

Typologies of Womanhood In *To The Lighthouse*

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Abstract

Virginia Woolf is the most prominent representative of the modern novel and she has contributed greatly to the development of the modern novel both in theory and in practice. Woolf searches for a technique in order to express “the stream of consciousness”, that’s why she is considered to be a major innovator in English literature. She experiments with this revolutionary concept, which attempts to explore the consciousness of characters by accumulating many details from their own environment. Her masterpiece, *To the Lighthouse*, serves as an excellent sample of Woolf’s literary theory and her experimental techniques. The consciousness of the characters is not blatantly described as in the naturalist style but filtered through showing the way the characters are thinking and interpreting events. Mrs. Ramsay is described through the technique of “interior monologue”, her inner conflict and her external conflict become clear when she talks to herself. This article will analyze this style by searching for Mrs. Ramsay’s everlasting dominance, her excellent motherhood and her being different from traditional women though having all these traditional roles as a woman who serves as a kind of hope for the birth of a new woman. Her hope and her ideal is Lily who is born as a new woman with a new point of view. The typologies of womanhood and the relationship between Mrs. Ramsay and Lily together with their differences and similarities will be discussed. The death of Mrs. Ramsay gives birth to Lily who is both the ideal of Woolf and Mrs. Ramsay together. This article

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will analyze the death of traditional, submissive women together with the birth of new woman by taking into consideration the development related to women right at the end of the nineteenth century.

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Typologies of Womanhood In To The Lighthouse

The entire action and movement in *To the Lighthouse* is built around Mrs. Ramsay and the novel can only be understood through analyzing her interaction with the other characters. Mrs. Ramsay lives with the patriarchal burden like most women have had to in the 19th century. She helps to bring the world out of chaos and darkness with her positive nature and she is the source of light for the other characters in the novel. In the light of this information, I will focus on Mrs. Ramsay's and her relationships with Lily Briscoe, with her husband Mr. Ramsay and with her children. Mrs. Ramsay is vitally important for *To the Lighthouse*, the novel can't be considered without her, and even after her death, which can be called a 'matriarchal death', she is still dominant in the lives of the characters in the novel, but her death brings an end to the traditional women and symbolically gives birth to Lily who can be interpreted as the colour and the vision of the novel as she is an artist. Mrs. Ramsay's colourless life and her being stuck in her traditional roles are closely related with Lily, the eccentric woman character who is the hope and the symbol of the woman of the time.

Mrs Ramsay is introduced to us as a matriarch who is kind and tolerant; Mrs. Ramsay's first word in the novel is "yes", which discloses her affirmative and positive nature. At the beginning of the novel, her son James wants to go the lighthouse across the bay, while Mr. Ramsay tells that the weather doesn't permit, Mrs. Ramsay tells him there is the possibility of going. This attitude of her shows that she doesn't want to dash her young son's expectations. "Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow," said Mrs Ramsay. But you'll have to be up with the lark," she added." (1). She doesn't want to shatter the hopes of her son, in that it can be said that she seems to be hopeful about life, thinking that the beauties and pleasures

of life are all temporary, life will end one day so there is no need to be hopeless. Mrs. Ramsay is a mother in every fibre of her being; in fact, it is her full occupation, her personal and public life, her hobby and her passion. She believes that motherhood is invaluable, although motherhood is not frequently valued as a prestigious, viable career choice. People, who know Mrs. Ramsay recognize her uncanny talent for it, even to go as far as to say that she makes it into an art form. Apart from being a mother, Mrs. Ramsay is described with reverence, see she is loved and respected by all the characters in the novel, for instance, Mr. Bankes tells her that “*Nature has but little clay... like that of which she moulded you.*”(25). Charles Tansley believes that “*she is the most beautiful person he had ever seen and is proud to be allowed to carry her bag.*”(53). Mrs. Ramsay has all the attributes required to be respected by any men in the patriarchal British society. Woolf actually describes Mrs. Ramsay when she describes the Angel in her ‘*Professions for Women*’:

