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Revaluation of Feeling in *Mrs. Dalloway*: Beyond Proportion and Conversion

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I.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf stresses the need for revaluation of feeling as a solution to human problems, individual or communal, which have been caused by a surplus of rational values such as reason and intelligence. It is well known that Virginia Woolf emphasizes the exploration of human consciousness, to understand life in a more authentic way. In "Modern Fiction," she announces that the task of the novelist is "to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display" (*Common Reader* 189).

Here, we can notice that Woolf expands the scope of "spirit" beyond the conscious and predictable action of reason and intelligence. It includes the unknown and unlimited area of the unconscious psyche, which tends to be aberrant and complicated, judging from the viewpoint of rationalists. As Woolf explored the human mind, from the most rationalistic through the standardized to the aberrant insanity, she found that the individual predicament was related to unbalance

between feeling and intellect. The state, church and social institutions considered reason and intelligence as beacons to lead an individual to the righteous way. Feelings and emotion have been regarded as hinderances to the agency of reason, because they are disparate and erratic. However, Woolf discovered that if reason overmasters and blocks the working of feeling, our life would be numbed and suffocated to death.

In fact, Woolf never defines clearly what feeling is and how it functions. She just spreads some hints in her works and diary. For example, while thinking over the inspirational source of writing, she asked herself, "Am I writing *The Hours* from deep emotion?"(*Diary* 56) Or she said about its topic, "I should say a good deal about The Hours and my discovery: how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters: I think that gives exactly what I want: humanity, humour, depth" (*Diary* 59). Here, "beautiful caves" refers to the inscrutable territory of human psyche, which works in an exquisite way. It brings out "humanity and humour," which are closely related to feelings. In *Mrs. Dalloway*—the later title of *The Hours*, Septimus is an objective correlative of the damaged feelings in modern society. Woolf's exploration of human nature leads her to diagnose British society. She said about the plan for *Mrs. Dalloway*, "I want to criticize the social system, and to show it at work, at its most intense"(*Diary* 56). In fact, a key theme in her work is to investigate the relationship of feelings to society.

In spite of its importance, there are not many commentators who deal with feelings as their main issue. If any, they limit references to this issue in oblique ways. For example, Alice van Buren Kelley approaches Woolf from the viewpoint of sensitivity (Kelley 100). She argues that Woolf requires the modern people to redeem the visionary sensitivity (Kelley 101) and be sensitive to beauty of life (Kelley 181). It is also notable that Jean O. Love states that Woolf develops her mythopoetic style to present the delicate tremble of life, in opposition to the empirical approach to human beings (Love 139). Another critic who takes a step further toward the issue of feeling is Jean Bennett. Bennett suggests that "sympathy"is the main concern of Woolf as she seeks for "emotional relevance" to every aspect of her work (Bennett 27).

If these critics opened the door to the issues concerning feeling, Roger Poole draws his attention to Woolf's criticism of the intellectual in the light of "embodied subject" (Poole 10). According Poole, "Virginia is constantly sharpening her indictment of the intellectual" since she finds them ever conceptualizing the world and nature in an abstract way. Further, he argues that Woolf proposes "a form of thinking which would be informed by feeling, and intuitively adequate to what was being discussed" (Poole 62). His view is quite supportive to our argument but he appears to assign the qualities of feeling as female attributes while thinking ability as male-related ones.

In this sense, Poole seems to follow Herbert Marder, who explained Woolf's quest for the "androgynous mind" in the early days of criticism of Woolf. Marder has emphasized that in Woolf's works, the male mind is "rationalist" at best and usually egocentric, insensitive, fact-obsessed, reductive (Marder 176). Marder's interpretation, like Poole's, is highly contributive to understanding two aspects of "androgynous mind." However, when we consider the fact that some female characters turn to have masculine rationalistic attributes and male characters to have affective intuition in Woolf's works, it seems necessary to start our argument from considering the more basic strata of human psyche, that is, reason and feeling.

