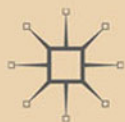


VIRGINIA WOOLF'S INFLUENTIAL FOREBEARS

*Julia Margaret Cameron, Anny Thackeray Ritchie
and Julia Prinsep Stephen*

Marion Dell



Virginia Woolf's Influential Forebears

Also by Marion Dell

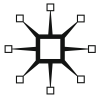
VIRGINIA WOOLF AND VANESSA BELL: Remembering St Ives

Virginia Woolf's Influential Forebears

Julia Margaret Cameron, Anny
Thackeray Ritchie and Julia Prinsep
Stephen

Marion Dell

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List of Abbreviations

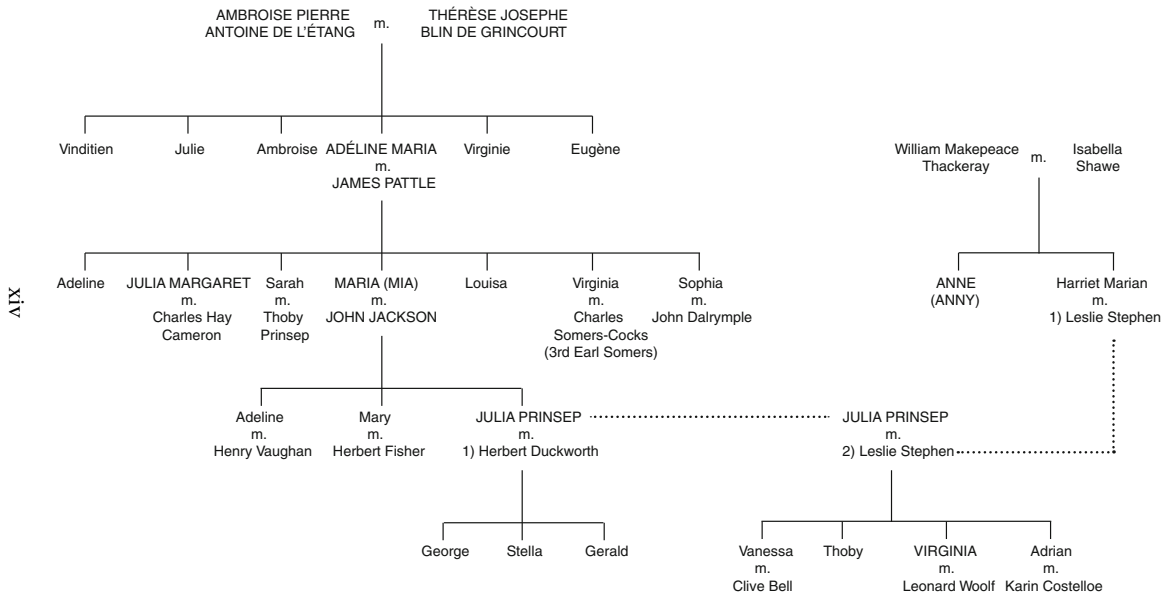
- ABoS* Ritchie, Anny Thackeray [Miss Thackeray (Mrs. Richmond Ritchie)]. 2006. *A Book of Sibyls* (1883). Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz; repr. Whitefish USA: Kessinger Publishing)
- Annals* Cameron, Julia Margaret. 1927. *Annals of My Glasshouse* (*Photographic Journal*, July 1927; repr. in Helmut Gernsheim. 1948. *Julia Margaret Cameron: Her Life and Photographic Work* London: Fountain Press: 67–72)
- BP* Ritchie, Anny Thackeray [Lady Ritchie]. 1908. *Blackstick Papers* (London: Smith, Elder)
- BtA* Woolf, Virginia. 2000. *Between the Acts* (1941. London: Hogarth Press; repr. Oxford University Press)
- CfSM* Ritchie, Anny Thackeray [Anne Thackeray Ritchie]. 1894. *Chapters from Some Memoirs* (London and New York: Macmillan)
- DNB* *Dictionary of National Biography*
- D1* Bell, Anne Olivier. 1979. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume I* (1977. London: Hogarth Press; repr. London: Penguin Books)
- D2* Bell, Anne Olivier. 1984. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume II* (1978. London: Hogarth Press; repr. London: Penguin Books)
- D3* Bell, Anne Olivier. 1982. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume III* (1980. London: Hogarth Press; repr. London: Penguin Books)
- D4* Bell, Anne Olivier. 1983. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume IV* (1982. London: Hogarth Press; repr. London: Penguin Books)
- D5* Bell, Anne Olivier. 1985. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf: Volume 5* (1984. London: Hogarth Press; repr. London: Penguin Books)

