

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **ANALYSIS**

This chapter is arranged to examine the formal elements depicted in the novel entitled *The Virgin Suicides* by Jeffrey Eugenides. Those formal elements will be examined through the analysis of the main character which is Mrs. Lisbon. Mrs. Lisbon is the mother of five Lisbon girls in *The Virgin Suicide* novel. She is the one who decides everything the Lisbon girls may do or not.

The first part of this chapter will explain about the setting depicted in the novel. The explanation about setting will help the writer to identify the problems experienced by Mrs. Lisbon. Those problems will lead us to the finding of conflicts that are experienced by Mrs. Lisbon which are internal and external conflicts. Besides that, the writer will also explain the characterization of Mrs. Lisbon which is developing gradually from the early beginning of the story until the end. The development of the main character characterization is believed to be influenced by the conflicts happened around the character itself. This explanation aims to help the readers to understand deeper about what events Mrs. Lisbon had through and to build the theme of the novel.

#### **3.1 Setting of The Virgin Suicides**

The youngest Lisbon girls, Cecilia, tried to kill herself by slitting her wrists while she was taking a bath. The suicide attempted failed and her life is saved. (Eugenides 1)

They got out of the EMS truck, ... the fat one said under his breath, "This ain't TV, folks, ..." He was carrying the heavy respirator and cardiac unit past the bushes. ... That was in June, fish-fly season, when each year our town is covered by the flotsam of those ephemeral insects. (Eugenides 1)

The utterance of EMS truck, TV, heavy respirator and cardiac unit on the passage may make certain clear statement of time, since by the exposition of it by simply may resemble time existence of product produced, which also may able to be related with the actual existing history recorded of the goods when it produced.

While the expose of "June, fish-fly season is not only give time statement for June as one of the month within a years but also as a "season" as the each quarter in a year or certain time being where the "fish-fly" usually appear, also especially the "fish-fly" give the hint the location of area or place where "fish-fly" may exist. Another part in the novel that give the clue of time is the description of Cecilia's vintage wedding dress.

Cecilia was wearing, as usual, the wedding dress with the shorn hem. The dress was vintage 1920s.( Eugenides 21)

The line when Cecilia was wearing the wedding dress vintage 1920s (21), exposing old story of parents' Second World War experience while their grandparents still alive. This is also significantly related when the cemetery workers' strike hit its sixth week the day Cecilia died (26-27) until the day of Mary's suicide, the strike settled after 409 days of negotiation (175) may become

another exact clarification of time being and occur during the story within the novel.

The majority of dying had happened during the Second World War when we didn't exist and our fathers were impossibly skinny young men in black-and-white photographs-dads on jungle airstrips... Now our dads were middleaged, with paunches, and shins rubbed hairless from years of wearing pants, but they were still a long way from death. Their own parents, who spoke foreign languages and lived in converted attics like buzzards....Nobody's grandfather had died, nobody's grandmother, nobody's parents, only a few dog.....The cemetery workers' strike hit its sixth week the day she died.(Eugenides 26-27)

The word that state about Cecilia's vintage wedding dress clarifies that the current time is more advance or more modern than the dress produced then the depiction of parents Second World War experience may add with the reality in the story that the parents of the parents also alive create such assumption that the story occur in about few decade after 1920's presumably around 1970's.

Trip Fontaine didn't see any signs of twistedness in the girls, but later he did say, "You would have killed yourself just to have something to do." Mrs. Lisbon oversaw Lux's knitting. Before the channel could be changed, she consulted TV Guide to judge the program's suitability.(Eugenides 84)

At that time, technology has been developing rapidly. It is shown by the existence of Television. This may be one of the reasons of Mrs. Lisbon's fear. Television, unlike radio, delivers the information from all over the country, even the world, to the eyes of her daughters. Those information spread by Television may contain things which Mrs. Lisbon considers it as the bad influences for her daughters.

Besides the television, in 1970's, there are also several genre of music that existed. One of the most notable genre is rock. As stated by Carey L. Martin in his *Outsider Nostalgia in Dazed and Confused and Detroit Rock City* that there are many bands that play rock music in 1970's. One of the most popular rock band at that time is KISS band. According to Martin, In a pop-art explosion, KISS posters, newspaper clippings, magazine covers, concert footage, broadcast news reports, and television commercials are intercut with at least 35 other icons of the 1970s (8).

