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The Strength of Separateness: A study of five women characters in five novels from two centuries

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the traditional role of women in society through looking at five novels about women by women. To establish what a woman's traditional place is this thesis compares Coventry Patmore's poem "The Angel in the House" to Virginia Woolf's speech "Professions for Women." It then goes on to analyze the main women characters of five literary works that demonstrate and counter this traditional and dominant view. The novels are *Villette* by Charlotte Brontë (1853), *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf (1927), *Gone With the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell (1936), *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston (1937) and *Violet Clay* by Gail Godwin (1978). Through analyzing the heroines and their environment the texts reveal that it is difficult for women to reach autonomy within a relationship and because of this many of them choose to have a better life as a single woman. The texts also show that the women's environments have difficulty in allowing them autonomy and that other women encourage them to marry in order to have their life choices of marriage and choosing a man over themselves validated.

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Introduction

The traditional view of what a woman wants is thought to be a husband, followed by a family. In most cultures women have been brought up with the sole goal of finding a man to marry. However, there are also women in the world who do not strive towards this presumed goal as well as literary works that highlight this. The following essay will analyze five literary works which demonstrate and counter this traditional and dominant view.

The works that I am going to explore are all works about women, by women. They were chosen because of a similar trait exhibited by their female characters, their ability to stand alone, and also because they represent different periods and settings. These works were at first all met with some resistance, as they were seen as radical in their way of depicting their protagonists and yet have still managed to stand the test of time by constantly being published in new editions and mostly having been accepted into the literary canon. They are *Villette* by Charlotte Brontë (1853), *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf (1927), *Gone With the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell (1936), *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston (1937) and *Violet Clay* by Gail Godwin (1978). The characters of these novels as well as the societies depicted all exhibit different viewpoints on women's marital status. They also challenge what it means to be unmarried, ranging from the ambivalent view demonstrated by the characters in *Villette* to the decisively negative and judgmental one expressed by Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* and the accepting one shown in *Violet Clay*. It seems that even today women are not allowed to be single and at the same time to be seen as "successful", but the writers of these novels in various ways question this view. In fact it is possible to see it contradicted even further back in time than when *Villette* was published by Charlotte Brontë in 1853.

Some questions that beg answers are: "Are the women characters portrayed as happier without a partner?" "Are they portrayed as more successful with or without a partner?" "Do the texts present the women characters as *potentially* happier on their own?" If we assume, and if the writers of the novels assume that a woman can find satisfaction within her own person without filling up a potential void with somebody else,

I will also try to answer the question, “*Why* is it thought by so many of the characters that the women characters within the structure of these novels cannot have a fulfilling and successful life without a partner?” It is not, or rather should not be, a given that a feeling of accomplishment should come from outside of oneself.

The traditional view exhibited by many of the characters within these novels categorizes unmarried women as unhappy, unsuccessful and a burden to their families. However I aim to prove that is in fact not the case when it comes to Lucy of *Villette*, Lily of *To the Lighthouse*, Scarlett of *Gone with the Wind*, Janie of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Violet of *Violet Clay*. Being single on the contrary opens up new possibilities for these characters’ agency, independence, and freedom, all while remaining outside of the patriarchal structure. Lucy Snowe in *Villette*, as an example, makes her own way in life entirely on her own merits and becomes successful as a single woman; and the text actually, though obliquely, indicates that she might be happier as a single woman than she would be as a wife. Scarlett O’Hara, as another example, can be seen succeeding and thriving in her professional life while unmarried as well as when she is married. Additionally, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie is able to function best when freely allowed to choose what and who is best for herself. Both Scarlett and Janie, in novels set in different periods but written in the same decade (the 1930’s) also come to question their societies’ views of marriage and what they mean to a woman.

I will first discuss what the traditional view of the feminine ideal encompasses and how this has been given expression in Coventry Patmore’s poem, “The Angel in the House”, as well as questioned in Virginia Woolf’s classic essay “Professions for Women.” Further I will broaden the discussion to explore how women characters, in general, have evolved from this traditional structure, relying on literary theory from a feminist viewpoint. Also, I will explore how the feminine ideal for various reasons simply does not apply to the protagonists of the chosen novels, Lucy, Lily, Scarlett, Janie and Violet. I will question whether the aforementioned women characters are better off by *not* fitting into the patriarchal structure and will also look at them not doing so through performing work outside of the realm of the home.

The Feminine Ideal

The Victorian view of women can be said to be embodied in Coventry Patmore's famous poem "The Angel in the House". In this poem, Patmore describes his courtship of Emily, his first wife, whom he describes as the embodiment of Victorian femininity. Patmore opens "The Angel in the House" by introducing the reader to Felix and his wife, Honoria. He describes Honoria's perfect beauty, the effect it has on Felix and how her manners are exactly those which women should strive towards. Later, in "The Wife's Tragedy" from Canto IX, Patmore discusses at great length how a woman's pleasure in life is derived from pleasing man.

Man must be pleased; but him to please
Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf
Of his condoled necessities
She casts her best, she flings herself.
How often she flings for nought, and yokes
Her heart to an icicle or whim,
Whose each impatient word provokes
Another, not from her, but him;
While she, too gentle even to force
His penitence by kind replies,
Waits by, expecting his remorse,
With pardon in her pitying eyes;
And if he once, by shame oppress'd,
A comfortable word confers,
She leans and weeps against his breast,
And seems to think the sin was hers;
And whilst his love has any life,
Or any eye to see her charms,
At any time, she's still his wife,
Dearly devoted to his arms;
She loves with love that cannot tire;
And she, ah woe, she loves alone,
Through passionate duty love springs higher,
As grass grows taller round a stone. (Patmore 52-53)

Patmore thus claims that women only attain their own joy through pleasing their men. He does not allow for any deviation from a wife's role when he writes in the Canto's opening line, "Man *must* be pleased." (my emphasis) Through using the verb "must" Patmore postulates that not only is it a woman's pleasure but also her duty to please her husband.

By the word “yokes” it also, however, is stressed that a wife’s relation to her husband is one of burden and labor. The association to a work horse or an ox points to the one-sided relationship customary of a beast of burden. In Patmore’s description of the ideal wife, the wife is there for her husband, and her existence is limited entirely to his. Their relationship to each other is that she dutifully waits for her master’s response, studying his behavior and mood in a dog-like manner, dutifully and loyally awaiting his command. This poem almost seems to portray a master-slave relationship in that there is no existence in the pair without the husband dictating to the subservient party, the wife. She is in every single way dependent on him for her thoughts, emotions, actions and sense of self—and still this is said to be her “pleasure.”

In addition to pleasing her husband, woman’s obligation is to forgive him his mistakes even before he asks to be pardoned. She, being “too gentle even to force/ His penitence” should expect no remorse to be shown (Patmore, Canto IX, Line 9-10, 52). She is to remain dutifully by her husband’s side and demonstrate to him that she has already forgiven his mistakes. Additionally, if shame does bring forth an apology or some word of comfort, a wife’s correct reaction is to take upon herself the burden and responsibility of the mistake as if she had been the one who has done wrong.

Furthermore, Patmore presents the importance of unfailing love. As long as a husband is still living and can “see her charms”, nothing is able to interrupt or destroy the wife’s devotion to him. Not even death is able to disrupt the duty a wife has to her husband. In loving him with a “love that cannot tire” she is even described as having to love him *more* when he has ceased to live. Patmore again emphasizes that the wife’s relationship to her husband is one composed of responsibility with his use of the word “duty” in conjunction with word “love” in line 23. There is no indication of a passionate love, a love filled with longing or even one stemming from the wife’s own will. Even in his death, his memory remains to haunt his wife and be a continuous reminder of how her life even in his death belongs to her husband.

The Victorian ideal that Patmore presents depicts a colossal imbalance between husband and wife. There is a crushing responsibility placed on the woman and seemingly complete freedom afforded to her husband. There is no room allowed for women to be individuals. They are not afforded rest or permitted to tend to themselves as they are too

busy tending to their wifely obligations. In fact, they seem to have no existence outside of their relationship to the man, and thus the very idea of a woman on her own—let alone a happy and fulfilled single woman—is made to seem an anomaly.

It does not seem that the poem received much interest when it was first published in 1854. However it was brought to the forefront after Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote of it in her short essay “An Extinct Angel” in 1891 and Virginia Woolf made use of it in her famous speech “Professions for Women” given to The Women’s Service League in 1931. Gilman and Woolf oppose the view of separate gender spheres that was accepted by the male dominant Victorian society by calling attention to the inherent imbalance that characterized them. It is through efforts of women like Gilman and Woolf and their readings of the poem that people today can read poetry like Patmore’s “The Angel in the House” and see both how crippling this ideal was for women and also how powerful it was.

Woolf discusses the Victorian ideal in relation to her own writing, describing the “Angel” thus:

She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was a chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it—in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. (Woolf, “Professions” 150)

When Woolf was writing she was continuously haunted by this “angel”. She did not want to “[b]e sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex” (Woolf, “Professions” 150). To obtain the freedom that she was struggling to grasp, Woolf realized she had to rid herself of this image:

I turned upon her and caught her by the throat. I did my best to kill her. My excuse, if I were to be had up in a court of law, would be that I acted in self-defence. Had I not killed her she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart out of my writing (Woolf, “Professions” 151).

Woolf's fight for women's right to their own voice and their right to an independent life was not one that was easily won: "She died hard. [...] It is far harder to kill a phantom than a reality. She was always creeping back when I thought I had dispatched her. Though I flatter myself that I killed her in the end, the struggle was severe [...]" ("Professions" 151). The angel in the house was such a fixed figure in Woolf's mind that it was impossible to erase her fully upon the first try, and the question is whether her ghost did not haunt literature and culture for a long time after, perhaps even does so today.

Feminist theory states that "[t]he representation of women in literature [...] provided the role models which indicated to women, and men, what constituted acceptable versions of the 'feminine' and legitimate feminine goals and aspirations" (Barry 122). As much of the literature at least up to the 1970's was replete with subservient women characters, feminist criticism brought attention to what its proponents claimed was an unfair portrayal of women. The traditional version of what was supposed to characterize feminine goals and aspirations was found to be unbalanced and one-sided. One of the main themes of feminist literary criticism was the emphasis and attention given to the women characters' choice of a husband and their life within the parameters of family life. Also brought to the forefront were the "mechanisms of patriarchy, that is, the cultural 'mind-set' in men and women which perpetuated sexual inequality" (Barry 122). The importance given to courtship and marriage in literature strengthened the emphasis of family life as the only valid model and the stigmatization of single life which feminists were trying to counteract.

A number of women were in all probability content and able to find happiness in being wives, housewives and mothers. Yet, just as all women were not happy in being married, not all women were unhappy in being single, as I hope to show in my discussion of *Villette*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Gone With the Wind*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Violet Clay*.

Single Women at Work

Ranging over a period of more than one hundred years and spanning a vast geographical area, the books chosen for this thesis depict very different societies. Yet despite the differences, a common theme with slight variations that transcends geographical settings and time is Patmore's image of the angel in the house. Women are supposed to be subservient to men, silent and passive, remain within the confines of the home and give of themselves while expecting nothing in return. At least, that is the view apparently held by the societies depicted, if not by the texts themselves. The societies represented in the five novels all seem to share the view that single women are a problem by challenging their pre-determined position within their community.

The term single as used here covers a wide group. The women characters to be discussed are widows, divorcees, women who have never been married and women who have been left by their husbands. This means that there are obvious differences between *how* they are single. So for example widowed women characters often exhibit a strong sense of self, have sexual experience as well as inherited wealth and are able to stand by themselves without having to be stigmatized by use of the term "spinster". They can be perceived as threatening to male characters but they also have an established position within the community, as is exemplified by the character of Madame Beck in *Villette*. Her opposite in the same novel is Lucy Snowe, who has none of these things and as a poor seemingly unattractive spinster without family connections seems to be almost invisible to the people around her.

To the women who choose to live within the patriarchal structure the women who do not marry are seen as a subgroup of society, one that has failed. Dorothy Yost Deegan argues in her book, *The Stereotype of the Single Woman in American Novels*, that single women are met with resistance and are discriminated against, because in colonial times the only women not to get married were the "unattractive or the handicapped or the incompetent ..." (2). Before women were able to be self-sufficient this may have been the case, yet in the five novels that will be discussed, it is far from the truth. For example, Lucy Snowe provides for herself in *Villette* by firstly being a governess and then a schoolteacher under the direction of Madame Beck; she is certainly neither handicapped

nor incompetent. Likewise, Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* is a self-sufficient painter and is in no way incompetent or handicapped.

If the above mentioned heroines are neither handicapped nor incompetent and perfectly able to provide for themselves then it does not follow that their marital status of being single remains a problem; and the question of their looks is therefore besides the point. Another explanation for the stigmatization of singleness according to Deegan was that if a woman is “economically and emotionally independent, if she earns her own living and contributes to the care of dependents, she is performing a man’s role in society” (2). If a woman performing a man’s role in society would be condoned, then the economical structure of the patriarchal society that we find ourselves living in would be deemed unnecessary. If society would come to the consensus that women are able to perform a man’s role in society by being able to work and take care of themselves, then men would not have such an important role to play. That women do so is only generally deemed acceptable when there is no other option, which can be seen exemplified during wartime when women are actually expected to take over men’s work, only to return it to the men once the war is over. The threat to patriarchal society seems to be the problem in the books discussed here, rather than any deficiencies in the women characters themselves.

It is an interesting fact that the women characters to be discussed do not on the whole personally conceive of their single state as a problem. However, they are able to see how their singleness can be viewed as a problem through challenging the dominating patriarchal framework. Patriarchy can be said to divide women and make them suspicious of each other. The women who chose to stay within the expected social norms gained a secure place within those norms and were presented with a very clear view of what their expected roles to be fulfilled were. The single women living their lives outside of the structure and succeeding without it therefore make it more difficult for the women who have -perhaps unhappily- remained within it to validate their lives and choices. This is what classifies these women as problematic and difficult: they challenge the prevailing social norms. For example, Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* believes that it is impossible to be happy without being married, and Lily Briscoe proves her wrong by being happy and successful though not being married, thereby implicitly questioning the

happiness of Mrs. Ramsay's own marriage. Mrs. Ramsay is unable or unwilling to understand that Lily is actually happy in her singleness and only made unhappy through others misunderstanding her and her position, while Mrs. Ramsay herself, is shown to be frustrated and torn between the demands of domesticity and her wish to do more in life.

As Virginia Woolf also points out in *A Room of One's Own*, married women have found it difficult to work outside the home. She cites the impossibility of raising a large family while working as well as the fact that married women were not allowed to keep their own money, even if they should happen to make some.

