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Pamela Gannon Mazzuchelli
Rhode Island College, pamm52@cox.net

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The Rebellious Angel: Virginia Woolf,
To The Lighthouse, and
The Debate About
Female Anger

By

Pamela Gannon Mazzuchelli

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Introduction

Freud believed that anger is the result of the ego's first struggle to maintain itself, to find an identity separate from the mother. In Art and Anger, Jane Marcus appropriates Freud's belief and adds that without anger, there is no identity, no sense of self (124). The Victorian ideological model for women was the Angel in the House, a model which continued into the twentieth century and denies women their anger. Angels were self-sacrificing and always at the service of their families. Angels were expected to exude an air of pleasantry, politeness, and reverence. They were not expected to express ugly emotions such as anger. Expressions of anger were discouraged, and those women who displayed it were labeled unladylike, and even at times considered insane. The Angel in the House forced women to repress their anger and that benefited men. Without anger, women could not voice their opinions. Without anger, they had no voice. Without anger, they had no identity.

Virginia Woolf found herself in a conundrum over anger. She was angry at feeling oppressed in a male-dominated world; and although the emotion fueled her creativity and art, she knew an angry female writer was not taken seriously. Although Woolf's name is often considered synonymous with feminism and feminist issues, she has not been lauded by *all* feminist critics as the alpha and omega of their issues. During the development of feminist literary theory and feminism in the early seventies, critics debated Woolf's contribution to both causes. Because these second-wave feminists believed anger was an essential component of social change, they questioned her indirect manner of expressing it, which many deemed defensive, an act of denial, or pandering to men, and they claimed she was not angry enough.

These feminist critics have charged Virginia Woolf with writing for women while addressing an audience of men. Additionally, they have argued that she and her fictional techniques and characterizations are defensive because she avoided or repressed anger. I believe that neither she nor her characters were defensive because she had conscious and deliberate reasons for handling anger the way she did. This study hopes to show how Woolf's creative deflection of anger can illuminate the fictional dynamics of her autobiographical novel, To The Lighthouse.

An examination of Woolf's writing and her anger in historical context reveals that while anger fueled her creativity, social, political, and personal circumstances dictated that she deflect or recast this volatile emotion. Most significant to this examination is the fictional Angel in the House, the source of her anger and under which fall the many injustices she fought against. Before turning to her fiction, I will examine passages from A Room of One's Own and her influential feminist speech, "Professions for Women" (in which she claims to have killed the fictional Angel in the House) for evidence of her deliberate intention to deflect anger in her writing.

The thesis will then analyze manifestations of anger in To The Lighthouse. Here Woolf, by appropriating her own methods of deflection, does in fact express anger, and that anger indeed accounts for the death of the central character, Mrs. Ramsay. Anger in this novel exists on three levels: One level is Woolf's own anger towards the patriarchy; the second level is anger expressed by the male characters; and the third level is Mrs. Ramsay's anger. I will show that although it appears that Woolf's depiction of her fictional parents is negative, and that she seems to be aiming her anger at them, her real target is the oppressive patriarchal system under which they lived. Similar to the

methods she describes in A Room of One's Own, she deflects her anger away from the patriarchy by using the ideology of Angel in the House (which allows expression of male anger and inhibition of female anger) against itself. This deflection technique exposes the repressive and destructive qualities of the Angel. When Mrs. Ramsay naively wishes to step beyond her role, Woolf then kills the character in order to demonstrate that the patriarchy limits women's roles and that none other than the Angel in the House is acceptable.

The Feminists (Re)discover Woolf: Historical Overview

Virginia Woolf's work is a cornerstone of the modernist era and her name will be forever listed among leading authors of that time. For decades she has been singled out for her innovative and experimental narrative style, and she is especially lauded for her stream of consciousness technique. She is perhaps best known, however, for her feminist works and views on women's issues. Her myriad writings, including essays, reviews, short stories, novels, and volumes of personal diaries and memoirs, were instrumental in developing modernism, feminism, and feminist theory.

Woolf was not considered a feminist writer or a champion of women's issues until decades after her death. Before her suicide in 1940, although she had been considered an "acclaimed high modernist writer" (Goldman 25) and was listed among the best novelists of her period, she had fallen out of critical and popular favor. Critical attention was drawn back to her work, however, in the early 1970's when her nephew, Quentin Bell, published over 4,000 letters and thirty volumes of her diaries and memoirs, making them available to scholars who had been coincidentally in the throes of falling into theory. These unexplored materials were of particular interest and became important in

the development of theory because in them Woolf wrote extensively about her process of writing (Roe and Sellers). Around the same time, her non-fiction work, including A Room of One's Own, Three Guineas, and her "Professions for Women" speech also snagged the attention of Second-Wave feminist critics due to their concentration on women's issues. These and other non-fiction writings also found prominent places in the development of feminism and feminist theory (Goldman), and her fiction became equally important in the development of modernism. Thus was established Woolf's significant place in the literary world along with Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir, and Adrienne Rich, as one of those "writers whose work spans both feminist polemic and fiction" (Laura Marcus 209).

Soon after, second-wave feminist critics reread her newly expanded oeuvre through the feminist theory which it was instrumental in developing. Viewing her work through this lens magnified subtleties that had been previously missed; namely, Woolf's ambivalence about expressing anger. Since second-wave feminists believed anger was necessary for social change, many deemed Woolf not angry *enough*—her handling of women's issues packed neither the direct nor fiery linguistic punch they felt necessary for the social change they were hoping to effect. Some claimed her voice advanced early feminist issues, while others believed it damaged or, at the very least, did little for the cause.

Anger and its place in Woolf's work then became a focus of discussion. In the early 1980's, heated debate sparked with Toril Moi's response to assertions Elaine Showalter made about Woolf's work. In her landmark book A Literature of Their Own, Showalter trounces Woolf's theory of androgyny outlined in A Room of One's Own. In

Room, Woolf applauds Coleridge's concept of the androgyny of great minds but does not view it as asexual. She instead suggests blending the male and female parts of the mind because both sexes have blind spots about their own and the opposite sex and are dependent upon each other to accurately discern humanity.

Showalter deems Woolf's theory defensive and sees in it an avoidance of anger. She writes, "[a]ndrogyny was the myth that helped her evade confrontation . . . and enabled her to choke and repress her anger and ambition" (264). In other words, rather than confronting injustices women suffered under the patriarchy, Woolf invented a defensive *theory* of compromise and pandering for coping with them. Showalter then claims that Woolf's repression, her refusal to directly express anger about these injustices, not only diminished her drive, but resulted in her suicide. She believes anger manifested in Woolf's madness as well as in her notions about androgyny, and she suggests detaching oneself from the overtly feminist message of the text of A Room of One's Own to expose the author's misguided refusal to deal with her anger.

Toril Moi argues against Showalter in her own landmark book, Sexual/Textual Politics, claiming that "remaining detached from the narrative strategies of A Room of One's Own is equivalent to not reading it at all" (3). Moi attacks Showalter's brand of feminism, calling it a crude "images of women" aesthetic, which requires positive role models in its female writers and their characters rather than "locating the politics of Woolf's writing precisely in her textual practice" (Moi 12). Employing the theories of French feminist Julia Kristeva, Moi argues against traditional aesthetic categories of the then current American feminists and asserts that instead of uniting the sexes, Woolf's

androgyny deconstructs sexual identity as well as the duality of masculinity and femininity, and that it is not an attempted resolution between or melding of the sexes.

Many critics weighed in on Woolf's handling of anger and the debate between Showalter and Moi. In her article "Woolf's Feminism and Feminism's Woolf," written in the late 1990's, Laura Marcus looks back on its historical significance and writes:

Showalter attempts to save feminist literary criticism, and women's writing more generally, from Woolf's fatal legacy of repression, passivity, sickness and suicide. . . . Toril Moi sets out to 'rescue' Woolf from [Showalter and] her unreconstructed, undesconstructed readers . . . [because Woolf is] the 'mother' of the feminist critics of the late twentieth century . . . [and] thus becomes the alpha and omega of feminist criticism, its origin and its goal. (231)

The disagreement between Showalter and Moi began the polarization of French and Anglo-American feminists in their criticism of other authors, too, but is referred to as a "defining moment not only in Woolf but in feminist studies generally" (Roe and Sellers 240). Ultimately, this disagreement facilitated the development of feminist theories.

The differing positions from which these critics view Woolf and her work are significant. One views the work from outside the text, the other from the inside. Showalter assesses the text on external criteria, namely Woolf's personal character, and from there determines that Woolf's mental illness negatively affects her aesthetic and politics, rendering the text "unfeminist" (Goldman 130). Moi judges the text on internal criteria, namely from within the text itself. From there, she determines the quality of Woolf's aesthetic and politics, rendering Woolf's theory of androgyny a useful vehicle by

which sexual identity may be discussed. Moi develops her argument from a position of first attacking Showalter's theoretical base or the brand of her feminism, and makes her own assessment based on a different brand of feminism.

My intention in elaborating these two positions for viewing Woolf's texts is that it is a useful starting point for examining anger in Woolf's work. Because Woolf was maligned by some feminists for not being angry enough, and other critics because her ambivalence in expressing anger baffled them, viewing her works from a combination of both positions will afford an alternative reading of anger in her work. This includes viewing Mrs. Ramsay as a character who comes to recognize her anger, and for that recognition she ultimately dies.

Contexts and Sources of Woolf's Anger

The sorely-lacking female tradition Woolf inherited meant she and other female writers had few models to follow. In The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar claim that up to and including the time Woolf wrote, the creative atmosphere was "defined purely in male terms" (66) and women were obliged to write in the same genres and styles as men. Here, they found an "overabundance of flighty female characters appearing in texts authored by members of both sex" (71) as well as subjects and themes beyond the realms of their experience. Even when they copied male leads, they were told they lacked the necessary experience to write, and because female experience was limited to the home and emotions, the experience they *did* have was rendered inconsequential to write about. Women who wished to write faced open fields laden with land mines and bordered by barbed wire. Thus, in efforts to put pen to paper, they learned the art of

deflection. They took Emily Dickinson's advice to "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant--" (73). By the time Woolf wrote, deflection was ingrained. That she specifically deflected anger was dictated by the circumstances under which she wrote.

Gilbert and Gubar also claim that, as writers, women traditionally deflected certain themes because they suffered the "anxiety of authorship" (60). This "anxiety" is described as a sickness or "just the feelings of self-doubt, inadequacy, and inferiority that their education in 'femininity' almost seems to have been designed to induce" (59-60). By this definition, femininity was a mode of female behavior designed by men for their own benefit and which kept women at a hegemonic disadvantage.

The model of female behavior Woolf was expected to emulate is referred to as the Angel in the House. The "Angel in the House" is a much beloved and popular poem Coventry Patmore wrote for his wife, circa 1854, and it describes the paradigm of Victorian womanhood. The Angel is quiet, selfless, and politely subservient. Her occupation is household duties, caring for her husband, and steering clear of men's business. In return for her selflessness, she is revered and complemented on her beauty. Woolf fought against this definition of femininity and female behavior. I believe the anger amassed about this singular, deeply ingrained ideology not only drove her creativity, but all the injustices she sought to expose can be traced back to this one stereotypical ideal. The Angel in the House is the root of Woolf's anger and the insidious ideology it represented had been planted deeply within her at an early age.

Woolf was born Adeline Virginia Stephen in 1882. Gilbert and Gubar suggest that as Christianity lost its grip and social systems broke down at the end of the Industrial Revolution, the hearth took the place of the church. The Angel in the House embodied an

otherworldly or religious element in the household (28). Woolf's mother, Julia, was the resident Angel in the Stephen household. She was an artist in her own right but her many responsibilities, including raising eight children and managing a large household, meant little time for artistic endeavors or her children. Woolf witnessed both the stifling and wasting away of her mother's talent. Julia Stephen died at the age of 51 when Virginia was only 13 years old. Many critics believe her role as Angel in the House had killed her (Crater 128).

Woolf then tended to her father, Leslie Stephen, until he died in 1904. Although she and her sisters each received more than adequate educations, their father would not pay for her to go to college as he had for her brothers. Early on he had supported her writing career, but as he got older he preferred that she follow in her mother's footsteps. Virginia did not want to be another Angel in the House and claimed that if he hadn't died when he did, she would have never written. In "A Sketch of the Past," Woolf expresses ambivalent feelings about both her parents; and she confesses that writing To The Lighthouse helped put their ghosts to rest.

After writing To The Lighthouse and in an address to the National Society for Women's Service in 1931, Woolf confesses to having "killed" this haunting ideology of the Angel because it had severely thwarted her efforts to write. The speech is important because it gave voice to the root of her anger.

"Professions for Women" and Woolf's Attitude Towards Female Anger

Woolf's influential feminist speech "Professions for Women" was delivered before the National Women's Service League in 1931, after A Room of One's Own and To The Lighthouse were published in the late 1920's. Because she was a well-known

author, the League commissioned Woolf to speak about her career before an assemblage of young professional women. The speech was later edited and printed as an essay by Hogarth Press, the publishing company owned by Woolf and her husband, Leonard.