She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She sacrificed herself daily. She never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of the others.. she was pure ..(Such women) must charm ... must conciliate.. must -to put it bluntly --tells lies if they are to succeed.(Woolf 212)

Throughout the novel, her life seems to be terrifyingly simple, but underneath, in the mind of Mrs. Ramsay it is terrifyingly complex. Though she has a great burden on her which is the effect of patriarchal society, she manages to overcome her sorrows and behaves appropriately in front of her guests at dinner parties and gatherings, so she satisfies the social norms. She sacrifices herself and she constantly gives herself to others. Her natural balance in the novel makes her psychologically unbalanced; she begins to question her place in life. “*But what have I done with my life?*”(Woolf 70) She cannot “*be herself, by herself.*”(95). She is the victim, she is the giver. “*She is a giver, that is to say, she gives with no assurance that she will get back even some unexpected profit from what she puts out.*” (Cixous, 881). Mrs. Ramsay is really humble and she does everything without expecting any return.

Mrs. Ramsay, besides being positive and sympathetic, devotes herself to her family and friends, though it is not what she really wants. Her magical power as a great mother is quite obvious in the first section, she is the hostess of the dinner party and it is clear that she has a unifying force, a typical woman of 19th century. She embodies the virtue of duty, subservience, self-sacrifice and other qualities which are proper for a Victorian woman and wife. Actually, she is the representative of a transition period. She is in between, she can't be the ideal woman like Lily Briscoe and she is not satisfied with being a typical Victorian woman. Mrs. Ramsay is a reverential mother figure starting from the first chapter "*The Window*" where the mother is placed in the central position, she dies in the second part "*Time Passes*", in *To the Lighthouse* part she is still as dominant as she is in part three though she was dead.

Lily is the other central female character in the novel. "In Victorian fiction it is often the orphan to whom the quest is given, who has the heroic role and who the survival figure is. Therefore; it is suitable to end the novel with Lily's vision," (Lilienfeld 348) it is the same in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, the novel ends with the last vision of Jane. Lily, whose voice is Woolf's herself, sees Mrs. Ramsay as a mother figure because she herself is an orphan living with an aging father. Lily finds it impossible to be just like Mrs. Ramsay, but she still admires her strength, beauty, resolution and gaiety. Lily is just the opposite of Mrs. Ramsay in that Mrs. Ramsay can see her own deficiencies through Lily. Mrs Ramsay represents the submissive and traditional woman in patriarchal society, while Lily symbolizes Woolf's ideal woman, the new woman. The two woman have a complementary distribution in that they long for everything that each possesses, Lily loves Mrs. Ramsay's being at the heart of the house, while Mrs. Ramsay instinctively identifies herself with Lily as she is an artist. They are both creators though their medium is different; Lily is an artist and her medium is her paintings, while Mrs. Ramsay is a creator whose medium is human beings and her form is human relationships. In fact, as Helen Storm Corsa argues, "It is in Lily that the largely libidinal attachment to the mother is seen. Her love... in its totality and in its idealizing force, dominates the first part of the novel. Her grief over the loss of the mother has long preceded the real loss of Mrs. Ramsay."(qtd in Lilienfeld, 347) For Lily it is the death of the mother, not the death of Mrs. Ramsay that matters. Lily is therefore more powerful than Mrs. Ramsay.

