant's role: 'The servant, however vulnerable, wielded a precarious power.'[8] Although servants were firmly segregated from the main household they still lived under the same roof and they were obviously aware of intimate family secrets and problems. The power they held was intangible as they could be witnesses and also eavesdroppers, friends or enemies.

The above discussion of an inept nursemaid indicates that Woolf may have experienced this behaviour in her own life. The portrayal of Pauline depicted in *A Passionate Apprentice* is one example. In February 1897 Woolf was writing about a book she was reading on Queen Elizabeth. She personifies this piece of literature and openly criticises her nursemaid: 'She is far too beautiful to lie about the nursery at the mercy of the ink pot or of Pauline' (APA, p31). A later diary entry written in the next month indicates Woolf's dislike of her servant: 'Pauline becomes more like a cow than ever- She insisted upon trimming the lamps in the night Nursery which has smelt of parrafin (sic) ever since' (APA, p47).Then a few days later Woolf announces with much glee: 'Stella told us this morning that the beauteous Pauline is going! Too hard work for that cow- she wishes to be a ladies maid- So we shall get rid of her- and the question is who shall succeed Pauline the 1st?'(APA, p50). Once the new nurse is installed at the end of March 1897 Woolf begins to scrutinise her as well: 'She is small and dark, an ugly nose...At any rate she talks real French, which is one very good point in her favour, after Pauline's German English mixture' (APA, p58). Light comments that Woolf's prejudices about servants, unpleasant attitudes and even hostility to them was typical of the day. Woolf's diary entry reflects her views: 'The fact is the lower classes *are* detestable' (DIX, V2, p64). The attitude of many Victorians towards their servants was the same as their attitude towards children or animals. One manual from the 1880s actually used an equestrian analogy. The reader was told to be kind and just with her

servants yet also warned to 'hold fast the reins in your own hands.'[9] Of course there was an obvious power dynamic at work in many of Woolf's relationships with her servants and from childhood she constantly attempted to affirm her intellectual and class superiority: she appeared to dislike the issue of 'dependence'.

Childhood images that haunt the adult characters appear to involve the figure of the nursemaid. In *The Years* Eleanor recalls how they used to play firemen when they were children and Morris and she set the chimney on fire: 'Pippy went and fetched Papa' (TY, p24). This is the first reference in this novel to Eleanor and Martin's nursemaid Pippy, a significant character. In Woolf's memoir 'A Sketch of the Past' we are informed that the model of Pippy, Eleanor and Martin Pargiter's nursemaid in *The Years,* was Justine Nonon. Woolf reminisces to the reader about what game Nonon used to play with her:

> I used to sit on her knee; and her knee jogged up and down; and she sang in a hoarse cracked voice "Ron ron ron- et plon plon plon-" and then her knee gave and I was tumbled onto the floor. (ASOP, p87)

Justine Nonon is mentioned in *A Passionate Apprentice* in January 1897 when Vanessa and Virginia met her coming up the road: 'She is much better, and gave back the money Stella lent her, and a glass of Californian Honey as a present' (APA, p18). Additionally, on Wednesday 17th February 1897 she is listed as one of the Stephen family's visitors. Nonon, a French lady, lived by herself in Shepherd's Bush. Even the voice of Pippy was based on the croaky voice of Justine Nonon as Woolf depicts the sound of the nursemaid singing in her novel as, croaking, 'in her wheezy rattle of a voice' (TY, p165). Her childish and simplified view of Nonon was as a caricature: for the young Woolf she was a semi-sinister character from Brothers Grimm with little hairs sprouted on her long, bony chin. Woolf's childhood memory as described in 'A Sketch of the Past' is Eleanor's song (sur le pont d'Avignon) and

the tumbling game Pippy played with Martin which is portrayed in the section '1914' (p165). Amusingly, it appears that the slimy piece of flannel is a consistent part of both Martin and Eleanor's early childhood memory of the nursemaid Pippy: bath times appear memorable for the young children in both *The Years* and *The Waves*. Bernard describes and remembers in vivid detail his nurse washing him with her sponge.

In Woolf's novels the children are not often looked after by their parents or even seen playing with them. The role of the nursemaid facilitated the withdrawal of the children for the domestic convenience of the parents. The separate nursery space and the role of the nursemaid, in retrospect, symbolize the distance we perceive to have been in place between Victorian parents and their children. Judith Flanders, writing in *The Victorian House,* which gives a detailed description of these domestic arrangements, states: 'There is no question that, however much the Victorians loved their children, they spoke of them, and thought of them, in a very different way than we have come to expect today.'[10] For the growing Virginia, the nurseries in St. Ives and 22 Hyde Park Gate were very important rooms. In London their intense world of childish emotions was contained in the night and day nurseries at the top of the house where they were looked after by their nurse. In her early journals, she stated how the nursery was almost imprinted in her mind. She could, as she remembers that particular room, 'write the history of every mark & scratch in that room, where I lived so long' (APA, p230). It was in the nursery that both sisters, Virginia and Vanessa, honed their skills and discovered what they would like to be in life, a writer and painter respectively. Vanessa even laboured on a painting eventually entitled 'The Nursery' which she hoped would have analogous meaning to what her sister had done when she created *To the Lighthouse*. Frances Spalding suggested that her painting was inspired by this novel. Spalding writes 'one can only hint at the possible layers of meaning which the nursery had for Vanessa. Inspired perhaps by *To The Lighthouse*, it presents a nostalgic evocation of motherhood.'[11] Within this

domestic scene that Vanessa painted there are two groups of figures within a circle that underlies the whole design; mother and nurse, the two main protagonists of this arena, are juxtaposed. Their poses and dress make apparent their different class and role while the nurse is actively engaged in holding the younger child (in a pose descended from the mother and child theme in Renaissance art) and the more elegant mother watches her elder child with greater detachment.

Spalding continues her analysis of this painting entitled 'The Nursery':

> If the nurse demonstrates intimacy, the mother, in her great stillness, suggests the remembrance of it. The toys mapped out carefully with the picture space, suggest various types of play and may have aroused in Vanessa's mind various recollections of her own children. The child nearest the mother turns aside from her, freed by the trust established between them to play alone and discover independence. This moment of domestic intimacy therefore also marks the onset of separation; while celebrating motherhood, the painting is also poignantly about loss.[12]

Woolf commented on the fact that her sister relied on her nursemaid immensely to bring up all three children. Vanessa Bell had been surprised how completely children revolutionised her life and greatly appreciated the help of her nurse six days a week which enabled her to paint.

The two fictional nursemaids which are the focus of the analysis in this section are Mrs Constable in *The Waves* and the figure of the nurse in *Mrs Dalloway* who is found on a bench in Regent's Park. This part of *Mrs Dalloway* also links in with another nurse that Woolf created, Nurse Lugton, in the short story 'Nurse Lugton's Golden Thimble', which is also discussed.

Mrs Constable's bath

Mrs Constable is the children's nurse in the first episode of *The Waves* and throughout Bernard's life, the memory of Mrs Constable, bathing him, is highly significant. However, it is Susan, not Bernard, who first describes Mrs Constable: 'Now Mrs Constable pulls up her thick, black stockings' (TW, p7). This is quite an intimate statement yet also a mundane description of a nurse's uniform. The thick stockings denote impenetrability, and authority; black is not an indeterminate colour such as grey or brown but a strong, often sinister, colour. The action that she is performing suggests that she is ready to commence her duties, to start looking after the children, or perhaps it symbolizes their playtime is nearly over and she will be controlling their actions soon. Other household servants are also mentioned in this opening episode such as Billy the Cook and Biddy. Bernard is the next character to refer to Mrs Constable: 'And my hair is untidy, because when Mrs Constable told me to brush it there was a fly in a web, and I asked, "Shall I free the fly? Shall I let the fly be eaten?" So I am late always. My hair is unbrushed and these chips of wood stick in it' (TW, p10). Mrs Constable's words of authority are unheeded as Bernard admits his hair is still untidy. This foreshadows a similar episode at school when Neville describes how Bernard sees a fly in the web and wonders whether he should rescue the fly; consequently he is still late.

Bernard's earliest private memories are always deep below the surface of his adult life. He continually returns to the memory of Mrs Constable bathing him in Elvedon:

> Mrs Constable, girt in a bath-towel, takes her lemon-coloured sponge and soaks it in water; it turns chocolate-brown; it drips; and, holding it high above me, shivering beneath her, she squeezes it. Water pours down the runnel of my spine. Bright arrows of sensation shoot on either side. I am covered with warm flesh. My dry crannies are wetted; my cold body is warmed; it is sluiced and gleaming. Water descends and sheets me like an eel. Now hot towels envelop me, and their roughness, as I rub my back, makes my blood purr. (TW, p18)

This extract is full of sensory description; the imagery is unpleasant, the words 'chocolate brown', usually denoting a sweet sensation, are used in this situation to describe the filthy, dark and murky water that has presumably been used to wash all six children. At the beginning of the book Bernard describes the children as ponies, tame animals, trooping upstairs to take turns in the bathroom: bathing is a physical necessity, what the children had to endure. In the nursery they 'spring up and down on the hard, white beds' as they wait for their bath (TW, p18). The careful choice of the word lemon makes the striking contrast between water colour and sponge more pronounced. The sights, sounds, textures used by Woolf are reminiscent of the way our first fragile memories of infancy are established; brief snippets of remembrance, the repeated succession of sensations, is almost rhythmic. What the reader may feel as a bad experience Bernard admits that he enjoys namely the extreme sensations of wet and dry, hard and soft. This bathing episode also has a quasi-sexual element to it, smouldering underneath the surface. Most of the images from infancy recur in the characters' later soliloquies and it is the bath experience that Bernard remembers throughout his life as he admits his pleasure from simple sensory experience. John Batchelor describes this paragraph as moving in a Wordsworthian manner from the physical experience to the psychological event which the experience stimulates: which then acts as a catalyst to lock the physical experience into its place in the memory.[13]

In Bernard's final speech he instructs his silent companion while they eat to 'turn over these scenes as children turn over the pages of a picture-book and the nurse says, pointing: "That's a cow. That's a boat." Let us turn over the pages, and I will add, for your amusement, a comment in the margin' (TW, p161). He then starts with his earliest memory: the nursery, which is almost a biblical reference: 'In the beginning, there was the nursery, with windows opening on to a garden, and beyond that the sea' (TW, p162). Bernard describes the

beginning of his infant world in a similar way to the opening of the chapter of Genesis or even Woolf's own first memory of Talland House nursery. The sponge of water squeezed above the children's head is symbolic of the breath of life. Bernard finds this infant memory, of his nursemaid Mrs Constable giving him his bath, comforting.

Later in this lengthy speech he summarises the effect his nursemaid had on his life: 'Yes, ever since old Mrs Constable lifted her sponge and pouring warm water over me covered me with flesh I have been sensitive, percipient' (TW, p195). This early introduction to sensation remains as the touchstone for many of his subsequent sensations: 'If we knock against a chair, a table, or a woman, we are pierced with arrows of sensation' (TW, p162). The figure of Mrs Constable reappears throughout his life, reminding him of early childhood and of his sensitivity and creative vulnerability.

The grey nurse on the bench

In *Mrs Dalloway*, Peter's childhood nurse is also described as a figure of reverie. This is foreshadowed earlier in the novel when a nursemaid finally deciphers the code, the words that the aeroplane was forming in the sky. Septimus hears a nursemaid's voice 'like a mellow organ' (MD, p25) the voice of this nearby nursemaid vibrated in his ears and brought the trees gloriously to life for him. In this novel the natural and maternal sounds of Regent's Park lull Peter Walsh to sleep, like a nursemaid, and into the world of the unconscious and dreams. Significantly, the nursemaid, sitting next to Peter Walsh, assumes the role of 'champion of the rights of sleepers', a 'spectral presence' (MD, p63). The elderly grey nurse (note the unpleasant adjectives Woolf uses to describe this woman) continues to knit and guard over the sleeping baby and implicitly guards the snoring Peter Walsh. The narrative carefully devotes time to Peter's dreams and it is of significance that the perambulator remains in the background as Peter sleeps. The normal, everyday function of sleep and

dreaming occur regularly in Woolf's novels. Woolf's first two, more traditional, novels are preoccupied with dreams: night dreams and day dreams. It is reported that she even contemplated calling *Night and Day* Dreams and Realities. The first person to seriously consider the psychology of dreaming was Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900)[14]. Several theories have been advanced on the function of dreaming. They can be divided into two categories: neurobiological or psychological. Neurobiological theories of the function of dreaming suggest that REM activity is the key.

