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Mrs. Ramsay's Art in *To the Lighthouse*

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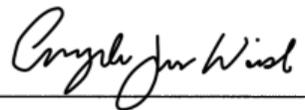
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Mrs. Ramsay's Art in *To the Lighthouse*

When Virginia Woolf discusses the struggles of women writers in *A Room of One's Own* she points out that one of the greatest hindrances to women's ability to write fiction, besides the criticism they will face, is the fact "that they had no tradition behind them, or one so short and partial that it was of little help. For we think back through our mothers if we are women" (76). In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf further explores this need for a female tradition through the struggles Mrs. Ramsay faces as an unfulfilled artist working through the only mode of art open to her, her role as angel in the house, and her influence over the painter Lily Briscoe, whom many critics consider to be a surrogate daughter to Mrs. Ramsay. Lily cannot exist without Mrs. Ramsay and not because she is motivated by a desire to rebel against Mrs. Ramsay's angel in the house, but because Mrs. Ramsay is the foundation on which Lily can begin to build a tradition. Woolf is not necessarily pitting Mrs. Ramsay against Lily Briscoe, but instead she is revealing a struggle that they have in common, which is the struggle to create art in a patriarchal society.

The role of Mrs. Ramsay in Virginia Woolf's semi-autobiographical novel *To the Lighthouse* has been debated at great length throughout Woolf scholarship. In Joseph Blotner's 1956 essay "Mythic Patterns in *To the Lighthouse*", Blotner makes the claim that Mrs. Ramsay functions as an idealized woman who is the "symbol of the female principle" who opposes the "male principle" and "works toward the mating of men and women, toward their becoming fruitful like herself... Her function is the same on the intellectual level, for she gives her protection and inspiration to both art and science" (550). Blotner idealizes her to the point of saying her "attributes are those of the major

female figures in pagan myth” (550), and the three major figures he believes that she resembles most are Rhea, Demeter, and Persephone, which he believes makes her mother, wife, and daughter in one person. In other words, Blotner considers Mrs. Ramsay to be the ideal woman and a model for all women.

In 1958, Glenn Pederson argued in his essay “Vision in *To the Lighthouse*” that Mrs. Ramsay is anything but the ideal woman and actually exists as a disruptive force in the novel. Pederson writes that Mrs. Ramsay is the reason why James never reaches the lighthouse, and he is only able to visit the lighthouse after she has died. Pederson argues that once Mrs. Ramsay has died, it is up to Lily Briscoe to put the family back together. By 1965, Josephine Schaefer moves away from these simplistic readings of Mrs. Ramsay, arguing that she is not a stereotype but instead a woman confined to her gender role with daughters who are beginning to question and feel dissatisfaction with such roles. However, by 1970 the dominant reading of Mrs. Ramsay was one that reduced her to feminine complement to Mr. Ramsay.

Feminist critics worked to move past this simplistic reading of Mrs. Ramsay as feminine counterpart to Mr. Ramsay, and many note that Mrs. Ramsay seems to exhibit signs of possessing the type of androgynous mind (man-womanly or woman-manly) that Woolf explores in *A Room of One's Own*. In 1973, Annis Pratt points out the androgynous nature of Mrs. Ramsay's mind in her essay “Sexual Imagery in *To the Lighthouse*: A New Feminist Approach,” and she argues that it is the sexual imagery in the novel that provides proof of Mrs. Ramsay's androgyny. Pratt begins with the scene in chapter 7 in which Mr. Ramsay comes to Mrs. Ramsay for sympathy and she “half turning, seemed to raise herself with an effort, and at once to pour erect into the air a rain

of energy, a column of spray” (37). After exploring the sexually charged nature of this passage, Pratt uses this imagery to reveal Mrs. Ramsay’s deeper connection to the lighthouse:

The “rain of energy” and the “column of spray” are analogous to the pouring of seminal fluid from the male organ into the female body. The fluid imagery is linked to the light imagery (“burning and illuminating) through still another submerged metaphor comparing the “column of spray” and the Biblical pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. This in turn links Mrs. Ramsay’s erection to the core symbol of the novel, that of the lighthouse, which as we shall see in our analysis of section 11 is a kind of mana or animus figure for her. (420)

According to Pratt, Mrs. Ramsay’s animus (Carl Jung’s term for the masculine part of the female brain) is not a result of anger towards Mr. Ramsay but instead of love and concern because she takes on “both male and female sexual characteristics in response to Mr. Ramsay’s infantile asexuality... consider Mrs. Ramsay’s erection... as an act of androgynous creativity in which the hero calls on the fullest reach of her internal nature...to respond to her marital situation” (425).

In her essay “Mrs. Ramsay and Mrs. Woolf,” Phyllis Rose finds that Woolf’s claim in *A Room of One’s Own* that a woman needs five hundred pounds and a room of her own in order to write is as much psychological as it is physical. Rose says that Woolf’s point is that “creativity can scarcely exist without a substantial sense of self and a conviction...that what one can produce is worthwhile. That is the implication of the metaphorical room and income” (199). Woolf’s detailed accounts of Oxbridge and the women’s college, in which the extravagancy of Oxbridge highlights the dearth of the women’s college, is not a result of “materialistic envy, but from the envy of the buoyancy of ego such pampering produces” (199). In Victorian society, women were socialized to be the angel in the house, a creature responsible for the pampering of the male ego, and Woolf’s fiction was very much concerned with exorcising the angel from the Moderns’ house. Rose points to the scene between Mr. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe when Lily refuses

to give in to Mr. Ramsay's demands for sympathy as a telling scene because "[T]hrough Lily, Virginia Woolf asserts the artist's need for self-containment, the need to refuse service to someone else's ego, but she also suggests the fear that in doing so... the woman artist might be losing her sexuality" (Rose 205). Rose suggests that Lily Briscoe's struggle is indicative of Woolf's own struggle.

Rose notes that "[I]n developing a certain hardness and independence, Woolf felt herself turning away from her mother's model in a way she did not like" (207), and as a result, Woolf's feelings toward her mother and her own decision to reject her mother's model were often ambivalent; a fluctuation between self-congratulation and self-reproach. Furthermore, Rose suggests that Woolf's breakdowns, always seeming to coincide with the wrapping up of a novel, may have had something to do with the fact that when she was creating, she was completely divided from her mother. This feeling of being divided from her mother is the reason why "at the very moment of creation, at the moment of greatest self-assertion, the psychological recoil is also greatest and Lily is most tempted to give up her effort and, in her own words, "to fling herself at Mrs. Ramsay's knee" (Rose 210).