Lily would be a threatening to the mother if she were known to be as powerful a perceiver as she is. Certainly Mrs. Ramsay isn't aware of Lily's secret powers, yet Lily is the only character who clothes Mrs. Ramsay in the appropriate shapes of imagery and whose penetration divines Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts. (Lilienfeld,348)

If Lily were really the daughter of Mrs. Ramsay, she would be a threatening figure for Mrs. Ramsay, but still Mrs. Ramsay wouldn't know how a powerful a woman she is, as Mrs. Ramsay is busy with "taking care of some man or other." (Lighthouse 37) Woolf places the emphasis on Lily Briscoe, while reading the novel; the story is like a journey of seeking after a hope for a new woman. Mrs. Ramsay makes up the deficiency of Lily's orphanage, Lily is the voice of Woolf in the novel, she symbolizes the unconventional and rebellious woman, the representative of the unwanted woman who should be abolished from that patriarchal society Lily underestimates herself in relation to Mrs. Ramsay, she feels less than a woman considering Mrs. Ramsay's role and her domination in her family as Lily is not traditional like Mrs. Ramsay.

Oh, but, Lily would say, there was her father; her home; even, had she dared to say it, her painting. But all this seemed so little, so virginal, against the other. Yet, as the night wore on, and white lights parted the curtains, and even now and then some bird chirped in the garden, gathering a desperate courage she would urge her own exemption from the universal law; plead for it; she liked to be alone; she liked to be herself; she was not made for that; and so have to meet a serious stare from eyes of unparalleled depth, and confront Mrs Ramsay's simple certainty (and she was childlike now) that her dear Lily, her little Brisk, was a fool. (Lighthouse 42)

Lily becomes more curious about Mrs. Ramsay. She accuses Lily of denying the universal law which is marriage, because Lily is adamant on remaining single. Mrs. Ramsay asserts that no matter what Lily has, it is not worthwhile as she is alone. Mrs. Ramsay is afraid of being alone and that's why she wants everybody around her and she has this unifying

force. She doesn't want her children to become grown-ups in order to control them. "*Mrs Ramsay, realising that James was tugging at her, to make her go on reading aloud the Fisherman and his Wife, she did in her own heart infinitely prefer boobies to clever men who wrote dissertations; Charles Tansley, for instance.*" (Lighthouse 47) In this way, when they are children she can control the boys but when they become grown-ups, they will become incomprehensible to her like their father Mr. Ramsay. She is unable to perceive their life as she is not wise enough to understand the professional issues.

Lily's painting is of great importance to the general direction of the novel, as it begins with Lily and her easel, paints and brushes in Ramsay's summer house and it ends with the last stroke of Lily in the same place. As Stewart tells in his *Light in To the Lighthouse*, "If Mrs. Ramsay relates to the light as essence Lily relates to colour as the contingent substance of reality and art"(Stewart, 441) Mrs. Ramsay is the light as she is the mother, while Lily is the one who represents colour as she is the artist in the novel. Her painting is a conventional challenge considering the time as the women at that time have no right even to go to college. It displays the strength in the representation of women; it is even a challenge to Mrs. Ramsay herself who has no time even to read. It is a struggle against gender conventions as said by Mr. Tansley "women can't write, women can't paint." (Lighthouse, 72) Lily proves that she can do it and her last stroke is the triumph representing the birth of new woman. Lily must have heard the voice of Helen Cixous who asserts that "Woman must write herself, must write about women and bring them to writing... Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement" (Cixous, 875). Through her painting Lily finds the hidden things in her unconscious, apart from going beyond the gender roles of the time. She attempts to discover and paint Mrs. Ramsay's beauty and gaiety just as Woolf reflects the portrait of her own mother through Lily. As Cixous suggests, Lily puts in the text what she lacks, she is lacking in motherhood and family; therefore, her painting the mother and child shows the scene that she never possesses throughout her life. She creates what she lacks and she portrays her deepest feelings towards Mrs. Ramsay through her painting. Lily's painting of James and Mrs. Ramsay suggests Mrs. Ramsay's character with a few lines and a bit of purple shadowing: "she had made no attempt at likeness." (Lighthouse

42) Lily attempts to capture something real in her portrait without being too meticulous about making the painting actually look like Mrs. Ramsay. Through this work of art, Lily isn't trying to paint Mrs. Ramsay's physical features, she's not trying to get only Mrs. Ramsay; apart from trying to represent the lasting bond between the mother and the child which is beyond expression, she endeavours to create her own perception of Mrs. Ramsay. Lily believes that Mrs. Ramsay has some magical power and she tries to obtain the magical power from Mrs. Ramsay by touching her physically,