Psychological theories of dreaming include Freud's wish fulfilment theory. Freud suggested that dreams were the disguised expressions of unconscious desires and impulses. However, the dream censor has disguised the recalled manifest content of the dream through methods like symbolism to protect our conscious self from the anxiety provoking latent meaning of the dream. Dreams may use metaphors and may provide solutions for problems. However, Peter's dream as in the vision of the solitary traveller and the elderly woman, figure of the mother, recalls Jung's theory of dreaming.[15] Jung did not agree with Freud concerning the distinction between manifest and latent content. He saw dreams as reflecting the mind's current state rather than having some underlying disguised content. Jung claimed that dreams contained certain universal archetypal symbols, which are part of our collective unconscious. These include the Persona (our social mask) and The Shadow (our animal urges, similar to the id but more positive in its influence). Furthermore, central to Peter Walsh's dreams is an archetypal woman form, perhaps due to the influence of the perambulator, and the solitary traveller. Critics suggest that the traveller is Peter Walsh as both are males, primarily alone. Daisy and Clarissa are the two women he appears preoccupied with; maternal figures are also revealed as being significant to this man during the dream (both Clarissa and Daisy are mothers- Clarissa is a mother to Elizabeth aged 17 and Daisy although only 24 has two small children); the grey nurse beside him appears

spectral, blending into the images of the sky and trees representing an omnipresent and all-encompassing presence. In the dream sequence, this solitary traveller conceives different images of women; a woman made of sky and branches who grants sympathy and pardon. He also imagines this woman as a type of siren, a temptress who waits to lure him to his death by her beauty alone.

At the end of the dream, Peter imagines a maternal figure, one of the least imposing characters possible, an old nurse or matron, the archetype of the eternal feminine, a figure that will reappear throughout the novel. This figure links in with the nurse on the bench with the perambulator and also Peter's memory of his childhood nurse. Earlier in the book Woolf uses a simile to describe Peter 'feeling like a child who runs out of doors, and sees, as he runs, his old nurse waving at the wrong window' (MD, p59). We could speculate about Peter's childhood traumas due to the inclusion of the word 'wrong'. He feels freedom but his picture of his childhood nurse motivates his next thought: 'But she's extraordinarily attractive' which is applied perhaps to the waving nurse in his mind (MD, p59). Later in the sentence it is ambiguously transferred to the 'young woman' Peter sees and begins to follow. Clarissa comments on the fact that Peter was always falling in love with the wrong woman (MD, p134).

In the dream sequence the figure of the nurse appears to wait for Peter's return 'with white apron blowing' (MD, p65). Finally, when this figure asks the traveller if she can get him anything else, he realizes he is not sure who to reply to. Jung suggested that dreams reflect current preoccupations and may be compensations for conscious attitudes and behaviour that are causing imbalance. For example, Peter's strong feelings for Clarissa have not diminished and they appear to compete with his relatively new love for Daisy in India. By analysing his dream sequence, we can assume that Peter Walsh appears to stereotype women. Ultimately, his dream may represent his childish wish to be saved by a female figure yet in

his dream the traveller accepts that he really has no one to express his need to. On the other hand, some critics suggest that this interlude while Peter dozes is a chance for the author to discuss her own views on appearance versus reality. Indeed, throughout the novel we see examples of this dichotomy and ultimately realise how fragile the division is between the two. Just as when reading the novel we must piece together the story from random fragments of information that Woolf provides, she also makes it difficult to receive any single interpretation of any of the characters. Woolf makes it clear that appearances deceive and the appearance of a person and the reality of that person diverge, just as different aspects of people's personalities emerge in front of different people. In this novel each character is given a multitude of identities by the other characters and Peter Walsh is unsure of himself and his own identity. Yet it is clear through his detailed and revealing dream that he returns to the comfort and security of early childhood and the figure of his nursemaid to help him with his current problems.

'Nurse Lugton's Golden Thimble'

The publication of 'Nurse Lugton's Golden Thimble' in the 1960s has an interesting history. Mr Wallace Hildick was a writer of adult fiction who also wrote children's stories and it was he who first made the connection and discovered this children's story written by Woolf over twenty years after her death among her notes for *Mrs Dalloway.* Mr Hildick was given permission by Leonard Woolf to quote from the MS of *Mrs Dalloway* in his book on the author's alterations for Faber. He noticed the list of animals, on one of the blank reverse sides in the final Warren Smith section. This list was connected with a passage about an old nurse who falls asleep while stitching some curtain material, the animal pattern on which comes to life. The story occurs on pp.104-6 of Volume two of the MS in the middle of the final Warren Smith scene, where Lucrezia herself is doing some stitching. Originally Woolf

had the girl embroidering blouses and not trimming hats as in the final version. In a letter from Mr Hildick to Mr Leonard Woolf dated 15th January 1965 he informs him of the existence of this text and Mr Hildick notes that the passage was a complete nursery story: 'an absolutely delightful one at that.'[16] He also checked *A Writer's Diary*[17] and found that around this time a little girl called Ann was staying at Monk's House and it occurred to him that Mrs Woolf may have written this for her. Perhaps she was having a break from writing a scene of *Mrs Dalloway* that was giving her trouble. It appears, then, that this story was written for Woolf's niece Ann Stephen when she was visiting her aunt in the country, in the autumn of 1924. Leonard replied to Mr Hildick on the 20th January 1965 saying he would like to see a copy of the story. It was obviously sent to him quickly as on 28th January 1965 he wrote again to Mr Hildick to say thank you for sending the story. 'It is extremely interesting and I don't remember seeing anything quite like it before.' A copy of the letters can be found in the Monk's House Papers (University of Sussex Library Manuscripts Collection B24-26).

In his letter Mr Hildick suggested that Woolf had a considerable grasp of the essentials of children's fiction. Woolf did, as an adult, write some fiction for children, most notably this magical tale which was first published in the *Times Literary Supplement* in June 1965 and illustrated by Duncan Grant. It was published separately by the Hogarth Press in 1966 with the foreword written by Leonard Woolf. On the whole, the story has been overlooked yet it is appropriate to a discussion of the figure of the nursemaid. Nurse Lugton sits in her armchair one evening sewing a curtain and the innovative premise of this story is that when she sleeps the animals on the curtain she is stitching come to life. The supposedly normal nursemaid has the magical power to constrict the animals' movements: 'They were only patterns so long as old Nurse stitched. But directly she began to snore, the blue stuff turned to blue air and the trees waved; you could hear the waves breaking on the lake; and see

the people crossing the bridge to market.'[18] The short story is connected with Regent's Park when Peter Walsh shares a bench with just such an old nurse and falls asleep himself.

An almost forgotten story, 'Nurse Lugton's Golden Thimble' was reissued under the title 'Nurse Lugton's Curtain' by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in 1991. It captures children's and adults' imaginations; the technique of anthropomorphism is an issue that fascinates children and always intrigues them. It is quite a comical and mischievous image to think of this stern, authoritative bespectacled figure who obviously demanded attention in her nursery: 'Her apron covered with roses and grass, with great wild beasts which she had only poked at through the bars with her umbrella at the zoo!'[19] The irony is that she was afraid of wild beasts; the narrator notes that even a little beetle scared her. It is a story that would delight young readers because a strict figure of authority is being ridiculed- the animals are getting 'one over' on the nursemaid. 'But she knew nothing of it all.' 'For it was said that a great ogress (changed from wizard) had them in her toils. Her name was Lugton. She had a face like the side of a mountain.'[20] She is finally awoken by a bluebottle buzzing round the lamp and on her waking she continues stitching the curtains. Nurse Lugton's custodial power is diminished when she falls into a deep sleep. The fact that she is oblivious to everything that is going on while she sleeps is comical and perhaps reveals Woolf's own view of servants. Nurse Lugton is unaware of what is going on around her, the perfect position for any nursemaid to be in which ultimately hands power to the children, letting them decide what they want to do.

It can be demonstrated within Woolf's novels and short stories that the nursemaid appears in a variety of situations to perform a number of roles. Her existence reminds characters of their past and also suggests the existence of the nursemaid in Woolf's own childhood. In 'A Sketch of the Past' and 'Reminiscences' Woolf simply refers to the Stephen's nursemaid as 'Nurse' there is also a character called Sooney that she names in 'A

Sketch of the Past' who accompanies the family and the Nurse on their daily walks, perhaps she was another servant? They both were familiar with the old woman who holds the air-balls opposite Gloucester Road (ASOP, p88). Woolf writes in her diary of an authentically nannyish saying: 'I walked 7 miles alone to Charleston & suffer for it (as Nurse Lugton used to say)' (DXXIII, V5, p246). Virginia Woolf's allusion in her diary to one of Nurse Lugton's sayings suggests that 'she may have had a real existence in the Stephen household.'[21]

Woolf focused on the valid and often trivial details of ordinary everyday life in attempting to represent the reality of early childhood. Since one of the main jobs of a nursemaid was to ensure the children in her care were healthy she had to take the perambulator out into the fresh air. Nursemaids were told to refrain from carrying the child in their arms; due to the fear of dropping the child the perambulator must be used at all times; it was only the lower classes, the ones who could not afford a perambulator who carried a child in that manner. However, as will be discussed below, in some novels the perambulator is not being used to push a baby; it may be used to carry a prize home from a country fete or used to assist a countrywoman cart a bundle of sticks. These motifs are partly buried in the text and serve as a reminder of the complex nature of human existence or archetypes. No matter what practical function the perambulator serves it is woven through the texts making unexpected links between unlikely characters. The next section of this thesis will discuss the motif of the perambulator.

THE PERAMBULATOR

After the decision was taken by Leonard Woolf that they would not have children Virginia never showed overly, or overtly strong, maternal urges; these feelings were seemingly repressed, although as discussed in chapter three she would often refer to this subject in her private writing when she had feelings of self-doubt. Nevertheless, it could be

suggested that these feelings do surface and re-emerge in her novels through the central childhood motif of the perambulator. We can read the poetic language of Virginia Woolf's novels in order to analyse their manifest content for the latent desires of her inner life. It could be implied that the symbol of the perambulator arose from a deep inner necessity just as images arise in dreams and this enabled Woolf's desire for a child to manifest itself in her creations. Woolf admits in her diary that in her writing various images seem to be conjured up in her mind, indicating the role of the unconscious. 'But in actually writing one's mind, as you know, gets into a trance, and the different images seem to come unconsciously' (L3055, V5, p422). The word 'unconscious' has multiple meanings. On the one hand, it can mean 'asleep', 'automatic', it can also mean 'oblivious', unaware of what's going on around one or it can mean 'neurologically programmed'. Freud considered the term unconscious most useful as an adjective describing a quality of thought, the largest part of our mental life, of which we are unaware, whose impulses and ideas, fears and wishes operate out of sight yet exert a powerful influence over our behaviours and attitudes. This thesis also uses Freud's definition of unconscious in discussing Woolf's buried and guarded desires which I propose surface in her novels through the use of the perambulator image.

The use of the perambulator was a lingering presence of domesticity in Virginia Woolf's novels and she used this motif in her work to show one of the most significant appurtenances of Victorian living. The perambulator had a profound effect on the Victorian culture of motherhood and even though the word sounds old-fashioned in today's contemporary society this contraption was once the ultimate in baby style. Paradoxically the perambulator motif is used by Woolf to symbolize psychological entrapment but also liberation. It freed mothers, nursemaid and babies from the prison of their own homes; they were free to perambulate the parks, streets and lanes, perhaps most importantly to escape the constraint of the patriarchal home. The motif of the perambulator also highlighted the

dependence of a woman in this society on men. Through this image Woolf demonstrates the extent to which women were chained to the technology of childhood. Childbearing was central to their lives and their only medium for expression. The use of the perambulator motif makes her literature more expressive of her own unique experience as a woman, in particular a childless woman and an artist. Additionally, the perambulator motif provokes the reader to think about the interlinked topics of motherhood, domesticity and fertility.

