The representation of Dominance and Submissiveness in

Virginia Woolf’s (1927) To the Lighthouse

La representación de la dominación y la sumisión en

Virginia Woolf’s (1927) To the Lighthouse

Marcia Aravena Erices

marikylie@gmail.com

Universidad de Chile


1 This article is based on the research carried out for the dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA in English Language and Literature from Universidad de Chile. (Este artículo está basado en la investigación llevada a cabo de acuerdo a los requerimientos para obtener el grado de Licenciado en Lengua y Literatura Inglesa de la Universidad de Chile).

2 Licenciado en Lengua y Literatura Inglesa de la Universidad de Chile. Licenciada en Educación y Profesora de Educación Media, con mención en Inglés de la Universidad Andrés Bello.

Resumen

El presente artículo tiene como objetivo dilucidar cuáles son los elementos que hacen aparecer los conceptos de sumisión y dominación de manera aparente en la novela de Virginia Woolf’s To the Lighthouse. La importancia de este tópico se da por el hecho de que Woolf muestra en sus novelas una interesante mezcla de figuras dominantes y otras sumisas de una manera sarcástica, es decir, mostrando una realidad cuando se quiere decir lo contrario.
Las novelas de Woolf, se caracterizan por presentar personajes que representan sumisión y dominación influenciada claramente por el período Post-Victoriano. Sin embargo, ella lo hace tratando de equilibrar estas dos fuerzas, Dominación y Sumisión para criticar el orden establecido o status-quo.

La novela fue analizada a través del enfoque literario de la Nueva crítica y utilizando los antecedentes biográficos y contextuales para complementar el análisis.

Por último, se consideró la influencia del Modernismo en esta presentación aparente de la dicotomía sumisión y dominación ya que unas de las estrategias representativas de Woolf, llamadas, Monólogo Interior y Corriente de la consciencia se caracterizan por transformar la sociedad desde la reconstrucción del individuo más que de la realidad social.

Palabras clave
Dominación, sumisión, período post-victoriano, Modernismo, Teoría Nueva Crítica.

Abstract
This main objective of this article is to elucidate which are the elements that make submission and domination appear to be apparent in Virginia Woolf’s (1927): To the Lighthouse. This topic is relevant because Woolf shows in her novels an interesting mixture of governing and subservient figures in a sarcastic way, that is to say, by saying something when she wants to state the opposite. Woolf’s novels are characterized by presenting submissive and domineering protagonists, due to the Post Victorian period where she created her novels. Nevertheless, there is an attempt to balance these two forces, Dominant and submissive in order to criticize the established order. To the Lighthouse was analyzed based on the literary approach called New criticism along with the study of the pertinent contextual and biographical backgrounds. Finally, it was considered the influence of Modernism on this apparent
presentation of submission and domination dichotomy. The most representative fictional methods used by Woolf, called: Interior monologue and Stream of consciousness, attempts to transform the symbolic order of orthodox society from the inside, which is symptomatic of the general Modernist strategy to change society through the reconstruction of self not system, individual rather than social reality.

Keywords: Domination, Submission, Post- Victorian Period, Modernism, New Criticism.

Introduction
The issue of dominance and submissiveness in Virginia Woolf’s (1927) To The Lighthouse will be the center of this study because of a number of reasons. Virginia Woolf shows an interesting mixture composed of governing and subservient figures in her novels. These first ones are represented mainly by men such as Mr. Ramsay, and the second ones, by women such as Mrs. Ramsay. The creation of this dichotomy is clearly influenced by the Post-Victorian environment in which Woolf grew up and wrote. There is an innovative way to present us these characters because she shows us the reality of dominance and obedience in a sarcastic way, that is, by saying something when she wants to state the opposite.

Virginia Woolf’s novels are characterized by the presence of governing and subservient protagonists. This happens due to the context in which she created her novels, that is, the Post Victorian period. Nevertheless, there is an attempt to balance these two complementary forces, dominant and submissive, in order to criticize the established order. She did it in a subtle way, though; the social conventions at that period prevented her from going any further.

The aim of this essay will be to discover the element that makes dominance and submission to be apparent in the
characters, this key element could be the post-Victorian society or a personal contribution of the author, specifically a modern strategy, to change society from the individual rather than system.

This work will be a contribution in the sense that as a starting hypothesis is that dominant and submissive figures in Woolf’s novels are presented in a non-traditional fashion. Therefore, one of the contributions of exploring these seemingly ascendant and passive representations would be to encourage a more realistic approach to characters, leaving aside stereotypical notions. Another contribution of this study, which lies on the examination of artistic and aesthetic motivations, is related to aesthetic purposes of the author. However, these are treated in an innovative way, not explaining much about their nature with practical language, but using rhetoric and poetic resources. Finally, it is important to relate these dichotomies to Woolf’s Modernism.

As a general objective, I will try to discover why the representation of dominant and submissive figures in the novel is only apparent and what would be the impact of this perceptible representation on characterization and main themes.

Related to this, I will try to elucidate what is the element, Social or Modern strategy, that allows Woolf to present seemingly dominant and submissive characters in To the Lighthouse. In addition, this work aims to identify the importance of Post-Victorian Society in the characterization of male and female figures in the novel.

On the other hand, I will try to discover to what extent Woolf makes an attempt to innovate in the presentation of governing and obedient figures in the novel, and if any of both factors prevails in the novel, that is, Post Victorian Society or individuals.

This objective is related to the idea that “Woolf”s fictional method attempts to transform the symbolic order of orthodox society from the inside, which is symptomatic of
the general Modernist strategy to change society through the reconstruction of self not system, individual rather than social reality”.  

With the purpose of emphasizing the importance of individuals over society, Woolf developed a technique that was called stream of consciousness, which proved useful in order to demonstrate how the action may occur not only in the external world, but in the inner private world. By means of this method, “she would burrow into the characters’ pasts so as to unearth their history. Her characters are then revealed to the reader as split beings that are living in the past and present”. 

The novel will be analyzed based on the literary approach of New Criticism along with the study of the pertinent contextual and biographical backgrounds. I decided to work with these two approaches because the dichotomy of Dominance and submission is something closely related to social reality. Therefore, I cannot leave social and contextual factors aside of the Post-Victorian age. Besides, the text itself provides relevant clues for the analysis, such as symbols, rhetorical devices, and interior monologue, techniques that interact in the process of characterization. The critical advantages of working with New Criticism have to do with the use of rhetorical devices in order to emphasize the literary and poetic texture of the principal episodes in the novel. Secondly, New Criticism employs formalist techniques, that is to say, it examines the relationship among the ideas in the text, and the structures used to communicate them. In spite of finding tension, irony, or paradox, New Critics resolve it by means of unity and coherence of meaning. Actually, they work with patterns of sound, imagery, narrative structure and

---

2 Ibid. p.165-167.
The representation of Dominance and Submissiveness in Virginia Woolf’s (1927) *To the Lighthouse.*

points of view related to close reading, in order to determine the literacy in a self-contained work.

The idea of including social and biographical issues in the analysis of the novel is pertinent since *To the Lighthouse* has been considered an autobiographical piece of writing. According to Hussey, Woolf used her own childhood memories of summer vacations in St. Ives, and drew portraits of her parents, Leslie Stephen and Julia Prinsep Stephen, in the figures of Mr. And Mrs. Ramsay. Moreover, as in Woolf’s family, the Ramsays have eight children: Andrew, Cam, James, Jasper, Nancy, Prue, Roger and Rose Ramsay (Hussey, p. 301).

Regarding the key concepts that will be employed, we have the opposition of Dominance and Submission. They can be defined as a set of behaviours, customs and rituals, relating to the living and acceptance of supremacy of one individual over another in an erotic or lifestyle context. (Wikipedia)

Then, it is pertinent to include the Assimilation of Domination. In accordance with Bourdieu, the passive attitude imposed to women from Cabilea is the same, which nowadays, is imposed to women from the US or Europe. This is based on some imperatives such as: smiling, looking down, accepting the interruptions, etc. Nancy M. Henley shows how women are taught to use the space, to walk, to adopt convenience corporal positions. Femaleness can be summed up in the art of getting smaller; women stay trapped behind an invisible fence that limits the territory of their movements and displacements of their bodies, while men use more space with their bodies, especially in public places (Bourdieu, p. 43). It is important to indicate that in the western society the use of the body is subordinated to the masculine viewpoint.

The constitutive divisions of the social order, and exactly, the social relationships of domination and
exploitation between sexes, are developed in a progressive way, in two kinds of different habits, under the form of opposite and complementary corporal organization which conduct to classify everything in the world and all the practices according to the opposition between masculine and feminine. It corresponds to men, situated in the external fields, of the official, of the public, of the right, of the high, of discontinuity of doing all brief, dangerous, and wonderful acts, as war and homicides. By contrast, women are situated in the internal fields, of the humid, of the bottom, of the curve and continuity. Consequently, all the domestic jobs are related to them, as taking care of children and animals, as the external activities close to water and the green, with milk, with wood, and specially the dirtier, monotonous and humble ones. That is, because of the limited world in which they live, the house, the country, the language, they can become what they are according to the mythical reason, that they are predestined to the under world. (p 45)

The fact that certain dominance is imposed to women gives them particular characteristics attributed to nature, such as astuteness or, more favourable one intuition.

Special form of the peculiar lucidity of the dominated people, the feminine intuition is, in our universe, inseparable of the objective and subjective submission, which force the attention and vigilance to go ahead to the other’s desires and to have a feeling on arguments. Women are more sensitive to the verbal sign, especially tone, than men are; women know how to identify a non-verbal expressed emotion and to elucidate the implied part of a discourse.

Regarding the symbolic violence, the masculine domination has all the conditions for its complete exercise. The pre-eminence universally recognized of men is affirmed in the objectivity of social structures and the productive and reproductive activities. It is based on the sexual division of
productive work and of biological and social reproduction that give men the best part. (p. 47)

There are some structures of domination, which are the product of a historical work of reproduction, in which singular agents take part: men with their physical and symbolic violence, and the institutions of family, Church, School, and State.