She had done more than take the girls out of school. The next Sunday, arriving home after a spirited church sermon, she had commanded Lux to destroy her rock records. Mrs. Pitzemberger (who happened to be redecorating a room next door) heard the fierce argument. (Eugenides 143)

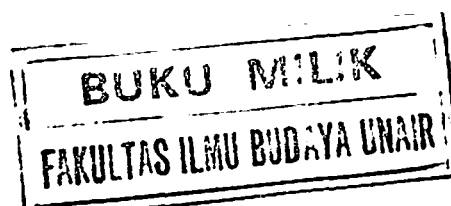
Lux Lisbon is into rock music, she collects some rock band records. It is also shown by the rock song records that one of Lux's friends has listed and gave to Ms. Perl (131). This may also one of the things that Mrs. Lisbon considers as bad influence for her daughters especially for Lux.

Moreover, the closest setting of place within the novel provides the information of location perhaps reveal at such that the Lisbon Family may lived in “A comfortable suburban”, located near “Bon Secours Hospital on Kercheval and Maumee.” and “St.Paul's Catholic Church on the Lake” (5-7). Lisbon family lived in a suburban area where everything is growing and developing. The technology is developed very fast as the the social interaction becomes easier.

The portrayal of certain time and space stated above, may represents certain era exist and also related to the condition occurs on certain society who may also share similar ideology. In short, in the novel it becomes the most important key to acknowledge the kind of people live around Lisbon Family and the common thought they share and also the Lisbon Family reaction towards their neighborhood.

### **3.2. The Conflicts Experienced by Mrs. Lisbon in The Virgin Suicides**

Mrs. Lisbon, by what she believes through her self proclaim “in the name of God”, might feel that she has authorized herself to comprise fully of her daughters life, inside and outside. Thus, conceivably based on such foundation understanding she makes decision which may rather strain her daughters' life rather than sincerely understand their truly problem and what best for them. The clash within the story may mostly appear from Mrs. Lisbon's difficulty to recognize the original crisis existed and at the same time fail to overcome with the fit solution, result in perhaps may be the worst case scenario, the death of her five daughters.



At the very beginning of the novel and giving attention to the appearance of Mrs. Lisbon, she may already give the indication for the emerge of conflict as the neighborhood boys who witness her outlook explain her as hopeless for some sign although they may believe she must been beauty in her past years. The fleshy arms, the viciously cut steel-wool hair, and the librarian's glasses frustrated them every time. She rarely sighted, in the morning, fully wearing clothes though the sun hadn't come up, come out to grasp the milk cartons, or on Sundays when her family drove in their paneled station wagon went to St. Paul's Catholic Church on the Lake. The boys might claim that on the moment, Mrs. Lisbon assumed a queenly iciness. (8)

There are two notions that can be seen from Mrs. Lisbon's early appearance, first notion may be related both with her appearance and the relation of it with religion she believes in, while the second notion related with her sociability or hospitality with the neighbor. In certain religions there is such belief that cleanliness is part of faith and depicted as one of a religious person in the novel, the idiom may not represent the way she keep her look since appearance is important to create image, while from the boys explanation on several reason she may not giving the ideal image by appear with what they called a bothersome sight.

On the other side, creating a good relationship between neighbor is also significant and many religion consider it as important to keep a fine bond with others; but as the boys claimed, Mrs. Lisbon is rarely sighted. It is shown that she

also rarely interact with other people and considered as having less interest to exist in society.

The concept offers the understanding that come along with acceptance and understanding in religion teaching. This understanding may result in different ways, ones acknowledgement and others who receive similar teaching may not same, such as for basic logic of every people may “need” to eat, but several may “want” different kind of food they need to eat. The learning and practice depict progress and result in distinct way. Thus, in the novel, the matter may formulate both from Mrs. Lisbon inability to connect the understanding she obtain from religion that teach love and compassion and provide sufficient nurturing. Mrs. Lisbon seems to be failed to apply the precise care for her daughters although she performs her self as a faithful and religious person.

*The Virgin Suicides* novel consists of two essential conflicts which appear inside Mrs. Lisbon herself which she encounter as the internal and external conflict. Both inner and outer conflicts have their different parts. The internal conflict parts are fear, doubt, and resignation. While on the external conflict are the clash between character and another character, conflict between another force surrounding him or character versus the social construction and society surrounding the story, and the final is the character versus nature (can be naturally weathers, urges of the body, etc.).