In the speech, after describing how she became a journalist, Woolf describes a phantom she always battled when writing reviews of books written by men. She said she recognized the phantom as the heroine of a famous poem called “The Angel in the House” and that, when she was young, during the end of Queen Victoria’s reign, every house had its Angel. She explains that whenever she began writing a review of a book written by a man, the Angel always came between her and her paper. She writes:

the shadow of her wings fell on my page; I heard the rustling of her skirts in the room . . . she slipped behind me and whispered: Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own . . . I now record the one act for which I take some credit to myself . . . I turned upon her and caught her by the throat. I did my best to kill her. (CE II 286)

She explains that the occupation of every female writer is to kill the Angel in the House and that every woman in the audience should kill their own Angels in order to succeed in their chosen professions. She claims that the definition of “woman” will never be known until all professions are open to them.

Into this satiric appropriation of Patmore’s “Angel in the House,” Woolf explicitly names the source of her anger as the Angel, and then she figuratively kills it. Her aim in killing the metaphoric angel was to rid society of the repression the Angel represents. She claims the Angel died hard due to her fictitious nature and frequently “crept” back to

haunt her. In To The Lighthouse the Angel returns, but here Woolf cleverly handles it by using Mrs. Ramsay as the victim of its insidious ideology.

Further Reasons for Deflecting Anger

In Virginia Woolf and the Real World, Alex Zwerdling sheds light on one reason Woolf avoided anger, especially in her political works. Besides the female tradition she inherited, which was influenced by both the behavior of the Angel in the House and writing by subterfuge, the “literary climate of Woolf’s time fostered the kind of detached, controlled, impersonal esthetic theory she adopted” (247). This accounts, he believes, for critics’ accusations that she or her characters were defensive or removed, and it explains the absence of high emotion such as anger. Further, Zwerdling suggests that Woolf would disagree with Showalter and Marcus who claim that had she been in closer touch with her own anger, she would have produced better art. She *was* in touch with her anger, he claims, and she did not trust it. Anger terrified her because it was close to the states of madness she herself had known more than once, and she feared that if it was present in her work, readers would think she was a raving lunatic. Therefore, she regularly connects violent emotions of any kind with distortion and self-deception, insisting that the direct expression of anger is fatal to art (248-52).

Zwerdling claims the “decision to inhibit anger in the feminist works was not only literary, it was also political” (247). In both Woolf’s fiction and non-fiction, “unity, harmony, merging are consistently idealized” (248). Her impulse for unity can be traced to the nineteenth-century women’s movement--specifically, the split between the constitutional suffragists and the militant Suffragettes due to their differences in the expression of anger. “From the first, the militant campaign was an attempt to substitute

direct, angry political confrontation for the conciliatory, refined tactics of the earlier suffragists” (248).

According to Marcus, Woolf was aware that photographs of suffragettes lying bloody and disheveled in the streets roused public anger toward them and not their assailants. Coupled with the fact that Woolf and her husband were pacifists, it follows that she worked with the constitutional group. These pioneers of feminism considered it politically essential to win support from men: “After all, it was men, who made the laws, controlled the universities and professions and owned the property” (Zwerdling 249-250). Understandable, then, is that Woolf’s feminist writing *was* conciliatory and reflected the tactics of compromise between the sexes. Controversy about the use of anger lasted through the second wave feminist movement and, not surprisingly, what feminist critics found in Woolf’s work was an absence of it. What emerges is that no matter how critics have tried to twist her character and dissect her ideas and writings, she was a writer who stayed as true to her basic beliefs as possible concerning conciliation, pacifism and women’s rights.

In addition to the social factors that influenced her decision to deflect anger, Woolf often had the anger edited out of her writing by her husband. In his autobiography, Leonard Woolf, explains that because he and his wife were both “political pacifists—a great deal of violence and anger was constantly being suppressed” (136). Marcus suggests that in the interest of protecting his wife’s career as well as his own publishing business, the political climate of the time dictated that he suppress some of her feminist writings. Referring to it as “editorial protection” (137), Marcus explains that when Leonard printed his wife’s speech, “Professions for Women,” in The Death of the

Moth and Collected Essays, it appeared at less than half the length of the original speech she delivered to the National Society for Women's Service in 1931. Among the many passages edited out are references to the Angel in the House as "the woman men wished women to be" (139) and that the ideal Angel had been created for reasons "that have to do with the British Empire, our colonies, Queen Victoria, Lord Tennyson, the growth of the middle class" (139).

Virginia also edited anger out of this speech. In a letter to a friend, she writes she regretted having "no time to comb-out [the anger that] clotted up and clogged" (Marcus 137) the speech and would not have it printed as it stood. Woolf knew the power of anger, and although she urges women to fight for their careers in the speech, she draws back and suggests they maintain a healthy anger rather than allowing bitterness about their repression overshadow what joy they may find in their lives. While her about-face may be viewed as a sign of ambivalence, I believe it was more an attempt to show the women in the audience the reality of their situations—that although they should fight for their careers, they are fighting an uphill battle and should not let oppression completely ruin their lives. The responsibility of making women realize the depths of their oppression was undoubtedly great.

Woolf's Technique of Deflecting Anger

Because anger fueled her creativity, Woolf regularly recorded rage in her diary, to use its "energy in the melting-down-of-the-mind process she called 'incandescence' so that the anger, when expressed, would have more fire than smoke" (Marcus 131). Evident here is that her redirection of anger comes from a conscious decision to make her writing more effective rather than from a psychological need or unconscious desire to

avoid it. Thus, the position from which anger is deflected or sublimated is deliberate and positive rather than defensive and negative.

A passage from A Room of One's Own proves that Woolf believed anger deflected was more effective than anger directly expressed. In the passage about Professor von X, the female narrator claims that the Professor's statement about the "mental, moral and physical inferiority of women" (32) angered her. While she is insulted and angry about his statement, she realizes that she became even angrier because *he* is angry. She wonders why men like him, in positions of power, should be so irate about women who are powerless. She then explains that when she thought about it, rather than thinking about his statement, she thought about *him* and his anger and came to the following conclusion:

When an arguer argues dispassionately he thinks only of the argument; and the reader cannot help thinking of the argument too. If he had written dispassionately about women, had used indisputable proofs to establish his argument and had shown no trace of wishing that the result should be one thing rather than another, one would not have been angry either. (33)

Above is Woolf's description of the effect of angry words on readers and suggests her technique for writing about an issue that angers her without showing her anger. Woolf believed an effective argument was one in which the arguer presented "indisputable" or logical evidence upon which the reader could decide the position he or she wished to support. In that light, the arguer would be respected for not trying to sway the reader by what would seem bullying tactics. This lends support to my assertion that Woolf did not

write from a position of defensive anger. In both her fiction and non-fiction, she deliberately distilled her anger into the fuel for her creative work.

Thus from A Room Of One's Own, we can assume Woolf believed anger in women's writing both weakened their voices and stifled their creativity. She writes, "It is fatal for any woman to lay the least stress on any grievance" (104), suggesting that expressing anger, or putting *stress on any grievance*, about an issue is detrimental to the female author. In a letter to a friend about A Room of One's Own, she writes:

I forced myself to keep my own figure fictitious, legendary. If I had said, "Look here, I am uneducated because my brothers used all the family funds"—which is the fact—"Well," they'd have said, "she has an axe to grind"; and no one would have taken me seriously. (Marcus 90)

Woolf suggests here that had she written about being excluded from college, she would have been dismissed as just another angry female writer with a thorn in her claw.

Instead, she created the three-interchangeable Marys who raise questions about women attending the fictional college and thus avoided personal grievance, as suggested in the technique she outlines in the Professor von X passage. Critics such as Showalter claim the interchangeable narrators represent Woolf's defensiveness and detachment, while Zwerdling suggests the effect is to avoid "personal grievance and to increase the feeling of detachment" (255).

Also present in her words is a tone implying that because she is a female writer, she is heavily criticized. In order to avoid heavy criticism, she specifically invented strategies such as deflecting and recasting anger. Therefore, her strategies of deflecting anger were not due to the fact that she was overly sensitive and could not withstand the

criticism, but because anger would detract from readers hearing her message. Deflecting anger is not the same as refusing to confront it.

In A Room of One's Own, Woolf accuses Charlotte Bronte of an unseemly “indignation” (69) because she allowed personal grievances to spill over into her characterization of Jane Eyre. Woolf writes that as a result, Bronte “will never get her genius expressed whole and entire. Her books will be deformed and twisted. She will write in a rage where she should write calmly” (69-70). As noted by many critics, it is ironic that while she criticized Bronte for allowing personal anger to filter into her characters, she quotes the novel at length; thus, while decrying Bronte’s indignation, she cleverly uses Bronte’s angry voice to support her own writing in A Room of One's Own. Showalter suggests that Woolf’s advice to women to keep anger out of their work smacks of her need to conform to the Angel in the House. Rather, I contend that because Woolf believed that anger could distort or muddy the response to female artists, it needed to be managed and expressed with deliberate care.

Alex Zwerdling’s observation about Woolf’s style in his article, “Mrs. Dalloway and the Social System,” sums up my position. He writes:

[Woolf] detested what she called ‘preaching’ . . . She observes, describes, connects, provides the materials for a judgment about society and social issues . . . by indirection, subterraneously undermining the officially accepted code, mocking, suggesting, calling into question, rather than asserting advocating, bearing witness.(69-70)

While Zwerdling does not refer directly to anger in Woolf’s work, he nonetheless speaks to her indirect style, for which the female tradition she inherited is partially responsible.

That she was against preaching but preferred subterraneously undermining social institutions is evident in my example of Professor von X above. On the surface, this technique may be viewed merely as an avoidance of anger, but it serves a distinct purpose. By cleverly presenting an issue without using angry words, she avoids being labeled as just another angry female writer who is not taken seriously. On a deeper level, Woolf is suggesting that angry presentations of arguments detract from the issues and *force* readers to adopt the opinion of the arguer, but that presenting both sides of an issue with logical evidence allows them the right to think on their own—a right she felt women had been denied.

That Woolf and other female writers employed deflection in their work was not uncommon. Gilbert and Gubar write:

The most successful female writers often seem to have channeled their female concerns into secret or at least obscure corners. In effect, such women have created submerged meanings, meanings hidden within or behind the more accessible, “public” content of their works, so that their literature could be read and appreciated even when its vital concern with female dispossession and disease was ignored (72).

What emerges is a confident writer interested in exposing injustice in the most effective ways she knew how. Her methods of deflecting and recasting anger have been greatly misunderstood. While early critics considered her style playfully light or humorous, they overlooked her biting use of satire and irony, which suggests an angrier and more serious message than what appears on the surface. Later feminist critics called her use of irony, satire, and humor defense mechanisms behind which she hid. Perhaps

she is not hiding but respecting her readers, expecting them to discern her dangerous, more radical meanings beneath the surface.

To The Lighthouse

For several reasons, To The Lighthouse lends itself well to an examination of anger in Woolf's work. Because she claimed that anger fueled her creative process, we can assume that she mostly wrote about subjects that either angered her or that she was passionate about. That this novel is autobiographical suggests that she is dealing with personal anger arising from her childhood. Woolf confirms that fact in letters and diary entries. In "A Sketch of the Past," she writes, "I suppose that I did for myself what psych-analysts do for their patients. I expressed some very long and deeply felt emotion. And in expressing it I explained it and then laid it out to rest" (Sketch 81). Of course, because elsewhere she claims to have deliberately deflected angry feelings in her work, uncovering that rage is difficult.

To that end, distinguishing between Woolf's own anger and that of her characters is important because both affect the novel in different ways. Woolf's personal anger affects the novel in a generalized, universal manner. The anger expressed by individual characters, though linked to and an outgrowth of her own, affects their fictional situations. Because the characters' anger is more overt, it is more accessible.

Three levels of anger exist in the novel, and they form a pyramid. At the base is Woolf's own anger towards the patriarchy, which anchors the story and gives it an ironic quality. From it other expressions of anger in the novel emanate. Anger at this level is deliberately sublimated. The middle level is made up of anger expressed by the male characters. Their anger is expressed through internal monologue and dialogue. Because

it is overtly expressed, it is more accessible to the reader. At the pointed top of the pyramid is Mrs. Ramsay's anger. When compared to the level of anger informing the other two areas of the pyramid, it is minimal. During most of her appearance in the novel, her anger is suppressed. When Mrs. Ramsay expresses anger in dialogue, it is mostly about a minor household incident. However, in her internal monologues, especially when she speaks derogatorily about herself, Woolf is exposing her position at the base of the pyramid and again speaking satirically and ironically. Mrs. Ramsay's personal anger is inwardly directed. Ultimately, when Mrs. Ramsay confronts her personal anger, she implodes, causing the pyramid to collapse; and this is expressed symbolically by her death. Mrs. Ramsay not only represents Woolf's mother, who was a real Angel in the House, but also the many Angels in the House who have gone before her.