In earliest times, babies were carried in the arms of their mothers, often in devices such as slings or shawls, as some cultures still use today. For some time there had been vehicles made for carrying children, versions of grown-up carriages, pulled by ponies, dogs, goats or facilitating servants. The oldest record of a 'child's carriage' dates to the 5th or 6th century and this was an Anglo Saxon four-wheeled carriage. During the 18th century the aristocracy often had miniature carriages made for their children and they closely followed the designs of horse-drawn carriages as they were supposed to be pulled not pushed. More of a toy rather than made for transport many an unfortunate servant was made to tow the children around in one of these miniature vehicles. Around the turn of the century hop-pickers would carry their infants and children in little carts and it is generally accepted that hop-pickers carts are the true forerunner of the pram. Proper 'perambulators' appeared in the mid 1800's. Bassinets were oblong wickerwork baskets with a hood over one end, used as a cradle for babies. They were also called berceaunettes from the French for cradle because they were lavishly decorated. The word was also used for a type of pram with this shape. Around 1870 bassinets began to be fitted onto four wheels, as it was illegal to use four-wheeled vehicles on the footpaths until 1875. It could then be argued that a bassinet was not a 'vehicle' and thus the road traffic laws were circumvented.

The mid nineteenth-century perambulators, later to become known as Victorians, were quite different in that they were pushed from behind like a bath chair and were designed

for the convenience of the mother (more likely the nursemaid) rather than for the delight of the baby. The perambulator was the first truly mass-produced vehicle for the transport of an infant. Pram manufacturers sold their models mostly through catalogues; these went into great detail about the qualities and fittings of each pram, playing on a mother's desire to provide the best for her child. The exterior of the perambulator reflected the family's place in society; shamelessly displaying family wealth and status, it could be ordered stained or gold leaf and the insides could be just as extravagant with silk, tapestry and bows on the parasols.

The early manufacturers of the 1840's were deeply indebted to Queen Victoria when she bought three ready-made carriages from Hitchings Baby Stores of Ludgate Hill. The large, high-backed vehicles she acquired for her children were designed to perambulate toddlers who would sit up and take an interest in the world. Pram manufacturers have called their models names such as Queen, Princess Royal or Duchess, in order to exploit people's snobbery and the high hopes they naturally entertain for their children. The most popular names of all have been those of royal residences, like Sandringham, Windsor and Balmoral, which might suggest to parents that their sons and daughters were receiving the same start in life as the princes and princesses of the realm. The term perambulator was later shortened to 'prams.' In modern society, we have entered the age of the carrycot and the innovative collapsible buggy and the days of the cumbersome perambulator seem to be numbered. The predominance of the perambulator symbol in Virginia Woolf's work is made even more poignant when we realize that Woolf would never have had a purpose for a perambulator in her own life.

Night and Day

The prominence and significance of the perambulator in Virginia Woolf's novels is a notable dimension of her writing and the motif appears to have a multi-level relevance. This section discusses in chronological order, each reference to the perambulator and suggests why Woolf has given prominence to this particular symbol. The starting point of the research was the fact that this motif appears in all of her novels apart from her first, *The Voyage Out* or *Melymbrosia*; the proposed reasons for this omission will be referred to at the end of the chapter. It is in *Night and Day* that we can find Woolf's first use of the perambulator motif; it was her second novel and it is the longest piece of work she produced. It was also the first novel she wrote when she was in her newly acquired role as writer and wife. When she wrote it the decision had already been made by her husband Leonard Woolf that there would be no children. It could be argued that the inclusion of this motif, when she had never used it before in her writing, indicates her repressed, latent desire for a child. The first reference she makes to *Night and Day* is in her diary: the entry is dated Tuesday 13th November 1917. *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day* only tentatively breaks free from traditional form but Woolf confesses in her diary in March 1919:

> In my own opinion N. & D. is a much more mature & finished & satisfactory book than The Voyage Out; as it has reason to be. I suppose I lay myself open to the charge of niggling with emotions that don't really matter. (DVII, V1, p259)

Suzanne Raitt explains, in her important essay 'Finding a Voice' that *Night and Day* is the story of a woman who secures the right to express herself in the language she chooses. It was also the 'first novel whose writing had to contend with Leonard's anxious and affectionate control of time and routine.'[22] Once the absence of children had been decided, Leonard would watch carefully over his wife ensuring she did not exert herself too much or

work too hard, especially when she was writing. By using the perambulator motif was Woolf hiding her desire for children within her texts?

Before analysing the use of the perambulator motif in this novel it is worth considering that the word 'perambulate' is used once in chapter three of *Night and Day.* Strictly speaking, a 'perambulator' is the person pushing and not the actual vehicle. It was the Victorians who popularised the name from the Latin words 'per' and 'ambulo' which simply means to walk through, over or about. The incident in chapter three describes Katharine and Mrs Hilbery's futile attempts to write a biography of Richard Alardyce. Katharine reflects that the reason why this will never be written is the fact that her mother never wrote for more than ten minutes at a time and liked to perambulate the room with a duster in her hand. Mrs Hilbery's temperament required time and space to create the right phrase. What is interesting about this use of the word perambulate is that it highlights the parallels between walking and writing. Woolf often used the narrative technique of the walk or the 'stroll' to develop the randomness of individual stories. For example, Dorothy Brewster in *Virginia Woolf's London* notes that Ralph Denham is the champion walker (perambulator) in the novel: he has 15 walking scenes; Katharine has 13, Mary 7, Rodney 5 and Cassandra 4.[23] In a diary entry from May 1928 Woolf wrote: 'London itself perpetually attracts, stimulates, gives me a play & a story & a poem, without any trouble, save that of moving my legs through the streets' (DXVII, V3, p186). Her essay, 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure'[24] published the previous year, is probably her development of this diary statement.

In 'How Should One Read a Book?'[25] both reading and writing are compared to walking through city streets. It is an essay which foreshadows 'Street Haunting' which portrays a walk through London, during the period between tea and dinner, the object being to buy a pencil, a tool in other words to facilitate writing. The underlying premise is that the act of walking helps the composition of the writing. This crucial walking seems to take place

in the city and this could be explained historically. The urban streets were the first origins of settlements and acted as a principal place of public contact and public passage, a place of exchange of ideas, goods and services. On this subject, Woolf wrote an interesting diary entry in 1925: 'I like this London life in early summer- the street sauntering & square haunting' (DXIV, V3, p11). Bowlby argues that this brings the two terms haunting and sauntering into synonymy, neighbours of sense as well as sound. Bowlby indicates that the word 'haunting' is almost a homonym of one of the possible English words for translating 'flaneur': 'sauntering'. In her landmark essay entitled 'Walking, Women and Writing'[26] (1988) Bowlby describes the figure of the flaneur and explains why women were never classed as flaneurs:

> The figure of the flaneur epitomises a distinctive nineteenth century conception of the writer as walker, a sort of man about town with ample leisure and money to roam the city and look about him. Women are not flaneueses in the nineteenth century, and for reasons which cut to the heart of the lived and imposed distinctions of their daily social world from that of men. [27]

Bowlby calls the Woolf of *A Room of One's Own* a flaneuse, as the text is structured around an imaginary walk. The term suggests a woman writer for whom strolling in the city provides creative stimulation. Additionally, Woolf tended to think of writing itself as similar to walking. This premise was obviously central to her creative process: walking to stimulate ideas and generate thoughts. *A Room of One's Own* is structured by an imaginary walk through 'Oxbridge', London and the British Museum. Many references are made to this fictional perambulator. Woolf urges her audience of Newnham College students to 'loiter at street corners' as one of the means 'to write all kinds of books' (AROO, p142). Bowlby views this topographic metaphor as 'advocating a kind of female street-walking or street-

writing which is clearly going to deviate from any expected routes.'[28] Bowlby argues that the urban streets provide freedom away from the traditional Victorian drawing room: a woman writer finds that strolling the streets both stimulates the creative process and provides an escape from the protective surroundings of the private home.

In this innovative essay Bowlby continues her argument stressing how 'it is as though the very grounds of rhetoric were made for walking on, measured out in properly poetical metres and feet.'[29] This is intriguing and perhaps undeniable, as these are words which metaphorically contain a link between writing and walking: the terms passage, excursus and digression. For instance the narrator 'rambles' in 'A Mark on The Wall'[30] and in *Mrs Dalloway* the London streets upon which the characters walk are the setting for many 'rambling' questions about the purpose of life. Perambulation links to the extended metaphor in Woolf's work of life as journey; therefore, it is not only the perambulator motif that is notable in Woolf's work but the use of perambulation. Robin Jarvis in his 1997 book *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel*[31] explores the relationship between walking and the creative thought process in Romantic writing. He also claims a genetic link between walking and writing. He suggests that walking as a pastime is a relatively new pleasure and was increasingly valued and legitimised as a form of tourist travel in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries. He cites Leslie Stephen's classic argument that walking produced Romantic writing, 'the literary movement at the end of the eighteenth century was...done in great part, if not mainly, to the renewed practice of walking.'[32] In the later chapters of *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel* Jarvis discusses the link between moving our legs and the creative thought process:

> Pedestrian motion can condition or mediate thought and perception by establish(ing) some of the distinguishing features of walking...specifically as a way of experiencing landscape or as a form of consciousness-in-motion.[33]

The obvious fact about the act of walking is that it is a free activity; always available for use and most importantly walking enables the perambulator to be in close and constant contact with the environment. Continuing his argument, Jarvis concludes that due to the 'regular, alternating rhythm' of walking, a walker will enjoy 'enhanced mental excitation...because walking has a remarkable ability to purge the mind of its habitual, everyday clutter.'[34] This certainly seems to be true of Woolf who carried out most of her own creative thinking, ideas and composing as she perambulated. The rhythm of walking certainly penetrates her sentences and aids her writing. Furthermore, in the illuminating interview with Frank Dean he described in detail the way Virginia Woolf perambulated around the village of Rodmell. He commented that she would walk in a determined, measured way, not too quickly and when she walked she appeared to be thinking of something.[35] Woolf learned to walk at St. Ives and her father had taught her this necessary skill along the shore path to Godrevy. As a child, her daily walks with her father around London sometimes had to be cancelled due to bad weather much to her chagrin and it is hinted in her early journal *A Passionate Apprentice* that walking was a form of therapy for her. In addition that she loved and enjoyed walking is particularly obvious when reading her diary where almost every day she records undertaking a walk. For example, in 1937 she wrote: 'Then a great restlessness seizes me. I think I could walk it off- walk & walk till I am asleep.' (DXXVI, V5, p63). Woolf associated walking with autonomy and her daily walks appeared to have enabled her to clear her own ideological space and rid her brain of parasitic thoughts. In conclusion, Jarvis' argument that walking assists writing appears valid in the case of Virginia Woolf. Writing as if she was walking was to be one of her most revelatory accomplishments, explained in an essay, 'A Walk by Night'[36] published in the *Guardian* of 28th December 1905. It appears that the act of walking

was medicinal for the writer Woolf and the daily act of perambulation proved fundamental to Woolf's own creative process and state of mind.

Returning to *Night and Day*, and to the prominence of the perambulator motif we can see that chronologically, the first perambulator motif Woolf ever used occurs in chapter twelve of the novel. Mrs Milvain and Mrs Cosham reminisce and recollect the 'old days' (ND, p134). Mrs Milvain solemnly remembers and reports to Ralph a story about Katharine's childhood. She describes her niece as a wonderful child and a very perceptive young girl. The story is about Katharine when she was a small baby in her perambulator:

> They stood the perambulator alone in a field where there was a bull. The animal became enraged by the red blanket in the perambulator, and Heaven knows what might have happened if a gentleman had not been walking by in the nick of time, and rescued Katharine in his arms. (ND, p138)

As well as containing two perambulator references this passage also recalls the unreliability and fallibility of memory, especially childhood memories, as was discussed in chapter one. This is due to the fact that Katharine challenges her Aunt's memory of events and insists that the bull in the story was only a cow. It appears that over time details have been added to this story to make it more interesting. However, undeterred, Aunt Celia Milvain continues describing the events that took place after this incident with Katharine's perambulator, apparently the 'great red Devonshire bull' actually 'gored a man to death and had to be destroyed.' It is perhaps worth noting that Aunt Celia is a childless woman whose husband was 'something very dull in the Board of Trade' (ND, p106). Mrs Milvain's 'childlessness', we are told, 'seemed always to impose these painful duties on her' (ND, p107). Family is obviously very important to this woman and she attempts to repair Cyril's unfortunate circumstances. She also acknowledges later in the book that because of her

situation she feels that she is a useless old woman as she has no children of her own. This incident also signifies the vulnerability of early childhood. Hearing this story and beginning to know Katharine's past and picturing her as a young child enables Ralph to feel close to her as he believes he has shared some aspect of childhood with her. Aunt Milvain is pleased that William and Katharine are engaged because she then has someone to protect her from bulls. Once Ralph realises that Katharine and William are due to be married he becomes angry and leaves the house as quickly as he can. Access to childhood memories is often a means of developing and building relationships, allowing access to the sacred, formative innocent years. Indeed, Katharine recalls this incident when she meets Ralph and Mary in Lincoln 'once I was left in a field with a bull when I was a baby' stating that someone always turns up in the nick of time to help her out of troubles (ND, p212). The perambulator in this instance can be viewed as a symbol of childhood, a time of vulnerability and innocence, a source of nostalgia and yet also claustrophobia. In Woolf's writing she often recreated her own childhood, discussed in chapter one, which to an extent was suffocating and also entrapping. There is also quite a lot of aggression towards the child in this story which should be acknowledged.