Sitting on the floor with her arms around Mrs. Ramsay's knees, close as she could get, smiling to think that Mrs. Ramsay would never know that the reason of that pressure, she imagined how in the chambers of the mind and heart of the woman who was, physically, touching her, were stored, like the treasures in the tombs of kings, tablets bearing sacred inscriptions, which if one could spell them out would teach one everything, but they would never be offered openly, never made public. What art was there, known to love or cunning, by which one pressed through into those secret chamber. (67)

Even after this attempt, Lily ends up in failure as she perceives that she can't be as powerful or magical as her and accepts her failure: "*Nothing happened. Nothing! Nothing!*" says as she leans her head against Mrs. Ramsay's knee. This attitude gives some clues about her untold sexual desire towards Mrs. Ramsay, though the time they live doesn't accept any deviation from heterosexual norms. Woolf gives some implications of the lesbian desire. Lily is unconventional and strictly rejects marriage, which Mrs. Ramsay disapproves, evaluating this situation as a deficiency. She strictly assures that "*An unmarried woman has missed the best of life.*"(Lighthouse 42) In her painting, Lily does not produce a woman holding her child which is the symbol of heterosexual fertility; it is interesting that she only produces Mrs. Ramsay in her own eyes. After she finishes her painting Lily says, "*I have had my vision,*" which indicates that Mrs. Ramsay is her own reflection, but she still doesn't dare to clarify the exact meaning of the picture. Though she prefers to have some assets of Mrs. Ramsay, she doesn't prefer to be traditional like her and her painting

will be left as a reminiscence of traditional woman, the new woman is here to symbolize some other assets of woman besides being a mother.

Lily Briscoe's artistic powers have been stimulated and she has brought a keen insight to bear on the Ramsay family. After ten years she had arrived at the answer to her vision, but could not say just what it was (*Lighthouse* 11). She knew something was "out of harmony"; as she walked on the shore "there was a purplish stain upon the bland surface of the sea as if something had boiled and bled, invisibly, beneath. . . . It was difficult . . . to continue, as one walked by the sea, to marvel how beauty outside mirrored beauty within. (Pedersen, 598-599)

Lily knows that she even does not have to clarify the exact meaning of the painting though she is the artist. Lily is the only character who laments Mrs. Ramsay's sudden death "Giving, giving, giving, she had died." (*Lighthouse* 126) Woolf shows this struggle through the development of Lily's painting and in the end she "senses what Mrs. Ramsay might have been like without the burden of the Eve and Mary myth upon her" (Daugherty 299). Mrs. Ramsay, "relieved for a moment of the weight that the world had put on her" (269), becomes her 'self', "the thing itself before it has been made anything" (287). Lily herself produces a world for Mrs. Ramsay where the dominant patriarchy has no effect can't be felt any more as she thinks that she recreates her in her painting: "Cursed by patriarchal contempt, killed by patriarchal reverence, Mrs. Ramsay disappears from the novel. Accepted as human, named worthwhile, seen and valued for what she was, Mrs. Ramsay appears again" (Daugherty 300). Woolf kills the angel who is her own mother and she explains its reason in her *Professions for Women* "I did my best to kill her. Had I not killed her she would have killed me." (*Lighthouse* 3) Here there is the atmosphere as if Lily is speaking and if Mrs. Ramsay hadn't died, she would have killed Lily as she is the rebellious, the unwanted or the lesbian. By killing Mrs. Ramsay all of a sudden, Woolf rejects all the conventional, submissive female roles in patriarchal society. Though she kills her, Mrs. Ramsay is still as dominant as patriarchy itself, even her thoughts, her words and her wishes are still there and it can clearly be seen when the family go to the lighthouse at the end of the novel. The existence of Mrs.

