



A Feminist Approach to Masculinity and Femininity: Self-Vanity and Self-Confirmation in Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse*

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Abstract

This paper employs a descriptive-analytical approach and provides a feminist critical analysis of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. It investigates the social mores and racial characteristics of Western civilization especially in British society. By concentrating on gender roles and societal norms, it also explores the social interactions between men and women in British culture. Even though the story takes place between two waves of feminism, various discrepancies, and misunderstandings have been identified between men and women as self-improvement. Both look at the socioeconomic position of women from a feminist standpoint. *To the Lighthouse* depicts a patriarchal Western civilization generally and British specially that harbors several discriminatory attitudes against women. However, each wave of feminism represents a certain perspective about men's dominance over women suffrage. Therefore, women suffer from male hegemonies and oppression and subordination, which is backed by societal cultural standards, particularly in British cultures. The social structures and cultural norms in Western communities equally repress the rebellious women against the injustice and enslavement of a male-dominated society. One of the societal issues that both genders experience into the *Lighthouse* is class strife. Virginia Woolf made a significant contribution to modernizing English literature. During that period, Woolf backed the feminist cause and invented the stream-of-consciousness writing approach to deal with people inner feeling. Finally, this study concludes that the stereotyped representations of the superior male and inferior woman in the novel are the same as those seen in British societies.

Keywords: Western Civilization, Feminist Perspective, Self-vanity, Self-confirmation, *To The Lighthouse*.

Introduction

On January 26, 1882, Virginia Woolf was born in London. She came from a distinguished literary family. However, her father, Leslie Stephen is a well-known literary critic who served as editor of both the *Cornhill* magazine and the *Dictionary of national biography*. In addition, she had authored a lot of philosophical, biographical, and critical writings. However, she has close friends with literary figures and prominent academics and she was raised in a family that another of its successors aptly referred to as the intellectual aristocracy and that Virginia Woolf likened to the Ramsey in her novel *The Lighthouse* because of the older and younger boys and girls.

The members of these families generally belonged to the upper echelons of the middle class, and they stood out for their academic prowess and sense of moral duty which caused them to become



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socially exclusive. Virginia Woolf was only indirectly impacted by the social environment of her day since she actively distanced herself from it. In both her novels and her diary, she is completely at ease with young people of both genders. (Sarkar, 2022)

The Lighthouse by Virginia Woolf is one of her greatest works and it is divided into three important parts. However, the first part of the novel is The Window which is set at a mansion on the Hebridean Isle of Skye, where beautiful Mrs. Ramsay and her philosophical husband with their eight children, and other invited visitors spend their summers before World War I. The longest of the novel's three sections, which is also the shortest in representations lasts a summer afternoon and a lengthy night time. The second part of the novel is the passage of time which covers ten years in a fraction of its pages and it is what constitutes the majority of the second half of the novel while charting what happens to the home after Ramsay stops visiting. The last part of the novel is The Lighthouse, which is significantly longer than this middle part and considers the final step of Ramsey's family which focuses only on the mornings that the remaining members of the old family spend at home.

In addition, Feminism theory is a social philosophy or movement to improve the position of women and defend their legal rights. Charles Fourier coined the term feminism in 1837, and it has been a significant social, economic, and aesthetic revolution in contemporary times. However, there have been three waves of feminism throughout history, with Virginia Woolf being a notable member of the First Feminism Wave at the end of its days. The Second Feminism Wave was established in the 1960s to combat patriarchy by promoting women's legal and social equality. Additionally, the Third Feminism Wave emerged in the 1990s as a continuation of the second wave (Eyre, 2015).

1.1 Research Questions

To conduct the study, the following questions are discussed:

- 1) How has the concept of masculinity as self-vanity been illustrated in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*?
- 2) How has the concept of femininity as self-confirmation been illustrated in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*?

1.2 Significance of the Study

Two genders' contrary perspectives give us a better understanding of how male behaviors can bring negative thoughts or beliefs toward the feminist gender as a whole. Two main characters represent Woolf's opposing ideas or beliefs as a feminist writer toward masculinity and femininity. The inequality between two genders creates a kind of monologue, and my goal as a researcher is to show the reader those different points of view and different ideas about how those two genders behave toward each other and what are the results behind them. The significance of this study is to provide the reader with a better understanding of the lack of communication between males and females in some special consequences, as well as how we can treat the other gender with respect and equality.