In Brenda R. Silver's "Mothers, Daughters, Mrs. Ramsay: Reflections," she traces the shifting readings of Mrs. Ramsay throughout the years. Silver notes Adrienne Rich's book *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* was very influential in shaping the way women read Mrs. Ramsay. Rich's emphasis on matrophobia, which she explains as being the fear of becoming like one's mother, was especially important:

I cannot overemphasize how powerfully Rich's emphasis on the mother- daughter relationship and the concept of matrophobia resonated at the time, manifesting itself in all aspects of women's lives. To take just one example: my women students in the late 1970s who, having watched their divorced mothers struggle to support themselves and their children with no training to call on,

said, “Not me; never; I’m going to have a career.” This spilled over into their readings of Mrs. Ramsay, who embodied everything they felt they had to reject.

Silver goes on to say that “whatever their current analysis, almost every one of my correspondents compared or contrasted their initial response to Mrs. Ramsay to their feelings about their own mother, a response that markedly crosses generations” (269).

Jane Lilienfeld’s 1977 essay “The Deceptiveness of Beauty:” Mother Love and Mother Hate in *To the Lighthouse*” examines “the relations between Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe as representative of those between mother and daughter” (346). Lilienfeld does not believe that Woolf intends for the character of Mrs. Ramsay to be a celebration of the self-sacrificing mother, but instead “a successful reconsideration and rejection of Mrs. Ramsay’s mode of life” (346). Lilienfeld writes that the responsibility falls on Lily Briscoe’s shoulders to move away from the archetypal image of mother and work towards her own independence. In turn, Lilienfeld believes that Mrs. Ramsay admires Lily’s independence but is unable to fathom fighting for an independence of her own. She also goes on to say that Mrs. Ramsay cannot understand Lily outside of the “previously formed categories of women” (347), but she points out that between Minta Doyle and Lily Briscoe, Mrs. Ramsay “thinks that ‘at forty’ Lily will be “the better of the two” (247). In Sara Ruddick’s essay from the same year titled “Learning to live with the Angel in the House,” Ruddick believes that while it is too simple to say that Mrs. Ramsay is modelled after Julia Stephen, the relationship between Lily and Mrs. Ramsay and the transformation that Lily undergoes as an artist does reveal a lot about Woolf’s relationship with her mother.

In Iona Bell’s essay “Haunted by Great Ghosts:” Virginia Woolf and *To the Lighthouse*” she uses *A Room of One’s Own* to support her argument that *To the*

Lighthouse “surpasses the memoirs and expresses, elusive enigmatic feelings Woolf could only explain in a novel” (151). Bell says that in *To the Lighthouse* we see “how closely Lily Briscoe comes to Woolf’s own vision of truth, truth that embraces the “undeniable, everlasting, contradictory things” Mrs. Ramsay saw but tried to conceal with the “relief of simplicity” (151). An example Bell uses is Lily’s decision to compliment Mr. Ramsay’s boots rather than offer him false sympathy just as Mrs. Ramsay would have done. Bell believes that by refusing to play the role of angel in the house and instead offer sincerity, Lily is able to form the kind of human connection with Mr. Ramsay that was impossible under Mrs. Ramsay’s regime. Bell disagrees with the critics who consider Mrs. Ramsay “emotionally and socially creative” and Lily “emotionally immature, socially inadequate, and artistically inhibited” (170) because Mrs. Ramsay chooses to conceal her thoughts and form artificial relations while Lily chooses to be sincere and is able to achieve actual intimacy because she is sincere.

However, Bell is ignoring the moments Mrs. Ramsay acknowledges her insincerity and chastises herself for it. For example, when Mrs. Ramsay begins telling herself, “[I]t will end. It will end” (63), she is quick to add, as if by reflex, “[W]e are in the hands of the Lord” (63). Although this statement seems like a mantra she would repeat to the people she tends to, when it intrudes on her own thoughts she is disturbed by it: “What brought her to say that: ‘We are in the hands of the Lord?’ The insincerity slipping in among the truths roused her, annoyed her. She returned to her knitting again” (64). Just as Mrs. Ramsay begins to contemplate the dark state of the world, the narrative shifts to Mr. Ramsay’s thoughts when he sees her and notices the “sternness at the heart of her beauty” (64). This is a moment where the type of intimacy that Bell talks about in

her essay could take place between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, but even though Mr. Ramsay wishes for some insight into her thoughts, he decides, “he would not interrupt her. She was aloof from him now in her beauty” (65). When Mr. Ramsay first sees Mrs. Ramsay and then later when he decides not to ask her what she is thinking, he is stricken not by the internal life going on underneath the surface but the way, at least to him, that internal life manifests into physical beauty. This scene gives the sense that if Mrs. Ramsay were to paint like Lily or write like Woolf, her art would be revered not because of the mind that created it but because of the face and body.

By 2000, Shannon Forbes points out in her essay “When Sometimes She Imagined Herself like her Mother,” that the overwhelming consensus among critics is that Lily functions as a surrogate daughter to Mrs. Ramsay whose artistic abilities are stifled, but is “able to realize her artistic capabilities only after Mrs. Ramsay, the archetypal Angel in the House, has died” (464). However, Forbes says that more attention needs to be paid to Mrs. Ramsay’s biological daughter Cam, who is an artist in her own right. Forbes writes that Cam is a “striking character because of both her resistance to her mother’s promotion of the Angel in the House and her struggle to come to terms with her own identity as having been influence by this Angel. Forbes points out Mrs. Ramsay’s unfulfilled desires to influence the public sphere and the many scenes where Mrs. Ramsay can be seen wrestling with these desires, and she states that, “Mrs. Ramsay is trapped within her uncompromising Angel role and left wrestling with her unfulfilled need to experience precisely the life this role denies her” (466).

In my essay, I would like to further explore Mrs. Ramsay’s unfulfilled desires in relation to Woolf’s essay *A Room of One’s Own*. Critics have noticed Mrs. Ramsay’s

untapped artistic abilities. For example, Rose briefly mentions that Woolf attempts to compromise and find a way to connect with her mother while rejecting the angel in the house. The compromise is a conceptualization of Mrs. Ramsay as “an artist working in human emotion and human relationships... essentially she is engaged in “making the moment something permanent” (212). Rose touches on the dinner scene in “The Window,” which I will explore in greater detail later on, and says “[A]s an artist her triumph is the dinner party... in which she converts base emotions into gold filigree and weaves relationships between chaotic and recalcitrant masses” (212).