The perambulator is also associated with the rich and with the establishment, a symbol of imperialistic power. The Hilberys were one of a network of families similar to Woolf's own, forming the intellectual aristocracy of England. The simple fact that Katharine was in a perambulator as a small baby is revealing and could be the reason why she has grown into the woman she is. 'The quality of her birth oozed into Katharine's consciousness from a dozen different sources as soon as she was able to perceive anything' (ND, p33-4). The perambulator can be viewed as an emblem of wealth. Later in the novel, it is shown as a device used by the lower classes to transport mundane objects- not its usual or intended function. Mary Datchet is a clever woman who lives alone but she does realise that there are

'other things in the world besides the suffrage' which interest her (ND, p168). Mary showed 'an indefinable promise of soft maternity blending with her evident fitness for honest labour' (ND, p149). In chapter eighteen, Ralph and Mary have walked to Lincoln and Ralph has told Mary that he has decided to give up his life in London and move to a cottage in the country to write. There is tension between these two characters as Mary is in love with Ralph and he is in the process of discovering her feelings. Undeniably, this novel follows closely the love affairs of the five main young characters. Mary spots the perambulator as she and Ralph sit by the rounded window of the Lincoln inn. We have seen Mary in the process of looking earlier in the novel, for example in the British Museum she views the Elgin Marbles and is reminded of Ralph as she looks at the 'Ulysses'; it is a means of distraction for many characters in this book. In particular, Mary sees the 'eternally moving pattern of human life' (ND, p72). As a suffrage volunteer, she obviously has a strong desire to reach people on the streets. This may be why Mary decides to describe the people in the street below the inn to Ralph:

> There was a motor-car with an old lady swathed in blue veils, and a lady's maid on the seat opposite, holding a King Charles's spaniel; there was a country-woman wheeling a perambulator full of sticks down the middle of the road; there was a bailiff in gaiters discussing the state of the cattle market with a dissenting minister- so she defined them. (ND, p205)

A cross-section of society is contained in this Lincoln street. Woolf has deliberately created an obvious juxtaposition of the wealthy and the poor; the old, obviously affluent woman with the maid in a motorcar and the countrywoman who uses her pram to transport sticks. The use of the perambulator motif raises certain questions in the reader's mind. Did this countrywoman ever push a child in this perambulator or is it merely a domestic object, a

useful container for her firewood, something she has found, perhaps discarded by the rich? Also in this passage we get a hint of nostalgia from Woolf for a purely un-mechanized past which is juxtaposed with the urban world of telephones and motor cars. Is the motor car in this village a first sign of the new world? The country was often associated with innocence and virtue whereas the town was associated with worldliness and vice.

The perambulator is mentioned again on the same page as the third person omniscient narrator reveals that Ralph watched Mary looking out of the window describing 'the woman with the perambulator' (ND, p205). Significantly Mary (the woman in the couple) focuses on the contents of the pram whereas Ralph just mentions the pram: not the contents that are the woman's domain. Throughout the novel the characters fortuitously arrive in time to see whom they wish to see; it is clear that Woolf also includes the perambulator motif for a reason. The ordinary, everyday image of the perambulator is an archetypal symbol representing sterility and absence; the pram carrying dead wood symbolizes Mary's fruitless campaign for Ralph's heart. As they sit at lunch, Ralph looks out of the window and sees Katharine in the street and then she disappears. It had suddenly come to him, in a flash, that Mary loved him; Mary also sees that he is in love with Katharine. It is a moment of epiphany for both characters. Mary appears to be missing what she most wanted in life; once she realizes that Ralph is infatuated with Katharine she resolves to dedicate her life to work. This image of the perambulator and its contents therefore foreshadow her future goal:

> Where should I be now if I hadn't got to go to my office every day? Thousands of people would tell you the same thing- thousands of women. I tell you, work is the only thing that saved me, Ralph. (ND, p355)

Mary uses her work as a distraction from thinking about what could have been, what the perambulator could have contained for her and Ralph. It is likely that Woolf drew on

Margaret Llewellyn Davies, who was the general secretary of the Women's Co-Operative Guild from 1889 to 1921, in her characterisation of Mary. The friendship between the two women appeared to be built on family connections; she was the daughter of the Reverend John Llewellyn Davies, a Christian socialist who had tutored Leslie Stephen before his entry into Cambridge University. Also, Leonard Woolf knew two of her brothers, Crompton and Theodore at Cambridge. Margaret invited the Woolfs' to Newcastle in 1913 to attend the Women's Cooperative Guild annual conference, an event that Woolf recalled in 'Memories of a Working Women's Guild.'[37] The two women shared strong views on feminism, socialism and pacifism. Davis could be a source for Mary Datchet and also Eleanor Pargiter in *The Years* and there are obvious and noticeable links between these two characters. Most importantly both of these characters view perambulators as not being used for their original purpose of carrying children and this perhaps foreshadows their own eventual childlessness.

Jacob's Room

Working on her third novel, *Jacob's Room*, Virginia Woolf had recorded her progress in her diary: 'I write Jacob every morning now, feeling each days work like a fence which I have to ride at, my heart in my mouth till its over, & I've cleared, or knocked the bar out' (DIX, V2, p56). *Jacob's Room* was Hogarth Press's first novel and its first full-length publication. In it the opening paragraphs present the themes and techniques which dominate this experimental book; Woolf gives us a series of sketches of Jacob's childhood and youth. It is a cinematic novel with more than one hundred and sixty characters. At the beginning of the novel the reader surmises that Betty Flanders, a woman of perhaps 45 years of age, has been a widow for two years and that Jacob, one of her three sons, has wandered off down the beach in Cornwall. The perambulator motif is cited four times in this novel and is introduced early: in fact the first reference materialises on the first page of *Jacob's Room* as it also does

in *Between the Acts* (1941). It is surely significant that two of Woolf's novels mention this motif in their opening pages. At the beginning of the novel Betty Flanders is writing a heartfelt letter to her friend Captain Barfoot: 'Everything seems satisfactorily arranged, packed though we are like herrings in a barrel, and forced to stand the perambulator which the landlady quite naturally won't allow...' (JR, p1). Betty's tear-stained letter implies how difficult she is finding her new role as a single mother: even deciding where to place the cumbersome perambulator is proving to be an issue with the landlady. Around 1910 in an effort to make perambulators safer and less likely to tip up they became much deeper and more cumbersome and it could be that this is making her task particularly difficult. Betty Flanders continues to reflect on this arduous and demanding situation as she walks back from the beach with her children: 'It's a great experiment coming so far with young children. There's no man to help with the perambulator. And Jacob is such a handful; so obstinate already' (JR, p5). Mrs Flanders's predicament is made clear to the reader; she is struggling with Jacob, Archer and the baby John. She is obviously anxious about her children, Jacob being the most prominent and difficult one. Throughout the book, people including Jacob's mother attempt to 'capture' him, albeit for a brief amount of time. It is likely that the perambulator motif in this novel suggests entrapment, not only for Betty trapped in this role as single mother, but also for her children. She is simply wedged into her holiday home by the size and enormity of the perambulator and what it represents: the task of single motherhood appears to weigh this woman down and is the catalyst for her tears in the opening pages. It is also revealed to the reader that Betty has covered up her deceased husband Seabrook's corrupt past. On his tombstone have been carved the elusive words 'merchant of the city' as she feels this is the best example he offers for her three sons. As a wife and mother she feels it is her responsibility to do this; Betty's life is obviously submerged in the needs of her children, even if it means deceiving them.

Jacob's Room can be read as a photograph album composed of various snapshots, pictures of a boy's transition to adulthood. Indeed, the passing of time in this novel is handled with extreme care: for example in chapter two, Betty does not need to use the perambulator anymore as baby John can walk by himself. This novel focuses on not knowing, the narrative is always pursuing and searching for Jacob yet as time passes it becomes clear that he will remain elusive. Woolf describes the elusiveness of memory by using the following simile: 'As the crooked pin dropped by a child into the wishing-well twirls in the water and disappears for ever' (JR, p25). The context of the simile's appearance concerns Mrs Norman who forgets about the young man on the train who is Jacob.

Fanny Elmer is just one of Woolf's numerous characters in this detailed book; she is an artist's model who has fallen in love with Jacob. The following quotation is taken from a descriptive passage later in the novel which is set in Hampstead Garden suburb. Nature is linked to the baby in the perambulator and the children's voices in the park:

> The fresh wind scatters the children's voice all about. *My* children, thought Fanny Elmer. The women stand round the pond, beating off great prancing shaggy dogs. Gently the baby is rocked in the perambulator. The eyes of all the nurses, mothers, and wandering women are a little glazed, absorbed. (JR, p113)

Although Woolf portrays this character Fanny Elmer, an artist's model, as a careless, vulnerable, emotionally unstable woman we see how this extract reveals her maternal side as she wonders about her future children: 'Fanny Elmer was all sentiment and sensation' (JR, p149). Therefore, the perambulator motif can sometimes represent a character's intense longing.

The last reference to the perambulator motif occurs at the end of the novel in chapter ten. Throughout the book we meet men and women who love or are loved by Jacob. Sandra Wentworth Williams, is a sophisticated married woman with whom Jacob fell in love. Sandra is depicted as being self-absorbed; she places her book of Donne's poetry that Jacob gave her in her bookcase alongside the other books she has collected whilst travelling, the underlying implication being there have been other affairs. As she thinks of Jacob as a small boy, she looks at her own child, Jimmy, who is out in her garden with his nursemaid:

> The perambulator was going through the little gate in the railing. She kissed her hand; directed by the nurse, Jimmy waved his. (JR, p166)

The implication is that due to her location at the window, she is separated from her child both literally and metaphorically. The perambulator is a recurring motif used to suggest a symbolic link between two people, Sandra and Jacob, or to reveal simultaneous events. Solid objects, like the perambulator remain whilst Jacob vanishes and is lost forever to the war. This novel reflects the waste and trauma of war which obviously affected Woolf's own life in a number of ways.

Mrs Dalloway

The perambulator is also a focal point in *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf's fourth novel. There are three references to perambulators in this novel and observing them by characters is always selective, they are used for a particular reason. There are also further indications that perambulators were a luxurious commodity and in this novel, Woolf shows us the iniquitous social structure that survived the war. For example, Clarissa Dalloway has turned her back on the lower classes of society who could not afford perambulators, such as the poor mothers of Pimlico (MD, p23) and Westminster (MD, p129) with their babies in their arms or crawling

on the dirty, infested streets. These poor mothers, Sarah Bletchley and Emily Coates, gather at the gates of Buckingham Palace. Woolf depicts Sarah Bletchley holding her baby in her arms, 'tipping her foot up and down as though she were by her own fender in Pimlico' (MD, p23). Mrs Coates thinks she read the word 'Blaxo' in the sky, her own baby lying stiff and white in her arms. These mothers of Pimlico are almost like symbols and they are not described in detail which reflects Woolf's avoidance of describing classes outside her own experience. The poor were a familiar spectacle in Woolf's time. Class mattered immensely to the Victorians and the impoverished represented a threat. Working-class women like the singer in *Mrs Dalloway* and toothless Mrs McNab in *To the Lighthouse* become potent mythical symbols in Woolf's novels. She tends to describe close-knit middle class society in most of her fiction.

In *Mrs Dalloway* the stream and kaleidoscope of life is linked with the material phenomena/objects: the mysterious royal motorcar, the sky writing aeroplane, the child who runs in to Rezia and the perambulator are all means of transition from the mind of one character to the mind of another. The book has numerous moments when different characters look at the same objects but are wondering about widely different matters. Woolf uses these transitions to suggest that solid existing objects of the external world unify the minds of separate people. However, because each person is trapped in their own mind, they will all have different private responses to the same external object.