In fact, Woolf is not the only thinker who attacks the modern rationalistic system and *Zeitgeist*. In the eighteenth century, David Hume, a Scottish philosopher, maintained that Reason is, and ought to be, only the slave of the passion. He asserted that all the moral actions come naturally from human feelings, without any intervention from human reason (Hume 574-92). Opposing the beliefs in rationality of those days, he refused ideas and substituted feelings for reason. The account of his direct influence on Woolf's thinking is beyond the scope of this article. Yet, we could find a number of similarities in their stances on feelings. Based on them, we assume that Woolf stands on the side of David Hume. In the European countries in the nineteenth century, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche held that the tragedy of the Western civilization was caused by the dichotomizing rationalism which failed to see a thing as integrated organic entity (Nietzsche

45-47). According to Eric Hobsbawm, this rejection of reason and intelligence had strong influence on psychology and *avant-garde* art at the turn of the century. For some examples, MacDougall showed that human behavior is based on "a bundle of instincts" like those of animals; Freud proved that "the rational mind was only a boat tossed on the waves and currents of the unconscious." William James states that rational consciousness is only a special kind of consciousness while there is another potential form of consciousness (Hobsbawm 262-71).

Among the literati around Woolf, there were several people who took a anti-rationalist stance. For instance, G.E. Moore, who was the center of the Bloomsbury group, rejected the creeds of Idealism in favor of fancy and fairy. He based his ethic principles on instinctive spirit. According to Poole, Woolf appeared to be drawn to G.E. Moore's avocation of intuitive spirit, along with Moore's catechism (Poole 66-68). Besides Moore, Leonard Woolf, Woolf's lifelong friend and husband, dealt with the matter of feelings in his two novels, *The Village in the Jungle* (1913) and *The Wise Virgin* (1914). He is reportedly said to focus his attention on how to feel and how to express feelings (Poole 74). In addition to them, T.S. Eliot, who kept in touch with Woolf, is famous for his diagnosis of the modern symptom, that is, the disintegration of sensibility and intelligence.

Influenced by these skeptical views on reason, Woolf appeared to turn her attention to feeling to seek for the cure of the reason-beaten society and to recover the wholeness of being. In the following, I will explore what Woolf thinks about two principles of rationalism, that is, proportion and conversion, and what she suggests to heal wounded feelings. Lastly, I will show what Woolf's vision for re-integration is, through examining Clarissa's party scene.

II. Specters of Proportion and Conversion

1. Proportion: A Tyrant of the Human Mind

Although some groups of philosophers and artists were sceptical about the

rationality-centered views, British society was controlled by creeds of reason at the turn of the century. As Romain Rolland approved in 1915, "They believed in Reason as the Catholics believed in the Blessed Virgin" (Hobsbawm 262). Since Descartes' fixation of reason as the ultimate norm, Western society witnessed the peak of rationalism around the beginning of the twentieth century. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf sees Proportion and Conversion as the two axes of rationalism in the sense that both of them inhibit the actions of feelings such as desire, emotion, and innate virtue, while serving to insinuate the rationalist ideology into consciousness of people. Woolf discovers that "proportion" and "conversion" go in parallel with each other, especially in the fields of religion and science.

As for the principle of proportion, Woolf portrays Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradford as its personifications. Both of the two psychiatrists consider that their patients lack a sense of proportion, which is necessary for the balance of life. With the help of proportional attitude, they believe, a human being may not be deviated from the normal track. This ethos serves as one single rule in life and science to them. However, Woolf describes it in quite a satirical tone as below:

> Worshiping proportion, Sir William not only prospered himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalised despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion. (*Dalloway* 109)

Woolf opposes the enactment of the proportion rule, because it has been used to exclude the dissident and the unfit from society. In the age of progression and evolution, one should not be doubtful about the triumph of rationalist ethos, nor be depressed by the suffering of the unfit. The citizen was required to share a sense of proportion in order to stay in society. In depth, the proportion rule is used as a threat of rationalist evolutionism to the dissident.

Moreover, a sense of proportion makes people lose the close contact with the vital experience of the body, since a blind following of proportion rule would produce an artificial balance in life. However, it would eventually dry up our

feeling to death. As Joanne Trautmann Banks says, Woolf recognizes that since a human being has a variety of aspects of the self, it's dangerous to force oneself to be unified into a single entity according to any norms (Banks xi).

Interestingly, Woolf implies several fallacies of Sir William Bradford and Dr. Holmes in detail. First of all, Woolf suggests that their proportional view fails to catch the core truth of some situation. For example, they can't gain insight into problems of Septimus' insanity. Woolf implies in the text that Septimus lost his faculties of feeling at the war. Behind his insanity, there lies the violent ideological maneuver which is used to make the citizen as a reified being with only rational will—necessary for self-control over natural feelings—but without emotion. At a fundamental level, Woolf blames the state and society for causing Septimus' insanity. In contrast, Sir William Bradford and Dr. Holmes are so myopic that they find fault in Septimus the victim.