The Base of the Pyramid: Woolf's Anger

As discussed in the introduction, Woolf deliberately deflected anger. Again, the reasons for this are several: modernists in general shied away from overt expressions of emotion; Woolf thought anger weakened women's voices; and, finally, she believed that angry words distracted one from the message or point of a communication. In addition, Alex Zwerdling claims that Woolf wanted readers to make up their own minds, preferring "indirection, mocking, suggesting, calling into question, rather than asserting, advocating" (PMLA 70), which is probably the greatest testament to her deflection of anger.

Although by the mid seventies feminist critics were debating the efficacy of Woolf's anger, as early as the late nineteen fifties scholars claimed she had vented much

anger about her parents in To The Lighthouse. Most sympathized with Mrs. Ramsay's character as the dutiful, self-sacrificing wife, and vilified Mr. Ramsay's character as the tyrant who treated everyone harshly and needed constant coddling from his wife. In "Vision in To The Lighthouse," Glenn Pedersen writes, "the reader is influenced to believe that Mr. Ramsay is a villainous character, a father who prevents his son from fulfilling his desire. Essentially Mrs. Ramsay is the negative influence" (585). Whether claiming Mr. or Mrs. Ramsay the more evil character, Pedersen and other critics focus on Woolf's negative portrayal of the Ramsays as her parents and many refer to her personal anger toward them as the cause.

For instance, Jane Lilienfield claims that Woolf "uses the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay . . . as surrogates for her own parents" (345), and that Woolf casts negative lights on both. Of Woolf's father Lilienfield writes, "Mr. Ramsay's tyrannical neediness looms over his being . . . [t]hus Leslie Stephen by implication is reduced to an emotional sponge" (345-46); and of Woolf's mother, she writes, "More than a celebration of the wonderfulness of Mrs. Ramsay, To The Lighthouse is plotted to take the reader and characters through a successful reconsideration and rejection of Mrs. Ramsay" (346).

Other critics including Kathleen M. Helal, James Naremore, Frank Baldanza, Theresa L. Crater, Elizabeth Andrews McArthur, and Alex Zwerdling have commented either on Woolf's troublesome relationship with her parents in relation to this novel or that she vented anger on them through the story. Such claims counter assertions that Woolf did *not* express anger in her work. Perhaps critics in Showalter's camp did not consider what they believed to be Woolf's personal anger strong enough for their cause or that she hadn't made the personal political *enough*.

That To The Lighthouse is commonly referred to as an autobiographical *novel* blurs the line separating fact and fiction. Attempting to fix that line is useful in determining whether Woolf's anger in this novel is personal and more aimed at her parents or political and more aimed at the patriarchy. While on some level all anger is personal, I believe that in this novel a heavier fiction content determines that her anger is more political, while a heavier non-fiction content determines that it is more personal.

Although determining the fictional versus non-fictional contents of any literary work may be impossible, fortunately some of Woolf's personal writings lend clues to her feelings about her parents and the novel, and may help distinguish where sentiments for her parents end and where her political issues begin. Zwerdling claims that in her diaries Woolf expressed doubt early on about writing the novel because it "came closer to recording the facts of her own life history than did any of her other novels" (180). He sympathizes with Woolf and wonders, "How could a novelist with such a strong sense of design keep hold of her right to shape every element of her fictional world if she felt an equal obligation to biographical truth?" (180). The writer in Woolf won over any sentimentality she may have felt about personal history, and Zwerdling concludes:

In To The Lighthouse Woolf tried not only to recover the memories of her childhood but also to record her tangled feelings about Victorian marriage and family life as well as about the substitutes for them that some rebellious modern spirits had proposed. Her book was concerned with her sense of institutional and ideological change and continuity, not just with the idiosyncrasies of her private history. And so it became necessary to shape the raw material, to rewrite the past. (181).

Eventually Woolf came to resent suggestions that the Ramsays were her parents. In a letter she writes, “I did not mean to paint an exact portrait . . . A book makes everything into itself, and the portrait became changed to fit it as I wrote” (Letters 4:517). The last line of the novel is “I have had my vision” (209) which suggests that it is only a creative *vision* of what she remembered of her childhood and her parents, and not an exact portrayal of that time or them.

In “Sketch of the Past” Woolf explains what she came to understand about her mother while she wrote the novel:

The understanding that I have now [. . .] shows me that a woman of forty with seven children, some of them needing grown-up attention, and four still in the nursery; and an eighth, Laura, an idiot, yet living with us; and a husband fifteen years her elder, difficult, exacting, dependent on her; I see now that a woman who had to keep all this in being and under control must have been a general presence rather than a particular person to a child of seven or eight. Can I remember ever being alone with her for more than a few minutes? Someone was always interrupting. (81)

Woolf here has come to terms with her mother’s early death and from that understanding forged an empathetic vision in her writer’s imagination of her mother’s life as an Angel in the House, a vision she immortalized in Lighthouse. Such an understanding of her mother’s plight precludes resentment or anger. After the novel was completed, she wrote, “I used to think of him [father] and mother daily . . . I was obsessed . . . unhealthily; and writing was a necessary act” (Diary 138). The unsettled feelings she had harbored towards her parents for years was replaced with empathy; and she especially

saw how their society shaped Leslie and Julia Stephen as people, spouses, and parents. Being a novelist first, a novelist greatly concerned with social issues, and one whose creativity was fueled by anger, she focused her efforts and anger on the cultural ideology that had imprisoned her parents and exposed it in To The Lighthouse.

Jane Marcus writes that most often Woolf's "blows were aimed at patriarchal institutions, as much in the cause of freedom for artists as for women" (Art and Anger 30). I agree with Marcus. In this novel Woolf transforms her personal anger into a political issue by challenging the patriarchal Angel in the House. However, rather than expressing anger at this ideology through her angry portrayal of her parents, as most critics imply when they equate her negative portrayal of them with anger towards them, I believe she was more angry that they were both victims of that system because her portrayal of them exposes the manner in which they were forced to behave. This difference changes the flavor of her anger from personal to political. She blames the system and not the victims. In the novel, she creates scenes which demonstrate how societal constraints forced the characters to behave and how that behavior forms a web that entraps them all. In this light, the anger in this novel is political because it focuses on the effect of the ideology of the Angel in the House, and Woolf's parents serve as the vehicles by which the story gets its meat and bones.

By claiming that Woolf aimed her anger at the patriarchy, I am not dismissing or denying the anger she felt most of her life towards her parents. That anger is important because it fueled her exploration of her childhood and the subsequent autobiography that followed. So, I agree with Zwerdling that Woolf's original motives for writing about her childhood were personal; but when she claims, "the portrait became changed to fit it as I

wrote” (Letters 4:517), I believe she was referring to the larger social issue she had uncovered while writing the novel, particularly the Angel in the House. Because of her social conscience, she undoubtedly realized the political dimensions of her parents’ lives as she wrote and, more importantly, the negative effect the ideology of the Angel in the House had on all involved. Mrs. Ramsay is an obvious representative of that cultural model. Woolf’s anger towards this insidious ideology evidently was not assuaged after writing To The Lighthouse because four years after completing the novel, she introduces the concept of the Angel in the House in her “Professions for Women” speech and claims to have killed it. Perhaps not coincidentally, Mrs. Ramsay behaves much like the Angel in the House Woolf describes in that speech.

The assessment that Woolf aimed her anger at the patriarchy is certainly not new, but my conclusion that she aimed her anger more at the cultural ideology than at her parents is a distinction that other critics have not made. This distinction opens the space for yet another interpretation of Mrs. Ramsay, one that clearly shows that Woolf’s anger in this novel is more political than personal. When viewed in a light not dimmed by Woolf’s personal anger towards her mother, Mrs. Ramsay can be interpreted as a woman who for many years blindly accepts the role of Angel in the House and mistakenly believes the power her beauty affords her is a valuable asset. More significantly, anger kills her when she wants to step beyond her assigned role.

In To The Lighthouse, Woolf faces the dilemma of what to do with an entrenched Angel in the House who, for personal reasons, dares to suggest stepping outside her assigned role. Both Rachel Vinrace, in Woolf’s first novel, The Voyage Out, and Septimus Smith in Mrs. Dalloway also had problems accepting their assigned roles.

Rachel's presumed life path would include marriage and children; and Septimus, a married war veteran, should have quietly returned to civilian life after returning from World War I. Instead, Rachel desires a career as a pianist and dies after an illness; and Septimus suffers post-traumatic stress disorder and commits suicide. Both characters meet an untimely death because they refused to adhere to societal expectations. Woolf also kills Mrs. Ramsay, and for much the same reasons; however, I believe that because Mrs. Ramsay is more a representative of the ideology of the Angel in the House than are Rachel or Septimus, Woolf decided to treat Mrs. Ramsay in a way that would reflect the manner in which the society in which Mrs. Ramsay lives would treat a woman who desired a life other than the one she was allowed. Given the layers and decades of negative attitudes towards and prejudices imprisoning women at that time, there was virtually nowhere for Woolf to place Mrs. Ramsay except off the pages of the novel. Woolf banishes from the novel the focal character of To The Lighthouse, the anchor of the Ramsay family and queen of the island on which they vacation, without explanation or fanfare in one bracketed sentence: "[Mr. Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, but Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty]" (Lighthouse 128). The "other" has simply gone elsewhere. (Woolf's unconventional handling of the death of Mrs. Ramsay has been the subject of discussion since the novel was published.) That Woolf handled Mrs. Ramsay in such a manner suggests that women's desires, unless in line with what was allowed by the patriarchy, were as inconsequential and off-the-page as Mrs. Ramsay's death. Because Mrs. Ramsay represents the ideology of the Angel in the House, Woolf's anger against that model of behavior killed her.

Very generally, my view of Mrs. Ramsay is in line with Moi's argument that Woolf's politics are found in her texts rather than with Showalter's claim that Woolf created ineffectual characters because she was mentally imbalanced. While Woolf's mental difficulties are well documented, Mrs. Ramsay *is* an ineffectual character because Woolf chose to show how Victorian society negatively affects women. Further, Showalter's claim that "Woolf's female aesthetic is an extension of her view of women's social role: receptivity to the point of self-destruction" (296) is proved false when Mrs. Ramsay is viewed as a representative Angel in the House. While I agree with Showalter that Mrs. Ramsay is a character forced to experience "anger, rebellion, and sexuality . . . at a safe remove" (Showalter 264), she nonetheless had been forced into the position of playing the role of Angel in the House. Woolf vented anger against that forced position in this novel and, more aggressively, in her "Professions for Women" speech which demonstrates that Mrs. Ramsay was not an "extension of her [Woolf's] view of women's social role" (Showalter 296) and rather a vision of what she wanted to see banished from society. Though she claimed she was not a feminist, Woolf wanted women to have the same freedom as men to choose their paths in life.

That no other identities or roles were available to women is reflected in Woolf's "Professions for Women" speech. When Woolf suggests that all women kill their own Angels in the House, as she has in order to be a writer, she then asks her audience what they thought was left of "herself" once the obstacle to her becoming what she desired was removed. Woolf answers her own question:

Ah, but what is herself? I mean, what is a woman? I assure you, I do not know. I do not believe that you know. I do not believe that anybody can

know until she has expressed herself in all the arts and professions open to human skill. (Collected Essays II 286)

Clearly, Woolf realized that women of that time were doomed to live their lives as Angels in the House because the prejudices against women were too momentous to overcome. The arrangement also conveniently suited the patriarchy. The patriarchy's responsibility towards women was to protect and revere them, a small price compared to the unconditional service they received in return. Ironically, when Mrs. Ramsay is viewed in this light, it seems that Woolf thought women who aspired to live outside the box allowed by the patriarchy were better off dead; however, quite the opposite was true. Mrs. Ramsay's anger is the first step in her development of a personal identity; and in order to effect the change Woolf spoke about in her "Professions for Women" speech, she needed female readers to become angry that Mrs. Ramsay died or at least question why she died the way she did.

The Middle of the Pyramid: Male Anger

Because Woolf's personal anger in Lighthouse is directed at the ideology of the Angel in the House and because Mrs. Ramsay is the representative of that ideology, anger expressed by the characters is directed at her. She is hit with and is the depository of all anger. Anger expressed by the male characters is overt and, as stated above, is an outgrowth of Woolf's own anger at the ideology of the Angel and how that role allowed men to behave towards women. The male characters express angry displeasure about females either through dialogue or internal monologue. Their negative opinions are so ingrained in them that utterances against women are an accepted and everyday part of the

vocabulary of their society. The only character who takes exception to their prejudicial remarks is Lily Briscoe.