It is only for the last forty-eight years that Mrs Seton has had a penny of her own. For all the centuries before that it would have been her husband's property—a thought which, perhaps, may have had its share in keeping Mrs Seton and her mothers off the Stock Exchange. Every penny I earn, they may have said, will be taken from me and disposed of according to my husband's wisdom—perhaps to found a scholarship or to endow a fellowship in Balliol or Kings, so that to earn money, even if I could earn money, is not a matter that interests me very greatly. I had better leave it to my husband. (24)

It is hard to imagine being interested in making money that one is unable to dispose of as one pleases. As a result, women in general and married women in particular have on the whole been excluded from the workplace and confined to work in the home. And because the work in the home, although often laborious as well as time-consuming, does not yield a wage it has not been valued as work and at times has not been seen as work at all.

While women have been confined to the home and the work there, they have also been confined to the frame of the patriarchal structure which places them in a subservient and dependent relationship to their husbands or breadwinners. By working outside of the realm of the home and earning their own money Lucy, Lily, Scarlett, Janie and Violet therefore challenge the patriarchal tradition. These heroines have created a new space for themselves uncommon to their gender and thereby challenge the dominant societal structure of their world.

Lucy Snowe

Villette by Charlotte Brontë is an important first novel in this study as it presents its heroine, Lucy Snowe, as an unapologetic character; one that is unperturbed in the fact that the life that she is living is one that falls outside of the patriarchal structure that she has been brought up to find a role within. Even amidst criticism Lucy is able to demonstrate that it is possible to work to support oneself without relying on a man in order to do so. Although she is given encouragement along her journey by several people, the majority of her success comes from her own strength and persistence to succeed. She looks at the world that she has been presented with and creates a space within it for herself; a new space that is unknown and unfamiliar to her surroundings and as a consequence is met with doubt and distain.

Lucy is first introduced to the reader when she is at the age of fourteen and residing with her godmother Mrs. Bretton, Mrs. Bretton's son Graham and a visiting child known as Polly. Lucy leaves her godmother's house almost at the same time as Polly due to an undisclosed family tragedy and is obligated to start working as a caregiver for an elderly lady, Miss Marchmont. It is due to this tragedy, apparently involving the loss of her parents, that Lucy falls outside of her designated position as a middle-class woman within the patriarchal structure and is forced to work to support herself financially. After Miss Marchmont's death, Lucy is left without money and without employment. Alone, she takes a risk and boards a ship bound for the fictional, but clearly Belgian, city of Villette. Upon arriving there she finds work as a governess for Madame Beck's three daughters. Eventually, Lucy is asked to teach in Madame Beck's boarding school for girls, a position in which she thrives despite various troubles. Her colleague M. Paul Emanuel becomes a good friend as well as Dr. John Graham, her godmother's son, who coincidentally weaves in and out of her life in Villette.

Of the company that Lucy Snowe keeps, some have an obvious disdain for singleness and all that it encompasses, such as Ginevra Fanshawe, an English pupil at the school. Others have an ambivalent view such as Lucy's employer, Madame Beck. The view that is expressed by Ginevra who simply takes marriage for granted is neither surprising nor contrary to the view held of society in 19th century England and Belgium

during this time period. Upon first meeting Lucy and inquiring about her life, Ginevra discusses her financial situation and her view of marriage:

By-and-by we are to marry—rather elderly gentlemen, I suppose, with cash: papa and mamma manage that. My sister Augusta is married now to a man much older-looking than papa. Augusta is very beautiful—not in my style—but dark; her husband, Mr Davis, had the yellow fever in India, and he is still the colour of a guinea; but then he is rich, and Augusta has her carriage and establishment, and we all think she has done perfectly well. No, this is better than ‘earning a living,’ as you say. (Brontë 64-65)

Obviously, Ginevra’s youth and beauty will be traded for an economically comfortable life. She accepts without question the fact that her sister is married to a man who is described as old and unattractive. The attitude that Ginevra displays of marriage is an indifferent one that she has been taught to adhere to and has planned for. That Ginevra expects *to be married* to a man as well because of his wealth and not *to marry* a man with her own fortune speaks volumes.

Many examples of women who fought for a new place in society are exhibited in *Villette* but are dismissed more quickly than it takes to read the passage. These different representations of strong and unusual women are in stark contrast with the women characters found in *Villette*. Lucy Snowe comes across these women in the museum and the theatre. Firstly, she encounters a painting of Cleopatra at the museum. She sees the painting that “represented a woman, considerably larger, I thought, than the life. I calculated that this lady, put into a modity of bulk, would infallibly turn from fourteen to sixteen stone. [...] She had no business lounging on a sofa” (Brontë 250). Cleopatra, known for becoming sole ruler of Egypt, is the epitome of strength and as she has been portrayed in the painting, is presented as such; physically large and powerfully built. Although Lucy to some extent rejects Cleopatra, it is not true as Diane Long Hoeveler states that she is “repulsed by this representation of woman in the flesh and cools her eyes by making a hasty retreat [...]” (231). On the contrary, Lucy is taken by the painting and therefore sits in front of it as long as she is permitted. Perhaps she is drawn to it because it exhibits what has been forbidden for her and all women of the Victorian era: autonomy and strength, as well as sexuality.

M. Paul Emanuel’s reaction when he discovers Lucy in front of the painting is

interesting in this connection. He is horrified, and ushers her to the other side of the room. Why is this? One argument as presented by Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* is that M. Paul Emanuel is “deeply offended, even affronted, that a young woman should see what he immediately settles down to gaze at” because the painting is “the male dream of an open and panting odalisque, the sheer carnality floating always in the back of his mind” (260). It is as if M. Paul Emanuel has been caught with his hand in the cookie jar and must distract Lucy away from his less than desirable behavior and chooses to do so by focusing on her behavior instead of his own. Reluctant to leave the painting, it is not until M. Paul Emanuel chastises Lucy for admiring it that she is forced to leave; “Vous vous amusez! et à quoi, s’il vous plait? Mais d’abord, faites-moi le plaisir de vous lever; prenez mon bras, et allons de l’autre côté [You are amusing yourself! and at what, if you please? but first, do me the favour of rising; take my arm, and let us go to the other side]” (Brontë 251). Is it the “indecenty”, i.e. the unabashed sexuality, of Cleopatra, which makes it an unsuitable painting for Lucy to watch, or is it the very idea of an autonomous woman? M. Paul Emanuel instead leads Lucy to look at a series of paintings showing what are supposedly the stages of a woman’s life: a “Jeune Fille”, a “Mariée”, a “Jeune Mère” and lastly a “Veuve”, Lucy promptly rejects the paintings and what they represent with disgust:

All these four “Anges” were grim and grey as burglars, and cold and vapid as ghosts. What women to live with! insincere, ill-humored, bloodless, brainless nonentities! As bad in their way as the indolent gipsy-giantess, the Cleopatra, in hers (Brontë 253).

These paintings fit well with Patmore’s view of “The Angel in the House”. The view that Lucy holds of what a woman is supposed to be like is obviously different. Her idea of a woman seems to be a person who is sincere and happy as opposed to “insincere” and “ill-humored” and who has warm blood as well as sharp brains. Lucy’s view contrasts sharply with the four paintings as what a woman *should* adhere to.

The second depiction of a powerful and successful woman character who stands outside of the patriarchal structure of *Villette* is the performer and opera singer Vashti. She is described thus by Lucy:

Before calamity she is a tigress; she rends her woes, shivers them in convulsed abhorrence. Pain, for her, has no result in good; tears water no harvest of wisdom on sickness, on death itself, she looks with the eye of a rebel. Wicked, perhaps, she is, but also she is strong: and her strength has conquered Beauty, has overcome Grace, and bound both at her side, captives peerlessly fair, and docile as fair. (Brontë 326)

Lucy seems to admire the actress more than she did the painting. She understands her as a strong woman, one that is to be looked to as an example of a strong character. The language used to describe Vashti is as strong as she is, due to her ability to overcome both beauty and grace resulting in her producing something much more valuable; strength.

Vashti is the complete opposite to the four “Angeles” described earlier. It is clear that Lucy identifies more with this woman than either the “Angeles” or Cleopatra. During the performance of Vashti, Lucy does not turn to her escort, Dr. Graham, to seek his approval. Instead, she asks herself, “What thought Dr. Graham of this being?” (Brontë 327). She wishes to see if he feels the same admiration as she does towards Vashti. She knows that he “*could* think and think well” and seems to be hoping for him to do so in giving his opinion of Vashti (Brontë 328). Unfortunately, Lucy is met by the same attitude from Dr. Graham as from M. Paul Emanuel. Dr. Graham’s “sympathies *were* callous. In a few terse phrases he told me his opinion of, and feeling towards, the actress: he judged her as a woman, not an artist: it was a branding judgment” (Brontë 329). Dr. Graham sees her as a woman selling her talents to the audience, a woman who is devoid of self-respect. His view is, in fact, the complete opposite of the one Lucy has. He is unable to separate the acting from the woman and therefore can only condemn Vashti for her explicit stage performance instead of admiring her talent and strength.

The fact that the two most prominent men in Lucy Snowe’s life are unable to accept her fascination for strong women is a natural consequence of the societal structures of the time. M. Paul Emanuel clearly places the male sex above the female. He announces to Lucy when she is to take part in the school play as a male character, that she must wear something that “announces [her] as of the nobler sex” (Brontë 172). With this statement he indicates that he sees women as subservient to men and in need of their guidance. Therefore it comes natural to him to lead Lucy away from anything that would

harm her understanding of what is acceptable for her as a woman. In fact, M. Paul Emanuel sees it as his duty to protect and lead Lucy as he sees women in general as in need of looking after. He believes the male sex to be the superior one and therefore sees himself as acting correctly.

The same attitude can be deduced of M. Paul Emanuel's reaction to Lucy's ability to learn. As he schools her in arithmetics, and later in various other subjects, he is initially pleased with his task, as Lucy finds the subjects difficult and requires much guidance, and he is able to retain his dominant position towards her. But this quickly changes as Lucy becomes more proficient in her tasks. When she "voluntarily doubled, trebled, quadrupled the tasks he set, to please him as [she] thought, his kindness became sternness [...] the more [she] did, the harder [she] worked, the less he seemed content" (Brontë 445). Obviously M. Paul Emanuel feels that Lucy's proficiency threatens his position of authority over her. He is therefore rude to her and belittles her. He lectures her on the "pride of intellect" and causes her to question her yearning for knowledge as unfeminine. "I was vaguely threatened with I know not what doom if I ever trespassed the limits proper to my sex, and conceived a contraband appetite for unfeminine knowledge" (Brontë 445-446). As late as 1969 a psychological study on the fear of success among women found that there "were fears that [...] success indicated abnormality, was an affront to femininity, and therefore to happiness as an adult female" (Apter 64). This is exactly the attitude of M. Paul Emanuel, which he tries to impose on Lucy, though with doubtful success:

A "woman of intellect," it appeared was a sort of "lusus naturae," a luckless accident, a thing for which there was neither place nor use in creation, wanted neither as wife nor worker. [...] He believed that lovely, placid, and passive feminine mediocrity was the only pillow on which manly thought and sense could find rest for its aching temples; and as to work, male mind alone could work to any good practical result—hein? (Brontë 449-450)

Describing a woman of intellect as a kind of freak shows how far M. Paul Emanuel is willing to go to stop Lucy Snowe from wanting to develop her intellect and independence. It is well known to people in powerful positions that if one is kept from education, it is easier to be manipulated and Lucy's steadfastness to acquire knowledge

and to stand her ground speaks volumes of her determination to be her own person and not be seen simply as a soothing companion to the great male.

The entire patriarchal structure would be shaken if women were to refuse their part in it. Therefore it is important for men such as M. Paul Emanuel and Dr. Graham to keep down a woman like Lucy, a woman who stands outside of the structure in her single state as well as in her need for self-sufficiency and her obvious intelligence and competence. They both do this in their strong rejection of alternative role models like Cleopatra and Vashti, and M. Paul Emanuel also does so through his offending manner towards Lucy. In effect, these actions keep Lucy from reaching equal status with both Dr. Graham and M. Paul Emanuel.

Many readers obviously shared Dr. Graham's and M. Paul Emmanuel's attitudes, and *Villette* was criticized by many, including Anne Mozley in her review in *The Christian Remembrancer*, where she accused Lucy of being a heroine "without the feminine element", "contemptuous of prescriptive decorum", and reliant on "unscrupulous, and self-dependent intellect" (Allott 110). Lucy Snowe was further criticized anonymously in *The Nonconformist* where she was found to be "[...] the least interesting, among the leading characters of the book" (Mcneese 597). The acceptable woman was obviously Patmore's "Angel in the House" and as Lucy's character worked outside of the realm of the household, voiced her own opinion and showed a thirst for knowledge, it is not surprising that critics found her to be "contemptuous of decorum" and uninteresting. Perhaps her lack of appeal is due to her "lack of any trait that might render her visible: beauty, money, conformity." (Millett 256) However, it is exactly for these reasons that she *is* interesting to a modern reader. Even though she lacks beauty, money and conformity she is still able to live her own life. It may even be the reasons for her ability to do so. Because she lacks these traits she is afforded what other women only wish to attain; autonomy.

Even amidst all criticism, Lucy may question the model for feminine behavior but she does not ignore it completely. An example demonstrating the contrary to Mozley's accusation is when Lucy plays the male character in the school play. "To be dressed like a man did not please, and would not suit me. I had consented to take a man's name and part; as to his dress—*halte là!* No. I would keep my own dress; come what

might” (Brontë 171). One must then question Anne Mozley’s criticism of Lucy’s lack of femininity; obviously it must be something much deeper than how Lucy is described and how she acts. Is it perhaps that she is a single woman who asserts her autonomy and her right to be a person on her own, not an adjunct to a man?

The only woman character in the novel who is able to support Lucy in her singleness is Madame Beck. She gives Lucy a role model to look to for guidance in how she wants to live her own life. As Birgitta Berglund writes in her article “In Defence of Madame Beck” she is a “single parent with three children to support, who works hard to do so using the means available to her” (192). Lucy is given inspiration from Madame Beck and her school and thereby expands her vision of her own abilities and begins to dream of a school of her own, just like Madame Beck. She therefore saves her earnings from her teaching so that she can open one. She confides in M. Paul Emanuel when “he had inquired into my plans of life, and I had communicated them; the school project pleased him; he made me repeat it more than once, though he called it an Alnaschar dream” (Brontë 560). M. Paul Emanuel’s reaction is typical of his attitude to women as he “is a fiercely competitive man, adverse to self-assured competence in others, and especially in women [...]” (Nestor 96). He is unable to appreciate Lucy’s confession of her dream and even though he claims to be pleased, he at the same time exposes his skepticism of her being able to carry out her ideas by calling her plan an “Alnaschar dream.” Alnaschar is a character in *The Arabian Nights* who dreams of wealth and in doing so causes the glassware that he was planning on selling to acquire his fortune to break. As M. Paul Emanuel is unsure of Lucy being able to succeed on her own, he decides to provide her with the facilities of the school himself from his possession of a handsome sum of money.

