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SPIRITUAL AND INTELLECTUAL PAIN IN VIRGINIA
WOOLF'S

TO THE LIGHTHOUSE

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ÖZET.....	iv
REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	v
CHAPTER ONE	
INTRODUCTION	
1.1. Virginia Woolf, <i>Pain</i> and <i>To the Lighthouse</i>	1
CHAPTER TWO	
SPIRITUAL PAIN IN <i>TO THE LIGHTHOUSE</i>	
2.1. Lack of Religion	6
2.2. Loneliness and Alienation of Characters.....	15
CHAPTER THREE	
INTELLECTUAL PAIN IN <i>TO THE LIGHTHOUSE</i>	
3.1. Discontent and Pessimism of Characters.....	30
3.2. Mrs. Ramsay's Lack of Education.....	38
CONCLUSION.....	43
WORKS CITED.....	46
Özgeçmiş.....	50

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ABSTRACT

SPIRITUAL AND INTELLECTUAL PAIN IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *TO THE LIGHTHOUSE*

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The present study has been prepared after having collected a plenty of critical articles, reviews and internet sources on the novel *To the Lighthouse*.

This study critically examines the theme of spiritual and intellectual pain in Virginia Woolf's modernist masterpiece *To the Lighthouse*. Pain is one of the very important themes in modernism, which is not surprising because disillusionment, frustration, alienation are among thematic characteristics of modernism. The novel being Woolf's most autobiographical one, it is inevitable that her own life be referred to. There are a number of similarities between the author's life and that of her characters.

I tried to show how the change of attitude towards Victorian values brought search for different values, different sense of reality, and quite unusual treatment of time passage in the novel. Questioning the previous tradition, denying God did not bring comfort and consolation, rather, it brought pain, emotional and intellectual. Modernism is not able to answer the questions posed by modernist writers unambiguously.

In the thesis, archetypal, autobiographical, feminist and, to some extent, psychoanalytical approaches have been used.

Keywords: *Pain, Spiritual, Intellectual, Alienation, Modernism, Pessimism.*

ÖZET

VIRGINIA WOOLF'UN *TO THE LIGHTHOUSE (DENİZFENERİ)* ROMANINDA RUHSAL VE ZİHİNSEL ACI

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Takdim edilen bu çalışma, Deniz Feneri romanı üzerine pek çok eleştirel makale, değerlendirme ve internet kaynağı toplandıktan sonra hazırlanmıştır.

Bu çalışma, Virginia Woolf'un modernist başyapıtı Deniz Feneri'ndeki ruhsal ve zihinsel acı temasını eleştirel olarak incelemektedir. Acı, modernizmdeki çok önemli konulardan biridir. Bu şaşırtıcı değildir; çünkü hayal kırıklığı, hüsrana, yabancılaşma modernizmdeki konusal özellikler arasındadır. Roman, Virginia Woolf'un en otobiyografik romanı olduğundan, yazarın hayatına atıfta bulunmak kaçınılmazdır. Yazarın hayatı ve karakterleri arasında pek çok benzerlik bulunmaktadır.

Bu romanda, Viktorya Dönemi'ne ait değerlere karşı olan tutumdaki değişikliğin, farklı değerlerin, farklı gerçeklik anlayışının ve zaman akışının oldukça alışılmamış işlenişinin arayışına nasıl sebep olduğunu göstermeye çalıştım. Önceki gelenekleri sorgulayarak, Tanrı'yı inkar etmek rahat ve teselliden ziyade, duygusal ve zihinsel acıya sebep olmaktadır. Modernizm, modernist yazarlar tarafından sorulan soruları tam olarak cevaplamaya yetmemektedir.

Tezde, otobiyografik, arketip, feminist ve bir ölçüde psikanalitik yaklaşımlar kullanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Acı, Ruhsal, Zihinsel, Yabancılaşma, Modernizm, Kötümserlik.*

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For the present thesis, a considerable amount of critical articles was explored. Some of them have been cited, many others consulted. As this thesis focuses mainly on the sufferings of the characters, the novel *To the Lighthouse* has been read in detail and besides the novel, lots of sources related to the pain in the novel have been investigated. The following are some of the sources in the form of summary:

First of all, Virginia Woolf's collection of autobiographical writings titled *Moments of Being* was of particular interest in that it helped me to get a deeper insight not only into Virginia Woolf's own life, her unique personality and vision but also how her literary career was shaped and matured. As *Moments of Being* seems to be a perfect companion to *To the Lighthouse* with much discussion of Woolf's childhood and her parents, it was of great use while investigating the characters of *To the Lighthouse*, her father and mother, in particular.

In Jane Lilienfeld's article, " 'The Deceptiveness of Beauty': Mother Love and Mother Hate in *To the Lighthouse*", the relations between Mrs. Ramsay and Lily as representative of those between a mother and a daughter are carefully examined. It is mostly about Lily's pain of longing for and separation from Mrs. Ramsay. It is the same with Virginia - Julia Stephen relationship (1977: 346).

In her article, Jane Lilienfeld considers Lily to be an orphan who, on the one hand, longs for having mother like Mrs. Ramsay, but on the other hand, she refuses to be archetypal, and is convinced that "she may forge her own patterns of behavior which allow her spirit to achieve an independence and maturity un hoped for in her early fierce ambivalence." (1977: 347).

Also, this article reveals Lily's pain very vividly drawing parallels with Virginia Woolf's own life. Virginia Woolf feels great "psychological alienation" (1977: 348) from her mother, not having adopted Julia Stephen's role, career and perspectives. After Mrs. Ramsay's death, Lily mourns a lot moving through real anger and anguish to an acceptance of her dissolution into memory.

According to this article, Mrs. Ramsay has some visions such as “women must marry, women must have children” (Woolf, 2004: 56)¹. Lily has the difficulty of struggling against Mrs. Ramsay’s visions. The only way to deal with Mrs. Ramsay’s power to kindle love is to denounce it. Lily resolves never again to submit herself to such pain. She resolves never to marry.

The article also focuses on Lily’s grief after Mrs. Ramsay’s death. At one point, Lily reaches the most painful moment of the mourning process.

Roberta Rubenstein’s article “ ‘I meant nothing by the Lighthouse’ : Virginia Woolf’s Poetics of Negation”, Virginia Woolf’s use of negative expressions in *To the Lighthouse*, “functions not simply as a syntactical element that appears to a greater or lesser extent in all discourse, literary and otherwise, but as a concentration of linguistic cues that underscore and advance the narrative’s thematic concerns.” (2008: 36).

While composing *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf experienced two significant episodes of illness. And both of these episodes are reflected in the novel as the pain of the characters. The writer touches on Mrs. Ramsay’s questioning her life and her unhappy marriage. She also dwells on Mr. Ramsay’s discontent with his life and career and his need for sympathy.

The author also focuses on Lily’s feeling of emptiness after Mrs. Ramsay’s death. Lily also feels herself blocked in the presence of Mr. Ramsay. She feels as if she were “overbearing” (2008: 45) Mr. Ramsay’s presence and she lacks inspiration.

In her article “ ‘There she sat’: The Power of the Feminist Imagination in *To the Lighthouse*” Beth Rigel Daugherty examines Mrs. Ramsay’s sufferings mostly as an angel in the house. Mrs. Ramsay has too many duties towards her husband, her children, her guests, the patients she visits. And she sacrifices herself as an angel so much that she suffers from “fatigue and depression” (1991: 292) in the novel.

¹ Throughout the thesis, all references to the novel are from WOOLF, V., **To the Lighthouse**, Vintage, London, 2004. Parenthetical numerals indicate page numbers; italics in quotations are mine.

The article examines Grimm Brother's tale in detail comparing the tale and the novel. Mrs. Ramsay gets her own message from the tale and the tale reminds her that "of the two, her husband is much more important than her." (62). Because of the devastating message of the tale, Mrs. Ramsay questions her motives, attitudes and behavior.

According to Beth Rigel Daugherty, Woolf and Lily try to accept the world as it is, without making it less painful.

"Thinking Back Through Our Mothers" is an article by Katherine Dalsimer which explores the complexities of Virginia Woolf's ongoing internal relationship with her mother, Julia Stephen, who had died when her daughter was only thirteen.

Beyond raising a dead person, Woolf, in the novel, according to Katherine Dalsimer, gives the readers the grief and the experience of losing mother. With the death of Mrs. Ramsay, Woolf induces the reader something very like pain and "experience of abandonment" (2004: 714). Through the first section of the book, the reader is drawn into the world of the novel, the readers' thoughts circling around Mrs. Ramsay and in the next section Mrs. Ramsay is gone, which is so unexpected and painful. Katherine Dalsimer also gives the pain of being left motherless of two children, Cam and James.

In contrast to most of the critics, Glenn Pederson, in his unusual article "Vision in *To the Lighthouse*" criticizes Mrs. Ramsay's attitude towards family unity and blames her for breaking it. He also accuses her of preventing a unity between family members. According to him, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay both experience the pain of loneliness caused by their unsatisfactory marriage.

The whole article emphasizes that it is Mrs. Ramsay who is "self-centered" and short-sighted" (n.d.: 585) compared to Mr. Ramsay. Furthermore, Mrs. Ramsay, surprisingly, is considered to be a negative force in the family, so that the members of the family are reunited only after her death.

The article dwells mostly upon Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay's not being able to have a unity in their marriage. Even though they seem to be a married couple, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay have never been in real unity.

In the article “Tables in Trees: Realism in *To the Lighthouse*” by Bruce Bassoff, Lily’s pain is in the foreground. The article focuses on her suffering: “The whole sea for miles round ran red and gold. Some winey smell mixed with it and intoxicated her [Lily] for she felt again her own headlong desire to throw herself off the cliff and be drowned looking for a pearl brooch on a beach” (261).

Lily is discontented with her work because she cannot finish her painting in the first part. Lily compares herself to Mrs. Ramsay. Lily, according to Bruce Bassoff, tries to defend herself against Mr. Ramsay by using her easel as a barrier.

“Perplexing relationships” (1984: 429) between the family members are explained by the help of quotations “Mr. Ramsay ties knots” (230) “Mrs. Ramsay knits”. All these images like ‘cutting’ and ‘slicing’, moreover, like those of blades, knives, razors, scimitars and knitting needles that pervade the novel, indicate the hostility.

James’s pain of dilemma is also explored in the article. According to it, he can neither accept his father’s authority, nor reject it as meaningless.

The author focuses on Mrs. Ramsay’s experiencing Mr. Ramsay’s mind as a “raised hand shadowing her mind” (184), which gives her a feeling of inferiority.

Three articles deal directly with the theme of religion in the novel. Two of them, “An Agnostic Daughter’s Apology: Materialism, Spiritualism, and Ancestry in Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*” and “Time and the Sacred in Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*” view the theme of religion taking under their scrutiny Part II of the novel, the third, “Art and Atheism in *To the Lighthouse*”, deals with the same subject directly, taking into consideration the whole novel.

Katie Gemmill examines Virginia Woolf’s treatment of time and religion in her remarkable article “Time and the Sacred in Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*”. She argues that the writer in the second part focuses on the sacred rather than religion in the traditional sense applying death and immortality to personified things and objects.

Mark Gaipa’s treatment of the characters’ agnosticism is quite different from that of the majority of critics. He does not consider Mrs. Ramsay and her husband to

be confirmed agnostics. They are doubters and “restless” (2003: 7) agnostics which increases the pain of unbelief.

The basis for Gaipa’s argument is Virginia Woolf’s being aware of her father’s and some of his colleagues’ spiritualism as versus materialism. Leslie Stephen’s essay “An Agnostic’s Apology” questions “gnostic faith and agnostic skepticism” (2003: 8).