### **3.2.1. Internal Conflict**

A character's internal conflict is resolved when he makes a final decision and/or carries out actions based on that choice. If the internal conflict is the story's primary conflict, then the reader can usually predict what the character's choice will be during the climax of the plot, even though the actual resolution may not take place until after the climax, during the falling action or denouement. If the internal conflict is a secondary conflict, resolution may take place at any time during the story.

Fear is the feeling that haunts Mrs. Lisbon in every single day she lives. The fear felt by Mrs. Lisbon is not shown expressively but it rather the hidden fear she keeps inside her. It may be the reason of things she told and did to her children. Many kinds of things that could possibly affect the personal life for example one of them is highly mentioned and voted for recently.

The writer has found some quotation from the novel that may be useful in supporting the analysis. This conflict occurs inside Mrs. Lisbon's conscience. This conflict actually can be considered as the external conflict because the trigger comes from outside which is changes that is spread all over the world.

It is reasonable for parents to be worried over the children development, especially againts the influence that rapidly rain down over surroundings. On the related matter, certain influence perhaps feared to serve negative or unwanted effect upon incapable children mind to process, such at Mary Lisbon's suicide event that may the reason of her death encouraged by some sort of advertising, which misinterpret by herself.



The paramedics give the laminated picture which found in Cecilia's pocket to Mr. Lisbon and Mrs. Lisbon. There is something written behind the picture;

The Virgin Mary has been appearing in our city, bringing her message of peace to a crumbling world. As in Lourdes and Fatima, Our Lady has granted her presence to people just like you. For information call 555-MARY. (Eugenides 14)

Mrs. Lisbon's may be too late to handle the impact of the influence of what we called changes that it already took Mary Lisbon's life, while the things she is afraid of actually come true, she feels the fear of it since the information may manipulated her daughters mind. It is shown by what she did to that laminated picture.

Mr. Lisbon read the words three times. Then he said in a defeated voice, "we baptized her, we confirmed her, and now she believes this crap". It was his only blasphemy during the entire ordeal. Mrs. Lisbon reacted by crumpling the picture in her fist (it survived; we have a photocopy here). (Eugenides 14)

At this state, the matter that Mrs. Lisbon fright did come true, the influence may already takes effect on one of her daughters. The fear which shown by Mrs. Lisbon regarding the changes and information is rather focused on its effects towards her precious daughters than what the information tells about. Mrs. Lisbon seems more concern on how her daughters accept and act towards spread advancement rather than filter information or guide her daughter to receive the

changes. Mrs. Lisbon tends to cut off the line of changes in hope that without knowing the information about changes, her daughter will remain pure.

Mrs. Lisbon feels the fear inside herself, she does not want her daughters to receive information which can lead them into bad things. She is between what she believes to be genuine love for her daughters, and her true belief that sheltering them entirely from a society still emerging from a major societal upheaval is somehow the right thing to do.

As the result of her fear, Mrs. Lisbon is likely to cut off any external influence. She does not set up the idea of disliking the content, instead she is not ready regarding the effect that the change or advancement is brought to her beloved daughters.

We knew what it felt like to see a boy with his shirt off, and why it made Lux write the name Kevin in purple Magic Marker all over her three-ring binder and even on her bras and panties, and we understood her rage coming home one day to find that Mrs. Lisbon had soaked her things in Clorox, bleaching all the "Kevins" out.  
(Eugenides 43)

It is clearly shown that Mrs. Lisbon was getting mad when she knows what Lux did; writing a boy's name on her bras and panties. Mrs. Lisbon feels the doubt toward her beloved daughter. She knows that Lux is an attractive girl, many boys are looking at her like they want her badly. Mrs. Lisbon does not believe that Lux can handle it well, she is afraid that Lux can not avoid the negative influence of a boy-girl relationship.

### **3.2.2. External Conflict**

Besides the internal conflicts, Mrs. Lisbon also has some external conflicts to be encountered day after day during her life in the house with her husband and five daughters. As it was explained in the previous part that an external conflict has three more divisions in the process, they are man versus man, man versus society, and man versus nature. And obviously those conflicts came from the outside of the main character. Here the writer will try to describe and analyze what are the external conflicts encountered by Mrs. Lisbon.