However, as M. Paul Emanuel provides Lucy with the start of her school, he also feels in his right to dictate terms to her. “‘Now’, he pursued, ‘you shall live here and have a school; you shall employ yourself while I am away; you shall think of me sometimes; you shall mind your health and happiness for my sake, and when I come back’—” (Brontë 618) As Lucy had wished for the school to allow herself the same autonomy that Madame Beck was afforded, the gift of the school from M. Paul Emanuel is somewhat problematic. It certainly makes Lucy happy, but it also makes her subservient: “He was

my king; royal for me had been that hand's bounty; to offer homage was both a joy and a duty" (Brontë 618). As a result Lucy feels bound to M. Paul Emanuel's wishes and therefore "promised to do all he told me" (Brontë 618). To Lucy's relief, only the first year's rent and the arrangement of the school is M. Paul Emanuel's gift and after that she is to take over the finances.

Even though it is M. Paul Emanuel who actually provides Lucy with her school and although she expresses her gratitude, (thereby keeping the project within the patriarchal structure as it were) Brontë then immediately withdraws M. Paul Emanuel by sending him away on a voyage which lasts for three years. "Reader, they were the three happiest years of my life", Lucy somewhat surprisingly comments on this period in her life (Brontë 625). It is certainly interesting that it is only through M. Paul Emanuel's absence that Lucy is able to obtain happiness. She is free to manage her own affairs as she wishes and as a result is able to be independent of anyone else. Because M. Paul Emanuel is absent, the whole success of the school is due to Lucy's hard work and competence, "I worked—I worked hard. I deemed myself the steward of his property, and determined, God willing, to render a good account" (Brontë 625). The school thus prospers in M. Paul Emanuel's three-year absence, and Lucy is even able to obtain the neighboring building, turning it into a pensionnat just as Madame Beck had done.

The only remaining problem is that the school is not wholly Lucy's. As it was a gift from M. Paul Emanuel, she is only the keeper of it until he returns. Brontë was aware of the dilemma and implies in the novel's frequently discussed ending that M. Paul Emanuel dies at sea in the storm that "roared frenzied for seven days" (Brontë 628). It is interesting that Brontë initially wanted to cement the fact of his death, but was discouraged by "her father's pleas to save him and provide a happy ending" (Hoeveler 240). However, some critics adhere to the notion that the ending of the novel is not as clear as that. Patricia Stubbs in her book *Women and Fiction* writes that the ending is an ambiguous one and believes there to be "doubt about Paul Emanuel's ultimate return and marriage to Lucy [...]" (28) while Kate Millet sees no ambiguity: "As there is no remedy to sexual politics in marriage, Lucy very logically doesn't marry. [...] So Paul suffers a quiet sea burial" (263). However, even without the explicit telling of M. Paul Emanuel's death, it is clear that Lucy is free to do as she wishes with her business and her life from

then on as a single, independent and successful woman.

Although Madame Beck is the standard that Lucy models herself against, even this strong and successful woman cannot act freely without being met with some criticism. As she associates with Dr. Graham without a chaperone, even the fact that she is a widow does not save her from gossip. The entire house is convinced that she is in love with Dr. Graham and “affirmed that she was going to marry him” (Brontë 122). Madame Beck’s judgment is further questioned when she allows Dr. Graham to become employed as the doctor of her school. This time, it is not only the staff of the house who gossip but her behavior also rouses concern from the parents of her pupils. Lucy admires her strength in being able to bear and manipulate the situation to her favor:

Madame, had she been weak, would now have been lost: a dozen rival educational houses were ready to improve this false step—if false step it were—to her ruin; but Madame was not weak, and little Jesuit though she might be, yet I clapped the hands of my heart, and with its voice cried “Brava!” as I watched her able bearing, her skilled management, her temper and her firmness on this occasion. (Brontë 121)

Since Lucy is able to see Madame Beck’s strength as an individual without limiting her to her role as a widow (her definition within the patriarchal structure), she is able to take pleasure in Madame Beck’s success and appreciate how she uses her wit and intelligence to keep her good reputation. Lucy also learns from her how to handle being placed in a problematic position.

In the novel Lucy reflects on love and marriage by asking, “[H]ow many people ever *do* love, or at least marry for love, in this world?” (Brontë 124). Her view being such, it is understandable that she does not just seek companionship in marriage but instead finds it in friendship. When at her weakest, before her nervous breakdown, Lucy admits to simply wanting just that. “I wanted companionship, I wanted friendship, I wanted counsel. I could find none of these in closet or chamber, so I went and sought them in church and confessed” (Brontë 231). Lucy is not a super woman who requires no contact with other people. She is not completely self-reliant but she is clear-sighted:

“I shall share no man’s or woman’s life in this world, as you understand sharing. I think I have one friend of my own, but am not sure; and till I *am*

sure, I live solitary.”

“But solitude is sadness.”

“Yes; it is sadness. Life, however, has worse than that. Deeper than melancholy, lies heart-break.” (Brontë 539)

For Lucy, it is a conscious decision not to seek marriage uncritically. Careful with her feelings, she is unwilling to risk them to gain a relationship. This is not limited to men or romantic relationships, she explicitly says that she will not share a man *or* woman’s life until she is completely sure of their true person. As she presents a thoroughly thought out reason, a modern reader at least cannot fault Lucy for her choice, even if some Victorian readers obviously did. Her life choices can be viewed as challenging conventions of propriety not only by her living a solitary life but also by thriving in it. She can be viewed as implicitly scorning the efforts of other women who could have been like her but sacrificed their independence for decorum.

Lucy is not entirely alone as she has her close friendship with M. Paul Emanuel, she has the security of being able to rely on Madame Beck, and she has her relationship to her godmother and Dr. John as well as her relationship with Paulina, to name a few. However, by not attaching herself through marriage she gains a freedom that was denied most other women at the time. She is able to go where she wants, economy allowing. She can speak to whom she pleases and work within her chosen profession which allows her more freedom in her social, professional and private life. All of these allowances are granted to Lucy within the confines of propriety. The borders are in fact far wider for her, as a single and working woman, than they could be for a married woman.

Charlotte Brontë was thus able to highlight the possibility of freedom for single women at the same time as she saw the difficulties they faced. Matthew Arnold’s opposition to the novel on its publication, shown in his letter to Mrs. Forster, described Brontë’s mind as containing “nothing but hunger, rebellion and rage” (Allott 93). She may well have been enraged over the discrimination single women faced. An unmarried woman was threatening to society mostly because it did not know how to refer to her, or in what context to place her; a single woman was kept out of society because it was unable to place her in a category. Brontë questions the reasoning behind excluding this entire group of women and in *Villette* dares to question why they are stigmatized for standing alone.

Lily Briscoe

A natural second novel to this study is Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. This novel is essential to a study of women characters that stand alone in that one of the main women characters, Lily Briscoe, does just that despite strong pressure from those around her to accept the perception of how women ought to act. Woolf clearly shows society's expectations of what Lily ought to be and do but gives her the freedom to do the opposite. Her character is one that demonstrates the internal struggle that accompanies the expectations that are placed upon her as a single woman. This is done in such a fashion that it is visible to the reader but hidden from the other characters in the novel and is primarily achieved through the use of stream-of-consciousness, as Woolf shows the thoughts as they enter a character's mind as opposed to actions that are being done by or to the same character. Woolf's writing is also unusual in that she places very little emphasis on women's sexuality. Woolf does not depict Lily as sexually repressed and emotionally incomplete, instead she demonstrates the strain that is placed on her psychologically by both sexes.

Lily is a single woman painter, and the text shows her interaction with various other characters. An aspect of Lily's life that is stressed is on the one hand how society in the shape of Mrs. Ramsay encourages her to marry, and how she reacts to this and on the other hand Lily's passion for her work, which is what really matters to her. Although the mass slaughtering in World War I meant that there was a large number of single women in the inter-war period in Britain, it was still uncommon for women to actively choose to work for a living, especially as artists. But Virginia Woolf creates in Lily Briscoe a new type of woman character with a will of her own and a passion for her work that cannot be taken away. As Laurel Thatcher Ulrich points out in *Well Behaved Women Seldom Make History*, "...Woolf challenged seemingly impermeable boundaries between male and female identity" in giving Lily Briscoe her profession and within it such a strong sense of self to be able to persevere (Ulrich 33).

The importance given to marriage in *To the Lighthouse* is primarily shown through the actions of and dialogues with the central character, Mrs. Ramsay. She discusses matrimony with her family as well as in her own private thoughts, and

everything about her signals to other people how important she finds marriage to be. As she is posing for a painting for Lily she reflects upon Lily's person: "With her little Chinese eyes and her puckered-up face she would never marry; one could not take her painting very seriously; but she was an independent little creature, Mrs. Ramsay liked her for it..." (Woolf 13). As is evident from Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts she finds Lily's looks more important than her painting and connects this to her inability to find a husband. She does not focus on the person that Lily is by taking into consideration her ambitions, her work ethic, her character or her personality. Mrs. Ramsay is unforgiving of Lily's person and choices due to her focus on what she sees as Lily's masculine qualities; what is important to Mrs. Ramsay however is Lily's marital abilities which she finds lacking.

It is obvious that Mrs. Ramsay finds the fact that Lily would never marry problematic, wishing there was a solution to the dilemma of Lily's singleness. She is therefore thrilled when she realizes the opportunity of linking Lily to the elderly writer William Bankes. "Smiling, for an admirable idea had flashed upon her this very second—William and Lily should marry—she took the heather-mixture stocking, with its criss-cross of steel needles at the mouth of it, and measured it against James's leg" (Woolf 19). Pairing Lily with William Bankes enables Mrs. Ramsay to find a space for Lily, thus placing her in familiar territory, where Lily is something and someone in relation to a man instead of herself. Mrs. Ramsay is only able to understand Lily as a person through seeing her in relation to a man. Thereby Lily gains a persona which comforts Mrs. Ramsay in seeing her as part of a couple, as opposed to having to understand Lily alone. Mrs. Ramsay sees marriage as the all-important thing in life, at least for women:

Minta must, they all must marry, since in the whole world, whatever laurels might be tossed to her (but Mrs. Ramsay cared not a fig for her painting), or triumphs won by her (probably Mrs. Ramsay had had her share of those), and here she saddened, darkened, and came back to her chair, there could be no disputing this: an unmarried woman (she slightly took her hand for a moment), an unmarried woman missed the best of life. (Woolf 36)

While actually reflecting on the flaws in her own marriage and how burdensome it is in many ways, Mrs. Ramsay still chooses to justify her life choices by pushing and pulling those around her into the same situation, even though it is clear to the reader that Mrs. Ramsay's marriage is far from easy. Continuously surrounded by others, including her

eight children, the guests of the household and her demanding husband, Mrs. Ramsay is never able to get the time she needs; and she actually seems to be losing a part of herself in this process. Only when everyone else has gone to sleep for the night is she able to think and be herself. “[I]t was a relief when they went to bed. For now she need not think about anybody. She could be herself, by herself. And that was what now she often felt the need of—to think; well not even to think. To be silent; to be alone” (Woolf 45). Still Mrs. Ramsay sacrifices this part of her person due to her unquestioned belief in the patriarchal structure and its demands on women. Mrs. Ramsay and Lily respond differently to these demands, as Lily rejects them while Mrs. Ramsay adheres to them, even though constantly being concerned with others is mentally exhausting for her. Any feelings felt for herself are the cause of guilt since those feelings could and should be felt for another. “Like all feelings felt for oneself, Mrs. Ramsay thought, it made one sad” (Woolf 59).

Mrs. Ramsay is willing to present marriage as idyllic to defend the choice that she has made in becoming a wife and mother. She is able to push away the negative sides of it and believes that an unmarried woman would never have the best of life, would never, in essence, live life to the fullest. Mrs. Ramsay reasons that filling one’s being, or existence, with oneself as opposed to another person is limiting, whereas the text actually shows the opposite. Mrs. Ramsay regards working for oneself (as Lily does) at the expense of time being taken away from others both inappropriate and impossible for a woman. She is therefore, similarly to Charles Tansley, unable to take Lily’s painting seriously.

Virginia Woolf kills Mrs. Ramsay in the second part of the novel entitled *Time Passes*. As a representative of the “Angel in the House” it is clear that her character cannot remain and be submitted to if Lily is to obtain autonomy. Mrs. Ramsay’s obsession with Lily’s possible marriage is commented upon by Lily herself when she asks, “What was this mania of hers for marriage?” (Woolf 131). Because the traditional role of women is the one that the character of Mrs. Ramsay chooses to adhere to, while Lily Briscoe creates a new role for herself, Mrs. Ramsay is unable to make sense of Lily’s person. However, through not adhering to her pre-determined role Lily grants herself greater freedom in her choices in that she is able to reflect upon her own needs. In doing so, Mrs. Ramsay and society would categorize her as a sad spinster, a failure as a

woman, yet Lily does not fit into that category either, due to the fact that she has her own wealth and occupation. In choosing to try and shape herself as opposed to focusing on finding a husband Lily's priorities are different from what Mrs. Ramsay deems desirable or even necessary.

When Mrs. Ramsay is gone, the character of Charles Tansley takes her place in trying to finagle Lily into adhering to her pre-determined gender role. Despite the negative attitude that Charles Tansley has to Lily and her art and implicitly to all women and their work, she does not allow him to affect her. She wants to complete her painting and she does. Charles Tansley is adamant in his opinion that Lily is untalented and widens that into a general statement about women. "Charles Tansley used to say that, she remembered, women can't paint, can't write" (Woolf 119). Woolf shows how Lily is "hemmed in by patriarchal contempt for women's artistic abilities" and is therefore not given the chance to allow her work to speak for itself (Goldman 58). Charles Tansley never asks for an explanation of her work or even shows any interest in viewing it. The only reason for his dismissal of it is that Lily's gender in itself makes her work insufficient.

It is not only Lily's gender that makes other people disregard her painting, though. It is also because of the complicated and novel nature of it, as is demonstrated when Lily must explain her painting to William Bankes. "What did she wish to indicate by the triangular purple shape, 'just there'? he asked" (Woolf 38).

But the picture was not of them, she said. Or, not in his sense. There were other senses, too, in which one might reverence them. By a shadow here and a light there, for instance. Her tribute took that form, if, as she vaguely supposed, a picture must be a tribute. A mother and child might be reduced to a shadow without irreverence. A light here required a shadow there. (Woolf 38)

Lily depicts Mrs. Ramsay and her son as a triangular purple shape, an abstract form. Due to her different way of thinking she must explain her technique and the meaning of the objects in the painting to William Bankes in order for him to fully understand them. The misunderstanding of Lily's work seems to be one of the reasons for the general dismissal of it, along with the fact that she is a woman. The consequence becomes that if she is unable to fully communicate the purpose of her art, the beauty and work that went into

creating it will be overlooked and dismissed. Due to this, Lily feels that “before she exchanged the fluidity of life for the concentration of painting she had a few moments of nakedness when she seemed like an unborn soul, a soul reft of body, hesitating on some windy pinnacle and exposed without protection to all the blasts of doubt” (Woolf 119). Because “Lily represents an alternative, creative path for women” she is stigmatized and forced to the outside of her society without any protection (Goldman 61). The character of Charles Tansley is a personification of the mass of people who are threatened both by the experimental nature of Lily’s art and her security within her work. He therefore condemns it whereas she experiences it “as if she had found a treasure” (Woolf 61).

