

PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

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MICHAEL FORDHAM

The Infant's Reach

THE INNER CHILD

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"Birthstone"

In their willingness to follow vague glimmerings from the unconscious, the memoirs became mysterious and fateful processes of discovery in which Jung at 84 and Woolf at 57 recover the playful, receptive spirit of the child.

Paintings by Deborah Koff-Chapin

ELIZABETH GOODENOUGH

Children Never Forget

*The Image of the Child
in Virginia Woolf and Carl Jung*



In their posthumously published memoirs, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1961) and *Moments of Being* (1976), Carl Jung and Virginia Woolf both attempt to create metaphors expressive of their sense of the infinite and ungraspable elements of childhood. Although these two works remain strikingly different as autobiographies, both writers struggle in remarkably similar ways to describe the evolution of their lives and work: the nature of their own creativity, the process of becoming, their sense of pattern underlying reality. Just as *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* defines Jung's scientific work as "the expression of an inner development," Woolf's memoirs reveal the matrices of her novels residing in the evolving experience of her life. Both works are profoundly personal indicating that what Jung calls "science," Woolf calls "art" derived from recalling powerful experiences of early life. Jung describes the relation of his life to his work in terms that apply equally well to Woolf:

My life is what I have done, my scientific work; the one is inseparable from the other. The work is the expression of my inner development; for the commitment to the contents of the unconscious forms the man and produces his transformations. My works can be regarded as stations along my life's way. (p. 222)

Memories, Dreams, Reflections is a careful sifting and rich synthesis of the inner developments and transformations that took place over 80 years in Jung's life. It reveals the enormous importance Jung places on childhood and the past from the beginning to the end of his life. Although he appears skeptical of the enterprise of autobiography—"we possess no standards, no objective foundation, from which to judge ourselves"—the book remains a painstaking effort to recount the discovery of his own myth, to tell "my fable, my truth."

Moments of Being, by contrast, is not an autobiography at all, if we mean by that term a chronological, comprehensive, life-defining document, intended for publication like *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. It is a loose collection of autobiographical documents ("Reminiscences," "A Sketch of the Past," and "Memoir Cub Contribution") which Woolf wrote over the course of her life and which were only published 35 years after her death. Woolf shared Jung's distrust of the genre, his sense that oneself is an elusive phenomenon—"a psychic process which we do not control, or only partly direct." She writes:

... I come to one of the memoir writer's difficulties—one of the reasons why, though I read so many, so many are failures. They leave out the person to whom things happened. The reason is that it is so hard to describe any human being. (p. 65)

Both "A Sketch of the Past" and *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* try to overcome this difficulty by focusing on the inner being of the subject—what Jung calls his No. 2 personality. Woolf never completed the autobiography she began in 1939 shortly after meeting Freud, as relief from the rigors of writing a biography, *Roger Fry* (1940). Although Woolf's "autoanalysis" remains unfinished, the body of the works she published also stands to reveal, as Jung suggests, the stations along her life's way. While the sequence of life writings which comprise *Moments of Being* gives glimpses of Woolf's personal development and ideas about the self, we can see that process unfold more fully in her fiction.

Autobiographical writing was therapeutic to both authors. In "A Sketch of the Past," Woolf attributes her being a writer to the "shock absorbing capacity" which, even at its most acute in early life, entailed the impulse to explain or make some whole of the shattering and overwhelming moment:

I feel that I have had a blow; but it is not, as I thought as a child, simply a blow from an enemy hidden behind the cotton wool of daily life; it is or will become a revelation of some order; it is a token of some real thing behind appearances; and I make it real by putting it into words. It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole; this wholeness means that it has lost its power to hurt me. (p. 72)

Jung's rationale for interpreting dreams and studying the unconscious is remarkably similar: "For as long as we do not understand their meaning, such fantasies are a diabolical mixture of the sublime and the ridiculous." In their willingness to follow inklings and hints, vague glimmerings from the unconscious, both writers improvised; the memoirs thus became mysterious and fateful processes of discovery in which Jung at 84 and Woolf at 57 recover the playful, receptive spirit of the child.