The second section of the novel “The Time Passes” in the writer’s opinion, is the most “painful” (Gaipa: 1), part of the novel. The restless spirits at the start of “Time Passes” are troubled by “the anguish of life, its concealed pain” (qtd by Gaipa, 2003: 4).

Woolf, according to Gaipa, associated her mother’s death with the burden her father now imposed upon his daughters. Much as Mrs. Ramsay’s death leaves Lily unprotected before Mr. Ramsay, whom she must confront herself in “The Lighthouse”, Woolf tells us that her mother “left us the legacy of L. Stephen’s dependence, which after her death became so harsh an imposition”. (2003: 4)

In Anne-Marie Walsh’s article, “Illuminating Gaze: Light and Consciousness in Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*”, the two characters of the novel, Lily and Mrs. Ramsay have been examined in detail in terms of their connection with the light. Both of them truly connect to *Light* in a spiritual way, and like everyone else in the novel, Lily is drawn to Mrs. Ramsay’s inner light, strength and purity. However, Lily doesn’t just bask in and absorb these virtues from Mrs. Ramsay, she attempts to understand why and how she can possess this light, and to re-create it in her painting. Also Lily’s quest for seeking balance is touched on here. Lily is said to be afraid of being criticized and of somebody seeing her work. In the third chapter, Lily’s struggle to give order to her chaotic thoughts and perceptions has been dwelt upon in the article.

In her article, “ ‘When sometimes she imagined herself like her mother’: The Contrasting Responses of Cam and Mrs. Ramsay To The Role of The Angel in The House”, Shannon Forbes presents the different approaches of Mrs. Ramsay and Cam, the youngest daughter of eight Ramsay children, towards the role of the Angel in the House. Mrs. Ramsay sacrifices her independence and enacts the

Angel role and also tries to educate Cam to relinquish her independence so as to adopt the Angel role as her own. Cam, however, is a rebellious daughter who struggles with her mother's teachings and eventually responds to them by refusing to enact the Angel role.

Mrs. Ramsay, according to Forbes, clearly enacts the role of the Angel in the House, yet she also recognizes the limitations and disadvantages of this role and often resents her position as such. The dinner party section expresses it in the best way. Mrs. Ramsay's Angel power is confined to the domestic sphere. Cam also has an experience of a painful process in which she is bothered and tormented by the influence of the Angel role, attempts to come to terms with this influence and to reject this role for herself.

Shannon Forbes also touches on James's hatred for his father and envy of his father's "tyranny" (160) and power in Oedipal terms.

In the doctoral thesis of Sinem Bezircilioğlu, on "The Stream of Consciousness Technique in Virginia Woolf's three novels: *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves*", the writer examines Mr. Ramsay's searching for perfection in his career, his being disliked by his children under the light of two famous quotations from the novel: "Someone had blundered" (23) and "We perished each alone" (158). The writer claims that these phrases reflect Mr. Ramsay's discontent and pessimism. He is afraid of and worried about being forgotten. He is trying to master the letter, which stands for his intellectual performance.

Also, Mrs. Ramsay's character is examined in this study. She is suffering from her husband's harshness and selfishness. Her husband never cares about her feelings. She feels herself restricted to being a person to be consulted, doing chores at home. Furthermore, the thesis reveals that Mrs. Ramsay cannot achieve unity in herself. She is questioning all her life. Moreover, Bezircilioğlu shows that Mrs. Ramsay is so obsessed with cohesion and arrangement that she cannot stand everything being spoilt. According to the thesis, she has a bad habit to the degree of obsession.

The writer also tells about James's disappointment when he reaches the lighthouse he desired to go to so much. He finds it different from the one he had in his mind.

At the end of the thesis, the writer explores that it is Mrs. Ramsay who had blundered. She was the one who broke family unity. Everything seems to be resolved only after her death.

It must be noted that all the critical articles read prove that Ronald Barthes's notion "the death of the author" can hardly be applied to the novel *To the Lighthouse*. Virginia Woolf herself is present throughout the novel. She shares all her characters' pain, disillusionment, and mistrust.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Virginia Woolf, *Pain* and *To the Lighthouse*

A work of art is abundant, spills out, gets drunk, sits up with you all night and forgets to close the curtains, dries your tears, is your friend, offers you a disguise, a difference, a pose. Cut and cut it through and there is still a diamond at the core. Skim the top and it is rich. The inexhaustible energy of art is transfusion for a worn-out world. When I read Virginia Woolf she is to my spirit, waterfall and wine.

Janette WINTERSON (qtd in Carson, 2005: 18).

I think no lover of literature or explorer of Virginia Woolf's legacy can deny the ecstasy of reading, examining and assessing it. Her masterpiece novel *To the Lighthouse* is an unfading novel. It is quite natural that

In 1998, the Modern Library named *To the Lighthouse* No. 15 on its list of the 100 best English – language novels of the 20th century. In 2005, the novel was chosen by Time magazine as one of the one hundred best English – language novels from 1923 to present.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/To_the_Lighthouse).

According to Higher Education Counsel's Thesis Catalogue, on the whole the number of thesis and dissertations on *To the Lighthouse* does not exceed nine. Mine is the tenth thesis of which I feel most proud of. Once again I would like to emphasize the pleasure of the investigation throughout the study.

To the Lighthouse is the best example of high modernism novel. The term is used in literature, criticism, music and the visual arts. However, whereas in politics, art and culture, the term has a pejorative meaning, it is usually absent when the term is used in reference to literature.

High literary modernism, is generally used to describe a subgenre of literary modernism, and generally encompasses works published between the First World War and the beginning of the Second.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_modernism).

High modernism believes that

[...] there is a clear distinction between capital – A Art and mass culture, and it places itself firmly on the side of Art and in opposition to popular or mass culture.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_modernism).

Though Virginia Woolf was never indifferent to the reaction of her readers, and was always wondering how her work would be accepted by the reading public, her works undoubtedly belong to capital – A Art.² The main reason for this assumption is that *To the Lighthouse* is different from other modernist novels in the way Virginia Woolf experiments with the new devices such as Stream of Consciousness Technique, the passage of time and how women are forced by society to allow men to take emotional strength from them. Her *stream of consciousness* is unique in that it contains the devices no other writer employs. She presents consciousness by using a number of devices in one and the same flow of consciousness such as *multiple point of view*, *use of free association*, *use of time montage*, *shift of characters*, *interior monologue* without warning and the overuse of personal pronouns (http://neabigread.net/teachers_guides/handouts).

The present thesis deals with spiritual and intellectual pain in Virginia Woolf's masterpiece *To the Lighthouse* (1927). The word *pain*, as a noun, means, "physical ache, discomfort, or distress because of injury, overstrain, or illness; emotional or mental affliction or suffering; grief." (Kellerman, 1976: 680). In this definition, "emotional or mental affliction or suffering; grief" suit the theme of our thesis.

The theme of pain shows itself vividly in *To the Lighthouse*, which is not surprising since loneliness, alienation, frustration and disillusionment are among thematic characteristics of modernism. Considering that pain accompanied Virginia Woolf throughout her life, it is natural that this theme is predominant in the novel.

In *Moments of Being* she calls "instances of exceptional moments" (Woolf, 2002: 84) in human's life as moments of being. Virginia Woolf is wondering in her book as what makes some things so memorable (she calls them "being", others

² *The Duchess and The Jeweller* and *A Room of One's Own* are the cases when Virginia Woolf made all the necessary corrections required of her for the works to be published.

forgotten or dismissed as something unimportant. To her, it is only the “being” that is worth remembering and describing. She thinks herself unable to do both of them like many great writers. (Woolf, 2002: 83). Non – being she defines using the oxymoron “cotton wool”. (Woolf, 2002: 83).

She emphasizes that “many of these exceptional moments brought with them a peculiar horror and a physical collapse;” (Woolf, 2002: 85). She is convinced that it is this pain of the lived, of the felt, and experienced that made her a writer (Woolf, 2002: 85). She calls it “the shock – receiving capacity” (Woolf, 2002: 85).

The way Virginia Woolf treats her pain, and pain generally, is amazing. In *Moments of Being* she mentions more than once that at times of pain her writing capacity increased:

It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole; this wholeness means that it has lost its power to hurt me; it gives me, perhaps because by doing so I take away the *pain*, a great delight to put the severed parts together.

(Woolf, 2002: 85).

So it is no wonder that *To the Lighthouse* is one of the most painful, elegiac novels into which Woolf poured out her grief. It is considered to be an elegy to her parents and so it is quite natural that the novel contains the author’s pain. While composing *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf herself had

[...] two significant episodes of illness. The first began with a collapse at her sister Vanessa’s home in August 1925. [...] The second episode, during the summer and fall of 1926, interrupted Woolf’s progress on *To the Lighthouse* as it neared completion. (Rubenstein, 2008: 37 - 38).

The pain in the novel is reflected quite intensely but not openly. Since it is Woolf’s half autobiographical novel, most of the characters are from her real life: Mrs. Ramsay (her mother Julia Stephen), Mr. Ramsay (her father Leslie Stephen) and Lily Briscoe (her sister Vanessa Bell or Woolf herself).

However, the terms *intellectual* and *spiritual* need to be clarified. Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary gives two meanings for the word *intellectual*: “1. of or connected with a person’s powers of reasoning. 2. (a) Appealing to, needing or using sb’s powers of reasoning or desire for knowledge. 2. (b) Having excellent

mental abilities and enjoying activities that further develop the mind.” (Crowther, 1995: 620). In the novel, we will make use of both meanings of the word.

The polysemantic word *spiritual*, however, needs further clarification because, in the novel it goes beyond its dictionary meanings. The first meaning “relating to people's religious beliefs”, will be dealt with in Chapter II (www.seslisozluk.com). The second meaning “of or pertaining to the moral feelings or states of the soul, as distinguished from the external actions; reaching and affecting the spirits” is also used in Chapter III (www.seslisozluk.com). Besides these two meanings, the word combination *spiritual pain* in the present study means *emotional pain*, the pain as a response to everyday events, speeches, looks and impressions. Virginia Woolf attaches great importance to spirit in her article “Modern Fiction”: She blames the writers of traditional fiction for their concern with the “body” not with the “spirit” (Woolf, 1919: 1).

In Chapter III, the characters’ preoccupation with their career and consequently, with their worries and anxieties related to it will be examined. Almost all the guests visiting the Ramsays are intellectuals working even during their summer vacation but none is satisfied with the outcome of their profession. The characters’ reasons for their pessimism and dissatisfaction will be examined.

The lighthouse is in fact an odd place for a journey, as the lighthouses mark those regions of the coast most perilous for ships to come to shore. Critics of the novel ascribe many meanings to the lighthouse considering it a symbol. As such, the lighthouse has a number of meanings such as ups and downs of life, target of life, Mrs. Ramsay, who, like the lighthouse, tries to guide people, “potential goals and dreams to be realized for James and Mr. Ramsay, it represents Mrs. Ramsay's goal of nurturing and giving.” (qtd from <http://www.english.sbc.edu/Journal/Archive/05-06/Walsh.htm>).

Yet, from the seemingly postponement of a visit to a nearby lighthouse Virginia Woolf tries to set up an important and moving examination of the complex tensions and allegiances of family life, and the conflict between male and female principles. In this thesis, this apparent conflict between males and females will be focused on.

Writers with their myriad of texts in the form of tragedies, essays, novels, poems, and epigrams have focused in depth on the human phenomenon of pain from the antiquity right up to the present day. Siegfried Lenz observes that “There is no suffering that is not preserved by it [literature], no painful experience that is handed down by it” (qtd from <<http://www.pain-initiative.com>>).

