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"She Feels not Half What We Feel": Oriental Affect Aliens and the Unhappy Queers in *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*

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In Mrs. Dalloway *and* To the Lighthouse*, Virginia Woolf's portrayal of Lily Briscoe's and Elizabeth Dalloway's "Chinese eyes" has drawn critical attention, but the lack of affective expressiveness in these characters needs further examination. Borrowing Xine Yao's term "unfeeling," this essay explores the relationship between Woolf's use of Oriental imagery and disaffection. It argues that Woolf's depiction of Oriental unaffectedness critiques Victorian patriarchal conventions and their constructed notions of happiness. However, in doing so, Woolf simultaneously perpetuates the stereotype of Oriental inscrutability. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's critique of happiness and her concept of the "unhappy queer," this essay first examines Elizabeth's restrained affective expressiveness, suggesting that Woolf's characterization challenges the white sentimentality linked to the heterosexual definition of happiness in the late Victorian era. Yet, through the lens of Yao's analysis of Oriental alienness, the essay contends that Woolf's narrative still subscribes to Orientalism. Likewise, Lily Briscoe's negotiation of her capacity for sympathy—especially in contrast to Mrs. Ramsay—highlights Woolf's critique of patriarchal norms. However, Lily's artistic vision is ultimately realised through her alignment with the Western affective economy, suggesting the author's acknowledgement of sympathy and affectability as universal concepts—yet ones that are underpinned by a racial hierarchy.*

In her diary written on June 19th, 1923, Woolf reflects

> One must write from deep feeling, said Dostoievsky. And do I? Or do I fabricate with words, loving them as I do? No, I think not. In [*Mrs Dalloway*] I have almost too many ideas. I want to give life and death, sanity and insanity; I want to criticise the social system, and to show it at work, at its most intense (*A Writer's Diary,* 57).

Later in 1940, Woolf further contends, "I don't like any of the feelings war breeds: patriotism; communal &c, all sentimental & emotional parodies of our real feelings" (*Diary* 302). "Deep" and "real" feelings, along with political consciousness, then, are parts of Woolf's focus when writing her novels. However, in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927), while most of the characters are portrayed as having strong exterior emotions, Elizabeth Dalloway and Lily Briscoe, both described as having "Chinese eyes", stand out. While the former appears to lack exterior affective expressiveness, the latter is portrayed as trying to negotiate her capacity for sympathy in the hegemonic structures of feeling in the late-Victorian contexts. Prompted by this observation, this essay then raises a question: why does Woolf associate unfeeling with Oriental features?

Scholars have explored Black and Queer affect studies and the conceptualisation of 'unfeeling'. Sara Ahmed, in her critique of happiness, argues that "the promise of happiness is the promise that the lines we follow will get us there", and that as long as we follow the "right path" then happiness will come (*Happiness* 32). Ahmed also contends that "the promise of happiness directs us toward certain objects", which include "the historic privileging of heterosexual conduct, as expressed in romantic love and coupledom, as well as in the idealization of domestic privacy" (90). Moreover, the critic notes that "we become alienated – out of line with an affective community – when we do not experience pleasure from proximity to objects that are attributed as being good" (41). The affect aliens depicted by Ahmed, such as the "feminist killjoy" and "unhappy queer," thus "disrupt normative conventions of happiness" (Yao 11). Building on Ahmed's notion of "affective economies", Mel Y. Chen puts forward the conceptual term "queer animality" and posits that the racialised figure embodies this characteristic unhappiness, which can also be "a part of his righteous defiance of Western orders of rule and knowledge" (121). Additionally, seeking "a nonrelational conception of affect", Tyrone S. Palmer critiques Ahmed's theory by pointing out that it "assumes an equal structure of relation between all subjects", and proposes "black fungibility", which renders black bodies as having no affective power of consequence ("Otherwise" 249; "Theorizing" 37).

