

Phantasies, Motherhood, and Genealogy in *The Hours*

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ABSTRACT

Virginia Woolf has become a model of the foremother in Modernist literature and her works have also had a profound influence on later postmodernist works and various film adaptations. Among Woolf's works, *Mrs. Dalloway* offers a visionary interpretation to construct a Kleinian matricentric world to replace Freudian paternal genealogies. Bearing this as a major focus, Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* contributes to conceptualize Woolf's maternal aura into a postmodernist re-interpretation of Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* by weaving it as a world of female genealogy in the multicultural cities located from the continent to the United States. The essay, thus, presents a comprehensive study of Stephen Daldry's cinematic version, *The Hours*, along with David Hare's same name script as the major contexts to concentrate on Woolf's rhetoric of m/other with psychoanalytic feminist approaches, namely Melanie Klein's object-relations and Julia Kristeva's abject. Contrary to the dominant oedipal focused concepts, the genealogical project of psychological mothering, thus, has shaped an alternative view on mapping the possible world of female phantasies.

KEY WORDS: phantasies, the paranoid-schizoid position, the depressive position, anxiety-situations, breast, abject

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This is my right; it is the right of every human being. I choose not the suffocating anesthetic of the suburbs, but **the violent jolt of the Capital**, that is my choice.

— David Hare, *The Hours: A Screenplay*¹

Much of the hatred against parts of the self is now directed towards the mother. This leads to a particular form of identification which establishes the prototype of an aggressive **object-relation**.

— Melanie Klein, *Envy and Gratitude*²

Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy **the flowers** herself.

— Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*³

The Mapping of Female Genealogy

The Hours, a book motivated by Virginia Woolf's 1925 novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, was written in 1988 by the American novelist Michael Cunningham whose book describes three stories of very different women who live in various time zones yet whose lives are linked by Woolf's book. As a literary project, Cunningham's book borrows the names and key themes from Woolf's novel. Cunningham's reinterpretation has demonstrated his ambition to broaden Woolf's leitmotifs in *Mrs. Dalloway* with a new postmodernist context by emphasizing the sense of **interconnecting female subjectivity** and

¹ David Hare, *The Hours: A Screenplay* (New York: Faber & Faber, 2003).

² Melanie Klein, *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963* (London: Hogarth, 1975).

³ Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (London: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1925) 1.

tunneling through time brought about through various surroundings, such as L. A., New York, Richmond, and London. All in all, his novel could be structurally divided into three episodes. The first “Mrs. Woolf” episode transpires in one day in 1923 when Virginia⁴ commits herself to write *Mrs. Dalloway* and then flashbacks to one day in 1941 when she commits suicide by drowning herself in the River Ouse. Ten years later, the second “Mrs. Brown” episode occurs in 1949⁵ Los Angeles, the city where the desperate and pregnant housewife Laura Brown discovers her hidden lesbian tendency and tries to make a new decision in her life during the process of reading *Mrs. Dalloway*. After half a century, the third “Mrs. Dalloway” episode details one day in 1998⁶ New York, where a modern-day editor Clarissa Vaughan, whose first name comes from a major leading female character in *Mrs. Dalloway*, prepares to set up a party for her one-time lover Richard, who happens to be Laura’s prestigious son, and has just won a prize for poetry affirming his literary achievement. On the whole, *The Hours* has interwoven these stories of three women in a subtle relationship around the book *Mrs. Dalloway*. It seems proper to conclude that these three women represent three points of view to re-examine Woolf’s novel, namely the ones of **a writer, a reader, and a character**.

Cunningham’s *The Hours*, a postmodernist work that transcends female selves of three generations through the theme of motherhood, is a homage to Woolf and her novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. Acclaimed as a major literary accomplishment, *The Hours* received the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the

⁴ To differentiate two Virginia Woolfs mentioned in various contexts, the essay names Virginia as the fictional character in Stephen Daldry’s film and Woolf as the Modernist writer in the real world of England.

⁵ In Stephen Daldry’s *The Hours*, the background time for Laura Brown is 1951.

⁶ The background time for Clarissa, in Daldry’s film, is 2001.

PEN/Faulkner Award. Screenwriter David Hare sees Cunningham's novel as an "extraordinarily accomplished piece of literature."⁷

Although the novel is a great literary triumph, many critics wondered how such a non-linear psychological literary work could be re-interpreted and transformed into a cinematic version. However, the idea of intertwining story lines in disparate historical time-frames could be built up as a highly cinematic concept whose historical context could be traced back as far as 1916 in D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*.⁸ Griffith's film was one of the greatest films of the silent era in that it combined three new stories to create a more spectacular and dramatic epic. All of the stories, spanning several hundreds of years and cultures, are held together by themes of intolerance.

Based on such a notion of condensing some similar feminist themes in the novel, the English director Stephen Daldry has cooperated with the screenwriter Hare to make Cunningham's novel into a film version in 2002 which is, more or less, faithful in narrating three stories through a lineage of women with a remarkable linking with themes and elements from Woolf's life and her creation *Mrs. Dalloway*. The film denotes and expands the transcendent subject positions by objectifying the various selves in the narration of female protagonists in the three generations, namely Virginia Woolf in London before WWI, Laura Brown in L. A. after WWII, and Clarissa Vaughan in New York at the beginning of the 21st century in the war on AIDS. To build upon the dialogical constitution of each protagonist's self disguised in the communicative forms with the use of stream-of-consciousness, Daldry proposes to employ a dialogical framework among three women to subvert the limitation of a new category for a single female self. By writing **the motherhood motif for**

⁷ "Film Synopses: The Hours," *Ritz Film*, 17 August 2004 <<http://www.ritzfilmbill.com/editorial/synopses/thehours.shtml>>.

⁸ *Intolerance*, dir. D. W. Griffith, perf. Mae Marsh and Robert Harron (Kino International, 2002).

modern females through a cinematic language to present a stream of female stories going through oppression in patriarchal societies, the film attempts to expand readers' stereotypical perceptions of the fictional character Mrs. Dalloway into a composite of various female selves.

Since the story lines drawn among each of three stories are not clear-cut, I find it tempting to explore the possible dialogues among these various female viewpoints as a writer, a reader, and a character in *Mrs. Dalloway*. In this essay, based on Daldry's film and Hare's screenplay as the major contexts to weave a story of female genealogy,⁹ first, I discover that these somewhat detached and fused allegorical and imaginary relationships among three women on the subject of motherhood could be used as a communicative model to suggest Kleinian theories of object-relations that could date back to the pre-oedipal phase when the baby has an intimate relationship with its mother. Thus, I propose to explore Melanie **Klein's** concepts of the **object-relations concretized in phantasies of the mother** as the major theoretic frame to draw upon Virginia, Laura, and Clarissa in their three aspects of daughter/wife/mother roles to fulfill the wholeness of motherhood as a collective memory of suffering women in contemporary Europe and America. Second, to go beyond the danger of indulging in a male angle to see female trauma, Julia Kristeva's notion of **abjects** in *Powers of Horror* will be used as a complementary point to Freudian phallogocentric theory to offer an advantage of illuminating psychoanalytic theories regarding feminine phantasies and to review how Daldry's *The Hours* is explored through the split self in the names of these three women as a writer, a reader, and a character.

⁹ For a more advanced intertextual reading of Cunningham's *The Hours* and Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, please refer to Shih-ming Tang's MA thesis "Virginia Woolf in Intertextuality: An Intertextual Study of Michael Cunningham's *The Hours*."

The Return to Kleinian Object-Relations

In the late 1920s, Klein founded the Object-Relations school of psychoanalysis. Through positing two major positions, developed during the first year of life but activated at any time thereafter, she describes the earliest stages of infantile psychic life. The primary fundamental phase of development, **the paranoid-schizoid (PS)** position, is characterized by the relation to part objects, the mechanism of splitting in the ego and in the object and the mechanism of projective identification such as paranoid anxiety. Usually, occurring during the first three to four months, the prevalence of splitting is a mental state which believes that something is either completely good or completely bad; there is no space of in-betweenness and different feelings cannot be expressed simultaneously. Also around the same three and four months of age, the secondary fundamental phase of development, **the depressive (D) position**, is ushered in when the infant recognizes the mother as a whole object instead of a part object in the primary PS position. Rather than split the observation, the infant begins to integrate experience and has the awareness of objects qualified with a sense of wholeness embedded as both loved and hated characteristics. No longer torn between different parts of the self, the infant holds them within the self. However, in the PS position, the absence of the good mother/breast for the infant is to be considered as a frightening experience manifested through the infant's physical pain. Yet, once the infant reaches the D position, the internal mother-object is seen as more resilient to both the loved and the hated. Eventually, the infant attains a sense of internal strength that provides a support for life. This experience, according to Klein, gives rise to pain, guilt, and loss.