The dominated apply to subordinating relationship categories constructed from the prevailing viewpoints; therefore, they appear as naturals. This can lead to a systematic self-despise, for instances, the adherence to a devaluated woman image. (p. 49)

Concerning the Post- Victorian period, it took place between 1900 and 1920, and it is characterized by a sense of breakdown, given by the First World War, and for being a conservative epoch, due to their Victorian ancestors. That is to say, the traditional institutions such as Family, Church, and State, had a great influence on people. For instance, there was a strong repression against any kind of sexual expression, and intercourses were admitted only under the institution of marriage, and mainly for procreation.

An important event during this period was the First World War, which brought a sense of indefensibility. For example, soldiers who participated in that event suffered from shell-shockness, therefore, women had to start with the role of nursering, in order to take care of them. This fact was considered a reinforcement of women’s stereotypes, and a challenging, for the reason that men had to take the position of children, “establishing a role reversal in which women were active and in control, while men were passive and vulnerable”.

It is pertinent to mention the fact that women at that time were extremely repressed in many aspects, because they were placed in their role of mothers and wives, therefore, it

---

3 Childs, Peter. Modernism. p.176.
was almost impossible to see them in other fields, which were managed by men, such as science, art, etc. They were seen as beings who needed to be protected and whose main function was to be at home.

The main references for this research are related to the social and historical construction of maleness and femaleness. The first one is La Dominacion Masculina, by Pierre Bourdieu, in which the topic of male dominance is explained as a social and historical issue. The next one is Historia de la Sexualidad, by Michel Foucalt, in which the topic of social construction of sexuality is developed.

It is necessary to include some bibliography related to Modernism and the novel, and to the sociocultural context, that is the Post-Victorian Period. The texts are: Modernism, by Peter Childs; The novel and the Modern World, by David Daiches; and Civilization and its Discontents, by Sigmund Freud.

In addition, it will be incorporated some texts related to analysis of symbolism and some autobiographical references in To the Lighthouse: the first one is The Symbolism of Virginia Woolf, by N.C. Thakur, and To the Lighthouse, by Stella Mc Nichol.

Finally, a text related to Literary Criticism, to justify the selection of an analytical perspective in the study of the novel. The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism, by Michael Groden.

Analysis

Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe

The analysis of the novel will be focused mainly on four main characters: Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Ramsay, Lily Briscoe, and James Ramsay because they constitute the central figures in the novel, and they are the ones who are
related to the representation of dominance and submission. Other character’s analysis will be included if they are relevant to the development of the theme.

The analysis will be done in pairs, that is to say, in terms of relationships between the characters, for example Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, Lily and Mrs. Ramsay and so on.

In this novel, there is a conventional couple, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, whose relationship could be considered as a standard one for the epoch, but at the same time full of interesting details. In To the Lighthouse, we appreciate more vividly the conventionalism of the post-Victorian time, its rigidity and strong moral values, and specially the institution of family, as the most important for the continuity of human society. In addition, related to this, it is presented the concept of motherhood, which according to gender roles is constitutive of being a whole woman.

Concerning the representation of domination and submission, we as readers can find “seemingly” governing figures, such as Mr. Ramsay, an intelligent and professional man, with a large conventional family, but internally weak and insecure. On the one hand, he has a strong necessity of being recognized, in order to reassure his identity. On the other hand, there are “apparently” submissive figures such as Mrs Ramsay, who follows the conventionalities of the Post-Victorian society, that is, she is a woman of her period, a mother and a subservient wife, but she, at the end, gives the impression of being emotionally stronger than her husband.

Isabel Grundy comments on the name Ramsay that it is something like a norm to which other names in To the Lighthouse aspire: Its stressed vowel is repeated in Bankes, and Tansley, and in four of the eight children’s name Andrew, Jasper, Nancy and Cam (Hussey,p.303). Related to this, it is found the topic of subjectivity, in the sense that Mr. Ramsay, as the dominant figure, tries to hide the real identity of Mrs. Ramsay. Actually, throughout the novel, her name is
never mentioned, but she is called by her husband’s last name, as an evidence of being someone who is not fully an individual. Besides, it can be interpreted as a way to make her personality be opaque and as proof of her apparent dependence on Mr. Ramsay.

This fact is oppose to Lily Briscoe’s reality, she is recognized as being a woman on her own, and she is always called by her name and last name, as a way to emphasize her condition of individual. It is true that both have almost completely different realities, Mrs. Ramsay, as a married woman with children has to accept the social rules for a housewife and mother, and she partially had to renounce to her own identity, to her own desires for living and taking care of others. Lily Briscoe is a single woman, an artist whose concern is to carry out her artwork. She admires Mrs. Ramsay, because she has something that Lily lacks, that is experience and an inner force that makes others to be dependent on her. In the following passage, we can appreciate the way Mrs. Ramsay sees that self-governing creature called Lily Briscoe:

“Lily’s picture! Mrs. Ramsay smiled. With her little Chinese and her puckered-up face she would never marry, one could not take her painting seriously, but she was an independent little creature, Mrs. Ramsay liked her for it, and so remembering her promise, she bent her head”.

In the quotation, it is stated the kind of relationship that both have, Mrs. Ramsay, with her perspective of a married woman sees Lily as an independent person, because she does what she wants to do; she is an artist whose main worry is her painting. Mrs. Ramsay admires her for that, but

---

at the same time, she stresses the fact that Lily did not get married, as something that she as a woman should have to do. However, in spite of that, they both have a friendly relationship; actually, they feel attracted to each other as two magnets.

In terms of the dichotomy of dominance and submissiveness, we may infer that the relationship between Mrs. Ramsay and Lily is similar to the one a mother and a daughter have, because Lily acts insecurely and doubts about her capacity to carry out her artwork. In fact, there is a moment in the novel, in which she experiences the same feelings of insecurity when she was a little girl:

“It was in that moment’s flight between the picture and her canvas that the demons set on her who often brought her to the verge of tears and made this passage from conception to work as dreadful as any down a dark passage for a child. Such she often felt herself- struggling against terrific odds to maintain her courage; to say: but this is what I see, and so to clasp some miserable remnant of her vision to her breast.”

According to what it was aforementioned, the relationship between Mrs. Ramsay and Lily was based on inequality. Because it seems that Lily is the immature and unconfident woman who wants the support of Mrs. Ramsay as a maternal figure. Lily expresses all her dreadful feelings of not being successful as an artist, and desires to be close to Mrs. Ramsay in the sense that she is a kind of mother to her.

In the analysis, Mrs. Ramsay and Lily represent two interesting female figures. On the one hand, Mrs. Ramsay

---

5 Ibid. P. 23.
represents all a woman is, that is a happy married woman with eight children, who takes care of them and the house. On the other hand, Lily Briscoe, is a less desirable image of woman for the period, that is, with no couple, with no children, with no husband, whose only occupation is painting.

Lily could be described as a passionate artist, and, like Mr. Ramsay, she worries over the fate of her work, fearing that her paintings will be hanging in attics. Conventional femaleness of Mrs Ramsay, represented by marriage and family confuses her, and she strongly rejects it. The recurrent memory of Charles Tansley insisting that women cannot paint or write deepens her anxiety. She begins a portrait of Mrs. Ramsay with great difficulty. However, she undergoes a drastic transformation over the course of the novel, evolving from a woman who cannot make sense of the shapes of the colours that she tries to reproduce into an artist who achieves her vision and, overcome anxieties that have kept her from it. By the end of the novel, Lily, puts into practice all she has learned from Mrs. Ramsay, reaching a larger sense of completeness.

Lily Briscoe’s painting has usually been read as analogous to the novel itself, implying that Lily represents Woolf herself. In addition, according to Howard Harver, Lily is the only consciousness evoked in all three parts of the novel, identifying her with “the final transcendent consciousness”. Actually, she is capable of the inspiration that resolves problems in a flash.

Concerning Lily Briscoe, she is strongly opposed to the prejudiced Mr. Tansley’s ideas about women. Actually, she got annoyed when he pronounced those irritating words: “Women can’t paint, women can’t write”, but she decided to change the idea of confronting him because of Mrs. Ramsay’s intervention.

“Will you take me, Mr. Tansley? Said Lily, quickly, kindly, if Mrs. Ramsay said to her, as in
Marcia Aravena Erices. *The representation of Dominance and Submissiveness in Virginia Woolf’s (1927) To the Lighthouse.*

effect she did, I am drowning my dear, in seas of fire. Unless you apply some balm to the anguish of this hour and say something nice to that young man there (……) Lily had to renounce the experiment- what happens if one is not nice to that young man there- and be nice”.  

In this passage, we can appreciate that the usual trick, being nice with someone you really dislike, was successful in this social situation, because it is part of the code of acceptable social behavior. Due to this, Lily thinks about how insincere human relations are, especially between men and women.

An interesting point in the novel is that Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe felt sympathy for each other, in spite of being rather different. The first one, married, with children, worried about social conventions, and the other, single without children, was interested in arts, and was good at criticizing social conventions.

Besides, Lily criticizes Mr. Ramsay’s attitudes towards Mrs. Ramsay, “He is petty, selfish, vain, egotistical; he is spoilt; he is a tyrant; he wears Mrs. Ramsay to death; but he has what you (she addressed Mr. Bankes) have not…, he loves dogs and his children”.  

In this quotation, we can see that Lily makes a strong judgment of Mr. Ramsay. However, she is assertive in the sense that she sees the reality of Mrs. Ramsay, her internal suffering: “Mrs. Ramsay felt not only exhausted in body (afterwards, not at the time, she always felt this) but also there tinged her physical fatigue some faintly disagreeable sensation with another origin”.  

She feels herself inferior in comparison with him, because she doubts about what she says to him, about the truth of what she says. He is a

---

6 Ibid. P. 86.
7 Ibid. P. 28.
8 Ibid. P. 40.
university man, a philosopher; therefore, she thinks that what he gives the world is infinitely more important than what she does. However, Lily thinks that he is more reliant on her than she is; Mr. Ramsay really needs her to live.