Xine Yao's concept of "unfeeling" critiques and extends the work of previous scholars. Yao first raises the question "[w]hat possibilities open up when we explore the implications of Édouard Glissant's 'right to opacity' in terms of feeling" (28). Glissant, in "For Opacity", suggests that "If we examine the process of 'understanding' people and ideas from the perspective of Western thought, we discover that its basis is this requirement for transparency" (190). Yao then proposes "Asiatic opacity" which is associated with Oriental inscrutability, whose representation of Asiatic subjects is depicted as "hard to read" and lacks emotional transparency (172-173). The Asiatic affective opacity is one of the many affective modes of "unfeeling", which is used to describe "people who are disaffected break from affectability and present themselves as unaffected" (11). Moreover, Yao proposes to explore "unfeeling through provincializing the concept of sympathy that forms the basis of sentimentalism" (12). The critic argues that sympathy and sentimentalism are rooted in a Western construction of "universal feeling", tracing its origins to Adam Smith's conception, which is associated with "bourgeois Western whiteness", and asserts that the capability to sympathise with others is used to define humanity in the Western context (4).

Adam Smith's conceptualisation of universal feeling epitomises the eighteenth-century emphasis on sentimentalism, a theme that was both embraced and challenged by the Victorian era. The work of Yao is thus useful here in negotiating between these contrasting positions. Laurence Sterne, another mid-eighteenth-century writer, also explored the theme of sentimentalism in his work: his book *A Sentimental Journey* "made literary material of the concept of sympathy" (Maclean 399). As Maclean points out, while there may not be "an influence coming directly to Sterne from Adam Smith", such an influence might indeed have existed (409). However, Woolf posits that Stern "takes sentimentality to excess" in her review of *A Sentimental Journey* (Barber 178). As Bell suggests, Victorian sentimentality is "a byword for indulgent and lachrymose excess, and the reaction against it" (118). Woolf, then, can be seen as belonging to the latter part of the critique group, who was "negotiating the meaning of the term [sentimentalism] and was ambivalent about the eighteenth century use of the word and the twentieth century use" (Barber 180). Though a sentimentalist herself, Woolf dislikes the "programmed sentimentality" that includes "pride for the nation and institutionalized norms" (Barber 180). Therefore, Woolf's ambivalent attitude towards

emotions and sentimentalism can be examined through the lens of Yao's theory of unfeeling, particularly when being emotionally unattached can be viewed as a defiant gesture against the patriarchal norms in the late-Victorian era.

Previous scholars have discussed emotion/affect and orientalism in *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* respectively, yet few have examined how these two come together. While both novels have been explored in terms of affect/emotion, most scholarly attention has been directed towards *Mrs Dalloway*, particularly its representation of sympathy, paying particular attention to the characters who are presented as sympathetic figures. Wilson, for example, notes that most characters in the text show "sympathy" in approaching other individuals, further suggesting that this sentiment serves as a "crucially important one to consider" in understanding Woolf's work (33). Likewise, Xiaoxi examines the "transcendental communication" between Septimus and Mrs Dalloway, emphasising Woolf's advocation for genuine sympathy through "associating [this] with people of inferior social status" (57-58). Similarly, Barber's dissertation contrasts sentimentality and "true feeling," arguing that Dalloway, Peter Walsh, and Septimus Warren Smith possess "a sense of true feeling," and that sentimentality is an illustration of "one's superior rank" (173). Though many of their observations are valuable, who disappears from their readings is the character represented as unable to feel – Elizabeth. Similarly, focusing on Clarissa Dalloway, Yuni Kim emphasises, "the significance of relationality" between bodies, "the relational affect" and its role in the novel in "engendering Woolf's envisioning of an emergent and expanding model of female subjectivity" (18-19). However, while Kim differentiates emotion and affect, this essay chooses not to, as Ahmed suggested that such distinction could be a "gendered one" (*Emotions* 207). Moreover, Kim's arguments do not consider Elizabeth's subjectivity, who is excluded from the "shared feelings" and Western intersubjectivity. Elizabeth's animality has also not been extensively explored. Meanwhile, with Carroll's paper as an exception, there is little scholarship examining affect in *To the Lighthouse* and exploring Woolf's depiction of ecstasy as an affect in the narrative.