Virginia Woolf's ideas about childhood and maturation can be viewed within the context of Jung's theory of the unconscious and his description of aging in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. The image or archetype of the child, which plays a pivotal role in the work of both, shows the similarities between Jungian thought and Woolf's vision of life. Then, building upon the image of the child as it is used in one of Woolf's late novels, *The Waves* (1931), we can see the elemental difference in her perspective of the youthful psyche as it becomes exposed to the adult world. If the child in Jung and Woolf is the germ and symbol of life—an archetype for the foundation and beginning of all human experience—then the way each came to different conclusions about the end and meaning of the life cycle becomes apparent. An exploration of *The Waves* reveals Woolf's ultimate pessimism regarding the cumulative effects of living. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, on the other hand, recognizes the encroachments on the Self that the battle with life implies, yet nonetheless wholeheartedly affirms the necessity and usefulness of participating in that battle.

THE IMAGE OF THE CHILD

The child for Carl Jung and Virginia Woolf, as for the romantic poets, is a potent image of psychic wholeness. For Jung (1959) the archetype of the child "represents the strongest, the most ineluctable urge in every being, namely the urge to realize itself." For Woolf, the visual precocity and receptivity of the child symbolize her highest ideal: the power and freedom of the unfettered imagination to create its own reality. She portrays an individual's first impressions as the most distilled and authentic moments of life: a union of self and world is achieved and can never be attained again. In "A Sketch of the Past," Woolf attempts to connect her sense of "some real thing behind appearances" with her recollection of "exceptional moments" in childhood.

That she returns to these vivid, at times violent, experiences, especially in her late novels, indicates an effort to recover and work through the origins of her own emotional life. It is startling how many of her earliest memories are incorporated in her novels and how prominent a part these solitary events—which Woolf called "scaffolding in the background... the invisible and silent part of my life as a child"—play in her work. Like Wordsworth, Woolf was convinced that "strong emotion must leave its trace." She went even further than the poet, however, in her speculations about the autonomy of the imagination. An arresting image in "A Sketch of the Past" even posits the independent reality of psychic experience:

... is it not possible—I often wonder—that things we have felt with great intensity have an existence independent of our minds; are in fact still in existence? And if so, will it not be possible, in time, that some device will be invented by which we can tap them? 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. (p. 67)

Woolf accounted for the peculiar strength and simplicity of her earliest recollections—why they can still seem to her “more real than the present moment”—by the extraordinary receptivity of that first era when everything is new. What distinguishes the child’s experience from the adult’s is its unique intensity; impressions falling fresh and sudden upon the sensibility are overpowering. Describing her own consciousness then, Woolf recalls “hardly being aware of myself, but only of the sensation”:

I am only the container of the feeling of ecstasy, of the feeling of rapture. Perhaps this is characteristic of all childhood memories. Later we add to feeling much that makes them more complex; and therefore less strong; or if not less strong, less isolated, less complete. (p. 67)

Like Wordsworth, Woolf believed that one is closest to some underlying truth in these early moments of vision. She defines her intuition of “some order... behind appearances,” however, not through a romantic faith in nature’s divinity but rather in terms of her own aesthetic philosophy:

It is a constant idea of mine; that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we—I mean all human beings—are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art. Hamlet or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself. (p. 72)