Concerning Lily’s feelings towards Mrs. Ramsay, they are mostly associated with admiration and a need for being close to her, even when she has died:

“Could loving, as people called it, make her and Mrs. Ramsay one? For it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge, she had thought, leaning her head on Mrs. Ramsay’s knee”.9

In this passage, we could see Lily’s desire for being close to Mrs. Ramsay, as if she were a child looking for the protection of a maternal figure. But some authors such as Hermione Lee see Lily’s feelings as erotic ones: “possibly Lily’s almost erotic desire for physical closeness to Mrs. Ramsay may be connected to Virginia’s growing feelings for Vita, whom she imagines, while she is writing the novel, as like a lighthouse, fitful, sudden, remote”.10 However, I prefer to believe in the idea that Lily’s emotions towards Mrs. Ramsay are mainly admiration as a daughter may experiment for her mother. Moreover, there is not an explicit scene in the novel where Lily shows sexual attraction towards Mrs. Ramsay. Therefore, the comment of the author is more an interpretation based on Woolf’s life, rather than founded on the plot of the novel itself.

Finally, and as the following quotation indicates, Lily’s position concerning marriage is quite interesting and innovative for her time: “…and Lily looking at Minta being

9 Ibid. p. 51.
charming to Mr. Ramsay at the other end of the table, flinched for her exposed to those fangs, and was thankful. For at any rate, she said to herself….she need not marry, thank Heaven: she need not undergo that degradation.”

It is in the vision of marriage where Mrs. Ramsay and Lily differ the most. Firstly, because for Mr. Ramsay getting married and having children are essential, actually she enjoys playing the role of matchmaker, in which she was successful in convincing Paul and Minta to marry. She also thought that Lily could marry Mr. Bankes but it did not happen. Lily was not the kind of woman to be easily convinced about a fact that may have gone against her principles and beliefs, and as it was explained before, she did not need to marry.

For instances, in N.C. Thakur’s “Symbolism of Virginia Woolf”, the author refers to the ideas about reality and the intuitive understanding of it as a feminine characteristic. She also endeavours how an enlightened person can help in overcoming silliness and strife, which, she feels, are created by ugly academic jargon and dry intellection.(Thakur,p.85). Woolf apparently believes that intuition is a quality unevenly distributed between men and women, the same way Mrs. Ramsay always pitied men due to the lack of this characteristic. In that sense, Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe in To the Lighthouse represent intuition, while Mr. Ramsay stands for intellect.

At this point, it is pertinent to include another different viewpoint concerning the theme of intuition. According to Bourdieu, intuition is a quality that the Patriarchal society has imposed on women. As a way to make them to feel quiet and believing that it is a positive characteristic that men lack. By contrast, Thakur stands for the idea that intuition refers to a complete understanding of

---

reality and makes an analogy with the experiences that oriental societies have. In “Symbolism of Virginia Woolf”, the author reassures the fact that Lily and Mrs. Ramsay stands for intuition and Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Tansley for rational comprehension of reality, which would be incomplete and slow. Therefore, women would have a privileged position in the novel, and this would be the Woolf’s idea. Nevertheless, I decided not to leave aside Boudieu’s perspective in the sense that he takes into account a socio-historical point of view in the development of maleness and femaleness. Furthermore, it is important to elucidate how the context influences the evolution of the dominant and submissive relationships in the novel.

Lily Briscoe did not desire knowledge but unity. As an artist, she produces balance between light and shadow, creates relations of masses by connecting this mass on the right hand with that on the left, and does not want to break the unity of the whole. Mrs. Ramsay and Lily not only create unity and harmony but also, like the saintly people, radiate peace and have a calming influence. (Thakur, p. 54).

Lily, as some critics have mentioned before, the figure that would represent Virginia Woolf. According to that idea, Lily would constitute the voice that in a certain way perceives and condemns the Patriarchal viewpoint that is embodied mainly by Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Tansley. Moreover, she criticizes the way Mrs. Ramsay is, she refers to her power of taking the attention of people, she is an extremely attractive person, who unfortunately for Lily, was the model of a conventional woman, that is to say, the housewife. The following citation illustrates Lily’s opinion about that objectionable Mrs. Ramsay’s face:

“How childlike, how absurd she was, sitting up there with all her beauty opened again in her,
talking about the skins of vegetables. There was something frightening about her. She was irresistible. Always she got her own way in the end, Lily thought\textsuperscript{12}

By reading the passage, we appreciate that Lily makes a critic on Mrs. Ramsay for talking so passionately about the skins of vegetables. In Lily’s view, it was almost inconceivable to speak about cuisine and to get the interest of her guests with that trivial and domestic issue. The extraordinary attraction that Mrs. Ramsay exerts on people can be explained in her charisma. She is extremely powerful, therefore, she can talk about the most stupid theme and she can make others be concentrated on her. However, Mrs. Ramsay reached her purpose, all the people were paying attention to her, and she was irresistible because she always gets her own way. Actually, Mrs. Ramsay makes Paul and Minta to be engaged, therefore, she has reached her goal.

There is an interesting moment in which she refers to Mrs. Ramsay’s daily activities. “She was like a bird for speed, an arrow for directness. She was wilful; she was commanding, of course,(..). She opened bedrooms windows, she shut doors. (So she tried to start the tune of Mrs. Ramsay in her head)”.\textsuperscript{13}

It is clear that Lily knows Mrs. Ramsay since she was a child, an insignificant little girl. Lily is successful in describing the way Mrs. Ramsay is, actually, she describes Mrs. Ramsay’s complete routine, from morning to nighttime, she sees her as a “bird for her speediness, and an arrow for her sincerity”. That is, she describes Mrs. Ramsay as the typical housewife who is busy all day long. Besides, Lily remembers an episode in which she is close to Mrs. Ramsay, in she feels all the candour and support of Mrs. Ramsay, as if

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid. p. 94.  
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid. P. 49.
they were mother and child.

“They had laid her head on Mrs. Ramsay lap and laughed and laughed almost hysterically at the thought of Mrs. Ramsay presiding with immutable calm over destinies which she completely failed to understand”.  

In this quotation, Lily feels extremely safe with her because Mrs. Ramsay has the experience of life that she lacks, which makes a person wise. Lily is not ready to understand that information, and now as a woman, is not yet prepared to do it. That is the reason because Lily wants to be close to Mrs. Ramsay, she really needs to learn from her, in order to grow up and posses a sense of fullness as a woman and an artist. Lily, in spite of being an adult is not mature enough to understand life, and she would like to possess the Mrs. Ramsay knowledge that is complete and truth. In fact, she regrets not having the experience of life that Mrs. Ramsay “Nothing happened. Nothing! Nothing! As she leant her head against Mrs. Ramsay knee. And yet, she knew knowledge and wisdom were stored in Mrs. Ramsay’s heart”.

The superiority of Mrs. Ramsay over Lily is clearly expressed in the scene where Lily decides to give a lesson to Mr. Tansley and in order to do that, she laughs at him. Mrs. Ramsay expresses her disagreement with Lily and encourages her to say a well-mannered phrase to him: “I m drowning, my dear, in seas of fire. Unless you apply some balm to the anguish of this hour and say something nice to that young man there, life will run upon the rocks”.

As we can see, this is an uncomfortable moment for Lily and Mrs. Ramsay because they were confronted. Here,

---

14 Ibid. P. 50.
15 Ibid. p.51.
16 Ibid. P. 86.
the winner was Mrs. Ramsay because Lily had to renounce her plan of making fun at Mr. Tansley, and she had to change her attitude towards him and listen to all his stories. Lily accepts Mrs. Ramsay’s advice because it was for the serenity of the interaction. However, Lily felt that she had not been sincere: “She had done the usual trick- been nice”. She was polite with Mr. Tansley but she would never know him, and he would never know her. This situation made think Lily about how insincere was the relationship between men and women. It was inevitable because being always polite was part of the acceptable social behaviour.

Lily’s ideas about marriage were quite clear, according to what she has seen in Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, and Paul and Minta, she felt more determined to stay single: “She need not marry, thank Heaven; she need not undergo that degradation. She was saved form that dilution. She would move the tree rather more to the middle”\(^\text{17}\). For her, love was something tedious, puerile, and inhumane but beautiful and necessary. In spite of not being in love with anybody, she reflects about that strange emotion for her. She has felt love for her art and Mrs. Ramsay, as a maternal figure for her. However, she has never been in love with any man.

According to Mrs. Ramsay, Lily should marry William Bankes, because they have many qualities in common, “they are both cold and aloof and rather self sufficing. She must arrange for them to take a long walk together”\(^\text{18}\). Moreover, Mrs. Ramsay thinks that Lily would better than Minta at forty. She claimed that with a strong security that it became true, because the marriage between Minta and Paul, in the end, was not successful. Lily came back to Ramsay’s home and could finish her painting, and reached a sense of completeness as individual.

\(^\text{17}\) Ibid. P. 95.
\(^\text{18}\) Ibid. P. 97.
Mrs. Ramsay insists that Mr. Bankes would be a good candidate for Lily to marry because, “There was in Lily (…..) a flare of something; something of her own which Mrs. Ramsay likes very much indeed but no man would, she feared”\textsuperscript{19}. Mrs. Ramsay is assertive in worrying about Lily’s destiny, because it is difficult and almost impossible for a conventional man to accept an economically independent woman as Lily. Mrs. Ramsay believes that probably William Bankes could marry her because he is an old man who shares some characteristics with Lily.