In contrast, more essays examine the theme of Orientalism in both novels, as the similarity between Lily Briscoe's and Elizabeth Dalloway's "Chinese eyes" has caught critics'

attention. Barrows has noted “Woolf’s privileged use of essentializing, Orientalist stereotypes as means for gender definition, artistic elevation, or ideological liberation” (237). In *Lily Briscoe’s Chinese eyes*, Laurence focuses on modernist aestheticism and interprets Lily’s gaze as the “aesthetic gaze,” which “will discover a new aesthetic space” and transform the “English landscape” (424). Seshagiri argues that “Woolf's treatment of race” is essential in “her artistic experiments and political subversions” (94). Barrows, while not meaning to “challenge Sehagiri’s powerful readings of Woolf’s ambivalent participation in Orientalist fantasies,” suggests that her use of oriental image is yet “pressing against the accepted limits” of oriental stereotype (237). Analysing Elizabeth and Lily together, Kaivola argues that through the use of Orientalism, Woolf reinforces racial and gender stereotypes (249). However, Woolf’s portrait of Lily and Elizabeth as oriental affect aliens remains to be fully explored.

This essay aims to bridge the gap by exploring the relationship between Woolf’s use of Oriental imagery and (un)feelings. It closely examines feelings, affects, and emotions, aligning with the scholarly opinion that “conceive of them as essentially interchangeable” (Tyrone 34). This essay does not intend to differentiate between sympathy and sentimentalism but instead aligns with Yao’s critique of ‘sympathy’ as “the fundamental mode of apprehending affects, feelings, and emotions — and deeming them legitimate” (13). It investigates the “affective complexity among Black and Indigenous peoples demonized as unfeeling” (Yao 17). In this context, “unfeeling”, used interchangeably with disaffectedness and disaffection, refers to affective modes that “fall outside of or are not legible using dominant regimes of expression”, and describe people who have complex interior emotions but lack Western forms of emotional display (11).

This essay also argues that Woolf employs Oriental unaffectedness as a critique of Victorian patriarchal convention and its constructed notion of happiness, yet in so doing, she subscribes to Oriental inscrutability. Using Sara Ahmed’s critique of happiness and her concept of affect alien, this essay argues that Elizabeth’s lack of feeling is a defiant gesture against the white sentimentality that partly resulted from the widespread cisheterosexual definition of happiness. However, viewing from the perspective of Xine Yao’s analysis of

Oriental alienness and critique of sympathy, the essay contends that in establishing such an image of unsympathetic Oriental affect alien, Woolf's narrative betrays itself in committing to Orientalism, since the text seems to value feeling as a quality which differentiates human being from animals. Likewise, Lily Briscoe's initial choice of not to sympathise with men contrasts with Mrs Ramsay's ability to express fellow-feeling, and her rejection of sharing domestic happiness suggests Woolf's challenge to patriarchal heteronormativity. Yet, as will be seen, the novel's structure, spanning more than ten years, highlights Lily's change of attitude in affectability and suggests that Woolf aligns the "feeling of completeness" with the completion of Lily's painting. Her eventual transformation and negotiation of her affective capability, and the fact that her artistic vision is achieved through her final capacity for "genuine" sympathy, indicates Woolf's acknowledgement of affective capability as universal. By rethinking Woolf's attitude towards late-Victorian sentimentality and her use of Oriental inscrutability, this essay aims to shed light on the racialised and gendered structures of feeling in these two novels, encouraging readers to sympathise with the seemingly 'unsympathetic' characters in Western narratives.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Elizabeth's Oriental features are associated with her queerness and emotional reserve, contrasting with Clarissa's and Peter's sentimentality. Elizabeth, with a tint of perhaps "Mongol" descent, is "dark," described as having "Chinese eyes in a pale face" and "Oriental mystery" (*MD* 104). Moreover, Elizabeth's queerness, as she might be in love with Miss Kilman, may suggest "a transformed femininity and lesbian desires" and be interpreted as aligning Elizabeth with androgyny (Kaivola 250). Along with her queer idenitty is her lack of emotional expression: "it was the expression she needed, but her eyes were fine, Chinese, oriental …. For she never seemed excited" (*MD* 114). During a conversation with Sally Seton, Peter Walsh comments on Elizabeth, saying "she feels not half what we feel, not yet" (*MD* 164). In contrast, Clarissa is depicted as overly emotional, as exemplified by one greeting scene: "How delightful to see you! She was at her worst – effusive, insincere" (142). Likewise, Peter Walsh is portrayed as being emotionally sensitive: "It has been his undoing – this susceptibility – in Anglo-Indian society; not weeping at the right time, or laughing either" (129). Employing Elizabeth's character to challenge the heterosexual affective economies, the narrative critiques the conventional happiness "promised" by the institution of marriage in