Evidently, Woolf's intention was to communicate this incessant flow of action and it is also clear that the perambulator motif provides a structural link in this novel. The section in which the perambulator motif is used is the Regent's Park fragment, which is heavily based on Peter Walsh's reflections. Much of the action of the novel takes place in parks, the oases of nature in the middle of a city. Peter Walsh has decided to sit in Regent's Park and have a cigarette before his appointment with his lawyers, with whom he will arrange his divorce

from Daisy. Peter Walsh sees Lucrezia and Septimus in the park, they do not know each other; however both Rezia and Peter see the perambulator. Later, Peter thinks that Clarissa would have spoken to the couple. Peter Walsh perambulating in Regent's Park looks for a secluded seat in the park but settles for one next to a nurse and a sleeping baby:

> An elderly grey nurse, with a baby asleep in its perambulator- that was the best he could do for himself; sit down at the far end of the seat by that nurse. (MD, p63)

Woolf often uses children to bridge the gaps between narratives and sections. Cam Ramsay forms a bridge between sections nine and ten of the first part of *To the Lighthouse*. She picks up the narration from Mr Bankes and Lily and transports it over to the window for her mother; the topic of marriage is also carried over by Cam. In *Mrs Dalloway* it is the character of Elsie Mitchell, the little girl playing in Regent's Park, who is used by Woolf to effect a narrative transition between Rezia Warren Smith and Peter Walsh. She is only introduced as a character briefly in order to run from the bench where Peter is dozing to crash into Rezia's legs (MD, p73). Elsie provides a link in space between Peter's seat and the Smiths. Woolf manipulates the point of view by using the perambulator as a focus; both Peter and Rezia see the perambulator and it is used to stimulate thought and memory. The perambulator symbolizes to Peter Walsh the passing of time, the devastating fact that he is not young any more, a reality he is unwilling to admit; whereas the same object, the perambulator, reminds Rezia of her longing for a family of her own. Lucrezia sees the same perambulator, 'slightly waved by tears, the broad path, the nurse, the man in grey, the perambulator rose and fell before her eyes' (MD, p73). The reader is informed that Rezia longs for children and this passage in the park is full of references to babies, motherhood and maternity. The perambulator is a poignant sign for Lucrezia, a young war bride; it represents a symbol of what she could and should have had with her husband Septimus: a family. The

sight of the perambulator upsets her due to the fact that she had given up so much for her husband and because of her desires: '*She* could not grow old and have no children!' (MD, p100). For Rezia, children are an important and necessary part of life. The following phrase, which describes the image of the perambulator as 'slightly waved by tears', represents the disillusion she feels with her life. The perambulator almost rocking 'rose and fell before her eyes' (MD, p73); 'To be rocked by this malignant torturer was her lot' (MD, p73). The first time Rezia cried since she was married was when she told Septimus that Mrs Filmer's daughter was expecting a baby. While Rezia longs for a child, Septimus believes that humankind is vile and must not be allowed to reproduce, like the poor mothers of Pimlico and Westminster with their crawling babies. His refusal to have children is because of a moral decision that there is no justification for reproducing as his conviction is that the world is really meaningless and hostile, not suitable to bring a child into. Most importantly, both these characters in Regent's Park, Rezia and Peter, are lonely and the image of the perambulator appears to heighten this loneliness and create a link between these perfect strangers. Peter Walsh, who had been Clarissa Dalloway's suitor years ago, falls into a deep sleep. This foreshadows the episode in *The Years* when Sara is asleep, in Hyde Park, at the same time as Maggie's baby.

Woolf often uses the London parks such as Regent's Park, Hampstead Garden and Hyde Park in her work and they appear to become a haven, a place where the city sounds are muffled and life is special. Woolf depicts the division between male and female activities by placing them in different areas in the city of London. She created a particular place for the feminine, the maternal, the perambulators, within the parks, the green spaces in London, the enclosed natural spaces, whilst the men are located in the busy inner city streets. The two different worlds have clear boundaries; the city and country are constantly in opposition. The park with its natural beauty, space and fertility is related to women; the city with its power

and logic to men. Generally, the perambulators with babies in are found within the green, fertile, fecund parks or gardens whereas the perambulators which carry deadwood or sticks are found on the harsh concrete streets or on country lanes. Peter Walsh surmises about the 'domestic family life of the parks' (MD, p79). The Stephen children had walked daily around Kensington gardens. Strolling in the fresh air was considered a joy and necessity for good health and motherhood. Social books such as *Rules of Conduct for Polite Society* stressed that mothers should rejoice with nature. Women in the park are either nursemaids or mothers; they are hence defined by their social roles whereas throughout the novel, as in most of Woolf's fiction, men are defined by their work and their own pleasure. Victorians created these parks to be as an institution in their own right; a philanthropic act that produced civic pride. Parks have a universal appeal, as they represent the natural world; they are a community area. Parks remind the characters of their childhood or force them to meditate and consider their future children. Crossing Green Park Richard Dalloway observes families both rich and poor sprawling, 'children kicking up their legs; sucking milk' (MD, p129). His opinion is that every park should be open to children, even the poor mothers of Westminster and their 'crawling babies' (MD, p129). Once again, the absence of a perambulator seems to imply poverty and delinquency; allowing babies to crawl on the grass is looked on with disgust!

Peter Walsh remembers 'as a child he had walked in Regent's Park' he remarks that it had changed very little since he was a boy (MD, p62).This is an interesting comment: unlike the technological changes within the city, the parks appear to remain constant and provide a fertile and familiar setting for each character. Peter remembers Elizabeth, Clarissa's daughter, and expects that the reason mother and daughter do not get on is due to Clarissa's temperament. The familiarity of the Park 'the little house where one bought air balls' (MD, p62), the sound of children's' voices, the shuffle of feet, traffic outside the park's perimeter

gently humming and his recollection of childhood induces sleep: 'Down, he sank into the plumes and feathers of sleep, sank, and was muffled over' (MD, p63). Peter wakes from his dream abruptly saying to himself: 'The death of the soul' (MD, p66). He associates the dream and those words with a scene from Bourton in the early 1890s. That summer Clarissa has been shocked to find out about a neighbour who had a baby before she was married. It was her prudish and arrogant reaction that had made Peter pronounce the death of her soul. This links in with his thoughts, concerning Clarissa's tendency to overreact, before he fell asleep. Whatever Woolf intended his dream to represent, one thing is clear about this park sequence- the perambulator is the centre of the action. Peter Walsh recalls Clarissa Dalloway's love of life as he imagines walking with her in Hyde Park and what her reaction would be to the things he can see: 'It was a bed of tulips, now a child in a perambulator, now some absurd little drama she made up on the spur of the moment' (MD, p87). The flowers represent the natural reproductive organ of the vegetable world, the perambulator represents the product of human reproduction and Clarissa Dalloway is the living image of the surface of the society Woolf was concerned with; this society involves a high proportion of children and perambulators. Just as the perambulator appears in the centre of the book, it is a reference point for each character and an anchor in Regent's Park. Clarissa performs the same role and is significant because she draws people together. The passage of time and the prospect of death scare Peter Walsh and these same concerns affect Lucrezia and are displayed by Woolf through the perambulator motif.

To the Lighthouse

To the Lighthouse is crammed full of children (Mr and Mrs Ramsay's eight children) and also Virginia Woolf's own personal and poignant childhood memories of her family and their holiday home in St. Ives. The novel reveals how she imagined the concept of family and

the male/female codes and roles. Surprisingly, then, only two references are made to the perambulator motif in this autobiographical novel. Both references focus on the baby within the perambulator and ask the reader to consider whether incidents that occur in early childhood influence adult identity. In part one, The Window, the whole of section twelve is within parentheses as the text moves away from the main narrative in both time and space; it is a flashback which tells the story of Nancy and Andrew who visit the beach with Paul and Minta. Andrew Ramsay observes Minta Doyle and focuses on the fact that although she was a very good walker and she was very rash and reckless, nothing seemed to scare this 24-year-old tomboy apart from bulls! Minta's hypothesis for this irrational fear is that it must have stemmed from childhood: 'She thought she must have been tossed in her perambulator when she was a baby' (TTL, p86). Whilst late Victorian and Edwardian prams were very beautiful and elegant they were notoriously unstable and many an infant was tipped out; some were even killed as a result. Brakes were not fitted in perambulators as standard until the 1920s. Later on in this section, Minta loses a brooch that had belonged to her grandmother and this quotation captures her reaction to this loss: 'It was the same as the bulls all over again- she had no control over her emotions' (TTL, p89). The main tenet of this quote is the fact that she attributes something that may have happened in her childhood to an irrational fear she has in her adult life. An obvious link exists here to the discussion in chapter one on screen memories affecting adult identities. Minta's character is also associated with the topic of marriage and motherhood as she becomes engaged to Paul Rayley in 'The Window' section of this novel. The motif of the perambulator foreshadows the future for this character. Subsequently in the last section of the book 'The Lighthouse', Lily imparts to the reader the information that Minta and Paul had 'two little boys' (TTL, p196). Lily also reveals that their marriage had been troublesome and gradually resolved itself into an excellent friendship.

Perhaps the unstable perambulator in Minta's childhood is used by Woolf to foreshadow the volatile marriage of Minta and Paul.

The second reference to the perambulator is in the last section of the novel, 'The Lighthouse'. James wonders about his father's childhood and what has moulded him into the man he is today. Through a haze of memories James recollects his first surge of hate when as a child, he sat at his mother's knee and his father told them that the trip to the lighthouse would have to be postponed: 'Suppose then that as a child sitting helpless in a perambulator, or on someone's knee, he had seen a wagon crush ignorantly and innocently, someone's foot?' (TTL, p210). His childhood memories recall his father's aggression as being like a wheel, which crushed his mother's foot. Of course other references are made to Mr Ramsay's feet in the novel. Mrs Ramsay is the static centre at the window, whereas Mr Ramsay uses his feet to pace and stride around the garden mumbling and shouting out pieces of poetry, wrestling with his quest for alphabetical progression. As discussed in chapter one, the readers experience an ambivalence of feelings in the young boy towards his father; there is an undeniable hatred but there is also an identification and an empathy with him as he realizes that Mr Ramsay is a sad old man. He realises it is not his father that he hates but his father's tyranny. Mr Ramsay is depicted as the patriarchal monster and chapter one above identified some resemblances between this character and Sir Leslie Stephen. It is clear that the perambulator motif in this novel highlights helplessness and the vulnerability of childhood, the precariousness of being in a perambulator and how our experiences in formative years may make an impact on us in later life. Daniel Ferrer points out in *Madness in Language*, 'with Virginia Woolf the familiar cosiness of daily life can serve as a mask for the most implacable forces of destruction.'[38] Ferrer proposes that *To the Lighthouse* reveals the tyrannies of family life, as do her other novels.

The Waves

In *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* Woolf demonstrated an increasing interest in images and symbols, aside from the perambulator motif. Various motifs are used in *The Waves* (1931) Woolf's seventh novel but it is pertinent that Susan is the only character to mention a perambulator. Susan is the earth mother, a maternal figure, who is deeply embedded in the rhythm of the country and motherhood. She acknowledges, accepts and indulges her role as Angel in the House and she continues to perpetuate her mother's role, in which she was, 'silent in a blue apron locking up the cupboards' (TW, p67). For Susan, her relationship with her partner is not as important as the result, the production of children. The reader does not even know the name of her husband. Susan has a childbearing body and her emblems of maternal splendour include her shabby dress and her rough hands. She symbolically identifies herself with the land, cycles of nature and she finds fulfilment close to the soil.

In this novel, as in *Night and Day*, the perambulator is used to carry sticks. Susan is thinking of her plans for the first day home from school, the day she has longed for and to which she has counted down. However, it is not Susan who pushes the perambulator but a countrywoman. She plans to get up at dawn to walk on the moor and, as she journeys back through the trembling lanes underneath the nut leaves, she imagines that she will see the perambulator but she already knows that she will not speak to the woman or the shepherd: 'I shall pass an old woman wheeling a perambulator full of sticks; and the shepherd. But we shall not speak' (TW, p36). These two images must frighten the character of Susan; firstly being an old and elderly woman is linked to being unable to conceive and being fruitless, something that would upset Susan, and the perambulator full of sticks would constitute Susan's anguish, the fear of not being able to have children. The reason they will not speak:

they have nothing in common. Susan is determined and knows what she wants, even though she is only nineteen. She uses the modal verb 'shall' five times in one paragraph when she is writing of her ambitions for the future: 'I shall have children'; 'I shall be like my mother' (TW, p67). The recurring image of the empty, childless perambulator is a symbol created by Woolf to portray failure, emptiness and absence. Without children, Susan's life would feel meaningless.