In *Envy and Gratitude*, Klein considers that there is **continuous tension** between the **PS mechanism** and the **D mechanism**. Not simply the transitory

or passing phases in life, her “positions” are the various bases for the psyche’s enduring orientation throughout life. Therefore, based on the mechanism of integration, one can simultaneously observe elements of oscillation between these two positions. Thus, the PS position and the D position shape two basic ways of dealing with anxieties throughout life. However, two processes, namely **the introjected and projected identifications**, are needed along with either the PS or the D mechanism. On the one hand, the introjected identification links an object with the ego by the internalized identification with some or all of the object’s characteristics. On the other hand, the projective identification can be thought of as perceiving someone else as having one’s own characteristics. This involvement with aggressive object-relations evokes in someone else aspects of the self which one cannot bear and is deeply denied in the self. As a result, there is a split shown as an attack on the mother. As follows, Klein describes this kind of aggressive behavior:

The other line of attack derives from the anal and urethral impulses and implies expelling dangerous substances (excrements) out of the self and into the mother. Together with these harmful excrements, expelled in hatred, split-off parts of the ego are also projected on to the mother or, as I would rather call it, into the mother. These excrements and **bad parts** of the self are meant not only to injure but also to control and take possession of the object. In so far as the mother comes to contain the bad parts of the self, she is not felt to be a separate individual but is felt to be the bad self.

Much of the hatred against parts of the self is now directed towards the mother. This leads to a particular form of

identification which establishes the prototype of an aggressive **object-relation**. I suggest for these processes the term “**projective identification**.” (*Envy and Gratitude* 8; emphases mine)

The concept of projective identification is crucial to the work of Kleinian analysts and its association with “**phantasy**” is the major key idea in Klein’s books. In the infant’s phantasy, the mother is identified with the hated parts of the self. The term “phantasy” was later developed in a paper titled “The Nature and the Function of Phantasy” written by Klein’s colleague Susan Isaac under her supervision. Isaac suggested the spelling “ph” instead of “f” to differentiate phantasies from typical daydreaming fantasies. The typical Kleinian example of a phantasy involves an infant and a relationship with its **mother’s breast**. If the mother could not respond to its instinct to be fed, the baby could have delusions to satisfy both its physiological needs and its mental instinct. However, since the baby cannot recognize this process as a hallucination, it is often termed as “unreal reality.” Not only is the infant’s phantasy to be activated to cope with anxiety caused by the mother, but also it constitutes the development of object relations by phantasizing about other objects like the mother’s breast. Realizing this through the process of introjection and projection, the baby finally reaches a more mature mind to understand the connection between the inside world and the outside world. As a consequence, Kleinian phantasies help the baby to recognize reality with its improved cognitive capacity of “**reality testing**.” In her famous essay, “Mourning and Its Relation to Manic Depressive States,” Klein describes this process of “reality testing” as the basic element in the D position and argues that this process will later become the process of **mourning**. In what follows, she writes,

The object which is being mourned is the mother's breast and all that the breast and milk have come to stand for in the infant's mind: namely, love, goodness and security. All these are felt by the baby to be lost, and lost as a result of his uncontrollable greedy and destructive phantasies and impulses against his mother's breasts. (*Love, Guilt and Reparation* 345)¹⁰

For Klein, the earliest response to reality begins with an awareness of one's destructive greed and inconsolable sorrow in the inside world rather than the superficial things in the outside world. The most distinguishing part of Klein's theories is her notion of **phantasy detailing the unconscious thoughts** that are associated with our instincts, the mental expression of the life and death instincts. It is important to recognize that the understanding for the child to know the external reality is an attempt to comprehend inner psychic reality shown through the process of phantasies. Klein considers that the child and its primitive love relationship with a breast/mother develop the narcissistic self in phantasy. Phantasies of the breast, thus, involve two opposed arguments, either **a good breast or a bad breast**. Observing them from one perspective, phantasies of the breast are to be considered as a foundation of love and hope, the inspiration of all life; yet seen from the opposing perspective, phantasies of being eaten up by it, torn apart or threatened by it are focuses for evil. These primitive phantasies, according to Klein, belong to the PS position where the child does not know that the mother's breast is not separated from its body. Later, as the child grows, it begins to be aware that the breast belongs to the mother and is part of her and not of the baby's self. This takes place under the influence of the D position, the stage that the baby could have the

¹⁰ Melanie Klein, "Mourning and Its Relation to Manic-Depressive States," 1940, *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945*, intro. Hanna Segal (London: Vintage, 1998) 345.

phantasies of cutting off parts of the parents' bodies, and this creates part-objects out of more whole ones.

These two distinct but overlapping Kleinian developmental positions, the PS and the D positions, have dialectic relations and there are interchanges between these two positions throughout life. When anxiety and stress approaching, each of us may temporarily regress to the PS position; but, we may acquire our whole identity when reaching the D position through the mechanism of integration. Coexisting together, human experience is to be shaped with **the dialectic play** between these two **PS and D positions**. On the whole, Kleinian notions of positions and phantasies are supportive to analyze the psychic transformation of the three major female protagonists in *The Hours* and their intricate intertextual relationships with Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, a book that becomes an important symbol to weave all the three female leads together. I, thus, clarify the female personae into three roles relating to the book *Mrs. Dalloway*, especially the writer Virginia, the reader Laura, and the fictional character Clarissa, with Kleinian PS positions and their association to phantasies of the breast.

In the following Kleinian table, not only have I listed some of the **major characteristics for the PS/D positions and Oedipus complex**, but also I have tried to relate these applications to explore each of the leading female protagonists' psychic transformation presented in the three episodes of the film. Applying Kleinian theories to witness these three women's changes is beneficial in that they both reinforce the issue of motherhood. According to Klein, in the primary PS position, it's hard for the child to realize that its body is separated from the mother. Thus, the child's theory of object-relations to the mother is either a totally positive or negative view. In the secondary D position, the child's recognition of the mother as a whole person matches the ideal of recognition of others. Very similar to the Lacanian pre-mirror stage or

Kristeva's semiotic chora, the Kleinian PS position shapes the child's primitive and libidinal drive as the affects for a good mother, yet this attachment to the mother is so powerful that the child cannot prevent itself from the power of violence to the possible separation. Coming to the secondary D position, like the Lacanian mirror stage, the child realizes the mother has good and bad qualities and develops its reality testing ability for others. This awareness of the aggressive impulses to the mother and the possible outcomes caused by the violence will make the child have a sense of guilt, despair, envy and greed. By doing so, the child is equipped with the ability to link internal phantasy and external reality.

Klein views the **Oedipus complex** as originating from the D position where the child has a sense of interpersonal relations with the mother. Hence, it is at this time that the characteristic oedipal dynamics of **dyadic/triangular object relations** begin. The anxieties of the oedipal complex center on the fears of retaliation resulting from the love toward the same-sex parent. These anxieties, such as jealousy, deprivation, and loneliness, become the core of the oedipal complex. However, two psychic manipulators, the identifications of **introjection and projection**, appear to cope with them with some sort of phantasy in which the parents' characteristics are combined, such as a phallic mother.

For the "Mrs. Woolf" episode, I have recorded the Kleinian phantasies perched on the borderline of the PS position and D position that achieve Virginia's oedipal maturation, such as her meditation on writing through associated leitmotifs of fictitiousness/reality, life/death, good mother/bad father, and London/Richmond, etc. For the second "Mrs. Brown" episode, Laura's position is treated as a reader of *Mrs. Dalloway*, the book in which she rediscovers a hidden world that reveals her lesbian inclination in contrast to the traditional world of being an obedient wife and a caring mother. Two

major symbols, namely cake-making and the water image, represent Laura's psychological transformation. At last, the "Mrs. Dalloway" episode details a millennium editor Clarissa, a fictional name in *Mrs. Dalloway*, who is a woman torn between the world of her youth and the world of the present. Having suffered from Richard's illusive voices and Water's visit, Clarissa's oedipal maturation is finally reached. Even though the party is not held because of Richard's death, the film still creates a scene for staging a female communion among Clarissa, Sally, Julia, and Laura. The analysis shows that the roles of a writer, a reader, and a character have been modeled to reinterpret *Mrs. Dalloway* in a postmodernist cinematic context that fits quite well with Kleinian object-relations theories.