Additionally, Woolf makes fun of the proportion principle by the fact that each of those psychiatrists has a totally different view on Septimus' mental state. Dr. Holmes concludes that there is nothing wrong with Septimus' mind and only recommends to take a rest in seclusion. In contrast, Sir William Bradford diagnoses his state as a serious case and forces him to be taken into the mental hospital in the countryside. If both of those medical doctors strike the balance as sharply as they are expected, each of them should have the same judgment of the case. However, we find their diagnoses are extremely different. Through their difference, Woolf suggests that there is no absolute rule of proportion in the world and if any, it would be easily misused to oppress the unfit while being used for the prosperity of the privileged class.

The most critical fault of the psychiatrists is their neglect of human feelings. Woolf indicates that the law of proportion is not for the balance of mind but for the tyranny of reason. To maintain decorum in bourgeois society, the citizen need to hide their desire and emotion. Sir William Bradford himself hides his real feeling of disgust and disillusion toward high-society people. Woolf describes that his real concern is not the ideal state of the mind, nor consideration of others. On the

contrary, the reason for his control of emotions is to make his social and mercurial ambitions come true. In this sense, the notion of proportion ironically means the capacity to obey the established opinions, as T.E. Apter notes (Apter 70). As for Dr. Holmes, he feels bored with his mechanical life and wants to let out his boredom. However, for the sake of proportion, he represses his natural desire and compensates it with the decent hobby of collecting antiques. As a result, he fails to find true satisfaction. Woolf continues to say that their life is futile and dried out.

In the case of Septimus, the situation is much more serious. Once Sir William Bradford defines Septimus as a serious mental disorder, he tries to transform Septimus' mind, based on the established theory of psychiatry. Consequently, he can't hear Septimus' voice of fear and anxiety. Taking their rationalist paradigms into consideration, it seems natural that they fail to respond to Septimus' poetical sensitivity in a more humane way. Most critically, Woolf proves the huge danger of reason-dominated value system through dealing with Septimus' suicide. The end of blind reason is the suicide of civilization, Virginia Woolf implies. As Marder notes, Woolf warns us of the "barbarism" of "intellectual rigidity within the mind" (Marder 2).

2. Conversion of the Human Mind

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf presents how the practice of "conversion" is interlaced with the hindrance of natural working of feelings. Woolf says through the mouthpiece of Clarissa that "making people think this or that" (*Dalloway* 131) is an act of conversion. The novel shows that one of the representative efforts for conversion can be found in Miss Kilman. She works as a private tutor of Clarissa's daughter, Elizabeth, but what she is actually doing is to convert Elizabeth to her religion of puritan Christianity. Woolf explains that Miss Kilman grew up in desperate poverty and her religious creeds have been used as the tool of attack on the rich. Throughout the text, she is portrayed as an agent of dogmatized Christianity, who makes efforts to convert others to her side. Woolf illustrated the aspects of conversion in the following:

> [Conversion] feasts on the wills of the weakly, loving to impress, to impose, adoring her own features stamped on the face of the populace. At Hyde Park Corner on a tub she stands preaching; shrouds herself in white and walks penitentially disguised as brotherly love through factories and parliaments; offers help, but desires power; smites out of her way roughly the dissentient, or dissatisfied; bestows her blessing on those who, looking upward, catch submissively from her eyes the light of their own. (*Dalloway* 109-10)

Here, the author clearly points up the dark side of transforming others' mind. Originally, this passage explains Sir William Bradford's attitude, but can be also applied to Miss Kilman, because they share the fundamental similarities in the sense that they try to make others obey their ideas.

Especially, confronting one's opponent, the strategy of conversion might be used as an effective means to defeat a person. Woolf refers to a weekly magazine as an example of the secular type of conversion. Clarissa thinks the weekly magazine is "loving to impress and impose unto others," covering its real intention with actions of brotherhood. As a result, a business company or the parliament could remove the dissident and dissatisfied while granting a variety of benefits to the assimilated persons. In this way, the establishments of society can effectively acquire and perpetuate their power. Through Clarissa's interior monologue, Woolf warns the readers against the practice of conversion as below:

> And then stole out from her hiding-place and mounted her throne that Goddess whose lust is to override opposition, to stamp indelibly in the sanctuaries of others the image of herself. (*Dalloway* 112)

Imprinting the image of oneself onto others is eventually to nullify otherness of an individual. That is, it is the denial of autonomy of others. It's true that the agent of conversion does not neglect the will of the dissident. On the contrary, the agent of conversion takes advantage of the will of the dissident who wants to be included in a group and to get some benefit thereby. We can imagine that an individual might be persuaded by the authoritative power with reasonable

backgrounds. In this case, the authoritative power urges the individual to use his/her own will power to attain the visible fruit. Throughout the course, the human will is used to control desires and discipline the body. Ultimately, it can be said that the conversion is wearing the mask of self-decision but, in reality, manipulating people's thoughts and feeling.