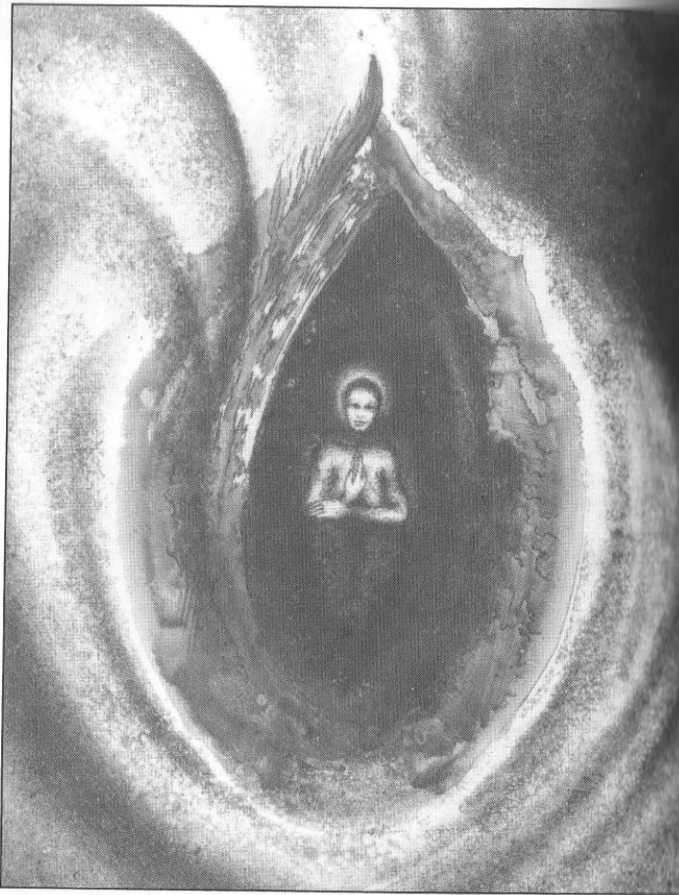
Similarly, recalling “the beauty and intensity of emotion” he experienced during visions, Jung describes feeling he is “interwoven into an indescribable whole” while having a strange capacity to observe this pattern “with complete objectivity” (1965). “That gives peace when people feel that they are living the symbolic life, that they are actors in the Divine drama. That gives the only meaning to human life; everything else is banal and you can dismiss it” (1960).

Believing that “the impressions of childhood are those that last longest and cut deepest,” Woolf returned, as did Wordsworth and Jung, to a single moment of primal apprehension to express her conception of life. “A Sketch of the Past” reveals the primacy of this recollection is not simply a matter of its being



“Messages from the Deep”

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"Shapes of the Future"

*Woolf valorizes
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pursuing patterns
which coalesce mysteriously from within.*

the first moment she can recall, but rather derives from its symbolic power. As the metaphor of base and bowl indicates, this moment originates and contains all subsequent apprehensions of life. The image suggests how the conscious mind continually draws on the liquid energies of the unconscious to revitalize itself:

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 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. (pp. 64–65)

As this unusual passage demonstrates, Woolf shares with Jung a romantic fascination with childhood as experience and myth. Her novels reveal the continuity between child and man which Wordsworth traced, as well as the radical disparity between the states Blake termed Innocence and Experience. Exploring the "luminous halo" of the mind, her investigation of psychic life encompasses sub- or semi-conscious as well as conscious activities. Her characters are primarily perceivers who create their world like a collage out of scraps drawn from the past. Woolf thus finds in the visual precocity of childhood the key to the adult self. Although identity develops through "seeing," it is not something discovered in a flash, as the modern term "finding oneself" suggests. Rather, the attainment of a particular vision is the result of a slow accretion of meaning, a process as imperceptible and incremental as the accumulation of rings in a tree or snow covering the ground. Only in perceiving the profoundly original experience of early life—especially those moments in which images first crystallize and reflect the mind's reality back on itself—can one understand the complexity of the adult self.

The central drama of Woolf's fiction focuses on an activity which both Jung and Woolf were extraordinarily attuned to and made the subject of their life work: the mind's investigation of its own reality. While Jung (1965) defines this task as man's need "to become conscious of the contents that press upward from the unconscious," Woolf valorizes the effort of the solitary female consciousness pursuing patterns which coalesce mysteriously from within. Woolf differs from other modern writers concerned with the emergence of identity, however, in the romantic pessimism which underlies her approach.

Her first three novels—*The Voyage Out* (1915), *Night and Day* (1919), and *Jacob's Room* (1922)—written between the ages of 25 and 40, are all studies

of young people approaching adulthood; two of the three protagonists are made to die on the threshold of maturity. These two deaths are not viewed as tragic waste but as escape from the corruption which adult life implies. Both demonstrate that the reckless imagination and perfect self-absorption of youth cannot survive the maturation process. The suspense which individuation generates in her fiction reveals how precarious an achievement Woolf considered vision in the adult to be; the nostalgia which runs throughout her work suggests how reluctant was her own willingness to outlive the imaginative abandon of childhood.