To the Lighthouse is no exception. Its best representative, Virginia Woolf, who was not unknown to pain, depicts it in one of her most famous novels, *To the Lighthouse*. Virginia Woolf had a worn-out world-, a world that “according to Arnold (1986: 136) had really neither joy, nor love, nor light/nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain.” (qtd in Carson, 2005: 18). Through art, she got rid of her problems – her pain. When art failed to alleviate her pain, she committed suicide.

CHAPTER TWO

2. SPIRITUAL PAIN IN *TO THE LIGHTHOUSE*

2.1. Lack of Religion

There is no Shakespeare; there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is *no God*; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself.

(Woolf, 2002: vii).

In the novel, the characters are considered to be agnostics. The name agnostic, originally coined by Professor Thomas Huxley about 1869 to describe their less aggressive, less certain version of doubt later gained general acceptance (<http://www.ratbags.com/rsoles/comment/lstephen01.htm>). Nowadays, “Agnosticism is the view that the truth value of certain claims about the existence of any deity, but also other religious and metaphysical claims – is unknown or unknowable.” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agnosticism>). In other words, agnosticism is the belief that it is impossible to determine whether or not God exists.

The novel being semi-autobiographical, it is necessary that Virginia Woolf’s own life be referred to. In her own life, Virginia Woolf found no consolation in religion as she was brought up with an aggressive, humanistic atheism. In Chapter I of her seminal work *A Room of One’s Own*, Virginia Woolf, while being eager to enter Oxbridge’s³ library (which was not easy to do without being “accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction), she “had no wish to enter” (2005: 8) the chapel even if she had the right. She finds it only

[...] amusing enough to watch the congregation assembling, coming in and going out again, busying themselves at the door of the chapel like bees at the mouth of a hive (2005: 8).

She goes on by making fun of religious people leaving the chapel

Many were in cap and gown; some had tufts of fur on their shoulders; others were wheeled in bath-chairs; others, though not past middle age, seemed creased and crushed into shapes so singular that one was reminded of those giant crabs and crayfish who have with difficulty across the sand of an aquarium (2005: 8).

³ Oxbridge is the abbreviation for Oxford and Cambridge universities.

Later she criticizes people, among them kings and queens, and great nobles who had always provided the church with “an unending stream of gold and silver”, (2005: 9) but there was no money for women’s education.

Her being skeptical about conventional religion is well known by critics. Kenneth Tighe devotes his article “Art and Atheism in *To the Lighthouse*” to the characters’ faith or rather to the absence of their faith. In *To the Lighthouse*, Virginia Woolf presents us isolated characters.

Isolation of individual characters in the novel is compounded by the absence of God. Without a Creator to lean on, one fends for oneself. Without a God to provide order in the universe, the task falls upon the individual (Tighe, 1997: 1).

In Mrs. Ramsay’s opinion, as there is no God, it is the concern of people to create a harmony and to bring order and meaning to this world.

Woolf’s father, Leslie Stephen, was regarded as one of the most famous rationalists and agnostics of his day. He “communicated a strong disdain for and disinterest in religion, from which he had recovered early in life” (Schaberg, 2002: 23). In 1865, he wrote “I now believe in nothing, to put it shortly; but I do not the less believe in morality, &c, &c.” (qtd in Schaberg, 2002: 23). And it can be clearly seen that Stephen’s writings on agnosticism – most notably his essay “What is Materialism?” became a very important subtext for Woolf as she composed the novel (Gaipa, 2003: 2). When writing *To the Lighthouse*, particularly “Time Passes”, Woolf is apparently responding to what she met in her father’s agnostic writings (Gaipa, 2003: 9).⁴

Leslie Stephen’s essay ‘An Agnostic’s Apology’ was written in 1876 as an answer to the grief he had after the death of his first wife. In this writing, L. Stephen focuses on the issues Woolf explains with Mrs. McNab – “the need to be consoled for life’s pain, the prospect of solace without religion.”(Gaipa, 2003: 24). Although he is grieving, Stephen still claims agnosticism to be better. He informs us that “agnostics willfully simplify the world, seeking an anodyne for their pain by insisting

⁴ Gaipa does not trust Woolf’s contention that she “specially refrained either from reading her [mother’s] letters, or [her] father’s life” when composing the novel. (Gaipa, 2003: 2).

the harmony beneath the discords is a reality not a dream” whereas agnostics like himself “have felt the weariness and pain of all” (Gaipa, 2003: 3).

Virginia Woolf is more concerned with the structure of faith than with its true content.

She believed that the life would begin again, but not that she would ever be a part of it, even in her imagination. She did not wish to be a part of it, and her characters could not act for her [...] (qtd from *Between the Acts* by Schaberg, 2002: 30, 31).

Pericles Lewis in his book *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel* argues that “Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* hints at the complex modernist attitude towards Victorian and the Edwardian atheism.” (2010: 86). Although Mrs. Ramsay is described as a Victorian female, in other words, the Angel in the House, she does not believe in God and wonders “How could any Lord have made this world?” (98). On the other hand, “Mr. Ramsay, a figure of Victorian patriarchy, denies the existence of God,” too (Lewis, 2010: 86).

Mrs McNab’s character is used by Woolf ‘as a generic example’ to show that

[...] if rich people like the Ramsays can hardly bear the pain and injustice of life without resorting to the solace of religion, how can the poor, who have real grievances and burdens to shoulder? (Gaipa, 2003: 23).

As Gaipa states, she has her own real sufferings and burdens; but she knows how to comfort herself. Mrs. McNab is an important character in the novel for Woolf in order to show that “she had her consolations, as if indeed there twined about her dirge some incorrigible hope.” (125). In “Time Passes” section, Mrs. McNab is questioning her seventy-year-old life. It was full of troubles and sorrows. “It was not easy or snug this world she had known for close on seventy years. Bowed down she was with weariness.” (124). However, despite all these “sorrow and trouble” (124), “she sang.” (124). V. Woolf seems to imply that, it is easier when you have God to believe in.

Kenneth Tighe shows how different the characters are in their agnosticism. The Ramsay children like mocking Charles Tansley calling him

“little atheist”⁵ (5). Tighe describes Tansley as:

[...] an insecure and ambitious scholar capable of flaunting his beliefs. If he is the “little atheist”, his intellectual mentor, Mr. Ramsay, is most likely a larger one (1997: 2).

For Tansley and Mr. Ramsay, denying God “seems more of an academic position, part of an intellectual ambition.” (Tighe, 1997: 2). Mr. Ramsay with his passion for facts, views religion as something unfounded.

From the novel, we learn that though the children are also atheists, the issue is being discussed in the family, and, it is Mr. Ramsay who is consulted on such a sensitive issue as religion. Cam would come to her father and says “all in a muddle about something someone had said about Christ, or hearing what Napoleon was like” (180). Here, the readers are not informed about the response of father. According to Kenneth Tighe, this shows us that the family live a “secular life” (1997: 2). Tighe also gives the answer to the question “What is atheism for Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay?”

For Mrs. Ramsay, atheism is part of a rugged self-reliance, strength of character; while for Mr. Ramsay, it is more of an intellectual posture associated with insecurity and weakness. Either way, the Ramsay household survives handily without benefit of a God (1997: 2).

Jane Schaberg quotes from Woolf’s book-length pamphlet *Three Guinnes* :

What we may ask, is ‘religion’. What the Christian religion is has been laid down once and for all by the founder of that religion in words that can be read by all in a translation of singular beauty; whether or not we accept the interpretation that has been put on them, we cannot deny them to be words of the most profound meaning. It can thus safely be said whereas few people know what medicine is, or what law is, everyone who owns a copy of the New Testament knows what religion meant in the mind of its founder (Schaberg, 2002: 22).

As seen from the statement, V. Woolf does not deny the beauty of the religious book; moreover, she is aware of its “profound meaning”. Therefore, it can

⁵ Atheism is commonly defined as “the position that there are no deities. It can also mean the rejection of belief in the existence of deities. A broader definition is simply the absence of belief that any deities exist” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atheism>). For agnosticism see page 6.

be suggested that as an agnostic, Woolf gave much thought to religion while questioning it.

The second section of the novel “Time Passes” in our opinion, is the most *painful*, part of the novel. It is also the most *sacred* part of the novel. The following lines from Katie Gemmill’s article prove this:

Much modernist literature charts writers’ various attempts to express and explore religious impulses – senses of the *sacred* – outside of the framework of traditional Christianity and its corresponding rites and ceremonies of worship. Virginia Woolf, for example, proposes alternative avenues through which to commune with the *sacred* in the middle section of her novel *To the Lighthouse*, entitled “Time Passes.” Specifically, in this section of the text, Woolf enlists an innovative conception of time to create windows of opportunity for profound spiritual meditation. In doing so she opens the possibility of feeling the *sacred* in everyday events and experiences, and in turn the possibility of connecting more intensely with existence (n.d.: 1).

In this section, we can see the pacers on the beach are stirred from their sleep with the struggle between belief and doubt. They are questioning the purpose of life and asking themselves some questions to understand life and to comfort themselves.

[...] the mystic, the visionary, walked the beach, stirred a puddle, looked at a stone, and asked themselves “What am I?” “What is this?” and suddenly an answer was vouchsafed them (what it was they could not say): so that they were warm in the frost and had comfort in the desert (125).

At the start of “Time Passes”, ‘the restless spirits’ (Gaipa, 2003: 4) are troubled by ‘the anguish of life, its concealed pain’ (qtd in Gaipa, 2003: 4).

We see “the divine goodness” (121) mentioned by the narrator in the second section of the novel “Time Passes”.

It seemed now as if, touched by human penitence and all its toil, divine goodness had parted the curtain and displayed behind it, single, distinct, the hare erect; the wave falling; the boat rocking, which, did we deserve them, should be ours always (121).

Further, in the same chapter, the narrator again refers to God. “God seems to be angry with people on earth thinking them not worth things given by Him. And he draws the curtain” (121).

Interestingly, this mentioning of “divine goodness” (121) and “divine promptitude” (122) does not seem to attract critics’ attention. “Divine goodness” and “divine promptitude” are translated into Turkish as “Tanrı” and “Tanrı buyruğu” (Öncül, 2000: 156, 157), therefore it can be suggested that Virginia Woolf by “the divine force” implies some sublime force, not exactly God.

Again in the same chapter, Woolf uses the terms like “the sunset on the sea, the pallor of dawn, the moon rising, fishing-boats against the moon, and children pelting each other with handfuls of grass” (127) which she regards as “the usual tokens of divine bounty” (127). Despite being an agnostic, she knows that she cannot deny the bounty of God.

In the first section of the novel “The Window”, Mrs. Ramsay almost acknowledges the existence of God. But immediately she regrets having mentioned God. After having put her children to bed, Mrs. Ramsay finds herself in a mystical atmosphere. While she is sitting and looking and thinking that the third stroke of the Lighthouse is hers, some little phrase, which is lying in her mind comes back:

“Children don’t forget, children don’t forget” – which she would repeat and begin adding to it, it will end, it will end, she said. It will, it will come, when suddenly she added, We are in the hands of the Lord (58, 59).

She thinks that “Who had said it? Not she; she had been trapped into saying something she did not mean.” (59). In Kenneth Tighe’s opinion, it is easy to understand why Mrs. Ramsay has said so and how she has been “trapped.” As she has just made her youngest son sleep, he gets into “a peculiar transcendental state in which words and phrases moved ungoverned about her mind.” (Tighe, 1997: 1). And Mrs. Ramsay sets about “purifying out of existence that lie” (59).

She returns to her knitting wondering what made her say “We are in the hands of Lord.” The insincerity slipping in among the truths roused her, annoyed her.’ (59).