Ramsay can only be understood from the light coming from the lighthouse that brightens the house at night, that light like her stops by each room of the house gently and touches every living being affectionately. As a mother figure she is the metaphorical lighthouse who is surrounded by family and gives light to everybody around, except her own self as she can rarely “be herself, by herself” (Lighthouse 95). As Stewart asserts in his article entitled as “Light in to the Lighthouse” “Mrs. Ramsay sinks back to being herself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others.” (Woolf, 52) Though she is the light to all the characters in the novel, she is dark and pretends that she is an optimist. She is dark as she gets stuck in the traditional roles of women of the nineteenth century. As Ernst Carrier observes, “*light and shadow go together. The light manifests itself only in the shadow it casts.*” (qtd. in Stewart, 378) There is no light in her, her primary goal is to glitter everybody with the light coming from the lighthouse. She always “*embraces the lighthouse beam as an ultimate source of creative energy and is filled with Light. Her family and friends approach the lighthouse through her.*” (Stewart 379) The expedition to the lighthouse which is planned in part one and is undertaken in the last part is a journey to the glowing light of Mrs. Ramsay and it can be interpreted as the victory of Mrs. Ramsay as it is her beloved son’s wish to go to there.

Mrs. Ramsay’s dominance is prevalent in her attitude towards her children though they seem to be an ordinary family of the late nineteenth century. Mr. Ramsay is different from Mrs. Ramsay both as a husband and as a father. His fatherhood is shown at the beginning of the novel, when he tells his son that they can’t go to the lighthouse because the weather won’t permit. After that he is described as “*lean as a knife, narrow as the blade of one.*” (Woolf 4) Mr. Ramsay is sharp both physically and personally. It is the description in the eyes of James whom he thinks “*grins sarcastically, not only with the pleasure of disillusioning his son and casting ridicule upon his wife, who was ten thousand times better in every way than he was.*” (4) James feels murderous rage for his father and it can clearly be seen when he says, “*Had there been an axe handy, a poker, or any weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father’s breast and killed him, there and then, James would have seized it*” (Lighthouse 4). James thinks that accepts that his mother is ten thousand times better than his father, which implies that his situation as a child can be interpreted as the Oedipus complex. James

has not got any close relationship till the end of the novel, when they go to the lighthouse. James is infatuated with his mother's compassionate love, however; he loathes his father. For James, his father is the reason he can't go to the lighthouse he desperately wants to visit, and his mother who allows the hope of going to the lighthouse As Mrs. Ramsay believes that hope is one of the most invaluable things in human life and she allows James to enjoy that.

Perhaps you will wake up and find the sun shining and the birds singing," said compassionately, soothing the little boy's hair, for her husband, with his caustic saying that it would not be fine, had dashed his spirits she could see. This going to the Lighthouse was a passion of her, she saw and then, as if her husband had not said enough, with his caustic saying that it would not be fine tomorrow, this odious little man went and rubbed it in all over again. (Lighthouse, 14)

Mrs. Ramsay is the source of comfort for James, while Mr. Ramsay is only harassment. "To James, Mrs. Ramsay is a source of peace and harmony and James witnesses the act of sexual sympathy by which she restores his father to himself and to his world."(Stewart 379) and he thinks that "Mrs. Ramsay's personal light is almost spent in sacrificing her energy for others"(379). James knows that both he and his father are in need of Mrs. Ramsay, but as he is growing, he begins to resemble his father as he needs the compassion and sympathy of his mother just like his father. However; James's feelings towards him are just like opposite to those of his mother's.