1.3 Methodology



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In this part, Firstly, I covered a general overview of feminist history. However, I contended that the feminist movement had historically evolved via several waves and from a variety of perspectives on women's rights. Depending on how powerful a certain era was at the time, each wave delivers a particular notion. Additionally, those three waves of feminism have had a significant impact on women's lives by developing across a variety of number types and independent variables. Based on data collection which was collected from several Websites and analysed them based on what I have investigated.

1.3.1 Overview: Feminist History

In numerous academic fields, such as anthropology, sociology, communication, psychoanalysis, politics, home economics, literature, and philosophy, feminism is a theory that investigates gender inequalities as well as women's social roles, experiences, interests, principles, and household responsibilities. Men and women should be on an equal footing according to feminist strategies in all spheres of political, economic, and social life. A patriarchal social structure is created and maintained by men. However, under patriarchy, men have the majority of the authority, prevail, and completely regulate social life. For instance, in a traditional family, the ladies serve as the family's central figure and the father figure has complete power over the kids. As a result, the social order is immediately reflected in this circumstance and is shaped by the idea of male superiority. Although the law codifies equal rights, in reality, society is not equal due to the patriarchal system (Zembar, 2017 p.4).

According to Abrams's book, Western civilization is fundamentally patriarchal, which refers to how it is run and arranged in a way that places males over women in all spheres of culture. The feminine has come to be seen as passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional, and traditional, according to Simone de Beauvoir, who also asserted that one does not become a woman; rather, one becomes a man (Abrams et al., 2009 p111). However, the masculine gender has grown to be seen as energetic, dominant, adventurous, logical, and creative. The male has come to be identified as aggressive, intellectual, and creative as a result of this cultural process, whereas the feminine has become passive, acquiescent, emotional, and traditional. It is frequently argued that the conventional classifications and standards for evaluating and assessing literary works are permeated with masculine presumptions, interests, and methods of reasoning, leading to a tacit but pronounced gender bias in the standard selection and rankings, the dominant canon, and the critical treatments of literary works (Abrams et al., 2009)

According to Bressler's book analyzing women's situation, the origins of discrimination against women throughout history, according to feminist critique, have long been present in Western society. The Greeks, for instance, encouraged gender inequality by saying that men were superior to women and vice versa. Other philosophers and scientists continue to discriminate against women in the centuries that follow (Bressler, 2007 p.147).

1.4 Types of Feminism

1.4.1 The First Wave (1830s–early 1900s)

In Western nations, the first wave of feminism starts in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Its primary goal is to provide women more chances which emphasizes attaining women's suffrage (Rampton, 2015). It brought both positive and negative developments. Additionally, global activists are brought together for a shared cause, and the movement moves forward with ease thanks to a



rigorous framework. In addition, it concentrates heavily on the problems of white women especially ignoring the predicament of black women and being of the Western middle class. The United States Constitution's 15th amendment, which would have granted African males the ability to vote before them, is opposed by certain campaigners (Rampton, 2015)

According to Singh (2008), women began to recognize in the end that they needed political power including the ability to vote in the late 19th and early 20th centuries if they were to effect change in society. Their political agenda grew to include topics related to sexuality, reproduction, and the economy. This movement explains feminist action in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the United Kingdom. In contrast to the notions of marriage and husbands as the legal owners of married women and their children, the original focus was on establishing equal contracts and property rights for women. However, when the nineteenth century came to an end, the work's primary focus shifted to political power, notably women's suffrage. (Singh, 2008). 'Therefore, we have considered the first wave as the beginning of women's principles. Those principles are extended through different rules in the second wave'

1.4.2 The Second Wave (1960's- early 1980s)

The second wave of feminism, which spanned the decades from the 1960s to the 1980s, aimed to dismantle gender stereotypes and cultural inequities and achieve women's equality in society. Its main objective is to increase minority groups' self-consciousness. (Jain, 2020)

According to Nicholson (2015), It was highly helpful for feminists to start referring to their movement as the second wave of feminism in the late 1960s. It was helpful because it served as a reminder that the women's rights and women's liberation movements, which were then in full swing, had a lengthy history and were not historical outliers. American history was rewritten by feminists in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Nicholson, 2015 p.1).