the Victorian patriarchal society. Peter and Clarissa's shared emotional expressiveness is disrupted by Elizabeth's lack of exterior emotion, distancing her from the happiness promised by conventional marriage life. When the two reunite, Clarissa contemplates an alternative future if she marries Peter, envisioning domestic happiness: "If I had married him, this gaiety would have been mine all day!" Peter Walsh, whose "susceptibility" has always been considered as "his undoing," also becomes deeply immersed in this feeling stirred by unfulfilled happiness, passionately questioning his former lover Clarissa about whether her marriage has brought her happiness:

> "Tell me," he said, seizing her by the shoulders. "Are you happy, Clarissa? Does Richard—"
>
> The door opened.
>
> "Here is my Elizabeth," said Clarissa, emotionally, histrionically, perhaps.
>
> "How d'y do?" said Elizabeth coming forward.
>
> The sound of Big Ben striking the half-hour struck out between them with extraordinary vigour, as if a young man, strong, indifferent, inconsiderate, were swinging dumb-bells this way and that.
>
> "Hullo, Elizabeth!" cried Peter, stuffing his handkerchief into his pocket, going quickly to her, saying "Good-bye, Clarissa" without looking at her, leaving the room quickly, and running downstairs and opening the hall door. (Woolf, *MD* 40).

Porter argues that "[t]he accompanying violent, 'indifferent, inconsiderate' image of Big Ben's tones inserts itself between Peter and Clarissa with 'extraordinary vigour'" and it is this "aural symbol splinters the emotional bond" (19).

Building on this, I suggest that Woolf's deliberate association between the indifferent sound of Big Ben and the image of Elizabeth points to her disaffected presence, which disrupts and impedes Peter and Clarissa's emotional connection. The contrast can be discerned first in the different ways in which the three characters are being described. For instance, Elizabeth's entrance lacks any modifiers, with only the verb phrase "coming forward," juxtaposing with Peter's exaggerated behaviour as he is grabbing Clarrisa's shoulders while

Clarissa's speech is modified by the two adverbs "emotionally" and "histrionically," and by the narrator's uncertain guess "perhaps" (41). Moreover, if affect is defined as arising "in the midst of *in-between-ness*" and "found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise)" (Gregg and Seigworth 1), then this perspective emphasises the intersubjectivity of feelings exchanged between Clarissa and Peter, which is then diminished by the sudden entrance of an opaque subject who does not share their heteronormative happiness. Brian Massumi describes affect as "unmediated bodily intensity and potential" and views the "universality of affect as a mode of intersubjective relationality" (Palmer 34; 39). However, as Palmer points out, this "assumes a universal humanist subject and body" while "not all bodies are imbued with the same capacities for feeling, movement, or sensation" (34). Elizabeth neither shares nor engages with the feelings of happiness associated with the heterosexual marriage between Peter and Clarissa (Woolf, *MD* 41). This intrusion diminishes their affective exchange and disrupts their emotional bond. Her Oriental inscrutability renders her "an impediment toward intersubjective relationality" under the Western construction of the universal feeling, and she cannot be recognised within "the onto-epistemological order of the Human-as-Man" (41).