This mania for marriages, as Lily calls it, symbolizes her instinctive desire to create unity, to turn “I-I-I” into “We”. Actually, by Mrs. Ramsay’s presence at the dinner table, she merges them all into a party by bringing close all those who sat separately. No sooner, she left the dining room, the party broke into separate groups again, and their talk turns from poetry to politics. (Thakur, p.80)

\textbf{Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Ramsay.}

Mrs. Ramsay’s main characteristic is to be a protective figure, especially with her children, husband and guests. Nevertheless, she needs to play this role mainly with men. According to her, men shoulder the burden of ruling countries and managing economies. Their important work, she believes, leaves them vulnerable and in need of constant reassurance, a service that women can and should provide. This dynamic fits into traditional gender boundaries, but it is important to stress the strength that Mrs. Ramsay feels. At some point, she is aware of her own power, and her posture is far from a submissive woman. At the same time, interjections of domesticated anxiety, such as her refrain of “the bill for the greenhouse would be fifty pounds” undercut her power.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. P. 97.
Another important characteristic of Mrs. Ramsay is her silence “she never spoke. She was silent always. She knew then- she knew without having learnt (…) her singleness of mind made her drop plumb like a stone, alight exact as a bird.” She communicates with her husband by means of looking and trivial dialogues, that is, they created their own code to talk to each other. That is the why her relationship with her husband could be qualified as peculiar. In fact, her husband is always demanding her attention and, because of that, he tries to be successful in his job, and he is looking for an abstract truth. On the contrary, her concern is reality, particularly, the reality of love, married life and family.

“A heartless woman he called her; she never told him that she loved him. But it was not so-it was not so. It was only that she never could say what she felt (…….), instead of saying anything, she turned, holding her stocking, and looked at him, and as she looked at him she began to smile, for though she had not said a word, he knew, of course he knew, that she loved him”.

According to Bourdieu, it focused on a special form of the peculiar lucidity of the dominated, the feminine intuition is, in our universe, inseparable of the objective and subjective submission, which force the attention and vigilance to go ahead to the other’s desires and to have a feeling on arguments. Women are more sensitive to the verbal sign, especially tone, than men are; women know how to identify a non-verbal expressed emotion and to unveil the implied part of a discourse. In other words, it is easier for

---

20 Ibid. P. 50.
21 Ibid. p. 113.
women to understand what others meant; when a person says something implying that he needs something else. In this quotation, we can see that Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay communicate in an indirect way. Actually, she was able to understand what he really wanted, but instead of verbalizing that she loves him, she only looks at him and by that glance, he recognizes her answer.

Moreover, in this quotation, we can see how Mrs. Ramsay takes the role of dominance in a subtle way, because she does not give what he asks, but instead of that, she offers the subservient care of a housewife to her man. “Was there no crumb on his coat? Nothing she could do for him?” Nevertheless, he continues feeling … from her, and she continues to feel his pressure. Their relationship can be considered as extremely conventional; the value of family is seen as more important than their own desires and feelings. She is always doing housewife’s labors, he is always reading his books, therefore they do not have time for themselves as a couple, and least as individuals.

They opt to continue with their conventional life because gender roles are extremely important at that period, she wishes to be recognized in her mother and wife roles, and he needs her because of his necessity of admiration in his intellectual activity, as philosopher. Both feel comfortable in their roles, they reject their own desires and thoughts to continue with their marriage that to the other’s eyes is admirable: “So that is marriage, Lily thought, a man and a woman looking at a girl throwing a ball”. By reading, that we may infer that marriage consists mainly of taking care of children, to keep your family without taking into account your feelings and emotions as an individual.

In the case of Mrs. Ramsay, she hides her lack as a woman behind matchmaking activity, for example, she is successful in bringing Paul and Minta together, but then she

---

22 Ibid. P. 69.
is assailed by doubts: “Why is it then that one wants people to marry? Then she adds, “What was the value, the meaning of things?” Besides, when he has spoken, she is grateful because Mr. Ramsay is reproving her, and she accepts his opinion, she is relieved because she does not have to continue thinking for herself:

“You won’t finish that stocking to-night, he said, pointing to her stocking. That was she wanted—the asperity in his voice reproving her. If he says it’s wrong to be pessimistic probably it is wrong, she thought; the marriage will turn out all right”.

In this quotation, we can see how they use indirect communication, because she just wanted to hear his opinion about her question, which was further away than that. She was not talking about Minta’s and Paul’s marriage, her question includes why they got married, but his answer was clearly reproving her, it is not good to be pessimistic about marriage. Minta and Paul probably will be happy, as they have been until now.

At this point, it is pertinent to incorporate Bourdieu’s concept of Femaleness. It can be summed up in the art of getting smaller; women stay enclosed in an invisible fence that limits the territory of their body’s movements, while men use more space with their bodies, especially in public places. Following this idea, we may infer that Mrs. Ramsay is a clear representation of what means to be a female. In the aforementioned passage, she expects the reaction of Mr. Ramsay, and she remains silent and assents when he points out that it is not advisable to be pessimistic. In her opinion, everything he claims is right (p. 43).

An interesting quality that distinguishes Mrs. Ramsay

---

23 Ibid. p. 113.
24 Ibid.p. 113.
feels uncomfortably when Mr. Ramsay is silent. Actually, she admires the way he talks and what he says because it is always correct. There is a moment in the novel, specifically, after dinner, when men are talking about politics. She feels bored about the conversation and Mr. Ramsay remains unvoiced, thinking about the meaning of his life.

“So they argued about politics, and Lily looked at the leaf on the table cloth; and Mrs. Ramsay, leaving the argument entirely in the hands of the two men, wondered why she was so bored by this talk, and wished, looking at her husband at the other end of the table, that how would say something.”

In this passage, we can see that Mrs. Ramsay respects her husband because he is able to say the correct words in a discussion. This is something that she cannot do because she has no idea about topics such as politics, economy, literature, etc. In fact, women at those times did not have the possibility of knowing and least talking about topics that were associated to men. In addition, in the post-Victorian period, women were not allowed to study and read. Mrs. Ramsay wants that Mr. Ramsay spoke, because “he went to the heart of things”. This what she lacks, she was not good at rhetoric, as her husband was. In addition, she did not realize that she was used to honouring him, as a way to praise their marriage.

Regarding the physical damage related to growing old, of both Mr. Ramsay and Mrs. Ramsay, it is clear that the last one is in a disadvantaged position. Mrs. Ramsay looks much older than her husband does because she is all day long doing different activities such as, taking care of their children, doing the housework, and what most wears her out is to deal with him. He always asks for approval and demands her attention without thinking that she probably is tired after a day plenty of activities. His lack of empathy is evident, he

---

25 Ibid. p. 88.
never thinks about her belief or if she feels exhausted or not. Moreover, he is able to flirt with other women such as Minta, who probably reminds him of Mrs. Ramsay in the past, causing envy in her: “And for a moment she felt what she had never expected to feel again—jealousy. For he, her husband felt it too—Minta’s glow; he liked these girls. These golden-reddish girls, with something flying, something a little wild.”

In this extract, it is expressed Mrs. Ramsay’s jealousy for Minta, because she is younger, beautiful and reddish, something that Mr. Ramsay likes in women. Mrs. Ramsay was getting older, because of everyday worries such as the bill for the greenhouse and their children. Mr. Ramsay seemed a young man, attractive to women in spite of his age. Mrs. Ramsay thinks that it is unfair, because he has the opportunity of being gallant with other women due to the fact of being a man. This constitutes a way of reassuring and confirming his masculinity by means of being charming with other women. Moreover, he had not a normal sexual life with her wife; therefore, he needed to feel that he is still attractive, specially, to “silly” women as Minta.

As it has been aforementioned, the relationship between Mr. Ramsay and Mrs Ramsay could be seen as the one typical of a conventional marriage. However, by reading the novel, we may discover some details that suggest that both constitute two different perspectives of life, Mr. Ramsay as the rational part, and Mrs Ramsay as the emotional one. At first glance, we may say that the dominant viewpoint is the one represented by Mr. Ramsay as the patriarchal figure, and Mrs. Ramsay’s conception is the submissive one because she stands for the submitted individuals. The following quotations taken from “The Window” illustrate this issue:

“How did he know? She asked. The wind

26 Ibid, p. 92.
often changed. The extraordinary irrationality of her remark, the folly of women’s minds enraged him. He had ridden through the valley of death, been shattered and shivered; and now she flew in the face of facts, made his children hope what was utterly out of the question, in effect told lies.”27

“Not with the barometer falling and the wind due west. To pursue truth with such astonishing lack of consideration for other’s peoples feelings, to rend the thin veils of civilization so wantonly, so brutally, was to her so horrible an outrage of human decency that, without replying, dazed and blinded...”28

In these passages, we can appreciate how different their approaches to reality are. She expresses her opinion about the weather based on her intuition and hopes that tomorrow it will be fine; Mr. Ramsay thinks that her comment is irrational; he cannot bear such remark because it is not accepted in his rationality. Apart from that, he adds “not with the barometer falling and the wind due west”. Mrs. Ramsay finds his remark cruel and egotistical, in the sense that he does not think about other’s hopes and feelings, not even about their children’s. That is the reason why she argues that “she reverences him”, because none in the family would dare question Mr. Ramsay’s resolution, no matter what happened.

According to Bourdieu, Mrs. Ramsay due to her condition of woman is able to understand that Mr. Ramsay wants to discuss about intellectual matter just for the need of being situated in first place, as Mr. Tansley does-another incarnation of male self-centredness. It is always emphasized the “I” in front of the others, Mr. Ramsay thinks about

27 Ibid. p. 28.
28 Ibid. p. 28.
himself and the impression that he caused. Mrs. Ramsay detected that for his tone of voice, the energy of his words and his uneasiness. (p. 100).

Regarding the self-image that Mrs. Ramsay has of herself, it is clear that she feels diminished in comparison with her husband. She makes a comparison between her feminine discourse with the ones of Mr. Ramsay. The result is that he has more credibility than she does, because his words are verdicts that can be proven as a hypothesis can in a scientific research. Besides, the way people relate to her is different in the sense that she as a woman is seen as a housewife, mother and wife. Therefore, she has to fulfill her role for the one she is recognized as in her environment.