Newman (2011) suggested that since its start, second-wave feminism has been a thriving and developing discipline. It emerged with other social and political movements in the 1960s and 1970s. Early research examined the connections between the nineteenth-century abolitionist, suffrage, and temperance movements and the twentieth-century civil rights and women's liberation movements, or what historians now refer to as first and second-wave feminism, with a large emphasis on the rights struggles of white women. Lesbians, women of color, and women from working-class backgrounds have all had their contributions immediately disputed, illustrating how various groups of women have approached feminism in different ways. (Newman, 2011). 'In the second wave, various equal rights have appeared to support women to live as an independent woman'

1.4.3 The Third Wave (1990's – early 2000's)

'Third-wave feminism was distinct from prior waves because it catered to underprivileged, non-stereotypical women from the developing world'. According to Yahya, it aims to increase the socioeconomic prospects for women while also recognizing variety, individual liberty, inclusivity, and a change away from binary politics toward an acceptance of difference. The age divides and the virility of contemporary technology allowed women to discuss feminism from a wider angle than their foremothers (Yahya, 2021 p.138). By bearing in mind the lives of real women who struggled with challenges at work and their socioeconomic independence, third-wavers attempted to reveal a fresh face of feminism. There are many different strands of this wave as a result of the explosion of research and development of feminist activities (Yahya et al., 2021)



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'However, the feminists of this wave have evolved, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that their subject matter has changed, and they now try to ignore the most fundamental hypotheses as much as possible'. According to Vardhan, they also believe that all other sources of oppression against women have been eliminated and cannot be revived. Additionally, they emphasize the third wave's ignorance of its forerunners, notably the radical branch of the second wave, whose actions represent a substantial portion of the third wave's objective (Vardhan, 2017 p. 127).

1.5 Data Analysis

As opposed to portraying women in Western society especially in British societies as submissive to male dominance and worthless, Virginia Woolf instead portrayed women as an ideal personality that everyone relies on in her fictional novel *To the Lighthouse*, dismantling the value of women being independent in their principles and directions. As a feminist writer, Woolf depicted in her novel certain powerful, domineering males who use women as a method of gratifying their needs. She perceives the masculine gender, as the source of injustice and imbalance. As a feminist writer, she creates such dominating characters based on her mental pain as a woman that suffered from men's dominance during her life. Through a few of the female characters in the novel, she represented the feminine true principles and values to protect women against any arrogant ideas.

In addition, it's important to acknowledge the historical oppression that the feminist community has endured over time and strive toward healing and resolution. To build a more neutral and impartial society for everyone, the reconstruction of feminist identity in Western culture generally necessitates a constant and supporting effort to protect the values of women against male radicalism. All of the aforementioned issues are based on descriptive-analytical techniques to analyze the issues between the genders and explain them in a novel as a new notion. Finally, this work employs a descriptive-analytical method..

1.6 Masculinity

The physical body's discourse is as important to masculinity as the physical body itself. In hegemonic masculinity, the masculine body is frequently compared with machines. When discussing sexual functions or physiological structure, machine-like terms are used to allude to body processes. When explaining sexual behavior, men employ terms comparable to those used to describe physical labor using tools. Digging and plowing are symbolic words for sexual encounters with females. The idioms are used to allude to forceful and physical behavior while referring to sexual intercourse. In talks with their peers, particularly other males, men utilize this language to reaffirm their successes in achieving opposite-sex criteria of masculinity (Kularski, 2011. p.9) .

1.6.1 Self-Vanity in Masculine Dominance

Males, on the other hand, stand for supremacy that marginalizes the position of women in society. The head of the hierarchy and the person in charge of the home, Mr. Ramsay is a typical Victorian guy. He is a key character in the book and stands in for the greater authority that, according to feminist viewpoints, casts women in a position of inferiority. Despite being intelligent and well-educated, Mr. Ramsay exhibits certain signs of megalomania. Little James, who wants to see the lighthouse, is treated cruelly by him. he" is lean as a knife narrow as the blade of one" (Woolf, 2001 p.4). He may be nasty and often gets angry. He may have been brusque and insolent, for instance, when Carmichael ordered another dish at the dinner party. On the other hand, he has a high social



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standing and is well-respected in his neighborhood. Women, however, do not have the same standing in society. Not only is Mr. Ramsay unhappy with his wife's compassion, but also that of all the females in his immediate vicinity. In the aforementioned quotation, the metaphor of the keen blade refers to Mr. Ramsay's insanity in achieving grandeur to loathe the female gender. He came out as a snarky and haughty intellectual character in the narrative because of the way he interacted with the people. As we defined the liberal type in the third chapter, his personality was uneven and characterized by the nature of awareness as a dominating liberal personality marked by arrogance. Feminist philosophy holds that when the ego is magnified, selfishness can result. As a result, Mr. Ramsay exhibits self-glorification and pride in himself, even to the detriment of his family, which led to his disordered personality. Woolf presents Mr. Ramsay by writing:

And then, and then ...this was one of those moments when an enormous need urged him, without being conscious what it was, to approach any women, to force them, he did not care how, his need was so great, to give him what he wanted: sympathy” (Woolf, 2001 p147).