Woolf shows Elizabeth is on the verge of being converted to Miss Kilman's religious dogmas. Once Elizabeth started to be assimiliated to Miss Kilman's views, she has lost her original vitality by degree because she represses deliberately the natural flow of her feelings. Clarissa is worried that Elizabeth becomes unnecessarily too much "serious." T.E. Apter is right when he notes that the act of conversion may "feast upon the human will" (*Dalloway* 70). As far as it remains within the level of rational power of the will, the converted person cannot help losing the immediate and inherent response to the self. The following passage illustrates the case of Miss Kilman:

> 'It is the flesh, it is the flesh,' she murmured (it being her habit to talk aloud), rying to subdue this turbulent and painful feeling as she walked down Victoria Street. She prayed to God. (*Dalloway* 141)

In this passage, Miss Kilman is so dogmatic that she denies her body. She views the flesh as the locus of secular sin and tries to brand Clarissa's attractive body as the site of vanity. Miss Kilman forces others as well as herself to control the "fleshly desires" and to repudiate the body, referring to the dogmatic tenets of Christianity. Virginia Woolf tells that Miss Kilman is on "the threshold of their underworld as a soul" (*Dalloway* 147). Without any desire and feeling except for a strong appetite, she is in a situation of death-in-life. Woolf severly criticizes her as a "rusted soul" with only "dulled feelings." In this sense, she is a "life-blood sucking" "specter."

III. Two Aspects of Feeling

1. Clarissa with Visionary Feeling

Earlier on in the critical history of Virginia Woolf, many commentators including Herbert Marder have pointed up the features of impressionistic style of *Mrs. Dalloway*, and praised Woolf's ability to "capture moments of sensibility" (Marder 23). Clive Bell, a member of the Bloomsbury group, approved Woolf's power of "lifting the veil," "showing inanimate things in the mystery" and "beauty of their reality" (Hussey 17). The beginning part of *Mrs. Dalloway* exemplifies Woolf's virtuoso skill of impressionistic presentation through showing how Clarissa gets dissolved into things and how she feels them as they are.

> And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning- fresh as if issued to children on a beach.
> What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her when she, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how clam, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen. (*Dalloway* 3)

Here, Woolf renders Clarissa a sensitive perceiver who can feel things as they are. Clarissa feels the freshness of the morning air, as if children do. It seems Woolf chooses intentionally the word "children" in order to present Clarissa as a pure perceiver without prejudice or ambition. Clarissa "plunges" into the world of things like as a lark. She does not judge and evaluate things according to the ready-made, rationalistic criteria, nor does she cut the world into parts and analyze them like a scientist. What she actually does is to "plunge" into the sea of things. Her senses become the sensitive "feeler." Though this process, Woolf shows that "feeling" is the most primordial response to things when the subject perceives objects.

This primordial feeling is free from artificial cognitive calculation or self-interest. Therefore, the more deeply one can feel things, the more immediately one approaches to the essence of things. Clarissa's three-times repetition of exclamatory sentences show the immediacy of relationship between her and the world. The purest immediacy does not allow the subject to have time for linguistic articulation of one's feelings. The exclamatory phrase is the most authentic response in such a case. As Alice van Buren Kelly notes, linguistic definition is deferred during such a fantastic moment when one gets absolutely absorbed into things (Kelly 11).

Woolf knows that this potential of feelings can be used to make emotional communication possible among people. It is proven in Clarissa's self-reflection. For example, Clarissa recognizes that her foremost shortcoming is not her mind but the warm feelings: "It was not beauty. It was mot mind. It was something central which penetrated something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or of women together" (*Dalloway* 34). To open up emotional communication, one needs neither intelligence nor the beauty of appearance. To achieve the real communication, one should have "something warm." It comes out of the heart and takes its root in the faculties of feelings. The words, "central" and "permeated," indicate the fact that Clarissa regards these capabilities as the most valuable qualities. Because of this point, she feels the more sorry for her lack of this "something central." However, Woolf affords Clarissa the opportunity to experience the affective communication with others at "the moments of being."