Fortunately for Lily she has the strength and courage to overcome the negative attitudes and is able to continue with her work and complete her painting. Having worked on the same picture the entire novel and struggled with herself over it, she is finally able to fulfill her vision and overcome the strictures of the patriarchy that she resides in as a result.

There it was—her picture. Yes, with all its greens and blues, its line running up and across, its attempt at something. It would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed. But what did that matter? she asked herself, taking up her brush again. She looked at the steps: they were empty; she looked at her canvas: it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision. (Woolf 154)

Lily’s painting becomes representative of her overcoming all the expectations placed on her by Mrs. Ramsay, Charles Tansley and others. It is an “attempt at something”, something she is trying to do that few before her have done, a new way of living as well as a new way of painting (Woolf 154). She knows that there is a strong likelihood that her attempt to create this something new will be destroyed but does not mind. Upon completing the painting she is exhausted from her struggle yet is also content in it. She knows that she finally is able to realize her vision and therefore finds the strength to place the final brushstroke in the middle of the painting for all to see.

Woolf drives home the fact that whether Charles Tansley or any other character takes Lily’s work seriously, does not matter. In spite of them believing it to be unsuitable for a woman to have a profession and to live for it Lily still does. She is able to work for

herself in what she enjoys and is therefore successful by her own terms. Lily does not wish to follow the example that Mrs. Ramsay sets, nor the position Charles Tansley asks her to uphold; instead she is acutely aware of what she will be giving up if she does. As Edward Mendelson points out in his book *The Things That Matter*, “Everyone yields to Mrs. Ramsay’s unifying embrace, but no one wants to stay in it forever” (Mendelson 213). Lily is no exception to this and in spite of her love and admiration for Mrs. Ramsay she is desperate to not remain in the embrace that requires her to give up her freedom, her art and her sense of self. She therefore makes a conscious effort to remain outside of the parameters that have been pre-determined for her through her personal *as well as* professional choices.

Because Lily feels a disconnection between herself and others, she prefers to remain outside of relationships, something which Mrs. Ramsay cannot understand: “[it] never once occurs to her that an exhilarating sense of unity may not be what the others need in order to become themselves, because it never occurs to her that becoming oneself is a goal worth seeking” (Mendelson 215). Yet to Lily, this goal is of utmost importance and she therefore actively seeks to become herself through not adding to her person via a husband and instead allowing time to find herself and what she wants from life. She knows about the code of conduct required of her to remain within the confines of society and thinks of whether she wishes to adhere to this or not.

There is a code of behaviour she knew, [...] that says [...] it behoves the woman [...] to go to the help of the young man opposite so that he may expose and relieve the [...] ribs, of his vanity, of his urgent desire to assert himself; as indeed it is their duty, she reflected, in her old—maidenly fairness, to help us, suppose the Tube were to burst into flames. [...] I should certainly expect Mr. Tansley to get me out. But how would it be, she thought, if neither of us did either of these things? (Woolf 66)

It is clear that Lily understands that she is expected to defer Charles Tansley, to be nice to him, to flatter and cajole him. She feels the pressure placed upon her to serve as his medium in the conversation. Her example of the gendered reactions to two situations strengthens the reader’s understanding of what Lily is *supposed* to do and makes us conscious of her choice of not doing so. In the scene above she is able to refrain from being the vehicle for Charles Tansley’s assertion, yet is unable to completely stand her ground when she later assists Mrs. Ramsay in facilitating the continuation of the

conversation.

Lily feels pressured into diffusing a tense moment with Charles Tansley and therefore asks him if he would take her to the lighthouse. In the same moment that Lily feels Mrs. Ramsay's gratitude, she asks herself, "[...] but what haven't I paid to get it for you? She had not been sincere" (Woolf 67). Although Lily does not want to assist in the conversation she does so to relieve the pressure she feels. She thus sacrifices her sincerity for insincere conversation and realizes the wrongness of her choice; the exact opposite reaction of what Mrs. Ramsay would have felt. Lily further reflects upon this:

She had done the usual trick—been nice. She would never know him. He would never know her. Human relations were all like that, she thought, and the worst (had it not been for Mr. Bankes) were between men and women. Inevitably these were extremely insincere. (Woolf 67)

Lily feels dishonest because she has given in to performing an act instead of staying true to her own feelings. While Mrs. Ramsay wants unity through self-sacrifice, Lily "perceives that unity is always in conflict with individuality" (Mendelson 214). She understands that she sacrifices a part of her individual self through unifying with others and does not wish to do so.

As Lily is unwilling to surrender herself either to William Bankes or to Charles Tansley or indeed to anyone, she is able and "willing to risk breaking the unity of the whole and [return] to [her] individual sel[f]" (Mendelson 214). She does not mind being left alone to work on her painting or to think during breakfast alone. Mrs. Ramsay notices this trait in her and sees its value: "And Lily, she thought, putting her napkin under the edge of her plate, she always has some joke of her own. One need never bother about Lily" (Woolf 79). Lily is able to move back to her individual self and remain there. She is able to have "jokes of her own" and thereby signals to those around her that she is able to stand by herself. She is not afraid of a constantly changing state. She is, however, unwilling to remain in the static form of marriage, afraid of the constant that this requires of her person. She cannot see herself compromising either herself or her work in order to remain with the same person for the rest of her life. She views marriage as a trap, one which would disable her both from painting and from making her own decisions. Instead she wishes to be allowed to grow and develop alone so that she is able to reach her own desired end result as opposed to somebody else's.

Lily is viewed as an oddity not only by Mrs. Ramsay and Charles Tansley but by Mr. Ramsay as well. He finds her ways peculiar and condemns her for being unwomanly by not submitting to his will. When Mr. Ramsay needs compassion, he almost panics trying to secure it from the women around him: “[T]his was one of those moments when an enormous need urged him, without being conscious what it was, to approach any woman, to force them, he did not care how, his need was so great, to give him what he wanted: sympathy” (Woolf 113). Turning to Lily to give him what he wants, he is perturbed when she is unwilling.

Instantly, with the force of some primeval gust (for really he could not restrain himself any longer), there issued from him such a groan that any other woman in the whole world would have done something, said something—all except myself, thought Lily, girding at herself bitterly, who am not a woman, but a peevish, ill-tempered, dried-up old maid presumably. (Woolf 113)

As Mr. Ramsay wishes for a different response, *his* response to Lily is one that causes her to ponder over his opinion of her. Because she is incapable of expressing sympathy towards him, she is deemed by Mr. Ramsay and indirectly by herself to be less of a woman. The last word of the quotation, “presumably”, emphasizes her interpretation of Mr. Ramsay’s thoughts. Lily only believes herself to be “a dried-up old maid” because she fails in fulfilling the expectations that Mr. Ramsay places on her. It is as Deborah Parsons discusses in her book, *Theorists of the Modern Novel*: “When women refuse their culturally assigned domestic role, [...], assert their own independence and dare to criticize male psychology and ways of life [...] he responds with angry panic” (84). It is clear that the anger Parsons discusses is directed towards the wrong person and that Mr. Ramsay should not be angry with Lily for not fulfilling his desire but with himself for expecting it of her in the first place. Mr. Ramsay wants Lily to submit to the role that he has placed her in but she does not wish to do so. She only submits because she has grown weary of the constant demand that is placed on her person to make decisions and react in accordance with others’ wishes. However, the text shows that she is wrong to submit to Mr. Ramsay’s unspoken accusation, since he has no right to her sympathy.

In staying true to herself Lily Briscoe does not adhere to society’s norms of beauty and sympathy in women. Mrs. Ramsay appreciates the importance of beauty, but

Lily finds it as overvalued as sympathy:

[B]eauty was not everything. Beauty had this penalty—it came too readily, came too completely. It stilled life—froze it. One forgot the little agitations; the flush, the pallor, some queer distortion, some light or shadow, which made the face unrecognisable for a moment and yet added a quality one saw for ever after. It was simpler to smooth that all out under the cover of beauty. (Woolf 132)

To Lily, beauty takes away the pleasures that imperfection allows for. She does not wish to lose the bumps and shadows of imperfection to the smoothness and flawlessness of perfection. Because it is harder to understand and appreciate imperfection it is all the more valuable to her. The difference between Lily's view of beauty and Mrs. Ramsay's is apparent. Lily does not care for it because she believes it deduces from reality whereas Mrs. Ramsay seems to believe that beauty and sympathy—at least in a woman—are the only things that really matter. Lily experiences emotion on a similar level. "For how could one express in words these emotions of the body? express that emptiness there? (She was looking at the drawing-room steps; they looked extraordinarily empty.) It was one's body feeling, not one's mind" (Woolf 133).

Lily's choice to be alone is thus an active one as she chooses herself over anyone else. She is unable to see herself complemented by a significant other and looks at a partnership as compromising her person. "She remained a skimpy old maid, holding a paint-brush on the lawn. And now slowly the pain of the want, and the bitter anger [...] lessened; and of their anguish left, as antidote, a relief that was balm in itself" (Woolf 134-135). For an instant she feels the pain of aloneness when she calls out for Mrs. Ramsay and does not receive a response. Yet after this initial pain has lessened she realizes the freedom that she now has and instead is soothed by her aloneness. The recognition of Mrs. Ramsay being gone and that she cannot place any further expectations on Lily brings relief to her. She gains confidence through completing her painting and knows that even if she is a "skimpy old maid", she controls her person and work and does not have to give up even a small part of it to please anybody else.

In comparing *To the Lighthouse* to *Villette* a discernible shift has taken place. While Lucy Snowe finds herself in a desperate situation that does not allow room for marriage Lily Briscoe makes an active choice to not marry. Lucy Snowe will not marry

for any price while Lily Briscoe will not marry at any price. The trend has moved from a woman finding herself in a position where she must fend for herself to a woman choosing to do so. Lucy finds that she is able to give her life a purpose by working while Lily's purpose in life is her work.

Scarlett O'Hara

In order to broaden the scope of this study, a change in time, place and nationality of the author is desirable to demonstrate how far the consequences of the idea of the Angel in the House reach. *Gone with the Wind* is therefore an appropriate third novel as it allows for just that. Although written and published in the 1930s, the setting for the majority of the novel is the antebellum south of The United States and there, the traits of the Angel in the House are clearly recognizable in the women characters. The main character struggles with the traditional role that she is pushed into, but through her interaction with the other characters in the novel she becomes determined that her place is outside of this narrow sphere.

Scarlett O'Hara, the lively and charismatic daughter of plantation owners Ellen and Gerald O'Hara, is brought up to be a southern belle. Similar to Patmore's "Angel in the House", the southern belle was the "fragile, dewy, just-opened bloom of the southern female: flirtatious but sexually innocent, bright but not deep, beautiful as a statue or a painting or porcelain but, like each, risky to touch" (Jones 1527). Raised to be all of these things, after having had her brief season of balls and parties, the natural next step for Scarlett is to meet a man and marry in order to become a southern lady. Scarlett is constantly reminded of what she ought to do, or what is required of her role in society by the example her mother presents to her. Ellen O'Hara teaches her daughters the role that they must uphold; a role where being silent and passive is a key virtue. Like Mrs. Ramsay, Ellen O'Hara is described as sacrificing her interests and herself completely for her husband; for instance when she asks him to tell her about the war:

Scarlett knew her mother cared nothing at all about the war and politics and thought them masculine matters about which no lady could intelligently concern herself. But it gave Gerald pleasure to air his views, and Ellen was unfailingly thoughtful of her husband's pleasure (Mitchell 69).

The fact that Scarlett knows that her mother considers war and politics as 'masculine matters' reflects how strongly ingrained the notion of feminine and masculine ideas are in the novel. However, the self-sacrificing role of the Angel in the House is demonstrated yet again through Ellen O'Hara surrendering her own interests to boredom so that her

husband is afforded amusement.

Ellen silently accepts her role as mother and wife on the terms with which society has presented her. She is willing to surrender herself and her needs for those of her husband as she is grateful to him for having married her. Ellen wishes to instill these traits in her daughters as women in the south were “celebrated for teaching correct patriarchal values” to their children, but she is unable to do so fully with Scarlett (Burton 1111). Although Scarlett reveres her mother as a true angel, she laments the fact that she is personally unable to adhere to her culture’s norms for ladylike behavior. Her behavior stands in sharp contrast to her mother’s: “‘Fast’ was the only word for Scarlett” is how Mitchell describes her (Mitchell 104). Elizabeth Fox-Genovese argues that not even material security “suffice[s] to transform her into a real lady. But then Scarlett lacks any vital understanding of what it is to be one.” (401) The text however demonstrates the opposite. It is Scarlett’s keen awareness of what she must sacrifice of herself that disables her to commit to the life of a lady. Even though she is a ‘belle’ at this point in the novel, (due to her being unmarried) she is still not given the freedom to act or talk to whom she wishes. She is judged by the women around her for being too outgoing and displaying a too strong personality. As a young unmarried woman, Scarlett is not even allowed to eat when and how she wants. Before a picnic she is forced by Mammy to eat, because “[...] you kin allus tell a lady by dat she eat lak a bird” (Mitchell 78). Therefore Scarlett must eat enormous amounts of food that she does not like, so that she can be full before she goes to the barbecue and display a suitable ladylike distaste for food.

Scarlett is initially under the assumption that marriage will allow her more freedom to do as she wishes. Through her mother’s ability to mask her troubles Scarlett is able to believe that the married woman’s life is one void of difficulty and filled with pleasure:

‘I wish to Heaven I was married,’ she said resentfully as she attacked the yams with loathing. ‘I’m tired of everlastingly being unnatural and never doing anything I want to do. I’m tired of acting like I don’t eat more than a bird, and walking when I want to run and saying I feel faint after a waltz, when I could dance for two days and never get tired. I’m tired of saying, “How wonderful you are!” to fool men who haven’t got one-half the sense I’ve got, and I’m tired of pretending I don’t know anything, so men can tell me things and feel important while they’re doing it ...’” (Mitchell 80).

Scarlett does not realize that in being married she will not be allowed any of these things either. When a belle becomes a lady "...she drops the flirtatiousness of the belle and stops chattering; she has won her man. Now she has a different job: satisfying her husband, raising his children, meeting the demands of the family's social position, and sustaining the ideals of the South" (Jones 1527). Once married, Scarlett's energy, previously spent in acquiring her husband, should be spent on satisfying the man that she has managed to obtain, and on making the environment in which they live a pleasant one.