A woman willing to empathize with a dictatorial, insensitive man is of no interest to him. Additionally, because he conforms to social norms, he unconsciously seeks compassion, making it a natural desire for him. Mr. Ramsay is an example of a Victorian gentleman who disregards others' feelings and behavior when they are enraged. Virginia Woolf, a writer, was annoyed by the hate, insincerity, and unfairness she encountered in her society for her individuality and her support of feminism, which led her to reject all males. Because feminist author Virginia Woolf detested men, she was forced to create this book in a way that creatively embodied the struggle between the sexes, favoring female characters like Mrs. Ramsay and Laila Briscoe. Where she emphasizes that since males are not mainly interested in her presence, they do not deserve all that excessive enthusiasm from women. She makes the point that Mr. Ramsay was requesting love not out of a desire for it but rather out of an egotistical need to make his wife suffer his wishes and inequities. In the eighteenth century, feminist ideology argued for and clarified this. He is shown to be conceited when he watches his wife reading a book in the morning and thinks:

Go on reading ..., and exaggerated her ignorance, her simplicity, for he liked to think. She was not clever, not book-learned at all. He wondered if she understood what she was reading. Probably not, he thought. She was astonishingly beautiful. (Woolf, 2001 p120)

Despite engaging in an intellectual pastime, she is not an adept reader; her spouse dismisses her abilities and places more importance on her outward beauty. Mr. Ramsay ignores and suppresses Mrs. Ramsay's voice. He rejects her suggestions for no apparent reason. The reader surmises that Mrs. Ramsay is aware of her looks even if she doesn't express it directly since it only has an impact on Mr. Ramsay's thoughts. This does not necessarily imply that Mrs. Ramsay is concealing her understanding of the sonnet behind a pretense of beauty, but it is one interpretation that is certainly conceivable. She may be aware of her attractiveness and how it affects other characters, the reader can presume. Everyone in the story is aware of Mrs. Ramsay's dominant personality, which serves as a link between her dominant and repressed levels of consciousness. Similar to how the ladies and girls in the novels are helpfully divided into generations, so are the men and boys.



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Virginia Woolf says, “he stood over her, and looked down at her” (Woolf, 2001 p164) Mrs. Ramsay feels a disturbance in her breast as a result of this activity. Mr. Ramsay sends a message of authority and superiority, particularly to his wife, through the way he acts and behaves toward others. Mr. Ramsay's views and stances in the lighthouse are examples of patriarchal power plays because he forces the mother and kids to adhere to him and carry out his wishes without giving them a chance to voice their ideas. This dominance has had a significant impact on Western civilization. Following is how Woolf explains the results of one of these circumstances: His kid detested him, but the feminist side of the story had the most animosity for him. James despised his father for stopping and looking down on them, for interrupting them, and on the other hand, for elevating and sublime his movements, for the greatness of his head, and his stern and selfish motives. However, James despised his father's emotions the most because they resounded around them and disturbed their perfect simplicity. Additionally, he felt comfortable about his relationship with his mother. The irritation shown by Virginia Wall in the Mr. Ramsay quotation above can be attributed to the fact that Virginia Wall experienced disparaging looks in her community and compared her mother to Mr. Ramsay in the book. However, Mr. Ramsay approaches the mother and boy first, interrupting their private study time. He exalts himself, assumes domineering stances, brags about his knowledge, makes commanding demands, and makes attention-grabbing appeals. James laments the way his father's emotions, which are buzzing all around them, impair his mother's and his relationship's immaculate simplicity and good sense. This may potentially be an indication of his Oedipus complex, but it also conveys the oppressive sentiments his father's dominant demeanor and body language engender. According to what Brown suggested, we might look at Virginia Woolf's response to his worry that radical feminist philosophy attacks males. For natural greed and aggression. He has suggested that radical femininity is abandoning males as they increasingly demonstrate a readiness to adopt feminist principles by concentrating on male violence. (Brown et al, 2019. p4) Mr. Ramsey from the hand criticizes women for their lack of mental perspectives by saying:

“The extraordinary irrationality of her remark, the folly of women’s minds enraged him...she flew in the face of facts, made his children hope what was entirely out of the question, in effect, told lies” (Woolf, 2001. p 31).