- E1 McNeillie, Andrew (ed.). 1989. *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume I* (1986. San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; repr. Harvest/HBJ)
- E2 McNeillie, Andrew (ed.). 1990. *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume II* (1987. San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; repr. Harvest/HBJ)
- E3 McNeillie, Andrew (ed.). 1988. *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume III* (1988. San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich)
- E4 McNeillie, Andrew (ed.). 1994. *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume IV* (1994. London: Hogarth Press; repr. Orlando, Austin, San Diego and New York: Harcourt)
- E5 Clarke, Stuart N. (ed.). 2009. *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume V* (London: Hogarth Press)
- E6 Clarke, Stuart N. (ed.). 2011. *The Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume VI* (London: Hogarth Press)
- F Ruotolo, Lucio (ed.). 1976. *Virginia Woolf, Freshwater* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich)
- Fry Woolf, Virginia. 2003. *Roger Fry: A Biography* (1940. London: Hogarth Press; repr. London: Vintage)
- FtP Ritchie, Anny Thackeray [Lady Ritchie]. 1971. *From the Porch* (1913. London: Smith, Elder; repr. New York: Books for Libraries Press)
- HH Dick, Susan (ed.). 2003. *Virginia Woolf, A Haunted House: The Complete Shorter Fiction* (1985. London: Hogarth Press; repr. London: Vintage)
- HPGN Lowe, Gill (ed.). 2005. *Hyde Park Gate News: The Stephen Family Newspaper* (London: Hesperus Press)
- JDS Gillespie, Diane and Elizabeth Steele (eds). 1987. *Julia Duckworth Stephen: Stories for Children, Essays for Adults* (New York: Syracuse University Press)
- JR Woolf, Virginia. 2000. *Jacob's Room* (1922. London: Hogarth Press; repr. Oxford University Press)
- L1 Nicolson, Nigel (ed.). 1980. *The Flight of the Mind: The Letters of Virginia Woolf Volume 1* (1975. London: Chatto & Windus)

- L2 Nicolson, Nigel (ed.). 1980. *The Question of Things Happening: The Letters of Virginia Woolf Volume II* (1976. London: Chatto & Windus)
- L3 Nicolson, Nigel (ed.). 1994. *A Change of Perspective: The Letters of Virginia Woolf Volume III* (1977. London: Hogarth Press)
- L4 Nicolson, Nigel (ed.). 1994. *A Reflection of the Other Person: The Letters of Virginia Woolf Volume IV* (1978. London: Hogarth Press)
- L5 Nicolson, Nigel (ed.). 1994. *The Sickle Side of the Moon: The Letters of Virginia Woolf Volume V* (1979. London: Hogarth Press)
- L6 Nicolson, Nigel (ed.). 1983. *Leave the Letters Till We're Dead: The Letters of Virginia Woolf Volume VI* (1980. London: Chatto & Windus)
- MB Bell, Alan (ed.). 1977. *Sir Leslie Stephen's Mausoleum Book* (Oxford: Clarendon Press)
- MD Woolf, Virginia. 2000. *Mrs Dalloway* (1925. London: Hogarth Press; repr. London: Penguin Books)
- MoB Schulkind, Jeanne (ed.). 1985. *Moments of Being* (1976. San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt Brace)
- N&D Woolf, Virginia. 2000. *Night and Day* (1919. London: Duckworth; repr. London: Vintage)
- O Woolf, Virginia. 2000. *Orlando* (1928. London: Hogarth Press; repr. Oxford University Press)
- OK Ritchie, Anny Thackeray [Anne Isabella Thackeray]. 1995. *Old Kensington* (1873. London: Smith, Elder; repr. Bristol: Thoemmes Press)
- PA Leaska, Mitchell A. (ed.). 2004. *Virginia Woolf: A Passionate Apprentice* (1990. London: Hogarth Press; repr. London: Pimlico)
- Rem *Reminiscences*, in Schulkind, Jeanne (ed.). 1985. *Moments of Being* (1976. San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt Brace: 25–59)