At the time Woolf wrote Lighthouse, the world was rapidly changing. The Women's movement had begun and World War I was looming. Obviously, men were affected by these changes; and understandably change often elicits fear in those it affects. Michael S. Kimmel's article, "Men's Responses to Feminism at the Turn of the Century," sheds light on those fears. He explains:

The rise of feminism in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century provoked a variety of responses . . . and prompted what we might call a crisis of masculinity . . . traditional gender definitions were challenged [and these] structural shifts affected microstructural relations, especially in the relationship between men and women in marriage and the family.

(262)

While Kimmel's article refers to the effects of feminism, the other change-producing factors listed above added to the fears and resultant anger men were experiencing. Woolf must have felt the effects of these changes, and no doubt they are reflected in her writing.

The four central male characters in Lighthouse-- Mr. Ramsay, Charles Tansley, William Bankes, and, to a lesser extent, Augustus Carmichael--can be analyzed through the lens of such male anger. The key to their anger is fear, fear that they will lose their positions of superiority in their society. In the context of Kimmel's claims, Woolf describes two fear-based aspects of gender relations in A Room of One's Own which negatively affect women. The first is Woolf's "looking-glass vision." She believed women serve as "looking glasses" that reflect men at twice their size. If men were to lose

their lofty positions in society and were no longer superior to women, then women “would cease to enlarge” them (A Room of One’s Own 36). Without women supplying this vital service, Woolf writes:

the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished. How is he to go on giving judgment, civilising natives, making laws, writing books, dressing up and speechifying at banquets, unless he can see himself at breakfast and at dinner at least twice the size he really is?
(Room 36)

Unfortunately, this is one of Mrs. Ramsay’s functions in the Ramsay household. She also supplies this service to most of the men who admire her. Woolf continues to explain the effect of this looking-glass theory on men. She claims these effects are “contributions to the dangerous and fascinating subject of the psychology of the other sex” (36). She writes:

The looking-glass vision is of supreme importance because it charges the vitality . . . Take it away and man may die, like the drug fiend deprived of his cocaine. Under the spell of that *illusion* [my emphasis] they start the day confident, braced, believing . . . I am the superior . . . and it is thus that they speak with that self-confidence, that self-assurance, which have had such profound consequences in public life and lead to such curious notes in the margin of the private mind. (Room 36)

The looking-glass vision is one function of the Angel in the House but how and why women were unwittingly used in such a way relates to their repressed anger and will be discussed later.

The second phenomenon Woolf discusses in A Room of One's Own explains the power their superiority affords men, and why, given this superiority, they fear losing it. After the fictional Professor Von X has expounded on the “mental, moral and physical inferiority of women” (32), the narrator wonders why he was so red faced and angry. She explains her confusion:

England is under the rule of a patriarchy. Nobody in their senses could fail to detect the dominance of the professor. He was the power and the money and the influence. He was the proprietor of the paper and its editor and sub-editor. He was the Foreign Secretary and the Judge. He was the cricketer; he owned the race-horses and the yachts. He was the director of the company that pays two hundred percent to its shareholders. He left millions to charities and colleges that were ruled by himself . . . with the exception of the fog, he seemed to control everything. Yet he was angry.
(33-34)

Woolf's narrator wonders why a man with such power and position, or any man for that matter, would speak so angrily about women whom he deems inferior and, therefore, powerless. She quickly answers her own question-- anger must be the “attendant sprite on power” (34). She equates the fear of the wealthy that the poor want to steal their money with the anger the professor vents against women and surmises that when the professor expresses his anger against women it is rooted in his fear of losing his superiority and power. In light of Kimmel's claims that the rise of feminism was altering gender relations between men and women at that time, it follows then that just as the rich

fear losing their wealth, men fear losing their privileged positions. The narrator also reasons:

when the professor insisted a little too emphatically upon the inferiority of women, he was concerned not with their inferiority, but with his own superiority. That was what he was protecting so hot-headedly and with too much emphasis. (34)

Although the manner in which males protected their superiority and power unfortunately affects women very negatively, it is nonetheless unconscious behavior which had been learned and fostered for centuries. Fear of losing it would, therefore, also be difficult to recognize. Unfounded fear often generates anger, an anger that cannot be properly directed. As often happens when anger arises, it is taken out on the weaker. In this instance, it is vented on those whom men perceive as threatening them—the women.

Although all the male characters exhibit such models of behavior at times, Mr. Tansley's and Mr. Ramsay's characters display more of them than the other two. Both need women to reflect them at twice their size and both are more concerned with their own superiority than with female inferiority. They make the women around them feel inferior by verbally abusing or belittling them in order to feel superior. Mr. Tansley, particularly, is verbally aggressive with his negative opinion of women, especially towards the rebellious Lily, when he exclaims several times, "Women can't write, women can't paint" (48, 86). He is threatened by Lily's independence and suffers the effects of the feminist movement as Kimmel describes in his article. No doubt a woman such as Lily threatens his budding manhood and confidence, and he responds angrily to that threat. He exhibits the two fear-based behaviors Woolf describes that manifest as

anger. While he does not express overt anger towards Mrs. Ramsay, as he does towards Lily, and is even taken in by her beauty, his attitude toward women, as reflected in some of his internal monologues, as discussed in more detail later, also show an ingrained prejudice.

Mrs. Ramsay thinks he is a nasty-tempered young man with “bony fingers” and who she claims says the most “disagreeable things” (5). He is also a “miserable specimen . . . all humps and hollows” (7). The Ramsay children call him the “little atheist” (5) and they complain that when they talk he always turns the conversation to himself. They don’t like his “point of view” (8) and their old, toothless dog bites him.

At the beginning of the novel, he immediately angers Mrs. Ramsay when he joins her husband in dashing six-year-old James’s hope that the family will go to the lighthouse the next day. Mrs. Ramsay thought “it was odious of him to rub this in and make James more disappointed” (5). Despite her irritation at his behavior towards her youngest son, she asks him to accompany her on an errand. In order to draw him into the false sense of her power (discussed later), she extols the “greatness of men’s intellect [and] the subjection of all wives . . . to their husband’s labors” (10-11). Tansley is exhilarated by Mrs. Ramsay’s intimate attention, and as she is reflecting him at twice his size he thinks, “[S]he was the most beautiful person he had ever seen. . . . for the first time in his life [he] felt an extraordinary pride . . . for he was walking with a beautiful woman” (14). Despite the fact that he had just been enraptured with Mrs. Ramsay, when they return home he nonetheless continues telling young James that there will be no trip to the lighthouse the next day.

While Mr. Tansley is not directly expressing anger towards Mrs. Ramsay, he has hurt her deeply by dashing her young son's hopes about going to the lighthouse the next day. Obviously he is an opportunist and is aligning himself with Mr. Ramsay, who had been telling the boy the same thing. Considering the intimate walk he had just taken with Mrs. Ramsay, if he valued her as a human being with feelings rather than an object of beauty, he would not have treated her child in that manner, since she had been quite obvious about the fact that she did not like that her husband was telling the boy the same thing. He could have found a more diplomatic way to please both Mr. *and* Mrs. Ramsay, but he chose to align himself with who he thought was the stronger and more powerful half of the duo. That choice suggests disregard of his most gracious hostess and hints at the fact that because he views her and all women as Angels in the House, he need not be overly concerned with her feelings. Angels are only concerned with others' feelings. In reality, though, he inspires anger in Mrs. Ramsay, and she thinks to herself that he is an "odious little man" (15) for continuing to tease her boy.

Later, at the dinner Mrs. Ramsay plans for the family and guests, Tansley begins expressing his anger towards women and overtly begins to display behavior that suggests he needs to feel superior to women. He starts degrading them in his internal monologue by thinking he was "not going to be condescended to by these silly women . . . They did nothing but talk, talk, talk, eat, eat, eat. It was the women's fault. Women made civilisation impossible with all their 'charm,' all their silliness" (85). His anger is directed at female Angels in the House in general, and Mrs. Ramsay is one of them. Behind Tansley's words is Woolf showing what men like Tansley really think about women, especially the Angel in the House and she is showing the manner in which the

ideology of the Angel in the House operates in polite society. He is polite to their faces, and even in awe of their beauty, but he believes they are inferior because of their silliness. That he finds them inferior also makes him feel superior. Though he is taken in by Mrs. Ramsay's angelic charm, he feels about her "something in particular that excited him and disturbed him for reasons which he could not give" (11). He is disturbed by and fears the power of the Angel.

Through internal monologue, he claims he likes Mrs. Ramsay but must nevertheless "assert himself" over her by directly repeating to her that there will be no trip to the lighthouse tomorrow. To feel superior, he must make Mrs. Ramsay inferior. He thinks to himself that one day he will talk about staying with the renowned Ramsay's and he will say "the woman bored one so . . . Of course Ramsay had dished himself by marrying a beautiful woman" (90). Again, the value of women is based on their beauty, an accident of fate, and determined by the patriarchy. Although he had no idea she had temporarily caught him in her alluring web, his behavior suggests an angry disregard for her.

Augustus Carmichael, whose "yellow cat's eyes ajar give no inkling of any inner thoughts or emotions whatsoever" (10) is more aware of people than any of the other characters in the novel. While he does not express overt anger towards Mrs. Ramsay, he nonetheless imposes negative energy on the pyramid of anger which threatens her. He is the only male character who does not exhibit fear-based anger; and he, despite his dearth of comments and seeming depth, offers more insight into Mrs. Ramsay than any other character. Even though he is not as vocal as the other characters, he nonetheless serves the important purpose of putting a chink in Mrs. Ramsay's Angel-in-the-House armor.

Jane Marcus writes, “She [Mrs. Ramsay] is idealized by poets, but Mr. Carmichael is not in the least taken in by her” (Art and Anger 242). Mr. Carmichael does not automatically respond to Mrs. Ramsay’s renowned beauty or pleasing manner as other men do, and she is bothered to distraction that she fails to move him. Because she does not elicit from him the same reverential response she does from other men, she begins to sense that something about her is amiss or, perhaps because she comments on her fading beauty, she is beginning to realize she needs something else to offer the world.

As discussed, my view of Mrs. Ramsay is that for many years she accepted her role as Angel in the House but for personal reasons wants to step beyond that role. Obviously, that decision does not randomly occur, so I believe Mr. Carmichael’s unconventional treatment of her is the beginning of her doubting that her world is not what it seems. Before Mr. Carmichael entered the picture, Mrs. Ramsay expressed doubts through her internal monologues about why her husband behaved as cruelly to their young son as he had and she also questioned whether she could have organized the household more efficiently than she had. This behavior of blame and self-doubt is part of the psychology of the Angel in the House. However, Mr. Carmichael’s dismissive attitude towards her is not within the realm of responses which she is accustomed to receiving, especially about her personal self, and this is the first time she registers negativity of this regard from an outside source, a source from where she should have received unconditional reverence. Although Mr. Carmichael put the chink in her armor, it will take many more similar instances of self-doubt before Mrs. Ramsay realizes the truth about her life. Until then, the obedient Angel in the House justifies Mr. Carmichael’s behavior by telling herself that he simply “did not trust her” because he

“had made an unfortunate marriage” (Lighthouse 40, 10). Here Woolf demonstrates the insidious nature of the Angel ideology. Not only does Mrs. Ramsay help perpetuate a stereotypical negative attitude towards women by blaming Mr. Carmichael’s wife for their failed marriage, she also does not consider that he may share the blame. Although she readily comments on his drug use and unkempt and lax behavior, she does not connect these qualities as having played a part in his marital problems.

According to Theresa L. Crater, Mr. Carmichael “sees through Mrs. Ramsay, who realizes he does. He alone sees her insistence on helping people as arising from her own selfishness, her desire to impose herself on others” (132). I agree with Crater that Mr. Carmichael *sees through* Mrs. Ramsay, which is why he upsets her so. However, I don’t believe he views her desire to help people as a selfish act. Although Woolf does not have Carmichael say or think that, Crater’s statement opens a space for speculation about what Carmichael may be thinking behind his *yellow cat’s eyes ajar*. His thought about her that “she was seductive but a little nervous” (10) offers a clue that he believes she may not be what she seems; and while her *nervousness* may be the result of his usual dismissal of her, it may also suggest her guilt about having doubts about herself. Perhaps he has heard her speak about her outside interests which are not *arising from her own selfishness*, as Crater believes, and have more to do with her desire to help reform the dairy system on the island on which they are vacationing.

William Bankes is yet another admirer of Mrs. Ramsay, and he uses her to reflect himself at twice his size. Crater believes “he offers his love as a tribute to her beauty” (132). Just hearing her voice on the phone causes him to utter, “Nature has but little clay . . . like that of which she moulded you” (29). His prolific accolades to her beauty

suggest guilt about what he really thinks of her marriage to his former best friend, and they mask his anger towards the woman he believes is responsible for Mr. Ramsay's need to "depend so much as he did upon people's praise" (23). He claims to envy Mr. Ramsay but finds astonishing:

that a man of his intellect [had divested] himself of all those glories of isolation and austerity which crowned him in youth to cumber himself definitely with . . . domesticities . . . [His family] gave him something . . . but they had also, his old friends could not but feel, destroyed something.
(22)

His statement may appear to be born out of jealousy that he had not married the alluring Mrs. Ramsay himself. However, when he recalls the day he realized Mr. Ramsay was in love with Mrs. Ramsay and compares his friend's protective feelings for her with that of a mother hen spreading her wings over her chicks, he diminishes their marriage to nothing more than a man protecting a woman, and that speaks loudly to his contempt and resentment for Mrs. Ramsay and women in general. Then, when he laments that his close friendship with Mr. Ramsay became practically non-existent through the years because of familial duties, he is registering resentment. Finally, his anger towards Mrs. Ramsay surfaces when he confesses that something was *destroyed*. No doubt, he blames his sense of abandonment by Mr. Ramsay, as well as regret for the loss of his friend's great mind, on his children and Mrs. Ramsay who bore them.