Later, the narrative's employment of associative imagery between Elizabeth and the Big Ben's chime reoccurs, emphasising the contrast between Elizabeth's presence and Clarissa's emotional insincerity. When Peter Walsh recalls his encounter with Elizabeth, the narrative highlights this contrast through Peter's reaction: "The way she said 'Here is my Elizabeth!'—that annoyed him. Why not 'Here's Elizabeth' simply? It was insincere. And Elizabeth didn't like it either. (Still, the last tremors of the great booming voice shook the air around him)" (Woolf, *MD* 42). Elizabeth's voice and presence are likened to the "indifferent" and "inconsiderate" sound of Big Ben, illustrating how the affective alienation undermines the "domestic stability" and promise of happiness (Porter 19). As Yao notes, "Oriental inscrutability stands out as the primary expression (or lack of it) of the treacherous inhumanity… that threatens the good white… family and… the foundation of its way of life" (175). In this context, Elizabeth's Oriental inscrutability threatens the ideal of the English heterosexual marriage. Woolf uses Elizabeth's Oriental imagery to challenge the White sentimentalism associated with patriarchal marriage and conventional notions of happiness.

Yet, Elizabeth is compared to a "dumb' animal throughout the narrative, whose "dumbness" – silence – implicates her inability to express interior feelings, thus differentiating her from the Western definition of human beings. As Yao argues, the coloniality in this affective hierarchy is exemplified in that one's failure to accept the "affectable vulnerability" equalises failure to "demonstrate their emotions as evidence of their subjectivity and, therefore, status as human subjects" (5). When Peter Walsh reflects on Elizabeth's interruption of his and Clarissa's reunion, the narrative depicts Elizabeth through his perspective: "this morning, for instance, in came Elizabeth, like a long-legged colt, handsome, dumb, just as he was beginning to talk to Clarissa" (Woolf, *MD* 130). As Chen suggests, "[t]he conjunction of animality, Asianness, and queerness persisted beyond the late nineteenth century" (115). Here, Elizabeth's quietness is likened to that of a "colt," a young male horse. This metaphor not only points out Elizabeth's androgynous body, but also renders her inhuman due to her perceived lack of feeling, as "[e]motional expression is presumed to be the signifier of affective human interiority" (Yao 5). Moreover, Elizabeth's tentative "lover" – Miss Kilman – also becomes frustrated by Elizabeth's apparent lack of feeling and inability to sympathise. In their final tea-drinking scene, Elizabeth, "with her oriental bearing" and "her inscrutable mystery," remains silent and inexpressive, leaving Miss Kilman in agony (Woolf, *MD* 111). Here, the metaphor of "dumb creature" appears again, marking Elizabeth's Oriental inscrutability from the narrator's perspective: "Like some dumb creature who has been brought up to a gate for an unknown purpose, and stands there longing to gallop away, Elizabeth Dalloway sat silent. Was Miss Kilman going to say anything more?" (112). Barrows argues that Elizabeth's Oriental appearance is linked to her being manipulated by Miss Kilman and Clarissa, as they "battle over emotional ownership of her, as a ready symbol of ownership or control", rendering Elizabeth "a passive tool … touching nothing real or authentic within her own desires and feelings" (241). Building on this, I argue that Woolf's representation of Elizabeth embodies "the animal's passivity or submissiveness", aligning with "racialized queering" and hinting at the character's animality (Chen 111). By depicting Elizabeth as akin to an animal and assuming white feelings as universal, Woolf's narrative still subscribes to Oriental inscrutability and aligns the text with the racialised and gendered affective hierarchy prescribed by the Victorian affective economy.