During the dinner scene, when Lily Briscoe thinks about Charles Tansley’s declaration that “[W]omen can’t write, women can’t paint,” she wonders why his words affect her so severely when “clearly it was not true to him but for some reason helpful to him, and that was why he said it?” (86). The word *helpful* is an important one, not just because it is important for Lily as an artist to understand that there is no truth behind his words, but also because she is on the verge of understanding the cause of her own sense of inferiority, something that Mrs. Ramsay is aware of already, but to a lesser degree. Lily’s realization that Tansley’s tirades against women are helpful rather than truthful touch on Woolf’s statement in *A Room* that “[P]ossibly 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” (34). In other words, by maintaining that women cannot write or paint, Tansley is reassuring himself that he can write or paint, which seems especially comical since we hear about Tansley’s dissertation but we never actually see him writing it.

Tansley's motives behind reasserting his superiority over Lily is most likely a result of his diminutive status among the other men, considering the fact that he's a student among established scholars. Even among the Ramsay children, he is mocked and dubbed the "little atheist." Although he seems to revere Mrs. Ramsay and vies with Mr. Bankes for her attention at the dinner table, he loses in a way that solidifies his inferiority to not only Mr. Bankes, but Mrs. Ramsay as well:

"How you must detest dining in this bear garden," she said, making use, as she did when she was distracted, of her social manner. So, when there is a strife of tongues, at some meeting, the chairman, to obtain unity, suggests that every one shall speak in French. Perhaps it is bad French; French may not contain the words that express the speaker's thoughts; nevertheless speaking French imposes some order, some uniformity. Replying to her in the same language, Mr. Bankes said, "No, not at all," and Mr. Tansley, who had no knowledge of this language, even spoke thus in words of one syllable, at once suspected its insincerity. (90)

Mrs. Ramsay wields small talk to reestablish and maintain order at the dinner table, an order that Tansley finds himself excluded from because he does not understand the language of small talk. This exclusion leads to Tansley's need to further assert himself by imagining a future where he will replace Mrs. Ramsay as the one leading the dinner conversation, entertaining guests with tales of the Ramsay's ridiculousness, and surpassing the man who "dished himself by marrying a beautiful woman and having eight children" (90). Woolf makes it very clear that Tansley's arrogance stems from his feelings of inferiority, which she describes as an extreme, physical discomfort, a desire to be included in the conversation where he will be *given* a chance to assert himself. However, no one asks for Tansley's opinion and he is not able to assert his intellectual dominance, and the fact that he must be a *given* the opportunity rather than take it is telling of his status in the group.

Tansley's feelings of inferiority compel him to declare "[W]omen can't write, women can't paint" because his sense of superiority over Lily, which seems to be

deteriorating little by little with each interaction between them, is his only footing among the men who surpass him. It is only when Lily follows the “code of behavior” that requires she relieve him “of his urgent desire to assert herself” (91), which ultimately means be a ladder for his ego to step on and play that part that Mrs. Ramsay plays for Mr. Ramsay, that Tansley is “relieved of his egotism” (92). In *A Room*, Woolf goes on to discuss confidence and how one attains it when she asks “how can we generate this imponderable quality, which is yet so invaluable, most quickly? By thinking that other people are inferior to oneself. By feeling that one has some innate superiority” (35). During the dinner scene, Woolf puts this theory into action, revealing the way Tansley’s confidence is saved at the sacrifice of Lily’s confidence.

Before Lily gives in to Tansley, Woolf shows how strong of an effect Tansley’s words have on her: “[W]hy did her whole being bow, like corn under a wind, and erect itself again from this abasement only with a great and rather painful effort” (86). This is not the first time Lily struggles to remain confident when faced with criticism or the threat of criticism from men. For example, when William Bankes goes to look at her painting she “winced like a dog who sees a hand raised to strike it” (52), and when Bankes attempts to discuss the painting with her, “[S]he stopped; she did not want to bore him; she took the canvas lightly off the easel” (53). The contrast between Lily and Tansley is striking here because while Tansley desires to speak and be listened to when he feels inferior, Lily wishes to shrink away and hide (and even destroy) her work. While Tansley’s confidence is restored by Lily’s submission, Lily is only able to elevate herself through her own effort. While Tansley feels assured that one day he will usurp Mr. Ramsay, Lily is aware that her paintings will never even be hung up. For Tansley this

dinner is just a temporary moment of discomfort, while for Lily it is a discomfort that very well may follow her her whole life. Even the way Lily characterizes herself in these passages reveals a lot about her sense of self-worth; she sees herself as either sustenance for mankind (corn) or a dedicated and inferior companion (dog). Tansley is the wind whose power is ordained by nature and Mr. Bankes is the dog's master. It is no surprise that Lily struggles as an artist and Woolf's words in *A Room* ring true, "what integrity it must have required in face of all that criticism, in the midst of that purely patriarchal society, to hold fast to the thing as they saw it without shrinking" (74).

Throughout the novel, many of the men need women to raise them up, while the women must raise themselves up. One way is by giving men reign of the conversation the way Lily does with Tansley during dinner, and another way is by complimenting them. Woolf's statement in *A Room* that "[W]omen have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (35) is relevant when discussing *To the Lighthouse* because many of male/female relationships in the novel not only give the impression that the women are merely mirrors for the men, but they are also talking mirrors.