She thinks that there is “insincerity” (59) in her words because she does not believe in God so she says these words just from habit.

Sometime later she is still angry at her words. Mrs. Ramsay seems to have her own reasons for her agnosticism:

How could any Lord have made this world? She asked. With her mind she had always seized the fact that there is no reason, order, justice: but suffering, death, the poor (98).

She refuses to believe and trust in things she does not understand. She is convinced that “There was no treachery too base for the world to commit; she knew that. No happiness lasted; she knew that” (98). According to Kenneth Tighe, her disbelief shows “a point of honor, a matter of personal pride” (1997: 1).

We learn from *Moments of Being* that Virginia Woolf’s mother, Julia Stephen had had faith before her second marriage, and it was not something to get over easily.

What is known, and is much more remarkable, is that during those eight years spent, so far as she had time over from her children and house, ‘doing good’, nursing, visiting the poor, *she lost her faith.* (Woolf, 2002: 101).

We see that the Stephens were the first in their family history to lose faith. Their parents were deeply religious people.

The climax of the novel, the dinner scene, gives important clues about how Mrs. Ramsay thinks about the atmosphere of that evening. She thinks that “Transformed into a cathedral, the dining room fills with prayer-like verse” (102). She is reminded “of men and boys crying out the Latin words of a service” (102) in some Roman Catholic Cathedral. Sitting at the head of the table, her husband was as if beginning to recite poetry. “But the verse speaks not of “God and Heaven, sin and redemption, but of the garden, the rose, the buzzing bee, and of romantic love.” (Tighe, 1997: 6). Kenneth Tighe comments on this scene, saying: “The simple life; secular yet sacred” (Tighe, 1997: 6). Even though divine issues are not discussed at table on that night, Mrs. Ramsay gets into that sacred mood and simulates the atmosphere a holy place.

Erich Auerbach assumes that at times Virginia Woolf, the author, replaces the narrator, and presents things from her own perspective (1946: n.p.).

One is obliged to assume that it contains direct statements of her own. But she does not seem to bear in mind that she is the author and hence ought to know how matters stand with her characters. (Auerbach, 1946: n.p.).

For a thinking, intelligent person it does not seem to be easy to deny God. As the characters in the novel are doubters, not strict atheists, they know the beauty and

unbelievable side of the great nature but if they are asked about their creator, they withdraw themselves:

It was impossible to resist the strange intimation which every gull, flower, tree, man and woman, and the white earth itself seemed to declare (but if questioned at once to withdraw) that good triumphs, happiness prevails, order rules; or to resist the extraordinary stimulus to range hither and thither in search of some absolute good, some crystal of intensity, remote from the known pleasures and familiar virtues, something alien to the processes of domestic life, single, hard, bright, like a diamond in the sand, which would render the possessor secure (126).

When Lily gets exhausted of her work, the same question makes her confused:

What is the meaning of life? That was all -- a simple question; one that tended to close in on one with the years. The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark [...] In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing (she looked at the clouds going and the leaves shaking) was struck into stability. Life stand still here [...] (154).

Cam is also meditative through the journey, full of reservations:

Would the water last? Would the provisions last? She asked herself, telling herself a story but knowing at the same time what was the truth (195).

James Wood places Woolf in the company of Melville, Flaubert, and Joyce, all writers “great enough to move between the religious impulse and the novelistic impulse, to distinguish between them and yet, miraculously, to draw on both” (Schaberg, 2002: 25). For Woolf, he says,

[...] there is no formal agony of religious belief. The hard work had been done. For her, a kind of religious or mystical belief and a literary belief softly consorted – and yet, for her, the novel still retained its skeptical, inquisitorial function. (Schaberg, 2002: 25).

Lily, when she laid her head on the lap of Mrs. Ramsay, “laughed almost hysterically at the thought of Mrs. Ramsay presiding with immutable calm over *destinies* which she completely failed to understand.” (46-47). Most critics agree that it is Lily who represents Virginia Woolf in the novel. With this sentence, Woolf

implies that there is a concept called ‘destiny’ in real life, even though she herself cannot understand it.

While Nancy and Andrew are out with the loving couple, Paul and Minta, Nancy crouched low down and thought while touching the smooth rubber-like sea-anemones:

Brooding, she changed the pool into the sea, and made the minnows into sharks and whales, and cast vast clouds over this tiny world by holding her hand against the sun, and so brought darkness and desolation, like God himself, to millions of ignorant and innocent creatures, and then took her hand away suddenly and let the sun stream down (70).

According to Kenneth Tighe, Virginia Woolf shows that “if there is no God, there are other things to worship, to hold sacred” (1997: 9). In his article, he claims that art has become “holy” as the novel progresses (1997: 3) and Woolf uses art as “a bridge over the anarchy of atheism” (1997: 1).

Woolf presents us, in *To the Lighthouse*, with an irreligion of her own, replete with mystical unions, ritual ceremonies, lofty incantations, life after death (Mrs. Ramsay), and the reverence, most emphatically, of the earth and of his life. At the center of it all are men and women – fallible and imperfect creators (Tighe, 1997: 9).

Religion can be defined as a strong belief in a divine power that holds the sole authority to control human destiny. It is an institution that helps to express our belief in a heavenly power. There is common knowledge that religious people take life more easily and religion helps to sympathize people in grief. At the time of sadness and loneliness, faith of God can play an important role in consoling our grievances. Yet it is not easy to agree wholly with Kenneth Tighe’s conclusion. According to him, it is lack of religion that makes the characters in the novel feel insecure and discontented. It cannot be claimed that all the atheists or all the agnostics are supposed to be unhappy for the lack of faith. V. Woolf herself, as well as her characters in *To the Lighthouse*, is too preoccupied with details to be happy. Art is religion for them through which they try to find meaning in life. However, when in difficulty, they fail to cope with problems not knowing where to turn for comfort and consolation.

2.2. Loneliness and Alienation of Characters

After great pain, a formal feeling comes
The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs
The stiff Heart questions was it He, that bore,
And Yesterday, or Centuries before?

The Feet, mechanical, go round
Of Ground, or Air, or Ought
A Wooden way
Regardless grown,
A Quartz contentment, like a stone

Emily DICKINSON (qtd from
http://quotations.about.com/cs/poemlyrics/a/After_GreatPain.htm)

Despite the seeming unity among the characters in the novel, in fact, most of the characters are alone and isolated from each other. According to Kenneth Tighe; the characters in the novel are “physically close but emotionally remote” (1997: 3). The author reinforces this by using stream of consciousness technique. She frequently shifts the narrator and in this way it is possible for us to understand the characters’ isolated consciousness. Although there are people in the novel who love each other, they are mostly alone. “That they occupy the same house, rub elbows at dinner, guarantees no legitimate interaction.” (Tighe, 1997: 3).

In her article on “Feminist Perspective”, Dr. Isam M. Shihada says:

[...] though the Ramsays and their guests live together, each is an isolated soul. Woolf dedicated her novels to analyze the miseries and loneliness of women’s lives that have been shaped by the moral, ideological and conventional means (2005: 121).

Jeanne Schulkind is quite right when saying that “There is a spacious roominess about so many of Virginia Woolf’s characters, a sense of mystery and of the inexplicable; they are rarely enclosed in precious outlines.” (2002: 14).

Mrs. Ramsay is definitely one of these mysterious and inexplicable characters in the novel. The resemblance between Julia Stephen, Virginia Woolf’s mother, and Mrs. Ramsay is so great that many critics rightly consider it an autobiographical novel.

In her memories, Virginia Woolf emphasizes that she has “never seen anyone who reminded” (2002: 107) her of her mother. She goes on adding that people like her “do not blend in the world of the living at all.” (2002: 107).

On the one hand, Mrs. Ramsay fits the model of the Angel in the House (she tries to smooth things, repress her anger, etc.), on the other hand, however, she is different from her in that she is well aware of her position. At the beginning of chapter XVII she asks herself: “What have I done with my life?”. From Virginia Woolf’s memories, we learn that her mother married Leslie Stephen out of respect and admiration rather than love. It is the same with Mrs. Ramsay: she respects and admires him but there is no the kind of love she had had for her first husband. Obviously, for Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Ramsay is a typical Angel in the House because she does not hesitate to kill her in Part II section of the novel, thus showing that if a woman is more than The Angel in the House, she is doomed. It is most probable that it was being the Angel in the House that killed her actually.

While sitting at the dinner table, with these on her mind, Mrs. Ramsay thinks that there is no order or beauty anywhere. Just as in the novel Mrs. Ramsay is constantly worried about the poor state of the summer house and other daily necessities, so does Julia Stephen in Virginia Woolf’s memories. “How seldom my mother bought a new dress” Virginia Woolf agonizes in *A Sketch of the Past* (2005: 91). She longs for order and harmony. She gazes around the room, the furniture, the colors. They all must be in order. She thinks that everything rests on her; if she does not do, nobody will do it.

The room (she looked round it) was very shabby. There was no beauty anywhere. She forbore to look at Mr. Tansley. Nothing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate. And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her (78).

Her husband never cares about their children’s emotions or their disappointments. It is Mrs. Ramsay’s duty to repair the hearts that her husband has broken. She can see how her loveliest son, James, is disappointed after his father’s words. Mrs. Ramsay tries to console James by saying “Perhaps you will wake up and find the sun shining and the birds singing” (14). She knows that going to the lighthouse is his passion.

At home, spending time with her son by cutting out pictures from the illustrated catalogue gives both Mrs. Ramsay and his son a great pleasure. At one of these moments, Mrs. Ramsay notices that the repetitive fall of the waves on the beach represent both support and destruction:

[...] the monotonous fall of the waves on the beach, which for the most part beat a measured and soothing tattoo to her thoughts and seemed consolingly to repeat over and over again as she sat with the children the words of some old cradle song, murmured by nature, "I am guarding you – I am your support", but at other times suddenly and unexpectedly, especially when her mind raised itself slightly from the task actually in hand, had no such kindly meaning, but like a ghostly roll of drums remorselessly beat the measure of life, made one think of the destruction of the island (14).

Mrs. Ramsay sometimes feels alone at home. People bother her with their needs, complaints, and requests. Even though she doesn't seem to complain about it, she is not happy with it: "She often felt she was nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions." (30).

Despite the detachment of her husband, Mrs. Ramsay does her best to show her respect for him. "There was nobody she revered more. She was not good enough to tie his shoe strings, she felt." (30).

Mrs. Ramsay has a lot of responsibilities on her shoulders and only after her children go to bed, she can take a deep breath and feel relaxed. Only in their absence, she can be herself. Sometimes she longs for silence, and solitude.

[...] it was a relief when they went to bed. For now she need not think about anybody. She could be herself, by herself. And that was what now she often felt the need of – to think; well not even to think. To be silent; to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others (57-58).

In most of the sources, the critics side with Mrs. Ramsay; but in some others, they accuse her of breaking the family unity. Glenn Pedersen, throughout his whole

article, presents Mrs. Ramsay as the “negating influence”⁶ (n.d.: 585). Pedersen also thinks that it is Mrs. Ramsay who is blameworthy for her unsatisfactory marriage.

Mrs. Ramsay’s relations with the male members of the household reveal her to be so self-centered and short-sighted that her marriage is not a true union of male and female; she insists that her domesticity triumph over Mr. Ramsay’s intellect (n.d.: 585).

In Pedersen’s opinion, Mrs. Ramsay’s declaring her triumph at home concludes in having no unity between the couple and also among the family members.

Thus, finally, Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Ramsay are both alone, in spite of her conscious desire for union with her husband, because consciously her domestic triumph, her matriarchy, her selfhood is more important to her than the integrity of the family (n.d. : 585).