If Elizabeth is presented as an unhappy Queer who disrupts heterosexual happiness, then Lily Briscoe, who shares a similar pair of Chinese eyes, also emerges as an affect alien, creating a stark contrast with Mrs. Ramsay. Lily refrains from sharing domestic happiness with a man, which reveals that Woolf is critical of the conventional Victorian notion of joy and fulfillment as promised by heterosexual marriage, especially when we compare Lily with the sentimental and caring Mrs Ramsay. The seventeenth part of "The Window" starts with Mrs Ramsay's reflection on her gloomy life during a dinner scene: "But what have I done with my life?" (68). However, Mrs Ramsay's feelings change after seeing "a yellow and purple dish of fruit," arranged by her daughter Rose:

> Now eight candles were stood down the table … and in the middle a yellow and purple dish of fruit. What had she done with it, Mrs Ramsay wondered, for Rose's arrangement of the grapes and pears …. and to her pleasure (for it brought them into sympathy momentarily) she saw that Augustus too feasted his eyes on the same plate of fruit …. That was his way of looking, different from hers. But looking together united them. (*To the Lighthouse* 79)

The observation of the fruits brings out the solidarity and mutual sharing of feeling – sympathy – between Mrs Ransay and Augustus Carmichael, the miserable male poet, as "it [brings] them into sympathy momentarily" (79). Yet where does this feeling come from? Using a phenomenologically informed approach, Ahmed emphasises the "togetherness" implied by family as a happy object, contending that "[t]he family becomes a happy object through the work that must be done to keep it together" (*Happiness* 46). She also mentions the connotation of "table", as "[b]eing together means having a place at the table …. The table is itself a happy object, insofar as it secures the very form of the family over time" (46). Here, Rose, fulfilling her social role as a daughter, has ensured the family's "togetherness" by putting different fruits and a shell "together," as the family is sitting around the dinner table and preparing to share a meal. Mrs Ramsay's affective state thus shifts from initial uneasiness, caused by waiting for Minta and Paul, to happiness, triggered by the 'togetherness' suggested by the plate of fruits, invoking domestic bliss. "Looking together" at the same object – the

fruit plate – and sitting around the family table, thus being "united" creates a communal affect of shared domestic happiness (*TL* 79). The "togetherness" indicated by the fruits is followed by the happiness promised to the newly engaged – Minta and Paul – that is, the happiness promised by the institution of marriage and the reproduction of social form. Moreover, Mrs Ramsay gazes at the fruit plate once again near the end of the dinner, then imagines her daughter Prue's future happiness. As Lewis observes, "[b]etween the removal of the pear from the dish of fruit and the staccato realization that dinner is over, Mrs. Ramsay thinks about her children's laughter and Prue's future happiness" (436). The myth of happiness, here, involves "the comfort of repetition" (Ahmed, *Happiness* 48). Mrs Ramsay's happiness is derived from the promise of happiness brought by the incoming marriage of Minta and Paul. This road towards "happiness" will be followed again by her daughter: "You [Prue]will be happy as she is one of these days. much happier…because you are my daughter" (89). Prue's death from childbirth – the reproduction of family form – implies Woolf's mockery and disapproval of Victorian society's construction of happiness: "Prue Ramsay died …. They said nobody deserved happiness more" (*TL* 108).