In her major fiction she celebrates the consciousness of children: in their wonder and certainty they embody the purest kind of integrity a character can achieve. Woolf thus denies that life progresses toward fulfillment but rather presents it as a decline from consummate moments of being. To Woolf, children are a disquieting reminder of the fragility of aspiration and the inevitability of disappointment and disillusion. By the cruel logic of her universe, the very intensities associated with childhood creativity invite their own curtailment. The frustration and disenchantment of early dreams and visions cannot be compensated by the process of ego formation or adjustment in the adult. Instead, Woolf was acutely aware of the dulling of perception over time and the conformity of outlook which family, education, social expectations, and conventions of language enforce. Against these realities, the perpetual impulse to create order and continuity from the fragmentation of experience asserts itself within the psyche. Jung calls this "insatiable drive toward understanding"—piecing together "mythic conceptions from the slender hints of the unknowable"—"the strongest element" in his nature. Although Woolf also finds this force as irresistible as breathing, she is struck by how effortful and confining these gestures of life become.

Significantly, the period of confidence and artistic empowerment inaugurated by *Jacob's Room* enabled Woolf to articulate the consciousness of childhood in a new way. In *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927), she portrays mothers in touch with their own early lives and with their children who are able to sustain a private vision in moments of solitude. She also demonstrates how an inner world of significance may be communicated from adult to child through the power of love. In these novels the counterpointing of past and present, innocence and experience, is a stylistic triumph because of the crucial significance of these issues to Woolf's fundamental fear—that forces of time and egocentrism will annihilate inner vision.

In the works which follow *The Waves*, adults actively thwart, ridicule, or destroy the creativity of children, and no protective figures like Mrs. Ramsay survive to ward off these assaults. That "the world of the adult made it hard to be

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an artist" is, as William Empson has said, a theme running throughout romantic and Victorian literature. Woolf's particular rendering of this idea reflects the temperamental links between her pessimism and the nostalgic or escapist attitude toward childhood which developed during the late Victorian period of her own early life. It resonates with Jung's assertion that "motifs of 'insignificance,' exposure, abandonment, danger" surrounding the archetype of the child "try to show how precarious is the psychic possibility of wholeness, that is, the enormous difficulties to be met with in attaining this 'highest good.'" For Jung, too, these motifs (1959) "signify the powerlessness and helplessness of the life-urge which subjects every growing thing to the law of maximum self-fulfillment, while at the same time the environmental influences place all sorts of insuperable obstacles in the way of individuation."

The mystical outlook which Woolf attained later in life is based, like Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, on the inevitable continuity she saw between generations. The iterative design of the late works—*The Waves* (1931), *The Years* (1936), and *Between the Acts* (1941)—suggests that completion of personality does not reside in self-generated identity but rather in the passive recapitulation of undifferentiated moments of being common to all human lives. Just as the end of individuation is a numinous experience for Jung, Woolf became increasingly drawn to escaping the selfhood which congeals over a lifetime. In the approach of death she glimpses the dissolution of personality—a liberation she likens to the infant's first anonymous apprehension of nature.

Like Jung in middle age, Woolf was intent to find meaning and continuity beyond the confines and meager identities of individual existence. Jung's image of life as "a plant that lives on its rhizome" (1965) suggests the metaphorical contexts of *The Waves*, *The Years*, and *Between the Acts*:

The part that appears above ground lasts only a single summer. Then it withers away—an ephemeral apparition. When we think of the unending growth and decay of life and civilizations, we cannot escape the

impression of absolute nullity. Yet I never lost a sense of something that lives and endures underneath the eternal flux. What we see is the blossom, which passes. The rhizome remains. (p. 4)

In a similar way, while Woolf's early novels showed that an individual's evolution from youth to adulthood cannot be charted chronologically or quantified in the manner of the *Bildungsroman* or Georgian novel, her late works challenge the notion of separate or distinct lifetimes altogether.

Woolf accomplishes this act of imaginative subversion by two means: first, by contracting and concentrating life so that its full meaning is revealed in its first moment of being; and, second, by drawing it out and diffusing its essence so that it cannot be localized or defined at all. The experience Jung describes in the Tower, feeling that "I am spread out over the landscape and inside things, and am myself living in every tree, in the splashing of the waves, in the clouds and the animals that come and go, in the procession of the seasons," echoes Mrs. Dalloway's odd sense when alone "of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown . . . being laid out like mist between the people she knew best." Likewise, Woolf's recognition of the collective aspects of human consciousness—"the common fund of experience [which is] very deep" and the eternal aspects of original impressions which "happen in a second and last forever"—is Jungian. This emphasis on an impersonal nature which underlies the psyche radically undercuts the assumption, as her early work did, that life can be communicated through a linear plot, a sequence of events in a prose narrative.