The early and shocking truth related with the neighborhood that Lisbon Family has to deal with may be presented at the early part of the novel as the neighbor boys arguing about who can be called as the best pervert.

When Paul Baldino heard Peter Sissen's story, he swore that he would get inside the Lisbons' house and see things even more unthinkable than Sissen had. "I'm going to watch those girls taking their showers," he vowed. Already, at the age of fourteen ...  
(Eugenides 9)

It is unexpected to have the reality that the boys around the Lisbon family possess such desire that considerably taboo or forbidden and the matter that may add it worse that they were compete on it even their just fourteen years old. While on the other side, the neighbor adult may depict different attitude. They show different response towards Cecilia suicide attempt.

Mrs. Buck found it odd that the razor ended up in the toilet. "If you were cutting your wrists in the tub," she said, "wouldn't you just lay

the razor on the side?" This led to the question as to whether Cecilia had cut her wrists while already in the bath water, or while standing on the bath mat, which was bloodstained. Paul Baldino had no doubts: "She did it on the john," he said. "Then she got into the tub. She sprayed the place, man."( Eugenides 12)

The question that asked curiously by Mrs. Buck while looking for information of the event happened which later she uses to conclude certain thought, rather than to show sympathy by asking if Cecilia going to be alright. Furthermore the similar trait shown by older adult in the neighborhood performed by other two old women which may come with different reactions and stories. Everyone had a theory as to why she had tried to kill herself. Mrs. Buell said the parents were to blame.

"That girl didn't want to die," she told us. "She just wanted out of that house." ... On the day Cecilia returned from the hospital, those two women brought over a Bundt cake in sympathy, but Mrs. Lisbon refused to acknowledge any calamity. ... "As soon as Lily and I took over that Bundt cake, that woman told the girls to go upstairs. We said, 'It's still warm, let's all have a piece,' but she took the cake and put it in the refrigerator. Right in front of us." Mrs. Scheer remembered it differently. "I hate to say it, but Joan's been potted for years. The truth is, Mrs. Lisbon thanked us quite graciously. Nothing seemed wrong at all. I started to wonder if maybe it was true that the girl had only fallen and cut herself. Mrs.

Lisbon invited us out to the sun room and we each had a piece of cake. Joan disappeared at one point (Eugenides 14)

What makes it different is the two old women use an approach to gain information that later they might use for conversation topic while gossiping or spread it to other people. On the event occurred when they tried to gain information while present sympathy by giving a cake, they pay more attention on Mrs. Lisbon's reaction towards them and seemingly they did not only came up with premature point of view by stating that Cecilia is being forced to hurt herself rather than to believe that the accident performed by Cecilia herself which lead her desperately wants to escape, the two elderly women also came up with two different version of Mrs. Lisbon's action towards their generosity. Mrs. Scheer even claimed that it is Mrs. Joan's story version which is false by accusing that Mrs. Joan is under the influence of certain drugs.

The next size up was full-size, more than Cecilia required. When they had opened her casket at the Funeral Home, all anyone had seen was the satin pillow and the ruffled cushioning of the casket's lid...The open section of lid revealed not only her face and shoulders, but her hands with their bitten nails, her rough elbows, the twin prongs of her hips, and even her knees (Eugenides 39)

Force may not always the answer, persisting desire rather listen to the main problems may result in worse condition. Cecilia is not only the youngest among others Lisbon girls and under current condition occurred, she is also become the most fragile one, who firstly attempt suicide but fail then choose

instant death by throw herself to fence post from second floor. It is depicted by the quotation above which explain her bitten nails. Cecilia who often bites her nails shows that she often feels insecure. She is not as expressive as her sisters but she is sensitive and imaginative. It is also shown by her diary where she can expressively tell story about her feeling towards everything as Tim Winer said in the novel; "Basically, what we have here is a dreamer. Somebody out of touch with reality. When she jumped, she probably thought she'd fly." (42) after read Cecilia's diary.

Most of the diary told us more about how the girls came to be than why they killed themselves. We got tired of hearing about what they ate ("Monday, February 13. Today we had frozen pizza .. ."), or what they wore, or which colors they favored. They all detested creamed corn. Mary had chipped her tooth on the monkey bars and had a cap. (Eugenides 42)

Based on the citation above, Cecilia is a sensitive person despite her silence. She rarely speaks to others but she always observes the way people act and behave. She sees her sisters everyday and observes many things about them even it is the little detail things of them.