> And whether it was pity, or their beauty, or that she was older, or some accident—like a faint scent, or a violin next door (so strange is the power of sounds at certain moments), she did undoubtedly then feel what men felt. Only for a moment; but it was enough. It was a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt the world come close, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its thin skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores! Then, for that moment, she had seen an

> illumination; a match burning in a crocus, an inner meaning almost expressed. (*Dalloway* 34-35)

This passage implies Clarissa's state of being when she passes through the process of feeling other's feeling. She feels what men feel in the similar way that she experiences the olfactory and auditory perception. Those words 'scent' and 'violin' prove that her sharing of feelings occurs not through the cognitive process but through the bodily response. At this rare moment, she can be unified with another being without negating each other. Thus, this moment is a blessed instant. By using words such "revelation" and "illumination," Woolf elevates this experience to the mysterious and places it within the realm of visionary exaltation. The world is filled with its innate meanings and the significance can be transferred to the perceiver as a whole. The subject, others, and all the world can co-exist on their own account and at the same time be diffused into other. Woolf makes it clear that this fully-charged state of trance is not just a possibility. She holds that it can be realized here and now. It should be stated that the faculties of feeling are the agent of this illumination.

A concrete example is Clarissa's exquisite relationship with Sally. There was neither rivalry nor deliberate sisterhood between them. None of them tries to convert the other to her side. Instead, each of them compensates the other's lacking and encourages the friend to go further without overmastering. The episode of their kissing implies that they cross the boundary of social norms. More importantly, the moment of kissing is the instant when Sally and Clarissa achieve their consummate union in the light of the body and the heart. To that extreme, their feelings are proved as authentic. Therefore, Woolf uses a jewel of diamond to highlight the perfectness of the union. Clarissa recalls the moment as "the revelation." This exalted pair goes beyond the limit of society and shares the profoundest emotion. Their union is a mysterious and sacred one. Therefore, their emotion is called "the religious feeling."

However, feelings are vulnerable to the attack from the empiricist/rationalist.

Peter, a rationalist, often blames Clarissa of being "sentimental."(*Dalloway* 39) In fact, feeling cannot prove its value in the empirical world. A utilitarian like Peter regards the practical rationality as the most contributive to civilization. Clarissa and Sally's "religious feelings" are judged as part of sentimental capriciousness which hinders the progress of civilization.

It appears quite unique that Clarissa stands heroically against the mainstream of rationalism. The text tells that until the age of 52, Clarissa retains her qualities of innate feelings. Even though she sometimes shows snobbery, such as being "worldly" and caring "too much for rank and society," she has "emotions" on the surface and is a "shrewd judge of character" (*Dalloway* 83). That is, she can recognize definitely her desire and need, which enable her to go beyond the snobbery. In addition to this self-recognition, she penetrates the personality and inclination of others. With this insight on herself and others, she is able to distinguish her original essential desires from false one imposed from outside. Moreover, fortunately, she is equipped with "the extraordinary gift" of "making a world of her own wherever she happened to be" (*Dalloway* 83). Therefore, Clarissa has not been swallowed into the swirl of proportion and conversion.

A good example is that Clarissa is never blindly assimilated to the opinions of highly-cultivated literati. On the contrary, the reader can see Clarissa "take some raw youth, twist him, turn him, wake him up" (*Dalloway* 84) at her party for literati. Woolf says that Clarissa arranges everything perfectly for the party, including the matters of human relationship, practical things and the protection of her own autonomy. It is done perfectly by "a natural instinct" (*Dalloway* 85).

Related to this instinct, it should be mentioned that Clarissa is skeptical toward the ideas of society. The text says, "Oddly enough, she was one of the most thorough-going sceptics" (*Dalloway* 85). If she can't accept the ideas from the level of the body and feeling, she remains aloof from the ideas. Taking it into consideration that the state, church, and school make efforts to constitute the mind of people, Clarissa's skepticism is highly precious because it enables her to keep her autonomy and to rely on her innate feelings.