The borderline for these three viewpoints of "Mrs. Woolf," "Mrs. Brown," and "Mrs. Dalloway," is not so strictly limited in Daldry's film since he uses a visual language of the stream of unconsciousness to portray three women as one. Like their shared daughter/wife/mother triple-characteristic, the film forms communicative dialogues through the relationships among a reader, a writer, and a character. As follows, in my discussion of a writer image, the "Mrs. Woolf" episode has been shaped as a preliminary viewpoint to see how the film concretizes an imagination of an original writer figure through Virginia in the oppositional worlds of creation and reality.

The Kleinian Table

	Valued Good Breast as Source(s) of Affects	Devalued Bad Breast as Source(s) of Anxiety	Object Relations in the mechanism of the Adaptive Defense(s)
Paranoid-schizoid Position	Libidinal force	Destruction of the ideal self	Objects into either the positive side or the negative side
Depressive Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guilt • Despair • Envy • Greed 	Awareness of the antagonistic impulses	Consciousness of the whole object <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capability for creativity • Ability to link the internal phantasy and external form
Oedipus Complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jealousy • Deprivation • Loneliness 	Fears of exclusion and retaliation	Dyadic/triangular relations with parents to recognize the ability to love and reproductive desire
“Mrs. Woolf” Episode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world of writing <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> • Vanessa and Angelica • London • A bird funeral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world of reality • Leonard and maids • Richmond • Voices 	The integration of the PS position and D position <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woolf’s healing from her mental breakdown through the writing of <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i>
“Mrs. Brown” Episode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world of reading • Kitty (a kiss) • Imaginary drowning in Normandy Hotel (“a huge wedding-cake hotel”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world of being a housewife/mother • Dan, Richie, an unborn baby • Making a cake 	The integration of the PS position and D position <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> resurrects Laura from a living death
“Mrs. Dalloway” Episode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world of the youth • Sally, Julia, and Laura • Having a party 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world of the present • Louis Waters and Richard • Voices and Richard’s suicide • Party as a lack 	The integration of the PS position and D position <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing the role of Mrs. Dalloway, Clarissa affirms the meaning of life.

Virginia Woolf, a Writer in 1920s and 1940s London

In the “Mrs. Woolf” episode, the major focus seems to make viewers

feel involved with the life of Virginia who is considered a pro-feminist writer in Modernist literature, and with her queries on the meaning of life and death. Virginia begins to write the novel *Mrs. Dalloway* that deals a lot with the motherhood motif that exists in the pre-oedipal phase, the borderline between nature and culture, body and language. *Mrs. Dalloway* becomes a cornerstone in Daldry's film. Thus, the memory of relationship to the mother—the **phantasied relationship of primary narcissism**—is idealized in Daldry's consecrated film. The film intends to set up a writer figure whose powerful strength could transcend these three aspects of the human being, the corporeal, the intellectual, and the spiritual. In the film, Mrs. Woolf is like an original mother-figure of literary inspiration, and Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Dalloway would be her second generation daughter and third generation grand-daughter whose cyclic appearances confirm Mrs. Woolf as a literary spirituality for the modeling of a female dreamland.

The film depicts the notion of rebirth through the efforts of physical writing with a metaphor of the book *Mrs. Dalloway* as a monument of female inscription. To Virginia, writing paves the path of spiritual ascension which leads to not only a representation of the integration of the feminine or unconscious self but also her painful writing of a book about women who suffer in a society where men consider them as petrified objects. Even more, we cannot help but think about the Freudian expression that “the sight of Medusa's head makes the spectator stiff with terror, turns him to stone” (264).¹¹ In a patriarchal society, a female's writing back is treated as a kind of strategy of gender politics whose function is to gaze back to the authority that considers the female only as an erotic object. Virginia's feminine writing subverts the patriarchal gaze, and, at the same time, her book becomes a

¹¹ Sigmund Freud, *Writings on Art and Literature*, ed. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997) 264.

monument describing how difficult it is to become a conscientious woman in a patriarchal society.

The narrative in the “Mrs. Woolf” episode seems to suggest an allegory of the ego built on the integration between the PS and D elements. In the Kleinian sense, Virginia’s realization of her self is understood in terms of the **doubling bifurcation of images**, the external form and the internal phantasy. For Virginia, the internal phantasy is sublimated through her creation of *Mrs. Dalloway*, and the external reality is reflected from the life in the suburb of Richmond where she lives with her demanding husband and horrible maids after her mental breakdown. On the one hand, being a female writer in the real world whose ideologies are torn between the traditional Victorian doctrines and the Modernist norms, she manages to survive in the worlds of her own phantasy by writing a semi-autobiographical novel *Mrs. Dalloway* to escape from the bondage of the earthly world. On the other hand, being an ordinary and unhappy housewife, she seems to live in the world where life is full of monstrous voices floating in the air. Her domineering husband is more like a bad father image and the gossiping maids are bad mothers who torture her extremely. According to the Kleinian theory of object-relations, the primary pattern of phantasy is the unbearable sense of persecution. Thus, the Kleinian ego is willed to perceive the absence of the breast into some vile and ruthless monster, the notorious bad breast. The disappearance of the satisfying breast underlies the harassing presence of the beginning of the death instinct. At this PS position, the distinction between the self and the object is not clear, yet it follows the pattern of the splitting of the good breast and the bad breast. In the rhetoric of the “Mrs. Woolf” episode, there is an imagined day in the life of Virginia herself when she begins to write *Mrs. Dalloway*. In her real life, she considers herself a failure; she is a patient who has just recovered from a mental collapse. Constantly, she hears the **hallucinatory voices** that force her

to the end. As a result, she leaves a suicide note to her husband Leonard:

Dearest, I feel certain that I am going mad again. I feel we cant [can't] go through another of these terrible times. And I shant [shan't] recover this time. I begin to hear **voices** and cant [can't] concentrate. So I am doing what seems the best thing to do. You have given me the greatest possible happiness. You have been in every way all that anyone could be. I know that I am spoiling your life, that without me you could work. And you will, I know. You see, I cant [can't] even write this properly. I cant [can't] read. What I want to say is that I owe all the happiness of my life to you. You have been entirely patient with me & incredibly good. Everything has gone from me but the certainty of your goodness. I cant [can't] go on spoiling your life any longer. I dont [don't] think two people could have been happier than we have been. (*The Hours: A Screenplay* 2-3; emphasis mine)

Virginia, in her PS position, without a nurturing mother, has sought to escape the Law of the Father projected by her husband Leonard who is always the superego under the condition of oedipal maturation. She is a daughter with the voice of the pre-oedipal phase, and her sister Vanessa represents an imagery of the good breast, the internalized good self image, just as her niece Angelica is an image of a good angel. These three women Virginia/Vanessa/Angelica have interwoven the good objects of a female trinity. Furthermore, it is with the help of the trinity of female genealogy that the traumatized self of the mother can reintegrate herself, as if the child were the positive image that is twined with the negative image of the mother. In Virginia's case, the phantasies underlying suicide aim at preserving the internalized good objects and that

part of the ego which is accordant with the good objects, and, simultaneously at destroying the other part in the ego which is identified with the bad objects and the id. Thus the ego is able to become united with its good objects.

For Sigmund Freud and Klein the Oedipus complex involves the introjection of a punishing father or mother. Yet unlike Freud, Klein observes the complex as setting in during the oral stage rather than the genital or phallic stage where Freud places it. The child is working through the introjecting of a negative father and a negative mother, both of whom function to punish the child's destructive impulses. The repression of the child and its own ambivalent experiences around the breast lead to the construction of a doubled maternal image: one is loving and beneficent; one is punishing and severe. The child, in Kleinian theory, is ravaged by its internal bad objects and frequently expresses these impulses in sadistic orientations towards the external world. In her "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms" of 1926, Klein remarks on the splitting of the self that

In [in] states of frustration and anxiety the oral-sadistic and cannibalistic desires are reinforced, and then the infant feels that he has taken in the nipple and the breast in *bites*. Therefore, in addition to the divorce between a good and bad breast in the young infant's phantasy, the frustrating breast—attacked in oral-sadistic phantasies—is felt to be in fragments; the gratifying breast, taken in under the dominance of the libido, is felt to be complete. The first internal good object acts as a focal point for the ego. It counteracts the processes of splitting or dispersal, makes for cohesiveness and integration and is instrumental in building up the ego.¹²

¹² Melanie Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms," *The International Journal of*

Woolf's castration complex is built on this split between the aggressive and the beneficent. The sketch of Klein's position on castration may help us theorize the cinematic details. Only through writing can Virginia sublimate her own bad parts into creative ones. During the process of writing *Mrs. Dalloway*, she recognizes her ability for toleration directed towards the inner world of phantasy as opposed to the outer world of events. The artwork is a result of meditation between the PS position and the D position. Generally speaking, an artist must have an intimate knowledge of his/her materials and the ability to control the internal death drive by embodying the terrifying experience of death. Similarly, the Kleinian analyst, Wilfred Bion (1962) believes that there is an ongoing oscillation between PS fragmentation and D re-integration which is a necessary part of creative living. An artist like Virginia must be able to acknowledge the death instinct, in both its aggressive and self-destructive aspects, and to accept the reality of death both for the object and the self.