“They came to her, naturally, since she was a woman, all day long with this and that; one wanting this, another that; the children were growing up; she often felt she was nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions. Then he said, Damn you. He said, It must rain. He said, it won’t rain; and instantly a Heaven of security opened before her. There was nobody she reverenced more. She was not good enough to tie his shoe strings, she felt”. 29

In this passage, she reaffirms what she thinks about her husband, but at the same time, she reflects about how unfair her life is. In other words, it has to do with the way she has to support others, she felt as a “sponge full of human emotions”, but full of emotions of others. Besides, she states that she reverences him because everything that he says is true; he has the rational thinking and security that every word that he pronounces will be a fact.

29 Ibid. p.34.
“It was a splendid mind. For if thought is like the key-board of a piano, divided into so many notes, or like the alphabet is ranged in twenty-six letters all in order, then his splendid mind had no sort of difficulty in running over those letters one by one, firmly and accurately, until it had reached, say the letter Q. He reached Q. Very few people in the whole of England ever reach Q”.\(^\text{30}\)

In this quotation, we may appreciate the idea that Mr. Ramsay has of himself, it seems that he has a good impression of how he is in terms of intellect, he is almost a perfect man who has reached Q, but he thinks that he could reach more, at least R. In spite of realising that his wife and children need his protection, he prefers going on thinking about the possibility of improving his mark. After Q there are a number of letters the last of which is scarcely visible to mortal eyes but glimmers red in the distance. Z is only reached once by one man in a generation\(^\text{31}\)

To complement what was aforementioned; Bourdieu has an interesting perspective to explain Mr. Ramsay’s necessity of being more brilliant. According to him, Mr. Ramsay viewpoint about him does not have any personal thing because it is the dominant and legitimate conception; therefore, it is the idea of himself that he must form in the social world. In this case, the ideal image of man and father is compulsory for him. In fact, the most important aim for him is to be successful in his profession rather than being considered as a good father and husband. That is, he tries to fulfil the role that society imposed on him as a man who posses a great deal of rationality. Therefore, he needs the gratitude of those who surrounded him, his wife, children and friends.(p. 93)

\(^{30}\) Ibid. p. 35. \\
\(^{31}\) Ibid. p.p. 35-36.
By reading the novel, the main characters of the novel wonder a recurrent question about themselves. This is: “What is the meaning of life?” As we can see, Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe have reflected about that issue. However, Mr. Ramsay, in his strong rationality wonders about the meaning of life. There is a scene, when they are having the dinner that Mr. Ramsay has prepared by their guests. He thinks that he does not feel comfortable in social events like that. Actually, he is angry with his wife for having created such a superficial situation, in which there are people talking about insignificant matters. “At this moment her presence meant absolutely nothing to him: her beauty meant nothing to him; her sitting with her little boy at the window, nothing. He wished only to be alone and to take up that book”\(^{32}\)

In this quotation, it is clear that Mr. Ramsay, as Mrs. Ramsay did too is wondering about the meaning of life. He does not feel satisfied with his life; actually, he did not enjoy family life. He thinks that the dinner is a superficial social situation created by his wife; she is occupied giving order to servants, while he is sitting in silence thinking about something more important and wanting to be with his books rather than with his family. The same attitude is appreciated in Mr. Tansley.

Regarding the individuality of Mr. Ramsay we may see that he feels frustrated as a man. Actually, he thinks that he would have been better in his work if he had not had a family. He thinks that he would have reached almost Q and been considered a genius. In the following passage, we may appreciate that he feels that he has not done what he might have done: “he had not done the thing he might have done. It was a disguise; it was the refuge of a man afraid to own his own feelings, who could not say. This is what I like-this is

\(^{32}\) Ibid. p. 83.
what I am”\textsuperscript{33}

By reading this extract, we may infer how frustrated Mr. Ramsay is in terms of not doing and saying what he really wants, he appears deeply embedded in his maleness that it is almost impossible for him to let his feelings and emotions flow. It seems that he comes from an extremely different world, the rational one, and that it is terribly hard for him to enter the world of the human beings talking about nonsense issues. That is, everything that does not have to do with metaphysical thoughts. The following citation of the novel is quite clear about Mr. Ramsay’s point of view in Lily’s perspective:

"Teaching and praying is beyond human power, Lily suspected.(…) Mrs. Ramsay gave him what he asked too easily. Then the change must be so upsetting, Lily said. He comes in from his books and finds us all playing games and talking nonsense. Imagine what a change from the things he thinks about, she said”\textsuperscript{34}

According to Lily’s viewpoint, Mr. Ramsay comes from a different territory, the land of his philosophical books; therefore, it is not easy to get along with him because he is always looking down on other people. To him, all of them, his wife, children and guests, talk nonsense. In comparison with him, who is worried about intellectual and important matters, such as “how to reach Z”, Mrs. Ramsay is concerned about the fifty pounds of the Greenhouse, which according to his opinion, constitute a trivial issue that does not deserve his attention. In addition, Mrs. Ramsay gives the attention that he demands very easily, in the sense that she reverences his rational and practical way of seeing everyday events.

The way Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay communicate is the

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid. p. 45.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid. p. 45-46.
one that is proper of an old couple that is near their end. They are in their fifties and have children who probably will not have the possibility of enjoying them for too much time. That is the reason why they are constantly questioning about the meaning of their lives and evaluating what they have done. One of the advantages of having lived with a person for many years, give them the option of getting to know the other that it is not necessary to ask what she is thinking or feeling. As the following quotation states: “She looked at her husband (…..) and saw that he did not want to be interrupted—that was clear. He was reading something that moved him very much. He was half smiling and then she knew he was controlling his emotion”35

In this extract, we can appreciate that Mrs. Ramsay did not want to ask her husband what he was feeling, or whether he was concentrated on his book or not. She is able to recognize what he is feeling or thinking only by looking at him. That is the reason why she remains silent in order to not interrupt him, in spite of being curious about what he is reading.

We may infer that they have created their own code of communication that consists mainly of gestures and looking. They do not need to speak to know what is happening with the other. In terms of relationship, on the one hand, we may say that they have been together for too much time that they know almost all about one another. On the other hand, we may argue that their relationship has turned into a monotonous one that they do not have the necessity of asking how they feel or what they are thinking. This is what happens with the passing of time in couples as the Ramsays, who have been together for many years.

Besides, Mrs. Ramsay considers the way her husband is, specifically about his obsession for receiving approval of her and people in general. He is extremely insecure about his
success because he is not a well-recognized and famous philosopher. In addition, for him the most important aim in life is to be praised for his work. “He was always uneasy about himself. That troubled her. He would always be worrying about his own books—will they be read, are they good (...) what do people think of me?”

“And he wondered what she was reading, and exaggerated her ignorance, her simplicity, for he liked to think that she was not clever, not book learned at all. He wondered if she understood what she was reading. Probably not, he thought”

In this quotation we can clearly appreciate the strong prejudice against women, because he takes for granted her capacity to comprehend poetry for not being book-learned. Nevertheless, if he would let her read more and discuss about novels, poetry, philosophy, etc, she could probably understand and comment on it. His thoughts reveal his necessity of making feel others inferior because he is not convinced about his own knowledge. In spite of having read and learned from books, he had not reached success because of his despotism and self-egotism. However, he makes an attempt of justifying Mrs. Ramsay’s ignorance about poetry with her beauty, a characteristic that has been associated with women in a Patriarchal Society.

However, according to Thakur, Mrs. Ramsay’s beauty stands as a symbol of perfection, of complete understanding and symmetry. That is the reason why Mr. Ramsay claims that she is “astonishingly beautiful”, which means that her beauty were possible to increase. (Thakur, p.79).

Moreover, we see that Mrs. Ramsay in some occasions needs the appreciation of Mr. Ramsay, for instance, when she doubts about the success of Paul and

---

37 Ibid. P. 112.
Minta’s marriage. Actually, she asks him whether it would have a possibility of failure:

“Slowly it came into her head, why is it then one wants people to marry? What was the value, the meaning of things? (Every word they said now would be true). Do say something, she thought, wishing only to hear her voice”\(^{38}\)

She needs to hear a phrase to be calm again, when she questions about the meaning of life, the meaning of marriage, she needs him in order to stop thinking about it. It is not advisable to question about life, it is better to be optimistic and be satisfied with life.

Mrs. Ramsay’s wondering about sense of life, is clearly expressed in the following passage:

“She took a look at life, for she had a clear sense of it there, something real, something private, which she shared neither with her children nor with her husband. A sort of transaction went on between them, in which she was on one side, and life was on another, and she was always trying to get the better of it”\(^ {39}\)

In this quotation, we see how Mrs. Ramsay feels as an individual, she thinks about her life, and she concludes that the most part of it has been hostile, unfair and terrible. She concludes that because she is aware of her frustration as a woman, she is a conventional person who followed the model that was imposed to women at that period, that is, to get married and have children. She felt that she had lost the possibility of doing something by her own that is the reason because she liked Lily, for being an independent creature.

\(^ {38}\) Ibid. P. 113.
\(^ {39}\) Ibid. P. 58.
Mrs. Ramsay admired Lily in the sense that she decided not to follow the patterns that were compulsory for women, on the contrary, she did not marry and did not have any children. Mrs. Ramsay could not escape from that reality, and at the bottom, she was optimistic about life, since she enjoyed allowing people to get married, as in the case of Paul and Minta. But she sometimes forgot how strong her influence on people was, therefore, she could be described as a domineering figure in the sense that her opinion was taken into account for other inexperienced characters, such as Paul and Minta.