Woolf's more disembodied rendering of consciousness in her late works is reflected in their central metaphors. These motifs, expressing her desire to get at "some real thing behind appearances," give rise to the same dichotomies Woolf probed in her earlier study of youth and the evolving self. *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *To the Lighthouse* presented youth's approach to adulthood through narrative techniques which juxtapose the depths and surfaces of life. In the moment of becoming, the self strikes some subtle balance between inner and outer worlds. Identity is fused in this process of stabilization, for the psyche has thus bridged the subterranean and social aspects of the self.

In her late novels Woolf extends these polarities "beyond and outside our own predicament" toward "that which is symbolic, and thus perhaps permanent, if there is any permanence in our sleeping, eating, breathing, so animal, so spiritual and tumultuous lives." The waves convey the organic, even mystical, unity of being from which individuation and dissolution of lives rise and fall. The years express the paradox of time through the progress and stasis of individuals and genera-

tions caught successively in the family's controlling web. The rural setting in *Between the Acts* shows spectators of a local pageant taking part unwittingly in a profounder, essentially timeless drama.

THE WAVES

The publication of *Moments of Being* in 1976 revealed that the prevalence and inclusiveness of wave imagery central to Woolf's fiction stemmed from an early experience she placed at the core of her creative life. Like Jung's mandala, waves for Woolf are a natural form representing the origin and elemental unity of human life. Given the urgency of Woolf's early recollections, her fictionalization of this primal apprehension—lying in her bed and hearing the waves "breaking, one, two, one, two, and sending a splash of water over the beach"—should not surprise us. The unusual mood of this passage from "A Sketch of the Past," mingling reverie and ecstasy, is reflected in the hypnotic rhythms of much of Woolf's earlier prose. The movement of the blind blowing in and out with the wind recapitulates in its tiny acorn sound the distant breaking of waves. The succession of sensations—lying, hearing, seeing, feeling—which communicates such passive excitement suggests the conditions of creative consciousness in Woolf's fiction. Only lulled into a state of self-forgetfulness, as if suspended between waking and sleeping, do adults enter the "margin of unknown territory" within themselves.

Demonstrating the power of such original moments of being to determine the shape of life, *The Waves* makes explicit the process of becoming which underlies Woolf's fiction. By identifying the self entirely with its visualizing capacity, the book traces successive stages of growth as they extend, elaborate, or refine some primary mode of perception. Just as Jung's individuation (1954) "has two principle aspects . . . an internal and subjective process of integration and . . . an equally indispensable process of objective relation," so Woolf's characters evolve: according to their own formative laws and in relation to others. In this second phase of objective relationship, they both differentiate themselves from peers who reveal to them the peculiarity and uniqueness of their own responses as well as assimilate the way others view the world. In the opening monologues of this play-poem, which Woolf considered calling *Moments of Being*, each of the six characters of nursery age describe impressions symbolic of the particular way they will discover and order reality. Initial objects seen are barely identifiable; the children articulate pure appearances as visual and auditory sensations flood and fuse with the imagination:

"I see a ring," said Bernard, "hanging above me. It quivers in a loop of light."



"Spirit of the Mountain"

*This dissolution of the Self
cracks the hard shell of identity
and leaves the soul as open and receptive
as it was in the first moments
of being.*

The second sequence of impressions is more recognizable, for objects are divorced from the perceiving mind, names are given, and a context is described:

"Look at the spider's web on the corner of the balcony," said Bernard. "It has beads of water on it, drops of white light."

In the third sequence, the children invent metaphors to convey more complicated apprehensions:

"Now the cock crows like a spurt of hard, red water in the white tide," said Bernard. (pp. 180-181)

Extracting Bernard's monologues from the series, one can observe both the progressive and selective nature of his consciousness as it builds awareness.