To protect her being from the swirl of proportion and conversion, there is another inner virtue necessary. It is "courage." We know that Clarissa has suffered several plights in her life. As for the earliest one, she remembers painfully the accident in which her most beloved sister, Sylvia, was pressed to death by a tree; as for another loss of family member, we can assume that her mother died in her earlier childhood, since there is no reference to her mother. In regard to her health, she was quite recently afflicted with a lingering disease that turned her hair white in the end. In addition, at the moment, she is quite conscious of human mortality and her aging makes her depressed. In spite of these, she goes her way bravely. It should be noted that her courage is different from the usual masculine courage.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, British society has required the citizen to be equipped with the attribute of courage, based on the masculine Christianity of Charles Kingsley, a Protestant minister. Whereas the masculine courage can be trained according to the rationalistic program, Clarissa's kind of courage is an outpouring virtue of the innate heart. Whereas the former is misused to override others, Clarissa's courage is mustered to keep her self and be faithful to her intuition. With this courage, Clarissa can lead her life in accordance with her feelings.

2. Septimus' Case: Wounded Feelings

Septimus is presented as a double-ego of Clarissa. They share many things in common; bird-like appearance and overflowing sensibility and feelings. Nevertheless, Clarissa manages to survive, while Septimus commits suicide in the end. What makes the difference?

The novel implies that the education of night-school might affect the frame of Septimus' thinking. Septimus took some lessons from Miss Pole and self-learned several books. In the course of the education, along with his ambition, he seemed to be assimilated to a rationalist paradigm. Hobsbawm says that around the turn of the century, many self-learned youths were absorbed into rationalist thought. Partly as a result, they used to repress their inner feelings while their consciousness was

been remolded on the basis of the contemporary religious ideals and the patriotic ideology. Woolf describes that after years in London, Septimus lost the pure vitality, and ambition and idealism have taken vitality's place.

Once he was insinuated by the values of society without his awareness, it appears natural for him to volunteer for the war at the beginning. The state demands youths to become the ideal citizen/soldier. Additionally, the false chivalric ideals force him to mistake the participation in the war as a heroic act of patriotism, as well as romantic guardianship for his teacher, Miss Pole. Woolf describes his attitude in a somewhat ironic fashion, "He went to France to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole" (*Dalloway* 94). In psychoanalytic terms, his innate poetic feelings were displaced by the false desire which was constituted by society through the mediation of language.

Woolf thought that the European War was the most extreme case wherein a variety of human virtues had been inhibited. The exposure of emotion was regarded as feminine and unreliable. The author explains that "There in the trenches the change···was produced instantly" (*Dalloway* 94). At the battlefield, he "developed manliness." That is, his psychic features were "converted" to attributes of Manliness. Woolf indicates in a dry and ironical style how his feelings were drained out:

> when Evans was killed, just before the Armistice, in Italy, Septimus, far from showing any emotion or recognizing that here was the end of a friendship, congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. The War had taught him. It was sublime. He had gone through the whole show, friendship, European War, death, had won promotion. (*Dalloway* 94-95)

Septimus was so drastically trained that he did not show any emotion of sorrow at the death of Evans, his closest friend. At last, he succeeded in feeling "little" and "reasonably." The fact of his self-congratulation upon "reasonable control of feeling" proves the extreme nature of the restructuration of consciousness on the basis of rationality.

However, Woolf shows that there is no overmastering of reason over feeling

without negative side-effects. The seemingly complete repression of emotions leads one to become a mechanical character with no humane qualities or a paranoiac. While the first includes Sir William Bradford, the latter is related to Septimus.

Woolf intentionally chooses a hat maker as his wife. Rezia is a semi-artist since she has an adequate amount of imagination and actually uses her inspiration to make hats in a creative way. Besides compensating Septimus' suffocated emotions with her warm feelings, she has another role to perform. That is, symbolically, her building-up a hat from fragments symbolizes her mythic function of integrating the cut-out parts of the mind into a holistic one in the modern days. And his inspirational and delightful action of decorating a hat may protect the brain from rigid reification through reason. Indeed, Septimus might find some consolation in the married life for a time.

Yet, the demand of resurgent feelings is too strong for his mind to control as he once had. By degree, his resurged emotions drive him down to obsession with the death scene of Evans. His paranoiac symptom is concerned with the self-punishment for "little feeling" at the tragic scene. The unconscious feeling eventually shoots out of the fissure of reason, and claims Septimus' mind and heart as its own.