1.7 Femininity

Bakker presented an analysis that today in the present time, the term femininity describes a circumstance in which a woman emerges in a nuclear or extended society. Many thinkers saw women as always second only to men. Studies on the tension between male and female sexual identities in the collection and hunting of civilizations can be found in the literature (Bakker et al, 2018). ‘According to what I've read, the novel's state and its portrayal of how the female character's interactions and evolution modify her gender and inner feelings are its most crucial elements. The characters' interactions with one another and their antagonism to one another also have an impact. The key female characters talk in gendered words to support their ideals or defend their ideas, yet all of the principal characters have opposing points of view. Lily Briscoe depicts herself as a strong woman who opposes Mrs. Ramsay's inconsistent femininity and demonstrates her independence, in



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contrast to Mrs. Ramsay's advice to other women to follow the conventional route. When the reader is exposed to a range of opinions and views, gender relations become more obvious.

1.7.1 Self-Confirmation in Feminine Principles

The Lighthouse's description of an independent English woman appears to have been influenced by British society. The woman's function is limited to household duties according to the institutions of English society. Mrs. Ramsay embodies the ideal English woman of the early 20th century, who was probably modeled after the conventional Victorian woman. However, to distinguish herself as a remarkable lady, Mrs. Ramsay is a dedicated and faithful wife to her husband and a loving mother who is exclusively concerned with her children's well-being. Family is a significant source of happiness for Mrs. Ramsay to show her passion and independency against other characters. She yells: "Poor man! who had no wife no children" (Woolf, 2001.p.83). She is a gifted homemaker who knits, cooks delectable meals, and takes good care of guests to highlight her independent personality. Women were raised with the expectation that they would take care of the home, and their ultimate goal was to marry and have children to care for. According to Mrs. Ramsay, happiness cannot be attained apart from a family. Her viewpoint is impacted by the cultural context of her upbringing. She is an elderly woman who has used concepts from Victorian culture to buttress her claims within her family, especially about the other masculine gender. At the start of the 20th century, the feminist movement was inspired to stand up for women because she saw the traditional woman as unappreciated, unequal, and without value. She saw herself as the ideal woman on whom everyone relied to assert her independence against men.

Therefore, in the passage above, she denigrates males by asserting that they are worthless without women and that they cannot survive on this planet without them. This tactic is one of the most effective ones used by the feminist movement to support women's rights. Mrs. Ramsay eventually exaggerates her claim that she is a lady with control over all males as a result of her conventional viewpoint. We might infer from the aforementioned quotation that Virginia Woolf was motivated to write about this struggle since she secretly hated males and believed that they were nothing without women. The defence of her identity as a member of the male gender may be seen in Charles Tansley's impressions of her, as he says:

"It flattered him; snubbed as he had been soothed him that Mrs. Ramsay should tell him this". Charles Tansley revived. Insinuating, too, as she did the greatness of man's intellect, even in its decay, the subjection of all wives..." (Woolf, 2001. p 10).

It is important to note that Tansley's character in the aforementioned quotation expresses her dislike of Mrs. Ramsay's emotions not because he lacks the desire for such feelings but rather to mock all women for their stupid attachments. Whatever Mrs. Ramsay's opinion, the outcome of this matter is a calm young man who, as a result of her remarks, may restore his superior masculinity. This reaction in someone else's head helps to tame feminine qualities and validate her capacity to elevate her standards above those of men. Even if they are necessary, Mrs. Ramsay's statements just serve to further her inferiority in the eyes of men since at the time, feminist ideas didn't mean anything. Women aspired to change the course of their lives toward independence after the feminist movement began, and Mrs. Ramsey did just that. Virginia Woolf's writings made the lust of the male element to amass passion to achieve their dominant position over women, particularly prominent. Mrs. Ramsay has always seen herself as a beacon of hope for the other characters, reaffirming her status as an ideal woman deserving of all the rights and obligations of the male side. She believes



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that showing feelings of affection to the male characters is not a sign of weakness but rather a way to make an assertion and satisfy her psychological whims.