The Years

The perambulator motif dominates this novel, as it does no other. Woolf's eighth novel *The Years* (1937) contains the most references to perambulators; twelve in total. This could be because this city novel chronicles the fortunes of a large typical English family and focuses on the passing of fifty years. It is also revealing that the important characters within this novel are the women as this links effectively to the use of the perambulator motif.

The opening chapters of *The Years* focus on the oppressive and repressive nature of the Victorian family. As the novel progresses the reader is given more examples of the challenges the family faced as the years pass. The interactions of Maggie and Sara with their cousins Rose, Martin and Eleanor are the emotional core of the novel. The Pargiter brothers Edward and Morris, their sisters Delia and Milly, and cousin Kitty remain on the outside. The family name 'Pargiter' means whitewasher or plasterer and this could represent Victorian concealment, especially of sexual matters. The word 'Victorian' has itself come to be used, almost like the word 'Puritan', to describe a set of moral and sexual values which seem, to many, to have been odd and even bizarre. 'Victorian' became and often remains, a derogatory term. The term 'Victorian' can also be used as a synonym for people who led lives as tightly corseted in the mind as they were in the flesh. There are easily identifiable characteristics associated with the Victorian age. The supplement to the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites the following terms as a standard definition of 'Victorian' from as early as 1934: 'Prudish, strict;

old-fashioned, outdated.'[39] Indeed, Woolf comments in 'A Sketch of the Past' that restraint was the first childhood lesson she was taught: 'Sit passive and applaud the Victorian males when they went through the intellectual hoops' (ASOP, p156). Madelyn Detloff's definition of a Victorian girl is as follows: 'Produced as a person who is ashamed of her body, of her sexuality, whose body is subject to the controlling forces of other males.'[40] It is apparent that Victorian ideas of worth and respectability were instilled in the children at an early age. The major historical happenings are barely touched upon in this novel: for example, intrinsic to the sexuality of women was the introduction of contraception. The first birth control clinic opened in the USA in 1916 and was a turning point in human history and most importantly in women's history yet it is not mentioned in the plot. The novel provided for Woolf an opportunity to dramatise, and thus historicise, her own familial dilemma within the repressive, class-ridden Victorian society of the Pargiter family.

When Abel Pargiter visits his mistress, Mira, at her squalid abode, the sounds of deprived and unsupervised children shouting in the street outside symbolize the disillusionment with life that Abel feels. His children remain under lock and key, especially the girls. The chaotic impact of the poor affects all characters in this novel as it also affected the author. The opening scenes take place in a house very similar to 22 Hyde Park Gate, with the mother dying upstairs. Rose, Milly and Delia all have an impulse to break free of Victorian patriarchal society and its protectiveness and the motif of the perambulator could suggest the characters' desire for a widening of perception. In this novel the protagonists are constantly going to the windows where they contemplate questions of identity and destiny. In the section entitled 1880, Delia observes, in the evening, from the window an uncommon sight for a child of her class: 'A woman of the lower classes was wheeling a perambulator; an old man tottered along with his hands behind his back' (TY, p14). The motif of the perambulator had its roots deep in Woolf's private store of imagery as her diary testifies.

During a performance break at the theatre Woolf and her friends spot an unusual sight, one which remains in her mind:

> Between the acts we all stood in the street...then came dribbling through us a draggled procession of poor women wheeling perambulators & carrying small, white haired dazed children; going across Waterloo bridge. (Diary XX, V4, p31)

The poor women depicted in this diary entry could be performers in a play as Woolf and her acquaintances seem fascinated by their bold procession over the bridge and what it represented. 'I dont like the children of the poor' Woolf bluntly states in a letter to her sister (L1269, V2, p544).

The perambulator signifies Delia's desire for freedom; the women of the lower classes who wheel their perambulators in the streets after dark are not trapped in their home; it was the middle and upper classes who felt the pressure of Victorian codes of behaviour for women most strongly. Delia longs to go out to the dinner party with old Burke and Robin. However, her father has only been instructed to bring one of his daughters. Obviously, this does not provide the girls with a feeling of individuality or uniqueness, all three older daughters seemingly without individual identities are 'lumped together'. Windows seem to provide the only opportunity for escape as the doors to the homes were often locked. Looking out of the window Delia feels a sense of freedom but Eleanor warns her sister not to be caught looking. The perambulator motif symbolises that the idea of a career for Delia is in the process of being stifled or shaped by the nature of her surroundings; this foreshadows the fact that Delia will end up having three children with her future husband Patrick.

The next reference to the perambulator motif can be found in the '1911' section. Every summer Eleanor Pargiter visits her brother Morris and his family at the home of Mrs Chinnery, his mother-in-law. Mrs Chinnery's home is located in a Dorsetshire village;

Woolf's writing captures rural English village life, a house that foreshadows Pointz Hall. The reader surmises that Eleanor's father, Abel has died and Abercorn Terrace has closed. Consequently, Eleanor feels as if she has 'no attachment at the moment anywhere' (TY, p143). Metaphorically she feels as if life is passing her by. People's lives were changing and as she thinks this morbid thought people literally do pass her: a procession. Successions of people are returning home from a fete. It is implied that it was actually a bazaar that Celia Chinnery held in her own garden. Eleanor observes, 'some of the women carried parcels; there was a gleaming silver object on the quilt of a perambulator' (TY, p143). The text does not specify if there was also a baby underneath the quilt or whether the sole purpose of the perambulator was to carry this object, its function being as a container The perambulator passing represents Eleanor's feelings of loss and loneliness; she has resigned herself to the fact that she will never have a family of her own and thinks she could not bear to 'turn into a grey-haired lady cutting flowers with a pair of scissors and tapping at cottage doors' (TY, p143). This woman within Eleanor's vision foreshadows the character of Lucy Swithin in *Between the Acts*. In fact, the bazaar held by Celia Chinnery for the church fund, and the after-dinner coffee on the terrace, strongly anticipates a location in Woolf's final novel *Between the Acts*. The perambulator appears to be a harsh reminder of what Eleanor would never achieve in her life; later in this section she does refer to herself as an old maid, and at the age of fifty-five she looks into the mirror and gives one glance at the woman who is 'so familiar that she no longer saw her' (TY, p145). We find out on the subsequent page that it was a Mrs Grice who had won the silver-plated salver 'the gleaming silver object' that was carried by the perambulator: 'That's what I saw in the perambulator,' Eleanor retorts (TY, p146). The statement could be suggesting that there was never meant to be a baby inside that perambulator; some perambulators are purely used as a means of transporting objects. However, Celia Chinnery, Morris's wife, wishes Eleanor had married William Whatney and

that she did have 'children of her own' (TY, p149). Ironically it is the reoccurring intrusive thought of 'who won the silver salver?', Mrs Grice and the perambulator that sends Eleanor to sleep. She accepts 'things pass, things change', her youth has passed, her father has died and her chance for a family of her own has faded: 'Darkness reigned' (TY, p156).

In a clever contrast in this section the reader also finds out that Maggie is due to give birth in November in Paris. There appears to be a subtle juxtaposition in Woolf's work between the childless and the mothers, for instance Mrs Ramsay and Lily, Susan and Rhoda, Maggie and Eleanor, Mrs Dalloway and Rachel. The basis for this contrast could be the familiar and over discussed relationship between the author and her own sister Vanessa. It appears that the emblem of the silenced, barren woman haunts Woolf's work of fiction: for example, Miss Allan and Hilda Elliot in *The Voyage Out*; Mrs Milvain in *Night and Day*; and Mrs Manresa in *Between the Acts*. Some critics have also suggested that Woolf drew on her own memories of Katharine Mansfield in creating Mrs Manresa and her childless relationship with John Middleton Murray. However, it is not only women who are thought about in this category of childlessness but also men in the guise of Mr William Bankes in *To the Lighthouse*, who is a widowed and childless botanist.

The perambulator motif is revisited in the next section of the book which is entitled '1914': 'A young woman was wheeling a perambulator' (TY, p174). This spectacle prompts Martin to ask Sara about Maggie and her new baby. Martin has not seen Maggie since her baby was born and he associates the sight of the perambulator with Maggie, the new mother. The implication is that the perambulator represents fertility, motherhood and new life. There is a brief insinuation that Martin 'was jealous for a moment' and his feeling of loneliness is compounded as he views the plethora of couples in Hyde Park that day (TY, p175). As Martin and Sara walk to the Round Pond to meet with the maternal Maggie, children seem to be in the majority and as they approach their destination, Martin and Sara hear 'sudden shrill

cries in the air' (TY, p177). Moments of stillness and fecundity by the Round Pond provide a strong contrast to the pressure of clock time in a world at war:

> Coveys of nursemaids pushed perambulators along the paths. Babies lay fast asleep in them like images of faintly tinted wax; their perfectly smooth eyelids fitted over their eyes as if they sealed them completely. (TY, p177)

The reader is led to conclude that Martin likes children and this influx of perambulators in the park reminds him of the first time he saw Sally (Sara), 'asleep in her perambulator in the hall in Browne Street' (TY, p177). Sara falls asleep again later that day, due to all the wine she has consumed at lunch with Martin, thus re-enacting this previous childhood episode. As they reach the Round Pond Martin recognizes Maggie first and tells Sara who is looking in the wrong direction and does not spot her sister straight away: 'A young woman who was lifting a baby out of its perambulator under a tree' (TY, p178). Woolf expands and develops the image of mother and child: 'With one hand she held the child; with the other she arranged the pillows of the perambulator. She too was dappled with lozenges of floating light' (TY, p178). The scene is very similar to that in *To the Lighthouse* where the mother and child are described as 'objects of universal veneration' (TTL, p61) and this image, depicted by Woolf, of the mother Maggie and her baby is majestic, almost magical. The perambulator at the centre of the image is represented as the throne on which the baby rests on. Maggie demonstrates confidence and ease as she handles her baby, a fact that obviously impresses Martin. Indeed, it could be argued that the 'lozenges of floating light' represent the universal belief that being a mother is associated with a sort of indescribable power. Martin thinks about how the baby has changed Maggie; seemingly in Martin's eyes motherhood has improved her as a person. He enquires whether she liked having a child, to which she replies in the affirmative but notes it is a tie. Martin advocates this notion of having a bond with somebody, a reminder again that Martin was obviously fond of children. Intuitively Maggie

senses this and asks Martin candidly if he wants children but before he can reply Sara, clicking at the back of her throat, interrupts his conversation. Martin's disillusionment with family life, his anger at his father's lies and his boredom with his romantic life, makes him unsure if he wants to recreate his own family situation and have children. As Martin looks at Maggie's baby asleep in Hyde Park, he wonders if he will experience the same thing too, and also whether the baby will suffer in the same way that Martin feels he himself has suffered.

Woolf creates a deliberate link between Sara and Maggie's baby. Sara, as discussed in chapter two, is a childlike figure who represents innocence and naivety. In Hyde Park, Maggie's baby and Sara sleep, in what Woolf calls, 'a circle of privacy' (TY, p179). Both characters are connected together as they are 'encircled in a ring of solitude' (TY, p180). The fact that both Sara and the baby are sleeping enables Martin and Maggie to talk honestly and openly. Also, as the pair sleep, nature seems more heightened: 'Everything was full of the stir, the potency, the fecundity of spring' (TY, p179). As discussed earlier this episode recalls an incident in *Mrs Dalloway* when Peter Walsh sleeps and the nursemaid next to him guards the sleeping baby. The perambulator can also be viewed as a symbol of fecundity as it is found within nature, the park, and contains a living creature. The next reference to the perambulator motif, more clearly shows how Woolf deliberately links the two characters together: 'Here the baby half woke and stretched out its hand. Maggie rocked the perambulator. Sara stirred' (TY, p180). The implication is that as Maggie rocks the perambulator to soothe her baby she is also soothing her sister. Maggie has the ability to soothe and calm her sister just as she has the power to keep her baby contented. This action also reminds the reader of Martin's earlier recollection of Sara in her perambulator in Browne Street; there is a definite similarity between Sara as a baby and her later state in adulthood. In a similar way to Vanessa Bell's and Virginia Woolf's close relationship, it could be argued that Maggie performs the role of mother for her sister Sara after the death of her own mother.