- Room* Shiach, Morag (ed.). 1992. *A Room of One's Own* (1929). London: Hogarth Press; repr. Oxford University Press)
- RTRB* Ritchie, Anny Thackeray [Anne Ritchie]. 1969. *Records of Tennyson, Ruskin, Browning* (1892. London: Macmillan; repr. New York: Kennikat Press)
- Sketch* *A Sketch of the Past* in Schulkind, Jeanne (ed.). 1985. *Moments of Being* (1976. San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt Brace: 61–159)
- TG* Shiach, Morag (ed.). 1992. *Three Guineas* (1938. London: Hogarth Press; repr. Oxford University Press)
- TP* Leaska, Mitchell A. 1977. *The Pargiters by Virginia Woolf* (The New York Public Library & Readex Books)
- T&S* Ritchie, Anny Thackeray [Miss Thackeray]. 1890. *Toilers and Spinners and other Essays* (London: Smith, Elder)
- TtL* Woolf, Virginia. 2006. *To the Lighthouse* (1927. London: Hogarth Press; repr. Oxford University Press)
- TW* Woolf, Virginia. 1998. *The Waves* (1931. London: Hogarth Press; repr. Oxford University Press)
- TY* Woolf, Virginia. 1992. *The Years* (1937. London: Hogarth Press; repr. Oxford University Press)
- VO* Woolf, Virginia. 2000. *The Voyage Out* (1915. London: Duckworth; repr. London: Vintage)
- VWB* *Virginia Woolf Bulletin* published by the Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain
- VWSGB* The Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain

Family Tree



XIV

Introduction: 'Born into a Large Connection'

In *A Sketch of the Past*, towards the end of her life, Virginia Woolf was again considering her forebears and memorialising her past. She was wondering, 'Who was I then? Adeline Virginia Stephen, the second daughter of Leslie and Julia Prinsep Stephen, born on 25th January 1882, descended from a great many people' (*Sketch*: 65). She was 'born into a large connection' (65), an extended family and their friends with Anglo-Indian, French and English roots and branches. The focus on Woolf's pre-eminent place in twentieth-century literary modernism has meant that legacies from this 'communicative, literate, letter writing, visiting, articulate, late nineteenth century world' (65) have been insufficiently acknowledged. Woolf herself remains ambivalent about her lines of descent, exhibiting both nostalgia for, and affiliation with, her past; but simultaneously trying to reject, suppress and obscure its influence. She constructs an unresolved dialogue between her past and her present, figured through her divided persona 'two people, I now, I then' (75).