Similarly, femininity appears to be useless in another reaction to her exhibited thoughts. Mr. Ramsay replies to Mrs. Ramsay's assertions that it might be "fine tomorrow" (Woolf, 2001. p 15) in a manner that denigrates and insults all women. However, Male control doesn't extend beyond the physical arrogance of the other gender but also stays above the mental aspects and perspectives of women.

Mrs. Ramsay is also conscious of her capacity to soothe men, according to Woolf "she had the whole of the other sex under her protection; for reasons she could not explain" (Woolf, 2001. p 6). She perpetuates rewarding him with shelter and praise for standing up for her daring thoughts as an independent woman because of her outdated notions about the gender role of men. This superstructure of her awareness, which suppresses the thoughts and renders them less harmful, covertly supports conventional femininity and upholds the belief that women are less than capable. Virginia Woolf's admiration for Mrs. Ramsey's character stemmed from an underlying longing she had as a woman who had experienced all kinds of tyranny and injustice; this is what the feminist school of thought referred to as the topic of the self. Despite all of this, she created this book to reflect society's expectations of female characters, such as Mrs. Ramsay, in the story. She rejected society's desire to battle against the female gender in the practice of art.

Every character was ruled by their conventional aspirations. Mrs. Ramsay was the perfect lady because of the conventional viewpoint that she has, which allowed her to manipulate the other characters' behavior either by emotion or style. We may consider Mrs. Ramsay as an illustration of the liberal lady that the first wave of feminism promoted. Virginia Woolf endorsed the view that conventional women had a significant part in creating the independence of the female gender in the upcoming ages that followed since this set the way for numerous revolutions that came to defend women, as can be seen from the aforementioned quotation. Therefore, the character of Mrs. Ramsay from the aforementioned argument, who all the other characters flocked around and relied on as a lady carrying a traditional lineage of sentiments for her independence, was the soul of this novel. The responsibilities of being a wife and mother have now limited Mrs. Ramsay's ability to think in certain ways:

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. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others. (Woolf, 2001.p 62)

She continues to describe that "Not as oneself did one find rest ever, in her experience...but as a wedge of darkness. Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir..." (Woolf, 2001. p 63). She creates a universe free of societal norms where her essence may be expressed in its most natural state without the need for forced performance or concealment, and she seems to distance herself from all customs as a strong, independent idealized woman.. As a result of her autonomous actions with her husband, in which she pretended to submit to him just to uphold her feminist views,



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she claimed that sometimes the sensation of opposing something may be harsh and even a little violent. According to the quotes above, Mrs. Ramsay isolates herself on the inside to become an autonomous lady free from male meddling. On the other hand, Virginia Woolf's emotions and concerns which she personified in this regard, allow us to describe this feminist psychological seclusion. She wants the reader to see the oneness that she had to live with herself to become independent in Western culture.

Mrs. Ramsay thinks Mr. Ramsay's conceit of grandeur has degenerated into sad levels. Because of her husband's self-awareness, Mrs. Ramsay frequently avoided him to avoid conflict. Men always believe that they have the power in their kingdom to force their authority over the other gender, according to the feminist movement's evidence, and they are never providers. However, Mrs. Ramsay constantly feeds Mr. Ramsay, treating him like a baby, thus her empathy for him is insufficient. when "filled with her words, like a child who drops off satisfied, he said at last, looking at her with humble gratitude" (Woolf, 2001. p 38) The function of a husband and wife is diminished in comparison to a mother and her kid. Mrs. Ramsay never goes against what her husband commands. Because of this, he starts to rely on her to make him feel important and to increase his sense of stupidity.

However, Mrs. Ramsay chose the path of passion to demonstrate to her husband that she is an ideal lady with traditional values, in contrast to her husband who was adoring his arrogance and adoring his phony passion just to appease his whims. Mrs. Ramsay thinks that her husband is smarter than she is. She believes that he is more important than her and she "must know that of the two he was infinitely more important, and what she gave the world, in comparison with what he gave, negligible" (Woolf, 2001. p 39) She still feels her life achievements are inferior to those of her spouse despite raising eight children. Despite all of his criticism, she still sees herself as a fairly conventional Victorian woman. Mrs. Ramsay portrays a Victorian housewife while crocheting stockings. A traditional example of Victorian society is knitting. Victorian ladies spent most of their time doing their coursework, knitting, singing, painting, and playing musical instruments in a patriarchal environment. In other professions, they were unable to compete with males.