Mrs. Ramsay must drop everything to compliment her husband and many of the other male guests. For example, on her walk with Tansley, Mrs. Ramsay compliments Mr. Carmichael's work and blames his wife for his failure to become a great philosopher, which Tansley takes to be not only to be a compliment to him but to all men:

It flattered him; snubbed as he had been, it soothed him that Mrs. Ramsay should tell him this. Charles Tansley revived. Insinuating, too, as she did the greatness of man's intellect, even in decay, the subjection of all wives—not that she blamed the girl, and the marriage had been happy enough, she believed—to their husband's labours, she made him feel better pleased with himself than he had done yet, and he would have liked, had they taken a cab, for example, to have paid for it. (11)

When Mrs. Ramsay lets Tansley in on this secret about Mr. Carmichael, she flatters and soothes Tansley's previously snubbed ego. It is important to note that the ones snubbing Tansley were not Mr. Ramsay or Mr. Bankes, but instead the Ramsay children. So, knowing that the children have snubbed Tansley, Mrs. Ramsay is the one responsible for "reviving" him and she does this by telling him the story that both elevates man and his intellect and disparages women as nothing more than a hindrance (when not performing their proper role in marriage) to greatness. Although Mrs. Ramsay corrects her earlier statement that it had been "an unfortunate marriage" by saying that "the marriage had been happy enough" (11), but this correction is lost on Tansley who takes the story as a reassertion of his own superiority. This scene is important because it begins with Tansley's ego reduced by the Ramsay children's insults, which means he is at the level of children, and it ends with Tansley feeling himself aligned with Mr. Carmichael. Mrs. Ramsay has not only revived Tansley's broken ego, she has augmented it to "twice its natural size," which becomes clear in the change that takes place in Tansley's demeanor: he transforms from a snubbed child following his mother on her errands into a man who would like to pay for her cab (if only they had taken one).

Mrs. Ramsay is not the only woman forced at times to play the part of the magic mirror. Even Lily feels the pressure to bestow Mr. Bankes with compliments: "Lily would have liked to pay [Bankes] a compliment; you're not humble, Mr. Bankes, she would have liked to have said. But he did not want compliments (most men do, she thought), and she was a little ashamed of her impulse" (72). Woolf's use of the word *impulse* is important because it suggests something that is almost out of Mrs. Ramsay and Lily's control. The impulse to flatter men must be fought, and Lily does manage to fight

it, which Woolf describes as Lily “tossing off her little insincerity” (72), and this phrase calls to mind the earlier scene in which Mrs. Ramsay scolds herself for saying something she did not mean. It is no secret that Mrs. Ramsay is insincere most of the time because her role as angel of the house dictates she say the most pleasing thing to each guest and member of the family. However, Mrs. Ramsay maintains a barrier between the insincerity she practices in her daily life and the truth she searches out in her own mind, and when this barrier shows signs of crumbling, when the impulse to say the right thing (“We are in the hands of the Lord.”) becomes too intrusive, she becomes aggravated. For Lily, there is no barrier. She looks to fight the impulse both in daily interactions with her male peers and within her own mind.

As mentioned earlier, many critics have suggested that Mrs. Ramsay is, in her own right, an artist whose struggle is similar to Lily Briscoe’s struggle. Penelope Ingram makes the claim in her essay “One Drifts Apart:” *To the Lighthouse* as art of response” that Mrs. Ramsay works as a life-artist. Ingram claims that the novel not only emphasizes “the value of art and the creation of unity” but also the idea that “the artist who creates wholes creates art.” Ingram singles out Lily Briscoe and Mrs. Ramsay as the artists of the novel, saying that “both art and life are represented as art-forms which the artist creates in order to produce wholeness. Lily and Mrs. Ramsay both attempt to use their respective pictorial and life arts to “compose from... fragments a perfect whole.”

Cara Lewis’ essay, “Still Life in Motion: Mortal Form in Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*,” takes this concept of Mrs. Ramsay as “life-artist”, although she does not use the term, one step further and suggests that the dinner scene comes together like a still life. Lewis turns her attention away from Lily’s painting because it “blocks the view we

might have of other, unframed works of art, such as Rose's still-life centerpiece of fruit and a seashell on the Ramsay's dining table" (426). While many scholars, such as Norman Bryson and Svetlana Alpers, argue that still life functions as a deterrent for narrative, Lewis believes that still life, and especially Woolf's use of still life in *To the Lighthouse*, actually propels the narrative along, and she points to Rose's still life centerpiece as the catalyst for action during the dinner scene in "The Window." In the midst of the dinner party, Mrs. Ramsay becomes fixated on Rose's centerpiece:

As she contemplates this still life of fruit and shell, she notices that her friend Augustus is also looking. She reflects that "looking together unite[s] them," and all of a sudden, everyone else is united, too. In other words, Mrs. Ramsay's looking at an aesthetic object created from disparate components parallels very strongly the way in which the distinct individuals around the table are "composed" into a party. (433)

Lewis' suggestion that before this moment the dinner party is made up of disparate components is an understatement, since many of the interactions are downright antagonistic, such as the interaction between Lily and Tansley or Augustus Carmichael and Mr. Ramsay. Even Mrs. Ramsay's assessment of the dinner party is that "[N]othing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate. And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her" (83). However, Rose's centerpiece is able to bring together the two most disparate components at the table, Augustus Carmichael and Mrs. Ramsay. Before they are united by their shared admiration of the centerpiece, Mrs. Ramsay recalls that "[Augustus Carmichael] did not like her, she knew that; but partly for that very reason she respected him" (96), and their opposition to each other is reinforced spatially since Augustus Carmichael is seated at the opposite end of the table, next to Mr. Ramsay.

Lewis goes on to say that "the Ramsays and their guests so strongly echo the still life that it hardly seems adequate to say that Rose's still life simply appears at a key

moment in the narrative... the dish of fruit and shell prompts the party to come together” (433). So in other words, for Lewis still life is anything but “still” because it propels the narrative forward, unites the dinner guests, and “also seems to cause the end of the dinner party” (433). Lewis says that the dinner party ends the minute Rose’s centerpiece is destroyed by a disembodied hand. Furthermore, Lewis points out that Rose’s still life provokes Mrs. Ramsay’s still life, and while it is a reversal of Woolf’s declaration that “we think back through our mothers if we are women” (76), there is still a tradition being created in this scene. Mrs. Ramsay’s piece is not just influenced by Rose’s centerpiece, it is provoked by it. If Mrs. Ramsay must think forward through her daughter, it may be because she has no tradition to look back on.

If the dinner scene in “The Window” comes together like a still life for Lewis, then the arranger of this still life is Mrs. Ramsay, although Lewis does not credit Mrs. Ramsay as the arranger. Instead, Lewis considers Mrs. Ramsay a part of the still life, and while there is no denying that the dinner scene would not be able to come together without her in it, it would also not be able to come together without her orchestrating it. This is a fact that even Mrs. Ramsay is aware of, considering the line earlier about the responsibility of merging and *creating* the dinner party resting on her “for if she did not do it nobody would do it” (83).