Three remarkable women from Woolf's 'large connection' were powerful agents in shaping her as a woman and as a writer. They illustrate the extent of her nineteenth-century legacies. They are her great-aunt, Julia Margaret Cameron, her mother, Julia Prinsep Stephen, and Anny Thackeray Ritchie, whom she called aunt. The work of Cameron, Ritchie and Stephen is textually, artistically, biographically and genealogically embedded in Woolf's. I focus strongly on Woolf's matrilineage and the transmission of women's work, but my argument is not theoretically feminist. It is informed by genetic theory which explores lines of descent, and reconstructs the writer's

process, through different texts, drafts, versions and emendations. In this I am indebted to the work of the late Professor Julia Briggs.¹

Genetic theory challenges the authority of any one text or version. A text is endlessly changing and is never finished. There are always new annotations, new readers, new critics and new theories. Related manuscripts and contextual material continue to be retrieved and studied. It is a problem explored by Woolf in *Night and Day* through Katharine, who is worried by the ever-increasing weight of material in the Alardyce archive (*N&D*: 305–6). Woolf had similarly seen Ritchie poring over the mounds of material in the Thackeray archive. Woolf's work is being read differently since the publication of material not in the public domain in her lifetime, such as Quentin Bell's revealing biography (1972). Gaps in our understanding of the genesis and process of her writing are being filled by *A Passionate Apprentice*, *Moments of Being*, the *Hyde Park Gate News*, volumes five and six of the *Collected Essays*, and ever more exhaustively annotated works, such as Anna Snaith's edition of *The Years* (2012). My study of the now frequently unpublished or neglected work of Cameron, Ritchie and Stephen reveals how strong and influential were their nineteenth-century lines of descent, so furthering understanding of Woolf's life and work. Close reading reveals the generic instability, and the constant reworking and recycling of material, which is a mark not only of Woolf's work but also of that of these three forebears, which circles in her own.

My opening chapter is a biographical introduction to Cameron, Stephen and Ritchie. I use the names by which they have now become best known; avoiding, for the sake of consistency and simplicity, their maiden names and in Stephen's case her first married name. Ritchie was christened 'Anne'. She published under her full range of names, from Anne Isabella Thackeray to Lady Ritchie. She was called, and signed herself, variously 'Anny' and 'Annie'. I follow Thackeray, Woolf, and her great-granddaughter Henrietta Garnett, in using 'Anny'. I explore the use which Woolf made of family histories, starting with that of her colourful great-great-grandfather Ambroise-Pierre Antoine de L'Étang, Chevalier at the court of Marie Antoinette who went to India. I trace the genealogical connections between Cameron, Ritchie and Stephen, and the many interconnections in their lives and work. They were part of an influential Anglo-Indian network and, once back in England, of the Little Holland House and

Freshwater artistic, celebrity circles. They were mutually supportive in their domestic lives and in their work.

Woolf's relationship with Cameron, Ritchie, Stephen and their legacies is very conflicted and inconsistent, making it very difficult to account for her response. She frequently distances herself from them; writing them out or fictionalising, caricaturing or mythologising them. The extent of her manipulation of their biographies and their achievements detracts from their deserved reputations; but reveals that her intention was not to portray them with strict accuracy. Instead she engages with them creatively throughout her writing life. She uses her aesthetic transformations as a means of exploring them and their work, and in doing so also exploring her own self and her own writing.

In the following chapters I argue that Woolf's response to her forebears is defined by ambivalence. I question the integrity of Woolf's representations, and the extent of her obscuration, by retrieving the achievements of Ritchie, Cameron and Stephen. The work of all four women is interdisciplinary; interrogating boundaries between literature, art and photography, auto/biography and fiction, literary realism and modernism, and nineteenth-century and twentieth-century contexts. I give a chapter to the work and legacies of each of these women. However, like Woolf, they inevitably, and joyfully, transgress boundaries, so that aspects of their influence on Woolf's work overlap into each other's chapters. They are also all interconnected in my founding texts *Night and Day* (1919) and *The Years* (1937), which virtually span Woolf's mature writing life. In them she overtly explores the conflicted relationship of the past and the present; in particular through genetic, familial and cultural legacies. These novels provide my bookends.