A key element in the southern way of life was women remaining silent about their competence while their labor stayed invisible. In this way the men could be given the recognition for both their own and their wives' work as is exemplified through Scarlett's mother's way of working. Ellen O'Hara never allows it to show that life as a plantation mistress requires dedication and hard work. Not only were these women required to manage the home, they were also responsible for the slaves and the plantation as a whole. "All white wives, rich or poor, worked for their daily bread. Plantation mistresses supervised slaves, rationed supplies for the black work force, and acted as medical experts for the white and black community" (Berkin 1521). In the southern culture of The United States depicted in Mitchell's novel, an imbalance is apparent in that the men were the ones given the recognition for the work their wives did. Despite this fact the southern culture was perpetuated with mothers passing their burdens on to their daughters. "Before marriage, young girls must be, above all other things, sweet, gentle, beautiful and ornamental, but, after marriage, they were expected to manage households that numbered a hundred people or more, white and black, and they were trained with that in view" (Mitchell 58). Women such as Ellen O'Hara were the reason that the southern culture thrived, because these women accepted it as their duty to educate their daughters in the tradition in which they themselves were raised.

As is clear from the discussion above, the line that separated men as breadwinners and women as managers of the house was blurred in plantation life, as the household and business were one and the same. This made it easier for women to take over tasks that would have otherwise been considered to fall within the responsibility of their husbands while still allowing the men to receive the recognition for their wives' work. A key

element to this illusion being upheld was the women accepting and remaining silent about their efforts.

Ellen's life was not easy, nor was it happy, but she did not expect life to be easy, and, if it was not happy, that was woman's lot. It was a man's world, and she accepted it as such. The man owned the property, and the woman managed it. The man took the credit for the management, and the woman praised his cleverness. [...] She had been reared in the tradition of great ladies, which had taught her how to carry her burden and still retain her charm, and she intended that her three daughters should be great ladies also. (Mitchell 59-60)

Ellen accepts her lot in life as she believes the world that she lives in is run by men and that her duty is to submit to them. "The southern lady's enduring and open respect for, and submission to, her husband was firm evidence of the benign nature of the southern way of life and its peculiar institution" (Berkin p. 1521). The text demonstrates that Ellen embraces this submission by being resigned to her life as a passenger. She knows that her husband owns the property and that she therefore has no rights to it and that she is the one who must work while her husband is the one who reaps the rewards. Charles Rowan Beye comments on what he finds to be

[...] the central truth of the book, which is that all of life for women and slaves alike was a vast prison in which these unfortunates were enslaved to free white males. This feminist interpretation may seem too fashionable for the mid-thirties, yet there is no question that Mitchell wrote from the perspective of a woman, not angry certainly, not even protesting, but nonetheless fully aware of the condition of women at the time. (376)

It is from this "truth" that Ellen O'Hara bases her behavior. She accepts as well as teaches the role she had been brought up in, and she wishes Scarlett to follow in her footsteps and become a "great lady" as well. However she is only partially successful.

Satisfying her husband sexually, or rather performing her "acts of devotion", is one of the first things that Scarlett is unable to comply with. When her husband comes to her bed on their wedding night Scarlett says to him "I'll scream out loud if you come near me. I will! I will—at the top of my voice! Get away from me! Don't you dare touch me" (Mitchell 130). Scarlett thus in a way remains single for a while even within marriage and thereby stands outside of what is expected of her not only by her husband,

but by her upbringing and her society. Her refusal to give herself to her husband on this occasion does not mean that Scarlett chooses another man though, instead she chooses herself. She has the strength to obey her inner voice that tells her to remain true to herself. When sexual intercourse finally occurs and leads to the birth of a son, Scarlett rejects her role as mother as well as not adhering to the tradition that a widow should uphold after her husband's death.

After becoming widowed, a new code of behavior is expected from Scarlett. As a widow "her heart was in the grave. At least, everyone thought it was in the grave and expected her to act accordingly" (Mitchell 133). This also entails,

wear[ing] hideous black dresses without even a touch of braid to enliven them, no flower or ribbon or lace or even jewelry, except onyx mourning brooches or necklaces made from the deceased's hair. And the black crepe veil on her bonnet had to reach to her knees, and only after three years of widowhood could it be shortened to shoulder length. Widows could never chatter vivaciously or laugh aloud. Even when they smiled, it must be a sad, tragic smile. (Mitchell 134)

Not only is Scarlett thus required to belong to her husband during their marriage but also after his death. Just as Patmore in Victorian England required of a wife that she be even more devoted to her husband after his death, Southern etiquette demanded the same devotion. Even though Scarlett is now technically single, she is still required to act as if she is a part of her former husband. She is to act in accordance to the morals condoned by her society as "[s]outherners have, in fact, traditionally equated manners—the appropriate, customary, or proper way of doing things—with morals, so that unmannerly behavior has been viewed as immoral behavior." (Wilson p. 634). Scarlett is thereby seen as acting "immorally" when she is attending a party while in mourning and while there is seen dancing with Rhett Butler. Further she accepts fabrics and clothing from him that go against the custom of a widow. Scarlett thus refuses to be imprisoned due to convention and is unwilling to dampen who she is for the sake of decorum.

Scarlett does not fall into the trap of doing what is expected and instead acts as her own person—strong and independent. This is what has made her loved and remembered by millions of women readers in the 20th century, but within the framework of her society she poses as a challenge, both to men and women. Grandma Fontaine is

one example of a woman who passes judgment on Scarlett. She says, “God intended women to be timid frightened creatures and there’s something unnatural about a woman who isn’t afraid “ (Mitchell 443). It is clear that Grandma feels the need to defend the role that she chooses to play in her life, even though she has the backing of the women of society. She even uses God as a tool or ammunition so that she has divine rule on her side of the argument.

Everybody around Scarlett accepts society’s code of conduct without questioning; everybody except Rhett Butler. In him Mitchell has created a character who himself stands outside of society by refusing to marry a girl he does not love, even though he is considered to have compromised her integrity through no fault of his own. Similarly, he encourages Scarlett to follow her own notion of right and wrong as opposed to everyone else’s. He knows that Scarlett is strong enough to stand apart from all the women that she associates with and therefore encourages her to do so. When she conforms, Rhett challenges Scarlett by calling her a coward:

You lack the courage to say what you really think. When I first met you, I thought: There is a girl in a million. She isn’t like these other silly little fools who believe everything their mammas tell them and act on it, no matter how they feel. And conceal all their feelings and desires and little heartbreaks behind a lot of sweet words. I thought: Miss O’Hara is a girl of rare spirit. She knows what she wants and she doesn’t mind speaking her mind—or throwing vases. (Mitchell 185)

Rhett Butler is able to see Scarlett for the woman she can become, and he encourages Scarlett to find herself and to hold on to that person so that she does not get lost in the humdrum of what she is “supposed” to do. He is the only person in the novel who encourages her to marry for money and asks her to be honest with others around her. As a result Rhett Butler and Scarlett are able to have an honest relationship without either party hiding their true feelings “behind a lot of sweet words.” Rhett Butler asks Scarlett to allow her true self to shine through instead of asking for the illusion that everyone else wishes for.

Determined to try to succeed on her own in managing Tara, as a widow after the war Scarlett makes the mistake of doing so as an unmarried woman with a voice. As she reflects over another girl’s marriage to an overseer Scarlett admittedly thinks, “Of course it was no pleasant thought, marrying Yankee white trash, but after all a girl couldn’t live

alone on a plantation; she had to have a husband to help her run it” (Mitchell 487). However, even though Scarlett applies these rules to others she does not find them to apply to her. Not only does she manage the household and plant and harvest the cotton herself, she also expects her sisters and the house slaves to assist her, and she shows herself able to make people obey her:

‘All right, go on. Any stock left?’

‘No’m. Nuthin’ ‘cept one old sow an’ her litter. Ah driv dem inter de swamp de day de Yankees come, but de Lawd knows how we gwine git dem. She mean, dat sow.’

‘We’ll get them all right. You and Prissy can start right now hunting for her’

Pork was amazed and indignant.

‘Miss Scarlett, dat a fe’el han’s bizness. Ah’s allus been a house nigger.’ A small fiend with a pair of hot tweezers plucked behind Scarlett’s eyeballs.

‘You two will catch the sow—or get out of here, like the field hands did.’

(Mitchell 414)

Scarlett’s strength shines through in her conversation with Pork. She is uncaring of the fact that he is unused to manual labor, just as she compels her sisters to work in the fields as well. Worth noting in Scarlett’s conversation with Pork is how even he plays a part in the patriarchal structure that tries to keep her independence at bay. He believes himself to be of a higher class as a house slave than the field slaves and therefore does not find it proper for himself to work outside thereby demonstrating his own sense of propriety on her working there as well. As he finds it inappropriate for himself to work outside (as a slave) he certainly finds it inappropriate for Scarlett as well.

The work Scarlett and her sisters do is frowned upon by those who know of it, and her actions are even criticized by Rhett Butler, who otherwise has encouraged her independence and defiance of conventions. When she visits him in Atlanta to ask for the money she needs to pay the taxes on Tara, he manages to discern the manual labor that she has been doing simply by seeing her worn hands:

This was a stranger’s palm, not Scarlett O’Hara’s soft, white, dimpled, helpless one. This hand was rough from work, brown with sunburn, splotted with freckles. The nails were broken and irregular, there were heavy callouses on the cushions of the palm, a half-healed blister on the thumb. The red scar which boiling fat had left last month was ugly and glaring. (Mitchell 563)

His attitude towards Scarlett profoundly changes upon his realization that she has been doing manual labor. In an accusing manner he states, “You’ve been working with those hands, working like a nigger” (Mitchell 564). Although Rhett Butler is certainly aware of the work that is required of a plantation mistress, he is unable to accept the work that Scarlett does that falls outside of that realm.

The social norms that Scarlett breaks are paradoxically what allow her to be successful. Because she marries Frank Kennedy for his money she is able to keep Tara, when she goes into business she is able to lie to men and use the patriarchal structure in her favor, and she is further able to help her husband’s store grow by running it herself. When being courted by Frank Kennedy, she pushes herself to learn about his business:

Sometimes in the afternoons he took Scarlett riding with him in his buggy when he went out on business. These rides were merry affairs because she asked so many foolish questions—‘just like a woman’ he told himself approvingly. He couldn’t help laughing at her ignorance about business matters and she laughed too, saying: ‘Well of course, you can’t expect a silly little woman like me to understand men’s affairs.’ (Mitchell 598)

Frank Kennedy feels his masculinity to be safe because of Scarlett’s lack of knowledge, and he is content with her ignorance of business affairs, feeling that this is a sign of her femininity. His triumphant laughter at Scarlett demonstrates that even though he knows that she is intelligent, he is aware that she is unable to exercise her intelligence because she is a woman. Keeping people uneducated gives the educated an advantage; this dominant position is what he most enjoys about his relationship with Scarlett, little realizing that she has a different agenda:

Frank, in common with all men he knew, felt that a wife should be guided by her husband’s superior knowledge, should accept his opinions in full and have none of her own. He would have given most women their own way. Women were such funny little creatures and it never hurt to humour their small whims. Mild and gentle by nature, it was not in him to deny a wife much. He would have enjoyed gratifying the foolish notions of some soft little person and scolding her lovingly for her stupidity and extravagance. But the things Scarlett set her mind on were unthinkable. (Mitchell 621)

In their short courtship Frank Kennedy is thus enthusiastic in teaching Scarlett about his business as he believes her simply to be allowing him to teach her something without any

intention of using the knowledge. He is obviously under the assumption that Scarlett's curiosity of his business affairs will dissipate after they are married and is appalled when he realizes that this is not the case and that she is actually going to use her knowledge. Frank Kennedy's behavior is reminiscent of how M. Paul Emanuel is initially enthusiastic in teaching Lucy Snowe but quickly becomes annoyed and feels threatened when she demonstrates proficiency in learning. When Scarlett is married her intelligence and knowledge become a challenge to Frank Kennedy's masculinity and authority over her. It turns into an issue of dominance as he is unable to exercise an authoritarian position in relation to Scarlett as she becomes independent of him.

Ellen O'Hara would certainly neither have approved of Scarlett manipulating Frank Kennedy into marrying her in order to obtain the tax money for Tara nor of her public interest in his business. However, Scarlett does not adhere to her mother's expectations and after her marriage to Frank Kennedy and due to her interest in his business affairs she quickly learns how to manage them better than him—as he himself realizes:

It had begun to dawn on him that this same sweet pretty little head was a 'good head for figures'. In fact, a much better one than his own, and the knowledge was disquieting. He was thunderstruck to discover that she could swiftly add a long column of figures in her head when he needed a pencil and paper for more than three figures. (Mitchell 601)

Frank Kennedy finds Scarlett's intelligence disquieting simply because she is a woman. Aware that he has lost his dominant position he is deeply uncomfortable with Scarlett handling his affairs. Ignoring his qualms however Scarlett continues to work in and improve his store. Frank Kennedy experiences Scarlett's intelligence and energy as an embarrassment primarily because of how public of a display she makes of it through working where others can see.

When Scarlett takes it upon herself to review her husband's account book she realizes her capabilities as a woman of intellect: "'Why, why,' her mind stuttered, 'I believe women could manage everything in the world without men's help—except having babies, and God knows, no woman in her right mind would have babies if she could help it'" (Mitchell 605). With this realization she gains the confidence not only to make a change in her husband's store in order for it to prosper, but also to borrow money

from Rhett Butler to buy a sawmill of her own. Refusing to turn the mill over to her husband after she has bought it does not sit well with him though and becomes one more ostentatious way that Scarlett exercises her independence:

It was the shock of his life when she told him with a sweet smile, in answer to his questions, that she intended to run it herself. 'Go into the lumber business myself,' was the way she put it. Frank would never forget the horror of that moment. Go into business for herself! It was unthinkable. [...] In fact, Frank had never heard of a woman in business anywhere. If women were so unfortunate as to be compelled to make a little money to assist their families in these hard times, they made it in quiet womanly ways [...] These ladies made money but they kept themselves at home while they did it, as woman should. But for a woman to leave the protection of her home and venture out into the rough world of men, competing with them in business, rubbing shoulders with them, being exposed to insult and gossip... Especially when she wasn't forced to do it, when she had a husband amply able to provide for her! (Mitchell 621)

Frank Kennedy is unable to believe that his wife will go into the business that he regards as his. This would expose him as unable to financially care for their family and his protests are raised to protect his own dignity. He simply cannot accept that his wife should work outside of the realm of the home and in a man's business as both she and he would be exposed to ridicule. The irony of the situation, however, is that Scarlett is in fact more successful as a woman than the men she competes with.