Much like Lily and the salt cellar, Mrs. Ramsay continuously moves pieces around in order to make her artwork come together. Mrs. Ramsay’s ability to control the dinner is evident in many ways throughout the chapter. The first inkling we get is at the beginning of the dinner when Mrs. Ramsay feels as though she is “past everything, through everything, out of everything... as if there was an eddy—there—and one could

be in it, or one could be out of it... she was out of it” (83). This quote gives Mrs. Ramsay an almost omnipresent, but not entirely omnipotent, status at the table. She is able to see the eddy that flows through the scene and directs the players, but she is not able to reverse its flow. She can only step outside of it, and she does step outside of it, but she cannot rewrite it. Even her ability to step outside of the eddy is only mental because while she watches the scene unfold and knows how it will unfold, she does not stop ladling soup, an action that makes her “raise her eyebrows at the discrepancy” (83).

However, at the same time, Mrs. Ramsay *is*, to a certain extent, in charge of maintaining the eddy’s flow:

It’s all come to an end, she thought, while they came in one after another, Charles Tansley—“sit there, please,” she said—Augustus Carmichael—and sat down. And meanwhile she waited, passively, for some one to answer her, for something to happen. But this is not a thing, she thought, ladling out soup, that one says. (83)

While it might seem paradoxical to say that Mrs. Ramsay is outside the eddy, within the eddy, controlled by the eddy, and controlling the eddy, what this scene makes very clear is that Mrs. Ramsay is both an active and passive player. As the guests enter the room, she directs them to their places in an order that, considering the fact that she sees the scene before her as being controlled by an eddy, to her seems preordained, and once everyone is seated she must wait passively for the next action to unfold. Ultimately, she is not exercising any real autonomy. Woolf makes it clear that Mrs. Ramsay recognizes her role, wishes to escape it, but feels trapped in it nonetheless.

Another instance of Mrs. Ramsay’s simultaneous power and powerlessness over the unfolding dinner scene is the interaction between Lily and Tansley mentioned earlier, when Lily puts forth the question to herself, “what happens if one is not nice to that young man there” (92). Unlike Mrs. Ramsay, Lily goes beyond questioning the norm and

tries to experiment with it, and this is partly because what Mrs. Ramsay considers an eddy, Lily considers “a code of behavior” (91). For Mrs. Ramsay, this “code of behavior” exists as a natural, unstoppable force, but for Lily, who playfully thinks to herself that her duty to Tansley is written in the code’s seventh article, it is a man-made “document” that can be amended. Yet, despite the fact that Lily knows she can experiment with the norm and wishes to experiment with it, she still gives into Mrs. Ramsay’s silent protests, which Ingram states is “indicative of this communion of understanding between the two artists. Though it goes against Lily’s own wishes to read the glance in Mrs. Ramsay’s eyes, she does so with an understanding of what it is that Mrs. Ramsay is attempting to achieve.”

When Minta Doyle and Paul Rayley show up, Woolf provides a better sense of how Mrs. Ramsay arranges her artwork. Mrs. Ramsay watches Minta Doyle and Mr. Ramsay interact, and for a moment feels jealousy, but it dissipates when she thinks about the way Minta Doyle’s personality complements Mr. Ramsay’s personality and makes him feel younger. Then she begins to think about Paul Rayley, and the way his personality complements her own personality. First, her thoughts about Paul Rayley are interrupted when the *Boeuf en Daube* comes out: “For herself—“Put it down there,” she said, helping the Swiss girl to place gently before her the huge brown pot in which was the *Boeuf en Daube*” (99). “[F]or her own part she likes her boobies. Paul must sit by her” (99). By juxtaposing the *Boeuf en Daube* and Paul Rayley, Woolf underscores the way Mrs. Ramsay does not make a distinction between the food and the people: both are objects she must arrange the right way.

Lewis points out that Mrs. Ramsay appraises the centerpiece in painterly terms, “[H]er eyes had been going in and out among the curves and shadows of the fruit, among

the rich purples of the lowland grapes, then over the horny ridge of the shell” (109), and her point becomes especially obvious when comparing Woolf’s language here and the language she employs when describing Lily’s artistic process. For example in chapter IV, Lily surveys the Ramsay’s home and reflects on how she would like to present certain parts of their home in her painting: “[T]he jacmanna was bright violet; the wall staring white. She would not have considered it honest to tamper with the bright violet and the staring white, since she saw them like that” (18). Lily is attracted to the “bright violet” jacmanna the same way Mrs. Ramsay is attracted to the “rich purples of the lowland grapes.” The terminology here is similar, but not just in the sense that the colors both women find aesthetically pleasing are similar; both women describe the objects in similar terms. Mrs. Ramsay describes the grapes as “bright,” while Lily describes the violets as “rich,” two words that are nearly synonymous. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines bright as “(Of color) vivid and bold” and rich as “(Of a color, sound, smell, etc.) pleasantly deep or strong.” In relation to color, the *OED* defines bold as “having a *strong* or vivid appearance,” so while the words are not entirely interchangeable, they are close enough to show a similarity in the way both women view the world and describe it.

In the scene with the jacmanna, Lily is concerned with providing an honest portrayal of the way *she sees* the jacmanna, which is an important distinction from merely looking to recreate it. Woolf is explicit about Lily’s awareness of her own subjectivity in the matter, as well as the encroaching male influence in Lily’s periphery in the form of Mr. Paunceforte, who is inclined to “see everything pale, elegant, semitransparent” (19). Again, Mr. Paunceforte’s “pale” and “semitransparent” view of the world provides a stark contrast to Mrs. Ramsay and Lily’s “bright” and “rich” world.

This scene also highlights the way Mrs. Ramsay works unconsciously to a certain extent. While Mrs. Ramsay is not able to recreate the centerpiece through painting or writing (or does not realize she is able to), she does not stop at admiration, but instead she goes beyond admiring the centerpiece to mentally rearranging it: “putting a yellow against a purple, a curved shape against a round shape” (109). This is another moment that parallels Lily’s constant adjusting of the salt cellar, especially since it seems to help both of them calm down. For Lily, the idea of working on her painting helps her put up with Tansley, and for Mrs. Ramsay it makes her “more and more serene” (109). Both women get lost in their “work,” but unlike Lily, Mrs. Ramsay does it “without knowing why she did it” (109), and the reason why she might feel the need to arrange a centerpiece, dinner table, or people’s lives is because of an unfulfilled desire to create. These similarities not only suggest that Mrs. Ramsay thinks like an artist, but they also highlight the fact that Mrs. Ramsay and Lily have very similar taste. Their similar tastes are further reinforced by the fact that the “bright” and “rich” color of purple that they both admire is repeated in Lily’s painting when she chooses to represent Mrs. Ramsay as a “triangular purple shape” (52), suggesting an abstraction of the grapes in the centerpiece.