As she rocks the baby in the perambulator, it is implied she is also calming her sister: she is a maternal substitute. Martin has to leave the sisters as he has a dinner date in Grosvenor Square. He turns back to look at them after he has walked a short distance: 'They were still sitting by the perambulator under the trees' (TY, p181). Just as the image of Mrs Ramsay comforts and soothes her husband, the symbol of the perambulator entices Martin to look back at the two sisters. Some aspect of this image intrigues him, excites him and motivates him: hence, he turns and looks back at the image at various points until he can see them no longer.

Further into the book, in the '1917' section, Eleanor is dining with Renny and Maggie who have two children. As she enters their home she notes the objects in the entrance: 'The perambulator in the hall; the umbrellas in the stand; the carpet, the pictures: they all seemed intensified' (TY, p204). These specific physical objects, tokens of domestic life, in particular the perambulator, convey the sense of time passing. *The Years* is littered with 'solid objects' that appear, disappear and reappear throughout the book. Examples include 'the spotted walrus with a brush in its back'; 'Italian chair with its paw-like arms' and the most significant solid object 'the perambulator'. As the perambulator moves through time it carries its past associations into contemporary time; people remember who used to be transported within this object and who has now grown up, considering the inevitable passing of time and acknowledging their own mortality. This association is demonstrated with Martin's powerful recollection of the perambulator in Browne Street that Sara used to be in. The inevitable interpretation is that the perambulator signals both continuity and change. This motif reoccurs in different places and at different times throughout the book and often reveals a buried piece of childhood/ time remembered. The perambulator has been passed from generation to generation as a symbol of health and fertility. The perambulator, which Eleanor glimpses as she arrives at her cousin Maggie's house, is now used by the next generation. After dinner the

perambulator poignantly remains in the background as they say goodnight: 'Renny smiled at Eleanor as they stood for a moment by the perambulator' (TY, p218). As Eleanor says good night she suddenly thinks that she would have liked to marry Renny twenty years ago. Through the image of the perambulator, we get a glimpse of Eleanor's repressed or stifled desires for a husband, perhaps even a family of her own. It is not just the perambulator that is passed down through generations, it is the genes- the disposition, the inheritance that is transmitted through families. The perambulator motif reveals the progression from the oppressive atmosphere of life at Abercorn Terrace to a more open existence in which the family, although living separately, can visit each other and discuss the past as well as the present.

Between the Acts

Woolf began writing *Between the Acts* in early 1938 and finished the final draft weeks before her own suicide in 1941. In her last novel, the perambulator motif is referred to six times. The first reference occurs on the opening page, as it does in *Jacob's Room*. Mrs Haines is recalling her childhood:

> Then there was silence; and a cow coughed; and that led her to say how odd it was, as a child, she had never feared cows, only horses. But, then, as a small child in a perambulator, a great cart-horse had brushed within an inch of her face. (BTA, p5)

Yet again, we see the image of the perambulator being used by characters to convey a particularly frightening time in their early childhood, an incident that has stayed with them into adulthood, often involving some sort of animal: a bull or a carthorse. The perambulator, as has been discussed earlier, is an ordinary, solid object that takes on a significant meaning

as over time the various characters associate it with emotions, feelings and memories: often frightening recollections or incidents from their own childhood.

Frank Kermode[41] has observed how the words 'prayer' and 'umbrella' contested between Bart Oliver and Lucy Swithin, result in the nurses wheeling a 'perambulator' several lines further on. Woolf had pictured many aspects of the book before she began writing and a focal area was 'a terrace where nursemaids walk' (DXXVII, V5, p135). The next three references of the perambulator motif occur on the same page of the novel:

> The nurses after breakfast were trundling the perambulator up and down the terrace; and as they trundled they were talking- not shaping pellets of information or handing ideas from one to another, but rolling words, like sweets on their tongues. (BTA, p9)

Two phrases from the first sentence 'trundling the perambulator' and 'rolling words, like sweets on their tongues' are repeated by Woolf in the last sentence, with only a slight variation: 'They walked up and down the terrace rolling sweets, trundling the perambulator' (p9). In chapter two reference was made to Woolf's affection for repeated phrases and symmetry. As the nursemaids trundle their perambulators they roll words, the implication being that they do not exchange information as they lovingly roll out their words, rather they are toying with words. This fits in with the words that arise from the play which are words without meaning.

Between the Acts highlights the modern age and it is the only one of Woolf's pieces of fiction where she uses the shortened and modern version of perambulator and refers to it as a pram: 'Amy was saying something about a feller when Mabel, with her hand on the pram, turned sharply...the baby, Caro, thrust her fist out over the coverlet and the furry bear was jerked overboard' (BTA, p9). The evidence from her writing suggests Woolf was not fond of

the modern age and this is reflected in her description of the gramophone, a symbol of contemporary society, always breaking down and faltering. As well as using this shortened version of perambulator, in no other novel does Woolf use the ellipsis so frequently; it is as if she is emphasising her views on the fragmentary and fragile quality of modern life. The threat of war hovers ominously in the background of the novel with the plane that flies overhead.

The child within the perambulator belongs to Mrs Giles Oliver- she has two children George and Caro, who is the baby referred to in the above quotation. However, Woolf presents a mother who is not content with her life; she is attracted to Mr Haines, and is not happy in her marriage to her husband Giles, whom she thinks of clinically as 'the father of my children' (BTA, p11). Mrs Oliver watches the nursemaid's slow progression along the path with her children and the perambulator. In *Between the Acts* there is no division between spectator and performers: 'What feeling was it that stirred in her when above the looking-glass, out of doors, she saw coming across the lawn the perambulator; two nurses; and her little boy George, lagging behind?' (BTA, p11). It is interesting as a reader to consider what emotion is stirring in Mrs Oliver as she watches her offspring- pride? Joy? Love? Is it a feeling she cannot admit to herself? It is described later in the novel that Isa 'loathed the domestic, the possessive; the maternal' (BTA, p14). Therefore, it is particularly relevant to analyse William's point of view as he watches how Isa changes; it is referred to almost like a costume change, as her small boy George approaches her for a cuddle:

> He saw her face change, as if she had got out of one dress and put on another. A small boy battled his way through the crowd, striking against skirts and trousers as if he were swimming blindly. (BTA, p65)

Does Woolf wait until her last novel to fulfil her sister's earlier request for her to write about the maternal instinct? The ties that exist between mother and child are captured succinctly in the above quotation.

The final reference in this novel to the perambulator motif links in with Isa looking at her children and what they represent as Woolf describes the procession again: 'The perambulator was passing across the lawn' (BTA, p17). Once again, she uses the object of the perambulator to form the basis of a procession of people; this gives it a sense of importance and symbolizes the contents of this container are significant yet separate from Isa, the mother. Lucy Swithin, an elderly widow shows William Dodge the nursery as they perambulate the estate; however, there is no baby in the cradle as the baby is outside, unconnected to its mother, being wheeled about by nurses. Woolf suggests this separation is felt by the watching mother from the window.

The Voyage Out

In the last section of this chapter the reference returns to Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out* and considers why this is the only novel that does not use the perambulator motif. At the time Julian Bell was born on the 4th February 1908, Virginia Woolf was struggling to bring her first novel, *Melymbrosia* into the world. 'A page of Melymbrosia was strangled in the birth this morning' (L429, V1, p345). This extract reflects the violent, traumatic and difficult process of completion, a theme which would develop and continue throughout her life and which demonstrates the obvious analogy between childbearing and writing. The completion of her first novel left Woolf unsettled and disillusioned. She was seesawing between extremes of pain and joy in both her writing and her everyday life and the novel reflects her own emotional attachments and doubts. *The Voyage Out* remained in Woolf's memory as one of the most difficult of her novels. The breakdown of 1913 was

triggered, in large part, by the pressure she placed on herself to finish *The Voyage Out.* Although a penultimate draft had been finished just before her wedding, she still felt she had work to do on it. Hermione Lee in her superb biography states that it would have been difficult for her not to be threatened by the fact that Leonard's novel, *The Village in the Jungle,* was finished and accepted before hers.[42] *The Voyage Out* was published the day after Woolf entered the nursing home. It received very favourable reviews but she was scarcely aware of the event which coincided with the most violent period of her lunacy.

The story of the evolution of *The Voyage Out* is uncertain and complex. Some critics claim she began thinking about it soon after her father's death in 1904. Other scholars place its conception nearer 1906. Her father's death enabled Woolf to begin creating a work of fiction that was very closely associated with the circumstances of her own life. Perhaps writing about Rachel's death was a means of dealing with those premature deaths in her own family that had affected her so significantly in early childhood. It is clear that the first draft of *Melymbrosia* was definitely underway by the spring of 1908 so its conception coincided with the conception of Vanessa's first child. Clive Bell's letter to her in February 1908 reveals that she had completed at least eleven chapters by that date, because he refers to the picnic, which occurs in chapters ten and eleven of the published novel. It is clear that Woolf rewrote the entire novel several times; Leonard claims she burned 'five or six' complete drafts of this novel, whereas Quentin Bell thinks it was as many as seven; she may even have had two versions on the go simultaneously. Evidently, finishing and letting go of her first book terrified her. Quentin Bell also suggests that she may have been thinking about this creation as early as 1904 during a visit to Manorbier: in the short period between the death of her father and her own breakdown during which she heard the birds talking in Greek. The identification and dating of the extant drafts of *Melymbrosia* by DeSalvo and Heine are important in understanding the biographical influences that affected this novel. Heine calls

The Voyage Out a 'protean' novel[43] and others too have recognised that Woolf's own experiences changed the way she wished to represent Rachel Vinrace. James King suggests that the seeds of the original idea may be traced back to Woolf's own childhood when she sent 'a short story to Tit-Bits, a magazine that the children often bought. This piece, which was refused, was a romantic account of a young woman on a ship.'[44] Ultimately, in revising her first novel for publication Woolf removed elements of the story that were autobiographical. For example, Theresa, Rachel's mother, is much more prominent in *Melymbrosia.* King proposes in his detailed biography of Woolf that

> in December 1912, the conflicts at the heart of Rachel's existence began to overtake Rachel's creator...She wanted to have a baby, but she did not wish to endure sexual intercourse. She wanted to nurture a baby but she herself had never been properly nurtured.[45]

Therefore, in the middle of the children crisis, described in chapter three, the typescript of *The Voyage Out* was delivered by Leonard to Gerald Duckworth in Henrietta Street. Ultimately, *The Voyage Out* was Woolf's first novel and it was finally published by Duckworth & Co. when she was 33 years old on the 26th of March 1915. Dedicated to her husband Leonard Woolf this first novel is a deceptively conventional work of fiction; it is a journey of a young girl from a sheltered childhood to adult awareness. The novel has an underlying theme of hopelessness, it exudes the aroma of despair which is ironic as there was still hope of a child at this stage in Woolf's life. Is this why she did not use the perambulator motif in *The Voyage Out*? The novel transmits hopelessness, as there is no voyage back for Rachel Vinrace. It is a novel about the death of childhood, the voyage out of girlhood and the futility of life. Woolf makes use of the ancient symbol of the sea journey for the soul's journey. Rachel is utterly unfit emotionally and intellectually to make her way through life because of her childhood. Moreover, symbolically, this is one reason why she dies.

According to the premise of this chapter the perambulator is absent because there was still hope and desire for children at this stage in her life. Chapter three described the decision that Leonard and Virginia made and suggested that once it was settled that she could not have children, the motif of the perambulator appeared consistently and prolifically in every novel that she wrote up until her death. Although the perambulator motif is not mentioned in this novel, this piece of writing still focuses on a psychological voyage into dreams and the 'subconscious'.

Additionally, this is the only novel which includes a sinister and menacing nurse. The other novels may have depicted some nursemaids as incapable and demanding but it is noteworthy that this is the novel which provides this childhood figure with a supernatural and chilling role. Helen Ambrose has Nurse McInnis in to sit with Rachel during her illness. Nurse McInnis is the nurse Rachel saw at the Sunday service in the chapel; in this earlier chapter she is simply referred to as the 'hospital nurse' and Rachel chooses her as a paradigm of the smug complacency of the faithful (TVO, p234). Nurse McInnis is described as wearing spectacles with a 'little round red face' and 'weak blue eyes' (TVO, p234). When she is first introduced to Rachel she observes that, 'nurse smiled steadily as they all did' a disparaging comment about the possible sinister truth behind a nurse's kind facade (TVO, p337).