Because of their fear of no longer fitting into their society's expectations, or, as we may say because of male supremacy and authority, women were not sufficiently encouraged to compose literary works. A lady is scared of losing her femininity; thus, she can't let go of the pen's needle. Women have equal physical attributes, but their mental faculties are less developed. Women are not allowed to declare their choice of writing as a career. Because males cognitively favoured less intelligent women, they were not expected to demonstrate their intelligence. Because of her dread of her husband's domination and power over her, Mrs. Ramsay can perform her duties with efficiency as the model wife. She so repeatedly made a statement about herself by defining herself as a woman. More than ten distinct methods are used to describe Mrs. Ramsay's knitting in the book. such as "she was knitting impatiently" (Woolf, 2001. p 4). "Knitting her reddish-brown hairy stockings" (Woolf, 2001. p 29). "She returned to her knitting again" (Woolf, 2001.p.63).By adopting such action, a metaphor for the traditional role of Victorian women is used. However, Mrs. Ramsay is reluctant to challenge men and demonstrate her knowledge to express her independence as the ideal female. The oppressed lady is Mrs. Ramsay when it comes to marriage and patriarchy. To express themselves and win men back, women in the Victorian era embraced marriage and motherhood as a goal. Kelly claims that the knitting idea may reinterpret an undervalued, typically



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domestic, feminine activity as inspiring and inventive. Additionally, it may support the development of new feminist groups and contribute to the production of alternative masculinities and femininities. To support my analysis, knitting reflects a deliberate political activity are still unclear, though. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in stitch 'n bitch knitting groups, online knitting communities, and interviews with knitters, I explore the potential of knitting as a feminist enterprise. I conclude that knitting has context-specific meaning and that both individual knitters and knitting communities only sometimes engage in feminist politics. (Kelly, 2014)

Lily Briscoe, on the other hand, has a variety of awareness levels that compete with those of the other gender to develop a cohesive essence. She respects Mrs. Ramsay's grace and beauty, but she disagrees with the restrictions placed on women historically. Despite her outstanding creative statement, Charles Tansley's statements on women deter her. Lily eventually develops into the most real and perceptive character in the book as a result of her self-discovery and career decision. Later, at the dinner gathering, Lily is contemplating the femininity that Mrs. Ramsay represents. First, she mutters softly about Mrs. Ramsay's support for Charles Tansley.

“For that was true of Mrs. Ramsay—she pitied men always as if they lacked something—women never as if they had something” (Woolf, 2001. p 84).

Readers are aware that Lily openly rejects this notion. Lily embodies Virginia Woolf's fictional character, a young woman who struggles against sexism to retain her individuality. Lily Briscoe disagrees with Mrs. Ramsay because it interferes with her ability to preserve her independence. In the aforementioned passage, we can see that Mrs. Ramsay exaggerates her fictitious feelings to get social acceptance, but Lily Briscoe fights against men by portraying herself as an ideal woman who defies convention and is contemporary. She was the ideal lady in the narrative because she insisted on equal rights.

However, because she attacked the prevalent conventional patriarchy in the novel, she was made the protagonist in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. Therefore, she provided readers with an opportunity to learn about her inner thoughts and longing for independence. She, therefore, provided female readers hope that they might make changes in their lives and combat hegemony in the actual world. Both representations of the Victorian woman and the new woman were cultural constructs that formed and strengthened a binary opposition. Going back to the topic of relationships with others, Lily contemplates that

“She would never know him. He would never know her. Human relations were all like that, she thought, and the worst (if it had not been for Mr. Bankes) were between men and women. Inevitably these were extremely insincere, she thought” (Woolf, 2001. p 92).

Even if she talked particularly harshly of Charles Tansley, the concept is still crucial. It clearly shows its independence while being dim. It also makes sense in the context of Woolf's aesthetics as a whole. We give the stream of consciousness that suppressed tales offer so much attention to the interactions between the sexes; but, if none of these elements were to some extent disclosed, one would concur with Lily regarding the falsity of every connection. It is possible to believe that Woolf was not intending to make this argument because her stream-of-consciousness writing style does certainly allow for the melding of tales with reality itself. Mrs. Ramsay's inner darkness is invisible to her husband, but there is still a chance to learn more about Lily's developing soul. Laila was an



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outstanding woman with a superb attitude because of her freedom as a feminist, independent of the rules of a patriarchal society.