After Bernard has gone through all the stages of existence—struggled to become a separate body, defined himself in relation to his peers, egotistically exulted in identity, made unalterable choices, encountered the death of friends and the "many rooms" of his own personality, and finally, shrunk with age, shed his "life-skins"—he returns to these first moments of being to explain the meaning of his life. Like Jung and Woolf describing first memories, he now interprets the loop he remembers ("I saw something brighten") within the context of later associations, making up a little story or myth, which epitomizes his life:

In the beginning, there was the nursery, with windows opening on to a garden, and beyond that the sea. I saw something brighten—no doubt the brass handle of a cupboard. Then Mrs. Constable raised the sponge above her head, squeezed it, and out shot, right, left, all down the sponge, arrows of sensation. And so, as long as we draw breath, for the rest of time, if we knock against a chair, a table or a woman, we are pierced with arrows of sensation—if we walk in a garden, if we drink this wine. Sometimes indeed, when I pass a cottage with a light in the window where a child has been born, I could implore them not to squeeze the sponge over that new body. (p. 342)

Although *The Waves* seems to bear out Bernard's assertion that "nobody . . . ever changes the attitude in which we saw them first," it also makes Bernard's pessimism at the end of his life—his sympathy for that "new body" no longer his own—comprehensible. Finding in old age that his once sociable, verbal, and infinitely curious being no longer projects itself against the world, he sees things differently: "The shock of the falling wave which has sounded all my life, which woke me so that I saw the gold loop in the cupboard, no longer makes quiver what I hold." He now makes "the contribution of maturity to childhood's intuitions—satiety and doom; the sense of what is unescapable in our

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lot; death; the knowledge of limitations: how life is more obdurate than one had thought. . . . If a bird rose I should no longer make a poem—I should repeat what I had said before.”

The sense of futility and nothingness at the end of *The Waves* is both caused and offset by the compelling rhythm of the waves which Woolf develops throughout the novel. Seeing the world “without a self,” Bernard becomes aware of the irrelevancy, the transparency of the partitions of selfhood. Summing up his friends and recalling their reunions, he realizes “I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am—Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis; or how to distinguish my life from theirs.” Recovering through his imaginative apprehension of them “the body of the complete human being whom we have failed to be,” Bernard finds a way to escape the limitations of his own personality. This dissolution of the self, from which he shapes his final defiance, cracks the hard shell of identity and leaves the soul as open and receptive as it was in the first moments of being.

Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson's response to *The Waves*, written at the end of his own life and recorded in E. M. Forster's biography (1962), recognizes the disturbing beauty which Woolf seemed to have found in the circular pattern of human life.

But what are we? Waves, yes? but waves in the sea part of the sea inseparable from the sea bound too [sic] each of us to this wave and not that (whence much if not all of our trouble). . . . Also life seems like a dream as one comes to the end of it. One's separate individual skin ceases to hold one, it cracks all over, nightmares come in and visions and terrors and ecstasies till finally one rides at death, like your Bernard at the end. (p. 231)

At the end of his life Jung, like Dickinson, felt the “dividing walls” become transparent and called uniqueness synonymous with limitation: “Only consciousness of our narrow confinement in the self forms the link to the limitlessness of the unconscious.” Writing to Albert Oeri's widow in 1950, Jung suggested that

the “spectacle of old age would be unendurable did we not know that our psyche reaches into a region held captive neither by change in time nor by limitation in place. In that form of being our birth is a death and our death a birth” (1973).

The idea that Lowes Dickinson found so compelling in *The Waves* exalts personal relationships as the ultimate value in life. The six characters in *The Waves* form part of each other's worlds from early childhood, apparently from the moment each first constellates his or her impressions of reality. From Woolf's perspective, this bond occurs at the deepest possible level, for it enables the children to know the way the world looks to each other. This bedrock of their intimacy also emphasizes Woolf's understanding that individual outlook and predisposition are determined at an earlier stage than late adolescence, one far less subject to rational control.

By defining the self through primary moments of vision, Woolf anticipates several trends of 20th-century depth psychology, as well as Piaget's cognitive studies of the child. Reformulating the psychology of Wordsworth in the same direction that Jung reinterpreted Freud, Woolf dramatizes the distinction between psyche and ego-consciousness. Like Jung, she revalues earlier phases of psychic life for their connection with the unconscious and portrays the attainment of identity or ego formation as a process of adolescence or young adulthood—a late phenomenon of the individual life cycle, as it is in the history of the species. At the end of their lives, Rachel Vinrace and Bernard both return to primitive layers of their own consciousness on their way to undifferentiated states of being: Rachel, through her symbolic journey up the river to a tropical jungle in *The Voyage Out*, and Bernard, by recalling the savage who squats within himself, “the hairy man who dabbles his fingers in ropes of entrails.”