In *Night and Day* Anny Thackeray Ritchie's is the most significant of these legacies, as I explore in Chapter 2. Constructed as Mrs Hilbery, Ritchie provides Woolf with a medium through whom to debate heredity, and the art of biography; an art which Woolf both claimed as her Victorian heritage and carried into the twentieth century. Woolf, Ritchie and Mrs Hilbery all confront questions of censorship in their auto/biographical writing, especially about genetic inheritance and its instability, which is a key theme in *Night and Day*. It is also both a Marriage and a Suffrage novel. Woolf was concerned to escape the constraint of inherited roles for women, representing

a range of models and identities; but the novel's lack of resolution means that none is prioritised.

Close reading of *Night and Day* reveals generic ambivalence, and a multiplicity of complex allusions and intertexts. Woolf enacts oppositions, as the title suggests, but ultimately she rejects the antithetical and dissolves boundaries. Her trope of the door, which is specifically linked with Mrs Hilbery/Ritchie, figures a crossing point. Her extended image of the lighthouse illustrates her use of the mythic and visionary. She inhabits liminal space, like Katharine hovering on the threshold at the end of the novel.

Chapter 3 explores the full extent of Woolf's legacy from Ritchie. Ritchie's vast body of work in all prose genres, spanning a publishing history from 'Little Scholars' in 1860 to *From Friend to Friend* posthumously in 1919, was widely respected by her contemporaries but gradually went out of print in the twentieth century. Woolf labels Ritchie 'the transparent medium' (E3: 18), acknowledging her mediation of the Victorian to Woolf's present, but also rendering her influence invisible. Ritchie was in a line of female literary mentorship which she extended to Woolf. She provided her with a role model of an independent writing woman, who valued her own work and marketed it astutely in financially advantageous, regenerative ways; a model which Woolf followed. Yet in *Night and Day*, in her obituary of Ritchie (E3: 13–20), and in reviews of Ritchie's work (E1: 228–9; E3: 399–403), Woolf misrepresents her as amateurish, slight, whimsical and unprofessional. Ritchie bequeathed a prolific and wide-ranging body of work of which Woolf would make significant, lifelong, but largely unacknowledged, use. Their work overlaps not only because Ritchie's circulates in Woolf's but also because aspects of Ritchie's can be said to be proto-modernist. Her various transgressive strategies and innovative techniques, such as blurring genre boundaries, employing an unreliable narrator and internal monologue, or shifting perspectives, anticipate the modernist aesthetic with which Woolf herself was experimenting. Ritchie, like Woolf, was at the centre of critical debates about the nature of auto/biography. She achieves some of the 'perpetual marriage of granite and rainbow' (E4: 478) to which Woolf would later aspire in her new biography. Ritchie's deliberate, joyful, subversive, prankishness allowed her to challenge traditional masculine models of both biography and essay writing, and to thrive in a patriarchal society and profession. This, and her interest in the

conditions of women's lives, provides yet another strong line of inheritance which Woolf would develop in her own work.

Inevitably I have had to be hugely selective from the abundance of Ritchie's work, choosing as my main exemplars her essay 'Toilers and Spinsters', her group biography *Records of Tennyson, Ruskin, Browning*, and her novels *From an Island* and *Old Kensington* as illustrative of connections with Cameron and Stephen and lines of influence with Woolf.

Ritchie provides the strongest link between Woolf and her great-aunt, Julia Margaret Cameron, the subject of Chapter 4. Cameron was an influential founder member of the Little Holland House and Freshwater circles and, like Ritchie, provided Woolf with a role model of a woman artist who regarded her work as a profession, and who took a controlling interest in all aspects of its production, publication and marketing. Woolf overtly refuses to take her seriously, reducing her to a caricature and her art to the butt of jokes in *Freshwater, Night and Day*, 'Pattledom' and 'Julia Margaret Cameron'. A comparison of Woolf's and Fry's introductory essays to their 1926 collaborative collection of Cameron's photographs, *Victorian Photographs of Famous Men and Fair Women*, reveals how different their response is to Cameron and her art. Nowhere does Woolf acknowledge Cameron's undoubted artistic achievements. The complex genesis of her story 'The Searchlight' (*HH*: 263–6), reveals how Woolf first appropriates, and then consciously suppresses, Cameron.