In this continuous floating between PS and D positions, Virginia encounters the process of the tearing ego by taking her husband Leonard as the image of a punishing father and her sister Vanessa and her niece as metaphors for the good breasts. More like a surrogate father, Leonard supervises Virginia's world both in her fiction and her real world. Hare's script discusses the question of death and genius through the dialogue between Virginia and her husband Leonard:

LEONARD. Why does someone have to die?

VIRGINIA looks up and frowns.

VIRGINIA. Leonard?

LEONARD. In your book?

VIRGINIA. Oh.

LEONARD. You said someone has to die. Why?

LEONARD catches just a trace of VIRGINIA'S reaction.

LEONARD. Is that a stupid question?

VIRGINIA. No.

LEONARD. I imagine my question is stupid.

VIRGINIA. Not at all.

LEONARD. Well?

VIRGINIA gives it thought before answering.

VIRGINIA. **Someone has to die in order that the rest of us should value life more.**

LEONARD looks at her, the two of them serious now.

VIRGINIA. It's contrast.

LEONARD. And who will die?

VIRGINIA. It's a secret.

LEONARD. Tell me.

VIRGINIA. The poet will die. The visionary. (*The Hours: A Screenplay* 110-11; emphases mine)¹³

This intricate dialogue between a writer/reader or a daughter/father scene makes spectators identify with Virginia's resolution about the death of Septimus, "the poet, the visionary" in *Mrs. Dalloway*, to compensate for her own death in the real world. In reality, her oedipal maturation is written with the replacement of death of a fictional male poet representing her libidinal urge so that her good self could be resurrected from the real world through the

¹³ David Hare, *The Hours: A Screenplay* (New York: Faber & Faber, 2003).

metaphorical death in the fiction. Likewise, figuratively speaking, the same contrast between the life in London and the life in Richmond is described as follows through the dialogue between Virginia and her husband Leonard:

LEONARD. We brought you to Richmond to give you peace.

VIRGINIA. If I were thinking clearly, Leonard, I would tell you that I wrestle alone in the dark, in the deep dark, and that only I can know. Only I can understand my condition. You live with the threat, you tell me you live with the threat of my extinction.

There is a silence. She is trembling, white.

VIRGINIA. Leonard, I live with it too.

Now it is LEONARD who cannot answer.

VIRGINIA. This is my right; it is the right of every human being. I choose not the **suffocating anesthetic** of the **suburbs**, but the **violent jolt** of **the Capital**, that is my choice. The meanest patient, yes, even the very lowest is allowed some say in the matter of her own prescription. Thereby she defines her humanity.

VIRGINIA is calm now, certain.

VIRGINIA. I wish, for your sake, Leonard, I could be happy in this quietness. But if it is a choice between Richmond and death, **I choose death.** (*The Hours: A Screenplay* 93-95; emphases mine)

Obviously, the contrasted metaphor of the doubling bifurcation of these two cities London and Richmond are related to the repetitive motif of life/death that is constantly floating in every corner of the film. In the Kleinian D

position, realizing the mother as a whole object, Virginia understands that the bad breast and the good breast exist together at the same time. The cosmopolitan London city bringing her the life of variety is certainly beneficial for a good writer; yet a disgusting suburb such as Richmond makes her consider herself a failure by being an ordinary housewife imprisoned by her mental illness and a domineering husband. Now the matter of choosing a lifestyle becomes a crucial argument between life and death. The living-death life in Richmond is more horrible than the real death itself. For Virginia, death is not so frightening compared with the meaning of artistic barrenness. Something that she is fighting for turns out to be a lifestyle of her own choice between being a writer with her own room and being a plain housewife confined by a suffocating country environment.

In her 1929 book *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf maintains that, “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write a fiction” (4).¹⁴ Throughout her lifetime, Woolf had lived in many locations, namely Richmond (1915-24), Bloomsbury (1924-39), and Rodmell (1919-41). Richmond is the place where she wrote *Mrs. Dalloway*, a novel about a woman’s day in the city of London. “I love walking in London,” said Mrs. Dalloway, “Really it’s better than walking in the country” (7).¹⁵ Through the character Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf reveals her love for the life in London where she had a house in Gordon Square and where she and Vanessa became the hostesses for the Bloomsbury Group, a Thursday gathering for artists, economists, and novelists in their lifetime.

Vanessa is to be depicted as a figure of great fecundity in the film, yet in real life, she becomes a model of the artistic woman . She was the elder

¹⁴ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt, 1991) 4.

¹⁵ Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (London: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1925) 7.

beloved sister of Virginia and a famous painter and designer who was married to Clive Bell, an art critic. Unlike her talented sister Virginia who studied at home, she was trained at Royal Academy Schools; her first solo show was held at the Independent Gallery in 1922 and her paintings were influenced by the French artists Paul Cézanne and Henri Matisse. Furthermore, she was also a good writer; even Virginia once wrote to Vanessa, saying, “You have a touch in letter writing that is beyond me.”¹⁶ It’s easy to observe that Vanessa is a surrogate mother figure in the film which avoids illuminating her artistic talent but emphasizes her ability of reproduction by showing the three children who accompany her for the visit.

In doing so, the film makes a contrast between the two sisters through the interwoven signs of barrenness/reproduction. Vanessa’s visit brings Woolf a joy through the glimpse of truth of how much she adores life instead of death. Not only do Vanessa’s energetic and nurturing qualities show a sign of the good mother, but also the London city that she comes from demonstrates a promising life and a sense of artistic merging. More than this, Vanessa’s daughter Angelica who wears the wings reminds us of the younger child within Virginia. Angelica carries with her a dead female thrush that has fallen from a tree. With the help from her aunt, Angelica is arranging a ritual funeral of burying the bird by decorating it with three yellow roses. Through this bird funeral, the film associates Virginia with Angelica’s angelic image. They are both angels who invoke the spirits of the marginalized women. Furthermore, what we have seen from the scene of a bird-funeral is more than a ritual of burying a dead thrush; it is also a serious discussion about life and death. With a ritualistic funeral, the mapping of the female genealogy of Vanessa/Virginia/Angelica is finally achieved.

¹⁶ Virginia Woolf, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, 6 vols, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann (London Harcourt Brace, 1975-1980).

Being a creative writer, Virginia's PS position and D position are integrated under the pressure of oedipal maturation through her interactions with a punishing father figure Leonard and a loving mother figure Vanessa. The metaphors of hallucinatory voices, a bird funeral, and Richmond/London also address the importance of the death instinct which seems to be always approaching a sensitive writer's soul. However, her sublimated integration and acceptance of reality may be ways of working with depressive anxieties through her writing of *Mrs. Dalloway*. Generally speaking, the process of integrating two anxiety-positions brings out Virginia's serious discussion of the death principle and helpfully she sublimates it into her successful literary project.

Laura Brown, a Reader in Post-WWII L. A.

In the "Mrs. Brown" episode, the film describes two stories separate but connected to show a woman's living from a male point of view and a woman's inner dialogue on her craving. Differing from a normal wife, "lesbian Laura" could not reveal her sexual inclination because of moral constraints and accuses herself in an extremely self-incriminating manner that tends to convey an accusatory tone to argue that each individual woman could not be allowed to develop her own uniqueness but is only to be imprisoned as an angel-self in the house. Her lesbian inclination is reinforced by her reading of Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* in which she identifies with the writer Virginia's bisexuality and her fictional character Clarissa's hidden lesbian desire. Yet this accusatory "lesbian self" is not only the other side of Laura but also the same self of the "social self" who is destined to perform her social roles of being a traditional mother and an obedient wife.