Pedersen insists that Mrs. Ramsay is guilty because of “her desire for selfhood” (n.d. : 600). He also claims that:

Family integration is not possible while she lives; only after her death, when unconscious forces are exempt from her conscious dominion, does the family come to the best possible integrity. Only then can James go to the lighthouse. Then, on both the literal and symbolic levels, on the journey and in Lily Briscoe’s vision, is James’s desire, and in effect the whole family’s, fulfilled (n.d.: 600).

Mrs. Ramsay always wants the women around her to marry. She believes in the sacredness of marriage. She is trying to bring the two young lovers Minta Doyle and Paul Rayley together by marrying them. A woman’s accusation of Mrs. Ramsay’s “robbing her of her daughter’s affections” was remembered by Minta’s mother who is nicknamed as “Owl” (53) by Mrs. Ramsay. “Wishing to dominate, wishing to interfere, making people do what she [Mrs. Ramsay] wished – that was the charge against her, and she thought it most unjust.” (53).

In the dinner party section, Mrs. Ramsay has a feeling she has never expected to experience again. It is a sort of jealousy towards Minta. But then she notices that this feeling is not jealousy but resentment towards the past years.

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

⁶ “Negating influence is a character intricately complex because of the conflicts within himself. (Pedersen, n.d. : 585).

girls, with something flying, something a little wild and harum-scarum about them, who didn't "scrape their hair off", weren't, as he said about poor Lily Briscoe, "skimpy". There was some quality which she herself had not, some lustre, some richness, which attracted him, amused him, led him to make favorites of girls like Minta. They might cut his hair for him, plait him watch-chains, or interrupt him at his work, hailing him.... But indeed she was not jealous, only, now and then, when she made herself look in her glass a little resentful that she had grown old, perhaps, by her own fault (92).

Mrs. Ramsay revises her fifty years behind her. She feels herself as the other. Whatever she wants in life, there are always obstacles to obtain them.

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, as it was of her; and sometimes they parleyed (when she sat alone); there were she remembered, great reconciliation scenes; but for the most part, oddly enough, she must admit that she called life terrible, hostile, and quick to pounce on you if you gave it a chance. There were the eternal problems: suffering; death; the poor (55).

However, despite "suffering, death, the poor", Mrs. Ramsay is able to feel happiness at times, she has her moments of being, things that she remembers, things that make her happy, things she imprints on her mind not to forget them and enjoy them when recollected. She is able to see beauty everywhere: in

[...] blue water [...] the hoary lighthouse, [...] the green sand dunes with the wild flowing grasses on them, which always seemed to be running away into some moon country, uninhabited of men (11-12).

She does not mind "the transaction" (55) between life and herself and tries to make the best of it.

Mr. Ramsay, who also feels alone and alienated throughout the novel, should, actually, blame nobody but himself. He always causes his children to worry with his pessimistic views and previews. From the outset of the novel, it is apparent that going to the lighthouse is James' greatest passion in life, which he sees as an adventure in life. In the first part of the novel, the bad weather does not let the family go to the lighthouse. Nevertheless, neither James, nor her mother ceases discussing the subject. Although Mr. Ramsay knows that going to the lighthouse is his six-year

old son, James's only desire in life, he makes his son feel hatred towards him saying the weather would not be fine the next day. The following lines from the novel best express how James, the youngest of Ramsays' eight children, also the dearest of Mrs. Ramsay, feels contempt towards his father:

Had there been an axe handy, a poker, or any weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father's breast and killed him, there and then, James would have sized it. Such were the extremes of emotion that Mr. Ramsay excited in his children's breasts by his mere presence; [...] (4).

Mr. Ramsay is always strict in his words and never changes a disagreeable word in order to make other people pleased. He always reminds people, especially his children, the realities of life telling true things every time. Despite Mrs. Ramsay's efforts to comfort her son, Mr. Ramsay never shows any pity towards him:

[...] standing, as now, lean as a knife, narrow as the blade of one, grinning sarcastically, not only with the pleasure of disillusioning his son and casting ridicule upon his wife, who was ten thousand times better in every way than he was (James thought), but also with some secret conceit at his own accuracy of judgment. What he said was true. It was always true. He was incapable of untruth; never tampered with fact; never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure or convenience of any mortal being, least of all of his children, who, sprung from his loins, should be aware from childhood that life is difficult; facts uncompromising; and the, passage to that fabled land where our brightest hopes are extinguished, our frail barks founder in darkness, one that needs, above all, courage, truth, and the power to endure (4).

It is impossible for the Ramsay household to say "No" to him, as it happens in the case of the journey to the lighthouse after ten years. Even though they do not want to go there anymore, they are not brave enough to say "No" to their father. Their enthusiasm to go to the lighthouse has vanished. We can see clearly in the third part of the novel, "The Lighthouse", Cam and especially James, who was full of passionate desire to go to the lighthouse, are not keen on going there anymore. They are forced to go there by their father, they cannot reject him. Lily feels pity for them and thinks the situation to be tragic.

Did they want to go? he demanded. Had they dared say No (he had some reason for wanting it) he would have flung himself tragically backwards into the bitter waters of despair. Such a gift he had for gesture. He looked like a king in exile. Doggedly James said yes. Cam stumbled more

wretchedly. Yes, oh yes, they'd both be ready, they said. And it struck her [Lily], this was tragedy – not palls, dust, and the shroud; but children coerced, their spirits subdued (142).

They have to go after their father. While they are about to set on the journey, Lily watches them and can see clearly the suffering they are exposed to by their father.

They looked, she thought, as if fate had devoted them to some stern enterprise, and they went to it, still young enough to be drawn acquiescent in their father's wake, obediently, but with a pallor in their eyes which made her feel that they suffered something beyond their years in silence (148).

At the beginning of the journey they are unwilling to go with their father to the lighthouse and during the journey their unwillingness goes on. They wish there would be no breeze and the journey would be cancelled or put off.

He had made them come. He had forced them to come. In their anger they hoped that the breeze would never rise, that he might be thwarted in every possible way, since he had forced them to come against their wills (155).

In the third part of the novel, "The Lighthouse", we can still see that, even after so many years, James has the same feelings towards his father. James can remember his six-year-old feelings clearly and while they are on the long-expected journey, he would act and take a sharp thing if his father, who is reading then, does any attempt towards him.

And James felt that each page was turned with a peculiar gesture aimed at him: [...] he would demand, or something quite unreasonable like that. And if he does, James thought, then I shall take a knife and strike him to the heart (174, 175).

But James notices something different.

Only now, as he grew older, and sat staring at his father in an impotent rage, it was not him, that old man reading, whom he wanted to kill, but it was the thing that descended on him [...] (175).

After these words, James simulates his father to a "black-winged harpy, with its talons and its beak" which is ready "struck at you" (175).

Throughout the journey, James has confused feelings and thinks that he and his father know each other more than anybody else.

[...] there he had come to feel, quite often lately, when his father said something which surprised the others, were two pairs of footprints only; his own and his father's. They alone knew each other. What then was this terror, this hatred? (175).

James himself cannot make a meaning from this "hatred." But still he cannot help thinking about his contempt for his father. "A rope seemed to bind him there, and his father had knotted it and he could only escape by taking a knife and plunging it." (178).

Although James rejects his father's tyranny, which suppresses his own individuality, he models himself after his father, whose phrases he repeats. [...] he can neither accept his father's authority as absolute nor reject it as meaningless (Bassoff, 1984: 426).

Here we can clearly see, James's dilemma: he does not want to be under his father's authority, nor can he disobey him.

As a husband and a father, Mr. Ramsay abuses his wife mentally and his children psychologically. He also discourages his children to an extent that makes them hate their father. Woolf describes Mr. Ramsay as insensitive, wicked, and brutal toward his family but, on the other hand, he also desires happiness and wants the best for his family. Woolf, in "The Lighthouse" part of the novel, presents us Mr. Ramsay's weak side. The readers often see Mr. Ramsay demanding sympathy from Lily. He is in need of sympathy of a person, woman, in particular. He is craving for it.

[...] – this was one of the moments when an enormous need urged him, without being conscious what it was, to approach any woman, to force them, he did not care how, his need was so great, to give him what he wanted : sympathy (144).

Nevertheless, Lily is disturbed by this "insatiable hunger" for sympathy. He wants Mr. Ramsay leave her alone and not demand anything from her. Lily wishes that

[...] this enormous flood of grief, this insatiable hunger for sympathy, this demand that she should surrender herself up to him entirely, and even so he had sorrows enough to keep her supplied forever, should leave her, [...] (145).

Throughout the novel, particularly in the end of it, whereas Lily's love for Mr. Ramsay increases, her love for Mrs. Ramsay ranges from hatred to fondness. Lily considers her being unmarried, as a triumph over Mrs. Ramsay. In her opinion, Mrs. Ramsay has died without achieving her goal about marrying Lily.

Mrs. Ramsay has faded and gone, she thought. We can override her wishes, improve away her limited, old-fashioned ideas. She recedes further and further from us. Mockingly she seemed to see her there at the end of the corridor of years saying, of all incongruous things, "Marry, marry!" [...] And one would have to say to her, it has all gone against your wishes. They're happy like that; I'm happy like this (166).

Yet, on some occasions, Lily calls Mrs. Ramsay but unfortunately she sees worryingly that nothing changes.

"Mrs. Ramsay!" Lily cried, "Mrs. Ramsay!" But nothing happened. The pain increased. That anguish could reduce one to such a pitch of imbecility, she thought! (172).

She sometimes remembers how Mr. Ramsay upset his wife and how desperate he made her feel. For even small things he has tired Mrs. Ramsay to death.

But it tired Mrs. Ramsay, it cowed her a little – the plates whizzing and the doors slamming. And there would fall between them sometimes long rigid silences, when, in a state of mind which annoyed Lily in her, half plaintive, half resentful, she seemed unable to surmount the tempest calmly, or to laugh as they laughed, but in her weariness perhaps concealed something. She brooded and sat silent. (189- 190).

But sometimes, Lily thinks that people might have reasons for not loving Mrs. Ramsay as she has.

There must have been people who disliked her very much, Lily thought [...] People who thought her too sure, too drastic. Also her beauty offended people probably. How monotonous, they would say, and the same always! They preferred another type – the dark, the vivacious. Then she was weak with her husband. She let him make those scenes. Then she was reserved. Nobody knew exactly what had happened to her. [...] one could not imagine Mrs. Ramsay standing painting, lying reading, a whole morning on the lawn. It was unthinkable (186).

The great journey has transformed the feelings of James, Cam and Lily to the positive ones and it softens their emotions toward Mr. Ramsay. Before the journey and even at the beginning of it, the children have the scorn for their father and they

have made an agreement on fighting the tyranny of their father to death. But gradually, as they move away from the home, first Cam and then James give up fighting the tyranny. Cam, throughout the journey, starts seeing her father differently and thinking that he is innocent and for this, he tries to convince James to give up the tyranny.

Lest this should be wrong, she looked at him [Mr. Ramsay] reading the little book with the shiny cover mottled like a plover's egg. No; it was right. Look at him now. She wanted to say aloud to James (181).

But James, at least at the beginning, seems so decisive not to give up that Cam as though knew what James would say:

He [Mr. Ramsay] is a sarcastic brute, [...] He brings the talk round to himself and his books, [...] He is intolerably egotistical. Worst of all, he is a tyrant (181).

James is afraid of being left alone by Cam on the way of the fight against tyranny. He does not trust his sister on her binding their agreement.