One of Mrs. Ramsay’s achievements was to persuade Paul to ask Minta to marry with him, in spite of not being completely convinced, “It had been far and away the worst moment of his life when he asked Minta to marry him. He would go straight to Mrs. Ramsay, because he felt somehow that she was the person who had made him do it”\textsuperscript{40}

In this extract, we realize that Paul felt the pressure of getting married without being convinced about it. He just did it because Mrs. Ramsay forced him to do it, in a polite manner. He thinks that she has a strong influence on him because she made him to think that he could do anything. In other words, Mrs. Ramsay is the only person who has taken him seriously. Therefore, he decided to engage Minta in order to comply with Mrs. Ramsay’s. “Yes, you can do it. I believe in you”\textsuperscript{41}

The mania of Mrs. Ramsay of playing the function of matchmaking was farther away. Because, she wanted that, nobody lost the experience of living a married life and having children. In her opinion, a single woman has lost the best of her life if she did not marry anybody. Actually, she even tries to convince even Lily, in spite of knowing that she was not interested at all in being married at all. Mrs. Ramsay felt

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{40}] Ibid, p. 74.
\item[\textsuperscript{41}] Ibid. p. 74.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
satisfied with her role of making couples because, by means of that, she could hide her lack as an individual. She needed an activity to think in anything but her miserable life. The following passage illustrates her obsession for making couples: “Ah, but was that not Lily Briscoe strolling along with William Bankes? (…) Yes, indeed it was. Did that not mean that they would marry? Yes, it must! What an admirable idea! They must marry!”

By reading this passage, it is not impossible for us as readers to feel sympathy for Mrs. Ramsay. She was used to controlling and being the support of her family and friends that it is hard for her to let that others do what they really want to do with their lives. She cannot evade giving a comment or a suggestion to the others to help them to take a decision. She just does it without being conscious of her behavior, sometimes she reflects about it, but she did not mind because it is the way she thinks it is correct.

As characters are human images in fiction, they are full of contradictions. That is the case of Mrs. Ramsay because, at the middle of the novel, specifically, while she is giving a dinner and is trying to sit together with her guests, she thinks about her feelings towards her husband. She clearly expresses that she cannot understand how she could be in love with Mr. Ramsay, as if she did not feel love for him any longer. “At far end, was her husband (…) what at? She did not mind. She could not understand how she had ever felt any emotion or any affection for him” However, in the last part of “The Window”, she says that she loves him, although she was not able to utter it.

It is here where the symbol of the sonnet makes readers to understand that Mrs. Ramsay loves him. According

---

42 Ibid.p.68.
43 Ibid.p. 78.
to Thakur, the Shakespearean sonnet that says that without the beloved “proud-pied April” with all its different flowers in odor and hue it seems “winter” to the lover, Mrs. Ramsay expresses love for her husband, which she could not express verbally. “But it was not so”, by making Mrs. Ramsay read that particular sonnet, Woolf reveals to the reader that what Mrs. Ramsay wanted to tell her husband is that she loved him, and that she was not a heartless woman. (Thakur, p.83).

Coming back to the dinner’s scene, where Mrs. Ramsay doubts about her love towards Mr. Ramsay. As she continues with her reflection, she decides that her question is not important, and she goes on thinking about the poor William Bankes who has not wife and children.

“And it was not true, Lily thought; it was one of those misjudgments of hers that seemed to be instinctive and to arise from some need of her own rather than of other’s people. He is not in the least pitiable. He has his work”\textsuperscript{44}

In this quotation, we appreciate the different viewpoint that Lily has about the same William Bankes. According to Mrs. Ramsay, he deserves her compassion because of his not being married and not having any children. By contrast, Lily thinks that he is a respectable man because he has his work, as she has. Therefore, Lily is able to identify that the need of pitying people is part of Mrs. Ramsay inner self, as a way to displace her own disagreement with life. Lily finally concludes that Mrs. Ramsay “pityed man as if lacked something- women never, as if they had something”\textsuperscript{45}, when she asks Mr. Tansley whether he writes letters to his mother, feeling sympathy for him, too.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.p.80.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.p.80.
Furthermore, we can realize the admiration that Lily feels for Mr. Bankes. In fact, she makes a comparison between Mr. Ramsay and him, and according to her, the former is better than the latter. Mr. Bankes has his work as she does, and she can talk about different topics with him. To her, Mr. Ramsay is the vivid image of a tyrant who is wearing Mrs. Ramsay to death. Here we can see that for Lily, the value of a person is given by the way an individual acts and thinks. To her, it was not important whether Mr. Bankes has children or not, because he was infinitely most valuable than Mr. Ramsay, even though he had a family. In her viewpoint, he was so selfish and distant that he cannot enjoy and appreciate what he had. “You have greatness,(...) but Mrs Ramsay has none of it. He is petty, selfish, vain, and egotistical; he is spoilt; he is a tyrant; he wears Mrs. Ramsay to death; but he has what you (she addressed Mr. Bankes) have not; a fiery unworldliness: he knows nothing about trifles; he loves dogs and his children”.

As we have seen in previous passages, Lily is quite radical and assertive in her judgments. She shows a clear preference for Mr. Bankes and Mrs. Ramsay, and a strong rejection towards Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Tansley. These last two characters represent opposite points of view in life compared to Lily’s and Mrs. Ramsay’s ones. However, Lily was aware of that and criticized these two somehow unbearable figures. Actually, for Lily these two men were important in the sense that their comments on a woman’s work affected her, and she even felt unable of carrying out her painting. The following citation illustrates what she thinks about Mr. Tansley: “He was really, Lily Briscoe thought, in spite of his eyes (…) the most uncharming human being she had ever met. Then why did she mind what he

46 Ibid. P. 28.
said? Women can’t write, women can’t paint”47 
In this passage, Lily feels annoyed by the presence of Mr Tansley because he has a male-chauvinistic conception about women. When he claims that women cannot paint and write, he meant that women are silly, that they cold not do anything to improve the civilization. Lily feels attacked and affected by his words. Therefore, she decided to answer him by laughing at him: “Oh Mr. Tansley, she said. Do take me to the Lighthouse with you, I should so love it”.48 He realizes that Lily is making fun of him and feels ashamed of not being able to answer her attack in an appropriate way in presence of Mrs. Ramsay. Therefore, Lily made him a fool, and he felt so uncomfortable that the only thing that he wanted was to be alone with his books.

James and his parents

Concerning the relationship between Mr. Ramsay and her son James, we may appreciate that at the beginning of the novel it was quite cold and distant, and we may infer that their relationship is highly antagonistic. Mr. Ramsay stresses his authoritative figure by denying his son’s expectations regarding the trip, every time that his son asks about going to the Lighthouse. James feels that his father is extremely severe and dislikes his personality. Woolf clearly shows an example of a difficult link between father and son, and besides, the former hates the latter because of being quite unfair with them. In fact, James is closer to her mother than his father is. Mr. Ramsay is jealous of their children since he wanted more attention from his wife. In other words, he behaves as if he were another child.

47 Ibid. p. 81.
48 Ibid. P. 81.
In this liaison, we may appreciate that Mrs. Ramsay’s position is to interfere in favour of James; she tries to protect him from the tyrannical behaviour of his father that seems to destroy his innocence. She may infer the terrible feelings that her little child has for his father, and the future lamentable consequences. The following quotations taken from the first segment of the novel, “The Window”, illustrate the way these three characters interact:

“Yes of course, if its fine tomorrow, said Mrs. Ramsay. But you’ll have to be up with the lark, she added”. But, said his father, (…), it won’t be fine” Had there been an axe handy, a poker, or any weapon that would gashed a hole in his father breast and killed him, there and then, James would have seized it”.\(^{49}\)

“What he said was true. It was always true. He was incapable of untruth; never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure or convenience of any mortal being, least of all his children, who sprung from his loins, should be aware from childhood that life is difficult”.

“But it may be fine- I expect it will be fine, said Mrs. Ramsay”.

“No going to the lighthouse, James, he said, as he stood by the window, speaking awkwardly, but trying in deference to Mrs. Ramsay to soften his voice into some semblance of geniality at least”.

Odious little man, thought Mrs. Ramsay, why go on saying that? Perhaps it will fine tomorrow, she said, smoothing his

\(^{49}\) Ibid. P. 9
hair.\textsuperscript{50}

These passages reflect the way Mr. Ramsay opposes to the desire of his child James of going to the Lighthouse. He actually repeats this behaviour in two opportunities. To explain his undesirable behaviour it is pertinent to include Bourdieu’s ideas concerning Mrs. Ramsay: “All the logicality of the figure is based on this apparent contradiction. Mr. Ramsay, as the representation of the law of the father, his words is verdicts. “He is able to annihilate with a phrase the joy of his son, James”\textsuperscript{51}. That is to say, his verdicts are not questionable at all, because he is the paternal figure whose expressions have the power of truth themselves, and the “no” of the father does not need to be justified. Another interesting point is the confrontation of two different perspectives, the paternal hardness against the maternal understanding, the fatherly verdict and Mrs. Ramsay affirmation based on an act of faith.

The way Woolf describes how Mr. Ramsay’s words are incapable of untruth is quite explicit and ironic, as she affirms that he has the power, she expresses how his acts hurt James’s feelings and hopes. In effect, she criticizes a father’s posture of destroying his child’s fantasies. The intervention of Mrs. Ramsay emphasizing that she hopes that “it will be fine”, is explained by the fact that she cannot be sure about a fact, which is represented by the father’s law. Besides, when she thinks “Odious little man.”, it is showed how Mrs. Ramsay expresses her disagreement with him. She is not allowed to say it aloud, and instead of that, she says: “perhaps it will be fine”, as a way to show subtlety to her annoyance.

Regarding form, according to Hermione Lee, there are sentences starting with “Yes”: yes, and a tentative

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid. P. 19.
\textsuperscript{51} Bourdieu, Pierre. \textit{La Dominacion Masculina}. P.91.
conditional future “if it’s fine to-morrow”; yes and an immediately vanished past “I have had my vision”. The “yes” of a narrative- something shaped, but always liable to shapelessness-keeps having to be reaffirmed. (p. 40).

As regards to the relationship between Mrs.Ramsay and his son James, we may state that it is quite different from the one James has with his father. This happens because James seems to love and respect his mother more than his father, since James and his father’s feelings differ greatly. Actually, he sees Mr. Ramsay as rival for her love with Mrs. Ramsay. Unfortunately, the way Mrs. Ramsay is educating James replicates the manner Mr. Ramsay is, therefore, by paying more attention to James than to the other children, she is encouraging the continuity of the cycle of differentiation of men and women. In the following quotation, we realize the overprotective way Mrs. Ramsay treats James similar to her husband. “Stand still. Don’t be tiresome, so that he knew instantly that her severity was real, and straightened his leg and she measured it”.