Mrs. Lisbon said, "If that's what you want, Cecilia. But we've gone to all this trouble to have a party for you." Cecilia tugged the bracelets until the tape came unstuck. Then she froze. Mrs. Lisbon said, "All right. Go up, then. We'll have fun without you." (Eugenides 29)

Mrs. Lisbon can do something to make Cecilia stay at the party. She can say something which may calm her down. Unfortunately, Mrs. Lisbon prefers to let Cecilia go upstairs and avoid the party. She did not do anything to keep Cecilia enjoy the social interaction at the party as the psychiatrist suggested.

None of the Lisbons helped with the fence removal. From time to time, however, we saw their faces blinking at the windows. Just after the truck pulled the fence free, Mr. Lisbon himself came out the side door and coiled up a garden hose. He didn't move to the trench. He raised one hand in a neighborly salute and returned inside.( Eugenides 40)

At this passage, Lisbon family performed such gesture of acting natural as there is no tragedy ever happened, while in fact, one of their member died in a such dreadful incident and they were just standing and saw as the neighbor were removing the fence that Cecilia jumped on. It is clearly shown that Lisbon family especially Mrs. Lisbon were performing denial for the tragedy. On the other side the neighbor may rather seemed to fail to acknowledge the real reason of Cecilia ended her life and only find solution which is removing the fence in order to avoid the same incident.

It is clearly shown that the neighbor's attitude only focuses on the fence rather than on the living things which is the rest of Lisbon girls that actually need more attention, while the incident on the fence itself in another perspective which may give access for the neighbor around the Lisbon family to be involved with them in many ways.

On the day Cecilia returned from the hospital, those two women brought over a Bundt cake in sympathy, but Mrs. Lisbon refused to acknowledge any calamity. (Eugenides 17)

According to the quotation above, it is shown that Mrs. Lisbon has the fear in letting Cecilia receive any information from outside the house. She feels that it is better for her daughters including Cecilia to not hearing any information or opinion from Mrs. Buell and Mrs. Scheer. Mrs. Lisbon then asked the girls to go upstairs and refused to eat the cake together, she took the cake and put it in the refrigertor instead (18). Mrs. Lisbon thinks it is better that Mrs. Buell and Mrs. Scheer go as soon as possible. She does not want them to share any thoughts about what happened in Lisbon's family.

Thus, the formulation of setting presented and other elements such as the citizen personality description revealed connection between setting existed and the character that lives in it which may later lead the conflicts occurred, especially towards Mrs. Lisbon and her family againts their society.

### **3.3 Mrs. Lisbon's Characterization**

The mother of the Lisbon family, Mrs. Lisbon, is a violent, strong matriarch, and become the leader in the Lisbon house. Mrs. Lisbon makes almost every decision in the house particularly the decision related to the Lisbon girls. As the story goes, the writer of this study recognizes that Mrs. Lisbon has the typical tendencies as the type of round character. As Richard Gill stated in his book, Round Character is a kind of full and complex character (94) which the writer



then makes some opinion that sometimes the typical of round characters has the capability in changing their characterization or probably playing the feelings of the readers. A character may be called as a round character when it is a complex character and has many branches in their life details. The most important thing in determining a character as the round character is the development of the character itself. The character has to experience the development from the beginning until the end of the novel.

Those requirements of round character have been accomplished by Mrs. Lisbon's character. As the story begins, Mrs. Lisbon is a typical of a good housewife. She takes care the Lisbon girls and maintain the household. Despite her forcefully maternal expression, Mrs. Lisbon seems increasingly unconcerned or unable to attend to the physical benefit of her daughters as she lays on her bed for weeks after Cecilia's death. The next thing is her house maintenance, fully normal as the novel begins, hastily fall apart after the first suicide, as the house becomes a forest of open cans, half-eaten food, mail-order catalogs, and dust.

In this study, the writer learns that Mrs. Lisbon, the main character, is depicted as a tyrant, lack of knowledge and insensitive mother. She set of laws the house with an iron fist, harshly control the girls' activities. She is everlastingly suspicious of the external world, with a dense belief that girls are best and happiest at home under a mother's attentive eye.