Another function of the paranoiac feeling is to voice out the poetic intuition. Originally, as an affective boy in the country, he had the seed of poetic intuition to feel the beauty of the world. Now, he comes to experience the poetic union with nature more strongly: "the earth thrilled beneath him. Red flowers grew through his flesh, their stiff leaves rustled by his head" (*Dalloway* 75). To go further, he imposes the role of a prophet on himself. As a prophet, he is supposed to tell the heavenly messages to the world. The Prime Minister is the representative of the world. Therefore, persuading the Prime Minister means persuading the world:

> 'To the Prime Minister,' the voices which rustled above his head replied. The supreme secret must be told to the Cabinet; first, that trees are alive; next there is no crime; next, love, universal love, he muttered, gasping, trembling, painfully drawing out these profound truths which needed, so deep were they, so difficult, an immense effort to speak out. (*Dalloway* 74)

Significantly, his words contain the anti-rationalistic messages. The overall ideas are quite tinted with the Gnostic concepts. They think that the universe is a living being with spirits. This is contrary to the rationalistic definition of the universe as a machine. "No crime" in the world is an absolutely opposite to the ideology of the state. Since the Victorian age on, the government has operated the police system to survey the people. Of course, the official reason is the protection of the citizen from evil and crime. However, in reality, they presupposed the presence of the crime in society. The role of this assumption is to strengthen the authority of the governing class and to prop up the ruling system in an effective way. However, Septimus tells there is "No crime." Moreover, he advocates for "universal love" in the world. This remarks reflect the optimistic belief in human nature. If "universal love" was to be immanent in the world and human beings were to realize love in society, there would be no war. This is Septimus' message to the world.

Paradoxically enough, in parallel with this prophetic vision, Septimus sporadically suffers from the spasm of fear. This fitful attack of fear is caused by the painful recall of the death scene and his then-apathetic attitude. Freud explains that feeling fear is the first symptom of regret over the past pain. The first step of healing the paroxysm of fear is to confront the past fault directly and reexamine it in a sincere way. Yet, Dr. Holmes orders Septimus to "think little on himself." This denial of self-reflection corresponds with the *Zeitgeist* of those days, which was so charged with the evolutionist spirit that one did not have to reflect on oneself. In this way, the rationalistic paradigm threatens Septimus through maneuvering Sir William Bradford as the agent.

Consequently, it appears inevitable that Septimus chooses suicide as the last method of self-defence. With the resurged feelings, Septimus won't allow himself to be locked into the grasp of reason-dominant society again. As he said, "I'll offer myself to you," to Dr. Holmes, Septimus gives his body as a sacrificial offering to society. Through this final offering, ironically, Septimus cannot lose his rediscovered feelings once again. His suicide is the ultimate manifestation of emotion and feelings to the world.

IV. The Party as Paradise

How can the wounded feelings be healed, if the person has to live under the constant threat of fierce rationalism? Where could the individual rejoice in the communal life in modern society even for a moment? Through what device could Woolf advocate values of feeling to obstinate rationalists of the modern world? Virginia Woolf prepares Clarissa's party as a testing place for the potential of feelings, and invite the readers to attend the feast. Clarissa is our "perfect hostess" for the work.

In the middle of the text, Woolf poses a question about life, to deduce the meanings of Clarissa's party. We can suppose Woolf's thoughts on life, through Clarissa's view of life. Clarissa says, "What she liked was simply life." Now, she has lost her interest in imposing herself or self-consoling excitement at the party. Her sole interest is life:

> What she liked was simply life.
> 'That's what I do it [the party] for," she said, speaking aloud, to life.
> Since she was lying on the sofa, cloistered, exempt, the presence of this thing which she felt to be so obvious became physically existent; with robes of sound from the street, sunny, with hot breath, whispering, blowing out the blinds. (*Dalloway* 133)

This passage illustrates well the triple relationship of life, party and things on the street. They define one another. To her, life is not an abstract idea, nor a transcendental world; life exists "physically" before her, here and now. "Sound from the street" itself is an aural embodiment of life: "Hot breath" from outside is the physical aspect of life. To Clarissa, every trivial and transient thing is part of life. What she enjoys is to feel the physical presence of them. The party is intended "as an offering" to enrich and vitalize life. To earn something, one should dedicate another thing, whatever it would be. Indeed, to rehabilitate the weakened life in the modern world, someone should do some work. In this sense, the party serves as "an offering" as Clarissa defines.