The drastic change in mood he exhibits at Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party shows that when he is occupied with his work, he forgets the allure of the looking glass. He appears nasty and petty, and he shows the superficiality of his feelings for Mrs. Ramsay. This in

turn is Woolf's way of saying that men know the role of the Angel in the House is a sham and that women are cajoled into playing it. The men do not actually revere these Angels; however, they profess female beauty and offer reverence in order to receive unconditional service from them.

During the party, Bankes's anger towards Mrs. Ramsay resurfaces. When he asks her if he should give his "love" to a mutual friend, Mrs. Ramsay replies, "No," because she had not seen the woman in many years (88). Mr. Bankes's retort that "People soon drift apart," is a deliberate slur, suggesting that it is her fault that he and Mr. Ramsay had drifted apart many years ago. Woolf allows the reader this insight because Bankes then prides himself on the fact that "*He* had not drifted apart" (88) [my emphasis].

Bankes's internal monologue also exposes his nasty temperament and imposes more weight on the pyramid of anger threatening Mrs. Ramsay. Because he would rather be working instead of attending Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party, he thinks that "It would have hurt her if he had refused to come. But it was not worth it for him" (88). His profuse testaments of love for Mrs. Ramsay soon dissolve when he selfishly prefers to work rather than attend the dinner his gracious hostess has planned. Sitting next to her he thinks, "At this moment her presence meant absolutely nothing to him; her beauty meant nothing to him . . . and he had nothing in the world to say to her" (89). His about-face reaction to Mrs. Ramsay is due to the fact that his attraction to her is rooted in the ideology promoted by the Angel in the House, that she is revered because of her beauty and self-sacrifice, and it symbolically shows the superficiality and hypocrisy of such a system of behavior on the part of both sexes. In reality, no one can revere an ideology because it has no tangible or living substance. When he claims he doesn't want to forget

that “quivering thing, the living thing” (29) in Mrs. Ramsay, he is suggesting that he needs to remind himself that she is a human being because to him she is only an inaccessible object of beauty. Therefore, Mr. Bankes had *nothing in the world to say to her*.

Mr. Bankes’s treatment of Mrs. Ramsay as an inaccessible object of beauty is explained in Beth Rigel Daugherty’s article, “‘There She Sat’: The Power of the Feminist Imagination in To The Lighthouse.” Daugherty describes the vicious circle of behavior both sexes were caught in and offers an explanation as to why women blindly accepted the thankless role of Angel in the House. She writes:

Woolf indicates the mythic origins of the Angel in the House role: the Virgin Mary. The Angel in the House and the story of the Virgin grow out of the same equation: reverence paid for with the self’s denial. Mrs. Ramsay’s extreme self-surrender, for example, earns her the patriarchy’s reverence . . . The Mary myth thus suggests that to be revered, women must be nonfemale, nonhuman” (292).

Gilbert and Gubar describe this *nonhuman* female form as “Otherness,” and claim that women “can appear from certain points of view to stand both under and over (but really simply outside of) the sphere of culture’s hegemony” (19). They suggest that in literature women are associated with “subversive feminine symbols [such as] witches, evil eye, menstrual pollution” (19), as well as with “feminine symbols of transcendence [such as] mother goddesses, merciful dispensers of salvation” (19), and angels. In a patriarchal society, women appear on a plane either above or below men but never on an equal footing with them (17-27). According to Daugherty, women accept their positions as

Angels in the House because “reverence conceals the damaging” (292) effects of self-sacrifice; and reverence given is a small price to pay especially when an Angel in the House reflects a man at twice his size.

Mr. Ramsay’s intellectual pursuits occupy his great mind and his time. He is often observed by other characters pacing up and down the yard along the hedge and loudly reciting poetry. He is also the character that interacts least with others. The root of his anger is that he fears he is a failure and probably blames his wife and children for it. He doesn’t believe he is as good a philosopher and writer as he had hoped to become. He knows his latest book has not been as popular as his others. His fear takes the form of anger and self-doubt.

Although he has nothing to be angry at Mrs. Ramsay about, she is often the depository of his angry self-doubt. Her Angel role dictates that she take on his emotions without complaint or resentment. She is his looking glass and she reflects him at more than double his size. During a bout of uncertainty, he suddenly needs his wife’s sympathy and wanders into the kitchen from the yard. She is reading The Fisherman’s Wife to young James, but he stands before her. “He was a failure,” he says, commanding her to assure him of his “genius” (37). She braces herself for the onslaught of his anger.

Woolf registers this anger as a kind of figurative rape:

into [her] delicious fecundity, this fountain and spray of life, the fatal sterility of the male plunged itself, like a beak of brass, barren and bare . . . Charles Tansley thought him the greatest meta-physician of the time, she said. But he must have more than that. He must have sympathy. He must be assured. (37)

While he is not specifically angry with her, he vents his generalized anger on her because her role as Angel in the House demands that she accept his anger. She registers guilt about his failure and further justifies his treatment of her by blaming herself. She thinks, “He would have written better books if he had not married” (69).

Mr. Ramsay most often expresses anger through his internal monologue. If self-doubt is not the subject of his thoughts, it is either the toll his family life has taken on him or the fact that he would have been more successful if he hadn’t married and had eight children. He never discusses these issues with Mrs. Ramsay, but she still suffers the effects of these negative emotions. The self-sacrificing Angel in the House unquestioningly takes blame, internalizes the anger, and feels guilty for making her husband a failure.

Mr. Ramsay also needs to feel superior to his wife and assert his authority. At the beginning of the novel, despite the fact that he has repeated to young James that it will rain the next day because the barometer has fallen and the wind is due west, Mrs. Ramsay still wants to know why he knows it will rain. Her questioning his facts exasperates him. His temper flares and he thinks, “The extraordinary irrationality of her remark, the folly of women’s minds enraged him. He had ridden through the valley of death . . . and now she flew in the face of facts, made his children hope what was utterly out of the question, in effect, told lies” (31). To punctuate his thought, he stamps his foot and says, “Damn you.” Here Woolf is exposing Mr. Ramsay’s verbal abuse of his wife in order to demonstrate the hypocrisy of the ideology both he and Mrs. Ramsay accept as victims of their society. He fails to realize that women’s minds were not full of *folly* because many of them had figuratively *ridden through the valley of death* during childbirth.

When Mr. Ramsay stamps his foot because she has questioned his knowledge of the weather and defied his authority, he turns his looking-glass wife into an inferior object that he must overpower with facts. Perhaps her mind enrages him, but when his confidence is low, her full-of-folly mind is more than capable of assuaging his fears. He could not see that at times human emotions do not follow rational lines and that they may even trump facts. It was cruel to dash his son's hopes and that is the heart of the disagreement between him and Mrs. Ramsay. He is angry because she refuses to acquiesce about the rain and fails to understand that she is refusing to hurt her son. His superior position seems to have negated any empathy he should have felt for her or his child.

At the end of "The Window" chapter he asks her, "Will you not tell me just once that you love me?" (124). She remains silent and only smiles because she thinks he knows that she does. He does not respond angrily, but the fact that he wants her to tell him *just once* suggests that she has never told him she loves him. I believe this is the key to Mrs. Ramsay's character and will be discussed later.

Of the four characters, Tansley and Bankes are alike in their negativity towards women. While Tansley overtly expresses his negative views, Bankes covertly expresses his feelings through interior monologue. Perhaps Tansley's youth permits him to speak so honestly and nastily; were he older, he might learn to act as Bankes does and temper his opinions in order to be liked. Though Tansley angers Mrs. Ramsay and Bankes does not, she is affected by the anger they both harbor towards women. Carmichael's silence throws a monkey wrench into Mrs. Ramsay's world, and Mr. Ramsay vents anger about

his lack of success on his Angel in the House. In all cases, Mrs. Ramsay is the main depository of male anger.

The Tip of the Pyramid: Mrs. Ramsay's Anger

Mrs. Ramsay, the model of perfection, the self-sacrificing Angel in the House, has been the subject of much discussion for decades. In a 1927 review of To The Lighthouse for the Spectator, Rachel A. Taylor writes that Mrs. Ramsay possesses “the deathless grace, regality, and sweetness of legendary women. She is . . . versed in all tender ways of loving She bewitches you.” Taylor also notes that the character is “lost in an endless sad reverie: she feels remote and lonely . . . she is sorrowful” (Critical Heritage 198). Taylor’s description of Mrs. Ramsay is reminiscent of Woolf’s concept of the Angel in the House, a notion she did not introduce until 1931 in her “Professions for Women” speech—Lighthouse was released in 1927.

Orlo Williams also reviewed To The Lighthouse in the Monthly Criterion in 1927. His description of Mrs. Ramsay is similar to Taylor’s. He writes:

she is a lovely vision, as unsubstantial, as vivid, as fleeting, as eternal, as past, as immortal . . . beautiful and impressive . . . Mrs. Ramsay wore herself out giving, and giving, to her husband, yet she knew his faults, and she worshipped him as her mortal superior . . . yet he crushed the life out of [her] by his demands on her emotions. (Critical Heritage 203)

In his review Williams questions Woolf’s handling of Mrs. Ramsay’s death, remarking that it was unexpected, quick, and without explanation. He wonders why Woolf chose to insert the passage about her death between brackets. While many early reviewers also

commented on Woolf's narrative style as well as the content of the novel, most referred to Mrs. Ramsay in terms of her beauty, duty to family, and selflessness.

After the advent of feminist literary criticism, opinions about Mrs. Ramsay have ranged from the view that she perfectly inhabits the Angel in the House role to that she is a controlling, spoiled woman. Critics Joan Lidoff and Sara Ruddick view her as a "passive, nurturing mother" (Forbes 484). Jane Lilienfield sees her as a passive figure and a victim of her society. To these descriptions, Mitchell Leaska adds that she is also "a meddling, self-seeking, possessive affection-monger" (Leaska 3). Glenn Pedersonn sees her as a villain (585), and Shannon Forbes writes, "she is a victim of her marriage and of the Victorian Angel role she feels forced to enact in order to gain acceptance" (485). Many agree that she is a conflicted character.

One of the most negative descriptions of her was written by James Naremore, who claims that "Mrs. Ramsay, perhaps more than anyone else in Virginia Woolf's fiction, is identified with relinquishing of the self. She is always described as wearing gray or black; she has no first name; her past is obscure" (144). He adds that she is unable to argue effectively with her husband and her passivity forces her to say things she does not believe.

More recent criticism, especially since the nineteen nineties, has focused on ambivalence in Woolf's novels and that assessment includes opinions of Mrs. Ramsay as a deeply divided character. Theresa L. Crater notes a duality in Mrs. Ramsay, claiming that because she is aware of her role as Woman, she is "self-conscious" (127) about it and must retreat to her private sanctuary, which is referred to as "elsewhere" (123), in order to free herself of the repressive life she leads.

In “When Sometimes She Imagined Herself Like Her Mother: The Contrasting Responses of Cam and Mrs. Ramsay To The Role of The Angel in the House,” Shannon Forbes also recognizes a duality in Mrs. Ramsay and takes that concept a step further by using Judith Butler’s concept of “performance,” in which “meaning arises and is constituted through performance” (465). Forbes claims that when analyzing all characters in To The Lighthouse, meaning is found in distinguishing “between roles they chose to enact and the silent, internal desires they possess” (465). She believes that Mrs. Ramsay is conflicted because she “has ambitions and desires to directly enter the public sphere” (467). Forbes adds that “Mrs. Ramsay enacts the *role* of the Angel in the House when she is around others” (469) in order to gain acceptance. In other words, Mrs. Ramsay chooses to *perform* her role as Angel in the House because her desires reach far beyond her doorstep. I agree that her desires to enter the public sphere cause conflict but I do not think that wanting a life outside her home causes her to perform the role of Angel in the House. Rather, I believe her conflict arises when she realizes that nothing in life is permanent, her beauty or her role as mother to her eight children; and she decides she wants to accomplish something of her own that *is* permanent and that includes service in the public sphere. I also believe she is not aware that she, or any woman, has a role to play because her actions, behavior, and beliefs were programmed into her psyche when she was young and that programming did not include questioning her role as a female member of the patriarchy.