The splitting of "two selves" into **a good social self** and **a bad lesbian self** causes the **Kleinian notion of anxiety**. Klein's views about anxiety

evolved; first, from Freudian notions of fear of castration or fear of loss of the capacity for sexual pleasure, then, in her 1933 paper “The Early Development of Conscience in the Child,”¹⁷ she describes persecutory anxiety as arising from the child’s fear of its own aggressive impulses. Developing Freud’s notion of a “death instinct,” she observes these aggressive impulses as something instinctual opposed to its opposite, a “life instinct.” Rather than hating life and the self, the child turns its hatred onto the mother. Occurring in the PS position, the so-called persecutory anxiety leads to fear of attacks by a revengeful mother/breast figure on the side of the child’s own body or on the organ of sexual pleasure. In the film, frustrated by Kitty’s refusal of her love, Laura’s **persecutory anxiety** is described in the kitchen scene after having a kiss with Kitty:

KITTY’s face is against Laura’s breasts. She seems to relax into her. Laura lifts KITTY’S face, and puts her lips against hers. They both know what they are doing. They **kiss**, letting themselves go a moment. Then KITTY pulls away.

KITTY. You’re sweet.

There is a brief moment, then LAURA turns and her eye falls on RICHIE who is on the floor with his toys. They had both forgotten him. **He has watched throughout.** KITTY stands up.

KITTY. You know the routine, right? Half a can in the evening, and check the water now and then. Ray will feed him in the morning.

KITTY has got up to go.

¹⁷ Melanie Klein, “The Early Development of Conscience in the Child,” 1933, *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945*, intro. Hanna Segal (London: Vintage, 1998) 248-57.

LAURA. Kitty, you didn't mind?

KITTY. What? I didn't mind what? (*The Hours: A Screenplay* 51; emphases mine)

In a moment of spontaneous passion, Laura is disturbed by her unarticulated dissatisfaction with the status quo of her seemingly comfortable suburban life with her husband and adoring son. She kisses Kitty, her admiring neighbor whose uterine disease is a contrast to Laura's reproduction. Not only does the kiss express the meaning of caring and assertion of connection with the female community, it also illuminates an outburst of Laura's repressed and confused sexuality. Generally speaking, Laura's unhappiness derives from her sense of a "social self"—she has married a local war hero in a motherly patriotic contribution of her individual freedom. In this sense, Laura spends her hours baking cakes with her son instead of reading because she feels bound to community—to a world larger than her own destiny. By such a reading, the cake becomes a metaphor for a valued good breast to indicate Laura's sense of building up a family romance with her husband and son, a picture of a wholesome family.

The film repeats this image of domesticity through the cake-making metaphor as Laura seeks reparation in the role of the mother she wants and the mother that she wants to be. Upon facing the cruelty of an attached mother represented by Kitty, Laura retreats to the world of her own destruction: first, she throws away the cake representing the positive oedipal family because of Kitty's refusal of her love, then she withdraws from the safe home to "a huge wedding-cake hotel, a pseudo-Spanish 50s palace" where she deliberates on the possibility of death (*The Hours: A Screenplay* 75). Both the birthday cake made for Laura's husband Dan and the "wedding-cake hotel" suggest Laura's domestic self, a self that searches for the good valued breast that is to be

qualified with an element of nurturing. The “**wedding-cake hotel**” could be interpreted as a Freudian **casket**, a metaphor that provides a female space for Laura to meditate on the possibility of facing the borderline experience of the death principle. However, in the birthday cake house, under the supervision of her sensitive son Richie, she suddenly feels that she cannot perform the traditional role of a loving mother for her persecutory anxiety caused by Kitty disturbs her strongly. Thus, she, alone, retreats to a “wedding-cake hotel.” In one room of the Normandy Hotel,¹⁸ after loosing her shoes off like a Cinderella who wants to get rid of the myth of a prince, she indulges herself in the world of reading where she is accompanied by Virginia’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, a book not only an access to solitary independence but also a suicide-enabler that eventually fails.

The **surreal water image** scene in the Normandy Hotel portrays Laura’s imagination of her **suicidal urge**. Lying on the bed, Laura imagines that she is drowned in the water. The water image involves ambivalent images of the good breast and the bad breast around the cycle of life and death. On the one hand, the water image seems to illuminate Laura’s sense of being alienated and isolated and it brings her to the inescapable fate of death. On the other hand, it suggests the fertilizing agent in love and life. The Freudian “necessity of death” seems to resurrect as the “choice of life.”¹⁹ The water image brings Laura back to the womb of Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, a book nurturing her in an atmosphere of a new life. By reading the book, Laura

¹⁸ In Cunningham’s novel, Laura whiles away the hours in **room 19** of the Normandy Hotel. Room 19 seems to offer an intertextual association to Doris Lessing’s short novel “To Room 19” that describes Susan, an unhappy housewife, who rents herself a room in a hotel as her private place to release her from the family and social restriction. Yet her husband Matthew does not understand her behavior and mistakes her as an adulterous woman. The story ends with Susan’s death that seems to provide a strong protest for a patriarchal system that wrongs her. However, the film avoids mentioning this contextual reference to Lessing’s short story “To Room 19.” See Doris Lessing, *To The Doris Lessing Reader* (New York: Knoph, 1988).

¹⁹ These terms are mentioned in Freud’s “The Themes of the Three Caskets.”

could return to her pre-oedipal world which links Mrs. Dalloway or the book's writer Virginia as the prototype of an original mother image. Klein offers an explanation for the sense of reclamation felt by some suicides in her 1935 article "The Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States:"

. . . a **suicide** is directed against the introjected object. But, while in committing suicide the ego intends to murder its bad objects, in my view at the same time it also always aims at saving its loved objects, internal or external. To put it shortly: in some cases the phantasies underlying suicide aim at **preserving the internalized good objects** and that part of the ego which is identified with good objects, and also at destroying the other part of the ego which is identified with the bad objects and the id. Thus the ego is enabled to become united with its loved objects. In other cases, suicide seems to be determined by the same type of phantasies, but here they relate to the external world and real objects, partly as substitutes for the internalized one. As already stated, the subject hates not only his bad objects, but his id as well and that vehemently. In committing suicide, his purpose may be to make a clean breach in his relation to the outside world because he desires to rid some real object—or the "good" object which that whole world represents and which the ego is identified with—of himself, or of that part of the ego which is identified with his bad objects and his id. (55-56; emphases mine)²⁰

²⁰ Melanie Klein, "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States," *Essential Papers on Object Relations*, ed. Peter Buckley (New York: New York UP, 1986) 55-56.

Alerted by her child patients, Klein discovers a variety of catastrophes which she calls “**anxiety-situations**,” one is adherence to a fear of “persecution,” and the other is attached to a dread of “depression.” Klein believes that these “anxiety-situations” are specific for girls, equivalent to **Freudian castration anxiety**. This peculiar rhetoric of self-addressing and interrogation would seem to confirm the Kleinian notion that the persecutory anxiety is constituted through the internalization of the parental voice, or the voice of other figures of authority. In Daldry’s film, Laura represents an ordinary housewife whose life is under the surveillance of the authorial through her husband and son whose gaze turns her into a materialized object, like the living dead, a void, and an abject. **An abject** is a trouble marker between the pre-oedipal and the oedipal, the sign of an undecided boundary line between the inside and the outside of the body and therefore of a divided subject: it is, says Kristeva, the “in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.”²¹ Throughout this episode, the **paranoid-schizophrenic Laura** is reflected in a cinematographic world where the camera reveals the observed character Laura then switches to show what the observing character Richie sees. The camera can be manipulated to observe every movement that she makes through Richie’s eye as a panoptic view. Laura’s sense of performativity in the public eye is the image constituting what Kristeva names a **materialized abject**, a term developed to name the horror of being unable to distinguish between “me” and “not me” of which the first and primary instance is the embryo’s existence in the mother’s body. Likewise, referring to ideas about how women are framed in the “male gaze,” Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” demonstrates a refined example to explore Laura’s sense of being a material abject who wants to murder her bad self in the film. Both Mulvey’s filmic writing on the

²¹ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982).

“female in the masculine gaze” and Kristeva’s analysis of the “materialized abject” make an association between women’s objectification and their lack of power within the patriarchal discourse. We understand from Kristeva’s article the ideology of how women are to be fragmented and silenced in Western culture and religion.

Similarly, Mulvey’s article substantiating the **maternal images as “something-to-be-looked-at-ness”** in the Hollywood cinema explains Laura’s panoptic situation in the world of men (19).²² Mulvey’s model has led to a feminist reading of images of women in the cinema as always **“objects” and “victims” of male gaze**, obscuring questions about female agency. Equally, Laura in the film has Mulvey’s realization of herself as an object of male gaze through the scene of failing at making a good birthday cake and the scene of her imaginary drowning in the hotel. Correspondingly, these two scenes demonstrate phantasied **scars** caused by the Kleinian persecutory anxiety.