But his son hated him. He hated him for coming up to them, for stopping and looking down on them; he hated him for interrupting them; he hated him for the exaltation and sublimity of his gestures; for the magnificence of his head; for his exactingness and egotism (for there he stood, commanding them to attend to him) but most of all he hated the twang and twitter of his father's emotion which, vibrating round them, disturbed the perfect simplicity and good sense of his relations with his mother. (Lighthouse 32)

Through James's sentiments, Mr. Ramsay's character can be accessed. Mr. Ramsay is selfish and harsh due to his ongoing anxieties; he is a bighead considering he is always superior to his wife and always wants to be praised about his professional abilities. It is a typical patriarchal attitude, it is just the social norms assign men and women their respective roles and create a hierarchy between them. Though he acts patiently and kindly to the others, he has an inclination to be rude and impatient. As a metaphysician, he is a man of reason and science and thinks that men are burdened with the weight of their work just like Mrs. Ramsay thinks. He represents the rational masculine mind as opposed to him Mrs. Ramsay represents the emotional feminine nature. Woolf does not show him superior to Mrs. Ramsay; actually he is accessed as a superficial character not deep like Mrs. Ramsay. *"He seemed a young man; a man very attractive to women, not burdened, not weighed down with the greatness of his labours and the sorrows of the world."* (Lighthouse, 82) Mrs. Ramsay again sacrifices herself and she thinks that she has to stand by her husband in order to lessen the burden of her husband; she herself has the burden of all women living in 19th century Victorian England. Mr. Ramsay wants to be the centre of the world; he knows that he is in need of her. Mr. Ramsay wants to be remembered in future generations, just like Shakespeare. He is a very insecure intellectual. He suffers from an acute sense of his own mortality and insignificance. Mr. Ramsay's struggle between intellectual achievements and domesticity also shows how concern Mr. Ramsay is about his books and his name being remembered. Mr. Ramsay loves his family, but Mr. Tansley believes that if Mr. Ramsay hadn't got married he would have written better books. *"If Shakespeare had never existed, he asked, would the world have differed much from what it is today? Does the progress of civilization belong to men? Is the lot of the average human being better now than in the time of Pharaohs?"* (Woolf 36) He compares himself with Shakespeare and he knows that he will never be as valued as Shakespeare, which only makes him more insecure. Mrs. Ramsay subordinates herself to her husband because she suspects her husband's intellectual abilities though she hasn't got the ability to understand what he does. Mr. Ramsay needs to feel that he is at the centre of the world and it is only possible through the praise and appreciation of Mrs. Ramsay.

When it comes to the marriage of Mr. Ramsay and Mrs. Ramsay, seemingly they have an ordinary marriage, but they both have some reservations about

their own selves. Mrs. Ramsay can't tell her love overtly to Mr. Ramsay though she knows that he really needs this revelation;:

He wanted something—wanted the thing she always found it so difficult to give him; wanted her to tell him that she loved him. And that, no, she could not do. He found talking so much easier than she did. He could say things—she never could. So naturally it was always he that said the things, and then for some reason he would mind this suddenly, and would reproach her. A heartless woman he called her; she never told him that she loved him. (99)

Mr. Ramsay wants his wife to tell him that she loves him. Therefore; he is not the oppressive patriarchal element after all. Mrs. Ramsay is not such a woman who can tell these pronouncements and this is the first thing that she rejects throughout her life. Though she is supposed to be full of love, she does not really love him, she is only under guard in the atmosphere of a family, and there is no just life for a woman outside a family. Her rejection is a revolt against the male-dominated society of Victorian England. Mrs. Ramsay is also disturbed when her husband recites sentimental poems to her but instead of showing her disturbance, “she is bowed and receives homage.”(Lighthouse, 90) Though the couples seem to appreciate each other, actually they don't. “He wanted sympathy. He was a failure.” (32) She thinks that he is always in need of her and actually he is, so she submits herself to her husband. Mrs. Ramsay is the figure that has the candidness and benignity to comfort everybody except her own self. While Mrs. Ramsay tries to be flawlessly wonderful, Mr. Ramsay can't fulfil the role of perfect father and husband. “She did not like, even for a second, to feel finer than her husband; and further, could not bear not being entirely sure, when she spoke to him, of the truth of what she said that Mr. Ramsay is not a failure.”(Lighthouse, 34) Woolf emphasizes that Mrs. Ramsay doesn't find comfort and self-satisfaction from anything throughout the novel, but she is always here to satisfy all the needs of her husband. “For her own self-satisfaction was it that she wished so instinctively to help, to give, that people might say of her, “O Mrs Ramsay! dear Mrs Ramsay... Mrs Ramsay, of course!” and need her and send for her and admire her?” Woolf here suggests that she is the one who is the giver, who always sacrifices