Mrs. Ramsay’s maternal dimension is quite strong that, by reading the novel, we may understand that one of her concerns was mainly to be afraid that her children grew up. Specially Cam and James, because according to her view, they were the ones who had more possibilities to emulate the model of man and woman that she and Mr. Ramsay have given them. The next passages demonstrate this idea:

“Oh but she never wanted James to grow a day older or Cam either. These two have liked to keep forever just as they were, demons of wickedness, and angels of delight, never to see them grow up into long-legged monsters. When she read just now to James, and there were numbers of soldiers with kettledrums and trumpets, and his eyes darkened,(…)

52 Ibid. P. 31.
why should they grow up and lose all that? He was the most gifted, the most sensitive of her children”53

In the passage, we may infer that Mrs. Ramsay is extremely concerned about the future of her children, and she thinks that probably they will not be happier than today because they are with her, she supports them. Moreover, she reflects about the meaning of life, and when she thinks about her own life, she is afraid of what will happen to her children. She hopes that they will be fine, but at the same time, she is afraid of Cam and James, because she perceives that both will probably finish identifying with their correspondent image of man and woman, that is to say, Mr. Ramsay and her. When she refers to her worry of their children, becoming monsters—she meant the process of growing up and becoming adults. She did not want their children to undergo such experience because she gave an important value to innocence and purity, qualities that are inevitably lost as time passes. Regarding her fear of being catalogued as a high-handed mother, she did not mind because she feels a sense of fullness by playing her role of mother; therefore, her duty was to be troubled about the future of their children. Mr. Ramsay does not give importance to Mrs. Ramsay’s concerns, because in his rational viewpoint of life, human worries are taking for granted. Actually, he expresses his disagreement with Mrs. Ramsay’s pessimistic way of seeing life.

To the Wholenes

In the third part of the novel, Lily returns to the Ramsay’s house with Mr. Bankes. When she arrived at home, everything was odd to her, because Mrs. Ramsay was not there anymore, she was dead as Andrew and Prue were. The following passage illustrates the emotions that Lily experiments in her return:

53 Ibid. P. 57.
"The house, the place, the morning, all seemed strangers to her. She had no attachments here, she felt, no relations with it (...) as if the link that usually bound things together had been cut, and they floated up here, down there, off, anyhow."\(^{54}\)

In the passage, it is clear that the absence of Mrs. Ramsay was shocking for Lily. She perceives that the link that bounded things together in the house is not present, and feels a sense of chaos and unreality that is, provoking and stimulating fear to her for the first time. Lily asks repeatedly why Mr. Ramsay, Cam and James will go to the lighthouse because she cannot notice the reason. It has passed ten years from the last time she was there. Suddenly she remembered her paintings and decided to look for them and started painting after Mr. Ramsay comes back.

"There was the wall; the hedge; the tree. The question was of some relation between those masses."\(^{55}\) Thinking about that, she realizes that she should finish her painting, but there was a problem: Mr. Ramsay. Because he bears down on her, he was walking down everywhere; he symbolizes chaos and ruin to her, as Mr. Tansley was ten years ago with his words: "Women can’t paint! Women can’t write!"

But there was Mr. Ramsay saying: “You shan’t touch your canvas, (,,,)bearing down on her, till you’ve given me what I want of you”\(^{56}\) Finally, Lily decides to give him what she could, by imitating Mrs. Ramsay attitude of admiring him.

As Mrs. Ramsay approaches to her, she felt a tremendous pressure. Actually, she doubts about her decision of praising him, it was difficult for her. Mr. Ramsay needed to reach what he always wanted: sympathy. ‘Was anybody looking after her? he said. Had she everything she wanted?’

\(^{54}\) Ibid. P.138.

\(^{55}\) Ibid.p. 139.

\(^{56}\) Ibid. P. 141.
Oh, thanks, everything, said Lily, nervously

Mr. Ramsay was waiting that Lily said something, but it did not happen. Mrs. Ramsay explained to her why he had to go to the Lighthouse: “There was a poor boy with a tuberculosis hip, the light keeper’s son” While he was saying that, Lily felt how that force was increasing that she would desire that this demand left her.

It seems as if he were saying “look at me, think of me”, she thought that it was intensely sexual to stand there dumb, as Mr. Ramsay was: “One say—what did one say? Oh, Mr. Ramsay! Dear Mr. Ramsay!” That was what an old woman, as Mrs. Beckwith, would have said. Unfortunately, she and Mr. Ramsay were completely alone. In this scene, it is interesting to appreciate how the masculine force fights against the feminine one. There was an intense tension because Lily tried to resist him, but unfortunately, Mr. Ramsay obtained what he asked.

“What beautiful boots! She was ashamed of herself”. In this quotation Lily could not believe that she did it; she praised Mr. Ramsay’s boots, the symbol of mankind, according to his thought.

As we can see, Lily could not avoid admiring his boots, because of that, Mr. Ramsay thought that it was the first time that Lily saw boots made of “authentic leather”. Then, he decided to explain her how to tie a shoe. In this tense moment, Cam and James appeared.

According to Hussey, this scene described Mr. Ramsay’s necessity for female consideration. His need was difficult to achieve because Lily had to fight against her principles of not being a conventional woman, as Mrs. Ramsay had been. Lily finally praised his boots, and just as she began to feel empathy for him, James and Cam arrived at Lighthouse, and Lily is left alone with her emotions. “Her

---

57 Ibid. P. 142.
58 Ibid. P. 142.
59 Ibid. P. 144.
sympathy seemed to fly back in her face, like bramble sprung”.

Lily, alone with her empty canvas, begins to paint and hears echoes of a voice saying she “couldn’t paint”, it was Charles Tansley’s voice. Suddenly, she recalls a scene from the past, on the beach with Mrs. Ramsay and Charles when he became very friendly and they got on well. Turning to her painting, Lily realizes that there is no supreme answer to life’s mystery but only “little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck suddenly in the dark”. She walks to the edge of the lawn and thinks she see the boat on which Mr. Ramsay, Cam, and James are preparing to set the sail.

During the trip, James steers the boat, Cam sits in the bow, and both feel uncomfortable because their father mutters to himself and Macalister and his boy will hear him. However, the sail starts, Mr. Ramsay relaxes, and they are on their way. Mr. Ramsay “gently and mournfully” recites the final lines of William Cowper’s “The Castaway”, outraging Cam. She murmurs to herself her father favorite words “We perished, each alone”. A silent struggle ensues between Cam and James, whose unspoken compact to resist their father’s tyranny wavers when Mr. Ramsay asks Cam about their puppy. James suddenly remembers feeling angry with his mother. Cam is torn between loyalty to her brother and her love for her father.

Lily returns to her canvas, still thinking of Mrs. Ramsay on the beach. She brings Paul and Minta to mind, whom she has visited, who now have two sons and have had an unsuccessful marriage. Lily feels a little triumphant over Mrs. Ramsay, who wanted her to marry William Bankes; Lily and William have been good friends.

When Lily thinks about Mrs. Ramsay, she concludes that Mrs. Ramsay represents the bound that this place was

---

60 Ibid. P. 146.
lacking because her absence is evident. Lily remembers a scene where Mrs. Ramsay is reading under a rock, and she could feel how that image in her mind evokes the power of Mrs. Ramsay when bringing people and different matters together: “That woman sitting there, writing under the rock resolved everything into simplicity (….) she brought together this and that and then this”

As she remembers more and more, Lily’s feelings towards Mrs. Ramsay grow more consciously intense, she decides to ask Mr. Carmichael to understand what she is feeling. Without realizing it, Lily begins to cry, saying aloud, “Mrs. Ramsay!”

Lily is immersed in her thoughts concerning Mrs. Ramsay, she remembers her saying: “Life stand still there”. Due to that evocation, Lily realizes that in the midst of chaos there is a shape, which was the revelation for her. After that important moment, she needs to go on thinking and painting.

Lily was relieved that Mr. Carmichael did not hear her; she turns again to her painting, remembering how she often pictured Mrs. Ramsay after hearing of her death.

Regarding Cam and James, we can appreciate that their relationship with Mr. Ramsay was hostile and tense. He imposed them to go to the lighthouse without thinking whether they wanted to do it or not. In response to that obligation, they decided to vow a compact “to resist tyranny to death”. That is to say, they would oppose resistance to any of Mr. Ramsay’s ideas and orders.

“They must come; they must follow. They must walk behind him carrying brown paper parcels. But they vowed in silence (...) to stand by each other and carry out the great compact-to resist tyranny to death”

---

61 Ibid. p. 150.
62 Ibid. p. 152.
In this passage, it is expressed the way Cam and James felt because of his father, they were obliged to go to the expedition. They did not want to go, but they had to do it because it was their father’s wish. They secretly hoped that the trip failed, and they would be there in silence, waiting, “resisting tyranny to the death”. We may infer that they were joined to fight against the law of the father, which is the basis of the androcentric society.

Later on, during the trip Mr. Ramsay decides to ask Cam about the point of the compass, “Did she know the north from the south?”, certainly not. In addition, he showed her where their house was. He was laughing at her because he could not bear the “vagueness of women’s mind”. Actually, Cam made him remember about his wife, they were alike, but he concluded that their imprecision was part of their extraordinary charm and accepted that he was wrong in being angry with her. Therefore, he decided to make his daughter laugh at him, and says: “Who was looking after the puppy today?” James was seeing the scene and thought that now he was alone to carry out the compact. Cam tried to resist as she could, but finally, she answered his father’s question, and recognized that she loved and admired him. “For no one attracted her more, his hands were beautiful and his feet, and his voice,(…) his temper, and his oddity”\textsuperscript{63}

The boat is becalmed. Mr. Ramsay read and James felt his old anger at his father rising. He brought his father to his mind saying he would not be able to go to the lighthouse, and suddenly saw the lighthouse as both the “misty-looking tower” of his childhood vision and the “tower, stark and straight” that he was now gazing. While the trip was taking place, James started feeling the old bad emotions towards his father. Mr. Ramsay was reading a

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.p. 158.
book and James was looking at him, trying to discover the way he turns every page. Nevertheless, he was waiting for the moment in which Mr. Ramsay gave him an order. Moreover, if he did, James would take a knife and strike him to the heart. He had always kept this old symbol of taking a knife and striking his father to the heart. Now, as he became older, it was not that old man whom he wanted to kill, he wanted to eradicate tyranny and despotism. In other words, James wanted to finish with the Patriarchal society that had made people do what they did not want to do.