As an Angel in the House, Mrs. Ramsay is caught in several vicious circles. One is that she blindly accepts her role because she has learned to repress anger and that repression ensures that she cannot realize that she is living an unfulfilling life of self-

sacrifice and self-denial. To label the condition of her psyche simply as that of denial suggests that given the right insight, she might be free to live a fulfilled life. However, due to the centuries of negative attitudes and prejudices that have been heaped upon women and the resultant repressed lives they have led, to label her, or any Angel in the House, as being in denial is an understatement. Mrs. Ramsay is rather in a state of never having realized that she had the option of questioning anything about her life. The insidious ideology of the Angel in the House ensured that the thinking of all women under its control was programmed to serve others.

Anger or repression of anger plays a particularly important part in the ideology of the Angel in the House because, as discussed, ingrained in women was the idea that expressions of anger were unacceptable and to be discouraged on all counts. Mrs. Ramsay was obviously a victim of repressed anger. The damaging effects of this repression become evident if Freud's beliefs about anger are applied to her character. In Art and Anger, Jane Marcus uses Freud's claim that "Anger is a form of primary narcissism, a result of the ego's first struggle to maintain itself" to assert that "self-preservation is the source of anger" (124). If human beings need anger for protection and for the development of the ego, then we can assume that Mrs. Ramsay never developed an identity of her own or defense mechanisms that would arouse her suspicions or incite anger in her when she was mistreated. Without defenses she would trust that the world has her best interest at heart. Laboring under such a flawed self-image, she easily accepts the only role available to women at that time. She also does not question life's injustices, and she eagerly makes the requirement of self-sacrifice her duty. As discussed, a second vicious circle in which Mrs. Ramsay is caught is

unconditional self-sacrifice in return for reverence paid by the patriarchy. She gives tirelessly of herself and is merely thanked and admired for her efforts. A third vicious circle, and the most insidious, is the false sense of power she believes is afforded her by her beauty. Mrs. Ramsay is renowned for her beauty. She radiates upon entering a room and uses her physical appearance in order to gain power over those around her. In the end she realizes her beauty is valued more in the realm of the Angel in the House and is of little value to her when she wishes to take on a different role.

Unearthing Mrs. Ramsay's anger is difficult because it is buried so deeply. Although her anger throughout her appearance in the novel mainly concerns minor household issues and is expressed in her internal monologues, it amasses as she continues to question situations and the people around her. Once she realizes the truth of her life, and experiences her anger, she dies. Before that happens, she wavers between acting as an Angel in the House (making excuses for the bad behavior of others and blaming herself when others are at fault) and daring to question the injustices and inequities she encounters on a daily basis. For example, at the beginning of the novel, when Mr. Tansley has irritated Mrs. Ramsay because he said "disagreeable things, [she] admitted; it was odious of him to rub this in, and make James still more disappointed; but at the same time, she would not let them [her children] laugh at him" (5). Despite the fact that Tansley was disliked by everyone and had hurt her child's feelings and her own in turn, she squelches her anger and refuses to allow him or any man be disparaged because:

she had the whole of the other sex under her protection; for reasons she could not explain . . . for an attitude towards herself which no woman could fail to feel or to find agreeable, something trustful, childlike,

reverential; which an old woman could take from a young man without loss of dignity, and woe betide the girl—pray Heaven it was none of her daughters!—who did not feel the worth of it, and all that it implied, to the marrow of her bones! (6)

Here Woolf not only makes Mrs. Ramsay the representative Angel in the House, she also demonstrates how women were manipulated into swallowing anger, their pride, and self-respect in favor of male attention and compliments, even reverence. She also shows that this behavior is reproduced in their daughters.

Another example of her excuse-making ability occurs after the scene in which Mrs. Ramsay disagrees with Mr. Ramsay that it will rain tomorrow, which means young James will not be able to go to the lighthouse. He simply says, “Damn you” (32) to her. Her temper understandably flares, but not only does she quickly suppress it, her programmed thinking takes her one step further:

To pursue with such astonishing lack of consideration for other people’s feelings, to rend the thin veils of civilisation so wantonly, so brutally, was to her so horrible an outrage of human decency that, without replying, dazed and blinded, she bent her head as if to let the pelt of jagged hail, the drench of dirty water, bespatter her unrebuked. (32)

Here Woolf registers the physical manifestation of suppression when she writes that Mrs. Ramsay was *dazed and confused* by her anger. More significantly, when she writes that the character bends her head as if to let *jagged hail* and *dirty water bespatter* her, Woolf is suggesting that Mrs. Ramsay is punishing herself for the digression of her emotions.

When Mr. Ramsay decides to “step over and ask the Coastguards” (32) about the weather, Mrs. Ramsay reverts to other learned behaviors: “There was nobody she revered as she revered him . . . She was not good enough to tie his shoe strings” (32). Obvious is that he has exhibited similar behavior before and that she copes with it as an obedient Angel in the House. His concession that he will *ask the Coastguards* is not necessary because she only wanted him to stop telling James it would rain.

Besides the fact that her repressed anger allows her to make excuses for the bad behaviors of others, it also operates in such a way that she blames herself when she is not at fault. Mr. Ramsay’s latest book is not as successful as his others had been, but Mrs. Ramsay will not let him think she knows. She behaves as if he is successful and is sought after for his great mind. She claims, “He would have written better books if he had not married” (69) and knows he thinks the same. She takes the blame for his failures because she labors to ensure that he does not know that she or others know the truth.

While the reader is privy to Mrs. Ramsay’s anger through her internal monologues, she experiences moments of clarity or insight into her life that, when viewed together, add up to the scene when she actually experiences that anger for herself. One such moment of clarity which could be interpreted as her questioning her life because it is slipping by is when she is sitting with James and he is cutting out pictures. She muses while listening to the children playing cricket outside and touching James’s hair as he looks for another object to cut out:

like a ghostly roll of drums remorselessly beat the measure of life, made one think of the destruction of the island and its engulfment in the sea, and warned her whose day had slipped past in one quick doing after another

that it was all ephemeral as a rainbow—this sound which had been obscured and concealed under the other sounds suddenly thundered hollow in her ears and made her look up with an impulse of terror. (16)

Here Mrs. Ramsay is registering concern that her life is in its final stage and she is being swallowed. The sound that is *obscured and concealed* is possibly her own voice or anger which terrifies her. Another moment of clarity occurs after Mr. Ramsay has figuratively raped her and she is reading to James the Fisherman's Wife. She claims that beside the usual exhaustion that had overcome her body she also felt:

some faintly disagreeable sensation with another origin . . . nor did she let herself put into words her dissatisfaction when she realized . . . she did not like, even for a second, to feel finer than her husband; and further, could not bear not being entirely sure, when she spoke to him, of the truth of what she said. (39)

In this passage, Mrs. Ramsay experiences uncomfortable physical feelings and admits to herself that she is not sure if the things she has to tell her husband about himself are true. In other words, she may be lying to him. Important here is that while she would never allow Mr. Ramsay to believe he was a failure that she is now questioning the truth in what she tells him signals a change in her thinking process. At the point that she finishes this thought, Mr. Carmichael, who, as discussed, has put a chink in her armor, passes by, redoubling her feelings about the “inadequacy of human relationships” (40). That he has struck a chord of anger in her is evident when she claims that “some demon in her made it necessary” (40) for her to call out to him. She knows this will irritate him. While she usually expresses anger through her internal monologue, here she gives voice to her

irritation. He is probably the first man who is not taken in by her beauty, which I believe is one of the many situations contributing to her questioning of her life.

While more building blocks to her beginning to question her life appear in the novel, Mrs. Ramsay registers those that lead to her dissatisfaction with her life as an Angel in the House. As discussed, an external trigger is Mr. Carmichael who confuses Mrs. Ramsay when he is not bowled over by her charm and beauty. I believe his dismissal of her is the beginning of her realization that her life is not as perfect as she believes it to be because, as discussed, it is the first external negative about her personal character that bothers her. Another external force is Lily Briscoe. She is the character who makes Mrs. Ramsay realize that her life would have more value if she had *something* of her own. Lily's *something* is her art.

Although Mrs. Ramsay encourages Lily to marry and insists that she and William Bankes should tie the knot, at the beginning of the novel she claims that Lily, "would never marry; one could not take her painting very seriously; she was an independent little creature, and Mrs. Ramsay liked her for it" (17). Lily's questioning the necessity of marriage coupled with the fact that she would easily forgo the institution for her painting (50) shows Mrs. Ramsay that alternate lifestyles are available to women and that not every woman's desires includes taking "care of some man or other" (7). Lily's reluctance to marry enables Mrs. Ramsay to realize that marriage is not a requirement for a woman's fulfillment.

During Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party, she compares Lily to Minta Doyle, who has taken Mrs. Ramsay's advice and has become engaged to Paul Rayley. Mrs. Ramsay muses, "Of the two, Lily at forty would be the better. There was in Lily a thread of

something; a flare of something; something of her own which Mrs. Ramsay liked very much indeed” (104). Although Mrs. Ramsay encouraged all women to marry and have children, she is coming to realize that because Lily has *something of her own*, she need not marry, and the fact that Mrs. Ramsay likes Lily, despite the younger woman’s choice to be different, shows that Mrs. Ramsay is open to ideas that oppose hers. Though Mrs. Ramsay has nothing of her own as does Lily with her art, what she *does* have is her beauty, her children, and her marriage, which she values above everything else. Her beauty affords her power and her children and husband give her life purpose and meaning. These are the assets of *Angels in the House*; and when she realizes their impermanence, she decides she wants *something of her own*, something permanent. Before the idea of permanence gels in her mind, several programmed ideas must be broken down and she must see “with her short-sighted eyes” (30) that while what she values in life is precious, none is hers forever. However, Lily’s art and her husband’s books will last forever.

Mrs. Ramsay’s belief about her beauty is one of her first behaviors to break down. Although her physical appearance is her scepter, she comments several times that her looks are fading: “When she looked in the glass and saw her hair grey, her cheek sunk, at fifty, she thought, possibly she might have managed things better—her husband; money; his books” (6). Later she wonders, “Was there nothing? nothing but an incomparable beauty which she lived behind” (28). She also feels:

the sense of her own beauty becoming, as it did so seldom, present to her
 . . . she could not help knowing it, the torch of her beauty, she carried it
 erect into any room that she entered, and after all, veil it as she might, and

shrink from the monotony of bearing that it imposed on her, her beauty was apparent. (41)

Evident is that she is aware of her beauty because men praise her for it. She realizes her beauty also affords her power. She does not realize that although men truly believe she is beautiful because beauty was a virtue in the Victorian world, the power it affords her has little value against patriarchal prejudices and the ideologies that control the Angel in the House. Men are enthralled by her beauty, and because Angels in the House reflect men at twice their size, those women who truly were beautiful were put on higher pedestals than those Angels who were not as attractive. Deep in Mrs. Ramsay's soul, however, I believe she does not feel that beauty is an asset worthy of the praise showered on her because it is not something she earned and that is a reason she eventually wishes to accomplish something outside the home, outside herself. Beauty is more an accident of birth, which is why Mr. Bankes comments, "she's no more aware of her beauty than a child" (29). She understands the value of beauty to those around her, however, when she comments on her daughter Prue, "she took one's breath away" (58). She urges all her daughters to capitalize on their beauty, but when she looks into the mirror she sees "with her short sighted eyes" (30) that it is not permanent.

Mrs. Ramsay's other valuable asset is her children, who give her life purpose and meaning. She laments their impermanence when she thinks, "She never wanted James to grow a day older! or Cam either. These two she would have liked to keep for ever just as they were . . . never to see them grow up into long-legged monsters. Nothing made up for the loss" (58). Again, she laments their growing up during her dinner party when she spies them sitting in an assembled row and realizes that Prue was no longer a child, "She

was just beginning, just moving, just descending” (109). She decides in her mind that her daughter will be “Much happier because [she is] my daughter” (109). Curiously, Woolf writes that Mrs. Ramsay corrects herself. “[S]he meant,” Woolf writes, “her own daughter must be happier than other people’s daughters” (109). Perhaps not as important as what Mrs. Ramsay thinks is that Woolf adds the Freudian slip in the character’s thoughts, allowing the reader a valuable insight into Mrs. Ramsay’s thought patterns as an Angel in the House. Ideas enter Mrs. Ramsay’s mind, and when they are not in line with what an Angel in the House should think, she immediately discounts or contradicts them with a programmed thought that is more correct for the role. I believe these irregular thought patterns suggest she is questioning her world by allowing snippets of the truth, which had been repressed for many years, to slip through. If Woolf was not attempting to inform with these thought patterns they would not be there. They particularly demonstrate Woolf’s method of deflecting anger while calling into question patriarchal ideals. Her method of deflection works on a deeper level as well: while on the surface she is showing Mrs. Ramsay’s lament that her children are growing up, on a deeper level, she is offering insight into thought patterns which show the disjointed manner in which an Angel in the House thinks. Mrs. Ramsay’s disjointed thought patterns represent repressed anger.