The character Laura is partially based on the writer Cunningham’s mother, a housewife. In an interview given by Richard Canning, Cunningham describes the “Mrs. Brown” chapters as “a day in my mother’s life.”²³ Daldry grasps the essence of Laura from the book and proposes to convey the void world of a married woman as a materialized abject whose existence and uniqueness is outdated and jeopardized in the oppression from the patriarchal society during the post-WWII era. “For Laura,” David Ng explains, **“the male gaze is especially persecutory**, from her husband’s oppressively benign grin to the accusatory stares of her five-year old son, who seems to be reading her thoughts.”²⁴ Similarly, Ng brings out the Kleinian notion of “persecutory

²² Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (New York: Macmillan, 1989) 19.

²³ Richard Canning, *Hear Me Out: Further Conversation with Gay Novelists* (New York: Columbia UP, 2003).

²⁴ David Ng, “The Hours,” *Images: A Journal of Film and Popular Culture*, ed David Ng, et al, 5 May

anxiety” that details violence towards an internal object that the child depends on for its psychic survival. The persecutory violence, recalled from a dead corpse-like object inside the child, causes the crucial anxiety-situation. Her bad and good parts are to be split in the PS position through the symbolization of the water image. Laura’s imaginary drowning scene perfectly describes her sense of being persecuted through the death-like sinking into the water to drive away her bad breast figure, an unrevealing lesbian tendency.

Apart from the “persecutory anxiety,” Klein discovers a different anxiety, the “**depressive anxiety**” proposed in “Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms.”²⁵ In this stage, it is not the internal object that is under threat but the ego itself. That is to mean that the child turns aggressive impulses against its own ego, the self. In connection with this last anxiety, a new form of defense, projective identification, rises. More bearable than persecutory anxiety, the depressive anxiety has moved to fears for the good breast/mother’s safety. It involves recognition of the goodness of the lost loved person and the awareness of the projected guilt. Not only does it stimulate an attempt to make things better, it also prepares to make some kind of **reparation**. Klein depicts it in “Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict” as follows:

It is not merely this uncertainty which disturbs her hope of future motherhood. It is weakened far more by **anxiety and sense of guilt**, and these may seriously and permanently damage the maternal capacity of a woman. Because of the destructive tendencies once directed by her against the mother’s

2004 <<http://www.imagesjournal.com/2002/reviews/hours/text.htm>>.

²⁵ Melanie Klein, “Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms,” 1946, *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1975) 1-24.

body (or certain organs in it) and against the children in the womb, the girl anticipates retribution in the form of destruction of her own capacity for motherhood or of the organs connected with this function and of her own children.²⁶

The child, and later on the adult, in the developmental structure of the depressive anxiety, no longer clarifies people into the good and the bad but realizes people are both good and bad. This is a really painful insight for the child in that hate, in a primitive form, is always something involving damage and violence. Only when a person starts to have ambivalent feelings with a mixture of love and hatred, can he or she have **a feeling of guilt, the Freudian super-ego or conscience**. In the film, Laura's conscience is reflected from an inner examination that looks at her and informs her that the drowning thing that she sees in the dream could not be realized in the real world for she's the mother of an unborn child. For Laura, in a Kleinian explanation, mothering could be exhausting and destructive, but while being resurrected from the drowning scene, she moves on to the second stage of the depressive anxiety manifested in the union scene with Clarissa, her son's ex-lover:

LAURA. He had me die in the novel. I know why he did that. It hurt, of course. I can't pretend it didn't hurt, but I know why he did it.

CLARISSA. You left Richard when he was a child.

LAURA. I left both my children. I abandoned them. They say it's the worst thing a mother can do.

²⁶ Melanie Klein, "Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict," *Love, Guilt and Reparation* (London: Virago P, 1998) 186-98.

Neither of them move. The room is silent now.

LAURA. You have a daughter?

CLARISSA. Yes, but I never met Julia's father.

LAURA. You so wanted a child?

CLARISSA. That's right.

LAURA. You're a very lucky woman.

CLARISSA looks down.

LAURA. There are times when you don't belong and you think you're going to kill yourself. Once I went to a hotel. That night . . . later that night, I made a plan. Plan was, I would leave my family when my second child was born. And that's what I did. Got up one morning, made breakfast, then to the bus stop, got on a bus. I'd left a note.

There's a moment's silence.

LAURA. I got a job in a library in Canada. It would be wonderful to say you regretted it. It would be easy. But what does it mean? What does it mean to regret when you have no choice? It's what you can bear. There it is. No one is going to forgive me.

LAURA looks at CLARISSA, steady, unapologetic.

LAURA. **It was death. I chose life.** (*The Hours: A Screenplay* 117-19; emphases mine)

Laura's new decision is to have her new life in Canada as a woman with a career after delivering her second child. Under the influence of the **D** position, the major reason for Laura to decide to have her second baby is that she wants to restore to her mother the baby she damaged in phantasy when she was small. With help from her husband, Laura somehow can achieve her goal of

repairing her relationship with her absent mother by having a baby. A newborn baby is a sign of a loving relationship, confirming not only the bond between two different people such as Laura and Dan, but also the representation of Laura's deep desire of connecting her baby-self with the mother-self. Furthermore, through the reading of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Laura compensates for her death drive with the message of affirmation of life from the book. There is a parallel metaphor between the reader Laura and the writer Virginia:

A few minutes later. Now LAURA is stretched out reading on the bed, a pillow against her back. As LAURA reads her book, the text is heard in VIRGINIA'S voice.

VIRGINIA. (v.o.) Did it matter, then, she asked herself, walking towards **Bond Street**, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely . . .

LAURA pulls her blouse out from her skirt to loosen it, and puts her hand on her pregnant stomach.

VIRGINIA. (v.o.) All this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? LAURA rubs her naked stomach slightly, **feeling the child within**.

VIRGINIA. (v.o.) It is possible to die.

Suddenly brackish **water flood [floods]** from underneath, washing up over the sides of the bed. LAURA, in her **imagination**, sinks under the water, strewn with weeds, and then drowns. (*The Hours: A Screenplay* 76-77; emphases mine)

It is through the experience of reading that Laura is to be coupled with Virginia. A reader shares her own life experience with her adoring mother-like

writer Virginia through various time zones. Revealed in the book is a sense of life-affirmation to enlighten Laura about a story of a recently recovering patient Mrs. Dalloway who finally gives up the thought of committing suicide but embraces her own life instead. In other words, the reading of *Mrs. Dalloway* uncovers **Laura's sense of guilt for her new-born** child, shown through the words "puts her hand on her pregnant stomach," and arouses her belief that the notion of motherhood is a realization of life through death. The similar Bond Street scene in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is beneficial for strengthening this parallel association:

She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, **up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway**; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway. (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 14; emphases mine)²⁷

Here, as a reader of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Laura is struggling between her seemingly contradictory identities of being Mrs. Brown and being Laura. For her, the life that performs the roles of a wife and mother is similar to the life of living death; on the contrary, the life that reveals her lesbian self provides her with other options for life, a new horizon that she has never discovered before being revealed with the connection to Kitty. In Laura's PS anxieties, her son Richie confirms not the Freudian sense of a substitute for the penis but the more Kleinian sense of cover-up phantasies of being lonely and having nothing inside. Laura feels that she must have everything and be entirely

²⁷ Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (London: Harcourt, 1925) 14.

independent through her despair. She is, probably, to be left alone on her own, either through her own rejection of mothering or because her mother did not provide her with what she needed. The surrogate mother-figure Kitty demonstrates an illusion in Laura's phantasy with a female that leads almost to Laura's own destruction. Laura's first son Richie and her second new-born baby stand for persecuting and demanding internal mother-figures, sometimes bigger than Laura, the mother herself who sucks her dry. Thus, she decides to retain her own whole sense of motherhood by leaving the family, otherwise her self would be destroyed eventually.

Laura's mechanisms of defense such as splitting, disintegration and denial take place under the pressure of persecutory anxieties through the metaphors of a birthday cake and water image; on the other hand, integration and acceptance of reality may be ways of dealing with depressive anxieties through the associations of the symbolism of a unborn baby and the reading of *Mrs. Dalloway*. All in all, these two anxiety-positions do not prevent Laura's psychic development but lead to her psychic transformation.