Laila did not know Charles Tansley, as evidenced by the aforementioned quote, which indicates that she does not acknowledge men or their laws and does not desire to do so. One of the virtues Virginia Woolf, a feminist writer, championed in her works is this one. That is the woman's independence from men. Lily approaches patriarchy in a different way than Mrs. Ramsay, who portrays women who upheld men's authority and gave them a sense of superiority. When she does not agree with a man's merit, she is against showing pity for him. While showing sympathy for males, especially for a spouse, is the right thing to do, Lily finds it difficult to fulfill her obligations as a female subordinate.

Lily attempts to get away from Mr. Ramsay's demand for pity as well as the patriarchal desire of males who always expect women to fulfill their requests. Additionally, he demands what he wants in a haughty tone and expects her to comply. Mr. Ramsay is persistent in trying to win Lily's understanding, and he stood by her as she painted. Lily was painting when Mr. Ramsay interrupted, demonstrating how Victorian males disliked seeing women enjoy themselves. Instead of squandering this time, they wanted women to take care of them and make them happy.

Tansley and Lily don't get along well, so Lily begs him: "Do take me to the lighthouse with you. I would so love it" (Woolf, 2001. P 85). She only wants to make him seem bad. He was lonely and felt alone. He was aware that she was making fun of him for some reason—she didn't want to accompany him to the lighthouse and hated him. Lily challenges Tansley, who always attempts to discourage her, rather than feeling sorry for him. The latter represents Victorian males who tried to undermine women by forbidding them from spending time on leisure activities. Men do worry that if women become proficient writers and artists, they will no longer be superior to them. Woolf describes the woman's gender as:

a rain of energy, a column of spray, looking at the same time animated and alive as if all her energies were being fused into force, burning and illuminating (quietly though she sat, taking up her stocking again), and into this delicious fecundity, this fountain, and a spray of life, the fatal sterility of the male plunged itself, like a beak of brass, barren and bare. (Woolf, 2001.p 37)

In this quotation, Woolf feminizes creativity by equating it with reproduction. Images of men symbolically raping concurrently set masculinity in opposition to "fatal male sterility". (Woolf, 2001, p. 37) Because being naked and sterile in masculinity inhibits fertile femininity from being pregnant, this is exciting from a sexual standpoint. Similar challenges Lily encounters as a single woman attempting to nurture her creativity have also been discussed. Lily Briscoe, who takes up the task of painting, constantly battles this preconception. Before she can perform the painting assignment, she must first combat the notion that she is doing something that women are not allowed to do. She becomes resentful toward the men, bordering on being slightly aggressive. Virginia Woolf makes fun of men in the aforementioned phrase in two ways. As a result, we frequently observe that males oppose women's innovation, Virginia Woolf explains this in her novel. Lily developed an autonomous and impartial personality as a result of the feminist inventiveness that inspired her behavior. Furthermore, young Lily Briscoe comments on Mr. Ramsay:



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“That man...never gave; that man took. She, on the other hand, would be forced to give. Mrs. Ramsay had given. Giving, giving, giving, she had died – and had left all this” (Woolf, 2001. p 146).

The existence of Mr. Ramsey according to Lily Briscoe's perspective, demonstrates the existence of male tyranny and tyranny in the novel. According to the feminist perspective and principles, men tend to view themselves as kings in their own right and to show little respect for the other gender. He establishes Lily Briscoe's dislike of Mr. Ramsay in the aforementioned remark as a man who is conceited and proud of himself and does not appreciate the other sex because women are always the ones who provide and men get. The fact that Mrs. Ramsay always had to sacrifice to gain her independence and that, although her giving, her husband's domination over her led to her death is another factor in Lily's loathing of Mr. Ramsay. According to Mrs. Lily Briscoe, the aforementioned quotation demonstrates that women tend to offer without expecting anything in return.

1.8 Conclusion

The novel by Virginia Woolf has had a significant impact. It depicts the tale of a conventional Victorian woman and a contemporary woman who are both victims of the smugness of men. Mrs. Ramsay, the house's dutiful angel, will comply with her husband's requests to sanction her independence. In the Victorian era, women's lives were subject to a lot of strain. Woolf so sought to emphasize the idea that women sacrifice themselves and their identities to appease society. In the novel, Mrs. Ramsay's passing stands in for an elderly lady who obediently upheld society's dominant masculine order. By contrast, Lily Briscoe was more than just a housekeeper; instead, her conflict with Charles Tansley or with the masculine cast in the narrative as a whole makes her an autonomous woman. As a consequence, new ideals are created with Lily Briscoe.

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