Her lament about her children growing up, while a natural emotion for most women, is especially devastating to an Angel in the House because caring for children is a major activity. For Mrs. Ramsay, who wants to be useful in many ways, losing that part of her daily routine as a mother is devastating.

An example of Mrs. Ramsay's disjointed thought patterns occurs while she is finishing reading the Fisherman's Wife to James. While reading aloud that the wife in the story says to her husband, "if you won't be King, I will," (56), not so coincidentally she recalls that she was once called domineering and interfering (much like the fisherman's wife who dared to want power). She muses that she is neither, that she does not try to impress, but vacillates, claiming she could be forceful about certain subjects such as:

hospitals and drains and the dairy. About things like that she did feel passionately, and would, if she had had the chance, have liked to take people by the scruff of their necks and make them see. No hospital on the whole island. It was a disgrace. Milk delivered at your door in London positively brown with dirt. It should be made illegal. A model dairy and a hospital up here—these two things she would have liked to do, herself. But how? With all these children? When they were older, then perhaps she would have time; when they were all in school. (57-58)

Here Mrs. Ramsay is bothered that people may conflate her with the fisherman's wife, who is punished for wanting power. She claims she is not *domineering*, meaning she does not want power, which is not the same as her feeling passionate about *hospitals and drains and the dairy* and wishing to fix them. While she knows she cannot overstep her bounds by wanting power, she does not think it would be improper for her to help fix these kinds of social problems. She is naïve in thinking that she would be allowed to do such work.

In the beginning of the novel she does charity work in town, as did many Victorian women, she but hopes that she "would cease to be a private woman whose

charity was half a sop to her own indignation, half a relief to her own curiosity, and become what with her untrained mind she greatly admired, an investigator, elucidating the social problem” (9). She obviously had ambitions outside the home, had thought about it, and thought it would be acceptable. Of course, her thought processes dictate that her ideas about ambition are quashed as quickly as they arise. She is programmed to repress not only anger, but also any ideas outside the box of Angel in the House behavior. That is why after she expresses interest in the dairy system, she immediately claims she cannot bear to see James get one day older.

Again, Woolf is working on two levels here, showing that Mrs. Ramsay is attempting to think beyond her role by toying with the idea of finding something tangible and permanent in her life, something that her husband has in his books and Lily has in her art, and at the same time demonstrating how the ideology of the Angel in the House clamps down on the mind and clamps it shut. Mrs. Ramsay vacillates several more times after that scene, reverting back to the Angel mode of thinking. She claims she wants more children because her youngest, James, is getting older, but that she cannot say that because it “angered her husband that she should say that” (58-9), then she defiantly thinks “Still, it was true” (59), then she continues with the fact that Mr. Ramsay calls her “pessimistic” (59). From justifying that she is *pessimistic*, because she is more exposed to human worries than her husband, she thinks about how she justifies her life and that she shares those feelings with no one. Immediately, she thinks life “rather sinister again” (60). She wonders if she unduly pressured Minta to marry Paul Rayley and dares to think “it were an escape for her too, to say that people must marry; people must have children”

(60). In the space of one internal monologue Woolf has Mrs. Ramsay questioning and vacillating between thoughts, proving she is a confused woman.

Later that day, Mrs. Ramsay comes to a stark realization about her third valuable asset, her husband. She admires his lean physique and thinks the years have not been unkind to him. After a tender exchange, she tells him she guessed that he was thinking “he would have written better books if he had not married [and he said] he was not complaining . . . She knew he had nothing whatever to complain of” (69-70). After he kisses her hand, she thinks:

How strange it was that being convinced, as he was, of all sorts of horrors, seemed not to depress him, but to cheer him. Was it not odd, she reflected? Indeed he seemed to her sometimes made differently from other people, born blind, deaf, and dumb, to the ordinary things, but to the extraordinary things, with an eye like an eagle’s. His understanding often astonished her. But did he notice the flowers? No. Did he notice the view? No. Did he even notice his own daughter’s beauty . . . And his habit of talking aloud, or saying poetry aloud, was growing on him, she was afraid; for sometimes it was awkward. (70)

While her words may appear to be the musings of any woman who has been married for a long time, that she would give voice to such critical thoughts about her husband signals that she has begun to accept and own her anger about his getting older, about his insensitive behavior and attitudes towards people and life, and about their marriage. No doubt, he has always been some shade of the character she describes, but in light of the other revelations Mrs. Ramsay has made about her beauty and children, her honest

assessment of her husband comes as no surprise and completes her inventory of the state of what she values most in life.

That same evening, Mrs. Ramsay takes her usual place at the dinner table where one of the parties she is famous for has just begun. That her musings of the past few days have begun to take their toll is obvious when she wonders, “But what have I done with my life?” (82) All that she values in life is assembled under that one roof in that dining room with her, and she takes another inventory of what she sees. Looking across the table at Mr. Ramsay, she cannot understand “[H]ow she had ever felt any emotion or affection for him. She had a sense of being past everything, through everything, out of everything” (83); and then she observes “There was no beauty anywhere” (83). These statements signal that the questioning stage about the doubts she has about her life is gaining momentum.

The party progresses and she encourages her guests to join in on her musings about love. At her insistence, Paul Rayley has proposed to Minta and now Mrs. Ramsay is anxious to match up Lily with Mr. Bankes. The guests ignore her cues, and Mr. Bankes brings up the subject of that “liquid the English call coffee” (103). Mrs. Ramsay eagerly joins in the conversation. She speaks about “real butter and clean milk [and] the iniquity of the English dairy system, and in what state milk was delivered at the door” (103). When she is about to prove her charges and has gone into the matter, one at a time members of her family and her friends laugh. She stops speaking and does not finish explaining her plan because:

all round the table, beginning with Andrew in the middle like a fire leaping from tuft to tuft of furze, her children laughed; her husband

laughed; she was laughed at, fire-encircled, and forced to veil her crest,
dismount her batteries. (103)

Always the angelic hostess, she deftly deflects the stinging dismissal to Mr. Bankes and immediately crams her mind with musings about Lily's need to marry William Bankes, about how she had mistakenly sat people in the wrong places, about how they would picnic the next day, and other subjects so that she would not dwell on the truth about what their laughter actually meant. The devastating behavior of those she believes revere her happened in a very few seconds but when combined with thoughts about her fading beauty and children growing up, she cannot face what it all means. When she had thought about *hospitals and drains and the dairy system* before, her thoughts were passionate, but curiously, now, she does not think about being laughed at or make excuses for the insult, or blame herself for their behavior because she has begun to feel anger and the emotion is addling her *untrained mind* and making her speechless.

Mrs. Ramsay did not include Lily as one of the insulters and adds, "Lily anyhow agrees with me" (103-4). She then discerns "in Lily a thread of something; a flare of something; something of her own which [she] liked very much indeed, but no man would" (104). Here, in the space of those minutes since she has been laughed at and is, no doubt, trying to repress the uncomfortable scene and her anger, Mrs. Ramsay makes two leaps. As discussed, she has realized that Lily does not need to marry because she has her art. Now she is not only allying herself with an independent thinking woman and speaking her mind in public, but she is also demonstrating thinking processes beyond those of Angels in the House because she has admitted to herself that she likes a quality

in a woman that men would not. Significant here is that she does not find an excuse for such independent and subversive thought.

After more polite conversation, Mrs. Ramsay realizes she had been “keeping guard over the dish of fruit . . . jealously hoping that nobody would touch it” (108). She runs her gaze over each piece of fruit, noting the colors and shapes. The still-life scene gives her a sense of serenity until “a hand reached out, took a pear, and spoilt the whole thing” (109). The fruit bowl symbolizes the permanent *something* she is searching for. That it was *spoilt* suggests that what she will never have anything permanent. Even if no one had taken a pear from the perfect picture, the fruit would have eventually rotted anyway. That she chooses to focus on something that is perishable suggests that all the things she values are perishable, her beauty, children, and marriage and her passion about the English dairy system was not correct either. Though she has come to realize many things about her life, it is too late. Mrs. Ramsay is now caught in limbo between her place as Angel in the House with all that entails and her desire to have something of her own, something permanent. The seed had been planted. Now there was no going back. Mrs. Ramsay is nearing the precipice now, the place Woolf describes in her “Profession for Women” speech after she had killed the Angel in the House and asked, *now what?* Where are women who desire something more to go? More importantly how should they go about doing that when attitudes and prejudices against women are so strong that the mere mention of it causes peals of laughter from one’s loved ones? How does a woman gather the courage to step outside her door when her ideas are defeated at the doorstep?

As the party breaks up, her thoughts take on an ethereal quality. The guests’ voices sound in her ears, “very strangely, as if they were voices at a service in a

cathedral” (110); and as she slips further away in mind, the scene foreshadows her mysterious death. Her husband recites lines from a Charles Isaac Elton poem. “Come out and climb the garden path, / Luriana Lurilee, / The China rose is all abloom and buzzing with the / yellow bee” (110); and she registers his melancholy tone. Mrs. Ramsay thinks the words “sounded as if they were floating like flowers on water out there, cut off from them all, as if no one had said them, but they had come into existence of themselves” (110). He recites more lines, “And all the lives we ever lived and all the lives to be are full of trees and changing leaves” (110). Mrs. Ramsay cannot understand the words because they “seemed to be spoken by her own voice, outside her self, saying quite easily and naturally what had been in her mind the whole evening while she said different things” (110). She forces herself to stand, and Mr. Carmichael holds the door open for her to exit the room. He bows to her as she passes him and “without knowing why, she felt that he liked her better than he had ever done before” (111). Mr. Ramsay recognizes his wife’s absent mood and chants to her, hoping to draw her back to him in order that she will assuage the pain of his own existence. He needs her to tell him he is not a failure. The poem entices her to explore spring with him, as they had when they were young, but she is like the *flowers on water out there, cut off from them all*. She knows her time to leave the room has come when she hears *all the lives we ever lived are full of trees and changing leaves* because tonight her life has changed forever. She stands to approach the precipice where she will face the courage of her convictions. Not coincidentally, Mr. Carmichael, the man who was instrumental in planting doubt in her head, ushers her out of the world she knows.

When she leaves the dining room, the place where she reigned over her kingdom and had created laughter and light, she will ascend the stairs, enter her children's room and then enter another room where she encounters Mr. Ramsay. In these separate locations she faces her anger and internalizes it. But before she enters that next phase of awareness, she must pause to remember the tentative beauty and happiness she can never return to. She thinks:

It was necessary now to carry everything a step further. With her foot on the threshold she waited a moment longer in a scene which was vanishing even as she looked, and then, as she . . . left the room, it changed, it shaped itself differently; it had become, she knew, giving one last look at it over her shoulder, already the past (111).

The shape that had *changed* was hers when she crossed the threshold of the room and symbolically entered another dimension of life. The sense she felt earlier of *being past everything, through everything, out of everything*, became a reality in that instant.

Vanishing, as the laughter still rang in her ears, are her naïve hopes that she could have worked to reform the dairy system. She also realizes that her beauty has faded, which means she no longer has power over people, that her children are leaving her, and that her marriage is not happy. All of that flashed before her *short-sighted eyes* in *that one last look over her shoulder*.

Upon “right[ing] herself after the shock of the event” (113), she ascends the stairs to the children's room and feels:

rather inclined just for a moment to stand still after all that chatter, and pick out one particular thing, the thing that mattered; to detach

it; separate it off, clear it of all the emotions and odds and ends of things; and so hold it before her. (112-13)

Her ascent symbolizes that she is reaching a higher level of consciousness, one where she will eventually face her anger. She assures herself that all under her roof that night will for “however long they lived, come back to this night . . . this house; and to her too” (113).

Upon entering the room where she expects to find James and Cam fast asleep, she instead finds them both awake because the boar’s head that is nailed to the wall is scaring Cam again. Cam says that the shadows cast by the horns were “branching at her all over the room [and that] it was a horrid thing” (114). James screamed if anyone touched it. He liked it there on the wall. Their mother, now an exposed raw nerve, tries to calm them both. The ugly skull is stuck fast to the wall; and because Mrs. Ramsay can find nothing with which to cover the monstrosity, she removes the green shawl from her shoulders that Mr. Ramsay had earlier put around them, and then winds her scarf “round the skull, round and round and round, and then she came back to Cam and laid her head almost flat on the pillow beside Cam’s and said how lovely it looked now” (115). She tells her potential Angel in the House, her daughter, to think of a “mountain, a bird’s nest, a garden” (115) instead of the ugly old pig’s head. James asks if there will be a trip tomorrow to the lighthouse, and she says, “No.” As she leaves the room she reaches around a shoulder for her shawl and remembers “she had wrapped it around the boar’s skull” (115).