Clarissa Vaughan, a Fictional Character in New York

The contemporary character Clarissa is probably the most related character to Mrs. Dalloway, not just as a namesake but also for her personality. Like her predecessor Clarissa Dalloway in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa is haunted by an earlier love affair. Richard, her lover, is a dying poet who has AIDS and by whom her first name is given. She is going to throw a party for his achievement in poetry. In the 2001 New York, as a book editor, Clarissa has lived with her lesbian friend Sally for ten years and they have adopted a daughter named Julia who is now a college student. However, Clarissa has recognized that the present life she lives with Sally is not so satisfactory and finds it trivial compared with her youthful life with Richard. With great

pleasure, Clarissa likes to indulge herself in the world of being Richard's Clarissa. Like a nursing mother, Clarissa has spent a lot of time caring for Richard since he has been infected with the AIDS virus. And on this particular day, Clarissa plans to celebrate Richard's earning a prize for his book *The Goodness of Time* by holding a party for him. In contrast to Clarissa's positive view on life, finding his tormented life caused by illness unbearable, Richard commits suicide by jumping out of a window. Laura, Richard's mother who has abandoned him since his childhood, comes to her son's funeral in New York and stays the night with Clarissa's family. The party, eventually, was not to be held because of Richard's death. Still, Clarissa has a reflective conversation with Laura who inspires and confirms to her that life is meaningful no matter how trivial it seems to be on the surface.

The story of Clarissa and her relationship with Laura through her ex-lover Richard could be associated with a link to parallel a similar mother/daughter relationship. The film intentionally draws upon the subject of motherhood in a cycle to depict the double personifications represented by Laura as a **Corn-Mother** and Clarissa as a **Harvest-Daughter**. The metaphor of unity suggests the theme of **immortality and rebirth** between the cycles of the mother and the daughter. The double personifications of the motifs of Freudian "necessity of death" and the "choice of life" have been linked through the pair of Eros (life) and Thanatos (death), the notion proposed by Freud in his essay "The Theme of the Three Caskets" whose intention eventually is to connect the life principle with the death principle. Freud illuminates,

The Goddess of Love herself, who now took the place of the Goddess of Death, had once been identical with her. Even the Greek Aphrodite had not wholly relinquished her connection

with the underworld, although she had long surrendered her chthonic role to other divine figures, to Persephone, or to the tri-form Artemis-Hecate. The great **Mother-goddesses** of the oriental peoples, however, all seem to have been both creators and destroyers—both goddesses of life and fertility and goddesses of death. (“TTC” 520-21; emphases mine)²⁸

Exploring the Greek myth, Freud assumes that texts are **transformations** of other texts as long as they all draw from the same source of the human psyche as its dialectical structure. Freud continues to ruminate that we are born to be in the process of approaching death. Inside our unconsciousness, as an act of compensation, the mechanical censorship reverses the death instinct into a life instinct. Therefore, these stories in literature, myth, or religion actually **compensate** for the reality of death by substituting for it the choice of love. The contrary metaphors in literature and the arts often represent the same content hidden in our unconscious mind. The film proposes to explore the facets of Clarissa and Laura as multiple surrogate mother/daughter figures whose ambivalent attitude toward life is filled with contradictory pairs such as love and hatred, Eros and Thanatos. Eventually, the film tries to link them all in **a cycle of rebirth** that constitutes the basic line for not just the motherhood motif in the film but also the rebirth theme emphasized by the union of Laura and Clarissa.

In the PS position, Clarissa observes her own paranoia through Richard’s guidance to observe the projection of her own death impulses, the bad self. For Clarissa, Richard, like the God Hades, is her dark lover in hell who refuses to go to the party on the earth. Instead, he has imprisoned himself

²⁸ Sigmund Freud, “The Theme of the Three Caskets,” *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: Norton, 1989) 514-22.

in a suffocating cell of the underworld full of the smell of disease and death. Staying in the death room, he refuses to go to the party, an occasion for celebrating the sense of communion by glorifying the positive side of life. Constantly, like the writer Virginia and her fictional character Septimus in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Richard hears these unknown **voices** that persecute him and nail him down into a web of death:

RICHARD. I don't think I can make it to the **party**, Clarissa.
I'm sorry.

CLARISSA. You don't have to go to the party, you don't have
to go to the ceremony.

RICHARD'S face darkens. CLARISSA shouts in desperation.

CLARISSA. You don't have to do anything, Richard! You can
do what you like.

RICHARD. But I still have to face the hours, don't I? **The
hours after the party**. And the hours after that.

CLARISSA. You have good days still. You know you do!

RICHARD. Not really. It's kind of you to say so, but it's not
really true.

CLARISSA is stopped dead, full of fear at her next question.

CLARISSA. Are they here, Richard?

RICHARD. Who?

CLARISSA. **The Voices?**

RICHARD. Oh, the voices are always here.

CLARISSA. But is it the voices you're hearing now?

RICHARD. No, **Mrs. Dalloway. It's you.**

CLARISSA looks at him, terrified now.

RICHARD. I've stayed alive for you.

RICHARD looks at her pleadingly.

RICHARD. But now you have to let me go. (*The Hours: A Screenplay* 101-03; emphases mine)

Richard has a haunting memory of the voice of his absent mother Laura who has abandoned him since early childhood. In his hallucinating **phantasies** of hearing the **voices**, Richard's phantasies of annihilation in which his life is under threat because of his mother's leaving, he becomes hurtful and terrifying to any woman he loves. For him, the only good mother in life is associated with death. Therefore, we may conclude that Richard, in many senses, is the Kleinian aggressive child who is too frightened of his own sadism, of his desire to attack and ability to damage the mother. In this notion, Clarissa becomes his victim and suffers from his sadistic aggression. Richard's anxieties in the PS position are life and death anxieties. The persecutory voices erupt into Richard's inner fear of death which happens when his beloved mother abandoned him. One of the ways Richard tries to deal with his own destructiveness is to disown his own life.

Kleinian projective identification is a way that involves a very deep split, where the aspects of the self projected onto others are very deeply denied in the self. Through her ex-lover Richard, Clarissa sees her own projective split-off part of her self, the persecutory self who attacks the good breast just because of being excluded from the mother. She lives in the world of her inner phantasy, the world of fiction, without realizing that the moment she holds in real life is something meaningful for her. Her daughter Julia, more like a mother to Clarissa, instructs Clarissa that she is persecuted by the ghost voices of Richard, a bad surrogate father-figure:

JULIA. Who? Is this Richard?

CLARISSA. Of course! He looks at me. He did it this morning.

He gave me that **look**.

JULIA. What look?

CLARISSA. Oh, to say: 'You're trivial, your life is so *trivial*.

Daily stuff, schedules, Parties. Details.'

JULIA. Mom, it only matters if you think it's true. Well? Do you? Tell me.

CLARISSA. When I'm with him, then, yes, I'm living. That's what I feel. And when I'm not, yes, things seem kind of silly. I don't mean with you. Never with you. But the rest of it.

JULIA. Sally?

CLARISSA. The rest of it. If you say to me: when was I happiest?

JULIA. Mom . . .

CLARISSA. Tell me the moment you were happiest . . .

JULIA. I know. It was years ago.

CLARISSA. Yes.

JULIA. All you're saying is, you were once young.

CLARISSA. I remember one morning. Getting up at dawn.

There was such a sense of possibility. We were going to do everything. Do you know that feeling? I remember thinking: 'This is the beginning of happiness.' That's what I thought. 'So this is the feeling. This is where it starts. And of course there'll always be more.' It never occurred to me: it wasn't the beginning. It was happiness. It was the moment, right then. (*The Hours: A Screenplay* 84-87; emphases mine)

Clarissa's psychic catastrophe is manifested through the mechanism of schizoid splitting: the one is her phantasy of her youth, the time when she fell in love with Richard, the time when she became a fictional character Clarissa in *Mrs. Dalloway*; while the other one is her present living world with her lover Sally and her daughter Julia. Richard's "look" proffers Clarissa a freezing moment to observe her hidden split-self. Apart from Richard's persecutory "look," Louis Waters's visit also causes Clarissa's emotional breakdown. As Richard's ex-boyfriend, Waters used to be Clarissa's rival and is invited by Clarissa to join the party. Being a "**ghost**" as Julia names him, **Waters**, as **Clarissa's projected mirror**, produces Clarissa's emotional trajectory from the nervous breakdown to the spiritual reparation. This is Clarissa's journey into her dark emotional "waters." Waters's visit is quite near to the symbolic water image in the episode of "Mrs. Brown" which actively projects Laura's narcissistic identification through the water mirror to perceive both her darkness of death and resurrection of life.