Mrs. Ramsay seems to throw herself into the angel in the house role because it is the only outlet for her artistic drive. Mrs. Ramsay is in charge of making sure “the thing is made that endures” (105), and what endures is the memory of her masterpiece. Mrs. Ramsay will not be remembered, but the dinner she orchestrated will be remembered. This calls to mind what Woolf says about anonymity in *A Room of One’s Own* when she states that for women “[A]nonymity runs in their blood. The desire to be veiled still

posses them. They are not even now as concerned about the health of their fame as men are” (50). Mrs. Ramsay’s form of creation will only ensure further anonymity, and Lily does not seek to assert herself the way Tansley does but hides her work. Woolf also goes into detail hypothesizing the fate of a woman “who was born with a gift of poetry in the sixteenth century” (50), and she states that:

When, however, one reads of a witch being ducked, of a woman possessed by devils, of a wise woman selling herbs, or even *of a very remarkable man who had a mother*, then I think we are on the track of a lost novelist, a suppressed poet, of some mute and inglorious Jane Austen, some Emily Bronte who dashed her brains out on the moor or mopped and mowed about the highways crazed with the torture that her gift had put her to. (49)

Mrs. Ramsay creates art with the few supplies she is given: young lovers, Boeuf en Daube. She creates narratives in the domestic space; however, she also expresses a longing to move outside of this domestic space. In chapter XI, Mrs. Ramsay begins to think of “all the places she had not seen; the Indian planes; she felt herself pushing aside the thick leather curtain of a church in Rome” (62). “but if one reads them over and marks that jerk in them, that indignation, one see that she will never get her genius expressed whole and entire” (69).

On the other hand, despite Mrs. Ramsay’s evident dissatisfaction with her role, she also experiences moments of incandescence similar to what Woolf describes in *A Room of One’s Own*. What does Woolf mean when she says *In a Room of One’s Own* that “the mind of an artist, in order to achieve the prodigious effort of freeing whole and entire the work that is in him, must be incandescent” (56)? Woolf suggests that an incandescent mind is one that has disavowed the self, and she uses Shakespeare as an example, saying that “his grudges and spites and antipathies are hidden from us. We are not held by some “revelation” which reminds us of the writer” (56). When Woolf discusses Shakespeare in *To the Lighthouse*, it is through the lens of Mr. Ramsay, a man

whose tastes are bogged down by the self. When Mr. Ramsay cannot make it past Q, he consoles himself by saying that the “very stone one kicks with one’s boot will outlast Shakespeare” (35). Mr. Ramsay’s need to disparage Shakespeare in order to console himself make his “grudges and spites and antipathies” very clear to the reader, and it also prevents Mr. Ramsay from actually reaching Z because he spends more time contemplating fame than actually working to achieve it. More importantly, Mr. Ramsay’s focus on fame at all is already an impediment to Mr. Ramsay’s work.

Mr. Ramsay moves on from Shakespeare to Scott, whom he only thinks to read because he is afraid of being forgotten like Scott. As he reads Scott, Mrs. Ramsay thinks “[H]e would always be worrying about his own books” (118). Mr. Ramsay’s egotism hinders his ability to experience Scott, but when Mrs. Ramsay begins to read “Luriana Lurilee,” Woolf writes that Mrs. Ramsay “felt that she was climbing backwards, upwards, shoving her way up under petals that curved over her, so that she only knew this is white, or this is red. She did not know at first what the words meant at all” (119). Mrs. Ramsay is engulfed by the text and while she does not understand the words of the poem, she is able to feel the meaning of the poem. Unfortunately, Mrs. Ramsay’s lament that “[B]ooks... grew of themselves. She never had time to read them” (27) means that this experience is rare for her, and the reason why it is rare for her is because all of her creative drive is spent on Mr. Ramsay.

In *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf proposes that “the fountain of perpetual life which the critics assure her” exists in the novels of male writers, is incomprehensible to women because they are centered only on the experiences and emotions of men. Ultimately, women cannot draw inspiration from it because it makes no attempt to speak

to them. Woolf comes back to this image of “the fountain of perpetual life” in *To the Lighthouse*, except this time she uses it to reveal the source of Mr. Ramsay’s “creativity.” When Mr. Ramsay’s egotistical musings become too much, it is up to Mrs. Ramsay “to pour erect into the air a rain of energy, a column of spray...and into this delicious fecundity, this fountain and spray of life, the sterility of the male plunged itself” (37). Woolf is establishing this relationship as parasitic because Mrs. Ramsay depletes all of her artistic energy “so that she had only strength enough to move her finger” (38), in order to make Mr. Ramsay “fertile.” However, there is no “fountain and spray of life” that acts as the equivalent for Mrs. Ramsay’s creativity.

When taking down from the shelf a new novel by Mr. A, Woolf first proclaims “it was delightful to read a man’s writing again... so direct, so straightforward after the writing of women... indicated such freedom of mind, such liberty of person, such confidence in himself” (99). However, the more she reads the novel, the more she notices, “a shadow seemed to lie across the page. It was a straight dark bar, a shadow shaped something like the letter “I.” One began dodging this way and that to catch a glimpse of the landscape behind it” (99). The author’s ego pollutes the novel, making it neither incandescent nor androgynous. Mrs. Ramsay, with her generalized and dispersed existence, is much closer to Woolf’s idea of an androgynous mind.

One example of Mrs. Ramsay’s incandescence is the dinner scene where she feels “past everything, through everything, out of everything” (83), but it is not the first time she feels this way. Another moment occurs prior to the dinner scene when Mrs. Ramsay is sitting alone: “odd...how if one was alone, one leant to inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt they expressed one; felt they became one; felt they knew one, in a

sense were one”(63). While Mrs. Ramsay’s mind has not “consumed all impediments,” she experiences brief moments where she pervades the world around her.