Conventional interpretations of the boar’s head skull are that it represents the brutality of the world, or the savagery of nature, or death. I believe the skull is a

pejorative symbol. As discussed, when Mrs. Ramsay is viewed as having realized that what she values is not permanent and that her hopes of finding *something* permanent of her own is not possible, then the ugly, scary, horned, and mounted-in-trophy-fashion boar's head can be interpreted as representing her emerging anger, anger that has been repressed and is taking shape due to the realization of those grave losses. On a deeper level the skull represents the fear-based anger that has been heaped upon her by the men who claim to revere her. When she removes from her shoulders the green shawl, she is better able to assess the skull and the emotions it represents because she no longer is shrouded in that symbol of Mr. Ramsay's oppressive protection. Her repeated winding action as she covers the skull represents her frantic attempts to physically hide the ugliness of the skull from her children as well as to symbolically hide from them and herself the ugliness of what it represents. That she covers the skull with an article of her own clothing is evidence that she feels personally responsible for suppressing her anger and proves that old habits and ideologies such as the Angel in the House die hard. Further, that the scarf symbolizes Mr. Ramsay's protection means he has a stake in and has had a hand in keeping her anger under wraps.

While Mrs. Ramsay lies next to Cam on the bed, she knows her anger is hidden beneath the scarf. From this distance she can safely examine the emotion without facing it. The raw emotion, her anger, is *that one particular thing, the thing that mattered that she wanted to hold before her*. Facing the ugly boar's head is difficult. Injustices are hard to accept even when she realizes she had no defense against them. The limits of her power are evident now and she knows she is and always was powerless against whatever it is that thwarts her from having *something* of her own. She attempts to rise above the

new emotions again, as she has for so many years, and lies to Cam that the skull is *lovely*. She tells the young girl to think of pleasant things instead of the *old pig's head*. When shrouded by the protection that represents her husband and that same protection that all male members of the patriarchy offer their Angels in the House, she can easily pretend it is that. She lies to Cam because she does not want her daughter to know the ugly truth about women's lives. She never wants her daughter to experience the insulting laughter that was fired at her execution style by her own family and friends or to feel the anger it still incites within her.

Significant is that Mrs. Ramsay's daughter, Cam, is deathly afraid of the skull while her son, James, likes it. He is so enamored by it that if anyone so much as tries to touch it, he screams. As a female member of the patriarchy, Cam *should* be afraid of the skull because it symbolizes the repressed anger of the Angels in the House; and James, a male member, *should* embrace it because he would want to perpetuate an ideology that unfortunately serves men while repressing women. No wonder he screams when either the maid or Cam tries to touch or remove it from the wall. As a male member of the patriarchy, he fights to keep the status quo; the young boy in him screams out of fear that the system may change. After Cam falls asleep, Mrs. Ramsay instructs James that he must:

go to sleep too, for see . . .the boar's skull was still there; they had not touched it; they had done just as he wanted; it was there quite unhurt. He made sure that the skull was still there under the shawl. (115)

As a young member of the patriarchy, James has to be sure the ideology that serves him best is *unhurt* and *still there under the shawl*. Ironically, Mrs. Ramsay claims that James is her favorite and she never wants to see him *get a day older*.

Mrs. Ramsay's final scene in the novel appears to be one of happiness and unity with her husband. After leaving her sleeping children, she finds her husband reading in another room. They have meaningful exchanges about the events of the day and their lives while she knits. Both of their internal monologues bespeak a marriage wrought with problems but also with an understanding of the love they share for each other. The significant point in this scene of domestic tranquility and one that opens a space for an alternative reading is that the reader learns that Mrs. Ramsay has never told her husband she loves him despite his many requests that she do so. He asks her here to tell him.

While she silently reads a Shakespearean sonnet, she feels:

through the crepuscular wall of their intimacy . . . his mind like a raised hand shadowing her mind . . . He wanted something—wanted the thing she always found it so difficult to give him; wanted her to tell him that she loved him. And that, no, she could not do.” (123)

Forbes suggests that Mrs. Ramsay “glorifies in her feeble belief that she has ‘triumphed again’ (124), simply because she decides not to tell her husband she loves him” (468). I do not agree with Forbes. I believe Mrs. Ramsay's refusal to tell him she loves him is the key to her character. Further, this refusal at the end of Mrs. Ramsay's appearance in the novel symbolically marks her leaping off the precipice she has been approaching since she was laughed at earlier that evening and signifies the owning of her anger. Mrs. Ramsay has refused before to tell Mr. Ramsay she loves him, but the reader

does not know why. Now, after internalizing the resentment she feels because she has been kind to men when they were not as kind as they should have been to her and her son, that her husband needed constant praise from her, she was fooled into thinking her beauty afforded her power, and, mostly, she naively thought she could have had *something* of her own with her interest in the dairy system, she cannot repress her anger any longer. She does not yell, scream, or throw a fit. An Angel in the House, even one who had just recognized and understood her own anger for the first time, would not behave in such an extreme manner. (Lily Briscoe and women in future decades acquire that talent.) She remains silent and gazes out the window, internalizing the impact of the emotion. Her pyramid of anger, the structured fortress that perpetuated itself, collapses silently while she views the uncertain darkness beyond the glass. In her mind she has taken the symbolic leap and now *will not*, as this one final act of deliberate silence demonstrates, tell him what he needs to hear. If she would, which would have neatly completed this scene of domestic bliss, Woolf would be indicating that she believes women should submit to their husbands on all accounts. Instead, Mrs. Ramsay thinks that she “could never say what she felt” (123). The difference in her thinking now is that she *will not* say what she is thinking. Ironically, her anger is expressed in her silence, in her refusal to say what he wants to her say. Her silence suggests she is now making the choice to be silent. Although she had always made that choice, now she realizes she is acting deliberately and that knowledge liberates her. That knowledge represents that *something* of her own. Though not tangible or as significant as what her husband or Lily have, in view of her status as Angel in the House, it suggests a huge step in the deprogramming of her purposely *untrained mind*. For Woolf, as the author, Mrs.

Ramsay's liberation represents the beginning of freedom of thought for many women. Mrs. Ramsay is changed forever.

To Mr. Ramsay, who is caught up in his own world, his wife is the same. He cannot discern the great difference within her. At this point, what he thinks does not matter. She wants him to think she loves him. The narrator claims she did love him, and that "he knew, of course he knew, that she loved him" (124). When he asks her again to tell him what he longs to hear, he watches her gazing out the window. She feels his eyes on her and she feels beautiful in her silence. She thinks, "Nothing on earth can equal this happiness . . . And she looked at him smiling. For she had triumphed again. She had not said it" (124). Mr. Ramsay cannot fathom her change, but she can feel it. Her *happiness* is that through her life she held on to that one small piece of herself that Mr. Ramsay could never wrest from her. She can weather her recent revelations that what she valued is not permanent; although that *something* of her own is not what she originally wanted, that one little piece of herself that she holds in silence from her husband will have to be enough to see her through the rest of her life. The truth might be bleak, but the conflict within her and the doubt she harbored about many things in her life will be easier to weather with this knowledge and inner feeling. That is her great triumph and that is why she is able to smile at him. Ironically, he allows her that. Her one act of rebellion, one that had openly continued during their entire marriage, suggests that she is and always was strong enough to resist being forced to reveal whatever it is she feels in her heart. I believe that although the ideology of the Angel in the House is a powerfully insidious and self-perpetuating force and that it successfully suppressed Mrs. Ramsay's anger, it never completely infiltrated or controlled her heart.

The pyramid containing Mrs. Ramsay's anger quietly implodes and she subsequently dies, but the impact of the collapse is far reaching. Ten years after her death, she *does* achieve permanence through Lily when the young artist immortalizes her in the painting she began when Mrs. Ramsay was alive. The completion of Lily's painting represents Woolf's passing the torch to Lily for the model of the new woman; Lily captures the essence of the old model of woman, Mrs. Ramsay and all the Angels in the House, in the triangle which represents Mrs. Ramsay on the canvas. Here Mrs. Ramsay will remain forever, represented in her "wedge-shaped core of darkness" (62), that private place in her mind where she began questioning her thoughts and actions especially after Mr. Carmichael cast "a shadow [on the] page" (39) of the book she read to James. He had also symbolically cast a shadow of doubt on her life. Similarly Woolf claims the Angel in the House cast a shadow over her pages as she wrote reviews about books written by men and that shadow thwarted her efforts as a writer. Mr. Carmichael thwarted Mrs. Ramsay's being an Angel in the House.

Ironic, too, is that Mrs. Ramsay's death is as unceremoniously quiet and seemingly uneventful as when she recognizes and understands her anger. Toril Moi claims that Woolf's "politics are found in her texts." As my claim about why Mrs. Ramsay refuses to tell her husband she loves him attests, I also believe there is as much in what she and her characters do not say.

Conclusion

Virginia Woolf lived at the time when the female model of behavior known as the Angel in the House was coming into question. Angels in the House were taught to selflessly serve others. Most of all, as young girls they were taught to suppress angry

thoughts, words, and emotions because they were not ladylike and most unattractive. Anger, however, is an important emotion for human beings to express because it signifies the ego's first attempt to protect itself, which is necessary in order to develop an identity of one's own. Robbed of the ability to express anger and thus not able to protect themselves against those who would cause them psychological harm, these women easily fell prey to a system of behavior that was unfortunately very injurious to them. Virginia Woolf recognized that the Angel-in-the-House model of behavior was stifling women's minds and their freedom. However, she found herself conflicted because while anger about the Angel in the House fueled her urge to expose this insidious system of behavior, she knew if she wrote about that anger she would not be taken seriously.

In order to write about what incited her without putting off readers, she developed methods of deflecting her angry thoughts. She believed that angry words often took precedence over an author's message because readers focus more on the angry words than on their meaning. Woolf explains her methods for deflection of anger in her hybrid work, A Room of One's Own, and then employs those methods in her most autobiographical novel, To The Lighthouse. I believe that in this novel she uses her parents as representatives of their society in order to expose the ideology of the Angel in the House. The Angel in this novel is Mrs. Ramsay. She realizes that what she values in life is not permanent and naively wants to find *something* of her own. Woolf kills Mrs. Ramsay in order to demonstrate symbolically that if an Angel in the House dares to desire something more out of life, the patriarchy will not accept that desire and will banish her. A rebellious Angel such as Mrs. Ramsay would be banished for two reasons.

One reason is that she is supposed to serve the patriarchy unconditionally and the other is that there is no other role for women to play.

Although feminist critics have claimed that Woolf was not angry enough in her writing and that she created ineffectual female characters due to her mental illness, I believe she should not be judged on personal traits because in this novel she *did* express anger against a cultural model that was thwarting women's development. My analysis of To The Lighthouse shows that, while critics claim that Woolf wrote the novel in order to exorcise the demons of her childhood, she is angrier at the ideology which controlled them, and she vented her anger there. Further, I believe that when the focus of her anger is placed on the ideology of the Angel in the House rather than on her parents, a space opens for a different analysis of Mrs. Ramsay. My analysis of Mrs. Ramsay is that while she has accepted her role as Angel in the House, she questions the injustices she perceives. While critics see Mrs. Ramsay as performing her role because she desires to work outside the home, my analysis shows that her lack of identity precludes knowing there was a role to play. Once she notices her beauty is fading, which she falsely believes is the source of her power, and she realizes her children are growing and soon will not need her, she naively thinks she will make herself useful outside the home. When she is laughed at for voicing that interest, she thinks she has nothing. Additionally, unlike the traditional readings of the boar's head, my analysis includes the skull representing Mrs. Ramsay's repressed anger and her recognition of it as such. Although she recognizes the emotion, she unceremoniously, and ironically, expresses it in silence. While she expresses her anger (even though the act is silent) symbolically she should have acquired an identity of her own, but that is not possible because women at that time had no identity

other than that of Angel in the House. What she gains from her silent expression of anger is that *something* of her own. It is not what she wanted but it will suffice. Because no alternative roles for women like Mrs. Ramsay were available at the time, Woolf had no choice but to have Mrs. Ramsay die, and she does not explain or detail the event in order to call attention to it.

Woolf's words from A Room of One's Own are useful when viewing her Mrs. Ramsay character. She writes, "We think back through our foremothers if we are women . . . masterpieces are not single and solitary births" (65). Woolf *is* one of the foremothers for women writers, and her Mrs. Ramsay creation accurately reflects a time when women were severely oppressed. To The Lighthouse *is* a masterpiece, and her depiction of Mrs. Ramsay is the reason. However, Mrs. Ramsay is merely a fictional foremother or stepping-stone character in the masterpiece that Woolf believed all women could be. Societal change does not happen quickly. It happens one day at a time and it begins in one person's heart. In this novel, Woolf demonstrates the painful process of how change began in one woman's heart and how that small change, represented in Mrs. Ramsay's silent refusal to say she loved her husband, caused a devastating ripple effect through her entire family. Symbolically, this change represents the ripple effect of social change. Although critics have trounced Mrs. Ramsay for being either a weak or tyrannical character, I believe she accurately depicts those women who were on the forefront, the ones who paved the way, as Woolf said in her "Professions for Women" speech, before women were *skilled in all the professions open to womankind*.

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