However, the lines of descent are strong. Cameron was innovative and experimental, exhibiting the same traits of subversive playfulness as Ritchie. Woolf clearly inherited this from her too, not least in her ludic and original use of photographs in *Flush*, *Orlando* and *Three Guineas*. Both Cameron's and Woolf's use of photographs illustrates powerful subversion of patriarchal formal biography and gender stereotypes, especially in the playful juxtapositions of fact and fiction, and constructions of ontologically uncertain identity. Both blur gender and genre boundaries. Cameron's posed, freeze-framed, subjects, and her use of tableaux, influence Woolf's set-piece scene-making, as exemplified by her short story 'Portraits' (*HH*: 236–40). Woolf's visual aesthetics, especially her use of focalisation, differing perspectives and angles of vision, which are recognised as fundamental to her literary modernism, are all resonant of Cameron's techniques. From the first, Cameron attracted attention and diverse critical response, especially

for her controversial use of soft focus. This technique, which blurs edges and creates fuzzy outlines, was hugely influential on Woolf's own lifelong experiments with the dissolution of boundaries and with liminality. Woolf had a lifelong interest in photography and her celebrity and domestic albums are direct descendants of Cameron's. Photographs can be retrievals and modes of transmission of family histories, as Woolf used Cameron's photographs throughout her life, and as she explores through the Hilbery album (*N&D*: 105–7), which contains a caricature of Cameron as Queenie Colquhoun.

Chapter 5 focuses on Julia Prinsep Stephen, whom Cameron called her favourite niece and who was the subject of over 50 of her remarkable photographic portraits which present her as very different to the gloomy worn-down woman seen in family snapshots near the end of her life. Stephen was a prolific letter writer, and responded to articles in periodicals for instance on the subject of 'Agnostic Women' and 'The Servant Question'. She published a manual, *Notes from Sick Rooms*, and wrote the *DNB* entry for Julia Margaret Cameron. She took her nursing and philanthropy seriously, regarding it as a profession, though, like most of her writing, it remained unpaid.

As a child, Woolf often felt neglected by her mother; but with maturity, she is able to see things from a different perspective and to take what she called the 'later view' (*Sketch*: 83). Leslie Stephen sanctified and idealised Julia in his threnody, the *Mausoleum Book*. This apotheosis is often layered with that of the Angel in the House, deriving from Coventry Patmore's eponymous poem, so that many critics and biographers conflate Julia Stephen with this Angel. Woolf does not apply the term to Stephen but she does reject the tyranny of idealised Victorian domesticity which she felt threatened her creative freedom. She does not idealise Julia Stephen but recognises all sides of a very complex woman through her representations of aspects of her in Clarissa Dalloway, Mrs Ramsay and Rose Pargiter. Stephen, especially when younger, was vivacious and gregarious, loving gossip, parties and the company of young people. Woolf inherited and creatively transformed this love of gossip and anecdote, as well as Stephen's mischievous and sometimes malicious wit. Above all it was her mother's laughter which remained in Woolf's memory.

Julia Stephen's influence on the work of her daughter was fruitful and formative. Woolf often literally wrote back through her mother, using her pen, 'the parent of all pens' (*D1*: 208). Stephen was a

facilitator and nurturer of Woolf's writing and publishing: her first mentor, attentive audience and demanding critic. It was she who suggested Woolf start the *Hyde Park Gate News*. Stephen's stories, now retrieved by Gillespie and Steele (*JDS*), show her to be a close observer with a clear sense of place which was often expressed in highly figured, evocative language. Stephen's merging of fact, fiction, biography, memory and anecdote is clear in Woolf's own work; as is her fine ear for the rhythms of speech and conversation. These stories showed Woolf that she could be an author of her own narratives, and insert herself and her friends and family into the plots. In *A Sketch of the Past*, the memoir which Woolf was writing at the end of her life, and which remained unfinished at her death, she famously claimed that writing *To the Lighthouse* was an act of exorcism after which she 'ceased to be obsessed by my mother. I no longer hear her voice; I do not see her' (*Sketch*: 81).