Mrs. Ramsay’s penchant for meddling in her guests’ lives and playing matchmaker is not just her way of being domineering, but instead it is her mode of storytelling. If Mrs. Ramsay tells stories through her guests, then that means that she views the world around her as a text. For example, Mrs. Ramsay’s remark that thinking back on her time with her friends the Mannings is like “reading a good book again” (93), and her subsequent disbelief at the possibility that the Mannings have changed is very telling. When Mr. Bankes tells her that the Mannings have built a new billiard room, Mrs. Ramsay replies, “how strange, she repeated, to Mr. Banke’s amusement, that they should be going on their still. For it was extraordinary to think that they had been of going on living all these years when she had not thought of them than once all that time”(88). Mrs. Ramsay is making it clear that she expects change to occur in the Mannings’ lives only if she is thinking about them. A story will not progress if the author is not thinking about it and writing it down. In this moment, the real world begins to encroach on Mrs. Ramsay’s “text” world, a world that Mrs. Ramsay thinks of as a “dream land.” Mrs. Ramsay enjoys her memory of the Mannings’ home because of its permanence and immutability in her mind. In Mrs. Ramsay’s eyes the “thing that endures” has already been made with the Mannings, but Woolf underscores the impossibility of such a thing and uses the Mannings to foreshadow the ultimate outcome of Mrs. Ramsay’s own dinner party. Mrs. Ramsay’s dinner will be forgotten, the physical world will continue to change, and the artist behind it all will sink back into anonymity.

“[T]hey would, she thought... however long they lived, come back to this night; this moon; this wind; this house: to her too” (Woolf 113). Although Woolf writes “to her too” as if Mrs. Ramsay considers her own immortality to be an afterthought, Woolf’s use of the colon suggests it is anything but an afterthought. Woolf is clarifying that what Mrs. Ramsay really means is that by remembering the night, the moon, and the house, Minta and Paul will essentially be remembering Mrs. Ramsay. After a sequence of semicolons it is easy to miss the colon, which in a sense replicates Mrs. Ramsay’s own self-deception in this moment; however, there is no mistaking that all of these things are the summation of Mrs. Ramsay and that the immortality of the night, the moon, and the house are, for Mrs. Ramsay, her immortality. The sentence is cry for selfhood buried beneath a façade of selflessness.

Another example of Mrs. Ramsay’s storytelling occurs during the scene with the skull. Mrs. Ramsay resolves the argument between Cam and James by covering up the skull with her own shawl. Woolf writes that the children “all watched her go to the chest of drawers, and open the little drawers quickly one after another, and not seeing anything that would do, she quickly took her own shawl off and wound it round the skull” (115).

Once Mrs. Ramsay has completely covered the skull, she:

came back to Cam and laid her head almost flat on the pillow beside Cam’s and said how lovely it looked now; how the fairies would love it; it was like a bird’s nest; it was like a beautiful mountain such as she had seen abroad, with valleys and flowers and bells ringing and birds singing and little goats and antelopes and... she could see the words echoing as she spoke them rhythmically in Cam’s mind, and Cam was repeating after her how it was like a mountain, a bird’s nest, a garden, and there were little antelopes. (Woolf 115)

Mrs. Ramsay weaves a story to ease Cam’s fears and put her to sleep, and while she does this she believes that she “could see the words echoing... in Cam’s mind,” as if her words actually become tangible in this moment. If Mrs. Ramsay believes she can see her words creating fairies and mountains in Cam’s head, then it is also what she sees when she tells

James that the weather will be fine enough to visit the lighthouse. She believes that she can write rewrite the physical world as if the world around her is her own construction.

That Woolf chooses to dress the skull in Mrs. Ramsay's clothing also suggests that she intends the skull to function as a sort of double for Mrs. Ramsay. While this could foreshadow Mrs. Ramsay's impending death, it also reminds the reader of something sadder, which is the fact that underneath Mrs. Ramsay's beauty and selflessness are dark thoughts such as "she felt this thing that she called life terrible, hostile, and quick to pounce on you" (60) and "[I]t will end, it will end" (Woolf 63). This scene is significant because throughout the novel Mrs. Ramsay's storytelling covers up the ugliness of the real world, such as her promise to James that the weather will be fine, her maneuvering of the dinner guests to avoid conflict, and her servitude to the male ego. Mrs. Ramsay places her shawl over all of these things. Paul and Minta's marriage will fail. Lily can relieve Tansley of his need to assert himself, but she suffers. James will wake up and see that the weather is not fine, and "he would never forget" (115).

Mrs. Ramsay is not deliberately lying to her son when tells him that there's a chance he can go to the lighthouse, but she is rewriting the story momentarily. Mr. Ramsay deals with fact which is why when James asks about the lighthouse he must keep on repeating "it won't be fine," and Mrs. Ramsay, who deals with fiction, must keep repeating "[B]ut it may be fine—I expect it will be fine" (4). She is not the only woman in the novel to do this because her own daughters do it as well but on a smaller scale. For example, the scene on the beach with Nancy, Minta, Paul, and Andrew reveals Nancy's ability to turn the world around her into a story. During the trip, Nancy goes off on her

own and when she finds her own pool, “[B]rooding, she changed the pool into sea, and made the minnows into sharks and whales, and cast vast clouds over this tiny world by holding her hand against the sun... brought darkness and desolation, like God himself, to millions of ignorant and innocent creatures... then took her hand away suddenly and let the sun stream down” (75). Mr. Ramsay’s complaint to Mrs. Ramsay that “[Y]ou’re teaching your daughters to exaggerate” (Woolf 67), is partly proven here, but what Mrs. Ramsay has taught her daughter to do is exercise her imagination. Similarly, Mrs. Ramsay will make the weather fine enough for a trip to the lighthouse, she will wave her hands and the ignorant creatures around her will realize they must marry, or she will turn a skull into fairies and mountains. Woolf also shows Cam exercising her imagination in the scene where Cam is heading toward the lighthouse with Mr. Ramsay and James and “her mind made the green swirls and streaks into patterns... wandered in imagination in that underworld of waters... where in the green light a change came over one’s entire mind and one’s body shone half transparent enveloped in a green cloak” (183). Cam shines half transparent, which again recalls Woolf’s incandescent writer who is everywhere in their work but also invisible.