Then, he remembered his father saying, “You won’t be able to go to the Lighthouse”, at that time, the lighthouse was “a silvery, misty-looking tower with a yellow eye that opened suddenly and softly in the evening”. 64 However, now the lighthouse is “a tower, stark and straight (…) barred with black and white; he could see the windows in it”. 65 He asks himself if this is the same lighthouse, and he realized that it is the same, because “nothing was simply one thing”, it depends of the way you see it.

Regarding the relationship between Mr. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe we could say that it was distant and tense. Both stand for two different kinds of sensitiveness, while she was an artist who plays with her emotions; Mr. Ramsay stands for intellect and a male-chauvinistic viewpoint of women. Both were aware of their differences. Therefore, when they interact, we feel the apprehension that it is produced between the two antagonistic forces that they represent. In fact, Lily reflected, after having praising his boots, about her relationship with Mr. Ramsay, and she concluded: “She had always found him difficult. She had never been able to praise him to his face.(…). And that reduced their relationship to something neutral, without that element of sex.” 66

64 Ibid. p. 172.
65 Ibid. p. 172.
66 Ibid. P.p. 158-159.
When she refers to “without that element of sex”, she refers to the fact that Mr. Ramsay does not see her as an attractive woman as Minta is for him. In other words, he did not consider Lily as an entire woman, because she was atypical, clever, independent and critical. Those qualities were intolerable for him in women; actually, he preferred those as Minta, beautiful and silly.

“No learning by heart of the ways of the world? No guide, no shelter, but all was miracle, and leaping from the pinnacle of a tower into the air? Could it be, even for elderly people, that this was life”\(^{67}\)

In this passage, we may realize the anguish that Lily felt because of Mrs. Ramsay’s absence. She necessitated her to create, but more than her, Lily wanted her knowledge of life. She still felt as a little girl who needed a guide to decide what to do and find the meaning of life. She was relieved because Mr. Carmichael could not hear her, when she was calling Mrs. Ramsay.

Lily continues reflecting about it as she tries to finish her picture. She thinks about the feeling of completeness that she experienced ten years ago, that had made her being in love with the place. Love has thousand of shapes “there might be lovers whose gift is to choose out of the elements of things and place them together, giving them wholeness”\(^{68}\). By contrast, at this moment she feels that there are two conflicting forces: Mr. Ramsay and the picture, that make it difficult to carry out her work. Due to that opposition, she realizes that her artwork lacks something important, that she cannot discover yet. Lily realizes that no one can be known completely, “fifty pairs of eyes would not be adequate to seeing Mrs. Ramsay whole. She thinks about Ramsay’s relationship, and how it would be a mistake to simplify it. Somebody comes into the drawing room, throwing a

\(^{67}\) Ibid. p. 167.  
\(^{68}\) Ibid. p. 178.
triangular-shaped shadow over the step which alters the composition of what Lily is painting, and suddenly she seems to see Mrs. Ramsay sitting there knitting her stocking. “Mrs. Ramsay! Mrs. Ramsay! she cried”

69 feeling a sense of fear, she feels the presence of Mrs. Ramsay there, stocking her reddish brown stocking. After that experience, she realized a sense of fullness in her mind, as if she were in communion with Mrs. Ramsay. Finally, she remembered Mr. Ramsay and expressed that she wanted him.

As Mr. Ramsay, Cam, and James are near the lighthouse, James starts to change the way he used to see his father. Now, he thinks that Mr. Ramsay looks old and embodies loneliness, as the truth of things. That is to say, James is feeling identified with his father, actually he says: “We are driving before a gale- we must sink, he began saying to himself, half aloud exactly as his father said it”

70 Therefore, there was change in the relationship between James and Mr. Ramsay, they are getting close, and even alike. Actually, what James wants from his father is that he congratulates him. This is what he has been waiting for years, and Cam perceives that. When they were almost arriving at the lighthouse, finally it happened: “Well done James! Had steered them like a born sailor”

71 It was a great moment for James because he had got what he wanted, the praising of his father, he felt proud and pleased of himself. Cam could realize that in spite that he seemed indifferent for the others. When they finally arrived at the lighthouse, Mr. Ramsay seemed to be satisfied for achieving their destiny. His children silently hope he will ask them about something, for now they long to be close to him, instead of that he says “The parcels for the lighthouse men (…) as if he were saying,

---

69 Ibid. p. 186.
70 Ibid. p. 187.
71 Ibid. p. 189.
“There is no God”72

Lily sensed that Mr. Ramsay must have reached the lighthouse, with a sense of relief because whatever she wanted to give him, she had given him at last. Mr. Ramsay, Cam, and James have reached the lighthouse. Therefore, Lily feels that it is the time of finishing her picture. Now, she realizes that she is ready to complete what she had started ten years ago. Mr. Carmichael joins her at the edge of the lawn and confirms her feeling. Suddenly, Lily returns to her canvas, picks up her paintbrush and, drawing a line in the center, finishes her painting and thinks to herself, in extreme fatigue, that she has had her vision. According to Thakur, Lily, by drawing a line in the middle of her picture, eliminates the empty space. In addition, she was successful at creating harmony between the wall, the hedge, and the tree; and at making a perfect picture of her vision of life. In other words, she reached a sense of completeness as an individual and an artist.

Conclusion

This investigation project deals with the representation of Dominance and Submissiveness in Virginia Woolf’s To the Lighthouse. The aim was to see whether that representation was apparent or real. That is to say, if Woolf wanted to show a conventional image of governing figures in male characters and passive images in female figures. In the novel, Mr. Ramsay would be the oppressive figure and Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe the submitted ones. In order to carry out the project, it was worked with the critical perspective called New Criticism and with some

---

72 Ibid. p.p. 190-191.
autobiographical sources as well to Modernism to complement the analysis.

After having carried out the study the results have shown that the relations of submission and domination between the characters were just apparent, and sometimes they implied a contrary and subtle proposal from the author. The answer for that finding was found due to the reading of the novel and the consulting of N. C Thakur, “Symbolism in Virginia Woolf” and Pierre Bourdieu, “La Dominacion Masculina”. Those books were helpful to understand the explanation of the existence of the relationships based on inequality; that is, there is always someone who commands and another who obeys. By reading Woolf, we can understand that due to her technique called “interior monologue” it is easier to comprehend the inner world of every character. Therefore, it was not so difficult to obtain an answer to the study question.

By doing the analysis, I was surprised by Mr. Ramsay’s attitude towards his children and wife. He was characterized as a tyrannical and self-egotist character who fulfills the qualities of a dominant figure. However, it was not so, he was just part of an androcentric system that forces him to act like that. For me, as a woman was difficult not to scorn and criticize him, as Lily Briscoe did in the novel. Nevertheless, it is a literary research; therefore, I will limit my study to mention my findings.

The dominant figure throughout the novel is Mrs. Ramsay, in spite of being a conventional woman, whose role was to be wife, mother and housewife. She demonstrated that she possessed a strong inner force due to her knowledge of life. Her main quality was to be protective and maternal. Those characteristics made others dependent on her, and allowed her to expand her motherhood further onto her children and husband. She as a powerful figure was loved and criticized for and by many of the characters; she aroused deep feelings in every person that met her. She was
irresistible domineering, but it was not a typical kind of domination, it was the one who is carried out by a woman, therefore, it opposed to the conventional domination that appears in a Patriarchal society.

Lily Briscoe is an important character who is considered as part of the submitted ones in the novel. Her dependence on Mrs. Ramsay is evident because of her youth and lack of experience of life. Her maternal vision about Mrs. Ramsay was emphasized throughout the story. However, Lily is the female voice that criticizes the Patriarchal figures embodied by Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Tansley. Her participation was transcendental in the sense that she constitutes the strongest feminine figure that refuse to accept the male-domination.

The use of Woolf’s technique called “Interior Monologue” makes easier to be familiar with characters deeply, because we, as readers, have the possibility of knowing their outside world, that is their behavior, as well as their thoughts. This technique allow us to get in touch with their past, present and future experiences. Besides, by means of this process, we can have access to the actual characters figures. For instance, Lily’s critiques on Mr. Ramsay “he wears Mrs. Ramsay to death”.

The way Woolf shows the dichotomy of domination and submission is innovative in the senses that she broke the gender stereotypes that associate male characters as governing, and female figures as submitted. In fact, Mrs. Ramsay is the dominant figure for excellence. However, she does not eject a patriarchal form of domination, by the contrary; she stands for a kind of dominance that is given by an intuitive understanding of reality. That characteristic makes people be dependent on her, even the rational Mr. Ramsay. Besides, Woolf describes Mr. Ramsay as a tyrannical figure who makes him an undesirable character for women. Actually, he represented Virginia’s father, fro whom it was
impossible that a woman would write or read “no writing, no books: inconceivable”.

The use of biographical resources in the analysis was constructive in the complete understanding of the novel, actually, To the Lighthouse is a piece of writing based on her childhood, and she calls it an elegy for her relatives that has passed away.

As Hermione Lee pointed out, the novel reflects the way male tradition is resisted with an alternative language of matriarchy represented by Mrs. Ramsay, By Lily with her painting and innovative way of life for the time and by the Cam and James with their rebelliousness and compact “to resist tyranny to death”.

Works Cited


**Works Consulted**
3- Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and its Discontents.* London, 1953
5- Showalter, Elaine. *A literature of their Own.* London: Virago Press, 1982