Clarissa's desire to possess a penis and to be in a boy position is an expression of **bisexuality**. Her penis envy covers in some measure the frustrated desire to take her mother's place with an unknown father and to conceive her daughter Julia from him. Because of her super-ego, she has a strong urge to fill this inner world with good objects by the intensity of her introjective processes. Through **Waters and Richard**, she explores an admired **internalized penis** in a father form as an intrinsic part of her **super-ego**. Reflected from Waters's ghosting self, Clarissa discovers that she has identified herself with her self as a punishing father in her male position, but this identification rests on the possession of an imaginary penis. Based on the feminine as well as on the male position, her main identification with Richard is experienced in relation to the internalized penis of her father image. First, in the feminine position, to internalize her father's penis, she is driven

by her desire for a child. Thus, she has adopted Julia without getting involved with Julia's father and is capable of submission to this admired internalization by having a daughter. Second, in the male position, she emulates Clarissa, a fictional character who fits all the requirements in the novel, with all her aspiration only to please Richard as an oedipal daughter.

Hearing echoes from the **narcissistic "ghosting" selves of Waters and Richard**, the terrifying internal figures, Clarissa finally accepts the truth that life is both trivial and valuable at the same time and her understanding fulfills Woolf's literary motherhood. In her D position, with the help of Laura, a surrogate mother-figure, Clarissa, thus, qualifies herself with having the ability to recognize that life can be repaired from the trauma of death. Richard's death makes her realize that her present life is more cherished and valuable than ever. Even though the party is not to be held because of Richard's death, the four women, Clarissa, Sally, Julia, and Laura have a communion to compensate not only with the Kleinian phantasy of the party but also the mapping of the female genealogy in three cyclic generations. In many senses, **the absent party** could be compared with the **Kleinian maternal space of phantasy**—the area which is composed of images and figures which one can never really inhabit—as the **"other" party**. Yet memory holds the key to the door of Woolf's "party." This phantasy stems from an inner sense of loss or what Kleinians call the D position. Clarissa's integration of the D position occurs when she understands Laura's decision of affirming life instead of death; then, she realizes that Richard's death brings a sense of resurrection to her present life. These feelings are accompanied by a strong desire to make reparation with the present world that Clarissa cherishes more than before. Not playing only as Richard's fictional character any more, Clarissa finally becomes her own leading protagonist in the world created by her unique flavor.

Under the pressure of persecutory anxieties, Clarissa's mechanism of defense is endangered through two male characters Richard and Waters, who reflect on her narcissistic "ghosting" self. Yet, in her depressive anxieties, she realizes that acceptance of Richard's death could make her walk out from the shadow of darkness to become a true Mrs. Dalloway with a more promising tone. Nevertheless, the "absent party" creates a communion of female unity and encourages Clarissa's integration between these two anxiety-positions.

Postscript

Even though the film explores the multi-leveled psychological depth of three leading female characters and their possible parallel connections, some critics mention that the greatest flaw in the film is the political and social vacuum of these three women, especially Virginia. Joseph Phelan and Colin Pearce declare that "we never for a moment learn what was so special about her as a woman and a writer besides her madness and her suicide."²⁹ Correspondingly, Meghan O'Rourke reveals that "female melancholy is primal and contextless" in the film."³⁰ These abovementioned critics argue that the film and the original novel would have had to allude in some ways to Virginia's extraordinary upbringing and her literary influence. However, instead of concentrating on the description of Virginia's background and her literary achievements, both Daldry's film and Cunningham's novel offer us an examination of emotional desperation and psychic disintegration, portrayed through the lives not just of Virginia but also the other two women, Laura and

²⁹ Joseph Phelan and Colin Pearce, "Which Virginia Woolf?" *The Claremont Institute*. 14 February 2003. 5 May 2004 <<http://www.claremont.org/writings/030214phelanpearce.html?FORMAT=print>>.

³⁰ Meghan O'Rourke, "To the Madhouse," *Slate Msn Com*. 6 January 2003. 5 May 2004 <<http://slate.msn.com/toolbar.aspx?action=print&id=2076387>>.

Clarissa. The film presupposes that viewers have learned about Virginia's literary background and her greatness as a Modernist writer and how she has influenced later writers, especially in her use of the stream-of-consciousness. By doing so, then, both the film and the novel could spare the efforts for illuminating the details of her outer milieu and pave the way for both the interpretation of her inner struggle between insanity and creativity and her spiritual connections with other women in the later years that have this similar dilemma in life.

Thus, the emphasis in the film is not to discover Virginia's greatness and glory in her time but to observe her epiphany, her awakening from the sense of ordinariness by paralleling the stories of the other two women in different time spaces. To put it in a larger context, the film underlines the sense of universality instead of specificity in the multicultural environments of L.A., New York, Richmond, and London. Therefore, it expands the social and cultural surroundings among cities for three women who represent the spirit of motherhood in dissimilar time zones. Generally speaking, not only does the film tell a story for a writer Virginia, who creates a great novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, but also it describes a narrative for a reader Laura who admires Virginia's book and it bridges possible parallels between Virginia and her fictional character Clarissa.

Cunningham illuminates, "I think of my novel as the work of a jazz musician who's improvised on an older great piece of music in order to pay tribute to it, play around with it, understand it better and make something new out of a piece of art that already exists. So the **movie is an improvisation on an improvisation.**"³¹ Mostly, the film, faithful to Hare's screenplay and Cunningham's novel, offers a visual interpretation of its original literary

³¹ Johnston Shelia, "A Day in the Life," *Sight and Sound*, 30 July 2004 <http://www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/2003_02/feature01_hours.html>.

predecessor *Mrs. Dalloway*. Daldry develops Cunningham's story into three tiers of stories for a writer, a reader, and a character and discusses three aspects of a mother/wife/daughter position, which I find is relevant to the Kleinian pre-oedipal phase with the breast. Upon autobiography and the genealogy of woman as the Freudian fort-da game, upon Daldry's montage scene of narration as fort-da, upon the motherhood motif as fort-da, upon the structure of three women's lives as fort-da, the film emphasizes the repression of a mother in the form of separation and absence in the sense of Kleinian phantasies. Therefore, **the Kleinian phantasies** become the key concepts important to be manifested through operative mechanisms of the PS position and the D position to demonstrate the emotions of aggression, anger, envy, love, and reparation for each of the major leads in the film. Finally, the film has been designed not only to denaturalize the stereotypical category of what women are supposed to be, but also to rewrite Virginia's *Mrs. Dalloway* in a revolutionary way to destabilize the limitation of genre. Finally, Virginia Woolf, like Sappho, a muse for prose in Daldry's film, inspires the film to present in the visual dimension the parts of three female generations to generate the theme of motherhood.

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幻思·母性·系譜： 《時時刻刻》的精神分析閱讀

談玉儀*

摘 要

英國導演史戴分·道卓藉《時時刻刻》電影，以特殊的影像魅力向維吉尼亞·吳爾芙的《戴洛維夫人》小說致敬。該片以小說中主角戴洛維夫人為敘述中心，編織出三個不同世代的女性系譜，她們分別以創作者、閱讀者、及實踐者的角色在命運的轉輪下相會。二零年代倫敦作家吳爾芙夫人正構思《戴洛維夫人》小說的情節，她希望藉由戴洛維夫人擁抱生命的態度，來克服自己在現實生活中所面臨憂鬱症復發的恐懼。五零年代洛杉磯的布朗夫人雖是平凡的婦人，但藉由閱讀《戴洛維夫人》探索自己內心深處蕾絲邊的情結，因而決心遠離家園，追尋自我。當代紐約的戴洛維夫人則是吳爾芙原著中主角的原型，一心想慶祝前任男友理查詩作獲獎而舉辦晚宴，不料理查卻選擇自殺結束生命。本文擬以克萊恩的「幻思」及克李絲蒂娃的「賤斥」等精神分析理論，剖析片中不同時空下身為母親／妻子／女兒三個面向的女性所面臨的掙扎與轉變。《時時刻刻》影片中三位不同世代的女性心靈因《戴洛維夫人》的連結而交會，進而產生「幻思」的空間，這種類似回歸前伊底帕斯的母性想像空間，是客體關係中自我與異我的

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相容介面，從而衍生出獨特的母性書寫影像風格。

關鍵詞：幻思、客體關係、偏執分裂心智狀態、憂鬱心智狀態、乳房、賤斥