### **3.3.1. Tyrant**

Mrs. Lisbon rules the house with her belief that Lisbon girls does not need to be touched by the outside information. She is such an intriguing character because the reader never knows what motivates her and why she is so controlling, cold and tyrant. She makes rules in the house without asking for others suggestion and opinion.

We never learned whether Mrs. Lisbon caught Lux as she tried to sneak back inside, but for whatever reason, when Trip tried to make another date to come sit on the couch, Lux told him she was grounded, and that her mother had forbidden any future visits.

(Eugenides, 65)

According to the quotation above, Mrs. Lisbon does not want Trip to come to Lisbon's house or communicate with Lux. Mrs. Lisbon makes a new rule that she forbid any dates and other activities which may lead into boy-girl relationship. Mrs. Lisbon as a tyrant person is not only felt by the Lisbon girls but also by Mr. Lisbon.

At that point, Mr. Lisbon told Trip to sit down, and for the next few minutes, in a patient voice, he explained that he and his wife had certain rules, they had been the same rules for the older girls and he couldn't very well change them now for the younger ones

(Eugenides, 83)

As Mr. Lisbon tells Trip Fountain that his wife has some rules that have to be obeyed by their daughters and Mr. Lisbon. According to what Mr. Lisbon tells

Trip, Mrs. Lisbon is against dances, hard music and prom night, and it is very hard to make her change her mind and let the girls go to the prom.

The subtle mentions of her throughout the course of the final four suicides show that she no longer cares about herself, her husband or her daughters. A key moment in this is when she first lets the paramedics into her house: "When the paramedics entered, she remained in the doorway tightening the belt of her robe. She straightened the welcome mat with her toe twice" (Eugenides 218).

It is never clearly established if Mrs. Lisbon is aware that the entire neighbourhood has their eyes on her house and her family. As a mother, a role generally thought as one that keeps the family together, she must have been humiliated and upset at the loss of her first daughter. Mothers in general tend to get blamed and also blame themselves when a family falls apart, because they are the provider, the nurturer. Mrs. Lisbon tightened her robe and straightened the mat because she didn't know who might have been watching.\

### **3.3.2 Lack of Understanding**

The character performance of Mrs. Lisbon is depicted as a mother that still posses compassion for her daughter although she can not understand them sensitively and acknowledge of her daughter's various needs, such the need to get close to opposite sex and freedom in self expression, while Mrs. Lisbon herself perhaps may unable to cope with anything outside her house, the change that brought by other from out of her house, the advancement . The evidence that she

felt so lost about her daughter show on “But then Mrs. Lisbon lunged in, screaming,” (4), while perhaps in little bit contrary the part “The upper-right second-story window contains a blur that Mrs. Lisbon identified as Mary Lisbon” (5) since it may rather portray either Mrs. Lisbon always remind the shape of her daughter even its faint so she doesn’t have to look clearly or just merely kind of ignore

Another event that may depict Mrs. Lisbon’s lack of understanding when Cecilia attempt to commit suicide.

Dr. Armonson stitched up her wrist wounds. Within five minutes of the transfusion he declared her out of danger. Chucking her under her chin, he said, "What are you doing here, honey? You're not even old enough to know how bad life gets." ... "Obviously, Doctor," she said, "you've never been a thirteen-year-old girl." The Lisbon girls were thirteen (Cecilia), and fourteen (Lux), and fifteen (Bonnie), and sixteen (Mary), and seventeen (Therese) (Eugenides 7)

On the quotation above, as the answer of the doctor’s question, Cecilia said that he must not know how it feels to be a thirteen year old girl. That statemet obtain an information about how Cecilia feels as a thirteen year old girl. She receives less attention and compassion that force her to execute such a dreadful performance in her age of thirteen. Furthermore, the fact that can not be ignored is that Cecilia as the youngest member of the Lisbon girls is able to perform a real fatal incident based on her background problem and it can be assumed her other

sisters are not only possess similar matter but also the same or worse risk to end their life as Cecilia did. Therefore, the fact is related to Mrs. Lisbon's nurturing method towards her daughter.