The fact that she was a woman frequently worked in her favour, for she could upon occasion look so helpless and appealing that she melted hearts. With no difficulty whatever she could mutely convey the impression of a brave but timid lady, forced by brutal circumstance into a distasteful position, a helpless little lady who would probably starve if customers didn't buy her lumber. But when ladylike airs failed to get results she was coldly businesslike and willingly undersold her competitors at a loss to herself if it would bring her new customers. (Mitchell 646)

By being a woman entering into a realm traditionally reserved for men Scarlett and her business are thus both able to thrive. She is able to cheat the patriarchal structure by bending its rules, and using southern etiquette to her advantage by cheating the men in business while knowing they will never expose her actions for fear of being hailed as ungentlemanly.

Being used to acting as she pleases, a struggle for dominance continues between

Scarlett and Frank Kennedy up until his death and also eventually within her marriage to Rhett Butler. Scarlett is at first given the space to do as she wishes because at the beginning of their marriage Rhett Butler still wants the fiery, independent woman that he has sought to marry for so many years. However, his desire for this side of Scarlett changes quite drastically as their marriage progresses. It turns out that he too wishes to remain in control of her and be able to rule her actions or at the very least be given the power to approve of them. As soon as Scarlett acts in a way that reminds Rhett of her independence he balks: “I won’t need you to rescue me. I can take care of myself, thank you.’ ‘Don’t say that, Scarlett! Think it, if you like, but never, never say it to a man”” (Mitchell 302). Being the most liberal thinking man that Scarlett associates with, Rhett’s inability to fully allow Scarlett her independence demonstrates how crippling any relationship is to a woman in this novel.

Yet the irony of the matter is that even though Rhett Butler may think he has diminished her opportunities for success he is unable to do so fully as he does not take into consideration her plantation. Scarlett is still able to mortgage Tara, and she is thus unworried about her future and her husband as she knows that she will continue to thrive due to the self-confidence that she has gained through her business and life experiences. When Rhett Butler has left her, and she has realized that she loves him, Scarlett still has the confidence to know that she will survive: “I’ll think of it all to-morrow, at Tara. I can stand it then. Tomorrow, I’ll think of some way to get him back. After all, to-morrow is another day”” (Mitchell 1011). A very different read of this passage is done by Kathryn Lee Seidel when she says how Scarlett: “Fantasizing that the future will resolve her problems allows her to avoid direct confrontation with her own self. She avoids introspection because her selfishness prevents her from wanting to understand her own drives and feelings” (56- 57). However, the text demonstrates that Scarlett neither avoids direct confrontation with herself nor introspection; quite the opposite. It is due to her ability to look within herself to what she needs and wants that she is able to make decisions for herself that allows Scarlett the self-confidence to be unworried about a future without Rhett in it.

Due to Scarlett being strong enough to create a life within her marriage to Rhett Butler she is able to gain both happiness and success not only as a woman but also as a

businesswoman; and it is quite clear that what is supposed to be a woman's goal in life—marriage and children—is to Scarlett O'Hara simply a necessary evil which she would gladly forego in order to be her own woman and run her own business. Marriage, far from bringing her freedom, suffocates her. It therefore comes as no surprise that she chooses to walk an isolated path, one where she has some financial independence and can decide who to be and in which direction to go.

Scarlett is thereby the first main woman character in this study that finds out after she has been married the suffocating nature of the institution. Her marriage to three different men only makes it clearer to her that it is something that she would rather be without. This conclusion is different to the ones that Lucy in *Villette* and Lily in *To the Lighthouse* come to as Lucy accepts her situation, Lily creates one and Scarlett discovers hers through a process of elimination. This change from the other two novels is quite stark as Scarlett makes her decision about being single only after having been married whereby Lucy and Lily make theirs without having done so.

Janie Crawford

Similarly to *Gone with the Wind*, Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was published in the 1930's, set in a southern state of The United States and introduces the reader to a strong main character: Janie Crawford. Hurston's novel is in one sense quite different from Mitchell's, in that it deals with the black community. However, common to many other writers of her time, Hurston chooses to not entertain the discussion of race. So, "[r]ather than portraying Janie [...] as a tragic mulatto or turning her into a mammy, Hurston develops her as an independent woman" (Cook 869). One that is forced to fight against her heritage to create room for herself as an individual.

Coming from two generations of rape victims and being the granddaughter of a former slave, Janie's environment begs her to marry for protection. Janie's grandmother was continuously raped by her master and is forced to see how Janie's mother, Leafy, is driven to alcoholism because she was raped by the town school-teacher. To break this chain and ensure it not happening to Janie, Nanny is adamant that Janie should marry as soon as possible. "'Yeah, Janie, youse got yo' womanhood on yuh. So Ah mout ez well tell yuh whut Ah been savin' up for uh spell. Ah wants to see you married right away' [...] 'Tain't Logan Killicks Ah wants you to have, baby, it's protection'" (Hurston 12-15). It is certainly not easy for Janie as a sixteen-year-old girl to marry a much older man, but Nanny's reason for placing such weight on Janie needing to be taken care of is founded in her own inability to protect herself as well as her daughter from male violence. Nanny has learned as a slave that it is dangerous for a woman to be alone. Therefore she finds security in the institution of marriage and feels that freedom from slavery should be enough independence; that a woman should not and could not ask for more. Nevertheless, as Janie discovers for herself through several marriages as well as times of being single, this is not the case.

Despite Nanny finding love and sexual freedom unnecessary, they are both of great importance to Janie and she wishes to have them within marriage. She equates marriage with sexual pleasure, as illustrated in the following passage:

She saw a dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing

with delight. So this was a marriage! She had been summoned to behold a revelation. Then Janie felt a pain remorseless sweet that left her limp and languid. (Hurston 11)

Therefore, when she is told by her grandmother that she is to marry the much older Logan Killicks she is unable to combine her own vision of love with Nanny's. "The vision of Logan Killicks was desecrating the pear tree, but Janie didn't know how to tell Nanny that. She merely hunched over and pouted at the floor" (Hurston 14). Nanny's and Janie's realities thus clash. At Janie's initial refusal Nanny asks her, "You just wants to hug and kiss and feel around with first one man and then another, huh? You wants to make me suck de same sorrow yo' mama did, eh?" (Hurston 13-14). Nanny reasons that if Janie is allowed to remain single she will end up in the same situation that Leafy is forced into; being raped and then left to fend for herself.

Both of the first two men that Janie marries are determined to control her. The freedom that she has as a single woman becomes a distant memory. Logan Killicks only wants Janie to do as she is told and sees her independence, as demonstrated by her not obeying him, as a threat to his authority. As Janie has learned from Nanny that her place is within the home and that the work there is her burden she is initially unwilling to move outside of that sphere which in essence traps her. She tells Logan Killicks as he orders her to chop wood, "'Scuse mah freezolity, Mist' Killicks, but Ah don't mean to chop de first chip'" (Hurston 26). Logan Killicks accepts her response as evidence of Janie being spoiled and does not initially push the matter further. However, a few days later he asks her again for help outside, and her response is: "'You don't need mah help out dere, Logan. Youse in yo' place and Ah'm in mine.'" Whereby he responds with, "You ain't got no particular place. It's wherever Ah need yuh. Git uh move on yuh, and dat quick" (Hurston 31). Janie's unwillingness to leave the sphere of the home to work and do Logan Killicks' bidding is indicative of her acceptance of her place, but also of her trying to defend a space of her own, something which her husband denies her.

During her first marriage Janie realizes that what she wants cannot be found within her marriage: "The familiar people and things had failed her so she hung over the gate and looked up the road towards way off. She knew now that marriage did not make love. Janie's first dream was dead" (Hurston 25). Looking up the road Janie is searching

for something different than the life that she has been put in. She knows that her grandmother has failed her by having her marry Logan Killicks and by not considering that she might need to do something for herself in order to find herself instead of becoming someone else through marrying. Ironically, Janie does what Nanny always feared would be *done to* Janie; she leaves her husband.

It comes as no surprise that Janie rejects Nanny's view as it is the opposite of her own. "She repudiates her grandmother's life and values and looks back only in resentment, refusing even to visit her grandmother's grave" (Kaplan 111). Janie understands that it is only when she conforms to the norm that she will be accepted by her family and the people of Eatonville. The moment she dares to transcend her given place in society she is condemned and criticized. However, as Elizabeth Meese discusses in *Crossing the Double Cross: The Practice of Feminist Criticism* "Hurston presents a forceful resistance to black women's oppression" through imbuing Janie with the strength to endure the condemnation and criticism of her society (41). After leaving Logan Killicks to marry Jody Starks, Janie is under the impression that she has found freedom and independence. Yet she eventually learns how wrong she is. Although he is seemingly different, his attempt to control her is confirmed in one of Janie's first conversations with her soon-to-be second husband, when he tells her, "A pretty doll-baby lak you is made to sit on de front porch and rock and fan yo'self and eat p'taters dat other folks plant just special for you" (Hurston 29). His wish is to have Janie at least partly "ornamental and silent" (Jones 1529). The freedom that he thinks he is offering Janie is only an alternative prison for her.

Upon leaving Logan Killicks Janie felt "[t]he morning road air was like a new dress. That made her feel the apron tied around her waist. She untied it and flung it on a low bush beside the road and walked on" (Hurston 32). But even though she is able to fling her apron off when she first goes to be with Jody Starks, it is firmly tied back on her as soon as she marries him. After her husband buys his store in Eatonville Janie is expected to act the part of the store owner's wife. She is told to "dress up and stand in the store all that evening. Everybody was coming sort of fixed up, and he didn't mean for nobody else's wife to rank with her. She must look on herself as the bell-cow, the other women were the gang" (Hurston 41). Being compared to livestock is hardly a

compliment; although Jody Starks thinks so, as he sees Janie as a beautiful piece of property that is not to act or speak, simply to exist. Though Janie is permitted to work in her husband's store, she is not allowed to manage her earnings, her time or even her own appearance. She is ordered to remain inside the store instead of partaking in the gossip on the porch. She is also told to tie up her hair because he knows that the other men find it attractive.

This business of the head-rag irked her endlessly. But Jody was set on it. Her hair was NOT going to show in the store. It didn't seem sensible at all. That was because Joe never told Janie how jealous he was. He never told her how often he had seen the other men figuratively wallowing in it as she went about things in the store. (Hurstons 55)

It is evident that although proud of Janie's lovely appearance Jody Starks also feels it to be threatening to his authority and therefore wants to control how much others can see of her.

Jody Starks' view of Janie as a passive object is demonstrated again when he is mayor and Janie is asked to say a few words during one of his speeches. He responds to the request with, "Thank yuh fuh yo' compliments, but mah wife don't know nothin' 'bout no speech-makin'. Ah never married her for nothin' lak dat. She's uh woman and her place is in de home" (Hurstons 43). As Janie does not protest, she is successfully silenced. This silence creates a rift within their relationship and changes the way that Janie sees her husband. Even though she has not planned to give a speech, she resents him for speaking for her. "It must have been the way Joe spoke out without giving her a chance to say anything one way or another that took the bloom off of things" (Hurstons 43).

It is not until much later that Janie takes back her right to voice her own opinion. After being put to work in the store without being allowed to partake in the discussions that take place at its front, she eventually grows tired of her enforced silence and the degrading gossip she continuously hears. She responds to the men's remarks about a neighbor, Mrs. Tony, with:

'Sometimes God gits familiar wid us womenfolks too and talks His inside business. He told me how surprised He was 'bout y'all turning out so smart after Him makin' yuh different; and how surprised y'all is goin' tuh be if you ever find out you don't know half as much 'bout us as you think

you do. It's so easy to make yo'self out God Almighty when you ain't got nothin' tuh strain against but women and chickens.' (Hurston 75).

Even though Janie speaks her mind through the catalyst of God she is nevertheless able to make her own thoughts known. Her husband has lost his hold on her and can only respond with “‘You gettin’ too moufy, Janie’” (Hurston 75). There is a perceivable shift at this point in the novel where Janie takes back her voice and is therefore able to look to herself for guidance as opposed to her husband. “‘She stood there until something fell off the shelf inside her. Then she went inside there to see what it was. It was her image of Jody tumbled down and shattered’” (Hurston 72). Janie has realized that apart from her husband she can be a better person and now has the confidence to tell him so and act accordingly. It has been argued that it is only “‘with her third relationship that Janie finally begins to develop her own identity’” yet the text shows her starting to find herself within her and Jody’s relationship (Harrison 294). Without this feeling of her own identity Janie would not have been able to take a stand against his treatment of her and act against it as a result.

Janie is described by Carolyn Perry as: “‘[a woman] who could not fit [herself] to the stereotype’” (238). Trying to do so is what causes her problems, as speaking or acting freely has been forbidden her by Jody Starks. It is only when she takes back her voice that she can she criticize him and his treatment of her, something that a wife is not allowed to do. The paramount example is when she insults his manhood as a retort to him insulting her looks: “‘You big-bellies round here and put out a lot of brag, but ‘tain’t nothin’ to it but yo’ big voice. Humph! Talkin’ ‘bout *me* lookin’ old! When you pull down yo’ britches, you look lak de change uh life’” (Hurston 79). Janie uses her voice as the most lethal weapon against Jody Starks. Not only is she finally able to speak her mind, she does so in front of others as well, just as he has done to her so many times previously. Janie cannot understand why he is unable to forgive her. “‘Why must Joe be so mad with her for making him look small when he did it to her all the time? Had been doing it for years’” (Hurston 81). Jody Starks’ pride is deeply wounded by Janie publicly insulting his manhood. As she has sullied the symbol for his masculine strength, he is unable to regain his self-confidence during his life.

Before Jody Starks’ death, Janie is able to tell him what she has learned, “‘ [Y]ou

got tuh die tuh find out dat you got tuh pacify somebody besides yo'self if you wants any love and any sympathy in dis world. You ain't tried tuh pacify *nobody* but yo'self. Too busy listening tuh yo' own big voice'" (Hurstun 87). Janie is finally able to see herself apart from her husband and is able to communicate with him truthfully. She has learned through his demeaning behavior towards her that to be loved, one must give love. And when he dies, Janie is finally able to articulate that his presence was what caused her imprisonment, "'Tain't dat Ah worried over Joe's death, Phoeby. Ah jus' loves dis freedom.'" (Hurstun 93). The sense of freedom that Janie experiences after her husband's death is immense. She is able to come and go from the store as she pleases as well as not have to be concerned with his disapproval of her every action.

After the death of Jody Starks, many of the men of Eatonville take it upon themselves to let Janie know where her place is. They are all under the same general assumption that she is unable to accomplish anything on her own and wish to yet again imprison her within marriage.