Woolf also shows her affinities with Jung in her portrayal of the self creating a metaphor or archetypal symbol which it will pursue in its quest for self-realization. Both writers reflect Romantic psychology in locating the origins of this creative act on the borderline of consciousness. This terrain of dreams, reveries, and fantasy recalls in Woolf the nursery at St. Ives, the mythical garden, as well as the conventional Romantic domain of childhood—the seashore. Woolf thus associates growing up with separation from the source of creative energy, which is not part of any heaven but of a larger, fluctuating sea of being. Similarly, James Olney (1973) describes Jung's understanding that “like poetry, the dream comes to us trailing symbolic clouds of glory from the inclusive suprapersonal psyche which is its home.” While Wordsworth finally transmuted the infant's awareness of his destiny into what Keats called the “egotistical sublime,” Woolf looked beyond the summit and goal of that poet's subjectivity to a release from “this difference we

make so much of, this identity we so feverishly cherish." Bernard's final apprehension of reality in his de-evolution ("the world seen without a self") has closer affinities to the Keatsian ideal of negative capability, as well as to Jung's experience of "defoliation" after illnesses in 1944, and "the evolution of the soul after death" he experienced after his wife died.

The impersonal style of the interludes in *The Waves*—which describe the progressive changes which sea, sun, and other aspects of nature undergo on a single day—suggests a sublimation of personality like that of the journals of Dorothy Wordsworth. These sections counterpoint and symbolize the transformation of mental states which Woolf charts. The characters, like the sea, sky, and land, become differentiated, gradually moving out of a dawn which makes all "dim and con-substantial" and back, finally, to a state of "huge obscurity" where they are again indistinguishable.

Given Woolf's assumptions about the life cycle as they are expressed in *The Waves*—her identification of childhood with moments of vision and the expectancy and "flaring ecstasy of youth" as an extension of it—it is not surprising that she portrays the process of maturation itself as one inherently destructive of human creativity. As Bernard said, a shell forms gradually "upon the soft soul, nacreous, shiny, upon which sensations tap their beaks in vain." In this emphasis on receptivity to moments of sensations and selfhood as a hard outer construct, like a room or house, Woolf reflects the aesthetic philosophy of Walter Pater. Pater traced the "building" of youthful sensibility from early perceptions and sensations in his autobiographical essay, "A Child in the House," and the novel *Marius the Epicurean* (1885). Woolf was familiar with Pater's writings early in her career and, like him, reflected the influence of Wordsworthian psychology, especially in stressing the formative role of memory and the transforming power of the child's visionary imagination. As Pater indicated, "we see inwardly" as children and thus create our own heaven out of whatever random piece of earth we inhabit.

The peculiar pessimism of Woolf's developmental outlook becomes apparent when one compares her to James Joyce, who also charted the maturation of the artistic sensibility in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Like Pater, Joyce shows Stephen Daedalus' integration of intellectual constructs to be an organic extension of his early sensory awareness of contrast. Pater's Marius is attracted to Christianity for aesthetic reasons—because it enables him "to harmonize contrasts" in a way his former epicureanism did not; Stephen, by contrast, must reject the religious life in order to establish his artistic vocation. Both young men, however, do not lose vital parts of themselves in making such choices but rather enhance and liberate their creative energies.



"The Painting"

***She portrays the process
of maturation itself as one intensely destructive
of human creativity.***

Stephen transmits the totality and discipline of the priestly commitment to the formation of his artistic identity. In Woolf's writings, by contrast, the processes of life are dangerous because of the annihilating threat which egocentrism and the commitment to specific choices and values pose to the possibilities of creative vision. In *The Waves* only the protean personality of Bernard seems to escape this fate because he never brings his stories to completion but possesses them all in their potentiality. Woolf thought Desmond MacCarthy, who inspired her creation of Bernard, the most talented of the Bloomsbury group—despite, or

As the oldest solitary son,
Carl enjoyed his mother's quiet understanding
of his No. 2 personality. . . .
He found powerful mentors
and doors open to young men of talent and ambition.

perhaps because of, his failure in actual achievement; she called him "a wave that never breaks" (Edel, 1979).