During the first night under the nurse's care Rachel sees that the Nurse was 'playing cards by the light of a candle which stood in the hollow of a newspaper' (TVO, p337). This sight had something inexplicably sinister about it which terrified Rachel and made her cry out. When the nurse came over to the bedside Rachel notices that her hands were very cold: 'It struck Rachel that a woman who sat playing cards in a cavern all night long would have very cold hands, and she shrank from the touch of them' (TVO, p338). The next line has supernatural connotations as, 'the shadow and the woman seemed to be eternally fixed above her' (TVO, p338). There is a suggestion that this woman is somehow hovering above Rachel

and looking down on her. Rachel keeps her eyes transfixed upon the peaked shadow on the ceiling, hoping that the shadow and the nurse would move. This first novel, according to Julia Briggs, was 'haunted by a sense of the underworld, of horrors, lying beneath the surface.'[46] Earlier in the novel Rachel sees an elderly woman cutting off the head of a chicken (TVO, p258). This gruesome sight of a servant performing a violent act perhaps foreshadows Rachel's later hallucinations of an old woman slicing off a man's head (TVO, p346).

During her illness Rachel begins to hallucinate and her hallucinations transform Nurse McInnis into a sinister woman playing cards in a dripping tunnel:

> Walking through a tunnel under the Thames, where there were little deformed women sitting in archways playing cards, while the bricks of which the wall was made oozed with damp, which collected into drops and slid down the wall. But the little old women became Helen and Nurse McInnis after a time, standing in the window together whispering, whispering incessantly. (TVO, p338)

The account of Rachel's fever and hallucinations draws on Woolf's own intermittent state of madness which led to suicide attempts in 1895 and 1915. Rachel's fatal illness is derived partly from her realization that she can never truly overcome the deprivations of the past.

Smouldering underneath the surface of this first novel were the unresolved topics of relations between men and women in a patriarchal society, sex and children. *The Voyage Out* is not autobiographical but it was of personal importance to Woolf. This novel boldly represent Woolf's own naïve inability at this novice stage in her life and writing career to represent what can happen in the everyday experience of marriage. Childless, fussy Mrs Hilda Elliott believes that having children is 'the crown, as one may call it, of a woman's life' (TVO, p114) and she desires to have her own children. The paradox in the novel is that Rachel is encouraged to imagine marriage and motherhood as her life's fulfilment, yet there

is a strong desire in particular to evade the plot. Rachel makes her timid entry into the world outside the secluded and sheltered home of her maiden aunts. Rachel's naivety is highlighted as she does not know much about marriage or how children were born. Moreover, this is the last time Woolf graphically describes a heterosexual kiss. Another fact that is significant to the argument is the awareness that this was the only one of her novels in which she worked more or less in public, showing sections of her manuscript to others, such as Clive Bell and asking advice. Did she not use the perambulator motif because she wanted to conceal her own desire for children, at a time when the topic was too painful and unbearable to discuss? Although it is only fiction, in the process of writing her first novel Woolf became even more poignantly aware of what life did not offer her. It could be argued that the recurring image of the perambulator is a symbol created, consciously or unconsciously, by the author to portray emptiness and absence.

How one's mind interests one. (DXXIX, V5, p275)

Woolf lived in times of transformation. Modernists preserved many of the most familiar motifs and structuring devices of the novel but Woolf isolates only a few objects in her fiction such as the brown stocking, looking glass and perambulator; these items have become symbolic and almost obsessive. It cannot be denied that the perambulator is a maternal symbol, which emphasises motherhood as an important role in Victorian society, the transmission of patriarchal codes and rules of behaviour. It could also be argued that the perambulator represents Woolf's own repressed, perhaps unconscious, anger at not being able to have children, the psychological distress and loss she felt about dealing daily with the central deprivation of her life. The invisible events that shrouded her work, memories of her childhood, the inconceivable child that haunted her all contribute to the force and poignancy of the perambulator motif, which echoes throughout her numerous novels. I did not include

Orlando in this research as this does not overtly feature the perambulator motif and this may be due to the nature and purpose of this book. When composing and writing this novel she would frequently use words such as 'wild', 'joke', 'fun', 'fantasy' and 'escapade': words which she never used about her projected writing and which seem to place the novel in a new, unique category and make it appear as an experiment; it suggests that writing *Orlando* was a form of escapism: 'I want fun. I want fantasy' (DVII, V3, p203). Virginia Woolf considered *Orlando* to be something of a freak and explained, 'I am writing Orlando half in a mock style very clear & plain, so that people will understand every word.' (Diary XVI, V3, p162). Although there is no reference to a perambulator, it does include a reference to 'bassinettes', Woolf uses this word to signify the climate has changed within the book and it reveals a reverence for marriage and children as 'wedding cakes' are also mentioned in the same list of objects which represent the beginning of the Victorian era (O, p222). Woolf does include associated words for example the following quotation from the close of the novel as Orlando 'began a perambulation of the house' (O, p301). Through her own individual style of writing Woolf not only explored and revealed the Victorian house but she broke free from the confines of this house and perambulated the streets and lanes of modernism.

Woolf chose a motif, the perambulator, imbued with both personal and historical significance. The perambulator is a central image of women's experience in patriarchal society enabling freedom yet also symbolizing entrapment. Embedded in her novels, the perambulator represents early childhood, new life and it is an image of fertility. Evidently, the perambulator had a multi-level significance for Woolf and it can be argued that its inclusion can symbolize her deep longing for a child of her own. Once her childlessness was determined, by Leonard in 1913, it was in her writing that her desires and maternal instincts surfaced, with the addition of the perambulator motif. What cannot be denied is the fact that the perambulator motif recurs thirty-two times within Woolf's books, bringing with it a

mosaic of memories and interlacing the characters and events in important ways. Was she unaware of the predominance of this motif in her work? The many perambulators in her fiction suggest the cultural and psychological hold they had on her.

CONCLUSION

> I feel that by writing I am doing what is far more necessary than anything else. (ASOP, p86)

In *A Room of One's Own* Woolf's narrator notes that the four women who dominate nineteenth century literature, George Eliot, Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte and Jane Austen, all wrote significant novels yet interestingly none had children, a detail that the narrator finds 'possibly relevant' (AROO, p85- 6). This narrator hints at some relation between women's writing and childlessness. Are the two activities of writing and having children incompatible? Although very different forms of creativity they do compete for the same resources: a woman's time, effort and patience. In *Mrs Dalloway* it is revealed that as a young girl Sally Seton aspired to be a writer and a painter yet she never creates artistically perhaps due to the fact that she has six children. Would Woolf's work have been so groundbreaking if she had been a mother; when her attention and passion would obviously have been divided? Woolf's imaginative voyages in her novels arose due to the freedom she enjoyed and her perambulations around the streets of London and the country lanes of Rodmell. Indeed, on this subject her sister noted in a letter, 'I can't do a stroke of painting as long as I have Julian- such is maternity.'[1] Resigned to her lack of children, Woolf created in a different manner by producing literature. 'Familiar tune: Nessa's children; my envy of them, leading to work' (DXXVI, V5, p106). The analogy with labour that Woolf uses in her private writing is fascinating: her books can be viewed as substitutes for the children she would never have.

Undoubtedly, writing is a difficult art yet for Woolf it was clear that this art of creation was also an addiction. In a diary entry from an Italian vacation to Piacenza in 1933 she refers to her writing as a 'seduction' and indicates how she 'cant stop making up The P.s: cant live without that intoxicant' (DXXII, V4, p159). It is apparent that when not working, she missed concentrating on this passion and that work appeared to be continually on her

mind even when she was supposed to be relaxing on holiday. Ironically, on her return from the aforementioned holiday, she complains that her 'brain is extinct' (DXXII, V4, p160). The prospect of writing which had enticed her and stimulated her during her vacation now repulsed and antagonised her: 'I cant look at The Pargiters. Its an empty snail shell. And I'm empty with a cold slab of a brain' (DXXII, V4, p161). Yet the day after this diary entry another characteristic change of emotion occurred as she observed, about her purpose in life, whilst driving through Richmond: 'How only writing composes it: how nothing makes a whole unless I am writing' (DXXII, V4, p161). Although her feelings varied from day to day she was aware of the fact that life without writing was meaningless. Her writing filled a void in her life yet it often did overwhelm her and she felt the pressure of being a writer and using the creative medium to voice her views: 'I am so oppressed by the thought of all the books I have to write that my head is like a bursting boiler' (DXXIV, V4, p323). Much of her writing could be seen as stimulated by the pain of not having children, having failed in this area of her life she overcompensated and put pressure on herself in her role as writer.

Much of the appeal of Woolf's work lies in the rich specificity of the real, everyday life experience of children and parents. On the surface the perambulator may seem to be a mundane, ordinary object used to facilitate the demanding roles of nursemaid or mother yet Woolf rarely put anything into her books, as decoration; everything was functional in some way. Every symbol had a purpose. The perambulator symbol appeared in every novel, apart from *The Voyage Out*, bringing with it a mosaic of memories, particular moments of being that are fundamental to the characters.

Through the use of this symbol Woolf communicated her conscious and unconscious mind to her readers. Many characters view the perambulator from a window and this distance provides insight into the relationship between Victorian parents and their children. In addition, the role of the nursemaid in Woolf's novels also indicates that this generation had a

completely different relationship with their children than is experienced in today's society. Milly and Delia in *The Years* stand at the window watching a baby as it is pushed past in the perambulator. This could reflect the awkwardness of the author who admitted in later life that she felt repelled by the possessive maternal relationship and she had killed this instinct inside her.

Often, though, the perambulator symbol represents wish fulfilment: a character's own desire, overt or hidden, for a child. Lucrezia in *Mrs Dalloway* sheds tears in Regent's Park for the child she will never have with Septimus after viewing the stationary perambulator. In *Night and Day* Mary sits with Ralph in the pub and looks at the perambulator in the street outside the window: she realises Ralph is in love with someone else. It is the character of Susan in *The Waves* who views the countrywoman wheeling the perambulator full of sticks and realises she does not want her own pram to be used for this purpose. Occasionally the pram is viewed completely stationary: in a park or standing in a hallway perhaps not in use anymore: the baby who once inhabited it now being a small toddler. It is a powerful reminder of change and time passing quickly, especially childhood. In a similar way to the nursery rhyme motif Woolf wanted to show readers that the perambulator is also passed down from generation to generation. Both are symbolic as the motifs that recur in different places and at different times; then reveal the buried part of early childhood remembered.

In the course of this thesis it has been demonstrated that Woolf employed symbols and language from early childhood extensively in her writing, both private and public. This may have been a conscious decision as Woolf acknowledged that early childhood was an extremely important time for her and that her life was formed on this base. Memory played a significant part in retrieving and reconstructing these early events. On reading Woolf's autobiographical writing, the intimate and enlightening texts, it becomes evident that the past was extremely important to the grown up Woolf and she states the reason for this in her 1925

diary: 'The past is beautiful because one never realises an emotion at the time. It expands later, & thus we don't have complete emotions about the present, only about the past' (DXIV, V3, p5). In 'A Sketch of the Past' Woolf tests her theory that some early memories are 'more real' than the present when she looks at Percy, her gardener at Monk's House, digging the asparagus bed and Louie, the daily help, cleaning a mat but sees them through her childhood memory of her nursery and the road to the beach at St. Ives (ASOP, p80). Instead of the domination of action or plot in Woolf's fiction, we find the predominance of childhood memories, nursery rhymes and remnants that provide us with an impressive insight into the characters lives, yet may also offer a glimpse into her own childhood reality. Woolf occasionally gave her characters her own childhood experiences or fears. For example, in *The Waves* Rhoda's experience of not being able to step across a puddle for thinking how strange life was, incorporates the author's self-doubts and social anxieties, which were revealed in 'A Sketch of the Past'. Mrs Ramsay looks at her neck and shoulders in the looking glass but avoids looking at her face. Throughout all her writing life Woolf's culture and childhood had been an influence. It is hard to imagine Virginia Woolf without her own childhood experiences both in London and Cornwall, which ultimately shaped the majority of her fiction. Woolf's early childhood formed an important and significant backdrop to all her novels and at the centre of her writing was a love of children and a repressed desire for her own.

NOTES

Introduction (p1-27)

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