'Uh woman by herself is uh pitiful thing," she was told over and again.
'Dey needs aid and assistance. God never meant 'em tuh try tuh stand by theirselves. You ain't been used tuh knockin' round and doin' fuh yo'self, Mis' Starks. You been well taken keer of, you needs uh man.'" (Hurstun 90)

The men attempting to court Janie are blind to the part that Janie has played in her husband's success. They are only able to see the result; Jody Stark's position as mayor and his successful store. Therefore they believe Janie being without a husband is an impossible situation as they are blind to her potential and strength as an individual. However, as the "[...] traditional entrapments for women—marriage, motherhood, male-defined gender roles—do not arrest Janie's personal growth" she is able to move on, at least for a little while, on her own (Hebble 304).

With her newfound voice and self-confidence Janie makes her own decision regarding her third husband, Tea Cake. His initial treatment of her is indicative of their future relationship. Tea Cake has enough self-confidence to not be worried about her being intelligent and able to pick up the male game of checkers quickly. Janie's reaction on being asked to partake in a game from which she was strictly excluded is one of excitement, "Somebody wanted her to play. Somebody thought it natural for her to play.

She looked him over and got little thrills from every one of his good points” (Hurstun 96). That Tea Cake allows her to learn and enjoy a male dominated game is significant. His behavior contrasts greatly to M. Paul Emanuel in *Villette* and Frank Kennedy in *Gone with the Wind* as he supports Janie in stepping into the male dominated structure whereas Lucy Snowe and Scarlett O’Hara were discouraged from doing so by men who felt threatened by the proficiency of women. Tea Cake is even able to encourage her to do as she wishes in traveling and encourages her independence by thinking that she can do more than she believes herself able. “‘If it wuz me, Ah’d wait on uh train. Seben miles is uh kinda long walk.’ ‘It would be for you, ‘cause you ain’t used to it. But Ah’m seen women walk further’n dat. You could too, if yuh had it tuh do’” (Hurstun 97). Even though Janie does not believe herself able to walk the seven miles to Orlando, Tea Cake’s support in the matter has the potential to change her mind. The fact that he is willing to give this support is of utmost importance. When Janie was married to Jody Starks he did nothing but place her on such a high pedestal that she was never able to get down; Tea Cake on the other hand allows her to be on the ground, doing as she wishes.

When Tea Cake and Janie move to the Everglades he even encourages her to work alongside him, something which is initially met with surprise by the other workers, “‘There was a suppressed murmur when she picked up a basket and went to work. Janie was already getting to be a special case on the muck. It was generally assumed that she thought herself too good to work like the rest of the women and that Tea Cake ‘pumped her up tuh dat’” (Hurstun 133). However, as her fellow workers see her unpretentious behavior she quickly extinguishes their suspicions of her being haughty or proud. The freedom that Janie experiences within the sphere of her work is immensely different within her relationship to Tea Cake than it was in her previous relationships. Janie shares her experience with him as opposed to having her position dictated to her; she is able to work together with him instead of under him.

Because Tea Cake is younger than Janie and she is a widow the townspeople of Eatonville are hesitant to accept their relationship. Their reluctance resonates through the constant reminder of Annie Tyler and her experience with her much younger beau, Who Flung.

She was broken and her pride was gone, so she told those who asked what

had happened. Who Flung had taken her to a shabby room in a shabby house in a shabby street and promised to marry her the next day. They stayed in the room two whole days then she woke up to find Who Flung and her money gone. (Hurston 119)

The townspeople have seen women such as Annie Tyler be destroyed and left to die by men like Who Flung, and they believe that Janie is making the same mistake as Annie Tyler. However, the difference is that Tea Cake is not a man who uses or abuses women. Janie has realized what she needs from a man through her experiences in her first two marriages, and by now knows that “nobody in the world had more kindness about them” than Tea Cake (Hurston 183).

In her life with Tea Cake, Janie can go back to the person she was when she was single, since Tea Cake accepts and encourages her independent behavior. Although bound by the expectations of the patriarchal structure in her first two marriages Janie is liberated from them in her marriage to Tea Cake. He does not wish her to act in accordance with decorum simply for the sake of doing so and she is given the freedom to move around more than just from the store to her house. She is encouraged to act as she wishes as well as converse with whomever she wants.

‘Cause Tea Cake ain’t no Jody Starks, and if he tried tuh be, it would be uh complete flommuck. But de minute Ah marries ‘im everybody is goingtuh be makin’ comparisons. So us is goin’ off somewhere and start all over in Tea Cake’s way. Dis ain’t no business proposition, and no race after property and titles. Dis is uh love game. Ah done lived Grandma’s way, now Ah means tuh live mine.’ (Hurston 114)

Janie decides to love and live the way that suits her, since Tea Cake is able to see Janie as independent from him, as her own person. In her life with him, Janie is able to even further develop her person and comes to the conclusion that she is a woman who wants to let her hair down when she pleases and who wants to wear overalls instead of fancy dresses.

After Tea Cake rescues her from a rabid dog and dies as a result, Janie attends his funeral in the clothes that he has helped her realize she can wear. “No expensive veils and robes for Janie this time. She went on in her overalls. She was too busy feeling grief to dress like grief” (Hurston 189). Due to Janie learning what she needs for herself she is able to allow herself to find it in her relationship with Tea Cake and therefore also to be

independent and thrive on her own after his death. She knows that if need be she can work to support herself and also knows that if she must she has it in her to kill in self-defense. Her time spent working outside of the sphere of the home enables her to understand her own person in relation to herself.

Janie has the ability and time to identify and focus on her needs which in turn creates the possibility of reflection and growth. She has gone through much to get to where she feels comfortable being herself and where she has finally figured out who and what that is. As she tells Phoeby, ““Two things everybody’s got tuh do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin’ fuh theyselves”” (Hurst 192). Though Tea Cake helped her while he was living, “Tea Cake’s death also liberate[d] Janie to continue her quest and, ultimately, to satisfy her “oldest human longing—self revelation” (Kaplan 118). Janie is finally able to find out about living only through her relationship to herself as she is “an autonomous person at the novel’s end” (Hebble 304).

Janie’s “self revelation” thus comes through the journey of her marriages but ends in and with herself. “With each of her three marriages, the first two of which result in frustration and spiritual discontent, Janie is able to claim more of herself, and she becomes stronger and more independent as she learns who she is and what she needs from life” (Hebble 304). Janie’s character in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is one that through its trials with different husbands comes out alone and accepting of that fact. She is more readily accepting of her singleness than the other characters of Lucy, Lily and Scarlett that have been previously discussed. Scarlett O’Hara in *Gone with the Wind* ends the novel fighting for another day while Janie is sitting in her room, wrapped in the sun for a shawl and reminiscing of her happiest memories. She knows that she will still be able to feel and love and live and in her current state is the perfect way to start doing so.

Violet Clay

The fifth and final novel of this study, Gail Godwin's *Violet Clay*, is the latest written as well as the only one which allows for the main character, Violet Clay, to have reached her emancipation from the patriarchal structures through her own experiences *as well as* through help from another female character. Violet's strength is demonstrated as early as the first sentence of the novel where she immediately defines herself when stating, "I am a painter" (Godwin 3). That being said, she too has to experience many changes of her person before realizing who she really is. Orphaned while still in her crib, she is brought up by her grandmother in Charleston, South Carolina. Having been married to one man and having gone through a number of relationships after that, Violet is jarred into thinking of her life when her only remaining family, her uncle Ambrose, takes his life at the same time as she loses her job.

Violet's story is an illustration of how women pressure each other into the "Angel in the House"—pattern. Being brought up in the upper-class tradition of the southern United States, Violet's grandmother, Georgette, had had plans of becoming a successful pianist before she met her husband Charles Clay. After meeting him and dismissing her plans of auditioning for the managers of Carnegie Hall she gave it all up though. Upon being asked by her granddaughter why she did not at least audition in New York before marrying, she responds with, "He wouldn't have wanted me then. And besides, I already had my secret fears that I might not succeed" (Godwin 29). Georgette's husband did not say that he would not want her if she had gone to her audition; she made her decision according to her own fear. The possibility of her future husband being intimidated by her attempt at success, as well as if she had actually succeeded, held her back from pursuing her dreams. If she had gone to her audition she would not have fulfilled the sacrificing role so important in upholding the expectations of an Angel in the House. "Then a subversive, tempting picture flashed through my brain [...] The picture was of that lady so fated in our day—her praises were sung in every woman's magazine—the accomplished wife and mother who turns her gifts to the enhancement of Home" (Godwin 31-32). Georgette chooses marriage partly for security even though as the above quote demonstrates she is on some level aware of what it would entail and as a result she

is left widowed with two children. Only then does she fully realize “what had been done to [her]” (Godwin 29). In trying to play the part of the Angel in the House, Georgette has been robbed of her career and her dreams. Therefore it is not surprising that she needs to have her decisions validated as correct, which she does through manipulating her granddaughter into making the same mistake that she herself made. Her actions mirror Nanny’s from *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as in Hurston’s novel too, a grandmother pushes a granddaughter into a marriage which is not right for her. Georgette introduces Violet to her first husband and encourages their marriage, even though she knows of Violet’s plans and dreams of becoming a famous painter. Because Georgette chose marriage instead of success, she makes Violet do the same. If Violet can succeed within the parameters of an Angel in the House she will validate Georgette’s choice, it seems. It is probable that if Georgette had made a different decision for herself, Violet’s life would have turned out very differently. In *A Room of One’s Own* Virginia Woolf places the blame of women perpetuating each others place within the patriarchal structure on a fictional woman character within the essay that she names Mrs. Seton:

If only Mrs Seton and her mother and her mother before her had learnt the great art of making money and had left their money, like their fathers and their grandfathers before them, to found fellowships and lectureships and prizes and scholarships appropriated to the use of their own sex, we might have dined very tolerably up here alone off a bird and a bottle of wine; we might have looked forward without undue confidence to a pleasant and honourable lifetime spent in the shelter of one of the liberally endowed professions. (Woolf 23)

Even though Woolf is specifically discussing academic life and economic success, the concept stretches itself over almost any subject. She is speaking to all of the women, such as Georgette, who choose to pass on their own legacy to their daughters and grandchildren even when they know that their lives were neither happy nor successful. The legacy that Violet’s grandmother leaves her is one composed of her own fear of success and a pattern of choosing marriage instead of a career. Virginia Woolf is asking women to teach their daughters to push further than they were willing or able to in order to create a better life for themselves and their future children.

However, it is Georgette’s example that Violet follows. In the summer before her marriage to Lewis Lanier, Violet actively paints and plans her career accordingly. Yet

after her marriage she stops painting and attempts to perform the “feminine duty” that she is expected to uphold (Godwin 10). She ceases to fight for her career and settles into the comfort Lewis Lanier affords her:

There was something sexy about having been captured, having been forced by the machinations of those two old Eumenides to lie down in the sweet juices of traditional womanhood and abandon the hubris of an edgy, lonely struggle. I didn’t touch a paintbrush those first months of captivity. What for? (Godwin 33)

Violet’s use of the words “captured” and “captivity” signifies the unwilling nature of her marriage to Lewis Lanier; however she also uses the word “sexy” to signify pleasure. She is to some extent relieved that she can get away with not painting to fulfill her role as a wife. As Joanne S. Frye writes, “in adopting the story of the wife, [Violet] has denied the story of the artist, thereby signifying Violet’s inability to be both a wife and an artist and feeling the need to make a choice between the two” (76). Violet describes her grandmother and godmother as Eumenidies, Greek avenging goddesses, to highlight the punishing nature of their decision that allowed her to abandon her “hubris of an edgy, lonely struggle.” It is the struggle that she lived for before she was introduced to Lewis Lanier, and after she loses it she does not know how to relate to herself anymore. Previous to her marriage Violet defined herself by her painting. Therefore when she stops painting she loses sight of her own definition of self which leads to recurring nightmares that she thinks are indicative of her “[selling] out. I hadn’t played square with my myth of The Young Woman as Artist. This myth had specified a certain order of events, a certain progression in the development of Self, and I had betrayed that order. I had snatched my security before I’d made a real try for my dream” (Godwin 17). It is only after she has stopped painting that she realizes how her dreams of becoming an artist are diminishing the longer she stays married. As a result of this realization Violet leaves her husband in order to focus on her career, only having submitted to marriage and passivity for a little over a year. Through leaving and beginning her work again she takes a necessary step towards independence. Whereas Violet previously had looked towards her husband for security, through her decision to leave him she starts her journey to become her own security.

Violet flees to New York City to try and be a painter. She reflects on her

marriage: “I seemed to have lost my art through marrying Lewis and lost Lewis through practicing my art on him” (Godwin 34). Violet has come to the same conclusion that her grandmother did, that she could not have both a family life and success; she has to choose between the two. In essence, she has to choose between two parts of herself. Joanne Frye argues that Violet makes a choice that creates a chasm between her “femaleness and her ambition.” She says that Violet,

both ... need[s] to fit into a narrative and [has] difficulties in doing so because she must inevitably deny some part of her own reality. The problem, of course, derives from the falseness of the plots themselves, particularly from their insistence that as a woman she must make an either/or choice between her femaleness and her ambition. She has no available pattern for narrative connections that include both work and womanhood. (77)

Frye poses the argument that Violet’s society has not given her the possibility to combine marriage and career and as a consequence, she is forced to choose between the two. Therefore, Violet who equates her husband with security, must choose to be without that security to “try for her dream”, having come to the conclusion that she values her art above that which he could offer her. She becomes conscious that she had sacrificed her ambitions for what she had thought were necessities, and asks herself, “Weren’t we all involved in the same contest between living and dying, between doing what we wanted and needed to do and not doing it?” (Godwin 116). Violet had been doing what she thought she needed instead of what she knew she wanted and was therefore not fully living. Her problem is that she is still not ready to pursue her dream to the fullest though. She settles for a compromise: a job as an illustrator and a string of lovers. She is not fully content with her work as a book-cover artist for Harrow House publishing house, but accepts it as a necessary step towards later becoming successful, a necessary evil, that allows her to support herself financially even though she dreams of painting her own paintings. Nevertheless she continues to look at her position at Harrow House as a means to live by and sees the loss of it as a disaster even though she realizes this to be wrong.

In someone else’s story, the heroine would have embraced her setback, welcomed it as a prod to catapult her out of her slough. She would have seen her dismissal from a job that had kept her on the side road of art for too long as a blessing in disguise. (Godwin 63)

However, she is still too focused on security to see her dismissal as a blessing in disguise. Fortunately she is able to do so eventually when she sees the combination of her uncle's death and the loss of her job as the catalysts which actually do propel her past being mediocre and force her to become excellent. In this situation Violet reflects upon the pros and cons of her life:

I was thinking how much money I had left in the bank, whether I could afford to stay in my apartment for the coming winter, what it would have been like, my life, if I had stayed on with Lewis and painted and cooked in the absence of great art or passion. At least I would not have to worry about a roof over my head. (Godwin 58)

She realizes that she is happier while alone even though she also recognizes that it is more difficult. It is clear that the decision she made to leave her marriage was the better one for her person, in spite of the lack of security.