Another devastating proof of her lack of understanding shown in her statement "None of my daughters lacked for any love. We had plenty of love in our house."(64) and "Mrs. Lisbon thought the darker urges of dating could be satisfied by frolic in the open air-love sublimated by lawn darts.(85) Mrs. Lisbon's mindset rather depict one sided selfish rule without more understanding of her daughters' need, while the fact shown by one of her daughters shows the contrary

In Dr. Hornicker's opinion, Lux's promiscuity was a commonplace reaction to emotional need. "Adolescents tend to seek love where they can find it," he wrote in one of the many articles he hoped to publish. "Lux confused the sexual act with love. For her, sex became a substitute for the comfort she needed as a result of her sister's suicide." A few of the boys did provide details that supported this theory. Willard said that once, while they lay together in the field house, Lux asked him if he thought what they had done was dirty. "I knew what to say. I said no. Then she grabs my hand and goes, "You like me, don't you? I didn't say anything. It's best to keep chicks guessing."(64)

Mrs. Lisbon's character shows that she fails to feel any sympathy towards her daughters' problem and refuses to admit. In order to set rules that she believes

as a solution, she states her statement with the rejection towards opinions and advices from others. It is clearly shown when Lux Lisbon's performance depicts the opposing situation where even a doctor able to explain that Lux's performance is derived from the incident related with her sister.

### **3.3.3 Insensitive**

The issue of insensitiveness is shown in the novel when she decided to send her daughter up to her room even she already made party for her "All right. Go up, then. We'll have fun without you."(23) Her statement may not only portray she did not care her daughter feeling she also perhaps, by sending her daughter apart from the current event they involve right now, she may discontinue or prevent another advance influence which possibly discomfort herself or her daughter and after that at "Mrs. Lisbon, as though alone, said, "Oh, my God.""(23) show how Mrs. Lisbon show her sorry and grief as her daughter commit suicide, the act as result of regret performance since she may fail to carry out certain protection that suitable for her daughter. Other people may declare that sometimes Mrs. Lisbon become a person with unpleasant appearance as "Whenever we saw Mrs. Lisbon we looked in vain for some sign of the beauty that must have once been hers. But the plump arms, the brutally cut steel-wool hair, and the librarian's glasses foiled us every time." (7). The statement above explains in detail that according to them, she may not pay attention to make better her own appearance.

Those evidences above become suitable clarification which support the understanding that Mrs. Lisbon's characterization reveal her as a mother who is not only a dictator but also lacks of understanding by refusing the flow of development in the era she lived. Just as the word 'characterization' refers to how an author develop and presents characters, so the word 'dramatisation' refers to the method writers assemble and form their plays. (Beard 84)

### **3.4. Mrs. Lisbon's Fear of Changes**

Furthermore, in this point also served the proof that Mrs. Lisbon withstands from current fashion of her era or certain style in her current neighborhood, she refuses to adopt dressing style which worn by people in that era. The way the narrators describe Mrs. Lisbon's dressing style shows that her current appearance did not suit for the time being. On the other side, she prefers to appear as she is and she chooses to not to modify herself as at least to be similar like other adult women appearance in her neighborhood at that time.

Another part that shows Mrs. Lisbon's fear towards changes is when she disagree with cremation. Cremation is comes from the Latin word cremo which means "to burn". In the funeral things, it is particularly the burning of the dead.

By the mid-1960s cremation was taking over from burial as the dominant form of English funeral but with practically no serious liturgical change to match. New crematoria were being rapidly built and the public at large were adapting to cremation. Cremated remains were, largely, being buried or scattered within

crematorium grounds. (Davies and Rumble, 2)

It is stated in the quotation above that the cremation becomes popular in the middle 1960s since it is considered as the most modern and efficient way of funeral. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century regarded as sanitary and for the social good, namely, the use of cremation to avoid overfilled graves and wasted land.

Mrs. Lisbon has her own ideology for certain matter also explain as she disagrees about cremation over the reason of religion. Mrs. Lisbon, however, objected to this idea, fearing it was heathen, and even pointed to a biblical passage that suggested the dead will rise bodily at the second coming, no ashes allowed (27). It shows that Mrs. Lisbon rejects the idea about cremation as a better solution while it also popular in her society. She is not only against it but also perform old fashioned way of funeral, she requires her daughter body keep intact as she quotes the bible that ones body shall be summoned when Jesus come once again to earth.