However, ambivalently, she immediately follows this claim with a series of set-piece memorials in which she imaginatively both sees and hears her mother. These creatively transformed memories reveal Stephen's enduring legacy and continuous 'invisible presence' (*Sketch*: 80) in Woolf's life and work.

In Chapter 6 I consider *The Years* (1937) in which Woolf continues her interrogation of her past, playing her life over again through yet more fictionalisations of her family. Like Eleanor she seems to be trying to find a pattern in life, wondering, 'Does everything then come over again a little differently?' (*TY*: 351). In *The Years* the past, and especially the present, are much bleaker and darker than in my other framing text, *Night and Day*, reflecting the period of composition. London streets are sordid and dirty, bombs are dropping, houses are run down and women are impoverished. Identities are shown as unstable and memory as fallible. Language is slippery, connectives disappear, and as at the party which constitutes most of the Present Day section, there is a multiplicity of voices but conversation is disjointed and elliptical and there is little communication. Gender politics are even more highly conflicted than in *Night and Day*. Though the doors of the houses are flung wide and the women are offered many more choices than Katharine Hilbery, only Maggie is happy.

The Years is structured, like *Night and Day*, through oppositions especially of light and dark, inside and outside, present and absent, realism and modernism; but again the boundaries are blurred and

indistinct. Like North, Woolf is concerned to 'make a new ripple in human consciousness' and ambivalently to 'be the bubble and the stream, the stream and the bubble' (*TY*: 390). Throughout, Woolf provides reassuring patterns of completion and continuity through iterated tropes, circle patterns, and a series of elemental cycles of the seasons, the weather, days, years and generations. At the end, as in *Night and Day*, Woolf moves into a unifying, liminal, visionary, third space. Eleanor, like Katharine, remains alone on the threshold looking out.

Woolf's lines of descent from Ritchie, Cameron and Stephen are clear. Ritchie is present through the recurring trope of the door, through her intertext *Old Kensington*, and obliquely through the street music of *The Years*. The barrel organ which sounds throughout the novel, even the modern sections, resonates with 'The Enchanted Organ' (E3: 399–403), in which Woolf recognises Ritchie's transgressive nature. The many Yorkshire references in *The Years* take Woolf full circle back to 'Haworth' (E1: 5–9) and her early mentors Ritchie and Madge Vaughan. Cameron's legacy is clear in Woolf's lexicon and tropes drawn from photography and film. There is an emphasis on the visual and on portraits and photographs as transmission of family history and records of genetic inheritance. Solid objects acquire Cameron's soft focus: 'Things seemed to have lost their skins; to be freed from some surface hardness' (*TY*: 274). Woolf is still obsessed with her mother. Rose Pargiter has the same red hair and blue eyes as Julia Stephen, which her descendants inherit. Woolf again explores the loss of the mother through the matricide of both Rose and Eugénie Pargiter. Stephen's presence is also felt in explorations of The Servant Question. Ethel Smyth, another of Woolf's 'great connection', is influential in the genesis of *The Years*, and is a transmitter of family stories, especially that of James Pattle, which Woolf had read in Smyth's autobiography.

In a postmodern age we celebrate uncertainty and ambivalence, and recognise them in Woolf. In her lexicon it is a predominantly positive term. In the Conclusion I argue that the ambivalence of Woolf's response to her three forebears, in particular, reveals her response to her past in general. Woolf was concerned to construct herself as different from her nineteenth-century forebears; as modernist, innovative and an exceptional writer of genius. She proposes a series of break points between her past and her future, such as the move