When first arriving in New York City, Violet worked as an assistant to Sheila Benton, the health and beauty editor at *Vogue*. Sheila seems to be the image of a successful career woman but she too turns out to be haunted by the ghost of The Angel in the House. "‘I’m twenty-nine now. You’re fortunate to be only twenty-three. Twenty-three and you’ve already been married. Nobody can ever call you an old maid.’ She sighed and put down her fork" (Godwin 132). Sheila validates Violet's life through her having been married without taking into consideration the content of the marriage or that it ended, and she cannot appreciate the success that she has herself because she thinks only love and marriage count.

Sheila Benton is one of many women characters that choose marriage over independence. As a contrast, the character of Carol Gruber, the ex-wife of Violet's uncle Ambrose, is an example of a woman who takes on a masculine role in society and is able to be successful before her marriage as well as after it. Carol is the personification of an independent woman who makes her own way. She took control of her life after her parents' death and became a successful businesswoman who owns "several factories in New Jersey" (Godwin 149). She finds it important for everybody to make one's own way in order to learn a good work ethic and responsibility. During her marriage to Ambrose she continues to thrive financially and is also able to grow as a person as he "had shown her what her full self could be like" (Godwin 226). After her marriage ends, she is able to

move on with the knowledge of who she fully is and continue to look towards her future. Carol is a realist which reflects throughout her life. One example is how she describes her interaction with her husband: ““ Ambrose liked his dreams. The problem with me was I kept waking him up and telling him the day had started”” (Godwin 232). Carol knows that in order to be successful one has to wake up from the dream and start working. She is no stranger to what it takes to be successful and all of her actions reflect her way of thinking. Even though Carol’s drive is to some extent detrimental to her marriage she does not regret her actions, and she accepts the consequences. She finds her sense of self and her career more vital to her person than Ambrose is, and she is not willing to obliterate herself to fit him and their relationship.

Even though Violet has been able to partly leave her grandmother’s influence behind when she divorces Lewis Lanier, she is unable to free herself from Southern propriety completely. As Katherine Westerlund writes, “While Violet does liberate herself from the entrapment of her marriage, the kind of profound transformation that would take her *beyond* an either-or choice is not accomplished” (150). As she herself reflects, she feels free enough to take her hairdresser Michel as a lover and play sexual games with him but is unable to face being alone or to expose her solitude in public:

If I had been a man, I, too, would have sat at the old piano and played boogie-woogie and waited to see who’d come along. But the ideals of Southern womanhood were still too strongly ingrained in me: I might play robot games on the floor of my hairdresser’s apartment, but I would never sit down by myself with a drink in a public bar. (Godwin 155)

In exposing the double standard Violet reveals both her awareness of it and her unwillingness to break apart from convention. To be a woman on her own is still the most difficult thing for her. Violet still relies on others for her own success instead of looking towards herself. She is always with a boyfriend or lover to look to them for the answers to her life in order to not have to take responsibility for her actions. Her reliance on others only changes when her uncle Ambrose takes his life and she moves out to his cabin in the mountains to work on herself and her art. On her way to the Adirondacks Violet realizes her past mistake:

There I had crouched in the shadows of my own potential. I had my feelings and I had my materials, but I didn’t know how to make one work for the other. There I sat, waiting for something to happen, for the phone

to ring, for help to come from the outside. That something was happening inside, I never considered. That certain equations were being made, certain colors and tonal values being locked away in my visual memory which could later be opened by the right combination of accumulated experience, I never dreamed. (Godwin 115)

Violet becomes conscious that she has allowed herself to wait for something on the outside to happen. She has become a damsel in distress, one that is waiting to be rescued from the dragon instead of slaying it herself. She now realizes that she is the only one who can be the catalyst for her own success. When she realizes that she is the last surviving person in her family and therefore finally entirely alone in the world, she also understands that she is the only person who can push herself. Only then does Violet overcome the teachings of her grandmother and is able to see that she must be the one to ensure herself a place in the world solely in relation to herself.

Upon first moving into her uncle's cabin in Plommet Falls, Violet meets a handsome police officer and seems to be on the point of repeating her former mistakes. However, for the first time makes a decision to choose herself and her art instead of a relationship.

'Okay, you've had your bit of old-fashioned flirt, I told myself. He glowered menacingly and you trembled deliciously. That's enough.' [...] If you look now, you defile the tabernacle to your muse, thought I, and I didn't look and after a moment's tense silence he touched his hat to me cordially and left me sitting in the Pontiac alone, feeling virtuous if slightly let down. (Godwin 251-252)

Violet now knows that she must say no to everything outside of herself. She must live for herself instead of a relationship. Westerlund comments that, "the sexual arousal the virile trooper elicits must be suppressed: sexuality poses too great a threat to Violet's independence and creativity" (105). As Westerlund observes, it is only after Violet rejects the sexuality that Lieutenant Quentin is offering her that she able to focus solely on herself and propel forward.

Violet eventually meets her neighbor Samantha, or Sam, and is introduced to a life-style that can aid her in achieving her goals. Sam is a woman who, as her name implies, breaks with conventional patterns of femininity and dependence. Violet's Landlady, Minerva Means, describes her with some astonishment:

‘I suppose you could call her a liberated woman. She can do carpentry and plumbing, fix anything. You should see what she’s done to that old ruin of a hunter’s shack her father left her. Yes, in the two years she’s been with us, she’s made herself quite indispensable around here. She’ll bring you a cord of wood in the back of that jeep of hers, she’ll repair your gutters, patch your room. No going on welfare for her. And with an illegitimate child most would.’ (Godwin 180)

Minerva believes that being able to do unconventional things is what makes Sam different, yet there is much more to it. Through exhibiting ambition and achievement in the male dominated trades of carpentry and plumbing Sam is given the title of “liberated.” She seems to fit with the gender role reserved for men by living in a hunter’s shack and providing financially for herself and her daughter. An obvious example of a woman who refuses the role of the Angel in the House, Sam breaks the frame that her society has tried to place her in. Westerlund argues that it is due to Sam foregoing men altogether that she “has been able to bring out her own strengths and capabilities, and has learned to do for herself what a husband would have done for her” (106). However, this opinion is not entirely supported by the text as Godwin depicts Sam as a woman who would allow herself to take a more masculine role in life regardless of being married or not, much like Scarlett O’Hara in *Gone with the Wind* and would therefore still learn the skills of “what a husband would have done for her.”

As Violet tells her a little bit later in their friendship, “‘I really think,’ I told her, ‘that the test of a person is, in the end, how well she’s used what she was given to use. And, girl, you’ve used it’” (Godwin 325). Sam is liberated from the patriarchal structure by proving that she is able to stand outside of it although she does not entirely reject the idea of a man in her life. In a conversation towards the end of the book Sam and Violet discuss men:

‘So you haven’t ruled out men.’ I had been thinking about this subject a lot since I had received the first part of Milo’s new novel, *Kaatje’s Curse*, about the embittered manhater who came into her patrimony too late.
‘Men, yes,’ said Sam. ‘Maybe not one nice man.’ (Godwin 335)

Sam is not opposed to the idea of a man, but she is not dependent on a relationship and therefore gives herself a choice. Lihong Xi argues in her novel that Violet is able to find in Sam an inspiring role model due to the fact that she “liv[es] an energetic, productive,

and self-sufficient life, constantly projecting herself into the future and creating possibilities for herself [...]” (109). Through her own behavior, Sam is able to replace the false role model that Violet had previously looked towards in her uncle Ambrose. Sam is the one to lead Violet onto the path that is right for her by showing her how to choose to work on her art, alone. Furthermore, she also becomes the subject of the painting that gives Violet the recognition that she has been craving in the art world and is able to teach her that she only needs to look to herself for fulfillment, thereby proving the problem of singleness to be a myth.

In *Violet Clay* a move towards a freer woman character is discovered. Violet not only learns from her experiences in life as a single, married and divorced woman but is also given the experiences of her friend and neighbor Sam to aid her in finding her place both inside and outside of the patriarchal structure of society. She is allowed to explore and learn from her past a bit differently than the previously discussed heroines as her first role model, her uncle Ambrose, (a man) changes to become her neighbor Sam (a woman) and in that change all the difference is made. As best described by Katha Pollitt in her review of the novel, which can perhaps be read as a bit derogatory but is mostly a positive observation, ""Violet Clay" has the pep-talk quality of so many recent novels in which the heroine strides off the last page, her own woman at last" (11).

Conclusion

Through the exploration of *Villette*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Violet Clay* the themes of women and their relationships to others have been brought forth. Beginning with Coventry Patmore's poem "The Angel in the House" a tradition of women choosing men before themselves is evident. The pattern that is presented throughout the novels is the expectation that is depicted in *Villette* by the four paintings Lucy Snowe sees at the museum. The "Jeune Fille", "Mariée", "Jeune Mère" and lastly "Veuve" show the four phases of a woman's life. First she is a young girl, then she marries and becomes a mother, and lastly she is a widow. There is an expectation not only that this is what a woman's life will be but that this is what women *should want* to do and women who do not adhere to the expectation are strongly criticized. For example, the characters of Mrs. Ramsay and Sheila Benton are unable to understand why Lily Briscoe and Violet Clay do not search for a husband. As a result of this way of thinking both Mrs. Ramsay and Sheila Benton are unable to appreciate themselves fully. Mrs. Ramsay does not have the time for self-reflection as the bulk of her time is spent in catering to her husband and children, and Sheila cannot appreciate her career, her good looks or her life as she focuses all of her energy on her disappointment of not being married. Contrary to the experiences of Mrs. Ramsay and Sheila, however, both Lily Briscoe and Violet Clay are able to live separate and independent lives. They find security within and do not find it necessary to sacrifice themselves to men in order to achieve success, and in the end both of them realize themselves and find fulfillment by finalizing their paintings, rather than by the relationship to a man.

Men's attitudes towards women play an important role in the choice that these women are forced to make as they constitute one half of the relationship. A common problem is the one that men have had in dealing with intelligent women. Both M. Paul Emanuel and Frank Kennedy find it flattering at first to teach Lucy Snowe and Scarlett O'Hara about arithmetics and business. Yet, as the women progress in their knowledge and show proficiency, they become a threat to the dominant position of their tutors. When these women step outside of their traditional place in society they question why no choice of doing so has ever been presented to them.

The attitudes of men and society shown within the five novels means that many of the women see marriage as a trap. This in turn causes women to choose a life outside of the parameters of marriage and this is shown to be in most cases a better life. When Violet Clay divorces her husband and moves to New York City she is able to find her own way to success and grows as a person while getting there. Though she must at times live in doubt she does so with the knowledge that she cannot place blame upon anyone else, for she is solely responsible for herself. Lucy Snowe is a similar example of a woman who lives outside of marriage and is successful on her own terms. Through taking a chance and leaving for Villette, Lucy is able to secure a position as a teacher and meets Madame Beck who later becomes the example that Lucy follows in order to reach her dreams of owning her own boarding school. She learns through Madame Beck that it is possible to achieve one's dreams even if they do fall outside of the norms that society has put in place.

However, the societies that these women live in often cannot accept the strength that the women demonstrate, and are unable to make allowances for women who prosper unconventionally. The women of the older generations tend to criticize the younger women when they step outside of the role they have traditionally held. For example, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* Nanny ridicules Janie's notion of love and the fact that she wishes to find it in marriage stating that marriage is simply a way to protection. Similarly in *Gone with the Wind* Aunt Pittypat finds Scarlett O'Hara's work in the lumber business embarrassing and reflecting negatively on the family name as she is holding a man's place in society. In *To the Lighthouse* Mrs. Ramsay constantly schemes to pair Lily Briscoe together with William Bankes, while in *Violet Clay* Violet's grandmother schemes to have her marry Lewis Lanier. A general distrust of women who attempt a different path is found throughout the novels. Their decisions are criticized and disliked due to the fact that they do not seek validation of others.

A woman's use of her voice or lack thereof is also a common theme that runs throughout the five novels. Janie being kept silent by Jody Starks limits her autonomy and allows him to control her. Yet at the same time her unwillingness to speak to the townspeople of Eatonville of her life after leaving demonstrates her ability to control her life. Likewise, Scarlett O'Hara's declaration that she does not need men rouses a strong

response from Rhett Butler while she also receives the same reaction when she chooses to remain silent and refuses to speak her mind. It is through gaining self-confidence that the women are finally able to rely on themselves and their own voice instead of allowing someone else to speak for them.

As time progresses between each of the five novels there are differences between them that can be seen as representative of changes in history. The only novel that depicts a successful relationship with a man who simultaneously is able to give the woman her independence is *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. However, this is not allowed to prosper, as Tea Cake dies and Janie is left alone at the end of the book. Zora Neale Hurston was praised for writing a realistic novel and perhaps it would have been unrealistic for her to allow the ideal relationship between Janie and Tea Cake to continue. His character was perhaps too good to be seen as realistic. In *Violet Clay*, the most recent book, the problem of singleness is the least evident. Violet mostly deals with the problem internally and must learn to break the pattern that her grandmother presented to her. She is able to see that she can have a successful life without a husband and that in some respects this can even be a better one, although at the end of the novel there is a hint that a relationship might be a possibility though not a necessity.

Patmore's idea of the Angel in the House permeates all of the character's lives. All of them at least initially succumb to their dictated positions as adjuncts to a man with the exceptions of Lucy Snowe in *Villette* and Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*. However, although Scarlett, Janie and Violet at first yield they eventually reject this place for one that gives them greater freedom. Lucy and Lily are able to maintain a distance from the ideal through remaining outside of the structure yet they are nevertheless exposed to it by their environment incessantly trying to press it into their lives. All five women are able to escape the constraints of the Angel in the House by removing themselves either from the environment where it is promoted or removing themselves from the people who foster the ideas. In doing so, they are faced with ridicule and the loss of friendship and family. Yet the heroines are unperturbed as they believe that the autonomy they gain is worth more. Lucy, Lily, Scarlett, Janie and Violet are able to gain a sense of self by staying true to themselves and in doing so they are able to understand who they are and what they need as individuals.

The novels depict how women perceive that men perceive women. Though not a flattering portrayal, it is one that is worthy of commenting upon. The women writers show men that wish women to stay within the patriarchal structure for the sake of the dominant position that the men hold within that structure. If a woman is to break this structure chaos ensues as she then challenges not only her own place within the framework but also everyone else's. With these types of men dominating women's lives it comes as no surprise that the women choose themselves. Perhaps it is due to selfishness or perhaps self-preservation. Their choices force them to endure criticism, and alienate them from those they are close to but at the same time offer them so much more. They are able to enjoy security on their own terms by experiencing their life as they wish. It is worth the struggle in order to break out of the patriarchal structure that has kept them confined for such a long period of time. They are thereby able to maintain their strength through remaining separate.

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