herself to everybody in the novel, irrespective of her own self, though she is always praised by the others in the novel. For instance; Mr. Bankes tells that “he respects her, she is not vain; she is entirely impersonal, she is finer than Mr. Ramsay; she is the finest human being that he knows.” However; she feels herself insufficient despite such overt reverence and dependence upon her throughout the novel. The tale that Mrs. Ramsay reads to is of great importance to the flow of the novel as, consciously or unconsciously, has a connection with her as she feels herself bad considering the wife of the fisherman in the novel. In this tale there is a fisherman and his wife: one day the fisherman finds a flounder who enchants him with being a prince in return for letting her stay alive. The fisherman releases the flounder, but when he returns home and tells the story to his wife, she forces him to go back, when he dies he finds the fish and it grants his wife’s request to have cottage. However the wife becomes greedy in time, she wants a palace, she wants to be the king, the emperor, the pope and at last God. Though the tale is chosen on purpose by Woolf, Mrs. Ramsay knows that she can’t go any further; she tells that she wants to read but she has no time to do so. The story and the novel are contradictory in that “*the tale’s punishment of a power-hungry woman transforms her “successful creation” (Lighthouse 33) into a fear of feeling or even appearing finer than her husband, “for then people said he depended on her.”(34).The tale reminds her to put things “right”: “they must know that of the two he was infinitely the more important, and what she gave the world, in comparison with what he gave, negligible”(33).* Mrs. Ramsay thinks that she is always inferior to Mr. Ramsay, no matter what she does she can’t be compared to Mr. Ramsay. As Daugherty says “*Ironically her fear of appearing superior to her husband is groundless, the men in the novel certainly assume his contribution is more important than hers, and in fact, think she hinders Mr. Ramsay’s career.*” Mrs. Ramsay can’t go any further, she can’t be better than what she is but she is not a stupid woman as Mr. Ramsay supposes. Actually he thinks that she is stupid like all the other women and her stupidity makes her beautiful. However; Lily makes a comment about her beauty, “Beauty 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 flesh, the pallor, some sight or shadow, which made the face unrecognizable ... It was simpler to smooth that all out under the cover of beauty. (148) For Lily, beauty is not everything; rather the thing under that beauty is of great

importance and Lily understands that Mrs. Ramsay's inner side has much to say: Lily is the voice of Mrs. Ramsay in the novel. Mr. Ramsay has great ambitions, he wants to be genius, and he wants to reach the letter Z, to be like Shakespeare. He wants to be assured that he lives in the heart of life. His need of sympathy renders him reliant on his wife's femininity. While both individuals seem to support one another, they have distinct approaches towards doing everyday life tasks. Mrs. Ramsay appears subordinate, because a practical approach could go against Mr. Ramsay's principles; Mrs. Ramsay is the more stable individual in their relationship. Ultimately; however, both individuals rely on one another for support and comfort.