Jung, too, was acutely aware of the dangers of identifying exclusively with the persona, of becoming simply a "role" person, and assumed that most people at mid-life lose touch with the unconscious. His "self-experiment," the decision to become his own patient and "confront the unconscious," signaled a rebirth (1965):

All my works, all my creative activity, has come from those initial fantasies and dreams which began in 1912, almost fifty years ago. Everything that I accomplished in later life was already contained in them, although at first only in the form of emotions and images. (p. 192)

Jung ultimately came to see the passage into old age as an *enabling* rather than a destructive process. Rebounding from illness in 1944, he reflects on the importance of affirming one's destiny at this turning point in life (1965):

In this way we forge an ego that does not break down when incomprehensible things happen; an ego that endures, that endures the truth, and that is capable of coping with the world and with fate. Then to experience defeat is to experience victory. Nothing is disturbed—neither inwardly nor outwardly, for one's own continuity has withstood the current of life and time. (p. 297)

Significantly, Woolf experienced a similar mid-life revitalization at age 40 writing *Jacob's Room*, the novel in which she finally discovered her "own voice." From this point on, children enter the novels, and her prose—which allows "one thing . . . [to] open out of another" like psychoanalysis—confronted deeper levels of personal history. It is therefore tempting to consider why, given the rich evolution of Woolf's late novels, her developmental psychology became increasingly dark. Why did the child in her work, symbolizing as Jung suggests "the pre-conscious and the post-conscious essence of man," fare so badly?

While parents and grown-ups are strangely absent in the early monologues of *The Waves*, adults neglect, threaten, and betray children in *The Years*, *Between*

Virginia's exhausted mother
whom she shared with eight siblings died
when Virginia was 13. . . .
Denied formal education and access to university,
she strove mightily to educate herself.

the Acts, and *Roger Fry*. The 19th-century premise that children have not yet been corrupted by civilization as all adults have been may account for this depiction. Another explanation, however, may be that confronting her earliest memories through these works persuaded Woolf that damage done to the child may not be inevitable. Louise DeSalvo's recent study (1989), *Virginia Woolf: The Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on her Life and Work*, argues that this trauma, which Woolf revealed for the first time in her "autoanalysis" in 1939, led to recurring depression and eventual suicide.

Although the biographical roots of Woolf's and Jung's philosophies must lie beyond the confines of this essay, it is tempting to speculate on what impact early life may have had on Woolf's drowning herself at 59, or on Jung's survival with boundless energies into his eighth decade. As eldest solitary son, Carl enjoyed his mother's quiet understanding of his No. 2 personality. By contrast, Virginia's exhausted mother, whom she shared in an extended family with eight siblings, died when Virginia was 13. Both identified with fathers who had lost faith in God and the meaning of their lives, but Carl surmounted this struggle and pursued his sense of calling through a university education. He found powerful mentors and doors open to young men of talent and ambition. Denied formal education and access to university, Virginia strove mightily to educate herself but feared that demands of her grieving father, domestic responsibilities, and expectations of late Victorian patriarchal society would extinguish her writing. If Woolf believed that "no way of building up character, no intellectual system, can bring out all that is inherent in the human spirit," it is not surprising that she accepted the corollary that "there is more in the child than any man has been able to keep" (Empson, 1953).

Jung's study of the unconscious and Woolf's exploration through fiction of the surface and depths of life are both grounded in a common philosophy. They both comprehend the process of becoming in large part through cognition of their respective childhoods. Neither sentimentalizes nor idealizes childhood in the late Victorian manner, but both concern themselves with the cost, the compromise,

the adaptation which the process of living entails. Both consider the effort which individuals must make to extend the creative energies of childhood. In pursuing his quest, Jung's sentiments in relation to one of his dreams sound remarkably like Woolf's:

My own understanding is the sole treasure I possess, and the greatest.
Though infinitely small and fragile in comparison with the powers
of darkness, it is still a light, my only light.

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