Yes, thought James pitilessly, seeing his sister's head against the sail, now she will give way. I shall be left to fight the tyrant alone. The compact would be left to him to carry out. Cam would never resist tyranny to the death, he thought grimly, watching her face, sad, sulky, yielding (160).

In the middle of the way, Cam becomes confused and does not know who to obey: her brother or father. "Her brother was most god-like, her father most suppliant. And to which did she yield, she thought, sitting between them, [...]" (160).

Charles Tansley is another character whom Virginia Woolf presents as the most unsatisfied and insecure one among Mrs. Ramsay's guests. He is constantly mocked by the children. They do not like Charles Tansley.

It was not that they minded, the children said. It was not his face; it was not his manners. It was him – his point of view (7).

They call him an atheist. But Mrs. Ramsay never lets her children tease Tansley.

Indeed, she [Mrs. Ramsay] had the whole of the other sex under her protection; for reasons she could not explain, for their chivalry and valour, for the fact that they negotiated treaties, ruled India, controlled finance; finally for an attitude towards herself which no woman could fail to feel or to find agreeable, [...] (5).

Charles Tansley had a hard childhood. He has the chance of expressing himself and telling about his hard days to Mrs. Ramsay, while they are out together. He has never been to a circus when he was a child and he feels sorry about it. Mrs. Ramsay feels sympathy towards him, while he is talking.

She liked him warmly, at the moment. Had they not been taken, she asked, to circuses when they were children? Never, he answered, as if she asked the very thing he wanted; had been longing all these days to say, how they did not go to circuses. It was a large family, nine brothers and sisters, and his father was a working man. "My father is a chemist, Mrs. Ramsay. He keeps a shop." He himself had paid his own way since he was thirteen. Often he went without a greatcoat in winter. He could never "return hospitality" (those were his parched stiff words) at college. He had to make things last twice the time other people did; he smoked the cheapest tobacco; shag; the same the old men did in the quays. He worked hard-seven hours a day; [...] (10-11).

Tansley has been alienated by other people. After Tansley's words, Mrs. Ramsay feels sorry for him. Mrs. Ramsay cannot help feeling sorry about people in grief especially those of opposite sex.

For example; she pities Carmichael, another Ramsays' guest. She summarizes Carmichael's life full of suffering;

an affair at Oxford with some girl; an early marriage; poverty; going to India; translating poetry "very beautifully I believe", being willing to teach the boys Persian or Hindustanee, [...] (9).

Because of his wife's bad treatment, Mr. Carmichael is unhappy and comes to Ramsay's summer house every year as an escape. He has an unhappy marriage and his wife turns him out of the house and makes him suffer. Despite being a wife and husband, they have no real unity. Carmichael is in fact alone. With her own eyes, Mrs. Ramsay herself witnessed his being turned out of the house by his wife. Mrs. Ramsay always tries to show him sympathy and intimacy because, "Mrs. Ramsay could see as if before her eyes, the innumerable miseries of his life" (38). She asks him if he needs stamps, paper, tobacco, "She couldn't bear to think of the little indignities she made him suffer." (38).

It makes Mr. Tansley extremely happy to be trusted by Mrs. Ramsay. She confides Mr. Carmichael's sad story to him, which

[...] soothed him that Mrs. Ramsay should tell him this [...] she made him feel better pleased with himself than he had done yet, and he would have liked, had they taken a cab, for example, to have paid the fare (10).

However, unlike Mr. Tansley, Mr. Carmichael is indifferent to her courtesy.

Mrs. Ramsay is used to being treated as the most favorite one wherever she goes. "She had not generally any difficulty in making people like her." (38). Mrs. Ramsay is worried about Carmichael's detachment from her. She is so much used to people's attention, love and admiration.

It injured her that he should shrink. It hurt her and yet not cleanly, not rightly that was what she minded, coming as it did on top of her discontent with her husband; the sense she had now when Mr. Carmichael shuffled past, just nodding to her question, with a book beneath his arm in his yellow slippers that she was suspected; and that all this desire of hers to give, to help was vanity (38-39).

In Mrs. Ramsay's opinion, Mr. Carmichael thinks her to be insincere in her treatment of people. Mrs. Ramsay suspects that in Mr. Carmichael's opinion, "For her own self-satisfaction was it that she wished so instinctively to help, to give, that people might say of her: "' Mrs. Ramsay! Dear Mrs. Ramsay ... Mrs. Ramsay, of course!'" (39). It is for this reason that he treats her coldly. Mrs. Ramsay is not angry with him and she tries to soften the atmosphere. We, readers, gain all knowledge about Mr. Carmichael from Mrs. Ramsay because Mr. Carmichael is the only character whose inner thoughts are not presented to us. Thus we glean all our information about him from other characters, "chorus figures"⁷ (Dougherty, 2000: 1) in particular.

Mr. Bankes is another character who is single and feels detached. At the dinner party section, he is disturbed and wishes to be alone. He thinks that he does not like being with a family, in fact he does not like a family life.

⁷ Chorus figure is a character who provides us with much information about the other characters in the novel.

He feels unhappy and uncomfortable at the dinner table,

He wished only to be alone and to take up that book. He felt uncomfortable; he felt treacherous, that he could sit by her [Mrs. Ramsay's] side and feel nothing for her. The truth was that he did not enjoy family life. It was in this sort of state that one asked oneself, What does one live for? Why, one asked oneself, does one take all these pains for the human race to go on? It is so very desirable? (83).

We learn from Mrs. Ramsay about other characters as well as about her own life, her own emotions. She mostly suffers from her husband's harshness and selfishness. Sometimes he frowns at something but Mrs. Ramsay cannot understand what makes him do that. She cannot even imagine how she liked a man like him. In the dinner party section of the novel, Mrs. Ramsay questions her life:

But what have I done with my life? thought Mrs. Ramsay, taking her place at the head of the table, and looking at all the plates making white circles on it. [...] At the far end, was her husband, sitting down, all in a heap, frowning. What at? She did not know. She did not mind. She could not understand how she had ever felt any emotion or any affection for him (77).

In the second part of the novel, "Time Passes", Mrs. McNab is on the scene and preparing the house for the guests. The ten-year-period of time has passed and while Mrs. McNab is thinking about those years, she questions her whole life. She thinks that she knows the world very well and it is not worth living in it.

[...] she seemed to say how it was one long sorrow and trouble, how it was getting up and going to bed again, and bringing things out and putting them away again. It was not easy snug this world she had known for close on seventy years. Bowed down she was with weariness. How long, she asked, creaking and groaning on her knees under the bed, dusting the boards, how long shall it endure? (124).

However, despite all these feelings of grief and her scorn toward the world, "she had her own consolations, as if indeed there twined about her dirge some incorrigible hope" (125).

Ten years later, when Lily is again in Ramsays' summer house, she feels isolated from and strange to everything around her. Everything seems to her "chaotic, aimless." She sits alone looking at the clean cups at the long table and feels "cut off from other people" (140), isolated from others. "The house, the place, the

morning, all seemed strangers to her. She had no attachment here, she felt, no relations with it, [...]” (140).

Thinking about the dead household, Mrs. Ramsay – Prue – Andrew, she goes on worrying:

How aimless it was, how chaotic, how unreal it was, she thought, looking at her empty coffee cup. Mrs. Ramsay dead; Andrew killed; Prue dead too-[...] (140).

Lily Briscoe has no biological links with the Ramsays but according to Jane Lilienfeld, she is surrogate daughter of the family. Lily is an orphan and in Lilienfeld’s opinion, Virginia Woolf tries to show her own place in her family with Lily’s character.

The fact that Lily is essentially an orphan reveals something of Virginia Woolf’s feelings about her place in her own family. Like Lily, she felt she had been deprived of mothering. She felt great psychological alienation from her mother, not having adopted Julia Stephen’s role, Julia’s career, Julia’s attitude toward her own husband (Lilienfeld, 1977: 348).

Katherine Dalsimer enlightens us about Virginia Woolf’s own grief after losing her mother. According to Dalsimer, Woolf’s grief is so deep that she tries to make even the reader be captured with the same pain. Woolf’s purpose by giving the abandoned house in the second part “Time Passes” is that “

The house that had brimmed with life is now deserted, the wind blowing through it: the desolate house is an image of abandonment, but beyond this the stylistic change evokes the *experience* of abandonment. Woolf induces in the reader something very like grief – confusion, dismay, puzzlement, loss (Dalsimer, 2004: 714).

V. Woolf has always tried to show life with all its nuances, its harsh realities, she thought hard how we, or rather our mind, receives such a variety of things around us and how our mind reacts to them: She shows that life is seldom what we think of it, that it seldom meets our expectations. The fleetingness of life is very upsetting. As a result, the majority of people (like the characters in the novel) feel isolated and estranged. She wants us, nevertheless, to thrive through creating and enjoy the process of creation, be it a painting, a novel or the creation of harmony among people.

Erich Auerbach states that the novel:

[...] breathes an air of vague and hopeless sadness. We never come to learn what Mrs. Ramsay's situation really is. Only the sadness, the vanity of her beauty and vital force emerge from the depths of secrecy. Even when we have read the whole novel, the meaning of the relationship between the planned trip to the lighthouse and the actual trip many years later remains unexpressed, enigmatic, only dimly to be conjectured, as does the content of Lily Briscoe's concluding vision which enables her to finish her painting with one stroke of the brush. It is one of the few books of this type which are filled with good and genuine love but also, in its feminine way, with irony, amorphous sadness, and doubt of life." (1946: 5).

What the critics say is not surprising. V. Woolf's novel is like life itself – “vague”, “sad” and “enigmatic.”

CHAPTER THREE

3. INTELLECTUAL PAIN IN *TO THE LIGHTHOUSE*

3.1. Discontent and Pessimism of Characters

To sigh, yet feel no pain, To weep, yet scarce know why; To sport an hour with beauty's chain, Then throw it idly by.

(qtd. from
<http://www.quotableonline.com/quotesubjectcss.php?subject=Discontent&page=2>)

All human situations have their inconveniences. We feel those of the present but neither see nor feel those of the future; and hence we often make troublesome changes without amendment, and frequently for the worse.

(qtd. from
<http://www.quotebila.com/cgi-bin/quotations/dir/search.cgi?query=discontent&Title=discontent>)

In the novel, the characters continue working even though they are on holiday in a summer house. In her article on “Feminist Perspective”, Dr. Isam M. Shihada thinks that it is mostly women in *To the Lighthouse* who suffer intellectual pain and says that in the novel, “women suffer alone, have no chances for education, lack warmth and are compelled to suppress their needs.” (2005: 144).

Plain Lily Briscoe, the frustrated painter, is plagued by fears that her work lacks worth. At the beginning of the novel, she begins a portrait of Mrs. Ramsay and James but has trouble finishing it. The opinions of men like Charles Tansley, who insists that “women can’t write, women can’t paint” (45), threaten to undermine her confidence. The recurring memory of Charles Tansley insisting that women can neither write nor paint deepens her anxiety. It is with these self-doubts that she begins the portrait which riddled with problems that she is unable to solve. When she sits in front of her canvas, she feels herself inadequate, insignificant.

It was when she took her brush in hand that the whole thing changed. 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, this is what I see”, and so to clasp some miserable remnant of her vision to her breast, which a thousand forces did their best to pluck from her. And it was then too, in that chill and windy way, as she began to paint, that there forced themselves upon her other things, her own inadequacy, her insignificance [...] (17-18).

Lily has a phobia about allowing her art to be seen and thus to be criticized. She does not want anybody to know and understand her. She has her own reason for this secrecy. “Somehow Lily feels that to see is to possess and is afraid that if anyone sees her work, they will possess some intimate knowledge of her.” (Walsh, n.d.: 4).