Then, what is the current situation of life on the street? Woolf says Clarissa "felt quite continuously a sense of their existence; and she felt what a waste; and she felt what a pity; and she felt if only they could be brought together; so she did It [the party]" (*Dalloway* 134). In brief, she feels that life is wasted and splattered to particles. Actually, Woolf writes that everything has changed from 1910. Peter, Clarissa's old friend, thinks that things have changed for the last five years, 1918-25. In fact, the European world including England was destroyed through World War I, which Woolf regards as caused by the conflicts among masculine rationalistic ideologies. In the novel, Woolf says, "So prying and insidious were the fingers of the European War," which "took away ablest young fellows" and "smashed a plaster cast of *Ceres*" (*Dalloway* 94).

To build up life from fragments, Clarissa intuitively realizes the present predicament and knows well how "to combine, [and] to create" life from fragments. She self-imposes the role of agent of life to create it again. She has "the gift" for it (*Dalloway* 134). There is no disguised intention. As a hostess, she is "doing good for the sake of goodness." It is for pleasure of life; therefore, one cannot find any distortion or bitterness of morality. Earlier, Woolf describes that Clarissa "enjoyed life immensely. It was her nature to enjoy." She has not planned to "convert" others, or to seek for any practical benefits. In this context, her party is quite off the track of proportion, since it is purely for enjoying oneself.

The party is a locus of union and communication. The guests all differ in rank, gender, age, class, and taste. But the list of guests includes people from the Prime Minister through Peter the retired officer to Ellie Henderson the poorest woman. Clarissa mediated the conflict between Professor Brierly and Jim Hutton and led quiet Lord Gayton and Miss Blow to talk together. On the contrary to Clarissa's previous worry, every guest comes to get along well together. Even regarding their practical problems, the text implies they come to find a prospective helper, as seen in the case of Peter. Sally's husband might help him find a job. Most importantly, at the climax, while Clarissa is imagining the scene of Septimus' suicide, she feels the same emotional and physical pains as Septimus might have felt: "Always her

body went through it first, when she was told, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed, her body burnt." Through Clarissa's empathetic imagination, the victim Septimus' wounded feelings could be consoled. Now, in the level of text, even the dead person is present at the party, through the mediation of Clarissa's feeling. The emotive bridge among people is built up and they experience the union with others.

V.

At the beginning of the party, Woolf describes, "the curtain with its flight of birds of Paradise blew out again" at the hall. It ultimately implies that Woolf intends the party to be like Paradise. Indeed, as seen above, it is suggested that all the people are on the way to Paradise, building up a state of union, through not their brains but their hearts. In this sense, it is said that they have been enchanted by the power of feeling. Woolf says, "They were surrounded by an enchanted garden," and Clarissa "was a magician." Here, English is regarded as having the power of "communicating feelings" (*Dalloway* 195) and is used to prove Clarissa's saying, "cleverness was silly. One must say simply what one felt" (*Dalloway* 210). In brief, Virginia Woolf presents her own vision of Paradise in the party scene. She invites the reader to cross the limit of proportion and conversion and enjoy the "ecstasy" and "extraordinary excitement" (*Dalloway* 213) of the party.

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Abstract

Revaluation of Feeling in *Mrs. Dalloway*: Beyond Proportion and Conversion

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This article explores the way Virginia Woolf considers the predicaments of reason-dominated society and how she searches for a redemptive way in the faculties of feeling. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf presents "proportion" and "conversion" as sister-principles which the reason-centered society acts out to restructure the consciousness of people. In the course of this process, the innate faculties of feeling are subdued and an individual's life becomes barren. Through Sir William Bradford and Miss Kilman, Woolf shows the irony that their creeds of proportion and conversion have been used to benefit themselves with regard to class, economy, or mastering over others. However, the futility of their lives eventually proves that their creeds damage their own lives as well as the lives of others. On the other hand, Woolf turns her attention to feeling, as a balance quality. Feelings come primarily out of perception and, as a result, guarantee more immediacy of the world than ideas do. Partly for this reason, through feelings, one can experience a union with the world/others at the moment of illumination. By the virtue of vital feelings, Clarissa lives an autonomous life and also establishes the empathetic connection with others. As for her double-ego, Septimus is described as the victim of reason. His incipient poetic feelings were ripped off and misplaced by masculine ideology. His suicide is not only the offering ritual but also the last defiance of feelings. Lastly, Clarissa's party is a kind of feast of feelings, where people enjoy the visionary pleasure of life with less discriminatory boundaries.

■ Key words: Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, feeling, rationalism, proportion, conversion