Mrs. Ramsay is the most important figure and she doesn't lose her importance and effect even after her death. The family's going to the lighthouse at the end of the novel shows the improvement of Mr. Ramsay's personality and her dominant refinement at that house. Mr. Ramsay, with his visit to the lighthouse, tries to fulfil the wish of his wife and to create secure and lasting bonds with his children and which is the sign of Mrs. Ramsay's dominance even when she is not there anymore. Going to the lighthouse is a journey to Mrs. Ramsay herself as she is the glowing light of the novel. According to Stewart in his 'Light in To the Lighthouse', Mrs. Ramsay's function is akin to that of the Lighthouse beam. At her "festival" dinner, she undertakes "the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating" (70) orders the candles lit (149) "her face was all lit up-without looking young, she looked radiant" (83) (Stewart 383). Although Mrs. Ramsay appears to be the idealized version of a woman, being the angel, mother and light of the house, through her inner monologue it is seen inwardly that she questions gender roles, but she is aware that she can't take any action. She still wants Lily and her daughters to marry and to become mothers.

Mrs. Ramsay is living in a patriarchally controlled world, but Lily is the one who helps to improve the situation of women by refusing the traditional beliefs related to gender roles and her painting is a proof for that. The subtle difference between two women is given clearly by Annette Kolodny in her "Dancing through the Minefield"; "others, after us, may literally dance through the minefield" (Kolodny 2165). If women can prove their

significance and importance in the society just like Lily who breaks the gender chains with her painting, women can dance through the minefield, rather than Mrs. Ramsay who always fights in that minefield. Lily is the representative of hope for a new woman, while Mrs. Ramsay represents the traditional Victorian woman. Lily who “wants to die out of one shape into another”(Lilienfeld 354) is unable to make sacrifices like Mrs. Ramsay though she “wants to be the life in Mrs. Ramsay’s center”(354). Thinking that she is holy like the Virgin Mary and proving it with her painting of Mrs. Ramsay and her son, she “wishes to penetrate its holy place.”(354). As Lily is in pursuit of her own wishes and interests and selfish, unlike Mrs. Ramsay, she wants to be Mrs. Ramsay, she desires “her body to mingle with that of Mrs. Ramsay.”(354) She wants to be “this woman’s central core, Lily would become Mrs. Ramsay, replacing and killing her.”(354). Though Mrs. Ramsay is dead when Lily paints the last stroke, she recreates her and names it as her own vision which gives a sense of recovery from the malign disease called patriarchy. “*Mrs. Ramsay’s knees would serve as the doorways to the cave of birth and death for each woman.*”(Lilienfeld 354) Though Mrs. Ramsay is dead physically, she is there for the birth of new woman and her soul implores for a livable world with males and females, as Woolf suggests in her *A Room of One’s Own* “life is for both sexes” (41) and there is country and world for both of them.

In conclusion, when the family reaches the lighthouse, Mrs. Ramsay achieves her vision, and that is a proof for her dominant presence which gains an everlasting quality. Her dominance is everywhere in her relationship with her husband, with her guests, with Lily, she is just like Zeus, the God of storm and lightning, who says the last word about the weather and she is certainly the one who decides on the atmosphere and the viewpoint of the novel. She serves as a giving mother figure for all the characters in the novel and she is worshipped for being just like the great mother of all like Gaia. When Lily succeeds Mrs. Ramsay’s power and when Mrs. Ramsay’s power has come back to the Ramsays, the chaotic atmosphere turns into the atmosphere of reconciliation, the atmosphere which Mrs. Ramsay embodies and inspires in others throughout her life in a selfless manner. After her death Lily finishes her painting and her last stroke is the birth of a new woman, Lily paints Mrs. Ramsay in order to make her permanent but only in paintings just like she lives throughout her

life. She lives the life of her husband, her children and even her guests but not her own life. She admires some assets of Lily without being noticed, she accepts that she has ruined her life saying “*what have I done with my life?*” (125). She even wants to curtail Lily’s independence by attempting to marry her off to William. Her death is the death of the traditional roles of the women and the birth for new women with their new artistic, usual and eccentric viewpoint. Lily is the one who will hold the flag as a successor of Mrs. Ramsay. Woolf and her artist Lily kill the angel and free the mother by giving a sense of hope as there is recovery from a bad illness called patriarchy both for the family and for the whole generation.

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