In the first part of the novel, “The Window”, Lily is afraid of Mr. Ramsay’s seeing her art. He is the last person to whom Lily wants to show her painting:

But so long as he [Mr. Ramsay] kept like that, waving, shouting, she was safe; he would not stand still and look at her picture. And that was what Lily Briscoe could not have endured. Even while she looked at the mass, at the line, at the color, at Mrs. Ramsay sitting in the window with James, she kept a feeler on her surroundings lest someone should creep up, and suddenly she should find her picture looked at. (16).

Lily is not contented with what she has drawn. She undermines her art and seeks the order in the chaotic moments. She is a perfectionist and she wants to achieve the best in her art.

She could have wept. It was bad, it was bad, it was infinitely bad! She could have done it differently of course; the color could have been thinned and faded; the shapes etherealized; that was how Paunceforte would have seen it. But then she did not see it like that. She saw the color burning on a framework of steel; the light of a butterfly’s wing lying upon the arches of a cathedral. Of all that only a few random marks scrawled upon the canvas remained. And it would never be seen; never be hung even, and there was Mr. Tansley whispering in her ear, “Women can’t paint, women can’t write [...]” (45).

But Lily lets only William Bankes, whose main interest is science, to see her painting. She feels an intimacy towards him because they have some things in common. For example; they are both keen on art and they have negative feelings for Mr. Ramsay.

Lily confesses that if somebody must see her picture, it must be William Banks.

And if it must be seen, Mr. Banks was less alarming than another. But that any other eyes should see the residue of her thirty-three years, the deposit of each day's living, mixed with something more secret than she had ever spoken or shown in the course of all those days was an agony. At the same time it was immensely exciting (48).

Despite Banks' being the only person who has the chance of seeing Lily's painting, Lily feels odd when he sees her art and thinks "But it had been seen; it had been taken from her. This man had shared with her something profoundly intimate." (50). By letting Mr. Banks see her painting, Lily gives up some of her control over life "and the way in which she is perceived, as well as her deep-seated fear of disapproval." (Walsh, n.d. : 4).

While Lily is strolling with Mr. Banks and talking with him about the places that they have been to, one can understand that Mr. Banks has gone to so many places whereas Lily has not. Lily has been to some cities, but she never visited the museums in those places. She does not regret it for she is convinced that if she sees other people's paintings, she can be influenced by them, and, consequently might not like her own painting. Once again, do we witness Lily's free spirit and independence.

[...] perhaps it was better not to see pictures; they only made one hopelessly discontented with one's own work. Mr. Banks thought one could carry that point of view too far. We can't all be Titians and we can't all be Darwins, he said; at the same time he doubted whether you could have your Darwin and your Titian if it weren't for humble people like ourselves (67).

In the first part of the book, Lily always sees her work as inadequate and incomplete at the beginning. She is very humble in her art and undermines her craft. Knowing that something is missing in her painting, Lily cannot complete it in the first part. Only after ten years and after Mrs. Ramsay's death, she is able to complete it. It is only at the very end of the novel that she has had her vision.

But apart from Lily herself and Charles Tansley, there is another character in the novel who despises Lily's art. This character is Mrs. Ramsay, who has a conventional idea of femininity. To her, each woman must marry and the primary

goal of a woman in life is to make her husband pleased. Mrs. Ramsay, while posing for Lily's picture thinks:

Lily's picture! Mrs. Ramsay smiled. With her little Chinese eyes, and her puckered-up face she would never marry; one could not take her painting very seriously; but she was an independent little creature, Mrs. Ramsay liked her for it, and so remembering her promise, she bent her head (16).

However, Mrs. Ramsay also compares Lily to Minta and decides that "at forty" (96), Lily will be "the better of the two" (96). "When she paints her final picture of the Ramsays, Lily is forty-four, Mrs. Woolf's age at the writing of the novel." (Lilienfeld, 1977: 347).

Not being able to complete her painting gives great trouble to Lily. In this way Lily is resembled to Virginia Woolf. For some critics, Mrs. Ramsay's death gives Lily refreshment and makes her adequate in her work.

Throughout the novel, Lily has difficulty finishing a picture, which also shows similarity with Woolf's writing process. Following the writer's diary, it is quite impossible to say that sometimes completing a work is a torturous process to cope with. ... However, after Mrs. Ramsay's death, everything turns out to be clearer for Lily and she finishes her picture (Bezircilioğlu, 2008: 115 - 116).

During all those ten years, the unfinished painting has disturbed her and does not let her forget it. When she sits at the same table after ten years, Lily remembers something, a trouble, about the picture.

Suddenly she remembered. When she had sat there last ten years ago there had been a little sprig or leaf pattern on the table – cloth, which she had looked at in a moment of revelation. There had been a problem about a foreground of a picture. Move the tree to the middle, she had said. She had never finished that picture. It had been knocking about in her mind all these years. She would paint that picture now (141).

In the first part of the novel, "The Lighthouse", she cannot decide what to do, how to finish her painting. But in the third part, she feels that she has found the solution to the problem in the painting. She puts the easel in the same place as it was ten years ago. She seems to have the solution now.

Yes, it must have been precisely here that she had stood ten years ago. There was the wall; the hedge; the tree. The question was of some relation between those masses. She

had borne it in her mind all these years. It seemed as if the solution had come to her: she knew now what she wanted to do (141).

Lily thinks that it is now easier to start, because she seems to solve the trouble in the picture. But when she takes the brush in her hand, she does not know where to start, how to draw the line in the picture. However, in practice, things turn out to be much more complicated.

For a moment it stayed trembling in a painful but exciting ecstasy in the air. Where to begin? – that was the question; at what point to make the first mark? One line placed on the canvas committed her to innumerable risks, to frequent and irrevocable decisions. All that in idea seemed simple became in practice immediately complex; [...] (150).

Lily calls drawing that line as “taking risks” but she knows she has to start and take that risk. She encourages herself thinking “the risk must be run; the mark made” (150).

While trying to produce something in her art, Lily thinks that Mr. Ramsay, who is always demanding sympathy from Lily after his wife’s death, is a hindrance between herself and her art. In his presence, it seems impossible for her to draw the picture.

[...] with Mr. Ramsay bearing down on her, she could do nothing. Every time he approached – he was walking up and down the terrace – ruin approached, chaos approached. She could not paint. She stooped, she turned; she took up this rag; she squeezed that tube. But all she did was to ward him off a moment. He made it impossible for her to do anything (141).

Even though he is away from her, Lily is disturbed by his mere presence. She thinks that next to Mr. Ramsay everything changes for the worse, her productivity decreases. No matter how far he is away from her, Lily is still affected by Mr. Ramsay and is afraid that he could demand something she cannot provide.

Let him be fifty feet away, let him not even speak to you, let him not even see you, he permeated, he prevailed, he imposed himself. He changed everything. She could not see the color; she could not see the lines; even with his back turned to her, she could only think, But he’ll be down on me in a moment, demanding – something she felt she could not give him (143).

Kenneth Tighe in his article “Art and Atheism in *To the Lighthouse*” says that “as Lily creates we are taken through the *painful*, combative, and exhilarating process of art from conception to completion.” (1997: 7). Tighe claims that the art is “sacred” (1997: 7) and must not be played with. Lily annoys herself for toying with the art. She dislikes playing with the painting. She regrets for coming to the summer house, for wasting her time.

[...] she ought not to have come. One can't waste one's time at forty-four, she thought. She hated playing at painting. A brush, the one dependable thing in a world of strife, ruin, chaos – that one should not play with, knowingly even: she detested it (143).

Tighe offers Lily that “In order to proceed she must overcome self-doubt and feelings of personal inadequacy.” (1997: 7).

Throughout the novel, we can see clearly that even though Mr. Ramsay is an accomplished metaphysician who made an invaluable contribution to his field as a young man (he wrote his masterpiece at the age of 25), he still demands sympathy and assurance of other people, primarily women. He is uncertain about the fate of his work. He fears more than anything that he will not be remembered by the next generations. He is not sure of his own genius and needs others convince him.

It was sympathy he wanted, to be assured of his genius, first of all, and then to be taken within the circle of life, warmed and soothed, to have his senses restored to him, his barrenness made fertile, and all the rooms of the house made full of life – [...] (35).

Mr. Ramsay worries about the fate of his work fearing that his work on philosophy will be forgotten by the posterity. Many people think that he has an extraordinary talent as a metaphysician and tries to convince him of that.

Charles Tansley thought him the greatest metaphysician of the time, she [Mrs. Ramsay] said. But he must have more than that. He must have sympathy. He must be assured that he too lived in the heart of life; was needed; not here only, but all over the world (35).

Becoming an unforgettable, immortal genius so much preoccupies Mr. Ramsay's mind that he applies different methods in order to determine which level he himself is at. He resembles the human thought to the keys of a piano or the letters

of an alphabet. He thinks that his mind has reached the letter Q. Not so many people in England can reach Q.

It was a splendid mind. For if thought is like the keyboard 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 (31).

But he is pessimistic about reaching the letter R. He thinks that he will never reach R. He is also afraid of people's saying he is a failure.

A shutter, like the leathern eyelid of a lizard, flickered over the intensity of his gaze and obscured the letter R. In that flash of darkness he heard people saying – he was a failure – that R was beyond him. He would never reach R. On to R, once more. R – (32).

Jeffrey Paul Von Arx regards that Mr. Ramsay is daydreaming while he is walking up and down the terrace and these words of him are just a reverie.

In his reverie, Mr. Ramsay consoled himself with images of heroic failure: he saw himself as leader of a climbing party, in sight of the summit and the stars, before snow and mist brought down darkness and death. But the reverie is ended when Mr. Ramsay in from the terrace where he has been daydreaming to his wife and son, to receive from them the reassurance of genius that he seeks (1985: 1).

While he is on the terrace with Charles Tansley, he is talking about his contributions to the society and wondering how long they are going to last. He is questioning how many more years his fame will last in a world all dying creatures are forgotten. Even Shakespeare might be forgotten one day:

And his fame lasts how long? It is permissible even for a dying hero to think before he dies how men will speak of him hereafter. His fame lasts perhaps two thousand years. And what are two thousand years? [...] What indeed if you look from a mountain – top down the long wastes of the ages? The very stone one kicks with one's boot will outlast Shakespeare. His own little light would shine, not very brightly, for a year or two, and would then be merged in some bigger light, and that in a bigger still (33).

Mr. Ramsay is always thinking and worrying about his books. The future of his books makes him sad. He is always weighing his books and comparing them with those of the others'. Mrs. Ramsay trusts her husband very much and thinks: a genius like her husband worries in vain about his books' fate. When Tansley said that

people no more read Scott, Mr. Ramsay thought “That’s what they will say of me” (109). He is always pessimistic about his work and this troubles Mrs. Ramsay. “He would always be worrying about his own books – will they be read, are they good, why aren’t they better, what do people think of me?” (109).

Although it is apparent that Mr. Bankes is jealous of Mr. Ramsay’s success in his field, he has to confess that, while talking with Lily, “Ramsay is one of those men who do their best work before they are forty.” “He had made a definite contribution to philosophy in one little book when he was only five and twenty; [...]” (22).

The unpredictability of the future is the main concern of the characters. Virginia Woolf convincingly depicts the meaninglessness and futility of human existence.

To Donald Adams,

Modern man, whose inner world is chaotic, is constantly facing an equally chaotic outer world, where momentary impressions are rained upon him in quick succession without connection or order of any kind (1956: 234).

3.2. Mrs. Ramsay's Lack of Education

In duty bound, a life hemmed in,
 Whichever way the spirit turns to look;
No chance of breaking out, except by sin;
 Not even room to shirk—
 Simply to live, and work.