Woolf's implied critique of family structures, evident in her portrayal of Prue's death is further highlighted through Lily Briscoe, depicted as an Oriental affect alien, who does not partake in the promised happiness of heterosexual marriage. Lily rejects conventional marriage and hopes to be exempted from this 'universal law', as the narrative describes her: "[w]ith her little Chinese eyes and her puckered-up face she would never marry" (43; 17). This mirrors Ahmed's argument that "We become alienated – out of line with an affective community – when we do not experience pleasure from proximity to objects that are attributed as being good" (*Happiness* 41). Lily's lack of emotional response to the dinner table scene can be seen as Woolf's implicit critique of heteronormative happiness in late-Victorian society. As Caroll observes, "[t]he atmosphere shifts" after the candles are lit and the fruit plate is served, and "a sudden affective shift occurs" (23):

> Some change at once went through them all, as if this had really happened, and they were all conscious of making a party together in a hollow, on an island; had their common cause against that fluidity out there. Mrs Ramsay who had been

> uneasy, waiting for Paul and Minta to come in, and unable, she felt, to settle to things, now felt her uneasiness changed to expectation. (*TTL* 80)

Caroll considers the communal feeling here as "transcendence and bliss," and compares this "intersubjective experience" to a feeling of "ecstasy" (22). Notably, while the narrator describes the affective community as experiencing the communal feeling of solidity "against the fluidity," Lily compares it "with that moment on the tennis lawn, when solidity suddenly vanished, and such vast spaces lay between them" (*TL* 80). Caroll argues that even though their experiences are opposite, "Lily and Mrs. Ramsay experience the same harmony of the affective moment" (23). However, I argue that Woolf's contradictory usage of "fluid and solid imagery" presents Lily as an affect alien who does not share the same affect – happiness – brought by the promise of domesticity. Lily chooses not to sympathise with the happiness brought by marriage, which is evidenced in her forming "a starkly different perspective of the moment to that of Mrs Ramsay, interpreting the ecstatic affect not as shielding but instead as a space in which solidity is absent, in which the world becomes utterly fluid" (Carroll 23). Here, also sitting at the dinner table, Lily attempts to "analyse the cause of the sudden exhilaration" (*TL* 80). As Ahmed observes, "the crowd may appear with a mind of its own only from the point of view of being outside the crowd, watching 'it' in the unfolding of an event or spectacle" (*Happiness* 43). Lily Briscoe, being an observer through her Chinese eyes, is then excluded from the affective community, as "[a]lien bodies who do not share the affective direction simply disappear from such a viewing point" (43). Moreover, Lily's later offer of finding the brooch with Paul as an attempt to fit in the affect community is dismissed. Lily tries to "correct [her] feelings", to "become disaffected from a former affection", yet her failure signifies again her Oriental alienness (Ahmed, *Happiness* 42). However, Lily remains unsympathetic – rendering herself an Oriental feminist killjoy. She is content with her own choice: "catching sight of the salt cellar on the pattern, she need not marry, thank Heaven" (83). Lily "deviates from the path of making others happy", and insists on her freedom to be excluded from Victorian marriage life, suggesting Woolf's critique of patriarchal convention (Ahmed, *Happiness* 48).

Nevertheless, Woolf portrays disaffection as an inhuman and abnormal trait that Lily must overcome, depicting it as a negative element that impedes her artistic expression. This portrayal further implies that Western affectability remains the dominant norm in the narrative. Given that the novel spans over ten years, this essay will first trace Lily's negotiation of her affective capability. The first part, "The Window", presents Lily's earlier decision of not giving her sympathy to men. However, by the third part, "The Lighthouse", Lily eventually decides to accept Western affective economy. Her ability to deliver sympathy marks a significant shift, culminating in the completion of her painting. This essay thus contends that the novel suggests Woolf's inclination towards viewing sympathy and affectability as universal. Lily's negotiation in her affectability is particularly evident in the third part, "The Lighthouse". Here, Lily feels remorseful after she rejects the emotional labour imposed by Mr Ramsay. Lily's unsympathetic stance renders her critical of herself and unsympathetic to her own eyes: Lily is then represented as "girding at herself bitterly", and considers herself "not a woman, but a peevish, ill-tempered, dried-up old maid presumably" (Woolf, *TL* 125). As a critique of white sentimentalism as universality, Yao argues that within such affect power structures, "to not have sympathy for others means forfeiting the recognition that they are deserving of sympathy" (31). Here, Lily is portrayed as an "unsympathetic villain" due to her unsympathetic stance against white sentimentality, suggesting Woolf's Orientalist attitudes (Yao 31).