When her daughter's dead body appears in the coffin, she does not dressed in a wedding gown as expected, she appear in a beige dress with a collar lace which is Cecilia had refused to wear it in her lifetime (39). Such decision portrays that Mrs. Lisbon desires certain image represent from her dead daughter although the decision seems rather shows other flawed side. At this state she rather force her ideology, she feels disagree with how community and their current funeral dressing dressed her daughter previously then she change the outfit with the dress which Cecilia never likes. Mrs. Lisbon's depiction as tyrant and ignorant shown



when Mrs. Lisbon finds out that Lux wrote the name Kevin in purple magic marker all over her bras and panties. Then Mrs. Lisbon had soaked her things in Clorox, bleaching all the "Kevins" out (43). When Mrs. Lisbon had stopped doing laundry or even buying detergent, the girls had taken to washing clothes by hand in the bathtub, and when Father Moody passed their bathroom, he saw shirts and pants and underthings draped over the shower curtain (37), when Mrs. Lisbon in particular disapproved of dances, proms, and the general expectation that teenagers should be allowed to paw one another in back seats (50)

At this state, Mrs. Lisbon performs a behavior that she did not care how her daughters feel, but rather execute harsh and non understanding decision towards her daughter. When she washed all of Lux's clothes and cleaned them from the word "Kevin", she tries to reject, prevent, and erase any influence that the writing may bring together, since she accepts the writing as external matter that have risk to manipulate her daughter.

It was well known that Mr. and Mrs. Lisbon didn't allow their daughters to date, and that Mrs. Lisbon in particular disapproved of dances, proms, and the general expectation that teenagers should be allowed to paw one another in back seats (Eugenides 51)

The quotation above serve a clear statement about Mrs. Lisbon's rejection towards dances and proms because she believes that those events will not only clash her daughter with other teenagers but also bring unexpected result such as alcohol and desire lead to free sex that Mrs. Lisbon mostly fear that it will

somehow alter her daughter. She prefers to have her daughters stuck on a seat where Mrs. Lisbon can keep an eye on them.

As the effect of Mrs. Lisbon's fear of changes that depict retreating from community, she discontinues to perform the laundry task resulting in stopping buying detergent. It is not only the laundry must be done by her daughters in their bathroom, but also they have to dry their laundry inside the house and hang the wet clothes on the shower curtain in order to show the withdrawal from her neighbor.

After everything that has happened and the risk of a similar incident of suicides which may happen in the future, Mrs. Lisbon depicts the one-sided view of her response towards the conditions that occur. At the same time, she rejects anything from the external part of her ideology and territory, which is her house, considered as a negative influence, such as the modern aspect of cremation brought by the community.

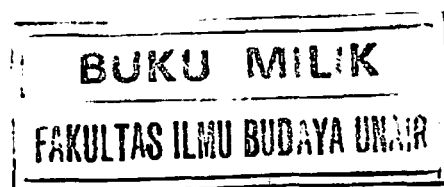
Based on the analysis above, we can see that Mrs. Lisbon has the description of a round character since she changed from the beginning until the end of the story. From the explanation of each quotation before, it can be inferred that Mrs. Lisbon's personality has developed because of each conflict that she has experienced. Moreover, those conflicts that happened are closely related to the setting in the story.

The setting of place and time in the novel plays an important role in defining the conflicts that may happen in the story. As we know that this story is taken place in a suburban neighborhood where the information spreads easily. The

issue of changes is clearly emerged in the suburban area at that time through the printed and audio-visual media. This condition leads into several conflicts that has to be experienced by Mrs. Lisbon. Mrs. Lisbon experiences the conflicts both with herself, other characters and also with the neighbor. She tends to face each conflicts by avoiding and demanding at the same time. The explanation of setting and conflicts lead us into an analysis of Mrs. Lisbon's chracterization since the changes of Mrs. Lisbon's personality and acts are the result of what have happenned to her throughout the story.

According to the analysis that has been done in this study, it can be stated that Mrs. Lisbon experiences such a deep fear towards changes since she avoids to wear certain types of clothes that worn by other women in the society at that era. Another evidence is that Mrs. Lisbon is very strict to her daughters regarding male-female relationship since she believes that that kind of relationship will always ended by sexual desire.

Furthermore, the fear towards changes is quite a natural thing for a mother to feel since it is normal for a mother to worry about her children especially in their adolescence. The fear towards changes felt by a mother is reasonable as long as it is based on logical grounds. However, each individuals has a different reaction in facing change, depending on their social background.



# **CHAPTER 4**

## **CONCLUSION**