The importance of Mrs. Ramsay’s storytelling and its own form of immortality is revealed through Lily at the end of the novel. In “The Lighthouse,” the last section of the novel, the unity Mrs. Ramsay established in the house is now dismantled: Lily and Nancy do not know what to send to the lighthouse, James and Cam are rebelling against their father, and Mr. Ramsay is slinking around Lily, waiting for sympathy from her since Mrs. Ramsay is no longer there to give it to him. Lily feels as though “the link that usually bound things together had been cut, and they floated up here, down there, off, anyhow”

(Woolf 146); however, despite the chaos, or maybe partly out of need to establish order out of the chaos, Lily begins to feel inspired to finish the painting she started the last time she visited the Ramsay's house. The exact moment that Lily feels this surge of inspiration to revisit her painting bears a direct correlation to Mrs. Ramsay because it occurs while Lily is thinking about what to send to the lighthouse, a job that originally belonged to Mrs. Ramsay in the beginning of the novel. As Lily thinks of the task of preparing items for the lighthouse, she thinks, "what does one send to the lighthouse? Perished. Alone. The grey-green light on the wall opposite. The empty places. Such were some of the parts, but how to bring them together? She asked" (147). While Ingram suggests that Lily understands what Mrs. Ramsay is trying to create during the dinner scene, Lily's understanding is limited up until this point. In fact, this scene of Lily attempting to prepare for the trip the first time Lily ever seeks to create wholeness with life's parts.

Ingram argues that Lily is an artist struggling to create unity, which is true, but only in the last section of the novel. Before "The Lighthouse," Lily does not look at her painting and think "[S]uch were some of the parts, but how to bring them together" (147). Instead, Lily struggles to translate the image in her head onto the canvas because while she paints, "there forced themselves upon her other things, her own inadequacy, her insignificance, keeping house for her father off the Brompton Road" (Woolf 19). Lily's sense of inadequacy stems from Tansley's (and probably other men's) assertions that woman cannot paint, and it stems from the role she is already being asked to play in her father's house. What Woolf is making clear is that at this point in the novel, Lily is not so much struggling with her artistic philosophy as she is struggling against that "masculine complex which has had so much influence upon the woman's movement" (*A Room* 55).

Woolf statement in *A Room* that a woman artist was not encouraged but rather “she was snubbed, slapped, lectured, and exhorted. Her mind must have been strained and her vitality lowered by the need of opposing this, of disproving that” (55), is exemplified through Lily.

Lily retreats back into her art whenever she is hit with a blow to her confidence as an artist. For example, when she must give into Tansley she comforts herself when she looks at the salt cellar and decides “she would move the tree further towards the middle, and her spirits rose” (93). She does this again when Paul Rayley mocks her offer to help find Minta’s brooch, when she decides she “would move the tree rather more to the middle” (102). Each time Lily pushes the salt cellar is indicative of the final line she will put in the center of her painting at the end of the novel, but she is not quite there, she is only moving towards that conclusion. Furthermore, Lily is not driven by a desire to create unity, but instead is only impelled to move the salt because it calms her while everything outside of her art makes her “feel violently two opposite things at the same time; that’s what you feel, was one; that’s what I feel, was the other, and then they fought together in her mind” (102).

Rather than dismiss the task of establishing unity in the house as unimportant, Lily attends to it the way she would attend to a painting, “[A]s if any interruption would break the frail shape she was building on the table she turned her back to the window lest Mr. Ramsay should see her” (147). She covers her work when Mr. Ramsay walks past the same way she covered her painting when Mr. Bankes tried to look at it. This shape that Lily builds on the table serves as an allusion to the shape that Lily previously built with the salt cellar during the dinner scene. As if the allusion was not obvious enough, Lily is

instantly reminded “there had been a little sprig or leaf pattern on the table-cloth, which she had looked at in a moment of revelation” (147). This moment is a convergence of Mrs. Ramsay’s art and Lily’s art, an acknowledgment of the similarity, the act of creation, between the two rather than of the differences.

Lily’s acknowledgment of Mrs. Ramsay’s art is triggered by her desire to put the parts together, and she begins to look back on her own antagonistic relationship with Charles Tansley. What she originally considered to be a sacrifice she made to keep the peace at dinner, Lily begins to see in a new light:

When she thought of herself and Charles throwing ducks and drakes and of the whole scene on the beach, it seemed to depend somehow upon Mrs. Ramsay sitting under the rock, with a pad on her knee, writing letters. (She wrote innumerable letters, and sometimes the wind took them and she and Charles just saved a page from the sea). But what power was in the human soul! She thought. That a woman sitting there writing under the rock resolved everything into simplicity; made these angers, irritations fall off like old rags; she brought together this and that and then this, and so made out of that miserable silliness and spite (she and Charles squabbling, sparring, had been silly and spiteful) something—this scene on the beach for example, this moment of friendship and liking—which survived, after all these years complete, so that she dipped into it to re-fashion her memory of him, and there it stayed in the mind affecting one almost like a work of art. (160)

The scene not only depends on Mrs. Ramsay but also her writing, especially when the wind threatens to destroy her writing because the act of preserving her work brings Tansley and Lily together. In a sense, Lily sees Mrs. Ramsay as “writing” the moment, and in the process of writing the moment, elevating it to immortality. Lily is able to find the memory preserved in her mind and it affects her “like a work of art.” Although she does not consider this moment on the same level as art but merely “like” a work of art, she is one step closer to acknowledging the importance and vitality of Mrs. Ramsay’s art.

Lily lingers on the idea of a memory being “like a work of art,” and she acknowledges “Mrs. Ramsay making of the moment something permanent (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent)” (161). Lily recognizes the goal they have in common, this time considering Mrs. Ramsay’s work as

in “another sphere” from her art but not wholly separate or antithetical to her art. Instead, Mrs. Ramsay’s “sphere” of art is integral to Lily’s, which becomes clear when Lily admits to herself, “[S]he owed it all to her” (160). Without Mrs. Ramsay’s constant urging that “life stand still,” Lily would not understand her own goal when she paints. She would continue moving the salt cellar because it calms her without understanding why it calms her. More importantly, Lily is able to create when she sees Mrs. Ramsay’s work as important to her own work rather than something she must revolt against. Lily’s breakthrough is not a rejection of Mrs. Ramsay because without Mrs. Ramsay the breakthrough would never have been achieved.

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