Moreover, Lily "could not achieve that razor edge of balance between two opposite forces; Mr. Ramsay and the picture; which was necessary" (Woolf, *The Lighthouse* 158). This balance can be interpreted as the choice between being sympathetic toward men who hold patriarchal views—that some occupations are unsuitable for women—and remaining entirely indifferent to them. At the end of the narrative, Lily eventually succumbs to Mr. Ramsay's request for sympathy: "Whatever she had wanted to give him … she had given him at last" (Woolf, *TL* 169). Lily's capability of being sympathetic is immediately followed by her filling of the final vision: "With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision." (170) Here, Lily's difficulty with expressing sympathy hinders her ability to paint, as exemplified in the fifth part of "The Lighhouse" as well, which

begins with: “The sympathy she had not given him weighed her down. It made it difficult to paint” (142). Crater argues that Lily Briscoe’s final stroke expresses female subjectivity: “Only Lily Briscoe survives the passage and reemerges, capable of articulating her vision of being a woman other than the prescribed role of Woman” (121). However, Lily’s inheritance of Mrs Ramsay’s sympathetic stance leaves this female subjectivity in doubt, as “Lily partially identifies with Mrs Ramsay years after her death” (Helal 85-6). The awkward space Lily always tries to fill in her painting, then, can be interpreted as her affective incapability. Thus, realising her capacity for sympathy provides Lily with the strength and creativity needed to complete her painting. By ultimately granting genuine sympathy to the Oriental figure of Lily Briscoe and likening her realisation of sympathy to recovery “after an illness” (157), the critique of patriarchal sentimentality is weakened by its Orientalism, which remains rooted in a colonial mentality. Therefore, Woolf’s critique of Victorian social convention through her utilisation of Oriental inscrutability is parallel with her approval of affectability as a basic human agency. Eventually, Lily’s unfeeling is presented as a flaw, and only through conquering it can her artistic vision be realised, suggesting Woolf’s inclination that “emotionality and affectivity belong to the empowered, the (fully) Human” (Palmer 47).

Therefore, in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, Elizabeth Dalloway and Lily Briscoe, both characterised by their Oriental features, are portrayed by Woolf as affect aliens. They either impede or do not participate in the happiness associated with heterosexual normativity and the ideal of family bliss. Elizabeth’s lack of affective expression serves as Woolf’s critique of the happiness myth and white sentimentalism as rooted in Victorian conventions and the institution of marriage. However, the narrative’s comparison of Elizabeth’s silence to the “dumbness” of animals reflects Woolf’s subscription to Oriental inscrutability – “the essential difference of an unfeeling and inhuman race” (Yao 176). Afterall, it is “sympathy” that connects or represents “a significant gesture towards unity of the inner life” in Woolf’s texts (Wilson 33). Similarly, while Lily Briscoe’s refusal to sympathise with men challenges the patriarchal expectations of women’s emotional labour, her final compromise in fulfilling Mr Ramsay’s desire for sympathy is linked with the accomplishment of her final artistic vision. While Woolf critiques the promised happiness of domestic life as perceived through Lily’s “Chinese eyes,” she simultaneously fails to fully recognize the racialised affective modality.

Instead, Woolf considers Western affectability as the norm and views Lily's disaffection as a personal flaw. This final act of sympathy, metaphorically linked to the completion of Lily's artistic work, signifies her full emotional and artistic maturation. Thus, readers may discern that the "normative model of civilized humanity" remains "the prevalent attitude" in Woolf's writing (Carr 211). Elizabeth's and Lily's "Oriental alienness" suggests that Woolf may degrade them as "non-human," owing to their failure to demonstrate their emotions at full capacity (Yao 175). How far could Woolf "manage to escape the racist attitudes she learnt in her earliest years," then, might remain a question without a definite answer (Carr 199).

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