An obligation preimposed, unsought,
 Yet binding with the force of natural law;
The pressure of antagonistic thought;
 Aching within, each hour,
 A sense of wasting power.

A house with roof so darkly low
 The heavy rafters shut the sunlight out;
One cannot stand erect without a blow;
 Until the soul inside
 Cries for a grave – more wide.

(qtd from
<http://www.charlotteperkinsgilman.com/2008/04/in-duty-bound-charlotte-perkins-gilman.html>).

Women's education and their literary career were Virginia Woolf's main concerns throughout of her life. In *A Room of One's Own*, she is optimistic about women's education and better chances to realise themselves in the future but very pessimistic about the current state of things in terms of women:

If we look past Milton's bogey, for no human being should shut out the view; if we face the fact, for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women, then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare's sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down. (Woolf, 2005: 112).

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar express the same anxiety over women's position up to the turn of the century;

The literature produced by women confronted with such anxiety-inducing choices has been strongly marked not only by an obsessive interest in these limited options but also by obsessive imagery of confinement that reveals the ways in which female artists feel trapped and sickened both by suffocating alternatives and by the culture that created them. (2000: 64).

Mrs. Ramsay likes helping people, poor and miserable people in particular, and keen on dealing with social problems such as “changing the dairy system in England, founding a model dairy, and a hospital [...]” (54). Mrs. Ramsay is untrained, uneducated but she is disturbed to go on her life as a housewife. She wants to be an “investigator” (8), but in fact she has no idea about the meaning of it.

[...] when she visited this widow, or that struggling wife in person with a bag on her arm, and a note-book and pencil with which she wrote down in columns carefully ruled for the purpose wages and spending, employment and unemployment, in the hope that thus she would cease to be private woman whose charity was half a sop to her own indignation, half a relief to her own curiosity, and become, what with her untrained mind she greatly admired, an investigator, elucidating the social problem (8).

Woolf, in fact, does not criticize the Victorian women like Mrs. Ramsay, she is criticizing the system of those days. Susan Gubar, in the introduction to Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, points out that Virginia's mother Julia Stephen was “the author of a book on nursing and socially conversant with a constellation of London luminaries” (2005: xliii). So, we can clearly see that Virginia Woolf's mother is an author, not an illiterate woman. Yet, in those days, even when Victorian women say something reasonable, men ignore it, as it happens to Mrs. Ramsay in the novel. Mrs. Ramsay, at the dinner scene, is telling that she is interested in changing “the English dairy system, and in what state milk was delivered at the door, and was about to prove her changes, for she had gone into the matter” (96). No one at the table seems to be interested in what she says. To make things worse,

all around the table, beginning with Andrew in the middle, like a fire leaping from tuft to tuft of furze, her children laughed; her husband laughed; she was laughed at, fire encircled, and force to veil her crest, dismount her batteries, and only retaliate by displaying the raillery and ridicule of the table to Mr. Bankes as an example of what one suffered if one attacked the prejudices of the British Public (96).

Mrs. Ramsay resents all these people who laugh at her. She says something she believes with her whole heart. But even her children laugh at her and her idea.

She is clearly enacting the role of the Angel in the House “yet she also recognizes the limitations of this role and often resents her position as such” (Forbes, 2000: 466).

She loves dealing with social problems, helping people

[...] yet she recognizes that such ambitions are impossible for a woman with children and a husband who require all of her time, attention, and energy (90).

Thus, Shannon Forbes claims that “Mrs. Ramsay is trapped within her uncompromising Angel role and left wrestling with her unfulfilled need to experience precisely the life this role denies her.” (2000: 467)

In the novel, the tale *The Fisherman and His wife* hinders Mrs. Ramsay’s having much knowledge. It gives Mrs. Ramsay a message about not desiring knowledge, power, property, etc. Daugherty supports this idea by claiming that

The idea that woman’s desire for knowledge and power is unnatural and should be punished originates in the Adam and Eve story. [...] wanting knowledge, sight, and power the equal of God’s [...] justifies God’s punishment of her. God curses woman’s generative power: the pain of childbirth becomes the price a woman pays to enjoy her sexuality; [...] (1991: 294 - 295).

Mrs. Ramsay is not a good reader, as can be understood easily from the following lines quoted from the novel. There are lots of books at home, the number of which is increasing day by day; but she has never read them. Rightly or not, she has never had time for reading them.

Books, she thought, grew of themselves. She never had time to read them. Alas! even the books that had been given her and inscribed by the hand of the poet himself: “for her whose wishes must be obeyed” [...] “The happier Helen of our days” [...] disgraceful to say, she had never read them (25).

Even though she tries to read one, she cannot understand the meaning of the words in it.

And she opened the book and began reading here and there at random, and as she did so she felt that she was climbing backwards, upwards, shoving her way up under petals that curved over her, so that she only knew this is white, or this is red. She did not know at first what the words meant at all (110 - 111).

She goes on reading without understanding what she has read, swings herself from one page to another and from one topic to the other.

For a long time Mrs. Ramsay cannot give a meaning to her husband's words "Someone had blundered" (17). Eventually, she can get it but despite that she is still unaware of what is going on, who is that "someone" (17).

Starting from her musing she gave meaning to words which she had held meaningless in her mind for a long stretch of time. "Someone had blundered" – Fixing her short-sighted eyes upon her husband, who was now bearing down upon her, she gazed steadily until his closeness revealed to her (the jingle mated itself in her head) that something had happened, someone had blundered. But she could not for the life of her think what (28).

Mr. Ramsay is talking about how much he wanted Andrew's getting a scholarship, but Mrs. Ramsay does not agree on the importance of this scholarship. Mrs. Ramsay is proud of her son whatever he does. Thus, Mr. Ramsay is annoyed with his wife for her taking a serious topic like this so easy.

He wished Andrew could be induced to work harder. He would lose every chance of a scholarship if he didn't. "Oh scholarships!" she said. Mr. Ramsay thought her foolish for saying that, about a serious thing, like a scholarship (62).

At the dinner scene, the men at the table are talking about some issues of which Mrs. Ramsay is completely ignorant. She is struggling to understand what is talked on but her efforts are futile. Though all the men including her sons know what the "square root" (98) is, she does not have the slightest idea about it.

[...] resting her whole weight upon what at the other end of the table her husband was saying about the square root of one thousand two hundred and fifty-three, which happened to be the number on his railway ticket (98).

At that moment, Mrs. Ramsay is trying to get a meaning from the conversation. She notices that she has become, one more time, an admirer of "the masculine intelligence" (98). For her, it seems impossible to reach that intelligence level.

What did it all mean? To this day she had no notion. A square root? What was that? Her sons knew. She leant on them; on cubes and square roots; that was what they were talking about now; on Voltaire and Madame de Stael; on the character of Napoleon; on the French system of land tenure; on Lord Rosebery; on Creevey's Memoirs: she let it uphold her and sustain her, this admirable fabric of the masculine intelligence, [...] (98).

Magnified by the “masculine intelligence”, Mrs. Ramsay “shut her eyes” (98)⁸.

She never denies her lack of education, the superiority of “masculine intelligence”; nor does her husband let her forget it. Even after her death, Mr. Ramsay thinks the women – and also his wife – with “the vagueness of their minds”, (159) cannot save anything permanent in their memories. During the great journey to the lighthouse, Mr. Ramsay sees Cam gazing with her eyes fixed on where there is no house and :

He thought, women are always like that; the vagueness of their minds is hopeless; it was a thing he had never been able to understand; but so it was. It had been so with her – his wife. They could not keep anything clearly fixed in their minds (159).

While thinking about all these, Mr. Ramsay notices it is this side of women that attracts him.

But he had been wrong to be angry with her; moreover, did he not rather like this vagueness in women? It was part of their extraordinary charm (159).

During her whole life, Mrs. Ramsay has had some ambitions such as; all women must marry, men should be protected. She is struggling to unite Paul and Minta; Lily and Bankes. She is not successful in uniting Lily and Bankes but at least, she makes Paul and Minta get married. Nevertheless, Mrs. Ramsay fails to see that Paul and Minta’s marriage is likely to be a failure.

⁸ Since Plato’s times, the metaphor “shut her eyes” stands for ignorance.

CONCLUSION

Thus, having explored emotional as well as intellectual pain in *To the Lighthouse*, it is not hard to see that the moral condition of the characters needs much to desire. Virginia Woolf skillfully depicts the heartbreaking way of life that comes with being man and woman in modernism. Without faith, these characters try to find out their own ways out of the chaos of the post-war modernism (First World War) in which they do not feel secure and comfortable. However, to explain their pessimism and alienation only by the absence of faith would be far from the truth. The characters do not accept the old Victorian values, nor are they happy with the new ones, so they are in constant search for new ways to get contented and safe.

Virginia Woolf tries to depict the changed human nature, which she thinks as something unavoidable. Through the painful experiences of her characters, Virginia Woolf reflects her own agony at the changed world as well as at the changed nature of men at the turn of the century.

Mrs. Ramsay goes out of her way to make some positive, though small, contribution to improving the world around her by bringing people together, trying to make them happy even if it is only for a short period of time at the dinner scene. However, by and large, the characters are insecure in their life. Mrs. Ramsay keeps thinking about her children's future about which she is not very optimistic, and it must be for this reason that she wishes they would never grow up.

Ironically, in part II of the novel, we see that her fears were well-grounded: Andrew and Prue die, but those in life (James and Cam) are not happy at all: they are on hostile terms with their father, and mourn their mother. Mr. Ramsay is aware of his children's attitude towards himself, and tries to repair things, which, finally, yields positive results. Cam and James are beginning to feel warm sympathy for him. Lily's painful process of finding balance in her painting is also solved at the end of the novel. Moreover, she changes her attitude towards Mrs. Ramsay, too. She realizes that in their short and insecure life they still could find moments of happiness, and thus enjoy life.

Pain to which the main characters are exposed has been analyzed deeply in the present thesis. The characters suffer from pain differently, Mrs. Ramsay's being

only spiritual. Her unique desire is to get unity and to be immortal. She wants to be unforgettable in the memories of the people. She always tries to attract the attention of all the people around her. She wants to be remembered in the future. And she achieves it. After her death everybody remembers her. Especially her dinner party has an unforgettable place in their memories.

Lily Briscoe suffers from spiritual pain, too. But hers is quite different from that of Mrs. Ramsay's. She is a painter. She starts a painting and her major trouble is to finish it. She wants to be immortal through her art. Her painting symbolizes immortality to her. She keeps thinking about her painting, and only at the end of the novel, she seems to have had her vision.

The philosopher Mr. Ramsay has intellectual pain. He is worried about the future of his works and his performance. He always thinks whether his works will be read and liked and remembered. He accepts that his mind has reached Q but his trouble is to reach R. At the end of the novel, his condition is a bit complex. Intellectually he cannot pass Q but it can be said that he spiritually reaches R because he has restored unity with her children.

All in all, three main characters in the novel go through pain and they have a sort of resolution towards the end of the novel. They suffer from pain greatly but at the end they get over it and have a seemingly happy end.

It is hoped that the present study might be of some use for the students of English Language and Literature department and also the researchers of English Literature especially those interested in modernism. It is also very helpful for the lovers of Virginia Woolf, her works, specifically her fascinating novel *To the Lighthouse*.

It will be of particular interest here to mention that it would be useful to take up a comparative study of the works of Western writers and those of Turkish writers such as Oğuz Atay and Yusuf Atılgan.

Within this frame it will be worthwhile to compare some themes in Virginia Woolf's novel and those in modern Turkish Literature. Comparative studies do show

that just as in life so in literature we have more similarities as human beings than differences.

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